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YOUTH, CRIME, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A Model for Grassroots Community Projects

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A Model for Grassroots Community Projects

by

Michael Bopp, Anou Borrey and
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FOREWORD

People's participation and development are the two major issues that are discussed in this paper. At a time when the government of Papua New Guinea finds itself virtually on the edge of bankruptcy, there is increasing pressure on the population to find their own way of becoming involved in sustainable development. In the past, and even now, the people have been putting pressure on the State to provide them with the much 'desired' development. The response from government officials is often that 'the handout mentality' is killing the State, and that people have to take their livelihoods into their own hands.

Both articles describe and analyse the processes taking place in two different areas of Simbu Province, and show that there is an eagerness for people to become involved in meaningful activities which could enhance their living conditions. However, the articles also show that the cry for government help is a request for basic facilities in order to give the people the capacity to develop the desired social and economic goals to which they have been exposed and which have deeply changed their views of life.

Part 1 presents the more general issues which hinder development and enhance the choice for involvement in criminal activities, while Part 2 describes how the people in a particular clan have organised themselves in order to fulfil their development wishes.

The case study in Part 2 also elaborates on a successful community development initiative and thereby yields lessons for both government and civil society in Papua New Guinea. That development program could well be seen as a model for other Papua New Guinean societies.
PART 1

YOUTH, CRIME, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

by

Anou Borrey
Introduction

In a rural area renowned for its criminal activities, the people have undertaken several initiatives to prevent their members from engaging in crime. Most attempts are geared towards initiating cash-generating projects so that they can increase their standard of living and, as such, contribute to the ‘desired’ economic and social development. However, most of the attempts have been unsuccessful. This paper analyses the positive and negative factors which may contribute to the success or failure of these projects. The analysis of the contributing factors of these projects suggests that the desired development will only occur if people recognise the need to change the urban bias of government policies and also start considering the social and cultural dimensions of human capital as an important factor in long-term planning. Several case studies are presented to illustrate the different crucial elements that contribute to or curtail the positive development of the particular projects.

History and Contextualisation

To understand some of the issues that are raised, it is necessary to look back through the history of that particular area. The research covers part of the Sinasina District which is in the Northern section of Simbu Province. It is home to the Tabare and Nemai tribes. The villages that were focused on within this area were Mata, Dumun, Oknii, Mu, Koge, and Lobakogi. The most common languages used in the area are Malda and Kendo. This area has always been described as densely populated (Brookfield and Brown 1963; Hatanka 1972; Goie 1985; Standish 1992). The rugged, mountainous country is another element which adds to the harshness of the social environment. Land pressure has often been the basis of disputes and tribal warfare.

The people in the Highlands region first settled as subsistence farmers about 2 300 years ago (Hatanka 1972). Their first contact with Westerners was in 1936 with the Taylors’ expedition to the Wahgi Valley. This expedition was followed by the introduction of the colonial administration which attempted to secure its position by using local leaders to implement its policies. At that stage, there appeared to be cooperation between State bodies and villagers, as traditional leaders seemed to benefit from it (Standish 1992:68). The churches then followed very quickly. The first missionaries in Mata, Dumun, Oknii, Mu, Koge, and Lobakogi were the Lutherans. They settled in Mu and were followed by the Catholic church which set up its centre at Koge.

The introduction of religion had a big influence on people’s lives. Strict prohibition was imposed on initiation and rituals, and parents were told not to pass on stories of pasin bilong tumbuna (traditional ways) to their children. Meeting places such as the hausman (men’s house) and hausmeri (women’s house) disappeared as they lost their main functions with the passing on of traditional beliefs from the elders to the younger people. The efforts of the missionaries in preaching pacification had a significant effect. More and more people started living in nuclear families with wife, husband, and children sharing the same house. However, polygamy was still being practised. People from different clans came to settle around the missions closer to their church, doing away with the dispersed settlements where each subclan had its own meeting place near the hausman. Land was given to people with the same religious
beliefs and, as a result, villages were shared by people from different clans who shared the same beliefs. With the recent introduction of many different churches such as the Seventh Day Adventist, Nazarene, Assembly of God, Four Square, New Tribes, and Pentecostal, villages often subscribe to more than one religion.

By the 1960s, the road infrastructure and airstrips that had been built by the colonial administration influenced many facets of life. People now moved from remote areas into villages which were near roads and airstrips, or at least not too far away. Because of the increased mobility, contact now took place between people from different areas who would have been considered strangers in the past.

With the introduction of the colonial system, came incorporation into the modern world economic system. Cash crops, especially coffee, became a feasible way of earning money, and marketing became possible with access to roads. Initially, this could only be achieved through working on plantations in coastal areas, or on coffee plantations in other areas of the Highlands. However, the demands for fertile land by coffee growers, combined with people pressure, increased the struggle for land, and this has caused clan warfare (Standish 1992). At the same time, cash became an accepted tool in traditional exchange and compensation rituals, alongside pigs, shells, and women. However, subsistence farming is still the major economic activity and sometimes surplus food is sold at the local market or in Kundiawa town. Industrial activities are non-existent, therefore, opportunities for participation in the cash economy are limited.

The administrative centre for Simbu Province is Kundiawa, which is about 30 minutes drive from the study area. There is daily transport to the city provided by public motor vehicles (PMVs). In the rainy season, the unsealed road from the highway leading to Mu, and further down to Koge, can only be used by four-wheel drive vehicles. There are health aidposts at Koge and Mu, but shortages of medical supplies often force people to travel to Kundiawa, or to try to get better by staying in the village, without medical attention. The district office at Kamtai has extension officers from the Department of Primary Industry, a youth officer, and a police base. Community schools have been established in several areas of the district together with a high school at Koge. Simbu Province has no national high school or vocational centre.

The formal justice system is represented at the village level by a village magistrate who is chosen by the people. The magistrate deals with disputes according to the guidelines provided in the Village Court Act. State control agencies in Simbu Province are represented by a police force of approximately 144 men (police/population ratio is 1:1 276) with a limited number of guns and vehicles. The councillors are representatives of local government and are also elected. Their main role is that of 'public relations' between the provincial government and the villages. In the light of a 'bottom-to-top' policy approach, attempts were being made by the newly created Department of Village Services and Provincial Affairs to increase the power of these people, giving them more authority in regard to financial and policy matters.

Obviously, Simbu Province has undergone major changes in a relatively short time, and this has affected all levels of life. The people are looking at a new system of governance (State), a new cash economy, a change of social values, the expansion of their horizons, and so on.
Justifications for and Analysis of Criminal Activities

Against this background is the social development which is characterised by an increasing level of criminal activities. For some of the people, this has become a regular 'job', from which many others are benefiting in direct and indirect ways. It allows people access to cash, excitement, and to some extent helps to gain self-esteem, prestige and respect. The major offences committed are armed robbery, rape, break and enter, marijuana trading, and sex work. This paper does not provide a description of these different offences. However, an analysis of the different rationales provided by offenders and community members might give a better insight into the social, economic, political, and cultural reality in which these actions take place. What is important is to find out why people engage in criminal activities. Also, this might show why projects become unsuccessful after a brief time. Their outcome (cash and increased social benefits) might be the same as the involvement in criminal activities.

The most common points raised by the young and old, and women and men are:

- the introduction to a cash economy, and with it the exposure to material goods, has created an unprecedented desire to become part of that process;
- moreover, cash has penetrated the traditional era as a tool in exchange rituals, bride payments, and compensation demands;
- cash is needed not only for its purchasing power, but also for its power to gain prestige. The example presented on many occasions is that of the person (who fits the image of the public servant) who goes back to the village at the weekend with his car, several women, and ten cartons of beer. That person is highly respected by other community members. With his money and beer, he buys favours and sometimes even gains electoral votes from the people who then hope to be able to share some of the profit and prestige that goes with the political position. He will also be able to contribute generously to feasts and compensation ceremonies;
- women feel important when seen with men who display their wealth;
- cash on its own is not the issue, but cash which buys prestige is the ultimate aim. This ideal also shapes the world of criminals;
- criminal activities are aimed at gaining prestige and self-esteem, while at the same time fulfilling the need for excitement and providing an escape from hard work and the daily struggle in the village (Borrer 1995; Avel 1995);
- poverty in real terms does not as yet exist in this rural setting and is surely not the motivation for engaging in criminal activities; and
- relative deprivation and the meaning of cash in society is what incites young people to engage in criminal activities.

There are many opportunities for participation in this new world economy, and one is through the educational system. This insight has led to contributions by more than one family member towards the payment of school fees for children. People hope that their children will obtain a well-paid job and that profits will filter down to the extended family. However, for many of them, expectations are not being fulfilled. Many children do not manage to complete their schooling and graduates are not always guaranteed jobs at the end of the long road. Formal sector jobs are generally only available in the urban areas, leaving 80 percent of the youth who live in the rural areas with only a slim chance of entering the formal and profitable economic sector. Even with insufficient educational qualifications, people often move to the city in the hope of
finding a job, often as a labourer, and fulfilling the dream of the 'new kind of life'
personified by the character already described. However, a labourer's wage is not
sufficient to live on in urban areas, and becomes even more meaningless when one
knows people 'back home' are expecting a share. The intense pressure from family and
clan may cause young people to either give up work or link it with alternative illegal
sources of income.

However, the majority of young people have no other choice but to stay in the
village. In some areas, such as the Sinasina District in Simbu Province, land pressure
has led to reduced accessibility to subsistence farming by some of the youth of large
families. Elders see themselves forced to divide the land only between their older sons
which leads to a situation where younger boys in the family are left without land. Even
though land seems to be abundantly available, mountainous terrain has restricted the
amount of workable land. Also, as already mentioned, elders have moved away from
their traditional land to settle closer to roads and government centres. Their children
find it hard to go back and settle on the traditional land where links with their 'new
world' are few or non-existent.

In these situations, younger boys become totally dependent on the generosity of
other family members to receive a workable piece of land. Options left to these
youngsters are often migration to the town, or involvement in criminal activities to get
money and prestige. Many of these youngsters travel easily between the town and the
village, especially where road infrastructure exists. Exposure to a large variety of
goods in the shops generates a desire for material possessions and the sight of some
wealthy citizens incites the desire to obtain the same standard of living.

Also, garden work and/or cash cropping is considered hard work with little
effective return for young men and women. Subsistence farming has lost its value
when compared with the prestigious jobs offered in the formal sector. The returns from
farming, in a country where agriculture is the major economic activity, are so low that
it discourages people from developing that very economic sector which is most
accessible to the majority of the population. Parents look upon investment in education
as a waste of money if their children are not able to subsequently become successful in
the cash economy, which is something that people now value very highly. This also
influences the way that young men and women can reintegrate into their villages.

Young women show very little or no interest in men who have no role in a market
economy. Young men call themselves pipia lain (rubbish) when they are looked upon
with disdain by desirable women. These frustrations, in combination with the
consumption of alcohol and/or marijuana, have led to rape. This has also led to the
abduction of young women from vehicles that are held up along the Okuk Highway,
where they are taken by one of the criminal youth cohort members as his wife.

In becoming involved in activities such as robbery, prostitution and rape, young
people are developing the process of building self-esteem and respect in an alternative

1 The preference for the term 'cohort' or 'criminal youth group' when referring to 'gangs' is
related to the findings of research conducted amongst these 'gangs' which reveals that there is
little comparision with the groups of 'gangs' referred to in other Western criminological work
(Huff 1990).
and marginal realm of community life. Because of the material outcome which they share, to a certain extent, with other community members, these people still manage to participate in mainstream community life every now and again. In addition, in the Highlands, these criminal youth groups are often asked to 'go to the front line' in tribal fights. They become the warriors and heroes, who with their guns, form the stronghold of the fighting clans. Their marginal world is just a survival one where mechanisms are available to allow them to participate in mainstream life. Many of the criminals who have been involved for a long time with criminal activities share the desire for a normal life, often after they have managed to settle down with a wife and children. The money that they collect through their illegal activities is sufficient to provide for daily necessities and the temporary fun of drunken brawls. Rascals' living standards do not improve a great deal over the years of active involvement. On the other hand, these youth have noticed that, in contrast, public servants and politicians have been able to create a good life for themselves and their families. Single women and girls especially feel left out of every initiative to improve their living conditions. If opportunities, besides prostitution, were available for women to participate in the cash economy, they would jump at them.

As already mentioned, involvement in criminal activities not only brings money but also excitement to an otherwise dull life. Young people have very few outlets in rural or urban areas for adolescent unruliness (Davis 1993), thus it is very easy to tempt them to join criminal groups, where members can be seen enjoying themselves around cartons of beer or walking around wearing a great pair of sunglasses. These groups also gain respect through intimidation. In general, a young person who can provide for himself, and on some occasions contribute to the welfare of other community members, will be respected. Community members do not often ask where the goods or money that have contributed towards communal transactions come from.

The communities, with their gang groups, are part of the larger constructs of the provinces and the nation — bodies that are represented by State agencies. The reason for touching on this issue is that it is sometimes forgotten that Melanesian culture, which has its own values and norms, is framed by a modern State whose functions and possibilities are not known by the majority of grassroots people. For many, the State is a surrogate 'big-man' or leader, who, in the process of wealth accumulation (like mineral and logging projects) is expected to redistribute some of this wealth back to the people. In this way, the big-man secures supporters. However, in the eyes of many people, this process has not happened and their disappointment has left them with a passive dependence upon the State. They claim that their living conditions have deteriorated since independence. The Members of Parliament who are elected by people from these communities are criticised for pursuits of self-interest and lack of investment in the overall community.

In the Highlands region, the youth groups have expressed their anger in a very specific way. In many ways, the Otuk Highway represents the State. It is the road of abundance which they feel should be redistributed. Holding up vehicles and stealing cargo and money is an activity which they legitimise as a form of redistribution. It is clear from these actions that these young people have developed a political agenda very much in line with communal traditional values. The set up of gang groups is often a reproduction of traditional support cadres for highlands big-men, who organise the income activities and make sure that the benefits get shared amongst support group members (Goddard 1993). They do not realise that their victims are often living in the same conditions and undergoing the same hardships.
6 Youth, Crime, and Rural Development Issues

The reaction of the State-controlled agencies towards the actions of gang members has been characterised by extreme measures directed at the whole community, for example, the burning down of villages, destruction of pigs and gardens, and sometimes, the rape of women. This has led to a situation whereby community members show little cooperation in the handing over or apprehension of criminals. Possible intimidation by offending youth cohorts is another contributing factor. Their own informal social control systems have collapsed, leaving very little control over the actions of young men and women. Intergenerational ruptures make the situation even more unstable. In general, control systems for the whole community are breaking down and individual pursuits are coming to the fore. Nowadays, people often only want to take on responsibilities when they will be paid for them.

Case Studies and Analysis

Several attempts have been undertaken by elders to engage their young people, especially their own children, in lucrative activities. By increasing awareness about their conditions and options, people have moved on to the stage where they have given up hope of any meaningful contribution from the State. The following case studies are summary descriptions of some projects that were initiated by the elders.

Case 1

One former public servant organised 'discos' and the money collected was used to buy spades and other garden equipment for use by youths in their gardens. However, the life span of the project was very short because most of the money was misused by some of the youths on a drunken spree, when the organiser was out of the village for a while.

It is clear from this incident that elders are concerned about the future of their youth. Activities which are regarded as fun are being organised to attract more people and in that way collect more funds. On the other hand, there seems to have been a communication breakdown between the organisers and the people benefiting from the activity. The youth obviously were not interested in the set-up and would rather spend the money on beer. Unfortunately, there had been no prior consultation with the young people, otherwise a positive and responsible participation could have been expected.

Case 2

The person who initiated this project was a retired Department of Primary Industry (DPI) officer and public servant. He returned to the village as he feared for his life in town because of ongoing tribal fights in which his clan was involved. In order to purchase some of the things to which he had grown accustomed while in a regular job, he had a drum oven made. This was the start of making his own scones, drying coffee and tea, and roasting peanuts. This provided his family with bread, coffee, tea and peanut butter. Refined sugar was replaced by home-made honey. The ideas came from some brochures that he saw in the DPI office in Lae. His intention was to expand this experiment so that the whole community would benefit from a lower dependency on money, which was necessary to purchase 'white men's food'. To expand his project, a loan application was submitted to several government agencies and banks. However,
no positive response came out of these submissions. Finally, the man lost the whole project in one of the police raids on his village. This time there was not even enough money to erect the small family enterprise. For this person, it was very much a case of combining village life with the commercial goods to which he had become accustomed. Access to outside funds and closer cooperation with other community members might have made this project more successful.

**Case 3**

A former school teacher attempted to set up a small poultry project. His initial funding came from personal savings. Sadly this enterprise had a short life. Because of increased competition in that particular area he took his chickens to town to sell them to some wantoks working in the government offices. He gave people credit, but was never paid. This resulted in a lack of funds to reinvest in the next batch of chickens, and that was the end of the project.

**Case 4**

Some people engaged in smallholder coffee production. However, they complained about the low return for their hard work. As a result, many rundown coffee gardens were found in this particular area. With the recent price increase, attitudes of owners of coffee gardens have changed. At the same time, there has been an increase in armed hold-ups, and bags of coffee beans are being stolen by criminals.

These projects were set up with personal investments by people who had been part of the formal sector. All of the people were literate and had gained some experience in the past through their involvement in the formal sector. For many of them, becoming involved in a business venture was an attempt to become a big-man. Nevertheless, as these case studies show, the success rate has been low or non-existent. Factors contributing to this are:

- no loan possibilities;
- no government support;
- insufficient knowledge of the produce;
- lack of marketing and accountancy experience;
- lack of diversity;
- lack of long-term vision;
- destruction through police raids and tribal fights;
- profits are used for compensation;
- exchange and bride price demands often resulting in a lack of cash flow to allow continuation; and
- loss at the hands of criminal activities.

It is interesting to note that no women were actively engaged in any project. However, they were often the working members in the projects. Case 1 shows that, on the part of young people, there is a lack of long-term vision. There is little understanding that people have to work hard and consistently to improve their standard of living.
Projects by Criminal Youth Cohorts

Several attempts have been made by criminal youth cohorts to engage in legal activities. Each project reflects different elements which should be considered when attempting to engage people in sustainable projects.

Project 1

Over the past few years, a trend has developed whereby more and more gang groups are negotiating with government agencies for project funds which are given in return for the surrendering of all arms (Dinnen 1994). While this trend was taking place, two youth cohorts from two different clans in Simbu Province decided to group together and organise a march to Port Moresby. After one week they made it to the capital city, where they were helped by their regional member with accommodation and food. Although their request to meet with the Prime Minister was turned down, they were received by another regional member who took the time to see them. In return for surrendering their arms, K5 000 was given for a project which they intended to initiate on returning to the village. They returned home on a chartered plane.

It took them another month to receive the money in return for the ILPOC. They were received as heroes upon their return but their state of glory did not last very long. First, they complained that the money would never be enough to provide for the needs of all the young men in their area. Not long after receiving the money, one of the clans asked for their share. This group had spent some of their money on beer and personal items. The money that was left was used to start a small poultry project. The project did not last very long as the returns were considered to be very low. The benefits had to be shared amongst too many youths. The few who were actively involved felt the effort outweighed the returns, and therefore, did not get involved in the next stage. The small amount of profit was distributed amongst the members of the youth cohort and was spent on personal needs.

The other half of the money was spent on a cattle project. After consultation with the agricultural officer at the district office, a decision was made to buy five cattle. A fence was constructed and the leader went to Lae with some of his boys to collect the adult cattle. When asked why they had chosen this option they replied that cattle were now in big demand for bride price and that people were paying lots of money for one animal. They also felt that it would be easy just to release them in the field and wait until they were ready for sale. After the first day, one of the cattle had already been lost. It escaped through the fence and was found drowned in the river. The five cattle all came to tragic ends, as did the leader. This negative experience affected him so much that he finds it hard to make a new start. Cultivating and smoking marijuana seems the best option available to him.

Project 2

Another youth cohort leader asked me to buy him some English potato seedlings. I agreed on the condition that he sought the advice of the DPI officer in regard to soil requirements and market availability. After going to the district office for three consecutive days, we finally managed to see the DPI officer, who showed us educational charts demonstrating the needs, and possible problems and solutions for
growing English potatoes. We made an agreement that the officer, together with the youth, would see the piece of land so that further advice could be given on the location and the suitability of the soil for the crop.

Several months later I visited the youth cohort leader. He was quick to inform me that the DPI officer never kept the appointment. Consequently, he had gone ahead with the planting of the seedlings and showed me the results. Half of the planted seedlings were growing well while the other half had been destroyed by insects. He needed some pesticide but did not have the money to purchase it. He also realized that his knowledge of gardening was sufficient when growing traditional vegetables but when it came to new crops he found himself facing new problems. The elders themselves did not know and the DPI officer was obviously a difficult person to contact. On my last visit, the potatoes had been harvested but there was the problem of marketing. The best market would be Port Moresby but he did not know how to get them there and still make a profit.

Project 3

Another youth cohort managed to get some funds from his local Member of Parliament to contribute to a coffee project. It has been two years since the project started up. At this stage, it is the leader and his wife who do most of the work. Here, much the same problem exists, as in the potato project. The initiative is there but once a setback is encountered there is very little support to keep the project going. The setbacks in this project have been the lack of funds to purchase the necessary pesticides, lack of knowledge in the cultivation of the cash crop, and little cooperation between those with the know how, and those who are willing to do the work.

Project 4

Two youth cohorts were each paid K1 000 into separate trust accounts in return for contributions made to a movie project. The first group could not get to the bank quickly enough to withdraw the money which was then spent on beer. There had been a request by one of the leaders to put some extra money into an existing coffee project, but that request fell on deaf ears. Now we have a situation where a leader is half-satisfactorily running his project, but has lost the will to work with the other youth members of his cohort.

The other K1 000 was put towards expanding the vegetable project that was initially set up in Project 2. Based on the latest reports, it seems the project is running well, with all young men from that particular project being involved. This group of young people has disengaged almost entirely from their criminal activities.

Comments on the Projects

These different case and project studies indicate that people are eager to follow opportunities which will bring in some money. The often repeated statement that Papua New Guineans are lazy is surely not true for this part of the Highlands region. If they cannot engage in legal activities, then they will seek alternatives to fulfill their hunger
for cash, even if that means engaging in illegal activities. However, as already mentioned, the returns from illegal activities are limited, but if they are great, they are being distributed as one would become suspicious of you building a semi-permanent house or driving a four-wheel drive vehicle. Therefore, young people will go to no end to acquire the 'big cash' that will allow them to engage in legal activities. The group who walked to Port Moresby in the hope of having that particular dream fulfilled is a good example.

Lack of knowledge contributes to the lack of persistence when something does not work out as expected. Elders are not being approached for advice and DPI officers are unreliable. There is a strong need to support those people who initially were engaged in lucrative, illegal businesses, but have now become involved in legitimate projects. When hurdles cannot be overcome, the move back to crime is easily made. Often, young people have to rely on others who can read and write in order to run a project. This often causes friction amongst group members and gives rise to mistrust. On the other hand, there is somehow the feeling that young people should be compensated for making the move to pursue legal activities instead of illegal ones. However, with the relatively low return, often because of the large number of people who have to share in the profits, a project will end in failure. The main reason for becoming involved in a legitimate business, besides gaining prestige, is the hope of a better and easier life. However, people must understand that they have to invest in human resources in order to obtain these changes, and that the results are not acquired overnight.

The majority of these enterprises are geared towards the improvement of a person’s own lifestyle and prestige. Very little profit goes to the overall community. Skills are being used very much in isolation, and are not being shared. The many human resources available in one particular area could improve the living conditions of the whole village population or, for that matter, the whole district. There is little exchange of knowledge taking place between different genders, generations, clans, and tribes. In particular, the rivalry for prestige amongst clans is often a setback to cooperation between the different groups.

Limited education and business exposure tends to lead to the initiation of projects which are all of a similar nature. The most favoured businesses are small tradestore and small poultry projects. Rarely will an original business idea come up. The limitations result from the lack of exposure to outside ideas and also lack of the necessary infrastructure such as power, water, and communications. The lack of infrastructure actually encourages illegal activities. For example, the local road infrastructure is now being maintained by youth cohorts from different clans living along the road. Anyone driving a vehicle along that road will be stopped by the youths working on it, and they will demand payment for their maintenance work.

There are often requests to government agencies for help. In many cases this has been interpreted as part of the 'handout mentality' which allows people to sit back and have everything paid for and managed by the State. This research has shown a different way of looking at such requests. There is enough enthusiasm for people to engage in the cash economy as cash has developed as a valuable exchange item in both traditional and modern economies. The incentives exist, but there is a lack of sufficient knowledge and experience. The case and project studies presented here show that people, after finding the initial investment, are eager to start working. However, none of these people have had enough relevant education. Projects are undertaken very much
on a trial and error basis, and if the start-up capital is lost, there is no back-up finance to make a new start. On the other hand, armed hold-ups and growing marijuana do not need these particular skills. Armed hold-ups can easily be associated with the tradition of tribal warfare where people used to be ambushed. Also, watching videos helps criminals develop techniques which make the whole event more successful and exciting.

Alternatively, marijuana needs no special care to grow, and therefore no investment is needed. Hence, people do not mind spending time weeding such a crop as the financial outcome of the harvest is always secured. Also, it is the second ‘bottle’ for people who cannot afford to buy beer. The making of guns by criminal youth groups has received great support from other community members as this helps them in tribal warfare. The makers enjoy the creativity and the financial benefits. If money is needed, then these guns can be sold to other remote tribes and clans with whom no traditional links exist. The makers wouldn’t want these arms to be used against their own clan members.

There is no laziness, only people developing other money-earning avenues through which they can prosper and gain some respect and prestige. These kinds of activities are not easily detected as people cannot travel easily in these areas, with poor road links, and mountainous and rugged terrain. Also, the market for their goods is guaranteed with short travelling distances, or with the help of wealthy people who will readily buy their goods. If it was not for the involvement of influential people, much of this business would not survive. Only the wisest amongst them would manage to penetrate the market.

One problem is how to use this eagerness for activity and prestige in a way that will lead to the development of a more sustainable livelihood for the whole community. The government’s idea of deploying agricultural officers to the different districts was an excellent initiative. However, personal interests and only partial commitment, especially geared towards wantoks, undermined the purpose of this particular program. Insufficient working budgets have also contributed to minimum productivity from these officers. A good example is the purchase of a ‘wokabout sawmill’ that people could ‘rent’. The demand was so high that people started paying a deposit to ensure that they had access to it. People wanted to use the wokabout sawmill to make better houses. However, because of lack of organisation and maintenance skills by DPI officers, people have waited for more than eighteen months because the equipment has supposedly broken down. It is no wonder that people turn against ‘the government’.

The assumption exists that anyone can make a living off the land. Hence, politicians and employers in the formal sector often make the statement that all those people without work in the urban sector should return to their villages and work in their gardens. This shows a misunderstanding of the issue. The majority would not mind going back to their villages if avenues could be opened for them to improve their living conditions there and lessen their need for cash. People do not just want to survive any more, they want a good life. This cannot be provided by growing kaukau (sweet potato) in their gardens and hunting for abus (meat). With the changing expectations of a market economy, population pressure, and more competition, new skills have to be taught. The educational system has never prepared people for their return to the village to make a living there. Much research in this area has pointed out the irrelevance of the curriculum in this regard (Avei 1994). Vocational centres are also limited.
Youth, Crime, and Rural Development Issues

The government should provide the necessary infrastructure and initiate a bottom-to-top approach through which people can be part of a process that will benefit them. Therefore, priorities should be aimed at providing education and skills that will allow them to actively participate and take on responsibilities. The government should work more closely with non-government organisations that have been able to assess the shortcomings and needs of the grassroots people. These non-government organisations have developed appropriate programs that will help the people build their assertiveness, which is necessary if they are to become responsible for their futures. Any support geared to increasing their effectiveness can only benefit the people and the nation.

As well as the technical issues, the historical aspects of that particular place should be borne in mind. Experience has shown that attempting to work with people from different clans makes projects less viable. The first difficulties encountered could easily be explained as 'clan differences'. Century-old traditions cannot be overlooked. The success of the project described in Part 2 of this paper is linked to the cohesion amongst the people. Also, community benefits seem to outweigh personal gain which is probably the result of having a long-term vision.

Communal support and endeavour will assist people through more difficult times. Experience shows that when difficulties are encountered it is very hard for people to overcome them, without outside assistance, because the circumstances are new to most members of the community. Therefore, access to a professional adviser is crucial. In the Numambuku case presented in Part 2, a clan member, who is working in the formal sector, offers that much needed link. Not every community clan has the advantage of its own committed member, therefore this task should be undertaken by district officers. This might mean that more skilled officers should be dispatched, at the district level, to handle the requests arising from an active community. Incentives, such as attractive salaries, housing, communications, and basic services should be created to attract motivated and skilled officers to fill these positions at the district level. It is at this level that dissemination of knowledge needs to take place.

Another important issue is access to starting capital. If people do not have accumulated savings, then starting a project is almost an impossible task. As the case studies show, those people who took the initiative did so with the savings that they had earned from working in the formal sector. The youths received money in return for the surrender of their arms and marijuana. It is clear that something more substantive is needed if a person wants to start a project which requires an initial investment. The chances of securing a loan from a bank, particularly for a person without a minimum of education or working background, and who has no assets except his or her clan land, is almost impossible.

Government agencies have made it possible for such people to apply for a loan. However, the procedures to be followed when submitting these applications are confusing, cumbersome and difficult to understand for those people who have never dealt with administrative procedures before. When inquiring about the outcomes of their applications, people are constantly being referred from one office to another. Who would not want to 'give up' after being sent back and forth between the village, the provincial offices, and the national offices for two years, without any result? The lack of continuity in government programs also makes it difficult for people to know what services are available to them at any one time. The introduction of the Village Services Program by the Wingiti government raised people's expectations, and many
Conclusions

Those people who are successful in their efforts mostly move out of their own environment, away from their relatives and wantoks. Reciprocity has lost much of its value. The need for people to have money is being created by an upwardly-mobile group of people who are raising its value (Gordon 1981). Nevertheless, there are some people who are making money outside the village and who return occasionally to share it in return for greater respect and maybe support in the political arena. Entering politics seems to be the aim of many Papua New Guineans, but is it because of power and prestige, or is it the access to money? Probably after all that has been said, it is this scenario which constitutes the dreams of the rebellious youth!

There is a growing awareness in the developed world that the capitalist system, and with it the cash economy, may not be the way to secure a qualitative and sustainable lifestyle. However, the values attached to the cash economy have already impregnated people's lives in such a way that the mounting importance given to money, and the desire to obtain it, cannot be ignored. Rousseau's romanticism surrounding a simple and basic life in harmony with nature is surely non-existent amongst the majority of people living in this area. They regard their lifestyle as a 'hard' one in comparison with what they observe around them. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness of their valuable customs and environment. Maybe there is a way for people to develop a lifestyle which balances traditional and modern values while achieving sustainable human development. As one youth mentioned, 'We want to reinstate our haus tumbuna but it will need a corrugated iron roof. We are now living in modern times.'

Consecutive governments have attempted to solve the law and order problems by increasing the manpower and functions of the law enforcement agencies. However, these agencies operate very much on a reactive basis and in a repressive manner, and little attention is given to the prevention of crime. This study indicates that unless the motives which incite young people to become involved in criminal activities are removed, there will never be a reduction in crime. Rather, there will be an increase as the level of frustration increases with the growing knowledge of relative deprivation.

The issues of urban bias and the lack of human capital are also highlighted in the United Nations Report on Sustainable Development (1994). This report refers to the necessity of government to make a massive shift in infrastructure priority, from urban to rural development. By building the necessary infrastructure, the emphasis on empowerment of people in villages and communities through better and more relevant education, training and awareness activities will allow effective participation in a bottom-to-top policy approach.

The message is very clear. People do have a great deal of enthusiasm and desire to engage in a new kind of economy which would give them a more comfortable life. The appropriate incentives from the government, with the necessary support system, could change the future of many people living in rural areas. However, patience is running out. The political nature of criminal activities is growing day by day. The situation in which people find themselves is not the kind that gives rise to positive incentives to engage in a constructive life which would bring people more than just survival.
Youth, Crime, and Rural Development Issues
PART 2

THE NUMAMBUKI CLAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

by

Michael Bopp and Merewe Degemba
Introduction

In many rural areas of Papua New Guinea, people at the grassroots level are beginning to realise that if they wait for the government to bring development to their villages, they may never see the changes and improved conditions that are so obviously needed.

Some of the reasons for drawing this conclusion are:

- many politicians and bureaucrats are subject to corruption, and do not make themselves accountable to the people. As a result, they have little or no inclination to even try to satisfy development needs at the grassroots level;
- most government officials lack the necessary skills and the orientation to work in a facilitative manner with village people;
- most government thinking about 'what development is' leaves the majority of people out of the picture. A philosophy of development focused on natural resource extraction which benefits an elite minority is not an adequate approach to development in the eyes of grassroots people. The wealth never really 'trickles down' as theory says it should. Also, such approaches to 'development' are not sustainable; and
- people-centred development is not something that can be delivered to people. It is a process that has to unfold from within, developing people and their communities. Outside resources and support can help if properly applied, but the most important parts of development entail increasing the capacity of the people to meet their own needs and solve their own problems.

These observations are being voiced by a wide cross-section of grassroots people (particularly those associated with non-government organisations and church programs) who feel that they must make their own development opportunities, rather than wait for programs to come to them.

This attitude is in harmony with the government's Village Services Program policy which calls for a shift from a top-down to a bottom-up process in the way that the government works with the people of Papua New Guinea.

There is an urgent needed for viable Papua New Guinean role models of successful grassroots development projects, so that community people and the various organisations trying to help communities at all levels can learn how to move from aspiration to reality.

Methodology and Acknowledgement

The data for this case study were collected through participant observation by Merewe Degemba, site visits by Michael Bopp and Elizabeth Cox, and from extensive conversations with various clan members and non-government workers in Simbu Province. After written notes were assembled, a data review workshop was held. Contributors were Michael Bopp and Daro Avei from The National Research Institute, Elizabeth Cox, who is a consultant and long-time friend of the Numambuku project, and Merewe Degemba, who is the project facilitator. This case study report is a synthesis of the combined findings emerging from all those people and sources. Credit
is also due to the North Simbu Rural Development Project for giving Merewe Degemba the opportunity to work on this report.

Background to The Numambuku Clan Development Project

The Numambuku people are a subclan of the Kuman speaking people who live in the northern part of Simbu Province in Papua New Guinea. The Numambuku group involves approximately 150 people who live in Tauviadumo Village, Kerowagi District. The village is approximately an hour’s drive north west of Kundiawa.

For many years, the Numambuku people had witnessed a steady deterioration of their traditional way of life and a gradual slide into poverty. The most disturbing signs were the attitudes and condition of young people who were increasingly lost in a swamp of frustration, negativity, and aimlessness, and were unwilling to work hard for anything. Many moved to cities and towns and became rascals. Only a few felt any sense of obligation or attachment to their own people, while most believed that the only way to ‘make it’ in life was to get away from home, and stay away.

Other problems facing the community included a desperate need for cash income, poor housing, poor nutrition, poor health, low levels of education, and many social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, family violence, and a general breakdown of community solidarity.

Although clan members talked endlessly about the problems, no-one seemed to know how to turn negative talk into productive analysis and planning, which would lead to effective action.

The Catalyst

A catalyst is something that is injected into a process and causes everything to move and change, even though the catalyst itself never becomes a real player in that process.

In January 1992, Merewe Degemba, a young man who had been born in Numambuku, but who lived most of his life elsewhere, returned to visit his people. He had been trained as an agricultural extension officer, and had also been influenced by the PNG Trust’s literacy and awareness strategies.¹

As he listened to the people talking about their difficulties, he began to feel a strong sense of obligation to the clan of his birth.

¹ The PNG Trust is the abbreviated name for the Papua New Guinea Integral Human Development Trust. The Trust is an indigenous non-government organisation with a network that extends to the grassroots people in many parts of Papua New Guinea. Their primary work is in literacy and awareness training.
"I saw that the people didn't have smiles on their faces. I started interviewing them, and they came up with a long list of problems — economic, social, and many personal ones."\(^2\)

Degemba wanted to help solve the clan's problems, but he also knew from his community development experience that, as an outsider, he could not provide positive sustainable answers for the people. The solutions had to be home-grown.

Thus, he engaged the people in a series of dialogue-extended conversations that ran late into the nights and over many days.

"I knew that if I initiated the solutions, it would never work. So I didn't tell the people how to think. I didn't give them the answers or the solutions to their problems. I kept beating about the bush. I asked questions. From these questions, the people began to develop their own answers, their own analysis, and their own solutions."

These conversations continued through a series of visits over a four-month period. In March 1992, a small group of clan members decided to act.

Core Group Formation

Some ten clan members organised themselves into a group called the 'interim committee'. This group took on the responsibility of continuing dialogue about development possibilities.

As community interest grew, more and more of the clan members participated in discussions. What had begun as conversations between a few people had now become a fully fledged community consultation process. One of the primary needs identified at those meetings was social development activities, which specifically addressed the needs of the youth and women. Clan members decided that it would be futile to attempt to get funding from the government to support their efforts. Therefore, the clan decided that it would fund its own social development activities through clan-based economic development ventures.

"The problem we then faced was the question of how we could get the start-up funds to begin our own income-generating projects. I had some ideas, but it was important that no matter what solution we came up with, it had to feel like a home-grown one. It took many hours of discussion, but finally we hit upon a plan."

The committee imposed a clan development tax ("membership fee") on every man, woman and child. It was essential for everyone to be a part of the plan. If a few were allowed to stay out, it was feared that they might try to destroy the good work of the others, out of jealousy, after they saw that the project was successful.

"What we did was to ask each man to contribute K30, each woman K25, and each child K10. This money was pooled together, and we used it to start up

\(^2\) All quotations in italics are the result of personal communication with Merewe Degemba.
Namambuku Clan Development Project

our own local credit scheme. In this way, we were able to make small cash loans to groups that had viable project proposals. It was a great idea, and it really worked. We started nine economic projects during the first year. Seven of them were successful. There were only a few clan members who refused to join the projects and pay their dues. So our youth raided their compound, and took pigs and goods equal to the value of the tax owed, thus forcing these families to become members.1

Collecting the 'membership fees' took approximately nine montas, as people were allowed to pay in instalments. Also, it is important to realise that the decision to impose the tax and to begin projects was taken by an open forum meeting of the community, and received virtually unanimous support.

Reflection

It might be useful to recap on what has happened so far to bring the process to this stage. Also, a few details have been added in order to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of the process.

1. Numambuku people are all members of one subclan. This is significant because the approach to community development adopted in Papua New Guinea is village based. The Numambuku project is a clan approach. In the beginning, not all of the members lived together in the same village, although they elected to do so after the project proceeded. Many community development strategies call for the mobilisation of distinct sectors of the community, such as youth or women. The Numambuku people believed that all ages and sectors could best be mobilised through an integrated clan-based approach.

2. Even before Degemba returned in January 1992, the Numambuku people had a feeling that something was wrong, and that changes were needed. This tension between the way things really are, and the way people feel they should be, is a very necessary ingredient in any community-empowerment process. Unless people feel the tension, they will possibly not be motivated into action, no matter how much discussion takes place.

3. Merewe Degemba was born in Numambuku, yet he operated as an outsider to the community's deliberations. Because he is a trained community development facilitator, he knew enough to stand back and allow the community to take the lead. Also, because he is a clan insider who went away, became educated, and then returned to help the people, he was accepted in ways that would be difficult for most outsiders to achieve in such a short time.

4. The community dialogue process moved through several stages:

   (a) initially, there was uncoordinated complaining. People didn't like various aspects of their lives but the analysis was at a relatively low level, in terms of its potential to cause disruption;

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1 Although this may seem heavy-handed, in the context of the Papua New Guinea Highlands cultures, it is a normal response. Also note that most so-called democratic countries such as Australia or the United States of America become quite annoyed and aggressive if citizens try to avoid paying taxes.
(b) then the conversation became much more focused, largely because of the involvement of Degemba, who provided a focal point and guiding questions to draw people more deeply into the process; and
(c) finally, there was sufficient concern and determination to make changes that several community insiders formed a group, and took on responsibilities for moving the process along.

If we compare these stages of dialogue to lighting a fire, it was Degemba who brought the fire to the wet wood. Over a period of months he held the flame (in the form of focused dialogue) to the wood until it caught fire and began to burn on its own.

The formation of a core group that begins to effect changes from within the community is the critical first phase of community development. It can sometimes take months or even years to achieve this, but until it occurs, very little else can be done that will be sustainable.

5. Finally, the core group managed to pull most of the rest of the community into the process, and secure their commitment to specific social and economic development goals and certain strategies. For example:

- a clan development tax;
- a local credit scheme;
- financing a local income-generating project; and
- funding social development with the profits from local economic ventures.

This building of consensus in support of a social and economic development strategy may be considered the real birth of the project, which was conceived in long late-night conversations some eight to nine months earlier.

Just as the birth of a child is followed by years of hard work on the part of parents to help that child to develop into a fully functioning adult, so the birth of the Numambuku Clan Development Project was only the beginning of a lot of hard work and careful guidance on the part of clan members, and the project facilitator, Merewe Degemba.

The Project Unfolds

After the Numambuku people came to an agreement on the development outcomes they wanted, and the processes they believed would take them to their goals, events began to happen very quickly.

Membership Fees

People began paying their membership fees, often in several instalments. Those who didn't have cash contributed goods in kind, such as coffee or pigs. It took nine months for all the fees to be paid, and the project has not received any funds from the government or other donor agencies.
Numambuku Clan Development Project

Land Pooling

Clan members agreed to pool their land so that all land could be used for the benefit of the entire clan. To secure this agreement, all individual families had to agree to give up exclusive control of parcels of land which they had been using or had control over by custom. The result of this strategy was that the best land for any particular project would be used for everyone’s benefit.

Men's House as a Community Development Resource Centre

The traditional men’s house became the focal centre of an ongoing process of community dialogue and solidarity building. For these meetings, both women and men could attend and speak. The men’s house began to function like a community development resource centre, and all community members now feel that they have a place in the meetings and are welcome to contribute.

Project Leadership

A formal decision-making group, the Clan Development Committee, was set up. This committee comprises the following people:

- ten members elected from the community (in particular, most family heads were chosen);
- one religious leader, nominated by the community;
- one youth president, elected by the youth; and
- one women’s president, elected by the women.

Community Forum Government

Regular weekly open community forums are held, and all important questions are put to the general meeting. After consensus is reached at the forum level, the Clan Development Committee takes formal decisions accordingly. The committee plays two roles in the process — facilitating a consensus building process, and taking decisions which lead to project actions being taken. The Clan Development Committee is not bound to follow the community’s guidance literally, but is expected to show creative leadership in carrying out the intentions and thinking behind community consensus. If the community doesn’t like a decision taken by the committee, it is free to bring the issue up again at the next open forum.

Economic Ventures for Income Generation

One of the main activities of the Numambuku Clan Development Project is initiating and operating small-scale economic ventures for income generation. Some of the ventures so far undertaken include:

- pig raising;
- poultry;
- fish pond and fish raising;
The Project Unfolds

- charcoal making;
- beef cattle raising;
- vegetable raising;
- citrus tree planting;
- agricultural supplies and service centre in Kerowagi;
- vegetable brokering — buying vegetables from other clans to resell in Lae;
- village tradestore; and
- coffee rehabilitation.

Some of the produce that has been sold by the Numambuku project includes:

- English cabbage
- Chinese cabbage
- broccolli
- cauliflower
- lettuce
- bulb onions
- English potatoes
- carrots
- strawberries
- coffee
- fish
- chicken
- pork

Project Management System

Each of the income generating ventures has its own site manager, selected by the Clan Development Committee according to appropriate qualifications. The individual site managers and their assistants provide quarterly project activity reports to the Clan Development Committee. Each venture must be financially independent.

Financial Management

The keys to success in the financial management of the Numambuku ventures are:

- **Vouchers and Receipts**: the number of people handling cash is kept to a minimum. If someone wants to buy produce or chickens, money is paid to the treasurer, who issues a receipt or voucher, which can then be exchanged for goods from the site manager. The site manager gives back his vouchers and a record is kept of the project earnings.
- **Professional Bookkeeper**: the project has engaged a part-time bookkeeper to ensure that all financial records are properly kept.
- **Public Accountability**: all site managers are publicly held responsible for their actions in front of the entire community at community forums and Clan Development Committee meetings.
22. **Numambuku Clan Development Project**

**Credit Schemes**

In order to enable clan members to undertake the many activities, a clan credit scheme was initiated in the form of a revolving fund, using the membership fees as the base. Each group within the clan that wishes to borrow money must submit a proposal to the Clan Development Committee. Two types of proposals are considered:

- a clan project, that entails involvement and support from everyone, and from which the benefits go to the clan as a whole; and
- small group projects, involving a few people.

In the small group projects, the profits go to the group members themselves. However, in both cases, the revolving fund receives its money back plus 15 percent interest.

**Work Credits and Dividends**

A detailed credit record shows who works on each project and how much time is contributed to each venture. These records are tallied and reported on at each open forum meeting. This procedure has served two purposes. First, community members are paid dividends on overall clan profits, according to their work contributions. More work credits mean more income for individuals. Second, clan members are very proud of their individual projects, and compete with each other to show who can work the hardest and contribute the most. Regular reporting provides a way of keeping 'score'.

**Social Development**

The Numambuku project started as a way for clan members to fund their own social development activities. The following summary lists some of the initiatives now under way:

- tokples preskul;
- community health improvement;
- women's club, which now has a sewing machine and sponsors a sewing project;
- adult literacy and homemakers’ house-inspection project;
- youth recovery: a concentrated effort has been made to locate young people from Numambuku who moved to urban areas, and to convince them to come back to the community. Almost everyone who left the community has now returned. This was achieved by ensuring employment for the youth in the various ventures, by giving leadership opportunities to them in accordance with their talents, and by involving them in the men's house and cultural activities. The community is now attractive to the youth. Things are happening, people are happy, and there are feasts and night activities. Many changes are occurring and the youth are an important part of this; and
- community fellowship activities including communal meals, singsings, meetings, and social gatherings.
Infrastructure Development

In addition to social programs, the project has also subsidised considerable infrastructural development. For example:

- **New Houses**: The Clan Development Committee inspected all houses. Those deemed unsuitable (old, in a poor state of repair, and so on) were condemned and marked with a white "X". Owners were given a month to tear them down. They were told that if they did not comply with that directive the community would burn them down. However, as soon as people began to comply, the rest of the clan members joined together and built new houses for them. Now, almost everyone in the clan has a new house.

- **Water Supply**: Previously, clan members had to carry water a long way up a steep mountain slope. Now, the village has its own water supply system which the Clan Development Committee intends to upgrade even further.

- **Roads**: At the start of the project, there was no access road to certain parts of clan land. Subsequently, clan members have built a road using funds from their Member of Parliament and the District Government Council. This is the only outside funding that the project has received, and it was not used for project activity per se.

- **Community Resource Centre**: A Community Resource Centre and a project office building have been constructed.

- **Hydro-electric Project**: A hydro-electric project is planned for 1994-1995, and preliminary studies are already under way.

Growing Pains and Future Plans

At present, the project continues to prosper and grow. While there have been many successes, there have also been some disappointing failures. Currently, the loan fund is very low on cash because much of the money is tied up in one project — the fish pond. When that venture sells its produce, the fund will be viable again. Nevertheless, seven of the community businesses are flourishing, and the level of community prosperity and social development continues to rise.

There are always internal conflicts that arise in any project. Several people have requested to withdraw from this project, and have demanded their money back. Although the reasons given were based on personal conflict, the problem was taken to the community forum. The consensus arrived at after discussion was that, for the good of the whole community, withdrawal could not be allowed — at least until the project has established a solid financial base.

"What is really most important is that the people have reintroduced their own self-rule. This is more important than any one decision. Decisions can be changed if the people have the freedom and the courage to take the necessary steps."

There is also a feeling among clan members that the Numambuku people have demonstrated what they can do for themselves without any government help, and that the government should now provide some assistance for certain key development projects (such as the water supply system and the hydro-electric project). Clan
24 Numambuku Clan Development Project

members feel they have proven that they can make good use of and manage any external funds, because they have already raised and managed their own funds.

"We are already doing what the Village Services Program says people should do. The government has promised that when people do what we have done, then resources would be made available. We are now ready to receive and responsibly use those resources."

The Numambuku people are very proud of what they have achieved. Although their project is only a few years old, they have already had many visitors wishing to look at what is happening. Although they are pleased with the results of their project, they are extremely disappointed about the way government officials have treated them.

One local bureaucrat calls himself 'the father of local development', and claims to be 'the one who started the Numambuku project'. This person was recently appointed to a district manager's position. Another incident occurred when the Numambuku Women's Club entered a display in the Simbu Provincial Show. They spent K310 of their own money, brought their own produce to the show, gave K200 to the district government so that they could transport women to the event, and had the opportunity to tell of their successful experiences with the Numambuku project. However, when the first six prizes for the event were given out, the Numambuku people got nothing — not even a mention. The winners were mostly government programs.

Hence, there is a feeling among the Numambuku people that they will never get the recognition and support which their efforts deserve. They are disappointed that others continually try to take credit for what the Numambuku people have done themselves.

Project Achievements

There are many important achievements that can be credited to the project. For example:

1. The Numambuku people are now more competent to analyse their own situation, work out solutions to their problems, and work together for community development. Before the project commenced, people were cynical, disunited and without hope.

2. The Numambuku people have learned about the dynamics of community development. They now know how to foster changes and to initiate programs. Previously, they believed that such changes had to come from the outside.

3. The youth of Numambuku have been encouraged to return to the village, and because of the positive climate and the economic opportunities, they are happy to stay and participate in the project.

4. Women have been mobilised and continue to play a significant role in all aspects of the project. Their leadership is welcomed at the Forum and Clan Development Committee level, and their energy, drive, enthusiasm and dedication have contributed a great deal to the overall success of the project. That the women feel a strong sense of ownership for the whole project is a very positive indication of the meaningfulness of women's participation.
5. The successful relationship between Merewe Degemba and the Numambuku community must also be regarded as an achievement. The project was initiated by his involvement, yet he never took over in any way. Ownership and control of money, decision making, direction setting, and so on always remained in the hands of the community. However, Degemba’s technical expertise in agriculture, economics, and community development provided an extremely valuable contribution to the process.

"I didn't really intend to start a project. I just took part in conversation, gave my views, and the benefit of my life experiences and knowledge, and waited until the people felt ready to grab onto something and run with it. The project has developed in such a way that the people have not become dependent on me. I am their helper and their friend. I am not their boss."

Maintaining this development and promoting relationships without giving way to the sorts of mistakes that have hurt so many other projects (such as dishonesty with money, power tripping, allowing outsiders to think for you and thus undermining community ownership) is truly an important achievement on the part of everyone involved in the project.

6. There have been substantive improvements in the quality of life of the Numambuku people. Some of these include better housing for everyone, a community water supply, a tremendous improvement in the quality of the food that people eat and hence of nutrition, an improvement in basic income, the availability of basic education and training opportunities, and a general improvement in health and sanitation standards.

7. A community/clan self-governance system has been put in place, and that is linked to the development process.

8. A vast improvement in the level of unity and solidarity within the community has occurred.

9. The social climate in the community has become positive, supportive, and a happy one.

10. The community has learned how to constructively address conflict.

11. The people see the project as a lifelong process of continuous improvement, rather than as a one-off event. Hence, the chances of project sustainability are greatly increased.

12. The clan has resolved to undertake development programs that are environmentally sustainable, for example, they refuse to 'sell off' their considerable timber resources.

**Training Centre**

Future plans include the establishment of a training centre for the Numambuku people. The centre will fulfill two important functions:

1. It would be used for further education and training of the Numambuku people.

"Our people do not become motivated by the idea of a project, but more so by the idea of an integral human development program. When we started out, one of the most important goals of the project was to develop our human resources. Our people come first. They are the reason we are doing everything else."
26  Numambuku Clan Development Project

Establishing a training centre will provide the clan with a base to continue their human resource development efforts in a systematical way.

2. Another reason for setting up a training centre is because the Numambuku people believe they can serve as a successful example of the grassroots development process. People from other clans and areas could visit the community to learn about development. This would be a service provided by the Numambuku clan which would bring economic benefit to the community. Part of the long-term plan is to set up a guesthouse in conjunction with the training centre and to offer workshops in collaboration with various training organisations.

Dangers and Opportunities

The training centre, through the general recognition which the project is receiving, presents both opportunities and dangers to the project. The opportunities have already been outlined. However, one of the dangers is that, all too often, when people have success at the grassroots level they are invited to travel to urban centres to work on larger projects. This usually results in a drain of energy, leadership, and resources from the local project. The Numambuku people are in a good position to avoid this problem by ensuring that control of the project (including its far-reaching efforts) remains in the hands of the Clan Development Committee and is continuously reviewed by the community forum.

The current management system is strong, as is proven by the project's solid record of financial management, as well as its resolve to remove managers who are not performing according to standards set by the committee. Nevertheless, it is critical that the committee remains vigilant and vigorous in its continued faithfulness to the principles that first inspired the project — people's participation, self-reliance, a clan-based approach, wholistic strategies, and accountability to the people.

Conclusion

The Numambuku Clan Development Project is barely out of its infancy, yet it has been able to make remarkable differences in the lives of the people that it serves. Even if the project now collapsed, for some reason, it would still have to be regarded as a success because it has demonstrated what can be accomplished when people unite to develop their own community.

Some of the elements that made the project the success that it is include:

1. People's Participation: The people who were supposed to benefit from the project were the main designers, implementors, and evaluators of the project.
2. Wholistic Approach: Development was seen as involving people of all age groups, working together — children, youth, women, men, and elders. It also sought to effect positive change in all aspects of development: personal (mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual), and collective (political, economic, social, and cultural).
3. Vision: The project began, and was later nourished by, a home-grown vision of what development is and how it could be promoted. This vision has roots in the people's daily lives, and most of the Numambuku clan articulate it in some way.
4. **Sustainability**: From the beginning, the project set out to build the process of continuous improvement and to ensure that this situation could be sustained environmentally, socially, and economically.

5. **People Centred**: The focus of the entire project was to build up the Numambuku people and develop their community. Everything was done for those reasons.

6. **Clan Based**: In many parts of Papua New Guinea, the clan; that is, the extended family is the basic social and economic unit. Building on that base proved to be of vital importance in the Numambuku project.

7. **Home Grown**: The Numambuku project was not imported. It was developed from within the community.

Clearly, there is much to be learned from the Numambuku Clan Development Project, but whatever experiences, initiatives and knowledge can be 'taken away' cannot simply be transplanted elsewhere. What can be learned from projects such as this one can certainly help to guide efforts in other places. This case study has been prepared with that possibility in mind.
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