

**Assessing community participation in development planning and service  
delivery  
A case study of the Omusati Regional Council**

**JOEL HISHI NEKWAYA**



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**Supervisor: Francois Theron**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ABSTRACT**

Community participation is a concept adopted to ensure participation and give opportunities to communities to determine their own destination in terms of their needs. It is a means of empowering people by developing their skills and abilities to enable them to negotiate with the development delivery system and to equip them to make their own decisions in terms of their development needs and priorities. The aim of the study is to assess community participation in the development planning and service delivery system by the Omusati Regional Council. As a government institution at the grass root level, it has a task to deliver required basic services through development programmes and projects. Interviews and participatory observation, including project visits were the methods used to collect information on the implementation of community participation in the decision making processes, and project implementation by the Omusati Regional Council. The study is structured into six chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the general introduction, background to the study, the statement of the problem, the hypothesis, objective of the study, perceptions, research methodology, significance of the study and organisation of the study. Chapter 2 discusses the theory and philosophy of community participation. It conceptualizes the key terms of community participation in development planning, such as sustainable development, integrated development planning and projects, decentralised development and the building block of development integrated rural development, basic service delivery and indigenous knowledge systems. Chapter 3 highlights the policy framework on community participation in terms of international, national and regional development planning policy documents. Chapter 4 is concerned with the local context of study (Omusati Regional Council), while Chapter 5 presents the data results, interpretation and analysis. Chapter 6 reflects the conclusion and the way forward.

## **OPSOMMING**

Gemeenskapsdeelname is 'n onderwerp wat meededeling te verseker en sodeonde geleenthede aan gemeenskappe onderskryf om eie bestaan in terme van benodighede te verwesenlik. Dit is 'n middel om mense te bemagtig deur hul vaardighede en vermoëns te ontwikkel en hulle sodoende in staat te stel om vir hulle ontwikkelingsleweringstelsel te onderhandel en daarbenewens hul eie besluite in terme van ontwikkelingsnoodsaaklikhede en prioriteite daar te stel. Die doel van die studie was om gemeenskapsdeelname in ontwikkelingsbeplanning en die diensleweringstelsel van die Omutsati Streeksraad te meet. As 'n grondvlakregeringsinstansie het plaaslike owerhede dus 'n plig om die vereiste basiesedienste deur ontwikkelingsprogramme en projekte daar te stel. Onderhoude en deelnameobservasie, insluitend projekte besoeke was die metode wat gebruik is om inligting te versamel om sodoende implimentering van gemeenskapsdeelname in besluitnemingsprosesse en projekimplimentering van die Omusati streeksraad te bewerkstellig. Die studie is in ses hoofstukke gestruktureer. Hoofstuk 1 weergee algemene inligting: die agtergrondstudie, die probleemstelling, hipotesis, die oogmerke van die studie, persepsies, die navorsingsmetodologie, die rede vir die studie en die uiteensetting daarvan. Hoofstuk 2 bespreek die teorie and filosofie van gemeenskapsdeelname. Dit omskryf die term gemeenskapsdeelname in ontwikkelingsbeplanning, onder andere volhoubareontwikkeling, geïntegreerde ontwikkelingsbeplanning en projekte, gedesentraliseerdeontwikkeling en boustene van ontwikkeling in geïntegreerde landelikeontwikkeling, basiesedienslewering en plaalike kennissisteme. Hoofstuk 3 werp lig op die beleidsraamwerk om gemeenskapsdeelname in terme van internasionale, nasionale en streeksontwikkelingsbeplanningsbeleid dokumente. Hoofstuk 4 is bemoeid met die plaaslikebestel van die studie, die Omusati Streeksraad, terwyl Hoofstuk 5 handel met die dataresultate, interpretasie en analise. Hoofstuk 6 reflekteer die slotname en die weg vorentoe.

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# CHAPTER 1

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Introduction

When Namibia gained independence in 1990, the country started to prepare its decentralisation policy<sup>1</sup> and key legislation, aimed at facilitating broader participation by its citizens in social, political and economic development. In Namibia, decentralisation implies the delegation and devolution of responsibilities and activities from central government to local authorities to enhance participation, integrated planning and institutional capacity based on a multi-disciplinary participation approach. The constitutional framework for the decentralisation policy and supporting legislation is outlined in Chapter 12, Article 102(1)<sup>2</sup> and 102(3)<sup>3</sup> of the Namibian Constitution. Article 102(1) enabled central government to create regional and local government structures through various Acts of Parliament while Article 102(3) is the constitutional cornerstone for the establishment of regional and local councils.

Two separate acts, Regional Council Act, 1992 (Act 22 of 1992) and the Local Authority Act, 1992 (Act 23 of 1992), were promulgated by Cabinet in 1992 to spearhead the development of structures in regional and local authorities, thereby facilitating infrastructure development and services in the regions and in so doing deepen, what Moore (1998: 84-124) and Olowu (1999: 285-298) have coined as democratic decentralisation<sup>4</sup>. Central to democratic decentralisation is

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that this policy has been theoretically articulated to bring out its meaning in the Namibian context. But its significance at sub-national level is still at an infant stage.

<sup>2</sup> Article 102(1) states: "For purposes of regional and local government, Namibia shall be divided into regional and local units, which shall consist of such regions and local authorities as may be determined and defined by an Act of Parliament."

<sup>3</sup> Article 102(3) states: "Every organ of regional and local government shall have a Council as the principle governing body, freely elected in accordance with the Constitution and the Act of Parliament referred to in Sub-Article (1) thereof, with an executive and administration which shall carry out all lawful resolutions and policies of such Council, subject to this Constitution and any other relevant laws.

<sup>4</sup> The term democratic decentralisation was first coined by Moore in 1998 and was used by Olowu (1999) to mean the transfer of power and fiscal resources from central government (Core) to regional government (Periphery) to ensure an accountable and transparent democracy. The term puts a strong emphasis on the linkage between community and the government to promote core values as described by Jenkins (1998:232) as representativeness, accountability, responsiveness, comprehensiveness and transparency and probity (which include honesty and a lack of deceit and corruption).

the concept of integrated development and planning, where regional governments are expected to coordinate development activities and their agenda based on local needs, communities' aspirations and local conditions to ensure sustainability. Communities are expected to participate in Regional Council decision-making bodies and their members should participate in the implementation of service delivery programmes and projects.

Community representation in regional decision-making bodies and community members' participation in service delivery programmes and projects are minimal, although community participation is enacted in all laws and policies governing regional development. Advantages of community participation are highlighted in the development literature as seen in Chapter 2 of this study. Poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment are crude realities of Namibia's regional development milieu.

The challenge facing the Namibian government since independence is how to accelerate community participation at regional and local level, as lack of community participation leads to programme and project failure.

Since the implementation of the decentralisation policy in the Omusati Region, there is little empirical evidence to demonstrate the extent to which community participation is implemented in service delivery. Therefore the study is aimed at assessing the extent to which members of the community in the Omusati Region understand the principle of community participation and to what extent it is practically implemented. The study attempts to assess why communities are not participating in decision-making, development planning process and the service delivery system through the implementation of projects. The objective of Chapter 1 is to outline (1) the background to the study, (2) the problem statement, (3) the hypothesis of the study, (4) objectives of the study, (5) the research methods used, (6) perceptions of the study, (7) significance of the study and (8) organisation of the study.

## **1.2. Background to the study**

The Omusati Regional Council, the case study, is one of the statutory bodies established - as per the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, Article 137 (4) (Republic of Namibia, 1990: 66) - to manage the affairs of local government at grass root level and to ensure that services are delivered to the rural poor on behalf of government. This is also in line with the Decentralisation Policy (1998a/b), Vision 2030 (2004) and the Second National Development Plan, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Namibia. As a regional administrative body in the Omusati Region, the Council plays a coordinating role over line ministries, agencies and other organisations to ensure that development projects and services are provided to twelve constituencies i.e. Anamulenge, Elim, Etayi, Ogongo, Okahao, Okalongo, Onesi, Oshikuku, Otamanzi, Outapi, Ruacana, and Tsandi (Annexure 3).

The Regional Council has a responsibility to provide services to a total population of 228,842 people<sup>5</sup> (Census 2001) (Republic of Namibia, 2001: 3) living in a total area of 13 638 km<sup>2</sup> as indicated by the Delimitation Commission 1998 (Republic of Namibia, 1998a/b: 1). It also has the responsibility of ensuring the planning and development of the settlement areas of Tsandi, Elim, Onandjaba, and Onesi. To ensure the sustainability of development planning and service delivery to these constituencies, it has to ensure community participation, as members of the community are stakeholders in the development planning process and service delivery system.

## **1.3. Problem statement**

Policy documents such as the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990), Vision 2030 (2004), the Decentralisation Policy (1998a/b) and the Regional Development Plan (2000) call for community participation in the development planning process. Since the implementation of the decentralisation policy in the

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<sup>5</sup> Annex 2 provides the statistics for all the regions in Namibia, including the Omusati Region

Omusati Region there is little empirical evidence to illustrate the extent to which community participation is implemented in the decision-making process and the service delivery system, and other development activities. Decisions have been undertaken without the participation of the community members. Programmes and projects experienced delays due to poor community participation. This is a challenge to the Omusati Regional Council as not only does it waste resources but inefficiency also leads to a disintegrated and unsustainable development planning and service delivery system, thereby failing to address the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. Community participation structures such as the Village Development Committees, Constituency Development Committees, Regional Development Coordination Committee, and the Regional Council are in place, however little participation has been observed. The study is aimed at assessing the extent to which staff of the Regional Council and members of the community in the Omusati Region understand the concept of community participation and its practical implementation.

#### **1.4. Hypothesis**

It is assumed that once the decentralisation process has been implemented, community participation will increase, the community will be empowered and to influence the decision making process. Assuming that quality of life will automatically be improved.

#### **1.5. Objectives of the study**

The study has the following objectives:

1. To assess the extent to which the community is participating in decision-making related to the development planning process and service delivery system.
2. To assess whether community participation is understood and being implemented during project implementation.

## 1.6. Research methods

The research methods adopted for this study are qualitative and inductive reasoning (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:15-29). It is literature based and draws information from academic books, policy documents, articles, newspapers, journals and websites. This information would reflect the literature review on community participation, which enables the understanding and importance of community participation in the development planning process and service delivery system.

Other tools used during data collection were non-scheduled structured interviews<sup>6</sup> which were held with officials at the Omusati Regional Council and some Line Ministries participating in the development planning and service delivery system. Interviews were also held with community members who are the beneficiaries of the planning and development process. In order to gain a deeper understanding, interviewees were free to elaborate and use any case they saw fit. In other words, although questions were asked as formulated in the questionnaire, the interviewees were free to tell their side of the story.

Participatory observation strategy was also another tool used in order to access the thoughts of the Regional Council members<sup>7</sup> and the Regional Development Coordination Committee members on community participation. In order to gain the confidence of the participants, the observer (the researcher) hides the real purpose of his presence by becoming a participant (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000:104).

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<sup>6</sup> In a non-scheduled interview, respondents are asked to comment on broadly defined issues. Those interviewed are free to expand on the topic as they see fit and to focus on particular aspects, to relate their own experiences (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000: 105). As argued by Patton (1980: 278) interviews are used to extract from the people those things we cannot directly observe. We cannot observe everything, e.g. we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that occurred at some previous point in time.

<sup>7</sup> Members refer to those people or officials who are appointed to become members of the Omusati Regional Council or the Regional Development Coordination Committee.

A combination of interviews and participatory observation was used during project visits to ascertain practically how community participation has been implemented during project implementation.

By employing the research methods mentioned above, it was possible to gain more knowledge and a deeper understanding of the extent to which the concept of community participation is understood and how it is being implemented practically and to determine whether the assumptions of the decentralization policy are being met. Field notes<sup>8</sup> were recorded during the methods used.

The study focuses on the interview of staff members of the Omusati Regional Council, other line ministries participating in development planning and the service delivery system as well as the beneficiaries, the community members of three settlement areas, i.e. Okahao, Tsandi and Ruacana (Oshifo).

Participatory observation methods were employed through attending the Omusati Regional Council and Regional Development Coordination Committee meetings to gain in-depth understanding of community participation. In addition, a visit to the Tsandi South Water Pipeline Project was conducted to ascertain if community participation is practically implemented.

Focus group discussions with members of the Regional Development Coordination Committee, and the Constituency Development Committees were also conducted to gain a better understanding of community participation.

This was done because the main aim of the research is to assess the extent to which communities are participating in development planning and the service delivery system fostered through the Omusati Regional Council to ensure an integrated and sustainable development planning process and service delivery

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<sup>8</sup> Data collected by participants observers, non-participant observers, and some interviewers are recorded as field notes (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993: 224)



system. The study also aims to investigate the extent to which the staff members of the Omusati Regional Council and communities understand the concept of community participation.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

The study would enable the Omusati Regional Council and its officials who are participating in development planning and the service delivery system, to realize the importance of community participation, the advantages and disadvantages of community participation, the barriers to community participation and the necessary structures and improvement needed to ensure sustainable development and to accelerate community participation in the region. It will also make a contribution to sustainable and integrated development, and lead to improved coordination between the Omusati Regional Council and other stakeholders, including communities. It will also lead to transparency, accountability, and an effective and efficient development planning and service delivery system in the region. It can also lead to the realisation of the alternative vision which argues that through participation, the community is enabled and can determine and control the allocation of development resources and not only merely influence its direction (Theron, 2005: 111).

### **1.8 Organisation of the study**

The study is structured into six chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the general introduction. It includes the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the hypothesis, objective of the study, research methodology, significance of the study and organisation of the study.

Chapter 2 discusses the theory and philosophy of community participation. It conceptualizes the key terms of *community participation* in development planning, such as sustainable development, integrated development planning and projects, decentralised development and the building block of development (social learning, capacity building, self reliance, empowerment and

sustainability), integrated rural development, basic service delivery and indigenous knowledge systems. Related to these would be the levels (typology) and modes of development.

Chapter 3 highlights the policy framework on community participation in terms of international, national and regional development planning policy documents.

From an international perspective<sup>9</sup>, information was obtained from the Manila Declaration (1989) as well as the Johannesburg Summit (2002) on sustainable development. In terms of the national context, the study will focus on the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990), Namibia Vision 2030 (2004), the Regional Council Act, 1992 (Act 22 of 1992), the Local Authority Act, 1992 (Act 23 of 1992), the Decentralisation Policy (1998a/b), and the Regional Development Plan (2000).

Chapter 4 is concerned with the local context of study (Omusati Regional Council), while Chapter 5 presents the data results, interpretation and analysis. Chapter 6 reflects on the conclusion and the way forward based on the discussion in the previous chapters.

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<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this study only the Manila Declaration and the Johannesburg Summit documents were studied. However there are other important international documents on sustainable development such as the United Nations Agenda 21 (1992), The Earth Charter Initiative Handbook (1997), the United Nations Millennium Goals (2000).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL CONCEPT AND DEPARTURE**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Chapter 2 is aimed at conducting a literature review about community participation in development planning. It will discuss the theoretical concept and philosophy of community participation. This is followed by the conceptualisation of other related key concepts of community participation in development planning, such as *sustainable development, integrated development planning and projects, decentralised development, community participation and the building blocks of development* (such as social learning, capacity building, self reliance, empowerment and sustainability), *integrated rural development, basic service delivery and indigenous knowledge systems*. Related to these would be the levels (typology) and modes of development. This is important as it sharpens and deepens the theoretical framework of community participation. It would reflect the different theories relevant to community participation through an interdisciplinary perspective (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000: 20).

#### **2.2. Theories and philosophy of community participation**

##### **2.2.1. Evolution of community participation**

Participatory democracy, democratic governance, democratic consolidation and community participation as a concept and principle have in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occupied centre stage in the debate on democracy and governance. Closely linked to this is the concept of human rights, which has been guided by the United Nations through its various instruments. With the birth of the UN Millennium Declaration, a new terrain has been introduced that moves away from the traditional context of governance to include democratic aspects of governance. This is governance that is participatory, responsive and accountable and which seeks to promote human development (Ngwenya, 2005: 2). The debate about community participation has shifted in an attempt to find an answer to the question as to whether the community is the master or client of

development. In the past, development failures were experienced, because development practitioners neglected the human factor. Reaching for the poor requires working with them to learn about their needs, understanding how development decisions are made in their communities, and identifying institutions and mechanisms that acquire opportunities and resources (World Bank 1996: 145). The new thinking which has emerged advocates the participation of communities in their own development efforts (Gebremedhin, 2004:10). According to the World Bank (1996: 145) participatory methods that have been used successfully to engage government officials and other relatively powerful stakeholders in development initiatives may be inappropriate or inadequate for reaching the poor. Thus the debate about community participation has shifted to allow the poor to participate in the development planning and service delivery process.

### **2.2.2. Defining community participation**

As Theron (2005: 124) pointed out, there are considerable differences of opinion as to what community participation is, and it follows that there will be many disagreements about the best way to achieve it. This can be seen in the work of different authors (Theron, 2005; Oakley, 1991; IAP2, 2005) who defined community participation differently. The notion of community participation is based on the understanding that there is a community that would be able to become engaged in the development planning process. However the form which the participation takes is influenced by the overall circumstances and the unique social context in which action is being taken.

The concept of **participation** has different meanings according to different authors.

*“Participation may mean just attending a meeting even if one does not say anything at the meeting; contributing money to a community project; providing one’s labour to a community project; providing information and opinion in a survey etc. Thus the definition of participation includes (a)*

*passive participation, participation in information giving, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and self-mobilisation” (Mukwena, 2005: 1).*

According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1998: 6), **participation** may mean that communities are allowed direct and ultimate control in deciding their own affairs.

According to Theron, (2005: 119) **community participation** is a means of empowering people by developing their skills and abilities so that they can negotiate with the development delivery system and can make their own decisions in terms of their development needs and priorities. Unless empowerment is understood in its entirety, the true meaning of empowerment cannot be achieved.

Theron (2005: 125) states that if participation is “doing” by the community, participatory interventions should lead to the change of an existing reality to a situation in the future which is presumably better. That means that the Omusati Regional Council would only achieve community participation if it has changed its current practices of community participation to a better one.

The methods of community participation play a crucial role in terms of meaningful participation. Many cultural, economic and political barriers effectively prevent the poor from having any real stake in development activities. Therefore there is a need to address the barriers to participation. Thus the methods adopted for community participation should be clear of barriers which prevent community participation in terms of culture, economics and politics. The Omusati Regional Council should be in a position to address some of these barriers and thereby accelerate community participation in the development planning process and the service delivery system.

Community participation also means reaching a mutual decision as how to best tackle the problems which face communities. This has also been argued by the

World Bank (1996: 145) which holds that a special effort by the Regional Council and other Line Ministries and Agencies, - as service delivery designers and sponsors of the projects and with appropriate policies - must be made to address these obstacles that prevent the rural poor from participating. The World Bank (1996: 145) pointed out that the first step in any effort to enable the poor to participate entails learning from them firsthand about the problems they face, how they have tackled them, and their proposals for gaining more control and influence over development activities. This would enable the Omusati Regional Council to develop strategies that are relevant and acceptable to the communities and ensures their participation.

To ensure integrated development planning, the Omusati Regional Council needs to craft responsive institutions and create an enabling environment which would facilitate the participation of all stakeholders.

Community participation should engage people of different ages and of both genders. Issues and constraints related to participation are gender specific and stem from the fact that men and women play different roles, having different needs and face different constraints on a number of levels (World Bank, 1996: 148). Special steps should be taken by the Omusati Regional Council to ensure that women participate and benefit, as usually they do not participate.

Community participation goes along with community development. De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:4) argue that community development is a method which brings about “desired change”, a process in which local community groups could take the initiative to formulate objectives which involve changes in their living conditions. To do that, one needs to understand the principles and core values of community participation.

### **2.2.3. Principles and core values of community participation**

For effective implementation of community participation, it is important to understand its principles and core values as highlighted by the Manila Declaration (1989). This understanding would help change the perception of the officials of the Omusati Regional Council towards community members in terms of development planning and service delivery. The question is who is to reinforce the principles and core values? Would they be made policies or by-laws in order to be implemented? The realisation of these principles and core values is of great importance to the community participation process, as part of a people-centered development. As stated in the Manila Declaration (1989), a people-centered development seeks to return control over resources to the people and their communities to be used in meeting their own needs.

The principles of community participation, based on the Manila Declaration, as applied to the case study are as follow:

1. *Sovereignty resides with the people, the real actors of positive change.* This calls for the Omusati Regional Council and its development agencies to change the perception that communities are the recipients of development projects or activities, as opposed to being actors in the development planning process and service delivery system.
2. *The legitimate role of government is to enable the people to set and pursue their own agenda.* The question is how the Omusati Regional Council can change the current trend, for example, the budget allocation which has strings attached and which demands that a project should be implemented as it was initially planned, and which cannot be adapted to community priority needs? The Omusati Regional Council needs to identify various platforms under which communities set their own agenda and the implementation thereof. It needs to establish its role as the government representative at grass roots level and find ways to facilitate communities so that they can set up and pursue their own agenda.

3. *To exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for the development of themselves and their communities, the people must control their own resources, have access to relevant information and have the means to hold the officials of government accountable.* This point suggests that the Omusati Regional Council must put into effect policies that require the community to participate and ensure that relevant information is provided to communities for sustainable service delivery. That would ensure that communities take the Regional Councils to task.
4. *Those who would assist the people with their development must recognise that it is they who are participating in support of the people's agenda, not the reverse. The value of the outsider's contribution will be measured in terms of the enhanced capacity of the people to determine their own future.* This calls for the Omusati Regional Council to enhance the capacity of the communities through an outsider's contribution in terms of project implementation.

Besides the above general principles another aspect of community participation is the importance of the core values (IAP2, 2002) of community participation which the Omusati Regional Council needs to recognise and implement in order to ensure community participation in developing programmes and projects in the region. The following are the core values as highlighted by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2, 2002):

1. *The community should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives.* One must ask which structure the community would use to have a say in the development planning and service delivery process? The Omusati Regional Council needs to identify structures through which the community can participate in decision-making and the service delivery system.
2. *Community participation includes the promise that the community's contribution will influence the decision.* The difficult part is to ensure that decisions are influenced by the contribution of the community. Often



decisions are influenced by policies and the discretion of the officials who implement them.

3. *The community participation process communicates the interest and meets the process needs of all participants.* With inadequate structures, how can the interest and process needs of all participants be met?
4. *The community participation process seeks out and facilitates the engagement of those potentially affected.* In every project there is a need to identify those affected and facilitate their participation.
5. *The community participation process entails participants in defining how they participate.* The challenge is time constraints as communities do not respond as per the projects schedule. The challenge is to balance the project time frame and the response of the community as to how they want to participate. If they do not want to participate, what mechanisms are in place to ensure the sustainability of the project?
6. *The community participation process communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.* Feedback is crucial in this regard. One needs to ask whether there are platforms where the community can be given feedback.
7. *The community participation process provides participants with the information they need in order to participate in a meaningful way.* Understaffed institutions face the challenge of making information available at all times, and whenever it is needed. How will the Omusati Regional Council accelerate the decentralisation process, to ensure that all institutions have the skilled staff with all the necessary information?

The Omusati Regional Council can only address community participation in development planning and service delivery systems if staff members, in particular development planners who are facilitating the process of development projects, bear in mind these principles and core values.

Even though there are principles and core values which define community participation, community participation is not an easy process. There are realities

that one needs to take into account so as to better prepare when engaging communities in the development process and service delivery systems.

#### **2.2.4. Realities of community participation**

One should realise that implementing community participation in development planning is not an easy exercise, as the form which participation takes is influenced by the overall circumstances and the unique social context in which action is being taken. There are many unknowable and outright surprises (Fitzgerald, Mc Lennan and Manslow, 1997: 5). It is important to take note of these realities as highlighted by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), (Republic of South Africa, 2001: 9-10). These realities are:

1. Community participation is a costly exercise and a time-consuming process. It may necessitate the commitment of a wide range of an organisation's staff members over a long period of time.
2. Due to the unpredictability of human behaviour, problems may develop at any time despite good planning and good intentions.
3. Stakeholders may raise old, unsolved issues that are extended to the current initiative.
4. Stakeholders may use community participation as a platform to further their own agendas.
5. It is likely that issues of a different focus will be raised and this brings the risk of conflict. The way in which this conflict is managed will determine its effect on the participation process. The energy created by the conflict may be turned into positive energy that aims at resolving issues both related to, and beyond, the focus of the initiative.
6. The outcome of a community participation process cannot be predetermined because people are unpredictable. The process must be flexible in order to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. It is not always possible to satisfy everyone, which can result in some people not approving of the initiative.
7. Community participation can lead to the realisation that the initiative is not feasible.

An understanding of these realities by the Omusati Regional Council would assist it to develop mechanisms which enable it to be ready and accelerate the implementation of community participation in the development planning process and service delivery system and respond to the outcomes of the community participation processes.

In understanding how community participation was first initiated, its definition, its principles and core values as well as the realities that come with it, it is important to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of community participation.

### **2.2.5. Advantages and disadvantages of community participation**

Literature (IAP2, 2005; Theron, 2005; Republic of South Africa, 2001; Korten, 1990) has reflected the advantages and disadvantages of community participation, and the Omusati Regional Council needs to recognise them. This would enable the Council to accelerate the implementation of community participation. Strategies can only be implemented if there are more benefits to be derived from such strategies than disadvantages. Therefore it is worth mentioning the advantages and disadvantages of community participation in the development planning and service delivery process.

Despite the realities mentioned above, there are benefits to be derived from community participation in the development planning and service delivery systems. Some of the benefits (**advantages**) as highlighted by DWAF (Republic of South Africa, 2001: 10) are that of (a) an improved decision-making process, (b) sustainable development, and (c) the normalised attitude of all stakeholders. Effective community participation can also result in short-term benefits that may add to the success of an initiative. These short-term benefits are:

- ◆ Allaying undue fears and countering undue expectations.
- ◆ Stakeholders contribute to decisions and, as a result, are less likely to lose interest in participating. This can establish a sense of ownership that helps stakeholders create a positive impact on initiatives.

- ◆ Community participation can generate commitment from stakeholders.
- ◆ Community participation lends credibility to an organisation that is open to stakeholders' suggestions and opinions.
- ◆ The effort it takes to allow the community to participate almost invariably produces something of tangible value for the decision-makers. It can help avoid conflict with the community arising out of inaccurate information. The cost of a badly informed decision could far outweigh the cost of engaging the community.
- ◆ Community participation that forms an integral part of all phases of decision-making helps to identify and resolve the community's concerns before they turn into major problems. Such a process thus helps prevent opposition to initiatives or even their cancellation.

The **disadvantages** of community participation are more or less the same as the realities of community participation. This includes the fact that community participation is a costly exercise, it is time-consuming and unpredictable human behaviour can occur. Therefore one cannot predetermine the outcome of community participation.

It is worth defining the key concepts that are relevant and give meaning to community participation, for without them, an understanding and interpretation of the concept of community participation will be meaningless and will not give value to the development planning and service delivery system. It is through defining the key concepts that the Omusati Regional Council would better understand community participation as a process.

### **2.3. Key concepts of community participation**

The following are the key concepts which give meaning to effective community participation in the development planning process. A better understanding of these concepts would enable the Omusati Regional Council to implement a sustainable and integrated development planning and service delivery system. It serves as a reminder of its functions as one of the decentralised institutions at sub-national level. It also facilitates the participation of the community in the development planning process. These concepts are:

#### **2.3.1 Development and sustainable development**

There is little consensus about the concept of **development** (Bryant and White, 1982:14-20; Stewart, 1997:6; Swanepoel, 1997:42-45,). According to Esman (1991:5):

*“...development connotes steady progress towards improvement in the human condition. It reduces and eventually eliminates poverty, ignorance, and diseases, and expands the well-being and opportunity for all. It entails rapid change, but change alone is insufficient. It must be directed to specific ends. Development involves societal transformation - political, social, and cultural as well as economic. It implies modernization -secularisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation, but not necessarily westernisation. It is multi-dimensional, with scholars and practitioners disagreeing, however, on relative emphasis, priority and timing”.*

It is argued by Du Toit (1997:598-599) that if development is to be responsive to the needs of impoverished communities, then it must be a participative, interactive, integrative and continuous process which acknowledges the linkages between all activities which constitute the development process. Its successful implementation requires integrated policy planning and social learning processes. Its political viability depends on the full support of the people affected through their government, their social institutions and their private activities.

Roodt (2001:478) argues that development entails not just the provision of material goods such as housing, sewerage, water and educational and sport facilities, but importantly, entails the empowerment of people, that is, enhancing the capacity of people to take control of their own lives.

According to Korten (1990:67), development is a process by which the members of a society (communities) increase their potential and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvement in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations.

According to Fitzgerald, et al. (1997:3) **sustainable development** means ensuring that peoples' basic needs are being met, that the resource base is conserved, that there is a sustainable population level, and that the environment and cross-sectoral concerns are integrated into decision-making processes and that communities are empowered. Sustainable development is concerned with quality of life as well as satisfying human needs. This is what the Omusati Regional Council needs to ensure. Sustainable development implies self-reliant and cost-effective development, facilitating access to health, shelter, clean water and food.

According to Vision 2030 (Republic of Namibia, 2004:175) sustainable development is the type of development that meets the needs of the present, without limiting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encourage people to take responsibility for their own development and promotes development activities that address the actual needs of the people, and require increasing community contributions to development services and infrastructure. Sustainable development should call for partnership between government, business, communities, NGOs and CBOs, academic institutions, international community and donors, rural and urban communities; capacity enhancement (human and institutional); good governance, accountability, and transparency;

democracy and human rights; environmental protection; peace and political stability and gender equality.

As pointed out by Fitzgerald, et al. (1997:4) sustainable development requires, amongst other things, an educational effort so that communities are made aware of the need to manage resources wisely to achieve the maximum benefits at the minimum cost, not only to fulfil their own needs today, but those of future generations. Communities can only manage resources effectively if they participate in the initiation and implementation of projects. Costs can be reduced if communities take ownership of the services provided to them and know how to sustain those services.

According to Theron (2005:116) the participation of communities is essential to improve the outcome of programmes or projects through cost sharing, increased efficiency and effectiveness.

To achieve sustainable service delivery, participatory development is required. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:5) participatory development is *“...the self-sustaining process to engage free men and women in activities that meet their basic needs and, beyond that, realise individually defined human potential within socially defined limits”*.

The Omusati Regional Council needs to understand the **elements** of sustainable development to ensure sustainable service delivery. Vision 2030 defined sustainable development in terms of the Namibian context, thus Omusati Regional Council need to implement Vision 2030 (Republic of Namibia, 2004) to ensure community participation in the development planning process and service delivery systems.

The elements of sustainable development that the Omusati Regional Council need to be aware of and implement are those as highlighted in figure 2.1 below:

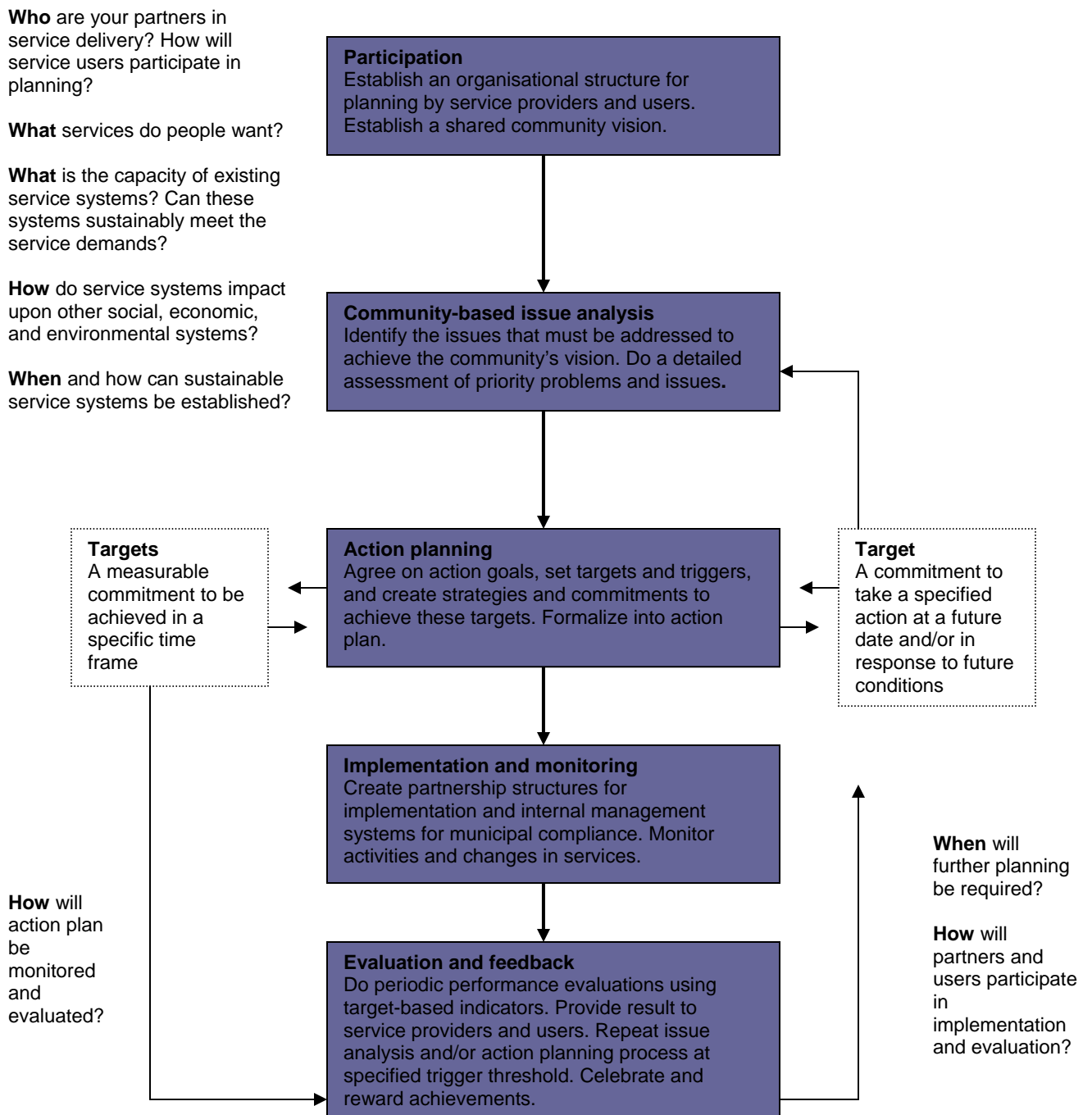


Figure: 2.1. Elements of sustainable development

By answering the above questions, the Omusati Regional Council would be in a better position to accelerate community participation in sustainable development, particularly in the development planning and service delivery system.



### **2.3.2. Integrated development planning and projects**

According to Davids (2005:26) the integrated approach to development and projects is based on an understanding that the nature and meaning of the whole is more and other than those of its constituent parts. Through integrated development planning and projects various benefits can be achieved. According to DEAT (2002:1) integrated development planning helps to eradicate the inequitable development legacy of the past. It improves the quality of life through the development of integrated and sustainable projects and programmes and creates community ownership. It enables local government transformation, ensures appropriate allocation of resources and facilitates delivery. It also acts as a measure of accountability by politicians and officials. Integrated development planning enables cooperative governance through facilitating alignment, and acts as a mechanism for coordination between local, provincial and national departments.

The Omusati Regional Council needs to ensure integrated development planning by allowing community and other stakeholders participation in the needs identification, project design and implementation steps of the project cycle. Further, as pointed out by De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:4), the desired situation is the use of the change agent whose aim is to stimulate the participation of the community in development projects. Through this process, the poor themselves define and control their own struggle. The development projects become radically participatory. Through development projects, public institutions such as the Omusati Regional Council can achieve sustainable development.

### **2.3.3. Decentralised development planning and projects**

As argued by King (1992:1), public decisions in a less centralised system reflect citizens' opinion more and politicians' wishes less than in centralised systems. Decentralisation implies a "decongestion" of local government that allows direct participation in local issues in which communities can play a role in non-official leadership and control the development process. *"Decentralisation creates a better opportunity for direct participation in service delivery and policy, and in the decision-making process in the public arena"* (MacKay, 2004:21). According to Nagel (2000:181), a call for decentralisation promotes the shifting of power from the national government to cities and states, shrinking the scope of government activity by putting the decision-making responsibility in the hands of a smaller unit of government. According to Ngwenya (2005:8) decentralised states consisting of administrative sub-units with clearly defined resources and tasks, enhance the quality and quantity of government services, provide for more transparency and accountability, create local ownership by moving decision-making more closely to those affected by the decisions, and leads to a desired devolution of political power.

Nagel (2000:183) defines administrative decentralisation as the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units, or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities, or non-governmental private or voluntary organisations. Barlé (2000:12) argues that decentralisation is the key element of democratisation, particularly in the search for a more participatory approach to development. According to King (1992:5), decentralisation enhances citizens' participation in decision-making, improves grass-roots democracy, and makes the signalling of preferences cheaper.

Decentralised development is a means of creating participatory democracy in which the ordinary people can have a direct say in the decisions that affect their

lives. *“Namibia adopted decentralisation as a state policy with the overall aim of ensuring economic, cultural and socio-economic development and providing the people at grassroots level the opportunity to participate in their own decisions and extending democracy to them as a right based on national ideas and values”* (Keulder, 2005:3). The Omusati Regional Council needs to implement the decentralisation policy in order to ensure community participation in service delivery and development projects.

### **2.3.4 Community participation and the building block of development**

There is a close link between community participation and the building blocks of development. Community participation and the building blocks of development are linked in the sense that the building blocks have an influence on community participation. These links can be seen in the following concepts:

#### **2.3.4.1. Social learning**

According to Theron (2005:121), the social learning process approach extends the principles of bottom-up planning and community participation by arguing that change agents and development organisations should adopt a learning attitude. This radical shift in thinking and planning, which the Omusati Regional Council needs to adopt, means adopting a learning attitude at the outset in respect of all aspects of development action so that the community, the “beneficiaries” of the action, are not included in the social learning process just as partners and beneficiaries, but also as actors in their own development.

This calls for an integration of the three elements of social learning as highlighted by Theron (2005:121-122) into project design, planning and implementation to create a culture of mutual learning and partnership between the Omusati Regional Council and the communities. These three elements are:

- ◆ The community and the service delivery project: the capacities of the people and the expected output must be integrated.

- ◆ The community and the organisation (The Omusati Regional Council): the formulation of needs and demands by the people and the decision-making process of the organisation should be integrated.
- ◆ The programme/project and the organisation (The Omusati Regional Council): the programme / project objectives have to be in keeping with the capacity of the organisation and that of the community.

#### **2.3.4.2. Capacity building**

As argued by Cook (1997:278) the central challenge (which is also faced by the Omusati Regional Council) is one of human resource capacity building and institutional strengthening to ensure effective management of sustainable development. The Omusati Regional Council needs to realise that human resource development is the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and the capacity of people in society. According to DWAF (2001:19) capacity building is the ongoing process of increasing the ability of individuals, groups and organisations to control and manage all important areas of their lives or operations. It empowers communities as stakeholders because it offers them the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to control their own lives and operations. This would ensure a sustainable development planning and service delivery system. This would also strengthen community participation in structures such as Regional Development Coordination Committees, Village Development Committees and Constituency Development Committees in Namibia.

#### **2.3.4.3. Self reliance**

According to Gebremedhin (2004:24), community participation is the base of self-reliance. Burkey (1993:50) argues that self-reliance is about doing things for oneself, maintaining one's own self-confidence and making independent decisions. Self-reliance is a question of attitudes rather than money and materials. Oakley (1991:17) defines self-reliance as a positive effect on rural communities by participating in development projects. It helps to break the

mentality of dependence, promotes self-awareness and confidence, and people participate in order to solve their own problems. This would assist the Regional Council in terms of resource mobilisation and acceleration of community participation implementation.

As argued by Dotse (1997:18), in order to strengthen self-reliance as a principle in working with the rural poor, it is necessary to develop structures and organisations that can help the poor become self-reliant. Unless the Omusati Regional Council develops and strengthens the capacity of development structures such as Regional Development Coordination Committees, Village Development Committees and Constituency Development Committees, the implementation of community participation will remain a challenge.

According to Gebremedhin (2004:25), participation and self-reliance imply and emphasise the necessity to engage the beneficiaries of development, namely the rural poor. This is a policy which the Omusati Regional Council needs to adopt.

#### **2.3.4.4. Empowerment**

Theron (2005:122) argues that issues of community participation and empowerment in the planning process for service delivery are central to sustainable development. According to Fitzgerald et al. (1997:25) an individual becomes empowered by feeling able to do things not done previously, gaining an ability to do these new things and having opportunities opened up which were previously denied. An important mechanism to ensure sustainable development is by empowering people to sustain their own development in order to be the sustainers of development in their own communities. The Omusati Regional Council needs to follow the principle: *“don’t do anything for people that they can do for themselves”* as formulated by Burkey (1993:211). Where the communities are able to carry out project activities, they should be given an opportunity to do so, as part of empowerment and capacity building. Unless the Omusati Regional Council makes provision in its recurrent budget for capacity building as part of

empowerment for the community to be able to gain the ability and take over the new development, community participation will remain a challenge.

#### **2.3.4.5. Sustainability**

According to Theron (2005:123) community participation should lead to sustainable development. Community participation and sustainability involves local choice because people are the local experts, in line with the idea of an indigenous knowledge system. This means that for the Omusati Regional Council to secure effective community participation in development efforts, the local people, as local experts, should be engaged in the development planning and service delivery system process through information dissemination and access to decentralised institutions (Line Ministries and Agencies in the region) for such information. If this does not occur, the sustainability of local choices cannot be achieved.

#### **2.3.5. Integrated rural development**

Gebremedhin (2004:18) argues that integrated rural development is a poverty-oriented strategy, which has adopted its features from community development. It is also argued by De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:3-4) that integrated rural development is concerned with the delivery of services and programme inputs to rural areas through change agents and self-help projects. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1998:4), integrated rural development failed to avoid an elite bias and also failed to generate income and employment for landless and jobless rural poor, a situation that needs to be rectified. The Omusati Regional Council needs to identify various platforms on which the rural poor can be assisted to ensure their self-reliance.

According to Maxwell and Conway (2000:7), integrated rural development planning advocates for simple or medium-term interventions on an initially limited scale; constant interaction between planning, execution and evaluation; dynamic analysis and more in-depth comprehensions of the context; increased

participation on the part of the target groups in decision-making, implementation and evaluation; as well as diversification and strengthening of the support given to local capacity for institutional organisations.

The large majority of the inhabitants in the Omusati Region live in a rural area. The Omusati Regional Council, through developing projects and programmes aimed at addressing poverty in the rural area, needs to ensure that priority needs are identified by the rural community itself to be addressed in an integrated manner. Continuing with the current practice in the Omusati Regional Council will lead to the rural poor becoming the recipient of development activities as opposed to being actors of development in rural areas.

### **2.3.6. Basic service delivery**

As stated by Fuller et al, (2005:2), one of the reasons why African communities have faith in decentralisation is because of its promise to perform better than the former system of centralisation in terms of community services. The provision of better quality services and easy access for a larger number of people, especially the less privileged portion of the community, is the challenge which confronts new African local governments and their leaders. Local democracy in itself will not be meaningful unless, in the long run, it leads to the constitution of municipal teams that are capable of improving the daily life of the community through the provision of the following essential services: drinkable water, waste management and sanitation, urban transport, primary health care and education, streetlights and energy.

The same sentiment is echoed by Roseland (2000:109), that local governments can procure larger numbers of services and products and can influence the market with regards to goods and services. These products include environmental services (e.g. water, waste management, and land use control), economic services (e.g. transportation infrastructure) and social services (e.g. health and education). Regional councils in Namibia have the responsibility of

providing these services. The study has looked at these services as a whole, instead of focusing on a single one.

The Omusati Regional Council acts as the municipality in the declared settlement areas in the region. It has the responsibility of ensuring the supply of basic services to settlement areas, as well as to the rural community of the region. Thus to sustain this basic service, the community needs to participate in its implementation and maintenance. Unless communities are participating in the planning, implementation and maintenance of these basic services, they will not take ownership of these services.

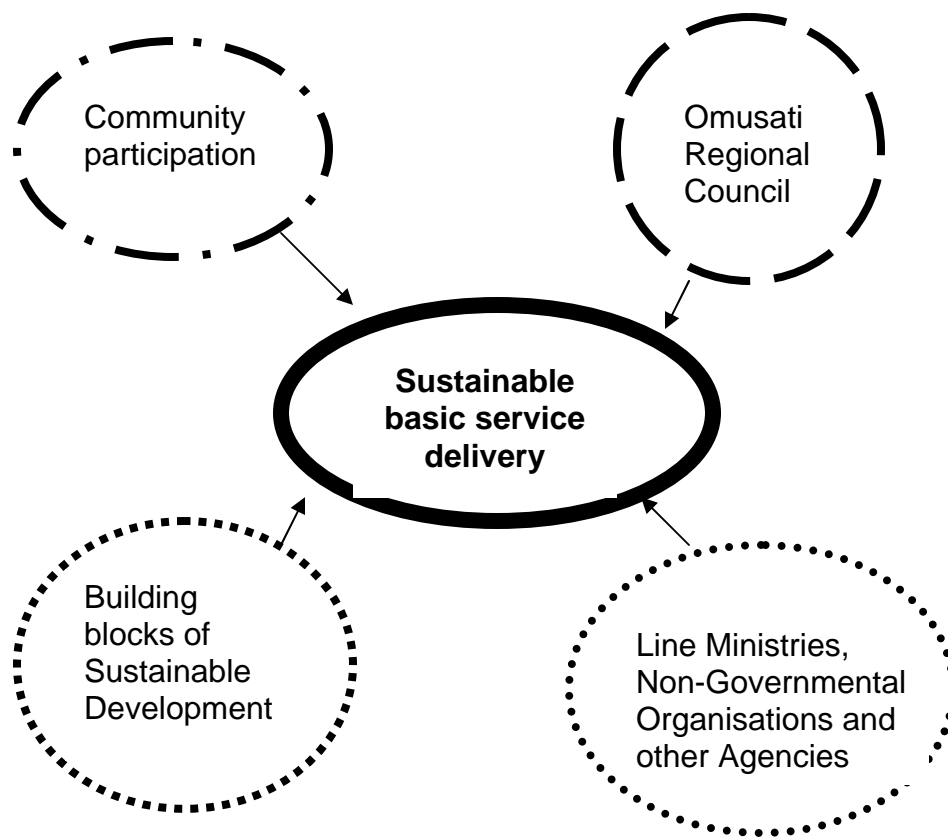


Figure: 2.2. Sustainable service delivery

As seen in figure 2.2 above, sustainable basic service delivery will depend on support from the Omusati Regional Council, the Line Ministries, Non-Governmental Organisations and other Agencies, and through community



participation by ensuring the implementation of the building blocks of development.

### **2.3.7. Indigenous knowledge systems**

Singh and Titi (1995:147-148) argue that if the idea of development is to have credibility, there is a need to legitimise an indigenous knowledge base to break the web entangling the conventional debate on development. Gebremedhin (2004:16) argues that there are several possibilities for using indigenous knowledge to empower communities by utilising their own local creativity and resources. The knowledge of the rural communities should be a component of development efforts. Community participation in this sense should be concerned with the production of knowledge, new directions and modes of organisation. More attention should be given to the culture of the people and the environment in which they live, as this would influence their participation in the development planning and service provision process. This is because indigenous knowledge reflects the dynamic way in which the residents of an area or settlement have come to understand each other in relationship to their natural environment and how they organise the folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs and history to enhance their lives.

Prozesky and Mouton, (2001:545) argue that local knowledge (also referred to as insider, traditional or popular knowledge), which refers to the participants' common sense, wisdom and expertise, should be valued and respected – even honoured, celebrated and praised. The reason for this is that local knowledge represents something unique about the participants' own system and culture, and because it is experience-based. As Prozesky and Mouton (2001:546) argue, by reinforcing and restoring the status of local knowledge, it empowers participants by enabling them to recognise the value of their own knowledge. In return, this implies that they will be able to participate more fully in the development process and outcomes.

Levin and Weiner (1997:254) argue that participation should be an essential component of a broad political programme in which local knowledge becomes a driving force for social transformation. The knowledge of the poor should be integrated into the development planning process and service delivery system.

Kotze and Kellerman (1997:35) argue that it is those who have learnt to survive with virtually nothing at their disposal who possess valuable knowledge. The Omusati Regional Council needs to realise that the current role and status, as argued by Kotze and Kellerman (1997), of the technocrats and technocratic approaches contribute not only to the devaluation of indigenous knowledge and experience but also to the sidetracking of the role of the people's emotions and feelings in development. Therefore the Omusati Regional Council needs to avoid such practice and tap deep into indigenous knowledge for sustainable development purposes.

One should also realise that indigenous knowledge is not like a pool of water which is known to everybody, but rather one has to hunt for it. There is no visible local knowledge, but rather a mixture of knowledge. Unless the Omusati Regional Council gathers information on the available local knowledge, referred to as indigenous knowledge, it will remain a challenge to refer to and use indigenous knowledge, an essential component required for community participation.

Bearing in mind the key concepts related to community participation (highlighted previously), one can only know whether communities are participating in development planning, by knowing and understanding the levels and modes of participation. Therefore it is worth mentioning that the level and mode of community participation in development planning found in the literature, are crucial in realising the exact type of participation which an institution practises.

The community might be participating, but this could be in a form that is not considered authentic participation, for example consultation<sup>10</sup> and involvement<sup>11</sup>.

#### **2.4. Levels and modes of community participation in development planning**

To understand and be able to implement community participation in development planning, while at the same time ensuring integrated development planning, it is important for the Omusati Regional Council to understand the levels of community participation in development planning. This is so because some of the levels are more relevant than others to ensure authentic community participation (Theron, 2005:126). This would help the Omusati Regional Council to monitor the pace at which it is fully or partially implementing community participation and whether there are strategies developed specifically for community participation in the region.

As argued by Theron (2005:113), the Omusati Regional Council needs to avoid the use of the term *community participation* to describe strategies that have little to do with authentic participation by the poor, as this will create misunderstanding and blown-up expectations amongst the community - the so called beneficiaries or stakeholders in the development planning and service delivery system.

The seven levels of community participation as highlighted by Pretty, et al. (1995) (Theron, 2005:115) are:

1. **Passive participation:** people “participate” by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened. *Participation* relates to a unilateral top-down announcement by the authority/project manager. The information which is shared belongs to outsiders (professionals).

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<sup>10</sup> The problem with consultation is that the public is free to give opinions regarding the relevant issues, but the powerful offer no assurance that these opinions will be considered (Theron, 2005:118).

<sup>11</sup> As argued by Theron (2005:117) involvement is a weak mode of participation and it has gained a negative reputation for being associated with co-optation; placation; consultation; and informing. Therefore it cannot be regarded as authentic or strong community participation.

2. **Participation in information giving:** people “participate” by answering questions posed in questionnaires or telephone interviews or similar “public participation strategies”. The public do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings as the findings of the research are neither shared nor evaluated for accuracy.
3. **Participation by consultation:** people participate by being “consulted”, as professionals/consultants/planners listen to their views. The professionals define both problems and solutions and may modify these in the light of the people’s responses. This process does not include any share in decision-making by the public, neither are the professionals under the obligation to consider the public’s views.
4. **Participation for material incentives:** people participate by providing resources, i.e. labour, in return for food and cash. This typology typically takes place in rural environments, as farmers provide the fields but are not “involved” in the experiment or learning process. The people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
5. **Functional participation:** people participate in a group context to meet predetermined objectives related to the project, which can involve the development or promotion of externally initiated social organisations. This type of “involvement” does not tend to occur at the early stages of project cycles or planning, but rather after important decisions have already been made.
6. **Interactive participation:** people participate in joint analysis, the development of action plans and capacity building. Participation is seen as a right, not just the means to achieve project goals.

7. **Self-mobilisation:** people participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. This bottom-up approach allows people to develop contacts with external institutions for resources and the technical advice they need, but they themselves retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated, bottom-up and self-reliant mobilisation and collective actions may or may not challenge the existing inequitable distribution of wealth and power.

The route to effective community participation by the Omusati Regional Council would depend on selecting the right combination of approaches. By going through these levels, the Omusati Regional Council would determine whether it actually allowed the community to participate and make its own decisions or whether the decisions are still being made by outside agencies and their change agents.

The last level (No. 7) of participation is the ideal one for authentic community participation in the development planning process and service delivery system; that is if the Omusati Regional Council wants the community to retain control. However this does not rule out that other levels of participation could not be used as circumstances and context are not the same. An example of this is the case where the Omusati Regional Council finds itself in a situation whereby the community simply does not want to participate; the Council then carries on with the project – this would be considered a *level one* type of participation.

Thus it is important for the Omusati Regional Council officials to understand levels No. 1-7 in order for them to achieve authentic community participation, and to ensure an effective and efficient way of community participation. Failure to understand these levels and modes might lead to the Omusati Regional Council to continue with the idea of involving people in the development planning system, which is a problematic process, as this does not empower communities to determine their own priority need and aspirations.

It is also important to understand the modes of participation as, these overlap with the levels of participation, and are necessary for community participation. These modes, as highlighted by Pretty, et al. (1995) (Theron, 2005:115) are:

1. community participation is considered as a voluntary “contribution” by the community to a programme/project, which will lead to development, but the public is not expected to take part in shaping the programme/project content and outcomes (***anti-participatory mode***);
2. community participation includes community “involvement” in decision-making processes, in implementing programmes/projects, sharing in the benefits and “involvement” in efforts to evaluate such programmes/projects (***manipulation mode***);
3. community participation is concerned with organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations for groups or movements excluded from such control (***incremental mode***) and
4. community participation is an active process by which the community influence the direction and execution of a programme/project with the view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values which they cherish (***authentic public participation mode***).

The same sentiment which underlies level No. 7 also applies to mode No 4 and should be applied by the Omusati Regional Council if it wants to ensure that the community participates in the development planning process and service delivery system.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Chapter 2 has presented the literature review by highlighting the theoretical concept and principles of community participation. This includes the definition of community participation, the principles and core values of community participation, the reality of community participation, the advantages and disadvantages of community participation as well as the various levels and modes of community participation in the development planning and service delivery system. These are all important, and form integral part of sustainable development planning and service delivery system processes.

For the Omusati Regional Council to ensure sustainable community participation in development planning and service delivery, an understanding of the concept of community participation and its principles is a prerequisite. The development planning process needs to be participative, integrative, and a continuous process which acknowledges the linkage between all activities which constitute the development process.

Members of communities as beneficiaries should be allowed to increase their potential and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce a sustainable and justly distributed improvement in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations. The opposite will be of no benefit to the communities, as they will not have any chance to hold officials responsible for any development planning and service delivered to them.

The Omusati Regional Council needs to move from community participation as involvement to community participation as empowerment which is regarded as strong community participation through a social learning process, capacity building, and a bottom-up decision-making process.

It should move from passive participation where people are told what to do to self-mobilization where communities are in control of the development planning

process. However proper management of the whole process of community participation in the development planning and service delivery system need to be managed to avoid delays and undesirable situations which might lead to the blockage of sustainable development.

The knowledge of the rural communities should be a component of development efforts as local knowledge represents something unique about the participants' own system and culture, and because it is experience-based.

A better understanding of the building blocks of development and how it relates to community participation is important for sustainable development in the Omusati Region. The building blocks of development are catalyst of community participation in the development planning and service delivery system. Its implementation would lead to sustainable development planning and projects especially capacity building and social learning.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN NAMIBIA**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with the legislative and policy framework regarding community participation in the development planning and service delivery system that the Omusati Regional Council needs to implement for it to ensure sustainable development in the region. Chapter 3 focuses on the Manila Declaration and the Johannesburg Summit to highlight the international perspective of community participation, and the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990), as the supreme law of the country, Vision 2030, the Decentralisation Policy (1998), the Regional Council Act of 1992, the Local Authority Act of 1992, and the Regional Development Plan (2000) to highlight the national perspective of community participation in development planning and the service delivery system of the Omusati Regional Council.

#### **3.2. International perspective**

##### **3.2.1. The Manila Declaration (1989)**

Arising from the Manila Declaration (Korten, 1990:217-221) is the concern that the results of current development practice are not just, sustainable or inclusive. Current development practices are based on a model that demeans the human spirit, divest people of their sense of community and control over their own lives, exacerbate social and economic inequity, and contribute to the destruction of the ecosystem on which life depends. There is an appeal to national governments to ensure community participation in the development planning process with the purpose of promoting sustainable development. There is currently a need for fundamentally different development models based on alternative development.

Governments need to understand that authentic development enhances the sustainability of the community and that a sustainable human community can only be achieved through people-centered development namely:

1. Sovereignty resides with the people, the real social actors of positive change. The legitimate role of government is to enable the people to set and pursue their own agenda.
2. To exercise their sovereignty and assume responsibility for the development of themselves and their communities, the people should control their own resources, have access to relevant information, and have the means to hold officials of government accountable.
3. Those who would assist the people with their development should recognise that it is they who are participating in support of the people's agenda, not the reverse.

The Manila Declaration suggests the transformation of international and national systems, which includes the redefining of participation, open access to information, building inclusive alliances, reducing debt dependence, reducing resource export, strengthening people's capacity for participation, creating demonstrations of a self-reliant community, and creating national and international monitoring systems.

It can be concluded from the Manila Declaration that the call is for the Omusati Regional Council, as part of the national government responsible for implementing international policy, to ensure community participation for sustainable development in the region.

### **3.2.2. The Johannesburg Summit (2002)**

The Johannesburg Summit is an equally important summit which stipulates the necessary issues to be considered for sustainable development. Such issues include the question of what fairness means in terms of community participation in the development planning process. According to the Johannesburg Summit

(Haas et al, 2002:6, 21), fairness on one hand calls for enlarging the rights of the poor to their habitats, while on the other hand it calls for cutting back the claim of the rich to resources.

The Johannesburg Summit recognised the plight of the poor, and emphasised that they (the poor) should be recognised as actors who shape their lives even under conditions of hardship and destitution. The Summit suggests that unless there is a shift in power patterns, the poor will almost always lack the security and the resources necessary for a decent existence. Can the Omusati Regional Council officials be willing to give a certain degree of power to communities to determine their own needs and decides on how to solve them? How will the Omusati Regional Council allocate resources to communities given the issue of accountability? Where will it get sufficient resource to enable the poor to live a decent life? Only when the Omusati Regional Council finds answers to these questions a shift of power pattern can be achieved.

From the Johannesburg Summit point of view, it is important to give equal opportunities to all stakeholders to participate in the development planning process. Dominance of the rich over resources and participation should be minimised to ensure sustainable development.

It is clear from the international point of view that cognisance of community participation in the development planning process and service delivery system needs to be ensured for sustainable development. Gradual shifts from the current practice that demeans community participation to models that encourage community participation are necessary. Therefore it is important for the Omusati Regional Council to learn from and integrate international policy into its development planning and service delivery system, to ensure community participation in the development planning processes.

### **3.3. National perspective**

#### **3.3.1. The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990)**

Namibia adopted one of the most liberal constitutions in the world and set about creating a new culture of citizen-based democracy and tolerance in which its aspiration for freedom and well-being of the nation could develop (Tjitendero, 2002:6). The Constitution is the supreme law of the country. It has made provisions, of which some are relevant to community participation. These provisions include:

#### **Article 6: Protection of life**

The right to life shall be respected and protected.

#### **Article 8: Respect for human dignity**

The dignity of all persons shall be inviolable.

#### **Article 17: Political activity**

1. All citizens shall have the right to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the government. All citizens shall have the right to form and join political parties and subject to such qualifications prescribed by laws as necessary in a democratic society, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives.
2. Every citizen who has reached the age of eighteen (18) years shall have the right to vote and he who has reached the age of twenty one (21) years has the right to be elected to public office, unless otherwise provided herein.

#### **Article 19: Culture**

Every person shall be entitled to enjoy, practise, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the terms of this Constitution

and further subject to the condition that the rights protected by this Article do not impinge upon the rights of others or the national interest.

### **Article 20: Education**

1. All persons shall have the right to education.
4. All persons shall have the right, at their own expense, to establish and to maintain private schools, or colleges or other institutions of tertiary education.

### **Article 21: Fundamental freedoms**

Article 21 subsection 1 states that:

1. All persons have the right to:
  - (a) freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media;
  - (b) freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which shall include academic freedom in institutions of higher learning;
  - (c) freedom to practise any religion and to manifest such practice;
  - (d) assemble peacefully and without arms;
  - (e) freedom of association, which shall include freedom to form and join associations or unions, including trade unions and political parties;
  - (f) withhold their labour without being exposed to criminal penalties;
  - (g) move freely throughout Namibia
  - (h) reside and settle in any part of Namibia;
  - (i) leave and return to Namibia;
  - (j) practise any profession, or carry out any occupation, trade or business.

### **Article 45: Representative nature**

The members of the National Assembly shall be representative of all the people and shall in the performance of their duties be guided by the objectives of this Constitution, by the public interest and by their conscience.

### **Article 95: Promotion of the welfare of the people**

The State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting, inter alia, policies aimed at the following:

- e) Ensuring that every citizen has a right to fair and reasonable access to public facilities and services in accordance with the law;
- j) Consistent planning to raise and maintain an acceptable level of nutrition and standard of living of the Namibian people and to improve public health;
- k) Encouragement of the mass of the population through education and other activities and through their organisation to influence government policy by debating its decisions;
- l) Maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future; in particular, the Government shall provide measures against the dumping or recycling of foreign nuclear and toxic wastes on Namibian territory.

In summary form, the Constitution makes provision for community participation by providing platforms such as freedom of expression, capacity building through education, and sustainable uses of natural resources and the use of indigenous knowledge. It is up to the Omusati Regional Council to implement these provisions as stipulated in the Constitution to ensure community participation for sustainable development. If this does not happen, community participation in the region will not prevail.

### **3.3.2. Namibia Vision 2030 (2004)**

Namibia has formulated a vision that guides it for future development. This is a vision which contains the framework that defines where we are today as a nation, where we want to be by 2030, and how to get there (Republic of Namibia, 2004: 9). Namibia Vision 2030 provides a long-term policy scenario of the future course

of development at different points in time up until the target year of 2030. The goal of the vision is to improve the quality of life of the people of Namibia to the level of their counterparts in the developed world by 2030 (Republic of Namibia, 2004:9). It is designed as a broad, unifying vision that will help the country's five-year development plans from the Second National Development Plan through to the Seventh National Development Plan, and at the same time, provide direction to government ministries, the private sector, NGOs and local authorities.

Namibia Vision 2030 encourages capacity building investment. It wants Namibia to be transformed into a knowledge-based society. Partnership is recognised as a prerequisite for the achievement of dynamic, efficient and sustainable development. This involves partnership between government, communities, and civil society; partnership between different branches of government, with the private sector, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, and the international community; partnership between urban and rural societies and ultimately between all members of Namibian society (Republic of Namibia, 2004:11). Therefore the Omusati Regional Council needs to implement Namibia Vision 2030, which encourages partnership between various stakeholders, including communities in order to ensure integrated development planning. The Omusati Regional Council has to consider capacity building of communities as highlighted by Namibia Vision 2030, to ensure a sustainable development planning and service delivery system in the region.

In summary, Namibia Vision 2030 calls for an integrated development planning process, through which local communities are given a chance to voice their needs and aspirations as they look towards 2030. Communities need to be sensitised to this important document and its aspirations in order to understand it - communities will then be able to contribute to and implement its policies, otherwise Vision 2030 would remain unknown to communities and its purpose would be meaningless. The end result would be unsustainable development and poor community participation.

### **3.3.3. The Decentralisation Policy (1998)**

Chapter 12, Article 102<sup>12</sup> of the Namibian Constitution provides the basis for decentralisation by providing for the establishment of regional and local governments. Under decentralisation, the functions of government are to be decentralised in two ways: through delegation and devolution. Under delegation, the central government retains the ultimate responsibility for delegated functions while the regional councils and local authorities shall be responsible for all operational matters (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:21).

The decentralisation policy makes provision for community participation in regional development and in terms of service delivery. According to the decentralisation policy (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:3), the political leadership in Namibia has chosen the path of decentralisation to enhance and guarantee democratic participation of people at grass roots level in order to achieve sustainable democratic development. Functions, power, responsibilities, financial and human resources are to be devolved to Regional and Local Authority Councils (Nehova, 2002: 4).

As stated in the Decentralisation Policy (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:5), decentralisation seeks to transfer political, administrative, legislative, financial and planning authority from the central government to regional and local authority councils. The decentralisation policy strives to promote participatory democracy, in order to empower communities to make their own decisions and to determine their own destiny. It also aims at improving public sector management so that in the long run there will be a close linkage between taxes paid by the people and the quality of services provided.

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<sup>12</sup> 'For purposes of regional and local government, Namibia shall be divided into regional and local units, which shall consist of such regional and local authorities as may be determined by an Act of Parliament. Every organ of regional and local government shall have a Council as the principal governing body, freely elected in accordance with this Constitution and the Act of Parliament, with an executive and administration which shall carry out all lawful resolutions and policies of such Council, subject to this Constitution and any other relevant laws.'



In all, decentralisation in Namibia “*aims to ensure economic, cultural and socio-economic development; provide people at the grass roots level the opportunity to participate in their own decision-making and extend democracy to them as a right based on national ideas and values*” (Republic of Namibia, 1998b: 4).

Various levels and platforms for participation have been provided in the decentralisation policy. Amongst these are the establishment of various development committees, such as the Regional Development Coordination Committees, Village Development Committees, Constituency Development Committees, and Settlement Development Committees. The establishment, constitution and management of these committees are the responsibility of the Regional Council. Thus the Regional Council has the responsibility of ensuring community participation by ensuring the functionality and capacity building of these structures.

The Decentralisation Policy (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:14-16), has made provision that:

- ◆ “The *Regional Development Coordination Committees* are to be established in every region for the purpose of effective regional development planning and coordination” (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:14).
- ◆ “A *Village Development Committee* shall be established in every village for the purpose of effective coordination of the planning and development of the village (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:16).
- ◆ “A *Constituency Development Committee* is to be established in every region for the purpose of effective coordination of planning and development of the region at the constituency level” (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:15).
- ◆ “A *settlement development committee* shall be established in every settlement area for the purpose of effective coordination of the administration and development of the settlement” (Republic of Namibia, 1998a:16).

Through these bodies, communities at grass roots level have a better chance of presenting their own views, wishes and needs. In addition, through these bodies, communities can debate the decisions of the regional or village council or constituency offices. However, the main question is whether communities understand and are aware of the existence of these bodies. To what extent are these committees allowing communities to participate in decisions which affect them?

The slow implementation of the decentralisation policy slows the process of community participation in development planning. This is due to the fact that major decisions regarding the policy's implementation are still made at the centre, while no platform is provided at grass roots level, despite the existence of these structures. Those institutions that have not yet decentralised could also not be represented, leading to a lack of the information necessary for the integrated development planning and service delivery system.

In summary, the decentralisation policy makes provision for and promotes the implementation of community participation in the development planning and service delivery system. However the challenge is to spread awareness amongst the communities, especially the poor, to make them understand the concept and principles of community participation.

#### **3.3.4. The Regional Council Act, 22 of 1992 and Local Authority Act, 23 of 1992.**

The Regional Council Act (Act 22 of 1992) is the second highest policy document, besides the Constitution, which guides the functions and responsibilities of the Regional Council in Namibia. It has made provision whereby community participation is guaranteed. One such platform is the access of communities to Regional Council meetings. In terms of the Regional Council Act (Act 22 of 1992), Section 11(2a) stipulates that every meeting of the Regional Council shall be open to the public, except on any matter relating to the

appointment, promotion, conditions of employment and discipline of any particular staff member of a Regional Council, any offer to be made by the Regional Council by way of tender or otherwise for the purchase of any property or the institution of any legal proceedings by, or opposition of any legal proceedings instituted against a Regional Council.

This provision enables the community to participate in Regional Council decisions, although they do not have voting powers. This provision also enables the community to influence and direct the decisions of the Regional Council, based on their desired needs which must be addressed through the planning and implementation of development projects.

Section 13 of the Regional Council Act 22 of 1992 (Republic of Namibia, 1992: 17), Subsection 1, stipulates that minutes of a meeting of a Regional Council as confirmed in accordance with the provision of Section 12(3)<sup>13</sup>, excluding the minutes or part of such minutes relating to any matter referred to in Section 11(2) (a) considered during a period during which a meeting of the Regional Council was not open to the public, shall during ordinary hours be available for inspection by any person. This means that if communities have concerns regarding a decision taken by the Regional Council, with which they are not happy, or where they do not understand the reason why such decision was taken, they have the right to inspect the minutes, and be advised accordingly. This advice might include the demand to amend the decision or include some of the matters they feel may be necessary for effective implementation of the decision, including their participation in the implementation and monitoring of such a decision.

In terms of public meetings and for the purpose of discussing matters of public interest, Section 42(1) of the Regional Council Act (Act 22 of 1992) stipulates that the chairperson may, if he or she deems fit, and shall, upon a request in writing

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<sup>13</sup> 'The minutes of the proceedings at any meeting of a Regional Council shall be submitted at the next ordinary meeting of the Regional Council for confirmation under the signature of the chairperson and the chief regional officer'.

signed by at least 10 per cent of the voters registered in terms of the laws governing elections for members of the Regional Council in respect of such region, convene a meeting of the Regional Council to which the community is invited by public notice in any newspaper circulating within the region of such Regional Council and such other manner calculated to reach as many members of the public as possible for purposes of discussion of any matter of public interest set out in such a request, on such date and at such time and place within the region of such Regional Council as may be determined by the chairperson.

This stipulation has made provision for the large majority of the population and community within a region to participate in any decision that affects them. Communities have the mandate to call upon the chairperson to explain or answer their queries, provided they are doing it in an organised manner as required by law.

The main question that one may ask is whether the community is aware of such rights entitled to them. It would also be interesting to know whether communities have been sensitised by legal institutions such as the National Institute for Democracy and the Law Society of Namibia about their right to challenge the public institutions such as the Regional Council in terms of decisions taken, as provided for in the Acts.

For proper and effective community participation in development planning and service delivery systems, as stipulated above, communities need to be sensitised about their right to participate fully in any decision regarding development planning and service provision in the area.

The Local Authority Act, (Act 23 of 1992), is meant for the affairs of Local Authorities. However the Regional Council can also make use of it to run and manage the settlement area within their regions, as stipulated in the Regional Council Act (Act 22 of 1992) Section 32(1)(a,) subject to the provision of

Subsection (4)(a) (Republic of Namibia, 1992: 43). The provision of Section 30, except paragraphs (p), (s), (t), (v), (w), (x), (y) and (z) of Subsection (1), 33 to 62, 66 to 76, 78, 89, 90, and 93 of the Local Authority Act 1992, shall apply *mutatis mutandis* in respect of the management and control of a settlement area by a Regional Council, as if such Regional Council was a Village Council as defined in Section 1 of that Act, or such settlement was the area of such Village Council. It is therefore imperative for the Omusati Regional Council to make use of the Local Authority Act to manage and control the settlement areas in terms of the provision of basic services. All the services that should be provided, such as water, sewerage, refuse removal, and maintenance of infrastructures, should be carried out by the Omusati Regional Council. It is through the provision of these services that the Omusati Regional Council needs to find a way to engage community members to ensure its sustainability.

In summary, both Acts made provision for and encourage community participation in the development planning and service delivery system. Therefore the Omusati Regional Council needs to accelerate full implementation of community participation to ensure sustainable development planning.

### **3.3.5. The Regional Development Plan (2000)**

The Regional Development Plan (2000) is an integrated document in which all line ministries have expressed their needs and aspirations through programmes and projects which have been planned for every region. This document is similar to the Integrated Development Plan in South Africa. The Regional Development Plan is a working and guiding document of what every ministry has planned for a region.

By consulting this document, communities would know in advance what every ministry has planned for their region, and in particular their constituency or village. Against that, they can identify the most pressing needs so that they may be addressed as a priority. In that way, they can influence the implementation process of development projects for the provision of services to their areas.

Every region has its own Regional Development Plan. According to the Omusati Regional Development Plan (Republic of Namibia, 2000:7), access to basic services and infrastructure is seen as a fundamental right in the reduction of inequity. The Regional Development Plan (Republic of Namibia, 2000:8) indicated that in terms of the institutional sector, the Omusati Regional Council has limited financial resources, inadequate human resources and lacks infrastructure. This could be an opportunity to allow community participation in development planning, make use of indigenous knowledge, and thereby fill the gap of inadequate human resources.

According to the Regional Development Plan (Republic of Namibia, 2000:9) the vision and long-term goals of the Omusati Regional Council are:

*“to improve socio-economic living standards throughout the Omusati Region, through the establishment and upgrading of infrastructure, equal access to human, natural and financial resources, the sustainable utilisation of the natural environment, by building on the traditional heritage and emphasising the development of marginalised groups and gender issues, within a crime free environment”*

Based on the above vision and long-term goal statement, the long-term development objectives for the Omusati Region are to create a suitable framework for:

- ◆ the sustainable development of the full economic potential of the region’s agriculture, tourism, trade and industry;
- ◆ the sustainable management of the region’s natural resources;
- ◆ the development of the human resource potential of people of all ages and backgrounds; and
- ◆ the Regional Council to support, co-ordinate and spearhead regional development.

These are the provisions that give power and allow community participation in the development planning and service delivery system. The Omusati Regional Council, as a powerhouse at regional level, should sensitise the community to ensure its understanding of its right to participate and influence the decisions of the public institutions in implementing development projects and making decisions that affect them. Otherwise this document will not be fully implemented and the acceleration of community participation will remain a challenge.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

The chapter has highlighted the important policy documents that promote community participation by providing a participatory policy framework. International perspectives, as well as the national and regional perspectives that encourage and promote community participation, have been highlighted. The message emanating from all the policy frameworks is that both policies encourage and promote community participation in the development planning processes and service delivery system. It emphasises that the poor should be given a chance to determine their own destiny. The question remains, would the Omusati Regional Council live up to these policies?

The Omusati Regional Council needs to take up the challenge of implementing these policies even though it faces resource and human constraints. While considerable progress has been made in enhancing and developing elected institutions, a lot remains to be done, in particular within the sub-national level of government when it comes to the implementation of development policies related to community participation.

A sustainable development and service delivery system can only be achieved through the implementation of these important international, national and local policy frameworks, provided both officials and communities are aware of and understand these important policies.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE LOCAL CONTEXT – THE OMUSATI REGIONAL COUNCIL

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the local context of the study, a situation analysis of the Omusati Regional Council, the conduct of the Omusati Regional Council meetings, the budgeting process and allocation thereof, and the structures available for community participation. The situation analysis will also highlight the current link and relationship of available structures for community participation to each other and to the communities at large. The current line of communication between some of these bodies<sup>14</sup> and its impact on community participation in sustainable service delivery in the region will also be discussed. The chapter also looks at what currently informs community participation about the development planning process and service delivery system in the Omusati Region.

#### 4.2. Background

##### 4.2.1. The Omusati Regional Council

The Omusati Regional Council is one of the thirteen Regional Councils established in Namibia as per the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia and the Regional Council Act 22 of 1992. The Regional Councils represent the central government at regional level under the Ministry of Regional Local Government, Housing and Rural Development. The Omusati Regional Council is the regional head of the Omusati Region, which runs, manages and coordinates the development planning process and service provision to the region. It is responsible for the provision of services to all 12 constituencies of the region (Annexure 3).

Politically the Regional Council is headed by the Regional Governor. The Governor is the chairperson of the Regional Council and of the Regional Management Committee. Administratively, the Regional Council is headed by the Chief Regional Officer.

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<sup>14</sup> The discussion will focus on the line of communication between the Omusati Regional Council, Regional Development Coordination Committees and Constituency Development Committees only. But this does not mean that communication between other bodies is not as important as between the three mentioned.



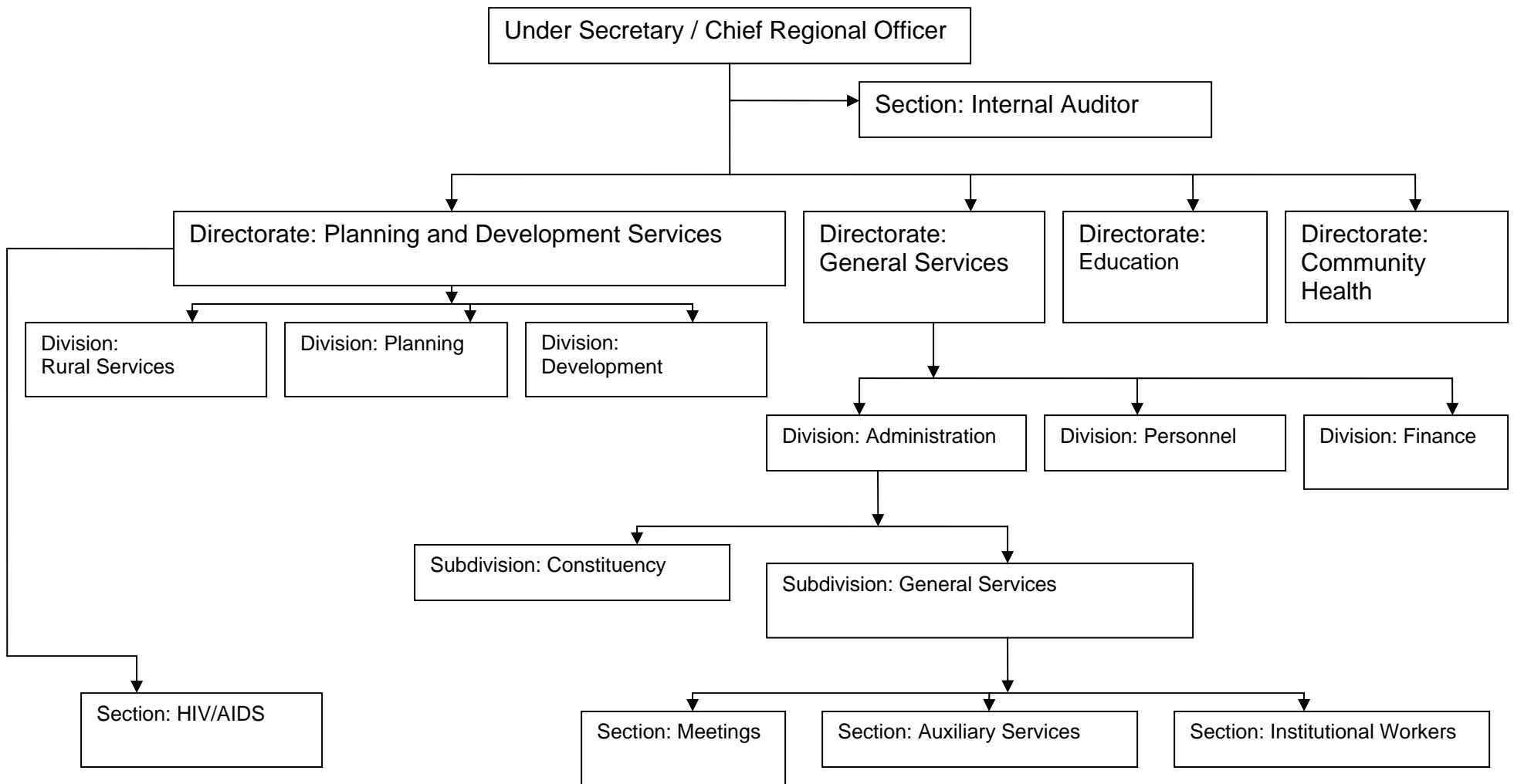


Figure: 4.1. Omusati Regional Council structure

As seen in figure 4.1 above, every directorate has a substructure which reports to it. The Directorate of Planning and Development Services is expected to be the biggest directorate as all other Line Ministries which are going to be decentralised will be hooked to that directorate for supervision and reporting. In this way, the chances of community participation are expanded as it will have a number of structures available to which it can report and voice its concerns. The challenge is that most of these decentralised institutions will be concentrated in the Outapi Town. This will shrink the base of community participation, as only those close to Outapi will have a better chance of accessing these institutions.

The Chief Regional Officer, as chairperson of the Regional Development Coordination Committee - a body responsible for development planning processes in the region, and where all Line Ministries, Agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations, and Community Based Organisations should be represented - assists the Omusati Regional Council to play a coordinating and monitoring role over Line Ministries, Agencies and offices operating and providing services to the communities in the Omusati Region.

The Omusati Regional Council, as a regional head, is responsible for listening to, receiving and finding joint solutions to community problems. It is also responsible for identifying projects or services which the community could not identify but which are necessary to them. Community problems are addressed by the Omusati Regional Council, either through its development budget or through other Line Ministries or the development budgets of Agencies. A joint effort between the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries and other offices is therefore required to ensure effective and efficient service delivery in the region. To ensure effective and efficient service delivery, the Omusati Regional Council has the power to pass and implement by-laws necessary for enforcing and regulating the implementation of development projects.

#### **4.2.2. Conduct of the Omusati Regional Council meetings**

Provision has been made in the Regional Council Act 22 of 1992, section 11 subsections 1 and 2 on the composition and the sitting of the Omusati Regional Council meetings. Subsection 2 (a) stipulates that every meeting of the Omusati Regional Council shall be open to the public (communities) (Republic of Namibia, 1992:15). The chairperson of the Omusati Regional Council is the Regional Governor. If the office of the chairperson is vacant, the Chief Regional Officer may at any time or, at the request in writing signed by not less than half of the members of the Omusati Regional Council, shall within 14 days after receipt of such request or, if the National Council is in session, within 14 days after such session, convene a special meeting of the Omusati Regional Council. A notice signed by the Chief Regional Officer and containing the time, date and place of, and the matters to be dealt with at every meeting of the Omusati Regional Council, shall be delivered to every member of the Omusati Regional Council so as to reach such members at least 72 hours before such meeting (Republic of Namibia, 1992:15).

Section 11, subsection 2(b) of the Regional Council Act 22 of 1992 states that the Omusati Regional Council may allow the Chief Regional Officer or any other officer or employees of the Omusati Regional Council or other interested person to attend any proceedings of the Omusati Regional Council and take part in any such proceedings, but such Regional Officer or other officer or person shall not have the right to vote in respect of any decision of the Omusati Regional Council.

Despite these provisions, the perception and the understanding amongst many officials at the Omusati Regional Council and in other Line Ministries, is that the Omusati Regional Council meetings shall only be attended by the Councillors. No community members, including other officials, whether from the Omusati Regional Council or other agencies, are allowed to attend and take part in such meetings. This flawed perception and understanding has prevented communities and other officers from participating and contributing to the discussion and decisions of the Omusati Regional Council, which in a way affects them as beneficiaries.

The meeting schedule for the Omusati Regional Council meetings is drawn up at the beginning of every year. Despite this, the meeting schedules are not shared with other officials from other Line Ministries or agencies. It is only shared with the Councillors and head of directorates in the Omusati Regional Council office. Officials working in the constituency offices, if they do not request the meeting schedule for the Omusati Regional Council meetings through their Councillor, will not receive a copy of the Omusati Regional Council meeting schedule. Therefore they cannot share with interested communities or persons in their constituencies as to when the Omusati Regional Council will be having a meeting for them to attend or share information necessary for development planning or services provision in their areas.

Though the Regional Council Act 22 of 1992 made provision for notices or agenda for the meetings, there is no provision made for these notices to be shared with interested community members or institutions. Line Ministries and agencies can only receive an invitation if the meeting is to have a discussion concerning their ministry or office. It becomes a problem if there is not sufficient information required for such a discussion. To ensure proper coordination, information flow regarding the Omusati Regional Council meetings needs to be encouraged to enable the community to participate.

Sensitisation of the community members about their rights regarding these meetings was not done. Community members or individuals with good project ideas or proposals, find it difficult to share their information with the Councillors, who in turn need to be able to share this information with other community members in their constituencies.

The Omusati Regional Council is the highest body, which can effect and affect any decision taken on regional development planning. Communities can make use of this body to effect and affect decisions taken in terms of development planning which may negatively affect their future. This can be done by attending Regional Council meetings. However access to meetings is limited. The communities can also have a positive influence over decisions taken at

the national level through the Omusati Regional Council. Due to a lack of awareness and understanding about the function of this body, beside the provision of services in the region, there is no way the community can make use of this body to their advantage.

The issue of language difficulty also poses a challenge for community participation. While communities are allowed to attend the Omusati Regional Council meetings, legislative and policy information is often available only in English. This makes the process inaccessible in many ways and those who do not have English skills are disadvantaged.

An effort was not made to sensitise communities and officials on their rights to attend and participate in these meetings. Some of the reasons (as highlighted by the communities and officials) which may have led to community non-participation or in attendance include the facts that:

- ◆ No publicity was generated regarding the Omusati Regional Council meetings,
- ◆ Some Councillors might feel embarrassed when presenting issues in front of community members,
- ◆ Sometimes issues discussed in the Omusati Regional Council meetings are not relevant to communities, and it becomes boring to them, and
- ◆ Line Ministry representatives felt they were not obliged to attend the Omusati Regional Council meetings. Therefore they can only attend at the request of the Omusati Regional Council.

These issues need to be addressed to enable community participation in the development planning and service delivery system of the Omusati Regional Council.

#### **4.2.3. Budgeting process**

Through the Decentralisation Policy (1998a/b), the Omusati Regional Council now plays a significant role in the budgeting and implementation of development programmes and projects. Various regional projects that include

planning, surveying, and servicing of new town and settlement areas form part of the development budget and are aimed at improving service delivery in rural areas (Republic of Namibia, 2006:xi). The budgeting process is based on the budgeting cycle of a three-year rolling budget<sup>15</sup> as adopted by the Namibian Government and the Decentralisation Policy. This is to allow line ministries to have the opportunity to make future allocations and prioritise their programmes and projects accordingly. The budget allocation would depend on the indicative ceiling for that financial year which has to be communicated to every Line Ministry (Republic of Namibia, 2004:iv). The three-year rolling development budget comprises the estimated expenditure on development projects for the financial year ending 31 March every year (Republic of Namibia, 2004:ii). The development budget limits itself to development and capital expenditures. Development expenditures are expenditures allocated to development projects of the public investment programme. This includes payments for acquisition of capital assets, buildings, land, and durable goods such as machinery, offices and technical equipment and construction related expenditure including payment to firms and contractors for the construction of roads, buildings, and other related services.

The main source of funding for development projects at the Omusati Regional Council are the Government of the Republic of Namibia (internal financing) and donor agencies which channel funds directly to the sectors (external funding) (Republic of Namibia, 2004:ii). There is no own source or fund available for the Omusati Regional Council.

Both operational (recurrent<sup>16</sup>) and development budgets are proposed by the Omusati Regional Council, and by various Line Ministries and agencies. Every Line Ministry operating in the region, including the Omusati Regional Council, has the responsibility to draft its recurrent budget and submit it directly to its mother ministry for funding.

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<sup>15</sup> The three-year rolling budget is the budgeting process whereby the budget for the current and the next two financial years are made. However every year line ministries are expected to submit their budget proposals.

<sup>16</sup> A recurrent budget is the payment to individuals and consumables/non-durable goods to be utilised in the process of government services/operations (Republic of Namibia, 2001: ii)

The situation is however different when it comes to the development budget. The Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries' development budget for development projects in the region has to be discussed and agreed upon by the Omusati Regional Council upon advice given by the Regional Development Coordination Committee. It has to bear a signature of the Chief Regional Officer in order to be accepted by the National Planning Commission Secretariat as a regional budget. The reason for the signature of the Chief Regional Officer is to confirm that the proposed projects for services or other project activities are from the region and were agreed upon by the Regional Development Coordination Committee in the region.

Despite this guideline by National Planning Commission Secretariat, projects are still going through to National Planning Commission Secretariat bearing the signature of the Chief Regional Officer even though they have not been discussed and approved by the Regional Development Coordination Committees or the Omusati Regional Council. This is so because other line ministries receive the information on the budget preparation and submission date very late, leaving no time to discuss these project proposals with Regional Development Coordination Committees or the Omusati Regional Council. The Chief Regional Officer does not wish to deprive the region of the services or benefits that come with these projects - he therefore signs the project proposals document for submission to the National Planning Commission Secretariat for possible funding. However this move leads to neglect of the priorities of communities as projects are formulated at ministerial level.

As mentioned earlier no other sources of development funding exist at the Omusati Regional Council, except the 5% collected from property evaluation by the Town Council. All development projects depend on the Central Government for funding. There are no strategies developed to source funds from donor funding or other institution or communities, by the Omusati Regional Councils or communities themselves. Mechanisms need to be developed to generate the region's own funds and avoid dependency on the Central Government for funding.

In most cases communities indicated their willingness to assist fully or partially with some of the development projects. However on several occasions their assistance was turned down, the reason being that Government is not prepared to share costs with the communities.

A practical example highlighted during the focus group study was that of the Tsandi communities who collected funds for the upgrading and tarring of the Outapi-Okahao gravel road in 1999 to 2000. The Road Authority rejected this project. Though this was a huge project that requires a large amount of money, collections from the community could have been used to implement other small projects for the benefit of the communities. This would encourage future participation and contributions. Turning them away was a defeat and a discouragement for future participation and contribution.

The Omusati Regional Council needs to find a way to integrate community contributions into a development fund to support community projects. A number of community members have approached the Omusati Regional Council seeking funds for their projects, however on many occasions they were turned away or were directed to the Ministry of Trade and Industry or banking institutions for loans.

Due to various conditions set out by these institutions such as collateral for one to get a loan, community members could not get any assistance as they lack the required collateral. Therefore the Omusati Regional Council needs to establish revolving funds to assist communities in their endeavour to pursue their community projects. It also needs to find ways how to sources funds from donor funding to benefit the communities of Omusati Region.

The Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries follow the development budget cycle as suggested by the Ministry of Finance, seen in figure 4.2 below:



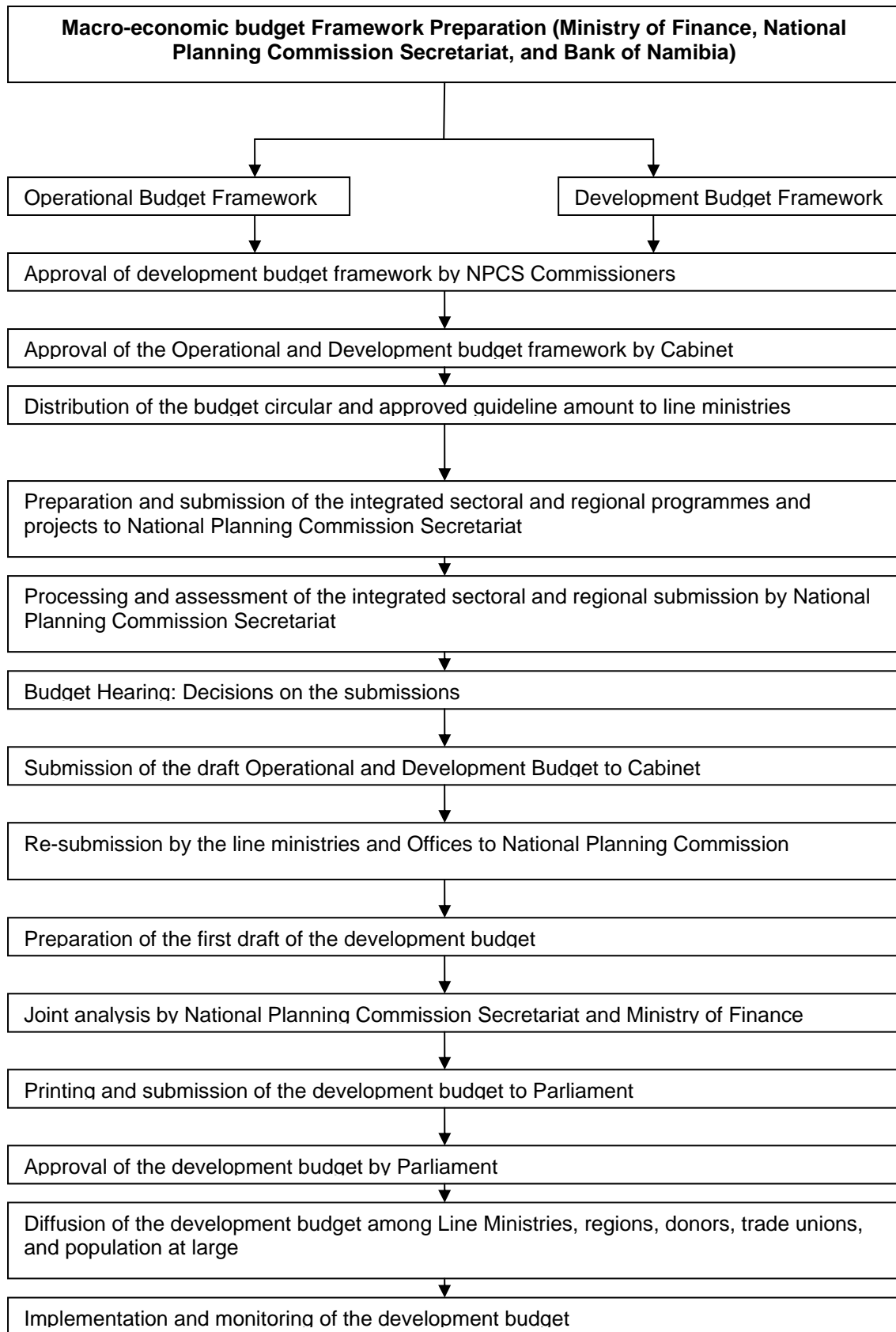


Figure: 4.2. Development Budget Cycle (Source: Republic of Namibia, 2001:ix)

Following this process of development budgeting, the recurrent expenditure, though prepared at the same time as the development budget, is in most cases not in line with the development budget, making it difficult for the officials to plan, share, and discuss project information with the communities as stakeholders.

In the recurrent expenditure budget, no provision is made for community empowerment and skills development, beside the capacity enhancement for the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries staff members. There is also no provision made for the empowerment and building capacity of community structures, which could foster community participation, such as Regional Development Coordination Committees, Constituency Development Committees, Settlement Development Committees and Development Centre Committees. Though the officials want to share the necessary information regarding the development planning process of service delivery, they could not do so as there is no financial means to do it.

It is not easy to make provision in the development budget for capacity building of staff members or communities as this is not a recurrent budget. However exposure and participation of community and staff members in the implementation of these projects would develop their capacity. To ensure this, provision needs to be made in the contracts with consultants and contractors when implementing development projects to make provision for capacity building of communities and staff members where necessary.

The budgeting process information is not disseminated to communities or to community structures such as the Constituency Development Committees, Settlement Development Committees and Development Centre Committees. This has created an impression that there are sufficient funds to finance all the projects proposed by the communities through their Councillors.

Information as to what funds are available for every region (ceiling amount) reaches the Regional Council only after they have submitted their project proposals to the National Planning Commission Secretariat. Sometimes the

Regional Council only gets to hear this information during the budget hearing process.

If the allocated budget is not sufficient to cover the proposed projects in their entirety, the official attending the budget hearing (usually the Chief Regional Officer), has to cut out some of the projects. Due to the time constraints which face budget re-submission, this information is never communicated back to the community structures to review their priorities. In such a situation, officials are left with no option but to make decisions on behalf of the communities, a matter which would affect future participation by the community in the budgeting process as their priorities are not met. Feedback on the projects cut off due to budget constraints need to be channelled back to the grass root structures especially the Constituency Development Committees and Village Development Committees. This is the reason why every financial year the Constituency Development Committees present a new list of projects instead of addressing last year's priorities because they don't receive feedback on what was accepted and what was rejected and the reasons given.

Uneven distribution of the projects budget amongst constituencies is also experienced. Uneven distribution is caused by insufficient budget allocated to the Omusati Regional Council. Due to a lack of sufficient funds to cater for ongoing projects and new projects in all constituencies, one constituency with ongoing projects might benefit for the next three to four years. This affects the participation of communities in the development planning process and service delivery system as their priorities could not benefit from the development fund. There is a need to maintain a balance to ensure that both constituencies benefit in terms of the available development budget for the region.

#### **4.3. Community participation structures**

To understand the role which community structures play in terms of the development planning process and service delivery system, as well as community participation, it is wise to highlight these bodies, their composition, functions and lines of communication.

### **4.3.1. The Regional Development Coordination Committee**

*“For the purpose of effective regional development planning and coordination, there shall be established in every region a Regional Development Coordination Committee”* (Republic of Namibia, 1998b:69). This is the technical body which controls development programmes and projects in the region.

#### **4.3.1.1 Composition**

The Regional Development Coordination Committee is composed of the Chief Regional Officer, who shall be the chairperson, heads of line ministries in the region, one designated member of each local authority in the region and one representative each of the Non-Governmental Organisations and Community-Based Organisations operating in the region (Republic of Namibia, 1998b: 69).

#### **4.3.1.2 Functions and responsibilities**

The Regional Development Coordination Committees shall be responsible for the effective planning and coordination of development in the region by performing the following functions:

- ◆ facilitates the establishment of sound management information systems in the region;
- ◆ prepares and evaluates development proposals or plans for the region for approval by the Regional Council;
- ◆ supervises and oversees, monitors and evaluates the implementation of the development plans approved by the Regional Council;
- ◆ discusses, evaluates and monitors the implementation of regional projects, which are funded by the Central Government;
- ◆ offers guidance to Constituency Development Committees;
- ◆ coordinates the development planning of the region and integrates all the development proposals from Constituency Development Committees for presentation to the Regional Council;

- ◆ is responsible for monitoring day-to-day emergency occurrences including natural and man-made disasters and takes account of the number of people affected by such emergency occurrences;
- ◆ is the secretariat to service the Regional Council for the purpose of planning and development;
- ◆ generally monitors the implementation of projects and other activities undertaken by Government and Local Authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations and Community-Based Organisation in the region; and
- ◆ carries out any other duty as may be authorised by the Regional Council or any law (Republic of Namibia, 1998b: 69-70).

This body (the Regional Development Coordination Committee) is based at the Omusati Regional Council, with its functions as stated above, but the large majority of the communities are not aware of this body and its functions. As seen from its functions, no provision was made to assist and disseminate development planning information to communities through existing structures such as the Constituency Development Committee. Though this body has a responsibility to guide and assist the Constituency Development Committees at constituency level, this has not taken place. Members of the Constituency Development Committees interviewed during this study indicated that they do not know that the Regional Development Coordination Committee exists. No one explained to them how this body functions, and what assistance they can receive from this body.

All along, the Constituency Development Committee members believed that if they had any problems or project proposals, they could only submit them to the Councillor, who is their chairperson. Information was not disseminated and shared with them regarding the functions and the line of reporting to the Regional Development Coordination Committee.

Further provision was not made in the composition of this body (Regional Development Coordination Committee) to have representatives from communities who are the beneficiaries of the proposed plans and projects.

Secretaries or the chairperson of the Constituency Development Committees who are supposed to be members of the Regional Development Coordination Committee, are not members. Therefore community participation at this level is excluded. Councillors who receive project proposals from the community members and Constituency Development Committee members are not allowed to take part in the meetings of the Regional Development Coordination Committee, as this is a technocratic body. Thus information from the community hardly ever reaches the Regional Development Coordination Committee.

Attendance of some of the members of Regional Development Coordination Committee at meetings is very poor. The reason for this is that Line Ministry representatives feel they are not obliged to attend Regional Development Coordination Committee meetings or Regional Council meetings. This is because the Permanent Secretaries of Line Ministries have not appointed or instructed these staff members in writing to become members of Regional Development Coordination Committees and to attend meetings as required by the decentralisation policy, to ensure a meaningful contribution as well as an integrated development planning and service delivery system.

These institutional problems lead to either a delay or a failure of project implementation, as the required information from various institutions could not be obtained before implementation or after implementation. Such a situation leads to a disintegrated development planning process, which will not ensure sustainable development. Information cannot flow, as there are no representatives of the Constituency Development Committees to take back and share information with other committee members regarding the right way to formulate and implement projects such as clinics or schools which require joint effort.

#### **4.3.2. Constituency Development Committees**

The decentralisation policy makes provision for the establishment of the Constituency Development Committees for effective planning and development of the region at a constituency level.

#### **4.3.2.1 Composition**

The Constituency Development Committee is composed of the chairperson who is the constituency Councillor, two members of the recognised Traditional Authority (headman) in that area, one representative each of the Non-Governmental Organisations, a representative of government service providers in the area in respect of each sector, three persons with disability representing people with disability in the constituency and two youth members. At least one third of the members of the Constituency Development Committee shall be women (Republic of Namibia, 1998b:71).

The members shall elect amongst themselves a secretary who shall be responsible for recording the proceedings of the committee meetings.

#### **4.3.2.2 Functions and responsibilities**

The Constituency Development Committee, as stated in the Decentralisation Policy (Republic of Namibia, 1998b:72-73) is responsible for the following functions:

- ◆ facilitating the establishment of community based management of information systems in the area,
- ◆ identify and assess community needs or problems to be considered for both constituency development proposals or plans and capital projects,
- ◆ prepare and evaluate development proposals or plans for the constituency for submission to the Regional Council,
- ◆ initiate, encourage, support and participate in community self-help projects and mobilise people, material, financial and technical assistance in relation thereto,
- ◆ monitor and evaluate the implementation of the development plans as approved by the Regional Council and write reports,
- ◆ serve as a communication channel between the Regional Council and the people (communities) at the constituency, and
- ◆ carries out any other function which may be imposed by the law or incidental to the above.

The current situation is that this body is found in some constituencies while in others it is found by nature of the existence of the institutions, but nobody was appointed to these bodies. Although stipulated in the Decentralisation Policy, most members of Constituency Development Committees interviewed during the study period were not conversant with the terms of references of the functions of this body. The Omusati Regional Council and Regional Development Coordination Committee did not perform their responsibility of capacitating and guiding these bodies, and making sure that they function in all 12 constituencies. This has prevented communities from expressing their views, wishes and aspirations for their constituencies.

The line of reporting to those that do exist and are functional is vague. The link between community members and the Constituency Development Committees is very weak. Of the community members interviewed during the study period, a large number indicated that they did not know about the existence of the Constituency Development Committees. This is an indication that this body is not functioning, and that information was not disseminated to the communities about its existence and functions.

The right of the communities to attend Constituency Development Committee meetings and the right of the Constituency Development Committees to be accessed by the community was not fully explained. Members of the Constituency Development Committees also believe that community members are not allowed to take part in these meetings. However this could also be the fault of the policy that does not stipulate the extent to which communities can be allowed to participate in these meetings. It can also be blamed on the Omusati Regional Council for not sensitising and sharing information with the communities and Constituency Development Committee members about their role and responsibilities. Thus a number of Constituency Development Committee members are of the understanding that information discussed and shared during the meetings cannot be shared with anybody else besides Constituency Development Committee members. They treated it as confidential information.



The composition of some of the Constituency Development Committee does not reflect the true picture as stipulated in the policy. Thus the participation of some community members, for example people with disabilities, is not represented in most Constituency Development Committees.

#### **4.3.3. Settlement Development Committees**

In all the settlements visited, there were no settlement development committees. All settlements are currently served by the Constituency Development Committees. Settlement Development Committees are supposed to run the affairs of a settlement area. The absence of such a committee has created confusion between the function of the Settlement Development Committees and the Constituency Development Committees. Thus the large majority of members appointed to the Constituency Development Committees are those within the settlement area, in most cases. To avoid confusion, and to ensure community participation at both levels (constituency and settlement level), Settlement Development Committees need to be established.

#### **4.3.4. Village Development Committees**

In the Omusati Region, two Village Councils were established recently but are not functional. Therefore there are no Village Development Committees established in the two Village Councils, Oshikuku and Ruacana. Thus the participation of community members through this body does not occur, although it is one of the necessary community structures. The lessons learned from the existing structure such as the Constituency Development Committees can be applied to ensure the functionality of the Village Development Committees and thereby ensure community participation in service provision at village level.

#### **4.3.5. Development Centre Committees**

Development Centre Committees are committees which are supposed to be established at village level in rural areas, whereby community members within that village or a group of villages, elect or appoint some community members to assist and manage the developmental affairs of such a village. An elected

chairperson, secretary and treasurer from within the community itself can head this committee. In the Omusati Region, such a body exists only in the Ogongo Constituency whereby 16 Development Centres were established.

Community participation in terms of services delivery at village level in many constituencies is limited and is not effective. These types of institutional structures need to be in place for community members to fully participate in the decision-making process that affects them at grass roots level.

#### **4.4. Communication and line of reporting**

##### **4.4.1. Line of reporting between Regional Councils, Regional Development Coordination Committees, and Constituency Development Committees**

Both communities and officials have indicated a problem with the lines of reporting and feedback. The lines of reporting between these three bodies are not clearly defined. The current practice is that communities report their project proposals to their constituency Councillors, despite the establishment of the Constituency Development Committees in constituencies, which is supposed to serve as a platform for community participation. Awareness was not created concerning the functions and responsibilities of this body and its relation to community members. Community members are supposed to report through Development Centres<sup>17</sup>, to Constituency Development Committees which then report to Regional Development Coordination Committees. Although these structures exist in some part of the region, they are not effective. Communities report their problems to their Councillors in an individual capacity or when a Councillor visits them concerning other issues. This has prevented information flow, as no one is responsible for channelling information to other bodies like the Regional Development Coordination Committees, Constituency Development Committees, Settlement Development Committees, and Development Centre Committees.

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<sup>17</sup> In other regions like Oshana, Development Centres are formed with a combination of a number of villages (two to three) to tackle development problems within those villages.

The Constituency Development Committee currently does not report to the Regional Development Coordination Committee. They report to the Councillor who is its chairperson. The Councillor reports to the Omusati Regional Council, instead of reporting to the Regional Development Coordination Committee, which is then supposed to report to the Omusati Regional Council after a thorough and critical analysis of the proposed projects. Councillors do not report to the Regional Development Coordination Committee, due to the fact that they are not members of the Regional Development Coordination Committee. There is no provision made in the policy document for either a chairperson or a secretary of the Constituency Development Committee to be a member of the Regional Development Coordination Committee, for reporting purposes, and for representation of the Constituency Development Committee in the Regional Development Coordination Committee meetings.

The necessary feedbacks from the Regional Development Coordination Committee to the Constituency Development Committee do not occur, especially when it comes to the unfeasibility or the cut-off of some prioritized development projects necessary for service delivery due to budget constraints. This leaves the Constituency Development Committee members with the impression that all their prioritized project proposals have been accepted and will be implemented.

This erroneous impression lead to poor planning, as every financial year Constituency Development Committees propose new projects, while other prioritised projects that were not catered for in the previous financial year due to budget constraints, remain unaddressed.

The Regional Development Coordination Committee, as the regional highest technical body, is responsible for scrutinising and prioritising all development projects for the region and advising the Omusati Regional Council accordingly. It is supposed to guide the Constituency Development Committees in project proposals, and provide capacity to members of the Constituency Development Committees for an effective development planning process. Once the Regional Development Coordination Committee has finished studying the regional priorities, it would then, with the approval of the

Omusati Regional Council, to forward these prioritised projects to the National Planning Commission Secretariat for possible funding.

The line of reporting and feedback between Constituency Development Committees, Regional Development Coordination Committees, Regional Council and National Planning Commission Secretariat is not effective. Sensitisation on the line of reporting needs to be re-examined. Proper guidance on the line of reporting needs to be given to these bodies, as there is no guidance as to who has the responsibility of reporting to whom, and on what issues.

Committees seem to lack adequate links with communities and are not made aware of concerns related to the ministerial implementation of legislation and the performance of officials. Where a submission is made by those who are clear about the rules of the process, feedback is limited, and this discourages participation while inculcating disillusionment and apathy amongst the community.

#### **4.4.2. Current line of communication and feedback**

As seen in figure 4.3 below, the Village Development Committees, Ward Development Committees and Local Authority Development Committees are currently not reporting to either the Constituency Development Committees, Regional Development Coordination Committee, or Regional Council, thus in the figure below they are not connected to any of the committees. This poses a problem, because it is not clear whether it is a policy problem or an institutional problem. For proper communication and information flow, this need to be corrected. Information need to flow top-down and bottom-up, horizontal and vertical if the Omusati Regional Council wants to ensure effective participation. With insufficient information one cannot plan properly. Therefore the Omusati Regional Council which is the umbrella body in the region with the responsibility of managing development planning and service delivery systems need to find a solution to this communication problem between various institutions, development structures and communities to ensure effective and efficient community participation.

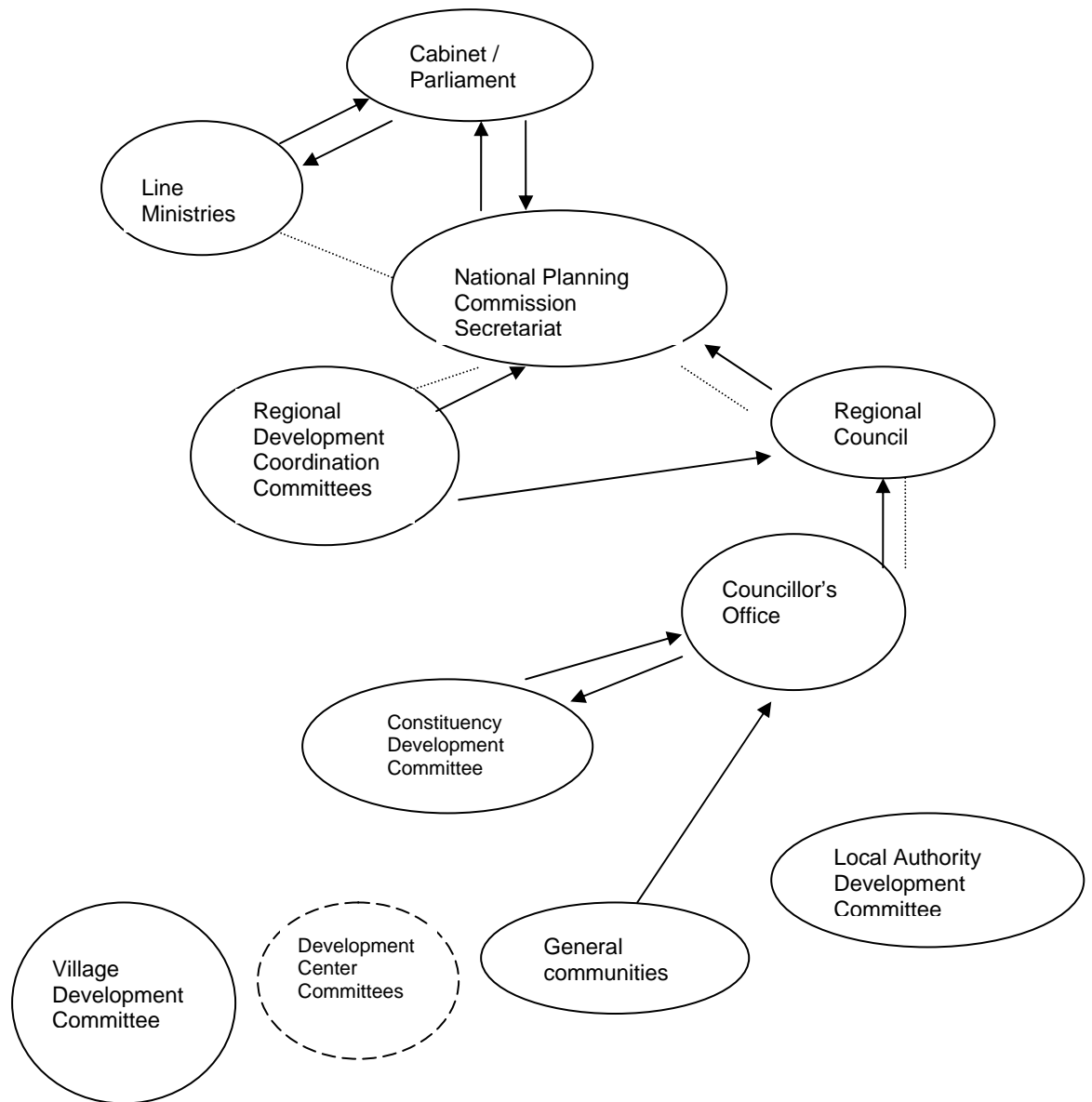


Figure: 4.3. Communication channels between various development structures

#### 4.4.3. Ideal line of reporting and feedback

The ideal line of communication, reporting and feedback is where information and feedback flows in a clear channel of communication from bottom to top and vice versa. Through this type of communication, information flows from all structures and institutions. This would improve the development planning process and delays in planning and implementation of development projects for service delivery will be minimised. The ideal communication, reporting and feedback channel is highlighted in figure 4.4 below.

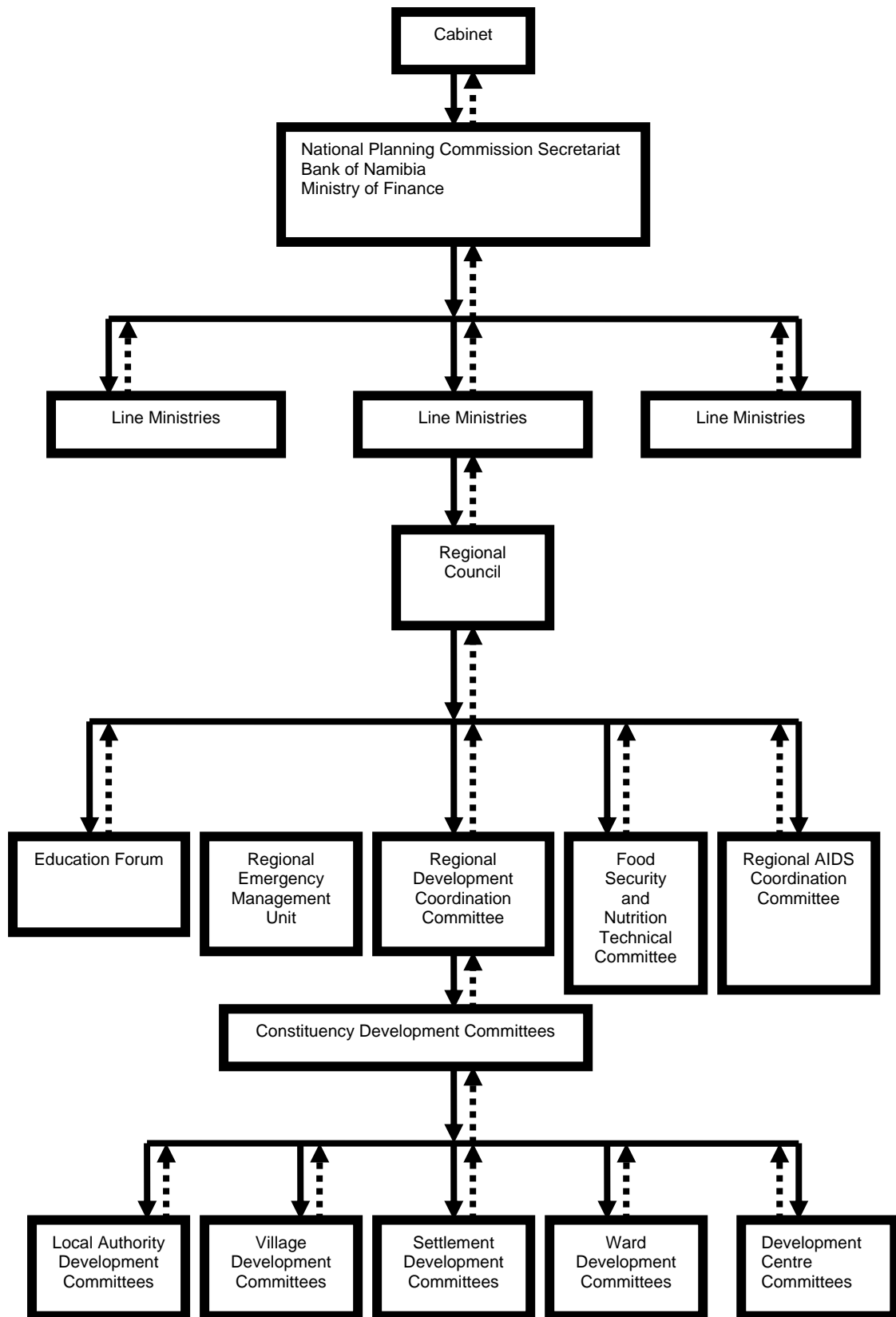


Figure: 4.4. Ideal line of reporting and feedback

Various structures that enable community participation have been discussed. It is necessary to look at other views and tensions emanating from institutions and various structural problems.

#### **4.5. Views and tensions between the Regional Council and Line Ministries and Agencies**

Different views and tensions still exist between the Regional Councils and the Lines Ministries and offices operating in the region. The decentralisation policy stipulates the delegation and devolution of the functions of some Line Ministries and offices to the Omusati Regional Council. Some of the Line Ministries and offices do not decentralise due to the fear of the unknown. Other Line Ministries, although they have decentralised, are not accountable to the Omusati Regional Council. They are still controlled by their mother ministry. This has created tension between the Omusati Regional Council and these offices or Line Ministries in terms of control and supervision. It has also created confusion as these offices have two bosses to which they report (Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries).

The other tension that exists is that some of the officials heading these institutions cannot take decisions without the approval of their mother ministry. Delays are always experienced in terms of service delivery to communities, as approval takes some time. Line Ministries and offices operating in the region still have the perception that they are accountable to their mother ministries, because that is where they receive their operational and development budget. The line of reporting between the Omusati Regional Council and these institutions is not clear as to what issues should be reported to the Omusati Regional Council and what issues should be reported to their mother ministries.

Administratively, some of the constituency offices in the region are headed by the Chief Control Officers, while others are headed by Chief Clerks. Most heads of Line Ministries are senior officials, and a few junior officials. In terms of the supervisory role played by the Omusati Regional Council through the constituency offices, tensions exist in terms of seniority. The directors might

feel disempowered by being ordered to perform a certain function by a junior person such as a Chief Control Officer or one of the Clerks. There is tension surrounding who is supposed to report to whom. The participation of some of these people in the planning process is negatively affected. It is also important to look at the current practice of sharing information with communities.

#### **4.6. What informs community participation?**

Policy originates in government ministries where experts draw up legislation to deal with problems that a particular ministry encounters. Whilst in theory it is possible for the community to participate at this level, in practice the complexity and speed of the legislative and policy-making processes diminish such possible participation.

The current practice is that communities receive information about development activities which are happening or about to happen in their locality. This information is disseminated at a public meeting conducted by the Councillors of the constituencies. In this type of participation, communities are informed of what takes place or is going to take place and have no power to influence the decision taken.

The other approach used by the Omusati Regional Council is placation (Theron, 2005:118), whereby a few individual members of the communities are consulted or appointed to committees such as the Land Board to make decisions on behalf of the large majority of the community. These individual members sometimes do not give feedback to the majority of the community on the decision taken, leaving communities with no information on the development planning process or services intended for their localities.

A one-way, top-down flow of information is still practised at the Omusati Regional Council. The communities are not informed of their rights, responsibilities and options available to them. In this case the community does not have much say in the decision but rather has to choose from the available choices.



As per the current practice no information flow from the above-mentioned committees to community members occurs. Neither does information flow from the community to these committees unless maybe through the Councillors. These type of participation limits the large majority of the community, especially the rural poor, when it comes to getting and giving information on time and having a say in the decision taken. Thus community participation in the Omusati Region is limited to those in or close to growth points such as the settlement areas, as opposed to those living deep in the rural areas. Information is not being shared and disseminated deep into the rural communities, making it difficult for them to make meaningful contributions to the services delivered to them.

#### **4.7. Implementation of development projects**

Most development projects identified at the Omusati Regional Council and funded under the Development Fund are implemented through consultants and contractors. Tenders are advertised and those with the technical and required qualifications will be appointed to carry out the development projects within the available budget.

Previously, contractors used their own personnel and their own labourers. However there has been a gradual change, which compels the contractor to use local people in terms of labour. It is up to the contractor's discretion to implement labour intensive methods or to use technology to implement the projects. In most cases, as contractors want to finish the project within a given time frame, they tend to use less labour and rely more on technology. Applying this type of project implementation strategy does not allow for community participation in the first place and it does not transfer maximum knowledge to the communities.

Consultants and contractors can also play a crucial role in knowledge transfer. The Omusati Regional Council needs to ensure that contractors do not carry out projects by themselves, but that they do so together with communities in order to ensure their participation and the transfer of complicated technical knowledge in a way that is appropriate to communities. Contractors should be

tasked with on-site skills training for community members taking part in the implementation of the projects. This would empower the community thereby leading to the sustainability of the project delivered to the community. It will also ensure community participation through project implementation.

To ensure this, community expectations with regard to the role and the responsibility of the consultant during the implementation of the project, should be clarified from the beginning. The Omusati Regional Council must ensure that early agreement is reached between the consultant, the Council and the communities if it is to ensure community participation through project implementation.

#### **4.8. Conclusion**

Chapter 4 has highlighted the current situation of the Omusati Regional Council and the important platform that could facilitate the participation of community members in the development planning process and service delivery system in the region. Non-existence or poor functionality of community participation structures would greatly affect community participation in the development planning process of the region.

For effective and efficient implementation of the development planning process at the Omusati Regional Council, various issues need to be addressed. Sensitisation of communities about the conduct of the Regional Council meetings and the rights of communities to these meetings needs to be implemented. Community structures such as Development Centre Committees, Ward Development Committees, Village Development Committees, Local Authority Development Committees, and Constituency Development Committees need to be established where they do not exist, or reconstituted where they do exist.

Information needs to be disseminated about the functions and responsibilities of these bodies to community members in order to enable the community to meaningfully participate in the development planning process and service provision in the region.

Capacity building for Settlement Development Committees, Constituency Development Committees, and Regional Development Coordination Committee should be conducted in order to ensure an effective and efficient development planning process and service delivery system in Omusati Region. The line of reporting between various structures needs to be clearly defined. Terms of reference should be explained to the members of Settlement Development Committees, Constituency Development Committees, and Regional Development Coordination Committee in order to eliminate the problem of non-participation and to ensure meaningful contributions.

Information about the availability of funding (ceiling amount) needs to be made known to the Omusati Regional Council and Constituency Development Committees beforehand to enable them to prioritise their projects better.

Misunderstanding and tensions that exist amongst Line Ministries and between Line Ministries and the Omusati Regional Council need to be resolved, to ensure community participation. An assessment of historical and cultural factors needs to be conducted as an analysis of obstacles to community participation would be incomplete without an assessment of the limitations of government mechanisms to facilitate community participation.

Community expectations with regard to the role and the responsibility of the consultant during the implementation of the projects, should be clarified from the beginning. The Omusati Regional Council must ensure that early agreement is reached between the consultant, the Council and the communities if it is to ensure community participation through project implementation. The transfer of complicated technical knowledge in a way appropriate to communities should be ensured for sustainability of development projects and services.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS AND SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM**

**5.1. Introduction**

The purpose of the study is to assess the extent to which communities participate in the development planning process and service delivery system. This is so because since the implementation of the decentralization policy, there is little empirical evidence to illustrate the extent to which the community is participating in the development planning and service delivery systems. Thus the study was designed in such a way that it would capture the understanding of the concept of community participation by the communities and the staff of the Omusati Regional Council, as well as the implementation of community participation in decision-making and project implementation. The following are the findings as per the questions used during interviews, focus group discussions and comments based on participatory observations. The challenges which face the Omusati Regional Council and the areas which need to be improved to accelerate community participation are highlighted.

**5.2. Analysis of community's and officials' responses (Annexure 1)**

**5.2.1 Question 1**

This question was based on the understanding and definition of community participation by the officials and community members. The finding is that there are mixed feelings and understanding about community participation amongst the people who were interviewed through personal interviews and focus groups. The intellectuals and people with a bit of education understand more about community participation than people at the grass root level. There is little understanding about regional planning by the community as the large majority of the communities were not engaged or did not participate in issues regarding the development planning process in the region as opposed to the staff and officials of the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries and Agencies who did participate. There is a need to explain more to the community about its participation in the development planning process and

service delivery system. Community sensitisation about their rights and obligations in terms of service delivery is required. In addition, officials need to be reminded that when policies are implemented, it is important to promote community participation in order to ensure and accelerate authentic participation of the rural poor communities.

The policy documents regarding development planning, such as the Regional Development Plan, needs to be explained to the community. In this way the Omusati Regional Council will ensure a better understanding of community participation in the development planning and service delivery process.

### **5.2.2. Question 2**

This question was based on who controls development in the region. It was indicated that both the communities and the government initiate projects and services activities. However a number of people interviewed believe that the government controls development in Namibia due to the fact that it provides the funds. Interviewees indicated that the government determines which project or services it can fund and which ones it cannot fund within a given financial year. When expressed in terms of percentage, the interviewees indicated that 85% of the development process is controlled by the government as opposed to the community themselves.

In the Omusati Region, the communities believe that the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries or Agencies operating in the region control the development process. The reason for that is because communities in most cases are only informed of what is going to happen or what has already happened. They indicated that the ones who physically hold the money are the ones who control development.

Due to inefficient functioning of the Constituency Development Committees, it was indicated by the interviewees that most of the projects from Constituency Development Committees which are put before the Omusati Regional Council are not from the communities but rather from members of the Constituency Development Committees.

To ensure that projects emanate from the community itself, officials and Constituency Development Committee members need to go deeper into the rural settings and find out from the community itself with regard to its needs and priorities. This might be difficult because of financial and human resource constraints. Care also needs to be taken concerning the influence of influential people in terms of project proposals, because of the respect they are given in our societies. In most cases they are the ones who are allowed to talk and decide on behalf of the communities. Role and responsibilities of traditional leaders against the roles of development structure need to be taken into consideration. For meaningful participation by all community members, a balance should be maintained between cultural and traditional values and respect and the opportunity for all to participate in decisions affecting all the people, as this would redirect the control of the development planning process.

### **5.2.3. Question 3**

The definition of community participation used during the interviews and the focus group was that of Oakley (1991) (Theron, 2005:119) which sees community participation as a means of empowering communities by developing their skills and abilities to enable them to negotiate with the development delivery system and equip them to make their own decisions in terms of their development needs and priorities.

The finding is that officials at Line Ministries and at the Omusati Regional Council do understand the definition. However it is not being practically implemented. There are no strategies which have been developed to ensure community empowerment through skill development programmes and information sharing systems. The communities do not know about the functions of some institutions. This makes it difficult for the community to request assistance or training in community activities such as ploughing techniques, aquaculture etc. Information dissemination on the functions of Line Ministries operating in the region, is necessary.

Some Line Ministries such as the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Rural Water Supply, the Directorate of Forestry, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry are community based as their activities take place in the communities. However their operational budget limits their continuous support to communities as part of empowerment. An example cited was that of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, whereby the Agricultural Extension Officers were given limited kilometres that they could travel in a given financial year. This prevents them from giving continuous support to community projects. The development budget is not in line with the operational budget. There is a need to ensure that the development budget is matched with the recurrent expenditure so that continuous support and skills development are ensured.

Incentives have been used by some Line Ministries for the community to take part in some development projects through programmes which supply food and cash for work. This has created a dependency, whereby community members, after the programme has ended, ceased to carry on with the projects. Much needs to be done to sensitise communities and empower them in terms of skills development so that they can continue and sustain the services provided to them after the incentives end.

#### **5.2.4. Question 4**

The finding is that a number of community members and officials interviewed do have an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of community participation in development planning, and service delivery in particular. The following were some of the advantages and disadvantages highlighted by the community and staff members themselves. The **advantages** include the fact that:

1. Community participation creates ownership of the project or service delivered to communities. The community and the officials believe that projects initiated by the community themselves will be better taken care of than those decided upon for the community.
2. By allowing the community to participate in decisions affecting it, it will enable the officials to have a better and deeper understanding of the

community's needs. Officials would get more information from the communities than previously.

3. By giving opportunities to communities, one would discover the tensions that exist amongst the communities themselves and which could prevent them from participating in development projects. This would assist the development planners to develop better strategies to enable the community to participate in development planning by addressing the tensions that exist.
4. Through community participation, communities would be capacitated and empowered. The community will know more about the steps involved in development planning and the timescale involved.
5. By allowing the community to participate in the development process, more knowledge will be generated, and information will be disseminated.
6. Community participation in the development planning process and service delivery creates a sense of cooperation amongst the community itself. It improves the relationship and cooperation between the Regional Council, Line Ministries and other Agencies and the community.
7. Through community participation, development planners and other officials would know more about the community structures with which they can work for the development and service delivery process.
8. Through community participation, weaknesses of institutions will be exposed, thereby leading to their improvement.
9. Community participation will assist the Omusati Regional Council to realise where it delivers and where it fails to deliver. The performance of the Omusati Regional Council can be judged by the community's demands.
10. When the community has engaged in the development planning process and service delivery system, it could confidently ask about a project that has not been implemented.
11. Community participation serves as a guarantee that community needs and priorities are taken seriously.

The communities and focus groups also highlighted some **disadvantages** of community participation in the development planning process. These disadvantages include the fact that:



1. There will be tensions and personal conflicts due to disagreement over various issues such as the location, who is to carry out the project activities, who is to contribute and what can be done to those who cannot contribute to the project.
2. There are difficulties when communities simply do not want to participate.
3. People might be demotivated by others who are not participating in the projects, especially those who have no interest in the project.
4. The community might not participate because of tribalism. A community might refrain from taking part in the projects or activities because the leader of the project is from another tribe or ethnic group.
5. A project proposal might be rejected outright by the community and this would prevent the process of development or service from continuing.
6. The process could be time-consuming due to debate and disagreement.
7. By allowing the community to participate, it might create conflict between officials and community members if it is not properly handled.
8. Representation of communities in development projects or services might be biased.
9. Community participation can create conflict amongst the community itself, because of power struggles.
10. Ownership of projects could be distorted because of community participation. An example given was that those who participated in the project of service provision could claim ownership of the project although the project was meant to serve the whole community.
11. Through community participation, institutions (such as the Omusati Regional Council and other Line Ministries) might be forced to include items which were not planned for in the project budget and this would escalate the project cost.

#### **5.2.5. Question 5**

These levels of participation have been highlighted previously in section 2.4. The Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries claim to have used a mixture of these levels. Regarding the last level of self-mobilisation, they indicated that in an individual capacity, everyone involved has completed this

level. Everyone has taken the initiative to change the system. In their individual capacity, officials retain control over how resources are used. Sometimes they address the question of inequality and sometimes not. Other interviewees have indicated that giving information (informing) as a type of participation was and is still the most used method of participation.

In terms of community participation, it appears that the stage, at which a collective decision-making process occurs, has not yet been reached. The community still experiences an inequitable distribution of wealth and power. A number of issues need to be addressed in order for the Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries to achieve the level of self-mobilisation. Some of the issues highlighted by interviewees include:

- ◆ Community structures and development structures through which the community can participate need to be established and strengthened.
- ◆ Information dissemination and its accessibility needs to be ensured.
- ◆ Sensitisation of the community about its right to participate in the development planning process and service delivery system is required.
- ◆ Communication and feedback loops need to be established through various development structures. A free flow of information from top-to-bottom and the bottom-up needs to be established and sustained.
- ◆ Capacity building and the strengthening of the existing structures such as Regional Development Coordination Committees and Constituency Development Committees need to be reinforced.

It is only through the improvement of some of these conditions that the Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries would ensure the self-mobilisation method of participation.

It has been observed that the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries to a large extent are still practising passive participation, information giving, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation and little interactive participation. To ensure and

improve community participation, the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries need to move from passive participation to the self-mobilisation type of participation. This can be done by empowering the community to take their own decisions, develop their skills, and use indigenous knowledge for development purposes and for strengthening the development structures such as Regional Development Coordination Committees, Constituency Development Committees, and Settlement Development Committees.

#### **5.2.6. Question 6**

It was indicated that there has been a gradual change in attitude towards community skills development and empowerment in some Line Ministries. A practical example given was the establishment of the Water Point Committees to manage community water points in the rural areas. Farmers are being trained on how to use draught power animals, animal husbandry and crop diversification. To a certain extent, communities are being empowered to sustain services or projects delivered to them. However much still needs to be done to be able to claim that community skills are being developed to take ownership of the projects delivered to them. This is more so because most of the development projects which are implemented by consultants and contractors, are not obliged to transfer skills and knowledge to the communities.

#### **5.2.7. Question 7**

This question was designed specifically to address the fact that it is difficult to ensure that all community members participate in the development planning process due to the low literacy rate, long distances, the language barriers and the issue of power. Therefore it is suggested that the community would elect its own representatives to participate and take decisions on its behalf in terms of development or service delivery. Because of power and the influence which some people have in the community, they might claim to be representative of the community, but in reality they are pursuing their own interests. This makes it difficult to determine authentic representation of the communities.

A number of interviewees believe that the authentic representatives of the community would be those people elected by the communities themselves and not self-imposed community leaders who were appointed through manipulation. Others argue that, it would depend on the nature of the project or services, which would determine the authentic representatives of the community. Everybody has a degree of stinginess and selfishness, however people who are less stingy and less selfish, and who are honest and genuine and who have the community's interests at heart, would be regarded as the authentic representatives of the community.

#### **5.2.8. Question 8**

The respondents have an understanding of the term "indigenous knowledge", however the question remains, what is indigenous? In the Omusati Region it is believed that due to cultural diversity (cultural hybrid), one would argue that indigenous knowledge no longer exists but rather it is now known as "local knowledge" as we live in the global world. Communities nowadays share various cultures, mixed ideas and materials.

Although the concept of local knowledge exists, the Omusati Regional Council and Line Ministries are not tapping into this local knowledge for planning purposes. There are no development strategies which have been created to encourage the use of local knowledge to sustain services to communities. More needs to be done in terms of policy to ensure that local knowledge is used for development purposes and for the sustainability of services delivered to communities.

#### **5.2.9. Question 9**

There are a number of strategies suggested to improve the participation of communities in the regional development planning and service delivery system. Some of the strategies highlighted include:

1. Information about the development planning process needs to be disseminated to communities and development structures.
2. Community structures and development structures need to be empowered and strengthened in terms of capacity building and resources, this includes financial, human, and material resources.

3. The line of communication between communities and institutions, agencies and various structures such as Regional Development Coordination Committees, Constituency Development Committees and Settlement Development Committees should be improved.
4. Fair use of power needs to be maintained.
5. Local resourceful persons need to be identified and used to disseminate and share the necessary information related to the development planning and service delivery system in the region.
6. Provision should be made in the operational budget for capacity building of community structures and other development structures, to ensure efficient and effective community participation.
7. Permanent secretaries of Line Ministries should appoint and designate their staff members operating in the regions to be members of various development structures as stipulated in the Decentralisation Policy.
8. Issues to be reported to the Omusati Regional Council and those to be reported to Line Ministries should be cleared. In other words, the line of communication between these institutions should be clearly established.
9. Gender bias which exists in the form of (a) customs, beliefs, and attitudes that confine women mostly to domestic spheres, (b) women's economic and domestic workloads that impose severe time burdens on them, and (c) laws and customs that impede women's access to credit, productive inputs, employment, education, information, and medical care, should be addressed.

### **5.3. Comments about participatory observation**

During observation, meetings of the Omusati Regional Council and Regional Development Coordination Committees were attended to observe how community participation is implemented. During participatory observation at both Regional Development Coordination Committees and the Omusati Regional Council meetings, none of the members reflected on or enquired about the absence of community member (s) at the meetings. However reference was constantly made to the community as the "beneficiaries". Projects and programmes which are developed are meant for the provision of services to the communities.

It was observed that communities do not participate in the decision-making process during the Omusati Regional Council sessions and the Regional Development Coordination Committee meetings. None of the community members or officials from the Line Ministries in the region attended the Regional Council meetings. No community members attended the Regional Development Coordination Committee meetings. Some of the reasons for this given during interviews included issues such as language barriers, the fact that meetings become boring, especially when topics under discussion do not relate to a member, while others are not aware that they have the right to attend these meetings. Therefore if communities are to participate in these meetings and contribute to the discussions and decisions, sensitisation about their rights needs to be carried out.

During participatory observation, projects were also visited to observe how community participation in the field occurs practically. Three projects were visited, and some members present at these projects were interviewed about their understanding of community participation. It was observed that the community participates in the implementation of the projects but not with the understanding that they are fulfilling their part as stakeholders - instead they do it because of the incentives they receive, such as payment for the work done. Thus when it comes to ownership of the projects, most of the projects were regarded as government projects brought to the people and not vice versa. Most of the interviewees indicated that they only participate because of the instant incentives provided such as temporary employment opportunities and payment made during the implementation of the project.

A case study would be the implementation of Tsandi South Water Pipe line, where some communities at Oshipeto, despite being paid for the work they do, decided to cultivate their fields, rather than dig trenches for the pipelines. Others believe that once they are registered as projects participants, they can benefit at the expenses of the others. For example, one community member influenced his group by arguing that whether he worked or not, for as long as his name is registered, he would receive the same amount as those that

worked. This has had a great impact on the projects, as most of the people followed suit. A delay has been experienced in the implementation of the project. This is also evidence which indicates that community participation is poorly understood by community members.

#### **5.4. The challenges facing the Omusati Regional Council**

To ensure and accelerate community participation in the regional development planning process, especially in the service delivery system, a thorough understanding of the concept “community participation” is required. The challenges facing the Omusati Regional Council include:

1. Implementation of the decentralisation policy to the fullest in order to ensure that all the functions required for service delivery are in place. This is a process which will take years before it is fully implemented. Failure to allow community participation or address community problems is often blamed on the slow implementation of the decentralisation process.
2. Lack of resources required to sensitise the Omusati Region about policy issues regarding community participation, functions and responsibility of institutions, the roles and responsibility of various development structures such as the Regional Development Coordination Committee, Constituency Development Committee, Village Development Committee, Ward Development Committee, Development Centre Committee and Settlement Development Committees in the region.
3. Lack of resources required for strengthening community development structures, capacity building and the sustainability of the members of the Regional Development Coordination Committee, Constituency Development Committee and Village Development Committee as some members move or shift because of greener pastures or because of the nature of their work or due to promotion.
4. Review of some of the policies such as the decentralisation policy and the Regional Council Act, as well as the incorporation of international policies to ensure proper community participation.
5. Improvement in communication and the line of reporting between the Omusati Regional Council and the Line Ministries and the development structures in the region.

6. Ensure a balance between administrative powers and political powers in order to eliminate the fear within the community which prevents it from participating when addressed by high ranking officials or senior persons in the region.
7. Uneven distribution of capacity, which is a hindrance to meaningful community participation in the legislative and policy-making process.
8. Inconsistent availability of information and a means for participation and a growing culture of self-censorship by members of the community themselves for fear of being discovered to be “politically incorrect”<sup>18</sup>.
9. Aligning the development budget with recurrent expenditure in order to be able to monitor and evaluate community participation in the services delivered to them and the sustainability of these services.
10. Address a serious lack of funding from own resources.
11. Address the issue of inexperienced and sometimes uncommitted political office bearers and administrative officials.
12. Explicitness on the rules and the means to participate, as there are few standardised procedures used to approach development committees to raise issues of concern.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

It has become clear that the community and the officials understand community participation in the development planning process and service delivery system differently. Each group defines it according to his or her level of education and understanding. Officials understood the concept better than the community at grass roots level. Both communities and officials know of the advantages and disadvantages of community participation in the decision-making process that affects them. However there are factors that prevent the community from participation in the development planning process and service delivery system.

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<sup>18</sup> If a member of a community begins to interrogate or ask a lot of questions during a meeting, he or she tends to be regarded as belonging to an opposition party, vice versa. To avoid that he or she tend to be quiet though his or her participation could have influenced the decision better.



For the Omusati Regional Council to ensure meaningful participation of communities in the development planning process and service delivery system, the challenges which face it need to be addressed. Strategies as suggested in this chapter need to be developed and implemented to ensure community participation.

To achieve integrated development planning, free flow of information is a prerequisite. In a democratic government, government institutions are supposed to be accountable to communities. However transparency and accountability at the Omusati Regional Council could not be achieved as the communities who are supposed to hold this institution accountable could not do so due to a lack of information on their rights and obligations in terms of development.

Overall, the data indicates that despite the fact that officials understand the importance of community participation in decision-making and project implementation, communities are not participating in the decision-making process. Sensitisation of community participation in the service delivery system is still a challenge, especially when there are no incentives provided. Therefore little community participation will occur until such time that communities are made aware of their roles and responsibilities as stakeholders in the development planning process and service delivery system.

The hypothesis proved to be true in that little community participation in the decision-making process and service delivery system has been observed since the implementation of the decentralisation policy. It is therefore clear that improvement within the system needs to occur to ensure community participation in the decision-making process and service delivery system to ensure sustainable development.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter, as mentioned in the organisation of the study, will specifically focus on the conclusion and the way forward, based on the lesson learned from the first five chapters.

#### **6.2. Conclusion**

In emerging democracies such as Namibia, community participation is a process that demands continuous learning. Ethics and social responsibility can be fostered only if communities participate directly in the process of development. Community participation has many benefits as opposed to disadvantages. Everybody need to value community participation and make it a way of life in every development project we intend to carry out. We need to identify every level of the project or service provision, and think how we can engage the community so that we don't lose out on their wisdom and knowledge. At the same time we need to avoid an increase in their frustration and anger in terms of poor delivery.

The implementation of legislation and policies such as the Constitution and the Decentralisation Policy and other related policies is a prerequisite for community participation. There should be a continuous recognition and mobilisation of all stakeholders and the communities themselves in order to significantly contribute to the achievement of effective and efficient community participation in the development planning process and service delivery systems.

A holistic approach to development at all levels (international, national and local) should be encouraged to address the challenge facing institutions in order to tackle the problem of community participation. For the Omusati Regional Council to achieve integrated development, all stakeholders, and development structures, should be empowered through skill development and knowledge transfer.

The Omusati Regional Council needs to tackle the question of how ordinary people, especially the poor, affect the social policies that in turn affects their well-being. The Omusati Regional Council needs to examine how changing contexts and conditions affect the entry points through which actors in civil society, especially the poor, can exercise their voice and influence in critical aspects of public policy and its management and general policy arena. Once this is known, the Omusati Regional Council can achieve sustainable community participation in the development planning process and service delivery system.

### **6.3. Recommendations**

Communities in Namibia and the Omusati Region in particular have inadequate understanding of their roles as citizens and this affects their capacity to engage the law and the policy-making process proactively. Therefore community sensitisation is recommended so that its members, in their role as citizens, can participate fully in the development planning process and service delivery system.

While communities are allowed to attend the Omusati Regional Council meetings, legislative and policy information is often available only in English. This makes the entire process inaccessible in many ways and those who do not have English skills are disadvantaged. It is recommended that the Omusati Regional Council, to ensure effective and efficient community participation, translate the legislative and policy documents into local vernaculars to accommodate everybody.

A balance should be maintained in terms of the available regional budget, so that both constituencies benefit from the budget.

It is a recommendation of this study that the Omusati Regional Council ensure the following conditions for effective community participation in the region.

- ◆ Existence of an appropriate legal and functioning institutional framework for community participation at the sub-national level.

- ◆ Existence and encouragement of non-formal participation opportunities, for example open and informal opportunities.
- ◆ Existence of a vibrant civil society.
- ◆ Most members of the community in a given locality must possess skills needed for effective participation.
- ◆ The dominant behaviour, attitude and culture must be conducive to participatory democracy.

With the fulfilment of these conditions, community participation will be accelerated, the community will be empowered and the lives of the community will be improved. Failure to ensure these conditions will result in a low level of community participation and a disintegrated development planning and service delivery system.

The Omusati Regional Council must ensure that early agreement is reached between the consultant, the Council and the communities in order to ensure community participation through project implementation. Consultants should be required to transfer complicated technical knowledge in a way appropriate to communities to ensure sustainability of development projects and services in the Omusati Region.

Development budget documents, as documents pointing out how and where the public money is allocated to the public sector institutions, should be distributed amongst the communities in order for them to know how public funds earmarked for their living, welfare and prosperity were spent. This would enable them to hold institutions accountable for development expenditure. The current practice does not share information with the communities with regard to development budget. The Omusati Regional Council needs to ensure that at every constituency office, a development budget document and other documents such as Vision 2030, the Regional Development Plan and policy related material are available to enable communities to have access to important information. The Omusati Regional Council should adopt community participation as its way of life to ensure sustainable development planning in the region.

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## **ANNEXURES:**

**Annexure 1:** Interview schedule for communities and officials at the Omusati Regional Council, Line Ministry and focus group discussion

1. How would you define community participation in regional development planning?
2. Who controls the development process in Namibia and in the Omusati Region in particular (community or government)?
3. According to Oakley (1991) (Theron, 2005: 119) the definition of community participation entails:

***Community participation as a means of empowering people by developing their skills and abilities to enable them to negotiate with the development delivery system and to equip them to make their own decisions in terms of their development needs and priorities.***

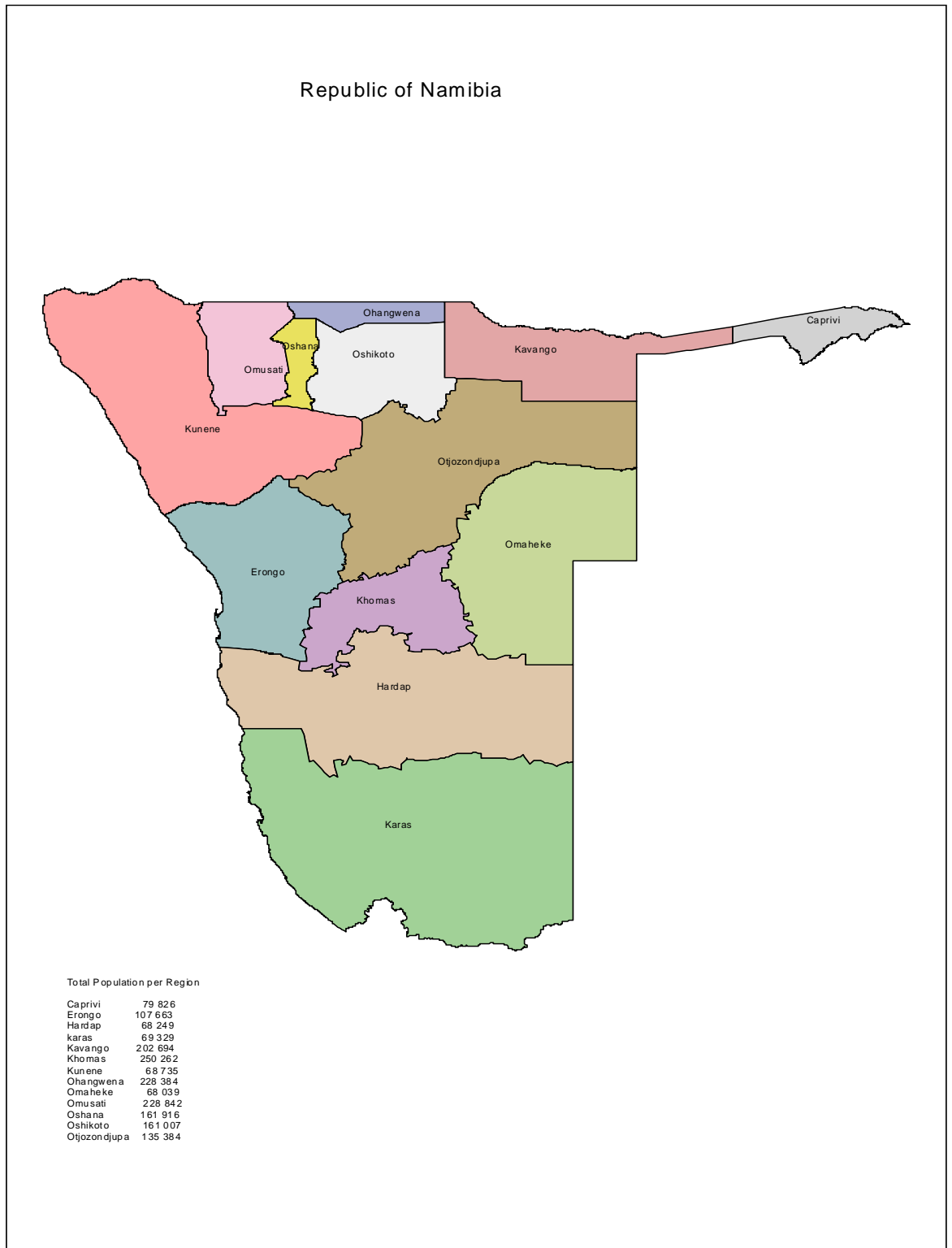
In your opinion is this happening at our regional level? If it is not happening, what could be the stumbling blocks and how can we solve them?

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of community participation in the development planning process?
5. There are various levels, or modes, or typologies of community participation. At which level (s) are we?
6. To what extent are our institutions (Omusati Regional Council, Line Ministries and other agencies) empowering and developing community skills to take ownership of projects delivered to them? (Structures)

7. In terms of community representation, who do you think are the authentic representatives of the community?
  
8. To what extent does our institution (Regional Council, Line Ministries and other agencies) tap into indigenous knowledge, as local expertise and make use of it for development planning purposes and the service delivery system?
  
9. What can be done to improve overall community participation in the regional development planning and service delivery system?



## Annexure 2: Namibian map with its regions



**Annexure 3: Omusati Region map with its constituencies**

