

Community Participation in NGO “Development Projects” in Zimbabwe: Myth or Reality?

Blessing Tsiga¹, Costa Hofisi^{1*} and Stephen Mago²

¹*North-West University, Department of Public Administration, South Africa*

²*Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe*

**E-mail: costa.hofisi@nwu.ac.za, berverlycolds279@gmail.com*

KEYWORDS Community. Development. Ownership. Empowerment. Capabilities

ABSTRACT For Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to bring about development to the communities they work with, it is imperative that they effectively employ participatory methodologies for their beneficiaries to take initiative and action in planning for the development of their communities. This paper sought to evaluate community participation in NGO development projects in Masvingo province from a participatory development theoretical perspective. Participation entails ownership and empowerment, therefore lack of ownership and empowerment hinders development. The researchers used the qualitative research methodology guided by a case study design. A case of one international NGO (which requested anonymity) was used. Results revealed lack of “real participation” in the identified development projects. Beneficiaries are merely “task takers” from the NGO officials rather than drivers of the projects. It was observed that participation in the project is at the implementation stage and is lacking at identification, design and monitoring and evaluation of the projects. Moreover, the NGO lacked a defined tool on participation which is necessary when working with beneficiaries. With these observations, the paper recommends that NGOs should institutionalize participation by employing participatory methodologies to guide them when working with their beneficiaries for their development projects to be successful.