# The rural participation complexity rainbow: challenges of community involvement in corporate social responsibility programmes in Zimbabwe.

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## Abstract

*While the Government tenders a regulatory framework governing issues such as employment rights, environmental protection, equality and fair trading, CSR goes beyond compliance with legislative requirements and creates shared value through collaboration with all stakeholders. This study was aimed at investigation complexities involved with active involvement of local communities in CSR programmes. The paper utilised both theoretical and empirical approach in data collection. As for qualitative designs, focused group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 participants who were selected purposively. The study found out that participatory paradigm which has increasingly been associated with people and their aspirations to make decisions affecting their own lives is not uncomplicated to achieve. Central to community's aspirations is their desire to plan and participate in the identification, planning and management of their needs without outside prescriptions. The study noted that respectful consultation, participation and collaboration with local communities bring a host of benefits to the enterprise as well as to the community. Establishing an appropriate strategy for stakeholder engagement raises several challenges for multinational firms. It was concluded that community members are important partners in national development and therefore, participation, ownership and sustainability of the projects has the multiplier effect of enhancing the overall development of the local community and contributing to the country's national development and economic growth.*

**Key Words:** community participation; corporate social responsibility; Zimbabwe

## Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a conception whereby enterprises integrate social and environmental concerns into their mainstream business operations on a voluntary basis. The theme of multi-level stakeholder engagement is centrally important to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda as a whole (IISD *et al.*, 2004). Even if quantification of the positive or negative correlations between community engagement and successful CSR initiatives is not statistically conceivable, it is commonly accepted that it is fruitless to undertake CSR initiatives or sustainable development (SD) initiatives without proper community engagement. Corporate social responsibility calls for the enterprises to be responsible, liable and answerable, not only to their shareholders, investors, lenders and regulators, but also to their stakeholders; their employees, community members and policy makers, amongst others (IISD *et al.*, 2004). For CSR organisation, stakeholder involvement can be made on a number of grounds, which include reputational management, enhanced levels of trust and strengthening of the so-called 'license to

operate. This is but one of many examples illustrating the link between 'best practice' in community engagement and the CSR agenda. Any project proponent's approach to community and multi-level stakeholder engagement should be conversant by an understanding of the constraints to stakeholder engagement in the CSR agenda as a whole (IISD *et al.*, 2004). It is thereforeindispensable to note how the community involvement process can help to answer vital questions that other CSR initiatives had grappled with, such as:

•Who in the community stands to benefit from the CSR projects?
•Does the CSR project empower or does it create dependency?
•Do the CSR projects strengthen or undermine local communities' participatory agenda?

Involvement and do-it-yourself are considered to be the best itineraries for growth support by institutions as varied as the World Bank and Oxfam. The main thrust emphasised in the Comprehensive Development Frameworks written by World Bank is that the doer referring to the individual, society or the nation should be enthusiastically involved in the determination of the destiny in developmental dialogues (Ellerman, 2001). General observation is that Zimbabwe is well bestowed with natural resources, but the general populace is amongst the underprivileged globally. Large companies that extract these resources are mostly foreign owned and products produced are exported. Kasukuwere (2012) argues that although companies have participated in CSR programmes, the levels are insignificant compared to the profits they have earned. It is against this background that Government introduced Community Share Ownership Schemes/ trust to compel corporates to invest meaningfully into the community where natural resources are being commercially exploited (Kasukuwere, 2012). The empowering legal framework to facilitate the meaningful involvement of indigenous Zimbabweans in the mainstream economy is provided for in the Indigenisation and Economic Act (Chapter

14:33). However, results from such noble initiatives indicate the complexity rainbow faced in trying to achieve a participatory involvement of the local communities.

Balancing the shareholder's expectations of maximum returns against other priorities is one of the fundamental problems confronting corporate management (Chanetsa, 2013). Ideally, the shareholder must receive a good return but the legitimate concerns of other constituencies (customers, employees, communities, suppliers and society at large) also must have the appropriate attention. Managers believe that by giving enlightened consideration to balancing the legitimate claims of all its constituents, a corporation best serves the interest of its shareholders. Cronje *et a1* (1990) maintain that the social responsibility of business is increasingly coming to the fore. Nowadays, the public expects an organisation to become closely involved in the real social problems of the community within which it operates. Thus, management should also keep anattentive eye on any activities that might be construed by external groups as irresponsible because these may give rise to resentment. Community participation in CSR programmes is essential in enhancing development at the basic community level, a critical tool for sustainable development and a foundation for national development.

Openness of markets, freeing up capital flow and globalization of production have created an interdependent world in the post-industrial era of today (Amaeshi et al, 2006). These enhanced exchanges have created a complex business, not just in commercial essence but also in corporate social responsibility activities.In such a challenging environment, organizations need to develop new ways of accepted wisdom and manage with the active involvement of key stakeholders (Chaneta, 2013). It is argued that enhanced globalization and interdependence have transformed the scenery of stakeholder engagement in firm management initiatives. Based on these perspectives, it is obligatory for multinational companies to consider the

different aspects of stakeholder involvement, and deal with the relevant challenges. Developing a sustainable business strategy in the face of increased volatility in the global business environment has deeply influenced the way in which executives think of non-equity partners and how to include them in the governance process. According to Amaeshi and Crane (2006), one of the important tasks in managing any corporate business is to manage relationship between the firm and its surrounding environment, including different stakeholders, to enhance the effectiveness of the firm's decisions and strategies. The ploughing back to the community in terms of CSR is critical for any business operations. The local community must feel the magnitude of respect provided by corporate companies. The role of local subsidiaries, environmental context, organizational structure and strategy, relationship configurations between different actors and stakeholder engagement are addressed to highlight relevant challenges (Castro, Verde, Salvadó & Navas-López, 2013).

The social responsibility of an enterprise is becoming even more significant today. It would also appear that organisations are expected to be involved in real social problems of the community to show that they do not only want to use the community for personal gain, but that they want to give something back to the community to ensure a better dispensation for both parties (Pincus, 1992). Today, however, organisations pursue multiple goals with emphasis on social awareness, social care and social commitment. Social responsibility is at present so imperative that the sources of an organisation may depend, to a large extent, on the social commitment. According to Thompson *et al* (2010), the notion that corporate executives should balance the interest of all stakeholders (shareholders, suppliers, communities in which they operate and society at large) is very imperative for the survival of every organisation.

**How reliable is community participation in CSR?**

The past numerous decades of development funding (e.g., World Bank in Africa) has demonstrated the failures of top-down approaches to development. Not only does the provision of public goods remain low in developing nations, most CSR projects suffer from a lack of sustainability. A possible reason for these failures is attributed to the lack of local participation. With contemporary movement in human rights, the new development catchphrase has been "participatory or community-led development" and there has been a rush to jump on the participatory bandwagon. This trend is supported by anecdotal and empirical evidence suggesting community participation is an unqualified good in terms of project outcomes and sustainability (Castrol et al, 2013). However, despite such interest there is much less understanding of, and even lesser agreement on, what community participation means and entails, and under what conditions is it necessary. There is a real danger that like most slogans, participation too will be misunderstood, misapplied and eventually discarded.

An examination of the narratives on community participation indubitably suggests it leads to development projects that are" more responsive to the needs of the poor, more responsive government and better delivery of public goods and services, better maintained community assets, and a more informed and involved citizenry" (Mansuri and Vijayendra, 2003). An obvious aspect highlighted in these benefits is the role of participation as a means of providing and accessing information. It is argued that when a community participates in CSR or any developmental programmes, it both provides information about its preferences, and gains information that may influence its optimal choice. Both types of information are likely to lead to increased welfare for the community, and better development projects. However, the sense one obtains from the field is that this notion of participation is incomplete as it misses the role participation plays as a means of affecting the distribution of power and

ownership. Past studies note that it is key the communities have control over project initiatives, decisions, financial) resources, and upstream planning (World Bank 1996; Narayan 1995). Moreover, if information transfer were indeed the only role participation played, it could be replaced by simply "asking and telling," which would not require a community to really participate but simply that its preferences be elicited and it be informed. The contribution of this paper is to offer a theoretical framework that highlights the additional "ownership" aspect of participation suggested above, such that participation is also a means of exerting influence or bargaining power.

Participation of community members in local projects therefore, has the potential to influence, challenge, alter and modify local village economy for the benefit of all. In particular, if CSR projects targeting the local poor are appropriately planned and effectively managed, they are likely to benefit and move from a level of dependency to that of self-reliance with the resultant effect of scaling down poverty. For this to be accomplished it requires participation of local people in needs identification. For instance, what are their most urgent needs? Have they ranked those needs in order of priority? Have they participated in ranking them? It also includes the need to participate in planning, management and evaluation of their programmes. One major limitation to this participation is political meddling in the decision making process. This is always done at the local or community level in which case people's decision-making is constrained.

The purpose of this section has not been to provide a complete theory of participation or a comprehensive explanation for the poor performance of development projects. Instead, the intention is to raise a note of caution by offering both theoretical and empirical support for why community participation may not always be a good thing. This by no means suggests a move back to token appreciation of autocratic systems or that communities should never be given ownership over certain

decisions, but a just concern that, in light of the increasing importance of community-driven development and decentralization of corporate projects, there may currently be too large a burden placed on community participation as a cure-all. Instead, there is need to recognize both its benefits and limitations.

## Theoretical Approaches to Participation

There are many theoretical underpinnings which explain the nature of community participation in developmental agendas. Among different practices for stakeholder engagement, the Gable (2005) model was integrated to explain various issues involvement in CSR programmes and concept of community participation. Gable's (2005) model presented three phases of the stakeholder engagement process. Phase one treats "Internal Preparation". In this phase, the organization tries to find the right leader; build/train its team; measure the company's baseline performance and the public's perceptions of its performance and then the organization should continue to phase two. In the second phase issues such as stakeholder mapping and strategic planning are dealt with. Organizations try to account for their stakeholders; map stakeholder roles according to business objectives; analyze the results and draw the results collectively into a strategic plan. Finally, in the third phase stakeholder engagement is dealt with, where it is the duty of the organization to develop a stakeholder engagement plan to reach business objectives; measure and monitor results and communicate results appropriately (Gable and Shereman, 2005).

Harrison and St. John (2009) divide the organizational environment into two; the operating environment inside the firm and the broader environment outside the firm. Freeman & McVea (2001) studied the internal stakeholders such as employees and managers with resource based theory and applied Porter's five-force model for external stakeholders. Ansoff (1965) explained the importance of identifying critical stakeholders, although he

considered stakeholders as the hurdles of achieving the main objectives of the firm. According to Freeman & McVea (2001), stakeholders need to create limits on the actions firms for the betterment of firms in the long run. This implies that management should be aware of the need of stakeholders to assist in setting the boundaries of a firm's actions. There are two main fundamentals in corporate planning according to Freeman & McVea (2001); prediction and adaptation. Firstly, senior executives or specialist research firms on their behalf, carry out an analysis of the business environment to identify the trends and elaborate their future predictions of the firm. This in turn helps to formulate the future strategies to adapt and reap advantages from the evolving business environment by putting the firm in a competitive position. This corporate planning stage also conducts the stakeholder analysis while doing the environmental scanning to highlight the trends of the business environment.

Drawing from five important steps of strategic planning including setting mission and objectives, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and evaluation and control (Grant, 2003), one can observe the challenges of stakeholder involvement in the execution phase. This stage of multiple players requires a multiple objective framework, which in turn complicates the unique definition of objectives. Considering the varieties of local and global stakeholders in CSR, their interests and their value perception are challenging issues. Moreover, defining the priorities for strategic formulation and assigning the different roles to community involvement in decision making, involvement in advising, negotiation and bargaining are the other source of challenges. The first phase in stakeholder engagement is planning. This planning includes the internal preparation of both subsidiaries and headquarters. In this phase, some challenges can occur. First, planning needs clear definition of goals and objectives. The variety of local stakeholders makes the definition of goals and objectives difficult. Conflict among different

may occur. Planning in corporate business also requires identifying value from a stakeholder perspective. This can be challenging. The second phase is execution. This phase includes stakeholder mapping, strategic planning and stakeholder engagement. The relevant challenges in this phase are identification of key stakeholders and their priorities. This could add an additional source of conflict among key stakeholders. Identifying the intensity of the relationship, from dialogue to partnership in addition to communication challenges, is considerable in this phase. The last phase is establishing the monitoring and action plan. Identifying adequate performance metrics for monitoring and measuring stakeholder satisfaction is difficult for multinational companies. These planning stages have great bearing on the stakeholder involvement in corporate social responsibility programmes.

## Study Methodology

The researcher used a qualitative methodology. Focus group discussions were conducted to gather information from respondents and interviews were carried out to gather information from key informants. Data analysis plan was made in which narrative themes were used. Qualitative methods are methods such as participant observation, intensive interviewing and focus group discussions that are designed to capture social life as participants experience it rather than in categories predetermined by the researcher. The researcher targeted people in Mola Community who live close to Ume Crocodile Farm. This population comprised of local community and organisational management team.Availability sampling was used which is a non-random sampling technique because it was during the raining season and people were not available in their homesteads but in fields occupied with their farming activities.

The first focus group discussionwas composed of 6 village heads (5 males and 1 female) from six villages benefiting from CSR programmes. The second (FDG) consisted of 8 participants (4 female and 5 male). The final FDG was made of

11 male youths (who were playing for Ume Crocodile Farm) social soccer team. Three in-depth interviews were conducted with 3 key informants (administrative members of target organisation). Empirical data was complimented by the use of various documents relating CSR with community participation agenda. Therefore the study used both theoretical information and field work responses.

Ethical deliberations of this study were detailed and adhered to. Respondents volunteered to participate in this study. The researcher did not coerce participation but simply explained that the research was purely for academic purposes. To exercise confidentiality, the researcher did not use names of participants in data presentation.Permission to carry out the study was given by Chief Mola, guaranteeing free community entry. Top management of Ume Crocodile Farm were also consulted to allow the researcher to meet the administrative staff responsible for community CSR projects or programmes.

**Presentations of Results**

**CSR programmes offered by Ume Crocodile Farm**

The research found out that Ume corporate offers the schools capacity building programme, education bursary scheme, free transport, health and environment and social soccer.Ume Community projects officer confirmed that the organisation is providing local community with many services.The CSR programmes were summarised as follows; infrastructural development, food aid, donations, scholarships, caring for the poor, health and education.

**Challenges for community engagement**

*Lack of Resources*

Incontrovertibly, resources are fundamental in influencing an active participation of communities in the matters that affect them. These resources includedscanty funding, government training programs, education,

leaders, and volunteers to support rural causes and initiatives related to corporate social responsibility. The study observed that rural communities under confluence of Ume Croc farm tend to lack one or more of these resources, a situation which interfered with their ability to effectively impact on key issues.Having scarce resources unenthusiastically impacts a corporate firm's capability to effectively influence and develop compact projects in Mola communities. However, there were divergences of explanation on the issue of resources. One of the community participant noted that *"local communities noted that the croc farm reaped supernormal profits from croc skin sales but the company was unwilling to help the local communities."*Key informants reiterated that community inclusion in community project was restricted by poor financial configuration remitted by administrative towards community corporate social responsibilities.

*Lack of Access to Information*

There is no doubt that knowledge is power and knowledge is information. Rural communities indicated that they feel there is a lack of access to information about corporate social responsibility programs and services. When asked about the existence of CSR, communities confirmed that there is not knowledge that corporate firm have obligation to plough back to the community in which they operate. Current CSR were considered as privilege based instead of right entitlement initiatives. Communities also reported that the information that is available on policy, government programs and services is difficult to obtain and interpret.One local leader retorted that; *"apart from poor accessibility to telephones and national press, there is reluctance among Corporatism to impact awareness to the communities."*From the study, community confided that nothing is done to teach them on CSR initiatives. Apart from reprimanding corporate firm, government through legislative members must ensure that both community and local communities are sensitised on necessity of such programmes.

With above observation, making rural CSR projects participatory become a tricky situation.

*Environmental Context*

The environment context is the serious source of challenges, as dealing with different stakeholders in different cultural or political background raises many issues for multinational firms. It is without doubt that the effective involvement of stakeholders requires appropriate dialogue and negotiations with interested parties. Dissimilarcultural and political entities complicate these negotiations, bargaining, and dialogue. As explained beforehand, the study established that there is no magnanimous information to facilitate dialogic environment form firms and local communities. In this study, the pedagogy of cultural included gender dimensions where society is dominated by masculinity in community projects. Some of the women who were interrogated showed much unwillingness to be at forefront of community initiatives except in agricultural activities. Based on Asim (2004), all stakeholders need an environment to operate. He further explained that the environment is where the game is played and that the structure of the game is created by the power that is shared by individuals with separate responsibilities. Gary (2009) describes the cultural issues in multinational context as communication across culture including language and nonverbal communication, cultural values, negotiating across cultures, national cultural power distance and organizational cultural distance.

*Organisation Performance and Prioritisation*

Corporate organisations operate on commercial motive which is archetypal to capitalism that works antithetically with socialism. Similar to any other business activity, stakeholder engagement needs to be prioritised in organisational agenda. Project officers admitted that "*the management should have a clear plan and a set of objectives, budget and responsibilities.*"In the study, there is no reservationthat Ume Croc farm has community responsibility agenda. However, defining the priorities for CSRstrategic formulation and assigning different roles to stakeholders or the level of community participation in decision making, the extent of informative stakeholders or negotiation and bargaining groups were the other challenges in strategic formulation and implementationof community projects.It was further that prioritisation of CSR among corporates firms is arguably; not given sufficient attention in organisational programmes.Among others key factors include; reluctance on part of firms, community ignorance, meagre profits and stringent government policies. Key informant confided that "*priorities concerning stakeholders vary based on whether firms view themselves and stakeholders as interdependent entities.*" When firms cross territorial borders, they are faced with different contexts, stressing the differences between the subsidary and the host-country context and increasing the boundaries with local actors or needs.

*Absence of Rural Representation in the Decision-Making Process*

Living in an egalitarian society, societies elect representatives to speak on their behalf at the government level. This is applicable to CSR organisation. By virtue of their larger population, rural areas tend to have indistinct representation in the parliament and provincial legislatures than urban areas. The greater number of rural representatives is one move that can lead these elected bodies to have a more rural focus and reduce the influence urban community members have in the decision-making process. It was observed that little if not non that has been done by those rural legislatures on behalf of communities in influencing CSR projects. The key informant of the study noted that the issue of CSR in Zimbabwe is predominantly influenced by indigenisation policy. This has diverted key aspect of community development into policy compliance as agitated by government demands. The participants from the Mola noted that community members are not given enoughavenues to participate in rural decision process.

*Timeline limitations*

Ad hoc approach in consultation process has characterised CSR programmes like any other community development initiatives. It was also observed the process of community consultation takes top down approach and it only takes few meetings to finalise all proceedings. In this study, chiefs and school development committees were only people consulted. Over consultation is not health but systematic process must allow dialogue and hear the voice of voiceless without disregarding their top authority. Capability model argues that people have potential and their life agencies that when enough time is given, they have inherent capacity to influence their lives. Often the policy timeline can create hitches for communities looking to impact policy around a particular issue. Although corporate firms may be considering a policy change for a long period of time, the public consultation process may be relatively short and not allow community the time to present and properly prepare to effectively participate. In some communities, the consultation process can take a very long time, draining the resources of community-based organizations and frustrating those who want change.

*Perceived Resistance of Communities*

Corporate programme designers who intent to effect rural CSR programmes can sometimes are faced with community resistance to change. It is not all programmes that are planned and initiated are welcome to the communities. From the study, project officers revealed that education programmes concentrating on girl child have failed to reap the expected results in Mola community. Although many factors may interfere in this scenario, cultural variants were considered to be chief factor affecting such programmes. Projects officers were of opinion that *"as a result of conservative culture, future programme will be perceived with failure."*This may stem from the cultural identity of some rural communities and their reluctance to

negotiate any of their beliefs and tradition even if the proposed change or policy could lead to improvements. In Zimbabwe, some cultural practices such as Khomba (ritual of passage for boys and boys) of Shangani people of Chiredzi cannot be easily penetrated by outsiders.Such practices can have internal cultural heritage but can simply affect CSR programmes. Another factor that may be reducing community involvement with change is the attitude that it is solely a government's responsibility to develop policy that benefits rural communities. Resistance to change can demoralizecorporate ability to involve the rural community in the policy-making process.

*Attitudes of Corporate towards Rural Communities*

Participants view local CSR projects with an *"urban bias discourse"*whereby the corporate and government pays more attention to larger communities. According to the study, this "urban bias" may arise from the fact that some CSR members have only lived in urban communities, the lack of available information concerning rural communities. It was also purported that urban areas are having a greater number of developmental officials, and this has a strong bearing on outlook of CSR projects in rural areas. Whatever the reasons, the existence of an"urban bias" can lead to a preoccupation with urban centres at the expense of rural communities. The most daunting fact is that policies and programs created with urban centres in mind sometimes are made to fit rural communities. Unfortunately, these types of policies and programs have a tendency to ignore rural issues and cannot be considered equal in both urban and rural areas. Therefore, local communities lamented that rural people are not given a leading role in CSR projects in Zimbabwe.

*Reliance on Volunteers*

Relying on voluntary work was cited to be one the reasons affecting community participation in CSR projects. Key informant noted that meagre

financial resources necessary to address problems and concerns of rural community leads to organizations relying on volunteers to carry out community-based activities. This situation can lead to reluctance among local volunteers who are given nothing to become involved in the complex community issues among volunteers. Even more burdensome is finding individuals within rural communities possessed with the skills, abilities and desire to initiate and champion rural development projects. Further, there are no programmes or initiatives to train, support and motivate new leaders and volunteers. As a result of a lack of these resources, some community leaders and volunteers face burnout that affects their productivity and progress in furthering the work to help their community. In addition, the loss of youth from rural communities results in a depletion of potential future community leaders and volunteers. Another factor which can be considered contributing to the absence of a volunteer pool may be the political and social visibility that can result from becoming active in the policy-making process. Such visibility may be uncomfortable for some and emphasize the vulnerability of certain community members, for example, those of low socioeconomic status.

## Discussions

Involving community participation in corporate social responsibility programmes is practically miscellaneous. While participation focuses on the active involvement of all stakeholders in the content of the programme, Bryant and White (1982) state that there are a number of levels of participation. They single out what they call extractionist participation which emphasises the role of the government in the planning and implementation of development projects and activities, often with involuntary contribution to the project. This kind of approach to development is likely to fail because as Bergdall (1993) states, it is supposed to contribute to the national development but people are not expected to take part in shaping it or criticising its content but are treated as objects, stripped of decision-making responsibilities regarding

planning and their initiatives. This approach creates room for abuse of power. This approach also takes much from rationality perspectives which permit those in power to plan for the disadvantaged.In CSR programmes, indisputable participation is the ideal model which seeks to empower the powerless towards assuming full responsibility over their destiny within their cultural and socio-economic spheres. Key in dealing withparticipation complexity rainbow is allowing the balance to exist between corporate world and the receiving community.

The configuration of relationship between headquarters, local stakeholders and global stakeholders raises challenges for multinational firms (Mikalsen and Jentoft, 2001). The network structure increases complexity in value analysis and the stakeholder engagement process and consequently for performance measurement (Keivanpour, Ait-Kadi & Mascle, 2013; Mikalsen & Jentoft, 2001). Dealing with local stakeholders requires more authority and flexibility in business operations but this issue can raise some challenges for headquarters in monitoring and the strategic decision making process. Coordinating CSR projects from headquarters into community level may be a daunting experience.Using peripheral argument analysis of resource management, most resources are consumed by administrative activities instead of project implementation process. Stakeholder involvement needs agility and nippy responsiveness in organizational structure. As a result, a degree of emergency in organizational structure of multinational firms is essential when considering an active role for stakeholders, but designing such structure might be challenging for multinational companies (Romano et al., 2001).

There is no reservation that dealing with different stakeholders in different socio-economic, cultural and political backgrounds raises many challenges for multinational firms. These challenges can be addressed while respecting local and global ethical concerns with adequate communication channels. Without

doubt, involvement of stakeholders requires appropriate dialogue and negotiation with interest groups. Different cultural and political frameworks obscure these negotiation, bargaining, and dialogues. Based on the plan-do-check-action (PDCA) cycle, some challenges may arise in the phase including planning, execution and mentoring. Other challenges, such as the clear definition of goal and objectives and value definition from a stakeholder`s perspectives, exist in the planning phase. In the execution phase, the identification of key stakeholders and their priorities, and in the monitoring phase, identifying performance metrics are a source of conflict. Thus the process of goal and objective setting may really influence the process of stakeholder involvement in CSR projects. It is therefore imperative for corporate world to consider local communities from the initial strategic planning system.

Participation does not take place in a vacuum but in a socio-political framework. Kumar (2002) has identified three major obstacles to people's participation in project management. The obstacles are also applicable in corporate social responsibility programmes. Among others, structural obstacles areprincipally responsible for the atmosphere of passivity and dependence that prevails in rural communities and formed part of the centralised political systems which are not oriented towards people's participation. This type of situation is typified by a "top-down'' development approach adopted by development initiatives like the Integrated Rural Development Programmes. However, local initiatives when taken at all were quite dismal and did not reflect the true self. Furthermore, the administrative structures that are control oriented provide little significant space to local people to make their own decisions or control their resources. On the other hand, the social obstacles such as the mentality of dependency, the culture of silence, domination of the local elite or gender inequality militate against people's participation (*Ibid:* 2002). The implications of these

omissions are that participatory as a process fails and the subsequent development of encouraging people's participation recommended.

Every community requires an avenue of communication in form of leadership representation. With reference to rural communities, political representation is both vague and inconsistence compared to urban areas. Hypothetically, rural communities are vulnerable in all spheres of life though the contemporary rise of urban poverty is insurmountable. In terms of leadership representation, this paper observed that the channels to air out their grievances in CSR initiatives arescanty in rural societies.Mulwa (2004) further argues that those rural communities have little or no organizational and managerial skills. This shortcoming is likely to expose the community members to lack of dialogic forums and other forms of manipulations by the elite multinational companies. Bergdall (1993) remarks the is made more complex by the fact that even though women form the bulk of community labour force for community projects they are often marginalised when it comes to access to information, decision –making and access to opportunities for capacity building.

The top-down methodological approach employed by CSR organisation arguably is responsible for the collapse of most community development projects. There is recognition that the more the local people do, the less capital costs are likely to be; preoccupation with sustainability and ideologically for some development professionals, the belief that it is right that people should be empowered and should have more command over their lives. Empowerment starts from an examination of how power is present in multiple and heterogeneous social relations (Nici and Wright, 1997). In these relations people are exercising supremacy by reproducing, changing or challenging systematic relations. It can be conceptualised as the capacity to manage one's own life, whether as an individual or as a

community. This involves influencing and changing public policy that may adversely affect the freedom of choice towards becoming master of one's own destiny (Mulwa, 2008). Mulwa (2004) advises that participatory development paradigm in CSR activities therefore is meant to correct the inadequacies encapsulated in the top-down and social welfare dispositions and practices that do not allow participation of stakeholder. Stakeholders such as opinion leaders, beneficiaries, women local leaders and the general local community all have a stake in whatever is invested in the locality. It is argued that previous development approach that excluded community members was responsible for the slow economic growth despite increased foreign aid which did not offer any solution to the deepening poverty within developing countries. This was because local participation had been completely excluded and hence they did not invest their thinking in projects being put up.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper presented the different challenges that the corporate companies face in integrating stakeholders into CSR projects to achieve sustainable development in a volatile community situation. These challenges were in a conceptual framework incorporating both internal and external factors. The important elements of this framework are grouped into many categories: relationship, environmental context, management including structure and strategy issues, stakeholder engagement performance and attitudinal.

Participatory development is therefore important to national development. First, participatory approach to development is an empowering process; it allows members to grow both professionally, physically and in the understanding of the dynamics of change and how to cope with it. Through these dynamics, they are able to evolve as skilful people capable of taking up challenges facing them as a community. It also enhances their capacity to skilfully analyse issues and make appropriate decisions, manage time and organise a sequence of activities beneficial to the community. Rural development in form of CSR projects is a complex process with many challenges and barriers faced by both communities and government. This suggests that ways to address these barriers and challenges may be most effective when communities and corporate organisations work together in partnership.

Recent efforts to reduce the barriers to community participation in CSR development initiatives at both the community and organisational levels has likely increased corporate companies' understanding of rural community needs as well as increased rural communities' understanding of how they can work effectively with organisations in matters that affect them. However, even though progress has been made in reducing the challenges to rural people, communities and key stakeholders must continue working in spirit of togetherness and corporation with the goal of improving the participation process in a manner that meets the needs of rural communities. There are many ways in which enterprises are involved in CSR initiatives in Zimbabwe through proactive social inclusion projects, outreach programmes, staff volunteering initiatives, support for broader health and wellbeing programmes, fundraising, mentoring.

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