

3. Encourage social workers to collaborate with community workers in forming partnerships with traditional and political leaders, churches, women's clubs, community structures and schools in establishing community projects. This process would afford social workers an opportunity to market their services, as communities were currently unable to distinguish between social workers and community developers.
4. Ensure that, before funding is allocated to community projects, social workers have ascertained that a needs assessment has been conducted; that projects are inclusive and have followed a transparent democratic process in the election of committee or board members.
5. Urge social workers to play the role of catalyst, resource developer, activist, coordinator, facilitator, broker and advocate in promoting partnerships and curbing the duplication of services. The cooperation and collaboration of all partners is critical in bringing about positive transformation in rural communities.
6. Join students in challenging academics and practitioners to develop and produce local, culturally relevant literature that would be relevant to South African rural communities, since the adaptation of Western theories and models of service delivery posed a major challenge to social work students and novice professionals.

Clearly, further research of this nature is needed. Participatory action research is an ideal strategy for gaining the community's confidence and trust (Van Rooyen & Gray, 1995). Most importantly, in participatory action research the community's collective generation of knowledge leads to the planning and enhancement of jointly created objectives (Collins, 1999:2; Long, 2001:7). According to Collins (1999:2), "the objectives are often for political ends, but may also be for organizational change, project management, community development and personal growth, or any other objectives the participants decide upon." This process would undeniably harness feelings of ownership and lead to the empowerment of rural communities as opposed to their exploitation through the imposition of others' views and values. Participatory action research could also serve as a foundation for the establishment of partnerships in social development. The goal of partnerships is to strategically combine efforts to alleviate poverty, address inequities and social injustices through the redistribution of resources and social and economic development programmes (Lombard & Du Preez, 2004:232). Clearly, there is a need for local, culturally appropriate community-based solutions and this is what social work must provide, if it is to be relevant in rural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study highlighted some of the problems and challenges of rural community development. Evidently little has been accomplished through development projects in impoverished rural areas and residents' quality of life has not improved as they believed it would after twelve years of democracy. Most importantly, the enormous task of social development in the rural areas of Limpopo province requires massive input from the government and private business sector. Developmental social work can do little more in such circumstances than play an ameliorative role, though it would seem that the future social workers involved in this study believed that they did have a role in rural community development. Hopefully policy makers in the provincial Department of Health and Social Development charged with this responsibility will take note of their enthusiasm and collective suggestions.

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