Introduction

In development circles the question of people's participation is a central issue, but the understanding of what it means varies. For some it is a question of getting people to accept what the authorities/agencies have proposed, for others participation implies that people dominate every step of the process; taking the initiative, making the plans, implementing and controlling the work and carrying out the evaluation.

The role of the outsiders (e.g. development workers) in this process is thus rather ambiguous. In some cases they are supposed to be leaders organizing or mobilizing people, in other facilitators conscientizing people.

Most development workers will today, at least in principle, accept the wider role for people in participation and thus that their own role is one of assisting and facilitating, at the same time as they themselves will learn and be assisted and guided by the people. But how can this be done?

My paper will deal with the question of how to operationalize people's participation in such a way that a dynamic interaction between a local community and the 'development workers' can take place, one which can stimulate the community's development efforts.

I will present a couple of models which were developed within the Lutheran World Federation - Communication for Development Project. I will further point to some areas of the 'spiritual' aspects of development (seen as a holistic process) where similar models could be made use of.

Models for Participation

Communication for Development Project (CDP) was to investigate the possibilities of using communication methods and media to enhance development efforts. It was carried out 1980-85 in Southern Sudan in cooperation with the Sudan Government, Norwegian Church
Aid, some local churches and the Sudan Council of Churches. For comparison purposes a smaller project was also established in Cameroon.

While the study as such dealt with a number of aspects of communication in development, I will here only mention one: models for organizing the encounter between insiders (local groups) and outsiders (development workers from other areas).

CDP accepted as a basic principle that the local group should participate in all steps of a project which dealt with their society and be given a creative and decisive role in the interaction with the outsiders.

The model I will describe was termed 'Village Workshop." I will begin by giving a practical example of such an event, in which a certain development issue was discussed and settled.

**A Village Workshop**

1. During visits to a Boya village a health officer had been approached by several people who worried about the many diseases which killed their children.

2. The health officer discussed the matter with the village elders and they agreed to hold a joint meeting on the matter. The elders undertook to select a group of some fifteen people "who understand this matter," to participate in such a meeting (or workshop), and one person offered a sheep as a gift to feed the participants. The health officer promised on his side to bring along a couple of 'experts' and some tea and sugar. They also agreed on a time for meeting.

3. The elders had decided on a place to meet (the site for their own gatherings), and on the date set the participants gathered. The village representatives included some diviners, healers and some ordinary villagers, and the health officer had brought along a nurse and a person with media experience. The participants sat down in a traditional circle. Other villagers who came to see what was going on were invited to sit down in an outer circle.

4. After introduction of all the participants the health officer began asking the villagers about the problems, what diseases were common, how they traditionally were treated, what solution the villagers saw to their problems, etc. The first sitting of two - three hours was