

GOODBYE TO PROJECTS? – THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACHES ON DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

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4. LESSONS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING INTERVENTIONS

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This briefing paper compares two approaches to community-based planning in Tanzania, South Africa and Uganda. Analysing these interventions through an audit of sustainable livelihood 'principles' (as a proxy for best practice) reveals general lessons about both the practical opportunities and challenges for employing sustainable livelihoods approaches to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development interventions and also about the changing format of development interventions.

Principal Findings

- Piloting planning systems is a useful means of learning - but pilots need to aim at mainstreaming learning through incremental financial and institutional integration with existing planning mechanisms.
- Recognising both the *strengths* and *needs* of communities can enable them to build on those strengths to drive their own development.
- Sustainable partnerships in community planning recognise and act to reduce the differentials of power and control in their relationships
- There is a crucial trade-off to be made between the depth and coverage of participatory processes and the resources required to replicate them.
- Sustainable community-based planning systems can play a role in linking individual livelihoods (micro-level) to policy-making processes (macro-level) and thereby improving their impact on poverty reduction. The same channels can also be used for the dissemination of information.
- Communities are not homogenous and social exclusion can be increased where community planning processes are captured by powerful groups.

Community-Based Planning

At the international level, moves to advance local participation for community-driven development are seen as being of central importance in the creation of sustainable livelihoods, good governance and in alleviating poverty. As a policy to overcome exclusion, collective participatory action has become a guiding principle (e.g. in the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers). Participatory approaches are implemented by governments, NGOs and donors in an array of formats varying from consultation exercises and incentivised collective labour to the management of natural resources and service delivery led by community-based workers.

Community-driven development, achieved through the devolution of resources and responsibilities to the local (micro) level was the aim of the two case studies considered in this briefing paper. Both the Community-Based Planning Project and Tanzakesho (box 1) sought to re-orient existing meso level planning processes and to empower communities to increase their 'voice' in these processes.

Box 1 The Case studies

The Community-Based Planning Project

The Community-based Planning Project (CBP) was a DFID-funded, four-country action-research project covering South Africa, Uganda, Ghana and Zimbabwe. It explored how an empowering participatory planning process can be integrated with the local government planning system.

It focused on three main themes:

- The promotion of decentralised approaches to planning and service delivery
- The promotion of empowerment, involving use of participatory methodologies
- An emerging body of work in the promotion of sustainable livelihoods approaches.

The goal of the project was 'by 2005, community-based planning systems have been developed and are operating in 4 African countries which were integrated into the local government planning and resource allocation system'. The purpose was 'realistic plans developed in each country for implementation or piloting of community-based planning systems, which participating institutions were committed to take forward'.

DFID originally awarded US\$421,000 for the operation of CBP as an action research project, although some additional funds were granted to ensure that the benefits of the project were captured and scaled up in the longer term. Essentially CBP funds were used to kick-start a system that was to be driven by local government partners, and therefore integrated into existing funding streams. CBP project funds were used to effect this integration through study visits, testing and developing improved community-planning methodologies and learning exchanges

Participatory Planning for District Development within the Capacity 21 Programme in Tanzania (Tanzakesho)

The origins of the Tanzakesho programme lay in Capacity 21, a commitment by UNDP to assist developing countries in building their capacity for the incorporation of Agenda 21 (the outcome of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit) into their national development agendas. Tanzakesho operated as a pilot project in two districts (Mbozi and Sengerema).

The main component of Tanzakesho was the advocacy of participatory planning processes as a means of effecting sustainable development. In both districts this meant improving the existing 'Mpango Kata' or Ward Planning Programme, which was a community-based programme aimed at addressing poverty alleviation at ward level. However, it was felt that Mpango Kata was largely implemented in a 'top-down' fashion and so could be strengthened by making it more participatory and therefore reflective of local needs.

Tanzakesho's activities evolved from five overarching programme objectives:

- Strengthening the decentralisation process through capacity building in planning for sustainable development at district and village levels.
- Piloting of participatory implementation strategies for initiatives on sustainable use of natural resources.
- Support to operationalisation of Tanzanian Development Vision 2025
- Review of the planning framework to incorporate principles of sustainable development
- Advocacy for sustainable development through environmental education and awareness raising.

Planning activities were followed by the implementation of micro-projects as prioritised during the village planning process and their monitoring by the villagers. Micro-projects included: classroom construction, village office construction, tree planting and the creation of by-laws to prevent cattle and people fouling water sources.

Additionally, district staff reviewed the National Development Vision 2025 document, which aimed to halve poverty in the country by 2025, and generated strategies on how the district could operationalise it. Facilitation of a Village Vision 2025 was incorporated into the village planning process.

Various environmental education and awareness measures were tailor-made to the needs of the respective districts, such as the experimentation with fuel-efficient cooking stoves. Local consultants were used to advise on their construction, and on other environmental technologies and income generation activities, although uptake of the technologies was low at the time of fieldwork.

The Sustainable Livelihoods-grounded audit

The two case studies were analysed as part of the Goodbye to Projects? study exploring the institutional implications for the adoption of sustainable livelihoods approaches (SLAs) to development. Details of this approach can be found in briefing papers 1-3 of this series. Broadly the principles, which underpin a sustainable livelihoods approach, are encompassed by community-driven development approaches (see box 2)

The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase consisted of general and country reviews on SL and development interventions. The second phase of the research involved the compilation of detailed case studies of development interventions in Uganda, Tanzania and Southern Africa. These case studies compare and contrast the implementation of a range of sector wide approaches, programmes and projects all developed with a livelihoods orientation, which reflects the evolving practice of development.

Analysis of the case studies was undertaken using the SL principles as a structuring framework in order to compare how different principles were translated into practice. This enables an identification of the trade-offs that are necessitated, for instance between the depth and coverage of participatory mechanisms and financial and institutional sustainability of any systems that are introduced.

Box 2 SL-grounded audit

Data was collected and analysed for each case study in relation to the following issues:

- 1) Poor People as focus
- 2) Participation
- 3) Partnerships
- 4) Holistic approach
- 5) Policy and institutional links
- 6) Building on strengths
- 7) Dynamism and flexibility
- 8) Accountability/ responsiveness
- 9) Sustainability (economic, social, environmental and institutional)

These principles were adapted by the study team from earlier work by Carney (2002) and others.

Comparing case studies across the SL principles

Focus on the livelihoods of the poor

In CBP livelihoods analysis was conducted in planning exercises with a range of social groups identified as vulnerable by community representatives. Although Tanzakesho did not employ specific forms of livelihoods analysis, it recognised the multi-sectoral nature of people's livelihoods and attempted to understand them.

Participation

Self-mobilisation by 'communities' was aimed at in the implementation of community plans in both CBP and Tanzakesho. CBP took this a step further and aimed to allow ward committees to monitor and evaluate their plans. However, it experienced problems with implementation of monitoring and evaluation in the pilot study.

Both interventions adapted their participatory processes to local conditions and attempted to include and listen to the poorest groups to some extent. The participatory processes in Tanzakesho and CBP were held over several days and included separate sessions for groups such as women and youth. Implementers showed awareness that these processes do not necessarily reach the poorest groups, but found themselves constrained by time and resources in addressing this.

Tanzakesho employed an intensive, resource-heavy participatory processes covering small groups at village level. This led to problems with the sustainability of the systems that it sought to pilot. CBP explicitly attempted to find a way out of 'one-off' PRA exercises as a means for people to influence resource allocation in district government. It sought to develop a methodology that could be employed at the level of district and local government (the 'meso' level) using resources locally available.

Partnerships

One of the reasons for CBP's success was due to the limited financial resources of the project. This forced the intervention to make strong and strategic partnerships with local and national government. The project relied on partners to find resources (funds and staff) in order to implement the CBP planning methodology. CBP operated as a coordination project for multi-agency action in that the project activity was facilitatory and so its power was not directional.

In Tanzakesho there was an attempt to create equal partnerships between UNDP and local government (and more widely with local NGOs). Staff working on the programme were paid through existing District Council systems, however significant resources were available for the operation of the programme in the form of computers and vehicles.

Multi-level and Holistic

In CBP attention was paid to bringing development actors within a community together in order to contribute in an integrated way to the ward and then the district development plan, as well as bringing together partners from meso and macro levels to work together in promoting micro-meso linkages. CBP also sought to engage key actors who, although not directly involved in the intervention, would have a vital role in upscaling and replicating the intervention methodology. Tanzakesho, showed some examples of co-operation with NGOs in the implementation of micro-projects, but operated through strong and effective multi-sectoral teams from District Councils. This enabled holistic support to village planning processes.

Strengths-based

It is not clear from this research whether this difference in framing an intervention makes a difference in outcome. CBP took a strengths-based approach and specifically tried to move away from a problem-based planning system. By contrast, Tanzakesho worked from a needs-based analysis. Although the starting points were different, both Tanzakesho and CBP worked towards the idea of having a community-owned goal, towards which resources would be mobilised with primary responsibility for development being placed on 'the community'.

It is argued by the CBP project management that focusing on strengths helps to give communities and institutions confidence and a belief that they can succeed. However, there is a need to be careful that working on strengths does not overload or distort the activity of systems and individuals. Understanding and recognising strengths is an inherently subjective process but using methodologies such as PRA in Tanzakesho and the planning processes in CBP can enable communities to reflect and discuss what they perceive as being their strengths.

Long-term and flexible

Tanzakesho was part of a broader programme of activities undertaken by UNDP, which operates through existing government structures but is not fully institutionalised within existing resource streams. However the intervention was very flexible - an initial focus on environmental goals was shifted towards governance issues in response to local pressure.

CBP demonstrates ways of operating a project as a facilitatory mechanism and platform for action-learning. The crucial difference in CBP is the explicit recognition of the need to work within institutions without overloading capacity and utilising existing resource flows, in addition to stimulating the flow of new funds.

Sustainability

Tanzakesho operated as a parallel structure within local government, which resulted in differential coverage by staff between pilot/non-pilot villages. The potential for sustainable impact appears to be greater where the intervention is fully integrated with institutional patterns such as testing and implementing methodologies across the whole of local government areas (as in CBP) and the institution as a whole rather than in pilot villages only (as in Tanzakesho).

The systems set up by many interventions rely heavily on external funding sources, as was the case with Tanzakesho. CBP differed in that it used its funds as a facilitatory mechanism to enable community-based planning systems to be set up, using existing resourcing streams in most cases.

The PRA planning process in Tanzakesho had a strong environmental awareness component. The main problems identified in village plans were environmental and the resulting actions were the cleaning and protection of water sources, the promotion of environmentally benign technologies and the passing of by-laws to prevent over-grazing and assist the regeneration of forest reserves. In CBP some environmental issues were highlighted as part of the planning process but they were not mainstreamed.

Conclusions

Both interventions incorporated a number of the SL principles, which do seem to have contributed to their successes. CBP appears to be more sustainable, partially due to the stronger institutional links at meso and macro levels, and also to be having larger impacts on policy. Our findings suggest that the explicit use of SL-linked tools and approaches can have positive benefits for planning, both at community level and in the incorporation at higher level of information generated from community plans.

Reference

Franks T. et al (2004) *Goodbye to Projects? The Institutional Impact of Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches on Development Interventions*. Bradford Centre for International Development, Bradford University