

MAKING THE LINK BETWEEN MICRO AND MESO: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING (CBP) CBP partners in Ghana, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe¹

Much effort has focused on strengthening decentralised institutions, such as local government, to support local development. However, frequently the links between decentralised institutions and citizens remain weak. Resources often get captured by these meso-institutions and do not reach the community level. This paper summarises ongoing work to develop and implement systems of community-based planning in Uganda, South Africa, Ghana and Zimbabwe. The approach has generated planning methodologies which have been tested in six large municipalities covering up to 2 million people, and are now being rolled out nationally in Uganda and South Africa, with a national steering committee established to take next steps in Zimbabwe.

Policy conclusions

- Democratic decentralisation is being widely promoted as one of the ways to improve service delivery. But if it is to be effective, then a systematic process is needed for linking citizens with local government through some form of community-based participatory planning (CBP), which must link to the local government planning system.
- Current approaches to participatory planning tend to be *ad hoc*, unsystematic and expensive.
- For CBP, resources must be allocated for immediate implementation of the plan, including an amount over which the community has discretion, with larger amounts channeled through the wider local government planning process.
- The systems that are being implemented in South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ghana have worked, so encouraging the wider testing of these types of CBP systems.
- As the plans are gradually implemented, attention will shift to wider issues of local governance, including accountability and feedback mechanisms, and community management of resources.

Introduction

Background

In 1998–2000, with a grant from UK-DFID, Khanya undertook action research to explore ‘Institutional Support for Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa’. This led to a further action research project in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana and S. Africa to test options for CBP. Early work suggested that if the livelihoods of poor people are to improve, the linkages between micro level (community) and meso level (local government and district service providers) need to be strengthened, to improve service delivery and enhance participatory governance. Three key governance requirements were initially identified at micro and meso levels:

Micro level²

- poor people must be active and involved in managing their own development (claiming their rights and exercising their responsibilities);
- there must be a responsive, active and accessible network of local service providers (community-based, private sector or government).

Meso level³

- at local government level (lower meso), services need to be provided or promoted effectively and responsively, and service-providers coordinated and held accountable.

This paper concentrates on the first of these requirements, and on how community involvement in planning and management can link to decentralised delivery systems.

Action-research on community-based planning

This project involves a range of partners in the four countries, including the key national organisation involved in decentralised planning, a local government prepared to implement the findings, and a development facilitator involved in participatory planning. Micro-macro linkages are thus embedded in the study. It is an action-research project, building on committed partners for whom these questions are crucial. The clients of the planning are communities, interest groups, individuals and local politicians as well as

technical staff of local governments and service providers (including national and provincial departments, and NGOs).

In terms of methods, the project has involved in-country reviews of experience, cross-country sharing, development of pilots and revised methodologies, and cross-learning visits to other countries.

Current attempts at participatory planning

The many types of participatory planning differ in:⁴

- the nature and scope of activities (e.g. project planning, sectoral planning or integrated area planning);
- the nature and extent of linkages with ‘higher’ level planning and/or local governance systems;
- the stages in the planning cycle at which community members are involved;
- the degree of community involvement at each stage;
- the type of external organisation (if any) which initiates and/or supports the planning activity (e.g. local authority, government department, NGO);

Typically, people promote participatory and community-based planning for the following reasons:

- to make plans more relevant to local conditions;
- to increase community involvement in service provision;
- to increase people’s control over their livelihoods;
- to help promote community-based action.

The CBP project addresses all four, and does so in a way which is implementable and sustainable with the resources available to local governments and local communities. In practical terms, the CBP project seeks to identify what sort of community-based planning process can be implemented which is holistic, reflecting the complex reality of people’s lives, linked to the mainstream planning system (usually local government, but also sectoral), can be empowering, and is realistic within the resource envelopes (human and financial) available within a municipal area.

Existing examples of participatory planning

Current attempts at community-based planning tend to fit into the following types, all of which exhibit shortcomings:

- attempts to enhance participation in local government planning (see the S. Africa and Uganda examples below);
 - attempts to involve communities in service delivery (e.g. Community Water and Sanitation Project, Ghana);
 - attempts by NGOs to enhance empowerment (e.g. ITDG in Zimbabwe);
 - support to structured community-participation projects (e.g. UNICEF and support for Parish Development Committees in Uganda).
- Some examples are described below.

The Integrated Development Plan system in S. Africa

South Africa has embarked on a process to make its local governments more viable and more focused on development. There has been an amalgamation of local authorities, the creation of a second tier of district municipalities and of six metros covering the large cities, and the allocation to local government of a responsibility to promote social and economic development. A new system of planning has started, where all local authorities are required to develop five-year Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) with community participation, and with frequent reviews by the municipalities of the participatory processes and mechanisms used.

Ward committees were established in 2001 as the lowest tier of organised representation⁵ but there is no effective process for undertaking participation in the IDPs. Thus, in practice there tended to be a single problem-focused workshop in a ward as the only mechanism for participation, making participation extremely limited.

Multi-stakeholder planning institutions in Uganda

The local government system in Uganda has five levels of local councils, each with statutory functions with regard to participatory development planning. The district is the highest level (LCV), followed by the county (LCIV), sub-county (LCIII), parish (LCII) and village (LCI) councils. Districts and sub-counties are levels of local government, while the other tiers of local councils (parish and village) are administrative units. Local Government Councils have the power to prepare, approve and implement their own development plans and budgets, based on locally-determined priorities.

The district and sub-county councils are required by law to plan 'bottom-up', i.e. to prepare a three-year rolling comprehensive and integrated development plan, incorporating the plans of lower level local councils. However, the methodology for developing plans is still evolving. Generally, a number of problems are identified at village level and a 'shopping list' of projects referred to the parish level, where village projects are prioritised and further referred upwards to the sub-county level. While not statutory, three-year rolling parish development plans are being encouraged by the Ministry of Local Government, through the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP).

An example of participation in services: Community Water and Sanitation Project, Ghana

This is a donor-driven project funded by the International Development Association (IDA) and the Government of Ghana. A prospective community applies for a grant through the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST). It is then assisted by a Partner Organisation through various phases of the project cycle, comprising awareness-raising, participatory processes, roles and responsibilities, the creation of a Water and Sanitation Committee (Watsan), collaboration between the community and Watsan in the selection and siting of facilities and various other Watsan responsibilities, (hygiene promotion campaigns, the development of a management plan, fund management and capacity-building).

New approaches to CBP: principles

Key principles that underpin our approach to CBP are that:

- poor people must be included in planning;
- systems need to be realistic, and the planning process must be implementable using available resources within the district/local government, and must integrate with existing processes, particularly local government planning;
- planning must be linked to a legitimate structure;
- planning should not be a one-off exercise, but part of a longer process;
- the plan must be people-focused and empowering;
- planning must be based on vision and strengths/opportunities, not problems;
- plans must be holistic and cover all sectors;
- the process must be learning-oriented;
- planning should promote mutual accountability between community and officials;
- systems should be flexible and simple;
- there must be commitment by councillors and officials and there must be someone responsible to ensure the plan is implemented.

Challenges of this approach

Some of the key challenges that this type of CBP raises are:

- the need for a process which is short (and so not too resource-intensive) and yet sufficiently in-depth to address the needs of poor people, and to do so in an empowering way;
- in order to have sufficient facilitators, there is a need to develop a facilitation capacity among a range of service agencies operating within an area, who need to provide their time at no cost (e.g. departments of social development, agriculture, health, education, who also need to get to know the priorities themselves), as well as potentially among ward/area committee members;
- the need for a budget to be available immediately to support local action after the planning;
- the need to train people to undertake planning, including ward/parish committees and develop their ability to plan and manage development in their wards;
- the need to avoid the extremes of shallow or token participation under conventional approaches on the one hand, and the slow, highly resource-intensive approaches typical of NGOs, on the other, which have virtually no links with formal planning structures.

The following sections describe the emerging results.

The core CBP methodology

The core methodology that was developed involves three to five days' planning, including:

- preparatory meetings with ward committees and opinion leaders;
- two days of situation analysis involving:
 - meetings with different social groups to analyse their livelihoods, their assets, vulnerabilities, preferred outcomes and livelihood strategies;
 - analysis of services using a Venn diagram process;
 - work within the community to map resources and problems, prepare a timeline of key historical events, and conduct a SWOT analysis of the community;
- a community meeting where all the outcomes identified by different social groups are prioritised, and a vision statement drawn up for the ward;
- development of a plan by the groups for the top five priorities, assigning responsibilities to the community, the municipality, and others;
- the preparation of proposals for projects to be submitted to the main local government plan, (and in Mangaung's case for the US \$5,000 that was guaranteed to each ward

to support their process);

- an action schedule drawn up by the ward committee to take the plans forward.

Country experiences in CBP

South Africa

Mangaung Local Municipality (MLM) became an early partner in the CBP project, in the process of producing its Integrated Development Plan (IDP). It was also decided to plan at ward level, the only recognised level below municipal level. The municipality budgeted an average of R50,000 (about US \$5,000) per ward as an immediate fund to support local action.

MLM's approach to the IDP envisaged three components:

- a ward plan prepared by the community, covering vision, goals, projects and activities by local actors, by the municipality and by other service providers, and a 3-month action plan;
- a municipal plan of similar scope, including ward suggestions for municipal action (e.g. a new municipal road) and strategic projects for the municipality (e.g. Mangaung Development Partnership);
- service plans by different government departments, NGOs etc, which should cover projects suggested by the Ward and strategic projects for the department/organisation.

The CBP was undertaken between September 2001 and February 2002, involving a contact week with each of the 43 wards, most of which received the US \$5,000 designated by the municipality. Some 10,000 people participated in the planning, i.e. 1.2% of the population. The IDP that has been developed for the whole municipality has also drawn on this information in different ways:

- in developing strategic priorities for the municipality;
- in suggesting ideas for how the overall development objectives could best be achieved (e.g. self-build housing rather than contractor-built housing);
- in suggesting specific ideas for the municipality as a whole (e.g. for a job centre);
- in specific project ideas for the local ward.

In addition, in Limpopo Province, the Department of Agriculture used CBP in 31 villages across the province as a participatory planning methodology.

A wide range of partners have now become involved through a national Steering Committee. The methodology is being refined to strengthen linkages with the local government's development planning process, improve the M&E, and also develop appropriate support systems for national rollout. Draft national guidelines will be piloted in eight municipalities this year, using local and donor funds.

Uganda

The CBP in Uganda works with the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP), Bushenyi District Local Government (a district of about 800,000 people in south west Uganda) and CARE Uganda. Additionally, the Uganda Participatory Development Network (UPDNet) was brought in to provide expertise in communication and to mainstream the CBP process across those stakeholders working on participation issues.

The CBP responds in part to a government call for a standardised participatory planning methodology within a revised investment planning guide, which could be used by local governments across Uganda, and which could be supported by NGOs.

Bushenyi District decided to pilot the CBP methodology in all 170 parishes (over 1000 villages) and to reduce the process to a three-day planning process, but with an additional pre-planning meeting where existing background information could be compiled.

Training began in December 2001 and the parish development plans were then formulated in March/April 2002, linking into the development of the sub-county and district development plans.

Concurrently, the government developed final guidelines for local government, which were issued in March 2002 and supported by training. Progress with their use has been reviewed and the Harmonised Participatory Planning Guidelines (HPPG) are now being revised and training of trainers planned, prior to roll-out to 26 districts.

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, political turmoil delayed the effective start of CBP. A district training team has led the process in each district, comprising municipal and government staff, and these have trained core facilitation teams for each ward, who have actually done the ward planning.

Some of the experiences from Gwanda and Chimanimani fed into the district budget discussions in October 2002, and into a national workshop in January 2003, bringing together a range of relevant stakeholders, where the decision was taken to establish a national Steering Committee to take forward CBP and community empowerment, to be chaired by the Ministry of Local Government.

Ghana

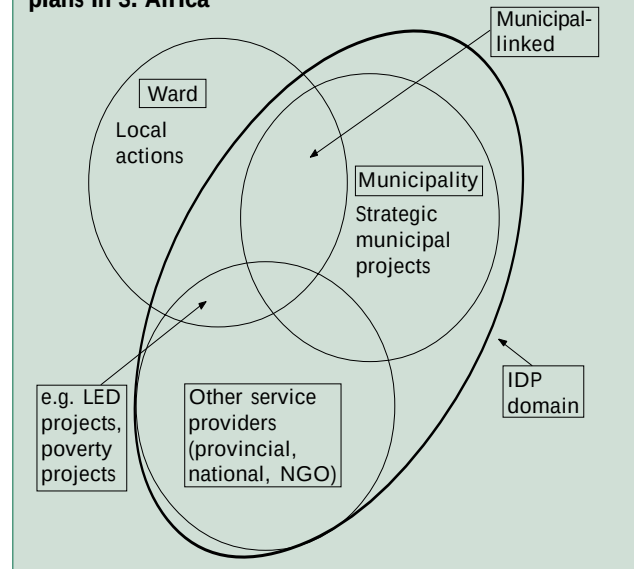
In Ghana, the lowest planning unit is the District Assembly. Decentralisation policy encourages the participation of communities in the district planning process. In practice however, the level of participation is very shallow, with little community 'ownership' of outcomes.

The CBP planning process started in Adansi East and Asanti Akim South districts in February 2002. The core CBP manual was adapted and the process was facilitated by a team drawn from the decentralised departments of the assembly and led by the Deputy District Coordinating Director who has been involved in the CBP project.

To spread the CBP concept cost-effectively to the rest of the district, a team of facilitators was created at the area council level to take the process to the communities and build an area council development plan.

Ghana has had difficulties developing a national approach, partly due to haste in district planning within the PRSP. However a common approach is being developed and it has been agreed to establish a national Steering Committee.

Figure 1 Links between CBP, municipality and sector plans in S. Africa



Results of the first two years of implementation

Each of the four countries participating in the CBP project has undertaken a review of experience and held a national workshop bringing together practitioners and policy-makers to look at CBP. In July 2001, a four-country workshop was held in South Africa, where the results from each country were reviewed and a generic CBP manual developed, which has since been revised (available at www.khanya-mrc.co.za). Visits have been made to India and Bolivia to learn from their experience.

In S. Africa, Zimbabwe and Uganda, a localised version of the CBP manual has been developed. In Uganda, the intensive planning has been reduced to a three-day process, which was believed to be more manageable to implement district-wide.

In South Africa, CBP has been applied in the whole of Mangaung Local Municipality, and in Zimbabwe in Gwanda Rural District and Chimanimani Rural District Councils. In S. Africa, the national Ministry includes CBP in the outputs it reports to the President, and a national Steering Committee is improving the methodology and piloting in eight municipalities this year prior to national rollout in 2004.

Independent evaluations have been conducted in Mangaung (S. Africa) and Bushenyi (Uganda). The evaluation from Mangaung showed that:

- 42 of 43 wards had prepared plans, all had been approved, and 41 had spent on their projects using the R50,000 allocated;
- CBP was felt to be very useful by most wards;
- the ward committees found working with different socio-economic groups as part of the planning to have been very helpful and participation levels were high;
- facilitators were drawn from a wide variety of jobs in the municipality and were very positive about the experience;
- the manuals were found to be very helpful;
- training and support to facilitators could have been improved;
- the poor and disadvantaged were involved in the planning, and their priorities are represented in the final plans.

The evaluation from Bushenyi was similar, revealing that the plans developed were comprehensive, provided a linkage point for civil society, private sector and government initiatives, and paid particular attention to sequencing and to the needs of disadvantaged groups, though there was scope for greater gender awareness and more attention was needed to ensure that the priorities of the poor emerged.

Next steps

The CBP study is now aiming to mainstream the participatory planning process, and examine the wider governance linkages which emerge. Some of these include:

- mainstreaming CBP into national planning processes, linking to other participatory planning methodologies;
- improving the methodology for integrating the local plans with local government plans;
- training up a cadre of consultants, NGOs and municipal planners as facilitators and 'trainers of trainers' in CBP;
- improving the monitoring mechanisms so that ward/area committees can monitor the plans effectively, and they can be monitored by citizens and local governments;
- developing mechanisms to support community-based implementation and management.

These point to CBP becoming a driver for a much wider local governance agenda.

Conclusions

Decentralisation initiatives have typically relied on short community meetings or participatory rural appraisals as the

main mechanisms for including people in planning. The former usually result in 'shopping lists', which are very difficult to implement. The latter can be more thorough but remain *ad hoc* with little contribution to capacity-building. Even where participatory planning systems have been developed, another common problem has been the lack of a budget allocated to the plans that are prepared.

The capacity-building and facilitation dimensions of the approach require further development, but the CBP approach described here offers an opportunity to mainstream participation and move it from rhetoric to a systematic process of assisting local people to be active and involved in planning and managing their own development, claiming their rights and exercising their responsibilities.

¹ Participating people and institutions are listed below.

² Community level.

³ Lowest level where services are managed, usually local government level.

⁴ Adapted from Conyers (2001).

⁵ In Mangaung, each ward has approximately 20,000 people.

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Acknowledgements

All project documents can be found at www.khanya-mrc.co.za, including some in draft form. For further details, or for those who would like to be part of a network on the topic, please contact the Project Manager, Ian Goldman, at goldman@khanya-mrc.co.za

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