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A NEW VILLAGE REGION: Addressing 'Rural Sprawl'

CONTEMPLATING
EFFECTIVE
RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

LAND
PRIORITISATION

STRENGTHENING
WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP AND
PARTICIPATION



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Contemplating Effective Rural Development

By Nontlantla Skenjana

The South African development arena is currently facing many challenges. As the country moves to the close of the second decade, there is still glaring underdevelopment in rural areas, inequality in urban suburbs and townships and piling backlogs in all levels of service delivery. There are constant protests ranging from wage disputes to service delivery concerns and mob 'justice'. The greater concern in all these is the violence and destruction that is caused during the protests that is further straining government's effort to accelerate the provision of basic services to communities, economic emancipation of the South African people and create an enabling environment for community participation in development and governance.

Rural development has, in the past fifteen years, been visible at policy level with no real interventions that are directly benefiting rural communities at large. In the past, developers have erred in thought by suggesting that if the urban setting is developed, the effect will trickle down into the rural communities. However, that led to urban migration which has been detrimental in the Eastern Cape as the province is largely rural, leading to brain drain from the province and persistence of high levels of poverty. The interventions by development agencies, like the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the Agriculture and Rural Development Research Institute (ARDRI) of the University of Fort Hare, Ntinga OR Tambo Development Agency and AsgiSA-EC, amongst others, have become a beam of hope for rural communities. This hope has been heightened by government's stated aim to prioritise rural development.

The risk that these interventions run is whether these interventions are sustainable. The purpose of rural development is to eradicate poverty and to establish rural economies that will be able to support and empower resident communities. It is therefore vital for rural development programmes to take into consideration all the possible factors that could influence the success of their initiatives. Swanepoel and De Beer (2006:10) identify five factors that are interdependent and must be considered for effective development to occur.

1. Political Factors

Community leadership has a crucial role in the panning out of the development process. Sud (1992: 84) quotes Iltiza Khan stating: "Leadership is thus sine qua non of success in all human activities but in a democratic system, particularly at the lower levels, it assumes greater significance and wider proportions." Leadership has a potential to influence the process of participation of community members



Public Participation for Rural Development

and championing socio-economic change. Community leaders are normally the gatekeepers to communities. There are instances where development projects have been derailed because of conflict between community leaders, particularly between traditional leadership and local government officials.

2. Social Factors

It has been said that the death of the family is the death of the community. The social dynamics of a community are very much dictated by the family units and by community structures that exist within the community. This is particularly evident in the South African communities where politics have shaped the social space of society and culture defines the social makeup of the communities.

3. Cultural Factors

The culture of a community is central to their values and morals. People, by nature, resist things that seek to change their way of doing things and are sensitive to things that infringe on their values. It is important for development programmes to consider the community's customs, maximising on the strengths therein.

4. Economic Factors

In most rural areas there are high unemployment rates with some local municipalities recording more than 60 percent unemployment. Commercial agriculture has declined and most families rely on grants for a living. Families have to undertake informal activities, such as cattle herding and sales of grain, vegetables and liquor. The economic outlook of a community will determine the interests of the people and how many people are available to ensure the success of development projects. The absence of social infrastructure, such as roads, water and electricity, has an adverse impact on possible development interventions.

“Rural development programmes must be fitted to the people, not people being fitted to rural development programmes.”

5. Psychological Factors

The way that people experience reality will impact their expectation of development projects. In a number of instances people have been exploited and this has led to greater caution in accepting development programmes. The new age of entitlement and self-gratification has led to communities not wanting to take responsibility for or ownership of development interventions from government and other development agencies. This has enhanced the severity of scarcity of resources and communities' perception of their inability to make a positive contribution to the betterment of their situation. This means that communities have to first go through a mindset change management process prior to accepting and taking ownership of a development project.

The consideration of the above factors will provide the necessary foundation for the implementation of rural development programmes. These are re-entrenched by Aziz (1978:99) who further sums them up as the economic, social and political components of development. It must be understood that unless rural development programmes provide a platform for sustainable rural livelihoods they will not have the desired impact. The accepted general definition of sustainable devel-

opment is that of using currently available resources without compromising the use of future generations (WSSD: 2004). This means that it needs the cooperation of the current generations and for them to take responsibility for the use of all resources in their custody. Aziz (1978: 91) states that the objective of all development is the provision of basic needs and supporting the economic activities of the communities.

Aziz (1978:98) introduces a model that aims:

“To organise, develop and utilise the available resources of land, water and manpower in such a manner that the entire rural population dependent on these resources has an equitable opportunity to meet, as a minimum, their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter with reasonable facilities for education and health and can live together in a positive and healthy social environment.”

“The purpose of rural development is to eradicate poverty and to establish rural economies that will be able to support and empower resident communities.”

This is the crux of rural development and touches on all the above factors of the development environment. For effective rural development management that is sustainable, Singh (2003: 133) argues in agreement with Uphoff et al that it should be participatory; responsibility and authority must be shared amongst programme members and beneficiaries. He further states that some management roles have to be transferred to the community so that they may share its goals, provide some of the resources and contribute to their management. Singh identifies two areas of focus that are indicators for the effective management of rural development: people management and project management. The factors raised by Singh are in agreement with those raised by Swanepoel and De Beer (2006:28-35), which are as follows:

The Human Orientation

This speaks more to the people management component. It includes the ability of people to realise their inner potential while working to fulfil their physical needs, thus enabling them to achieve their own social development as alluded to by Aziz (1978:103). It speaks to open communication between all stakeholders to enhance accountability and responsibility. It also takes into consideration the institutional structures that exist within a community making it easier to coordinate activities.

Participation

People involvement and participation is in line with the development facilitation legislation and also entrenched in the

Municipal Systems Act. It is a platform that can be used not only for the sake of consultation, but for sharing and change. It provides space to explore alternatives and to consider indigenous knowledge and wealth that could be useful for sustainable development. It also entails the strengthening of the social fibre through creating space for co-operative participation in activities that will speed up development and adaptation to current technologies.

Empowerment

Swanepoel and De Beer (2006: 30) state that empowerment is a mixture between the right to make decisions and the ability to make decisions. Therefore, empowerment goes beyond training and capacity building to the actual application of that capacity and training for the effective management of rural development programmes. It is not limited to training provision, but also shapes the texture of society (Singh, 2003). It enables the people to monitor progress, evaluate the programmes and strategise on what can be done.

Ownership

Ownership deals with the ability to make and sustain decisions. It speaks to the accessibility of the programme to its beneficiaries. Rural communities need to take responsibility for diversifying its activities to ensure increasing social productivity in a growing population. This requires the communities to be able to manage the programmes effectively, efficiently and economically. It also hands over the responsibility for the sustainable use of natural, capital and human resources.

Release

This entails the actual effective addressing of the problem. Primarily, the objective of development is poverty eradication and a better life for all people. It entails ensuring the establishment of the necessary infrastructure, such as road and information networks, water and the appropriate building structures, to create an environment conducive to rural development. It entails the rural development programmes being able to create employment and generate income that can sustain the households within the community. It calls for public accountability and transparency and a political and administrative capacity to link the rural economy with the larger economy - providing leadership and guidance without curbing local participation (Singh, 2003).

These factors touch on the three concepts identified by Chambers and Conway (1991: 22-23), those of enhancing capability, improving equity and increasing social sustainability.

Primarily, rural development programmes must be fitted to the people, not people being fitted to rural development programmes (Servaes J et al, 1996). The process of development can be long and painstaking. It needs diligence from the implementers, careful consideration of the development environment and an understanding of the people and the projects to be implemented such that effective rural development can be achieved and sustained. r

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This article is based on selected experiences and discussions from the World Urban Forum (WUF5), an international UN-HABITAT event on meeting the challenges of urban sustainability, which was held in March 2010. Some of the information provided in this article is based on the World Urban Forum Daily News, a publication made during the session.

World Urban Forum 5 (WUF5)

By Frederick Kusambiza

Background

The WUF5 session took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and attracted close to 12 000 people from over 100 countries. The five days of the session were devoted to examining rapid urbanisation and its impact on communities, cities, economies and policies. Just as the past four forums had different working themes, WUF5's broad working theme was "Right to the City - Bridging the Urban Divide."

The WUF sessions, which came out of Habitat I and Habitat II meetings 34 years ago, aim to consider the future sustainability of our cities. The WUF5 session gave evidence of the demand for more global dialogue, exchange and mutual learning on sustainable urbanisation. The global dialogues and mutual learning stimulate discussions on the challenges faced by rapid urbanisation and realise the opportunities entailed in accelerating a global trend towards an urbanised future that has implications for every country.

The substantive objectives of the WUF5 session were about taking stock of where the world stands with respect to the "Right to the City," analyse who is getting the benefits of the urbanisation process and who is being left out. The fifth session also shared perspectives and view points on the contemporary relevance of this right to identify what is required to bridge the urban divide as well as facilitate a prompt and sustainable transition of moving from a city that is partially inclusive to one that is fully inclusive.



Some 'Favelas' (slum areas) in Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro, can be seen situated next to up market areas, like the 'Favelas' in the background of the Sheraton Hotel in Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro. The 'Favelas' in the background have a stunning view!

Broad Understanding of the Theme

"The Right to the City - Bridging the Urban Divide" session endorsed that this right expands the traditional focus of improving the quality of life, previously centred in the areas of shelter and the neighbourhood, to embrace the quality of life of the entire city and its surrounding areas. In this regard the city is not defined geographically or administratively. This right is therefore a mechanism to protect the populations living in cities or regions undergoing rapid urbanisation as well as those areas demonstrating urban decay and abandonment.

Furthermore, the right carries an explicit understanding of a paradigm shift demanding that all inhabitants of the city - the rich, the poor and the powerful - have the same right to access and benefit from the opportunities that the city offers. At the WUF5, the main six domains that were used to discuss and provide critical responses to the above and other questions regarding the concept of "Right to the City" were:

- Taking forward the right to the city.
- Bridging the urban divide; inclusive cities.
- Equal access to shelter and basic urban services.
- Cultural diversity to cities.
- Governance and participation.
- Sustainable urbanisation; cities in a changing climate.

Under the six domains that were used as the main topics for the dialogue sessions are overlapping issues that are inevitable and necessary to discuss in terms of sharing the responsibility of different actors and in most cases share common approaches for effective policy implementation. The noted issues are categorised under economic, social, political and cultural aspects.

Under the economic category, income inequalities as a resultant lead to hunger in cities amongst many other things while the social and political category bring about deprivations associated with overburdened infrastructure, inadequate housing and urban service delivery, and out-of-date health care systems. The cultural aspects place women and youth and race at the periphery in decision making.

The spirit and enthusiasm evidenced at the WUF5 showed that every participant was committed to the basic theme of the Forum, "Right to the City - Bridging the Urban Divide." A number of ideas were proposed and discussed. WUF5 session was concluded with a call for strengthening

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partnerships for urban development, as well as a growing recognition of the urgent need to address underlying causes of rapid urbanisation. †

Key Observations

Noting that the WUF sessions happen biennially, how can government institutions, development agencies and civil society organisations contribute to mitigating the identified issues of "bridging the urban divide"? Broad observations are made below based on various reports from discussions held at the WUF5 and prior experience gathered from the field.

- Developing a sustained vision for society is an on-going process. The route to sustainability changes as circumstances change over time. New forms of partnerships have emerged and need to be enhanced where arrangements of public, private and civil society should be deepened further. Concrete legal and institutional arrangements between public, private and civil society as well as necessary investments by public and private have to be committed to make the right to the city a reality. Intentions and promises will only continue to widen the gap by cheating of the precious time.
- There are alternative approaches to supporting development; for example one approach would be to work with policies and regulations; while another approach would be to work with vulnerable groups in society, by preparing them to become resilient to obstacles. This provides mitigation through the governance side as well as the affected populace, which gives opportunity working with this populace and not for them.

- Urbanisation needs to be managed through a process of proactive investigations, planning, action and learning so as to create a virtuous circle in development. "Bridging the Urban Divide" requires an integrated approach that articulates economic, social, political and cultural forms of inclusiveness. This provides to looking at new models of urban development and management where bold realistic policy framework and leadership at national and local levels is instituted, implemented and measured. Government policies, strategies have to change to respond to the decreasing gap between rural areas and cities.
- As it was mentioned in the overview report of the WUF5 session, cities are not just about economies or populations, they are also defined by their ability to bring people together along with their ideas and culture. Therefore social participation has to become a pattern of democracy and justice for all people regardless of their backgrounds, beliefs and origins.

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Self-initiated housing development

Land Prioritisation

By Ronald Eglin

The land question in South Africa, one of the most important issues of our time, has not yet been adequately addressed. The vision of the Bill of Rights is not being realised. Citizens are not, in significant quantities, gaining access to land on an equitable basis (section 25.5). Without land, other rights like housing (section 26), sufficient food and water (27.1.b) and an environment not harmful to health and wellbeing (24.a) are very difficult to achieve. Land needs to be prioritised.

In rural areas, land is not being redistributed quickly enough and those that do gain access to rural land often find it is of inappropriate quality for productive purposes and/or they do not have the necessary skills to productively utilise it. Minister Nkwinti hinted, in an interview with Business Day, that the government is considering extending its deadline to achieve a target of transferring 30 percent of land to black owners by 2014 to 2025. To date it has achieved a target of five percent (<http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-11-10-govt-remains-committed-to-landreform-objectives>).

In urban areas, the number of people in need of housing continues to remain high. When people do get land they find that they live in locations far from opportunities and they are unable to afford the on-going maintenance costs associated with owning a house.

In order to more effectively address the land question, three significant mind shifts need to be made.

Firstly, land needs to be conceptualised as a livelihood asset. In the rural context, land is valued for its productive purposes, to be used to grow and raise food. The challenge becomes how to make sure land is used productively - how to affordably increase soil fertility and the skills of those using the land. In the urban context, land is valued for its locational advantages, to be able to access job opportunities, educational facilities, health services, recreation and entertainment. The challenge becomes how to provide access to well located land - how to afford to buy well located land and keep this land in the hands of those that need it.

Secondly, land needs to be understood as a single resource, and managed through one ministry and department dedicated to land in the same way that water is understood

to be a single national resource. At the moment, we have the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform dealing predominantly with rural land, the Department of Human Settlements, especially through the newly created Housing Development Agency, dealing with urban residential land, and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs dealing with spatial planning. There is still too much confusion as to who is supposed to do what. Land must become a single ministry that deals with all land issues from urban to rural and all shades in between, for example peri-urban and rural village, etc. At the very least, as an interim arrangement, a series of land clusters at various tiers of government and levels of bureaucracy must be established where land issues can be coordinated.

Thirdly, land redistribution, both rural and urban, needs to become the central rallying point for government. Land redistribution will not simply happen through nice talk and goodwill. There needs to be a huge increase in the amount of human and financial energy and capacity that is channelled towards land redistribution. Government needs to start using all the tools it has at its disposal, from land redistribution grants, land expropriation, land taxation, land use management, to spatial planning, in order to make significant inroads into ensuring that land is redistributed and that the previously disenfranchised have access to land.

It is only once we recognise land as the key livelihood asset that it is, that land is being managed as a single asset through a single department, and that significant resources are channelled towards land redistribution that we will reach the goal of everyone having access to land on an equitable basis.†

Housing Delivery and Backlog

To date government has provided 2.8 million housing opportunities for more than 13 million people. Yet despite this globally acknowledged mass delivery of homes for the poor, the department is still faced with a backlog of almost 2.1 million home units - a figure which has remained constant over the past five years. (*Building the nation*, Issue 2, 2009, Department of Human Settlements, page 7)



A NEW VILLAGE REGION: Addressing 'Rural Sprawl'

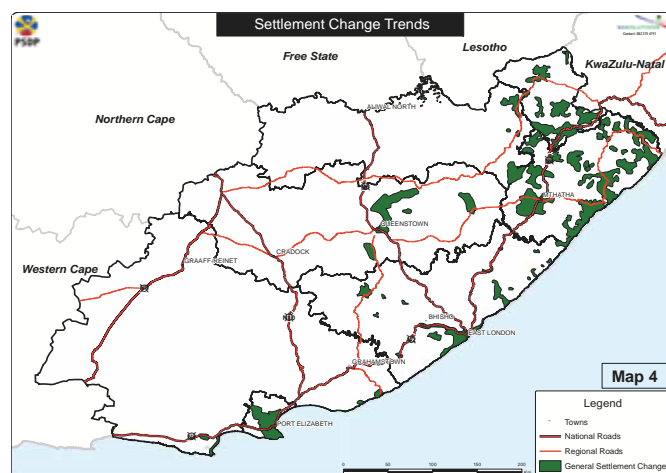
By Ronald Eglin

The Eastern Cape Spatial Development Plan Volume 1: Contextual Analysis of 2010 states that, "In the eastern portion of the province, there is widespread peri-urban sprawl close to the service centres and towns, with the main transport corridors enabling high mobility to and from urban opportunities." What this means in effect is that the former Transkei and Ciskei areas are becoming one large sprawling rural settlement.

Most people refer to the former homeland areas of the Transkei and Ciskei as rural; made up of rural homesteads, rural villages and rural towns. In most parts of the world, rural areas are areas where people make a living off the land. That's not what you see when you drive through most areas of the former homelands. What you see is what can only be described as 'rural sprawl' with houses scattered across the landscape. Many traditional authorities are starting to complain that they have no more land to allocate for new homesteads in such a sprawling landscape.

Households do not appear to be making a living from the land. Most of these areas do not rely on farming income, but rely more on remittances sent back from people working in urban areas and on social welfare grants, for example child support grants and old age pensions.

The following map of the Eastern Cape, compiled as part of the present process of reviewing the provincial spatial development plan, provides a visual picture of this rural sprawl occurring in the eastern portion of the Eastern Cape. The population of the eastern half of the Eastern Cape is growing while the western half shrinks. It does not look like this growth is going to stop anytime soon.



The areas marked on this map are a stylised summary of areas of new settlement development from 2000 to date. It shows that most new settlement development is occurring in the former homeland areas.



Urban and Rural Sprawl

Urban sprawl is when urban growth expands out from an urban centre into the adjacent agricultural and rural hinterland. Small towns grow over long periods of time to become cities; cities grow to become metropolitan areas; metropolitan areas are now growing to become what some call city regions. For example, the metropolitan areas of Gauteng are growing and there is no longer any space left between these metros for further development. It is becoming one big Gauteng 'city region'.

In the Transkei and to a lesser extent the Ciskei, rural villages have expanded over time to become more spread out rural villages.

There is now less space between

these spread out rural villages for more homesteads to be built. One spread out rural village is joining with the next rural village, becoming what we could call one big sprawling 'rural region'.

If this is truly a new sprawling rural region settlement pattern emerging, then we need to understand it; in terms of its limitations (if any), and identify ways in which it can be improved.

This rural sprawl settlement pattern of the Transkei (and Ciskei) has emerged over time as households from these areas aspire to a traditional rural lifestyle of having open space around their house and space for cattle, crops and graves. But this rural sprawl settlement pattern is coming at a cost.

The Cost of Rural Sprawl

As land becomes scarce for low density living, new homesteads that are built have to be built on land that may be better for agricultural development or land that has cultural significance, for example ancestral graves. It is expensive for the government to provide roads and other networked services, like water and water-borne sanitation, to such spread out locations. If inappropriate on-site sanitation is provided, like unlined pit latrines, this then leads to increased contamination of ground water sources. It is also expensive to provide a viable public transport system to such a scattered population. The extra travel required from a spread out settlement pattern increases greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels contributing to climate change; and households also have to pay more for travel as fuel prices rise due to the effects of peak oil.

If the present trend of rural sprawl is allowed to continue, new homesteads will encroach onto agricultural and cultural lands. New homesteads will also need to be built in between the existing homesteads increasing the density of rural sprawl. These expansion and densification trends will lead to

the erosion of the rural lifestyle that households so admire and aspire to in the region.

Addressing Settlement Development

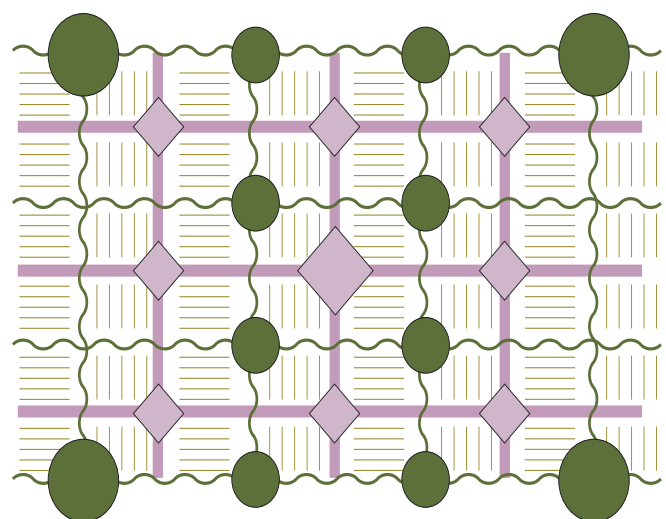
If we do not want to end up with a more expansive and denser rural sprawl, we need to change the way that settlement development occurs in this region.

The first thing to do is to identify existing and potential future wilderness areas that we want to keep for future generations. We need to conceptualise these wilderness areas as one big network of wilderness zones and corridors connecting these zones. Experience in the conservation sector demonstrates that nature functions better when fauna and flora are linked. Isolated islands of wilderness do not do as well and are harder to sustain from an ecological perspective than areas that are linked.

We then need to identify those agricultural areas that have high agricultural and grazing potential, have good soils and access to irrigation. These areas need to also be set aside so they can be maintained as agricultural productive areas into the future. However, these agricultural zones do not necessarily need to be part of a continuous corridor-node network.

This then leaves the remaining areas on which settlement development can occur. Settlement planning theory currently emphasises the development of a network of settlement nodes and corridors. The nodes relate to areas where urban activities occur and the corridors relate to movement and transport routes, especially public transport routes such as rail and bus. Settlement activity is then concentrated in these corridors thereby preserving the agricultural and wilderness areas.

The diagram below provides a schematic description for what such a wilderness, agricultural and settlement network could look like. This network pattern would be found at various scales, from the scale of the region (i.e. the former Transkei as a new village region) to the scale of a local village.



- ▶ Straight Lines and diamonds: settlement
- ▶ Squiggly lines and circles: wilderness
- ▶ Hashed areas: agriculture



At larger scales the size of these corridors may be fairly wide and large, with distances between separate corridors from tens to hundreds of kilometres. At smaller scales the size of these corridors may just be the width of one road with houses on each side; creating what Christopher Alexander (A Pattern Language, 1977) calls a 'lace of country streets.' The distance between this 'lace of country streets' could be from tens to thousands of meters.

The scale of wilderness corridors and agricultural areas within this settlement pattern would similarly change from kilometres to meters as you move down in scale. In effect, what is found is a self repeating wilderness - agricultural - settlement pattern at all scales. This network pattern would be replicated in a nested manner at different scales, or in what mathematicians call a fractal pattern. It is nested in a way that you can still find wilderness and agriculture areas nested within settlement areas, as well as nodal and linear settlements nested within wilderness and agricultural areas.

Such a nested and networked system would ensure that the wilderness, agricultural and settlement realms are kept apart. Settlement

be retained with open vistas over a mosaic of wilderness areas, agricultural lands and rural country lanes.

The higher density along these routes or corridors will make it easier for government to provide networked services, like water and electricity. The higher densities along these routes will also mean that public transport becomes more viable.

Implementing a Village Region Settlement Pattern

Assuming it is accepted that such a village region (as opposed to rural sprawl) settlement pattern is appropriate and accepted, the question becomes how can it be promoted and achieved? Forceful removal as done by the apartheid government through its Betterment Scheme Programme, where households were moved into villages with separate agricultural lands, is not acceptable and is not the way to go.

The present rural sprawl pattern needs to be the starting point. The rural sprawl pattern can not just be wished away. What can happen, however, is that all future development

“Urban sprawl is when urban growth expands out from an urban centre into the adjacent agricultural and rural hinterland.”

does not encroach into agricultural and wilderness areas. And if it does, it does within the spatial logic of the wilderness - agricultural - settlement network at a lower scale. It does however imply that within the settlement zones and corridors, as new homesteads, schools, shops, etc., are built in future, these areas become denser and more compact. The size of plots on which households are able to build structures becomes smaller. If this is handled within the networked approach, this homestead plot compaction would occur along this 'lace of country streets.' These households will still have access to agricultural and wilderness areas in their vicinity.

The lifestyle of those living in this village region would be preserved as they continue to have access to agricultural and wilderness lands. As one travels through the region the 'rural' character of the landscape would also

and homestead growth can be smarter in how it is located within the landscape. All new development can be encouraged to follow this networked pattern approach.

There will be households that fall outside such a networked approach. Some households will be located in areas that are more suitable for wilderness or agriculture or grazing. These households can be encouraged to move, but they should not be forced to move.

Raise Awareness Amongst Role-Players

The first thing to do to work towards the development of a village region settlement pattern, is to raise awareness amongst all role-players, from traditional leaders to councillors, development professionals, policy makers, and the communities themselves, as to why such a village region approach is needed and how it can be achieved. There would need to be lots

of meetings and workshops within traditional and municipal councils, and in communities generally. It could also involve, for example, new radio programmes confronting the issues of rural sprawl and possible solutions. Role-players in each local area will need to unpack for themselves what the implications of this wilderness-agricultural-settlement networked pattern would have for their locality. Since all areas are understandably different, the way this pattern expresses itself in each area will be different. Once people understand why a nested and networked village region approach is necessary, and what it means for their locality, they will be more prepared to work towards such a vision.

Encouraging Investment in Settlement Corridors

A second set of activities that can be taken is for the State to start using the resources at its disposal for investment in roads, bridges, water systems, schools, clinics, etc., in areas where it wants to encourage development along the settlement routes within this village region pattern. This will also be cheaper for government as not as many kilometres of roads and pipes need to be constructed.

The government also needs to develop a comprehensive public transport strategy for the whole village region, in much the same way the Gauteng city region is working towards a comprehensive public transport system based on the Gautrain and a feeder Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The combination of focused public investment in schools, clinics, subsidised housing, etc., along a network of corridors (at various scales from regional corridors to a local 'lace of country streets') and a comprehensive integrated public and private transport network will provide a huge incentive for households to locate in close proximity to these facilities and services. Some people may still want to stay in more isolated areas outside of this settlement pattern, but they will then not benefit from these services.

Exploring Village Region Incentives and Regulations

A third and final set of activities that the state can adopt in support a village region settlement pattern is to provide financial and other incentives to entice households to settle within certain areas in line with the planned pattern. A possible example to explore in this regard would be a relocation incentive that is provided as part of the state welfare package, for example as a small bonus that is added to the monthly old age pension or child support grant, to people that are located within certain areas where settlement is to be encouraged.

Those that live outside these areas will still receive their welfare package, but not the bonus component. Some may claim that it would not be sustainable to continually provide such subsidies, but the cost savings in terms of public transport, road construction, etc., will likely more than make up for these additional bonuses. Another possibility would be to offer a once-off re-location bonus to any household that moves from an area not designated as a settlement zone to one that is. Households would not be forced to move and accept these relocation bonuses.

Regulations could also be established that discipline households that do not conform to the village region pattern, but it is likely that it will be difficult to enforce such regulations. Examples of this would be to fine households who continue to build new homesteads in areas not designated as settlement zones. It could also involve creating rules stipulating maximum plot sizes in an effort to reduce the expansion of new settlements into agricultural areas. As suggested previously, this regulation approach may be construed as too draconian and bring back memories of forced removal as a result of the implementation of the Betterment Scheme programme.

Ideally, households that do not conform rigidly to such a village region pattern should not be forced to move, unless there are compelling reasons for this. They can stay where they are, but they would just not benefit as much from the services provided by the roads, schools, etc., that are provided by the State and they would also not benefit from any incentives provided to households that do move according to this settlement pattern.

Balancing Bottom-Up and Top-Down Processes

The ultimate objective would be for all decisions that are made, that have a spatial component to them, to be made using the vision of a nested and networked village region. This includes, for example, traditional leaders deciding where to allocate land for a new homestead; the Department of Basic Education deciding where to locate the next school; the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries deciding which irrigation project to support; the head office of a major retail chain deciding where to open a new branch office; a local municipality deciding which roads to surface; and a household deciding if and where they would like to open a new spaza shop.

This nested and networked village region settlement pattern will not miraculously occur over night. It can only be achieved over time, one step at a time, in much the same way that the present rural sprawl pattern also emerged over time.

What is required is for everyone, at all scales and from all sectors, to continually work towards the same vision. There is no pre-conceived spatial master plan that defines in detail what this village region will look like. Rather, there is an on-going process of individual role-players making spatial decisions relating to their field of influence, such as where to build the next homestead, road, school or irrigation scheme; building it; reviewing the quality of the environment created as a result of this new build; and making the next spatial decision on where to build subsequent additions in a way that helps solve problems created by earlier decisions and contributes towards the vision of a village region.

In summary, spatial development is achieved through a bottom-up process of action and reaction working towards a collaboratively defined top-down vision of a nested and networked village region.

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Get Land, Build a House: LANDfirst Principles

By Thembi Mabhula



It is apparent, beyond a shred of doubt, that one way or another policy review is necessary regarding the Low Cost Housing policy. An approach that encourages people to get land then build a house would help to bridge housing delivery processes and assist in clearing the current low cost housing backlogs.

The quest for houses, particularly among the urban poor, has reached boiling point right across South Africa, marked by violent protests and serious disquiet over broken promises by the government. The govern-

ment for the past sixteen years has managed to provide free low cost houses to millions of urban poor South Africans and yet one startling fact remains that there are still millions of urban poor in various urban areas waiting for their turn to be issued with a key to a free low cost house. The government had failed millions of people who were living in appalling conditions in informal settlements, and President Jacob Zuma stated that efforts to explain to them why this was so after more than a decade and a half of democracy would be meaningless (Mbanjwa, 2010).



Still the government keeps on making promises as it did in the past, while each budget year the housing delivery process dramatically slows down. Recently, about 600 members of the 1996-2000 Housing Waiting Committee in Johannesburg marched to the offices of the Department of Human Settlement in Gauteng to hand over their memorandum of demands. They claim that they registered for RDP houses as far back as 1996 and that they are being sidelined. One of the marchers said, "We live in backrooms, hence nobody notices us." In response, acting chief operations officer of the department, Bongani More, said, "In Gauteng we have all these issues all the time and we attend to all of them," (Molefe, 2010). There are hardly any such protests among the rural poor. Rural areas are relatively quiet, which is a complete contrast to what is happening in urban places.

The government needs to devise innovative strategies of cutting down the huge housing backlog. Land tenure security is definitely one such creative means that can be used to fast-track the housing delivery process. Land tenure security implies that the beneficiary is granted guaranteed occupation

rights on a site and can then begin to build a house using his/her own resources or savings.

The route involved in providing a low cost house goes through tedious processes that involve technical and environmental feasibility studies and beneficiary subsidy processes, which collectively entail so much red-tape, are time consuming and ultimately terribly protracted. It is absolutely necessary that feasibility studies get done prior to occupation of land by beneficiaries, but it is equally imperative to shorten processes. Some of the activities can be conducted when beneficiaries are already settled on the land.

The process applied by rural authorities when allocating sites to their subjects demonstrates the LANDfirst approach perfectly. The process is amazingly quicker and far less time consuming in comparison with that of the urban areas. What we need to learn is that land is allocated first and the beneficiary then occupies the land and builds a shelter from his/her savings and resources without any government subsidy. People who have acquired sites start off with temporary shelters, but through an incremental process get to build beautiful permanent structures.

The Case of Sandile in Tsholomnqa Area

A beautiful eye-catching example of this type of settlement can be seen at Sandile, a rural settlement about 44km from East London. According to Vusumzi Seyisi, who is both a resident and chairperson of the Sandile Village Committee, the new settlement was planned by the community and an interim committee was set up to run the new project. They planned a sustainable community, which initially accommodated a brick-making project that would provide an opportunity for people to buy bricks locally at a cheaper price. The project also provided employment opportunities for the local people. They planned proper streets and more than 100 sites were demarcated.

In less than a year all the sites were taken and people started building temporary structures as well as brick structures. The beneficiaries of these sites came from various places, including many people from outside Sandile Village. Applicants for the sites followed a system, applications were submitted to the committee which then conducted interviews and then allocated sites to approved people. Phase two of the project is about to kick off. This time around they wish to invite the municipality and town planners to make the phase two settlement even better. The first project attracted high profile people from East London and this time around they want to control the influx of people.

The Dependency Syndrome

The current low cost housing policy has fostered a terrible dependency syndrome, a tendency where town-dwellers sit back and wait until the government comes around to give them a completed, free house. However, in practice the subsidy policy penalises beneficiaries who, while waiting for their turn to get a housing subsidy, build themselves houses on the sites allocated to them. The impression they give the government is that they can afford to build their own houses and government officials often interpret this to mean that they do not deserve to benefit from the subsidy. To avoid being penalised they are expected to do nothing but wait. This kind of action discourages people's efforts to complement whatever assistance the government grants them. The government is seriously falling short in its "wait until you get" approach. This is but one of the reasons that we get strikes right across the country as people who are on the government's waiting list run out of patience.

In September 2004, the government released a comprehensive housing plan, called "Breaking New Ground", directed at the removal or improvement of all slums in South Africa as rapidly as possible, not later than 2014, and to speed up development by removing administrative blockages and to aim to reduce the time for permission to be granted for building to 50 percent of the current time (ETU - Education Training Unit). In his State of the Nation Speech for 2010, President Zuma pointed out that 500 000 housing opportunities would be provided to the poor by 2014. What is definitely possible, beyond doubt, is that 500 000 sites can indeed be allocated. The impact of Breaking New Grounds, particularly the fast tracking of the delivery process and the removal of administrative blockages, has very poor impact on our urban areas. Things have remained the same since 2004; little has changed.



Learning From Others

Faced with an enormous influx of rural and desert people into urban areas and the resultant proliferation of squatter settlements and unplanned houses, the Saudi Arabian Government initiated a massive low-income housing programme. Two projects were key to its success. First, the Free Land Plots project provided land grants ranging from 400 to 900 square metres each. In the Riyadh suburb of Oreijah, for example, 30,000 families received free plots. The second key factor was the Real Estate Development Fund's (REDF) extension of Easy Term and Interest-Free Loans to Saudi citizens who owned land plots. In the last 20 years, the REDF gave citizens 425,000 loans with which 510,000 residential units were built at a cost of SAR 105,646 billion (US\$ 28, 168 billion). Concurrently, loans were given to Saudi investors to build housing compounds with no less than six units each. A total of 2,485 investment loans created 29,500 such units at a cost of SAR 5,170 million (Most Clearing House, Best Practices, 2010).

In our very own quarters, the previous government initiated a strategy called the Site and Service Approach, a system

intended to speed up the delivery process of houses through a LANDfirst-like strategy (that did not actually provide top structures). The approach helped to provide people with sites that were located on suitable land and the municipality serviced the sites and then people went ahead to build their own houses; no subsidies were provided for the house. Site and Services is an approach intended to bring land, services and shelter within the economic reach of the poor and is practiced in other parts of the world, like India, and in particular the city of Madras. The first major scheme planned by Benninger, at Arambakkum in Chennai, created about 7 000 shelter units, within the paying capacity of the urban poor. Within five years the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority (MMDA) created more than 20 000 units and the approach became a major strategy of the World Bank to tackle a variety of shelter problems globally (Wikipedia).

In Port Elizabeth in the early 2000s, the municipality embarked on an emergency strategy to speed up housing delivery, a strategy called " 4 Pegs" intended to release 6000 serviced plots per annum. The municipality provided the 4 PEG plot with water connections and scrapped roads. The balance of services (sewers, gravel road, etc.) were provided when the subsidy money became available. Various examples similar to the 4 Peg approach were done in other parts of the country.

A review of the People Housing Process (PHP) principles would help broaden our understanding of how approaches of getting land and building houses can work and even be modified. Through the PHP, the Department of Housing used to support communities, or organised groups of households, that want to build their own houses to provide special PHP funds to assist groups of people, and especially women, who want to build their own housing.

The People's Housing Process included the following support:

- (a) Access to suitably located land that can be serviced.
- (b) Access to housing subsidies and other forms of credit to build the houses.
- (c) Training opportunities.
- (d) Technical assistance.

The PHP helped to ensure that land is readily available and people organised themselves to form housing projects. They received training in basic building skills, carpentry, plumbing, brick-making, brick laying and electrical works and began to build their own houses. A large number of women were involved in the projects and were able to build themselves decent houses. It is time to hasten the facilitation of access to decent housing by embracing quicker and dynamic approaches.

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Strengthening Women's Leadership and Participation

By Noxolo Kabane

Throughout the developing and the developed world, women carry an unduly high burden of poverty. This poverty is experienced not just as material deprivation, but also in the form of marginalisation, which means that those living in poverty often have little or no opportunity to influence the political, economic and social processes and institutions that control and shape their lives, keeping them trapped in a cycle of poverty.

For poor women, this experience of marginalisation is effectively doubled: they belong to communities that exist 'on the edges of society', and they are also often denied a voice within the communities, and households in which they live, dominated by men and male interests. Their lack of voice functions as a critical factor in perpetuating gender inequality and poverty, which effectively blocks women's access to decision-making and opportunities to lead these processes. This situation contributes to an invisibility of women as public actors and constitutes an exclusion of their rights to equal participation (Africa Renewal).

“Not only is women's participation and leadership an essential element for poverty alleviation and tackling gender inequality, it is also a basic human right.”

Not only is women's participation and leadership an essential element for poverty alleviation and tackling gender inequality, it is also a basic human right. International human-rights treaties and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the third Millennium Development Goal on gender equality, recognise that women have the right to participate equally with men at all levels and in all aspects of public life and decision-making, whether it is deciding how the household income is spent or determining how the country is run, and such conventions commit signatories to realising this goal (www.wedo.org).

Despite these commitments to promoting gender equality in formal structures of representation and decision-making, women continue to be under-represented in all areas of decision-making and face significant barriers to their full and equal participation in the structures and institutions that govern, and directly affect their lives (www.wedo.org.za).

Encouraging Leadership Roles for Women

In this day and age, it is essential to provide targeted training to women and young girls who want to assume positions of leadership. This is one way of enabling more women to influence decision-making processes. Research definitively shows that educating girls and applying pro-active strategies to develop and empower women and girls to take on leadership roles in their communities dramatically improves all social indicators in a developing country (www.oxfam.org.uk).

An important challenge for government and organisations is how support can be delivered in as impartial a way as possible, in order to sustain an increase in women's participation in all the developmental institutions.

Another challenge is that of making sure that women from a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicity, age, level of education, (dis) ability and socio-economic status are included in training and development activities.

While training and support is important for women as they seek to attain positions of power, women find that they are left to 'fend for themselves' in what can be a very hostile environment. Hence France's Christine Lagarde, the world's first female minister of finance advised women by saying, "Don't assume that you're going to be better heard because you shout louder, because you use slang, and behave like the boys around the table. Just be yourself. We have plenty of energy, confidence, and technical expertise to fit the bill and to hold the position without having to necessarily comply with the model that has been set by other people," (www.sacsis.org.za).

The main aim should not be preparing women for formal positions of leadership, but rather encouraging women living in poverty to engage with the institutions that make decisions which impact on their lives (www.gwsafrica.org). Central to this is building their confidence, and encouraging them to recognise that they have the right to challenge situations and decisions they think are unfair, or will have a negative impact. But another important aspect has been preparing those in positions of power and leadership so that they are ready to really listen to what the women have to say,



in order to make such exchanges as worthwhile as possible for both sides (www.gwsafrica.org). Beyond developing women's capacities to lead, there is a need to transform models of leadership development so that they become more gender responsive, and include issues such as participatory governance and inclusive dialogue.

Lobbying the Men

If increasing the profile of women in leadership roles is to be successful as a means of benefiting women living in poverty, this must be linked to a broader process of promoting women's rights and initiatives to combat poverty. We should be talking to girl children and women, but we also have to talk specifically to men. In this way we can start to break the paradigms that we ourselves have developed. In South Africa there is a huge movement dedicated to gender justice, but it's made up almost exclusively of men. The problem for women is not women, but men. Programmes aimed at strengthening women's leadership and participation will have limited impact unless the structures that uphold gender inequality and other forms of inequality begin to change. For such challenges to be successful, men must be brought on board at all levels to accept the idea of women occupying positions of power, to support women in attaining and carrying out effective leadership that challenges all forms of inequality,

and to work with women to develop collective agendas for upholding women's rights (www.oxfam.org.uk).

Some of the principles that need to guide this process of upholding women's rights can be achieved through making sure that there needs to be a particular focus on supporting the participation and leadership of women living in poverty or who suffer discrimination on the basis of aspects of their social identity, such as disability, ethnicity, background, HIV status, religion, or age. Work to support women's leadership will only advance poor women's interests if accompanied by long-term support for claiming and exercising their rights in other areas, such as access to and control over resources, access to public services like education and health, or protection from violence (www.gwsafrica.org).

A final important lesson concerns the need to base any programme work on an in-depth understanding of the particular gender issues facing a given community or organisation, and hence the particular barriers to women's participation and leadership in that context. Perhaps most significant to overcoming gender inequality, and the other forms of inequality and discrimination that keep women in poverty, is the work that feminist and women's rights organisations are already doing to articulate the needs of poor women, and to push for their strategic interests to be met. These groups, whether working at the local or national level, are made up of individuals who are already proving to be effective leaders, and are enabling other women to gain greater control over their lives, and to engage with their communities as active citizens. r

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Microfinance

&

Women

Empowerment

By Nomaxabiso Maqanda

Poverty, it has been said, has many faces and its definition and measurement can be quite hard to pin down. Some have defined poverty as lack of income or being denied choices and opportunities for living a quality life. The World Bank has defined poverty according to the following circumstances: hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not being able to go to school and not knowing how to read, not having a job, fear for the future, living one day at a time, living in an unhealthy environment, powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (www.worldbank.org).

However one may choose to define poverty, there is a sense of lack and deprivation that dominates and makes the one experiencing it quite vulnerable. It has been cited that children, women and the aged are the most vulnerable groups affected by poverty, and according to Obiageli Ezekwesili, World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region, "the face of poverty is female" (web.worldbank.org). It is for this reason that empowering women, especially those in rural areas who are more prone to poverty than their urban counterparts, is essential in reducing the levels of poverty.



As poverty is most extreme in rural areas, microfinance has played an important role in the development of these areas. If poor people are to be assisted in overcoming poverty, it is vital to recognise the importance of means by which they can find their own solutions. Microfinance is a powerful tool in doing this as it assists very poor households to take care of their basic needs while also protecting them against risks (Wrenn, 2005). Because the institutions target the poor, microfinance gives poor people access to resources in such a way that enables them to identify their own livelihood projects. For example, create sources of income that are sustainable and provide self-employment for themselves and their children. It also organises under-used local resources for the sustained benefit of even the poorest microfinance participant and local resident.

Microfinance services are a component of the fight against poverty and make a significant difference to the economic welfare of poor households and the capacity for self-reliance. Access to microfinance has made a significant difference to poor households. Studies have shown that income of households of families with access to credit is much higher than those households that do not have access to credit. Those poor households that do have access to microfinance services have been shown to accumulate more assets, and this pro-

vides them with both a safety net against accidents, as well as resources for self-help investments.

The fact that microfinance institutions are highly unregulated enables them to be flexible and to adapt to meet the needs of poor households, giving them an advantage over formal financial sector institutions. Clients' voluntary savings with microfinance institutions is used to meet their own community's needs. Microfinance institutions empower the poor as they encourage active participation in their own development (Remenyi, 2000).

At household level, microfinance provides a greater opportunity for children of microfinance participants to go to school. Studies have shown that microfinance participants' children are more likely to go to school and stay longer in school than children of non-participants. Microfinance programmes enhance the quality of life of the participants as they also give these families an opportunity to obtain insurance and to make choices that best suit and serve their needs (Wrenn, 2005).

For women, microfinance has proven to be a powerful tool for social change. In the context of heterosexual relationships, especially in South Africa where there is a high rate of



violence, HIV infection and poverty, it has been argued that women have little power to assert their needs or to negotiate sexual relations, because of gender power inequality that characterises these relationships (Shefer, 2006). Many microfinance interventions aim to empower women, and their focus on women gives these women the power to set up their own businesses and to negotiate sexual relations from a not-so inferior position.

Because poverty and gender inequalities are shaping the nature of sexual relationships, if a woman is in a violent relationship, she may feel powerless to, for example, ask her husband to use a condom, as this could make her husband suspicious and provoke further violence. Microfinance benefits women in that it helps enhance their status, both in the home and communities, especially when they are the ones responsible for managing loans and savings. This ability of women to generate and control their own income creates an environment for further empowerment of poor women.

Microfinance helps women set up their own businesses and become self-sufficient, impacting significantly on the families' quality of life, especially the children.

Although microfinance has many strengths and benefits as an instrument for rural development, it also has its weaknesses. There seems to be an unintentional leakage of microfinance resources to people who are not so poor, making the poorest clients benefit least from microfinance institutions loans. Microfinance institutions concentrate on the higher layer of the poverty triangle to ensure they achieve financial growth, but the poorest of the poor are left to benefit from the little that is generated by the spread of microfinance to an increasing number of poor households in poor communities. Also, because microfinance places an over-emphasis on scale, this may compromise the microfinance institutions' capabilities to adapt to its socio-cultural environment (Remenyi, 2000). Nevertheless, microfinance is increasingly becoming a vital tool for women empowerment. ▮

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