

Report

National Workshop on Community Based Planning in Zimbabwe:

Moving Towards Common Principles

Held at

**The Chapman Golf Club
Samora Machel Avenue East
Eastlea
Harare
Zimbabwe**

6th and 7th June 2001

1. Background

Zimbabwe has experienced a variety of planning systems and approaches since Independence. These have been evolving within the context of a centrally-driven decentralization process introduced to facilitate local level planning and decision making for self-sustaining development in Zimbabwe. Several other actors including NGOs and private agencies have been developing and applying a range of community based planning systems and approaches in their projects and programmes. To date, there is no systematic learning process of the key experiences from the various initiatives to improve local level planning processes and their connection with resource allocation processes in Zimbabwe. This gap has created a national desire for moving towards a common framework of community/ local government planning in Zimbabwe.

There are already a number of on going initiatives in many other African countries to reflect on community based planning experiences so as to map out a shared strategy and framework for the future. These initiatives are on going in South Africa, Ghana and Uganda. Country reports on best practices in community based planning will be produced in these selected countries to facilitate sharing of lessons and experiences across borders. It is therefore our hope that the multi-stakeholder reflection process on community based planning in Zimbabwe will result in a Country Report to be shared with other countries.

2. Partners

A Steering Group involving the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, the Rural District Capacity Building Programme and the Intermediate Technology Development Group – Southern Africa have been driving this process in Zimbabwe owing to their keen interest in the development of effective planning systems in Zimbabwe.

The Ministry of Local Government and Public Works is responsible for developing and overseeing the development of planning processes for local government in Zimbabwe. The Rural District Council Capacity Building Programme, is an initiative hosted by the same Ministry, to support the institutional, capital and human resource capacity of rural district councils in Zimbabwe. Intermediate Technology Development Group Southern Africa (ITDG), is a non-governmental organisation which has put a lot of emphasis on community based planning in all their rural development programmes in the country.

3. Objectives of the Workshop

The key objective of the workshop was to enable participants to have:-

- A clear understanding of the present mechanisms, structures and systems of community based planning that are operational in Zimbabwe.
- Shared analysis and understanding of the key lessons, experiences on participatory planning and integrated development.
- A live network of learning and consultation on community based planning.
- An agreed framework for future community/local authority planning in Zimbabwe.

4. Workshop Participants, Methodology and Discussion Framework

Participants

The workshop drew its participants from a broad range of stakeholders to enable the widest possible range of existing community based approaches and systems to be discussed. The participants were from local government related institutions in Zimbabwe, Non-Governmental Organisations, relevant operational projects and programmes and the donor community. An analysis of the interest configuration of participants was done on cards. The key interest in community based planning among the participants was mainly in the following areas:-

- Enhanced accountability and performance
- Enhancement of micro-level projects
- Enhancement of community participation
- Enhancement of sustainable planning and development
- Enhancement of community organisational development processes
- Enhancement of community ownership and empowerment
- Enhancement of integrated planning and development
- Institutional development
- Learning from experience
- Improvement of service delivery
- Improving impact of project work

It is evident from such an interest configuration that there is enormous diversity in community based planning approaches and systems that can be generated and applied in the Zimbabwean context. Such a diversity also underscores the need for basic principles of community based not rigid guidelines and regulations of planning.

Methodology

The workshop kicked off with a critical review and analysis of decentralization and local level planning since Independence in Zimbabwe prepared and presented by Diana Conyers. This provided a solid basis for an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in four groups of six to seven participants. The broad issues and questions on community based planning in Zimbabwe came out distinctly from this exercise principally in the form of strengths and weaknesses to set the foundation for a participatory problem analysis process using the problem tree analytical technique. A problem tree is a means of analysing an observed problem in order to establish inter-linked and root causes. It is a useful way of teasing out the inter-relationship of issues and in deriving core problems which enable more focused action to be taken.

Four problem trees from the four groups provided a broad base for mapping out the CORE PROBLEM in community based planning in Zimbabwe. Extensive discussion of the four problem trees resulted in a COMMON PROBLEM TREE developed by a task force and approved by all the participants as the basis for generating the solutions.

The exploration of solutions took place in three discussion groups. The groups used the agreed and consolidated problem tree as the basis for solution seeking by simply turning the key problem statements into solution statements. Overall, the group work on problems and solutions generated a lot of debate and analysis of the key issues and directions in enhancing community based planning in Zimbabwe. The groups were also designed to allow sharing of lessons and experiences in smaller groups as the key points were being generated. This greatly enhanced the quality of plenary contributions.

The future direction of community based planning in Zimbabwe moved from mere propositions of potential solutions to critical analysis of the basic principles of community based planning, on-going and long-term goals to be played , actions required to achieve principles and agreed roles and the risks and assumptions inherent in these.

This workshop was seen as the beginning of a learning network on community based planning with core steering group of ITDG Southern Africa, Ministry of Local Government, National Housing and Public Works and the Rural District Council Capacity Building Programme. Other interested organizations could be part of the core group. Case studies from UNICEF and ORAP were shared with other participants in the form of prepared case studies.

5. A Critical Review of Community Based Planning in Zimbabwe

What is community based planning?

Community based planning is planning which addresses activities or problems at community level and in which the members of the communities are involved. The community level comprises the lowest tiers in the planning system, which in Zimbabwe terms means the ward level (or it's equivalent) and below.

Types of community based planning

The types of community based planning differ from each other in terms of:-

- The nature and scope of activities or problems which are being addressed;
- The nature and extent of linkages with 'higher' level planning and/or local governance systems;
- The stages in the planning cycle at which the 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 process.

Why community based planning?

Community based planning is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It can be used to achieve three very different types of objective:-

- To make plans more relevant to local needs and conditions;
- To increase community involvement in the provision of public services, due to lack of capacity in government agencies;
- To increase people's control over their own lives and livelihoods;

It is important to note that the type of objective affects the type of community based planning which is likely to result.

Relationship between community based planning and decentralisation

Community based planning is, or should be, an integral part of the decentralization process and an essential component of any local authority's activities, because:-

- Decentralisation involves the transfer of responsibility for planning and implementing 'community based' development activities.

- Elected local authorities are directly responsible to these communities.

Examples of Community Based Planning in Zimbabwe

Community Based Planning to Make Plans More Relevant to Local Needs and Conditions

Government Initiatives

- Bottom up planning system introduced in the 1980's in response to the 1984 Prime Minister's Directive.
- Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (IRWSSP)
- Component of District Development Grants (DDGs) earmarked for 'community based' projects.
- Community Action Project (CAP)
- District Environmental Action Plans (DEAPs)

NGO Initiatives

- SNV
- Plan International
- Care International
- Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG)

Community Based Planning to Increase Community Involvement in Service Provision

- Community based maintenance component of IRWSSP
- Establishment of School Development Committees
- Ministry of Transport's pilot community road maintenance project.
- Community involvement in natural resource management through:-
 - CAMPFIRE
 - Community based fishing associations on Lake Kariba
 - Forestry Commission's pilot community management projects.

Community Based Planning to Increase People's Control over their own Lives and Livelihoods

Government Initiatives

- Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation
- Agritex (eg village land use planning)
- Three community based natural resource management programmes mentioned above, especially CAMPFIRE.

NGO Initiatives

- ITDG (eg agricultural based planning project in Chivi District)
- Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust (ACPDT)
- Binga Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Binga CCJP).

Ad hoc activities which communities initiate and implement on their own.

The Prerequisites for Effective Planning

The Planning System

- The main objective should be to increase people's control over their lives, as part of a wider process of democratisation.
- The planning process should focus on issues of concern to the community and ideally be initiated by the community.
- Financial and other resources to address the issue must be available, so that the community is assured that something will materialize from the planning process.
- Planning procedures should be flexible enough to adapt to the specific conditions of each community.
- Planning procedures should be as simple as possible.

Constraints in Zimbabwe

- Planning is usually initiated at national or district level, to achieve national and district objectives eg cross cutting.
- Financial resources are limited, seldom guaranteed and often subject to numerous conditions.
- Planning procedures are usually standardised and designed by people at national level.
- There is a tendency to mystify planning (eg PRA).
- The time available for planning is short and constrained by deadlines.

The Community

- Community members must consider that the time and effort they have to put into the planning process is justified in terms of the anticipated benefits.
- The community should be politically aware and organised.
- There should be sufficient social and political cohesion within the community.
- Key individuals involved have leadership qualities necessary to steer the process.
- The community should not have had previous negative experience of community plans or projects.

Constraints in Zimbabwe

- Communities seldom regard the planning process as theirs and often have other priorities.
- Political awareness in most rural communities is lacking and organisational structures tend to be weak and dominated by a few individuals.
- Communities are not homogeneous.
- Good leaders are rare and seldom hold formal positions.
- Many failed attempts at community based planning.

The Initiating or Supporting Organisation

- Should be democratic rather than autocratic in nature and committed to community based planning.
- Should be prepared to delegate responsibility to communities but also provide advice and support.
- Should have sufficient resources to provide the necessary advice and support, including facilitatory staff, technical expertise, vehicles – and fuel and finance.
- Should be well organised and managed.
- Should be prepared to accept the decisions made by the community.

Constraints in Zimbabwe

- Most organisations operate in an autocratic manner.
- A change in organisational culture is needed, and this requires commitment and time.
- Good facilitators are difficult to find.
- Technical expertise is often lacking.
- Donor assistance is usually required, and this limits flexibility and sustainability.
- Many organisations are not well organised or managed.
- Many organisations cannot cope with uncertainty and loss of control.

The major conclusion of the keynote paper was that effective community based planning is not actually impossible but it is very difficult. It mainly requires a democratic environment and participatory organisational culture at national, district and community levels, good organisation and management within both communities and supporting organisations, requires people with appropriate leadership qualities at all levels and adequate financial support of the process.

6. SWOT Analysis of Community Based Planning in Zimbabwe

Participants brainstormed on the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of community based planning in Zimbabwe building on their varied knowledge and experience. The output was as follows:-

Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are lots of skills in communities • Communities are always willing to get involved in planning. • Existence of legislative framework recognizing the presence of local level institutions. • Existence of village development workers and village development committees to promote integrated approach to development. • There is supportive infrastructure present at community level. • Planning decisions have always been made at community level. • Existence of local authority institutions to provide a framework for community involvement.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of parallel and competing institutions at local level • Ineffective structures at community level (WADCOs/VIDCOs). • Lack of internal social cohesion • Conflict of mandates between the community and external agencies • Controlled participation of communities • Dollar driven community planning tendencies • Communities unwilling to commit their own resources • Patronising attitude of external agencies • Fragmentation of approaches at community level. • Intervention often done for unclear reasons • Divergent values priorities of communities and support agencies • High rate of project failures discouraging community participation. • Autocratic culture of most organizations killing local initiatives. • High prevalence of poverty in rural communities constraining full community participation. • Communities often lack adequate financial and human resources to support community based planning processes. • Piecemeal decentralisation not creating an environment conducive to community based planning. • The co-ordinator of decentralisation, the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing) has limited mandate to lead the process given the multi-sectoral nature of issues in decentralisation. • Plans tend to be usually unrealistic and ambitious. • Non-adherence to legislated procedures by most actors in rural development • Centralisation and sectoralisation of financial resources • Lack of commitment towards decentralisation • Lack of planning skills at community level • Failure of local level planning to influence resource allocation processes. • HIV/AIDs is ravaging and undermining community initiatives. • Communities generally lack the initiative to plan. • There is limited capacity on the part of Rural District Councils to respond to community demands. • Lack of in-built sustainability mechanisms. • Use of complex planning techniques by outside agencies eg PRAs • Plans usually done by outsiders • Most actors in rural development have lost faith in planning. • Plans tend to raise people's hopes too high. • Inadequate civic education • Supply driven planning processes.

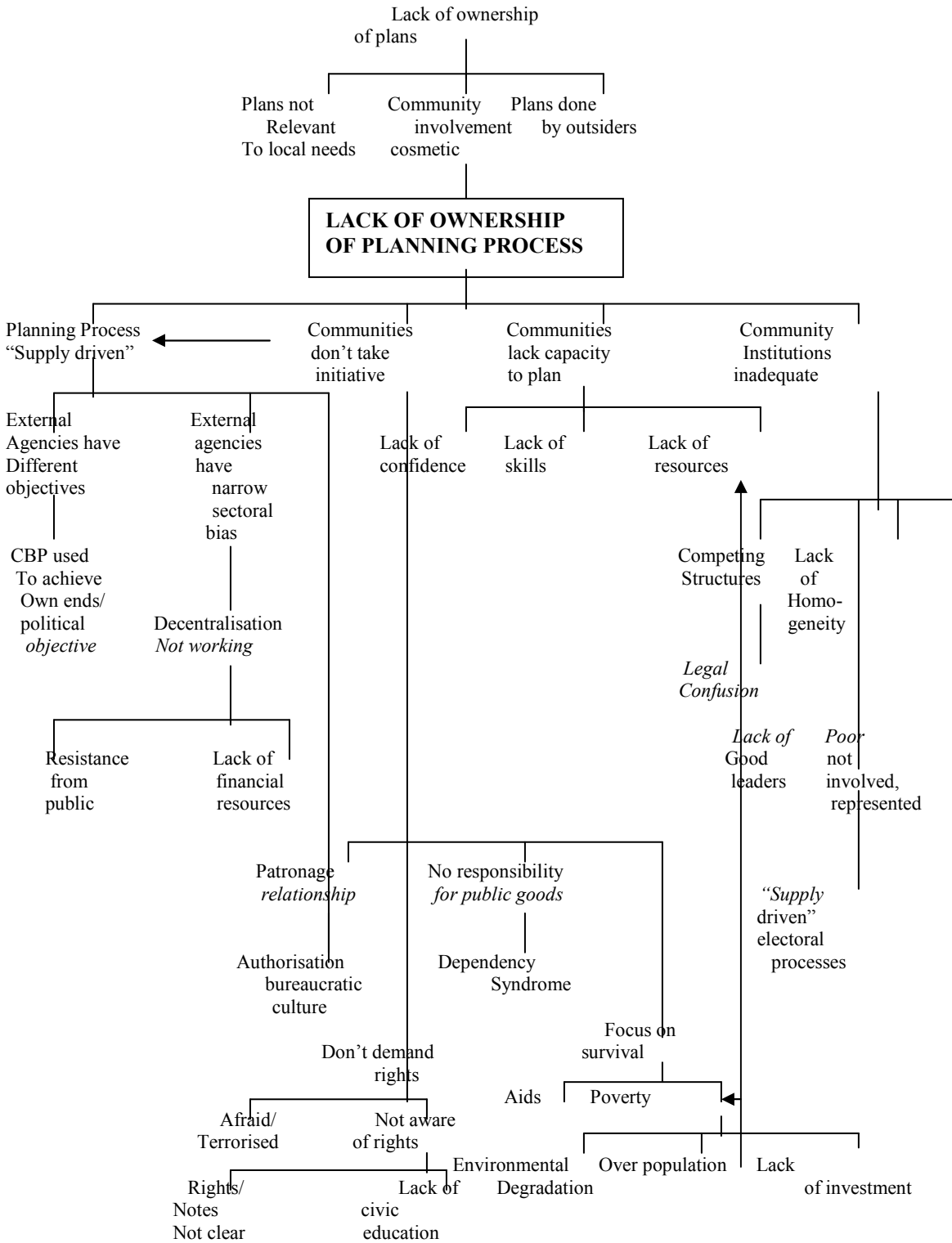
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of well educated, aware, cohesive and demanding communities • Presence of NGOs at grassroots level with resources. • Abundance of natural resources. • Economic challenges opening new avenues of looking at things • Withdrawal of external resources providing opportunities for increased mobilisation and use of local resources. • Room for initiating civic awareness programmes • Scope for learning from innovative communities • New civic leaders are emerging • Presence of government support ministries and departments at community level who can facilitate the process. • Growing political diversity and pluralism in Zimbabwean society. • Realization by communities that centralized systems are not working. • Realization by government that centralized systems are not working. • Appreciation by central government of the need for decentralisation. • Existence of the policy of decentralisation in Government.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate civic education programmes • Poor donor/NGO co-ordination • High levels of environmental degradation in communities • Over-population and increasing population mobility • Political interference in community development initiatives • Competition among donors • Donors pulling out of development • Politicization of community plans • Negative party politics.

7. Problem Analysis

A participatory problem exercise was done in groups using the problem tree analytical technique. A problem tree is a means of analysing an observed problem in order to establish inter-linked and root causes. It is a useful way of teasing out the inter-relationship of issues and in deriving core problems which enable more focused action to be taken.

Four problem trees from the four groups provided a broad base for mapping out the CORE PROBLEM in community based planning in Zimbabwe. Extensive discussion of the four problem trees resulted in a COMMON PROBLEM TREE developed by a task force and approved by all the participants as the basis for generating the solutions. This problem tree is presented in Figure 1.

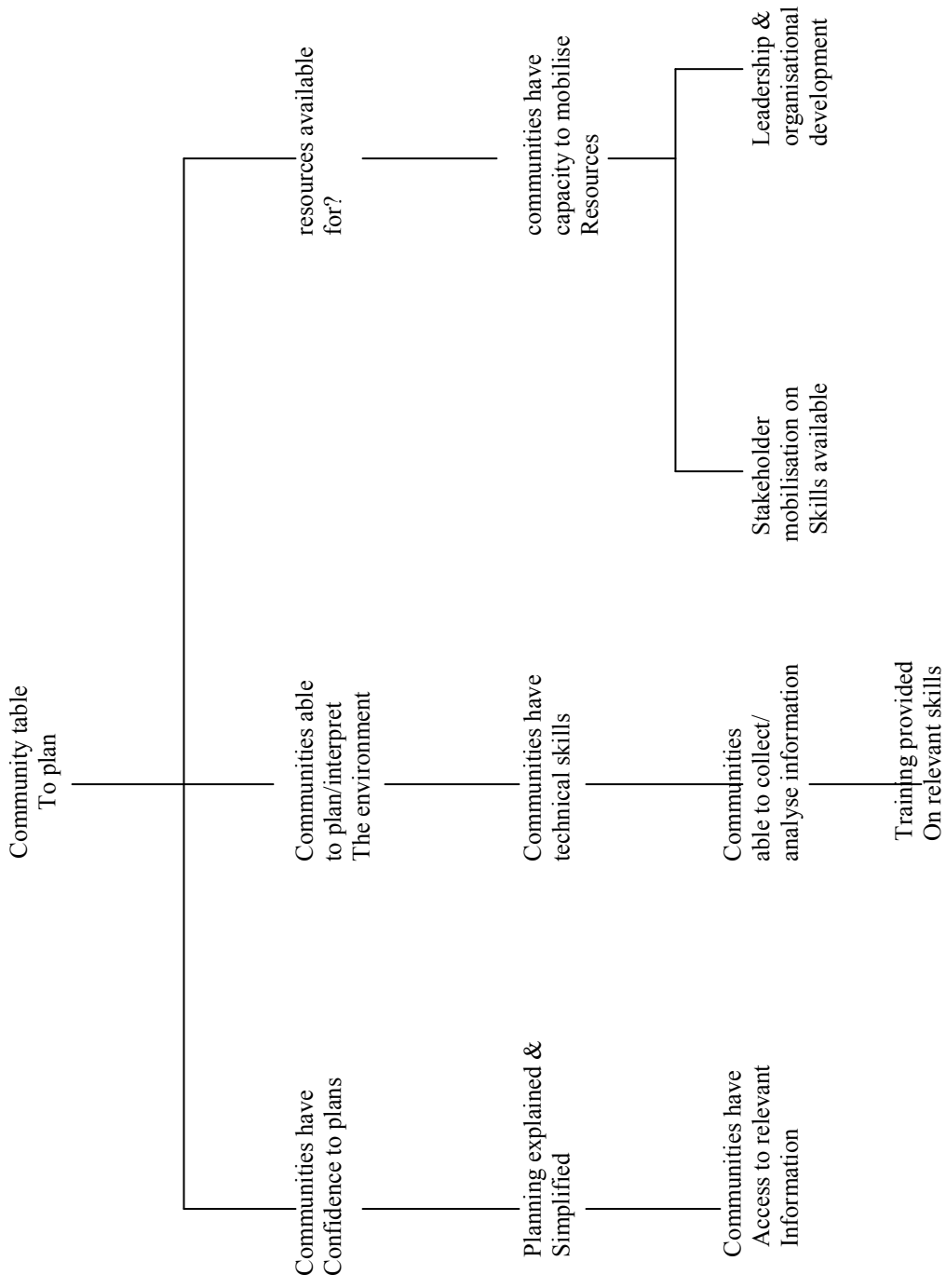
Figure 1: The Core Problem



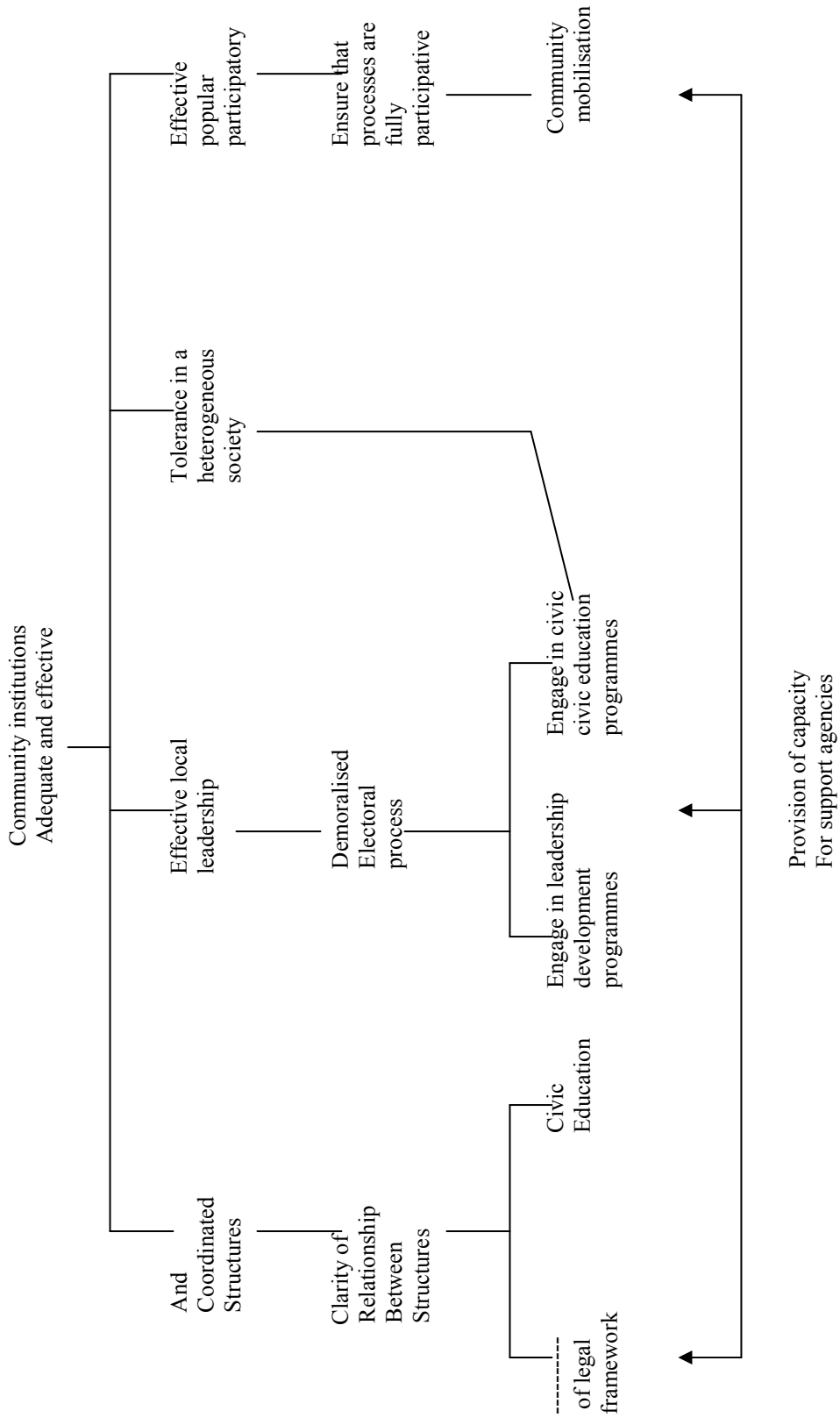
8. Alternative Solutions

The exploration of solutions took place in three discussion groups. The groups used the agreed and consolidated problem tree as the basis for solution seeking by simply turning the key problem statements into solution statements. Overall, the group work on problems and solutions generated a lot of debate and analysis of the key issues and directions in enhancing community based planning in Zimbabwe. The groups were also designed to allow sharing of lessons and experiences in smaller groups as the key points were being generated. This greatly enhanced the quality of plenary contributions.

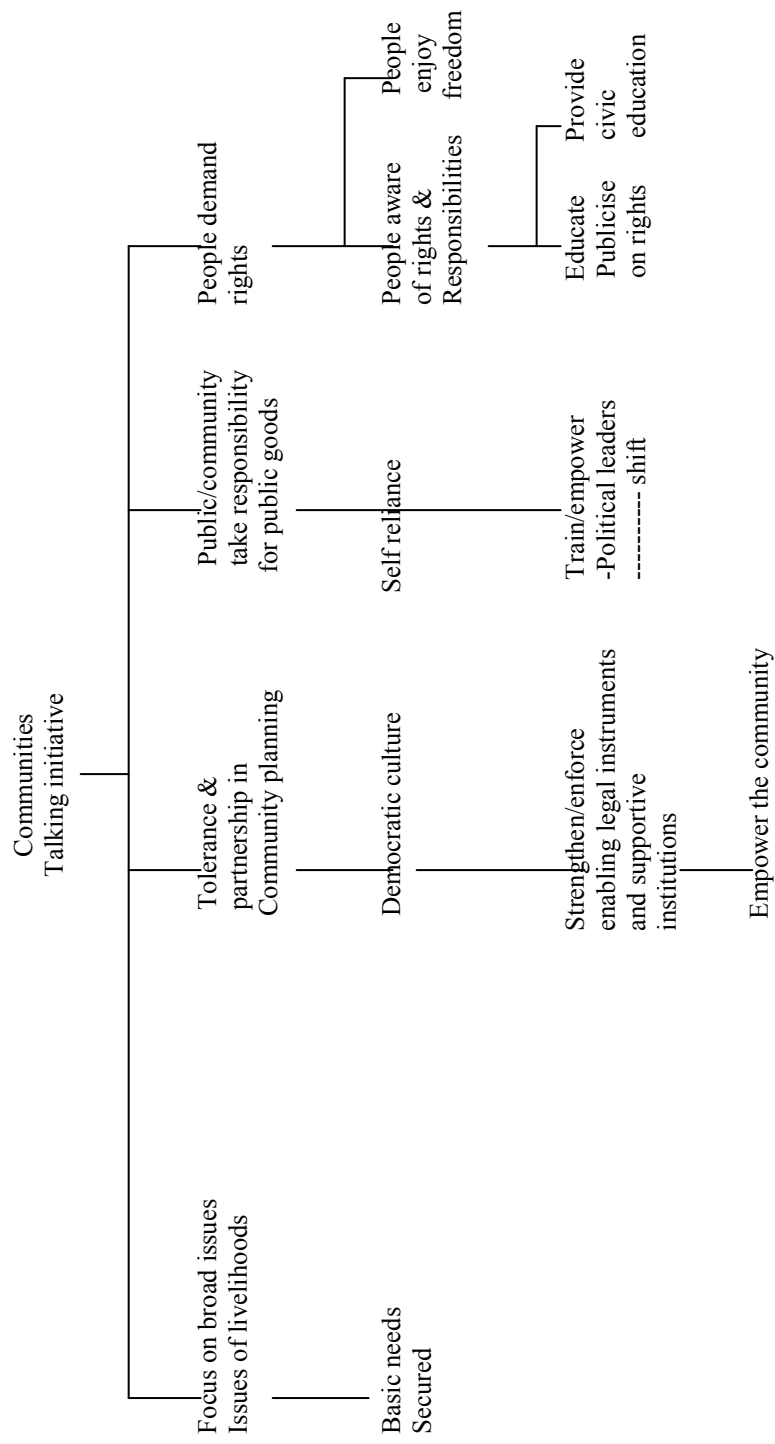
Community Planning Solution Tree 1



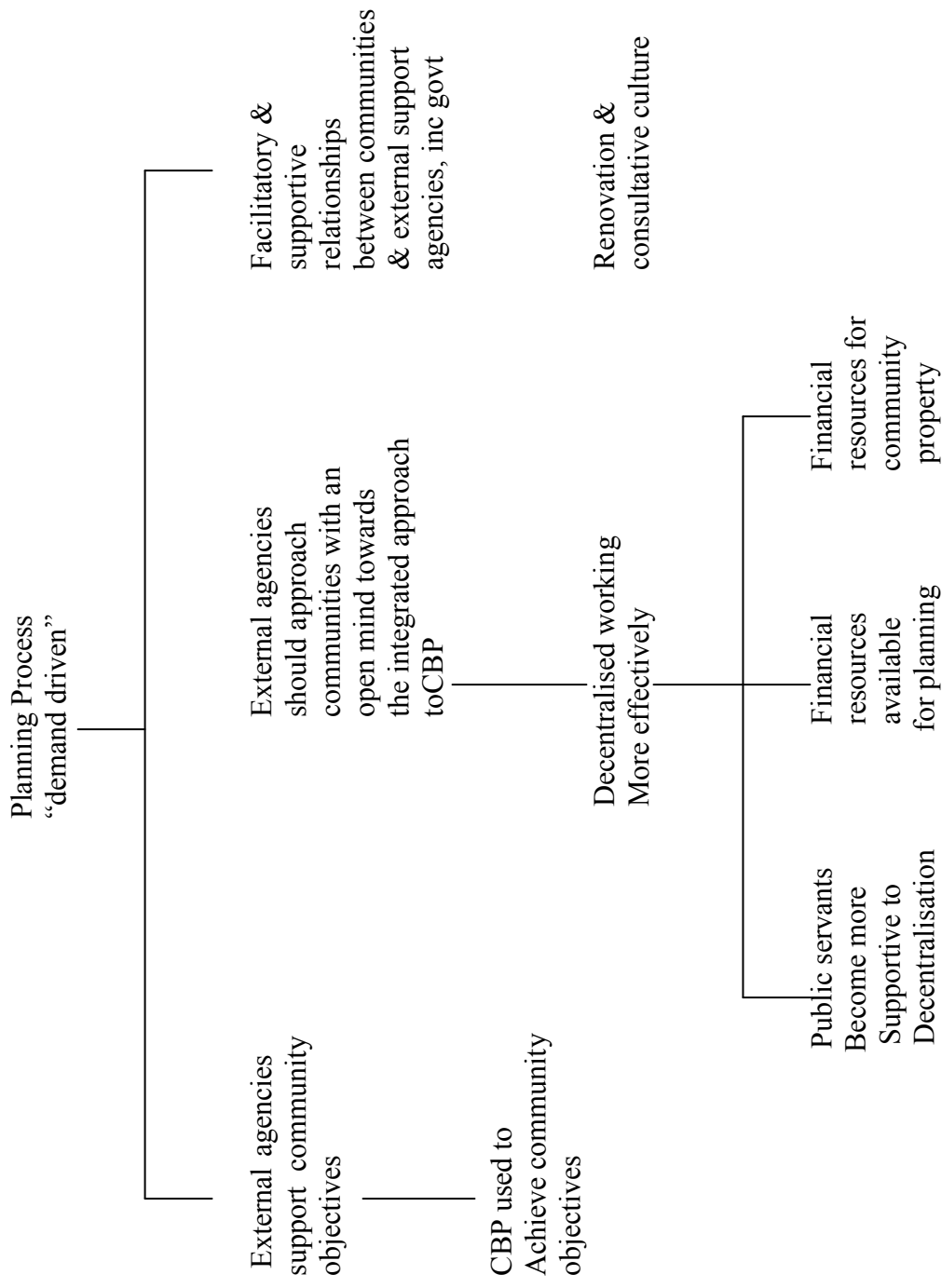
Community Planning Solution 2



Community Planning Solution 3



Community Planning Solution 4



9. Moving Towards Common Principles

Realizing the dangers of establishing a ‘one size fits all approach’, the workshop focused on developing key principles for Community Based Planning in Zimbabwe. The meeting had hoped to identify the key roles to be played in ensuring success of the identified principles, to specify the actions required to achieve principles and ensure roles are played and to identify the key risks and assumptions. However, due to time constraints, the meeting focused mainly on basic principles. The Principles relate to the key areas for ensuring effective community based planning which are:-

- The Planning System
- The Community
- The Initiating or Supporting Organisation

Basic Principles for the Planning System

Basic Principles	Roles to be Played
1. The planning system must allow people’s control over their lives to be increased.	Support/promote/facilitate initiatives that enhance people’s control over resources.
2. Community concerns and priorities must form the basis for planning processes	External agencies must strengthen community based planning processes.
3. Communities should own the planning process	Support provision of civic education to communities
4. Resources must be available to implement community plans	Mobilize resources and disseminate information on available resources.
5. Planning process should be flexible and simple	-
6. Planning process should enhance existing structures	Strengthen existing planning structures.

Basic Principles for the Community

1. Ensure community time and effort is commensurate with benefits to be realized.
2. Ensure organized and conscientized community.
3. The community should have sufficient social cohesion.
4. Ensure good leadership quality
5. Build on and use previous experience
6. All social groups to be taken into consideration.

Basic Principles for Support Organisations

1. Uphold democratic principles and respect existing systems, processes and values.
2. Demonstrated commitment to community based planning.
3. Prepared to delegate responsibility to communities and provide adequate support.
4. Have sufficient resources.
5. Be a well managed organization.
6. Organisations to recognize the role of local authorities.
7. Where an organization observes lack of capacity it should make an effort to address the problem.
8. The District Strategic Plan should be the basis of all projects (although some plenary views felt this could stifle development initiatives).
9. Time frame should be longer.
10. All plans should have sustainability and exit strategies.

10. Conclusion and Way Forward

Despite the challenges and constraints to community based planning in Zimbabwe from planning, community and support organization perspectives, the meeting was generally convinced that there is room for improving the current community based planning processes and to address the current constraints. This requires the Ministry of Local Government and its key partners to use the results of the workshop to map out a long term vision on community based planning as the basis for rural development in Zimbabwe.

In the mean-time, a comprehensive review of current practices, gaps and opportunities should be completed as part of an input into the national review process and as a basis for exchanging lessons and experiences with other countries facing similar challenges.

The resulting lessons and best practices will be pilot tested and integrated in at least one local planning system in Zimbabwe, which at the moment is Gwanda District in Matebeleland South Province.

Annex 1: Workshop Participants

Community Based Planning Workshop Participants June 6th – 7th, 2001 Chapman Golf Club, Harare

P/S Participants who attended (1 to 32)

1	Ian Goldman	goldman@khanya-mrc.co.za
2	Fanuel Gumanzala	ccjp@mweb.co.zw
3	Bongani Mpfu, Nkayi RDC, P O Box 20, Nkayi	
4	Norbert Dube, ORAP	oraphq@acacia.samara.co.zw
5	Wilton Mhlanga, P O Box 65 RDC Chimanimani	
6	Herbert Mureriwa, CBU	
7	Andrew Mlalazi	
8	C W E Matumbike	
9	Bernard Chahuruva, Ministry of Local Government, P O Box 97 Chinhoyi	
10	Millie Mutepfe, Murehwa RDC	
11	K R Machaka, Depart of Natural Resources	kushingam@hotmail.com
12	Jerry Gotor, Association of RDC, P O Box BE114, Belvedere, Harare	
13	Solomon Makanga, SEDAP, P O Box 453 Harare	makanga@mutare.ico.zw
14	Fred Ndhlovu	ranga@africaonline.co.zw
15	L Mukubvu, DFID-CA	i-mukubvu@dfid.gov.uk
16	Rob Mellors	
17	G M Kundhlande	gladmank@safire.co.zw
18	D Mushongera, Rural Resources Department	
19	Colleen Butcher	cbutcher@worldbank.org
20	Ethel Mlalazi, Department of Physical Planning	physplan@africaonline.co.zw
21	Stephanie Aubin	Stephanie.Aubin@undp.org
22	Diana Conyers, P O Box 71, Binga	
23	Bright Makwindi, P O Box 535 Mutare	
24	Noah Sigauke, ITDG	noahs@itdg.org.zw
25	Sifiso Chikandi	schikandi@unicef.org
26	Sibongile Mauye	smauye@mweb.co.zw
27	Ronnie Sibanda, Gwanda RDC	
28	Ebbie Dengu, ITDG	ebbied@itdg.org.zw
29	Absolom Masendeke, ITDG	absolomm@itdg.org.zw
30	P Murapa, Pricewaterhouse and Coopers	Phineas.Murapa@zw.pwcglobal.co
31	N Musekiwa, CBU	
32	E Tafangombe, USAID	
33	S Chakaipa, Ministry of Local Government	
34	G Nhunhama, IRDP/CASS	
35	F Mugabe, IRDP/CASS	
36	G Tsododo, SEDAP	
37	O Mugweni, Small Holder Dry Areas Resource Management programme	
38	Richard Madawo, Capacity Building	
39	The Director, Plan International	
40	The Chief Executive, Gokwe North RDC	
41	DANIDA	