

Sustaining Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Theme: An integrated approach to improving livelihoods: the Cata
story

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Editor's notes

The Cata Story describes how poorer people's livelihoods have been improved in one of the poorest areas of South Africa through an integrated rural development process. What is significant is that this has been achieved using resources which were secured through the realisation of the rights of the Cata community to receive restitution for the loss of their land. So it is a story about people co-operating with one another and pulling together, about fostering partnerships, about deliberately adopting an integrated approach to development. It's about ordinary people coming together to achieve something extraordinary.

Border Rural Committee (BRC) is a prominent land reform and rural development NGO working with poor rural communities in and around the former South African homelands of Ciskei and Transkei, part of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

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Background and context

Cata is located in the former Ciskei bantustan of the Eastern Cape Province. The province is one of the poorest in South Africa with up to 68.4% living in poverty in 2002, an increase of 14% since 1996. The former homeland areas constitute the greatest single development challenge facing South Africa. They are dysfunctional spaces that have been excluded and marginalized from functional South Africa. Their exclusion from the franchise was addressed in 1994 but in all

other ways (politically, economically, socially and environmentally) they remain on the margins. Since 1994 unemployment has risen, economic activity has declined and poverty has become more endemic.

In early 2000 36% of households were struggling, which meant that they had no dependable source of income. From 1996 to 2001 the percentage of households with no income rose from 16% to 43%.

One of the prerequisites for local economic development is adequate available local skills. Although there had been modest improvements in overall levels of education in Cata since democracy, there were still only just over 100 people who had a matriculation certificate in 2001.

Civil society in Cata was also very weak. There was still a branch of the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) that existed in the village, but its effectiveness was hamstrung by a lack of resources and facilities. A former headman still loomed large in local politics. Members of the civic and supporters of the former headman gave their allegiance to different political parties. Cata was a divided community.

Securing resources at the village level

The prevailing tenure system in the area is communal tenure. This form of tenure was eroded and undermined by the colonial and apartheid regimes, to the extent that government was able to forcibly remove (villagise) the community in the early 1960s. After villagisation, the people had very small residential and arable lands. The arable parcels were allocated far away from the people's homes, which resulted in their underutilization. After 1994, the democratic government instituted a restitution programme for victims of forced removal. However, people from the former bantustans in the Eastern Cape were erroneously excluded from the restitution programme.

The Cata community challenged this exclusion in the Land Claims Court and their case was successfully negotiated outside court. In October 2000 a Settlement Agreement was signed. The monetary value of dispossession was placed at almost R32 000 per household. It was agreed that half of this money would be paid directly to the families as financial compensation and that the other half would be set aside for local development, amounting to approximately R5,2 million. This amount was supplemented by government grants worth about R1,5 million. This money was transferred to the Amatole District Municipality (ADM), which assumed administration and management responsibilities. Crucially, the settlement agreement instituted a Project Steering Committee (PSC) to guide the development process with "the decision-making authority and responsibility for the development in respect of the type of development and the funds to be allocated for such development". In addition, the Settlement Agreement gave the Cata community an absolute majority on PSC and also provided for the restoration of community control over the communal lands. This model provided the basis both for broad-based community participation in the planning and implementation of the development process, as well as the subsequent establishment in 2004 of the Communal Property Association (CPA) that has since become the institutional hub in the village.

Realising potentials through integrated planning and development

Planning

As 'developer' for the Cata process, ADM adopted a three-phase process, comprising situation analysis, planning and implementation. BRC was appointed to co-ordinate and manage the development process. The Cata situation had been analysed by the end of 2001, enabling integrated planning to commence.

The processes of project prioritisation and operational planning were undertaken in close consultation with an elected development committee and the process was structured to distill and accommodate the specific needs of women, young people and men.

By late 2002, although the planning process still had some way to run, there was already clarity and consensus about the priority needs of the community. Some of these needs were of such a nature that they could be addressed in the short-term. Therefore, ADM acceded to a request from the development committee that some projects be implemented immediately, without waiting for the finalization of the development plan. So the building of a multi-purpose community hall and the construction of three new classrooms at the primary school were implemented in 2003.

In mid-2003, the Cata community and ADM adopted an integrated development plan for the village. This plan covered the following sectors: infrastructure, forestry, agriculture and tourism. In addition, it recommended that the community establish a communal property association (CPA) to take transfer of the communal land and to manage development on the land. In early 2004, the Cata CPA was established.

Implementation

Since 2003/4, the CPA, the ADM and the BRC have focused on implementing the plan. Projects in all sectors have been implemented, meaning that the development process in Cata has a broad scope.

Different projects have been implemented through different institutional systems and processes. However, the CPA, ADM and BRC have all promoted a common set of principles, including maximizing local employment, building partnerships and seeking underlying sustainability. Consequently, it is not surprising that over 250 new local jobs have been created through development projects since 2003/4.

In the process, (apart from the multi-purpose community centre and school classrooms) the following projects have been successfully implemented:

- Conversion of a seventy-five hectare wattle jungle into a managed plantation;
- Introduction of new homestead agricultural techniques to promote food security;
- Rehabilitation of a defunct flood irrigation system;
- Opening of museum and heritage trail.

These projects have been implemented using different institutional models (eg community teams aided by outside experts, external service providers utilising community labour, etc), but

all these models have been characterized by an explicit commitment to maximize local job creation and skills enhancement and to build institutional capacity at local level.

When I look around and see how green Cata is, it makes me happy and proud because our village is producing a lot of vegetables and our lives are changing for the better. A small thing like being able to buy vegetables in our village instead of going to town is one of the big benefits of the development.

Mzama Myama

In addition to the projects that have been implemented, there are others that have commenced. Contractors are on site building chalets for tourist accommodation and upgrading roads, and the local forestry team is busy planting a new pine plantation.

Building capacity at local level to take charge of development

One of the most significant constraints to development in the Eastern Cape is the lack of institutional capacity. In the former Ciskei, village-level organisation is weak and fragmented. Generally speaking, there is a civic structure of some sort and a local branch of one or more political parties. But the active membership of such organisations is typically no more than a handful of people, usually comprising new order elites (economic and political). As a result, the vast majority of community members are typically uninformed about development opportunities and government intervention. Consequently, many opportunities are missed and government interventions tend to be top-down and unsustainable. Because of the weak institutional set-ups, these villages are characterised by misinformation, rumour, factions and cliques. Such conflict often pits vestiges of the abolished headmanship system against new order elites. The result is protracted stand-still and pervasive fear; there are no winners, only losers.

In Cata, BRC has remained consistent in its determination to build institutional capacity to drive development locally. Initially this meant working with the development committee and, more recently, with the CPA. These structures are critical because they have been entrusted with co-ordinating and managing the integrated development processes locally.

BRC focused on supporting the CPA. This has paid dividends. In 2007 the CPA held its third successful AGM. During the past four years it has managed key aspects of the development projects (eg labour recruitment and selection) and it has been responsible for community consultation and communication. Crucially, it has functioned in an open and democratic manner:

The CPA is trying to provide a different kind of leadership; different from a time when we were under the leadership of a headman. I can clearly remember how the headmen exercised their power in a way that marginalised most people. Now, the CPA tries to include most people in the decision-making and we to them.

Nothemba Languva

In order to implement projects in a sustainable manner, BRC has facilitated the formation and development of local businesses in the forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors. This is a key challenge because the development process will only be sustainable in the long-term if the projects are run profitably. BRC has used a number of capacity building methods over the past

few years, including training, mentoring and workshopping. Since 2002, 23% of the adult population of Cata has participated in one or other training programme organised by BRC.

Outcomes achieved

A recently conducted research process shows that the 1996 – 2001 trend of deepening poverty in Cata has been reversed. A comparison of our 2007 figures with the 2001 census shows that income levels have increased, employment has risen, education levels are improving and there is better food security.

Improving financial assets

The percentage of households with a monthly income of more than R1 600 has increased from 7% in 2001 to 31% in 2007. The percentage of households with no income at all has dropped from 43% to 4%. These percentages are significant because they show that the increase in levels of income is a broad-based phenomenon, benefiting most Cata households.

In most rural areas in the former homelands, over the past few decades, the two most important sources of income have been remittances and (more recently) welfare grants. These two sources of income remain important for the Cata community, with 39% of its income coming from welfare payments and 8% from remittances. However, for the first time in about fifty years, most of the community's income now stems from economic activity taking place in and around Cata. More specifically, 41% of income derives from locally-generated wages and 10% is generated from local businesses. There has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of local people that are employed. Employment rates have increased from 4% in 2001 to 26% in 2007. Most of the new jobs have been created in the agriculture, forestry and construction sectors. This means that there is considerable local economic development taking place in the heart of a former homeland.

Human assets

Because of the large number of mature adults with limited education, BRC has placed emphasis on adult education, through a variety of capacity building processes, including on-the-job-training. Anecdotal evidence, such as feed-back from contractors who have worked in Cata and testimony from training beneficiaries, indicates that these interventions have built the skills-base in the village.

Food security has improved. Almost all households eat regularly; 99% eat twice a day or more often. Almost half of the families eat more regularly than they did three years ago.

In the community, the development has created opportunities for women – many have become aware of their potential and are starting to do things that they thought were not possible. For some women, the development has created an opportunity for skills development and they are realising the choices they have in life - it is good to see them exercise their choices by undertaking tasks that were previously considered impossible for women. Looking around in the community, I can see how women are slowly becoming economically independent – they have control over the money that they are earning.

Boniswa Tontsi

Physical assets

To date the focus has been on social infrastructure such as the building of a multi-purpose community hall, construction of new classrooms, refurbishing existing buildings at the primary school and upgrading roads. In 2008/9 the emphasis will shift to water and sanitation.

Social assets

The CPA has provided a democratic institution which has led development in the area, giving the community confidence and the power to negotiate for their rights and the services and resources they need.

Natural assets

All interventions have been informed by the principle of environmental sustainability. Some have entailed direct measures such as soil rehabilitation and clearing riparian zones of alien species; others (eg spacing wattle to yield an economic asset) have been informed by environmental principles. The indigenous forests are in very good condition; yellowwoods, knobwoods, and other indigenous trees are plentiful. One of the key reasons for this is that local people use wattle for energy and building purposes.

Lessons learnt

The basis of BRC's approach is that people have a right to a decent life where they currently live. The most realistic way to realise this over-arching right is to make public resources for development available in all areas and to transfer decision-making responsibility for their allocation down to the lowest possible level which in this case is the village. In order to realise the potentials inherent in this approach, it is necessary to set up the planning process in such a way that it is participatory, it builds local institutional capacity and it is integrated. Once decisions have been taken, implementation can be driven by local institutions, leading to broad-based empowerment

This approach has shown that poverty can be reduced and livelihoods significantly enhanced through an integrated approach to development. Two important dimensions of integration in the Cata context were the geographic and sectoral dimensions.

In order to arrive at integrated plans, it is necessary to design the planning process in an appropriate way. In this regard, there must be a balance between participatory discussion and decision-making on the one hand, and adequate technical input, on the other. There is no substitute for participatory process because the people on the ground know their needs and their village better than anyone else. But people often have limited ability for people to identify and conceptualise the development potentials that exist in their vicinity. It is thus necessary to make use of technical expertise.

Plans must be formulated such that they give impetus to implementation. In other words, an implementation programme should be included in an integrated development plan. Added to this, detailed business plans should be prepared for each development initiative, and such plans should cover spatial, financial and institutional dimensions.

In order to implement an integrated approach successfully, there is a need to mobilise adequate public resources through concerted and sustained networking and lobbying. So integrated

development is best implemented through partnerships between community, government, and other organisations.

Integrated development processes should be co-ordinated and led at local level by democratic community institutions. So, from the outset in Cata, an approach was developed that recognized the importance of building local decision-making structures. The CPA¹ is a good example of a locally grown institution that is assuming increasing levels of responsibility for oversight of local development processes. The institution needs to have the mandate to represent the community at all meetings with third parties (ie both government institutions and private sector service providers).

Empowering people in this manner strengthens their hand in negotiating for additional resources from the state. For example, experience at Cata has shown that if a community puts up its 'own' money then it has considerable bargaining power in negotiating with government for top-up funds- it is no longer a beggar at the table of government, it is a public-sector investor. In addition, the Cata model ensures that government accounts to the people, and that government serves the people rather than the community simply being 'consulted' about someone else's plans. The Cata community has used this power dynamic very effectively. Through brokering, it has doubled the development monies made available through the restitution agreement.

The Cata story begs the question of how such processes can be facilitated but at scale. One route towards this is to institutionalise the principles that have informed the Cata process – namely:

- 1) the state should invest public resources in poor areas, in such a way that decision-making resides with local communities;
- 2) where the state invests in this way, development processes (including planning and implementation) should be integrated;
- 3) local institutions and leadership should be at the forefront of all development processes (including advocacy and brokering).

But the quality of facilitation and support will always be critical and needs to be maintained throughout. In part this can be achieved through recognising the role of and building capacity within civil society and not just assuming government is best placed to guide such sustainable processes.

Conclusion – the realisation of an alternative

The Cata Story challenges the prevailing development paradigm in South Africa, which claims that economic growth can only realistically occur in strategic nodes, and that public investment in rural areas should be limited to welfare hand-outs. The Cata Story asserts a contesting

¹ In the mid-1990s, parliament passed the Communal Property Associations Act. This act sought to create the legislative framework for the establishment of democratic and accountable community land holding entities, known as communal property associations (CPAs). It was envisaged that these structures would receive support from the Department of Land Affairs when needs be. Since then, several hundred CPAs have been established and registered around the country. Their performance, however, has been uniformly poor. The main reasons for the problems have been: lack of capacity, absence of support from the Department, and inadequate resourcing of the associations. The Cata CPA though become a strong local institution, in part because of sustained support and mentoring from BRC.

paradigm that puts people first, irrespective of where they live. It revolves around the values and principles of decentralised, participatory democracy, redistribution of resources, integrated process, and the building of human capital.

The Cata Story is uplifting and encouraging because it is an account of how poor, marginalised people are in the process of overcoming tremendous obstacles and challenges; they are claiming their rights and pushing back the tide of poverty that threatened to overwhelm them. However if the principles guiding Cata's success were institutionalised into government and civil society processes and practices, there would be many more Catas around.

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Useful resources

'Understanding the nature of poverty in 22 nodes in South Africa' - Nodal reports from The South African Urban Renewal and Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme

The South African National Department of Social Development commissioned the largest social research project outside government agencies to focus on 'building sustainable livelihoods' in the nodes of the Urban Renewal Programme and the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme. The project is a large set of interventions, carried out by Strategy & Tactics and Khanya-aicdd. These presentations summarize key findings in the main areas studies, including poverty, service delivery quality, health status, social capital, as well as attitudes to reproductive rights and gender-based violence.

The project focuses on understanding the nature of poverty in the 22 nodes; identifying key sustainable livelihood interventions; supporting nodal, provincial and national spheres in developing a sustainable livelihoods approach and set of skills; baselining the situation, and then evaluating the impact of the changed approach later in the project.

This is the first time directly comparable nodal-level data has been gathered and analysed, and is a key tool for programme managers and policy-makers alike. For more information go to: <http://www.sarpn.org/documents/d0003004/index.php>

Livelihoods Assessment and Analysis is the latest of a series of food security e-learning courses produced by the EC-FAO Food Security Programme. The course introduces the concept of livelihoods and the components of the livelihoods framework. It also provides guidance on assessing livelihoods in different food security contexts and on selecting and interpreting livelihoods indicators. It is likely to be of interest to a wide group of people - including technical officers, policy makers, and academics - involved in food security related work. It is available for free online at www.foodsec.org/dl and on CD-Rom by writing to information-for-action@fao.org. The course is also available in French. For more information, please contact Cristina LoPriore, Training Officer cristina.lopriore@fao.org

Livelihoods: Online Learning Resource - University for Professional Education; Larenstein and Wageningen University - was created to support livelihoods modules run within two masters courses held at the Wageningen University. The site www.livelihood.wur.nl also serves to encourage critical reflection on the more methodological dimensions on livelihoods research. It offers a clear and easy to navigate introduction to Livelihoods Approaches and is a valuable entry point for those wishing to explore Livelihoods.

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