

MAKING THE LINK BETWEEN MICRO AND MESO: LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE ON COMMUNITY-BASED PLANNING (CBP) Ian Goldman¹

Abstract

Much effort at developing institutions has focused on decentralised institutions, such as local government. However frequently this has not extended to seeing how to link decentralised institutions with citizens, and so resources often get captured by these meso-institutions and do not reach the community level. This paper summarises some ongoing work to develop and pilot systems of community-based planning in Uganda, South Africa, Ghana and Zimbabwe, and highlights in particular the experience of Mangaung Local Municipality in South Africa. This work has generated planning methodologies which have been tested in 3 large municipalities in SA, Uganda and Ghana. First indications are that the methodology works and does result in both useful plans and active involvement from citizens subsequently.

Policy conclusions

- Democratic decentralisation is being widely promoted as one of the ways to improve service delivery.
- If democratic decentralisation is to be effective, then some systematic system is needed for linking citizens with local government through a form of community-based planning, which must link to the local government planning system.
- However current approaches to participatory planning tend to be adhoc, unsystematic and expensive.
- For CBP to be acted on, there must be resources allocated to the plan, including an amount which the community has discretion to allocate, although larger amounts may need to go through the larger planning process.
- The systems that are being piloted in South Africa, Ghana and Uganda have worked and so there are good reasons to look to test these type of CBP systems much more widely.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

In 1998-2000, Khanya undertook action-research funded by the UK's Department for International development (DFID) looking at "Institutional Support for Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa". The main focus of the work was looking at institutional issues arising in South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, if sustainable livelihoods (SL) are to be promoted. This work identified that if livelihoods of poor people are to improve, there is a particular problem in the linkages between micro level (community) and meso level (local government and district service providers), both in terms of improving participatory governance and in terms of improving services. Three key governance requirements were identified at micro and meso levels if poverty was to be addressed:

Micro level²

- Poor people must be active and involved in managing their own development (claiming their rights and exercising their responsibilities)

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² Community level

- The need for a responsive, active and accessible network of local service providers (community-based, private sector or government)

Meso level³

- At local government level (lower meso) services need to be facilitated, provided or promoted effectively and responsively, coordinated and held accountable

The first of these requirements implies community involvement in planning and management of local development. The requirement for widely dispersed and accessible services implied by the second suggests a rethinking of service delivery paradigms. This paper concentrates on the first, and how community involvement in planning and management can link to decentralised delivery systems. This has formed the basis of another DFID-funded action-research project covering Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana and South Africa, Action research on Community-Based Planning. This paper is based on the early work on this action-research project, providing the background to the topic and early findings.

1.2 Action-research on community-based planning

This project involves a range of partners in the 4 countries (see list at end of paper), including the key national organisation involved in decentralised planning (and so hoping for policy impacts), a local government and a development facilitator involved in participatory planning, so that the learnings should be implemented immediately. It is an action-research project, building on committed partners for whom these questions are critical.

The purpose of the project is that “Realistic plans have been developed in each country for policy change, implementation or piloting of community-based planning systems, which participating institutions are committed to take forward”.

The project involves in-country reviews of experience, cross-country sharing, visits to other countries from whom lessons can be learned. The design did not envisage piloting during this phase but as a subsequent phase but in fact piloting started only 4 months after project start, and will happen in all the 4 countries.

The remainder of this paper draws from early experience from this project on this topic.

2 Current attempts at participatory planning

There are many different types of community based planning. They differ from each other in terms of⁴:

- the nature and scope of activities or problems which are being addressed (eg. project planning, sectoral planning or integrated area planning);
- the nature and extent of linkages with ‘higher’ level planning and/or local governance systems (eg. district, sectoral or national planning systems);
- the stages in the planning cycle at which community members are involved (eg. in the case of project planning: problem identification; project identification and design; implementation; operation and maintenance; and monitoring and evaluation);
- the degree of community involvement at each stage (eg. in the case of project identification and design, whether the community is merely informed of what is going to be done, is consulted as to the nature and form of the project, or makes all the decisions);

³ lower level where services are managed, usually local government level

⁴ Adapted from Conyers, 2001

- the type of external organisation (if any) which initiates and/or supports the planning activity (eg. local authority, government department, NGO);

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

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

The approach being adopted in the CBP project is that we need to address all 4, but in a way which is implementable and sustainable using the resources available to local governments. Therefore the CBP project focuses on the question of what sort of community-based planning process and system can be implemented which is holistic, reflecting the complex reality of people's lives, linked to the mainstream planning system (usually local government, but also sectoral), can be empowering, and is realistic within the resource envelopes (human and financial) available within a municipal area.

3 Some examples of community-based planning

Current attempts at community-based planning tend to fit into the following types:

- Attempts at including participation in local government planning systems (eg the Integrated Development Plan process in South Africa)
- Service delivery organisations (eg rural water supply) involving communities in planning, or management of services (eg Community Water and Sanitation Project, Ghana)
- NGOs undertaking projects focusing on empowerment (eg ITDG in Zimbabwe)
- Structured community-participation projects (eg UNICEF in Uganda)

3.1 The Integrated Development Plan system in South Africa⁵

South Africa has embarked on a process to make its local governments more viable and more focused on development. There has been an amalgamation of local authorities, the creation of a second tier of district municipalities as well as 6 metros covering the large cities, and the allocation of a responsibility to promote social and economic development. A new system of development planning has started, where all local authorities are required to develop 5 year Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). Participatory planning is required as part of the IDP process and municipalities are required to review annually the needs of the community, the processes for involving the community and to develop mechanisms to consult the community. Ward Committees have recently been established as the lowest tiers of organised representation⁶. The difficulty with the process is that there is no effective organisation for participation in the IDPs, and the reality has tended to be that in practice one workshop is held in a ward as the only mechanism for participation, which is therefore extremely limited.

3.2 Community Water and Sanitation Project, Ghana

This is a donor driven project funded by the International Development Association (IDA) and Government of Ghana. A prospective community applies for a grant through the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST). The potential beneficiary community is then assisted by a Partner Organisation (PO) through four phases of the project cycle. In phase one, the community is assisted to establish a participatory process for community decision-making,

⁵ See Goldman, Roos and Jacobs for a case study of this.

⁶ IN Mangaung, each ward has approximately 20 000 people

building awareness about the project and responsibility for management of the facility. The PO also assists the community to form a Water and Sanitation Committee (Watsan). In phase two, the Watsan committee is trained by the PO to facilitate further community decisions in selecting type of facility and sitting. The committee also proposes the management plan of new facility, develops and hygiene action plans and promotes sanitation, raises fund and establishes a bank account and put in place a Facility Management Plan. In phase three, further training is provided for the Watsan committee to develop skills in record keeping, promoting hygiene education and latrine construction. The area mechanics at this point provide training for the selected caretakers.

3.3 UNICEF in Uganda – Parish Development Committees

UNICEF has been undertaking some interesting work in Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ghana in establishing local development committees. In Uganda UNICEF has been helping to establish non-statutory Parish Development Committees at parish level, the second lowest level of the local administrative structure. They have funded the PDCs and line ministries using them, especially for interventions in education, health and environmental sanitation. Other donors have also followed this by supporting PDCs.

4 **Principles underlying this approach to CBP**

Key principles that this approach to CBP are based on include:

- we need to ensure that poor people are included in planning
- systems need to be realistic and practical, and the planning process must be implementable using available resources within the district/local government, and must link in and integrate with existing processes, particularly local government planning
- planning must be linked to a legitimate structure that can take funds
- planning should not be a once off exercise, but should be part of longer process
- plan must be people focused and empowering
- we must plan from vision and strength/opportunities not problems
- plans must be holistic and cover all sectors
- must be learning oriented
- planning should promote mutual accountability between community and officials
- systems should be flexible and simple
- there must be commitment by councillors and officials and there must be someone responsible to ensure it gets done

The clients of the planning are communities/interest groups/individuals, local politicians as well as technical staff of local governments, service providers (including national and provincial Departments, NGOs).

Table 1 compares some different approaches:

Table 1 Proposed approach to community-based planning linked to the IDP

Pure empowerment CBP approach	Proposed 3rd Way for Ward planning in this project	Participatory planning
Directly related to local action	Starts with community view. Planning for local action, municipal, provincial and other inputs to ward	Primarily related to municipal budgets, decisions, actions
Intensive, time-consuming	Limited time, eg 3 days plus follow-up contacts, budget cycle related	Limited time, budget cycle related
Process oriented	Partnership approach including capacity-building and empowerment	Delivery oriented
Decisions primarily on members' own resources	Decisions on own resource proposals, proposals for government and other resources through IDP	Decisions primarily on government-controlled resources
Learning process crucial	Mutual learning crucial	Learning process as a side-effect
Not necessarily inclusive, initiative-based	Inclusive, covering whole Ward	Inclusive, area covering, (democratic right),
Focus primarily on strengths, opportunities, as well as needs	Strategic planning: linking people's strengths, opportunities, needs and local knowledge with external specialists' know-how, to find effective solutions for many	Strategic planning: linking people's needs and local knowledge with external specialists' know-how, to find effective solutions for many
No consideration of municipality-wide approaches for community needs	Focus on the Ward, but some consideration of municipality-wide issues	Consideration of municipality-wide approaches through negotiation across communities

5 Challenges of this approach

Some of the key challenges the project raises are:

- The need for a short process (so not too resource intensive) and yet sufficiently in-depth to address the needs of poor people, and to be empowering in how the planning is conducted.
- In order to have sufficient facilitators, the need to develop a facilitation capacity not just in local government, but in a range of service agencies operating within an area, who need to provide their time at no cost (eg departments of social development, agriculture, health, education, who need to get to know the priorities themselves);
- The need for a budget to be available immediately to support local action after the planning, and so not be in the situation of planning with no budget which has been a common problem;
- The need to train people to undertake the planning, including ward/parish committees and developing their ability to plan and manage development in their wards.

6 Progress to date

Each country has undertaken a review of experience and held a national workshop bringing together practitioners and policy makers to look at CBP. At the end of July, a 4 country workshop was held in South Africa, where the results from each country were reviewed, and a generic concept for CBP developed, based around an intensive 5 day planning process, 2 days on situation analysis, 2 days on planning and 1 day write-up. Following this partners worked together to develop a generic CBP manual (available at www.khanya-mrc.co.za).

In Uganda, a localised version of the CBP manual has been developed. The intensive planning has subsequently been reduced to a 3 day process and training has been conducted in Bushenyi District, and work will start on implementing this in February 2002. Following the drafting of the Ugandan guidelines for CBP, the Ministry of Local Government, in collaboration with the LGDP, has revised the investment and planning guidelines currently being used by local governments to formulate district development plans. The consultants have adopted the Bushenyi model for the national guidelines on participatory planning. It is also proposed to use the planning guidelines in a new \$100 million World Bank- and DFID-supported project in Northern Uganda.

In South Africa, Mangaung Municipality decided to use these ward plans as the basis of their Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The Municipality has also budgeted an average of \$5 000 per ward as an immediate fund to support local action. This is discussed in more detail below. Khanya has also been commissioned to develop national guidelines on community participation for local government, and will base this on the CBP work.

In Ghana the methodology has been piloted in the town of New Edubiase, Adanse East District. In Zimbabwe the approach has been piloted in 3 areas of Chimanimani District in eastern Zimbabwe.

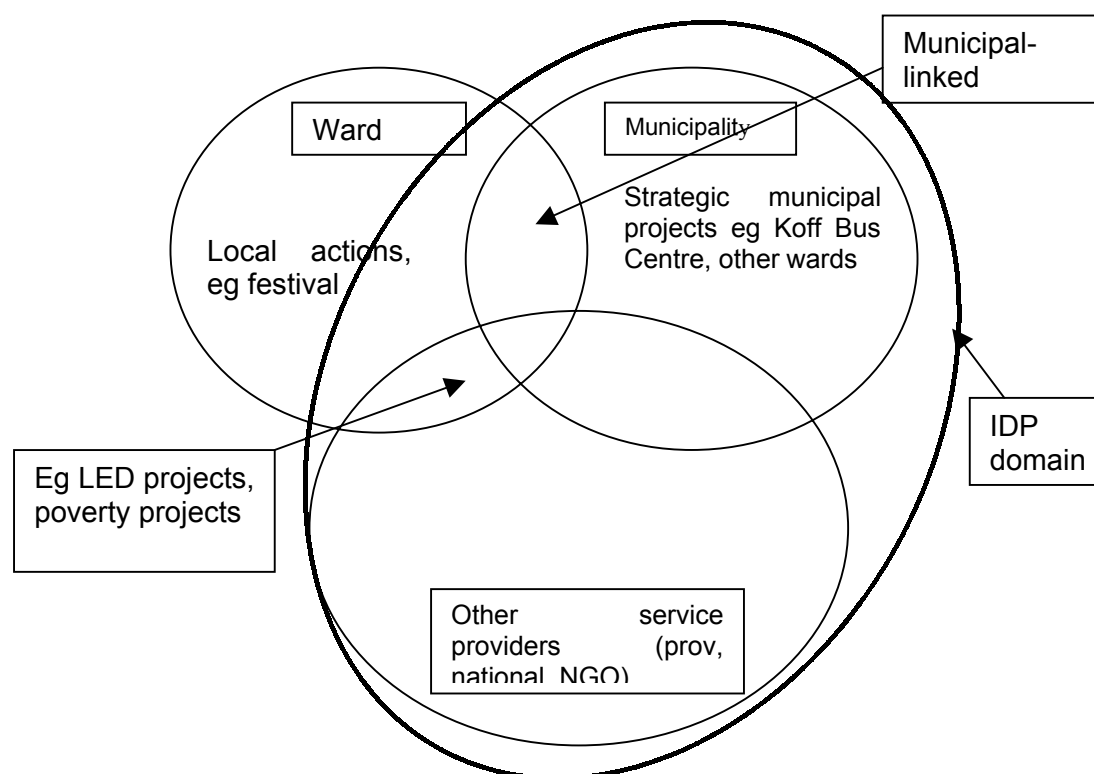
7 South Africa - Mangaung's experience of using community-based planning

Mangaung is a newly created municipality including SA's sixth city (Bloemfontein, the judicial capital), two other towns (Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu), and a rural area. It covers 6300km² with a population of over 750 000. It therefore covers the extremes of South Africa, from wealthy, predominantly white suburbs, to very poor squatter settlements. The new municipality amalgamating 3 former councils was created in December 2000.

Mangaung was an early partner in the CBP project, seeing this as an opportunity to promote participatory democracy as part of producing its IDP. The Municipality also made the decision not just to pilot the methodology, but to apply it in all 43 wards. It was also decided to plan at ward level, the only recognised level below municipal level, which have populations of 9000 to 18 000, rather larger than the planning units used in Uganda for example, which are parishes of 3000-5000 people.

The approach to the IDP being adopted by MLM envisages 3 components:

- ❑ a **Ward Plan** done by the community covering vision, goals, projects and activities which include local action, action by the municipality and by other services, and an action plan for activities to be followed in the next 3 months;
- ❑ **Municipal Plan** covering vision, goals, strategies and projects for the Municipal area including projects suggested by the Ward for municipal action (eg new municipal road) and strategic projects for the municipality (eg Mangaung Development Partnership);
- ❑ **Service plans** by different government departments, NGOs etc, which should cover projects suggested by the Ward for their action (eg local clinic) and strategic projects for the department/organisation (eg provincial hospital).

Figure 1 Links between CBP, municipality and sector plans

The community-based planning was undertaken between September 2001 and February 2002, involving a contact week with the ward to cover:

- two days situation analysis involving
 - meeting different social groups to analyse their livelihoods, their assets, vulnerabilities, preferred outcomes and livelihood strategies
 - using a Venn Diagram process to analyse local support institutions, whether CBO, government, NGO or private sector
 - mapping the resources and problems of the community
 - doing a timeline of key historical events in the community
 - doing a SWOT analysis of the community
- this culminates in a community meeting where all the outcomes identified by different social groups are prioritised, and a vision statement drawn up for the ward
- based on the top 5 priorities, groups then work on each of the development priorities to develop a plan for what the community will do, what the municipality needs to do, and what others need to do
- proposals are then made for projects to be submitted to the main 5 year Integrated Development Plan, and for the \$5000 that Mangaung has guaranteed to each ward to support their process
- and the ward committee draws up an action plan to take the plans forward

So far 42 of the 43 wards have been planned, and many have now received part funding of the \$5000 to support them. Some 10 000 people participated in the planning, 1.5% of the population. The Integrated Development Plan that has been developed for the whole municipality has also drawn on this information in different ways:

- in developing overall strategic priorities for the municipality (which changed considerably from the previous priorities, notably in making economic development far and away the most important)
- in suggesting ideas for how the overall development objectives could best be achieved (eg self-build housing rather than contractor built housing)
- in suggesting specific ideas for the municipality as a whole (eg for a jobcentre)
- in specific project ideas for the local ward

The challenge now is to support the on-going process, and to implement the reporting systems, support wards to take their plans forward etc. This is all part of the learning-by-doing process.

Many of the wards have already started to implement the projects identified in their plans, notably where they can act by themselves, or using the \$5000 made available by the Municipality. This will be the big test - does the community-based planning stimulate local action and local management of development.

8 Learnings from other countries

In addition to experimenting ourselves, the partners are looking to learn from best practice elsewhere. A team went in May 2002 to visit Bolivia (and Sao Paulo very briefly) to learn from their experience of implementing the Popular Participation Law of 1994. From there we have picked up some ideas around:

- the local CBO structures (OTBs) and how these are legally recognised, and existing CBOs can apply to be registered as an OTB
- the way the OTBs vote for a Vigilance Committee which provides a civil society oversight role on the municipalities
- the voluntary grouping of municipalities to form Mancomunidades, to focus on specific cross-municipality issues, eg economic development, transport etc

9 Next steps

The partners will meet in July to share the learnings from the different pilots, to see how the core methodology can be improved, whether we need policy changes in our countries, and how the lessons can be spread more widely. There will be national conferences, a video is being produced, and partners from other countries are being invited to share our experience. There will also need to be some evaluation of what has actually happened in the locations where the planning has happened – as this will be the ultimate test of the approach.

10 Conclusions

It is common in local government planning that ad-hoc participatory events have been the main mechanism for including people in planning. An alternative, often used for services, is ad-hoc participatory rural appraisals. These are expensive and resource-intensive, absorbing large amounts of staff time. The intensive empowerment mechanisms often used by NGOs are also very expensive and resource intensive and difficult to implement on a wide scale. Even where participatory planning systems have been developed, another common problem has been the lack of a clear budget to use on the plans that emerge. Already we have demonstrated an effective participatory planning methodology for use at sub-local government level.

Further information

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

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In addition there are examples of some of the community-based plans on the website.