

Thina Sinako Provincial LED Support Programme
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LED Learning Encounter: Partnerships for LED
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Record of proceedings

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1 Presentations

1.1 Introduction to the LED Learning Encounters

Mr John Reynolds, Thina Sinako Programme Coordination Unit

1.2 Input on the experiences of the Thina Sinako Programme in supporting partnership formation

Mr Geoff Orpen & Ms Lu Heideman, Thina Sinako Programme Coordination Unit

1.3 Review of experience of partnerships for LED in South Africa
Ms Rashnee Perhane, Khanya-African Institute for Community-Driven Development

2 Points raised during discussions:

The following points were raised during discussions after presentations:

- It is not clear what the solution is to the question of how to ensure effective participation by the poor in LED. Some experiences on the ground show that partnerships with poor communities are becoming more and more difficult – even partnerships between communities and municipalities are difficult, partly because of the physical distances between municipalities and the communities they serve. There is also a sense in a number of localities that municipalities do not put forward the views of “the people”. NGOs have a role in supporting partnership formation, particularly the older NGOs that have built up relationships in communities (some over 20-30 years).
- How does one change from “communities as beneficiaries” to “communities as partners”, and what are the challenges around management of funds by communities? The national government is currently engaged in an initiative to give 2% of its budget directly to wards to manage.
- Municipalities in the Amathole District do not feature strongly in partnership applications to the Thina Sinako Programme’s Local Competitiveness Fund, but they do in the Ukhahlamba District (these were the two districts that were the focus of the reflection on the Thina Sinako experience).
- There is a concern that where municipalities participate in partnerships with non-governmental institutions (including private sector institutions) they meddle in internal management issues of those institutions – the institutional integrity of institutions that are members of partnership groups should be respected.
- Cooperatives are potential legal vehicles for particular types of partnerships, and very effective vehicles for strengthening participation by the poor in larger partnerships. However, many cooperatives do require capacity development support.
- Feasibility studies, value chain studies and studies of the competitive advantage of localities are critical for partnerships to identify opportunities and focus themselves effectively on those. The Thina Sinako Programme has undertaken a number of such studies (which have all been published on the programme website, www.thinasinako.co.za), and its funding for the identification and design of Competitiveness Action Plans can also be used for further, focussed studies.
- The nature of development funding is such that partnerships are more like arranged marriages for the sake of access to resources, rather than a marriage based on complementarities, shared interest and a long-term developmental view. Perhaps one should look at partnerships that are already working and look at ways of strengthening them further.
- One of the negative approaches to partnership formation that has been observed is where a private sector player uses an emerging partner to get funding, after which the role of the emerging partner is undermined or terminated, or the funding is used to take control of a support relationship with a partner. Even where motives are pure, partners with greater technical capabilities often run away with projects – funders have a role to play in supporting a balancing of power relations within partnerships.
- Partnerships groups can be constituted of a large number of partners provided management is good. With weak management, even small partnership arrangements face difficulties.
- Guidelines for partnership formation might be useful in alerting the various types of institutions to opportunities, pitfalls, and types.
- A large number of partnerships appear to be more for the mobilisation of large investments than for direct participation by the poor.
- There is often a contention that the poor need to be helped to be more entrepreneurial, but this is contradicted by the experience of many poor people who engage in complex entrepreneurial activities in order to sustain

livelihoods and develop businesses. The question is rather how entrepreneurs can be identified, nurtured and supported to engage with larger, more formal and more complex markets and business processes. It should also be recognised, however, that many people are not able and or interested in starting and/or managing enterprises. Partnerships would be most successful if they are organised around entrepreneurs, but with mechanisms to ensure that other types of contribution, e.g. labour, is rewarded.

- A partnership without shared objectives or without a viable and sustainable project would not last very long.
- The South African experience of land reform has illustrated the negative consequences of leaving key institutions out of partnerships for effective utilisation of land for economic development (e.g. municipalities have often been left out of partnership processes until deadlines for finalisation of plans are reached, when there has often been a rush to involve them). Sufficient time is required to form a strong partnership between institutions.

Following the presentations, group discussions were held in terms of specific questions. The key points identified per question are given below:

- WHY PARTNERSHIPS?
 - A partnership is an active form of participation involving a sharing of skills, resources, risks, etc.
 - Partnerships are often formed to solve problems.
 - Sometimes partnerships are mandatory for access to funding.
 - Partnerships are based on the recognition that no single group/institution has all the answers – there are differing expertise and strengths between different groups/institutions that could be combined in complementary ways around particular initiatives.
 - Formation of a formal partnerships helps to identify a single point of responsibility in support of a larger shared interest.
 - Partnerships are more likely to have noticeable impacts than individual institutions or people can on their own.
 - Partnerships allow for more effective networking and for more effective decentralisation of knowledge, expertise and experience. For example, the capacity of emerging institutions can be strengthened through partnerships.
 - Partnerships can serve as a vehicle for increasing levels of participation by a range of groups and/or institutions in the implementation of projects.
- CAN A PARTNERSHIP BE ARTIFICIAL?
 - Yes, if it is formed only because a partnership is required for eligibility for funding, e.g. government tenders and to meet BEE requirements.
 - Yes, if the partnership is formed for short-term convenience.
 - Yes, if partners have unequal status or unequal resource (financial and other) contributions.
 - Yes, when a partnership is consultant-driven.
 - Artificial partnerships are often characterised by conflict, low levels of trust, marginalisation of some partners by others, and a short lifespan.
- WHAT ARE THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP?
 - It needs to be based on common goals.
 - Risks, responsibilities and resources need to be shared – all partners need to contribute, whether in cash or in kind.
 - Mutual trust.

- All partners must have the opportunity to input into the project around which the partnership has been organised (whether time, intelligence, technical expertise, finances, etc).
 - Clear definition of roles within the partnership.
 - Clear definition of lines of communication within the partnership.
 - Partners and the partnership itself need to be credible to outsiders.
 - Partnerships need to be monitored and adapted where required.
- WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN “PARTNERS” AND “BENEFICIARIES”?
 - A beneficiary is a person or a group of people who reap benefits from a given programme. Such benefit can either be direct or indirect (e.g. through the “spin-offs” of the original programme or project).
 - A beneficiary does not necessarily input into an action, but receives a benefit.
 - A community is a set of people or citizens with common interests, e.g. religious, social, and political.
 - A community can also be defined as the broader social environment within which the project is implemented.
 - A partner is directly engaged in project implementation and the sharing of capacity with other partners.
 - Beneficiaries should not be viewed as of lower status than partners.
- WHAT ARE THE EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS?
 - A range of examples were discussed, including (i) an example of an American film maker working with an orphanage, an HIV craft group and funders, (ii) an example of a partnership between a Communal Property Association and an NGO, and (iii) a partnership between traditional leaders and the private sector built around a development trust incorporating 6 villages, as well as a municipality and provincial and national government departments.