

ASSESSING THE BOTRIVIER MUNICIPAL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS (SL) PRINCIPLES

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INTRODUCTION

FCR is currently facilitating a municipal-community partnership (MCP) process between the Theewaterskloof municipality; a community group consisting of the most vulnerable women-headed households in Botrivier; the Botrivier Small Farmers` Association (BFA); the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation; and Eco-tunnels – a private company. This is part of FCR`s strategy to contribute towards poverty alleviation in the Western Cape province by promoting MCPs within a sustainable livelihoods framework. In this particular initiative FCR is the supporting NGO facilitating the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes.

COMPLIANCE WITH SL PRINCIPLES

- **People-Centred and Participatory**

The Botrivier MCP is people-centred in that the people of Botrivier, through the participatory initiatives of the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process of the Theewaterskloof municipality conceptualised the idea of a Botrivier mini-tunnel-farming project.

In terms of participation, FCR facilitated a number of participatory stakeholder meeting to discuss issues related to project design. FCR also facilitated the direct beneficiary identification process in a transparent and participatory manner by developing selection criteria with the community. An application form was designed and community meetings were held to explain the process. A community reference group verified the applications and assisted in the selection of the final 18 beneficiaries.

Furthermore, a representative project task team (PTT) consisting of one representative from all the partners was established to drive the project. This was done to ensure optimum participation and to create a pool of diverse capabilities, assets, resources and interests. The PTT also serves as the vehicle through which participatory monitoring and evaluation takes place.

- **Holistic**

The Botrivier MCP project is holistic in that it addresses both the economic and social challenges faced by the people of Botrivier.

The holistic nature of the Botrivier MCP project is also demonstrated by the fact that the project brings different stakeholders with different strengths together in the form of a unique partnership which serves as a platform for the development of innovative and effective

solutions to the cross-cutting challenges of poverty. In doing so, knowledge, skills and resource gaps are closed and solutions are found which the partners in this particular MCP may have been unable to succeed at on their own.

- **Sustainability**

An assessment by the Planning Department of the Theewaterskloof municipality indicated that there is no need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The project is semi-organic in nature and does not use any kind of pesticides. The organic fertiliser used in the project also poses no threat to surrounding farms and the water sources it uses.

The seasonal nature of the regional economy prompted FCR and its partners to engage in financial and technical feasibility matters. A holistic view was taken of all factors impacting on the project. This included agricultural suitability, income per person, competitors, markets and marketing, quality, prices, fencing, storage, access to water and electricity, threat of wind and theft, alternative livelihood strategies, training requirements and institutional sustainability.

- **Micro-Macro Linkages**

To date, the Botrivier MCP project has affected institutional, structural, policy and programmatic changes on a micro-, meso-, and macro-level.

The Botrivier project – located at the micro-level – has been instrumental in influencing and changing the mindset of councilors and officials at the meso-level about the notion of developmental local government and what local government is supposed to deliver in terms of poverty alleviation.

A policy vacuum existed at the meso-level in that the municipality had no policy on preferential service rates for community projects. FCR engaged the municipality on the importance of giving effect to its development mandate by creating a policy environment conducive to sustainable poverty alleviation interventions. To this end, the Theewaterskloof municipality – with the assistance of FCR - is currently busy drafting a preferential water rates policy which will contribute to the sustainability of the project. This move will also benefit future poverty alleviation initiatives of an agricultural nature.

On a macro-level the project has also affected institutional and programmatic changes in that the Western Cape Provincial Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation have adopted a more open approach to developmental partnerships as a vehicle for poverty alleviation – a mandate it receives from national government. Furthermore, the lessons learnt at the local and provincial levels on poverty alleviation are fed back to inform the resource allocation criteria and programme development process at a national level. The Botrivier

MCP project has therefore gone a long way in facilitating partnership building between a small, rural community and the different spheres of government.

LESSONS

- **For NGOs and CBOs:** NGOs have a critical role to play in balancing the powers between different partners and to make sure that the partnership upholds the principles of equality, accountability, and respect. The introduction of participatory monitoring and evaluation contributes significantly to foster partner participation where all the partners help to reflect and find solutions to cross-cutting challenges.
- **For Local Government:** The Theewaterskloof municipality have realised that, in order for them to give effect to their developmental mandate, they have to participate in and support development initiatives such as the Botrivier MCP project. The municipality therefore committed staff and funding towards the project.
- **For Partnership Building:** MCPs for poverty alleviation initiatives benefit significantly when municipalities re-deploy its existing resources (e.g. by providing land and municipal equipment, assigning proactive officials, and providing subsidised service rates to projects). In order for a MCP to be successful, it is important to build partnership relationships and formalize arrangements between all partners in some form of agreement.

CONCLUSION

A lot of ground has been covered in bringing different partners together and to create an environment in which the Botrivier MCP project can be implemented. This, however, is not enough to make the Botrivier MCP project achieve its objectives of providing jobs and food security towards the ultimate goal of poverty alleviation in the town of Botrivier. More work still lies ahead for everyone involved in this MCP initiative.