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A Community Asset Mapping Programme for Roots-driven Sustainable Socio-economic Change in Rural South Africa

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Abstract: Apartheid left a legacy of high levels of poverty and inequality in South Africa. This research aimed at the development of a tool that would be able to assist communities in reducing their levels of poverty and inequality and thus improve their own quality of life. The research was undertaken over a period of four years in collaboration with the Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation (GRCF) and within eight rural communities in South Africa. The lessons learnt in the rural communities through participatory rural appraisal interactions resulted in the development of the community asset mapping programme (CAMP) that is presented in this paper. The reason the tool was designed was to achieve sustainable and responsible high impact social change. The tool focusses on various processes that aim to enable community members to focus on their respective human, social, cultural and environmental capital as a means to reduce their levels of poverty and inequality. Unlike similar tools, CAMP advocates that the success of roots-driven change depends on the inclusion of processes that allow community members to identify the various levels of power and trust within the community and to use this information to make a number of cognitive changes that will provide the basis of sustainable change in communities. The research is thus grounded within the post-development theory and the role of external partners in the development process is described within the context of this theory as those who would be willing to provide funding, mentorship and skills to a community, but are prepared to stand aside and allow communities to establish their own priorities for sustainable socio-economic change.

Keywords: Community Asset Mapping Programme, Human and Environmental Capital, Participatory Rural Appraisal, Poverty and Inequality

Introduction

The Human Development Index (HDI) for South Africa increased from 0.570 in 1980 to 0.629 in 2012, while the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for South Africa was 47% in 1993 and dropped to 39% in 2010, classifying South Africa as a 'medium developed' country (United Nations 2013). The ranking of South Africa is high when compared to other countries in the Global South and the broader sub-Saharan Region in Africa in particular. South Africa has a sophisticated infrastructure with a well-developed private sector and a relatively stable macro-economy. The country is less dependent on foreign aid and the achievement of sustainable change depends on the public and private sector to mobilise domestic resources to facilitate this change. The overall description of poverty and inequality in South Africa can however be misleading as there are strong regional dimensions and differences to the phenomenon. Although all nine provinces in South Africa are considered to fall into the category of 'medium-level development', the actual number of people living in poverty varies considerably between the provinces. While the provincial distribution of people living in poverty present an unequal distribution, the rural/urban divide within the provinces present an additional spatial pattern with the majority of the South African poor living in rural areas.

Since 1994 South Africa has implemented a number of rural development programmes. The overall goal of all these programmes has been to promote social cohesion and development that would create equitable and sustainable rural communities. The most recent plan to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa is the National Development Plan (NDP): 2030 (National Planning Commission 2012). The NDP has developed key targets that will help communities, civil society, state and business to assist in the elimination of poverty and reduce inequality in the country by 2030. The principle of community-driven change is incorporated into the NDP by advocating that communities' capabilities must be developed in order for

communities to improve their own lives through education, skills development and self-employment (National Planning Commission 2011). This is in line with the World Bank (2013) that advocates the application of community-driven development programmes which encourage communities and households to manage their own development resources. The bottom-up approach to development seeks to give communities and local governments more control over planning and investments and in the process empower communities to lift themselves out of poverty.

Post-development Theory

The research for this paper is grounded in post-development theory that arose as a result of critique against the dominant development theory of the 1980s. The development process of the last two decades of the previous century was socially constructed and reflected western values (Escobar 1995). During this period development was entrenched in the ideals of 'modernisation' where it was assumed that western economic structure and society was the universal model that the whole world should copy and follow (Esteva 1999). Post-development thought poses that the imposition of western lifestyle on the global population meant the loss of indigenous culture and other psychologically and environmentally rich and rewarding modes of life (Sachs 2008). The development theory of the previous century resulted in the discarding of once very sustainable ways of living in the Global South in favour of the ideals of the Global North.

Participatory Rural Appraisal

This paper presents a community-driven development programme that aims to facilitate roots-driven inclusive and socio-economic change that will improve the quality of lives of South Africans living in rural areas. The programme was developed over a period of four years during Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) interaction within eight rural communities in three provinces of South Africa. The fundamental underpinning of PRA is an understanding that the rural poor can lift themselves and their communities out of poverty. PRA is founded on a set of beliefs that communities know the basic challenges of the rural poor and thus have the inherent power to solve their own challenges.

Asset-based community development which is a specific PRA approach was selected as the basis of the community-driven development programme presented in this paper. The asset-based approach focusses on community assets rather than the conventional needs approach. By focussing on the positive (assets) and not the negative (what communities do not have) a positive outlook and vision for sustainable community development is possible. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) was originally developed by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) over a period of two years while working on an endogenous community development in a number of low-income urban neighbourhoods in the United States. The premise of their work was that communities can identify and mobilise existing but sometimes unrecognised assets and in this way drive the development process themselves by responding to and creating local economic opportunities. A number of researchers have adopted and adapted the ABCD approach since 1993. The Coady International Institute of St Xavier's University in Canada have applied a contemporary version of ABCD in many countries in the Global South, and South Africa in particular (Mathie and Cunningham 2002; 2003; 2008 and 2010).

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

The typical ABCD application consists of three basic steps. The asset mapping process starts with a facilitated workshop during which the attendees map the human, social, economic, physical and environmental assets within a community. The second step is for the community to

collectively define their preferred future and the last step is an impact assessment and the establishment of entrepreneurial projects. A post-workshop phase allows external agents to acts as funders by providing small match grants to support key projects (Mathews, 2012). Considering the success achieved by the ABCD process in communities in the Global South, the researchers decided to implement this process in rural communities of South Africa to achieve roots-driven sustainable change.

The pilot study for the implementation of the ABCD programme in South Africa took place in the North-West Province, Mathopestad, which is a rural farming community with a tribal authority. The three day workshop was undertaken in 2009 and was attended by 60 community members. The initial successes of the application of ABCD were very positive and a number of community projects were created. Within one year of the workshop the successes of a number of projects were overshadowed by increasing challenges, most of which were related to power struggles and trust issues within the community projects. It became clear that the application of ABCD was not successful due to the failure of the tool to recognise typical challenges within a typical South African rural community.

Community Asset Mapping Programme (CAMP)

The experiences gained by the application of ABCD in Mathopestad provided the basis for the development of an asset-based programme that is better suited to rural communities in South Africa. The Community Asset Mapping Programme (CAMP) presented in this paper was developed after PRA interaction in seven additional rural communities in South Africa over a four year period. The application of an asset-based development programme in the following rural communities form the basis of CAMP that is the focus of this paper: Feloane Village (100 community members) in the Free State Province, Wittekleibos, Guava Juice, Doriskraal and Snyklip (112 community members) in the Eastern Cape Province and Koffiekraal and Skuinsdrift (100 community members and 15 emerging farmers) in the North-West Province (GRCF 2009; 2010; 2011; Nicolau 2013; UNISA/GRCF 2011; 2012a and 2012b).

All of these communities are rural in nature and experience high levels of poverty and inequality that have increased over the last decade. Farming and mining are the dominant forms of economic activity and there are low levels of self-employment. All of the communities have traditional leadership that is recognised formally by the local, provincial and national government. Demographically the communities all have a high dependency ratio with the largest proportion of their populations under the age of 21 years and over 60 years. In terms of the economically active sector of the communities, the dominant gender is female with most of the male community members working away from the communities as migrant or seasonal workers. High levels of illiteracy are prevalent in these communities.

After four years of interaction with these communities, CAMP was developed and consists of a variety of phases that are undertaken over a period of two to five years:

- The pre-workshop visit to the community followed by a four day empowerment workshop
- Follow up visits within six months of the four day workshop
- Period of monitoring and evaluation which often is characterised by skills training and mentoring to encourage communities to create their own opportunities to improve their quality of lives.

The inclusion of concepts such as human, social, cultural and environmental capital in all the phases of CAMP has as purpose to offset some of the shortcomings and challenges experienced by the application of a variety of asset based processes in rural South Africa. Knowledge of the

various forms of capital in a community provides valuable information in order to assist communities to facilitate their own roots-driven change.

Prior knowledge of the community is critical for the external stakeholders involved in the CAMP. The social, cultural, economic and political characteristics of the community provide an important context for the external stakeholders, while the physical geography of the area also provides important preparatory information for the external stakeholder. Within the South African context, it is critical to establish if the community is under the jurisdiction of a traditional authority, and it is important to engage with community leadership to obtain additional information about the community. Contact must also be made with local government representatives. It is recommended that the externals spend time discussing the basic principles that underlie CAMP with the leadership of the community to set the scene for the workshop. This is critical to ensure that communities are not expecting a basic needs approach and an ad hoc hand-outs of assistance and money during or after the workshop.

Logistical arrangements related to the location of the workshop are essential and all attempts should be made to make use of local resources. It is advisable to have one contact person, through which all liaison will take place. The preferred language of facilitation should be established and, if required, the services of a competent local translator must be finalised. The composition of the workshop attendees is crucial and should reflect the social, economic and demographic (gender, age and ethnic composition) profile of the community. Externals must allow the community leadership to decide on the composition and representation of community members who are to attend the workshop. The ideal workshop attendance is no less than 40 and no more than 100 community members. Attendees must be informed that attendance of all four days is required and as such must make the necessary arrangements to attend the entire workshop.

The CAMP processes take a community through exercises designed to make them aware of their existing social, human, cultural and physical capital (expressed as assets). The process is meant to help communities to change their thinking from 'this is what they lack' to 'they are richer than they realised'. The workshop utilises methodology that allows for creative and participatory ways to engage community members while working in small teams. The workshop starts with a welcome; introductions and a brief orientation of the purpose of CAMP and ends with the community representatives developing their own indicators of success for the future.

The first day of the workshop focusses on establishing the human, social, cultural and physical capital (assets) of the community. The first session (appreciative enquiry) encourages participants to focus on their individual dreams and not on their problems and needs. The community is divided into groups and they are asked to share accounts of individuals in their communities they consider to be successful. They then need to speculate on reasons why these individuals are successful. During this exercise participants are able discover the richness and diversity of opportunities within their own community. Participants are then encouraged to create a collective vision for their community that include their own indicators of success. The next session concentrates on the creation of an inventory (capacity inventory) of individual assets of community members and this is divided into three categories, i.e. heart, head and hands skills and abilities. This is followed by association mapping, when the groups are asked to group their community assets into four different categories. Human assets (capital) include the skills, gifts, abilities and talents of the community members. Social assets (capital) include the various associations within the community and associations with organisations outside of communities. Economic assets (human capital) focus on the resources that can trigger or form the basis of entrepreneurial opportunities as well as the existing and emerging business opportunities. Environmental assets (capital) include the physical (infrastructure) and natural resources. At the end of this activity an inventory of the collective assets that exist within a community is compiled. Given that the participants created the list, they take ownership of the list, and the

cognitive transition of thinking about what they lack to begins to shift to what they have. The conclusion of this exercise is generally a sense of pride and a feeling of they are richer than they realised. The final session of the first day is critical in the rural communities in South Africa and this session establishes the power structure within the community. The power structures of the community are important to describe and analyse to ensure the sustainable success of projects. Experience of the eight case studies that underpin the research for this paper, show that the lack of open discussion of the power structure seem to be one of the major reasons for the failure to effect change within communities. During this session, the facilitator takes the participants through a process to map power structures in the community. This is a particularly difficult process as the various role players in the power structures of the community are sometimes part of the workshop groups. The value of the exercise is to sensitise participants to possible power struggles that might harm (or help) future projects.

The second day focusses on the cultural and social capital of a community. Roots-driven change in the pilot study failed as a result of the lack of self-worth, and overall trust within the community. CAMP thus incorporates sessions related to the wishes, fears and values of the participants at the workshop. Participants are asked questions on these aspects as related to themselves as individuals and as members of the community. The facilitator collects the individual responses and a story board is created keeping individual responses anonymous. This session provides crucial information that assists communities in driving their own roots-driven change, and also provides an indication of the potential future success of community projects. In some communities, it is clear at this point of the workshop that possible external intervention to deal with these 'soft issues' will be required during the follow-up and monitoring process. An important aspect of the second day of the workshop is for the groups to identify one social problem within the community. They are then asked to discuss the problem and to formulate possible solutions for the problem. This exercise is extremely important, as the purpose is to take something negative in the community, and provide community members with the opportunity develop positive solutions to the problem. The exercise assists the external stakeholders in establishing how well the community can work together and the level of problem solving in the community.

By the third day of the workshop participants are normally ready to make a cognitive shift that is critical to generate ideas that could lead to small entrepreneurship opportunities and job creation of community members. The day starts with a simple community-based economics session that provides the community with a practical understanding of the economic situation of their community and the possible entrepreneurial opportunities that are possible. The exercise demonstrates to the community how much money comes into the particular community through salaries, grants and other income and then how much money is spent inside and outside of the community. The community can see that money flows from the community, but with some innovation the money can be circulated within the community and in this way grow the community. This step is often the catalyst that encourages groups to create small business opportunities. The session also provides the external stakeholders with an indication of how much money is potentially available within the community to fund own projects. When the community can see that they need to keep the money circulating within their community, they are encouraged to think about possible business opportunities.

Attendees are then requested to build a community map that reflects their community in terms of their human, social, cultural and physical assets (capital). They are then requested to identify opportunities that these assets present in terms of possible small and medium business projects. This is an interactive activity that allows the groups to creatively think about and plan their physical environment in terms of positive and sustainable projects. There are several reasons for building a community map in CAMP. The map provides a framework for discussion on the relative location of assets and thus provides an opportunity for the community to highlight resources they consider to be important in the community. The map raises an awareness of the

existing assets and resources and stimulates a debate on the relative importance of resources. The result of the activity is a visual presentation which can be understood and explained by everybody at the workshop.

Once the community has progressed with their maps, they go on a transect walk. The walk provides the community with the opportunity to link the previous two processes by looking at their communities through asset lenses. The groups physically walk through their community with a facilitator with the intention of looking for additional social and environmental assets. They then return to their respective groups to complete their maps and suggest further ideas for possible projects in the community. In areas where a map of the village does not exist, participants can walk through the community with a Global Positioning System (GPS). As they identify assets, the facilitator records the exact location, with a description of the asset. The community can use these co-ordinates to create a true-to-scale map of their community. In this way the community can become the authors of a map of their village. The fact that they are able to be the 'cartographers' of their own community map adds to the sense of pride and belonging of the attendees to their respective communities.

On the final day of the workshop participants make use of all the information gathered over the previous three days to create a community vision and action plan in terms of projects that will be the drivers of change in the community with their own indicators of success. The attendees are requested to provide information on the following: the future change that is possible in terms of an identified project; the actions required to ensure the success of the project; the local assets that will contribute to the success of the project; the outside assistance required to help the project's success; and an indication on how the project members will measure the success of the project. The workshop concludes with the creation of a community forum that can champion (or lead) the process of change in the community. Not only does the creation of this forum help the community to take ownership of their own change, the group also acts as the connector to any external partners.

Two weeks after the CAMP workshop the facilitators return to the community to provide individual/group support and assistance to groups to help with their planning, by providing advice on the identified projects. Depending on the action plan and the projects identified by the community at the four day workshop, a general two day workshop is normally presented and includes the formalisation and registration of business initiatives; strategic planning; business planning; financial management; trust and self-worth workshops; soft skills workshops and technical support.

Regular visits to the community to track the progress of change in the community are crucial. Communities are encouraged to set their own indicators for success and change must be tracked and recorded against these indicators to ensure that communities are achieving their own roots-driven change. There should be an understanding between the external stakeholders that the members of a community are the only ones that can actually say whether their quality of life is improving and external stakeholders should only assist in the tracking of change in the community. On-going support with the permission of the community must be provided by various external stakeholders over the medium to long term. This includes the provision of skills, technical, monetary support and mentoring as identified by the community. External stakeholders should constantly monitor the levels of dependency between stakeholders and communities and should not tolerate any form of dependency.

Essential External Role-players of CAMP

The basic premise of CAMP is that a number of external stakeholders need to partner with communities and should have as their objective the assistance of communities to achieve their own indicators of success. Each of the role-players would have different reasons for their interactions with particular communities, but all should place their own agenda's second to the

agenda of the community to ensure that the conventional needs-based approach to development is not followed, and that a dependency relationship between communities and external stakeholders does not develop.

Since 1994, the South African government has done much to try and combat social inequalities and poverty levels by the implementation of various development programmes. The persistent high levels of inequality and poverty remain part of the socio-economic reality of South Africa. Increasingly communities, business, civil society and institutes of higher learning have become active and are essential role-players in community programmes. Each of these role-players has specific roles and responsibilities to ensure the success of any roots-driven change and wealth creation in a rural community.

Business in South Africa applies various forms of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to meet their vision of Corporate Social Investment (CSI). Corporates use CSI to help communities, by setting aside money, time and expertise to local non-profit organizations who in turn work closely with communities to provide solutions for significant social problems. Usually corporates will make sure that their social investment is aligned to their mission statement, and in this way ensure that their monetary contributions reflect their reputation and brand. Some corporates do not follow this approach and prefer a direct community-based approach to their CSR and CSI. Corporates that wish to participate in a CAMP should take the following principles into account:

- Select a community programme that reflects the company's ethical principles
- Accept that progress and setbacks will occur and cannot be predicted
- Do not expect results too soon
- Recognise that training and mentoring for success are crucial, and provide the budget and time for these activities
- Provide resources and support in the community for a period of three to five years.
- Unspent budgets must be rolled over to the next financial year
- Ensure transparency and consistency and specify criteria for funding
- Be visible in the community and ensure a good understanding of the process, challenges, successes and failures
- Promote the use of written and non-written reporting which includes photographs, videos and audio clips (especially those produced by community members)
- Should a corporate be a sole funder, withdrawal of funding can end a project. Failure to provide guarantees of budgets from one financial year to another will negatively impact on the project, and in some instances will prevent sustainable change
- Ensure that staff transfers, resignations or new appointments do not negatively impact on the project. Make a corporate decision to support a project despite staff turnover. In the worst case scenario, if staff turnover means the end of a project, have the moral obligation to implement a phase out plan to ensure that community members are not negatively affected by changes in staff
- Always ensure that investments meet the community needs first and corporate needs second. Never allow the principles of the dependency paradigm to development to be followed.

Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are perfectly suited to be the link between communities and external role-players. The NPO must be local, independent, philanthropic, a grant making and a support organization that offers services to donors and grantees alike. NPOs services will help external role-players to achieve their strategic philanthropic goals and thus contribute sustainable change in rural communities. In addition to managing the donations from business, the NPO must be able to focus on: mobilizing additional resources and raising more funds for the community projects; providing grants (on behalf of the funder) to projects in the community;

increasing the capacity of the local community by identifying suitable service providers for the skills development in a community; the identification and facilitation of the provision of technical support services to communities; facilitate research, global and local networking and sharing of resources, by acting as the liaison between all role-players; and assisting communities to build bridges between divided communities.

NPOs involved in CAMP where there is an external funder should be conscious of a number of principles:

- Understand funders' organisation structure and establish what can be funded and the requirements for the provision of funds
- Development of a positive relationships with the funder
- Negotiate on behalf of the community and be prepared to refuse funds when the agenda of the community is swept aside
- Insist on flexibility during the monitoring and evaluation phase
- Provide funders with the necessary documentation to enable the corporate to track and trace the impact of their investment
- Provide audio and visual material to share successes and challenges
- Ensure that the funder has the opportunity to participate in the programme and thus experience the changes taking place in the community.

The Higher Education Act of 1997 (South African Council on Higher Education, 2010), set aside an agenda for the transformation of higher education in South Africa that can serve both the individual and collective needs of society. Academics can make their knowledge and skills available to the community or can develop 'in-service' learning programmes where students can work within communities to transfer their knowledge and skills and at the same time learn from communities to understand the dynamics of real-life situations. In a country such as South Africa, an 'in-service' learning component of the university curriculum could provide opportunities for students to liaise with communities that are socially, culturally, economically and politically different from themselves. The CAMP advocates that universities should partner with NPOs who are considered the connector between the community and the academics. Academics who wish to support the application of CAMP should take the following into account:

- Be careful of creating expectations
- Be transparent and inform the community of any intentions to use information and knowledge in tuition or research outputs
- Ensure compliance with universally accepted ethical norms and practices
- Share any research with the community, and publish results of activities in both popular and academic publications
- Consider multiple authors of publications to include non-academic role-players
- Be cognisant of the fact that the drivers of success are the community and not the academic and a possible research or tuition agenda.

Basic Guidelines when Applying CAMP

Transparency, sharing and openness that ensure mutual learning and sharing of knowledge between all stakeholders are important components of CAMP. There are certain guidelines that should be adhered to while undertaking a CAMP. The guidelines as presented in this paper are loosely based on the various recommendations provided by Chambers (1992a; 1992b; 1994a; 1994b; 1994c; 1994d; 1994e; 1997; 1998; and 2002) in his work on PRA as well as the actual experience gained in the eight case studies that were involved in the development of CAMP:

- Listen rather than talk
- Encourage interaction and dialogue
- Meet the community when it is convenient for the community
- Ensure that external role-players understand their respective roles
- The external role-players must be multi-disciplinary
- Allow the community to set and drive the agenda
- Be aware of conflicts and deal with them in a positive way
- Mutual sharing of knowledge and skills must take place
- Identify locals to provide refreshments during meetings and share the same meals
- Respect the communities, their culture, their customs and their way of life
- Ensure correct translations are done
- Be cautious of creating expectations
- Consensus must be reached by all role-players regarding commitment after CAMP is critical
- Community must decide their own objectives and indicators of success.

In addition to the above suggestions the stakeholders should apply the basic principles of a typical PRA while undertaking a CAMP. It is crucial that external stakeholders' attitude and behaviour are characterised by openness, humility, curiosity, sensitivity, self-introspection and self-criticism. The externals should never lose sight of the fact that the programme is designed and implemented by the community for the community, and the role of the external is merely to facilitate this process.

Conclusion

The reality of the apartheid past of South Africa, where the denial of access to basic services and infrastructure, assets, education, and training placed the poor far from economic opportunities and actively discouraged the establishment of opportunities within the rural areas. This resulted in the present spatial patterns of poverty and inequality in the country and continues to plague the country after two decades of democracy. While CAMP can assist rural communities in driving their own agenda of transformation it is hoped that this tool will play a role in the realisation of the government programmes to eradicate poverty in the country. In closing, it should be remembered that every rural community has different dynamics and the tool as presented in this paper should be adapted to the specific conditions of the community. The golden rule of CAMP is that one size does not fit all.

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