Executive Summary

Building Sustainable Livelihoods...an overview. Analysing a baseline (2006) and measurement (2008) survey in the 22 nodes of the URP and ISDP

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1 Key Words

Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP); Urban Renewal Programme (URP); 22 nodes of the URP and ISDP; National Population Unit study; Poverty-nodes Study; Building Sustainable Livelihoods Research Project

2 Commissioned and supported by

The National Department of Social Development and supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

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3 Conducted by

The evaluation was conducted by Strategy and Tactics and Khanya-aicdd.

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4 Background to evaluation

The Department of Social Development commissioned a baseline study in 2006 on the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) and Urban Renewal (URP). The purpose of these development-nodes, proclaimed in 2001, is to achieve integrated and sustainable development in areas of poverty that are characterised by high levels of unemployment, crime and a lack of services. The study covered 22 urban and rural development nodes in South Africa. The baseline study comprised a survey component and a qualitative component comprising in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.

To measure changes since the baseline study, follow-up research was undertaken with the same development nodes and which comprised a further smaller survey as well as a qualitative component. The whole study was spread over three years.

Khanya-aicdd undertook the qualitative component of the study whilst Strategy and Tactics (a development agency) were responsible for the survey component of the research. Both of these studies were combined into a synthesis evaluation report. A Synthesis Report was published in 2008 analysed the findings of the 2008 survey and compared these with the findings of the larger baseline study in 2006.

5   Overall purpose of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were the following:

- To create a baseline of socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the development nodes;

- Describe the state of social development in the nodes through undertaking a situational analysis;

- To monitor and evaluate projects in the development nodes; and

- To assess the status and capacity needs of projects implemented under the Poverty Relief Programme.

6   Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken over 3 years. A baseline study was undertaken in 2006 and follow-up measurement study was implemented in 2008. This was undertaken in municipalities where their nodes had been established.

This included the provinces of: the Eastern Cape Limpopo, Western Cape, Northern Cape, Free State and KwaZulu-Natal.

The sectors focused on are sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

7   Evaluation methodology

7.1   Type of evaluation

This was primarily an impact evaluation, although the study was also able to reflect on the way projects were implemented and the role of the department and how implementation could be improved.

7.2   Methodology

A mixed method approach was utilised, comprising a literature review each node; a survey of beneficiaries; and, in-depth interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.

The 2001 Census was used as the sample frame and in the case of the URP. Ward-level maps were generated from the Municipal Demarcation Board's website. The sample was stratified by local municipalities on the basis of probability proportional to size.

Data analysis compared the findings of the baseline study (2006) to findings of the 2008 tracking study across key indicators and across the development nodes. Data analysis was descriptive and a rating system to rate the status of projects across the key indicators in the following thematic areas: poverty; development awareness; social capital; health status; service delivery; gender inequality; and, sustainable livelihoods. The rating system used a colour-coding system indicating green for (project doing well), red (project failing) and orange (project not quite realising its potential).

7.3   Data collection

Data collected included primary data from the survey interviews of beneficiaries as well as in-depth interviews and focus groups with projects members and other key stakeholders.

The evaluation comprised a large baseline study (8387 interviews) undertaken in 2006 that comprised a survey and in-depth interviews. A smaller tracking survey, undertaken 18 months later comprised 5232 interviews.

8 Findings

Integrated Sustainable Development Programme (ISRDP) findings were as follows:

- A lack of coordination and integration and coordination of government activities in the support of the programme as well as problems with business plans and the need for expansion of DSD interventions were prominent issues raised in the 2006 and follow-up 2008 studies.

- Project members reported the following positive changes since the first evaluation: financial improvements at project-level; additional inputs for projects; training and skills development; improved access to markets; improved support and interaction with others; improved staffing situation; access to sites to house their projects; and, increased confidence, happiness and motivation.

- Project members reported on the following negative changes: ongoing problems since the first evaluation, including theft, a lack of water for crop production and crèches; loss of crops and poultry through disease; inadequate machinery and machinery in need of repair; loss of members; internal conflict; and, poor management.

- Benefits to the wider community included the products and services the projects offered to the local community.

- Half of the projects rated themselves as running well (green), about 40 % of the projects rated themselves as orange (having some problems) and 10% of projects rated themselves as red (failing).

- Key improvements identified at project level since the baseline study were: improved production/income; receipt of inputs and training; institutional improvements; improved discipline and commitment of members; and, better networking.

- Aspects of projects that did not work since the baseline study were: poor project management skills and mismanagement of resources; lack of money and necessary inputs; loss of markets; poor planning; poor training; theft; and, internal conflict.

- There were also poor relationships between projects and service providers and weak support from local municipalities.

The Urban Renewal Programme (URP) findings included:

- Five key issues emerged across all the nodes: integration; co-ordination, planning and communication (within government departments and at all levels); institutional capacity; staffing and staff-retention; and, training and access to and the quality of DSD services.

- Many projects had to downsize or close completely due to poor management and/or lack of funds.

- A lack of appropriate markets or marketing skills negatively affected projects.

- There was a high turnover of project members

- Since the first assessment a number **positive changes** were identified: financial improvements; additional inputs were secured; and, there was

improved support and interaction with others to facilitate strategic departments.

- There was improved training and skills development and access to markets for some projects.

- Some projects reported an improved relationship with DSD.

- Some projects reported an improved staffing situation.

- **Negative changes** since the baseline study was undertaken, reported by projects, included: poor management and communication; funding running out; the breaking down of the relationship with DSD and a lack of DSD support; the relocation of project sites resulting in access to fewer services or premises that are too small, etc. Theft and vandalism, lack of local demand or markets and little or no progress with training were other negative project developments.

9   Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion

The Synthesis Report contained some overview conclusions. However, recommendations were provided separately for the ISRDP and the URP programmes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations pertained to the ISRDP:

- DSD should stop seeing itself as the driver of income generating projects where it has limited competence. It should instead increase its support for the creation and maintenance of community-based service organisations in social welfare and social development.

- DSDs core functions should therefore focus:

    o On development and support interventions that support positive social impacts together with partners in civil society and other government departments; and

    o DSD should support the 'massification' of social services through building and providing ongoing support to community-based organisations that support DSD services.

- DSD staff should play a role that emphasises process facilitation, not project management.

- DSD should engage in a process of reflection with regard to the income-generating projects it supports. The Department should assess whether the outcomes of the projects justify the expenditure on them. The first and second-round assessments show that while these projects have generated important psychological and social benefits for members, they have not generated enough material benefits for them.

- For community-based service projects, supported by DSD, there is no need for an exit strategy because these services can be integrated into the service delivery structure of DSD and other partners such as the Department of Health and the municipalities.

- DSD should facilitate learning between community-based service organisations to help them improve their services.

- The role of CDPs in relation to the core functions of DSD needs to be clarified.

- DSD needs to provide support to municipalities to enable them to fulfil their key functions as key institutions that facilitate integration and coordination at the local level.

- Policy-making should take into account the perspective of all levels of government and the roles the different levels are meant to play in the roll-out of services.

- Management structures need to encourage a culture of reflection, learning, analysis and action-planning on all levels.

The following recommendations pertained to the URP:

- DSD needs to define its social development and poverty reduction role more clearly. This will help projects understand which tasks can and cannot be fulfilled by DSD and will help DSD identify the kinds of interventions and impact it is making.
- Project lifecycles and procedures need clear definitions and guidelines for the development and planning of projects.
- Project success indicators need to be formulated using participatory methods.
- Staff appointments needs to be devolved to the regional level. DSD should consider new ways to recruit and retain staff.

10 Evidence of use

According to a DSD official, it appears that the Department has utilised the evaluation findings and some of the recommendations to a limited extent and this has resulted in improved satisfaction with services received. The Public Service Commission undertook a meta-evaluation of the study in 2011, and in its report it noted that despite the fact that the recommendations were sound and implementable, in its view, the Department failed to supply it with evidence of implementation of these recommendations.

11 Note on quality of report

 The overarching quality assessment score for this evaluation was 3.61 out of a scale of 5 when applying the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT).

The report was of a high quality, excellently presented and written. The report was a synthesis of survey findings from the ISRDP and URP surveys. The report utilised key indicators to assess changes in perceptions of living conditions and poverty projects between the baseline (2006) survey and the follow-up tracking study (2008). It provided some background policy detail on the ISRDP and URP programmes. Areas where the report could have been strengthened was to have included a methodology section which would have placed the two surveys (the focus of this report), in an overarching evaluation methodology that covered the three years of the evaluation. The report lacked a 'limitations' section. It may also have been useful to provide some select key qualitative data to enrich and support evidence presented in the survey data. Although

the report contained a set of recommendations for both the ISRDP and URP, the report could have been strengthened further with a set of overarching statements in a conclusion on whether the two programmes were achieving their intended impact.