

Policy Research and Promotional Strategies: Linking Policy Research to CASS/UP's Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

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Introduction

The W K Kellogg Foundation (WKKF)-funded Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) being jointly implemented by University of Zimbabwe's CASS Trust and University of Pretoria's Postgraduate School of Agriculture and Rural Development has a principal goal to provide an operational framework for rural development. It aims to develop rural communities' capacity to establish a sustainable economy with sufficient social services and structures.

The programme recognizes that communities can overcome poverty if they create among themselves a new vision for the future, work together to achieve this vision, and are assisted with appropriate resources and technological capacity to implement their development initiatives.

IRDP aims to establish a model for eradicating rural poverty through support, initially for three years, of development initiatives in nine rural sites in six countries in southern Africa, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

IRDP developed four main objectives for its work in southern Africa:

- To mobilize rural communities to work together, optimizing their institutional capacities to support sustainable and integrated development
- To increase community capacity towards sustainable development, especially among economically marginalized groups,
- To increase the capacity of individuals, families and communities to follow healthy and defensive lifestyles
- To develop community capacity especially among women and the youth in life skills, family and community values, and sensitive and responsible leadership.

To achieve these objectives, IRDP has taken an approach that includes, among many other things, adopting and advocating for policies that favour sustainable rural development at selected sites, national and SADC levels. IRDP further developed six cross-cutting impact services that provide strategic support to the whole programme, aiming to increase the programme's impact, and therefore, chances of its success. The services function at the programme management and community levels, and consist of: monitoring and evaluation, technology, organizational learning, networking, communication, and public policy and promotion. This document has been written to highlight how public policy and promotion, the last in the list above, can be utilized to further IRDP's objectives, as well as suggesting methodologies for using this service within the programme.

Public Policy and Promotion Service

Working within IRDP's overall goal to "help people help themselves" assumes a policy environment that is conducive to the development needs of the rural sector. While the selected nine sites will provide a reflection on policy issues in the region, lessons learnt during implementation of the programme can be used to influence policy direction in southern Africa with regards to the needs of rural communities as far as development is concerned. It is important, therefore, to develop channels and mechanisms for evaluating these policy issues, identifying the appropriate policy makers that would address them, and creating a culture of community input into policy formulation not only in IRDP's sites, but in the rest of SADC.

The public policy impact service (PPIS), managed by CASS Trust, will establish mechanisms to initiate and coordinate policy research efforts. It will also develop a promotion programme for policy options suggested from research results.

The service will use the IRDP framework, evaluating lessons learnt from the programme's implementation, encouraging multi-disciplinary discussions on issues raised, and will assist in ensuring that correct, reliable and adequate information reaches decision makers at different levels of society.

Specifically, the PPIS was established to

- Inform policy makers
- Facilitate and coordinate research and policy debates on rural development
- Provide a credible academic base for policy decisions
- Share policy information and knowledge, and
- Build capacities in policy issues

Terms of reference

This paper has been written to “give an insight to CASS Trust as to how policy research can be made relevant to the entire IRDP, and what sort of methods to employ in the information gathering in the nine IRDP sites”. Specifically the aim is to:

- Assess issues raised in the first IRDP Public Colloquium and offer strategies for addressing them;
- Investigate policy research methodologies useful in the nine sites and experiences with community participation in policy research; and
- Things to look out for when transforming research result to promotional material.

The paper has, therefore, been structured following this sequence.

Issues Arising from the Colloquium

Brief background to the colloquium

The colloquium was established to serve as a forum for intellectual discourse to discuss policy issues related to rural development, with the main aim of identifying areas where policy research can be targeted. Another objective was to share experiences with various stakeholders from southern Africa, promoting participatory policy making processes involving all levels of society, from rural communities, development policy researchers to policy makers in governments of the region and at the regional level. The colloquium is also used as a platform for sharing WKKF's vision of a successful IRDP for the region.

The colloquium is therefore a series of discussion meetings where papers are presented and discussed in both plenary and parallel sessions. Debates are held in working groups, and participation is drawn from government, communities themselves, NGOs, the academia, private sector and IRDP related professionals. The first colloquium was held in March 2001, and raised the issues discussed in this paper.

That rural development is not proceeding at the desired rate is an indication that various barriers hinder the process. Sustainable development will, therefore, only occur when these barriers are addressed. The issues raised in the colloquium are thus discussed.

Generic issues

The colloquium identified what it termed *generic* issues, which generally highlight the absence of comprehensive public policies for rural development at the local, national and SADC regional levels. These issues include:

- Fragmentation of policies affecting rural development,
- Absence of effective implementation strategies and thus hindering implementation of policies that favour rural development
- Barriers to consultative policy formulation processes at the national and SADC levels
- Unintended and unwanted results from rural development policies and strategies' implementation
- Balancing community diversity with the concept of "cohesive rural community"

These issues generally indicate the absence of coordinated efforts at rural development at the national and regional levels. In an ideal situation, a comprehensive national rural development policy would recognize the roles played by different stakeholders. Including the communities at the center, efforts by government, NGOs, and private sector are well coordinated to avoid duplication, conflicts of interest and to ensure an efficient development process. Such a policy would be backed by a comprehensive implementation strategy that outlines the roles played by each stakeholder, the frameworks for implementation, resource allocation and sources, and developed in a transparent, participatory and efficient way.

As one discussion group noted in the colloquium discussions, “it is important to understand and influence the role of the public sector in the overall economic system as a major driver of economic development”. Policies to address economic, institutional and social transformations in rural areas should, therefore, not be developed in isolation, even if the responsible government organs may be different. The fundamental question or quest for IRDP, then, is to encourage holistic or integrated resource planning for the public sectors dealing with rural development directly or indirectly.

Service delivery for rural areas, be it social, economic or otherwise, has often failed to attract meaningful private sector support because of the apparent lack of business opportunities in the areas, leaving only governments and NGOs participation in the sector on social grounds. IRDP policies have the huge task of reversing this mindset, both in private sector and the communities themselves. It is common but sad that even when communities take the initiative to develop a viable economic venture, limited access to markets prohibit further development. This is especially common with perishable products that require an efficient marketing strategy.

Also, there should be a move towards developing rural development policies **with and not for** the rural sector. How to get the community voice to be heard in policy research and the policy formulation process requires considerable effort and planning, backed by appropriate methodologies. This indeed is a task for the policy researchers, and caution must be taken that the same researchers do not fall in the same trap, that is, that of researching for, rather than with.

Governance, the process by which various concerned elements in a confined and intact society, such as Botswana at the national level, or Johannesburg at the city or local authority level or Guruve at the rural district level, wield power and authority and, thereby, influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and economic and social development,¹ cannot occur until the country fully addresses its resource based conflicts, or at least put in place measures for their resolution. Good governance is increasingly being recognized as necessary criteria for achieving sustainable development, a concept the region advocates for. Thus rural development policy research is encouraged to marry rural development policies with governance policies conveniently.

Successful implementation of policies resulting in good governance, is directly linked to the institutional structures implementing the policies, and in particular, the degree of freedom such institutions have, and the levels of involvement of stakeholders. This involves empowering communities to fully acknowledge the degree to which they can access and develop their resources, and the associated impacts and measures they can take to ensure that their survival is secure. The policy aspects of rural development have not been fully addressed, as evidenced by the continued deterioration of the livelihoods of the rural sector. For example, funds directed to conservation of certain species of wildlife such as the rhino and elephant often exceed those directed at improving the livelihood of the people in constant contact with such wildlife. This may result from external forces such as international treaties (e.g. CITES), and therefore not always in line with the country’s development needs.

Some injustices inherited from the colonial era hamper development and have to be addressed. For example, settlement patterns observed in the rural areas have resulted in acute shortage of trees for firewood while a country such as Zambia or Zimbabwe as a whole may actually have a surplus. Policy instruments such as land reform should therefore, be assessed for responsiveness to human needs as far as basic resources are concerned. As such, a study assessing policies for

rural development in the region, both from governments' point of view and communities' perspectives is necessary. Such a study as proposed herein could tackle governance issues relating to rural development.

Specifically, policy research in the following areas are proposed:

- Shortcomings of existing rural development policies in southern Africa and innovating ideas for countering these.
- Involving and empowering communities in public policy development, experiences and barriers in southern Africa, noting the importance of gender equity in developing policies and strategies for rural development.
- Governance and rural development, the role of the different governance structures in rural development: how important is political willingness? How to motivate for investment in rural development?
- Developing a comprehensive regional rural development policy and strategy
- Cautions and options for developing rural communities: the role of agriculture in rural development.
- Indicators for rural development, methods for assessing and measuring progress in rural development.

Addressing these issues can be achieved innovatively by involving the important stakeholders at various relevant fora, and developing specialized information packages that will meet their needs. For example, developing a comprehensive regional rural development policy can be championed by research experts from the region, who may then be tasked to develop the skeleton policy framework that can form the basis of discussions by SADC land and rural development ministers at an appropriate SADC meeting.

What could be most beneficial for the region is to maintain that study results from the nine sites be used as case studies that can highlight regional trends. This will ensure that the results are useful in a wider spectrum of the region.

Specific Issues

Because of the various factors affecting rural communities, a broad base of policies, public or otherwise, indeed impact on the well being of the communities continually. As such, research areas, some which may seem distant from the subject of rural development, may still have a considerable impact on the rural communities. Take for example climate change research, where identifying seasons associated with flooding is a crucial piece of knowledge for the survival of most rural communities. Also, some issues may be community specific, and though they may not be significant at the national or regional levels, they may be the most pressing for those communities affected. An example includes flooding in lower Zambezi and Limpopo catchments.

The specific issues raised by colloquium participants are married to IRP priorities, and listed here:

- The role of the African culture, societal values and indigenous knowledge in the design and implementation of rural development policies
- Leadership structures at local and national levels in facilitating rural development and associated policies.

- Land reform in SADC countries and the need to address property rights, especially for marginalized communities.
- Closing the gap between rural and urban divide, developing urban-rural partnerships for effective development
- Integrating rural development efforts at the local, national and regional levels
- Gender and rural development
- Policies to minimize the impact of natural disasters on rural communities.
- Technology and rural development

Most of these issues appear to require one-off assessments, but the critical point is what to do with the research results. Of critical importance is making the research result reach the decision maker responsible for developing policies that address these issues. If the research reached a conclusion regarding land reform and rural development for example, swift delivery of this piece of information to implementers of the reform may mean the difference between sustainability and doom.

Noting that humanity has survived off the natural environment from time immemorial, wild plants and animals have continued to form an important aspect of livelihood for most rural communities to this day. However, factors such as increased population, industrialization and expansion of agriculture have seen a sharp increase of human-environment conflicts. Sustainable management of rural resources such as wildlife has not only become topical, but also long overdue.

Various legislation and policies including acts of parliament for natural resources, forest produce, agriculture, rural development and environment have been developed, implemented, and revamped (GoZ, 1998) to better address rural development issues, but the persistence of these problems means that new innovative mechanisms have to be put forward. To this effect the international scene has proposed various measures, including conventions eg Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and new management initiatives that encourage stakeholder participation in rural development. Zimbabwe boasts success in the CAMPFIRE programme where local communities participate in wildlife natural resource management and derive benefits from these in a sustainable manner (SADC, 2000).

The list of issues proposed above could form the initial list of possible study areas, but it is important to verify that these indeed form the more pressing specific policy issues. This can be achieved by an initial baseline study on policy, ideally carried out at the sites. The study could employ a participatory approach such as participatory rural appraisals (PRA), as suggested in the section on methodologies.

Methodologies for rural development policy research

Literature Review, Desk Studies and surveys

Worldwide, rural development has gained considerable attention and thus generated substantial research material. International organs, especially those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), assisted by some donor communities, have developed a series of methodologies that can be used to research on rural development policy. However, caution must be taken when adopting such methods, because situations differ. A review of existing literature should be carried out to examine the state of knowledge on rural development issues, paying particular attention to indigenous perspectives.

In particular, a detailed literature review will be carried out to utilise past deliberations from conferences, programmes and projects on rural development at the local and national levels. These include, among many, the work by NGOs such as IUCN-the World Conservation Union, the University of Zimbabwe's Centre for Applied Social Studies (CASS), CAMPFIRE Association, Community Technology Development Trust (Commutech), Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), ZERO and regional bodies such as the SADC Environment and Land Management Sector (ELMS).

Quantitative data from secondary sources such as countries' basic published economic statistics, and government publications will be used as a main source of raw data. Documents such as the national conservation strategies and the district environmental action plan (DEAPs) can be used to assess national focus on similar issues. It is important to work within countries development rather than offer entirely new ideas which governments are likely to take time to consider, let alone implement.

Additional raw data can be collected by use of a questionnaire survey targeted at the communities in selected sites as well as a realistic quantity from other sites to allow for meaningful comparisons. Respondents include government officials, other organizations such as CAMPFIRE, and government departments such as the departments of natural resources, departments of wildlife, departments of rural development and those responsible for national economic planning. Further information can be collected from personal interviews with relevant personnel from these. The data collected should be used to verify and augment the result of the literature review. If a survey is deemed necessary, it can be carried out within the framework of participatory methods discussed below.

Participatory research methods

IRDP will recognise that its major stakeholders can be classified as the communities and beneficiaries themselves, national government and its departments, including rural councils, other donors, CBOs and NGOs. Participatory methods involve these groups and focus on making the beneficiary the core or centre of the stakeholder matrix. Participatory methods have the main aim of eliminating poverty, encouraging gender equality, ensuring environmental sustainability, and assisting to develop good governance.

Participatory methods include:

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisals (RRA)
- Participatory Action research
- Multi-stakeholder Collaboration
- Other Methods (Project Cycle Management (PCM), Logical Framework Analysis (LFA))

These methods are means by which the principles of participation are translated into actual practice in development projects. Each participatory method can draw on various techniques to ensure maximum efficiency and service delivery.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders are “all those groups and individuals who have a stake or vested interest in determining the success or failure of the programme” (UNDP). The full list of the stakeholders for IRDP as far as policy research is concerned include:

- The nine selected communities
- Local and central government officials,
- Community based organisations and other NGOs working at the selected sites,
- CBOs and NGOs working elsewhere, but implementing similar programmes,
- Mass organisations such as cooperatives working in the selected areas,
- Traditional leaders,
- Religious leaders and groups,
- Political parties,
- Elders, the poor and destitute,
- Money lending organisations,
- Business communities and local contractors.

A stakeholder analysis is used to identify the different sectors of society that the project will impact on, negatively or positively. This is important at planning stage, as it can allow the programme planners to have a wider view of the likely impacts of their intended activities. Where conflicts are likely to occur, planners may then take appropriate action prior to them occurring.

A stakeholder analysis for the IRDP programme consists of primary stakeholders; including the rural communities, elders, and other WKKF beneficiaries, secondary stakeholders; such as government and its departments, scholars, other communities etc; and external stakeholders such as NGOs and CBOs implementing similar work elsewhere. The programme’s impact on each stakeholder should be assessed and weighed prior to implementation.

Stakeholder analysis is analogous to Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (EIA) conducted for large development projects. If a survey is carried out, stakeholder analysis questions can be included:

- What are stakeholders’ expectations of IRDP?
- What benefits or drawbacks are stakeholders likely to experience?
- What can stakeholders contribute to the project in terms of resources etc?

- What other interests do stakeholders have, that may be good or bad for the programme?
- How does a stakeholder regard others in the list?
- Can stakeholders identify other potential members to the list that planners had not recognised as important?

The analysis of stakeholders should differentiate the different gender roles, and be able to classify the levels of knowledge, participation and access to decision making. Linked closely to this aspect of the analyses is gender analysis. Gender analysis can even be carried out as an integral part of the main participatory method.

Gender analysis involves asking men, women and children to identify their roles in the community separately. It is common in communities in southern Africa that women have as many as three major roles: a productive role, economically, a reproductive role associated with the family, and a community management role in the provision, allocation and management of shared resources such as water, firewood and forests.

Gender analysis seeks to identify the different needs of men and women in the society, and this can be implemented within the monitoring and evaluation framework.

Rapid Rural Appraisals and Participatory Rural Appraisals

These methods have at their core the acknowledgements of the value of local knowledge, and the importance of capturing qualitative information otherwise missing from classical survey data. They investigate linkages of people's lives, and the effects of activities on the whole system.

The concept of RRA and later PRA is that of using an umbrella for a series of methodologies that use a multi-disciplinary team of experts to develop a quick systematic overview of community systems. This method is common with academics, aid agencies and NGOs. Within RRA, information is gathered from the villages, with substantial input from the villagers, but analysis is carried out elsewhere, and the beneficiaries of this information are planners in government, NGOs and donor agencies. Developers of their methodology have proposed participatory rural appraisals (PRA) which applies the same concepts, but with more emphasis on community involvement in planning and feedback. The specific techniques include:

- Data from secondary sources,
- Semi-structured interviews,
- Identifying and interviewing key informants,
- Participatory mapping and modelling,
- Transect walks
- Venn Diagrams,
- Time lines and trend analyses,
- Oral and life histories,
- Seasonal calendars and daily time use
- Livelihood analyses,
- Matrix scoring and ranking
- Stories and case studies
- Team contracting,
- Interaction, presentations and analyses

As can be seen from the list, PRA and RRA are not mutually exclusive of other techniques, but clearly outlining whether this methodology is being implemented will enable the implementers to investigate all the techniques included herein.

Participatory Action research

Participatory action research is useful for IRDP work, although it can also be applied in action research in organisations, schools, farms (farmer participation in research and technology generation) and evaluation. Within participatory Action Research, the following principles are observed:

- Valuing local knowledge,
- Non-violence to change
- Ownership of research lies with the community,
- Communities are included at all stages of the research
- Research method are selected on the basis of their appropriateness
- Outcomes are intended to benefit the communities directly.

Other Methods

A host of other methods exist, and many have similar concepts as those discussed above. These include, but not limited to

- Multi-stakeholder Collaboration incorporating roundtable discussion groups, colloquiums, task forces and workshops.
- ZOPP and Project Cycle management as proposed by GTZ, Germany, where representative stakeholders meet in workshops to identify challenges and develop project planning matrices (PPM). The PPM is made up of project analysis, problem analysis and objective analysis.

Data analysis techniques

Statistical procedures should be used to analyse quantitative data collected from surveys. Data analysis techniques should predominantly be inference, multivariate analysis and other more advanced procedures such as probit and logit regression analyses.

Proper sampling must be done to achieve some efficiency in time, resources, and expense, allowing for equitable distribution among and within selected sites. I cannot make a determination at this point as to what sampling approach is best for this study, but much will depend on an examination of the organizational structure of communities and the utility associated with decisions that will be made with the survey results. Survey sampling is both a science and an art. The experience of survey consultants show that it involves common sense and methodological rigor.

On implementing rural development policy research

Traditional knowledge, other wise coined indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) have huge potential in enhancing natural resource management and rural development. For example, the use of traditional knowledge reportedly increases the efficiency of screening plants for medical properties by more than 400 percent. The current value of the world market for medicinal plants derived from leads given by indigenous and local communities is estimated to be US\$43 billion.ⁱⁱ Thus common sense should prevail, when it comes to marrying formal research results and indigenous knowledge. It is important to always keep the overall objective of helping people help themselves, in mind.

IRDP should address the capacity of existing institutions, government, NGOs, and CBOs, which are generally not equipped enough to fully carry out meaningful rural development. Ideally CASS should develop a directory of stakeholders and their input to rural development in the selected sites, and clearly identify niches where IRDP will be most beneficial. IRDP should therefore complement efforts by these to fully maximise benefits going to the rural communities. This can become particularly important in regions where active politics drive rural development agendas.

At this point it is necessary to mention once again, the importance of community participation, as this has a direct bearing on what will become of the programme what IRDP pulls out. Communities should be able to create a sense of ownership of the programme, and be able to continue its implementation well after IRDP terminates. But balance must be kept so that communities are not subjected to too much involvement which may lead to them tiring out and giving up. This is especially so if they are bombarded with too many initiatives aiming at the same goals.

IRDP should also consider the following:

- Creating forums for information sharing, involving communities, government, and other stakeholders
- Prioritising demand-driven aspects of the programme, noting communities sensitivity to aspects of the programme.
- Identifying the correct communication channels with the community and other important stakeholders.

Communicating Policy research result.

Credible information is an essential ingredient for effective sustainable development policy making and action planning. With sound information, the chances for improved and integrated decisions are increased. Such information does not guarantee a healthier society, but the lack of appropriate information is a serious impediment to taking sound and rational decisions and to working towards a sustainable future.

The intended purposes for communicating policy research findings are many, but dwell on:

- increasing awareness and understanding of rural development among all stakeholders
- providing a foundation for improved decision making at all levels, from the individual to national governments and international organizations
- To facilitate the measurement of progress towards sustainability.

Channels of media to be used

The media of dissemination is an important consideration in delivering information to users. Traditional products have tended to be printed reports, albeit often with a profusion of illustrative material. However, audio-visual and electronic products provide flexible formats that are often preferred by certain users, such as young people. An electronic format, for example, has the potential to overcome the cumbersome characteristics of large comprehensive products through rapid search capabilities.

Below is a list of useful media, stating advantages and disadvantages of each:

Radio/Television

Radio programmes are maybe the most effective way of reaching a large community, as they command a wide audience, and radio coverage is generally up to 95% in most countries of the region. The only shortcoming with radio broadcasts exists in the uni-directional flow of information.

Newspapers

Newspapers also enjoy wide circulation, and have the added advantage that the target audience can always use articles of interest as sources of reference. However, as is with radio and television, stakeholder input is limited.

Other media

Below is a list of suggested innovative techniques for raising awareness and encouraging debate on research results:

- Internet conferencing, and
- Web based discussion groups

- Comprehensive packages targeted for the younger generation
- technical documents discussing methodological and technical developments in the programme,
- maps represent valuable information useful for certain users.
- Drama.

In summary, an integrated family of products provides the comprehensive coverage, while the individual products can better serve more specific clients needs. In addition specialized or interim products can be produced which cover a selected aspect or component. Such products could be designed to provide an assessment of trends and conditions for one particular issue. They would provide more in-depth treatment of a topic than possible in periodic reporting mechanisms.

Table 1: Communication and marketing vehicles

| Communication and dissemination vehicles | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|--|---|
| Direct marketing/Client lists | Targeted to known clients Low additional cost | Ignore potential new clients |
| Selective Advertising | Targeted to specific client groups Appropriate for products with narrow scope | Less suitable for comprehensive, multi-dimensional products |
| Independent Endorsements | Increased credibility and confidence in the product | |
| Press Release/Press kits | Focus for actual release Wide dissemination and low cost | Passive vehicle, low involvement |
| Press Conference/Product Launch | Focus for actual release Maximise initial exposure Opportunity to involve major contributors | More planning and time consuming than press release |
| Public Service advertisement | Maximum audience reach | Passive vehicle, low involvement |
| Newspaper insert | Wide audience reach | Significant additional cost |
| Media Interviews | Opportunity for in-depth review of the product Can involve major collaborators | Significant preparation Time consuming |
| Special briefings | Targeted to major clients Opportunity for in-depth review of the product | Time consuming |
| Government information Centres | Assistance for promotion and distribution | Limited reach compared to commercial bookstore |
| Distribution Facilities of partners | Wider reach than internal mechanisms Increased credibility | Key messages may get diffused |

Conclusions

The policy research service is an integral part of the IRDP programme, and stand to benefit from the programme as much as it will input. Various issues needing research have been identified, together with methodologies for carrying out such research. An integral part of the service deals with transforming research result into actions that will enhance sustainable development, hence the need for a comprehensive marketing and advocacy strategy. This strategy can draw from some of the ideas presented herein.

ⁱ Corkery J., A. Land and D. Osborne. 1997. Governance and Policy Formulation. Maastricht: ECDPM.

ⁱⁱ ⁸ Mugabe et al ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES ACTS Press Nairobi Kenya 1997 Page6



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