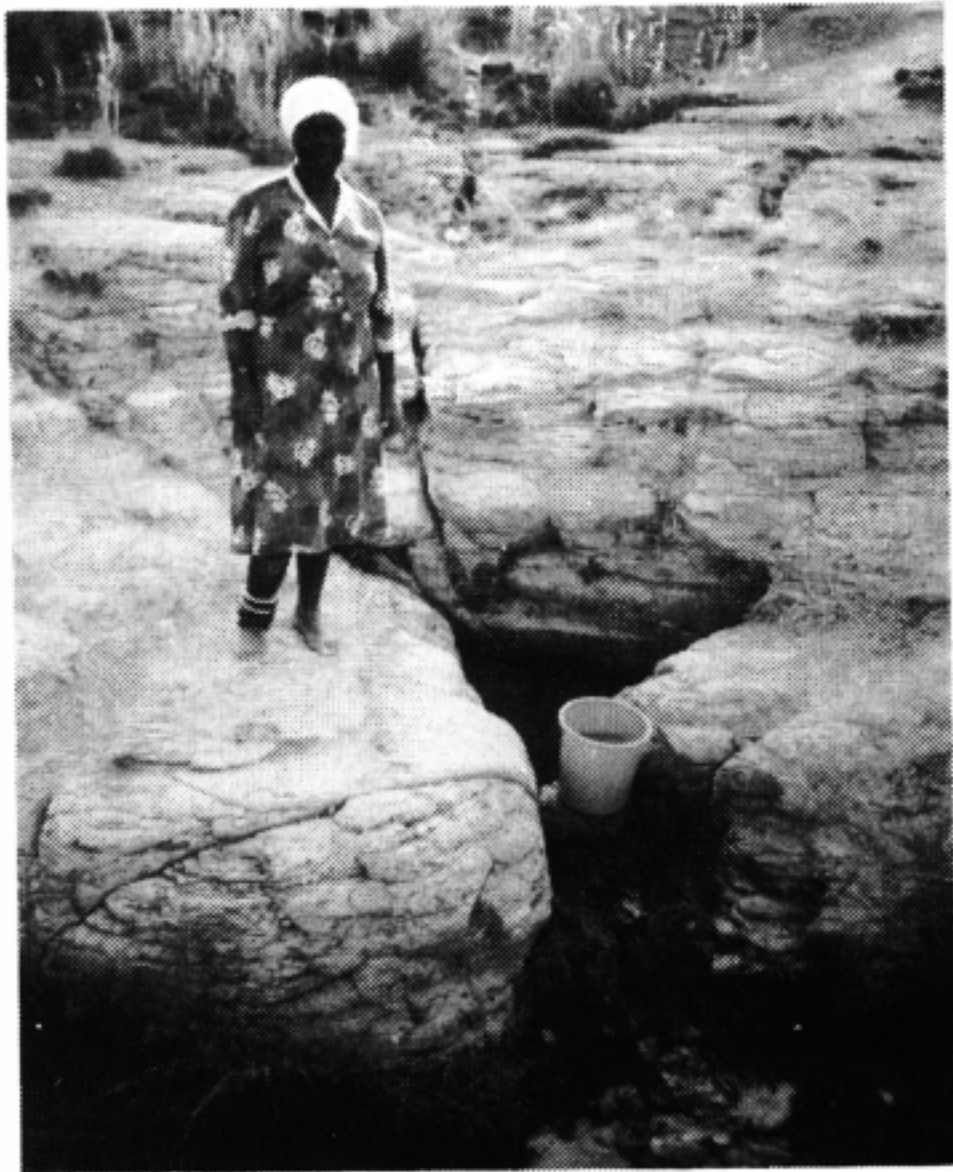


IDT funding problems

THE Independent Development Trust (IDT) is a funding agency set up mainly to provide funding to non-government and community based organisations for development projects. Recently, the IDT set up a special fund for drought relief projects. But there seems to be problems in the Natal midlands around who has been getting access to these funds and how projects have been started.



IT seems that by September 1992 only 9% of the IDT's drought relief funding had been allocated to non-government organisations (NGOs) in the midlands. Most of the remaining funding went to private consultants and the Natal Parks Board (NPB). Government agencies also appeared to have been able to play an important role in getting funding.

An important factor in the government agencies' ability to get hold of information and coordinate activities seems to be the role of the Joint Coordinating Centre (JCC) and Joint Services Boards (JSBs). In May this year, the JCC started a process to set up a regional water emergency committee. A meeting of 70 representatives from the KwaZulu government and NGOs decided at a JCC-convened meeting in June 1992 to coordinate their activities through the JSBs.

The JCCs and Local Coordinating Centres (LCCs) would play a supportive role, they also decided.

These mechanisms seem to have facilitated some agencies getting quicker access to funding. However, it seems that several NGOs and community organisations in the Natal midlands did not know of this process.

The process of drawing up funding motivations and their approval by the IDT in the Natal midlands has, in some cases, deviated from the criteria set by the IDT. In particular, the following practices raise serious concern:

- The speed with which IDT funding has been granted to some communities.
- The lack of adequate consultation with communities.
- The apparent lack of consideration for

organisational capacity in communities to plan, control, carry out and maintain projects.

- Capacity problems in implementing agencies.

These are errors that typically lead to the failure of disaster relief programmes throughout the world.

The following are examples of communities where AFRA works and where funding was approved from the IDT's drought relief programme. Each case study is evaluated in terms of the IDT criteria.

Tembalihle

We were told by the IDT that funding for Tembalihle was approved on the basis of a motivation by the Natal Parks Board (NPB). In discussions with the NPB, it was reported that the whole motivation for this project

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was drawn up in three days. A NPB worker approached one of the two indunas. With the induna, he helped draw up a list of needs of the community. The NPB drew up a budget, handed in a proposal and was granted funding. AFRA was asked to help the NPB to make contact with the community.

In discussions with the community, problems were raised with this and other aspects of this project. Some of their concerns were around how funding was secured. The community said that there were three groupings in the community. Two of these groupings have different tribal affiliations, with indunas representing the interests of the different tribes. In the past, there were some tensions in the community because of these different affiliations. The third grouping is the majority of the community who see themselves as a united community. The majority in the community were neither involved nor consulted in this proposal. They question how one induna could speak for the whole community. They also raise concerns about the NPB and say they are suspicious of them. We were told that the NPB evicted some people, now living in the area, from the Weenen Nature Reserve.

Community dynamics, community involvement in planning this project and community sensitivities seemingly were not considered by the IDT. There were also problems with the implementing agent and its poor contact with the community.

Through involvement in Tembalihle, AFRA was

asked by the NPB to assist in three other projects for which it has already secured funding. Their request seemed to indicate that the NPB lacked capacity to act as an implementing agent. Despite this weakness, it has still managed to secure at least R884 000 in IDT funding (39% of IDT funding of projects in the Natal Midlands).

Cornfields

A proposal for funds was submitted to the IDT by the Natal Provincial Administration's Community Services. It seems that there was poor consultation with the community and the relationship between this agency and the community is weak. It seems that there was no investigation of financial management skills or capacity of the community to carry out the project. After the project was approved, AFRA was asked to replace Community Services as the implementing agency.

In discussions with the IDT consultants, they acknowledged problems in capacities of implementing agents and communities to carry out projects. In addressing these problems, the IDT asked AFRA to assist as a facilitating agent for 40 projects in Natal. This seems to indicate that some implementing agents in the region are having difficulties and that the IDT has limited contact with other NGOs in the region who could assist in this role.

IDT criteria for programme support

THESE are some of the criteria formulated by the IDT for its drought relief programme at a facilitators' workshop in June 1992.

- All affected parties to be involved from the outset, including the identification of projects.
- Avoid strengthening any particular power group.
- Greater justice should be achieved and existing injustices should not be strengthened.
- Local implementing capacity should be built.
- Decision-making should be shared out within clear, agreed criteria, responsibilities and processes.
- Communities must be given enough information to make decisions.
- The efforts of all parties should be integrated (locally, regionally and nationally as appropriate).
- Projects should be well structured, including financial estimates, cash flows and institutional arrangements.
- Implementing agent to accept accountability to IDT to act according to agreed criteria.

On several occasions, the IDT has also stated its commitment to community empowerment and working mainly with community based organisations and NGOs.