

Getting our Community developo



Training — an unresolved problem

One of the major difficulties facing the KwaZulu government is how to get its workers adequately trained in community development skills at grass roots level.

Blame for the current crisis in community development expertise has, to a large extent, been placed at the door of previous South African Governments.

The rigid and uncompromising attempt by the National Party to impose, over decades, "grand apartheid" (including the forced creation of homeland governments for Black South Africans) has had an alleged effect of stifling initiative at local levels.

According to various economists, sociologists and development workers, the bureaucratic machinery put into force militated — to a large degree — against local populations effectively organising themselves and getting things done.

All this now appears to be changing. There has been an obvious re-think on rural service delivery and the emphasis has been shifted from rigid bureaucratic to self-help approaches.

However, there is no escaping that damage has been done. Many people, excluded for decades from decision-

making processes, reflect poor organisational skills in their self-help efforts.

Another serious problem has been that academic institutions have lagged behind in their understanding of needs in community development training. Today, for instance, there is still no recognised training at tertiary level in "hands on" community development skills.

Some professional training (social work, community health nursing) integrates some exposure to community development concepts and practices, but more often than not what is taught is textbook-based rather than experience-based.

As a result, in KwaZulu, we recognise that we are not short of jargon and clichés but we are desperately short of skills.

Given the history of the problems in our rural communities, it is believed that far more emphasis now needs to be directed towards developing sound community organising expertise amongst field workers.

The KwaZulu Government is considering ways and means of building up such expertise — possibly through the introduction of community develop-

ment officers who will be specifically trained "on the job" to strengthen the outreach of various departments to the communities they serve.

Plans are also being considered to launch a small interdepartmental training committee that will try to standardise in-service training to make the best use of the expertise available.

At a broader national level, the training of community development workers remains an unresolved problem.

The success of the South African Government's much publicised Population Development Programme will, no doubt, be totally dependent on whether the government can deliver the goods in the form of trained and skilled community development workers and a responsive bureaucracy.

Meanwhile the KwaZulu Government cannot afford to sit around waiting for the introduction of formalised tertiary training in community development skills.

For this reason plans are underway to initiate our own in-service training programme making use of the expertise and resources currently available.

act together

Development in KwaZulu



Moves to improve co-ordination

The most serious obstacle to progress in KwaZulu's Community Development endeavours has no doubt been the lack of co-ordination between various departments.

At local level each department has, in the past, pursued its objectives in isolation from other departments. This has resulted in a fragmented approach at local level with resultant duplication, overlap and gaps in service delivery.

With the worsening economic climate precipitating new levels of poverty in the rural areas, a bold new plan is being implemented to ensure the KwaZulu Government's limited resources are optimistically utilized.

Far-reaching plans to improve co-ordination in local level service delivery are beginning to be put into practice in KwaZulu.

Plans have been drafted and approved in principal by the KwaZulu Cabinet for the introduction at local level of Development Committees in each Magisterial district. The aim of such committees is to facilitate

the co-ordination of development at local level. This will be done by determining priorities in project work based on needs identified by communities themselves.

Such development committees have generally had a bad track record in Africa. They have often been ineffectual as a result of becoming unmanageably large or political forums.

In view of the lessons that have been learned from bad experiences elsewhere, the KwaZulu Government makes no apology for gradually phasing in these committees.

The launching of each committee will be preceded by local level consultation and orientation to ensure the committee clearly understands its role and the *modus operandi* for its functioning. To ensure that they are in fact effective, each committee will be required to periodically evaluate its own performance as a co-ordinating body.

In the initial stages the local level committees will consist only of representatives of local departments. At a

later stage, non-governmental organisations and local community leaders will also be represented.

At head office level, an inter-departmental committee for co-ordinated community development is also being constituted.

The aim of the head office committee is to ensure that even at policy-planning level, there is communication and co-ordination among departments.

The head office committee will also receive reports from and discuss problems being encountered by local level committees.

The launching of district committees to facilitate co-ordination of community development in KwaZulu reflects another important step forward in the implementations of the Buthelezi Commission's recommendations.

In the long term, it is envisaged that the committees will expand their functions and become more involved in local level district planning. However, in the initial stages their main thrust will be in local level co-ordination.

A plan of action for basic needs

The Buthelezi Commission endorsed the KwaZulu Government's earlier decision to adopt a "basic needs approach" to rural development. The basic needs approach includes firstly:

Basic consumption goods, such as food, clothing and shelter.

Secondly, basic services such as education, health services and a clean water supply.

Thirdly, the right to participate in making and implementing decisions

which affect one's own development.

Translating the adoption of a broad approach to a plan of action that has an impact on local communities, particularly with the very limited resources available to KwaZulu, presents an enormous challenge.

By its very nature the basic needs approach should aim to meet the poorest sections of the community. Yet for field workers that need good results to impress their supervisors it is often easier and more rewarding to work





with the "rural elite" who are usually more enlightened and progressive. Clearly, attention will need to be given to reversing some professional values and preferences to ensure that services do reach the poorest sectors of the community.

Implementing the basic needs approach requires a system of setting targets and monitoring progress to ensure that progress is being made. This entails collecting and storing data which in the rural context is very difficult to do.

The local communities should inevitably be defining and articulating their basic needs but there must be channels through which such needs can be directed. Even more importantly there must be a meaningful, considerate, prompt response from somewhere within the bureaucracy.

Then there is the reality of needs exceeding available resources, of raised expectations, of inadequately trained local workers, of local level politics and power struggles — all of which can quickly set communities back and thwart development efforts.

Notwithstanding the many pitfalls ahead, an important start has been made within the KwaZulu Govern-



ment to try and ensure that the basic needs approach is translated into development action at local level.

A document outlining proposals for more effective community development service delivery was prepared by Liz Clarke of the Bureau of Community Development and Youth Affairs. The document highlights many of the obstacles to progress and calls for sharper focus on what the KwaZulu Government Service labels as "Community Development". The document, which has been circulated to all major divisions of government departments as well as Inkatha, suggests concrete strategies for the implementation of the basic needs approach and deals as well with training and co-ordination in Community Development. The proposals are currently being studied and will be discussed at the inaugural meeting of the planned inter-departmental co-ordination meeting for Community Development. Most departments have welcomed the proposals and are very supportive of the need to work towards better utilization, rationalisation and co-ordination of the KwaZulu Government's limited resources.

In addressing the issue of strategy the document, which relies heavily on experience-based literature of the 1980's, suggests three key components for community development:

1. Institutional Development:

A striking characteristic of KwaZulu is the large number of self-organised structures within the local communities. These range from Inkatha to the multiplicity of church groups and religious sects as well as other organisations such as burial societies, stokvel groups and so on. With the exception of Inkatha and a few development orientated church and women's groups — the self-organised structures have to a large extent been ignored in the development efforts of KwaZulu.

It is suggested in the proposals that much greater emphasis needs to be paid on strengthening the capacities of self-organised groups for a more dynamic role in the development of KwaZulu. More effort will be needed to identify the groups, work with them and build up their capacity to expand their efforts and involvement in local level community development.



2. Social Learning:

Bryant and White (1984, 17) stress the importance of organisations, such as the bureaucracy, learning from their environments and facilitating increased understanding of local level perceptions of issues and problems. An example of this lies in the recent experiences of youth leadership trainers at Emandleni Matleng Camp. Trainers were preparing to carry out a training session on "mobilising youth". However, it was to be preceded by a discussion of youth groups and the role they serve in the community. In the trainers' minds the youth would identify the formal groups such as the Boy Scouts, Inkatha Youth Brigade, Church youth groups whom potential youth leaders could collaborate with for the purpose of youth projects. However, the youth revealed a different perception of the "group" in their communities. They cited a number of informal groups, many of which had anti-social lifestyles, including street corner gangs,

school drop-outs, and petty criminals. They believed the priority was to acquire skills on how to make contact with such groups and integrate them into youth projects. To meet their needs, role plays shifted the emphasis to coping with difficult encounters with anti-social youth groups and less attention was paid to the formal groups. This is what social learning is all about — it is hearing the local communities point of view and responding appropriately.

3. Collective Action:

Collective action deals with the thorny issue of community participation. Glib statements are made about the need for the community "to be involved", but the nature of the involvement is seldom elaborated on. What degree of participation is hoped for? Are communities merely to endorse a decision and support services that have been imposed on them? Or are communities to have a say in the planning and implementation of new services? These are the thorny issues that have to be wrestled with but clearly government departments in KwaZulu need to consider ways and means of actively strengthening and increasing the degree of participation in local level projects and services.

The starting point for translating strategy into programme development lies in building bridges between the departments and working towards consensus amongst top government officials and planners. Once this has been achieved, local level committees can begin their co-ordinating role. This is not a top-down approach but rather an all important effort to ensure that once a bottom-up dialogue for development begins, there is a better informed and equipped top level bureaucracy to respond to the issues that cause concern at local level.

The process of dialogue and the working towards consensus has already begun. Recommendations, based on the views of all departments will be made to the Cabinet and thereafter suggested strategies will be elaborated further into local level programmes.

References:

- Bryant, C. and White, L.G. 1984. *Managing Rural Development with Small Farmer Participation*. Connecticut. Kumarian Press.
Buthelezi Commission. Vol. 1 and 2. 1982 Durban H&H Publications.



Pension problems

During the course of the 1984/85 financial year approximately R113-million was allocated for expenditure on old age pensions. The amount far exceeds the total budget of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and also exceeds expenditure on health services.

The social costs to the community and the escalating dependency on pensions is an important issue. At family level the issues can be summarised as follows:

1. Many families are almost totally dependent on old age pensions. The amount (R65 per month) payable bi-monthly as an old age pension exceeds the wages of very many domestic, farm and "casual" workers; it also exceeds the income generated by small home industries.

For thousands of rural families roles are switched as the aged becomes in effect "the breadwinner" and adult men and women are the new generation of "dependents". This distortion of roles is creating problems and obstructing the growth of family members into their traditional roles.

2. The concept of pensions is relatively foreign to African communities where care of the aged has always been a vital function of the family. Urbanisation, escalating poverty and the ongoing destruction of the traditional way of life has eroded away concern for the aged.

At a broader community level the total dependency of families on so-

cial pensions precipitates serious problems.

The increasing dependency on social pensions may well be contributing to the stagnation of subsistence agriculture and other self-reliant "survival" activities. Now that total families "depend" on pensions in fact means that total families are now dependent on the Government.

This is in direct conflict with the Buthelezi Commission's (Vol. 2, 420) recommendations that the overall goal of integrated health, welfare and other related services should be total community development which should work towards "community decision-making and the heightening of morale and community commitment for development and change".

It is also in conflict with the philosophy of Inkatha as indicated by the President of Inkatha, Chief M G Buthelezi who, in an opening address to a *symposium on community development* (1983, 7) stated: "It is crucial that community development starts off with the principle that self-help is a central formative principle. Communities must accept the challenge of doing something for themselves. There will be no manna from heaven for them, and Inkatha must tell them this and mobilise them to help themselves."

The more the "Government" accepts responsibility for pensions, the more it is assumed that this indeed is where the locus of responsibility for the aged and disabled is. The responsibility is thus shifted from the individual and family to the Government.