

Applying sustainable livelihood approaches to improve rural people's quality of life

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Abstract

People's well-being is a function not just their income but of their levels of 5 assets (human, natural, social, physical and financial), their vulnerability to stresses and shocks, and the impact of policies, institutions and processes. The paper draws on experience from South Africa in particular, but also from other African and international experience, to draw out lessons for improving the lives and livelihoods of poor people, as well as making them protagonists with agency and not just passive "beneficiaries" of development. The paper discussed the implications for scaling-up such programmes.

Summary

This paper illustrates how community-driven development (CDD) can strengthen the livelihoods of poor people, and suggests the requirements at community, local government and national level. It builds on experience in South Africa, and internationally.

The paper builds on 3 strands of work – an evaluation of the situation in 22 priority rural and urban nodes in South Africa from 2006-8, work over 11 years by Khanya-aicdd on livelihoods and community-driven development (CDD) in Southern and East Africa, and recent research on good practice on promoting meaningful rural livelihoods in Southern and East Africa, Latin America, India and the US, funded by the Ford Foundation.

What emerges is that poverty is multidimensional and should not only be seen through an economic lens. Livelihoods approaches help to understand this complexity: people's assets, their vulnerability, the policies, institutions and processes which affect them, and the livelihood strategies they adopt to achieve their preferred outcomes. The Ford-funded research showed that successful organisations promote people's **assets**, build their feeling of **agency** (power), and change the **rules of the game** to support meaningful rural livelihoods.

If support organisations are to promote agency they must move from treating people as beneficiaries or clients to treating them as **responsible citizens**, and from a transactional to a **transformative** relationship. Community-driven development (CDD) programmes are an example of this, which support communities to develop their own plans, and then fund implementation of those plans. Such programmes operate at large scale in places from Malawi to Indonesia and Brazil. South Africa has a proposal for such a programme at Treasury for consideration, and has implemented a world-class community-based participatory planning system.

A key challenge is finding ways to experiment, learn and upscale. There are lessons nationally and internationally in how to do this effectively, which include designing pilots in ways that can be replicated widely in the country, and then developing the upscaling logistics including training manuals, financing systems, and training of staff, to be able to upscale the work.

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Some of the key elements needed for supporting the development of livelihoods of poor people therefore include:

- Focusing on building **assets** (and reducing vulnerability), strengthening the sense of **agency** and changing the **rules of the game** to support poor people;
- Communities expressing their own priorities and **developing plans** for their area (the model exists in South Africa, CBP), which are then funded, through;
- Substantive **transfers to communities** to take forward their own plans themselves, which builds agency, assets and in the process changes the rules of the game (and a proposal for a community development grant has been submitted to Treasury)
- Responses in **multiple sectors** to support livelihoods and build assets (natural, human, financial physical and social). Services are needed ranging from agriculture, to health, or adult literacy. One of the key ways services can reach all communities is through using **community-based and paraprofessional** models (and these models exist in South Africa);
- We must build **incentives for partnership** approaches, both carrots and sticks, to support community and local government level coordination and integration of civil society;
- Effective **local government** is key and local government must be supported to playing an effective coordination role, with a local plan with dedicated funds, and a multisectoral coordinating committee to oversee the plan and implementation;
- There must be a clear process of **learning**, experimentation and **upscaling**;

Many of these elements exist in the proposed Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) in South Africa but we need to clarify how to implement it effectively and ensure that the pilots are **replicable and can be scaled-up**.

1 Poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon

"In order to understand which policies are important in improving the well-being of poor individuals and households in a particular context, we need to understand who the poor are, where they are, what makes them poor (poverty drivers), what keeps them in poverty (poverty maintainers) and what are the key exit routes from poverty (poverty interruptions)" (Bird and Busse, 2007, 1).

Poverty is extremely high in rural South Africa. A recent study of livelihoods was carried out for the Department of Social Development in 22 urban and rural nodes which are some of the poorest parts of the country, covering 22 of the 52 districts in the country². In 2006 the level of unemployment in the rural nodes averaged 79.1%, compared to 62.6% in urban nodes. Between 2001 and 2006 the rate of unemployment *increased* in all rural nodes and 79% of respondents reported that it had become harder to find work in the last five years. Three quarters of the unemployed have been unemployed for four years or more. As unemployment has increased, the research suggests that poverty reduction has been achieved by on-going provision of infrastructure and improved access to social grants provided by the Department of Social Development (Strategy and Tactics 2007:14). *"From 2006-2008 In the urban nodesservice delivery has improved, and poverty has levelled off after dropping dramatically between 2001 and 2006 (when social grants began to be paid out in significant numbers). In the rural nodes, an almost entirely different situation obtains. Poverty continues to inch downwards, slowly, but services are available to very small proportions of residents, and – as we argued in 2006 – to be poor and living in a rural node is the toughest position to be in South Africa. The key development and anti-poverty challenge remains a rural one."* (Strategy and Tactics 2008 p7).

The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) has been advocated as one way of both understanding poverty (using the sustainable livelihoods framework) and changing the way poverty is addressed (using the sustainable livelihoods principles) (eg see Carney, 1998). Using a livelihoods approach involves an understanding of people's capital assets (human, natural, social, financial and physical), their vulnerabilities, and the policies, institutions and processes which enable certain possibilities and inhibit others (see Figure 1).

How can this approach help us to understand the nature of poverty, and how to address it more effectively in rural areas? How do communities themselves perceive poverty? The SLA has been applied in South Africa extensively by Khanya-African Institute for Community-Driven Development (Khanya-aicdd), and has been the basis of an ongoing programme of work with the Department of Social Development, including the research alluded to above. Table 1 shows the very multifaceted way that people in some rural nodes perceived poverty, which included issues of assets (lack of shelter), issues of capabilities and confidence (living without hope and without a vision), and vulnerability (eg crime). Table 2 shows how people in Alfred Nzo saw the situation of poor and very poor people.

² Much of the data on poverty used in this paper draws from this large survey which represents a very valuable picture of rural poverty in the country. The quantitative elements of the survey are drawn from Everatt and Smith (2008), and the qualitative from Goldman and van Rhyn (2006) and Greenberg and Scott-Goldman (2008).

Table 1: Some common perceptions of poverty in the rural (ISRDP) nodes (Goldman and Van Rhyn, 2006)

Node	Common Perception 1: Unable to meet basic needs for survival	Common Perception 2: Lack of income and unemployment	Common Perception 3: Other factors
Alfred Nzo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not knowing what you will eat the next day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No access to income, resources and jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living without hope and without a vision
Chris Hani	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not being able to feed your family healthy food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues of unemployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-ownership of land and cattle and other resources Unable to access healthcare Unable to educate your children
OR Tambo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of shelter, food and clothes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of employment Too few opportunities to build a life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of income to educate your children Hopeless about finding a solution Crime
Kgalagadi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rely on grants and handouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of basic income No income to start your own business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of goods and services

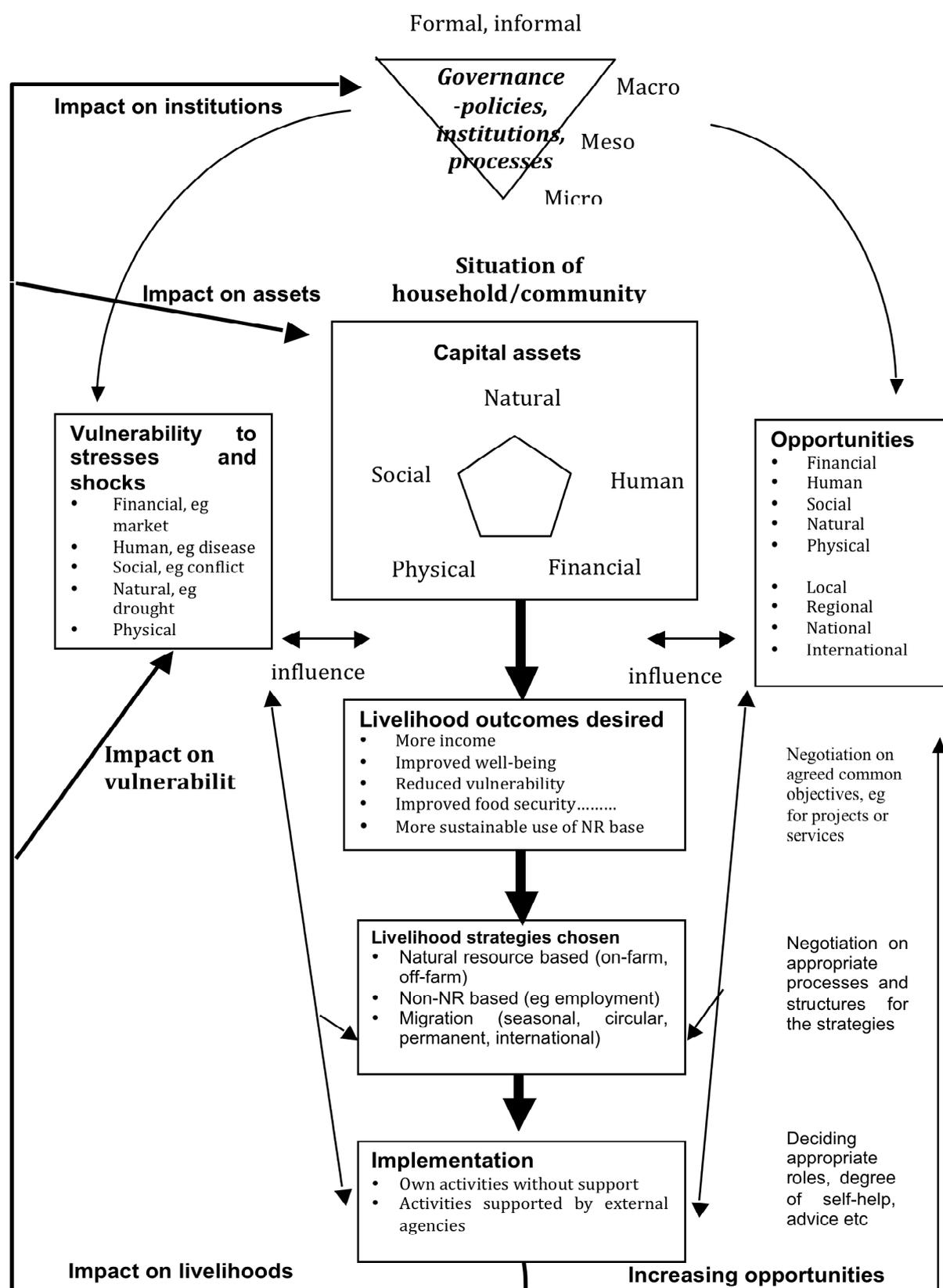
Table 2: Characteristics of the poor, and poorest of the poor in Alfred Nzo node, as seen by local people

Poor	Poorest of the Poor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live in remote rural areas No stable source of income and live from hand to mouth Unable to participate in development activities Open to exploitation, abuse and cheap labour Children are not healthy Most have lost their dignity Referred to as people who cannot make their own beer Have to endure hardship Rely on grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless and helpless and sleep in the streets Beg for a living Cannot access grants as they have no IDs Poor health due to poor sanitation and unclean water Food is scarce and they depend on handouts or food from bins. They cannot choose what to eat Have low self esteem No change of clothes Have no social networks

What this illustrates is the **multivariate nature of poverty**. Research conducted by the Ford Foundation in different continents points to poor people being in different categories of poverty, and that the strategy needs to be different in the different cases (see Hopley et al, 2009, RLLG, 2010, drawing from Hopley and Jones, 2006). The categories suggested were:

- Extreme dependent poor or chronically dependent poor** at the lowest end of the spectrum. They lack the minimum capacity to participate in the formal or informal economy. They include old people from very poor families and people variously 'capability-challenged' and without social support systems. They need continued social or public support.

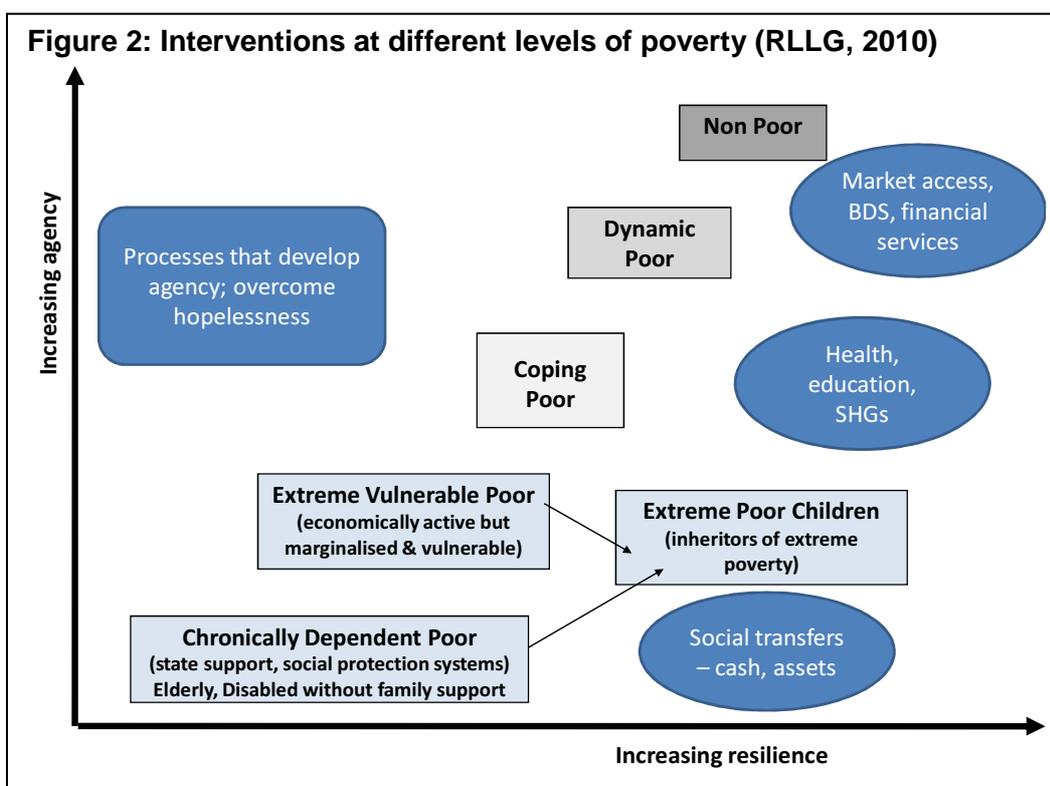
Figure 1: Sustainable livelihoods framework (adapted from Goldman et al, 2000)



- **Extreme vulnerable poor** or **declining poor** who participate in the economy but are on a downward spiral, keep accumulating social, economic and capability deficits, and often have practices and behaviour unsustainable in the market place. With suitable strategies they can graduate out of their present condition. However, this requires public investments to help them negotiate various externalities, such as widespread economic and ecological decline; to adopt more market-friendly behaviours; and to enhance their sense of self-worth.
- **Coping poor** are stagnant but on the precipice and could fall into the lower category as they are often locked into unsustainable production systems and cannot imagine alternatives. Their risk threshold does not permit them to accumulate social, financial and economic assets necessary to transit into the next higher category purely through market instruments; some public support is necessary but must be provided in ways that enhances their agency and builds experience useful for dealing with the mainstream and standing on their own feet.
- **Dynamic poor** have the self-confidence, risk taking ability and economic behaviours to be able to graduate out of poverty if they get a level playing field; therefore, fair market instruments are adequate for them to transit out of poverty.

So poverty has many different dimensions, and people at different levels of poverty have different mixes of these elements. One needs to understand this mix before appropriate support can be identified. It is also critical that poor people themselves are able to analyse their situation and to voice the outcomes and livelihood strategies they wish for.

Figure 3 from the Hybrids research and Hobley and Jones (2006) shows how poor people from declining to dynamic poor require different strategies to support them.



2 Challenge of focusing on the economic, particularly in SA

In South Africa, economic growth is generally seen as the most important issue, with addressing poverty seen as a social, not an economic issue. There is an assumption that the benefits of growth will trickle-down from growth in the formal sector. In post-apartheid South Africa, common poverty datum lines used to measure absolute poverty are the Household Subsistence Level (HSL) and the Minimum Living Level (MLL) (Woolard and Leibrandt, 1999 in Frye 2005). These measurements are based on narrow definitions of poverty, particularly focusing on income or expenditure.

Figure 1 shows the sustainable livelihoods framework, which provides a way of looking at poverty and livelihoods in a broader sense, including **assets** (human, social, physical, natural and financial), **vulnerability**, as well as putting up front what are poor (and non-poor) people's **preferred outcomes**, and the **livelihood strategies** they adopt to fulfill these. It also shows the centrality of the policies, institutions and processes which support (or inhibit) people's livelihoods. In another approach Noble et al (2004), argue that for the South African context, consensual definitions of poverty can be operationalised by firstly creating a 'list of socially perceived necessities' and secondly, developing measures based on the 'list of socially perceived necessities'.

Section 1 examined the different ways that rural people perceive poverty, using a livelihoods perspective. Once this broader perspective is taken, then the ways that livelihoods can be improved can take a much more nuanced approach. Bird and Busse (2006) show examples of the range of possible pro-poor policies (see Table 3):

Table 3: Examples of pro-poor policies (from Bird and Busse, 2006)

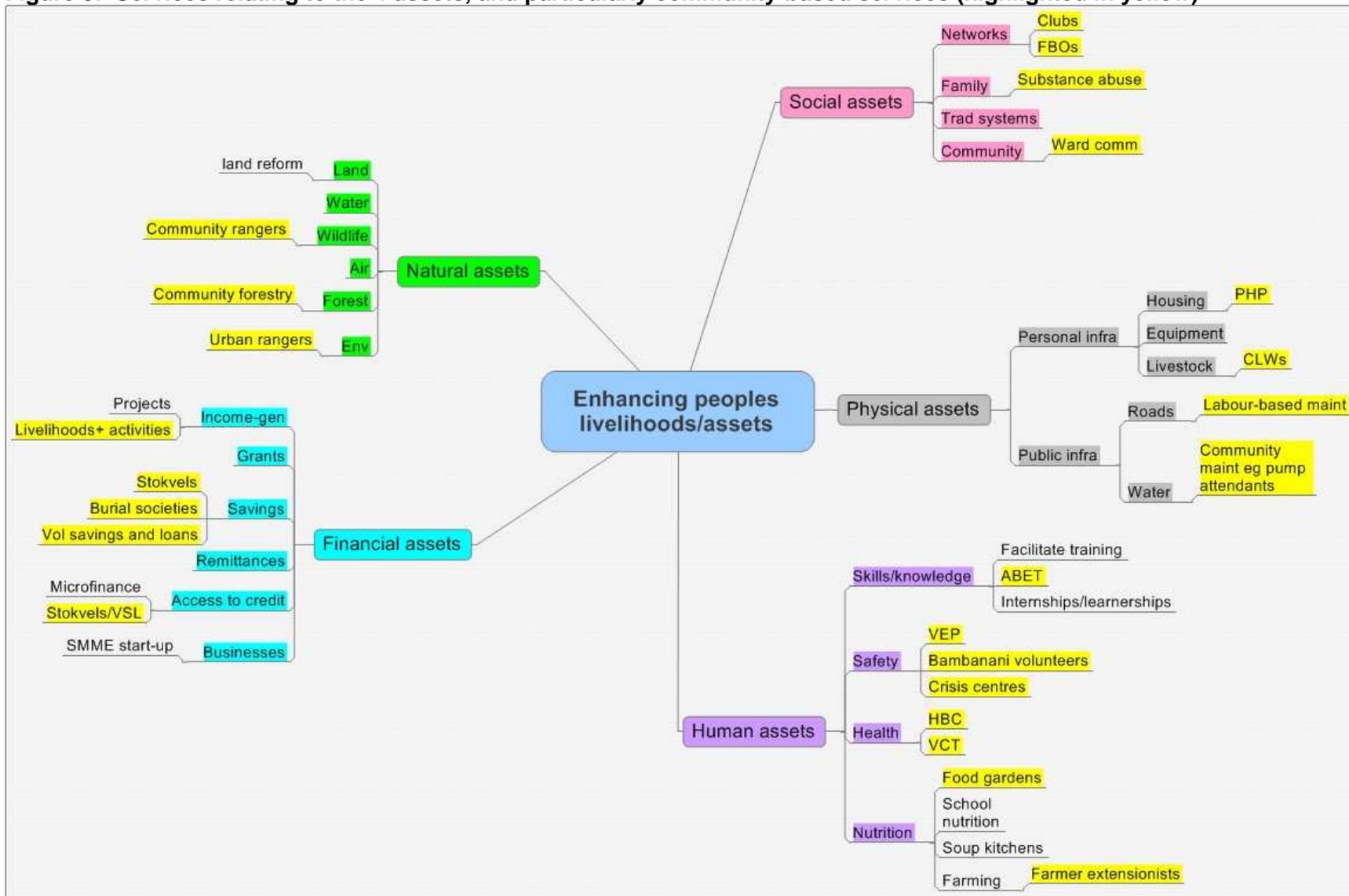
Targeted interventions	General policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safety nets such as social grants ▪ Anti-discrimination policies ▪ Social investment funds ▪ Targeted subsidies e.g. lifeline tariffs for water, electricity, food subsidies ▪ Public works programmes ▪ Learnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good macro-economic management & progressive fiscal reform ▪ Agricultural policy supportive of small emerging farmers ▪ Creating an enabling environment for investment and the private sector (for broadly based and pro-poor growth) ▪ Provision of basic social services ▪ Universal primary education & healthcare – free at the point of delivery

3 Potential of livelihoods approaches to enhance wellbeing

So how can operationalising a sustainable livelihoods approach help us to support these diverse areas? Figure 2 shows a diagram of services relevant to the 5 different asset types, drawn from a real planning exercise with the Northern Cape Department of Social Services and Population Development.

This is based on the 5 asset classes and shows the wide range of elements involved in enhancing livelihoods, with increasing income only a part. The figure also shows the tremendous range of services that can be provided to enhance livelihoods, and the wide range that can be community-based (those in yellow). The potential is therefore for policy interventions to prioritise supporting these types of services, and particularly supporting community-based services, which can strengthen the capacity of communities to take forward their own development.

Figure 3: Services relating to the 4 assets, and particularly community-based services (highlighted in yellow)



The Ford Foundation Research already cited also points to the need to support multiple activities and in an integrated way (see Box 1).

Box 1: Experiences from Latin America, India, US, Southern and Eastern Africa of supporting rural livelihoods (from Okagaki et al, 2010)

The Ford Foundation funded research in India, East and Southern Africa, Latin America and the USA on the nature of hybrid organisations (HOs) supporting meaningful rural livelihoods, covering 21 case studies, some of which are operating at considerable scale. Some of the characteristics that emerge are that HOs support practical services such as micro-finance, but also seek to empower the groups they work with, in a transformational, not just a transactional relationship, building the agency of groups and not just individuals to take forward their own development. They understand poverty in a broad way, often using a livelihoods lens, seeing the diversity of assets and capabilities, and the need to support communities to use these assets to achieve the outcomes they desire and increase their resilience. HOs seek to build **assets and services, change the rules of the game** and promote **voice, promoting influence and agency**. People at different levels of poverty require different types of support, ranging from social protection for the extreme dependant poor, to access to markets for the dynamic poor, and HOs see the need to build pathways between these. HOs demonstrated the ability to **learn**, many changing entry points, target groups, or services, often realising that a broader mix of support was needed. A distinguishing feature of the HOs is the development of suitable **partnerships** to deliver this mix of support, building on their respective competences. These partnerships could be internal to the organisation between different services, or across organisations. They also seek **systemic change**, changing the rules of the game, and building agency. While hybrid organisations see how market linkage fits into the individual pathway out of poverty, they do not presume that simply providing opportunities is sufficient for people to seize them. They build a social/human capital infrastructure without which market linkage strategies will collapse and long-term development processes cannot be sustained.

4 Potential of community-driven approaches to ensure people are protagonists and not passive participants

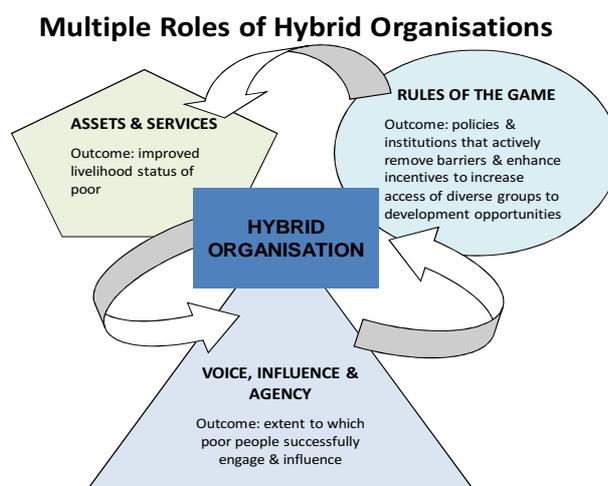
The other element that emerged from the Ford Foundation research was the need to support several aspects if “meaningful rural livelihoods” are to be addressed:

- **Self-confidence/agency** to participate, **self-belief**, capability to claim;
- **Equitable and certain access to assets, authority** to use and to **leverage** assets;
- Capability to **steward**, use, secure and build own assets, maximising **locally retained value**;
- **Scalability** and **impact** of interventions; and
- Understanding **limits to use** for needs of future generations.

This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 4.

This research implies that successful organisations take a **broad understanding** of how people secure their livelihoods and adjust their approaches to meet these complex realities. Instead of simply delivering services that meet physical needs, they take people’s livelihoods and strengths as the basis for their strategies and programmes and they seek to develop the **capability of poor people** to become active **agents** in their own development. These organisations recognise that agency and assets are meaningful at both the **individual and community levels**. By adopting these varying roles they can be seen as “Hybrid” organisations, using a combination of strategies, but also with the ability to think and act simultaneously and intentionally in the three dimensions of **agency, assets, and changing the rules of the game**. They transcend traditional boundaries, work across public and private goods provision, and act in multiple roles, and potentially at multiple scales.

Figure 4: Multiple roles required to support meaningful rural livelihoods (DFID/World Bank, 2006)



So we need to support these 3 dimensions, and to ensure that services complement each other, either within one organization, or across organisations.

So if there are a wide range of services which can enhance livelihoods, and many of them can be provided by communities, and supporting agency is a key aspect, could this be part of a programme to build community-driven development, and would this be a good thing?

Figure 5 shows the evolution of approaches to local and community-driven development approaches (LCDD), and the move from agricultural development, to integrated rural development programmes, to sectoral programmes as well as CDD, and latterly to LCDD where CDD is linked with local government support programmes.

Figure 5: Evolution of approaches to LCDD (from Binswanger-Mkhize et al, 2009)

Timeline of Approaches to LCDD						Progression of community involvement
1950s →	1960s →	1970s/80s →	1990s →	2000 →	2005 →	
Centralized De-Centralized						
	Sectoral Technology Led/ "Green Revolution" Irrigation development					Consultation ↓
		Special Area / Target Group Area Development Program (ADP) & Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) NGOs and private sector	Community-Based Development Sector-specific programs Social Funds			Participation ↓
				Community-Driven Development (CDD)	Local & Community-Driven Development (LCDD)	Empowerment

Internationally one can see an evolution between consultative approaches, through participation, towards empowerment and community-driven approaches:

- **Community consultation model.** In this model, government agencies or NGOs consulted communities, but operated as direct service providers using their own staff;
- **Community participation model.** Government agencies or NGOs invited participation from communities in choosing development priorities and project design, co-financing the investments, and contributions in cash or in kind, and operating the investments once they were completed;
- **Community empowerment model.** Implementation responsibility for projects was entirely devolved to communities, along with the funds for implementation. These are referred to as community-driven development (CDD) or local and community-driven development (LCDD) where the role of community and local government is seen as critical.

There has been wide experience of community-driven development (CDD), including a series of initiatives internationally to fund communities taking forward their own development, whereby they plan their priorities, and funds are provided to them to implement these. CDD or LCDD programmes have operated at very large scale in developing countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Indonesia, as well as in poorer countries in Africa such as Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania. Goldman and Hungwe (2009) indicate that in:

- **Mexico** – Over one million projects have been funded in 15 years, nationwide – much of it in infrastructure. Program is now national policy with own budget;
- **Brazil** – Over 300,000 projects have been funded in 1100 poor municipalities – much of it in infrastructure;
- **Indonesia** - where around \$1.3 billion is being provided to communities through an infrastructure programme at the Kecamatan level. The approach is now national policy, integrated into the fiscal system, and it covers about 60,000 rural villages in all provinces except Jakarta, in all 4,805 rural kecamatan/sub-districts.

And of course the famous decentralization work carried out in Kerala for example, also points to the potential power of such approaches. Table 5 shows elements of a huge CDD project from Indonesia, the Kecamatan Development Programme (KDP).

Table 5: Examples of KDP programme in Indonesia (from Goldman and Hungwe, 2009)

Element	How it works in KDP
What community structure is funded	Villages each of between 1000 and 3000 people. The funds are managed by a team selected by the village assembly at large.
Type of plan developed (integrated, sectoral or only project etc)	In the beginning only sub-projects , but now the villages are preparing multi-year development plans and lists of priority investments for more than one year and for funding other than the block grant they themselves control.
Grant covers what (social infrastructure, services, maintenance etc)	"Open menu" with a small negative list, mostly for basic village infrastructure (lots of access roads and bridges), social infrastructure and facilities (health facilities and schools and scholarships etc.) and up to 25% can be used as capital for women's savings and loan groups, for revolving funds.
Size of grant (and if based on formula eg \$10/person)	Grant is about \$6k to \$22k per village, depending on location, population and % of poor. On average there are about 12 to 20 villages per sub-district and a population of 12 000 to 50 000 for a subdistrict. Each sub-district was guaranteed at least 3 years, which was quickly increased to 5 years.
Grant handled through community structure's own bank	Villages open a joint account at the sub-district, where the banks are located. Sub-district financial management unit, set up as part of the project, and staffed totally by villagers, elected in open village assembly meetings and then

Element	How it works in KDP
account or in local gov account)	again decided on at a inter-village meeting (by the 6 reps from each village).
Role of local government in the process	The unearmarked block grant is at the sub-district level. A sub-district is a division of a district but not a formal level of government. No money is used at the sub-district level. They sign off on the list of selected projects (agree or reject but NO line item veto), sign off on all disbursements from the local branch of the national treasury, monitor planning and project construction and call monthly or biweekly coordination meetings to review progress and problems and help to resolve problems that arise. LG oversees and pays consultants

So what lessons emerge about how a CDD approach could be combined with support for livelihoods using community-based approaches. Work by Khanya-aicdd on community-based approaches has pointed to the cost-effectiveness of such approaches eg see CBW (2007), Goldman and Carnegie (2001). This shows that these approaches can have better impacts, at costs of about one third that of traditional government service provision.

5 Change in approach from service agencies

If approaches are to build assets but also build agency, the nature of the relationship between the agencies that form part of the institutional environment within which poor people live, and these people themselves is critical. The hybrids research drawing from Jha etc al (2009) identified three forms by which organisations engage poor people:

- 1) As **beneficiaries** – where organisations hand out assets and services to them. The implicit assumption is that poverty is merely a result of accumulated deficits and would go away with an injection of assets and services.
- 2) As **clients** – the relationship is essentially transactional, and is limited by the suitability or worthiness of the client. Investment is not made if it does not bring assured returns at acceptable/manageable risk.
- 3) As **responsible citizens** – with rights and obligations and who are agents of their own change. The organisation believes *a priori* that people have capability, that they are worthy and sees its own role as actualising that capability so that people drive change for themselves.

So **transactional approaches** – such as micro-finance services, business development services and improving access to markets – focus primarily on improving assets but not agency or changing the rules of the game. **Transformational processes** focus on empowering citizens to build their voice, claim assets, and influence decisions, procedures and (eventually) the formal and informal rules of the game, working to support the development of people's own agency rather than perpetuating dependent relations, as well as providing services. The end point of any intervention is to exit from that relationship.

This is not just idealistic – some of the 21 agencies researched operate at large scale (eg Umsombomvu Youth Fund – now merged into the Youth Development Agency, GAPI in Mozambique or PRADAN in India. They also demonstrate how such an empowering approach can be conducted, which builds assets, agency and changes the rule of the game. There is a challenge of how to systematize such approaches, which is discussed next.

6 The implications of such an approach for the development system

This type of approach could have major impacts in South Africa which is contending with high levels of poverty and unemployment in rural areas, poor quality of life, and low levels of income generation. Some of the implications of such an approach are likely to include:

- A cross-government push to see **pro-poor policy as embedded** in all the business of government (eg see Table 4). This should include adoption of a **national policy** to support such community-driven approaches, eg through the forthcoming National Community Development Policy Framework being put together by the Department of Social Development (DSD);
- Greater emphasis on **decentralisation** to local governments. In South Africa much of the decentralisation has been to provinces as part of the compromises at liberation. This must be accompanied by increased transparency and a stop to deployment practices putting party cadres into local government at the expense of ensuring competent staff who are able to provide services;
- A large-scale scheme to **fund communities** (as has been put forward in South Africa by COGTA, with a proposal of an average of R200 000 (about \$28000) per ward, or around \$1.5-5 per head, and support to develop the capacity of the legal participatory structures, ward committees;
- Support for widespread implementation of programmes for **community-based services**, so that services reach into all communities, providing appropriate value-added services within communities, building individual and community assets and agency. These can use the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) modality and the Community Works Programme (CWP) which provide guaranteed work, like India's National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme. Through this services are provided and stipends can be paid, but there should be no time limit (the current limit is 2 years), as these services are needed on an on-going basis. The Department of Social Development should become a champion of such services, funded by a range of departments from the social but also the economic sector;
- Expanded involvement and mobilization of NGOs and CBOs to support such services, with a large scheme for **capacity-building of civil society**;
- The provision of higher level support services in a wide range of sectors needs to be coordinated, with a spirit of partnership reflecting the hybrid approach mentioned before,. This could include **incentives for collaborative work**. For example Bolivia has a scheme whereby the grant rate for municipalities is higher if they undertake joint ventures (see Box 2). This could apply to joint activities between local and provincial government, 2+ municipalities, or between government and civil society;
- Systems for effective coordination such as **development coordination committees** at local government level, or using natural units such as catchments. Binswanger et al (2009) p115 suggest that these "should have broad representation among all the stakeholder groups, including local politicians, sub-districts, communities, NGOs,

Box 2 Mancomunidades in Bolivia (Khanya 2002)

The mancomunidad is a voluntary association between municipalities for specific purposes. The government through appropriate incentive policies such as concessional co-funding requirements has encouraged federations of municipalities to come together and address common development activities, which cuts across their geographical boundaries. This has had two effects: economies of scales have been realised, and secondly municipalities have been forced to think creatively to identify activities which are cross cutting for the benefit of the majority of their population such as irrigation, environmental management, tourism, common public health services for eradication of endemic diseases, etc.

relevant private sector actors, local managers, and technicians of de-concentrated sector agencies. These committees usually have sub-committees, such as for planning, project approval, monitoring and evaluation, financial control, education, health, water, agriculture, HIV/AIDS etc, which are constituted in a similar manner than the main committees". The absence of such structures is notable in South Africa;

- A major focus on increasing **accountability** through service committees that have real power, like school governing bodies so that citizens can both help to plan services, monitor implementation and hold service providers to account. Until real accountability is in place, bureaucrats can continue to be unaccountable demi-gods, where providing a service is giving a favour. In this way we can move from passive beneficiaries to a citizen-focused approach.

This does not cover specific services needed for particular sectors, which of course are also needed. In such a way we could hope to improve many facets of the livelihoods of rural people, helping them to develop and grow and plan and manage their own development.

6 Operating at scale

The challenge is to move from good ideas to implementation at a scale which can have significant impacts on rural people. Some of the issues which affect this are:

- We are not sure of the “**right answers**”, the magic bullets for development. This means we have to set a platform for **learning and change**, which recognizes that situations and responses change, and are different in one place from another;
- To do this requires some form of pilots, but these pilots need to be carefully planned to be able to be replicated and upscaled, and they do not have unrealistic levels of resources, or political pressure³;
- The limitations to scaling-up are often limits in **understanding, in capacity, in systems, and in mainstream funding** – which condemns many good but small-scale interventions to having little systemic impact;
- There is often a **political imperative** to “deliver” and quickly which is at odds which incremental learning, participatory approaches;

Box 3: Main steps in scaling up (from Binswanger et al, 2009)

<p>Diagnostic Phase to Ensure Minimum Conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostics - assessing the LCDD underpinnings in the national context • Alignment with the national government, donors, and other partners • National Commitment: Synchronizing /transforming policies/regulations/laws with LCDD • National leadership and coordination
<p>Pre-Program Development – National Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining the program • Selecting pilot districts • Appointing scaling up team
<p>Pre-Program Development – Local Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District selection • Diagnostics: Local level • Local buy-in • Communications
<p>Pilot Phase of Scaling Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining players & roles • Training • Facilitation • Participatory Planning • Technical Support
<p>Resource Flows & Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct financing to communities • Options for allocating funds • Options for managing and disbursing financial resources
<p>Scaling Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements in place • Planning finances • Managing bureaucratic hurdles • Designing management system • Focus on costs & logistics • Communications strategy • M&E System • Special conditions • Pre-launch activities
<p>Consolidation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sustainability

³ see Box 4 which shows this for community-based planning. In CBP a compromise was taken of a 6 day planning process which was felt to be realistic given the resources available to local governments, as well as an amount of R50 000 provided (approx \$7000) given to each ward to support community action following the plan. Later work has suggested raising this to R200k.

- There are some interventions which can be implemented widely, with little time spent in the transaction costs of a relationship, such as paying out social grants. These can be implemented relatively easily and at scale, but this is not true of much more client-specific interactions such as agricultural extension, or a doctor/nurse patient interaction.

So we have to find a modality that recognizes that we don't know all the answers, and allows us to experiment, learn and then scale-up. Binswanger et al (2009) specifically address this issue in their book on scaling-up local and community-driven development (LCDD). Box 3 draws out some of the key steps they suggest.

In South Africa the new Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) is grappling with these issues, seeking to find an appropriate role for itself, and how to promote rural development effectively, proposing pilots in each province.

While pilots are sometimes seen as an excuse for inaction, Binswanger et al suggest that "Such scaling up pilots should cover all communities and sub-districts in at least one district of a country. The scaling up pilot leads to proven procedures, logistics and tools that can be summarized in an operational manual that subsequently can be translated into local languages and rolled out and further adapted in the remaining districts of a country, province or state. Only then can a truly scaled up LCDD program be put in place that can cover an entire country."

The piloting process must include effective M&E so that learning can happen, and lessons from the pilots can be used to design the next stage. There are examples of this happening in South Africa, in the application of a process of action learning about community-based planning (CBP), see Box 4.

Box 4: The piloting and scaling-up process in community-based planning (CBP)

CBP demonstrated an effective approach to build agency, and also which changed policy – the rules of the game. Implementation of the linked grant, where this happened, also built assets, as did the feeding in of the participatory plans into the local government plans. The scaling-up process included:

- An **initial pilot** conducted by Khanya-managing rural change, dplg and Mangaung Local Municipality in South Africa, with similar partnerships in Ghana, Zimbabwe and Uganda in 2001-2, and also drawing lessons from study tours to India and Bolivia. The pilot developed the planning methodology, it was tested across the whole of a large local government area (Mangaung) covering 43 wards, including experimenting successfully with a R50 000 grant per ward. The process concluded with an independent evaluation. The methodology itself was developed with scaling-up in mind, in that the 5 day methodology was conceived as being applicable nationally, the facilitators were designed to be from ward committees and local government staff, and the R50 000 was seen as applicable widely in the country. Based on the success at this stage;
- **Expansion** to 8 pilots from 2003-5 to cover a range of cases from small rural municipalities (eg BelaBela) to large predominantly urban municipalities (eg eThekweni), in all cases covering the whole municipal area. The expansion brought in a wider group of partners including Development Works, SALGA and DBSA, into a structured learning process, which also expanded the core group of trainers;
- **Training of trainers and development of manuals** for facilitators, for planners, and for ward committees which were piloted in 2001, adapted in 2003, and finally revised after the 8 pilots with the production of printed manuals in 2005;
- A process of **policy influencing**, starting with the involvement of dplg as the policy-maker and later the involvement of SALGA in the action learning process; advocacy including presentations to the parliamentary portfolio committee on provincial and local government on the planning process itself and later on the concept of ward development grants. This led to changes in legislation;
- **Evaluation**, leading to adoption of CBP as national **policy**, accreditation by the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority.

However the importance of building a wide cadre of trainers and facilitators who could take CBP forward was not addressed, and is being discussed now, reflecting a lack of understanding of the requirements of a scaling-up process. The approach has been taken forward at scale since in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, and Capricorn District in Limpopo. A similar process happened in Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ghana, with cross-learning between the 4 countries. CBP also became national policy in Uganda, and went through a scaling-up process. Some of the lessons about upscaling are captured in Goldman (2003).

The proposed Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) needs to be considered in the light of these lessons. The model on the table at the moment could be strengthened, such as moving from applying in a few wards to a whole local government area. It would be useful to test the scaling-up model provided by Binswanger et al in the context of the CRDP.

7 Conclusions

What this paper aims to show is that if we are going to promote rural livelihoods we need to adopt a broader understanding of the nature of poverty and livelihoods which includes the concept of assets, vulnerability and resilience, and which addresses people's own preferred outcomes, which they are able to voice. It is important to understand that we must build people's sense of their own **agency**, as well as increasing their **assets** and reducing their **vulnerability**, and this requires changing the **rules of the game**, the policies, institutions and processes which impact on livelihoods. This does not mean focusing only on incomes, but a **wide diversity of interventions** which can improve livelihoods and people's wellbeing, many of which are best addressed through community-based responses, which build agency as well as assets. Policies are generally favourable in South Africa and mechanisms are in place in to support such community-based services, such as the EPWP and CWP, but these must be extended to cover a wider range of services, without a time limit. A programme is needed to **build the capacity of local service providers** to support such services, service providers such as local government, the local services of provincial departments, NGOs/CBOs, and the local private sector. Very importantly mechanisms are needed to enhance their capacity to work in **partnership** mode, using the hybrid characteristics alluded to earlier, as well as setting up effective local coordination mechanisms. These steps should be complemented by programmes to support **communities to plan** for their wards (CBP), and to be provided grants to implement those plans (**ward development grants**), so again strengthening agency and assets. Suitable methodologies have been developed and a plan for rollout prepared in COGTA – it needs the political will and approval by Treasury to take this forward. Core to all of this is effective and committed **local government**. Significant measures to improve capacity are needed, including reversing the process of deployment of party cadres to local government which has undermined capacity and promoted nepotism. The **powers of local government and fiscal transfers to local government** are limited compared to other countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, or Mexico, and in the medium-term this needs to be addressed. The **CRDP** provides an opportunity to test out this type of integrated response, but a suitable model for piloting, learning and upscaling is needed.

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