

A BEST-PRACTICE MODEL FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA: THE TRANSKEI AND CISKEI EXAMPLE

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SUMMARY

The *Integrated Livestock and Crop Development for the Eastern Cape: a community development landcare project* represents a dynamic public service poverty relief strategy for sustained rural improvement through joint service with commodity organisations. The project is a multi-institutional and inter-disciplinary initiative of the Agricultural Research Council, the National and Eastern Cape Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs, the National Wool Growers' Association and the Rural Communities of the Transkei and Ciskei in South Africa.

The woolled sheep project among sheep farmers in the Transkei and Ciskei in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa aims to uplift the rural communities through development of farming systems, household typology development, skills training, and the creation of employment opportunities and food security. Central to this upliftment is the empowerment of the community structures to organise effectively, the co-ordination of intervention strategies by support institutions and the enhancement of commodity market competitiveness. The project focus on a strong environmentally, socially and culturally compatible "economic tiger", **Wool Production**, to forge and spearhead development in the rural areas. The project integrates the resources as well as the administrative and motivational strengths of all role players for mutual and compounding benefit of the rural communities in the Transkei and Ciskei and all other stakeholders.

To date, 32 shearing sheds have been established and are operational throughout the Transkei and Ciskei. These shearing sheds serve as training and development centres throughout the Transkei and Ciskei. A ram group-breeding project has been initiated to retain the hardiness and to improve the wool clip of the woolled sheep breeds in the Transkei and Ciskei. A successful sheep management programme has resulted in improved sire selection and increased weaning percentages. Other successes of the project include an increase in household income from wool production, an increase in available jobs as wool classers and shearers, and 6000 farmers were equipped with practical skills in aspects of sheep farming technologies, wool production practices, and product value adding and marketing.

The multi-agency and inter-disciplinary commodity focus of this project and its successes provide invaluable insight into the restructuring of certain public service organisations and drawing up of development initiatives. The project had a major impact on the upliftment and development of the rural communities in the Transkei and Ciskei and its successes demonstrate the potential for its replication. The project has already contributed significantly to service delivery in the Agricultural Research Council, the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, the Community-Based Organisations of the Transkei and Ciskei and the National Wool Growers' Association of South Africa.

Keywords: *Livestock and crop development, wool production, sustained rural livelihood improvement*

Project roject purpose, scope and nature

The rural areas of the Transkei and Ciskei in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa principally produce agricultural products but faltering and sometimes unreliable marketing strategies impede production in these areas. Consequently the local communities have a broken vision of these areas as a potential agricultural production powerhouse. The potential of the rich natural resources and the opportunities these offer for immediate and lasting socio-economic benefits to rural communities is demonstrated for the purpose of uplifting and expanding the vision of the local communities. The project intends to train the communities in the skills necessary to exploit the animal and crop production and product markets by expanding these enterprises to an economic level without over-exploiting the natural resources.

The project addresses directly the problem of a consumptive and passive rural economy that falls dismally short of the present and growing socio-economic needs of these areas. The purpose is to effect immediate and lasting improvements in the rural socio-economy by developing appropriate agricultural production skills and marketing opportunities.

The project acts as a catalyst to catalyse the development of agricultural enterprise by the rural communities. The project aims to unlock the agricultural potential of the Transkei and Ciskei and the best way to achieve this is through the economic development of the wool industry by improving production technologies and product marketing. Sustainable wool production of good quality wool to be competitive on an international market is the backbone of the project.

Wool production takes place throughout the region. Improving income from wool production does not at the outset require either adverse cultural changes to production practices or a reduction in animal numbers. An improved quantity and quality of wool together with an increased market efficiency for these areas is beneficial to the Transkei and Ciskei farmers and the National Wool Industry. Success in this endeavours compliments and does not compete with other production areas and interest groups.

The project focuses on entrenching a vision and strategy for the socio-economic upliftment of rural communities in the Transkei and Ciskei by entrenching land-care for sustainable resource use and reducing the dependence of rural communities on outside income and welfare. The poor level of household and community income is also addressed through facilitating effective resource use, agricultural production and marketing, much of which involves women and youth. The focus on primary production in the project will have direct benefits in establishing household food security.

The realisation of these benefits infuses an urgency and purpose for effective integrated community management institutions and co-operation between these institutions. Development of associated infrastructure and skills through focused training programmes are as a result, firmly community based. This presents ideal circumstances for a rewarding public service and technology support structure.

Best practice model

A dynamic agriculture is central to social and economic growth, especially in areas where the general welfare and farming fortunes are closely linked. The cardinal elements of a "best practice" model employed for the successes of this project are:

- * that the project has a clear and realistic purpose and goal
- * that the backbone of the project is economically orientated, based on a reliable product market
- * that the complementing and buffering advantages of a multi-agency project be used to the full
- * that the project be community based, addressing the requirements as determined by the benefiting community and guarding against going ahead of the community
- * that particular attention is given to the maintenance of political sanction and support
- * that the project encompasses both short and long term benefits that can be unquestionably realised by the communities
- * that the project contains elements of demonstration and training that are hands-on and *in situ* for the communities
- * that the project embodies community development through stabilising and strengthening community management institutions, increasing household income and effecting job creation
- * that the project practises in a participative management style
- * that the project includes regular evaluation and monitoring by means of performance recording and adjustments for best practice
- * that the potential for replication of success within the project and of the project in new areas be a beacon for its continued relevance, efficiency and success, and
- * that the project be culturally compatible and economically sustainable.

Project conception and implementation

The project was conceived through the application of the terms of reference of the Veld and Livestock Liaison Committee (a national multi-agency research and development integration structure) to the need for rural development in the Transkei and Ciskei. This process, together with the development initiatives of the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture (ECDALA), the drive for improved wool revenue for the wool industry by the National Wool Growers' Association (NWGA), and the R&D role of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), precipitated consensus for an integrated livestock and crop development project.

Central to the conception of the project is the recognition that development is an active process driven by the profit motive and that the required economic incentives are not strong enough in a service-based public sector or a research organisation to lead such a process. The role of commodity groups and marketing organisations is essential to the success of the project.

A consortium project management committee was formed to manage the integration and implementation of the project. The fundamental implementation philosophy is that the rate of implementation is a direct function of the willingness, readiness and perceived ability of the community to take full ownership of the respective development component (community-based implementation process).

The level of funding dictated that resources are focussed on five "star" projects strategically located across the Transkei and Ciskei, where all elements of the programme are being implemented. The five centres of excellence serve as "best practice" examples in a nodal development strategy. The projects encompass the concept that success; demonstration and promotion will result in wider application and benefits in the Transkei and Ciskei. The implementation is assisted through the erection and improvement of a network of shearing sheds and dipping facilities spread throughout the area. Apart from their use for job creation through sheep shearing, wool classing and training, they serve as foci through which the benefits of the project can be realised by surrounding communities. Crop field demonstration and research is currently located at the star sites, but all foci serve as sheep training and production development sites.

Phases of implementation are concurrent and complimentary. These include:

- * A situation analysis and inventory of social, economic and environmental aspects
- * Identification of development goals and priorities
- * Strengthening and empowering community management institutions
- * Analysis of current farming systems to enhance efficiency and competitiveness in the sector supply chains
- * Sourcing of enterprise capital and training
- * Facilitation and development of infrastructure
- * The establishment of community-based demonstration units and FSR-E
- * Effective agricultural product value adding and marketing
- * Regular evaluation and monitoring by means of performance indicators
- * Consolidation and expansion of successes

Effectiveness and success

Performance indicators used to measure the success of the project are divided into three fields, namely (1) *social*: i.e. household typology development, effective community management institutions, number of beneficiaries, skills development and household food security; (2) *economic*: i.e. increased household income, job creation and community-commodity funds and (3) *environmental*: i.e. condition of the natural resources and the conservation status of arable areas.

The effectiveness of the project can be measured by the quantitative and qualitative benefits that arise in the communities that are the initial focus of the project.

Quantitative benefits: Broadly accepted and effective community institutions are operational, ensuring a stable and ordered society to lead development. The functional agricultural enterprise sub-committees elevate the self-worth of and provide economic empowerment to these communities. Twelve extended communities serve as wool-based centres, reaching *circa* 50 villages each.

Shearing sheds, animal handling facilities, dipping tanks and other critical agricultural infrastructure markedly increased the production and income generation potential of these communities.

During the past two years more than 6000 farmers received practical training in aspects of sheep farming technologies, wool production practices, product value adding and marketing. A successful sheep management programme resulting in increased weaning percentages, improved mating practices and sire selection, and a ram-breeding project are some of many successes in the project. Wool producers, women and youth have received training in wool classing and animal health. An increasing awareness of the value of effective grazing and crop use by farmers is evident in the farmers requesting training in the effective use of the natural resources and rangeland management. Spring lambing seasons with increased lambing percentages are also being implemented.

More than 3000 woolled sheep farmers have become active members of the NWGA and participate in farmer development programmes. A 300% increase in household income from wool production and an approximate increase of 30% in available jobs within the wool producing and handling process are direct results of the project.

Qualitative benefits: The project contributes directly to the renaissance of agriculture as an income generator in the Transkei and Ciskei through building a vision and implementing a strategy for the socio-economic upliftment of rural communities. The application of appropriate value adding and marketing reduces the dependence of rural communities on outside income and welfare. The involvement and commitment of the public sector in effective service delivery, together with the motivation and training of service providers and communities, contributes to the concept of multi-agency cooperation for the greater benefit of all the stakeholders.

Replication

The empowerment of communities through the development of and training in skills will spirit entrepreneurial development throughout the rural areas. Wool farmers from the traditionally disadvantaged areas of the Transkei and Ciskei have shown the greatest initiative to improve the standards of production and organisation of their farming enterprises by organising themselves into progressive commodity-based organisations. A communal ram breeding initiative to genetically improve wool quality by using adapted ewes from the production regions is currently being implemented. Other commodities, such as red meat and maize, are also involved in the broader development programme and this should broaden the impact of the project, leading to improved sustainability.

It is proposed that the principal tenets of this service delivery strategy have universal application within other resource-poor pastoral communities of South Africa and within SADC (Southern African Development Community). This is conditional to it being possible to identify and focus on an appropriate economic vehicle to forge ahead and spearhead development, as wool production development is used in this project. It is stated from time to time that woolled sheep were the economic backbone for development and commercialisation of the non-arable extensive grazing areas of South Africa.

To conclude:

The project had a major impact on the upliftment and development of the rural communities in the Transkei and Ciskei and its successes demonstrate the potential for its replication. Depending on our understanding of it, these efforts can be made throughout the continent. What we as animal scientists philosophise and argue about is of little value to someone living in rural agricultural poverty without a vision and an implementation plan to change his or her way of living, and it is our responsibility to apply our sciences and make our technologies relevant and a reality for improving quality of life.

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