

Reconsidering rural development

Using livelihood analysis to examine rural development in the former homelands of South Africa

Background

Persistent poverty, deprivation, and under-development in South Africa's former homeland communal areas have been little changed by post-apartheid 'rural development' policy. Two decades since the political transition to democracy, they remain marked by limited economic opportunities and inadequate infrastructure and state services, along with enduring human development deficits. Public administration is often uneven, and rural governance contested.

State-driven efforts at advancing 'rural development' have proved largely ineffective, often characterised by impulses towards top-down planning, a default assumption that agriculture ought to drive rural development, a reliance on resource-intensive income generation projects, and general inattention to the larger economy (including the role of urban linkages, employment and markets).

Objectives

The overall objective of this project was to generate policy-relevant knowledge by explicating South Africa's dominant rural development paradigms and critically evaluating them in relation to livelihood research in order to facilitate the reformulation of policy for inclusive growth.

Methodology

Using livelihoods-based analysis, this research project examined rural development and rural development policy within South Africa's former 'homeland' (or 'bantustan') communal areas in the rural Eastern Cape. The research combined in-depth household interviews with longitudinal National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) and area-based Census 2011 data. Integrating these enabled the depth and specificity of household qualitative inquiry to be contextualised in relation to larger (quantitative) dynamics.

Key issues

- Research reveals households in the communal areas sustain themselves through diverse combinations of wage earnings and remittances; receipt of social (welfare) grants; limited agricultural production and various other (often small-scale) informal economic activities.
- Rural households demonstrate varied patterns of livelihood 'diversification' in relation to the above four activities. These patterns of diversification both reflect and reinforce material differences between households (i.e. rural 'social differentiation').
- A livelihood-informed segmentation of rural households shows that external linkages (especially employment) are a major determinant of a rural household's well-being and position relative to each other.
- All of the above have implications for rethinking rural development policy.



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS)

CONTACT

David Neves
+27 (21) 959 3733
Dneves@plaas.org.za

GRANT AMOUNT
ZAR 1,250,000
CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2 (CfP2)

For the full report and to find out more about other PSPPD-funded policy relevant research, visit the PSPPD Poverty & Inequality Knowledge Repository at:
<http://psppdknowledgepository.org/>.

Conclusion

- Place a livelihoods approach at the centre of rural development, in order to facilitate clear household segmentation and optimally focus interventions.
- Facilitate inclusive, pro-poor economic growth in the wider economy, as rural development cannot be exclusively addressed in a local or insular manner.
- Strengthen and facilitate rural households' access to existing external (often urban) labour markets.
- Support small-scale agriculture, where it has potential, including through appropriate production support.
- Support rural non-farm economy enterprises and employment, as agriculture is not the sole driver of rural development.
- Address the 'crowding out' effects of concentrated, extractive, metropolitan-based firms that undercut the potential for inclusive economic growth.
- Recognise and strengthen the effectiveness of social welfare grants, which are complementary to practices of rural livelihood-making.
- Resolve contested rural governance, and address weaknesses in public administration. Meaningfully connect rural development to land reform and agrarian transformation.



planning, monitoring & evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



PSPPD
PROGRAMME TO
SUPPORT PRO-POOR
POLICY DEVELOPMENT

