

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS – ENHANCING MUNICIPAL FOOD SECURITY POLICY

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## ABSTRACT

Whilst many developing countries engage in sound policy processes on macro level as far as economic and social development are concerned, the day-to-day victual needs of impoverished communities also depend on sound policies as well as appropriate arrangements, which take effect in the municipal sphere. Such needs, as food security, is dependant on the establishment of effective partnership agreements among all stakeholders, including local councils, district councils as well as metropolitan councils; the actual entities that are responsible to create the enabling environment in which food security could be enhanced.

In this article, issues relating to food security, partnership models, the enabling environment, and community involvement in this partnership process, are discussed briefly. Public administration practitioners should ensure they contributively involve themselves in this debate. The article concludes by emphasising the need for a proper and structured approach to be followed, of a food security policy is due to be operationalised in practice.

## INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity has become a chronic development problem challenge in Southern Africa, affecting both the rural and urban areas in South Africa. Dramatic urban growth, poverty and the Southern African region's vulnerability to natural hazards mean that urban and rural food security is no longer assured in many countries. Food

security is part of the section 27 Constitutional rights in South Africa. The Constitution, 1996 states that every citizen has the right to have access to sufficient food and water and that "... the state must by legislation and other measures, within its available resources, avail to progressive realisation of the right to sufficient food". It therefore stands to reason that public administration activities in South Africa should be geared towards enhancing the nation's food security needs. In addition, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994 identified food security as a priority policy objective and states that the government of South Africa is determined to reprioritise public pending to focus on improving the food security conditions in the country. The aforementioned resulted in streamlining, harmonising and integrating the various food security programmes that had been implemented by different government departments and the development of an Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa.

Therefore, since local government remains a key facilitator of social and economic development within South Africa, municipalities should realise its development mandate by ensuring that food security is enhanced through the municipalities' respective Integrated Development Plans. Yet, the complexity of food security issues demands that a comprehensive and multi-sectoral- as well as an active participatory approach be followed whenever programmes and policies addressing food security are developed. In this article the importance of the formation of partnerships with communities for the purposes of enhancing food security, is explored. Different partnership models, which municipalities may find relevant in this context are indicated, and finally the policy imperative relating to community participation in food security is briefly presented.

## DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY

In order to achieve food security, it is important that the concerned parties should take cognisance of the concept "food security". According to the Integrated Food Security Strategy for South Africa (2002:15), food security is defined as "... physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preference for an active and healthy life". Following on the aforementioned is a definition, which is particularly appropriate for many countries in Southern Africa: a society which can be said to enjoy food security is not only one which has reached a food norm, but which has also developed the internal structures that will enable it to sustain the norm in the face of crises threatening to lower the achieved level of food consumption (Oshaug, 1985:5).

Three inter-related components are highlighted by the definition, namely *availability*, *accessibility* and *utilisation* of food at a macro and a micro level.

*Food availability* depends on domestic food production, international importation and efficiency of food distribution, and is assessed in the light of the food requirements of the population. *Food accessibility* refers to the ability of households to obtain sufficient food for all members at all times, either through production for own consumption, or through exchange. The chronically poor, who have low or variable incomes, few assets and few marketable skills, and who lack powerful advocates, are most vulnerable to chronic food

insecurity. *Food utilisation* refers to the final use of food by individuals at household level. The range of household food practices, including preservation and storage, selection, preparation and final consumption are influenced by intra-household factors, such as women's control over resources and decision-making authority.

In a developmental context, the state has a primary responsibility to provide a framework within which households and individuals can exercise choices to achieve food security in a manner that will not jeopardise the food security of future generations. The state must also take appropriate measures to ensure that vulnerable groups, particularly young children and the elderly are able to meet their food needs.

The *Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)* and the *Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR)* of the government of South Africa initially provided the strategic framework for action to achieve food security for all. The RDP identified food as a basic need that should be met. It recognised poverty as a challenge and identified sustainability, productivity, participation, nation-building and democratisation as the principles guiding strategies to tackle poverty. The GEAR strategy formed the macro-economic framework within which a food security policy must be developed. It provided the fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies required to stabilise the economy and enhance international competitiveness, and emphasised employment creation, stimulating new investment, infrastructure investment and human resource development as key areas.

The *White Paper on Agriculture*, 1995 commits the South African government to addressing both national and household food security. A key focus of the agriculture strategy is to broaden access to agriculture of those who were previously excluded from the sector, within an increasingly competitive global environment. Thus, the strategic role of agriculture requires a reconsideration of existing strategies and support programmes for actions, which can effectively support economic growth and contribute to equity and achieve food security for all.

South Africa's food security policy is furthermore being developed within a broader regional and international context of heightened awareness of the importance of achieving food security for all. In the Rome Declaration on World Food Security 1996, South Africa and other countries pledged to support the World Summit Plan of Action. Leaders committed themselves to creating an enabling political, social and economic environment, implementing policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty, and achieving durable peace, based on the full and equal participation of women and men. They further pledged to take action to ensure that technology development, farm management, trade and growth policies and distribution systems are conducive to fostering food security and that natural disaster and human-made emergencies are prevented or anticipated so that its impact on food consumption is minimised. The Declaration also promoted optimal allocation and use of public and private sector resources to achieve food security goals.

At a regional level, South Africa is committed to working together with the other *Southern African Development Community (SADC)* member countries to achieve regional food security. SADC subscribes to the view that policies and programmes must address national, household and individual food security. The SADC Food Security Unit

in Harare, Zimbabwe, has an important promotional, facilitative and regulatory role, to enable national entities, both public and private, to address food security issues. A regional policy is important due to the climatic correlation among states in the region. Furthermore economic, social and political changes in the region necessitate closer collaboration, a form of participation in fact, between the public and private sectors to achieve these goals.

All South Africans are challenged to participate in strategies to ensure the availability, accessibility and utilisation of adequate, safe and nutritious food for all members of households at all times on a sustainable basis. Within this context, different partnership models have proven that to enhance service delivery may warrant consideration.

## PARTNERSHIP MODELS

Government policy documents mention different types of partnerships. The public private partnership-approach has historically been seen as a useful and appropriate vehicle to improve development and service delivery in developed and developing countries alike. In addition, different permutations or options of partnership arrangements exist. When decisions are taken towards which type of entity or combination of entities should be involved in development and/or service delivery, the objectives and current resource capacity (widely defined) realities should be considered. Such considerations would inform the following four possible arrangements:

- public ownership and public operation;
- public ownership and private operation;
- private ownership and private operation; and
- community and user provision.

These four arrangements represent different allocations of ownership, financing, operational and maintenance responsibilities, and risk distribution between government and the private sector.

Public-private partnerships could be defined essentially as a contractual arrangement whereby a private party performs part of a department's (public entity's) service delivery or administrative functions and assumes the associated risks. In addition it is understood that the private party in return receives a fee according to pre-determined performance criteria, which may be from service tariffs or user charges, entirely from a departmental or other budget, or a combination from the above (National Treasury, Public Private Partnerships, 2001:5). The essential aspects of a public private partnership arrangement are:

- a focus on the services to be performed; and
- a shift in the risks and responsibilities to a private entity for the activities associated with the provision of services (National Treasury, Public Private Partnerships, 2001:5).

Public ownership and public operation describe infrastructure owned and operated by a public entity and controlled by the national, provincial or local government. Under the public ownership and public operation arrangement specific types would include

commercialisation and corporatisation. The former involves the public entity 'financial and managerial autonomy (run according to business principles), whereas the latter structure establishes the public entity as an autonomous legal entity subject to company law, with formal separation of ownership and management responsibilities (e.g. with a board of directors).

Public ownership and private operation may be achieved through concessions and leases, which may allow the government entity (e.g. municipality) to delegate the operation of infrastructure facilities and the responsibility for new investment as well as commercial risk to the private sector. In the case of private ownership and operation, the private sector achieves a high revenue factor from for instance user charges; especially where commercial risk and the risks associated with political interference are low.

Under the user provision option, normally in the cases of municipalities, self-help arrangements are put in place and communities themselves are involved in providing basic services and development endeavours with the government as facilitator creating an enabling environment.

The above possible arrangements are by no means exclusive and may form the basis for innovative combinations in this respect. Cranko and Kahn (1999:25) mention in addition, that service contracts, leases, management contracts, and concessions (build, operate and transfer) arrangements are possible contractual arrangements under the public private partnership context.

Service contracts could be defined as assigning the private sector the responsibility to carry out specific operations and maintenance activities for a specific period of time. In this regard, the public provider sets particular performance criteria and standards for the activity. Bidders are evaluated and appointed and the contractor's operations are contractually managed. Specific payment arrangements are made and penalties and liabilities are set contractually.

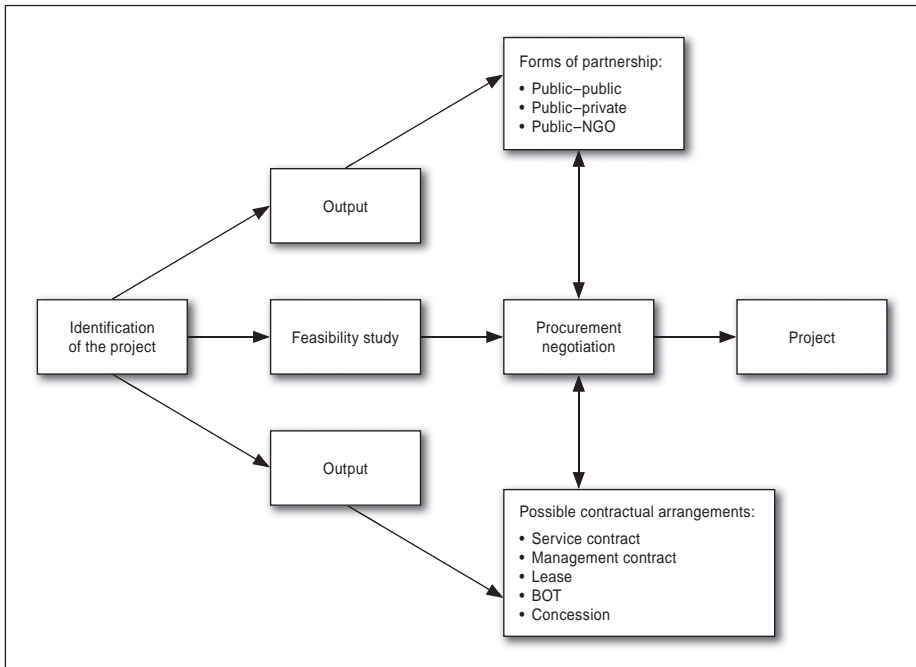
Management contracts are distinguished from service contracts by the degree of responsibility the private entity enjoys. Under a management contract, a private entity manages the operations of the government-owned enterprise without committing its own investment capital or accepting full commercial risk for matters such as tariff collection.

Lease agreements imply that a private sector entity operates and maintains a government-owned enterprise at its own commercial risk, with income derived directly from tariffs. The private entity is under no obligation to invest in the infrastructure. Essentially, the lessee is normally only under contractual obligation to attend to maintenance aspects.

Concessions are arrangements where a private sector entity manages the infrastructure facility, operates it, accepting commercial risk, accepts investment obligations, whether to build a new facility or to expand or to rehabilitate an existing facility. A typical contract may involve a fixed term during which the enterprise is established, operated and eventually transferred back to the government (Build, Operate and Transfer-arrangement – BOT) (Department of Constitutional Development. Guidelines for Private Sector Participation in Municipal Service Delivery: 4).

Entering into a particular partnership forms part of a greater process where a possible project(s) is identified, feasibility studies are conducted, the forms of possible partnerships

**Figure 1: The steps in the municipal service partnership-process**



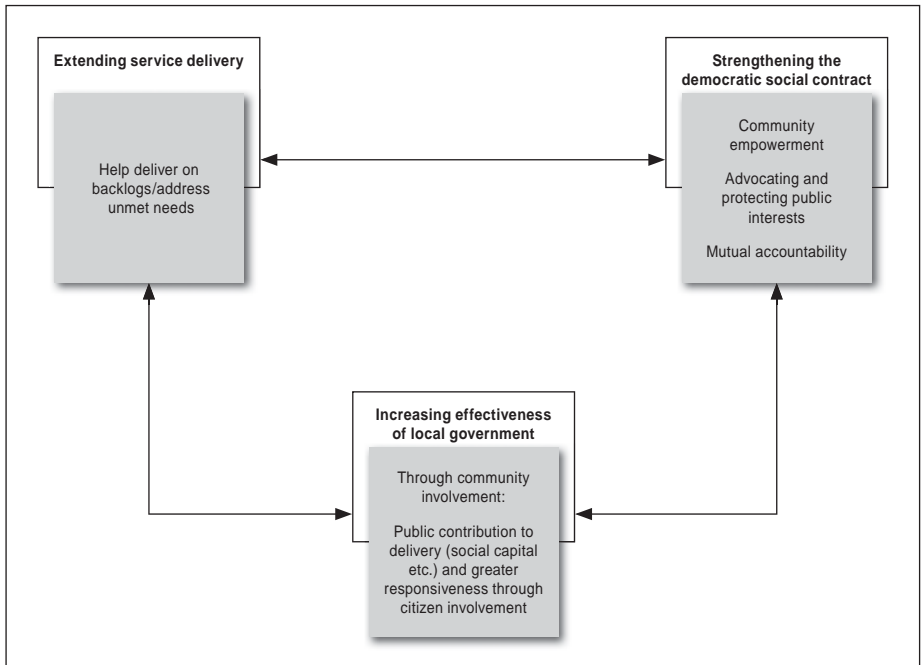
Source: Adapted from Cranko & Kahn, 1999:25

are considered, and detailed contractual arrangements are negotiated. By way of an example, Figure 1 serves to explain a generic process associated with the establishment of a municipal service partnership.

Empirical evidence indicates that literature on public-private partnerships fail to describe the extent of different permutations and arrangements in this regard. It may be appropriate to mention that the emphasis should be placed on the partnership facet of the public-private partnership arrangement. If the concept partnership is analysed, it could be described as a power that is distributed between the public and another authority (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2005:118) (sphere of authority e.g. local, provincial or national). This process occurs through negotiations that result in a mutually agreeable settlement. According to Burke (2000:241) partnership brings parties (for instance the client and a contractor) together to share risks and benefits associated with projects. The essence of the preceding discussion and analysis is that stakeholders reach agreements on particular responsibilities whilst the risk distribution aspects associated with projects are clarified.

It is interesting to note that, when the characteristics of a municipal community partnership as presented by Cranko and Kahn (1999:30) (figure 2) are interpreted, the emphasis is throughout placed on empowerment, protecting of community interests, mutual accountability and responsiveness to community needs.

**Figure 2: Characteristics of municipal-community partnerships**



Source: Adapted from Cranko and Kahn (1999:30)

Cranko & Kahn's cited characteristics are similar to the (former) Department of Constitutional Development's study on so-called winning communities in 1998. Finally, Holtzhausen quotes this study in Fox and Van Rooyen eds. (2004:123) and suggests that winning communities' *best practices* include:

- **Building Bridges** – where communities extend their interests by connecting themselves with other entities that may assist them in the process of meeting their particular objectives.
- **Partnerships** – where communities, after having built bridges (see previous *best practice* on building bridges) partner with other entities to achieve particular development or service delivery objectives.
- **Business plans** – to assist communities to articulate their needs to stakeholders vividly. Such plans serve to outline actions to be taken as regards for instance proposed projects that immediately detail issues that require medium and long-term attention. Business plans include for instance specific objectives, methods by which objectives should be met (strategies) and costs aspects associated with the particular project. In addition, by way of the Dinokeng example, specific aspects to be covered by business plans could include the business philosophy, policy and legal aspects to be considered (governance), infrastructural aspects, socio-economic development imperatives and marketing strategies (Combined Land Owners Associations Integrated Business Plan: Preamble and Executive Summary: February 2005).

- **Record of work** – where all activities that are undertaken are done according to a set framework (constitution), resolutions are duly minuted and reports are regularly provided to stakeholders.
- **Expertise** – the necessary expertise needed to ensure project success should be identified and sourced, in the event where communities do not have such skills readily available.
- **Training** – capacity improvement should be recognised as an important factor to ensuring sustainable socio-economic development.
- **Financial control** – proper financial administrative and managerial practices should be maintained to ensure transparency and legitimacy. Statements should be regularly updated and procedures should be uncomplicated.
- **Leadership** – socio-economic development projects should benefit from having good leaders to provide the necessary impetus and to serve community needs. Such *project champions* may improve the success prognosis of complex projects.
- **Overcoming inactivity** – high unemployment and associated socio-economic symptoms tend to depress community spirit. Such feelings of hopelessness could be overcome through proper leadership and encouragement to become actively involved in organised community activities or development projects.

## AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Since different partnership options exist within the context of development and service delivery, it should be noted that risk management aspects associated with such endeavours might be significant. Government policy, which guides decision-making and facilitate the *enabling environment*, should be coherent and clear. Different government departments and different spheres of government do differ in terms of their partnership agreements. The differing approaches reflect a broader debate in the development and service delivery environment as to the true role of government(s) and methodologies associated with partnership agreements. In this regard, a food security-project is unique as it brings together a range of extra-ordinary considerations. In particular, an enabling environment should promote key public policy objectives (e.g. alleviating poverty, job creation and capacity skills building) (National Treasury, Public Private Partnerships, 2001:7).

The legislative part of the enabling environment in terms of promoting food security, should deal with the following aspects:

- It should cement the legal capacities of different spheres of government (whichever are relevant particular to the project) to create binding arrangements from the side of government.
- Current procurement arrangements tend to be focussed on conventional partnership arrangements and as soon as extraordinary demands are made through unconventional projects, it may be that no policy or legal direction is available.
- Contractual templates for extraordinary projects are mostly not readily available, which may hamper project planning and retard agreement processes. Therefore, skilled advisors should be used to assist in this regard.



- Current legislation does not provide detailed or clear guidelines for the mandatory consultative processes with stakeholders on various matters.

The following problems may still exist:

- Unaffordable partnerships – the lack of detailed guidelines as far as balancing the priorities between public and private sectors to maintain control over government's financial commitments. It may be difficult to ensure that partnerships do offer value for money, present an appropriate allocation of risks between the contracting parties, and are affordable in terms of current and projected budget provisions.
- Unmandated guarantees – many projects that may entail the collection of tariffs from the public are accompanied by requests from the private sector stakeholders for guarantees or performance undertakings.

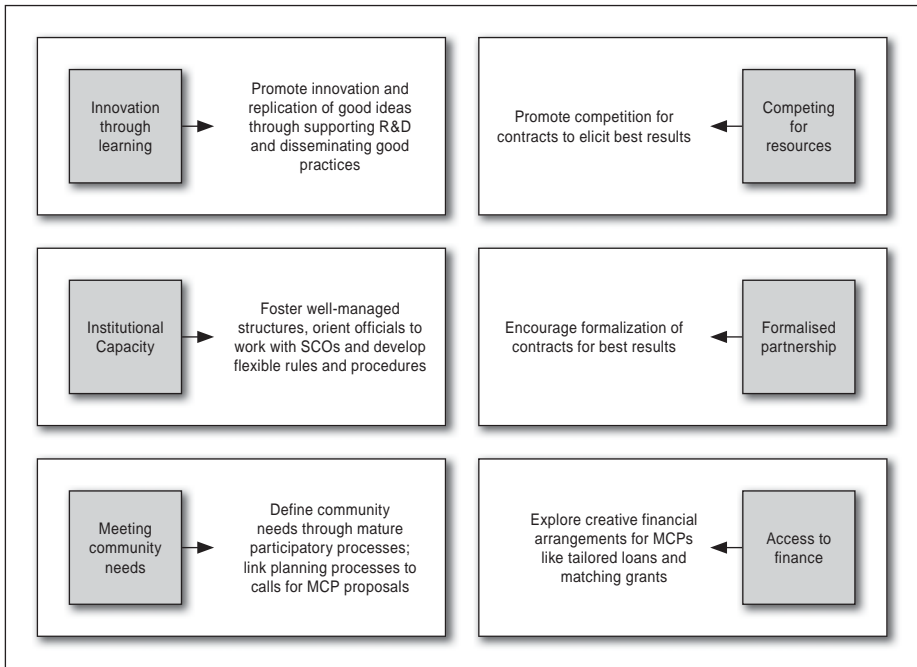
Another dimension of the enabling environment is one of institutional capacity and intergovernmental relations. Government institutions should refrain from conducting partnership processes, which do not integrate the interests of all stakeholders, both internal and external to the organisation. Thus public institutions should not operate in a vacuum. This may result in a fragmented approach to partnership interests and render such endeavours unsuccessful. It is important to maintain open communication with support institutions such as Treasury, or the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Unit (National Treasury, Public Private Partnerships, 2001:9).

If a public sector organisation is charged with the obligation to oversee partnership arrangements, it needs specific types of management and administrative capacity to fulfil this function. Such capacity may refer to financial, technical or managerial areas, which may not form part of the conventional operational functionality of a public sector organisation. Complex partnerships require improved skills from officials; two ways of dealing with this challenge is to concomitantly pursue skills development (capacity creation/improving) activities as well as reducing unnecessary complexity as far as partnership agreements are concerned (National Treasury, Public Private Partnerships, 2001:9).

To clarify this matter, figure three presents a concise explanation of the basic characteristics of what an enabling environment should entail. Essentially, six requirements exist:

- innovation should occur through learning;
- institutional capacity should be in place to ensure that proper support is presented to facilitate partnership success;
- it is imperative to ensure that community needs are met through such partnerships;
- fair competition should occur to access contracts and opportunities;
- contracting arrangements that govern partnerships should be formal, lucid and befitting the nature of the endeavour; and
- access to finance forms an important component in partnerships since restrained access to reasonable credit facilities is prohibitive to HDI (C)s or SMMEs to bid for contracts or to perform optimally.

**Figure 3: Characteristics of an enabling environment**



Source: Adapted from Cranko and Kahn (1999:31)

The preceding description of partnership issues is an attempt to contextually place socio-economic and service delivery projects within a particular mould. However, since such projects tend to be unique in many ways, they are often difficult to categorise explicitly. It is possible to clarify the risk distribution and accountability aspects associated with partnership agreements. The project planning protocols associated with stakeholder negotiations do conform to the normative requirements cited in this section. The enabling environment characteristics are generally prevalent. However, the specific form of public private partnership that a food security-project may conform to is yet unclear. It may reflect elements of public ownership and private operation as well as elements of community and user provision. The final form (or mix of forms) of partnership and subsequent contractual arrangements should be clarified as part of a process of thorough investigation and public participation.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN FOOD SECURITY POLICY MAKING

In a developing democracy, such as South Africa, public and community participation in the public policy making process, poses a challenge. Although a legislative framework exists, which seeks to promote public participation in decision-making, the actual practice thereof often falls short of the policy ideal. In various acts, such as the *Promotion of Access to*

*Information Act*, 2000, the South African government acknowledge that access to information is critical to enable citizens, including the poor and marginalised, to exercise their rights to promote a people-centred, participatory democracy. Since 1994, the government has put in place policies and legislation to promote participation. Chapter two of the Constitution, 1996, outlines the Bill of Rights, including the access to equality, human dignity, freedom, clean environment as well as rights to health care, food, water and access to information. In terms of the roles of the national, provincial and local spheres of government, the Constitution provides in section 151(1) that municipalities should encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in local government. Moreover, the *Local Government Municipal Systems Act*, 2000 defines “the legal nature of a municipality as including the local community within the municipal area, working in partnership with the municipality’s political and administrative structures provided for community participation”. Almost all of the acts directed towards regulating service delivery in municipalities put community participation at the core of such delivery, for example:

- *White Paper on Public Service Delivery*, 1997
- *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act*, 2000
- *Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act*, 2003
- *National Policy Framework for Public Participation*, 2007.

Community participation is therefore a critical element of local government and the assumption is that public participation may contribute towards making policies concerning service delivery more sustainable. The aforementioned should also apply to the development of a food security policy for a municipality.

According to the *National Policy Framework for Public Participation* (NPFPP) (2007:15), public/community participation has been used to build local capacity and self-reliance and also to justify the extension of the power of the state. In the aforementioned document public/community participation is defined “as an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making”. It is further defined as a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives.

The NPFPP (2007:15) also outlines the basic assumptions underlying public/community participation, namely that:

- participation is designed to promote the values of good governance and human rights;
- participation acknowledges a fundamental right of all people to participate in the governance system;
- participation is designed to narrow the social distance between the electorate and elected institutions;
- participation requires recognising the intrinsic value of all people, investing in their ability to contribute to governance processes; and
- people can participate as individuals, interest groups or communities.

More generally, in South Africa in the context of public participation, community is defined as a municipality, with elected ward committees; hence ward committees play a central role

in linking up elected institutions with the people. Other forums of communication reinforce these linkages with communities like the *izimbizo*, road shows and the *makgotla*.

## CONCLUSION

The state of the world economy has resulted in a renewed debate on the vexed question of how food security could be enhanced among the world's destitute and impoverished peoples. Local government practitioners are challenged to give effect to food security policies by finding ways to ensure that an enabling environment is maintained, and that appropriate forms of partnerships are forged with relevant stakeholders, for instance communities or business entities. In particular, community partnerships are dependant on particular principles. The aforementioned discourse is an attempt to apply a particular body of knowledge to the food security arena. Much research still needs to be conducted in this regard and public administration practitioners are in particular obliged to engage therein.

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