

INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S WORKING FOR WATER PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

Current initiatives by the South African Government pertaining to development include programmes and projects, which are rurally based and which are focused towards improving the socio-economic disposition of marginalised rural communities. However, Government also realises the importance of ensuring sustainability within such initiatives, which include natural environmental conservation and preservation.

One example of a rural development initiative is the Working for Water Programme, which is administered by the national Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, as lead entity. In this article the normative criteria to attain integrated and sustainable rural development are presented and benchmarked against the Working for Water Programme to attempt to establish whether synergies in this regard have been achieved. In addition, suggestions are made with regards to additional programmes and projects to extend and augment this Programme.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable rural development forms an important part of the South African Government's quest towards improving the socio-economic disposition of poor and marginalized communities. In addition, the South African Government accepts that the continued health of the Country's natural environmental resources form the bedrock

of further sustainable development. Naturally, the ideal rural sustainable development programmes and projects should address issues of for instance poverty eradication, whilst lending justice to the need for natural environmental health.

An example of the South African Government's programme in this regard is the Working for Water Programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), which was initiated in response to the concern that alien invader plant species are impacting negatively on South Africa's scarce natural water and soil resources. Such invader species cause devastating damage to the natural environment where indigenous plants are displaced and out-competed as far as scarce water resources and growth space are concerned.

In terms of dealing with the above-mentioned problem, Government has introduced an approach of job creation (through labour intensive eradication practices), which not only provides temporary jobs to those employed in the programme but also serves to raise rural communities' level of consciousness about environmental issues in general. In particular, communities are educated on how these invader plant species interact with the environment and impact on the general economy, and on rural livelihoods.

Whilst it is believed that poverty alleviation may be addressed through creating such types of employment opportunities for rural people, additional innovative initiatives to promote economic growth should continuously be considered. If new programmes and projects could be introduced to substitute the eradicated invader plant species with naturally occurring species, which could be harvested to improve economic growth in the long term, a significant form of sustainable development may be achieved. Then, jobs are not only generated as part of the programme process of eradicating invader plant species, but also through substituting such plant species with environmentally friendly species, which may develop into an independent industry as such. An option in this regard, therefore may be to introduce indigenous plant species, which may be harvested to produce bio-diesel.

The review of the Programme below will explain how it serves the objectives of integratedness and sustainability in rural development and the problem of invader plants in South Africa. This article also explores the extent of the Working for Water Programme and the potential of augmenting its yields by stimulating the bio-diesel industry and the possible mutualism between the two. In other words, a partnership to achieve integration between two programmes in pursuance of social, economic and environmental development objectives expressed in terms of sustainability and integratedness. The case of a bio-diesel initiative in the North-West Province is cited to illustrate the potential that this industry may hold.

SUSTAINABILITY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The South African *National Environmental Management Act*, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998) defines sustainable development as '... the integration of social, economic and environmental factors into planning, implementation and decision-making so as to ensure that development serves present and future generations. In practical terms, sustainable development in South Africa would be about access to water, food security, health-

care, energy, employment opportunities, debt relief, more development assistance and a safe and clean environment (with the focus on self-reliant and cost-effective development). Sustainable development is about improving the overall quality of life of individuals as well as satisfying human needs.

The World Commission on Environment and Development (Hugo, Viljoen and Meeuwis, 1997: 176) emphasizes that sustainable development is “ a process of change in which the exploitation of resources the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change, are made consistent with future as well as present needs”. Against the backdrop set by the aforementioned definition, Hugo *et al.* (1997: 176) establish the five principles of sustainable development:

- maintaining essential ecological processes preserving biological diversity;
- sustaining the use of species and ecosystems, some of which support important industries;
- developing diverse opportunities for non-material use (spiritual, recreational and aesthetic) use of natural resources;
- maintaining and improving quality of life; and
- developing a long-term sustainable economy.

These principles are regarded as the basic points of departure in the quest towards attaining sustainable development. It is notable that the principles address human-spiritual, ecological and physical as well as economical needs in a holistic manner, seeking to find a balance amongst potentially conflicting aspirations.

For sustainable development that will have a lasting socio-economic, political and environmental impact, all developmental programmes need to be co-ordinated and various development agendas of all spheres of government need to be integrated. A programme entitled the Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) was introduced with a view to establishing a positive rural development trajectory in selected areas (From Action to Impact: the Africa Region’s Rural Strategy, 2002: 15). The premise upon which the ISRDS rests is that rural development should be implemented in a participatory and decentralised fashion in order to respond to articulated priorities and viable opportunities in rural areas. The ISRDS falls within the context of Integrated Development Planning applied within South African municipalities and its implementation occurs through means of existing planning, management and funding mechanisms.

In relation to the above exposition, the Working for Water Programme and, as a second step the (re-) establishment of indigenous woodlands for the purposes harvesting for bio-diesel and associated products, may warrant consideration.

IMPERATIVES ASSOCIATED WITH RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

According to the World Bank, it should be acknowledged that different regions and countries reflect different demographics, particularities and variables that should be considered in planning and implementing development programmes and

projects. However, strategic interventions to be launched with a view to attaining sustainable rural development, fall into four broad categories, being (From Action to Impact: the Africa Region’s Rural Strategy, 2002: 3):

- instituting measures to ensure that governments and institutions improve service delivery to the rural poor;
- promoting widely shared growth;
- enhancing natural resources management practices; and
- reducing risk and vulnerability.

The **first** strategy category pertains to issues of governance. This category includes aspects associated with security, adherence to the rule of law, as well as probity in public spending. Emphasis is also placed on instituting systems to improve public procurement and efficient management of public finances. Associated aspects in this category pertain to decentralisation to strengthen local capacity to manage its own rural development programmes and projects, placing communities at the centre of development, supporting voluntary producers’ organisations, ensuring that rural communities’ needs and aspirations are taken into account in processes of national development planning, and providing institutions and organisations to ensure efficient and effective management of natural resources.

The **second** strategy category involves the acceleration of growth through technological change and the facilitation of trade opportunities. Wages are increased, food prices are stabilised. Governments should create a rural development environment conducive to growth by controlling factors such as the stability of the macroeconomic environment and the incentives that provide for investment and trade; the underlying competitiveness of production, including productivity, quality, policies specific to the sector or commodity; and transport costs. Specific interventions in this regard may include:

- reforming policies and institutions to encourage investment;
- improving provision of agricultural services, including research and extension;
- increasing investment in infrastructure and the quality of services in rural areas;
- expanding access to rural financial services;
- improving water control systems;
- implementing land policies that conform to principles of security of tenure, fair distribution of ownership and access and effective and effective and efficient management of natural resources; and
- improving management of livestock production systems.

The **third** strategy category deals with the management of natural resources. Principles that should apply in this regard are:

- establish a proper regulatory framework and legislation to protect the environment and build capacity to ensure adherence;
- avoid harm by conducting environmental impact assessments;
- mitigate adverse impacts identified in impact assessments through environmental management plans;

- empower communities and individuals to take full responsibility for managing natural resources and contributing to their sustainable livelihood;
- place environmental issues centre to broader development programmes through environmental support programmes and appropriate capacity building efforts;
- address past damage and assist communities to improve their management of natural resources through focussed investments;
- establish and improve incentives for long-term environmental stewardship as opposed to short-term exploitation; this could be done e.g. through means of concessions, predictable natural resource charges or taxes.

Fourthly, the multiple risks associated with rural life in Africa and the vulnerability of communities should be reduced. Approaches to managing risk may include, for instance: prudent macro-economic management, public health programmes (e.g. immunization and cost-effective nutrition interventions), education programmes to ensure rural poor children access to schooling, and actions to manage conflict and enhance security. Consideration could also be afforded to the following mechanisms to lessen the impact of risks to assist people to cope with:

- price stabilisation boards and funds;
- government-sponsored crop insurance;
- generalised consumer and producer subsidies;
- subsidised micro-credit facilities;
- public works programmes; and
- public pension schemes.

Strategies to promote, implement and sustain rural development should be based on apposite information. In addition, the planning and implementation of programmes and projects, are dependent on, and informed by the following data (Fox & van Rooyen, 2004: 95):

- area demographics (i.e. per municipality, per province and ultimately for the country as a whole);
- labour market conditions (that would include employment patterns per municipality, per economic sector or per province);
- economic characteristics such as the structure of local economics and long-term economic opportunities;
- physical and location (placement) conditions to establish local assets and liabilities to determine local economic advantages and disadvantages of particular projects for particular areas;
- the economic policy framework within which development has to be reconciled with national policy objectives;
- the financial constraints within which local government, but also the central and provincial governments could accommodate capital and technical needs;
- a realistic assessment of successful and less successful economic programmes from all over the country, and the region – also international best practices; and

- a concise outlay of available development inventive packages from government institutions and other agencies.

The above strategy suggestions should of course be concomitantly implemented to form an integrated whole to address issues of sustainable development. Similarly, if the objectives and modalities associated with the Working for Water Programme and the possibilities that forestation for the purposes of bio-diesel production is considered, the objectives informing these strategy suggestions may largely be met. Following is a description of the aforementioned programmes to indicate how integrated sustainable rural development may be achieved.

ALIEN PLANT SPECIES' IMPACT ON SOUTH AFRICA'S BIO-DIVERSITY

Invading alien plants (IAPs) are believed to be the single biggest threat to plant and animal bio-diversity. Plant and animal bio-diversity are very much tied to South Africa's natural environmental health and socio-economic growth. Some IAPs, which were originally introduced for commercial production of timber in for instance the forestry industry, have spread out into the wild to cover an area of over 10 million hectares where they continue to displace indigenous trees and out-compete them in terms of consumption of scarce water resources. IAPs have a far greater impact on water than the indigenous plants that they displace. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) indicates that that if IAPs are left uncontrolled, the problem doubles every 15 years. Research has shown that IAPs waste 7% of South Africa's water resources; reduces agricultural capacity; intensifies flooding of rivers; increases the incidence of veldt fires; causes soil erosion; destroys rivers whilst it increases the siltation of dams and estuaries; results in poor water quality; and displaces and causes mass extinction of indigenous plant and animal species. Richardson and van Wilgen (2004: 45) postulate that the ecological impact of invasive alien plants is a product of (a) the (potential) geographical range of the invader, (b) its (potential) abundance or density, and (c) the effect of an individual invader or the measurable impacts at the smallest spatial scale. It is also indicated that elements of global change (global warming, elevated atmospheric carbon dioxide, nitrogen deposition, and habitat fragmentation) are already interacting worsening the impact of plant invasions (Richardson, Moran, Le Maitre, Rouget, and Foxcroft, 2004: 126).

Although alien plant species (mainly timber species) have been introduced into the country for commercial production of timber, the devastating effects of some of these species result in underperformance in the economy, which impacts among others on the poor and those vulnerable people whose livelihoods are tied to the natural environment. South Africa has an area of close to 1, 35 million hectares of plantation trees of almost entirely alien species, and only 530 000 hectares of closed canopy indigenous trees. Government recognizes the fact that though commercial forestry plantations consume a large volume of water for their sustenance, they play an important part in the socio-economic development of the country in terms job creation and provision of raw material needed in other industries. Yet, if left to invade at random, such species may cause detriment.

The problem with alien plant species is not with formal forestry activities as such, but with plant species which managed to escape from their controlled commercial environment into the wild, where encroachment had occurred into protected areas such as wetlands. Given the fact that some IAPs are able to aggressively subdue and displace indigenous plants, their spread in the wild is believed to be exponential.

THE WORKING FOR WATER PROGRAMME

The Working for Water Programme was launched in October 1995, and had received initial funding to the amount of R25 million from the then Ministry of Reconstruction and Development (RDP). The expenditure on the programme has increased to an amount of R400m in 2003/04 financial year, with R1, 95 billion having been spent since inception up to and including 2002/03 the financial year (Marais, van Wilgen and Stevens, 2004: 97).

The Programme primarily affects the core mandates of the Departments of Water Affairs and Forestry, Agriculture, and Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and as such reports to all three these entities. The challenge is to integrate the implementation activities associated with the Programme, which needs to be carried out by each department. In addition to these departments, other departments have been playing a supporting role to the programme based on their department-specific mandates, and are listed as follows: Arts and Culture (e.g. curio development), Defence (e.g. use of military veterans to clear land used by the military), Education (Environmental awareness in schools, as well as advocacy), Health (HIV/AIDS and reproductive health awareness for workers of the programme, as well as integrating HIV/AIDS sufferers into the programme), Justice and Constitutional Development (e.g. review and streamlining of legislation), Labour (e.g. involvement of SETAs through provision of accredited training for workers to ensure exit from the programme), Land Affairs (e.g. access to affected State land), Public Works (e.g. access to affected State land, and expanded public works programme), Science and Technology (e.g. development of appropriate technology to control invasive plants), Trade and Industry (e.g. stimulation of SMME opportunities from invasive plants control, as well as support with regard export opportunities for products coming from this programme), the National Treasury (e.g. setting up of public/private partnerships, coordination of National Poverty Alleviation, and technical assistance in the formulation of strategic and operational plans), Provincial and Local Government (e.g. support to municipalities to use incentives and disincentives to property owners for the control of invasive plants for example through the use of property tax and Integrated Development Planning strategies of the relevant municipalities), Correctional Services (e.g. integrating ex-offenders into the programme), Social Welfare (e.g. child care support for workers). In addition to having to coordinate horizontally across departments, linkages and coordination had to be done vertically between Provincial Departments (provincial growth and development strategies, agricultural policies and provincial environmental management policies) and municipalities (e.g. incentives and disincentives, funding, community mobilization and local economic development strategies), since the implementation takes place within their jurisdiction.

The Working for Water Programme has been designed with a biased emphasis on poverty alleviation. Job creation, education and training, child welfare, HIV/AIDS, and

reproductive health have been built into the programme for the benefit of the workers. Other social aspects include integration of ex-offenders into the programme. For example, targets set for the programme in 2002 were as follows:

- create 18 000 jobs per annum, for previously unemployed individuals;
- allocate 60% of these jobs to women;
- allocate 20% of the jobs to youth (persons under the age of 23 years);
- allocate 2% (minimum amount) of jobs to disabled persons;
- ensure every worker receives a minimum average of two days of training per month;
- ensure every project has a functional steering committee;
- ensure every worker receives an hour of HIV/AIDS awareness training per quarter; and
- ensure every project allows for access to childcare facilities.

A number of targets and standards were set for the programme, which forms a basis (not the only basis) for assessing programme performance. It is estimated (2003/04 Annual Report: 1) that since the inception of the programme, close to 1 million hectares of invasive alien plants had been cleared. This represents a major investment by government.

The following have been listed in the 2003/04 Annual Report as achievements:

- full budget spent within the financial year;
- employment opportunities provided to 32 935 people;
- 52% of work went to women;
- 20% of work went to the youth;
- 1% of work went to the disabled;
- 194 440 hectares of initial clearing of invasive alien plants completed; and
- 598 135 hectares of follow-up clearing of invasive alien plants completed.

If the aforementioned description is considered, it becomes clear that the four sustainable development categories of strategies proposed by the World Bank namely, *governance, widely shared growth, natural resource management practices and reducing risk and vulnerability* are considered, the Working for Water Programme may meet the criteria. In relation to the above exposition, a partnership specifically with the objective of promoting the bio-diesel industry may bring additional sustainability to development in the Country. If business, the community and Government could cooperate to use the bio-diesel industry to rehabilitate areas cleared through means of the activities associated with the Working for Water Programme, the impressive achievements quoted above may be improved in the form of socio-economic growth and natural environmental health.

BIO-DIESEL PRODUCTION

The environmental concerns against the use of fossil fuel, as well as the continuing depletion of fossil fuel reserves have brought about a search for alternative sources of fuel. Fossil energy, from which petroleum products are derived, contains high concentrations of carbon, and as such a high volume of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere during the burning process. It is also estimated

that should the current consumption rate of crude oil continue, there would only be enough oil reserves to last until 2020 (Miller, 1990:484, cited in Hugo, 2004:138). As the reserves for crude oil continue to diminish, demand would exceed supply and this would push up the price leading to serious repercussions in the world economy. Developed countries that are highly industrialized such as the USA and EU, whose future economic growth depends on the reliable supply of energy, have invested significant financial resources in the technological research for bio-fuel. EU countries and Britain have already diversified their fuel sources, and have successfully been using bio-diesel for the past fifteen years either in its raw form or as a blend to petroleum products.

Bio-diesel is a bio-degradable product and as such poses a limited threat to nature. It is a renewable energy, which is sourced from plant material, which can be planted as an annual or permanent crop. It is also classified as a non-flammable liquid given its low flash point of 160 degrees Celcius. Due to its low flash point it is much safer to use than highly combustible fuels, which tend to cause explosions during car accidents. Diesel, in particular petroleum diesel has been shown to have 15% more energy potential than petrol in that it produces 40,9 mega joules (MJ) per litre when burned as opposed to petrol which produces 34,8 MJ/L. Bio-diesel in particular is said to have 37,8 MJ/kg as specific energy density and 33,3-35,7 MJ/L as volumetric energy density. Bio-diesel is also believed to have better lubrication qualities than petroleum diesel even when blended with pure petroleum diesel, and this helps in reducing the wear and tear of engine parts (Bio-diesel SA, 2006).

It is also believed that while poverty alleviation would be addressed through job creation opportunities for rural people, economic growth of the country may be boosted. The extent of the contribution of bio-diesel to GDP growth depends on the ultimate decision by Government whether to make the blending of bio-diesel with petroleum diesel compulsory or voluntary. Given the fact that 7,5 billion litres of diesel are consumed annually in South Africa, a 5% blending rate as prescribed in the Government regulations, may create a demand for 325 million litres of bio-diesel annually. Should Government decide on compulsory blending it may create long term certainty for the investors to set up processing plants, bringing in much needed foreign capital and world-class technology. Marginal land could then be put to productive use by planting with low maintenance permanent crops that would produce yield on a sustainable basis for 25 to 30 years.

PROSPECTS FOR BIO-DIESEL IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African Government has published a *White Paper on the Promotion of Renewable Energy and Clean Energy Development* (2002) that addresses the diversification of energy sources. Eventually, this will be followed by an implementation strategy that will turn the deliverables envisaged in the *White Paper on the Promotion of Renewable Energy and Clean Energy Development* (2002) into achievable targets. The Central Energy Fund also has identified the need to diversify the fuel sources by increasing the use of fuel produced from biomass. Government has already announced incentives for the production of bio-diesel when it indicated in 2002 that it envisages to

eventually reduce the fuel levy on diesel produced from bio-mass by 30% (Engineering News, December 2005). The Department of Science and Technology commissioned the CSIR in 2003 to investigate the prospects for commercial production of bio-diesel in South Africa, (Engineering News, December 2005). However, the Country still has to develop a coherent national bio-diesel strategy to give direction to investors and all role players.

A joint implementation committee (JIC), consisting of amongst others government departments, South African petroleum industry association, farmers, oil companies and unions has been set up to give direction to the formulation of a strategy on bio-diesel. The JIC has managed through the assistance of the South African Bureau of Standards to develop a bio-diesel standard for South Africa (Engineering News, December 2005). However, a current initiative in the North West Province may prove to be an important laboratory to inform on the establishment of an extensive and coherent bio-diesel strategy. Initially 45000 hectares has been set aside in Mafikeng for the planting of indigenous *Jatropha Curcas* trees. The advantage with the *Jatropha* tree is that it can be used to earn additional revenue in a form of carbon credits (a tradable "currency" that regulates the amount of carbon emissions allowed into the environment by industries), mainly from developed countries that have to reduce and stabilize their carbon emissions to certain pre-determined levels. These are hardy plants, which may be planted in arid to semi-arid conditions, as has been demonstrated in Ghana, Gambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Close to R500 million is budgeted for the project (Naude, Interview: 2006). Oil will be extracted for bio-diesel production and the cake remaining after the seeds may be processed into fertilizer (Paralox).

The project is known as the **Alternative Bio-diesel Project**, which is run by a company called Mafikeng Bio-diesel. This is a first pilot project of this kind for South Africa and second for the world (Morocco) that will request carbon credits through the Kyoto Treaty. This rural job creation project uses under-utilised and marginalized land. According to Naude (Interview: 2006) the characteristics of this project are:

- sustainability over the long period;
- high initial input cost (instead of annual input);
- development rural job creation opportunities;
- complete "Source to Plate" development; this includes rural development issues such as institutional and training aspects;
- no competition for food security; and
- prospects for up-and downstream opportunities.

CONCLUSION

The Working for Water Programme is a complex programme that clearly demonstrates the application of governance and intergovernmental concerns in the planning and implementation and evaluation of a public development programme. The programme has successfully managed to integrate within what was initially an environmental problem, socio-economic development.

Successful implementation of a public policy involves the integration of multiple decisions taken by multiple stakeholders (integratedness). The Working for Water Programme

may provide valuable lessons towards the planning and implementation of other government programmes, around integrated planning and implementation for the achievement of multiple spin-offs. If bio-diesel production programmes could then be successfully used to improve quality of lands cleared of invader plant species, which were cleared through means of the Working for Water Programme, sustainable development may be enhanced.

The five principles of sustainable development are reflected in the design and intent of the Working for Water Programme and may thus be emulated in the case of the Alternative Bio-diesel Project. Also, the Programme meets strategies associated with integrated sustainable rural development. Further research into the detailed modalities of the above partnership proposal is warranted.

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ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES: HOW TO REPOSITION INSTITUTIONS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE AND INCREASED SERVICE DELIVERY

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ABSTRACT

The reputation and stability of a government depend upon the conduct of public functionaries and the public perception of their conduct. Public functionaries should act justly and fairly to all, not only with lip service to transparency and openness, but also ensuring that these are manifestly and undoubtedly seen to be done. This is especially in circumstances where the possibility of a conflict of interest may become an ethical dilemma.

Both elected and appointed functionaries in South Africa are expected to adhere at all times to the *intra vires* rule, as ethical conduct is, within the public service, always subject to formal prescriptions based on the policy of the ruling party, as expressed in terms of law. Contrary, adherence to the *intra vires* rule, which requires acting within the formal prescriptions of the law, leads to conflicting actions that might develop into ethical dilemmas. Common among these with which public functionaries are confronted, involve incidents such as corruption, public accountability, nepotism, information leaks, and professional ethics.

This research article centres around these ethical dilemmas and democratic values to suggest repositioning of institutions for good governance and increased service delivery. The research approach is descriptive and analytical, though interpretative.