

## **Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainability of Community-based Projects in the Inanda Region in Durban, South Africa**

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**ABSTRACT** In South Africa, although, various poverty alleviation projects have been implemented with some degree of success, there still remain alarmingly high levels of poverty among those that have been historically disadvantaged. Based on field research in the Urban Renewal Program in Inanda, North of Durban, the present study qualitatively examined the perspectives of project implementers regarding the appreciation for local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and its relative impact on the failure of poverty alleviation projects. The central premise of the present study is that there is a notable gap of IKS and its integration in the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) and this has had a ripple impact on the implementation and sustainability of community based projects in Inanda. The study examines the policy context of social development, the importance attached to IKS as part of a holistic poverty alleviation strategy within the broad social development framework currently in place in the country and presents suggestions for incorporating IKS into future poverty alleviation projects.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Twenty years, since, the advent of the new political dispensation, South Africa continues to grapple with high rates of poverty and inequality. The KwaZulu-Natal Draft provincial Growth and Development Plan (2012-2030) indicated that 33% of the economically active population in the province lives in dire poverty as they do not have access to food security and employment in the formal economic sector. Many writers argued that as a result of skewed distribution of resources and income, millions of people continue to live in poverty (Frye 2007; Desai 2007; Van Der Westhuizen 2012). Poverty and inequality reflects many of the structural strains in society and must be considered in relation to the socio-political, economic and cultural factors in which it is deeply rooted. It is widely acknowledged that economic development that does not provide opportunities for gainful employment of people and that does not consider how the intersections of race, class and gender influence people's access to status, privilege and

power will limit social development initiatives (Sewpaul 2013; Raniga et al. 2014; Holscher 2008).

Post 1994, the development approach to social welfare as enshrined in the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) was acknowledged as an appropriate policy directive for the eradication of poverty in the country (Sewpaul 2013; Holscher 2008, Lombard 2008). Patel (2008) contends that redesigning a social welfare system has indeed proved to be a complex process in South Africa, with increased unemployment and poverty rates. The most successful poverty alleviation strategy in the country has been the expansive social security system with almost 15 million beneficiaries (Statistics South Africa 2012). However, such a quantitative assessment of the state's success in term of rolling out its poverty alleviation strategy to its impoverished citizens provides very little insight into the cost-benefit derived by beneficiaries through such cash roll outs and the level to which it is sustainable. A qualitative measure, perhaps, will be more revealing on the impact of such state expenditure on the lives of a significant section of the South African populace confined to the margins of impoverishment.

Given the expansive social security system, writers such as Raniga and Ngcobo (2014), Holscher (2008) and Gray (2006) question its sustainability and argued that because social

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development goals are intertwined with economic goals, one cannot evaluate the progress of development without examining shifts in economic policy. Gray (2006) suggested the point that there has been limited success of social development projects since the economic policies no longer focus on reconstruction and development but continue to benefit the elite, thereby, widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Sewpaul (2005: 312), in her critique of the draft South African Family Policy, maintains that programmatic intervention directed towards individuals and families, "without attention to the structural barriers in people's lives serves to not only exacerbate poverty but prevents families from realizing the goals of self-reliance, family pride, dignity and respect and family independence".

The assertion made by Sewpaul (2005) is qualified by the Millennium Development Goals Mid-term Country Report of September 2007 which aims at halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger in the country by the year 2015. The report suggested that South Africa has huge challenges in terms of eradicating poverty in terms of the MDG expectations. With 57% of the households in the KwaZulu-Natal province living below international poverty line of USD2 per day or R620 per month, it places huge fiscal constraints on the state by way of expanded social grants (MDG Mid Term Report 2007: 13). The National Development Plan (2011: 5) aptly acknowledges this distorted development and that a major challenge facing the state is that, "in partnership with communities, to build on the platform of social services and social security and contribute to a more balanced approach by developing the skills and capabilities of people". A commitment provided by the state through a "People's Contract" which informs poverty eradication intervention programs through employment and skills development is an enormous challenge for the state to surmount, given the pace of delivery to the poor which is highlighted by social movements and organs of civil society by frequent political protests and confrontation with the state on a daily basis.

Notwithstanding the different critiques of poverty alleviation policies in the South African context, confrontation by the poor for a better quality of life and structural challenges imposed on the states poverty alleviation implementation strategy, a notable absence of indigenous

knowledge systems (IKS) and its integration in the development social welfare policy is an oversight on the role it can play in poverty alleviation projects. The importance of IKS in development projects in South Africa has gained impetus since 2002 through the establishment of an Interdepartmental Committee on IKS which draws on institutional support from all National Departments. In November 2004, IKS was written into official policy under the aegis of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the official institutional mechanism through which it was to coordinate, develop and implement its policy with eleven other national departments (Department of Science and Technology 2004: 27). The policy acknowledges that "indigenous knowledge has always been and continues to be the primary factor in the survival and welfare of the majority of South Africans". Be that as it may, what is noteworthy from this policy and institutional arrangement is the absence of the National Department of Social Development from integrating IKS within its foundational policy, namely, the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) and the ripple impact, this had, on the sustainability of poverty alleviation projects in the country.

Given the failure of development projects and persistent levels of poverty, there is renewed interest in an alternative approach to development that emphasizes the cultural dimension of development (Gumisai 2007; Mihindou 2006; Biggs 2005; Dia 1996; Davis and Ebbe 1995). In the development literature, an area that is often overlooked is the potential of indigenous knowledge as the single largest knowledge resource which is only beginning to be mobilized. Its potential for a positive impact on the development enterprise has always been ignored. In part, the reason for this is the misperception by development practitioners that African local customs and traditions are irrational and incompatible with conventional western strategies for economic development. Very little importance was accorded to it as an effective source of knowledge to cope with present day needs and challenges. This was partly due to development projects being blue printed and imported from other failed program experiments by development agencies (Korten 1980) without being adapted to local conditions and situations for its implementation. Swanepoel and De Beer

(2006) argued that development projects were used to indoctrinate local people into subscribing to Western values. It is, thus, not surprising that projects have been known to have alienated and marginalized the very people for whom such strategies were meant to help (Nel et al. 1997: 57). This colonial approach, of treating them as passive and helpless subjects devoid of any knowledge and skills except for those acquired from formal educational institutions to make any significant impact on their social well-being, has been a key factor in the failure of projects (Ife and Tesseriero 2006; Stephney and Popple 2008). As a consequence, the period of the 1980s and '90s was characterized as an era of development crisis arising from policy failures by formal government systems (Leach 1995: 461) which resulted in very little faith being expressed in the Western 'external agency' model of development imposed from the top both by national governments and international development agencies.

Bearing the above deliberations in mind, this paper presents the findings of qualitative field research undertaken in the Urban Renewal Program node of Inanda in the eThekweni Metropolitan Area, KwaZulu-Natal. The study seeks to evaluate the extent to which IKS is integrated in the different poverty alleviation projects implemented by development agents as part of the National Poverty Reduction Program and the impact this has had on the success or otherwise in ameliorating poverty in the node. The reason why Inanda was chosen as an important research site to test the incorporation of IKS into poverty alleviation programs is due to its historical socio-political profile. Inanda is characterized by a bifurcated socio-political structure in that almost half of its geographical area falls under the tribal authority system which conforms to many indigenous forms of social, cultural and religious knowledge systems.

The present study is founded on field research of selected poverty alleviation projects implemented by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Social Development since 2001. Using a variety of research techniques (observations, structured and semi-structured interviews with community stakeholders and Department of Social Development officials, focus group interviews with project beneficiaries and the study of project proposals, the paper identifies key challenges facing project sustainability as a result of not

taking into consideration local conditions and knowledge systems in challenging high levels of poverty in the Inanda region. Community stakeholders in the study comprised tribal authority structures, local government councilors, and municipal department officials involved in enhancing social development of the region. The unemployed, senior citizens, single mothers and the youth constituted the focus groups informing the study. In addition, projects involving bead-making, block making, food garden, and poultry and sewing groups were evaluated.

The study does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of the role and importance of IKS in poverty alleviation projects as much has already been documented. What this paper seeks to provide through field data analysis is the localized context and challenges facing poverty alleviation projects which have been launched without the Provincial Department of Social Development's consideration for IKS and its impact on their sustainability. It makes an argument for the integration of IKS which has been excluded from the different life cycles of poverty alleviation projects. The study commences with a brief synthesis on the poverty alleviation policy context in South Africa, followed by a profile of the study locality and thereafter an analysis of field data which highlights the importance of integrating IKS in future poverty alleviation projects.

### **Poverty Alleviation Policy Context in South Africa**

The Developmental Social Welfare (DSW) paradigm mooted in 1997 was viewed as a panacea to all of South Africa's poverty woes which were inherited from apartheid. DSW was a direct response to the post-apartheid vision to eradicate poverty and promote conditions for the reconstruction and development of the majority of the black population. This paradigm emphasizes that social development is contingent on economic development. It stresses that economic development will have very little meaning if it is not accompanied by improvements in social wellbeing of people challenged by poverty. A preventive rather than a curative approach is promoted emphasizing long-term, sustainable development involving poor people as active

participants in economic development projects rather than making them dependent on state sponsored social welfare grants (Midgley and Piachaud 2013). Moreover the process of developing projects is based on collective co-operation and action where local people have the power to change the conditions impacting the quality of their lives. This process is based on Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of social capital which maintains that there is a strong relationship between levels of trust, reciprocity and civic participation and the quality of governance among diverse communities. As such, building social capital in communities is incumbent on social networks and cooperation for mutual benefit – the individuals, groups, institutions and organizations that make up society. The focus as put forth by Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) and Ife and Tesseriero (2006) are the need to strengthen collaborative stakeholder partnerships that seek to promote the sustainability of poverty alleviation projects and programmes. In this sense development projects can become transferable and transformative (Ledwith 2005).

Key elements such as mobilizing assets, strong supportive relationships within the community and the links between local communities and external agencies such as government departments and NGOs have the power to either influence or undermine the achievement of project goals (Raniga 2014). The challenge however is that there is much fragmentation and little cooperation between community organizations in both government and NGO sector in respect of the planning and implementation of poverty projects. Instead competitions for funding and resources have become the order of the day (Raniga, Simpson and Mthembu 2014). For the context of this paper, the authors argue that integration of IKS and focus on social cohesions and trusting relationships are critical for both government and the NGO sectors to nurture in order for poverty alleviation projects to be sustainable.

DSW aims to break away from a context where government officials in the past determined who benefited from development projects. Historically, state led and sponsored develop-

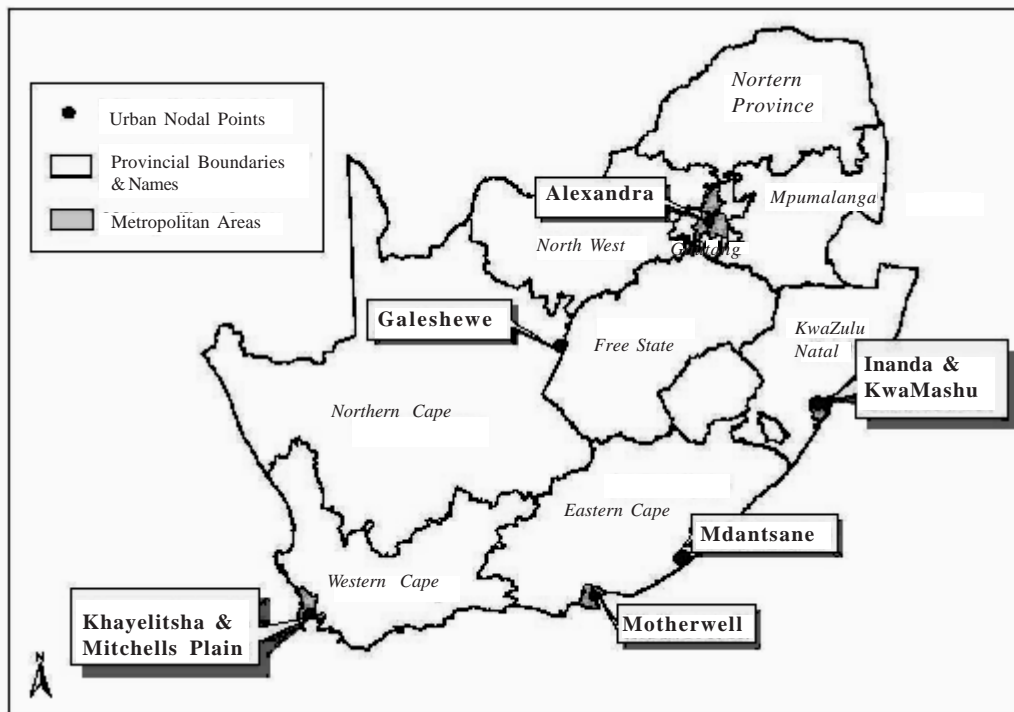


Fig. 1. Map that illustrates the 13 rural and 8 urban nodes identified under the national poverty relief project.

ment agents were the key initiators and implementers of development projects. By virtue of this status quo, the power relationship in the development process was characterized by one of 'a provider and a beneficiary' with the former representing the powerful state institution and the latter comprising poverty afflicted communities. By adopting a community development approach, DSW aims to re-orientate the development process from the state being 'controllers and gatekeepers' to one of facilitators and supporters in development and poverty alleviation projects where ownership lies with local people in communities. Such a breakthrough however was contingent on the extent to which institutional capacity within the Department of Social Development the official state apparatus responsible for the implementation of DSW "would be able to support and sustain development and poverty alleviation projects and programs especially at the level of its human resources capacity" (Everatt and Gwagwa 2005: 28).

Although at a theoretical level, DSW may appear to be a post-apartheid innovation, experimentation with the concept may be traced as early as the 1990s under the apartheid regime through engagement with civil society organizations to pioneer development from the grassroots. In pursuance of this concept, the Independent Development Trust (IDT) was tasked to implement poverty alleviation programs in the education, health, urban development, welfare, rural development and micro-enterprises sector. For the period 1991-1997 the IDT disbursed R2.43bn through 8800 projects nationally. Although, the IDT was lauded for its achievement by reaching out to some 8m South Africans, it was criticized for not operating within a national development framework. As a consequence, the majority of the black poor benefited superficially with little promise of sustaining such an investment, while the countries rich white population group enjoyed social security benefits derived from a diverse number of state funded programs (Patel and Stewart 2000).

In 1997 an attempt was made to resuscitate the states failed attempt to arrest poverty through development projects. A more clear vision for DSW was identified in the White Paper on Social Welfare (Government Gazette No. 18166, Notice 1108 of 1997) which aimed to achieve:

*"a humane, peaceful, just and caring society which will uphold welfare rights, facilitate the meeting of basic needs, release people's creative energies, help them achieve their aspirations, build human capacity and self-reliance, and participate fully in all spheres of social, economic and political life"* (Department of Welfare and Population Development, 1997: 7).

Central to this national imperative was the direction of social welfare policies and programs towards 'poverty prevention, alleviation and reduction' making creative use of all available resources.

With such a revitalized national poverty alleviation policy, some 2293 projects were implemented in the financial years 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 under the auspices of the national Department of Social Development amounting to R243m (National Department of Social Development, 2001a: 18). This period was characterized as a testing out phase as many lessons were consolidated from the implementation of the poverty alleviation projects in the country. In its midterm review for the roll of these poverty alleviation projects, the National Department of Social Development noted that projects were implemented without due consideration to the actual conditions prevalent at the local level resulting in the lack of local participation and ownership of projects. Further, projects were designed to achieve a wide spectrum of goals instead of addressing key issues as well as the relative short duration of financial support lasting for a year was problematic. These shortcomings were considered as an impediment to creating conditions at a local level for any appreciable long-term outcomes through poverty alleviation projects (Department of Social Development 2001b: 3).

The lessons learnt from the midterm implementation of the poverty alleviation programs resulted in drastic changes being made on how funds were allocated in the 2001/2002 budgets. In this phase, allocations were made; spreading over a three year cycle under the aegis of a National Poverty Relief Project Office assigned with the task of regular and improved monitoring under the UNDP evaluation system. The main priority areas identified were HIV/AIDS, food security for children, youth development, economic empowerment of women in the nodal points of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Program (ISRDP) and the Urban Re-

newal Program (URP). Under this program, woman, youth, children, the infirm, disabled and the aged, who were particularly vulnerable to the conditions associated with poverty, were targeted. The national urban renewable nodes were known to be characterized by the prevalence of high levels of poverty, crime and unemployment, and a lack of basic services such as housing, as well as a lack of economic opportunities. Given the local realities prevalent in these nodes, it was expected that the implementation of poverty relief projects would comprise a multi-sectoral and a multi-partner approach (Department of Social Development 2005: 3). An amount of R157.7m was allocated to 606 projects, including those carried over from the previous funding cycle. Once again, the IDT was identified as the development agent with the responsibility of allocating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all projects (Department of Social Development 2001a: 18-21).

In so far as the study area is concerned, for the period 2000 to 2006, approximately fourteen poverty alleviation projects have been identified for implementation in the node. The projects aimed to target the unemployed youth, single parents, the aged and adult unemployed males and females. Broadly, the projects involved bead making, sewing, block manufacturing, poultry, catering and food gardening. An amount of R1 425 500 for the 2001/2002 allocation period rolled over three years was budgeted for these projects. Out of this amount R923 965 was not spent for various operational reasons. One of the major reasons for the non-operation of projects was the high dropout rates found amongst project beneficiaries. Cumulatively, approximately 154 participants participated in the different life cycles of the projects over the six year (Khan 2010: 223).

### Profile of Inanda

Inanda, like other black settlements in South Africa developed as a satellite of Durban during the apartheid period. Its development was funded by central government to house black Africans who were forcibly removed from areas such as Cato Manor and surrounding black spots in the city. Since its origin this "township" displays all the characteristics of similar settlements across South Africa. It was established to house communities forcibly removed from their right-

ful homes, designated as an area for one "population group", and actively prohibited major economic initiatives which could have helped develop the area through many of the restrictive apartheid laws. Compounded by the scourge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unemployment and the "deterioration of the physical living conditions" a clear need for an integrated anti-poverty strategy in the node emerged (DPLG 2004: 26). The majority of the people who live in this node have done so since 1996 whilst a small number had moved into the node over the past 5 years. Immigration is fairly low by URP standards.

Of those that have moved into the node from elsewhere in the province; the majority are known to originate from the Eastern Cape. Such a trend is not atypical as urban areas (and poor urban nodes) are known to be magnets for the rural poor, and as such it suggested the migration of poverty from poor rural to poor urban areas. This trend reflects that while urban nodes are poor, their poverty levels are far lower than those to be found in rural areas.

With almost half a million residents on 9423 hectares, Inanda constitutes one of the largest conglomerations of low-income residential areas in the whole of South Africa (SA). Its closest boundary is over 20 km from the City Central Business District and it stretches inland from the gently rolling coastal plain to the deeply incised river and ridge systems. The area comprises 15 wards, with a large number of informal settlements, limited basic service infrastructure, inadequate recreational facilities, and shortage of social facilities. The Department of Local Government website notes that: "the population is increasingly youthful with high rates of unemployment, low levels of education, high levels of poverty, and high levels of crime, inadequate criminal justice capacity, poor traffic and road safety standards, and land/legal complications due to its complex political structure (DPLG 2006: 24)."

A distinct governance feature in this node is its bifurcated political structure. Almost sixty percent of the area is under the tutelage of the traditional authority system which competes with the democratic form of governance through a system of elected councillors in keeping with the country's newly founded constitution. The status of the *amakhosi* (tribal leader) is culturally entrenched in these areas and the majority of the inhabitants conform to this traditional form

of governance, but at the same time on matters of development, show an allegiance to their democratic electorate for leadership. Areas under the traditional authority system are excluded from land usage planning processes for development due to its contested land ownership status. As a consequence, large parts of this area are underdeveloped with low levels of service delivery. Given this status, it comes as little surprise that the area is ravished by such high levels of poverty. A number of poverty alleviation projects have been targeted in this area through the use of independent consultants and specialists for skills development.

An interesting feature of the tribal authority section of this urban node, is its strong adherence to customary law, practices and conformity to IKS. The tribal community depend on IKS and the natural resource within this locality for health related products and medicines, cultivation of food and animal husbandry, construction of dwellings through natural material, conservation and storage of water, dependency on natural forms of energy, recycling of organic material, production of arts and crafts through natural material and integration of indigenous culture within their social structure and system. Folklore and tradition are highly revered within this community. In contrast, the urban section of this locality, has modern forms of infrastructure (piped water, clean forms of energy, telecommunications, surfaced roads and social amenities). The households are located on single plots of land, generally accommodating nucleated family forms and integrated into the urban social, political and economic landscape of the metropolis.

#### **Integrating IKS with Modern Poverty Alleviation Project Interventions**

It was evident from the focus groups that a variety of indigenous knowledge and skills exist in the Inanda region, but are put into limited use. The full potential of this resource is difficult to assess due to the lack of importance attached to the preservation of such skills, over dependence on modern forms of development approaches and the lack of enthusiasm in restoring confidence in such practices amongst locals. Nonetheless, through observations, followed by visits to various projects and focus group discussions with key stakeholders in the study local-

ty, the value or otherwise of such practices being incorporated in local poverty alleviation project interventions is constructed.

In one bead making project that was evaluated, it was interesting to note that this art has not been preserved by the indigenous population. A total of twelve participants were engaged in this project. The total cost for a training facilitator lasting approximately three weeks amounted to R16 000. When participants were interviewed in this project, they were most delighted to be part of the project but lamented that they were embarrassed that this skill was once indigenous to their ancestors and that its present generation had to be dependent on a consultant to be trained. They strongly felt that the art of bead-making should be codified into a training manual so that it is preserved for future generations.

#### **Perceptive Shared About the Food Garden Project**

In evaluating food garden projects it was observed that the project funded by the DSD with institutional support from the Department of Agriculture, was most revealing and represented a classical case for the study of clashes between civilizations. It illustrated how the use of modern agricultural methods came into conflict with traditional knowledge and skills systems acquired by indigenous people over many generations. A total of 21 food garden projects were initiated in keeping with the DSD poverty alleviation program for the node. An evaluation of the food garden projects through the *amakhosi* provided startling insights into the lack of consideration for IKS. Focus group interviews with the *amakhosi* suggest that when the idea of food gardens were conceived, there were many consultants from the Departments of Agriculture and Social Development who promoted the notion of using modern agricultural equipment as a way of producing high yielding crops. They also assumed that the local people had very little knowledge of and skills in agriculture and hence went on a program to educate them on modern farming techniques. Training focused on the use of modern equipment (tractors and irrigation systems), as well as the use of genetically modified seeds and fertilizers to produce high yielding crops.

When the agricultural trainees in the project cultivated their food gardens based on modern

agricultural methods, they encountered several challenges. A brand new tractor, paid for through project funding, lay in disuse and never utilized by the initiators of the 21 food garden projects. The reason being only one person was trained to operate the tractor fitted with a plough and he subsequently withdrew from the project due to finding full time employment. The others in the project had not acquired any technical skills which could be transferred in the absence of the one who has been trained. In addition, the running cost for this equipment was not budgeted for in the project, including the cost of re-training project beneficiaries. Experimentation with different brands of fertilizers and scientifically engineered seeds did not yield the desired crop harvest even though the project beneficiaries decided to use labor intensive methods to kick-start their food gardens. Hence, a season passed without any agricultural yields and the food garden project was depleted of its budget. In the following season, the project beneficiaries re-initiated the food gardens on their own. This time they used no genetically engineered seeds or fertilizers. Neither did they use the tractor which lay in disuse outside the tribal offices. The project beneficiaries regrouped under the leadership of a democratically elected project leader with no official source of funding. Beneficiaries from each project site had to collect seeds and produce seedlings which had to be shared amongst themselves. Some produced seeds from crops from the previous season, whilst others brought seedlings from their rural homesteads and preserved these using indigenous methods for the next season. The soil was re-fertilized using mulch, dung and poultry waste gathered from other projects in the locality. Labor to till the soil and sow seeds were sourced from other family members associated with the different food garden project sites. Multiple cropping was encouraged, with a variety of vegetables patches classified into short and long term sowing and harvesting cycles. The project leader visited each food garden project site once a week on foot to meet with project beneficiaries and advise them on crop care, harvesting and sale of produce. In that season, of the 21 food garden projects that were initiated using local and indigenous knowledge and skills, six were most successful with the potential of transforming into a cooperative, four reported that they had 60% yield, and the remaining eleven had marginal success, with

less than 30% yield. On evaluation it was evident that the community project leader was not disappointed by the project performance, despite its marginal success. The most important learning from this community initiated food garden projects using indigenous knowledge skills was the creative use of local resources and skills which displayed potential of being capitalized and advanced in the next planting season.

### **Insights from the Poultry Project**

An evaluation of a poultry project provided much insight into planning projects that did not conform to local realities. The top structure of this poultry pen was constructed over a year comprising the most modern forms of equipment costing thousands of rands. This poultry pen was designed with the most technically advanced material, including electricity which was a necessity for rearing chicken on a mass scale. For over a year this pen remained economically unproductive. The major constraint was the delay in training poultry farmers. A conglomerate Rainbow Chickens, which holds the monopoly for commercial chicken production in the province, was approached by project beneficiaries for training and the provision of stocks. Typical to private sector business interests, they were prepared to do this, with some long term engagement in a joint project venture with the community, at a cost of R100 000, which was way above the project budget. With such restrictions, inquiries from a local veterinarian led the project beneficiaries to interface with the Department of Agriculture and the Cedara Agricultural College located in Mooi River for skills training. With just basic training, the community set up the project which became functional, only to be challenged later by being in serious contravention of the municipal health bylaws. In an interview with the Director of Health in the municipality on environmental health problems in the node, he provided dismal insight on the future of this project. Most poultry pens in the locality did not conform to land management and use programs put together by the municipality for the area and this posed a serious health risk for formal residences in the node. As consequence of contravening development planning by-laws, this thriving poultry project was restricted by the municipality from expanding. The beneficiaries, however, used a very creative approach to



surmount this challenge. They extended the beneficiary group to a household level in the tribal authority areas of the node which was excluded from the strict application of the municipal planning by-laws. Each household participating in the project was provided with a dozen day old chicks to be reared in their backyards. When the chicks reached the appropriate weight to be culled, the poultry project bought these from individual households to be resold on the formal market. The lesson learnt from this project is that informal means of production can provide support to the more formal ones and both can co-exist based on mutual interest. According to the project leader of this project, the outsourcing of chicken production at a household level created more jobs, better quality home-reared chicken, lesser cost and risks in production through formal processes and greater opportunity for a poultry co-operative emerging in the future within the tribal community.

#### **Livestock as an Asset in the Community**

Sheep, goat and cattle are to be abundantly found in most parts of the node under jurisdiction of the tribal authority. In the densely populated formal and semi-formal parts of the node, livestock form part of the household social structure. It does not only serve as a family and cultural asset, which is widely valued by indigenous Africans in the country, but is also a vital source of food, rich in protein for the many poor inhabitants in the node. They are found to be crossing over the main roads in Inanda, often posing accident risks to unsuspecting motorists. Neighborhood feuds, resulting in violent confrontations due to unattended cattle relishing on the neighbor's vegetable garden, are common occurrences. This has a destabilizing effect on social cohesiveness and the building of a sense of community amongst neighbors due to feuds emanating from this perceived menace. Nonetheless, cattle rearing appear to be part of the neighborhood cultural structure due to the importance attached to it as part of the family and community asset.

The municipality's health department is mindful of the growing health concern that this informal animal husbandry practice poses to the community in the node but has not yet taken any proactive steps to curb this practice, in light of the complex cultural and political challenges

prevalent in the locality. At the entrance of Dube Village in the locality one is welcomed by a modern shopping complex only to find a massive livestock outlet located opposite it. Bleating sheep and goats, the smell of dung and bottle green flies swarm the area, in sharp contrast to the modern homes located around the shopping complex by emerging new black middle class households. These households have come to endure such environmental nuisance only because they fear both reprisal from the livestock keepers who do so in search of eking out a livelihood, and would not want to upset this traditional cultural practice entrenched amongst the indigenous people of the area over generations. Not far away in the neighborhood is a dilapidated abattoir which continues to be open for business only on certain days of the month, especially when social pensions are paid out for the many grant dependent residents in the locality. The middle and upper income households snap up the limited supply of freshly processed meat from the abattoir, while the byproducts were sold at the different pension pay-point areas as a cheap and affordable delicatessen for the very poor. The entrance of the Department of Social Development on pension pay out days is temporarily converted into a bustling open air meat market. Several attempts by the city health department to formalize meat processing in the area and to regenerate the dilapidated abattoir met with little success as the poor locals claimed that this is the only source of protein they can have easy access to. They find the price of these meat products to be affordable and locals set up "sishayamas" (braai stands) to cook on open fire for a ready local market. Meat prepared on open fire has become a delicatessen and part of the local people's dietary tradition. Considering that the vast parts of the area have no electricity and households are too poor to afford the luxury of freezers to store meat purchased from the distant food chain stores, this indigenous dietary tradition indirectly helps to curb poverty and malnutrition in the area. The traditional healers in the area encourage locals to purchase fresh supply of meat when they are able to afford them, citing that it has historically been part of the indigenous people diet and, in addition, a way of indigenous survival strategy practiced long before the advent of modern refrigerators resulting in meat processing plants becoming part of the capitalist enterprise for the storage and distribution of frozen meat products. Since hous-

ing development in Inanda is rapidly becoming formalized it appears that this form of survival is under threat as large tracks of arable land are used for human settlement development purposes. The locals have attempted to formalize animal husbandry through project grants from the Department of Social Development, but with little success as such projects are considered to be expensive, requiring advanced animal husbandry skills, commercial and environmental risks especially in light of the rapidly evolving built environment alluded to earlier. In the interim, it would appear that the informal livestock market, which is indigenous to the local people, serves an important food safety net for the poor.

### The Healing Properties of Nature

The fauna and flora in the majestic breathtaking mountains and ravines in the node contain traditional medicine secrets, which is the intellectual property right of a few *sangomas* (traditional healer) or community elder. It is in these areas that indigenous hunting skills, intergenerational traditional knowledge systems and environmentally exploitative practices are played out in secrecy. Whilst those who exercise hegemony over this form of knowledge system and benefit financially from the healing properties that nature provides, at the same time, little consideration is accorded to the long-term damage that this practice will bring to bear on the environment. Nonetheless, considering the fact that nature's healing properties are to be found readily in this node, vulnerable households and individuals are blessed to have at their disposal an alternative and affordable health care system in the form of traditional medicine. This natural asset averted the attention of the state's poverty alleviation project initiators as a potential for the establishment of traditional medicine co-operatives in the node based on environmental conservation considerations. In addition, one of the reasons cited by the state's project initiators is the contestation arising from intellectual property rights preservation from different traditional healers in the area, who are anxious about losing their medicinal healing secrets to commercial medicine entrepreneurs. It appears that, although, communities are aware of the value of indigenous knowledge systems and the need to preserve intellectual property rights,

they have little awareness that such rights are protected by law in the country. The Department of Trade and Industry has a special policy and framework on the protection of IKS through the intellectual property system through a variety of tools in the form of patents, trademarks, copyright, trade secret and contractual arrangements (Department of Trade and Industry 2004: 10). It might necessitate at the project implementation level to raise such awareness and encourage communities to preserve IKS as intellectual property so that these might be integrated in a transparent and open manner with due recognition given to its source and origin. In this way IKS will be preserved for use by future generations.

Inanda is home to one of the largest traditional African church congregation named after its founder Isaiah Shembe. It has a sacred site called Ekuphakameni, the 'Place of Spiritual Upliftment' whereat twice a year during January and July; thousands of followers converge at the Ebhuleni village to undertake a pilgrimage walking barefoot over 80 kilometers to a mountain at Ndwedwe called Nhlankakazi. Since 1910, this tradition has helped to promote social cohesion amongst its followers and is known to promote the local economy. Sewing and bead-making projects, set up through the DSD poverty alleviation funds, make a thriving business during these religious festivals through the sale of religious artifacts and paraphernalia. However, beyond these seasonal economic activities, one of the major problems experienced by the bead and sewing co-operatives is the lack of markets for their products, given the high levels of poverty in the node. Efforts at venturing outside of the node and partnering the city in the many mega and social events hosted in the CBD for new markets met with little success. This is largely due to the cost of stalls, the odd hours when these events are held and travel constraints from the node to the city centre that has been a major constraint. For this to work positively in favor of the local people in Inanda, it would be necessary for nationally promoted poverty alleviation projects and programs to interface with local governments. In this instance, the city can play an important role in partnering such local economic initiatives by providing marketing support through its sophisticated media networks and institutional structures.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the need for IKS to be integrated into poverty alleviation programs. Despite the fact that IKS has been institutionalized in development discourse across national departments in the country, this paper highlights that the Department of Social Development is not a key stakeholder in integrating such knowledge systems in poverty alleviation programs. It appears that project based community development continues to be approached from a needs-based perspective, focusing on identifying the needs of the local community with the goal of presenting solutions that will address such needs. This approach fails to identify various forms of tangible and intangible assets that the local community possesses to be creatively used in poverty alleviation projects and programs through the mapping of often unrecognized community assets particularly social capital. Such an approach draws on participatory approaches to development, collaborative economic development, and strengthening civil society to develop them as citizens charting their own direction as opposed to being passive recipients of development projects and social grants. This participatory approach as suggested by Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) and Ife and Tesseriero (2006) are based on collective co-operation and action where local people have the power to change the conditions impacting on the quality of their lives has an important reference point. It is premised on the assumption that communities can organize to drive the development process themselves by identifying needs and then mobilizing existing strengths and assets to respond appropriately to their needs. These can be drawn from their localized context in terms of knowledge, skills and resource.

The study also highlights that both IKS and modern systems of development are not contradictory but can complement each other. A space exists for both modern and traditional approaches to be integrated into poverty alleviation strategies to promote social well-being and improve the quality of life of the poor. What appears to be missing is sustaining a balance between these two approaches and the weighing out of options for the best causes of action necessary to ensure sustained livelihood and poverty allevi-

ation outcomes. This increasingly calls for an integration of IKS in the different institutional phases (policy, planning, implementation and evaluation) of poverty alleviation projects and weighing in the best intervention strategies that can help to consolidate the social and natural capital of communities. Given the local context of this study, IKS can serve as an important tool for harnessing the strengths of the community through new ways of increasing the chances of success of poverty alleviation projects and sustaining gains that have already been made. Even though the past decade has been marked by hefty investments in poverty alleviation projects with dismal rates of success, as evidenced in this paper, transcending conventional modern approaches to community development to embrace IKS holds some promise for the future. It is in this context that the role of the private sector, with its modern technological capacity can also through public-private partnerships integrate IKS in poverty alleviation programs and projects. Through adaption and innovation of modern technology to localized conditions and integrated IKS in such technological development can have mutual benefits to both the private sector and the government in meeting the challenge of chronic levels of poverty plaguing the country. The state's public expenditure through grants masks through quantitative forms of measurement as to whether social grant dependents who find themselves on the threshold of poverty and below have indeed made any sustainable advancement in their quality of life. A need exists to measure through effective evaluative tools the cost-benefit of such expenditure in the lives of the poor.

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