METHODFINDER

Practitioner's Guide:

District Strategic Planning

Development of a district strategic plan in Kilifi, Kenya

Example 1:

Seventeen steps: From community planning to district planning in Kenya

The approach for defining and agreeing upon a long-term strategic development plan for a district cannot be undertaken merely as a desk exercise. It has to be *participatory and should be bottom-up*. This is usually easier said than done, especially if there are only limited funds available for the exercise. More importantly, the exercise should not be reduced to a farce during which participation is merely simulated and is not genuine. Figure 3 depicts 17 broad steps for deriving a strategic development plan:

1. **Summarised priorities of communities:** In your district you may find that numerous planning exercises have been undertaken together with communities. These may have been undertaken through Government departments or through development projects or Non-Governmental Organisations. The planning team should first of all collect all available community action plans or any other planning documents that the villagers and people in the district have produced as a result of undertaking joint analysis and planning exercises. After collecting the information the planning team should examine whether a summary of the results of the exercise exists, if not the planning team should summarise the information contained in the community plans. The summary should include a table of the prioritise problems, potentials and development activities which they want to undertake.

2. **Collected and stored secondary / primary district data and information** The planning team collect all secondary data and information that is available. This information should not only be collected but it should also be stored systematically in the district planning unit offices (i.e. office of the district development officer). Where data is either missing or grossly inaccurate it may prove necessary to collect primary data. The planning team must distribute data and information formats to all concerned organisations and persons. The planning team should explain briefly how each sector should fill in the appropriate form and they should set a deadline by when the completed forms should be submitted to the planning team. Once the forms have all been completed, the planning team needs to ensure that the information is typed in the appropriate forms. The planning team need to collect the necessary base data on the district. A lot of information required for planning can be gathered from former development plans or from the central bureau of statistics. The planning team, however, have to undertake the necessary population projections and this information needs to be included in the appropriate tables.

Seventeen steps....(continued)

3. **Summarised current situation of the district:** Once all the data has been collected, the planning team needs to examine the data, analyse it and draw tentative conclusions. The data and information will give a good overview of the status quo of the district. It provides and insight into the present situation. The tentative conclusions that the planning team should draw really focus are issues of the positive factors that exist in the district and the negative factors. The information should be documented in the appropriate forms and should also be presented in a simple way so that it can be discussed with the communities. This process can be termed "facing realities". In other words, if certain areas are marginal, alternatives need to be discussed with the communities.

4. **Verified facts on the district (first community dialoguing):** If sufficient funds are available and personnel resources are there, then a dialogue with the community should and must be undertaken. The first of three consultative forums or dialogues should be undertaken after the initial data collection has been completed. The objective of the dialogue is to present the results of the analysis and determine whether the conclusions drawn are correct. The communities have an opportunity to verify, refute or alter the interpretations on the basis of additional knowledge that they have which may not be contained in the primary and secondary data.

5. **Initial solutions from communities regarding identified main development issues (continuation of community dialoguing)** During the meeting with the communities or community representatives, the issues that have been identified during the data assessment will be further presented and discussed. The objective of the discussion is also to confront the communities with the realities on the ground, which the community are aware of but they may not fully understand the implications. It would be important that during the dialoguing process the community also develops some ideas how the problems and constraints can be overcome.

6. **Development zones, agreed scenarios, draft visions and strategies:** The planning team together with other key stakeholders (i.e. heads of sectoral line departments, representatives of NGO, private sector, civic society, politicians local government representatives, etc.) would undertake the dynamic analysis during a planning workshop. During the workshop they would define the developmental zones; the main factors that influence the development in the zones; they would also define the most likely scenario based upon the main factors that influence the development of the zones. Furthermore, the planning team and the heads of the sector departments would also determine the impact the scenario will have on national plans including poverty reduction strategy papers (e.g. PRSP) and they would also formulate visions for the developmental zones.

Seventeen steps....(continued)

7. **District Development Councils (DDC) agrees upon development zones, scenarios, draft visions and strategies:** The results produced during the workshop would have to be included in the respective chapters of the development plan. It would now also be opportune to gain approval by the District Development Councils of the proposed development zones.

8. **Finally agreed upon zones, visions and draft strategies (second community dialoguing):** A second round of dialoguing with the community is necessary. However, this too is dependent upon the resources available. The zonal development proposals that have been formulated by the planning team need to be subjected to a second round of consultations with the communities'. During this process the development zones and the **visions** that have been formulated are presented and agreement reached on which one to select. This is followed by discussions as to which way (strategies) the visions should be implemented.

9. **Overall district strategy:** After completion of the second community dialoguing, the planning team should be in a position to be able to finalise the visions and strategies for each development zone and then to agree upon an overall strategy for the district.

10. **DDC agreed upon overall district strategy**: The DDC or district assembly would formally approve the visions and the overall district strategy.

11. **Long-term sectoral strategies:** Once agreement has been reached on the overall district strategy, the planning team needs to determine what consequences the strategy has both on the zones and on the PRSP programme categories. This work needs to be undertaken during a workshop where all stakeholders mentioned above are involved. During the formulation stages of the strategies, the planning team would also make use of the information given by the communities. The communities usually know exactly the type of development activities that they would like to undertake. At the end of the exercise a precise description of the sector is given (i.e. sectoral strategy) whereby variations between the zones must be highlighted, where appropriate.

12. **DDC approved long-term sectoral strategies:** Approval has to be sought for the sectoral strategies from the DDC. This concludes the development and approval stage of long-term strategic development plan. This plan is the basis for development of a 3-year plan along the lines advocated in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).

Seventeen steps....(continued)

13. **Three-year development plan:** The district needs to define the main sectors and areas of intervention that should be undertaken over a three-year time period. Step 13 in the process provides the linkage between the long-term strategic plan and medium term plans.

    A simple format can be developed to assist in the process of developing a 3-year medium term plan. The information needed has to be derived from several different sources: the community priorities (as defined in community action plans), in participatory rural appraisal reports or in reports documenting the dialoguing process during the Poverty Reduction Strategy exercise. In order to gain some impression of the total funds required in order to meet the demands, a broad costing per unit needs to be calculated. It is important that the capacity levels of the various service providers are also taken into consideration so that demand and supply can be balanced.

    The planning team should develop some proposals as to how the DDC could select the most needy areas for intervention in the coming 3 years since the capacity limits will automatically mean that a choice has to be made. This process will be guided by the strategies and visions agreed upon in the long-term strategic development plan.

14. **DDC approved 3-year development plan, including financial requirements:** The DDC needs to approve the 3-year district plans, especially the financial requirements. The DDC also needs to select the areas where interventions will take place since there are restrictions both on the capacity of the service providers and on the financial and other resources provided by the central government to implement the projects.

15. **Annual plans:** After approval has been given both by the DDC and eventually by the national ministries (especially the Ministry of Finance and Planning) for the medium term plans, the district can develop annual plans. These annual plans will be detailed and will contain an exact breakdown of the work to be undertaken and a more detailed cost estimates. Annual plans have been produced in many countries for a long time and it is quite likely that the process will be modified to fit into the new MTEF concept. The changes, however, are unlikely to be completely different from the current annual planning approach. The only difference that could take place is that the districts are provided with direct funds for developmental work and the approval process for using these funds will be undertaken at the district rather than at the national level.

Seventeen steps....(continued)

16. **DDC approved annual plans:** The annual plans need to be approved by the DDC / District Assembly.

17. **Implementation and monitoring:** At the end the only thing that really counts is the fact that the plans are put into action. The plans need to be implemented, the implementation process needs to be monitored and the effects and impacts evaluated.

Figure 3: Seventeen steps for merging bottom-up & top-down planning processes