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HOUSING, URBAN POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

INPUT TO ANC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past eighteen months, a range of civic bodies and a number of trade unions have initiated a range of development projects in the field of land, services, community facilities, housing, local government and urban policy.

Earlier this year, a 'Transvaal Development Forum', representing a range of over sixty community-based organisations and service groups, met over a series of three workshops to formulate a number of development principles and strategies. This was in response to the Jan Steyn Independent Development Trust initiative.

Many of these ideas and debates on development have been discussed in the recently formed Civic Association of the Southern Transvaal (CAST), as well as in OMHLE, an organisation representing a number of homeless communities in the Transvaal.

This process has given these organisations a range of experiences in the field of development. This paper provides a short summary of the key issues that have emerged during this period.

1. FROM VEHICLES OF PROTEST TO DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

For the past decade, civic organisations have been in the forefront of organising and mobilising communities around a range of both grassroots and national political issues. More recently, however, a shift has taken place, in that many civics see their role as one of development agencies, addressing issues such as the provision of land, services, community facilities and housing.

This has led civics to emphasize their autonomy from political organisations, and to build up strong organisational structures throughout the whole community.

2. THE EXPERIENCE OF NEGOTIATIONS

There have been over 50 'local level' negotiations involving civics during the past year in the Transvaal alone. The negotiation partners have included inter alia the:

- * Transvaal Provincial Administration;
- * various black and white local authorities;
- * Department of Planning and Provincial Affairs;
- * Regional Services Councils;
- * Eskom;
- * Rand Water Board;
- * Development Bank of Southern Africa;
- * private developers; and
- * financial institutions.

Although many of these negotiations have focused on specific issues such as the writing off of arrears, the upgrading of services and the creation of single fiscal systems for local authorities, they have invariably moved towards the establishment of developmental programmes. Civic organisations have therefore gained an immense wealth of knowledge from this process of negotiations, including an understanding of the current key actors in the development process.

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Many civic bodies and some trade unions have begun to implement actual development programmes themselves, including the provision of serviced land, low-income housing projects and community facilities such as pre-school centres, creches and community halls.

In some instances, this has taken the form of planned land invasions, such as in Tamboville outside Benoni. The Alexandra Civic Organisation has put forward a multi-million rand development proposal for the Far East Bank, based on the notion of community participation and control. Certain civics have begun to work towards the upgrading and conversion of hostels. These projects, while still in their infancy, have given civics an understanding of a range of different approaches to development.

4. SOURCES OF DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

As project implementation has become a reality, civic organisations and trade unions have had to build up their understanding of sources of development capital, and the

styles and methods of a variety of state, parastatal and private sector development agencies. These have included the following groupings:

- * Regional Services Councils;
- * Development Bank of Southern Africa;
- * National Housing Fund;
- * state housing subsidy schemes;
- * South African Housing Trust;
- * Jan Steyn two billion rand fund;
- * capital development funds of white municipalities;
- * Urban Foundation;
- * pension and provident funds;
- * banks and building societies;
- * funds controlled by insurance companies;
- * company social responsibility funds.

5. ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

As civics and trade unions have moved into the role of development agencies, they have realised that their organisational structures need to be altered. During the process of negotiations, the civics have had to work hard to build local structures at street level, in order to inform residents about the negotiations, and receive mandates before agreements are signed.

The complexities of the negotiations, including the work of the Joint Technical Committees that are frequently set up by the principal parties to the negotiations, have prompted civics to establish their own technical, housing and research Committees. These committees in turn have established a wide range of links with professional consultants, so that civics can match the levels of information ranged against them in negotiations.

Some civic bodies have also begun to establish themselves on a professional basis, with offices, equipment and full-time staff.

6. TRAINING FOR CAPACITY

Many civics have realised that they do not possess the necessary expertise within their own ranks to handle large-scale development programmes. Civics have tried to initiate various education and training programmes in order to:

- * develop their own expertise;
- * build capacity to manage projects and funding;

- * achieve levels of community participation in the formulation of development strategies, and,
- * deal with consultants, private developers and state agencies.

7. CO-ORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICY

During the process of negotiations, civics have begun to see the need to co-ordinate regional strategies and policies, in order to avoid the situation where weaker civics are divided from the better-organised areas. Civics continue to experience a lack of co-ordination at a national civic level.

There is also a need to work towards common national policies on developmental issues. There are many cases where civics have found their strategies at a grassroots level contradicted by national statements and actions by political organisations.

8. STATE AND COMMUNITY

While there has been a strong emphasis amongst civics about the centrality and importance of non-racial and democratic local government for future development strategies, there has also been a growing debate about the need to avoid an over-reliance on the post-apartheid state for the provision of basic needs.

Many civics have begun to investigate and establish a range of community-based institutions that can carry out development work. These institutions, while controlled by the community and not the state, are also very different to the individualised and privatised notion of development currently being promoted by both capital and the apartheid state.

Forms of non-profit community development institutions under consideration include:

- * Community ownership systems, such as Land Trusts, Electricity Co-operatives and Housing Co-operatives;
- * Non-profit financial institutions such as Community Credit Unions and Banks;
- * Community-based development organisations, such as Development Corporations.

While these institutions are being initiated by the civic organisations, they are seen to be representative of wider community structures. In terms of developmental projects

and programmes, many civics have tried to involve a broad range of community organisations, in different sectors, and in some cases representing different interests.

9. UNITY AND DIVISION

Many civic organisations are now very aware of the way in which the provision of material resources to poor communities can have a very divisive effect. They have also seen how development projects initiated by the apartheid state and capital have often had the effect of dividing communities, increasing stratification and the potential for conflict.

Civics are therefore trying to move in a direction where they increase their organisational capacity in the free-standing and the backyard shack-settlement areas where developmental needs are often the greatest. This is not an easy process, because it is often resisted by the civic's traditional constituencies in the established townships and the matchbox houses.

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