SOUTH AFRICA
POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN GREATER MAFIKENG

Administered by the Department of Local Government and implemented the Mafikeng City Council, this project is a prime example of successful post-conflict reconstruction and development, which aims to rebuild social cohesion back into a formerly divided and neglected area of South Africa.

The Greater Mafikeng area in the North West Province of South Africa is divided geographically by the Molopo River, which runs from east to west. Mafikeng, the capital, is situated 300km to the west of Johannesburg and has a total population of over 250,000, of which only 50,000 are classified as urban. The legacy of apartheid had politically and economically divided the city. The impoverished areas of the south did not have direct access to the city and depended heavily on it for survival. Here people lived in poor conditions without clean water, electricity, adequate sanitation and storm water drainage. The formally established areas north of the river (also deteriorating) had better services and facilities. A fragmented system of rival governing structures perpetuated, where the municipal council co-existed with a tribal authority, but did not work together. The town was afflicted with heavy pollution, traffic congestion and an uncoordinated system of informal traders and transport services.

In 1994, the National Reconstruction and Development Programme allocated funds to the Province in order to empower those oppressed under the previous apartheid regime. The initial and crucial step was to involve all stakeholders in the formation of a broad-based Steering Committee, comprising representatives from a wide range of organizations and communities. Identifying and including disparate groups that had never before worked together on a basis of co-operation or shared responsibility, took several months of negotiation and organization. The Committee, with its 12 sub-committees, became essentially an amalgamation of various administrative systems and a forum where important decisions were made and discussed in order to resolve conflicts and rebuild a fragmented community.

A variety of social, economic and environmental sub-projects, which aimed to improve the area, both
along the river and across the town, were coordi-
nated under one comprehensive, multi-sectoral plan
known as The Mafikeng Development Programme.
By May 1996, the funding had been approved and
the first meeting of the Steering Committee had been
inaugurated. The programme focused on training
and building local capacity, by promoting enterprise
and tourism development. In all, a much cleaner,
healthier and orderly city and river area was
achieved, with improved facilities and traffic flows.

One notable innovation was the inclusion of sections
of the community precluded from participating in
development projects due to their lack of knowledge
and familiarity with the competitive tendering proce-
dures and lack of a financial base. Development
contracts, subdivided into 50 categories were
devised which included building construction, earth
works, construction of storm water drains, brick
paving, bush clearing, fencing, electrical work and
construction of movable steel hawker stalls.

Information workshops were held, with assistance
given to help first time tenderers to understand the
process, enter the market and to complete the docu-
mentation. When established contractors were used,
training and labour intensive methods were encour-
aged.

For instance, the US$ 1.7 million Molopo River Basin
Project involved the clean up of the polluted river
basin to improve facilities for tourism, recreation and
informal trading. As a pilot scheme, the work was
divided between new (female) contractors. Some
US$ 700,000 was allocated towards improvement
projects for the city. Traffic flows were improved by
the provision of ranks and parking bays for taxis and
buses. Providing informal traders with transportable
and lockable steel hawker stalls, trading legislation,
book-keeping and management courses, assisted

economic activity. Improved storm water drainage
and pedestrian paths also contributed to a better
quality of life for urban residents.

Mafikeng is also a town steeped in history as a
former military outpost during the Anglo-Boer War
and the birthplace of the modern Scouting
Movement, all of which can be utilized in building a
tourism base to sustain the local economy. Approximately US$ 500,000 was committed to
tourism development, including construction of a
Scout Centre for Excellence in Nature and the
Environment.

The Mafikeng Action Plan, a joint initiative between
provincial government, private sector and other
organizations, also sought to enhance tourism by
improving access to places of interest, through better
signage and paths and the construction of a Tourist
Information Centre.

The local communities were also
involved in the improvement of facilities
(eg fencing, toilets, lighting, land clear-
ing) for the Lotlanioreng Dam recre-
ational area, either through opportuni-
ties given for directly tendering for
contracts, or for informal tourism-
related trading. In terms of employment
(eg tour guides, hotel staff) and small
business enterprises generation (eg
handicraft sellers, hawker stalls), such
projects have achieved positive results.

The overriding intention of the National
Reconstruction and Development
Programme was to empower previously oppressed
and disadvantaged communities of South Africa. The
main lesson learnt was that the projects could not be
effectively managed or administered without the
involvement and co-operation of all stakeholders.
The process was long and tedious. It took several
months to form the Steering Committee and sub-
committees responsible for implementing specific
sub-projects. Capacity building and training also took
time to implement (skills training, bookkeeping for
informal traders, training in the understanding of the
tender process and pricing for emerging contractors).
Yet this has produced a pool of skills and expertise
that was previously lacking in the Mafikeng area. This
may prove to be a more significant achievement of
the programme, than simply improving the overall
quality of life.