

## 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 coordinated 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 procedures 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 documentation. When established contractors were used, training and labour intensive methods were encouraged.

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 clearing) for the Lotlanioreng Dam recreational area, either through opportunities 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.



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