

Summary of the Submission by the Thornhill Development Forum

This brief summarises the complaints and request for intervention by the Thornhill Development Forum (also referred to as the development forum) from the Community of Thornhill in Ward 7 of Kouga Municipality, Eastern Cape Province. The development forum raises concerns about the approach to rural development in this area; especially consultation and participation by members of the communities of Loerie and Thornhill. The central message of the submission is that community participation and consultation was overlooked, and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) proceeded without members of the communities' inputs around land and development needs. In view of the contents of the submission and the arguments, one could conclude that lack of participatory and bottom up development approaches poses threats to development initiatives because they are viewed with suspicion by those the project ought to benefit. Such development initiatives could run the risk of missing the development goals of the local people, especially if they were not informed by the beneficiaries' real needs.

Some background

The DRDLR is reported to be in the process of buying an "immovable property in terms of the Provisions of Land and Assistance Act, 1993¹" under its land reform programme. On 25 and 27 October 2011, the Thornhill Development Forum and the Thornhill Community, respectively, met to discuss the memorandum originating from the DRDLR to request approval for the purchase of immovable property on a private lifestyle estate known as Crossways Farm Village.

The Crossways Farm Village is situated in the Kouga municipal area and covers a fertile coastal landscape of 2 133 km². The website of Crossways Farm Village states that:

Crossways Farm Village dovetails perfectly with the government's rural development strategy. When completed, it will have created nearly 3 000 permanent jobs in a largely agricultural part of the country and will have expanded existing irrigation pastures and the dairy farm which is in line with the government's commitment to food safety. In its motivation for approving the concept, the Eastern Cape Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries stated that the village and the concept of New Ruralism offered the opportunity for rural development and economic stimulation, job creation, equity and ownership to previously disadvantaged people as well as training, education and the expansion of existing agricultural activities.

Source: <http://www.crosswaysfarmvillage.co.za/index.php?page=ruraldevelopment>

It is against this background, that members of the communities had their expectations raised about the development benefits from the development. When the process unfolded, the development forum found the communities were being left behind and has been attempting in vain to raise their concerns about the flaws of the process with the Minister for Rural Development and Land Reform. The request to meet the Portfolio Committee on Rural Development and Land Reform (the Portfolio Committee) was triggered by a memorandum that sought permission to buy immovable asset. Based on the list of questions (which I shall return to) it appears the development forum and the community were not fully involved in taking decisions about the nature of development and how it should occur. The development forum documented their questions to raise with the Committee and the DRDLR.

¹ Provision of Land and Assistance Act, 1993 was amended by Provision of Land and Assistance Act, 2008

Summary of concerns of the Thornhill Development Forum

A submission to the Portfolio Committee creates an impression that the development forum, and communities of Loerie and Thornhill, was not fully consulted in setting the development path proposed. The following are some of the concerns from the submission:

- Lack of understanding of the reasons why government should purchase property (194 ha) on Crossways Farm Village, a private lifestyle estate at the cost of R28 million.
- The logic of purchasing 49% shares in the Crossways Farm Stud at the cost of R6 million is also questioned. In contrast, the development forum is of the view that government should support cattle farmers in the area – especially those who attempted in vain to access land through LRAD
- The cost of purchasing different properties and assets is too high. The development forum has suggested that if government wanted to purchase a hotel, they could have acquired the Thornhill Hotel which was on market at a lesser cost.
- Questioning of the acquisition of school, agro-industries, and hotel sites illustrates that, either the development forum was not part of the consultation or that there was no community participation is prioritization of development needs.

Table 1: Purchases -Community's 49% Equity

Property	Cost (million)
194 ha in Crossways Farm Village	R 28
49% of 250 dairy cows	R6
49% equity share in the Milking parlour	R2,637

Table 2: Assets to be directly purchased by DRDLR

Item	Cost (million)
0.3099 ha for Regional Training Centre	R1,859
0.3094 ha for student accommodation	R2,43
0.1384 ha for lecturer accommodation	R1,24
1,0290 ha site for school	R2.1
1,5530 ha site for agro-industry	R7,535
3,9770 site for hotel	R10,9

Discussion

The strategic objective of the CRDP is therefore to facilitate integrated development and social cohesion through participatory approaches in partnership with all sectors of society

(CRDP Framework, 2009)

One of the core issues about this submission is that the Thornhill Development Forum alleges that there has not been consultation and participation of the communities in the development that is taking place in the area. Number of questions that the development forum raises bears testimony to this effect. If indeed there has not been any consultation, or some sections of the society have been excluded from the consultation, it undermines the strategic objective of the CRDP cited above. It is common knowledge that development which addresses the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries (rural poor) should be participatory in nature and adopt a bottom up approach. This view is also espoused by the CRDP framework which endorses 'equitable community development' whose one of the underlying principles is "meaningful community participation, leadership, and ownership in change efforts" (CRDP, 2009).

Drawing on the conceptualization of rural development, where rural development is about enabling rural people to take control of their destiny, thereby dealing effectively with rural poverty through the optimal use and management of natural resources, a question could be asked to what extent does the development initiatives proposed by the DRDLR enables the Thornhill Community take charge of their own destiny? The document entitled "COMMUNITY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MEMORANDUM APPLYING FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE PURCHASE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY IN TERMS OF THE LAND REFORM: PROVISION OF LAND AND ASSISTANCE ACT, 1993: PE6/3/9/T7/5" is full of questions which the community is not able to respond to. This could suggest that the community and the development forum are not in the forefront of development, and thus not taking charge of their own destiny.

In the line of integrated development, the document raises some concerns that whilst, the development forum and the "Department of Economic Affairs to try to find investors to start things where we are", some business, for example - the Bellingham and Smith cricket bat factory, are being relocated to one of the Agro-Industry sites at Crossways. Quoting the Thornhill Development Forum, "*but now we are worried that your if we find some interested parties, your Department will steer them towards being located at Crossways*" (Thornhill Development Forum, 2011); it would appear the development forum and the DRDLR are not working together in an integrated manner.

Who represent the aspirations and the interests of the communities in this development initiative? Is it the DRDLR? Are there other structures that represent the Community outside the Thornhill Development Forum circles? Could it be that the DRDLR has been consulting with the Loerie and Thornhill communities without the knowledge of the development forum? What about the Community Trust. The submission does not provide responses on these questions. These could be questions for clarity during the Committee meeting.

Table 3: Role players

Role players	What the submission says about them/their roles
Crossways Farm Village Home Owners Association	Equity ownership in dairy enterprise
Community Trust	It is not clear who the beneficiaries of this Trust are. In fact the submission alleges that the Trust excludes farm workers from elsewhere in ward 7
Kouga Municipality	No official Council resolution has been obtained for the development but it is understood the local municipality supports the project
Department of Agriculture	Requested a report on the agricultural component of the report, but it is not known if the report has been submitted to the Department
District Screening Committee	Although the committee was uncomfortable with the lack of detail and information on the project, after three meetings to clarify the project, the committee then approved the project on 26 September 2011
Chief of the Gamkwa Khoi and the Loerie and Thornhill communities	It alleges that they were not 'consulted' but 'addressed' on this matter. In principle, they supported the project.

The table above suggests that there has been some level of engagement on this project, especially at the government level. However, at a community level, there is dispute about what consultation mean. It appears that the Development Forum would have liked a thorough discussion and engagement about the process. What level of engagement would have been enough to qualify as a consultation process? Who was excluded from this process?

The Thornhill Development Forum objects to the memorandum's statements that:

"Government to purchase 49% interest ... on behalf of a Community Trust that has already been established and represents the communities in Ward 7 – Kouga Municipality"

and

"... the Trust is already worth a substantial amount of money... The management of the Trust is still being resolved with the involvement of STRIF, RID, LR, and SPI from East London DRDLR"

The Trust is unknown to the development forum but was addressed in a meeting about it and that they would have to elect trustees from their communities.

Implications for oversight by the Portfolio Committee on Rural Development

- It is important to clarify if the project is a CRDP site; how it was initiated and for whom? How is this initiative being funded, who is championing the initiative?
- It is important to ascertain who are the stakeholders and role players in this project; in addition, some evidence of the consultation since the initiation of the projects.
- Clarify who are the project beneficiaries and how they are organized. What kinds of benefits are expected from this project
- Explore if there were chances that some sectors of the society/community have been excluded from the initiative.
- Some evidence on the Community Trust – which allegedly is set up by the DRDLR should be provided