

# THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS' PROGRAMME IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR-ON-POVERTY PROGRAMME

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## ABSTRACT

The South African government initiated the Community Development Workers' Programme (CDWP) to combat the alarming levels of poverty in the country. This study sought to examine the extent to which the CDWP has supported the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme, with the aim to alleviate poverty. A triangulated mixed methods approach was used in the gathering of data. In total, 250 questionnaires were completed by programme beneficiaries, and 37 in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants in the Eden District Municipality. The major findings show that the efforts made by the CDWP to support the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme have borne little or no fruit in some instances. The poor implementation of the initiatives and politicisation of CDWP services were also noted as matters of concern, and therefore the study recommends that a clear policy framework be developed to guide the practice of community development and to ensure the alignment of community development services across sectoral levels of government.

**Keywords:** community development; local government; service delivery; war on poverty; South Africa

## INTRODUCTION

In the precolonial era, the South African social welfare system was characterised by a conservative, residual and diversionary nature, ranking people according to race, with the white race being the most privileged and the black race the least (Patel and Selipsky 2010). South Africa's main community development challenge is to overcome the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, which were characterised mainly by racially segregated settlement patterns and an unequal distribution of resources (Luka and Maistry 2012). This legacy left large portions of previously disadvantaged racial groups living in poor communities, and created a vast array of socio-economic problems and inequalities requiring redress by the post-apartheid government.

The post-apartheid government introduced the CDWP as a developmentally oriented policy to reverse past injustices and deal with the alarming levels of poverty that continue to prevail in South Africa (Republic of South Africa 1997). According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA 2013), the programme's main objective is to improve service delivery to the people, to facilitate community development and to work towards sustainable economic and social upliftment. Its focus is poverty alleviation, local economic development, the deepening of democracy, planning and development, and support for the youth.

The CDWP, as a public service echelon of multi-skilled community development workers, is responsible for maintaining direct contact with the people where they live. According to Raga, Taylor, and Gogi (2012), though steady progress has been made to ensure direct contact, the local government sector continues to face great obstacles, particularly in rural areas, where the pace of improving service delivery is reported to still be slow.

South Africa has done much to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as they expired in 2015, and was particularly committed to the goal of poverty alleviation which the war-on-poverty initiatives strive to achieve. However, although President Jacob Zuma (2013) acknowledges that South Africa has made significant progress towards achieving the MDGs, by "reducing by half the number of people earning less than a dollar a day ... while the share of those experiencing hunger has also been halved", he is acutely aware that the levels of poverty among vulnerable groups, such as children and women, still remain a major challenge (Statistics South Africa 2013, 2). According to English (2016), despite all the noted positive developments on poverty alleviation, South Africa still suffers from serious poverty and unemployment, with 25 to 30 per cent of the workforce being unemployed. This is confirmed by the rampant service delivery and job-seeking protests being witnessed in most of the country's provinces. The failure to achieve total emancipation from poverty for all South Africans through the MDGs has led to the crafting of Vision 2030 by the Department of National Planning, aimed at dealing with persistent unemployment, inequality and poverty and the United Nations' 2030 agenda for sustainable development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2016 which South Africa is a signatory to.

It is of importance to note that poverty eradication is the overarching goal of the agenda for sustainable development agenda taking a far more ambitious approach than the MDGs (OSAA 2016).

This background prompted the authors to carry out an exploratory study into the effectiveness of the CDWP in linking citizens to services aimed at alleviating poverty through the war-on-poverty initiatives. A closer scrutiny of the programme will highlight the relevance of the antipoverty “war rooms” that are dotted throughout the country’s nine provinces and that are geared towards poverty alleviation through the war-on-poverty initiatives.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Poverty levels in South Africa are still remaining high, despite the many policies that are being implemented to deal with the multifaceted nature of poverty in the country. According to Lehohla (2014), 21,7 per cent of the population of South Africa live in extreme poverty, with 37 per cent not having enough money to purchase both adequate food items and non-food items and 53 per cent of people being able to afford enough items but falling under the widest definition of poverty in South Africa, surviving on under R779 per month. This situation remains rampant despite the government introducing the CDWP in an attempt to alleviate poverty. Its failure to make a significant impression on reducing endemic levels of poverty raises serious questions regarding whether the programme has achieved its mandate more than a decade after its inception. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the extent to which the CDWP has supported the initiatives of the war on poverty as a means of combating poverty.

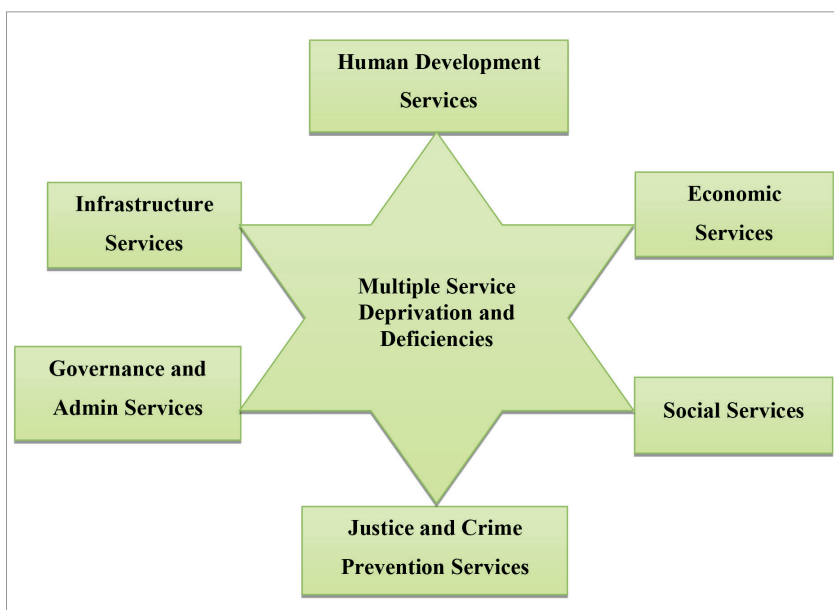
## BACKGROUND TO THE INITIATIVES OF THE WAR-ON-POVERTY PROGRAMME

The War-on-Poverty programme was launched under the National War Room on Poverty in 2009 as a Presidential Special Programme and an apex priority of the government’s efforts to achieve the transversal coordination of its Comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy (National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services 2009). The author further notes that it is founded on the conclusions of a study conducted by the Department of Social Development into nodal areas of poverty. This study noted that, between 2006 and 2008, urban poverty had risen, the decline in rural poverty had slowed down, and the level of rural poverty had become more than twice that of urban areas. The CDWP has been mandated to oversee the implementation of the War-on-Poverty programme in all of the country’s provinces, from programme inception to completion.

The programme's main objective is to improve the living conditions of all South Africans. Among its specific objectives are placing the country on a more rapid but sustainable growth trajectory by 2014, developing an expanded and more diversified economic base, halving the rates of poverty and unemployment of 2004 and achieving greater equity and social cohesion (National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services 2009). The programme seeks to coordinate all the anti-poverty initiatives in all spheres of government in order to obtain a clear definition of the country's poverty matrix, to develop a proper database of households living in poverty, and to identify and implement specific interventions relevant to these households.

## NATURE AND SCOPE OF ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVES

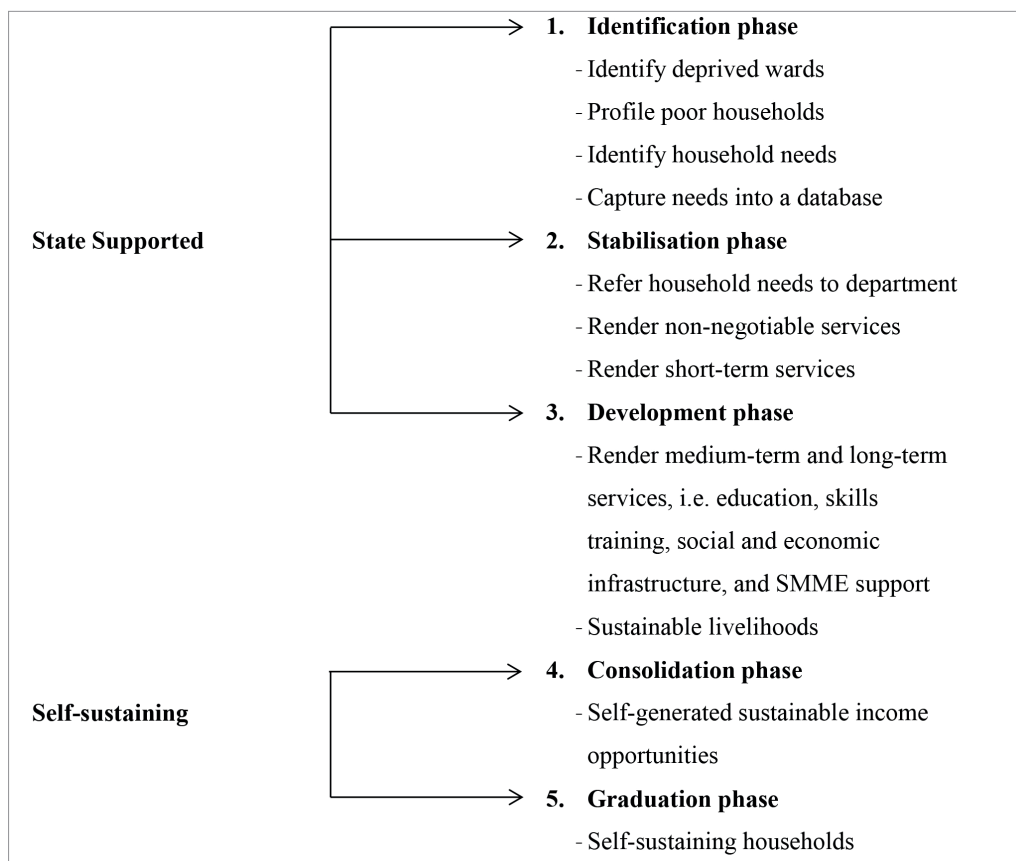
The National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (2009) defines poverty as a "condition of deprivation below a minimum standard of living"; a deficiency in the socio-economic capabilities of individuals that becomes chronic as a result of prolonged endurance of worsening conditions of deprivation and declining capabilities. The dimensions of poverty may include few or no income-earning opportunities, lack of access to basic services, few individual and collective assets, low human development indices, low social development indices, and racial and spatial manifestations of poverty. Figure 1 shows the scope of the anti-poverty initiatives, which cut across various sectors and clusters of both state and non-state sectors.



**Figure 1:** Scope of anti-poverty initiatives

*Source: National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (2009, 15)*

The National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (2009) envisages households progressing through a process of rising above poverty and ultimately arriving at the point of self-sustenance. The household starts at the identification phase, moves through a stabilisation phase, development phase, and consolidation phase, up to a graduation phase, at which it no longer needs state sustenance, but is self-sustaining (see Figure 2). Community development workers (CDWs) assess families or individuals from the identification phase to the self-sustenance phase.



**Figure 2:** Progress of households

Source: National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (2009, 14)

Figure 2 shows how a household can progress from being state supported to becoming self-sustaining. The first step involves the identification of deprived wards, household profiling, assessment of community needs and capturing the information in a database. The stabilisation phase involves the referral of the needs of the household that were identified to the relevant government department for rendering of non-negotiable

services on a short-term basis. The third phase of household progress is the development phase, in which medium-term and long-term services are rendered through education, skills training and social and infrastructural development. The fourth and fifth phases are the consolidation and graduation phases, at the completion of which a household becomes self-sustaining, and generates an income (National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services 2009). It is important to note that CDWP officials facilitate the entire process in conjunction with other government sectors as informed by the household profiling outcomes.

From its inception in 2009 to 2014 the four-year roll-out plan of the War-on-Poverty programme identified 53 districts, 180 municipalities and 1 128 municipal wards in South Africa for inclusion in the programme. It was estimated that a total of 14 127 710 people from the selected municipalities and districts would be covered by 2014 (National War Room on Poverty Policy Coordination and Advisory Services 2009). In the light of these projections it is vital to assess the extent of the support provided by the CDWP to the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme accurately. According to Bond (2010), winning the war on poverty seems utterly impossible for South Africa to achieve, given the balance of forces, the leadership, the chosen weaponry and the economic terrain upon which the campaign is being conducted. This grim assessment is supported by the numerous service delivery demonstrations that have raged in all of the country's provinces over the last couple of years.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the participatory community development theoretical framework owing to its perception of real and intrinsic value in having strong, resilient individuals and community groups and organisations. The framework views community development as taking place in a context of social, demographic, technological, economic, environmental, political and other changes. It plays an important role in achieving equal opportunities, accessibility, participation in democratic processes and sustainable economic, social and environmental change (SCCD 2001). The framework starts with community members coming together to deal with challenges that have been identified, providing support to the connections that exist between them, and acknowledging the fact that individuals, groups and organisations need to learn from one another and cooperate if consistent and sustainable change is to be achieved (SCCD 2001). The theoretical framework is adopted for the purpose of assessing the impact of the CDWP's support for the war-on-poverty initiatives to achieve poverty alleviation.

According to the VSO (n.d.), levels of participation in the approach may vary and take various forms, including being informed, consulting, deciding together, acting together and being supported through the phases of development. It is important to note that participation becomes progressively more difficult to achieve at the higher levels of engagement, where participation and ownership by stakeholders increase; it

is considerably easier to achieve participation at the lower levels than at the higher levels. This approach also applies to the war-on-poverty initiatives as the household progresses, from the phase of household assessment towards becoming self-sustainable.

## METHODOLOGY

This section of the study deals with the research approach and design used in the study. It also highlights the population, sample and sampling procedure adopted with the research instruments utilised as well as the methods of data collection and analysis.

The study utilised a triangulated mixed methods approach, and adopted a convergence model (Creswell 2009). It used both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain the research data. This methodology involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data of a single study as according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) citing Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). The research design adopted for the purpose of this a case study design in that it involves an exploration of a “bounded system”, which is bounded by time, context and place (Creswell 2007), cited by Fouché and Schurink (2011, 321).

### Research Population and Sample

The study's population comprised beneficiaries of the CDWP, officers of the Department of Agriculture, CDWs, community leaders and CDWP coordinators in the Eden District Municipality. The sample of the study was drawn from the beneficiaries in five municipalities of the Eden District, with 50 respondents being selected randomly from a list of names provided by the CDWP office, making up a total of 250 respondents. The study sample also included 10 non-randomly selected CDWs from the Eden District Municipality's five municipalities, which included supervisors, community leaders and a coordinator of the CDWs.

### Sampling Methods and Selection

The study used both probability and non-probability sampling. The type of probability sampling adopted for the purpose of this study is simple random sampling. The non-probability sampling type adopted is purposive sampling and it made use of non-randomisation in obtaining the qualitative data from the key informants during in-depth interviews, while the CDWP beneficiaries were required to respond to a structured questionnaire.

A probability sample comprising 250 respondents was randomly selected from all the local municipalities in the Eden District Municipality for the purpose of gathering the quantitative data. As advanced by the mixed method research approach adopted for the study, qualitative data were obtained from a sample whose selection made use of non-

probability with non-random sampling of key informants, which comprised 10 CDWs, five CDWP supervisors per local municipality, one CDWP coordinator, because of the role in the implementation of the CDW programme, and 10 community leaders from the various local municipalities in the district.

## Methods of Data Collection and Administration

The research utilised a self-developed in-depth interview guide and questionnaire as instruments of data collection. The in-depth interview guide that was used to gather qualitative data from key informants was written in English. The first section of the guide contained the biographical information of the participants, and the second section contained the role-specific questions, perceptions on programme performance and effectiveness in linking citizens to the war-on-poverty initiatives, and possible recommendations. The questionnaire that was used to gather quantitative data from beneficiaries of the CDWP was also written in English. The first section of the questionnaire noted the respondents' biographical information, and the second section covered questions with regard to support of the war-on-poverty initiatives through household profiling. This section covered critical issues such as the respondents' knowledge about the programmes, whether they have been profiled or not, satisfaction with services rendered, and how the services can be improved. The analysis of the data gathered using in-depth interviews was premised on descriptive analysis, which is methodologically suitable for qualitative research informed by the critical theory paradigm.

## VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The validity and reliability were of central concern throughout the designing and administering of the self-developed questionnaire. As in all measurements, the questionnaire had to ensure that the study's findings are valid and reliable. Neuman (2015) opines that it is not possible to have perfect validity and reliability; however, there are ideals towards which one strives for. The study adhered to the protocol for quantitative questionnaire design, protocol while developing the questionnaire, ensuring that it accurately measures the contributions of the CDWP in linking citizens to the war-on-poverty initiatives, geared towards poverty alleviation. This, therefore, supposes that the tool can be applied in any other province in South Africa where the programme is or has been implemented and will yield similar results in terms of measurement.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data of the study were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) method of data analysis. The data were also presented using



tables and pie charts in order to give a clear and precise presentation and therefore making it easier for meaningful interpretation of the impact of the CDWP on poverty alleviation. The analysis of qualitative data gathered from the key informants was done through thematic content analysis. The information was subdivided into different themes, and these included the CDW programme's support for the war-on-poverty initiatives, the impact on poverty alleviation, and possible recommendations for the effective implementation of the programme.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researchers had a moral and professional obligation to adhere to the ethical issues that pertain to research participants. These are the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research, even when participants are aware or unaware of them (Neuman 2015). The researchers were granted ethical approval by the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) to undertake the study. For the purpose of this study, the researchers took cognisance of the ethic of harm avoidance to research participants in a physical, psychological, legal or economical manner through the anticipation of possible risk from the beginning of the study. Informed consent to participation was also ensured as a research ethic; this was done through a written agreement for participation in the study by the research participants in promotion of the principle of voluntary participation (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). The researchers also guaranteed the participants of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality; this was done through making sure and assuring the participants that no identifying information shall be shared or made available to anyone who is not part of the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the study deals with the presentation and discussion of findings from the War-on-Poverty programme beneficiaries, community leaders and the CDWP staff members.

### Findings from Data Gathered from Beneficiaries of the Initiatives of the War-on-Poverty Programme Implemented through the CDWP

The biographic details of respondents for the quantitative data according to gender comprised more females than males; 65 per cent of the total sample, and 35 per cent respectively. With regard to marital status, the single category of the respondents constituted the greatest proportion, with 34 per cent of the total sample, followed by widowed respondents, who comprised 30 per cent, and the divorced respondents constituting less than one per cent. In terms of the level of education, the findings show

that 45 per cent of the sample had received primary level education, with the second largest group constituting 29 per cent of the sample, having matriculated and two per cent obtained FET college qualifications. The biographic information for participants in the qualitative study according to gender, comprised 21 females and 15 males, and according to age, the bulk of them fell within the 31 years to 40 years category, making up 17 in total, followed by 11 in the 41–50 years category. It is also important to take note of the participants' work experience; many of the respondents in the sample had been in their specific lines of work for more than 10 years, with the least having five years' work experience.

A comparative analysis of the respondents' gender and awareness of the support provided for the war-on-poverty initiatives and available to beneficiaries, shows that 84 of the sample of 250 respondents knew about the support given by the CDWP to the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme. Table 1 shows a comparative analysis of the respondents' knowledge with respect to gender. It is clear that women, 24 per cent of the sample, are more knowledgeable about the war-on-poverty initiatives, compared to the 10 per cent of male participants. The findings show that less than half (34%) of the sampled population knew about the CDWP and its war-on-poverty initiatives. This finding paints a negative picture about the CDWP mandate through the War-on-Poverty programme and its purpose of bridging the gap between local municipalities and the intended beneficiaries through service information dissemination.

**Table 1:** Awareness of the support given by the CDWP to the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme

Aware of CDWP	Female		Male		Grand Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
No	103	41	63	25	166	66
Yes	60	24	24	10	84	34
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>

## Support Given to the War-on-Poverty Programme Initiatives

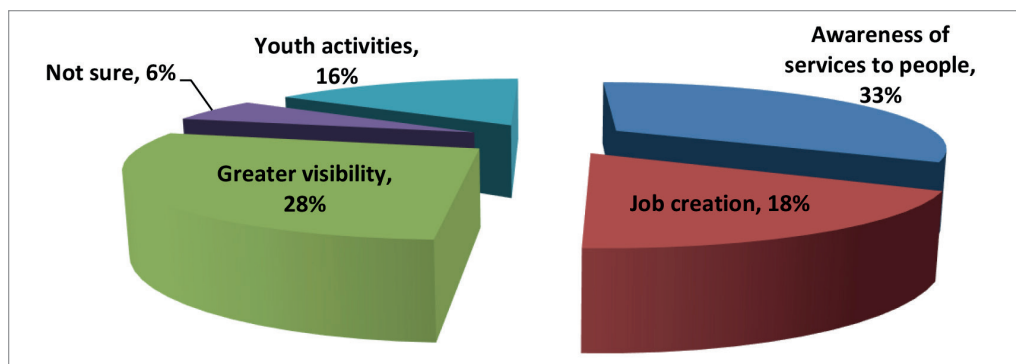
Data concerning the support given by the CDWP to the War-on-Poverty programme were gathered by establishing the number of profiled households and determining the involvement of the study participants in the programme. The data show that 22 per cent of the 84 households who reported knowing about the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme had been profiled. It was also established that 13 per cent had not been profiled but possessed knowledge of the support given by the CDWP to the initiatives. Household profiling marks the start of the helping relationship between the community development practitioner and members of the community as beneficiaries. Finding that

so few households had been profiled suggests a serious challenge regarding the success of the War-on-Poverty programme initiatives to alleviate poverty with the aid of the CDWP.

## Impact on Poverty Alleviation

In its quest to establish the types of support respondents surveyed by the CDWP had received in relation to the War-on-Poverty programme, the study sought to establish whether any of the respondents had progressed from depending on state support, to becoming self-supporting or living on a combination of the proceeds of being self-supporting and support provided by the state. It was found that, of a total of 54 respondents, only one had become partially self-supporting while continuing to receive support from the state, while the other 53 were still dependent on support from the state through social grants. This finding seriously questions the role of the CDWP in the war-on-poverty initiatives as it relates to service delivery and emancipating rural people from poverty. It can be stated unequivocally that the CDWP has failed to live up to its mandate.

The study also found that 33 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that an overall awareness of the services that are rendered to the people under the auspices of the War-on-Poverty programme and the CDWP constituted the best means of improving the performance of the CDWP and eventually generating positive results regarding the alleviation of poverty. Increasing the visibility of the CDWP was the second-most-favoured means of improving the CDWP's performance, attracting 28 per cent of the participants. The least favoured means of improving the CDWP's performance was proposing activities for the youth. These findings are presented in Figure 3. The findings relating to knowledge of CDWP services and the War-on-Poverty programme initiatives concur with the need to raise awareness of the programme's services and to increase visibility of CDWP personnel. This can be achieved through making integrated development planning (IDP) meetings more practically oriented than theoretical.



**Figure 3:** Suggestions for improving the services provided by the CDWP (N = 250)

## Findings from Data Provided by CDWs, CDW Supervisors, the CDW Coordinator and Community Leaders

According to information provided by the CDWs, household surveys had been conducted by a joint team from the Department of Social Development, local government and the CDWP. The surveys marked the first step in the implementation of the War-on-Poverty programme initiatives on the part of the CDWP. CDWs from the George, Oudtshoorn, Mossel Bay and Knysna local municipalities all reported having conducted surveys in their respective communities. A participant from George reported: "We conducted the surveys with the Department of Social Development and local government under the IDP." The Bitou Local Municipality was an exception, as one CDW said: "No surveys were done; we do only ward profiling twice a year in order to identify the common problems in the ward." Ward profiling, however, can be considered the start of the intervention process through household profiling, setting the stage for the other steps to follow in the process.

According to the SCCD (2001), a vital attribute of the participatory community developmental theoretical framework is its ability to play an important role in achieving equal opportunities, accessibility, participation by individuals and communities in democratic processes and sustainable economic, social and environmental change. This viewpoint is supported by Kelly and Van Vlaenderen (1995), who opine that there is widespread recognition and acknowledgement that the process of transforming existing services in the sphere of the South African public service requires "community participation" in the planning and implementation of new services. The CDWP has managed to collect views on the challenges affecting communities, in accordance with the participatory community development theoretical approach.

It is, however, important to note that CDWs from all the municipalities who reported that surveys had been conducted in the various communities claimed that nothing had been done with the data collected by those surveys; neither had feedback been forthcoming from the municipalities. This research also found that the data from the surveys had not been captured for analysis as had been intended and that, instead, survey forms were stacked up in municipal offices, and were eventually sent for recycling. This finding implies that no actual work has been done in implementing the War-on-Poverty programme initiatives based on data gathered from surveys. The finding that the intended poverty alleviation programmes are far from being materialised is shocking, considering the rampant poverty trapping so many South Africans.

The CDWs also expressed concern with the politicising of CDWP personnel and services; they would sometimes face challenges with local municipal counsellors who would interpret their actions as aligned with a certain political party. This would directly go against the spirit of collaboration and integration of service delivery in the communities and will constitute setbacks to the full realisation of the CDWP's goals in the domain of poverty alleviation through the War-on-Poverty programme.

There was a general perception among the CDWP staff members that much of the budget for the food security projects was not being put to its intended use; they felt that the problems encountered as a result of limited funding could, at least in part, be the result of local municipalities using the money for other purposes and allocating little to the food security projects. One supervisor said: "There is a serious shortage of resources for the programme; we are not receiving much support from the municipality," and added, "the usage of operational grants is not clear; it seems as if they are used anywhere and anyhow, as it suits the municipality." Resource shortage has also been witnessed through the shortage of gardening implements and the delays in delivery from the Department of Agriculture.

The study's findings also show that there are few CDWs compared with the number of municipal wards which they are intended to serve. There are some wards that do not have CDWs due to either promotion or leaving for greener pastures. The Hessequa local municipality is one noted area by the CDWs, due to promotion of the CDWs from the wards to CDWP management level at a district level. This problem seriously compromises the ability of the CDWP to make a significant contribution to poverty alleviation, as far fewer people than intended will end up benefiting from the programme owing to the inaccessibility of CDWs, for many. It was also established from the CDWs that there are unemployed CDWs who have been trained and who are willing to work. Their successful deployment could contribute significantly to reaching more people and monitoring the processes of the War-on-Poverty programme in which people are helped and encouraged to progress from depending on support from the state to becoming self-sufficient.

The data gathered from community leaders indicate that most of them had a general understanding of the nature of the CDWP. One community leader explained that, although the CDWP had been conducting interviews in her community, she had not seen any evidence of them coming back to the people as a result of the surveys. She said: "I think they were mentoring youth who would go to houses asking questions, they did the surveys, but I have never heard of any help being given to them out of that." It is possible that some community leaders were not aware of what exactly the survey administrators were doing, as there had been no orientation on the purpose of the survey by CDWP personnel. Further engagement with communities in the practical sense, from the onset of the process, is of the utmost importance.

Failure on the part of the government departments responsible to follow through on the household survey process, to the point of suggesting intervention strategies for poverty alleviation under the auspices of the War-on-Poverty programme does not come as a surprise. According to Bond (2010), Noxolo Kievit, former premier of the Eastern Cape, confessed that a "lack of coordination and integration of government services" meant that "only 30 per cent of the households surveyed received all the services needed". This would suggest that the envisaged progress of households, from dependence on state support to self-sufficiency, will not be achieved, and that disadvantaged people

will be obliged to remain dependent on the state for support, thereby condemning them to being trapped in poverty forever. It can therefore be asserted that the CDWP has played a role in providing support to the War-on-Poverty programme, however, the CDWP's support suffered a stillbirth because there was no clear collaboration strategy among the stakeholders, and this sabotaged the success of the programme.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A fair assessment of the support given by the CDWP to the War-on-Poverty programme would be that the programme has played a constructive role in participating in the surveying of poverty-stricken households. In doing so, the CDWP collaborated with government departments, such as the Department of Social Development, local government and other stakeholders. This collaboration confirms the CDWP's support of the initiatives, even though the exercise itself did not fall strictly within its overall mandate. However, it is regrettable to note that nothing was done with the data collected from households during the course of the survey. This research found that no feedback had resulted from the survey, because the data had not been analysed to identify the challenges that households face, and therefore relevant and appropriate interventions for the benefit of the affected households could not be developed. This state of affairs precluded the household survey from yielding any of the intended positive results; instead, the survey ultimately sabotaged the support of the CDWP to the initiatives. It is therefore recommended that the CDWP embrace a practical approach to deal with poverty alleviation, rather than a theoretical approach. The implementation of the programme is what matters most.

The efforts made under the umbrella of the CDWP to support the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme have borne little or no fruit. As has been noted, this has been the result of household surveys being conducted in the absence of strategies for implementation of interventions. This means that, regardless of who is ultimately at fault, the CDWP has failed to achieve one of the objectives of its overall endeavour to alleviate poverty. There is, therefore, a need to promote stakeholder alliances and IDP to ensure that government departments become familiar with the CDWP, its services and its personnel. These actions would contribute significantly to promoting accountable interdepartmental planning.

The reported serious shortage and politicisation of CDWP personnel are a matter of concern, especially in relation to poverty alleviation. There is a need for vacant positions to be filled with already-trained workers as noted. There is also a need for greater awareness of the services provided through the CDWP. This can be achieved by presenting information sessions to explain these services to communities and their representatives across the political divide, in a bid to depoliticise the CDWP.

The CDWP deserves applause for its contribution to the household surveys. It is a pity that the municipalities did nothing with the data contained in the completed surveys.

The initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme had been a joint exercise with other government departments, including local municipalities under whose auspices the CDWP was being implemented. In this case the failure of the programme, as exemplified by a lack of feedback and analysis in order to determine appropriate interventions that would contribute to alleviating poverty, must be considered to have fallen outside the mandate of the CDWP. The failure of the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme to make any progress towards implementing interventions aimed at poverty alleviation, has, in this case, resulted in continued dependence by households on the state for support; the interests of these households were disregarded by those responsible for failing to carry through the initiatives of the War-on-Poverty programme.

The study found that, of the 54 respondents surveyed, only one had achieved partial self-sufficiency while continuing to receive assistance from the state. The rest remained solely dependent on support provided by the state. This finding of the study resonates painfully with the assertion made by Bond (2010), namely that South Africa is losing its war on poverty. This opinion is confirmed by rampant demonstrations to demand better service delivery that regularly take place in many South African cities and towns. According to Bond (2010), “the war on poverty is one of the most clandestine operations in South African history, with status reports kept confidential by a floundering army in rapid retreat from the poor, who are estimated at half the society”.

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