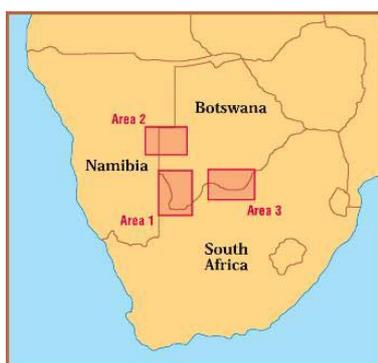


Chains of Communication in the Policy Process

Key points

- The communication of policy from policy-makers to communities is often subject to distortion and misinterpretation
- Breakdown in chains of communication can have both negative and positive livelihood outcomes
- Sharing of information and best practice experience within communities and between households can enhance local capacity and help sustain livelihoods



Research areas:

1. **Arid southwest:**
 - a) Mier, South Africa
 - b) SW Kgalagadi, Botswana
2. **Semiarid northwest:**
 - a) Ghanzi Dist, Botswana
 - b) Omaheke, Namibia
3. **Dry sub-humid southeast:**
 - a) NW Province South Africa,
 - b) Barolongs, Botswana

PANRUSA Briefing Notes

PANRUSA, Poverty Policy and Natural Resource Use in Southern Africa. A DFID funded research project at the University of Sheffield UK.

This briefing explores the chains of communication between policy makers, communities, households and individuals. These are critical in affecting place-to-place outcomes of policies, their implementation as well as natural resource practises employed at community and household level. PANRUSA has found that breakdown in communication and different interpretations of policy can have significant impacts on livelihood outcomes.

National policy makers

At the 'top' of the policy-making process are the policy-makers who often operate on behalf of individual government departments. A problem occurs when particular policies or livelihood issues cross-cut the remits of these individual departments such that there is no clear division of responsibility, a situation complicated by poor communication.

Namibia's land resettlement programme provides a good example of the ways in which horizontal (between ministries) breakdown in communication have affected the viability of livelihoods for those resettled (see BN9). The Ministry of Lands and Resettlement is responsible for negotiating access to land and the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for livelihood provision following resettlement. Lack of communication between the two ministries has resulted in resettlement taking place in the Omaheke region without prior consideration of the viability of livelihoods. Resettlement has for example, taken place on marginal, overcrowded grazing lands often with water supply problems and is removed from employment and livelihood opportunities. Moreover, individual rights to the land have not been legislated for at present resulting in the *ad hoc* fencing of land to secure exclusive access to resources for some and marginalising others.

Local government

Within Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, policy implementation is often devolved to District Administrations (e.g. Land Boards and Agriculture). PANRUSA found that the communication of policy from national to local

government and its interpretation was highly variable affecting implementation. In NW Province, South Africa (Study Area 3a) the situation has been compounded by the reorganisation of provincial government and complicated by the continued importance of tribal authorities. The implementation of the Financial Assistance Programme (FAP) in SW Botswana (see BN10B) indicates how local government interpretations of policy may have affected its implementation in a particular way. Although the FAP provides loans for various productive activities and business ventures the policy has been sold to the people locally as a smallstock scheme. As a result, many have acquired smallstock through the FAP rather than pursuing other activities which may be more viable for livelihoods.

Local communities

PANRUSA found that many communities were ill-informed about policy. For example none of those living and working on the Ncojane TGLP ranch block (Study Area 2) knew anything about the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy itself (see Briefing Note 10a). Many associated it with fencing but few understood the rationale behind fencing notably improved range management. Thus on ranches with absentee owners few residents were aware of, or practised, rotational grazing strategies making use of paddocks. The following extract from an interview with a male ranch worker in his 50s typified many of the responses; *"What is TGLP? I know nothing about it...Fencing of the ranches is not good when there is a drought. It's drought now. When the ranch is fenced the livestock eat all of the grass on the ranch so that there is nothing left. If the ranch isn't fenced the cattle go out to graze and then things are better"*. The quotation also highlights a strategy employed by ranch owners to overcome the rigidities of the policy during times of drought namely the removal of fences. PANRUSA found that among communities living further away from policy-making centres (in this case Gaborone), lack of policy co-ordination sometimes allowed for the flexible interpretation of policy. During times of drought several of the Ncojane farmers were operating their ranches on a cattlepost basis to secure grazing and water for their livestock, improving livelihood opportunities for ranch populations.

Households

Within individual communities some households are more knowledgeable about policy and livelihood opportunities than others. In the Barolong (Study Area 3b) several

small-scale farming households were able to make use of ALDEP (Arable Lands Development Programme) very successfully, while neighbours remained largely uninformed or uninterested in the opportunities available through the programme. In NW Province (Logageng, Study Area 3a) the local farmers' group is highly active, meeting regularly to discuss cropping issues. Only some of these meetings are organised by the local extension officer. Farmers reported that their own networks of friends were very important for information sharing about policy and credit facilities, as well as the exchange of farming experiences.

Outcomes

- **Policy is open to distortion and manipulation in implementation with implications for livelihoods.**
- **Both horizontal and vertical chains of communication are significant to policy implementation. Horizontal chains link groups at the same stage or level of implementation while vertical chains link groups at different levels.**
- **The effectiveness of policy implementation is subject to distance decay. Communication of policy objectives is weakest away from centres of government.**

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