



PRACTICE NOTE

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

LEARNING EVENT INSIGHTS
DEEPENING REIPPPP'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

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What can, and must, be learned to improve community development in the REIPPPP, the largest renewable energy programme ever undertaken in South Africa?

This was the question that 150 diverse participants came together to explore at a dedicated Learning Event in early 2020. The event was funded by USAID, in partnership with the IPP Office, and supported by the industry associations SAWEA and SAPVIA, and was hosted at the IDC in Johannesburg. This practice note is one of six compiled by a group dedicated to recording the day's rich discussions, and captures insights related to the specific important theme of **COLLABORATION**.

THE CHALLENGE

The competitive aspect of the REIPPPP (the Economic Development requirement in particular) has been identified as a hindrance to effective industry collaboration on community development. While the programme has an ideal of community development built into it, it lacks a common vision to drive *joint* development action, and has therefore unfortunately not translated into *collective* efforts towards impact. This is a missed opportunity.

The main problem with the lack of collaboration, let alone coordination, has been the duplication of development initiatives among multiple independent power producers (IPPs) operating in the same communities. Among other things, this wastes resources and creates confusion. On the positive side, there are already promising opportunities for the renewable industry to better align community development work, particularly at the point of commitments made in Implementation Agreements, as well as in some of the changes to the rules over successive REIPPPP rounds. In addition, there are other 'low hanging fruit' strategies available (with little or no implications for competitiveness), such as sharing maps of community engagement projects among IPP companies, making it clear who is doing what, and where. Having jointly agreed community

development outcomes in this way could minimise unintended negative consequences and optimise development impact.

Understanding the incentives and disincentives for collaboration is vital if the current challenges are to be overcome. On the one hand, it is known that *collective* efforts to address the complexity of socioeconomic challenges in host communities are most effective; yet, pushing against this is the *competitive* culture inherent to the private sector in which IPPs operate. Perhaps the need for effective developmental impact presents an opportunity to become *competitive collaborators*.

Recognising these and other challenges, the industry has embarked on a series of dialogues in search of opportunities for collaboration. At one such event, in September 2019, members of the South African Wind Energy Association (SAWEA) pointed out the need for value alignment among IPP role-players for collaboration to be viable, sustainable, and impactful. Getting as many IPPs 'on the same page' as possible is vital for the co-creation of an effective industry transformation agenda. The Learning Event reflected upon in this practice note represents another step towards that goal.





NEW INSIGHTS

Ideas we need to let go

- **Capacitating communities are 'unnecessary' investments.**

Community capacitation is much-needed foundational work. It may have a different timeframe to that of IPPs' operations, but it is no less necessary. It does not unfold solely according to company priorities, nor is it an opportunity for companies to exercise control over communities. It must be recognised that the imperative of development reflects the democratic will of the people and is mandated in the REIPPPP policy for that reason.

- **A silo approach to community assessments.** Communities are 'over researched', having to participate in multiple needs assessments that are mere information extraction processes. IPPS can collaborate and share information with one another, so that others entering the community only need to validate existing data and collect additional data. It is important not only to look to community needs, but also to their assets and what can be strengthened.

*Insights that **disrupt** and **liberate** our thinking*

- **Collaboration demands a joint focus.** In order to have clarity on the objectives for collaborating in the first place, a shared understanding is needed of exactly what we are trying to achieve. It is worth remembering the philosophy underlying collaborative socioeconomic development: 'If you want to go quickly, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together'. We also need to think 'beyond' collaboration of only IPPs, and include government, civil society, and other groups and organisations within communities.

- **What is the vision for the renewable energy sector?** The industry needs to have a shared vision for community development that all stakeholders buy into. This vision should be framed within the context of the broader energy transition in the country, and how it will impact areas like Mpumalanga and Limpopo especially. The vision at community level should align with the national vision, and should be co-designed through a process that is appreciative of the time it takes to co-create with communities.

- **Collaboration is a journey that evolves as trust is built.** Collaboration requires a process of moving from 'I' to 'we'. Learning together is a good foundation for working together. IPPs realise that, to the community, 'we are just a wind farm – not different companies', and this is something we can embrace as an opportunity to speak with one voice, rather than getting caught up in a confusing web of stakeholder management issues.



RECOMMENDATIONS

*Actions for **local or community** impact*

Before collaborating, define the problem and identify who 'touches' it. By nature of the community development component of the REIPPPP, there are often multiple role-players shaping dynamics, including the private sector, community groups, and journalists. It is important not to prematurely launch into problem-solving before all the problem dynamics are understood as clearly as possible. It is helpful to start with community mapping and then to 'spiderweb' out.

Work with broader stakeholder groups, including municipalities. Holding multi-stakeholder forums/structures that include municipalities, relevant government departments, and support services, can be a good starting point for sharing information first, *and then* coordinating efforts. These forums/structures could start off focused on specific issues at municipal or provincial level, such as education, LED or (as we have seen with COVID-19) health.

*Actions for **national** impact*

Research on collaboration for high impact. National guidance, based on evidence, is needed to understand how to use IPPs' financial resources to better leverage change in the system. How can these companies' funds catalyse growth in the state's funds so that there is more to go around for the development of all South Africans?

Incentivise IPPs to collaborate. The IPP Office needs to explore strategies for incentivising collaboration. This should not be about standardising, but rather creating a space that allows for innovative and active experimentation, with limited risk to those companies or the communities they have a legal and moral mandate to help develop.

Neutral conversations managed by an independent intermediary. This may ease barriers to collaboration and help build trust among stakeholders. Making use of an intermediary to facilitate allows for conversations to be constructive, inclusive, and ongoing.



FURTHER READING

[International – Published Journal]

Bryson, JM., Crosby, BC and Stone, MM. 2015. Designing and Implementing Cross-Sector Collaborations: Needed and Challenging. *Public Administration Review*, 75: 647-663.

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Butcher, JR., Gilchrist, DJ., Phillimore, J and Wanna, J. 2019. Attributes of effective collaboration: insights from five case studies in Australia and New Zealand. *Policy Design and Practice*, 2(1): 75-89.

[International – Planning Toolkit]

Community Places. 2014. Community Planning Toolkit – Working Together. Available online: <https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/WorkingTogether.pdf>

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Rinehart, TA., Laszlo, AT. and Briscoe, GO. 2001. COPS Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix, and Sustain Productive Partnerships. Department of Justice – Office of Community Oriented Policing Services: United States.

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