

POLICY INFLUENCING WORKSHOP

INSTITUTE FOR NATURAL RESOURCES/PROLINNOVA SOUTH AFRICA

PIETERMARITZBURG 14/15 APRIL 2010-05-04

REPORT

1. Introduction

The workshop came about as a result of interaction between certain members of PROLINNOVA SA and the Dutch organisations ETC and BBO. Flowing from this, Prolinnova asked BBO to facilitate a workshop in South Africa aimed at introducing local members to questions of policy influencing, advocacy, lobbying, etc. BBO in turn approached Mike Pothier of the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office, Cape Town, to facilitate the workshop on their behalf. This was considered to be a far more cost-effective option than sending a BBO staff member to South Africa for a single, short workshop.

PROLINNOVA (PROmoting Local INNOVation) is active in ‘ecologically-orientated agriculture and natural resource management’. It is not strictly speaking an organisation, but a network, bringing together individuals, NGO members, officials and academics who are all to some degree active in small-scale agriculture, farmer-support, agricultural research, food security and allied fields.

2. Objectives

In correspondence between Maxwell Mudhara of PROLINNOVA (MM), Huub Sloot of BBO (HS), and Mike Pothier (MP), it was decided on the following broad objectives:

- i. To strengthen members’ theoretical knowledge on policy influencing;
- ii. To provide insight into the experiences of other organizations with policy influencing at local and national level;
- iii. To strengthen members’ knowledge on policy development processes, policy intelligence and preparedness;
- iv. To strengthen their knowledge on how to strategize for policy influencing;
- v. To start developing an action plan for policy influencing at local and national level.

While the workshop was being prepared it was unclear to what extent participants had any prior knowledge of the subject-matter, or whether they had undertaken any policy influencing activities before. The available information suggested that their knowledge was at best limited, and this was confirmed at the beginning of the workshop when participants expressed their expectations.

Four people wished for clarity on what public policy is; how it is developed; and why it is important.

Two raised the question of the difference between advocacy and lobbying.

Three wanted to know how to go about doing advocacy and/or lobbying.

Seven had expectations around PROLINNOVA's efforts to influence policy:

Which policies will PROLINNOVA seek to influence?

What does PROLINNOVA seek to achieve by influencing public policy?

What concrete steps will PROLINNOVA take to influence public policy?¹

3. Workshop Structure

The workshop was divided roughly into three parts:

A 'theoretical' part, looking at what public policy is, who makes it, and how it is formulated. This took up the first two sessions (14th April, morning);

A 'practical' part, sharing and considering members' past experiences with influencing policy, and following the 'nine steps' strategic approach (14th April, afternoon);

A 'planning' part, intended to identify specific targets for influence and to prepare a strategy for implementing policy-influencing efforts (15 April, morning).

A copy of the workshop programme is attached as an annexure.

4. Participants

The 13 participants were drawn from a mixture of government departments, NGOs and academic institutions. This made for some very useful discussion and exchange, as issues of public policy could be approached from all three perspectives. For example, NGO members could learn at first hand how government officials sometimes struggle to understand and implement their 'own' policy. Government-based participants, on the other hand, could hear the frustrations of NGO members who don't know how or where to lodge their concerns about public policy issues. This interaction, and the fact that PROLINNOVA SA somewhat unusually draws its members from both state and NGO sectors, was a very positive aspect of the workshop.

Levels of participation were good, although some were more confident and willing to speak than others. No-one failed to contribute, and interaction improved as the workshop progressed.

5. Forward Planning

The morning session of the second day was intended to be used for selecting specific policies that PROLINNOVA SA would try to influence, and for preparing a strategy for the

¹ There were 13 participants; some recorded more than one expectation. A list of the participants is appended at the end of this report.

attempt. It became clear, however, that this was not yet an appropriate step. There were a few reasons for this.

Firstly, the different members of the group do not all share the same vision; some are more 'hands-on' and focused on practical interventions, while others are more concerned with 'philosophical' questions. An example of this arose with regard to the policy of supplying tractors to small-scale farmers, as applied by a provincial agriculture department. Some participants saw the problem as one of favouritism and corruption, where the policy-influencing efforts needed to be directed at practical intervention to achieve fairer distribution of resources. Others, however, regarded it as problematic to provide small-scale farmers with tractors at all – theirs was a more philosophical question about appropriate technology.

Secondly, various members (and their organizations) were already engaged in projects which had not yet come to an end. They felt that it would be better to allow such projects to run and then to assess – against the theoretical background provided – their success or failure in influencing policy.

Thirdly, the time available was clearly insufficient for the proper absorption of the theoretical and 'nine-step' information dealt with on the previous day. Some participants found it more difficult than others to relate this material to the task of planning.

As a result, it was decided between MP and MM to adapt the planning session to become more of a 'sharing' session, where participants could relate their experiences of policies that had worked or failed, and suggest possible reasons therefore. These were then analysed in light of the theoretical principles discussed the previous day; in this way the theory was related to the practical experiences of participants.

Finally, three potential opportunities for influencing public policy were identified by the group.

The national Department of Science and Technology has a Committee for Innovation and Development which is looking at 'participatory innovative development' as a model. This idea is due to be presented to the Minister and may then undergo further development towards becoming policy. PROLINNOVA SA will try to gain access to this process and contribute to the drafting and development of the policy.

The Department of Land Affairs and Rural Development is in the process of drawing up policy on various aspects of rural development. PROLINNOVA SA will select one or two of these and, using existing contacts, engage with the policy process.

The University of Limpopo is conducting research into different aspects of small-scale farming. At the same time, some participants at the workshop felt that the Limpopo provincial agriculture department is not sufficiently involved in research into innovative farming methods. These participants will get together with PROLINNOVA SA members at Limpopo University and try to influence departmental policy towards such research.

While the final session of the workshop did not go according to the original plan, it was nevertheless a necessary and worthwhile step in the process of helping PROLINNOVA SA to identify a role for itself in influencing policy.

6. Outcome and Evaluation

Participants generally felt that the workshop had been a success. Among the positive comments were:

- I have a much better understanding of public policy
- It provided a framework for advocacy
- Good grasp of policy processes
- Gained a clear understanding of public policy and how to influence it
- I now know who the policy-makers are

On the other hand, there were also negative comments:

- It was too advanced and difficult to understand
- We didn't get to the point of being able to strategise
- There should have been more practical examples

In addition, five participants commented that the time allowed was too short. This is also my view; in future, similar workshops should have two full days at least, and longer if possible.

As far as the objectives set out in section 2 above are concerned, (i) and (iii) were certainly met; (iv) was substantially achieved; (ii) was partly achieved, although more actual examples could perhaps have been put forward; (v) was not significantly achieved at the workshop – however, it is on PROLINNOVA SA's agenda and they now have the basic tools to achieve it.

7. Conclusion

I am satisfied overall with the success of the workshop, and grateful to BBO for the opportunity to be involved. South Africans have the privilege of a constitutional and legal environment that is very open to citizens' participation in public policy processes. Unfortunately, both government officials and the citizens themselves often fail to appreciate this, or to exercise their rights in this regard. Workshops such as this are therefore of vital importance in engendering an active awareness of the importance of public policy and of how to influence it.

Mike Pothier
Cape Town
5th May 2010

List of Participants

Refiloe Chuene	<i>Limpopo Provincial Department of Agriculture</i>
Anton Krone	<i>SAVEACT</i>
Brigid Letty	<i>Institute of Natural Resources, University of KwaZulu-Natal</i>
Sipho Maphosa	<i>KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Agriculture</i>
Zimbini Mdlulwa	<i>Agricultural Research Council</i>
Thami Mpanza	<i>KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Agriculture</i>
Koketso Mphahlele	<i>University of Limpopo</i>
Maxwell Mudhara	<i>Farmer Support Group, University of KwaZulu-Natal</i>
Nono Ngubane	<i>Farmer Support Group, University of KwaZulu-Natal</i>
Monique Salomon	<i>Research Fellow, University of KwaZulu-Natal</i>
Khensani Sambo	<i>Ecolink</i>
Sifiso Shandu	<i>KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Department of Agriculture</i>
T R Thobejane	<i>Limpopo Provincial Department of Agriculture</i>

Program for Workshop on Influencing Policy

14-15 April 2010 Pietermaritzburg

Wednesday 14th April

Session	Hour	Activity	Facilitator
1	08.30 – 08.50	Opening and Introduction, Presentation of participants Objectives of the workshop Logistics	Maxwell
2	08.50 – 09.10	Programme of the Workshop Initial questions	Mike
3	09.10 – 10.30	The Theory of Public Policy - What is public policy? - Who formulates it? - Constitutional and human rights context - Public policy at local and national levels	Mike
	10.30-11.00	Tea break	
4	11.00-13.00	Influencing Public Policy - The process of formulating policy - Public policy as a dynamic - The special role of civil society	Mike
	13.00-14.00	Lunch	
5	14.00-15.30	Practical Experiences with Policy Influencing - Exchanging experiences (group work) - Identifying successes and failures (group work) - Lessons to be learnt	Participants and Maxwell, Mike
	15.30-16.00	Tea break	
6	16.00-17.30	Strategic Steps for Influencing Policy - Lobby, advocacy, campaigning - The nine steps - Practical tools for each step	Mike

Thursday 15th April

Session	Hour	Activity	Facilitator
	08.30-09.00	Recap of Day 1	Participants
7	09.00-10.30	Identifying the Targets - What specific policies does Prolinnova wish to influence? - Who controls these policies? - What are the key 'entry points' - Political/ideological or technical? - National, regional or local? - Formulation or implementation? - Formulating the objective for lobby and advocacy	Mike and participants
	10.30-11.00	Tea break	
8	11.00-13.00	Preparing an Influencing Strategy - Group work to develop an influencing strategy according to the nine steps and based upon the objective formulated - Presentation of results - Timelines and responsibilities	Mike and participants
9	13.00-13.30	Conclusion - Follow up of the workshop - Evaluation and closure	Maxwell and participants