

Reverse Empowerment in South Africa's Comprehensive Rural Development Programme

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ABSTRACT This paper reports a testing of the 'reverse empowerment' concept on South Africa's ambitious comprehensive rural development programme (CRDP). The objectives of the study were to provide a brief overview of the rural development policy, to isolate key elements of service delivery, to analyse state budgetary interventions and, to trace evidence of reverse empowerment. The methodology involved nine pilot sites spread across provinces in terms of budgetary allocation for the programme 2009-2013. This was reinforced with a survey of the Department's annual reports for the period 2009-2012 to show the apportionment of spending on services, infrastructure and production. The data was analysed and the results confirm the operation of reverse empowerment because the implementation mechanism of the state is bureaucratic, focuses on service and infrastructure delivery and fails to create space for communities to participate in their own development. The findings have direct implications for state policy.