

Local Government: Strengthening Capacity – A Review of Measures Taken in the Last Fifteen Years

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SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Recurring episodes of local protests, in the period preceding the 2006 elections, have focused public attention on the state of local government. The main cause of this spectacle is reportedly inadequate or/and absence of municipal services (Ndletyana, 2007). This inevitably raises questions about the capacity of local government to execute its mandate. Existing backlog in social infrastructure renders the resolution of this problem even more urgent. In September 2005, the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) reported that a significant number of municipalities were failing to provide social services (Atkinson, 2007).

Moreover, municipalities are increasingly expected to lead economic development in their respective communities. The purpose is to make residential areas more than just places of residence but also economically viable to absorb residents into the labour market. This is a response to the high rate of unemployment that not only denies residents a quality lifestyle, but also breeds anti-social behaviour with unsettling consequences for the community. Thus, among others, municipalities lead public works programmes, build infrastructure

and initiate local development, all in an attempt to create employment and better living conditions (www.thedplg.gov.za).

Needless to say, if the backlogs continue unattended and a significant segment of South African populace remains economically inactive, local unrests and a host of other anti-social behavioural traits are likely to persist. Municipal capacity, therefore, is the catalyst in this whole scenario. This begs the question: Do municipalities have the requisite capacity to live up to their mandate?

The study sought to answer the afore-mentioned question. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the existing level of skills relative to municipal needs; evaluated the existing programmes introduced to offset a lack of municipal capacity; and then, where possible, made some recommendations on how these programmes could be strengthened.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken over a period of roughly four months, beginning November 2007 to February 2008. Our starting-point was to determine the nature and range of functions that municipalities are mandated to execute, thereafter established what capacity is required to undertake such functions. We took note of the multi-faceted nature of the term “capacity” to mean financial resources, human capital and social capital. The White Paper on Local Government reemphasised this definition of capacity in highlighting that municipalities needed to develop:

- Strategic capacity to assess, plan and develop innovative programmes to meet local needs and to make a significant contribution to social and economic development;
- Integrated capacity to co-ordinate and integrate outputs from inside and outside the administration to ensure developmental outcomes; and
- A community orientation to inform user-friendly, relevant and quality services to local communities (DPLG, White Paper on Local Government).

The latter point underscores that the impetus for a functioning local government includes more than just financial and technical capacity. It also stems from social capital, especially civic engagement in the political processes and institutions of local government (Putnam, 1993). Civic participation is crucial to nudge an otherwise unresponsive political leadership into the right direction. And where there is a lack of capacity it is unlikely to go unnoticed for long as an engaged and vocal citizenry will attract the attention of relevant authorities to their aid.

The guiding thesis for this review study, therefore, was that an effective municipality is a function of a combination of technical skills, material resources and civic engagement. It is worth emphasizing though that this study reviewed what was already in place. To that end, it was largely retrospective covering the

last fifteen years of new local government system: from legislative and institutional alignment between 1993 to 1999; to consolidating institutional integration from the year 2000 onwards, and to focusing programmatically on capacitating local municipalities since 2003 or so.

Being pitched as a macro review of local government, the study examined a mixture of primary and secondary data to determine government's efforts to improve local government capacity, which cuts across the full spectrum of municipal functioning. Primary sources included official documents, reports, statistics, whilst secondary sources consisted of literature by a wide array of key, specialist scholars on local government. A significant volume of material on the transition of local government in South Africa, and in particular its capacity, have been generated in the country, given the scale of restructuring that this sphere of government has undergone since the early 1990s.

We catalogued and procured a variety of documentation that had relevance for this study. This relevant documentation related to the following three topics:

1. Qualitative and quantitative estimates of local government capacity;
2. Documentation relating to the macro-restructuring experience of local government; and
3. Documentation giving details of major and concrete state-sponsored interventions, either by departments or public entities, that have since 2000 been created to strengthen capacity and facilitate the organizational transition of local government.

This report is presented in six sections. Following this introductory section is section two, which narrates the historical context, within which local government has evolved in South Africa. It covers the period beginning in the 1950s to late early 1980s. The third section follows on legislative and institutional reforms that began in the early 1990s. Thereafter, the fourth section focuses on the post-2000 period, specifically at the host of challenges that beset municipalities. Then the fifth section presents the array of measures and programmes introduced to empower the developmental capacity of municipalities. Finally, the sixth section evaluates these remedies, makes recommendations and concludes the study.

SECTION TWO:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This section provides a historical analysis of the development of local government in South Africa, beginning in the 1950s onwards. This is crucial as it provides context and, partly, explains the logic of reforms that followed the 1994 democratic breakthrough.

2.1 APARTHEID LOCAL GOVERNMENT: TRIPLE LEGACY – SEGREGATION, SKEWED TAX BASE AND UNACCOUNTABILITY.

Analysis of local government under apartheid reveals that apartheid bequeathed the new democratic society a local government system marked by a triple legacy. It was racially segregated, built on an uneven revenue base, and was unaccountable. This adversely pre-figured both the capacity of the post-apartheid local government and the magnitude of the social needs it would have to cater towards once inaugurated.

2.1.1 *Pre-1994*

Local government in South Africa evolved within a context of racial segregation. Inevitably, local authorities were similarly fashioned. A 1962 amendment to the Group Areas Act, for instance, made provisions for the establishment of separate local structures for Indian/Asian and Coloured communities in the form of advisory committees called “Management Committees” and “Local Affairs Committees” (Cameron, 1999: 78). Africans were left out of this policy regime and its accompanying institutions as they were not considered part of the “South African citizenry”, but temporary sojourners in the urban areas. Officialdom had legislated Africans out of SA into the “citizenship” of Bantustans, where local government, which was regulated under the Bantu Authorities Act, and manned by chiefs. But, as apartheid officialdom gradually accepted the permanence of the African urban populace, they too were provided their segregated local government. This came in 1977 in the form of “community councils” and, in 1982, the Black Local Authorities Act (BLAA) was passed to institutionalise local government for this section of the population (Todes & Watson, 1984: 23).

BLAA gave the newly created bodies more powers than their predecessor, but, as Cameron (1991: 289-290) observed, these were “...not quite as comprehensive as White local authorities.” As with its Indian and Coloured counterpart, BLAs also experienced an inadequate tax base. “Lack of finance” as Cameron concluded, “proved to be the Achilles heel of BLAs” (1991: 319).

The circumstances of pre-1994 local government were therefore a symptom of the government’s overarching apartheid policy. The 1980s did however see some movement on the part of the National Party government to liberalise the functioning of separate race-based local authorities and address their infrastructural needs. Of particular note was the establishment of Regional Services Councils (RSCs), which were designed as multi-racial bodies whose membership comprised participating local authorities from all racial groups. RSCs promised to redirect infrastructural resources to areas in need, but the manner of its decision-making process made lie of this promise. Local authority that had a high consumption of services, which happened to be white, had more

voting powers, and used them to maintain their privileged status (Atkinson & Heymans, 1988:4).

The period between the mid 1980s and the beginnings of a process that eventually ended with the dismantling of apartheid (1990/1991) saw increasing volatility at local government level, as black residents rejected these undemocratic structures. BLAs had also increased levies in the form of rental and service charges to maintain viability, to which black residents responded by not paying at all (Mayekiso, 1996). That period also saw large vacancies amongst Black local authority councillors, prompted by resignations which in one case saw over a third of the seats in the Transvaal province's eighty-two councils left vacant because of the intimidation levelled at Black councillors by their constituencies (De Jongh and van Vuuren, 1991:9).

Ultimately the continued viability of the pre-1994 local government system succumbed to and was inextricably intertwined with the fortunes of apartheid policies and separate development, which began to be dismantled between 1990 and 1994.

SECTION THREE:

POST-APARTHEID REFORMS: DERACIALISATION DEVELOPMENTAL ORIENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY , 1993-2000

The immediate post-1994 period saw the promulgation of a raft of legislation and policy regime. These were intended to de-racialise this tier of government, empower its resources, especially in the poorly developed black communities, and to make them accountable to the citizenry.

The Local Government Transition Act (No. 209 of 1993) initiated the process of de-racialising the local government system by formalising the negotiation process for this reform (creating non-racial negotiating forums), in addition to providing for the functioning of non-racial "transitional" councils. The Act also called for the establishment of local government demarcation boards for each province; and repealed the Black Local Authorities Act whilst recognising the continued existing of entities created under the BLAA subject though to the provisions of the LGTA. The LGTA was therefore a significant piece of legislation in its intent, which was to begin a lengthy and complex process of crafting non-racial geo-political units at local government level.

It must be mentioned that post-apartheid local government was also handed the ambitious, and some might argue onerous task, of functioning "developmentally",

that is, foregrounding the social and economic development of its constituencies, which was not a role that it had historically been able to perform². Chapter 7 of the 1996 Constitution dedicates a distinct section to the developmental “duties” of municipalities, where local government is required to structure its administration and budgeting to give “priority” to the basic needs of its communities and to “promote” their social and economic development. The seriousness of local government’s newfound “developmental mandate” was further specified in a White Paper on Local Government, tabled in 1998, which defined developmental local government according to four themes:

- Maximising social development and economic growth
- Integrating and co-ordinating
- Democratising development
- Leading and learning (Reddy, 1999: 209)

The first two features can be directly linked to the text of section 153, where local government was expected to make an impact on social and economic circumstances and ensure the requisite planning for this purpose was effective. The latter two expectations were aligned more with the broader transitional expectations of government as a whole, where greater participatory engagement with constituencies on developmental issues was being urged, which was again not standard operating procedure under apartheid.

Public participation was to take place within ward committees. The creation of ward committees was in recognition of the importance of civic participation for municipalities to function properly. Ward committees form a crucial component of the system of participatory local government. They are intended to facilitate interaction between elected officials and residents. They serve as an on-going channel for residents to present their concerns and complaints, or even suggestions for improvements and provide a platform for elected councillors to report regularly on their mandate. Councillors and ward committee members now play important roles in both LED and integrated development, especially in the initiation, formulation and management of local projects, the details on business planning and tendering included in these modules are very important. There are close to 4 000 ward committees established country wide, with approximately 40 000 ward committee members (Municipal Structures Act, 1998, No.117; LGSETA, Sector Skills Plan for the Local Government 2007: 22; L. du Plessis).

Before reviewing how post-apartheid local government has coped with these and other expectations stemming from its new legislative mandate, it is necessary to give a summary of other major pieces of legislation passed after 1994 on local

² Heymans (1994: 1) noted for example that under apartheid “many local authorities simply never had the financial basis, political legitimacy or administrative ability to govern their areas. This also meant that they were not in a position to address development challenges”. One should add that social and economic development of South Africa’s Black African population in particular was more closely regulated by national government departments working with homeland administrations.

government matters. Table 1 below summarises in table form the key pieces of legislation drafted after 1994 to regulate and make provision for the structure and performance of local government.

In commenting on table one, it is evident that South Africa has made a successful effort to introduce a comprehensive legal and functional framework for local government in a non-racial democratic environment. This has moreover largely given effect to the provisions governing local government in the 1996 Constitution. New legislation was introduced to provide for:

- The re-demarcation of municipal boundaries, to replace racially fragmented and dysfunctional local authorities;
- A new structural and operating regime designating new categories of municipalities and provisions relating to their functioning
- A new system governing financial management and revenue-generation

Table 1: Overview of key local government legislation introduced after 1994

Legislation	Significant matters discussed
<p>Local Government Municipal Demarcation Act (Number 27 of 1998)</p>	<p>Demarcation of municipalities to take into account new factors linked to de-racialising boundaries and promoting inclusive social and economic development, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of services in an equitable and sustainable manner • Have a tax base that is “as inclusive as possible of users of municipal services...” • Promotes social and economic development • “...need for cohesive, integrated and unfragmented areas,...” <p>Perhaps the most important provision of all, in terms of the future look of local government:</p> <p>“the need to <u>rationalise the total number of municipalities</u> within different categories and of different types to achieve the objectives of effective and sustainable service delivery, financial viability and macro-economic stability.”</p>
<p>Local Government Municipal Structures Act (Number 117 of 1998)</p>	<p>Finalised a new structural regime for post-apartheid local government, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categories and types of municipalities (3 categories: A, B and C) • Establishment and provision for the election of Municipal Councils • Internal structures and functions thereof • Establishment of participatory structures, i.e. “ward committees”

	<p>The Structures Act also however vested considerable authority in provincial ministers of local government to regulate and or intervene in the functioning of local government, in accordance with aforementioned constitutional provisions. These were in respect of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate types of municipalities • Determination of number of councillors • Dissolution of a Council • Participation of traditional leaders • Adjustment of municipal powers and functions <p>Intervention or regulation was however generally not of an arbitrary nature where particular conditions or circumstances would have to prevail.</p>
<p>Local Government Municipal Systems Act (Number 32 of 2000)</p>	<p>Focused on performance processes and mechanisms that local government was expected to adhere to in order to adjust to a new policy emphasis on social and economic development. Included provisions governing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing and revenue generation of municipalities • Adoption of “integrated development planning” (IDP) • Processes covering “performance management” <p>As with the Structures Act, provincial ministers for local government also vested with the power to intervene in instances where IDPs did not comply with requirements of the Act or were not aligned with other municipalities or organs of state; or intervene in instances where maladministration, fraud or corruption has occurred.</p>
<p>Local</p>	<p>Designed to bring municipal government in line with procedures and</p>

<p>Government Municipal Finance Management Act (Number 56 of 2003)</p>	<p>regulations governing the financial management of public bodies (national and provincial departments) passed in 1999, in the form of a “Public Finance Management Act”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines procedures and requirements governing the preparation and approval of municipal budgets; steps relating to unauthorised, irregular or fruitless and wasteful expenditure; fiduciary responsibilities of municipal managers; financial reporting requirements; and supply chain management <p>Also specifies conditions under which provincial ministers of local government can intervene in cases of municipalities experiencing serious financial problems</p>
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Despite the entering into force of new legislation governing the structure and functioning of local government, the scale of the operating challenges that lay ahead for local government was not immediately evident until December 2000, when local government underwent elections which brought into being a new re-demarcated system of local government in South Africa. In essence then, the transitional period for establishing the rules under which post-apartheid local government was constituted took seven years, between 1993 and 2000, before new structures were finally voted into office. Again, the scale of the challenges that lay ahead could more acutely be assessed when a comparative look at demarcation is taken into account. For example, according to table 2 below there were over one thousand local government bodies in existence prior to the beginning of South Africa's post-apartheid political transition in the early 1990s. The structure of these bodies differed across racial groups, with as many as six types for whites to three for the coloured population group. It was not clear how many types of black local authorities existed, although Cameron (1991: 317), referring to official government documents³, noted that these were said to include 25 city councils and 22 town councils in 1990.

Table 2: Local government bodies prior to political transition

	<i>City council</i>	<i>Town council</i>	<i>Town board</i>	<i>Village Council</i>	<i>Local board</i>	<i>Health co</i>
Race Group*						
White	13	323	49	53	52	48
	<i>Mgt. Committee</i>	<i>Municipal council</i>	<i>Local affairs committee</i>			
Coloured	220	1	19			
	<i>Mgt. Committee</i>	<i>Town council</i>	<i>Local affairs committee</i>	<i>Town board</i>		
Indian	43	2	23	2		
	<i>Black local authorities**</i>					
Black	262					
TOTAL						

Source: Cloete, J.J.N. 1988: 243, 246, 248; Cameron 1991: 317

*figures for white, coloured and Indian local bodies were given for 1987, as presented by Cloete.

**figures for number of black local authorities were reported by Cameron for mid 1989, referring to government estimates at the time

This is then compared with the transitional and post-transitional period given in table 3 below. Between the coming into force of the 1993 Local Government Transition Act and the December 2000 elections, it was estimated that there

³ Cameron referred to the following document: Bureau of Information. 1990. South African Profile. Pretoria: Government Printer. Page 22

were 830 local bodies, which saw a reduction in the number estimated in table 2, as well as rationalised the various types that had previously existed across racial lines. By the December 2000 elections, South Africa's municipalities were re-demarcated for a final time which drastically reduced their number to 284, spread according to only three types: Category A: metropolitan areas, Category B: local municipality, and Category C: district municipality comprising more than category B type.

Table 3: Local government bodies during political transition

Type of local government body	Prior to Y2000	Post Y2000
<i>Trans. Metro Council</i>	6	
<i>Trans. Metro substructure</i>	24	
<i>Trans. Local council</i>	494	
<i>District+</i>	52	
<i>Local councils</i>	58	
<i>Rep. councils</i>	196	
<i>Category A</i>		6
<i>Category B</i>		232
<i>Category C</i>		46
TOTAL	830	284

Source: Kotzé, H. 1998: 3, Cameron 2006: 81

The following section reflects on the experience of South Africa's newly demarcated municipalities after the December 2000 elections, and, to this end provides, an introductory discussion to a later assessment by this study of efforts introduced by government to strengthen local government performance.

SECTION FOUR:

DEVELOPMENTAL-ORIENTED MUNICIPALITIES: POST-2000

The 2000 local elections ushered in a drastically transformed system of local government. This change was manifested in the revenue base and financial resources; municipalities functions; and in the interface with the electorate.

The sheer number of municipalities was drastically reduced and their re-configuration was designed to ensure that they were financially viable. Communities with a poorly developed revenue base, for instance, were combined with well-re-sourced communities under the same municipal jurisdiction. The idea was to attain cross-subsidisation of poor communities by

the rich ones. Left alone, and as noted earlier, municipalities based in poor communities lacked a revenue base to generate income that would enable them to efficiently provide services to their residents. Even the nationally-raised revenue allocated to municipalities, in the form of equitable share, as the Demarcation Board's Michael Sutcliffe noted, would prove insufficient to make municipalities in the pre-dominantly black areas financially viable. They could not augment funds from the national government with locally generated income due to factors arising from apartheid planning, including limited revenue sources and historically large variances in levies per employee received amongst previously disparate councils⁴ (2000:3-4). Community integration, beyond de-racialising institutions of governance, was thus intended to ensure cross-subsidisation.

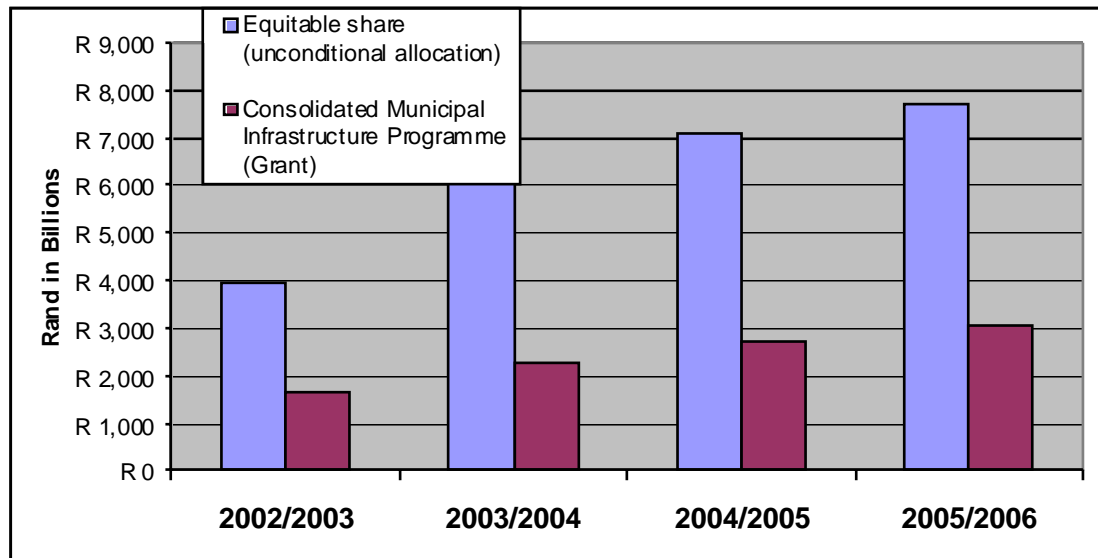
But, the provision of infrastructural grants to municipalities boosted their developmental capacity of municipalities somewhat. This was in recognition of their expanded mandate to lead infrastructural development and the fact they themselves lacked the financial resources to undertake this task. And this was in addition to the unconditional allocation municipalities receive from the national government. As figure 1 illustrates, this rose significantly in the 2003/2004 financial year⁵.

Financial grants were accompanied by the introduction of the Integrated Development Planning (IDP). This planning tool enable local government to strategically identify, budget for infrastructure and development needs over a five year period. In terms of the integrated development planning processes municipalities are obliged to prepare disaster management plans, spatial development plans, transport plans and waste management plans. In addition, those municipalities that are water service authorities are required to submit water service plans. The IDP process is meant to arrive at decisions on issues such as municipal budgets, land management, promotion of local economic development and institutional transformation in a consultative, systematic and strategic manner. Integrated Development Plans are a statutory requirement of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 for municipalities at district and local level. The first five year IDPs were completed in 2002, and are required to be reviewed each year. They serve as the main tool for local government to consult with their residents, and to identify developmental priorities (Ovens and Kitchins 2005).

⁴ In 1999/2000 utility charges and property rates accounted for over 50% of a municipality's revenue source (National Treasury 2001: 147)

⁵ These two allocations represent the largest portions of total national transfers to local government: 64% of total in 2002/3, 71% of total in 2003/4, 73% in 2004/5 and 73% in 2005/6. Other transfers included a series of grants to support municipal restructuring, financial management and systems improvement, and assistance in specific service delivery areas such as water and electrification.

Figure 1 : Rise in national revenue transfer to local government



Source: National Treasury 2003:38

Public participation and accountability of councillors to were to occur through ward committees. As noted earlier, the committees would comprise community members, elected by residents in the ward, and the councilbr. The idea was to ensure community participation in municipal affairs and provide a forum where residents would present their concerns and councillors would account on regular basis. It was hoped this would assist in making councillors and municipalities effective in their mandate.

4.1. UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS: POOR SERVICE DELIVERY

The newly reformed municipal system yielded mixed results. Service delivery continued steadily, but not in proportion to the increasing financial injection and betrayed the new emphasis on local development. A significant portion of municipalities battled to rise up to this task. In September 2005, the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) reported that, of the 284 municipalities, “203 could not provide sanitation to 60% of their residents; 182 were unable to provide refuse removals 60% of their residents; 155 could not provide water for 60% of properties” (Atkinson, 2007). Current statistics suggest that 61% of municipalities are performing 50% or less of their municipal functions (2005/6 Capacity Assessment). The small urban centres and the ISRDS (Integrated Rural Development Strategy) denominated municipalities were the weakest performers (LGSETA, Sector Skills Plan for the Local Government: 2005-2010: 14).

The severity of this failure manifested itself in community unrest. The Minister of the Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi, put the number of protests at 881 within a year leading up to October 2005 (*New York Times*, 25-12-2005). They

were spread-out, frequent and some were even violent. Seemingly, shocked cabinet ascribed the protests to the work of “a third force” (*The Star*, 10-06-2005). Rather than showing an inclination to conspiracy theories, government reaction reflected a genuine shock, for it had been pouring enormous resources into local development. Thus government had not expected communities rise up, at least not on account of poor service delivery.

In reality, though, municipalities were stifled by a range of challenges, especially relating to a lack of technical expertise. The DPLG National Capacity Building Framework gave a broad overview of capacity constraints within local government as follows:

- Insufficient staff contingency and the seemingly non-availability of appropriate candidates due to the inability to attract such individuals into the local government arena as well as the lack of such trained or graduated individuals.
- Insufficient strategic leadership to drive large-scale change-management and developmental processes
- Inadequate requisite technical skills in critical functional areas and lack of requisite internal operational infrastructure and technology.
- Lack of competency which leads to the inability to do tasks
- Recruitment and selection of staff not in line with job descriptions
- Inadequate knowledge and information base within municipalities.
- Poor understanding of local government legal framework caused by insufficient expertise to interpret and translate legislation and policies into action
- Lack of service orientated attitude and behavior, partly influenced by an organisational culture that does not uphold the principles of service delivery
- Limited understanding of the developmental organisational purpose and vision.
- Bureaucratic and hierarchical structures and systems that limit functional relations and programme and project based activities as created and demanded for within their IDP's.
- Dissipated organisational memory due to continues transformation and lack of knowledge management
- Appropriate consolidation of systems and structures necessary to stabilise finances and begin to ensure service delivery and development. (DPLG, National Capacity Building Framework, 2007)

Specifically, the constraints related to: a general scarcity of technical skills in the country, the inability, especially, of small and rural-based municipalities to recruit and retain the requisite staff; and the insufficiency of financial resources relative to the scale of need in communities.

For starters, many municipalities experience a large number of staff vacancies, both on budgeted posts and on their organograms. Vacancy rates (on approved organograms) average 36% – 38% (LGSETA, Sector Skills Plan for the Local Government: 2005-2010: 3-5). A notable number of these vacancies, as shown below on table 4, related to technical, professional, senior management and leadership positions.

Table 4: Distribution of Total Employees - All Municipalities, 2005/06

Province/Occupation	%	% Race				% Gender	
		A	C	I	W	M	F
Leadership & Gov.	5%	4%	0%	0%	1%	3%	1%
Senior Off & Man	5%	2%	0%	0%	2%	3%	1%
Professionals	4%	2%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Tech/Ass Prof	8%	3%	2%	0%	2%	5%	3%
Skilled Agric & Fishery	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Clerks	17%	10%	2%	1%	4%	6%	11%
Service Workers	12%	8%	2%	0%	2%	9%	2%
Craft & Related	5%	3%	1%	0%	1%	5%	0%
Plant & Machine Ops	6%	5%	1%	0%	0%	6%	0%
Elementary Occs	38%	32%	5%	0%	0%	32%	6%
Total	100%	69%	14%	2%	15%	73%	27%

Source: LGSETA, 2007: 15.

SAICE clarifies this dire situation even further in its May 2005 research report. According to this report, 78 municipalities have no civil engineering professionals - i.e. no engineers, technologists or technicians. A further 49 municipalities have only 1 civil technician on their staff. Municipalities report an average 35% vacancy rate among professional staff in technical services (approximately 600 posts). In addition to the obvious lack of civil engineering design and implementation skills, this leaves municipalities with little expertise in project and contract management and in a weakened position when it comes to supervising outsourced functions/ projects. Supervisory, management and planning skills are noted as being weak in this functional area, along with the need to provide ongoing professional development and mentoring of employees. Planning processes are often outsourced, frequently with very poor results (Local Government SETA 2007: 27).

The insufficiency of skills has, in turn, led to a number of problems. The sheer number of personnel within the municipal sector has remained stable despite the increased volume of households to be serviced. Currently 200 000 are employed in this sector - a number that has, according to the Demarcation Board, remained somewhat constant since 2002. Yet, the number of people living in municipal

areas to be serviced has been growing phenomenally. SA Cities Network 'State of the Cities' report of 2004 notes particularly high urbanisation and population growth within South Africa's secondary cities. Coupled to the urbanisation are very high rates of household formation. The 'Ten Year Review' found that 20% of the urban population were 'newcomers', or new urban migrants. Increasing rapid urbanisation has exacerbated the demand for skills linked to planning and infrastructure in metropolitan areas.

Though offering some relief, the existing capacity is inadequate not just in terms of insufficient numbers, but also in relation to competency in some crucial areas. Most of the people working on municipal financial budgets are not well qualified and experienced in municipal finance and budgeting. According to the Demarcation Board review of 2004, 37.4% of all municipal managers had less than 5 years experience in local government. Of the 82% of municipal finance managers who had a finance qualification, 59% of those were at NQF 4- an under-qualification for the post. In Northwest province, only 62% of finance managers had an associated qualification. The Demarcation Board reports the level of qualifications amongst municipal finance managers as follows:

Table 5:

Qualification	No data	Matric	Matric + certificate	degree	Degree + diploma	Post – grad degree	Post – grad + diploma
%	1.8	11.5	25.9	34.2	10.8	12.6	3.2

A Deloitte project completion report, compiled for DPLG in October 2004, also states the following training needs within the area of municipal finance:

- Compiling asset registers
- GAMAP training
- FINSTEL
- MFMA
- Compiling budgets and financial statements
- Cash flow management
- Supplychain policy and procurement
- Development of revenue strategies
- Preparation of management reports
- Analysing and interpreting financial statements
- Bank reconciliations
- credit control
- cost accounting

Low competency levels engendered administrative problems. Some departments could neither monitor nor audit their finances properly. In the Eastern Cape only 7 of the 45 municipalities submitted their annual financial statements in time for

auditing in the 2003/4 financial year. In the previous year, 2002/3 only two of the 26 audited municipalities received a clean bill of health from the Auditor-General, whilst only seven got a qualified report. The rest received disclaimers (*Daily Dispatch*, 06-07-2005).

Smaller and rural municipalities are particularly hit by the shortages of managers and professionals. These locations are unappealing to outside professional persons because of their remoteness from major cities or underdeveloped nature. Nor do they have sufficient educational institutions to generate local expertise, which forces locals to re-locate elsewhere for tertiary education. And, in some cases, the newly qualified professionals do not return to their home-towns, but simply settle in the same community where they had received professional qualification. This explains the uneven spread of expertise in the country (Lodge, 1994).

The only option open to rural and small-town municipalities, therefore, is to 'import' staff. But, this has been an extremely difficult option to pursue, for outside staff is highly priced, whilst municipalities are notably limited in what they can pay. The salary bill is restricted to 35% of the operational budget. The poorer the community within which the local authority is located, the more constrained the operational budget. Indeed local government is expected to meet at least 90 per cent of its revenue needs (although it is entitled to an equitable share of national revenue which can contribute up to 40 per cent of its revenue). This has worked well in municipalities covering rich neighbourhoods or those with big industries. Municipalities incorporating the rural areas of former bantustans have struggled to raise revenue from citizens who are poor (Davids 2003: 46-47).

Failure to offer competitive salaries has, in turn, led to a considerable outflow of skills from the municipal sector. The preliminary 2007/8 WSP analysis indicates that municipalities are increasingly unable to match the salaries paid by the private sector to finance specialists, engineers and artisans. The local government SETA broke-down the levels and areas hit by staff-outflow as follows:

Table 6: Outflow Rates in the Sector

TOTAL	2004/5	2005/6
Resigned	38%	37%
Retired	23%	21%
Retrenched	11%	1%
Medical Grounds	4%	6%
Dismissed	8%	7%
Death	16%	18%
Other	1%	11%
	100%	100%

Source: LGSETA, 2007: 16.

The greatest problems with acquiring and retaining skills has been in the occupational categories of professionals, senior management, technicians and associated professionals- a problem exacerbated by the widespread skills shortages in these high-end occupations across the economy. The Western Cape and Gauteng, in particular, appear to be experiencing a similar shortage for similar reasons, among primary health care staff.

Furthermore, local municipalities' ability to generate their own revenue has also been adversely influenced by a culture of non-payment that developed in black townships during the rate boycotts of the 1980s. These municipalities suffer from enormous financial debt that some municipalities function under. One estimate put it around R40 billion countrywide¹, up from R24, 3 billion in 2003 and R22 billion end of 2001 (*Business Day*, 05-03-2003). In some Free State municipalities, for instance, debt soured even after they had improved measures for credit controls and revenue collection. This has meant that a significant portion of their funds had to be diverted towards servicing debt. As a result, as Free State's MEC for Local Government put: "Other important issues such as essential repairs and maintenance, the upgrading of service delivery and the filling of critical key vacancies are not attended to". For other municipalities insufficient funds meant they could not even "pay for audit fees to get audited by the auditor-general" (*Business Day*, 07-09-2005/*Cape Times*, 18-09-2005). Problems that could have been uncovered by audit and possibly remedied thus went on undiagnosed.

However, according to Project Consolidate, the lack of financial resources does not always constitute the primary challenge to performance in municipalities. Oftentimes they are hampered by financial inefficiencies and under-expenditure. Annual financial statements and budgets are often inadequately prepared, resulting in audit qualifications. This view is supported by the National Treasury analysis of the municipal financial statements and budgets. The National Treasury Report on 2004/5 Local Government budgets (September 2005) reports 'sluggish spending' by local authorities on their capital budgets, with most local authorities having under-spent.

Problems extended beyond human capacity to civic engagement through ward committees. The latter is meant to comprise councillors and elected community members to facilitate both official accountability and public involvement in municipal affairs. Failure of ward committees simply means, on the one hand, councillors are likely to neglect their duties because there is no immediate and public pressure to perform and, on the other hand, residents lack an accessible official channel to report their municipal needs, concerns and complaints. Some of the key challenges that have been noted with regards to the proper functioning of the system of ward committees and councillors are:

- Inadequate interaction between ward councillors, ward committees and officials;

- Inexperience in municipal affairs among councillors and members of ward committees. More than 60% of councilors in all provinces are first term local government political office bearers, with little political experience and experience in local government systems and processes; and
- Poor functionality of Ward Committees, which are often deemed peripheral and marginalised in consultative processes. DPLG notes that whilst 96% of ward committees are established they are characterised by a relatively low level of functionality pointing to a great need for training and skills development in this area.

Barichiew, Pper and Parker's (2005: 386-388) assessment of 'participatory governance' in two locales: Buffalo City and Msunduzi made two observations in particular: the first was that there was a "...lack of institutionalisation of ward committee into [municipal] council processes.", and the other was that in both municipalities the "formal" spaces for participation did not appear to work well. At a macro-level, a forum of provincial ministers of local government observed that community participation was "inadequate to enable citizens to influence policy and resource allocation", including where "development [was] seen as a technocratic process", where "ward committees [were] not functional as required", and where there was "Lack of access to municipal budgeting and financial management" (Local Government MINMEC Workshop 2006: 3).

In short, after 2000 it became increasingly clear that municipalities were faced with formidable shortcomings to execute their developmental functions. These included a shortage of skilled personnel, inexperienced staff, high turn-over rate and poor recruitment due to relatively low salaries, and uneven spread of skills between rural/poor and urban/rich neighbourhoods. The resultant poor performance was further exacerbated by the near-absence of civic engagement through ward committees, which would have ensured some official accountability and provided residents direct access to their municipal representatives to report their complaints.

4.2 Municipalities vs. Provincial/National: Unfunded Mandates and Confusion Over Roles.

Section 238 of the Constitution empowers an executive organ of state in any sphere of government to delegate any power or function that is to be exercised or performed in terms of legislation to any other executive organ of state, provided the delegation is consistent with the prevailing legislation. The Constitution does not prescribe the formal requirements (e.g. agreement or legislation) when agency or delegation should be used as instrument of decentralisation. "Delegation" is typically a temporary arrangement, which usually requires agreement – e.g. transfer agreements for funding, and service agreements to monitor performance, accountability, intervention and reporting. Agency

arrangements” are usually done on an annual basis, also by agreement, and should include full funding by the principal agent. The original institution (provincial/national government) retains the authority, the responsibility and the accountability in respect to the exercise of the delegated power.

A variety of possible roles for municipalities are indicated, in all cases acting on behalf of Departments, including:

- Front desk: or "client interface" service;
- Information collection: on behalf of Departments;
- Client support: for individual clients, or groups of clients. Such support could take the form of regular visits, workshops, trouble-shooting, or advice;
- Tied grants: grants with specific requirements, are a special case of delegation. They may well form part of assigned functions (see Part F). However, the fact that spending is clearly earmarked means that Municipalities have little discretion over the spending of that funding;
- Technical functions: National or provincial departments may require municipalities to perform sophisticated technical or scientific functions; and
- Rule enforcement: National or provincial departments may require municipalities to "police" public compliance with regulations, to set standards (Atkinson et al, 2004: 44).

There are however some problems with the delegation and agency arrangements. Delegation and Agency are similar, in that they decentralise very little discretion. The principal agent (e.g. a national or provincial department), retains key policy-making powers, and that only the implementation of those functions (typically, administrative roles) is delegated to municipalities. This means that municipalities do not have much discretion or latitude in the performance of these duties (ibid: 12). An ever more worrisome feature of this arrangement, however, is it often involves unfunded mandates and poorly defined support mechanisms. For example, tied grants (grants with specific requirements – e.g. funding for sports stadiums) are considered a special case of delegation. Such projects may well form part of assigned functions (see section 2.6). However, the fact that spending is clearly earmarked means that municipalities have little discretion over the spending of that funding (ibid: 13).

Some issues arising in relation to fiscal decentralisation include:

- Concern about unfunded mandates: for this reason, a whole armoury of legislation has been drafted to assess the impact of the allocation of functions on municipal finance;
- Bypassing of local government, with some departments funding community projects directly without the funding being channelled through municipalities;
- Municipalities facing old or new functions without any fiscal provision; and

- Financial disincentives for municipalities taking on functions – e.g. in the Housing sector, no municipalities have been accredited as housing authorities. There is a significant disincentive for municipalities if they were to consider applying for accreditation (Atkinson, op cit: 60).

In terms of Municipalities facing old or new functions without any fiscal provision, an example is Housing, which is not a Part B function but many municipalities have added their own funds to increase the subsidies. Another example is road maintenance where there is chronic under-funding of infrastructure and public transport services.

In terms of financial disincentives for municipalities taking on functions, one example is urban rail transport where the opinion is that only big cities can run a metro service, as it is expensive to run and needs a high level of subsidies. eThekweni would want to take up the function because they have a transport authority, but not without additional funding, especially funding the operating cost shortfall (including maintenance and refurbishment). This also applies in housing, where no municipalities have been accredited as housing authorities. There is a significant disincentive for municipalities if they were to consider applying for accreditation. This will be an unfunded mandate in that the municipality will have to take over administrative functions presently undertaken by provincial housing departments. The Department of Housing accepts that with its support for accreditation, it will have to pay for some or all of the operational budgets of municipalities for an extended period (Ibid: 61).

The foregoing, and to recap the points, has serious implications for municipalities, especially when their performance is evaluated. That is, they get evaluated on functions for which they have been poorly funded, if at all. Also, when such mandates are funded, the arrangement lessens the enthusiasm of municipalities to execute the mandate as they are not recognized as accredited as authorities in the sectors where they have been requested to fulfill mandates.

SECTION FIVE:

INTERVENTIONS

A series of measures and programmes have been initiated by both public and the private sectors, especially since the 2000 as it increasingly became evident that municipalities were battling to lead socio-economic development in their respective communities. The major challenge they had to confront, however, was that some of the problems, especially the shortage of skills, were not peculiar to the municipal sector. Rather, there is a general lack of technical and professional skills throughout the country, affecting other sectors of the South African society. Inevitably, interventions to remedy the shortage of skills had to be designed in a manner that yielded immediate relief, whilst ensuring a wider and sustainable

supply of skills in future to cater for other sectors of the economy as well. Thus the interventions adopted were both specific to local government, as well as comprehensive geared to unlock the bottlenecks in the system and assist the various institutions responsible for producing the requisite expertise. For the purpose of this study, however, we look exclusively at initiatives targeted towards the local government system.

The interventions varied. They involved capacitating existing officials and elected leaders; drawing expertise immediately into the employ of the municipal sector; cultivating expertise that would be available in the short-term; strengthening interaction between elected leaders and the electorate and public access to public services; and developing a tracking system for municipal performance.

5.1 IMMEDIATE RECRUITMENT OF EXPERTISE:

A number of the initiatives have been put in place to bring expertise immediately in the municipal sector. And these followed at different times in the last three to four years. Project Consolidate and JIPSA were two such programmes.

5.1.1 Project Consolidate

Project Consolidate was the first prominent public initiative in this regard, launched in October 2004. It was intended to provide hands-on assistance to targeted municipalities to that could not provide essentially services. As noted earlier, this followed government's own audit in 2004, which revealed that, of the total 284 municipalities, 203 suffered serious weaknesses that impaired them from performing their service delivery functions. Hundred and thirty nine municipalities were subsequently targeted for special hands-on intervention by experts, dubbed Service Delivery Facilitators (SDFs), with a range of skills including managerial, technical and financial skills. SDF were to perform many and varying tasks, including:

- Doing a needs analysis study and assisting with recruitment of staff;
- Drawing up local economic development strategies;
- Helping to compile annual financial reports;
- Developing various internal policies;
- Improving billing systems; and
- Initiating feasibility studies for projects

5.1.2 Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA)

Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) was launched in March 27, 2006. JIPSA is intended "to create short-term, but sustainable interventions to the skills problems". It is an offshoot of another government-initiated programme, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA). The

latter contains a series of measures intended to fast-track SA's economic growth from the current average level of 4, 5% to 6% by 2010, whilst also halving unemployment rate and poverty by 2014. The achievement of these objectives, however, hinged, among others, on the availability of a much wider pool "of sufficiently skilled professionals, managers and artisans", than is the case presently (AsgiSA - Annual Report, 2006).

JIPSA, therefore, is meant to increase the level of this much required set of skills. In a signal of the importance with which government takes this initiative, JIPSA is located within the Office of the Presidency and is led primarily by the Deputy-President, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. The programme is administered by a Joint Task Team that includes, in addition to the Deputy-President, other "senior leaders in government, business, labour, academic and research institutions and civil society" (Ibid: 8). The inclusiveness of the Task Team shows a realization that achieving this task was to be a collective effort. Government could provide some of the resources and regulatory support, but it did not itself have resident expertise and space to cultivate the requisite skills. For the latter it needed the private sector.

Various sectors of the economy and institutions of governance were prioritized to benefit from the envisaged expansion of skilled personnel. Municipalities were among the intended chief beneficiaries, as they suffered from a dire need of engineering, planning, artisanal, technical and project management skills. These were among the range of skills whose acquisition and cultivation was prioritized by JIPSA. Several initiatives were thus set in place to meet the immediate needs within the municipal sector. Such initiatives included:

5.1.2.1 *Siyenza Manje*: Re-employment of retired personnel

A programme dubbed *Siyenza Manje* (we do it now) was launched jointly by several State Departments⁶, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA). This involved hiring re-tired individuals, with skills specifically in engineering, project and financial management, and town planning, who would then be assigned to targeted municipalities. The first batch, 67 in total, was recruited between May and November 2006. They provided both hands-on intervention and mentoring to young graduates. By March the following year, this number was envisaged to grow up to 90, "with a further 30 young interns taken on board (AsgiSA – Annual Report 2006: 8)

Mentoring offset the problem of students, especially in the engineering sciences, who could not "graduate because they are unable to secure the necessary placements" (Ibid: 23). Municipalities proved to be a useful alternative to provide

⁶ National Treasury, Provincial and Local Government, Water and Forestry and the South African Local Government Association

placement opportunities for technical students, who otherwise could not find placements in the industry, “which had not kept pace with the growing demand” (Ibid).

5.1.2.2 Skills Importation

Skilled individuals were to be recruited from abroad. Departments of Labour and Home Affairs were assigned to make acquisition of work permits and entry into the country easier for this category of individuals. This would involve encouraging South African citizens with the relevant skills, who are either working or resident abroad, to return home for employment in the municipal sector. As they arrive back in the country, their names would then be kept in a database, developed by DBSA, for easy reference.

5.1.2.3 Unemployed/Inexperienced Graduates: Placements

An Unemployed Graduate Initiative was launched by the Deputy-President in December 2005. This initiative sought to draft unemployed graduates, among others, into the municipal sector, especially in the Departments of Arts and Culture, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and Public Works. Whilst providing the much needed expertise, albeit inexperienced, to the municipal sector, this measure went a long way to reduce the rate of unemployment among graduates, especially within the black community. In 2006 alone, the overall number of unemployed graduates were estimated at 200 000, the overwhelming majority of whom being black. This phenomenon is due to several factors including “lack of access to employers and networks” and “lack of work experience” (AsgiSA, Annual Report 2006:20).

5.1.2.4 Public-Private Sector Initiatives: Training Programmes

Private and public institutions undertook joint initiatives to provide training to municipal employees. One example of this partnership involved the Old Mutual Business School, assisted by the South African Management Development Institute and the Department of Provincial and Local Government, where 97 municipal employees from the Western Cape, Gauteng and Eastern Cape were provided with hands-on training in foundational project management. Old Mutual has also created a non-profit entity, Ilima Trust, through which it secures services of semi-retired experts with expertise in project management, financial management, human resource management and operational efficiencies. The first recruits of nine experts were placed at municipalities in Cape Town and the Nelson Mandela. This is at no cost to government, at least initially.

5.2 COUNCILORS-VOTERS INTERACTION AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO SERVICES

The outbreak of community protests in the period leading towards the 2006 elections underscored not only persistent absence of municipal service in some communities, but also a breakdown of relationship between councilors and the citizenry. Residents with concerns were unattended to by their councilors and generally did not know how to access State services. And ward committees did not provide residents with any recourse, as they had become dysfunctional due largely to the non-attendance of elected councilors. The Community Development Workers Programme (CDWP) was initiated to address this disconnection between officialdom and the citizenry at the local level.

5.2.1 Community Development Workers Programme (CDWP)

Started in 2003, the Community Development Workers Programme (CDWP) was initiated as a response to a less than desired weak relationship between ward committees/elected councilors and the citizens. The policy document on CDWP, for instance, noted:

The harsh reality is that in many cases, officials who are employed at this sphere of government often do not know how to forge strategic links and engage communities on the wide spectrum of government-sponsored programmes and projects..." (DPSA, CDWP Conference Report 2007:9)

Indeed ward committees had simply collapsed in most communities. Councilors were hardly seen in their own wards. After they had been elected councilors, some simply relocated their residence to posh neighbourhoods and hardly visited their constituencies. This was borne out by findings of a survey, taken in Gauteng, which showed that only 10% of the residents felt that their councilors were in touch with their constituents (*Business Day*, 20-09-2005). Other councilors, as President Mbeki was to hear at an *imbizo* in the Eastern Cape in July 2005, complained that their wards were simply too vast to cover efficiently and doing so would require resources they did not have (*Daily Dispatch*, 25-07-2005).

This weakness manifested itself in government failure to communicate messages to communities about government programmes especially on matters that affect their quality of life. And when it does, the language used "is too difficult for ordinary people to understand" (DPSA, op cit: 10). In the absence of information on existing government programmes or how to access them, citizens were prone to bemoan lack of social delivery. Senior government officials often retorted that popular discontent either stemmed from deceptive information or sheer ignorance about government programmes.

Community Development Workers (CDWs) were to be the answer to this disconnection. To this end, the programme was to be anchored on the following principles:

- Popular participation and self-initiative to tackling community concerns;
- Collective action, and joint-decision making;
- Initiatives based on the actual needs of the community;
- Community awareness of their own problems and what government does; and
- Promoting community leadership, and not expect government to do everything;

The overall objective was to foster a collective approach, involving both the community and government, to solving community problems. The idea seem to underscore that municipal success does not depend entirely on government officials, but also requires residents to be actively involved in identifying problems and helping to implement solutions and protect public assets.

CDWs were to work closely with delivery oriented State Departments that initiated programmes and projects in communities⁷. Specific activities entailed:

- Disseminate information to residents in a timely fashion;
- Provide feedback from the community to appropriate State department;
- Help community members to understand, develop and submit their own Integrated Development Plans to municipalities and other organs of the state and donors;
- Oversee work done by teams of volunteers and community members involved in a community project
- Evaluate the impact of government projects and programmes on communities and submit reports to that effect to relevant State departments; and
- Lobby relevant State departments on behalf of community in respect to their developmental needs.

Essentially CDWs were to be intermediaries between municipalities and their local electorate. They would serve as the first port of call for residents with concerns, and, in turn, inform residents of the range of government resources and give them information on how to access such resources – a function for which they were given training. To this end, CDWs were selected from and lived within the community they worked. They had to work with other community structures, such as ward committees and recognized local leaders. In the four years since the launching of the CDWP 3614 cadets have completed the one-year learner-ship, whilst 123 dropped out. CDWs are active in more than 2000

⁷These include: Public Works – Expanded Public Works Programme; Transport – Road Infrastructure Programmes; Social Development – poverty alleviation programmes; Provincial and Local Government – LEDs, MIG, FBS, etc. Housing – provision of houses and subsidies; and Health - primary health care facilities, Community Health Workers and HIV

wards throughout all the nine provinces (DPSA, CDWP Conference Report 2007: 2).

5.3 MONITORING AND TRACKING

To improve the capacity of municipalities to implement budgets and their service delivery mandate, the Municipal Demarcation Board performs an annual capacity assessment of municipalities to measure their ability to meet their obligations in performing their powers and functions. Arising from the continual assessment, the Board drafted a report in 2004 entitled, "The Determination of Poorly Performing Municipalities" which began to categorise municipalities by performance levels. The identification of the vulnerable municipalities was relayed to provinces for closer monitoring and where necessary, direct intervention undertaken (Municipal Demarcation Board 2004).

Results obtained from the 2002/2003 and the 2003/2004 assessments were used to identify those municipalities that were performing poorly and to categorise municipalities accordingly. Municipalities were re-evaluated in terms of the 2004/05 capacity assessment and, based on the findings, some were re categorised.

Table 7: Categorization of municipalities based on results obtained 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 capacity assessments

	Category	Description	Monitoring required by National and Provincial Government
1	Performing poorly 2002/03 and 2003/04	Performed 11 or less functions with some capacity in 2002 and 2003	Close monitoring
2	Performed poorly in 2002/03 but improved in 2003/04	Performed 11 or less functions with some capacity in 2002/03 but performed more than 11 with some capacity in 2003/04	Routine/Close monitoring
3	Performed poorly in 2003/04 only	Performed more than 11 with some capacity in 2002/03 but performed 11 or less functions with some capacity in 2003/04	Close monitoring
4	Reduced the number of functions from the 2002/03 period to the 2003/04 period but 7 or more functions	Performed more than 11 functions with capacity but the overall number of functions performed were reduced by 7 or more	Close monitoring
5A	Stable	No or little change in the	Routine to close

	Category	Description	Monitoring required by National and Provincial Government
		functions performed with some capacity between the two assessment periods but performed 30 – 50% of functions with some capacity.	monitoring
5B	Stable	No or little change in the functions performed with some capacity between the two assessment periods and performed more than 50% of functions.	Routine monitoring

Treasury has also developed a further categorisation of municipalities linked to their ability to implement the requirements of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act No 88 of 2003. Municipalities have been allocated high, medium or low capacity status for the implementation of the Municipal Finance Management Act. Generally those municipalities with the largest budgets tend to be regarded as having high capacity levels. Municipalities which believe they have the necessary capacity levels are able to apply to have their status upgraded (National Treasury; Municipal Financial Management Act, 2003).

SECTION SIX:

EVALUATION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The interventions initiated to tackle capacity challenges took different forms. They ranged from training programmes, recruitment of skilled personnel to a programme aimed to enhance interaction between officialdom and the electorates, as well as public access to services. Some have been evaluated and others not. Thus data is a bit sketchy on these programmes, making it difficult to reach any definitive assessments. What is clear, however, is that these initiatives have yielded mixed results and others need to be strengthened. Following below are some actual evaluations and mere observations where we have been able to find data. It focuses on the CDWs, Training Programmes, IDPs and Project consolidate.

6.1 PUBLIC ACCESS TO MUNICIPAL SERVICES: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS' PROGRAMME

The CDWP was introduced in 2003 to enhance the work of councilors especially with respect to providing the public with information on municipal service and to assist residents to access them.

It is not clear what impact this programme has had. It has not been independently evaluated, nor properly tracked or monitored by government itself. It is only in late 2007 that CDWs and government officials met to review the experiences of the last four years. Attendants at the conference indeed admitted that the "impact of the CDWP on the communities is not known" (DPSA, Conference Report 2007: 54). A suggestion was thus made that an independent review was thus required "to gain knowledge about the effects of CDW activities in the communities...The question of "added value" of the CDWs to government needs to be properly addressed through an empirical research of some sort" (Ibid).

Yet, the conference drew attention to some challenges faced by the CDWs. The following are worth noting:

- The rural landscape has proved to a hindrance. Households are dispersed and cover a wider territory. In some cases these households fall within a radius of 100 km. This requires transport (car or bicycle) to move from one household to another, and some may not even be reached on regular basis.
- The number of CDWs is insufficient to meet the number of ward committees. In one municipality in KZN, for instance, there are 20 ward, but only 5 CDWs to cover them.
- Departments are unresponsive to reports submitted by CDWs and thus not taken seriously nor acted upon. CDWs get poor feedback from departments. This was illustrated by one incident in the KZN involving the Health Department and CDW seeking a grant for a disabled child. The CDW wanted the department to ascertain the child's case in order to facilitate her application. A year went on without the Department issuing a report, and when it did, the CDW found the report entirely unhelpful to the child. Mr. Kulumane even resorted to the Public Protector, when, in turn, referred him back to the Dept. It later emerged that the Dept. had misplaced the documents of the child and "to the present day the case remains unresolved"... The Dept... "has been very unresponsive". (Ibid: 25).
- Problems to build relationships between CDWs and councilors. This seems to be hampered by political differences and suspicion. CDWs are

hindered from their work and their initiatives are blocked by councilors who feel threatened by CDWs.

- Lack of co-ordination and sharing of lessons among the various provinces. North West joined the programme just recently, but suffers from weaknesses that should have been avoided if it had learned from other provinces, especially poor overall management of the programme and a weak relationship between provinces and national departments.
- CDWs, though expected to be based in ward, where they should work with councilors, are nonetheless not integrated into the work activities and schedule of ward committees. They were not even invited to meetings nor properly introduced at those meetings.

The following means thus need to be undertaken to remedy the weaknesses that afflict the programme:

- A policy that spells out the role of CDWs and how the departments should relate to them. There's clearly a need for such policy as department don't seem to be responsive to the CDWs. The level of unresponsive for the CDW's is in fact that they don't think a policy would convince the govt. officials to take them seriously. Rather, they prefer an act of parliament.
- There needs to be a closer integration of the CDWs into the provincial departments, especially in their annual planning. This synergy would enable the CDWs to feed their local experiences directly into the departmental work. State officials seem not to understand the role of CDWs. As a result the latter "experience blockages in the different levels of government" as they seek to secure services for the help-less ordinary citizens. So, "there is a need for a programme to be developed to orientate municipal officials and ward committee" (DPSA, op cit: 40).
- Councilors need to be thoroughly appraised of the role of CDWs. In particular, councilors have to be re-assured that CDWs are complementing their work, not competing with them. CDWs, for their part, have to be cognizant that they operate within a political environment and have to be alert that they do not do anything that is likely to be construed as bias in favour of one party against another.
- CDWs still suffer from inadequate training especially on the range of government's economic programmes and opportunities. This speaks to the aforementioned challenge on lack of integration between officialdom and CDWs.

6.2 TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Many of these capacity building programmes conducted by different donors operating in municipalities across the provinces have had the following problems:

- **Lack of co-ordination:** While some of these programmes dwell on different aspects of capacity building training, many of the programmes duplicate each other in terms of both content and focus. As a result, a lot of money is being wasted producing the same material when better coordination of programmes amongst the donors and municipalities could lead to an avoidance of this.
- **Limited time:** Many of the capacity building training workshops are conducted over a limited number of days. During these few days councillors are also bombarded with a lot of information which is supposed to be digested over a limited period. The result is that this important agency in capacity building in local governance is left with a very basic understanding of the system it is supposed to spearhead. It is important to devote more time to capacity building workshops and to organise refresher or follow-up courses to refresh or update councillors on important developments in the field. Feedback from the capacity building workshop for councillors from Tshwane shows that councillors seem to find value in having ongoing training and longer capacity building workshops.
- **Lack of attendance:** Since councillors are such an important agency in the whole local government nexus and capacity building programmes are quite important for effective delivery, there is need to develop mechanisms to ensure compliance and maximum attendance when it comes to capacity building workshops. Some of these workshops are poorly attended, mainly because some councillors do not attach a lot of significance to the training or the training programmes are conducted at inconvenient times. Due to time constraints, some persons prefer self-study guides. In certain cases, it is because of poor planning on the part of the organisers. When councillors miss out on this important training for their job, it is not just these councillors who miss out but their wards and ward committees as well. It is hereby recommended that both councils and organisers need to develop a better registration strategy so that attendance could improve.
- **Inappropriate Language and Curriculum:** One limitation identified was that too much material had to be covered in the course. Capacity building could be improved by inviting Ward committee members to attend and by always having facilitators who are able to use local languages. The implementation evidenced that facilitators are key for successful training and that ice breaking sessions are the best way to start the sessions and the use of case studies is preferred by participants. Capacity training

workshops in Tshwane showed that most councillors battle with budgeting and there is need for more workshops on this.

6.3 Weaknesses of IDPs

The integrated development planning process has not been very successful in resolving the economic problems of most municipalities. Its successful implementation has been hampered by the following weaknesses:

- IDP's are generally not backed by coherent development strategies. The focus on economic recovery or regeneration and attracting investment is limited;
- Lack of commitment. Many municipalities are simply taking IDP as a technical exercise, going through the motions to meet legislative requirements and deadlines;
- Baseline data and information is weak or unavailable, which means that IDP's are often not empirically rooted. Most municipalities have little economic strategy for their operating areas. The emphasis appears to be far more on piecemeal and narrow projects that are not linked to wider community and regional economic initiatives;
- IDP planning processes are weak: IDP's are often the product of a single department within municipalities, rather than the strategic blueprint of the municipality;
- budgets are poorly linked to IDP's;
- Monitoring and evaluation systems are absent or weak;
- Limited understanding of local economic potential;
- Long term economic management receives little attention; and
- Inadequate appreciation of the linkage between reliable service delivery, infrastructure and local economic development (Ovens and Kitchins 2005:18-20)

6.4 Project Consolidate

By July 2007 only 85 of the 139 designated municipalities have been assisted through this programme. The rest had obviously not been attended to and continue to face formidable problems. This suggests that there are fewer Service Delivery Facilitators (SDFs) available to send around (Moyo, 2007). A report on progress of the programme also noted that SDFs initially ran into serious challenges at the municipalities to which they had been assigned. They had to contend with resistance, arising from suspicion that they had been sent to expose inefficiency and corruption. Municipalities also had false expectations of SDFs thinking that they would bring funds (DPLG – Project Consolidate, September 2006).

Overall, the presence of SDFs has reportedly made a huge difference where they had been sent. By September 2006 a total of 281 individuals, including technical experts, graduates and students had been involved in the programme. The impact of the programme has obviously been limited to less than the targeted number of 139 municipalities needing urgent hands-on intervention. Though highly appreciated, SDFs are also a stop-gap measure as they are part-time and fewer in number. A wider pool and skilled permanent are needed. Moreover, there has been a very high turn-over rate among nominated SDFs which retards efforts to build the capacity among interns and trainees. This has meant that, in some instances, while middle management and senior management positions are being filled, they are being filled by less qualified people (LGSETA 2007: 15-16).

Evidently, a strategy needs to be worked out to retain SDFs within the municipal sector. We were not able to determine the cause(s) of the high turn-over rate among the SDFs. This needs to be established in order to inform the retention strategy. For, the failure to retain SDFs not only undercuts the purpose to turn municipalities around, but also weakens the effectiveness of the placement programme involving young graduates as interns and trainees with the various municipalities.

6.5 Importation of Skills and Training Programmes

The impact in this area proved challenging to quantify. We could not locate any data from which to draw definitive conclusions, especially in relation to the importation of skills. This is understandable in light of the fact the programme was introduced just recently - less than two years ago -, which has meant that it is not fully running. The training programmes, targeted to both councilors and municipal officials, have had some impact, but this seems limited. Fewer municipalities have benefited and the programmes have suffered some pitfalls as noted earlier. The major weakness here seems to be the disjointed nature of the programmes/initiatives themselves, as they are initiated by different institutions and offer varying contents or stresses different issues. In other words, the programmes are uncoordinated, which also makes it difficult to find information that provides a comprehensive picture of their impact. Some measure of co-ordination and overall assessment is needed.

In short, it is evident that relief for municipal incapacity lies in providing immediate expertise, such as intended by the afore-mentioned programmes. A long-term strategy that will yield a constant supply of local and resident skills (within municipalities) is evidently required, but that will take a little longer to bear fruition. For now the solution lies with the afore-mentioned immediate measures. They need to be strengthened, and part of this effort should entail their constant evaluation in order to make immediate interventions.

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ⁱ *Business Day*, 8-September-2005