

**EVALUATING THE DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL: A
REVIEW, WITH CASE STUDIES**

SUMMARY REPORT

DEVELOPMENTAL, CAPABLE & ETHICAL STATE RESEARCH DIVISION

HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DCES	Developmental, Capable, and Ethical State
DDM	District Development Model
DG	Director General
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GTAC	Government Technical Advisory Centre
GWME	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDPs	Integrated Development Plans
IGR	Intergovernmental relations
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NPC	National Development Planning Commission
NSG	National School of Government
NPC	National Planning Commission
PSA	Public Servants Association
PSLSD	Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SDFs	Spatial Development Frameworks
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SMMEs	Small, Medium & Micro-Enterprises
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study emanated from President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2019 State of the Nation Address wherein he expressed concern about the government working in silos. The District Development Model (DDM)¹ is an operational model for improving cooperative governance aimed at building a capable, ethical and developmental state, embodying an approach in which the three spheres of government and state entities work together in an impact-oriented way, and where there is higher performance and accountability for coherent service delivery and developmental outcomes. The DDM operates through vertical and horizontal intergovernmental relations (IGR) lenses since all spheres of government, national, provincial and local, assist in the operationalisation of the DDM. The vertical IGR lens focuses on authority and power while the horizontal IGR lens relates to relations between governmental authorities in the same sphere of government and at the same level – for instance relations between the nine provincial authorities and among the categories A, B, and C municipalities.

From our observations, incoherence in planning and implementation makes monitoring and oversight of the government's programme difficult. Communities are affected by service delivery challenges, leading to service delivery protests across the local government landscape. This is the context for President Cyril Ramaphosa's call for the introduction of the DDM, which calls for an integrated and a single strategically focused "One Plan" and "One Budget" for fifty-two geographical areas to respond to service delivery challenges more coherently, effectively and efficiently.

This study was conducted with the primary objective of assessing the implementation of the DDM in South Africa in three chosen municipalities – the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, the Waterberg District Municipality in Limpopo and the OR Tambo District Municipality in the Eastern Cape. These three pilot sites were identified based on their socio-economic profiles and rural-urban mix. The methodology employed in the study involved (1) Drawing on regional and international experiences as case studies to inform the implementation of the DDM; (2) Conducting desktop and empirical studies on the practical workings of the DDM to determine how it responds to service delivery and development challenges within the three piloted municipalities under investigation; and (3) Proposing policy options and recommendations to inform the implementation of the DDM in response to the developmental local government mandate.

Some of the key highlights from the study are the following:

- Stakeholders highlighted the positive impact made by the model in bringing together stakeholders, including business and labour; under this initiative, there has been a stronger appetite for private sector involvement in assisting emerging entrepreneurs in the three pilot districts.
- Because of the DDM, there seems to be far more effective and cohesive stakeholder engagement, primarily driven by the model. Although most of the stakeholders acknowledge that the model is not new, it has brought a renewed sense of urgency in ensuring that districts can work with local municipalities to improve service delivery.

¹ Also outlined in "Concept note: New district coordination model to improve the coherence and impact of government service delivery and development" (EDSE 2019). Also referred to as the Khawuleza District Coordination Service Delivery Model (DPME 2019).

- The model has also been hailed for creating a platform for skills transfer among municipalities in the province. This includes voluntary mentoring offered by senior officials from the district municipality and an increase in the uptake of young municipal staff accessing training and skills development towards improving capacity development in local government.
- However, it is worth noting that participants indicated that IGR is not seamless yet. The three spheres of government are still working in silos.
- For LGSETA, the model has enabled the authority to invest in and uplift emerging businesses in the three pilot districts through a discretionary grant which has been awarded to several businesses. This grant intends to uplift emerging SMMEs and assist in providing cash flow for start-up companies.
- There is a possibility that the DDM will remain an idea for the current administration and not move beyond the pilot phase unless it is legislated.
- The findings reveal that the DDM implementation is led by officials without a conceptual understanding of the model.
- There is limited community involvement in the planning and implementation process.

Based on these findings, the review emerged with thirty recommendations to inform the implementation of the DDM.

Key Words: Local government, developmental local government, governance, service delivery

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa identified the “pattern of operating in silos” as a challenge that had led to a “lack of coherence in planning and implementation [that] ha[d] made monitoring and oversight of government’s programme difficult”. In his 2020 SONA, the President called for the rolling out of a new integrated district-based approach to address service delivery challenges in the country. The District Development Model (DDM) is a practical intergovernmental relations (IGR) mechanism that aims to ensure an integrated and single strategically focused “One Plan” and “One Budget” for each of the 44 districts and eight metropolitan geographical areas (referred to as “fifty-two spaces”) in response to service delivery challenges.

Over the years, the Developmental, Capable, and Ethical State (DCES) research division of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) has built expertise in local governance research, which places it in a prime position to make informed contributions to this area and to offer evidence-based recommendations on the rollout of the DDM to advance the developmental mandate of the local sphere of government.

1.1. An outline of the District Development Model

The DDM, adopted by the cabinet on 21 August 2019, is an operational model for improving cooperative governance to build a capable, ethical and developmental state (Priority 1 of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework 2019-2024; see DPME 2020). It embodies an approach in which the three

spheres of government and state entities work in unison in an impact-oriented way and where there is higher performance and accountability for coherent service delivery and developmental outcomes.

While the current governance system relies on each sphere of government to align its plans with the other spheres, especially in strategic infrastructure investment, a more efficient approach would be to have all three spheres of government working together on a joint strategic alignment platform. A manifestation of the current situation is the highly inefficient utilisation of funds and resources, and even wastage. The DDM provides a platform for the situation on the ground to be scientifically tested, to ensure that the model is integrated and facilitates the realisation of all local government activities.

1.2. Objective of the study

The study's primary objective was to assess the implementation of the recently introduced DDM in South Africa in the three piloted municipalities (Waterberg, OR Tambo and eThekweni) in the Limpopo, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces respectively. To achieve this objective, the research team sought to:

- Draw on regional and international experiences as case studies to inform the successful implementation of the DDM
- Conduct a desktop and an empirical study of the practical workings of the DDM to determine how it responds to service delivery and developmental issues in a concerted and coherent manner within the three piloted municipalities under investigation; and
- Propose policy options and recommendations to inform the implementation of the DDM in response to the developmental local government mandate.

The research was designed to be of strategic value to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency, COGTA, and the South Africa Local Government Association (SALGA).

1.3. Structure of the review

The review is structured as follows. Section 2 sets out the methodology employed in this study. Section 3 reviews the South African development policy framework. Section 4 considers the IGR context within which the DDM is located. Section 5 sketches the status quo of local government in South Africa. Section 6 outlines municipal service delivery challenges in the country. Section 7 locates the argument for a DDM in South Africa against the backdrop of a comparative analysis of similar models elsewhere in the world. Section 8 presents the findings of the primary (empirical) research, while Section 9 discusses emerging issues from the desktop and empirical analyses. Section 10, which presents conclusions and recommendations, concludes the review.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

The research design chosen for this study comprised three methods:

1. A review of the context within which the DDM is situated: the South African development policy framework; the current local government landscape in South Africa; the IGR framework in South Africa; and service delivery challenges besetting the country
2. An investigation into why South Africa needs a DDM in the context of a review of the literature on district development models in other countries; and
3. Case studies of three municipalities in which the DDM has been implemented.

The findings from these methods were triangulated to provide for a balanced approach to the study.

2.1.1 Case study method

For the primary research component of the study, fourteen qualitative interviews were conducted across the three study sites.

In Limpopo, interviews were conducted with:

- SALGA Limpopo
- A Councillor: Waterberg Municipality
- LGSETA Limpopo
- A member of the traditional community; and
- Waterberg Municipality officials.

In KwaZulu- Natal, interviews were conducted with:

- The DBSA
- The eThekweni Municipality
- A Councillor; and
- The eThekweni Head of Strategy.

In the Eastern Cape, interviews had been scheduled to be conducted with:

- COGTA (national)
- The Presidency (GTAC)
- An academic (Thinc Foundation)
- SALGA (national); and
- The Eastern Cape Water Caucus.

However, accessing stakeholders proved to be an arduous task – especially in the Eastern Cape, where stakeholders were for the most part unable to honour scheduled appointments for interviews. In addition, given that most councillors across the three sites had been recently appointed in the wake of the 2021 local government elections, a substantial number of them were not aware of the DDM as they had either just joined the district municipality without any prior experience or had left their roles as municipal councillors and expressed no interest in participating in the study.

The research team consulted with a senior official in COGTA to provide it with OR Tambo DDM documentation. Analysis of the OR Tambo DDM implementation plan and initiatives was based on these documents.

Because of the difficulties experienced in accessing officials, the research team amended the methodology and focused on a secondary analysis of DDM-related documents from the three pilot districts.

3. REVIEW OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Several key initiatives and projects have informed the South African government's approach to the eradication of poverty and inequality. Magasela's (2005) review of the African National Congress (ANC) government-led initiatives and poverty research is one of the most extensive and comprehensive efforts to reflect the poverty situation in South Africa. According to Magasela (2006: 52; 2005: 15), the ANC's efforts to address poverty started well before 1994 through three key initiatives: a document entitled "Preparing to govern"; the "Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development" (PSLSD); and the "Reconstruction and Development Programme" (RDP). The main purpose of "Preparing to govern" was to provide data for policymakers to develop key social and economic policies to consolidate the newfound democracy and enhance the fight against poverty and inequality.

The RDP, its successor, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, and the National Development Plan (NDP) are reviewed below.

3.1 The Reconstruction and Development Programme

The RDP, was "an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework ... [that] [sought] to mobilise all our people and our country's resources toward the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial, and non-sexist future" (O'Malley 1994). The political and economic philosophy behind the RDP was underpinned by six basic principles: an integrated and sustainable programme; a people-driven process; peace and security for all; nation-building; linking reconstruction and development; and the democratisation of South Africa (O'Malley (1994).

3.2 Growth, Employment and Redistribution

GEAR was "essentially an economic reform programme directed towards a competitive and fast-growing economy that would create sufficient jobs for all jobseekers, a redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor, a society capable of ensuring that sound health, education and other services were available to all, and an environment in which homes were safe and places of work productive" (Mahedea 1998: 448).

GEAR rests on the following policy foundations:

- Fiscal discipline
- Monetary discipline and relaxation of exchange controls
- Trade and industrial policy reforms, including the development of, small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs)

- Public sector asset restructuring (that is, privatisation)
- Public infrastructure and human capital investment; and
- Greater flexibility in collective bargaining.

3.3 The National Development Plan

The NDP, a strategic framework for addressing the socio-economic and developmental challenges confronting South Africa, has as its overarching goal the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality in the country by 2030.

Following the release of a diagnostic analysis in June 2011 that highlighted the main challenges facing the country and an extensive consultative processes, the NDP was finalised and formally adopted by the government in 2012. Matlou (2019) contends that one of the problems afflicting the NDP, as with most government-led initiatives, is the lack of implementation. Against this backdrop, the DDM fosters a practical IGR mechanism to plan, budget and implement jointly to provide a coherent government for the people in the Republic.

4. IGR AS THE PLATFORM FOR THE DDM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The DDM model as an implementation tool is located within the IGR system, which has a long history in South Africa dating back to the colonial institutional politico-administrative systems of Dutch and British colonial rule.

4.1 Managing the three spheres of government under the Union of South Africa

The current system of IGR in South Africa has much in common with the Union of South Africa government. The Act of 1910 established three spheres of government – central, provincial and local spheres – with limited powers for lower tiers of government. After the merger of the colonies and two Boer Republics South Africa established a unitary system with some federal characteristics (Worrall 1971; cited in Kahn, Madue & Kalema 2011: 51). Provincial governments were established in a bid to accommodate the former British colonies and the Boer Republics in terms of their political interests. The Act introduced a form of decentralisation of power by giving some delegated powers to the provinces to decrease intra-provincial rivalry and foster unity. Even though provinces were placed under the central government, they had the power to pass some ordinances (Omar-Cooper 1994; cited in Kahn et al. 2011: 51).

4.1.1 Central control over lower levels of government

The central government had absolute control over the provinces (Kahn et al. 2011: 52). Control was attained through the appointment of an administrative representative of the Union government at both lower tiers of government.

IGR in the British colonies and Boer Republics was a centralised system where lower levels were “agents” of the central government (Tapscott 1998). The dominance of the central government in IGR continued under the apartheid government. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 was enacted to establish self-governing homelands for black South Africans (Horrell 1970; cited in Kahn et al. 2011:

57). Homeland authorities were not completely independent of the central government: they also functioned as agents of the central government (Horrell 1970; cited in Kahn et al. 2011: 57).

In the 1960s, the apartheid government made efforts to restructure the system of IGR, owing to pressure from liberal cities like Durban and Cape Town (Boulle 1994; cited in Khan 2011: 59). A tri-cameral parliament that included Indians and Coloureds was established; but resistance to this system was intensified locally and internationally, which resulted in negotiations over a new trajectory (Worden 1994; cited in Kahn 2011: 61).

4.2 IGR in the post-apartheid period

After 1994 the promotion of IGR and the cooperative government was seen as important to the new democratically elected government of South Africa (Malan 2005). Section 41 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) stipulates that:

An Act of Parliament must –

- (a) establish or provide for processes, structures and institutions to promote and facilitate intergovernmental relations; and
- (b) provide for appropriate mechanisms and procedures to facilitate the settlement of intergovernmental disputes.

The principle of cooperative government mandates the three spheres of government to work cooperatively and yet independently.

4.3 The concept and definition of IGR in South Africa

Public servants and academics use the concept of IGR; but the definition is an arena of various contrasting views (Wright 1982; cited in Kahn et al. 2011: 4). The general view is that IGR depicts how the different spheres of government relate to and engage with one another in issues of governance at various levels (Botha 1996; cited in Kahn et al. 2011: 4). IGR promotes and enables cooperative government and decision-making by ensuring that policies and activities in all spheres of government encourage efficient and effective service delivery for citizens (Edwards 2008).

The threefold purpose of IGR is (1) to promote and facilitate cooperative decision-making, (2) to coordinate and align priorities, budgets, policies and activities across interrelated functions, and (3) to ensure a smooth flow of information within and between government and communities to enhance the implementation of policies and programmes (Baatjies 2010). The South African government has faith in IGR notwithstanding the various obstacles experienced in all spheres of government (Jones & Thomas 2007). As IGR is meant to engender cooperative governance to ensure productive and competent service delivery (Edwards, 2008), effective and efficient service delivery in South Africa depends on a stable and effective system of IGR (Baatjies, 2010).

4.4 Classifications and approaches to IGR

National, provincial and local governments and government institutions are based on *vertical IGR* in South Africa. Under vertical IGR, authority and power are key, and the national government possesses more authority and power than the provincial and local governments.

Horizontal IGR refers to relations between governmental authorities in the same sphere of government and at the same level – for instance, relations between the nine provincial authorities and between the district and local municipalities and Metro municipalities. The DDM is an example of a government programme that is intricately linked to horizontal IGR in South Africa.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE STATUS QUO

5.1 The current local government landscape

The DDM is a response to challenges in local development planning and implementation. COGTA has identified the following challenges the DDM is expected to resolve:

1. The lack of coherence in planning, budgeting and implementation remains a challenge.
2. Sector departments' involvement in integrated development planning processes is very weak.
3. Constant changes in priorities and programmes are not driven by development logic and long-term outcomes.
4. There is a need to shift from alignment to a joint plan approach.
5. IGR mechanisms have been poorly employed to enable joint work and integration.
6. Government plans lack a strategic and long-term approach and there is limited localisation of the NDP and MTSF.
7. Growth and development strategies and spatial development frameworks do not always have buy-in from all spheres; and
8. Integration needs a performance management structure that is expressed in an intergovernmental plan (COGTA 2020).

5.2 Local government post-1994

The White Paper on Local Government 1998 (RSA 1998) identified a plethora of challenges faced by local government which continue to affect local government. These challenges are:

1. Skewed settlement patterns
2. Extreme concentration of taxable economic resources
3. Huge backlogs in service infrastructure
4. Creating viable municipal institutions for dense rural settlements
5. Great spatial separations and disparities between towns / townships / urban areas
6. Entrenched modes of decision making
7. Inability to attract private investment and lack of capacity; and
8. Poor relations with communities.

At the dawn of democracy, the focus was on social infrastructure, which saw a “service delivery” orientation as the state invested heavily in building houses, connecting residents to the national

power grid, expanding sanitation systems, and providing other social infrastructure such as schools, clinics and hospitals. The local government as the closest structure to the people carried the most responsibility for meeting the needs of all who live in South Africa (RSA 2019).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) mandates the local government to:

1. Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities
2. Ensure the provision of services to the communities in a sustainable manner
3. Promote social and economic development
4. Promote a safe and healthy environment; and
5. Encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government.

The signing of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996 positioned local government as the main sphere of the government delivery system and the heart of poverty eradication initiatives (Mogale 2003: 227), affirming that local government is the sphere of government that interacts most closely with communities.

The slow pace and lack of quality services have fueled protests all over the country and have brought local government under the spotlight. These protests have been characterised by high levels of violence, xenophobic attacks, looting and police brutality. The dissatisfaction with service delivery is particularly visible in informal settlements and metropolitan areas in the Western Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng. There is also a large service delivery gap between rural and urban areas, specifically in the former homeland areas of Limpopo, the Eastern Cape, North West and KwaZulu-Natal (Bohler-Muller, Davids, Roberts, Kanyane, Struwig, Masiya and Nomdo 2016: 4).

The mandate for local government is succinctly contained in the preamble to the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998:

A vision of democratic and developmental local government in which municipalities fulfil their constitutional obligations to ensure sustainable, effective and efficient municipal services, promote social and economic development, and encourage a safe and healthy environment by working with communities in creating environments and human settlements in which all our people can lead uplifted and dignified lives.

Developmental local government is intended to have a major impact on the daily lives of citizens (White Paper, 1998). The White Paper envisaged a future in which developmental local government played a significant role in representing communities, protecting human rights and meeting basic needs (RSA 1998). Developmental local government has four critical characteristics:

1. Maximising social development and economic growth
2. Integration and development
3. Democratising development; and
4. Leading and learning (RSA 1998).

In a media briefing following the national assessment of local government, COGTA identified, *inter alia*, various factors contributing to the state of distress that municipalities find themselves in:

tensions between the political and administrative interface; poor ability of many councillors to deal with the demands of local government in terms of the provision of services; insufficient separation of powers between political parties and the municipality; inadequate accountability measures and support systems and resources for local democracy; and poor compliance with the legislative and regulatory frameworks for municipalities (COGTA 2009).

6. MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGES

The 25-year review (RSA 2019) states that there are serious systemic issues underlying service delivery, which include: duplication of structures and functions between spheres and districts and local municipalities; misaligned or inappropriate devolution of functions; municipalities performing functions that are not their core competencies; unfunded or under-funded mandates (for example, library and primary health services); and the impact of amalgamations. One lesson from the last 20 years of consolidating local government is that combining two dysfunctional or distressed municipalities does not necessarily yield a viable municipality.

The 25-year review (RSA 2019) observes that while considerable progress has been made with the level of investment and the stock of new infrastructure, several challenges with infrastructure rollouts have been encountered. These include, among others: weak planning and limited integration of projects; slow rollouts due to capacity or financing constraints; poor technical specifications and inadequate system engineering processes; underspending of budgets coupled with poor maintenance of infrastructure; inadequate local community benefits from infrastructure development in a specific area; uneven cooperation between spheres of government; corruption in state procurement; and collusion among construction firms, which has increased the cost of infrastructure delivery.

6.1 Structure and finance

Reddy (2010: 82) outlines several structural and financial challenges that have impacted negatively on service delivery since the ushering in of the post-1994 local government dispensation. One of these is unfunded mandates, where municipalities are not funded or receive extraordinarily little funding for services such as housing, library services, tourism, and welfare services.

Financial viability is a challenge in a much broader sense. The demarcation of municipal boundaries has resulted in some municipalities not having an economic base to be financially viable (Reddy 2010: 82). As a result, many municipalities are heavily dependent on grants from other spheres of government.

6.2 Politics and professionalisation of the public service

A substantial number of municipalities bear ample testimony to the failures of local government and the inability of the ruling party to deliver on improvements despite a series of interventions and strategies. In this regard, Booysen (2012b: 352) points out that “faltering local government, graphically exposed to policy deficits and multiple cases of overt corruption, mismanagement and inappropriate appointments – often elicits popular disdain.” She adds that political reward, patronage, and nepotism are some of the key characteristics of local government politics and that demonstrable evidence of this locally quite often triggers protests among local communities. Zybrands (2012: 87) proposes a

solution: “the appointment of competent and qualified staff and compliance with the laws, rules and regulations could help solve this conundrum.”

A draft implementation framework to “professionalise the public service” (NSG 2020: 8) builds on the same call in the NDP (2012: 55). There have been numerous reports detailing the problems facing local government. Although the problems are vast, three main systemic issues have been identified. These key problem areas are political appointments, lack of capacity, and lack of accountability (NPC 2012). In many cases the three key problems in local government overlap.

The NDP, in its chapter on local government, stipulates that party-political intervention in decision-making and political appointments has caused turbulence that has undermined the morale of public servants and citizens’ confidence in the public institution and that municipalities have not been spared in this situation. In part, the lack of true performance management originates with governing bodies that lack the political will to make the kinds of difficult decisions that are required to achieve substantial performance improvements in fields such as service delivery and instead redefine the issues as problems of mismanagement and inefficiency and then vow to hold the respective bureaucracies responsible (Frederickson 2005; Koma 2016: 128).

6.3 Quo vadis for local government?

Local government is key to basic service delivery and can be viewed as the engine of local development. However, as Gumede (cited in Reddy 2010: 81) points out, significant percentages of local communities are yet to receive rudimentary services and for most township residents that do not have access to the most basic services, “getting a pavement fixed or the rubbish cleared that is piled up on the streets is a distant dream.” This has contributed to the sense of the dysfunctionality of local government over the past decade.

According to Booysen (2012a: 5), one of the major areas of concern for local communities in South Africa is that local government is, in most cases, continuously dysfunctional and is often the unstable coalface of interaction with the people. She points out that it is the (already weak) local sphere that often bears the brunt of the dissatisfaction with the national and provincial government as the local government is nearest to local communities. Municipal functionaries and the physical facilities of municipalities are more visible and accessible to the local citizenry. There seems to be a need for greater public accountability in local government than at either the provincial or national government level.

7. THE DDM – AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

7.1 A common vision tailored to the needs of each district

This sub-section of the literature review focuses on relevant international literature on the district development planning of countries that have sought to develop a common vision for development through a collaborative process across all spheres and levels of government.

COGTA posits that the DDM will give rise to a common vision for the development of the country that is broken down according to the needs and opportunities of each district and metro geographic space (COGTA 2020). It is envisaged that all spheres of government would coordinate and integrate their

development plans – an *all-of-government* approach – that gives rise to a common vision for development (the “One plan”) (Fosi 2021). The DDM envisages a process by which joint planning is undertaken collaboratively at the local, district and metropolitan levels by relevant structures from all three spheres of governance, resulting in a single plan for each of the 44 districts and eight metropolitan geographical areas in the country.

The whole-of-government approach to district development can be traced to the post-New Public Management (NPM) reforms introduced in the UK in 1997. The approach emerged in reaction to “siloisation” or “pillarisation” and to crises, disasters and threats, such as natural disasters like floods, tsunamis, or pandemics such as COVID-19, constituting an attempt to overcome the central government’s loss of control and influence that arose from devolution and an efficiency measure and in response to budgetary pressure (Christensen and Lægreid 2006: 7). In its simplest form, the whole-of-government approach involves collaboration between officials in a variety of portfolios and across jurisdictions to integrate policy and programmes to achieve more efficient and effective implementation and service delivery (Halligan, Buick and O’Flynn 2012).

This approach soon spread to other Anglophone countries such as New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and has taken on more complex forms beyond these countries, as the following review shows.

7.1.1 India

India provides an interesting case study for South Africa to consider. District development planning came in the 1960s to be seen as an integral part of national development planning. All aspects of the national objectives and the total scope of the national plan of development would necessarily be reflected in district planning. There were several benefits to planning locally or “from the bottom”, that is, at the district level (Gadjil 1966). The requirements for this included basing the district plan on technical and economic knowledge regarding local conditions and the association of local people with the formulation and implementation of the plan.

District-level planning efforts were the norm in the early 1970s in India. Service centre planning was based on the socio-economic needs of a district, which were derived from information from the households, villages or towns of that district or region. However, service level planning became a characteristic feature of development planning in India after it was established that there was a “lack of empirical studies to weave the spatial aspect of planning with the budgetary and time horizon aspects at the district level” (Wanmali and Islam 1995: 150).

The lessons drawn here are the importance of identifying growth centres in the district planning process and of basing development planning on the needs of the district as obtained from the households, villages, or towns of that district. From a South African perspective, the Indian model would allow the district hubs proposed by COGTA (Tau 2019) to capacitate struggling municipalities in needed areas of expertise such as accounting and project management.

7.1.2 *Uganda*

The Ugandan Jinja District Five-Year District Development Plan (2015/16-2019/20) serves as another example of how district development plans based on the needs and opportunities of districts can be derived from a common national vision (Jinja District Local Government 2015). The process of developing the plan is outlined in the plan itself (Jinja District Local Government 2015: 2-5). The process was coordinated by the District Council, which was designated the District Planning Authority (DPA). The DPA had to operate within the framework of guidelines for preparing plans established by the National Planning Authority. Importantly, however, the District Council was required to base its development plan on the plans of the local government structures (sub-counties and municipalities) and to submit the plan to the National Planning Authority. Likewise, these local government structures had to incorporate the plans of lower councils (villages and parishes) into their respective areas of authority.

The District Development Plan put together by the District Planning Unit thus emerged simultaneously from a top-down and a bottom-up participatory process and included the views of political, civic and development stakeholders. The process took place at five levels of planning – the village, the parish, the lower local government, the municipal council, and the district – and allowed for the inclusion of the priorities of the distinct levels (Jinja District Local Government 2015: 2).

At the district level, the process of putting together the development plan included collecting data on various district variables like poverty indicators, gender issues, climate, and so forth, reviewing Sub-counties' development plans, holding planning meetings to identify the district's needs, and holding a budget conference (Jinja District Local Government 2015: 3). Subsequently, funds were allocated to the various departments, sectoral plans were compiled by the budget desk, and all priorities of the district were integrated into the District Development Plan. The final plan was submitted to the council for consideration and approval (Jinja District Local Government 2015: 4).

Uganda, like South Africa, has traditionally framed development plans at lower levels around its national development plan. As has been illustrated here, however, there is a place, notwithstanding a nationally coordinated planning approach, for a bottom-up approach to development planning that ensures that local needs are prioritised in district plans.

7.1.3 *Ghana*

As in the case of India, the district development approach adopted in Ghana is characterised by decentralisation. Decentralised administration and development planning was introduced in the country in 1988 to promote local autonomy and participation, with the added objective of improving efficiency (Owusu 2009: 61). District Assemblies (local governments) were given responsibility for the development of districts and to this end were provided with executive, legislative, administrative and technical support. Most importantly, the objective was to draw into local planning the views and aspirations of the people within their areas of jurisdiction to ensure effective development at the local level (Owusu 2004: 167). This decentralised development process required that a District Assembly, which was composed of a District Chief Executive, the head of the Assembly, Assembly members representing all the communities within the district (two-thirds were elected and one-third appointed

by the central government), and a civil service support team consisting of administrators and planning officers assume the overall territorial authority over the district (Owusu 2009: 61).

The Ghanaian experience of district development planning indicates some of the main requirements for effective district development planning: clearly defined roles for key role players; adequate administrative and human resource capacity; a strong capacity for development planning; adequate funding and financial controls; the involvement of communities in local governance; equitable access to resources and inclusive decision-making; and clearly defined relationships among key stakeholders.

7.1.4 *Sri Lanka*

Sri Lanka offers another example of bottom-up development planning based on local needs, having begun a process of decentralisation in the 1950s through the establishment of five new districts to make local administrative structures more effective (Yusoff, Sarjoon and Hassan 2016: 164). Only after 1970 did regional development planning as a form of formalised planning come into effect, however, when the government introduced a new system to accelerate the implementation of development planning at lower levels; and only in 1981 were District Development Councils (DDCs) introduced in the country (Matthews 1982). A DDC, comprising a district minister, an elected chairperson, and an elected Council, was established in each of the 24 administrative districts, and was responsible for regional development as part of a wider national endeavour.

The marginalisation of certain groups of people through decades of civil war and ethnic conflict made a compelling case for introducing new districts in Sri Lanka in order to boost regional and national economic development (Yusoff et al. 2016) – allowing marginalised sectors of society to be included in development planning and outcomes. This has implications for the inclusion of marginalised groups in local planning processes in South Africa.

7.2 A vision supported by well researched long-term implementation plans

Another benefit of the new DDM identified by COGTA is that it will give rise to a vision and priorities supported by well researched, credible and technically sound long-term implementation plans (COGTA 2020).

Wanmali and Islam's (1995) study of Indian development planning described earlier illustrates the importance of basing such plans on well-researched information, in this case, information on socio-economic needs derived from the households, villages or towns of that district or region.

7.2.1 *Ethiopia*

The literature on district development planning in Ethiopia similarly draws attention to the need for well researched, credible and technically sound long-term implementation plans to develop the vision and priorities required in development planning. In fact, the South African DDM concept emanates from the strategy of Agricultural Development-Led Industrialisation (ADLI) in Ethiopia. In the aftermath of the imperial era, between 1974 and 1991, development policies favoured state and collective farms rather than individual farmers. During the post-1991 period, however, development policies gave rise to “the most prominent and enduring economy-wide strategies” (Welteji 2018: 2),

including ADLI, which consists, in essence, of improvements in the productivity of food agriculture on small and medium-sized farms (Adelman and Vogel 1991: 5). Gebreselassie (2006: 3-4) showed how productivity could be significantly improved by giving farmers increased access to technologies that would narrow the gap between “farmers’ yield” and “exploitable yield potential”. Using average data collected over six years, Gebrekidan, Debela and Mohamed (2004) demonstrated that the maize yield could be increased significantly if peasant farmers had access to improved seed varieties and fertilisers and made use of other recommended agricultural practices (cited in Gebreselassie et al. 2006: 4). T

7.3 Multi-year, long-term objectives, targets, and resource commitments extending beyond electoral cycles

Another benefit of the DDM, according to COGTA, is that it will issue in multi-year, long-term and predictable objectives, targets and resource commitments to agreed programmes and projects extending beyond electoral cycles (COGTA 2020). The DDM “One Plan” is expected to “take the form of prioritised spatial expressions over the long term and will be divided into five- and 10-year implementation plans supported by annual operation plans which will be based on commonly agreed diagnostics, strategies, and actions” (Levin 2019) .

The Ghanaian Biakoye District Assembly (2010) District Medium Term Development Plan serves as an example of a multi-year long-term plan, even though it does not extend beyond electoral cycles. The three-year plan, developed by the District Planning Coordinating Committee for the period 2010 to 2013, had the predictable objectives, targets and resource commitments of which COGTA speaks.

7.4 Monitoring and evaluation through accountability framework implementation tracking

The final benefit of the new DDM, according to COGTA, is that it ensures an accountability framework and responsibilities for tracking and reporting on implementation and actions within the government to stakeholders and the broader public (COGTA, 2020). The Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Parks Tau, informed parliament in 2019 that the model “would provide clear accountabilities and responsibilities for each government ‘vertically or horizontally speaking’” (PMG 2019) – a notion endorsed by the Public Servants Association (PSA 2020).

Since local government is arguably the most important sphere of government as it is the closest to the people for whom public services are intended (Sebola 2015; Reddy 2016; Khambule, Nomdo and Siswana 2019; Masuku and Jili 2019), M&E of local government programmes takes on a particular importance (Matsiliza, 2017).

The extent to which government interventions contribute to measured results is central to public sector evaluation. Occasionally, evaluations ought to aspire to even higher ambitions. They should try to answer why outcomes do or do not stem from the measures enacted (Vedung 1997: 209).

National, provincial and local government have several mechanisms to ensure that M&E processes are followed: the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWME) policy framework (The Presidency 2008: 80) and various pieces of legislation (the White Paper on Local Government (1998),

the Municipal Systems Act (2000), the Municipal Finance Management Act (2003) and the Municipal Structures Act (1998). The key challenge lies in lack of implementation (Koma 2010; Mashamaite and Lethoko 2018).

8. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The presentation of the findings of the primary research conducted for the study is situated within an analysis of four key themes: 1) the relevance of the DDM; 2) its impact and sustainability; 3) the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the model; and 4) the replicability and value for money of the DDM.

The study examined key informants' views regarding the relevance of the DDM to their own situations. Responses ranged from views of traditional leaders to that municipal officials in Waterberg about the DDM's:

- Relevance lying in its contribution to “creating safe and economically viable lively communities” (SALGA)
- Promotion of partnerships with the DBSA and USAID (Waterberg)
- Fostering support of mines to schools in the district (eThekweni Councillor) through the mounting of summer and winter camps for matriculants (Waterberg)
- Resolving issues of unemployment and inequality when disasters happen (“You will find out that if you work together as a team, things get to be resolved within a split second”) (Eastern Cape Water Caucus)
- Addressing the issue of institutions engaging with municipalities and not districts about problems that arise at the district level, which makes evaluation and monitoring difficult (eThekweni); and
- Compelling national, provincial and local government and agencies supporting democracy, international structures and funding structures to officially declare what they intend to do in their localities (COGTA).

In terms of the potential impact and sustainability of the programme, it was noted (by a COGTA respondent) that this depended on how effectively resources were managed and whether it was understood that resources were intended to assist beneficiaries of the programme to sustain themselves beyond its duration. Other respondents observed that the DDM had facilitated the following:

- A simple act like providing a learner with a stipend for travel to a classroom or workplace had unintended benefits like contributing to food security for the learner's family (COGTA)
- Learner ability to form cooperatives in the wake of training interventions (COGTA)
- Funding and financing of training programmes (Limpopo LGSETA)
- Providing a platform for stakeholder engagement to smooth the coordination of service delivery (SALGA)
- Ensuring sustainable development while accelerating initiatives to promote poverty eradication and unemployment and aligning those to national priorities (Waterberg)
- Focusing on the value chain within specific industries and diversifying the economy (COGTA)

- Highlighting that government's role was not to create jobs but to create a conducive environment for business to be able to operate in an environment that helped it to grow and to develop more human capital (Waterberg Councillor); and
- DDM promotion of stability and coordination had attracted international funders (Waterberg).

In response to questions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the DDM, few respondents engaged with actual implementation, most focusing on the foundation which the model had laid for future success:

- Management had been broken down into smaller pieces so that the district now focused on those localities and emphasised the work of the district (Limpopo LGSETA)
- A number of *imbizos* had been held to discuss implementation of the model (Limpopo LGSETA); and
- The DDM had inculcated active citizenship and engendered confidence in government (Waterberg).

In terms of the replicability and value for money of the DDM, it was claimed that:

- The DDM had positioned government to improve service delivery programmes by creating a more coordinated model ("a province's and a national department's plan will speak directly to what the needs of the people are") and getting buy-in from all the relevant stakeholders (SALGA, Limpopo)
- Replicability depended on stakeholders like LGSETA buying into the model and concomitantly on stakeholders' financial investment and willingness to make it work (Limpopo LGSETA)
- The permanence of the DDM and willingness at the political level to drive it were key to its replicability (eThekweni Councillor)
- The implementation of the DDM in the piloted districts served as a model for other districts to follow – some of which had already done so (COGTA); and
- All parties had to be cognizant of the comprehensiveness of the DDM goals and not focus on appointing service providers who could deliver on only one goal. The DDM needed to be multi-departmental, multi-agency and multi-sectoral (COGTA).

In addition to the challenge of a guarding against a narrow focus, respondents identified other potential challenges in the implementation of the model:

- Cabinet ministers appointed as district champions lacking on-the-ground knowledge by dint of lack of engagement with their districts' DDM coordinators
- A sense of inferiority amongst municipal officials because of an imputation of a lack of capacity and capability at local government level, which might compromise independence and commitment to the DDM
- A perception that the DDM had been introduced as a first step towards doing away with provinces

- DDM implementation running the risk of political interference, the ruling party pushing its political agenda through it, particularly in the era of coalition governments
- Non-governmental actor lack of trust in municipal officials, especially in weak municipalities; and
- The huge task of educating community members about the DDM.

9. EMERGING ISSUES FROM THE DESKTOP AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

A number of issues emerge from the desktop and empirical analyses. These are summarised below.

9.1 The need for cooperative governance

The national government does its spatial planning, the province does the same independently, and municipalities plan through IDP processes. The engagements with the study participants confirmed that there is a lack of coordination among government departments as well as all three spheres of government.

It is questionable whether the spheres of government can work together without a coordinated system such as the DDM, which should therefore be seen not as a programme or a project but as a system of government in which IDPs, APPs, provincial development plans, national departmental master plans, and the 257 municipal plans should mirror and / or complement one another. The whole-of-government approach of other countries discussed in the literature review provides implementation lessons upon which officials can draw.

During fieldwork, the officials participating in this South African study expressed the fear that some districts were reluctant to develop their One Plan strategy as this was not legislated. The fear is that such an attitude might delay the implementation of the DDM in all fifty-two spaces in South Africa.

9.2 The DDM as a provincial implementation programme

Programmes such as Operation Sukhuma need to be reviewed as they are part of the problem (Macwele 2014: 92). Each province has its own approach. A close analysis of these approaches shows that they fall short of integrating municipal and provincial plans, provinces imposing their own plans on municipalities.

The One Plan starts with the profile of each district, which outlines the demographics of that area, the levels of poverty, unemployment rate, skills, schooling, health care facilities or status, crime rates, and economic enhancement. This profile is compiled from all the data from the district municipality. That profile is a baseline that must inform what the national government needs to do in that district.

9.3 The DDM as an accountability mechanism

The One Plan should be used as the chief accountability framework, where departments can be held accountable for the budget and its implementation. Currently, departments are held accountable based on APPs. National departments need to be measured according to the One Plan implementation outcomes.

9.4 The DDM as an IGR framework

The DDM One Plan needs to become a requirement for each government department, with measurable outcomes, to prevent the current pattern of linking planning to individuals. The current trend is that the first order of business of newly appointed political heads of departments is always to implement their agenda without clear consideration of the plans already in place. With the DDM, the first point of reference needs to be the department's commitment to the One Plan. In short, the DDM needs to be regulated, as are planning and budgeting.

The DDM One Plan is central to the accountability framework, in which the President holds ministers accountable based on commitments made in the One Plan, Premiers are monitored, and the discussion at the Premier Council needs to be centred around commitments made in the One Plan. Mayors' and district mayors' forums are about implementation. These platforms should focus on accountability for the commitments made towards the One Plan.

For this framework to be implementable, the government needs to start planning beyond five-year cycles so that IDP plans are adhered to even with the change of leadership at the local government level.

9.5 The DDM in the three pilot sites

9.5.1 *The DDM in the OR Tambo District*

In the absence of the views of OR Tambo officials (who failed to participate in the interview process), this section summarises the OR Tambo District One Plan document, which is influenced by the DDM's theory of change. According to this theory, there are six key pillars of transformation that the DDM focuses on: 1) People development and demographics; 2) Economic positioning; 3) Spatial restructuring and environmental sustainability; 4) Infrastructure engineering; 5) Integrated service provision; and 6) Governance management. Following the One Plan document launch, key stakeholder engagements to introduce the Plan and get the backing of all key stakeholders have taken place with various role players, including the Minister of CoGTA, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, senior municipal management officials, and the Eastern Cape economic cluster departments, which include provincial SOEs and development agencies.

The OR Tambo One Plan structure has four steps: identification of the root causes of the different challenges facing the district; a vision detailing where the plan wants to go; adoption of a strategy; and an implementation commitment, involving the district clearly outlining what it wishes to implement and how that implementation fits with the OR Tambo district's desired future in the medium to long term.

Because of the historically skewed land ownership model in the province, the area is predominantly rural, and the land remains in the hands of a tribal authority or is government owned. Part of the DDM consultative process included key engagements with traditional leaders, who expressed the need for budgetary and agricultural skills development that would enable them to make the most of the arable land that is presently not being utilised for agriculture.

Another challenge cited by the One Plan document relates to responsible governance. The OR Tambo district acknowledges governance shortcomings relating to service delivery and ailing public infrastructure. A further challenge is that OR Tambo district has the lowest infrastructure quality ranking across the country. Infrastructural support such as electricity supply and road connectivity is failing, along with backlogs in housing, piped water and electricity connections within households, which presents a significant challenge to the district and its economic aspirations. These are areas which the DDM needs urgently to address.

9.5.2 *The DDM in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality*

President Cyril Ramaphosa launched the DDM in eThekweni in KwaMashu on 18 October 2019. At the same event, Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma outlined the outcome of the first step in the DDM implementation process – the profiling exercise – which gave rise to a document describing the existing situation regarding socioeconomic development, service delivery progress, infrastructure, governance, and financial management (COGTA 2021: 5). The profiling exercise showed that the triple structural and systemic challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality run deep in eThekweni compared to the other metros and are a major constraint to economic growth and well-being despite the municipality's potential. The One Plan presented an opportunity for all three spheres of government to collaborate with stakeholders, the private sector and civil society to integrate planning, budgeting and implementation so that service delivery and development impact could be improved (COGTA 2021: 1, 3).

The objective of the eThekweni One Plan is that “Government working together with stakeholders and communities aims to make eThekweni a leading Smart Port City Region that is just, safe, sustainable, socially cohesive and culturally expressive” (COGTA 2021: 1). The first stakeholder engagements were held between the municipality's political and administrative leadership, local businesses, and key social and economic development programmes in eThekweni from 19 to 23 November 2021. Engagements across the three spheres of government on the catalytic projects that would drive the One Plan based on evidence collated from municipalities, the province and strategic national departments (that is, the profiles, IDPs, SDFs, etc.) also commenced at this stage (COGTA 2021: 5).

Following the visit of the COGTA Minister on 18 October 2019, a series of intergovernmental technical working sessions (Design Thinking Workshops) were held, together with the drafting of the Diagnostic Report and the Vision Setting, Strategy Formulation and Implementation Commitments. The various meetings culminated in a draft One Plan, which was distributed for public comment from 29 May to 11 June 2021, (COGTA 2021: 6).

The diagnostic exercise described several structural and systemic challenges and threats in the metro. These challenges and threats gave rise to six DDM transformation focal areas: people development; economic positioning; spatial restructuring and environmental sustainability; infrastructure engineering; service provisioning; and governance (COGTA 2021: 8-9).

9.5.3 *The DDM in the Waterberg District*

The Waterberg District Municipality DDM One Plan process was officially launched on 26 November 2019, having been preceded by the development of a profile of the district. The launch was followed

by a skills gap analysis conducted in December 2019; the development of a One Plan Concept document in January 2020; a Waterberg foresight exercise conducted as part of Limpopo Outlook in January 2020; a profile gap analysis in February 2020; the establishment of district hubs and the project management unit in March 2020; and stakeholder engagements (Waterberg District Municipality 2020: 19). The draft Waterberg One Plan was released in March 2021.

The draft Waterberg One Plan includes a detailed analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the district. These are divided into the six transformative goals that are characteristic of the One Plan discussed, with each goal having a series of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats that are described in detail. The focus, however, is on issues that impact on each of the transformative goals.

The draft One Plan sets out the desired demographic change and people development to be achieved. Visions are developed from the diagnosis in the One Plan for spatial restructuring and environmental management, infrastructure engineering, integrated service provisioning, and governance and financial management.

The Waterberg One Plan outlines the various roles and responsibilities of key institutions such as the DDM District / Metro Hubs and the Department of Cooperative Governance, as well as mechanisms such as inter-governmental forums as decision-making bodies and special purpose vehicles as implementation bodies in the implementation of the strategies and programmes in the One Plan.

Included in the One Plan is a list of commitments and planned initiatives of the different spheres of government and the private sector, as well as the total value or project cost and financial commitments associated with the projects planned for the Waterberg district.

9.6 Government plans to update and assess the One Plan

In August 2022, the DG of the Department of Cooperative Governance distributed a circular to all Municipal Managers, HoDs responsible for local government, and all DGs of local government, as well as all DGs of national government, outlining the process to update the One Plan of all districts and metros. All districts and metros were expected to develop their One Plan after a circular was distributed in May 2021 outlining the process to develop a fully-fledged One Plan. The DG's circular also indicated that after the One Plan had been developed, a process would be undertaken to assess the quality of the One Plan. The quality assurance process involved a review of the process to develop the One Plan and to identify challenges and gaps that needed to be addressed in the review and updating of the One Plan. The assessments conducted in this process were consolidated into provincial reports (COGTA 2022). The provincial administrations were given responsibility for overall oversight and management of the One Plan review and updating process, which was expected to be completed by December 2022.

The Presidency distributed a circular in September 2022 outlining a process that would lead to an assessment of the One Plan. This was a three-day programme during early September 2022 (7 to 9 September in Public Service Month) to allow for senior public servants to “assess the quality of the District Development Model (DDM) One Plan and address specific sectoral challenges on the ground,

thereby strengthening the implementation of the DDM” (The Presidency 2022: 1-2). The reports arising from these exercises countrywide were subsequently to be consolidated into a single report (The Presidency 2022).

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Conclusions

From the desktop review to the findings from the empirical study, DDM is presented as a key strategic development policy to address the triple burden of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in South Africa. The focus on the district creates a decentralised approach, allowing planning at national, provincial, and local levels to address similar issues through the One Plan and One Budget planning process. South Africa has implemented several development strategies over the years; the current discourse is around whether the DDM will succeed where various previously implemented development models have either failed or only partially succeeded.

With the NDP as the overarching national planning policy, the DDM in its current format seems like a top-down approach imposed on districts. It might be a disruptor of the existing service delivery framework in the sense that we may see a local government that is more responsive to the needs of the people. Or it might create conformity and resistance, as indicated by Goldman (2012) regarding the GWME. However, the South African government is still in the initial stages of implementation of the DDM, and it is difficult to tell if the model will perform positively in the fifty-two spaces.

Even though the DDM might yield a positive result overall, its implementation requires carefully crafted strategies by the unique nature of the current fifty-two spaces in the current local government setup. The sentiment from primary research participants is that the model is replicable, but that this will depend on the inclusive nature of the anchor project in each district. The sign from the pilot projects is that provinces and local government are still struggling to find seamless collaborative platforms because municipalities feel that provinces want to impose their plan without clear consideration of municipal planning. This has the potential to hamper collaborative efforts because municipalities can plan independently without a provincial or national government. At this stage DDM could be reduced to a guide without legislative safeguards rather than a legislative requirement with which districts should comply.

The key objective of the study was to assess the initial rollout of the DDM in the pilot districts within the context of a broader investigation into South Africa’s governance system and a review of case studies of comparable district development programmes in other countries in Africa and abroad. But since key informant understanding of the DDM is patchy and its implementation implications are unknown, the primary research has had limited usefulness in providing definitive evidence of the DDM’s efficacy.

Findings from the primary research show that the plan to implement DDM in eThekweni District is at an advanced stage. However, we noted the limited contribution of communities in the process of developing the anchor projects. The limited community involvement in the DDM process was also noted in the way COGTA (2020) defines DDM as a “new integrated model that government is using to institutionalise an integrated district-based development approach aimed at fast-tracking service

delivery and ensuring that municipalities work together and are adequately supported and resourced to carry their mandate.” In the absence of coordination and planning among the three spheres of government, the DDM idea and vision risks may not be fully realised. The concern from municipalities that provinces tend to impose their plans through provincial implementation strategies or Operation Sukhuma Sake remains a potential obstacle to the success of the DDM.

Much more work needs to be done in terms of training and capacitating officials and all DDM stakeholders for planning and implementation. Critically, the three spheres of government need to create a mechanism for seamless coordination to anchor DDM initiatives. There is also a need for a new budget model to facilitate the One Plan One Budget process.

A particularly worrisome challenge is institutional performance. A common criticism levelled against public institutions is that government structures function in silos with little or no coordination among them. The private sector, moreover, is not part of decision-making despite the key role it plays within districts. Their exclusion from decision-making is likely to affect the broader performance of the district and its institutions, with wide-ranging implications for human resources, economic development and ultimately service delivery.

In terms of skills and training, there is a greater need for tertiary education institutions within districts and for the LGSETA to address the skills gaps that are currently experienced. An economic development boom depends fundamentally on skills and capacity availability, which would enable citizens to take full advantage of emerging opportunities.

This study provides an early assessment of DDM implementation in pilot districts. At the time of the fieldwork, pilot districts were finalising the implementation of their DDM plan. The way forward will be to assess the progress of the implementation of anchor projects. Further work still needs to be undertaken to monitor the implementation of the One Plan beyond the pilot. This should include mechanisms for continuous monitoring of the DDM implementation plan in each district.

10.2 Recommendations

Based on the discussion above, the overarching recommendation is that a complete evaluation be conducted once the DDM has been fully implemented in a municipality.

Besides this overarching recommendation, the study has identified a set of 30 specific recommendations, which are presented below. These recommendations overlap, and are presented in no particular order. The DDM management teams at national, provincial and local levels will need to combine and prioritise these recommendations as a proposed next step in the implementation process. These recommendations as well as findings of the study are discussed in more detail in the project report.

1. Legislate the DDM
2. Involve relevant agencies and stakeholders in decision making
3. Get the basics right: get everybody on board
4. Practise greater transparency and promote access to information
5. Foster teamwork and team spirit during the implementation

6. Improve cooperative governance, involving all three spheres of government
7. Formulate an implementation plan that adopts an all-of-government approach
8. Draft and implement a Training and Development Plan for officials and political office bearers
9. Foster democratic participation in district development by civil society and community stakeholders
10. Focus on sustainable development and the eradication of poverty, inequality, and unemployment
11. Institutionalise the role of development finance institutions in development projects
12. Focus on local economic development and business investment opportunities
13. Create an enabling environment legislatively
14. Replicate the pilot projects in all districts in the country²
15. Ensure that the direct beneficiaries of the DDM are the people, not government officials, in these fifty-two spaces
16. Prevent underdevelopment in the fifty-two spaces
17. Pass municipal by-laws and implement them
18. Increase the number of Learnerships
19. Reduce bureaucracy
20. Harmonise all programmes across the three spheres of government and across all departments to create One Plan
21. (The Presidency should) assume overall control of the DDM and institutionalise the oneness of the Plan
22. Establish a mechanism for regular M&E
23. Treat the DDM as a national programme of action
24. Formulate implementation strategies
25. Depoliticise the DDM
26. Exercise meritocracy, not politics, in the appointment of officials
27. Develop an accountability mechanism
28. Promote women's empowerment
29. Departmentalise and depersonalise DDM implementation; and
30. Ensure that the DDM has measurable outcomes, deliverables, and performance contracts for officials.

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² The Presidency should sanction the rollout of the DDM to all the districts. However, oversight mechanisms must be implemented to ensure DDM achieves its objectives when the rollout takes place.

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