

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES for inclusive and productive cities

A skilled labour force is central to the economic development of nations and cities. However, local governments in South Africa do not have a mandate to promote skills development. JOHAN ERASMUS reports.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT aims to achieve an economic growth rate of 6% per year, which it believes will lead to a reduction in unemployment, and ultimately, to a better quality of life for all. But the skills shortage is a key obstacle to achieving this objective and thus government has assumed a substantial role in providing comprehensive education, training, and skills enhancement programmes.

From an analysis of relevant legislation and related policies, it is apparent that local governments are not assigned the power to provide education and training; the government and the nine provincial governments are responsible for this. However, it follows from the developmental role of local governments that they should in fact seek to facilitate the education and training that would enhance their development objectives and competitive advantages.

CONTRIBUTION OF SACN CITIES

Together, the nine member cities of the SACN play a vital role in the social and economic life of the country.

- ▶ In 2004, the populations of the nine cities of the SACN amounted to 37% of the total South African population.
- ▶ The cities gave employment to approximately 5.5 million people, nearly half (49% of the 11.5 million workers in South Africa in 2004.
- ▶ Collectively, the nine cities contributed to 59% of the total wealth created in South Africa in 2004.

Most local governments in South Africa, including the cities of the South African Cities Network (SACN), have thus far paid little attention to the potential contribution of skills development strategies to their development programmes. Members of the Cities Network are Buffalo City Municipality, the City of Cape Town, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, eThekweni Municipality, the City of Johannesburg, Mangaung Local Municipality, Msunduzi Local Municipality, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality, and the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

It is against this background that the Productive Cities Reference Group of the SACN has initiated a programme to assist member cities to develop and implement skills-development strategies. To this end, SACN has commissioned the HSRC to develop a Toolkit that will assist the cities with preparing skills development strategies as part of their local economic development (LED) programmes.

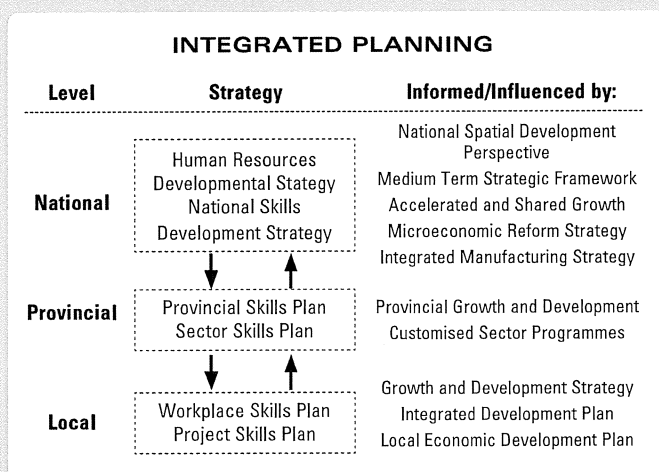
The Toolkit consists of three parts:

1. An explanation of the role of skills in economic development;
2. An exploration of the 'space' available to the cities to contribute towards skills development, with a focus on national and provincial policies, programmes, legislation and funding (a list of useful websites pertaining to relevant institutions and skills policies

and programmes is available in the Toolkit);

3. The identification of particular skills-development strategies and an explanation of how cities may contribute to skills development, for example developing small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) skills, sponsoring learners and students, and supporting schools, technical colleges and universities. Additional strategies are suggested for enhancing municipal capacity and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on the municipal labour force and intellectual and skills assets within the city.

Part 3 also introduces the approach to skills-development strategies and explains the nature of these strategies. It is assumed that the



Adapted from: *Skills Strategy for the Nation*, p. 6, Department of Labour, Implementing the National Skills Development Strategy: the role of Sector Education and Training Authorities and the Department of Labour's Provincial Offices.

strategies have emerged from the LED component of the integrated development plan.

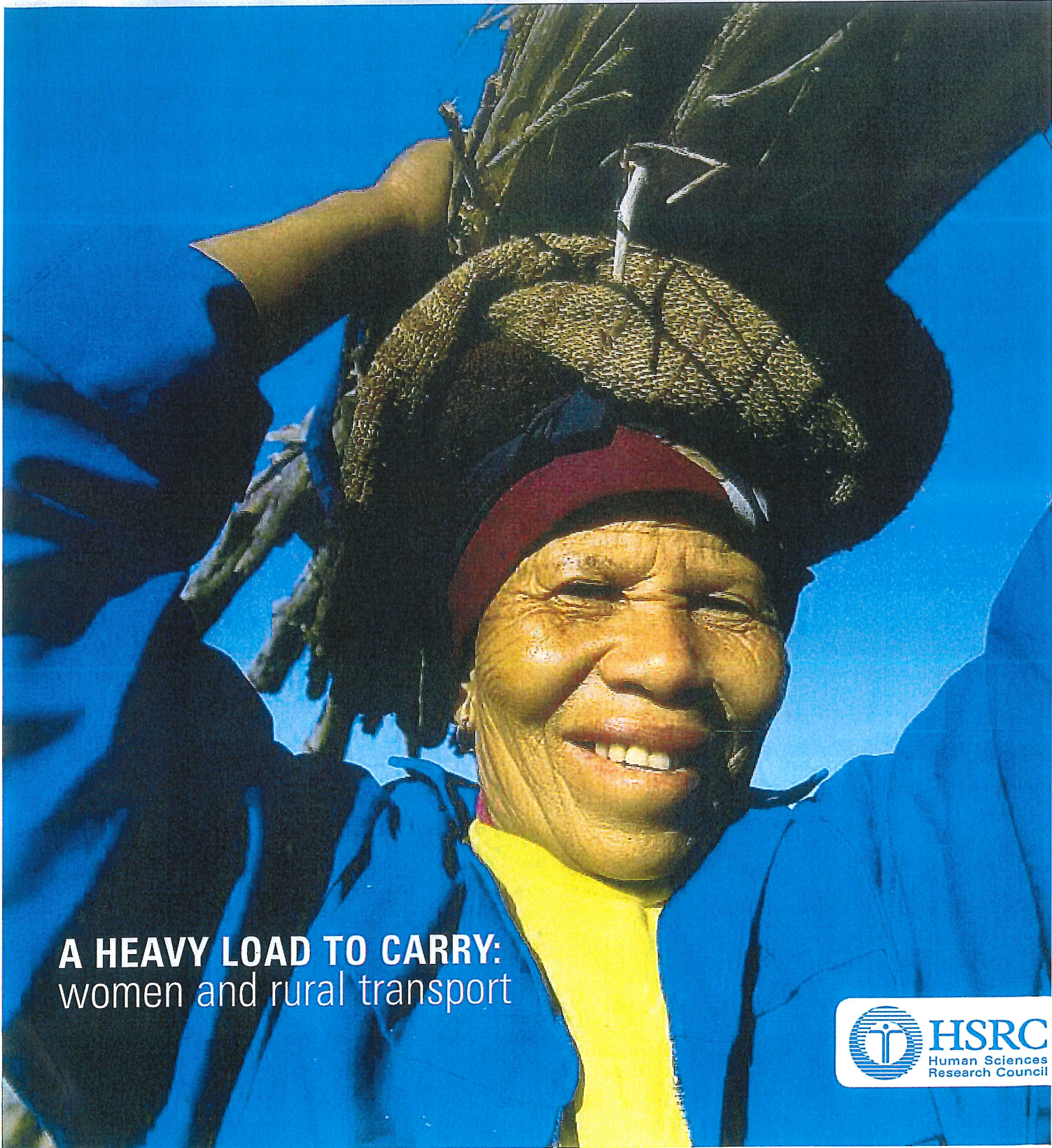
In summary: local governments will have to use national, provincial and sector plans as background information for their own skills-development strategies. This iterative process, where each level of the skills-development strategy affects the other, is shown in the diagram above.

Parts of the Toolkit synthesised material contain a comprehensive analysis of the skills environment. The comprehensive analysis that informs the Toolkit, a published abridged version of the Toolkit and a compact disc containing the comprehensive Toolkit may be obtained directly from the Programmes Administrator, SACN, e-mail sadhna@sacities.net. It can also be downloaded from the SACN website at www.sacities.net. ●

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HSRC review

www.hsrc.ac.za **4** VOLUME No. 03 | SEPT 2006



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