Decentralisation and Development Planning:

Some Practical Considerations

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	:	Accessibility Indicator
ANC	:	African National Congress
ANRS	:	Amhara National Region State
ASIST	:	Advisory Support, Information Service and Training
CEO	:	Chief Executive Officer
DA	:	Development Agent
DFID	:	Department for International Development
EAP	:	Environmental Actions Planning
IDP	:	Integrated Development Planning
ILO	:	International Labour Organisation
IRAP	:	Integrated Rural Access Planning
IUDD	:	Infrastructure and Urban Development Department
LLPPA	:	Local Level Participatory Planning Approach
MoA	:	Ministry of Agriculture
NCBP	:	National Capacity Building Programme
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
PRA	:	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RDC	:	Rural District Council
RTS	:	Rural Transport Study
SDPRP	:	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme
SIDA	:	Swedish International Development Agency
WFP	:	World Food Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is a report on the outcomes of work commissioned by the Infrastructure and Urban Development Department (IUDD) of the Department for International Development (DFID). This work was commissioned out of a concern that development related interventions being initiated by DFID were either too narrowly project focussed, or grappled with development policy in the broadest terms.

A problem commonly faced by development practitioners is how to bring together high level strategic thinking and the local level context in a way that ensures the optimum outcomes. The brief of the study was to investigate development planning approaches and models that close this gap in order to identify lessons that could be applied to future DFID projects, and to disseminate these within DFID.

Most developing countries have either drawn up poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) or are in the process of doing so. At the same time many of these countries are also in the process of decentralising development functions to the local level. These two dynamics operate at very different scales and need to be brought together if development interventions are going to have their desired outcomes.

Section Two of this paper sets out in more detail some of the dynamics that have shaped the ways in which development planning has evolved over the last ten years. Some models of and approaches to development planning that have been put into practice, with varying degrees of success, are examined in **Section Three**. The report concludes in **Section Four** by drawing together some of the lessons that have come out of the establishment of these planning systems.

2. INFLUENCES ON DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The principal influence on the development of planning systems in the last ten years has been the move towards decentralisation undertaken by many developing country governments, often on the advice of international development agencies and donors. Decentralisation refers to "the transfer of political power, decision making capacity and resources from central to sub-national levels of government" (Walker, 2002). A number of arguments have been advanced to support decentralization including:
  - *Allocative efficiency:* Local authorities are more sensitive to local priorities and needs, and can modify service provision to reflect this;
  - *Information provision:* Local government can keep people informed as they are in direct contact with users of services;
  - *Responsiveness:* The proximity of local government to service users means that, provided that they have sufficient autonomy, they can be more responsive to local needs than central government;
  - *Local revenue maximization:* Local authorities can optimise local sources of revenue by levying local taxes, fees and user charges and using the income locally; and,
  - *Accountability:* Local communities are better placed to influence politics and policy at the local level than at the national level. Communities can put direct pressure on local authorities if they are unhappy with the delivery of services.

However, decentralisation is not without its risks:

- *Elite capture:* Local elites may capture the benefits of decentralisation and are not necessarily more pro-poor than national elites;
- *Revenue minimization:* Local government may have limitations in their capacity to mobilize local financial resources, or be unwilling to do so;
- *Corruption:* More people have political influence under decentralization and consequently the risks of corruption may be higher;
- *Weak administrative and management systems*: The transfer of responsibilities and resources to local government requires effective and efficient administrative and management systems, which may take a while to develop at the local level; and
- *Lack of participation*: The decentralisation of resources and authority will not automatically result in more participatory and inclusive processes and top-down approaches to development may continue regardless;
- *Poor human resource base*: Professional staff are often unwilling to live and work in remote areas. Staff that are available are often poorly trained, lacking in motivation and have low levels of capacity.

The way in which decentralisation is undertaken and the impact that it has is heavily dependent on the context in which it takes place. Consequently, it is not easy to generalize about what makes the implementation of decentralisation successful. Watson (2002) identifies five areas that play an important role:

- Clear division of roles, responsibilities and powers between levels of government;
- The transfer of adequate financial resources to the local level;
- A clear distinction between the roles of elected councillors and technical officials at the local level;
- Capacity for planning, budgeting and project management; and,
- Appropriate mechanisms of accountability between the local authority and the users of its services.

New approaches to planning have been developed in response to the decentralisation agenda. The scope of planning has expanded and it is increasingly seen to be an important management tool that "gives life" to many aspects of decentralisation by leveraging in the benefits of these processes and ensuring that the desired outcomes are achieved. Planning has moved away from being only concerned with the control of land use, and increasingly concerned with:

- The co-ordination of activities across sectors;
- The efficient distribution of resources;
- Facilitating pro-poor outcomes;
- Providing tools for analysis and implementation;
- The creation of an enabling environment for development activities; and
- Being able to manage change while continuing to provide guidance in the event of change.

The decentralisation agenda is closely related to the concern of international development agencies and donors with promoting good governance. Good governance is seen to be a key contributing factor to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. One of the key governance capabilities identified by DFID is the operation of "political systems which provide opportunities for all the

people, including the poor and disadvantaged, to influence government policy and practice" (DFID, 2001).

Planning systems have an important role to play in creating an enabling environment for local communities to participate in development decisions and activities. Participation can take many forms, not all of which are empowering to local communities. At its most token, participation is limited to providing information to communities, with decision-making about development interventions being the responsibility of councillors and technical officials. Participation of communities in the identification and prioritisation of needs and in decision making with respect to the allocation of resources to meet those needs is a more empowering form of participation. In practice, participative processes usually fall somewhere in between these two extremes.

Participatory process and their associated methodologies play a useful role in articulating local needs and aspirations, and identifying development interventions. However, due to capacity constraints on the part of participants, these interventions are not necessarily strategic in nature or consistent with the policy of higher levels of government. In the context of decentralisation, planning systems are increasingly required to undertake this function of integrating top-down strategic obligations with the bottom-up outcomes of participatory processes.

3.   APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

This section takes a looks at three very different approaches to development planning that have been developed in recent years in Sub-Saharan Africa in the context of the dynamics discussed in the previous section:
- Integrated Development Plans – South Africa
- Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning – Zimbabwe
- Decentralised Woreda Level Planning – Ethiopia

These three approaches provide a broad overview of development planning systems, and illustrate some of the challenges that practitioners face in using planning as a tool to manage the outcomes of development processes. IDPs are an example of a development planning systems conceptualised and steered from the centre. IRAP is a more bottom up, consensus driven approaches that was used in Zimbabwe as a important component of a rural transport study in the hope that it would catalyse a broader system of development planning. Finally, the use of the Local Level Planning Approach (LLPPA) as a tool used by civil society within a wider process of state driven decentralisation driven is investigated.

Each case study is structured around the following framework:
- *Background* – set outs the context in which the approach or tool was developed and institutionalised.
- *Institutions* – provides an analysis of the institutions involved in the development planning process and outlines their roles and responsibilities.
- *Process* – describes and analyses the process undertaken to produce development plans.

- *Outcomes* – details the products of the development planning process and examines how they are used.
- *Lessons* – emphasis some key learning points arising from the establishment of the particular development planning system.

It is difficult to present the models and tools in a way that does justice to the complex and dynamic environments in which they operate. The framework used to analyse the development planning models in this paper is not intended to capture the complexity of these contexts, but rather provides a means of highlighting the issues that development practitioners need to take into consideration when thinking about planning systems, decentralisation and their wider role in poverty alleviation.

3.1. Integrated Development Planning – South Africa

This section is a summary of a paper produced by Hadingham (2002) for the Infrastructure and Urban Development Department's Annual Conference 2002, which provides a more detailed analysis of the issues discussed below.

3.1.1. Background

Post-apartheid South Africa has seen fundamental changes in the role of local government. Legislation and policy have been implemented that redefine the role of local government as an agent of delivery focussed on the proactive management of local resources and pro-poor outcomes.

The African National Congress's (ANC) subsequent election victory gave them a broad mandate to pursue a wide range of development objectives as set out in their pre-election vision of the new South Africa, the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The national government realised at an early stage that the resources that it would have available for development were limited and therefore it was necessary to try and maximise the benefits from the use of these resources. Consequently, a process of decentralisation and local government reform, that placed the mandate for the delivery of development on local government, was undertaken after the 1994 elections.

The process of local government reform included:
- The development of management tools, such as integrated development planning (IDP), intended to assist local government in undertaking its new mandate.
- IDPs were given a statutory status that compelled local authorities to make them the basis for their activities and decision-making.
- The decentralisation process and its associated tools were placed within a clear legal and regulatory framework.

3.1.2. Institutions

The post-1994 government inherited a fragmented and undemocratic system of local government and instituted a series of reforms in three phases in an attempt to overcome this legacy. Table 1 below provides an outline of each of these phases.

Table 1: Phases of the Local Government Transition

	Date	Description
Pre-Transition Phase	Pre 1994 until local government elections in 1995	This phase involved the linking of black local authorities, civic organisations and white local authorities, and the formation of management committees responsible for overseeing the preparations for the local government elections (including negotiations on demarcation) and playing a caretaker role until these elections were held.
Transition Phase	1995 – 2000	After local government elections, Transitional Local Councils (TLCs) were responsible for the initial implementation of developmental local government. During this time consultations and negotiations took place at a national level in order to determine the final form of local government and how it would function. Three local government acts were promulgated in order to facilitate this. The 2000 local government elections brought this phase to an end. Most local authorities produced an IDP during this period.
Final Phase	2000 onwards	This phase saw the establishment of three categories of local government: • Category A – Metropolitan Municipalities • Category B – Local Municipalities • Category C – District Municipalities Local authorities still retain their decentralised powers but operate within differently demarcated boundaries, and the relationship between rural and urban local authorities has changed.

3.1.3. Process

As part of their development mandate local governments are required to produce IDPs. IDPs as they have been implemented in South Africa are characterised by:

- *Vertical integration* – Bringing together national policy and local level needs
- *Horizontal integration* – Developing synergies between sectoral interventions and managing trade-offs where sectoral needs are in conflict.
- *Participation* – Throughout the process enabling community empowerment and ensuring accountability of elected officials. Participation is a crucial part of the integrated development planning methodology, both as a means and an end.
- *A hierarchy of plans* – Higher-level (regional) plans have a reciprocal relationship with lower level (sub-regional and local) plans, and rely on trends identified in these plans to inform the development of policy and strategic decision-making. Lower level plans in turn are guided by the strategic direction set by the higher level plans.

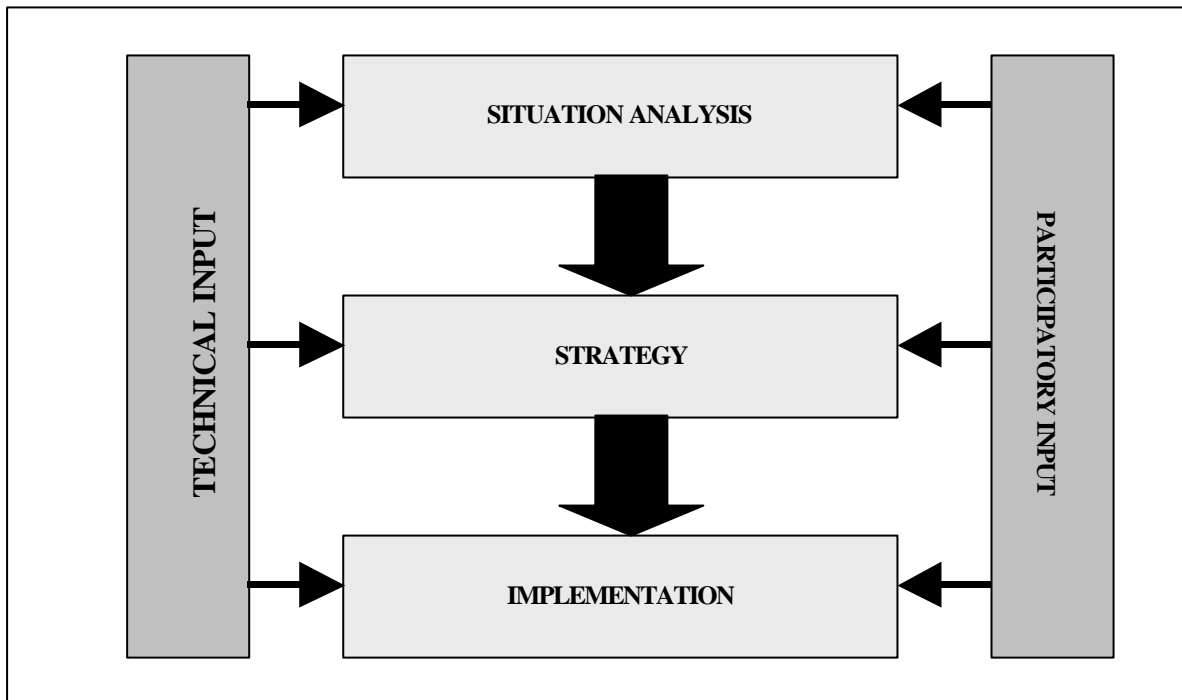The IDP planning process is a very simple one consisting of three phases as Figure 1 below illustrates.

Figure 1: The IDP Planning Process

Figure 1 illustrates one phase of a cycle. IDPs are updated yearly as part of the local authority budgeting process and are completely redone every five years.

Most local authorities have completed their first five-year development plan and are about halfway through the cycle. In most cases, due to capacity constraints, consultants rather than local authority staff undertook the preparation of these plans. Funding was made available from national and provincial government for preparation of these plans and was supplemented in some cases by funds from the local authority's budget. It is not clear where the funding for future development plans will be sourced.

Participation methodologies are used throughout the process in order to:
- Identify problems and needs;
- Gather information;
- Develop strategies and potential projects;
- Prioritise interventions; and
- Monitor implementation.

The modalities of the participation process vary widely, but in most cases substantive inputs are made into the development planning process through a steering committee or working group that is broadly representative of the various stakeholder groupings operating with the planning area. At key points in the process, participation is extended to a wider audience in order to create awareness of and obtain broader support for the development plan.

3.1.4. Outcomes

Due to the fact that development issues are not homogenous across South Africa, there is no standard format specified for IDPs. However, the Department of Constitutional Development has drawn up guidelines that outline the broad areas that IDPs should consider. In general terms, an IDP has three basic components that follow a logical progression:
- A situation/status quo analysis
- A suite of integrated development strategies
- An implementation plan

The situation analysis involves the collection of pertinent baseline information for the planning area and typically covers the following areas *inter alia*:
- Physical/Environmental – climate, geology, topography, fauna, flora
- Human – settlement hierarchy, demographics, migration trends
- Economic – types and locations of economic activities, demand for goods and services
- Institutional – roles and responsibilities of governmental and civil society institutions active in the planning area with a focus on local government

This component concludes with a SWOT analysis or a similar problem/opportunity statement, which forms the basis for the identification of priorities for the municipality and the setting of objectives in consultation with the municipality and relevant stakeholders.

The strategy component of an IDP consists of:
- A vision or "broad statement of intent" relating to the desired future developmental state of the municipality.
- A suite of integrated sectoral development strategies reflecting the vision, priorities and objectives of the municipality.

The implementation plan contains
- Projects, identified through a participatory process that will facilitate the execution of the development strategies.
- An integrated financial plan for both capital and operating budgets. The scope of this plan is not limited to the transactions relating to the IDP but covers all the activities of the municipality
- Key performance indicators and performance targets, as well as monitoring and review mechanisms, in order to assist the municipality to monitor progress.

It is important to note that most IDPs are considered to be "working" documents. The development environment in which municipalities operate is a complex and rapidly changing one. Consequently, if IDPs are to be an effective management tool, they have to be flexible enough to adapt to these changes. A system of monitoring and review is therefore built into the implementation plan to facilitate this.

In many cases, especially with some of the early IDPs, plans were prepared because they were a legal requirement rather than because councillors and municipal officials believed that there was any inherent value in the process. As IDPs have developed

and capacity has been built among stakeholders, councillors and officials, they have become more useful as development management tools.

3.1.5. Lessons

While IDPs have not been an unqualified success, they have played an important role in assisting local government in coming to terms with its developmental mandate. Some key lessons are outlined below.

- IDPs require political buy-in and need to be supported by clear uncomplicated legislation.
- The preparation of the plan is not sufficient, an understanding of development issues needs to be cultivated among councillors and officials.
- The development of planning systems doesn't happen instantly. Fine-tuning and the opportunity to evolve and develop is required if plans coming out of these systems are to meet their objectives.
- The voices of local stakeholders (especially the poor) are very easily crowded out of the planning process.
- Participation does not necessarily lead to pro-poor outcomes.
- IDPs have an important role to play in building awareness of development issues.
- The IDP process needs to be carefully managed if desirable pro-poor outcomes are to be achieved

3.2. Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning – Zimbabwe

3.2.1. Background

After independence, while development priorities changed to focus on rural development, development planning displayed continuity by retaining a top-down approach. In 1984, in an effort to stimulate rural planning, a bottom-up approach was to development planning was introduced into the planning system and corresponding legislation. This approach result in the production of long lists of community needs that had very little relationship to the funds available for development. The resulting lack of delivery meant that this approach very quickly lost credibility and for all practical purposes was abandoned (PlanAfric, 1999; Mellors, 2002).

The failure of the rural development planning system to deliver the desired outcomes resulted in a multiplicity of government departments and agencies taking up a number of similar but essentially separate approaches. The efforts were often narrowly focussed on sectoral concerns and in most cases co-ordination with activities undertaken by other ministries and agencies did not occur. The development planning arena was further complicated by aid agencies and NGOs piloting their own approaches to development planning on the back of their projects.

The Ministry of Transport and Energy initiated the *Rural Transport Study in Three Districts of Zimbabwe* in 1995 with funding support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) through its Advisory Support, Information Services and Training programme (ASIST)

supplied technical assistance to this programme. The main objectives of this study were to:

- Develop a better understanding of rural travel and transport patterns in Zimbabwe;
- Encourage the implementation of pilot access interventions to demonstrate possible solutions to relevant transport problems; and
- Contribute to the development of a national transport policy that addresses the travel and transport needs of the rural population.

(Sakko, 2001, pg 4)

The districts of Chipinge, Rushinga and Zaka were selected for this study on the basis of a series of criteria related to:

- Geographic location
- Topography
- Levels of economic development
- Levels of poverty

The Integrated Rural Accessibility Planning (IRAP) tool developed by ILO-ASIST was used to underpin the study. IRAP methodologies formed the basis for the collection of household and village level data with an explicit focus on *access needs*.

The IRAP approach is a simple and relatively cheap tool than enables communities and planners to identify access problems and develop appropriate solutions. IRAP focuses on the household and the time it spends in gaining access to services and economic opportunities. Access problems are solved by either improving mobility (i.e. making it easier for households to move themselves and their goods) or by enhancing proximity (i.e. by developing more optimum spatial distribution of social and economic services).

IRAP is often thought of as a transportation planning tool, but its concern with proximity means that the methodology used and its outcomes have broader application to the field of development planning. IRAP is not a planning model but rather a planning tool that enables the identification of access problems and the development of a set of priority interventions that will overcome those problems

In Africa in particular, the bulk of the transport burden falls on women. One of the strengths of the IRAP approach is that it provides disaggregated data for women and allows gender to be mainstreamed into the planning process.

IRAP has five characteristics:

- It supports the local level planning process
- It makes the household a focal point of the planning process
- It is based on a comprehensive data collection system
- It mainstreams gender into the collection and analysis of data
- It is a bottom up approach that involves local communities at all stages of the process.
- It is integrated in the sense that it takes into account all aspects of household access needs, as well as considering the full range of possible solutions including non-transport interventions.

3.2.2. Institutions

Initially IRAP was not integrated into planning procedures, but only used as a means of assessing the rural access situation in the three districts. The tool was used by a team of three local consultants, under the guidance of the ILO and Rural District Council (RDC) officials. The outputs from the survey were used as direct inputs into the RTS. In this way, it was hoped that RDC officials would see the usefulness of the tool as a means of directing investment, and integrate it into their planning and implementation processes.

The data collected using the IRAP methodology provided a comprehensive and reliable data set. However, the interventions suggested by the analysis of the data were in conflict with the projects favoured by local political interests. Consequently the data was used as a basis for the development of an implementation programme in only one district.

The integration of IRAP into the existing planning system and the strengthening of the institutions responsible for development planning only became an issue when the RTS process was well advanced and a decision was taken to use the outputs of IRAP as a basis for implementation. ILO-ASIST co-opted political interests in the district that might have worked against the outputs of IRAP, by subcontracting the Rural District Councils to implement the identified interventions. The CEOs of the RDC and the ward councillors signed the contracts as representatives of the community making themselves responsible for implementation as well as the supervision and management of contractors.

During implementation, the beneficiary communities supplied locally available materials as well as unskilled labour. Funding for other materials and skilled labour was sourced from RTS project resources. Most communities set up a committee for the purposes of the implementation project in order to provide a point of contact for the RDC as well as a forum where issues such as levels of participation, community contributions and management of the interventions could be raised.

3.2.3. Process

The IRAP approach follows a basic planning process model as Figure 2 illustrates
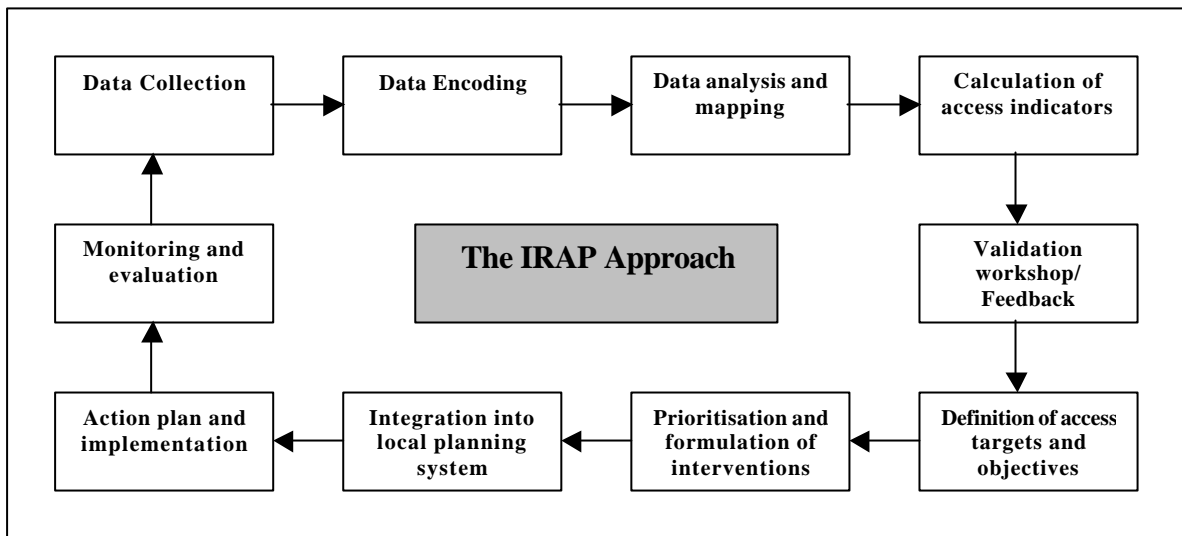
Figure 2: The IRAP Planning Process

The IRAP process relies heavily on primary data and consequently, the process begins with surveys conducted at the household level. Enumerators are trained locally to undertake these surveys and to process the data. The surveys consist of a series of questions relating to how the household gains access to services as well as the time required to undertake trips related to tasks undertaken by households to meet basic needs. In the case of the RTS in Zimbabwe these tasks included:

- The collection of water and firewood
- Visits to the grinding mill
- Agricultural related activities such as tending fields, harvesting crops and sale of produce
- Visiting of urban centres to gain access to government services
- The use of health and education facilities
- Accessing employment opportunities

Data on these activities is collected in terms of time taken, load, cost, frequency, mode of transport and trip responsibility.

This data is cleaned and supplemented by other secondary sources and used to develop a demand-oriented assessment of access and transportation needs. The data is further processed to create accessibility profiles, indicators and maps. Accessibility indicators are calculated for each sector in every village using the following basic formula:

$$AI = N \cdot (T - T_m) \cdot F$$

Where   N is the number of households;
             T is the average time spent to reach a facility of service;
             T_m is an acceptable time to reach a facility or service; and
             F is the frequency of travel to a facility or service within a given period

Accessibility indicators are mapped, providing a medium of analysis, which is easily understood by all stakeholders regardless of levels of literacy.

Prioritisation in each sector is based on the relative values of the access indicators in each village. The larger the access indicator, the worse the access problem is, therefore, the village with the worst access indicator in a particular sector gets the highest priority for access interventions in that sector.

At this stage in the process, the processed data is validated at a workshop held with representatives of local authorities, organisations and other stakeholders. This workshop is also used to set objectives in the form of measurable targets.

Finally, projects are identified on the basis of the accessibility profiles and sectoral priorities. These interventions are either transport related (better infrastructure, promotion of non-motorised transport, provision of better transport services etc.) or take the form of non-transport services (the better location of social and economic services).

An implementation programme is then undertaken using inputs from the local community in terms of unskilled labour and locally sourced materials. Local communities are also expected to make similar contributions to the ongoing maintenance of the projects.

If IRAP forms the basis for a broader planning system, accessibility indicators can also be used as a basis for a system of measuring and evaluating the impact of the interventions.

3.2.4. Outcomes

In the case of Zimbabwe the IRAP approach formed part of a rural transport study in three districts. Accessibility indicators, profiles and maps were produced and used as the basis for a number of interventions, most of which were transport related (twelve footbridges, seven footpaths). In addition, a dam and a spillway were constructed and three boreholes sunk. In most cases, however, these interventions were not a result of the IRAP analysis but reflect the concerns of local political elites.

In an ideal scenario, the data collected using the IRAP approach can be fed into other sectoral and development planning processes, as experience in the Philippines has shown. However, in the case of Zimbabwe this did not take place. An assessment of the use of IRAP as a basis for the implementation of projects suggested that the interventions finally implemented would not have been undertaken if the RDC did not have access to an outside fund set up specifically for the implementation of RTS projects (Sakko, 2001).

3.2.5. Lessons

IRAP, while not a fully-fledged planning system, illustrates a way in which local communities can engage with abstract planning ideas in a way that facilitates participation in broader planning processes. Some of the lessons that can be derived from the Zimbabwean experience are as follows:

- IRAP is a development tool that is particularly effective in bringing together planning and implementation. However, in order for IRAP to be used effectively it needs to be integrated into the existing local development planning cycle and institutional context.
- The data collected during the course of the IRAP process has value to development planning efforts outside of the transportation sector. In the Philippines, the data collected during the IRAP process is made available to all sectors to use in their development activities.
- Similarly, the information derived from the IRAP process provides a useful primary source of data for policy development at the national level.
- In the case of Zimbabwe, all interventions eventually undertaken as a result of the IRAP analysis took the form of infrastructure. This reflects the difficulty in promoting programmes that cut across sectors rather than any inherent problem with the methodology.
- The IRAP approach directly supports democratisation and empowerment of communities at the local level. It is simple, easy to understand, user friendly and easily implemented, even in the context of low levels of capacity at the local level and allows communities to engage with all stages of the development process.
- The empowerment of communities in the use of this tool has to be supported by the development of capacity among technical staff at the local level. This is necessary, as a balance needs to be struck between conceptual planning at the district level and higher, and detailed planning at the local level.
- The Zimbabwe case study also highlights the political dimensions of institutionalising planning systems in order to provide a rational basis for investment. Participatory approaches and technical assessment may be in conflict with the preferred interventions of local political elites.

3.3. Decentralised Woreda Level Planning – Ethiopia

This section draws on work undertaken for DFID's Africa Great Lakes and Horn Department as part of the preparation of the Ethiopia country assistance plan. The paper "Woreda Decentralisation and Local Level Planning in Ethiopia" (Blake *et al*, 2002) contains more details on these issues.

3.3.1. Background

The 1994 Ethiopian constitution paved the way for decentralisation, initially to the regional level, but with the intention of eventually extending this process to the woreda level. Block grants to the woreda level were made in June 2002 for the first time, and capacity building programmes aimed at supporting woreda government in the use of the block grant have been initiated.

Capacity building is a national priority identified by the Government of Ethiopia in its strategy for poverty reduction, the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme (SDPRP). The Ethiopian government has launched a National Capacity Building Programme (NCBP) designed to provide necessary capacity at all levels of government in Ethiopia to implement its poverty reduction strategy. Particular

emphasis has been given in the NCBP to woreda level decentralisation as a means of empowering local communities, developing democratisation and improving delivery of basic services.

3.3.2. Institutions

The woreda is the basic co-ordinating unit at the local level for planning and budgeting. Institutions at lower levels are responsible for collecting information, identifying and prioritising needs, and feeding this information up to the woreda for inclusion in development plans. Below the woreda, institutional arrangements vary widely across the country, and appear to be largely dependent on the local context. Table 2 below sets out the various local institutions involved in planning from the grassroots upwards.

The structure of the woreda is designed to reflect the institutional arrangements of regional government in terms of sectoral competencies, in order to facilitate integration and coordination between these levels. While woredas have greater responsibilities under decentralisation, these are limited to the provision of locally based services. Regional bureaus retain responsibility for higher-level services. For example, woredas are responsible for primary schools, while the region is responsible for secondary and tertiary institutions.

Institution	Characteristics
Mengistawi buden (hamlets)	• Represents 30-60 households • Community workshops held to identify needs and establish priority • Development committee comprising 3 women, 3 men and 3 youth steer the process • May not be present or used for planning purposes in all woredas • NGOs active in facilitation of planning at this level
Sub-kebele (villages)	• Represents 50-100 households • Government team (GOT) responsible for planning, project identification and implementation • GOT usually consists of 3 people representative of the grassroots and includes household heads, teachers and farmers • GOT receives assistance in its activities from development agents and NGOs
Kebele (peasant associations)	• Represents 150-250 households • Kebeles originally set up by the Derg to control the local population • Replicate structure of the woreda • Elected officials • Responsible for consolidating the prioritised needs of lower level across all sectors • Consolidation usually done by Rural Development in collaboration with development agents • 2-3 people represent the kebele on the woreda council
Woreda	• Represents 20-30 kebeles • Responsible for consolidating priorities and reconciling them with available budgets • Woreda council elected and responsible for final approval of plans • Woreda administrator elected by council and head up woreda executive • Woreda executive consists of heads of all the offices (technical) and the woreda administrator (political)

Table 2: Local Level Planning Institutions

Figure 3 on the following page illustrates the standard model for woreda administration. This model forms the basis for the institutional structure of all woredas, although some variation does occur depending on the woreda's specific context.

Each office is comprised of a number of desks that deal with particular sectors. The Rural Development office is expected to be the dominant office in most woredas as its

responsibilities correspond most closely to development needs in rural areas. The Planning and Budgeting Desk in the Finance and Economic Development Office is also anticipated to play an important role, as it will have the responsibility for integrating the various office plans, and matching these plans with the available budget.

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Rural Development Office	Finance and Economic Development Office	Social Affairs Office
• Agriculture • DPPD • Cooperatives and Credit • Rural Energy • Community Roads • Inputs and Credits • Water	• Revenue • Planning and Budgeting • Finance • Inspection and Audit	• Youth • Women • Other Associations

Capacity Building Office	Administration and Justice
• Education • Health	• Prosecutor's office • Police • Militia

Figure 3: The Federal Model for Woreda Administration under Decentralisation

3.3.3. Process

Planning is undertaken on an annual cycle, corresponding to the annual financial cycle. The planning process begins in January with initial consultations at the sub-kebele and mengistawi buden level, and is completed with the final approval of the plan by the woreda council in July. Figure 4 below illustrates the planning process from the local level to final approval by the woreda.

MENGISTAWI BUDEN

Community Consultation
Community, Development Committee, NGOs

- Problem identification
- Prioritised list of needs across all sectors

SUB-KEBELE

Community Consultation
Community, GOT, DAs, NGOs

- Problem identification
- Prioritised list of needs across all sectors

KEBELE

Consolidated list of priorities
Kebele officials and DAs

WOREDA

Priorities disaggregated into sectors
Planning and Budgeting Desk

Preparation of sector plans
Technical staff in sector desks

Preparation of office plans linked to budgets
Office heads and technical desk staff

Integration of office plans into single woreda plan
Planning and budgeting desk, office heads, woreda executive

Approval of woreda plan
Woreda Council

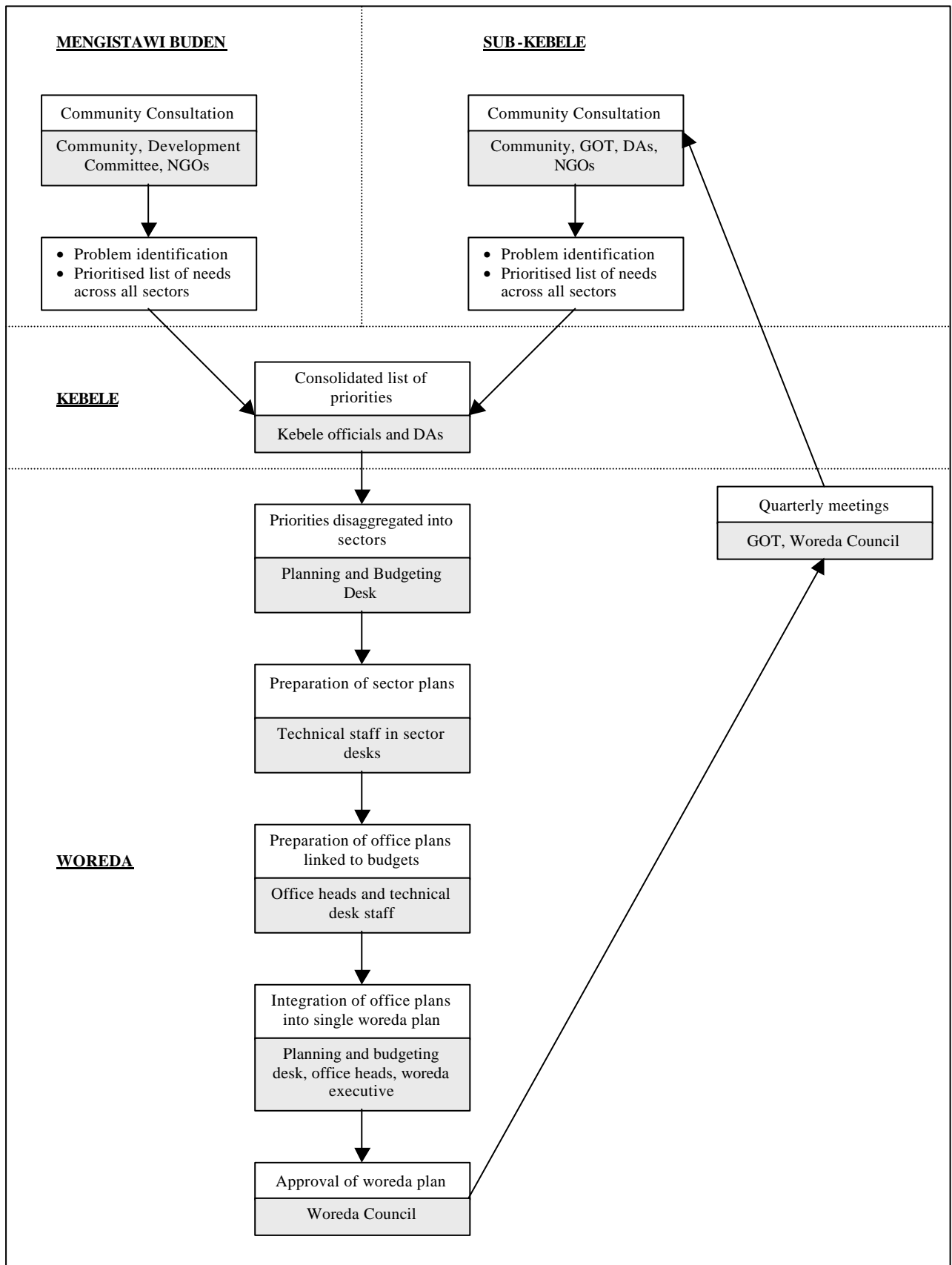| Quarterly meetings |
| --- |
| GOT, Woreda Council |

Figure 4: The Planning Process

The planning process is initiated at the local level (i.e. at mengistawi buden or sub-kebele, or both depending on the institutional structure of the woreda) in January

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every year, with a series of community consultations aimed at identifying the problems facing communities and ranking these problems in order of priority. Development agents (DAs), employed either by the regional Bureau of Agriculture or directly by NGOs undertake these consultations using a range of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques. NGOs are often involved in providing support to these consultations, either by facilitating the consultations themselves in collaboration with the DAs or by providing training to the DAs in PRA and other participatory approaches.

The priority lists developed at the local level are sent up to the kebele level, where kebele officials, with the assistance of the DAs, consolidate them into a single priority list for the kebele. These lists are then sent up to the woreda level. Participatory activities at the kebele level and lower are limited to problem identification and prioritisation, as well as the provision of labour and materials during implementation. The skills required for a participatory planning process that goes further than this are not seen to be present at this level, either as far as the community or the government is concerned.

At the woreda level, the kebele priority lists are reorganised into sectoral groups by the Planning and Budgeting desk, and passed onto the relevant sectoral desks. This reorganisation has the potential to undermine the community driven prioritisation process. Relative priorities will only remain where more than one intervention was identified by a kebele in a particular sector. The mechanism for deciding which sectoral interventions get priority in which kebele is unclear even among woreda officials. Nonetheless, each sectoral desk uses these lists as the basis for developing a plan for the woreda for its specific are of responsibility.

The sectorally based desk plans are then integrated at Office level and linked to budgets. Again the mechanism for prioritising between sectors and between interventions is not clear even among woreda staff. It is likely that in the absence of clear guidelines, prioritisation is done on an *ad hoc* basis with choices of intervention being heavily influenced by the interests of the office head.

In a process of negotiation, facilitated by the Planning and Budgeting desk, the Office Plans are integrated into a single Woreda Plan. This plan identifies priority interventions and links them to a budget. The agreed plan is then sent to the woreda council for approval.

The woreda council holds quarterly meeting with the GOT at sub-kebele level. One of the purposes of these meetings is to act as a feedback mechanism to the sub-kebele over the outcomes of their needs identification and prioritisation exercise. If the sub-kebele is unhappy about the outcomes it can make representations to the kebele, and if they feel that the kebele is being unresponsive they can complain directly to the woreda. In these cases, the woreda is obliged to send a team to the kebele level to investigate and make recommendations.

Woredas do not have an established track record of undertaking local level planning processes, and even under decentralisation are unlikely to develop this in the short term due to low levels of capacity. This creates space for NGOs to continue their involvement in local level planning and play a supportive role in woreda level

decentralisation. NGOs, and some donor programmes, have long realised that the most effective entry point for their interventions is at the local level in close consultation with the community. Consequently a number of approaches have been developed, most of which draw heavily on PRA techniques and practices.

The local level participatory planning approach (LLPPA) advocated by the World Food Programme is one approach that has been used widely throughout Ethiopia, on WFP projects, as well as on those implemented by other agencies. LLPPA is a community based planning methodology initially developed by the FAO in 1989 in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). The WFP took over the development of the methodology in the early nineties and have worked closely with MoA in developing it further. The MoA has adopted the approach and now uses for all community based work.

In most instances LLPPA has been used in the context of food insecure woredas with an explicit focus on the consolidation and creation of social assets. WFP are interested in expanding the scope of the methodology to include income generating activities, as well as other sectors such as health and education.

The approach enables communities to identify and prioritise needs and to tie those needs to a plan of action. The needs identified can cover any sector, but WFP will only get involved in projects that are covered by its "menu" of 53 types of interventions. However, the information gathered through the LLPPA process could still prove of value to the woreda, which has a broader mandate. The plans are developed on a five-year time horizon, but now have a measurement and evaluation component that allows them to respond to rapid change. A local development committee, fifty percent of which have to be women, drives the DA facilitated planning process.

LLPPA, as well as similar approaches, has the potential to strengthen the woreda planning system, as it is undertaken in close collaboration with the official structures of the woreda. Appropriate ways of institutionalising LLPPA into the woreda planning system without losing the strengths associated with its informality need to be investigated.

3.3.4. Outcomes

As is clearly indicated in the previous section, the initial phases of the planning process are participatory in nature, but the benefits of local input seem to get lost in successive iterations of consolidation and reorganisation. Voice at the sub-kebele level expressing important local issues may be barely audible by the time the woreda plan is eventually compiled. Furthermore, there is only a single feedback mechanism in the form of a quarterly meeting that allows the community to confirm that their concerns have found expression in the woreda plan.

While the process includes some level of participation, the planning methodology employed seems to be more of a "local top-down" approach rather than a truly participatory one. Participation is used only as a means of extracting information from the community, rather than as a vehicle for involving local people in decision-making.

Questions have also been raised with regard to the quality of the participation at the sub-kebele level, and how confident decision makers at the woreda could be that they were responding to the actual needs of local communities rather than the articulated needs of local elites.

The planning system as it is currently established, creates a clear relationship between the allocation of the block grants handed down from the regions and local communities represented at the kebele level and lower. The woreda, specifically the planning and budgeting desk plays a critical role in facilitating this relationship, and therefore represents an important interface between local communities and government.

The woreda also needs to bring a third consideration into its decision-making with respect to resources *viz.* the policy and legislation frameworks put in place by regional and national government. It is intended that policy and plans developed by the woreda be made within the framework provided by regional policy, which in turn is framed by national policy. However, woredas are supposed to be able to develop policy that reflects their own unique context, but at this early stage of the decentralisation process the extent of this autonomy is yet to be tested. It is also not possible at this stage to assess the extent to which woreda plans will reflect the broader policy environment. However, early indications are that matching community needs with available budgets will be the main focus of the woreda plans.

The general approach taken to planning at the woreda level is an incremental one i.e. it advances in small iterations with each years plan differing only slightly from the previous years. While this approach is an appropriate one in a context where change takes place slowly, incremental processes rarely produce the large shifts required to deal with deeply rooted structural problems. This strategic planning aspect is absent from the planning approach proposed for the woredas under decentralisation. However, considering general levels of capacity, it is unlikely that the skills to undertake strategic planning exist at the woreda level at this stage.

The ANRS government has recognised that the planning exercise needs to go beyond matching community needs with budgeting and have developed a manual that aims to bring a broader set of considerations into the planning process. This document acknowledges that one year time horizon is too short, and goes on to advocate for the development of medium term plans with a horizon of between three and seven years. Budgets for plans can still be linked into the twelve-month financial year. It is argues that the slightly longer time horizon will allow bigger, more beneficial projects to be implemented in a more effective manner, as well as allowing a strategic view to be taken.

The ANRS also moves away from the notion of a plan as a collection of projects with budgets and suggest that woreda plans should contain the following components:
- A status quo evaluation – describing the base conditions in the woreda, as well as identifying the needs and priorities of local communities
- A statement of objectives – based on the analysis provided in the status quo
- A strategy – detailing how the objectives would be achieved in a way that meets the needs of local communities

- A programme – setting out projects to be undertaken as part of each strategy, the sequence and timeframe in which they should be implemented and the resources and funding required.

3.3.5. Lessons

The process of decentralisation is still in is early stages and consequently it is difficult to assess the system of woreda planning being implemented. However, some general comments can be made with regard to best practice:

- Woreda level planning under decentralisation has not been piloted, but has been rolled out in the "big" four regions (Amhara, Tigray, Oromiya and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples). Consequently, all these areas are running into similar problems of resource and capacity constraints, which require medium and long term solutions.
- NGOs can play an effective role in supplementing the planning capacity of local government, particularly with respect to participatory methodologies.
- Development interventions undertaken by NGOS are limited to those permitted by their mandate. Woreda government however, has a wider development remit and is able to pick up those interventions that fall outside the mandate of NGOs.
- While NGOs are capable of providing accurate information with regard to local needs, the responsibility for using this information in a strategic and practical way ultimately rests with the woreda. Capacity building is needed at the local level to ensure that this strategic component forms part of the overall planning process.
- Planning systems need to deliver more than the capability of matching needs expressed at the local level with available budgets. A strategic viewpoint is necessary, even at the local level, that can link local plans with broader strategic objectives to gear in public (and private) investment, and to access donor and NGO funded initiatives.
- The outputs from LLPPA and other participatory approaches need to be used carefully to ensure that their value is not lost to the overall planning process, and that the views expressed by local communities is not distorted. Currently prioritisation exercises taking place at the village level become meaningless when the results are aggregated into sectors.

4.   CONCLUSION

While development planning systems have the potential to make a significant contribution to decentralisation in practice this is not often the case (Hadingham *et al*, 2002). The implementation of development planning systems is usually secondary to the financial aspects of decentralisation, or other developmental objectives.

The three case studies presented in this paper illustrate a number of areas that require careful consideration when the institutionalisation of development planning systems forms part of project activities.

There are different ways that development planning systems can be introduced to the institutional environment. In the South African example, development planning was driven by the state as an integral part of the decentralisation process, while in Ethiopia the state also played a leading role in the decentralisation process, but the basis for development planning has been formulated by civil society. A sectorally focussed development project was used in Zimbabwe as a vehicle for the introduction of an approach to development planning.

The Ethiopia case study highlights the importance of having the capacity available at the local level to undertake development planning activities. Adequate capacity needs to be developed at all levels of government, within civil society and in local communities. A significant component of the institutionalisation of development planning at local government level in South Africa was focussed on developing manuals for IDP and providing the necessary training.

The development planning process needs to be effective in that it needs to be sent to be delivering tangible results, This is necessary to retain political interest in the process, but also to maintain its credibility with communities participating in the process. Failure to deliver means that communities will be less likely to participate in future development planning activities.

One of the driving forces of decentralisation is the need to reduce the dependence of local government on the national government fiscus. However, in all three case studies, local government is still heavily dependent on the resources, both financial and in terms of human capacity, needed for development planning activities.

Regardless of the means used to institutionalise development planning, it is clear that it needs extensive investment by the state, and commitment the implementation of the outcomes of the process. To a large degree IDP in South Africa is meeting its stated objectives after more than five years of implementation, considerable amendment of enabling legislation, extensive financial support to local government and comprehensive capacity building. However, for it to be sustainable the development planning process needs to be taken on board by local government and associated stakeholders, and funded from its own revenue base. Amongst other things this is necessary to ensure that local government has a significant enough stake in the process to ensure that the outcomes are useful in undertaking its mandate.

Development planning systems can make a significant contribution to poverty alleviation and development activities by focussing the use of resources and ensuring their efficient use. Development planning will become increasingly important as a vehicle by which priorities articulated in PRSPs and the needs of local communities are brought together. Consequently, planning systems that can facilitate this need to become an important part of the project design stage. This paper has focussed on three sub-Saharan case studies and highlighted a number of issues that need to be taken further. Further work in this regard is needed, particularly with regard to establishing more clearly the factors that contribute to successful decentralisation and how these can be built into the design of development planning systems.

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