

Capacity building for integrated development: Considerations from practice in South Africa

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Abstract

From December 2003 to March 2006 the CSIR (Build Environment) lead and implemented the Municipal IDP Support (MIDPS) Project on behalf of the Department of Provincial and Local Government. The Project was designed on the premise described by the National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government (2004), which identifies three forms of capacity, i.e.

- individual capacity (an individual's technical and generic skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour);
- institutional capacity (an organisation's human resource capacity, strategic leadership, support systems, financial abilities, etc); and
- environmental capacity (potential and competency found outside of organisations' formal structures).

In this article the results of an assessment of the MIDPS Project and its implementation of environmental, institutional and individual capacity building will be presented. Considerations for the design of future capacity building initiatives that emerged from this experience and similar international experiences will be shared.

KAPASITEITSBOU VIR GEINTEGREERDE ONTWIKKELING: OORWEGINGS UIT DIE PRAKTYK IN SUID-AFRIKA

Gedurende die tydperk vanaf Desember 2003 to Maart 2006, het die WNNR se Boutegnologie eenheid die Munisipale Geïntegreerde Ontwikkelingsbeplanningsondersteuningsprojek (MIDPS) namens die nasionale Departement vir Provinsiale en Plaaslike Regering bestuur en geïmplimenteer. Die ontwerp van die projek is geskoei op die sogenaamde drie vorme van kapasiteitsbou soos omskryf in die Nasionale Kapasiteitsbouaamwerk vir Munisipale Regering (2004) en behels:

- individuele kapasiteit ('n individu se vermoë op grond van sy tegniese and generiese vaardighede, kennis, houding en gedrag),
- institusionele kapasiteit ('n organisasie se gesamentlike vermoë op grond van sy menslike hulpbronnkapasiteit, strategiese leierskap, ondersteuningstelsels, finansiële vermoëns); asook
- omgewingskapasiteit (potensiaal en bekwaamhede buite die organisasie se formele strukture).

Hierdie artikel beskryf die implementering van die omgewings-, institusionele- en individuele kapasiteitsbou projekkomponente asook die resultate en bevindinge voortspruitend uit 'n evaluering van die projek. Die artikel vergelyk dié bevindinge met bevindinge uit soortgelyke internasionale studies en beskryf ten slotte, die kernlesse en oorewegings vir die ontwerp van toekomstige kapasiteitsbouprogramme.

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NTLAFATSO YA TSEBO MABAPI LE NTSHETSOPELE E KOPANETSWENG: DINTLHA TSE HLOKOMETSWENG AFIKA BORWA

Ho tloha ka Tshitwe 2003 ho fihla ka Hlakubele 2006 Lekgotla la Mahlale le Indaseteri ya Dipatlisiso (LMID) CSIR (Tikoloho ya Meaho) e eteletsepele le ho Kenya tshebetsong projeke ya Moralo wa Ntshetsopele e Kopanetsweng wa Masepala (MNKM) MIDP lebitsong la Lefapha la Mebuso ya Metse le Phumantso ya Matlo, mme projeke ena e ile ya ralwa ho latela mefjha le ditaelo tsa Moralo wa Naha wa Ntlatfatso ya Tsebo bakeng sa Mebuso ya Metse (2004) o ileng wa hlwaya dintlha tse tharo tsa bokgoni:

- Bokgoni ba motho ka mong (tsebo ya motho ya setekgeniki le ya tlhaho, tsebo, mekgwa le boitshwaro);
- Bokgoni ba lefapha (bokgoni lehlakoreng la mehlodi ya batho, ketapele e hlokolotsi, mekgwa ya tshetsetso, tsebo ya tsamaiso ya ditjhelete); le
- Bokgoni ba tikoloho (tsebo le bokgoni bo fumanehang kantle ho lefapha, mekgwa ya tshetsetso, ditheo tsa semmuso)

Kgatiso ena e tla phatlalatsa sephetho sa ditoko tse entsweng ke projeke ya MNKM le ho kenngwa tsehebetsong ha bokgoni ba tikoloho, lefapha le motho ka mong. Nakong e tlang re tla lekola dintlha tse mabapi le sebopeho sa ntlafatso ya bokgoni tse bontshitsweng mosebetsing ona, mme re tla arolelana tsebo e tswang matjhabeng.

1. FACING MOUNTING PRESSURES FOR DELIVERY

Building the capacity of the public sector in developing countries to deliver on development goals and eradicate poverty has increasingly become the focus of international aid agencies and local support programmes. It is recognised by leading aid organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006: 5) that "a capable and accountable state supported by an

effective civil society and private sector is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as other national objectives". An acceptance of the complexity of the developmental challenges facing the public sector, as well as an increased focus on poverty alleviation (in terms of for example the MDGs), has led to the realisation among capacity building institutions and donor organisations that integrated and programmatic approaches towards sustainable capacity building in developing countries would be more beneficial than once-off project focussed development assistance and the provision of short-term technical expertise (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 1-3; Van Horen, 2002: 114; UNDP, 2006: 3-5; Bossuyt, 2001: 2).

Integrating a programmatic approach to capacity building also speaks to the increasingly demanding context in which governments operate. Hilderbrand & Grindle (1994: 4-5) identified three factors that affected the context of state action:

- increased economic globalisation "heightened the importance not only of wise economic management on the part of governments, but also of policy making systems that could respond flexibly to rapidly changing international conditions and provide the strategic capacity to enhance country competitiveness...".
- governments have to respond to a more involved and demanding civil society in an era of greater democratisation and pressures on government to perform in more effective ways.
- Yet, a third factor, that of diminishing resources such as the requirement to operate with "tightly controlled austerity budgets", affected governments' ability to respond to developmental challenges. In this context, the role of the public sector has been changing, with public sector reforms over the past fifteen years focussing on strengthening the role of the state as "a regulator of the private sector, a promoter of civil society and as a provider of core services through executive agencies and local governments" (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 1).

Similarly, the leadership and facilitation role of a well capacitated public sector has been recognised in South Africa as one of the prerequisites of achieving government's developmental goals. It is stated in a briefing document on the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA), that "the goal of reducing unemployment to below 15% and halving the poverty rate to less than one-sixth of households will not be achieved without sustained and strategic economic leadership from government, and effective partnerships between government and stakeholders such as labour and business" (Republic of South Africa, 2006: 1). The AsgiSA briefing document also recognises "deficiencies in state organisation, capacity and leadership" as one of the key binding factors that could hamper the achievement of development goals:

... certain weaknesses in the way government is organised, in the capacity of key institutions, including some of those providing economic services, and insufficiently decisive leadership in policy development and implementation all constrain the country's growth potential (Republic of South Africa, 2006: 1).

In South Africa, local government's developmental role has been entrenched in the Constitution, giving local government a prominent position in the fulfilment of government's developmental mandate. Yet, this sphere of government experiences persistent capacity challenges: it is stated in the government's Ten Year Review published by The Presidency (2003: 108), that most municipalities did not have the capacity nor were "likely to gain the capacity to perform their delivery functions in future..." In his foreword to the *National Capacity Building Framework*, Provincial and Local Government Minister Sidney Mufamadi stated that:

there are various factors that account for local government's inability to achieve its constitutional objectives, which largely pertain to weak institutional, individual and environmental capacity (Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA), 2004: 1).

In response to what some perceived as a capacity crisis in the key delivery vehi-

cle of government's developmental mandate, a range of local government capacity development interventions and programmes were implemented by national and provincial government departments, as well as other organisations (e.g. South African Local Government Association) and various donor agencies. An analysis of support initiatives (Goss & Meiklejohn, 2004: 41) revealed that the recent approaches were generally characterised by:

- Training that covers breadth, not depth, with an emphasis on providing as much basic information on specific new approaches/relevant issues, to as many local government participants as possible.
- Generic capacity building, not tailored to the specific needs of municipalities, removed from the municipal setting with a lack of in-house training.
- Ad hoc skills development that is embarked upon often based on the availability of funding for particular thrusts.
- Conflicting approaches or emphases from different government departments or different divisions within the same department.
- Insufficient targeting of support programmes, which means that those best able to benefit and apply skills do not always participate.
- Lack of consistency of participants leading to the same ground being covered repeatedly with different participants and limited growth of skills occurring.
- Issue-based training and capacity building that is not linked to actual workload or tasks of the local government participants and therefore does not promote practical implementation.
- A focus on individuals rather than on building the capacity of the local government institution as a whole. The high turnover of staff limits the value of this approach.

In 2004, in response to the above situation, the national Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA) published a *National Capacity*

Building Framework for Local Government (NCBF) in an attempt to:

establish an integrated capacity building structure and guidelines, which will steer all capacity building strategies towards enabling municipalities to fulfil their constitutional duties ... as developmental local government entities (Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and South African Local Government Association (SALG), 2004: 5).

In the same year, the implementation of a programmatic capacity building initiative commenced lead by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on behalf of the DPLG, based on the premise set by the NCBF, and targeted at enhancing the Integrated Development Planning system at both provincial and municipal levels.

In the following section, a concise theoretical overview of capacity building will be presented, including definitions of capacity and approaches to capacity building. This will form the backdrop against which the implementation of the Municipal IDP Support (MIDPS) Project will be discussed. The discussion of the MIDPS Project will culminate in a section that will describe the factors and circumstances that influenced the outcomes of the project, relate these findings to similar international experiences, and subsequently describe considerations for the design of future capacity building efforts.

2. WHAT IS "CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT"?

The concept 'capacity' is a commonly used term, used in literature on capacity building to describe a range of processes and outcomes. Definitions and understandings of the concept range from very broad and all-encompassing, to fairly narrow and subject-specific. At the one end of the scale, the UNDP (2006: 3) defines capacity as "the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner." This definition is considered to equate capacity to development, what others regard as the desired outcome of the process (e.g. Hilderbrand & Grindle, 1994: 9 and Boesen & Therikidsen, 2004: 9). A more specific-

ly defined concept is supported by

Hilderbrand & Grindle (1994: 9), who define capacity as "the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably." Other authors take an even narrower and more results-oriented approach, e.g. Boesen & Therikidsen (2004: 9), who for developing countries recommend that capacity building should as a first step focus on "the ability of an organisation to produce appropriate output".

To every capacity building initiative there is an underlying approach that, in conjunction with the definition of capacity, sets the tone for the development and implementation of the initiative. These approaches can be grouped in various ways, with the examples below a typical classification (Lusthaus *et al.*, 1999: 5-8):

- **Organisational approach:** This approach regards an entity, an organisation or set of organisations as the key to development. The focus is on identifying and developing the elements or components of capacity within an organisation.
- **Institutional approach:** The focus of this approach is on institutional development, where institutions are defined as the formal and informal rules that govern society. The aim is to develop the capacity to create, change, enforce, and learn from these processes and rules.
- **System approach:** This approach views capacity building from a multi-level, holistic, and interrelated systems perspective, in which each system and part is linked to another. For capacity development, intervention is required at multiple levels involving various actors, power relationships, linkages and processes; consideration is also required of all contextual elements as well as the linkages between them.
- **Participatory process approach:** This approach is based on the view of people-centred, non-hierarchical development. Capacity development initiatives should identify and use local expertise, should be participatory and empowering, and ensure local ownership.

An approach that strongly features in recent literature is an increased recognition of a form of system approach where three interrelated levels of capacity are addressed: individual capacity, institutional / organisational capacity and a context which influences how individual and institutional capacities are applied (e.g. UNDP, 2006; Boesen & Therikidsen, 2004; Van Horen, 2002; Smith, 2005; Bossuyt, 2001).

Development practitioners such as Boesen & Therikidsen (2004: 10) regard organisations as open systems. In this, they recognise that the organisation exists within a context, of which certain factors are beyond the influence of agents within the organisation ("context of appreciation") and other factors are within some influence of agents in the organisation ("context of influence"). They also argue that "boundaries between the organisation and its environment are permeable and fluid".

Even with their broader definition of capacity the UNDP (2006: 5) recognises that capacity "clearly resides within individuals and organisations". Individual capacity is defined as knowledge and skills vested in people, where organisations are seen to provide the framework for individual capacities to connect and achieve collective goals. They also recognise that capacity resides in wider systems or an enabling environment.

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (1998) defines municipal capacity to include "the administrative and financial management capacity and infrastructure that enables a municipality to collect revenue and to govern on its own initiative the local government affairs of its community" (South Africa. Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998: 14). In an attempt to address the complexity of the development challenges facing local government, a systems approach similar to what is becoming internationally acceptable was taken with the inception of the NCBF in 2004. Dealing specifically with local government capacity and setting a very broad definition of capacity as "the potential for something to happen", the NCBF (Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA), 2004: 9-11) defines three

forms of capacity, i.e. individual capacity (an individual's technical and generic skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour), institutional capacity (an organisation's human resource capacity, strategic leadership, organisational purpose, support systems, financial abilities, by-laws, etc), and environmental capacity (potential and competency found outside of municipalities' formal structures, such as tax base, demographic composition, and ecological and geological conditions).

The contextual relevance of capacity is recognised in the NCBF, establishing the principle that a distinction can be made between absolute and relative capacity (Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA), 2004: 12-13). Firstly, a municipality's individual and institutional capacity can be strong or weak relative to its environmental capacity (e.g. a 'strong' and established municipality may be facing serious environmental capacity challenges, such as non-payment for services). Secondly, a municipality's capacity can be sufficient or insufficient relative to what it needs to effectively govern and perform municipal functions within its specific developmental circumstances (e.g. a municipality can appear to have 'strong' overall capacity, but experience difficulty in managing a development context of high poverty levels and a declining economy). In terms of this perspective, a municipality's relative capacity can also decline due to a developmental change (e.g. more poor people migrate to its area).

The South African Constitution establishes three distinctive, yet inter-related and interdependent spheres of government (the national, provincial and local spheres). Each sphere has the responsibility to carry out the powers and functions assigned to it in a manner that co-operates and co-ordinates with the other spheres. Having agreed that the three spheres of government must work in partnership to tackle the development and service delivery challenges of South Africa in an integrated way, the President's Coordinating Council (PCC), at its extended Lekgotla held on 14 December 2001 resolved: "...to accelerate the implementation of the system of state-wide planning (government and state-owned enter-

prises), wherein IDPs serve the basis for aligning policy, planning and budgeting processes across the spheres." (South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government. 2001: online).

Within this broader context, one of the key developmental capacity requirements placed on local government is the formulation and implementation of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). Integrated development planning was one of the three primary tools and approaches for achieving the developmental outcomes of local government identified in the *White Paper on Local Government* (South Africa. Department of Provincial Affairs and Constitutional Development, 1998: 27-35). The *Municipal Systems Act*, (Act 32 of 2000) (MSA) establishes the platform for municipal development planning in the context of cooperative governance. Chapter 5 of the MSA identifies the *Integrated Development Plan* (IDP) as the main mechanism for development planning in the local sphere: "Each municipal council must, within a prescribed period after the start of its elected term, adopt a single, inclusive strategic plan for the development of the municipality." (South Africa. *Municipal Systems Act*, 2000: Section 25)

Since its inception, the role of especially the District and Metro IDPs has been further entrenched "to serve as the overarching framework for the municipal government as well as other spheres, sectors and role players that are responsible for and contribute to development in the metro / district area" (The Presidency, 2004: 31). The role of the District IDP is to contribute to joint and coordinated action by all three spheres of government as well as other developmental roleplayers in a shared geographic space or "shared area of impact", which is geographically defined as the fifty two district and metro areas in the country (The Presidency, 2004: 31-32).

The challenge posed to local government to deal with the complex processes and requirements of integrated development planning is firmly set in the overall capacity challenges faced by this sphere of government. Whilst the institutional restructuring of local government and the reform of core organisational systems was meant to provide municipalities with greater capacity to tackle develop-

ment effectively, some aspects of restructuring and reform have resulted in a net 'loss' of capacity. Even where municipalities are successfully negotiating establishment / stabilisation, they have still not consolidated their structures and core systems: performance management systems, IDPs, budget and accounting reform, implementation of free basic services and review of delivery mechanisms" (Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA), 2004: 17). The findings of the 2005 National IDP Hearings confirms this finding by revealing that many new or dramatically re-demarcated municipalities were still preoccupied with establishing an administration, finalising an organisational structure, recruiting staff, allocating and finding office space, building capacity of staff, or developing institutional performance management systems.

The different forms of capacity are also alluded to in the 2005 State of the Nation Address:

We can refer to the provision of services across all the spheres or weaknesses in the implementation of the urban renewal and rural development programmes, and the conclusion will be the same. We need massively to improve the management, organisational, technical and other capacities of government so that it meets its objectives (South African Government Information, 2005: online).

According to Watson (2006: 5) it is generally considered that a masters degree is necessary for students to enter the profession as fully functioning planning professionals, but in practice and because of shortages, people with a training in other related fields are often taken into planning posts. In addition, the JIPSA Technical Working Group (TWG) and Joint Technical Team (JTT) identified high level, world class engineering and planning skills for the 'network industries' - transport, communications, energy as well as city, urban and regional planning and engineering skills (JIPSA, 2006).

From the above discussion it follows that the high developmental demands placed on South African local government, as well as this sphere of government's persistent capacity challenges, make building

the capacity of the local sphere to deal with developmental issues and processes particularly relevant. Due to the prominent role of the IDP as both developmental and cooperative governance instrument, this was regarded as an appropriate and potentially high-impact entry point for the MIDPS Project. In the next section, this project and its outcomes will be discussed, set against the backdrop of the premise established by the NCBF, culminating in a discussion of considerations for the design of future support initiatives.

3. THE MUNICIPAL IDP SUPPORT PROJECT

3.1 Background

In 2003, the DPLG put in place a process of rendering targeted municipal IDP support to the respective provinces and municipalities through a range of specific interventions, within the context of the NCBF. In November 2003, the CSIR was awarded the tender by the DPLG to roll out the MIDPS project under the leadership of the Built Environment Unit (Planning Support Systems). The MIDPS Project was targeted at strengthening the integrated development planning system by:

- providing inputs to the creation of a more enabling, stable and predictable intergovernmental planning environment;
- adopting approaches which would ensure that institutional capacity and memory is built and retained; and
- developing individuals' confidence, and capacity, thereby building motivation with a view to support the formulation, implementation and review IDPs.

A typology of the planning and implementation support needs of all municipalities (based on a nation-wide assessment of capacity profiles and support needs) was elaborated in the *National Intergovernmental Planning Support Strategy* (Coetzee & Van Huyssteen, 2004) and ranged from municipalities where basic institutional capacity and resources to do integrated development planning did not exist, through to municipalities able to plan and implement successfully. The reasoning behind this approach was that different typologies / categories of municipalities require different support and capacity building measures.

3.2 Approach to Capacity Building

The point of departure of the support approach followed in the MIDPS Project was to be responsive to municipal demand or needs and well co-ordinated with other support initiatives, in line with the approach set out in the *Draft Intergovernmental Planning Support Strategy* (Coetzee & Van Huyssteen, 2004: 2). The definition of capacity on which the MIDPS Project was based, reflected the three types or levels of capacity defined in the NCBF: environmental capacity, institutional capacity and individual capacity. The application of these concepts in the MIDPS Project is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

For project purposes, the definition of "capacity to be developed" entailed the ability to formulate, implement and review an IDP.

It was also described as:

the capacity development of key groupings of staff, through a range of capacity development interventions, organised, co-ordinated and targeted over a set period of time, and focused on critical needs of the municipalities. This capacity is built through groupings of people in municipal and provincial spheres to achieve clusters of increasing competence that give form to further internal capacity development (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research [CSIR], 2004).

The relevance and appropriateness of this approach has been confirmed by various international experiences. The importance of creating clusters of competence or a critical mass of change champions is explicitly recognised by authors such as Mengers

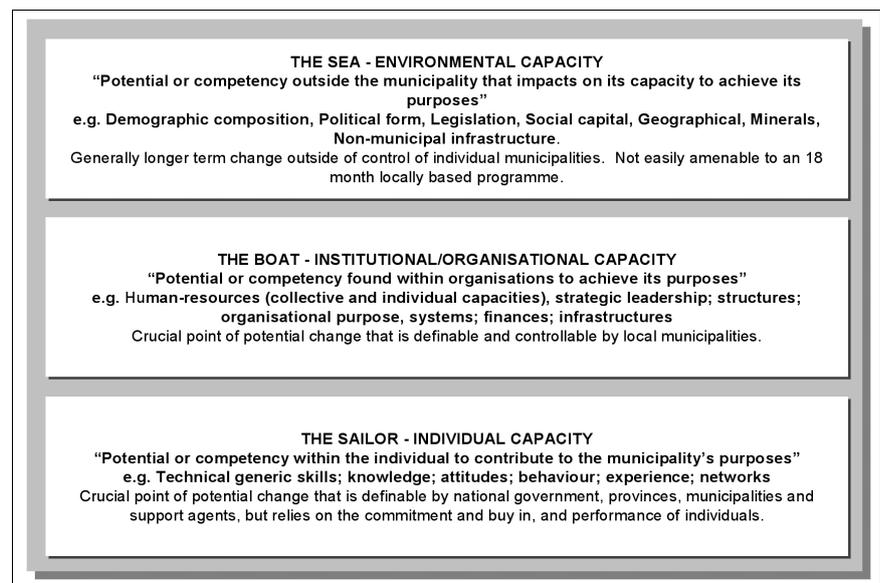


Figure 1: Definition of Capacity

The general principles guiding the design of the initiative were consolidated into concept termed "programmatic support". This was defined as:

systematically planned and delivered programmes that progressively build capacity over the medium-term using combinations of support mechanisms and types, targeted at individuals, institutions or creating an enabling environment, and linking the different organisational elements as part of the capacity development process, resulting in capacitated networks and centres of competence in the process (DPLG, 2004: 23).

(2000: 387) and Smith (2005: 453). Hilderbrand & Grindle (1994) and Bossuyt (2001: 9) refer to the importance of organisations in task networks to work together, and the development of multi-dimensional strategies that address institutional issues at different levels (individual, organisational, sector and societal) while being cognisant of and responsive to relationships among them.

3.3 Project Components

A description of the project components that were assessed are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: MIDPS Project Technical Components

<p>Table 1: MIDPS Project Technical Components</p> <p>Phase 3: Implementation and Implementation Management Phase (August 2005 - February 2006)</p> <p>The various project components listed below were implemented and adapted throughout the implementation phase based on (1) the needs of DPLG, (2) the needs of specific provinces and project participants (3) new knowledge emerging from the implementation of the project components as well as (4) shaping the implementation to accommodate a wide array of factors impacting on and impeding project implementation.</p> <p>Summary of Key Technical Components that Formed Part of the Assessment</p> <p>National Project Components: These project components were aimed at addressing environmental/contextual issues and frame conditions that impact on the ability of municipalities to prepare, implement and review IDPs. These project components were intended to support the creation of an enabling environment for integrated development planning.</p> <p>N1: Municipal Typology of Needs: Refine the interim typology of municipal planning support requirements based on an understanding of the capacity levels of groupings of municipalities with a view to prioritise appropriate capacity building and support approaches, modes and types of support in order to provide capacity building and support interventions relevant to the types and scales of capacity needs identified for these different municipal typologies.</p> <p>N2: Provincial Government IDP Support Guidelines: To develop approaches to the institutional organising of provincial government functions in support of the provincial mandate to support, co-ordinate, monitor and assess municipal IDPs; guidelines that will assist provinces in decisions on resource allocation and structuring in this regard.</p> <p>N3: Sector Support Study: Conduct a series of interviews and workshops as a basis to develop guidelines to create awareness across key sector departments within all spheres of government on joint planning, prioritisation and resource allocation and to clarify how the various spheres and sectors can embark on planning and implementation processes and achieve mutual impact.</p> <p>N4: Provincial/Municipal Engagement Process: Review and assess the status quo form and nature of current provincial-municipal assessments and engagements, with specific reference to the MEC IDP Assessment and Review process across 9 provinces as a basis for developing guidelines on provincial assessment and review of IDPs.</p> <p>N5: Legal Review (Municipal Systems Act): Review the current legislative framework as contained particularly (but not exclusively) in the Municipal Systems Act and proposed changes for enabling and promoting the latest policy perspectives on the role of credible IDPs.</p> <p>N6: PGDS Guidelines: Contribute to developing guidelines for the preparation and content of Provincial growth and development Strategies (PGDSs), particularly reflecting on the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) principles and methodology (in conjunction with The Presidency).</p> <p>N7: Training of IDP Co-ordinators: Prepare and conduct motivational training, change management and team building sessions for Provincial IDP Co-ordinators aimed at building the individual capacity of key individual role-players responsible for supporting, co-ordinating, monitoring and assessing the system of municipal integrated development planning.</p> <p>IDPH1: Support for National IDP Hearings. Preparation of a substantive analysis of national development planning issues across all the district and metropolitan areas of South Africa in order to assist with the identification of the key inter-governmental planning actions required to support IDP formulation and implementation within the municipal sphere.</p> <p>Provincial Project Components: These project components were mainly aimed at addressing issues of institutional capacity within the provincial units responsible for building the capacity of municipalities to to prepare, implement and review IDPs.</p> <p>The intervention in each of the 9 provinces was designed in close consultation with the key provincial role-players and summarised in a provincial action plan, which outlined the key point of intervention, the focus of the support and the type of support deemed most appropriate.</p> <p>P1: Free State: The support intervention had two aims. (1) Develop the capacity of the Newly appointed IDP co-ordinator and (2) Promote greater sector co-operation in municipal planning processes, through building awareness in a range of district based engagements and provincial sector workshops.</p> <p>P2: Limpopo: The main aim of the intervention was to strengthen the medium to longer term establishment of institutional structures and processes to render IDP support in the province.</p> <p>P3: Eastern Cape: The aim was to strengthen the organisational development of the IDP Support Unit and the MEC commenting process.</p> <p>P4: Mpumalanga: The aims were (1) to build sustainable processes around sector engagement and (2) to develop an operational plan for the IDP Unit, which aligned with the various other donor driven IDP support initiatives in the province.</p> <p>P5: Gauteng: The intervention was aimed at (1) supporting the IDP Unit to work out a plan to fulfil its mandate; (2) establishing relationships among key role players and (3) refocusing and designing the provincial-municipal engagement process of the province.</p> <p>P6: Northern Cape: The aims were (1) the development of an effective Provincial IDP support programme through providing ongoing technical assistance and mentoring to the IDP Unit; and (2) strengthening the approach to sector alignment with IDP processes;</p> <p>P7: Kwa-Zulu Natal: The aim was to provide additional technical capacity to support ongoing processes in the province in the areas of project management, intergovernmental agreements, and provincial- municipal engagements on IDPs.</p> <p>P8: North West: The aims were (1) to focus the IDP support programme of the province through supporting the IDP Unit in developing a vision for IDPs in the Province (2) to build the capacity of teams and individuals (District Municipalities, Local Municipalities and Planning and Implementation Management Support Structures (PIMSS), through a series of engagements and capacity building sessions.</p> <p>P9: Western Cape: Initially assisted with operational plan for IDP Unit and served as a sounding board for the IDP Coordinator; later provided</p> <p>Municipal Project Components: These project components were predominantly aimed at building individual capacity of key role-players in the municipal sphere.</p> <p>M2: Implementation Management for Cape Winelands District in Western Cape: Provided direct support around the conceptualisation of, and institutional arrangements for, a Municipal Strategic Support Unit in the District in order to develop 'model' approach to shared service centres with potential for learning and application by other districts in South Africa.</p> <p>M3: Project Management for municipalities in Northern Cape: The aim was to to create clusters of skills within and between groups of municipalities in project management by rolling out programmatic capacity building and support to individuals in the context of their particular institutional settings.</p> <p>M4: Development Finance for nationally invited municipalities: The aim was to build individual capacity in development finance, in the context of an institutional setting through programmatic support and capacity building aimed at creating clusters of skills within and between groups of municipalities.</p>
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Source: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), 2006: 10-26

3.4 Review of Project Components

3.4.1 Methodology

As a starting point for analysis and comparison of the vast array of proj-

ect components that formed part of the MIDPS Project, an analysis framework was designed with the aim of

identifying and describing certain elements common to every project component (summarised in Table 2 below):

Table 2: Analysis Framework: Generic Elements of a Support Approach

Table 2: Analysis Framework: Generic Elements of a Support Approach	
Elements of support components used to describe components for comparison purposes:	
Intervention Target	<p>Level: The level which is used as the entry point to capacity building relates to the types of capacity identified in the National Capacity Building Framework, and involves interventions at the following three levels (or a combination of levels):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Contextual / systemic / environmental / frame condition: Interventions to create an enabling environment which serves to build the capacity role players in the system at an overall level. Examples related to IDP include e.g. identifying mechanisms and giving process guidelines, setting overall direction on intergovernmental structures, providing guidelines on how to engage in processes, fiscal systems, information sharing, etc 2) Organisation / institution: Interventions aimed at making institutions more effective and efficient, e.g. organisational restructuring, setting up systems in organisations, leadership development, support of developing a positive organisational culture, establishment of institutional structures, etc 3) Individual: Interventions aimed at capacitating of persons, e.g. mentoring to fulfil functions, skills development through training, etc <p>Structuring: The intervention target can be unstructured, i.e. involving ad-hoc individuals on a supply and demand basis, or can be structured in various ways, e.g. as an illustration (1) a grouping of individuals with a similar existing skills base or professional background (e.g. development planners or engineers); (2) groupings of individuals with similar positions in an organisation (e.g. IDP managers or municipal Councillors) or similar organisational structures (e.g. provincial IDP support units, national line departments); (3) groupings to further general policy goals, e.g. empowerment of individuals or groups of specific gender or race groups; or (4) groupings if individuals from municipalities that fall within the four categories of the typology on municipal planning and implementation support needs.</p> <p>Involvement: Ensuring the involvement of appropriate groups or individuals according to the design criteria of the project component can be achieved in ways ranging from giving incentives such as certification of courses, to authoritarian approaches of pre-selecting individuals and getting high level management to order participation of pre-selected individuals.</p>
Outcome Horizon	<p>Three broad time frames for the outcome of support components were identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Short term / immediate competencies to fulfil a specific task: e.g. the ability to submit a project plan in a certain format, or a once-off grant to fund a restructuring initiative. 2) Medium term / gradual build-up of capacity: Starting from a point and adding capacity in a step by step manner, building on competencies gained in the previous step. For example, the training of IDP managers in the various phases of IDP formulation and implementation over the course of an IDP cycle or the programmatic support approaches employed as part of the Municipal Support Component of the Project (M2 and M3). 3) Long term / ultimate sustainability in capacity, taking the above a step further by trying to ensure that the capacity that is created will be sustainable for the long term, e.g. creation of clusters of competence in an organisation or geographical area, ensuring that capacity will not be lost with the loss of a single individual, and that capacity could be transferred to other individuals in the organisation.
Delivery	<p>Mode: Capacity building is delivered in different modes or a combination of modes, e.g. training courses, financial support, mentoring, technical support, learning networks, guidelines, education interventions, provision of additional human resource capacity on site, etc. Many of the support interventions employed in the project utilised combinations of various capacity building modes.</p> <p>Timing: Capacity building interventions are delivered according to different time frames, from once-off events (e.g. publication of guidelines) to a process that is phased or continuous over a set period or time (e.g. phased training sessions or continuous mentoring).</p>

The second step was to identify three outcomes pertaining to the project components:

- Which components were 'successful'? 'Success' for the purpose of this study was defined as having reached the goals for every project component as set at the outset of the project, and evaluated by those receiving support and the project team, at the time of project conclusion.³
- What were the influencing factors effecting the success of the different project components?
- Drawing on the above, which support approaches were successful in dealing with specific sets of influencing factors?

From the above, the study concluded with a set of considerations for the design of future capacity building and support initiatives. To identify these considerations, the findings of the

MIDPS Project were compared and related to findings from similar international experiences.

3.4.2 Information Sources

Information for the assessment was obtained from:

- project documentation supplied by support providers (including action plans, progress reports and final reports on components) and information supplied by the CSIR project team on the design and nature of initiatives;
- interviews with and/or assessment questionnaires distributed to support providers, beneficiaries / participants and in some instances client representatives involved in project components; and
- reference group meetings and focus group discussions to verify the findings obtained through the interviews and questionnaires. A summary of response rates to the questionnaires is provided in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Survey Response Rates

Table 3: Survey Response Rates		
Project Number	Number of Interviews / Questionnaires	Number of Responses
National Projects		
NT-N7, IDPHT	11	8 (73%)
Provincial Projects		
P1-P9	16	13 (81%)
Municipal Projects		
M2 - M4	3	3 (100%) (supplemented by 2 sets of participant assessments)

³ The long term monitoring of substantive impact after project completion was outside the scope of the project.

3.5 Findings

In this section, the findings relating to the factors that influenced the different project components will be described. These findings will also be related to the elements of the support approaches that were applied to the project components.

3.5.1 Factors Influencing Outcomes of MIDPS Project Components

From project documentation and responses to questionnaires and interviews, a series of factors were identified that were perceived to have influenced the outcome / success of the different project components. These factors were first clustered into themes, and subsequently various iterations of summarising these factors were made in an attempt to find commonalities. The most meaningful grouping of results was achieved according to the level of the intervention target (contextual / environmental, institutional or individual) of the project component. This grouping was also the most meaningful in terms of two other criteria, namely:

- the approach set out in the *National Capacity Building Framework* and
- the definition of capacity underlying the MIDPS Project.

The success rating and related influencing factors for the environmental, institutional and individual level project components were as follows:

3.5.1.a Components Aimed at Creating and Enabling Environment (N1-6; IDPH1):

Five of the seven components were rated as being successful in having achieved the component objectives,⁴ and two were rated as having partially achieved component objectives. The primary mode of delivery for all seven components was technical reports and/or guidelines, and four of the seven components dealt with stakeholders in the national sphere of government only. Changing political priorities and the availability of information, as well as project design issues (e.g. changing terms of reference for components), were the main influencing factors that hampered achievement of objectives

success. Institutional factors such as lack of continuity due to staff turnover in stakeholder institutions, organisational culture and attitudes to a lesser extent negatively influenced project outcomes. Because the enabling envi-

ronment project components were of a highly technical nature, the skills and experience of support providers was a highly rated positive factor. A summary of influencing factors are provided in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Factors that have an Influence On Enabling Environment Project Components

Table 4: Factors that Influence the Success Rating of Project Components Aimed at Providing an Enabling Environment		
Success Rating of Component	Negative Influencing Factors	Positive Influencing Factors
Successful (achieved objectives)	Availability of information. Technical issues / design of methodology. Organisational stability: high staff turnover and restructuring in participating organisations.	Skills and experience of support providers.
Partially successful (achieved majority of objectives)	Changing political priorities / policy emphasis resulting in frequent changes to project component brief / addition of extra components. Availability of information. Technical design of methodology. Institutional stability: high staff turnover in stakeholder organisations. Organisational culture and attitudes: non-participation in events.	Skills and experience of support providers. Positive attitudes / commitment from some stakeholders.

3.5.1.b Components Aimed and Institutional Capacity Building (P1-9; M2)

The provision of institutional level capacity building presented the most complex set of influencing factors and the least favourable perceived success rate. Out of the ten institutional level project components, only four were rated successful in having achieved component objectives. Four components were rated as unsuccessful, not having achieved project

objectives (in two of these cases component budgets were relocated to other project components). In the remaining two components, advances were made with respect to one or two specific objectives, but the support initiatives were not rated as successful overall. A summary of influencing factors pertaining to the successful and unsuccessful components are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Factors that have an Impact on Institutional Project Components

Table 5: Factors that have an Impact on Success Rating of Project Components Aimed at Providing Institutional Support		
Success Rating of Component	Negative Influencing Factors	Positive Influencing Factors
Successful (achieved objectives)	Externally imposed initiatives. Lack of institutional stability; high staff turnover / restructuring. Lack of institutional absorption capacity / organisational readiness to receive support. Lack of commitment / support of senior management. Lack of political support / conflict.	Responsiveness to change and local circumstances. Contextual knowledge on part of support provider. Skills and experience of support providers. Approach and attitude of support providers. Positive relationship / trust between support provider and beneficiaries.

⁴ Although the majority of project components were rated as successful in terms of achieving immediate project objectives, the study that did not, due the budget and time constraints of the project, make provision for long term impact assessment. This is a major weakness in the review of these components, as the true effects and impact of a more enabling environment would only become visible over the medium and longer term.

Table 5: Factors that have an Impact on Success Rating of Project Components Aimed at Providing Institutional Support		
Success Rating of Component	Negative Influencing Factors	Positive Influencing Factors
Unsuccessful overall, in spite of achieving success in one or two objectives	Externally imposed initiatives. Lack of political support. Negative external relationships between beneficiaries and stakeholders. Lack of understanding of project context on part of support provider. Lack of political support / conflict.	Skills and experience of support providers. Commitment of select individuals (not necessarily at appropriate levels in organisations). Good relationship between support providers and beneficiaries. Approach and attitude of support providers.
Unsuccessful (did not achieve objectives)	Organisational culture and attitudes that did not support learning. Lack of external project management support. Lack of institutional stability; high staff turnover / restructuring. Lack of institutional absorption capacity / institutional readiness to receive support. Inappropriate entry point for support initiatives (too low a level in organisation). Lack of role definition for support providers and beneficiaries. Individual perceptions of own capacity (viewed support as negative reflection on own capacity). Lack of commitment from leadership / support beneficiaries.	

3.5.1.c Components Aimed at Individual Capacity Building (M2-3; N7)

In contrast to the above, project components focussing on individuals or teams / clusters of individuals were rated most successful, with comparatively fewer resources being used in the project context. Influencing factors

were mostly limited to practicalities that presented challenges during capacity building, and individual attitudes and relationships that had a positive impact on the achievement of objectives. A summary of influencing factors impacting on the outcomes of individual level project components are presented in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Factors the Impacted on Individual Project Components

Table 6: Factors that Impacted on Success Rating of Project Components Aimed at Providing Individual Support		
Success Rating of Component	Negative Influencing Factors	Positive Influencing Factors
Successful (achieved objectives)	Physical context (e.g. long travelling distance affecting time available to mentors to spend with trainees). Low levels of technology availability. Project design / budgeting (lack of time for some components).	Positive attitudes / commitment of beneficiaries. Skills and experience of support providers. Approach and attitude of support providers / mentors. Positive relationship / trust between support providers / mentors and beneficiaries.

5 Components dealing with an enabling environment were omitted from this review, because

- they did not directly deal with specific target groups, mostly providing technical support to systems and processes at national level and
- their true impact on creating an enabling environment was not tested against a wide audience of stakeholders due to project limitations.

3.5.2 Commonalities in Successful Support Approaches

All project components, whether rated as successful or unsuccessful, shared similar challenging circumstances. In order to translate these findings into more tangible considerations for future capacity building and support initiatives, the different elements of the institutional and individual support approaches in the successful cases were reviewed.⁵ Those elements where differences were observed between successful and unsuccessful components are summarised in Table 7 (page 56).

In the case of the successful components, the challenging circumstances were overcome and project objectives achieved. The key factors influencing the successful project outcomes can be grouped under the following overarching themes:

- contextual understanding and responsiveness;
- commitment and ownership;
- appropriate timing and entry point;
- relationships and networks; and
- continuity of engagement.

3.6 Key Considerations

The above findings, regarding factors that influenced project outcomes as well as the type of approaches that were more successful in addressing these factors, gave an initial indication of the type of considerations that could add value when designing a capacity building intervention in future. To further define and clarify the exact nature of these considerations, an analysis of international capacity building experiences were done, and compared to the findings of the MIDPS Project. In this section, international findings are related to MIDPS Project findings, and subsequently a set of considerations for the design of support approaches are described in more detail, based on the insights gained from both the MIDPS Project and international cases.

3.6.1 Relating MIDPS Findings to International Experience

A series of international sources were explored and the success factors and approaches described were related

Table 7: Commonalities among Successful Support Approaches

Table 7: Commonalities Among Successful Support Approaches		
Element of Support Approach	Commonalities Among Unsuccessful Approaches	Commonalities Among Successful Approaches
Level of Intervention Target	Institutional.	Individual and small percentage institutional; however in two of the four successful institutional components, mentoring and targeted support of an individual formed a key part of the project component.
Structuring of Intervention Target	Individuals at middle management / lower levels in organisations.	Individuals at middle management in organisations, combined with outreach actions / events that involved organisation management / facilitated discussions with organisation management. Individuals in organisations that formed part of a work network / task network.
Mode of Delivery	In majority of cases: Formal workshops involving series of stakeholders, a limited number of personal interactions with beneficiaries, technical documents	High number of personal interactions with beneficiaries and their broader work / task networks (e.g. management, roleplayers in other departments); some interactions informal in nature. Personal interaction supported by technical documentation, participation in formal events such as workshops. Mentoring by support providers or additional appointed mentors
Timing of Delivery	Different timing ranges from once-off formal events (e.g. workshops) to more regular interactions with beneficiaries.	All components included a continuous element to delivery, in the form of regular interaction between support provider / mentor and beneficiaries. This was complementary to formal once-off events (e.g. high-profile meetings or workshops) and in the case of individual capacity building scheduled training sessions.

to the findings of the MIDPS Project. The outcome of this process is summarised in Table 8 below:

From this framework, key considerations for the design of future capacity building initiatives were formulated around five main themes (see Table 9, page 57).

3.6.2 Discussion: Key Considerations for Designing Capacity Building Interventions

In this section, the five primary themes and their respective dimensions that have been identified during the assessment of the MIDPS Project will be discussed.

3.6.2.a Contextual Understanding and Responsiveness

3.6.2.a.i Responding to Needs and Existing Capacity Levels

Authors such as Van Horen (2002: 114) and Mengers (2000: 385) recognise the importance of a needs based orientation and / or the need to build on existing capacities. For successful institutional capacity development, Bossuyt (2001: 5) recognises the "need to start from local conditions and

Table 8: Summary of Success Factors

Table 8: Summary of Success Factors	
MIDPS Project Findings: Factors and Support Approaches Common to Successful Project Components	Success Factors and Approaches Emerging from International Literature
Contextual knowledge on part of support provider.	Developing a contextual understanding; take into account the "inherently political and complex realities in the environment". ⁶
Responsiveness to change and local circumstances; recognise and respond to needs.	Building on existing strengths and capacity, recognising needs for capacity. ⁷
Positive attitudes and organisational culture	Importance of ensuring buy-in and ownership; focus on "soft elements" such as incentives, norms and values, attitudes. Foster self-esteem. ⁸
Leadership commitment / political support	Commitment of leadership; political support. ⁹
Entering organisation at appropriate level.	Choice of appropriate entry point, taking into account temporal aspects that may present a window of opportunity. ¹⁰
Involvement of a key contact person and broader work networks / external relationships	Recognise relationships and change power differentials. ¹¹ Importance of recognising and developing task networks; adopting a multi-actor perspective; creating critical mass of change champions / individuals involved in change. ¹²
Mentoring, frequent / continuous interaction.	Stay engaged in difficult circumstances and adapt expectations accordingly. ¹³ Recognise long term nature of sustainable capacity development. ¹⁴

⁶ Boesen & Therikildsen, 2004: 21; UNDP, 2006: 6

⁷ Bossuyt, 2001: 11; Mengers, 2000: 385; UNDP, 2006: 9; Van Horen, 2002: 114

⁸ Bossuyt, 2001: 5; Smith, 2005: 452; UNDP, 2006: 8

⁹ Boesen & Therikildsen, 2004: 6, 45; Bossuyt, 2001: 5; Mengers, 2000: 387

¹⁰ Lusthaus, *et al.*, 1999: 10, 14; Smith, 2005: 453; UNDP, 2006: 6

¹¹ Lusthaus, *et al.*, 1999: 11; UNDP, 2006: 6, 8

¹² Boesen & Therikildsen, 2004: 6, 29, 51; Bossuyt, 2001: 9; Hilderbrand & Grindle, 1994; Smith, 2005: 446; Mengers, 2000: 387

¹³ Boesen & Therikildsen, 2004: 52; UNDP, 2006: 9

¹⁴ Mengers, 2000: 385; UNDP, 2006: 8; Bossuyt, 2001: 2

Table 9: Considerations for the Design of Capacity Building Initiatives

Table 9: Considerations for the Design of Capacity Building Initiatives	
Considerations: Main Themes	Considerations: Dimensions
Contextual Awareness and Responsiveness	Responding to Needs and Existing Capacity Levels
	Contextual Understanding
	Respect and Recognition
Commitment and Ownership	Positive Attitudes and Individual Commitment
	Ownership and Sustainability
	Leadership and Change Drivers
Appropriate Timing and Entry Points	Context-Specific Entry Point
	Entry Point and Expectations
	Temporal Dimension
Relationships and Networks	Systems Approach
	Individual and Organisational Task Networks
	The Individual as Building Block
	Politics and Power
Continuous Engagement	Dealing with Challenging Circumstances
	Long Term Sustainability

capacities" and "to look at what can realistically be achieved in a given institutional setting". In order to achieve this, a participatory process is required, "involving the different actors and stakeholders in defining the agenda, setting priorities and deciding on possible implementation strategies" (Bossuyt, 2001: 11). This was found to be an important part of the MIDPS Project, with an analysis of municipal and provincial support needs assessed in the establishment phase of the project, culminating in a municipal typology of needs and provincial action plans. Successful institutional components at provincial level were all based on provincial action plans that were drawn up with high levels of participation from support beneficiaries and based on a sound contextual knowledge (see next section), reflecting true needs of participants and a level of realism in expectations.

3.6.2.a.ii Contextual Understanding

In order to be responsive to existing capacity and needs, and to successfully navigate contextual dynamics, a thorough contextual understanding is required from support providers. Support providers in successful project components of the MIDPS Project demonstrated first-hand knowledge of the context in which they operated, supported by their own direct observations. This knowledge was more reliable than information gained solely from the perceptions and opinions of participants. A lack of contextual understanding contributed significantly to at least two of the unsuccessful components.

3.6.2.a.iii Respect and Recognition

The UNDP (2006: 8) goes further, highlighting the importance of respecting existing value systems and fostering self-esteem as one of the key principles for successful capacity building. The importance of self-esteem and individual perceptions were confirmed by two instances during the course of the MIDPS Project, where participants' perception of their own capacity, as well as the perception that the acceptance of capacity building may be a negative reflection on the ability individuals or organisations, contributed to two project components not achieving set objectives.

3.6.2.b Commitment and Ownership

3.6.2.b.i Positive Attitudes and Individual Commitment

In all of the successful MIDPS Project components, individual commitment, positive attitudes and positive relationships between beneficiaries and support providers were in place. This was further supported and fostered by regular interaction between support providers and key individuals, and the building of trust between support providers and these individuals. Norms, values and attitudes that shaped organisational behaviour were found to be one of the most significant influencing factors in the MIDPS Project, resulting both in failures in contexts where other positive factors were in place (e.g. a number of capacitated individuals, established organisational structures), and success stories under very challenging circumstances (e.g. establishment of new units). This finding was also reflected in literature on international experiences, e.g. Bossuyt (2001: 5) refers to the need to focus on "soft elements such as incentives, norms and values".

3.6.2.b.ii Ownership and Sustainability

In terms of longer term sustainability of capacity development, taken to the highest level, ownership is regarded as a means for achieving capacity without direct external support - "the process of taking responsibility for one's own development will lead to the strengthening of national capacities. The learning process is part of designing, planning and guiding the programmes / tasks ...learn to build by building" (Ndoye, 2002 in Smith, 2005: 452).

3.6.2.b.iii Leadership and Change Drivers

The importance of leadership was recognised in both the MIDPS Project and international literature. Bossuyt, (2001: 5), and Boesen & Therkildsen (2004: 7) state that "clear commitment to and leadership of change is maybe the single most important factor for capacity development efforts to succeed".

The development of a critical mass of change champions (also at different levels of the organisations) was an important success factor in the MIDPS Project. It was also found to be important to support and develop change agents or champions at various levels of the organisation. This finding is confirmed by authors such as Mengers (2000:387), who recognises that commitment is required of "more than one person at the top of the organisation", and by Smith (2005:4 53-4), who states that change needs to be bottom up as well as top down, and emphasises the importance of developing mechanisms for "bringing policy and grass roots movements together".

Ensuring ownership and commitment is also about recognising the drivers of change in a given situation. These drivers can be structural (changes in economic and social structures), institutional (changes of norms and behaviour), or agents (individuals, groups or organisations) (Duncan & Hay in Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 5). In a systems approach, it is recognised that the actions of agents are influenced by their institutional and structural contexts, as well as the actions of other agents - "broad and sustained change is the result of complex processes that cannot be explained by reference to a few determining factors, nor created by a standard

recipe across time, sectors and countries" (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 5).

3.6.2.c Appropriate Timing and Entry Point

3.6.2.c.i Context-Specific Entry Point

Choosing an appropriate entry point for a capacity building initiative is firstly linked to the intended result of the initiative and the underlying understanding on how development takes place (Lusthaus, *et al.*, 1999: 14). In the MIDPS Project, the institutional context has proven important in choosing the appropriate entry point into the organisation. In organisations with relative high levels of capacity and / or buy-in, it has been appropriate to approach a functional official that does not hold a very senior position. Where less buy-in and capacity existed, the more futile attempts became to enter the organisation at a lower seniority level (as happened in three of the unsuccessful institutional project components).

3.6.2.c.ii Entry Point and Expectations

The choice of an entry point is related to expectations, e.g. the desire to use an entry point to achieve high impact with a relatively small investment (Lusthaus, *et al.*, 1999: 14). In the MIDPS Project, high level entry points designed to achieve quick and substantial gains (e.g. high level workshops with national sector departments) have shown less success than more facilitative, direct interaction approaches based on continuous contact "closer to the ground".

3.6.2.c.iii Temporal Dimension

The choice of an entry point also relates to the time dimension, in that the time-related stage of development of the unit / individual whose capacity is being built is important, with organisations / individuals at different stages being capable of different types of change (Lusthaus, *et al.*, 1999: 10). This was confirmed by the experience in the MIDPS Project, where the appointment of new IDP Coordinators in two provinces provided a positive entry point to capacity development. This is also confirmed by the experience of the UNDP (2006: 6) at a broader level, recognising that "windows of opportunity for change open and close with changes in leadership, which could bring a new look at development priorities, partnerships and resource availability".

3.6.2.d Relationships and Networks

3.6.2.d.i Systems Approach

Recognising networks and relationships is one of the fundamental principles that underlie a systems approach to capacity building. This approach takes into account macro-complexity, develop multi-dimensional strategies; address institutional issues at different levels (individual, organisational, sector and societal) while being cognisant of, and responsive to, relationships among them (Bossuyt, 2001: 9). Following this approach, on which the MIDPS Project was based, was strongly evident in all of the successful project components. The emphasis in successful institutional components was largely on supporting the individual's place in and contribution to the larger task network, and also involved support interactions with other roleplayers (individuals and organisations) in this network. In successful individual project components, technical capacity building was directly related and made applicable to the greater context within which those capacities were exercised. A systems approach strongly relies on recognising individual and organisational task networks.

3.6.2.d.ii Individual and Organisational Task Networks

Boesen & Therkildsen (2004: 29) refer to organisational networks that consist of interdependent but semi-autonomous organisations that "interact and bargain with each other about providing, withholding or failing to deliver resources". This situation is closely reflected in the South African system of government spheres, and especially in the case of the broader intergovernmental planning field and specifically IDP. When considering networks in the context of capacity building, the development of capacity is regarded as taking place "not just in individuals, but also between them, in the institutions and the networks they create" (Fakuda-Parr, *et al.* in Smith, 2005: 446).

An approach of establishing networks or "islands of excellence" is also recommended for situations of very weak existing capacity, but should be regarded as part of a "deliberate, sequenced strategy for sector wide improvements in capacity" (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 51), and not an end goal in itself.

3.6.2.d.iii The Individual as Building Block

In the MIDPS Project, a common thread through all successful project components was a focus on directly supporting / mentoring individuals. To be successful, this approach required high levels of direct interaction between support providers and beneficiaries, whether in the form of support to an individual to find his/her place in the institutional context and establish networks (e.g. as in the case of institutional provincial sphere initiatives), or in the form of formal mentoring periods about specific technical content (as in the case of individual municipal initiatives).

3.6.2.d.iv Politics and Power

Capacity building will not be sustainable if the process does not take into account the "inherently political and complex realities in the environment" (UNDP, 2006: 6). Capacity development initiatives are successful where there is attention paid to performance and results, provided further that the "overall balance of incentives and power must tilt towards change" (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 7).

The importance of understanding and taking into account the political dimensions of both the context within which capacity building takes place, as well as its political repercussions, was proven to be important. It is recognised that "capacity development is not power neutral and challenging vested interest is difficult" (UNDP, 2006: 8). The building of trust and positive relationships, as well as ensuring mutual transparency in decision-making, are some of the key ways of addressing this challenge.

3.6.2.e Continuous Engagement

3.6.2.e.i Dealing with Unfavourable Circumstances

One of the major challenges faced during the course of the MIDPS Project was dealing with situations where capacity levels were very low. In such a less than ideal context, Boesen & Therkildsen, (2004: 52) recommend that support providers consider the level of risk they are willing to take, ensure that capacity development ambitions and levels of support are "correspondingly modest", and design and manage the support process to gather its own momentum. Another option that is proposed is to first work

towards changes in the enabling environment (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004: 52). The UNDP (2006: 9) emphasises the importance of staying engaged in difficult circumstances, as "the weaker the capacity the greater the need". Continuous engagement from the side of support providers in cases of weak capacity did eventually lead to breakthroughs and contributed to the success of especially some of the successful institutional project components.

3.6.2.e.ii Long Term Sustainability

There is general agreement in literature on the subject that capacity develops over the long term, and "it is not amenable to delivery pressures, quick fixes and short-term result seeking" (UNDP, 2006: 8). The MIDPS project took the shape of a two year intervention, focussed on building capacity in relation to integrated development planning and its implementation and it is therefore important to view the MIDPS Project as a small part of a bigger, longer term strategy and collection of capacity building initiatives¹⁵ towards building capacity for development in all spheres of government.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the MIDPS Project, and the range of factors that were found to have influenced the outcome of project components, confirmed the complexity of the wider context facing individual organisations and actors in the developmental field. It also confirmed the relevance of targeting capacity building at different levels in an open system approach, as proposed in the NCBF. This approach was especially well suited for capacity building for development in South Africa and specifically IDP, as IDP deals with integrated systems, multiple organisations and actors, in a complex and changing policy and developmental context.

The experience during the course of the MIDPS Project point to the importance of approaching capacity building in a manner which is appropriate to contextual circumstances and sen-

sitive to existing attitudes and perceptions, power positions, relationships and expectations. The approach to capacity building was more influential than specific technical content in determining the perceived success of outcomes.

Experiences in the MIDPS Project again highlighted the great extent to which both the intergovernmental planning process in South Africa (including IDP), as well as the building of capacity to engage in this process, is less reliant of perfect methodologies and short term provision of technical expertise, than on establishing well functioning networks of committed individuals in the various organisations that are actors in the development arena.

The findings emphasise the desirability and sustainability of systematic, programmed support over the short-term, ad hoc injection of capacity and support interventions into institutional contexts where such efforts can not be absorbed and have no long term benefits. The study also confirmed the importance of the committed and positive individual - in creating an enabling environment, in making institutions work and in ensuring personal growth and development of those involved in planning and implementation.

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¹⁵ The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) is spearheading a variety of capacity building initiatives. It houses a dedicated Systems and Capacity Building Branch (including Capacity Building Systems and Local Government Leadership Academy), and is also providing support in specific technical areas through, for example, its Chief Directorate for Development Planning which is running various support initiatives to strengthen integrated development planning capacity in local government through various IDP training initiatives including the preparation of IDP unit standards and training material, the training of IDP facilitators, verifiers and assessors and the roll out of IDP learnerships and skills development programmes. Other examples include programmes such as Project Consolidate, the joint DPLG and SALGA initiative around Knowledge Sharing Programme (KSP); the IDP Nerve Centre; and the Municipal Systems Improvement Grant (MSIG).

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