



## **DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME**

### **DPLG Knowledge Products Draft Recommendations (July 2007)**

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## 1. Introduction

Following from the Terms of Reference (TOR), the main purpose of the project was to examine the existing database of the ODA (Official Development Assistance) projects with an aim to:

- Analyse, assess and summarise all the products within the database;
- Identify and recommend good practice products that could be reproduced and shared with municipalities
- Make follow up on outstanding products or collect and collate all outstanding products; and
- Produce a report with recommendations including a dissemination strategy.

This is Part 3 of the main report, produced as part of the deliverables agreed upon by the DPLG and the Human Sciences Research Council. The first part of the report consists of abstracts of all the 106 documents reviewed by the researchers. The abstracts are organized in MS Excel. The prepared abstracts of all the reviewed documents contains the following: the title of the document; organizations or individuals involved in the production of the document; the year of publication; and a concise summary of the document/report outlining its key focus.

The second part of this report contains an assessment of key knowledge products within the database. The report contains a critical review of these products, which examines the strengths and limitations of these reports. From these reviews, the report also identifies best-practices.

This third report outlines the research team's recommendations, based on its overall assessment of the products. It further outlines a dissemination strategy for the products.

### **1.1. Research Method**

A small research team consisting of HSRC senior researchers and administrative support was established to work on this project. The research was carried out in three phases. First, the research team, as a group, undertook the initial scooping and assessment of the database as part of the process to prepare summaries of each document. In collaboration with the DPLG, and making use of D & G's own network of donor organization, collaborators and partners, the research team made every effort to ensure all outstanding reports were collected, assessed and built-in to the report and its recommendations. The resulting summaries of all the collected documents were entered into a spreadsheet as abstracts on each document.

The second phase of the project involved preparing detailed analysis of selected documents from the wide range of the abstracted documents. These select documents were sub-grouped into different themes and analysed from a thematic approach. The various themes addressed by these reports were identified as:

- The structure and organization of local government: Operations and functions/Wards and Village structures/ provincial and municipal structures
- Decentralisation and local government/ intergovernmental relations/centre-local relations.
- Current legal and operational framework of local and provincial government
- Local government Financing: Sustainable Development/ Leadership and Administrative Management of Municipalities
- Resource Management and distribution/Management Systems: Citizen Participation and Accountability in Local Government/ Performance management and evaluation
- Skills Development (Capacity Building Programmes).
- Poverty Reduction Strategies

- Issues of Gender and Women.

The analysis enabled the team to identify products that can beneficially be reproduced and shared within municipalities. More importantly, the thematic analysis helped the research team to prepare its list of recommendations contained in the third part of the report.

### 1.2. Research Challenges

One of the major challenges encountered related to the collection of outstanding documents. The researchers, with the invaluable assistance of the contact person in the International & Donor Relations Chief Directorate, managed to get hold of many of the outstanding documents. But, some of the reports were difficult to trace. Without some of these missing documents, it was sometimes difficult to make a comprehensive analysis of some of the projects. Moreover, some of the assessed reports were either incomplete or not very detailed and this also made it difficult to do a proper assessment of certain projects.

The assessment of the products was based on donor reports, which mainly contained donor impressions rather than the views of the participants themselves. An assessment of the products which incorporated the views of participants would have helped to produce a more objective assessment. The researches are of the view that a more comprehensive evaluation of best practices would be done if researchers were able to have interviews with both service providers and recipients of the services. We recommend that the next phase of this project should involve getting feedback from the municipalities and some of the participants involved in these projects.

## 2. Recommendations

### 2.1. Consolidation of Programmes:

- The glaring lack of skills in local and municipal government in the first decade of democracy obviously necessitated massive deployment of resources and actors in capacity building. The various reports assessed by this team show that a lot of ground has been covered in capacity building training for a number of provincial and district municipalities. However, many of these capacity building programmes conducted by different donors operating in municipalities across the provinces are uncoordinated. While some of these programmes dwell on different aspects of capacity building training, many of the programmes duplicate each other in terms of both content and focus. As a result, a lot of money is being wasted producing the same material when better coordination of programmes amongst the donors and municipalities could lead to an avoidance of this.
- To avoid wasting resources through duplication of programmes, especially when it comes to production of training material, we suggest the consolidation of all available material on capacity building with a view to selecting best case studies which can be used for national training programmes. Alternatively, the selected case studies can be used as source material to produce future training material. For example, the DPLG-SALGA and Planact modules on budgeting and finance are both very good and could be used as best source material to train all councillors and relevant officials in municipal finance (See Draft Assessment report for some of the highlighted best case studies). The duplication/reproduction of this material will, however, require some negotiation about intellectual property rights with the various donors and their partners.
- To improve the effectiveness of national and provincial capacity building, the International & Donor Relations Chief Directorate (IDR directorate) might need to consider consolidating different capacity building funds/programmes into a single one which would be accessed on the basis of capacity building needs of various municipalities. This suggestion is likely to be resisted by municipalities, especially those in direct control of

large donor funds, who will not want to relinquish their control of such funds. It might also have detrimental effects on LED and the whole decentralisation project or violate the provisions of the Municipal Finance Management Act. However, if such a consolidation is done in full consultation with the municipalities and SALGA it will be a welcome move that will benefit all municipalities in the long run.

- Consolidating these various capacity building programmes into one single fund/programme will enable the DPLG to monitor the implementation of a host of disparate existing programmes and effectively facilitate the capacity building requirements of municipalities in a holistic way.

## 2.2. The role and functions of the International & Donor Relations Chief Directorate (IDR):

The recommendations suggested above can only fully materialise in a context where the role and functions of the DPLG's Research Directorate in the whole knowledge management process is expanded. For effective consolidation and better coordination of ODA training programmes, we recommend the following:

- **Fiscal Information Database:** The Research Directorate should establish a clear tracking system or mechanism which highlights work done in various provinces and municipalities, the focus of such work, areas still in need of critical attention and municipalities lagging behind in terms of capacity building programmes. This tracking system should take the form of a Fiscal Information Database that would be housed at the International & Donor Relations Chief Directorate (IDR) and municipalities across the country. The framework for this Fiscal Information Database is already in place, as the results of this knowledge assessment exercise could be used to set up this database. The abstract and the assessment reports produced by this team help to give a glimpse of what is taking place in the municipalities. A follow up on this process will require setting up a team which will do a physical audit of all municipalities (and possibly donors) to establish: a clear picture about the programmes that have been undertaken (including recorded and unrecorded); ongoing and future

training programmes; current skills levels and needs of various municipalities, etc.

- The Fiscal Information Database discussed above will not only reduce the problems of duplication and over concentration of resources and efforts in one area/field cited above, but will also solve the problem of inequitable share of skills and resources. The assessed material reflects that ODA projects have not been evenly spread across the country. While municipalities around Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal and Eastern Cape provinces have received considerable assistance, municipalities in peripheral provinces like Northern Cape, Northwest and Limpopo have not received much training. The Directorate therefore needs a database that will enable it to keep track of all training of members of staff, councillors and community members that has taken place in each jurisdiction. The tool will enable the Directorate to compile a comprehensive profile of all municipalities, assess the performance of municipalities and track project implementation.
- Once a clear tracking system/Fiscal Information Database has been established, it will be easier for the Directorate not only to establish the training needs of different local and provincial municipalities, but also to engage with ODA partners with requests for further training.
- Through this clear tracking system, the Directorate will also be able to identify the various organisations' areas of expertise in terms of programmes they are best placed to handle. For example, our assessment revealed that organisations like Planact have developed very good projects on public participation, budgeting and financial planning while ASALGP's programmes/handouts on the same subjects are not very detailed. (See *Planact, The Planact Enhancement Programme for Ward Committees, Councillors and Officials (Modules 1-6)*, 200; *Australia South Africa Local Governance Partnership (ASALGP) Handbooks*, 2005). GTZ, on the other hand, is equally good when it comes to Local Economic Development (LED) and Integrated Development Projects (IDP) and has been involved in this area for a very long period. Its collaborative LED

projects with DPLG, Department of Trade and Industry, Industrial Development Corporation and the provincial governments of Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape have important insights on how local communities, including public, private and civic actors, could engage in participatory, competitiveness-based LED processes (See Draft Assessment report for more detail on GTZ LED projects). With this kind of knowledge, the Directorate can play a more pivotal role when it comes to coordinating ODA projects- appropriately offering expert advice to municipalities in need of training partners.

- The Directorate needs to develop its knowledge management capacity- moving more into a knowledge management department whose functions include both repository and processing functions. The knowledge generated by different ODA projects should be processed and assessed internally by a team of competent researchers. An improved knowledge processing and management capacity by the Directorate will enhance knowledge sharing among municipalities. The Directorate will be in a better position to direct shared knowledge to various municipalities and this way they will be able to learn from their counterparts and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

### 2.3. Conceptual Approach

Most ODA training programmes assessed in this project involved specific donors designing their own capacity building training programmes, often in consultation with the concerned municipalities, and then bringing their own experts to conduct the training of the locals. The greatest benefit of this conventional approach to capacity building in most ODA programmes is that it allows for greater sharing of knowledge, expertise and experiences among both the external trainers and local participants through training and staff development exchange programmes. Countries like the USA and Germany, for example, have had more established democracies and local government systems for a long time. They have also had more time to experiment with different practices and have learnt from their initial mistakes. The recently established, democratized

local government system in South Africa can, therefore, learn a lot from their experiences. Apart from allowing for the transfer of skills, ODA programmes sometimes provide the opportunity for the development of enduring partnerships between local municipalities and their overseas counterparts. However, external technical assistance is not without its disadvantages. In fact, external technical assistance is the most heavily criticised forms of aid whose problems include the following:

- Knowledge emanating from outside sources is sometimes not locally relevant. Some of the knowledge is out-dated or based on development models that do not work in the local context.
- External training programmes are sometimes donor-driven and in the process skew country or provincial development priorities. The unevenness in capacity building training programmes discussed above is partly a problem of this factor, i.e. the donor- driven nature of local government support programmes which gives donors the latitude to choose where they want to go and who they want to work with.
- Technical advisers are often under pressure from donors and governments to deliver and rarely have extra time to build local capacity. Technical advisers are thus more focused on meeting donor demands, writing glowing reports about the 'success of their projects', than building local capacity.
- Advisers whose continued employment may hinge on the existence of capacity gaps often have real incentives not to pass on knowledge to their counterparts.
- The greatest problem with external capacity building projects is that the recruitment of technical advisers has tended to focus on the selection of international 'experts'. The disadvantage with this approach is that it does not fully empower the trained local communities to become purveyors of knowledge in their own right. When left to their own, municipalities and local communities which rely on 'external experts' for their capacity building training rarely develop the capacity to engage in their own capacity building projects. Given the above, there is need to structure

local government support programmes in a way that develops local communities' ability to stand on their own two feet. For this to happen it will require:

- **Locally driven process:** IDR directorate and municipalities taking more control over capacity building, in terms of deciding what sort of training is needed, choosing the training partners, and designing the content of such training and how it will be conducted.
- **Innovative Approaches;** There is need for a shift in the current conceptualisation of capacity building in local authorities and communities by following the different and innovative approaches such as one adopted by Planact in the Bohlabela and Vembe district municipalities (see *Planact (2003. Training of Trainers: Evaluation Report/ Bohlabela District Municipality and Vhembe District municipality)*). In this approach, the focus shifts away from direct training of stakeholders among local government practitioners to training of local trainers. The rationale is that the local trainer would thereafter be responsible for rolling out subsequent training to ward committees. This approach, focussing on developing local expertise in training, is a more sustainable approach to capacity building. It develops the capacity of local communities and municipalities to develop their own expertise in the field of local government and reduces the dependence on external expertise. Municipalities, donors and service providers working in this field need to adopt this forward-thinking approach to capacity building which contributes to improvement in local effectiveness and develops greater sustainability.
- **Long Term Partnerships:** There is need for a shift in approach from the current 'parachute' or short term projects to more enduring long term partnerships. The Isandla project for *Koukamma Local Municipality* is a perfect example of a co-ordinated capacity building project (Liesel du Plessis (Isandla partners in Development), 2004). Isandla was involved with the concerned municipalities from the very beginning, starting from the establishment of offices, the registry and secretariat. It also trained

office staff in issues ranging from minute-taking to preparation and updating of policy document as well as preparation of manuals. Because of its involvement from the start, Isandla was able to do a comprehensive need assessment for the municipalities and keep an audit of the work that had been done as well as outstanding issues. Its long-term partnership with these municipalities also put it in a better position to make recommendations on future programmes that can be implemented for the better functioning of the municipality. Similar projects involving long-term partners who are present during all the implementation stage should be encouraged. They help to nurture a good working relationship between the municipalities and their partners and also provide a context for an objective assessment on operations of the municipality.

#### 2.4. Training Programmes and Material

- **Time frames:** Councillors are the main medium through which information or knowledge on local government is imparted to ward committees and local populations. They require thorough and ongoing capacity building training workshops which leave them with a thorough understanding of the issues discussed. Many of the capacity building training workshops are conducted over a limited number of days. During these few days councillors are bombarded with a lot of information which is supposed to be digested over a limited period. The result is that this important agency in capacity building in local governance is left with a very basic understanding of the system it is supposed to spearhead. One of the major complaints among participants is that there is insufficient time to process all the information presented to them in the few days they attend workshops. It is therefore important to devote more time to capacity building. We recommend that capacity building training should focus more on long term training conducted over weekends rather than workshops conducted on a single weekend.
- Further, it is important to draw up realistic time frames for the training programmes. In the case of capacity training programmes for Tshwane (2003), the time between the launch of the programme and its practical

implementation was too long. Some participants complained that the course was 3 years overdue. In the end, the initial interest in the programme was lost and some people gave up before it even started.

- **Follow-up:** Capacity training programmes should include refresher or follow-up courses to refresh or update councillors on important developments in the field. Feedback from the capacity building workshop for councillors from Tshwane shows that councillors seem to find value in having ongoing training and longer capacity building workshops.
- **Attendance and registration:** Since councillors are such an important agency in the whole local government nexus and capacity building programmes are quite important for effective delivery, there is need to develop mechanisms to ensure compliance and maximum attendance when it comes to capacity building workshops. Some of these workshops are poorly attended, mainly because some councillors do not attach a lot of significance to the training or the training programmes are conducted at inconvenient times. To ensure compliance and maximum attendance:
  - a) Municipality authorities need to develop incentives that encourage municipal workers, councillors and ward committee to attend training. A common strategy employed by most organisations is one that incorporates capacity building into the job description. Workers can also be encouraged to attend training if it is tied to performance related bonuses.
  - b) Individuals targeted in capacity building projects need to be involved in the planning and decision-making process from the inception of the project. This helps to develop community support for the project and the spirit of ownership by all involved stakeholders.
  - c) In certain cases, poor attendance is caused by poor planning on the part of the organisers of workshops. Both councils and organisers need to develop better registration strategies so that attendance could improve.
- **Municipal buy-in:** Common difficulties encountered by donors in organising capacity building programmes include the failure of national

and provincial government departments to respond effectively to the requests made during the implementation of the project, the lack of cooperation from local government, non-commitment from some local wards and municipalities, the frequent changes in personnel at the District Municipality at the start of the project resulting in uncertainty.

- Successful registration of municipal officials for training requires full municipal buy-in and dedication from senior officials from the municipality to drive the process. In the case of the 2003 Tshwane training programmes, the overall training process was hampered because there was no specific senior official within the municipality to serve as link/ facilitator for the process.
- To avoid some of the above problems, it is hereby recommended that both councils and organisers need to develop a cooperative framework that ensures delivery. Organisers of training need to establish a steering committee at the beginning of the project to get the buy-in and involvement/co-operation of key people in the municipality from the beginning.
- **Organisation of Training Sessions:** Most capacity building training programmes for municipalities have been conducted in isolated ways, targeting specific categories of municipal stakeholders in their isolated spaces. In the 2003 Tshwane capacity building programme conducted by *Simeka Management Consulting*, councillors attended training with ward committee members and jointly developed learning toolkit following their discussions in the training sessions. The councillors and ward committee members, whose relationship is usual less than cordial, ended up developing a better understanding of each other's roles in local governance and appreciated their respective roles. This approach might need to be tried on a larger scale in other municipalities. It is however necessary to provide different levels/approaches to the different categories of municipal stakeholders since they all have different needs.
- **Curriculum Design:** Training is a complex activity. Too often when external experts are hired to conduct training workshops they do not take time to plan and design their programmes according to the requirements

of their target audience. Successful training programmes assessed were those that were able to incorporate the needs of the trainees. Such programmes not only began with an audit to establish training and skills needs of trainees and as well as their competences but also developed their learning toolkit from the input of both trainers and trainees after discussions in the training sessions. Examples of such best case studies include the capacity building programme for ward committee members in Tshwane conducted by *JUPMET/ Simeka Management Consulting* (2003) and the capacity building programme for councillors and municipal officials conducted in Cacadu District Municipality in the Eastern Cape by Port Elizabeth Technikon in 2003.

- ***Presentantion:*** One of the major limitations with most training programmes is that not only is too much material expected to be covered in a short period of time, but sometimes the curriculum is not pitched at the right level. Different ward committees have different development levels and all training programmes need to be pitched at the right levels. All capacity building programmes will benefit from an audit methodology to assess the competence levels of ward committee members and to establish their training and skills needs. Furthermore, some of the material found in handbooks is not very detailed enough, and requires to be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation on local government.
- ***Local languages and case studies:*** While training from donor agencies and their representatives is highly appreciated, capacity building could be improved by having facilitators who are able to use local languages because this ensures maximum participation and feedback from the participants. Most participants reports covered in this assessment revealed that both councillors and ward community members were more comfortable with training conducted in local languages and the use of local case studies which participants can easily relate to. Our recommendation is that best case studies which are going to be distributed nationally should be translated into local languages.
- ***Local relevance and feasibility:*** Some project recommendations are not detailed or feasible on the practical side. For example, the NORAD

project recommendations on LED and IDP are not practical (NORAD, 2005). The project advocates the provision of basic infrastructure to help efficient movement of goods and people. It however does not have any suggestions on how this can be done, especially how funding for these projects could be raised. Its suggestions on assistance for small business are not backed up by detailed discussion on what form of assistance is needed or how such assistance can be mobilized. So are suggestions about the boosting of agricultural economy and the development of tourism. In the absence of such practical suggestions on ways of implementing these recommendations, the ideas in some of these handbooks remain very theoretical. For research to be utilized in policy, the issues addressed by the research need to be practical and locally relevant.

### **3. Dissemination Strategy**

- Data base which should be availed to all municipalities
- Workshops across the provinces to discuss findings/recommendations and map way forward.
- Opinion pieces in public media teasing out some of the project findings and recommendations.