MUNICIPAL PLANNING IN A POST–2024 SOUTH AFRICA:

NAVIGATING UNITY AND COALITION GOVERNANCE

Editors Paul Kariuki and Gerrit van der Waldt

Municipal Planning in a Post–2024 South Africa

Navigating Unity and Coalition Governance

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Book Summary

In the dynamic and evolving landscape of South African governance, the post-2024 dispensation marks a significant turning point. The ushering in of a Government of National Unity and coalition governments across provinces introduces new political dynamics that will fundamentally reshape the way that municipalities plan and operate. This publication is a timely and essential resource for practitioners, policymakers, planners and scholars alike. It provides a comprehensive exploration of the new political direction and the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for municipal planning.

As South Africa embarks on this new dispensation, i.e. a Government of National Unity, the importance of effective municipal planning cannot be overstated. This book seeks to equip readers with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate the complexities of multi-stakeholder engagement, strategic decision-making, and the execution of both long-term and short-term operational plans in a rapidly changing environment.

The results of the 2024 national elections in South Africa ushered in a new political dispensation characterised by a Government of National Unity and coalition government at the provincial sphere. This significant shift in governance brings forth both opportunities and challenges for municipalities across the country. As municipalities become arenas for diverse political interests and multi-stakeholder engagement, the need for robust and adaptive planning mechanisms becomes ever more critical. Newly negotiated political priorities and political leadership (i.e., national minister of COGTA and provincial MECs) demand a re-evaluation of existing municipal planning paradigms. Decision-making processes will now involve a broader array of political actors, each bringing their perspectives and priorities. This new political reality requires municipalities to foster inclusive and collaborative approaches to planning, ensuring that diverse viewpoints are integrated into coherent and actionable strategies.

Engaging multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes poses unique challenges. Balancing competing interests, achieving consensus, and maintaining effective communication are essential yet complex tasks. This publication addresses these challenges head-on, providing insights and strategies for effective multi-stakeholder

engagement. It highlights the importance of transparency, negotiation, and conflict resolution in achieving sustainable and equitable outcomes.

In this new governance context, municipal planning must extend beyond traditional boundaries to encompass a wide range of specialised domains. This book offers in-depth coverage of key areas such as:

- **Human Resource Planning**: Strategies for developing a skilled and motivated workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of municipal governance.
- **Financial Planning**: Approaches to ensuring financial sustainability and effective resource allocation amidst changing political and economic conditions.
- **Community-Based Planning**: Methods for engaging local communities in the planning process to ensure that their needs and aspirations are reflected in municipal policies and projects.
- **Spatial and Urban Planning**: Innovative solutions for managing urban growth, infrastructure development, and land use in a manner that promotes sustainability and resilience.
- **Disaster Risk Planning**: Frameworks for preparing for and mitigating the impacts of natural and man-made disasters, ensuring the safety and well-being of communities.

By integrating theoretical insights with practical examples and case studies, it provides a valuable resource for those seeking to understand and respond to the new political and administrative realities. We believe that this book will contribute to building more effective, inclusive, and resilient municipalities capable of driving sustainable development and enhancing the quality of life for all South Africans. Through this scholarly endeavour, we aim to inspire a new generation of municipal leaders and planners to rise to the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by this transformative period in South Africa's history.

Given the context outlined above, this publication is divided into two sections. Section A deals with Government's Planning Architecture comprising two chapters, while Section B, consisting of five chapters, outlines specialised municipal plans.

In Chapter 1, "Municipal Planning: Realities and Fundamentals", Solly Motingoe perceptively provides conceptual and contextual perspectives regarding aligning planning in government. This

includes vertical aligning national plans and strategies with provincial growth and development plans, and these provincial plans with municipal integrated development planning (IDPs) and top-layer service delivery and budget implementation plans. He also alludes to whole-of-government planning by considering vertical and horizontal coordination between different departments and sectors at the municipal sphere to promote integrated planning. In this regard, planning structures and mechanisms (e.g., MUNIMECs, portfolio committees, MINMECs) as well as multi-stakeholder engagement in planning are explored. Finally, Solly affirms the significance of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System in assessing the success of government planning interventions is accentuated.

Chapter 2, "Municipal Integrated Development Planning", follows on this contextual orientation. Sanet Ouwencamp expertly delineates integrated development planning with specific reference to the purpose and role of IDPs as the planning architecture for municipal governance. Core principles of the IDP, including integration, sustainability, participation, inclusivity, and accountability are accentuated. She also focuses on alignment of the IDP with national and provincial development plans and policies and underlines the need for horizontal coordinating across different municipal departments and sectors. Finally, common challenges faced in the IDP process, such as resource constraints, political interference, and community apathy are explored.

In Chapter 3, "Spatial and Urban Planning", Ngoako Mokoele proficiently contours South African urban spaces, shaped by a colonial planning systems and characterised by unprecedented urbanisation and rapidly changing demographics. These realities demand a shift from conventional urban planning systems to cater for current urban demands by implementing suitable technologies to influence the planning praxis. He highlights the fact that urbanisation has reshaped the outlook of South African cities and, thus, requires the adaption of integrated transport planning approaches. The adoption of technological model systems such as geographical information systems, remote sensing and urban building energy models to map the development activities of green agendas, brown agendas, integrated transport routes and biodiversity is at the core of municipal spatial and urban planning in South Africa. The chapter thus provides insights into the status of the South African cities and attempts for the regeneration of inner cities and the revitalisation of city centres.

"Human Resource Planning in South African Municipalities" is the theme of Chapter 4, in which Leigh Anne Naicker skilfully provides a comprehensive perspective regarding the design and implementation of effective human resource planning (HRP) strategies in municipalities under the new political and administrative dispensation. The chapter lays the foundation for investigating the complexities of HRP and its significance for municipal effectiveness and service delivery. By highlighting the current workforce capabilities and forecasting future skills needs for municipalities, Leigh Anne emphasises why HRP strategies should align with long-term municipal goals and strategic plans. Furthermore, she provides a guide to understanding how effective HRP strategies that prioritise talent management and succession planning, training and development, sound labour relations, and performance management can lead to enhancing efficiency and productivity.

In Chapter 5, "Municipal Financial Planning in South Africa", Adebimpe Ofusori capably outlines the nature and scope of financial planning transformation in the local government sphere, necessitated by a fragmented system with limited accountability and transparency. Through the stipulations of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 and other statutory and regulatory frameworks, municipalities shifted to a budget based financial system founded on community needs. Adebimpe reasons that despite the improvements made by municipalities through legislative reforms and strategic frameworks, National Treasury and the Auditor–General of South Africa (AGSA) confirm that serious financial challenges persist. These include limited tax and revenue bases, financial control inefficiencies, inadequate technical and managerial skills related to municipal finances, significant municipal debt, as well as good corporate governance issues. However, strategic and operational financial planning, supported by oversight structures and systems such as municipal public account committees, internal audit, audit and risk committees, and the ward committee system can help improve financial accountability and foster long–term economic growth in the country.

John Mamokhere adeptly charts "Community–based Planning" dynamics and realities in Chapter 6. He assesses the evolution and current state of community–based planning (CBP) in South African municipalities and analyses the impact of new political frameworks on community engagement and planning. He also explores the significance of good governance principles that promote CBP,

along with various engagement strategies and methodologies. In conclusion, John stresses the need for municipalities to improve resource allocation and monitoring for sound participatory planning processes and recommends that adequate financial and human resources should be allocated for community workshops and the operationalisation of suitable monitoring and evaluation processes. He also suggests that political–administrative interference should be minimised by clear role definitions and legislative revisions.

In the final chapter, "Municipal Disaster Risk Planning", Olivia Kunguma learnedly contends that the 2024 general elections not only marked a significant shift in the country's political landscape but also ushered in new perspectives regarding disaster and risk management. She argues that the disaster management fraternity – already characterised by its multi–sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature – needs efficient, rapid, and robust decision-making. Unfortunately, the diversity of political engagements often exacerbates the bureaucratic delays experienced by disaster management practitioners. She therefore affirms that political influence plays a crucial role in shaping disaster management efforts, directly affecting investment in disaster risk reduction and response planning. This influence may negatively impact municipal risk profiling and the identification of community vulnerabilities. She recommends that functional institutional arrangements should be affected to better coordinate efforts of relevant stakeholders, thereby bolstering emergency response and rehabilitation efforts for affected communities. To enhance community resilience, she accentuates the need for insurance and funding opportunities, effective monitoring and evaluation systems, greater transparency and accountability, as well as leveraging technological innovations in disaster risk planning.

More information about this book series is available at: http://ddp.org.za/blog/publications/

Editors

Paul Kariuki
Democracy Development
Program
Durban, South Africa

Gerrit van der Waldt
Research Professor:
Public Governance
North–West University
Potchefstroom, South Africa

Abbreviations

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
AGSA	Auditor-General of South Africa
AMP	Asset management plan
ANC	African National Congress
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
APP	Annual Performance Plan
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CBP	community-based planning
CBO	community-based organisation
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration
COGTA	Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CoJ	City of Johannesburg
CEE	Commission for Employment Equity
DCoG	Department of Cooperative Governance
DDM	District Development Model
DDP	Democracy Development Program
DEI	diversity, equity and inclusion
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DMA	Disaster Management Act
DMC	Disaster Management Continuum
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EVP	employee value proposition
Exco	Executive committee
FAIS	Financial Advisory and Intermediary Services

FMIS	Financial Management Information System
FPI	Financial Planning Institute
FSCA	Financial Sector Conduct Authority
FSRA	Financial Sector Regulation Act
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNU	Government of National Unity
GPoA	Government's Programme of Action
GWM&E	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System
HoD	Head of department
HR	human resources
HRD	Human resource development
HRIS	Human resource information system
HRP	Human resource planning
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IGR	Intergovernmental relationship
IMATU	Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KPA	Key performance area
KPI	Key performance indicator
LGE	Local Government Election
LGSETA	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDMC	Municipal Disaster Management Centre
MEC	Member of the Executive Committee
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MIG	Municipal Infrastructure Grant
MinMECS	Ministers and Members of Executive Committees
MPAC	Municipal Public Accounts Committee

MSA   Municipal Systems Act

mSCOA   Municipal Standard Chat of Accounts

MTEF   Medium-Term Expenditure Framework

MTDP   Medium-Term Development Plan

MTREF   Medium-Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework

MTSF   Medium-Term Strategic Framework

MTSP   Medium-Term Strategic Plan

MuniMECs   Municipality and Members of Executive Committees

NCA   National Credit Act

NCR   National Credit Regulator

NDMF   National Disaster Management Framework

NDP   National Development Plan

NEMA   National Environmental Management Act

NGO   non-governmental organisation

NPC   National Planning Commission

NPF   National Planning Framework

OFA   Organisational functionality assessment

PA   prudential authority

PCC   President's Coordinating Council

PCF   Provincial Coordinating Forum

PGDS   Provincial Growth and Development Strategy

PMS   Performance management system

POPIA   Protection of Personal Information Act

PPP   Public-Private Partnerships

RDP   Reconstruction and Development Programme

RSA   Republic of South Africa

SA   South Africa

SACN   South Africa Cities Network

SALGA   South African Local Government Association

SALGBC	South African Local Government Bargaining Council
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SAP	Systems, Applications, and Products in Data Processing
SCOPA	Standing committee on public accounts
SDBIP	Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SETA	sector education and training authority
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
SMS	Short Message Service / Senior Management Service
SoI	Statement of Intent
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SOPA	State of the Province Address
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land-Use Management Act
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UBEM	Urban building energy model
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
USDG	Urban Settlements Development Grant
WCG	Western Cape Government

Foreword

Municipal Planning in a post-2024 South Africa: Navigating Unity and Coalition Governance emerges at a historic inflection point in the country's democratic journey. The 2024 general elections ushered in a Government of National Unity and widespread coalition configurations that fundamentally altered the political landscape within which municipalities operate. This publication, therefore, is not only timely; it is imperative. It interrogates the evolving nature of municipal planning in an era marked by institutional fluidity, policy contestation, and the imperative of collaborative governance.

Over more than two decades of engagement in the local government sector, from municipal advisory and capacity-building architecture to institutional transformation, I have come to appreciate a foundational truth: municipalities are not merely administrative sites of service delivery; they are the democratic state's most immediate and intimate interface with the public. When local governance falters, citizenship recedes, trust erodes, and the constitutional promise of developmental government is deferred.

This volume offers more than a technical guide. It presents a paradigm shift. Its chapters engage with the multi-dimensional challenges of our time: planning coherence amidst fragmented authority; spatial transformation in the shadow of apartheid geographies; fiscal resilience under economic duress; human capital renewal amidst capacity deficits; and participatory governance in a polarised civic terrain. What sets this work apart is its commitment to praxis through the integration of theory, empirical insight, and actionable frameworks.

In a polity increasingly defined by pluralism and polycentricity, the ability to plan adaptively, govern inclusively, and implement resiliently is no longer optional. Coalition dynamics demand not only political dexterity, but institutional maturity. The call here is for anticipatory governance, demanding systems that absorb uncertainty, centre community intelligence, and convert political complexity into developmental opportunity.

Municipal Planning in a post-2024 South Africa repositions municipalities as developmental laboratories – spaces where multi-stakeholder consensus can be forged, local innovation can be institutionalised, and democracy can be deepened through

deliberation and responsiveness. It equips planners, officials, and policymakers with the intellectual tools and strategic foresight necessary to navigate the turbulent terrain ahead with clarity and purpose.

As South Africa crosses into uncharted democratic terrain, the remaking of local governance cannot be approached incrementally. This moment calls for bold reimagination, underpinned by rigorous analysis and principled leadership. This book delivers precisely that – a compass for a new era of municipal planning.

Professor Halima Khunoethe

Chief Director for Capacity Building, COGTA, KZN

About the Volume Editors and Authors

Co-Editors Bios

Dr Paul Kariuki holds a PhD in administration from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). He is the Executive Director of the Democracy Development Program (DDP), a national not-for-profit organisation and think tank based in Durban, South Africa. Moreover, he is a research fellow at the School of Management, IT, and Governance, UKZN. He is an alumnus of the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science, and Technology (CREST), University of Stellenbosch, where he undertook his training in monitoring and evaluation (*M&E*). Kariuki's research interests are in governance, digital transformation, public participation, elections, electronic governance, local government, migration, cybersecurity, as well as M&E in the public sector. He has published research articles in peer-reviewed journals in these areas of interest and co-edited several books on various themes. Furthermore, he is a guest reviewer of several journals in Africa and abroad. Additionally, he is a regular contributor to various social and political issues in the mainstream electronic and print media in South Africa and abroad.

Prof Gerrit van der Waldt is a research professor in public governance, attached to North-West University (NWU). He is a National Research Foundation-rated researcher and is the author and co-author of 52 textbooks, 157 scholarly articles, and 95 internal handbooks for institutions nationally and internationally, such as the Swedish Institute of Public Administration (SIPU), the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and the African Cities Network. He represented South Africa in the design of the African Union's African Peer Review Mechanism and supervised 66 Master and PhD studies to date. According to the World Scientist and University Ranking Index (2025), he is ranked 3rd on the African continent in the field of Public Management/Administration.

Authors' Bios

Dr Rapulo Solomon Motingoe holds a PhD from North-West University (NWU). While his doctoral research work focused on monitoring and evaluation systems, it extensively presented the alignment between national, provincial, and municipal planning systems. He has worked for the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and in municipalities for 22 years. He is currently appointed by the Department as the Project Manager to establish a new municipality in the Xhariep District, Free State, with effect from the date on the next Local Government Elections (LGEs) in South Africa.

Dr Sanet Ouwencamp is an accomplished Integrated Development Planning (IDP) Manager with over 27 years of experience in Local Government. Holding a PhD in Public Management and Governance, along with multiple advanced qualifications, she is a recognised expert in public administration and governance. She is deeply committed to advancing public participation in IDP processes and uses her leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills to foster inclusive and effective planning. She strives to deliver innovative solutions that empower communities and her expertise in planning, organisation, and stakeholder engagement emphasises her commitment to excellence in service delivery.

Prof Ngoako J Mokoele is an Associate Professor at the University of Limpopo, Faculty of Management, Department of Development Planning and Management. To date, he has published 20 articles in accredited journals and supervised 5 Master's students and 1 has completed studies awaiting graduation. The focus of his research is located within the development domain focusing on spatial planning, spatial development, climate change and urban planning.

Dr Leigh Anne Naicker completed her PhD in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria in 2022. The focus of her study was the role of the Compulsory Induction Programme on the Socialisation of public servants at a national government department in South Africa. Dr Naicker has a strong background in Education and Skills Development, and has gained solid research, analytical and problem-solving skills through her various management roles in the South African public sector. Through the multiple projects that she has worked on, she has amassed experience in research designs and methodology, specifically the design and implementation of research instruments. Dr Naicker and her family emigrated to the

Netherlands in 2024, where she continues to work as a consultant. Her role as a consultant focuses on public administration and skills development for the public sector.

Dr Adebimpe Esther Ofusori is an Innovative Researcher and a lecturer. She obtained her PhD from the University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. Her areas of expertise are Analytical Chemistry and Natural Products. She attended international conferences and had trainings in modern Analytical and Biotechnological instruments. Other areas of interest include women development schemes, youth empowerment, and politics. She is research-oriented with publications and book chapters in highly reputable peer-reviewed journals and has outstanding ability to work collaboratively with others.

Dr John Mamokhere is a research associate at the University of Limpopo, a regional-based tutor for the University of South Africa and a Research Grant Administrator at the University of Johannesburg. His research expertise includes public administration, governance and development studies. He obtained his Doctoral degree in Public Management and Governance at the University of Johannesburg and has published more than 30 DHET-accredited peer-reviewed journals, presented 4 conference papers at both local and international conferences and co-published a book chapter. His research contribution has attracted 507 Google Scholar citations and has an h-index of 12.

Dr Olivia Kunguma is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the Free State - Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (UFS-DiMTEC), teaching Management of Media Relations and Strategic Communication, Strategic Disaster Management, and Legal and Institutional Arrangement in Disaster Management. She has published peer-reviewed papers and graduated PGDip, Master's and PhD students. She holds a BA and Honours in Integrated Marketing Communication, a Master's and PhD in Disaster Management. Her research interests are in disaster management governance and disaster communication.

Chapter 1

Municipal Planning: Realities and Fundamentals

Solomon Motingoe

Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs,
Free State

Abstract

The new governance context of the post-2024 dispensation has brought into sharp focus a critical need for a relook at planning in municipalities. Unlike at any time before, the challenges facing local government do not require routine linear action but rather adaptive and innovative planning approaches. Persistent symptoms of systematic failures have made thorough planning even more imperative. Municipal planning is required to consider, on an unprecedented scale, the incorporation of diverse interests of multiple stakeholders and actors and consensus thereon to meet expectations, inclusive of national development priorities. For municipal planning to be effective, the premium is more than supporting efficient service delivery, sustainable development and effective governance. Planning should support municipalities to embody responsiveness and accountability and further reflect society's values such as human dignity, participation and equality. This demands an integrated planning approach. The essential ingredients and successful execution thereof should include robust intergovernmental collaboration, coordination and stakeholder inclusiveness. While the District Development Model (DDM) offers a framework for integrated planning and execution within the district spaces to achieve the greatest impact, the Medium-Term Development Plan 2024-2029 constitutes one instrument of the wider development planning architecture to realise national priorities in the country.

This chapter outlines realities and fundamentals which support municipal planning. It provides comprehensive conceptual and contextual perspectives regarding the extent to which planning is aligned across government spheres and tiers. More specifically,

focus is placed on frameworks, structures, systems and processes across government. It presents how scenario planning is utilised to anticipate and prepare for various future local governance conditions and challenges. Consideration is further given to the common challenges in developing and implementing coherent planning architecture. The objective is to consolidate a baseline towards elevating municipal planning to a paradigm befitting to cope with the new challenges of the post–2024 dispensation.

Keywords: District Development Model (DDM), Governance**,** Integrated Development**,** Intergovernmental Collaboration**,** Municipal Planning**,** Scenario Planning**,** Stakeholder Inclusiveness

Introduction

The local governance context of the post–2024 dispensation has not only placed a higher premium on planning by municipalities, but further requires municipal planning to consider, on an unprecedented scale, diverse interests and consensus thereon to meet the national priorities. Municipal planning constitutes an essential component of government–wide planning that serves as both a catalyst for local socio–economic development and a conduit for aligning local priorities with broader provincial and national imperatives. With this perspective in mind, this chapter focuses on government–wide planning, wherein municipal planning serves as a basis for achieving national development priorities. It presents a view that municipal planning should be compatible with provincial and national development plans as well as planning requirements binding on the municipality to realise national priorities while also providing basic services to their communities. Towards achieving this objective, the chapter situates municipal planning within the broader planning ecosystem of government, where short–, medium–, and long–term planning cycles converge to form a coherent framework for addressing South Africa's most pressing challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Therefore, this chapter establishes the contextual foundation for subsequent chapters.

The chapter begins by defining the concept of municipal planning, tracing its purpose and function in fostering aligned and inclusive development. Conceptual and contextual perspectives regarding aligning planning in the South African Government follow. The chapter further provides an overview of planning alignment across South African spheres of government. Focus is placed on the

significance of government-wide planning in enhancing service delivery. Intergovernmental collaboration in municipal planning will also be explored, including current challenges in bridging gaps between broader strategic planning and municipal operational planning. Utilisation of the DDM for the achievement of the national development priorities at municipal sphere will also be highlighted. Furthermore, consideration is given to scenario planning and evidence-based decision-making to enhance coalition governance in the new local government arena. Before concluding by highlighting persistent obstacles for coherent national planning, focus will be placed on the relationship between the Government-wide Monitoring & Evaluation (GWM&E) System and municipal planning.

Conceptual and Contextual Perspectives on Municipal Planning

Municipal planning can be regarded as a multifaceted process that lies at the core of local government operations, ensuring that municipalities fulfil their constitutional mandate to promote socio-economic development and deliver basic services. According to Oliveira and Pinho (2010:16), municipal planning is broadly conceived as an umbrella concept that includes a variety of interrelated elements such as policies, plans, programmes, procedures, and outcomes that collectively shape the strategic direction of a municipality. There is broad agreement in the management literature that planning is a forward-looking and goal-setting process in which organisations determine the strategies and actions necessary to reach its objectives (Aguilera et al., 2024; George et al., 2023:1). The broad conceptualisation reflects the complexity of governance in the local sphere of government where planning must be both inclusive and responsive to dynamic community needs and expectations. This highlights the proactive nature of planning, suggesting that municipalities must continuously anticipate future challenges and opportunities, while aligning their resources and efforts accordingly. In the context of municipal governance, this involves both the long-term Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and short- to medium-term instruments such as Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIPs).

Susanto et al. (2023:44-45) provide a comprehensive operational view of planning by emphasising the sequential activities that it entails, namely, information analysis, goal formulation, and the

breakdown of strategies into concrete steps and actions. The process-oriented perspective highlights the importance of planning as not merely a technical exercise but a continuous cycle of decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and adjustment. Collectively, these perspectives converge on the understanding that municipal planning is a structured and strategic function that facilitates effective local governance. In the South African context, municipal planning serves not only to guide the internal functioning of municipalities but also acts as a vehicle for realising national development imperatives as articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996), the National Development Plan (NDP) (NPC, 2011), and other policy frameworks. It therefore plays a pivotal role in ensuring that developmental objectives which include spatial transformation, service delivery and participatory governance are translated into practical, actionable plans at the local level.

From the aforementioned views it can be argued that municipal planning in South Africa is both a technical and normative process, aimed at aligning local-level strategies with broader national priorities. It serves as a conduit through which national socio-economic objectives are localised and operationalised, ensuring that municipalities are not only compliant with legislative mandates but are also developmentally responsive and accountable to their constituencies.

Overview of Planning in South Africa

Technically, the country's planning cycle does not have start and endpoints. It is rather a continuous process where one activity feeds into the other and vice versa. Notwithstanding, the Government's planning process in South Africa takes place as short-term (annual), medium-term and long-term planning cycles.

Short-term (Annual) Planning Cycle

After the 2024 national elections and at the beginning of the current electoral cycle, the Cabinet of the South African Government adopted the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024-2029, which has replaced the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019-2024.

The MDTP undergoes an annual review by Cabinet during its Cabinet *Lekgotla* (strategic planning session) and is subsequently distributed to national Government departments and provincial

administrations. In December, the process of integrating detailed programmes for the upcoming year begins. These programmes are subsequently absorbed in Government's Programme of Action and ratified annually during the January Cabinet *Lekgotla* and announced by the President during the State of the Nation Address in February.

Medium-Term Planning Cycle

Mofokeng and Nkgapele (2025:51) confirm that a medium-term plan typically spans a period of three to five years and is primarily characterised by its conciseness. The MTDP outlines Government's priorities for inclusive growth, improved living conditions and a capable state. It integrates the Statement of Intent of the Government of National Unity (GNU) and National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030 (NPC, 2011) into a strategic framework to guide policy and implementation over the next five years.

The priorities contained in the MTDP are reflected in the medium-term strategic plans of national and provincial departments, as informed by each department's statutory mandate. The approach requires departments to plan for the priorities which they will deliver over a five-year planning horizon. These five-year strategic plans of the national and provincial departments serve as building blocks towards achievement of the NDP in 2030.

Long-Term Planning

The NDP outlines South Africa's long-term aspirations and development goals, offering a clear focus and direction for national efforts. It proposes to create jobs through numerous initiatives which include promoting employment in labour-absorbing industries as well as raising exports and competitiveness. Khambule and Kariuki (2024:63) postulate that the NDP is a long-range plan which concretises a South African vision, aimed at eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030, thus making this long-term goal tangible.

The NDP is the anchor reference point, as the departments in the national and provincial spheres of government, including municipal entities and public entities, are required to align their plans with the national development objectives of the NDP.

Planning Alignment Across South African Spheres of Government: An Overview

Alignment refers to how different levels of government, namely, national, provincial, and local, coordinate their plans and actions to work towards shared national goals. Vertical alignment is about ensuring consistency and coordination from the top (national) down to the bottom (local). According to Harrison (2023:1), this alignment can take different forms, depending on how each department understands and applies the NDP's directives. The governance structure in South Africa is shaped by its constitutional commitment to cooperative governance amongst the three spheres, namely, national, provincial, and local. Planning processes are integrated vertically and horizontally to promote coherence, alignment of priorities and effective service delivery. The annual planning cycle aims to translate the long-term NDP into actionable policies and programmes across all spheres of government.

To ensure that developmental goals are realised, Government uses a range of planning instruments and understanding these instruments is key to appreciating how alignment, coherence, and accountability are achieved. These planning instruments at national, provincial and local spheres are examined in terms of vertical alignment where specific focus is placed on the flow of planning activities within the annual planning cycle as well as on the whole-of-government planning approach of the South African Government. That is, focus is placed on how plans are developed, approved and implemented throughout the year across the different levels of government. Consideration is further given to the strategy used by the South African Government in ensuring that all departments and levels of government work together in an integrated and coherent way rather than in silos.

At the national sphere, several key planning instruments serve as the foundation for South Africa's long-term vision and strategic direction. Foremost amongst these is the NDP, which articulates the country's vision for 2030 (NPC, 2011). It outlines broad national goals related to economic growth, social equity, education, health, and governance, and acts as the overarching framework for all planning in the country.

The State of the Nation Address (SONA) is another key national instrument presented annually by the President in the National Assembly. The SONA sets out Government's short- to medium-term

priorities and communicates strategic interventions to be pursued across departments and sectors. It reflects the Government's immediate responses to emerging challenges and opportunities and often informs annual departmental planning.

The MTDP translates the NDP's long-term vision into implementable programmes and targets within a five-year planning horizon. It provides specific outcomes, indicators, and timeframes, which are then incorporated into departmental and sectoral plans. Complementing these instruments is the Government's Plan of Action, which operationalises political commitments and ensures that strategic objectives are implemented through coordinated activities across ministries and agencies.

At the provincial and local spheres, planning instruments are more operational in nature, focusing on service delivery and the management of local development priorities. The cornerstone of sub-national planning is the IDP. Developed by municipalities, the IDP is a strategic tool that aligns local socio-economic development with national and provincial objectives. It is informed by community needs and guides resource allocation and infrastructure planning. Complementing the IDP is the SDBIP, which translates the goals and targets set in the IDP into specific deliverables, timelines, and budgets. The SDBIP serves as a performance management tool that links planning with implementation, enabling municipalities to monitor progress and ensure accountability in delivering services to communities.

While national instruments such as the NDP, SONA, MTDP and the Plan of Action set the strategic tone and vision, provincial instruments like IDPs and SDBIPs ensure that these priorities are effectively implemented. Together, these planning tools foster integration, responsiveness, and developmental impact across all levels of government.

Table 1: Annual Planning Cycle Flow (Integrated Across all Spheres)

Time frame	Activity	Instruments
Q1 (Jan – Mar)	National and provisional SONA/SOPA delivered, departments begin drafting APPs	SONA, SOPA, draft APPs*
Q2 (Apr– Jun)	Finalisation of national and provisional budgets, municipalities start IDP reviews	National Budget, Provincial Budgets, IDP review
Q3 (Jul– Sep)	Mid-term reviews, performance assessments, and adjustments to planning	Mid-Year Budget Review, Performance Reports
Q4 (Oct– Dec)	Planning for the next financial year starts, community consultations in municipalities.	Draft IDP, PGDS# alignment, planning meetings

* SOPA – State of the Province Address; APP – Annual Performance Plan
# PGDS – Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
Source: Author's own

Significance of Government-Wide Planning in Enhancing Service Delivery

Intergovernmental relations fundamentally demand a unified approach across all levels of government, where governance institutions operate in a coordinated and harmonised manner. The state's approach to planning has primarily functioned as a system rather than a centralised planning authority. In practice, government departments have developed plans independently, often based on their own discretion, resulting in varying levels of quality. These plans were then subjected to a relatively informal peer review process. As a result, the overall planning tended to focus more on procedure than on meaningful content.

Efficient service delivery is intrinsically linked to the effectiveness of government-wide planning. Planning coherence across national, provincial and local levels is essential to address development needs, allocate resources wisely and ensure accountability. The following key dimensions highlight how integrated planning mechanisms foster improved outcomes in governance and public service delivery.

· **Policy Alignment and Coherence**: A primary objective of government-wide planning is to achieve policy alignment

and coherence across all levels of government. This involves harmonising long-term national development goals such as those articulated in the NDP with provincial and local development priorities. By aligning planning frameworks like the MTSF with IDPs and other local strategies, Government ensures that all levels are working towards a unified vision. This alignment helps to prevent policy fragmentation and conflicting priorities, which often lead to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for collective impact.

· **Efficient Resource Utilisation**: Integrated planning enhances the coordination of budget processes and resource allocation across the public government. When departments and spheres of government plan in silos, the risk of duplication and inefficiency increases. Conversely, government-wide planning supports a holistic approach to public investment, particularly in critical areas such as infrastructure development and social services. Through synchronised budget planning, resources are more likely to be directed where they are most needed, enabling better returns on public expenditure.

· **Integrated Service Delivery**: Service delivery often requires cooperation across different spheres and departments. Government-wide planning promotes seamless service delivery by facilitating cross-cutting coordination and breaking down administrative boundaries. Resultantly, citizens experience government services in a unified and efficient manner regardless of where they stay.

· **Strengthened Accountability and Monitoring**: Government-wide planning strengthens accountability mechanisms. Tools such as IDPs, SDBIPs and the DDM facilitate joint planning, implementation, and performance monitoring. These mechanisms provide clear lines of responsibility and improve the transparency of government operations. Effective monitoring ensures that performance gaps are detected early and that corrective measures can be taken and thereby reinforce accountability and public trust.

These dimensions emphasise the need for strengthened coordination of carrying out cross-cutting planning work by the organs of state and entities in the three spheres of government. Formal systems and structures alone are not sufficient to ensure a coordinated approach between departments and spheres of government. The Constitution assigns specific roles and responsibilities to each sphere; a lack of

coordination can hinder the attainment of social and economic goals (De Wee & Jakoet-Salie, 2025:10). Additionally, the significance of government-wide planning includes ensuring that there is linkage and coordination of sectoral plans and strategies; it further helps to align human, technical and financial resources towards achieving the greatest impact. Planning architecture should support sustainable development, efficient service delivery as well as effective governance. Municipalities should be greatly assisted towards effectively providing basic services which include water, sanitation, electricity, storm water drainage and further contributing towards addressing the challenges of poverty, unemployment and equality.

Maonei and Shava (2023) state that the concept of cooperative governance recognises that all spheres of government can work together in partnership to deliver effective and high-quality services to citizens. Maonei and Shava (2023) explain that effective collaboration requires the establishment of appropriate procedural and institutional frameworks. In addition, Parliament has put in place adequate legal frameworks for intergovernmental relations in South Africa. Nonetheless, it would appear that numerous fault lines beset the machinery at implementation level.

Structures and Mechanisms for Achieving Coherent National Planning

Several structures and institutional mechanisms facilitate coordination, each playing a distinct yet complementary role in integrating national, provincial, and local development initiatives. Some of the most significant structures and mechanisms are outlined below.

MinMECs and MECMECs

MinMECs (Minister and Provincial Members of Executive Committees [MECs] for local government) are sectoral intergovernmental forums that are critical for aligning sector-specific policies, plans, and budgets across the spheres of government. MinMECs play an especially important role in ensuring alignment and coordination across the three levels of government. One of their key functions is to translate national strategic priorities such as those outlined in the MTDP, into plans that are relevant and actionable at the provincial

level. The national objectives are thus meaningfully adapted to provincial contexts and needs.

MinMECs facilitate sector alignment by integrating national priorities into provincial Annual Performance Plans (APPs). Through the process, MinMECs help to create coherence between national strategies and provincial implementation efforts, strengthening the overall delivery of services. They are also responsible for overseeing performance monitoring. They do so by conducting joint reviews of sector-specific reports, enabling an ongoing assessment of progress and the identification of areas requiring intervention or support. This alignment facilitates coherent planning and resource allocation across all spheres of government, enabling municipalities to incorporate national development goals into their IDPs. Additionally, the oversight and performance monitoring functions of MinMECs support improved accountability and service delivery at the municipal level by identifying gaps and coordinating timely interventions.

MUNIMECs

Key functions of MUNIMECs (Municipalities and MECs for local government of provinces) include identifying and addressing service delivery challenges at the municipal level. Through regular interaction and collaboration, they help to identify issues early and work towards coordinated solutions that enhance the effectiveness of municipal operations. In addition, MUNIMECs ensure that the concerns and priorities raised by municipalities are fed into provincial and national planning processes. This alignment is essential for ensuring that local realities are reflected in broader government strategies, leading to more responsive and effective policies. These structures are also responsible for overseeing the use of municipal grants, such as the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG). They participate in the co-design of performance conditions and establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure that these grants are used appropriately to support infrastructure development and service delivery improvements. Furthermore, MUNIMECs play an important role in mobilising technical support from national departments to assist municipalities. The support is especially critical for municipalities with limited capacity, helping them to prepare key strategic documents such as IDPs and SDBIPs.

Prrovincial Coordinating Forums (PCFs)

Provincial Coordinating Forums (PCFs), chaired by Premiers, play a crucial role in aligning provincial and municipal planning. These forums are essential platforms for fostering collaboration and ensuring coherent governance across the different spheres of government.

PCFs facilitate engagement between provincial departments and local municipalities, creating opportunities for direct dialogue and the sharing of information. This interaction helps to bridge gaps between the two spheres and promotes a deeper understanding of the challenges and priorities at the local level. Another important function of PCFs is supporting the identification of shared priorities. By bringing together key stakeholders from both provincial and municipal governments, PCFs enable the development of a common agenda that reflects the needs and aspirations of communities across the province. In addition, PCFs promote joint solutions to service delivery challenges. Through collaborative problem-solving, these forums help to address systemic issues more effectively, making use of the strengths and resources of both provincial and municipal structures. PCFs play a critical role in ensuring the development of coherent strategies that are responsive to both provincial and municipal needs. By coordinating planning efforts, they contribute to more integrated and effective development outcomes, ultimately improving service delivery and promoting sustainable growth.

This coordination enhances the development of integrated plans, supports joint problem-solving for service delivery issues, and facilitates the creation of shared priorities, leading to more coherent, effective, and sustainable planning and implementation at the municipal level.

Presidential Coordinating Council (PCC)

The President's Coordinating Council (PCC) serves as the apex intergovernmental coordination structure in South Africa, providing a critical platform for high-level dialogue and strategic decision-making across all spheres of government. Chaired by the President and comprising the Deputy President, Ministers, Premiers, and representatives from the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the PCC ensures that key leaders are involved in shaping and guiding national development initiatives.

One of the PCC's primary functions is to facilitate strategic policy alignment. It ensures that strategic priorities are harmonised across national, provincial, and local governments, particularly around long-term planning and development goals. The alignment is vital for coherent governance and for the effective realisation of South Africa's broader socio-economic transformation agenda. In addition to aligning policies, the PCC provides critical oversight and guidance. It offers political direction on the implementation of national development plans, including key frameworks such as the NDP and the MTDP. Through this oversight role, the PCC ensures that government actions remain focused, strategic, and aligned with national aspirations. The PCC also plays an essential role in the coordination of government programmes. By facilitating collaboration and resolving cross-cutting issues that span multiple spheres of government, the PCC promotes coherence in planning, budgeting, and implementation processes. The function is particularly important in addressing complex development challenges that require integrated and cooperative responses.

Another critical responsibility of the PCC is monitoring progress on the implementation of integrated government programmes. Drawing on inputs from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the PCC assesses the extent to which government initiatives are meeting their intended objectives. This monitoring role is key to ensuring accountability and making necessary adjustments to improve performance.

The PCC is a cornerstone of South Africa's intergovernmental system, ensuring strategic planning alignment, oversight, coordination, monitoring, and cooperative governance. Through its work, the PCC supports the achievement of integrated, accountable, and effective governance, crucial for the country's long-term development success.

Treasury and Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)

The National Treasury and the DPME play a central role in supporting the standardisation of South Africa's government planning system. Through the development of guidelines, these institutions ensure greater coherence, transparency, and effectiveness across all spheres of government. The two departments further establish uniform processes and templates for performance planning, target setting,

and monitoring. By providing clear and consistent frameworks, they help departments and municipalities to structure their plans and reports in a way that is systematic and aligned with national priorities. In addition, the guidelines developed by the National Treasury and the DPME promote consistency, transparency, and accountability in government performance. Standardisation ensures that performance information is clear, reliable, and comparable, allowing stakeholders to assess progress and hold institutions accountable for the delivery of services.

Bridging the Gap Between Strategic and Operational Planning: Current Alignment Challenges

Section 31 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000) enjoins the MECs for local government to provide comments on the municipal IDPs in the respective provinces. According to the Assessment Report issued by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) (2024a), Free State shows either partial achievement or not achieved in respect of horizontal and vertical alignment of the Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) of the four district municipalities with the provincial and national SDFs.

The Annual Report issued by the national DPME (DPME, 2024), highlights several recurring misalignments across Government's planning value chain. These findings point to several systemic weaknesses and challenges that undermine effective service delivery and developmental coherence. These weaknesses and challenges are explained below. Evidence–based remedial actions grounded in public management theory and national planning frameworks for each identified weakness and challenge are proposed.

Misalignment between Five–Year Targets and Medium–Term Strategic Plan Outcome Indicators

The weak linkage between five–year departmental targets and broader Medium–Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) outcome indicators remains a serious concern. The adoption of a Theory of Change approach is recommended to ensure a logical flow from inputs and activities to outcomes and impacts. This method enhances the strategic coherence of five–year targets. Additionally, performance indicators must adhere to SMART principles (Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound), ensuring direct alignment with national outcomes. Regular indicator mapping exercises should be institutionalised, where each departmental target is reviewed for its coherence with MTSP indicators.

Annual Outcomes not Derived from MTSPs

The DPME Annual Report (2024:20) further notes that annual outcomes often fail to stem from MTSPs. To resolve this, it is recommended that a "Planning Cascade Model" should be institutionalised, wherein the MTDP informs the MTSP, which in turn guides the APPs. Zero-based performance planning should also be adopted, requiring departments to justify each APP activity by demonstrating its alignment with higher-order MTSP outcomes. Furthermore, performance budgeting should be embedded into the APP development process to ensure that budget allocations reinforce strategic priorities.

Inadequate Technical Planning Skills

Many of the misalignment challenges are attributable to a shortage of technical planning skills within departments. To build capacity, the DPME could spearhead the creation of an Inter-Provincial Planning Academy focused on outcome-based and strategic planning training. Establishing communities of practice will further allow provinces to share practical tools and approaches, while mentorship programmes involving experienced national planners can enhance capacity at provincial levels through peer learning.

Lack of Feedback Loops to Correct Misalignment

The absence of effective feedback mechanisms impedes the correction of planning misalignments. It is proposed that planning audits and compliance scorecards be introduced to assess the degree of alignment between strategic and operational plans. The role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) units must also be strengthened, empowering them to validate APPs prior to their finalisation. Institutionalising quarterly review sessions between the DPME and departments will provide real-time feedback and enable necessary mid-term course corrections.

Fragmented Planning Tools and Templates

The fragmentation of planning tools and templates hinders system-wide alignment. Deploying digital dashboards, such as a centralised Planning Alignment Tracker, can allow for automated cross-referencing and flagging of misalignments across MTDPs, MTSPs, and APPs. Integrating validation rules into planning software will further ensure that no plan can progress unless each target and indicator is appropriately linked.

Low Institutional Planning Capacity and Governance Weaknesses

Alm et al. (2021:83–84) elucidate that municipal capacity is a complex concept that encompasses financial means, skilled personnel, and social networks. An effective municipality is characterised by the integration of technical expertise, material resources, and active community participation. According to Choi (2021:4), government capacity refers to the ability to manage resources, develop sound policy decisions, design programmes to achieve policy objectives and learn from current experiences to improve future actions.

Links and Draai (2023:1088) hold that the ability to evaluate the institutional capacity of municipalities and understand how this capacity serves as an indicator of potential performance, is crucial for enhancing the local government system in South Africa. They further maintain that institutional capacity plays a crucial role in determining a municipality's success or failure, and sustainable development will remain out of reach unless efforts to strengthen this capacity are prioritised. Institutional capacity plays a crucial role in determining a municipality's success or failure, and sustainable development will remain out of reach unless efforts to strengthen this capacity are prioritised (McLennan & Ngoma, 2004:279).

Weaknesses across local, provincial, and national government spheres continue to undermine progress, erode public trust, and stall socio-economic transformation. At the local level, many municipalities face severe capacity constraints, including skills shortages, poor financial management, and political instability, leading to service delivery failures and community protests. At the provincial level, challenges include weak interdepartmental coordination, inconsistent performance, and limited capacity to support struggling municipalities. At the national sphere, weak policy implementation, corruption, and poor alignment with other spheres of government undermine effective governance.

Given the dynamics of capacity challenges at the local government sphere, the following recommendations are made (Peters & Niewenhuyzen, 2012:296):

· Capacity-building initiatives should be thorough and long-lasting, rather than temporary or short-term fixes.
· Environmental limitations and especially those related to the distribution of powers and functions as well as the structure of conditional grants may need to be revised concurrently.
· Capacity-building initiatives should take a comprehensive approach that integrates efforts at the individual, organisational, and institutional levels within a municipality over the medium term. Rather than placing excessive emphasis on training alone, support programmes should also provide technical assistance for implementing new systems, redesigning business processes, and managing change, all informed by a thorough assessment of the specific municipality.
· To strengthen municipal capacity, it is essential to urgently stabilise medium and senior management by safeguarding appointments and skills retention processes from political interference.
· The connection between managerial performance and the decision to renew or terminate performance contracts should be made more robust.
· The human resource function in municipalities must take a proactive approach in identifying potential incentives to retain scarce skills and in ensuring that roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined in municipal job descriptions (Peters & Niewenhuyzen, 2012:296).

Utilising the District Development Model (DDM) for Achievement of the National Development Priorities in Municipalities

On 10 May 2024, the Minister of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs published the Regulations Framing Institutionalisation of the District Development Model, 2024 (COGTA, 2024b). The Regulations serve as a foundational step in entrenching the DDM across all spheres of government by providing a formal intergovernmental and operational framework. The purpose of the Regulations is to guide the coordination of local development priorities through a system of intergovernmental

forums and the implementation of the DDM *One Plan*, which acts as the central instrument for integrated planning and execution within the district and metropolitan spaces.

Nel and Minnie (2022:44) argue that one of the core objectives of the DDM is to strengthen alignment and coordination of state functions through a coherent district–wide development plan. The deduction that could be made is that the DDM represents a shift from mere intergovernmental compliance to active collaboration, supported by capacity–building and inclusive planning processes that span all levels of government. Similarly, Tafeni (2024:120) observes that the DDM has already contributed to improved coordination and integration within the local government sector, especially in aligning municipal plans with provincial and national priorities. Nonetheless, there remains a need for a more structured and binding coordination framework that not only harmonises government programmes but also aligns financial and human resources with development priorities in a more systematic manner. Furthermore, Tafeni (2024:121) emphasises that overcoming the current limitations of the DDM will require sustained political will, robust institutional arrangements, and consistent resource mobilisation. Institutional strengthening at municipal level, coupled with support from provincial and national counterparts, is essential. Moreover, the long–term success of the DDM hinges on the development and implementation of a robust and reliable funding model, which is critical for translating integrated plans into tangible outcomes.

It can be deduced that while some of the anticipated benefits of the DDM have begun to materialise, its full potential has yet to be realised. Nevertheless, the DDM remains a credible and pragmatic mechanism for advancing national development priorities at the local level. To prevent it from becoming a purely aspirational concept, deliberate and sustained efforts must be made to institutionalise it effectively, ensure adequate resourcing, and foster a culture of joint planning and accountability across all spheres of government.

Enhancing Coalition Governance Stability: Scenario Planning and Evidence–Based Decision–Making for a New Governance Era

Given the rise of coalition governments and new governance context, it is crucial for the Republic to strategically position itself within this evolving and increasingly complex multi–party system. The growing

coalition landscape, particularly at municipal level, has introduced significant instability into governance. Frequent coalition changes disrupt strategic planning, delay service delivery, and erode public trust. Municipalities, as key service delivery agents, struggle to maintain continuity amid leadership shifts and policy reversals.

On 21 May 2024 the Local Government: Municipal Structures Amendment Bill, 2024 (COGTA, 2024c) was published for public comments by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. It is intended that the promulgation of the Bill will take place before the 2026 Local Government Elections. The Bill seeks to create a legislative framework to guide the establishment and governance of coalition governments while also implementing systems to reduce general challenges associated with coalitions.

Consistent with the foundational principles of the Government of National Unity contained in the Statement of Intent (SoI), evidence-based decision-making needs to be embraced to navigate new governance. Key tools in this regard include the following:

· **Scenario Planning**: Preparing strategic responses to a range of political outcomes.
· **Real-Time Data Analytics**: Monitoring service delivery and public sentiment for quick, informed action.
· **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning**: Creating feedback loops to align coalition partners and improve performance.
· **Stakeholder Engagement**: Ensuring inclusive consultation with political actors, civil society, and the private sector.
· **Institutionalised Frameworks**: Establishing clear protocols and agreements to foster accountability and reduce political disruption.

To enhance stability in coalition governance, South Africa must adopt a forward-looking and evidence-based approach that anticipates political shifts and mitigates their impact on service delivery. Scenario planning enables policymakers to prepare for a range of coalition outcomes, while real-time data and robust monitoring systems support agile, informed decision-making. By institutionalising these practices and fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement, government can strengthen accountability, reduce governance disruptions, and ensure that developmental priorities remain on track despite political volatility.

Relationship Between the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System and National Planning

The GWM&E system plays a vital role in supporting national planning in South Africa. At its core, the M&E system ensures that government programmes and projects are aligned with the country's long-term strategic objectives, particularly those outlined in the NDP. By maintaining this alignment, the M&E system helps to keep national development efforts focused and consistent over time.

A critical function of the GWM&E system is tracking the implementation of national plans. It provides structured mechanisms to systematically monitor progress, allowing the government to assess whether development initiatives are achieving their intended outcomes. This tracking capability is essential for identifying areas where interventions may be succeeding or falling short. The GWM&E system also strengthens evidence-based planning. The data and insights generated through monitoring and evaluation activities inform future planning cycles, highlighting successes, exposing challenges, and revealing areas that require adjustment. This evidence-driven approach leads to more informed, adaptive, and responsive policymaking, ensuring that plans remain relevant in a changing environment.

Enhancing accountability is another key contribution of the GWM&E system. Through the production of regular performance reports and evaluations, it holds government departments and agencies accountable for delivering on their national development commitments. In doing so, it fosters a culture of responsibility and transparency across the public sector. Moreover, the GWM&E system promotes resource efficiency by assessing the relevance, efficiency, and impact of programmes and projects. This evaluation ensures that public resources are used wisely and directed towards initiatives that yield tangible developmental results aligned with national priorities.

Institutionalising learning is another important benefit of a robust GWM&E system. By systematically capturing lessons from both past and ongoing initiatives, the system allows national planners to refine strategies, improve implementation processes, and avoid repeating previous mistakes. This culture of continuous learning is essential for long-term development success. The GWM&E system strengthens coordination across the three spheres of government. In linking national, provincial, and local levels of planning and execution, it fosters collaboration and coherence in

pursuit of South Africa's developmental goals. This integration ensures that all levels of government work together towards common objectives, maximising the impact of national planning efforts. The GWM&E system is thus critical for the effective national planning in South Africa. It provides the tools necessary for strategic alignment, tracking, accountability, resource efficiency, learning, and coordination, thereby enhancing the government's ability to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

Despite the points mentioned above, Motingoe (2010:12) remarked that the Performance Management System (PMS) serves as the tool for implementing Integrated Development Plans in municipalities. Collectively, GWM&E and PMS create a comprehensive performance management architecture that reinforces good governance, strengthens planning, and supports continuous improvement across all spheres of government. The difference between these performance measurement tools lies in their scope. The PMS is a micro-management tool used by municipalities to support the achievement of local priorities as contained in the IDP, whereas GWM&ES offers broader information, such as the performance of departments and municipalities in implementing the Government's Programme of Action (GPoA) across the three spheres. In other words, GWM&ES provides a comprehensive overview of performance management at the national level.

Persistent Obstacles for Coherent National Planning in South Africa

A key challenge in South Africa's national planning landscape is the persistent lack of effective coordination mechanisms. Ali and Haapasalo (2023:60) caution that coordination system that relies solely on voluntary cooperation between stakeholders lacks the enforcement mechanisms necessary to overcome entrenched institutional silos and competing priorities, which continue to hinder effective intergovernmental collaboration.

The Medium-Term Development Plan 2024–2029 issued by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, highlight the importance of aligning plans with realistic resource allocations. It notes that planning in the absence of sufficient budgeting and implementation capacity, has limited impact on actual developmental progress (DPME, 2025:9). This reflects a systemic disconnect between planning and fiscal frameworks. Furthermore,

Maonei and Shava (2023:769) identify persistent barriers such as fragmented planning processes, weak inter-sphere coordination between national, provincial, and local governments, and limited information-sharing platforms. These obstacles result in duplication of efforts, misaligned priorities, and inefficient service delivery. The lack of a centralised database or integrated planning tool exacerbates these issues by impeding evidence-based decision-making and hindering the synchronisation of development initiatives across different spheres of government.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Municipal planning in South Africa is a cornerstone of developmental governance and a vital mechanism for translating the aspirations of the Constitution into tangible socio-economic outcomes. As this chapter has demonstrated, planning is not a stand-alone function but a dynamic, intergovernmental process that must be responsive, integrated, and forward-looking. Through coordinated efforts across all spheres of government, municipal planning can unlock the potential for inclusive development, spatial transformation, and efficient service delivery. However, realising this potential requires strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing intergovernmental collaboration, and ensuring that planning frameworks are not only aligned but also informed by community needs and grounded in evidence. The way forward demands that municipalities embrace innovation in planning, institutionalise robust monitoring and evaluation systems, and foster greater accountability and transparency.

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Chapter 2

Municipal Integrated Development Planning

Sanet Ouwencamp

IDP Manager, City of Matlosana

Abstract

Integrated Development Planning (IDP) can be regarded as a crucial framework for municipal governance in South Africa, shaping the political landscape beyond 2024. Local, district and metropolitan municipalities need to adapt to new political dynamics attributable to the establishment of coalition governments across provinces and a Government of National Unity, which marks a turning point in governance. This chapter examines how, in this changing environment, IDPs can function as a strategic and stabilising tool. It offers a comprehensive summary of the objectives and importance of IDPs, highlighting their role in promoting integrated, sustainable and responsible planning processes. It achieves this using a desktop analysis of the relevant literature and secondary data from related research. IDPs are portrayed as being essential to improving governance and resource allocation while bringing local objectives in line with national and provincial objectives. Fundamental concepts like sustainability, integration and inclusivity are emphasised as the foundation of successful IDP procedures.

To examine its applicability in the framework of coalition-led governance, a succinct synopsis of the historical development and present situation of IDPs in South Africa is presented. In addition, the structured phases and steps of IDP formulation and implementation required to meet complex planning issues are delineated. The chapter also examines how IDPs align with the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP), emphasising the necessity of converting strategic objectives into quantifiable results. Effective community engagement techniques and methods for fostering cooperation and trust between stakeholders and municipalities are scrutinised. The chapter addresses sectoral integration and horizontal cooperation amongst municipal departments, including

budgeting, human resources, and spatial planning. Lastly, it outlines frequent challenges encountered during the IDP process, such as lack of resources, interference from politicians, and community indifference, and provides solutions.

Keywords: coalition governance, community participation, integrated development planning, local democracy, municipal governance

Introduction

This chapter investigates the role of Integrated Development Planning (IDP) in promoting stability, sustainability, and effective service delivery within South Africa's changing municipal governance landscape beyond 2024. In order to ensure coordinated and participatory governance, IDPs are becoming more and more important in coordinating national, provincial, and local development priorities as coalition governments and a Government of National Unity come into power. The overall contribution of the chapter is to show how IDPs can be strategically employed to improve developmental outcomes and stabilise municipalities led by coalitions. The research question, "How can Integrated Development Planning improve governance and service delivery in South African municipalities?" was posed during this analysis.

The chapter examines patterns of governance opportunities and challenges in coalition municipalities using case evidence and existing literature, utilising Grounded Theory as the theoretical framework. The study's foundation is a qualitative desktop analysis of secondary data from reliable media sources, government publications, and scholarly research. It aims to demonstrate that despite the challenges that coalitions present, well-run IDPs can serve as stabilising forces that promote accountability, public participation, and innovation in service delivery. To accomplish these objectives, crucial mechanisms are required, such as coalition agreements, stakeholder engagement, better financial management, and the professionalisation of the civil service. Despite the opportunities and risks associated with coalition governments, the chapter makes the case that municipalities can achieve more inclusive and sustainable governance by prioritising integrated, participatory, and accountable development planning.

Political Ideological Perspectives to Government's Role in Development

An exposition of the role of government in development is thus case sensitive, implying that the particular socio-economic and political dynamics (e.g. dominant political ideology and system of government) and the history of a particular country (e.g. colonialism and wars) should be considered to make sense of current events and trends.

An exposition of the role of government in development is case sensitive, implying that the particular socio-economic and political dynamics and the history of a particular country should be considered to make sense of current events and which contend that major events such as the French and American revolutions guided political ideological traditions in the Western world. Similarly, trends and events in the Middle and Far East placed governments on a different socio-political and development trajectory. Cohen (2008), Freeden (1996), and Vincent (2004) insist that ideological perspectives are extremely significant to make sense of political thinking and systems of government. However, they concur that ideological perspectives are complex and cannot be easily categorised or distinguished from other political ideas.

Purpose of IDPs in Government's Planning Architecture and their Importance for Municipal Governance

According to Pretorius and Schurink (2007), post-apartheid South Africa faces notable challenges in ensuring that municipalities deliver the best possible services to communities. From 1995, integrated development planning within the new co-operative system of government became the de facto planning instrument for municipalities (Binns & Nel, 2002). Nkomo (2017) asserts that coalition governments that arose after 1994 tend to create more transparent and accountable governments than single-party governments. This is because of coalition partners from other political parties that are more likely to hold one another responsible, making sure that they fulfil their collective pledges to the voters (Booysen, 2018).

Sikander (2015:175) highlights that integrated development planning is grounded on the "theory of decentralised governance". It extends community choice and encourages local decision-making regarding development needs and priorities. By permitting local communities to participate in their own affairs and by facilitating

closer contact between national and local authorities, decentralisation aids a responsive administration to local needs. This fosters the legitimacy of council decisions and facilitates a sense of ownership for development programmes. It also empowers communities to actively embark on self-help initiatives (Sikander, 2015:174).

Within the framework of decentralised and cooperative governance, the IDP promotes representative democracy in addition to development at local level (Vatala, 2005:71). It can be deduced from the above deliberations that the role of local government has evolved to incorporate a strong developmental and local democracy focus. Both of these foci are supposed to be accommodated in the IDPs of municipalities. The IDP should serve as a strategic development planning instrument and be designed after consultation with local communities.

Core Principles of the IDP

The IDP is a coordinated, inclusive, and participatory process that unites different planning tools, stakeholders, and sectors to advance democratic values, accountability, efficient service delivery, and sustainable development. Dahl (2015:45) opines that democracy constitutes the most stable form of government since it safeguards fundamental human rights, individual human development, the protection of personal interests, political equality, peace and prosperity. Consequently, it should represent the "democratic ideal". Gueli et al. (2007:93) maintain that the integrated aspect of IDPs is associated with adequately aligned and coordinated planning. A significant aspect of integration is the application of the most suitable methodologies to facilitate alignment and coordination across departments, sectors and all levels of government.

Rauniyar and Kanbur (2009) argue that inclusive development strategies emerged after the previous United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were implemented. To promote more equitable and sustainable growth outcomes, the inclusion concept aims to guarantee that historically marginalised and underrepresented groups are actively included in development processes. Sustainability stands as an essential component which extends beyond basic inclusion principles. Sustainable development requires balancing immediate service delivery requirements with long-term environmental and economic and social needs. Planning and implementation processes for internally displaced people need to incorporate sustainability

principles to guarantee that current development projects meet needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. Sustainability increases the effectiveness and duration and importance of local development projects. Democratic governance receives additional enhancement through the establishment of long-term prosperity foundations and community empowerment and proper management of public resources (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

Legislative accountability and monitoring are crucial for long-term democratic stability, and the IDP's participatory process is statutory. By fostering legitimacy and public support for laws and government actions, public participation helps to maintain democratic stability (De Villiers, 2001:5). Moreover, the consolidation of democratic stability depends on legislative accountability along with structured monitoring systems. The IDP framework's participatory process fulfils a statutory purpose of promoting legitimacy and public trust in governmental decision-making, as De Villiers (2001:5) highlights. In addition to improving the substantive quality of local planning, meaningful public participation strengthens the fundamentals of democratic practice by fostering wider public support for governance procedures.

As coalition governments encourage greater representation of diverse populations within a municipality, all political parties in a coalition are driven by the need to satisfy the needs of their respective communities. Every political party has unique goals and issues (Masina, 2021). By establishing coalition governments, these parties can ensure that different points of view are considered throughout the governance process. Coalition governments are undoubtedly more accountable and transparent, with openness at the core of every process, because all parties want transparent and cooperative governance (Khumalo & Netswera, 2020).

Overview of the Evolution and Current State of IDP in South Africa

When municipal planning was introduced in South Africa in the 1930s, local sphere planning was generally executed on "a racially-segregated basis and within a top-down apartheid superstructure" (DPLG, 2000:12). The decision-making authority was seldom delegated to local authorities, which led to the marginalisation and exclusion of civil society.

Fortunately, the system of governance has evolved to accommodate a more decentralised and co-operative model. In this regard, Fitzgerald et al. (1997) and Gumede (2009) argue that between the 1990 and 1994 elections, a distinctive viewpoint about the post-apartheid development route was perceived. In the transitional phase from the early 1990s, the concept of integrated development planning began to develop. This developing concept of integrated development planning was rooted in traditions within more contemporary planning theory and in the New Public Management paradigm (DPLG, 2000b:13). Development planning thus became more decentralised and gained a local democracy focus. In this respect, IDPs embody a broadening of scope and a more inclusive approach to local planning. This shift is characterised by the movement from the conventional "master planning" tradition of control and forecasting to a more multidimensional, strategic planning approach in response to local development concerns (Odendaal, 2007:68).

Van der Waldt (2007:52) emphasises the necessity for municipalities to collaborate with local communities to identify more sustainable means of meeting their needs and improving the quality of their lives. It can also be argued that the inclusive nature of IDPs generally improves community ownership of developmental priorities and interventions. Coalition administrations in South Africa also encourage the participation of a broad spectrum of political parties and interests, leading to better representation and inclusion of everyone and a more comprehensive picture of society (Thusi & Ndebele, 2024). Hence, meaningful participation of communities should be promoted in all phases of municipal IDPs.

Phases in the Development and Implementation of IDPs

Van der Waldt (2007:103) reasons that the phases of the IDP aid situational analysis and that these phases should be viewed as highly interrelated and interdependent. This implies that any change in any one phase will in all likelihood also affect subsequent phases. The interrelated and interdependent nature of phases implies that all phases should be executed to bring municipalities closer to development objectives and targets (DPLG, 2006:152).
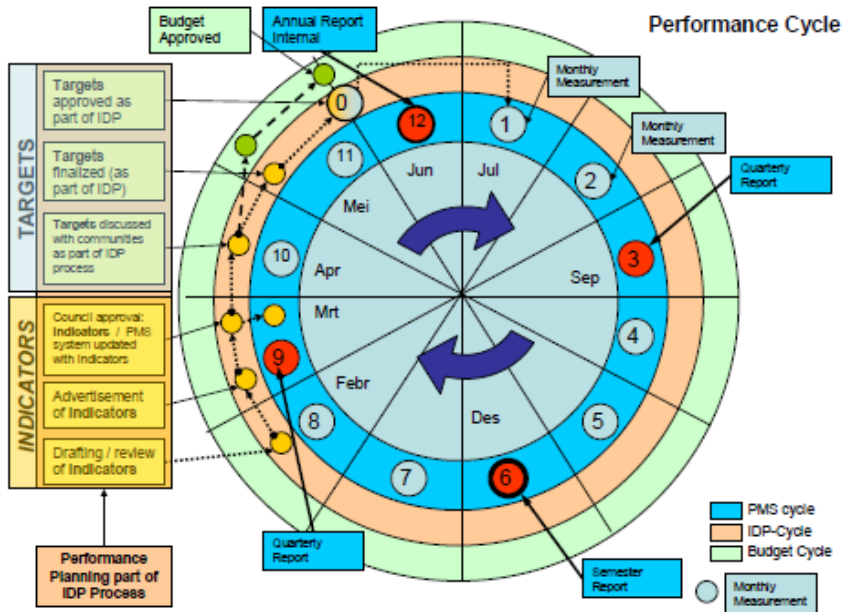
Figure 2.1: Example of a typical IDP cycle. Source: Swellendam
          Local Municipality (2024)

Figure 2.1 reflects the integrated nature of the IDP cycle (indicated in blue) within the performance management and budget cycles of a municipality. Each phase in the IDP cycle is briefly outlined below.

Phase 1: analysis

According to Venter (2018:113), the analysis phase of the IDP primarily focuses on the existing situation within a municipal area. Such a situational study includes the internal (organisational) as well as external environments. Political, social, economic, legal, and technological issues are considered in the analysis of the external environment, and the internal environment takes into account factors like a municipality's structures, management style, resources, and leadership (Van der Waldt & Knipe, 2001:17).

Phase 2: strategies

Phase two comprises the formulation of the municipal vision to aid the purpose of development planning and the particular identity of the municipality (Thompson & Strickland, 1998:4). The vision can be regarded as a roadmap of a municipality's development outlook

or the future position it anticipates. The vision should subsequently be operationalised by recommending specific strategies. According to Roussouw et al. (2003:99), strategic objectives can be regarded as the end results (outcomes) that a municipality wants to realise, while strategies are the methods and means by which it wants to achieve these objectives. It is only when strategies are sufficiently formulated that municipal officials can obtain a clear picture of the nature of particular projects that should be executed to implement these strategies.

Phase 3: projects

Phase 3 involves finding and creating initiatives that will help to put the techniques developed in Phase 2 into practice. It also includes the design of particular specifications of projects for implementation (Venter, 2018:113). These projects should be clearly aligned with priority issues (Phase 1) and strategic objectives (Phase 2). Projects need to be distinct in the following areas, according to Venter (2018:113): "Target group (beneficiaries), the area of the project, the dates of start and completion, the people responsible for managing the project, the project budget, and the funding sources." Additionally, the DPLG (DPLG, 2001:12) maintains that it is essential that particular performance targets and indicators are formulated to assess both the performance and the impact of municipal IDP projects.

Phase 4: integration

Once the projects have been identified, categorised and prioritised, the municipality must confirm that they are adequately integrated with the development vision statement, strategic objectives and strategies. Projects also need to be aligned with institutional realities such as staff capacity, the availability of adequate resources and the political commitment of councillors. Projects furthermore need to be scheduled in a logical way to ensure that their timing corresponds with priority needs. To create a well-coordinated and integrated development plan of action, projects must also be coordinated in terms of their contents and locations (DPLG, 2000:17).

Phase 5: approval

The last stage comprises the municipal council approving and adopting the final IDP. All interested parties and stakeholders, including those from other branches of government, should be given the chance to offer feedback on the draft plan. Transparency and

a solid foundation of legitimacy, support, and relevance are thus guaranteed (Rauch, 2002:12). A copy of the final IDP and the process plan should be sent to the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for local government in the provincial executive for evaluation within ten days after the council's approval and adoption. The MEC must assess whether the IDP complies with the requirements of relevant legislation and is aligned with the provincial growth and development plan.

Aligning the IDP with Top-layer Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans

A critical element in the effective implementation of municipal development strategies is the alignment of the IDP with the top-layer Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP). The IDP articulates the strategic priorities and developmental objectives of the municipality (Reddy, 2010), while the SDBIP operationalises these priorities by detailing measurable service delivery targets and corresponding budgetary allocations (National Treasury, 2007). Alignment between these instruments ensures that strategic goals are translated into actionable projects and that financial resources are directed appropriately to achieve developmental outcomes. Such coherence strengthens accountability, facilitates effective monitoring and evaluation, and enhances the municipality's ability to fulfil its constitutional mandate for service delivery and development (Van der Waldt, 2019).

Community Participation in IDPs to Foster Trust and Collaboration Between the Municipality and the Community

The legacy of apartheid has produced historical governance challenges in South Africa. These historical challenges, in particular, are spatial disintegration, imbalanced distribution of resources, and increasing backlogs in service delivery. To rectify the situation, the national government has been promoting the development role of local governments through an integrated development planning approach. Smith and Vawda (2003:28) assert that the IDP is not only a developmental local government instrument but also a "community-participation promoting programme".

According to Freysen (1998:249), public participation requires the participation of the community in a variety of governmental policy-making activities such as prioritising the budget, establishing

the service levels and all other matters impacting community well–being. Public participation therefore, brings about democracy. As clients of local government, community members are inherently more receptive to public needs than government officials. Public participation entails that members of the community should be engaged in the decision–making process (Du Toit et al., 1998:124). It thus builds civil society partnerships and raises awareness of development concerns through the strengthening of government institutions (Gonzalez de Asis & Acuña–Alfaro, 2002). Considering the power division that maintains the balance of power amongst the political parties, coalition administrations are an inevitable feature of municipal government in South Africa (Thusi & Ndebele, 2024).

Structures and Mechanisms for IDP Participation

A means by which local government ensures democratic governance and accountability is through public participation. As a result, municipalities must interact with their communities in an organised manner. A municipality must establish a strategy for public involvement or stakeholder engagement, according to the Revised IDP Framework for Municipalities (COGTA, 2012:42). Such a strategy should, amongst other things, specify the various ways in which the municipality's stakeholders will be involved and allocate them according to their areas of interest. Through the use of local democratic institutions like ward committees and public meetings, participation enables the public's voice to be heard in matters pertaining to local government. Thus, when the local community determines their needs and develops a strategy for meeting those needs, participation begins (Mubangizi, 2010:153).

IDP planners are expected to create alternate forms of community participation in light of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID–19) pandemic and other realities, such as potentially dangerous public areas brought on by escalating public dissatisfaction in communities. New methods of interaction and consultation had to take the place of in–person, face–to–face sessions. Structures and procedures for public participation must change to accommodate the so–called "new normal" in the context of municipal governance. Numerous studies have shown that electronic media is the most effective communication tool for public engagement (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2020). When in–person meetings are not feasible, electgronic media can be effectively utilised in almost any setting and situation. According to studies such as these, local governments should implement a

mixed-mode of involvement by employing a range of engagement techniques for local democracy. Short Message Services (SMS), Facebook messages, WhatsApp group communications, electronic mail (e-mail), and virtual Zoom presentations are a few examples of these techniques.

Strategic Integration and Coordination in the IDP Process

Development planning's integrated approach aims to align the interests of all parties involved who have a significant impact on how a given developmental goal is carried out. It has its roots in a multifaceted environment that includes planning procedures at the municipal, provincial, national, and even international levels.

Van der Waldt (2007:175) states that integrated development planning is multifaceted and requires the close collaboration of stakeholders and the effective alignment of planning in all spheres of government. Such alignment should be fostered when employing a national planning framework. In the case of South Africa, the National Planning Framework (NPF) intends to accommodate these dimensions by incorporating and aligning all planning dimensions. The Cabinet approved the NPF in 2001 to guarantee integrated planning and more effective implementation. It has manifested in a malfunction between local sphere planning and sectoral departments at national and provincial level, consequently having a direct impact on local communities. It outlines cycles of policy strategising, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, development of programmes and public announcement of programmes (Van der Waldt, 2019:6). In addition to the NPF, the National Planning Commission, during the Presidency, developed the National Development Plan: Vision 2030 (NDP) (NPC, 2011). The NDP is considered the de facto fundamental framework for development planning in this nation.

Alignment and coordination between all spheres, tiers and levels of government are essential to maintain the notion of "integrated" development planning. According to Van der Waldt (2019:6), Chapter 13 of the NDP entitled "Building a Capable State" has particular significance for municipalities as the decentralised agencies of the state to operationalise development plans. Municipalities are responsible for the localisation of national development plans by incorporating them in their IDPs, inclusive of spatial planning, infrastructure development and the provisioning of basic services. This role is complicated by the fact that IDPs must also reflect local

needs and priorities. Consequently, both top-down – national, and provincial planning – as well as bottom-up, grassroots planning should be used to define IDPs.

The alignment of provincial development planning and municipal IDPs commences with the respective State of Province Addresses (SOPA) shortly after the annual State of the Nation Address (SONA). In the SOPA, the respective Premiers must outline their development vision and priorities for the province. As the provincial equivalent of the National Government Programme of Action (GPoA), the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDSs) are derived from the SOPA and serve as a broad strategic framework within which all metropolitan, district and local municipalities must design their respective IDPs. The MEC responsible for local government must ensure that there is sufficient alignment between the respective IDPs of municipalities and the respective PGDSs (Van der Waldt, 2019:9).

For planning to be truly integrated, it must be integrated in both the vertical dimension across the various branches of government (national, provincial and local) and across jurisdictions in the horizontal dimension. From a grassroots, bottom-up vantage point, municipal IDPs need to be aligned with district municipalities which should in turn align with provincial plans.

District municipalities have definite responsibilities regarding coordination and alignment, and also to the distribution of basic planning information to warrant the orientation of local municipalities' IDPs. Horizontal co-operation within the local government sphere amongst neighbouring municipalities and in particular between municipalities whose activities are interdependent is essential (Rydin, 2012; Sarker, 2006).

The IDPs can thus be regarded as strategic planning frameworks within municipalities, realising their developmental mandate in close consultation with local communities. This framework also serves as a means to integrate municipal development plans with provincial and national plans as well as broader international development frameworks. The IDP and the local economic development (LED) plan have to be aligned, giving added impetus to the design of a top-layer SDBIP. This more detailed operational plan is the support for community-based planning to guide municipal development projects (Van der Waldt, 2019:6).

Van der Waldt (2019:20) maintains that the IDP Implementation Toolkit designed by the Department of Social Development (2009:16), makes a significant contribution to facilitate cooperation and coordination between the respective spheres of government and build positive partnerships. As far as horizontal integration is concerned, a local municipality must liaise with neighbouring local municipalities as well as the district municipalities on issues such as coordination, local economic development, infrastructure development and maintenance, and other areas of concern. On a vertical level, municipalities should engage provincial government departments to foster alignment between sectoral programmes and their IDPs.

It is evident that provincial and national government are responsible for municipal oversight and the delivery of various government services in the local sphere such as clinics, police stations and schools. It is of utmost importance that municipalities align their IDPs with the programmes and policies of these departments. To guide municipalities on how to allocate their resources to meet local requirements, the provincial and national governments have to participate in the IDP process. It may also be necessary to engage other government actors such as state–owned enterprises, parastatals and agencies such as Eskom, the South African Social Security Agency and the National Development Agency.

Sectoral Integration in IDP

As a multi–sectoral framework, the IDP necessitates input from various stakeholders representing multiple sectors throughout its design and implementation processes. Intrinsically, the IDP is the outcome of a comprehensive participatory planning process where different sector plans are synthesised.

When putting together the IDP, municipalities must cover plans for the financial sector, LED and spatial development, as required by Section 26 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (as amended) (RSA, 2000). They also need to include a performance management system (PMS) plan, in line with Section 41 of the same Act. Water services development plans must also be included in the IDP, as required by Section 12 of the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 (as amended) (RSA, 1997a). Environmental responsibilities are just as crucial. Disaster management strategies must form part of the IDP, as set out in Section 53 of the Disaster Management Act 53 of 2002 (RSA, 2002). In line with Section 11(4)

(a)(ii) of the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) and the National Environmental Management: Waste Act 59 of 2008 (RSA, 2008), municipalities must ensure that integrated waste management strategies are incorporated into their plans.

According to Section 36 of the National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009 (RSA, 2009), Section 9 of the Housing Act 107 of 1997 (RSA, 1997b), and the White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of SA (DME, 1998), respectively, integrated transport plans, housing strategic plans, and electricity service delivery plans are additional requirements. Supplementary plans to take into consideration in the design and execution of municipal IDPs are the National Development Plan (NPC, 2011), the Urban Development Framework (DoH, 1997), and the Rural Development Framework (DALRRD, 1997). It is thus evident that IDPs are truly integrated in nature through the alignment of a wide range of sectoral plans. The vertical and horizontal alignment of national, provincial and local development plans further leads to the multidimensional nature of the design and execution of municipal IDPs. IDP decision-makers thus must ensure that the development plans are adequately aligned with national planning imperatives, that it truly reflects the needs and desires of local communities, and that it addresses the sector-specific planning requirements.

Action Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

The SDBIP gives effect to the IDP, and key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets should be set for each phase of the IDP process. These indicators will ensure regular planning, continuous monitoring, periodic measuring and reviewing performance of the model in terms of indicators and targets for efficiency, effectiveness and impact. Therefore, the performance assessment system will guarantee that all municipal managers, officials, and council members are held responsible for their activities, which should promote public participation and, in turn, service delivery. It is also necessary to include provisions for political monitoring of the IDP framework. Political supervision falls within the mandate of the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC). MPACs assist the municipal council in ensuring the efficient and effective use of municipal resources and in holding the executive and municipal administration accountable. Per the financial data, this committee examines the performance-related data based on the responsibilities

assigned to the municipality. To account for its execution in the MPAC interviews on the annual report, it is advised that the MPAC and senior management examine the IDP closely.

Common Challenges Faced in the IDP Process

According to Davids et al. (2009), the IDP process has several risks, such as being top-down, lacking local ownership, being impractical, and generally lacking in project management expertise and political commitment. Many municipalities find it difficult to carry out their constitutional development mandates, according to reports from the South African Cities Network, the Auditor-General, and programmes like the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (2009) and the Back-to-Basics campaign (2015) (Van der Waldt, 2019). Deep-seated resentment within local communities is often reflected in the widespread service delivery protests that frequently follow these systemic flaws. In light of this, tackling the issues facing South Africa's local government sector requires an understanding of coalition governance dynamics and how they affect municipal performance. The following disparities in the IDP process were derived from a robust literature review:

Inadequate public participation

Several studies conducted at South African municipalities have revealed the fact that public participation is inadequate in the IDP process (Mafunisa & Xaba, 2008; Maphunye & Mafunisa, 2008). Harrison (2008) confirms that municipalities are generally unable to conform to numerous prescripts in national legislation that encourage partnerships with communities. In addition, according to Mashamba (2008), municipal IDPs do not always represent the actual needs and priorities of communities. Instead of emphasising effective community participation, the IDP process concentrates on information transfer.

Lack of alignment

In theory, the IDP encourages strategic planning and execution. However, in reality this ideal is hampered by several problems. The IDP's alignment with sector plans is one of these problems. Reddy (2010) claims that the lack of vertical (between spheres) and horizontal (between different sectors such as housing, transport, energy, health and safety) government alignment impedes development processes in South Africa. The lack of alignment is compounded by

inadequate translation of national development policies and plans into local contexts.

Lack of institutional capacity

Another vital issue in the preparation of IDPs is the institutional, organisational and managerial capacity and competency of municipalities. Dale (2004) emphasises the need to take institutional capacity into account in the development process since weak institutional foundations, organisational deficiencies and bad management reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts. There are rising concerns regarding the capacity of local governments (Goss & Coetzee, 2007), institutional arrangements (Mashamba, 2008), synchronisation and cooperation amongst sectoral departments (Pieterse et al., 2008). Lack of capacity affects the "quality of participation of a given group", according to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:78), and Ngwenya (2002:2) emphasises that "uneven distribution of capacity involves uneven availability of information and means for participation."

Deficient development initiatives

According to Lelope (2007) and Malefane (2009), the slow pace of service delivery in executing municipal projects and the IDPs, has encouraged violent service delivery demonstrations by communities. Surveys have recommended that the implementation of programmes and projects has been insufficient, time-consuming, has had inadequate impact on the lives of beneficiaries and in general lacks sustainability (Asmah-Andon, 2009; Lelope, 2007; Mashamba, 2008; Tshikovha, 2006). It can be maintained that development initiatives are often deficient in sustainability at a local level.

Lack of monitoring and review

In general, IDPs lack proper reviewing, monitoring and evaluation procedures which lead to failures and disillusionment (Davids et al., 2009). Harrison (2008) claims that the appraisal of the implementation of the IDP process in South African local governments is challenging, mainly because of the complex nature of IDPs.

Lack of understanding of governance processes

The Centre for Public Participation (2007:6) states that a lack of understanding of governance processes further extends the

marginalisation of disadvantaged groups as they find it difficult to communicate their views. This decreases their chances of being heard.

Language barrier

Another factor that hampers the ability of the public to participate is language (Ngwenya, 2002; Trotter, 2005). If there is no translation of IDP documents or meetings, effective participation cannot take place.

Political power games

Rubenstein (as cited in Davids, 2005:28), reasons that structures instituted for public participation in the policy process may cause unnecessary competition and conflict between current local structures and those launched for public participation. Trotter (2005:6) is of the view that "political power games", which guarantee that certain people are not recognised in policy processes are challenging to public participation. The Centre for Public Participation (2007:6) adds corruption as another element of political power games that hinders public participation in governance processes.

Government officials impeding the process

Lando (1999:113) advocates that government officials can become "an inhibitor" of public participation when public officials "anticipate problems and formulate policy solutions for the public to rubber stamp", as an alternative to engagement. He believes that the perception of these officials is that it is their role to formulate "the best solution" (Lando, 1999:113). According to Pithouse (2006:24), this method of formulating policies tends to be a "technocratic engagement with state power on the terms of state power." In theory, this suggests that the state determines the kind of involvement, the amount of participation needed, and the manner in which participation would take place. He draws attention to the possibility that this "technocratic" approach to policymaking could demobilise and marginalise regular people in the process.

"Gate-keeping"

According to Peter (1998:25), to prevent excessive engagement, the government may impose order on public participation. Colebatch (2002:31) augments that in such cases, the government's key focus is on "making organised activity stable and predictable", rather than deepening participation. Peter (1998:25) describes this phenomenon

as "gate-keeping". By restricting the time for participation, Peter (1998:25) considers that this would interest those engaged in the participation process to fast-track the participation process, consequently limiting the degree of public participation in decisions.

Reinforcement of current inequalities

An additional criticism of public participation is that it may support the current inequalities in society. Beyer et al. (2003:11) affirm that this may ensue where participation aids those who already have power, at the detriment of those without, by allocating "costs and benefits in accordance with the pre-existing local distribution of power". This assertion is reaffirmed by Taylor (2003), who states that while participation may aim to challenge current patterns of dominance by some individuals over others, it may also be used as a means of establishing these power disparities. Trotter (2005) believes that public participation can influence marginalised members of communities. Trotter (2005) further argues that these groups have limited resources and are also not likely to be well organised.

With the notable exception of the 1994 Government of National Unity, South African coalition governments have generally been described as ineffective and impeding efficient governance and service provision. Coalitions, according to scholars like Mofokeng et al. (2024), impede rather than advance good governance (Khambule, 2022). Furthermore, Matiwane (2023) argues that internal power struggles that compromise stability and operational effectiveness are the cause of coalition governments' ongoing failure nationwide. Under coalition governments, managing municipalities frequently necessitates striking a balance between the conflicting interests and egos of different political leaders, which increases the likelihood of corruption and undermines professionalism (Nkadimeng, 2023). Cities like Johannesburg, where complex political alliances have made decision-making difficult and unpredictable, are prime examples of the difficulties of coalition governance (Eligon, 2023). Political expediency frequently trumps sound governance and dependable service delivery in many coalition-led municipalities. This dynamic is demonstrated in the City of Tshwane, where a number of capital projects were ceremoniously announced but later shelved because of a lack of political oversight (Mpangalasane, 2020). The foundation of South Africa's decentralisation initiatives has been development planning, especially through the IDP, which aims to improve community involvement and change local governance (Hadingham,

2003). Despite the fact that many municipalities have created IDPs, there are still recurring issues with planning's institutional capacity, design, and implementation (Asha et al., 2013; Reddy, 2010).

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the essential function of the IDP in improving municipal governance within South Africa's complex political environment. It also demonstrated how IDPs function to support stable development alongside sustainable growth and inclusive development during the time of coalition governments and Governments of National Unity. The chapter described the systematic steps of IDP development and its relationship to the SDBIP and the need for sectoral integration and stakeholder engagement and interdepartmental coordination. The chapter analysed the governance problems that municipalities face including political interference, resource constraints and citizen disengagement while suggesting coalition management as a solution to enhance service delivery. The chapter demonstrated that coalition governments create governance difficulties yet enable wider community involvement and innovative solutions and better service delivery through strategic planning and collaborative leadership.

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Chapter 3

Spatial and Urban Planning

Ngoako J Mokoele
University of Limpopo

Abstract

South African urban spaces are shaped by the colonial and apartheid planning systems that were discriminatory, and which placed the non-white population in rural areas and townships. The new democratic dispensation ushered a renewed hope towards redressing apartheid relics such as racialised settlement patterns, informal settlement, spatial distortion and spatial fragmentation. However, the perpetuation of racialised inhabitants of informal settlements, low-cost housing and townships that are located away from the city centre after 31 years of democracy demonstrates some of the entrenched challenges facing urban planning. Additionally, the unprecedented rate of urbanisation, intensifying climate change effects such as heat waves, floods and drought, and the changing demographics in urban areas provoke a shift from conventional urban planning systems to cater for current urban realities by implementing suitable information and communication technologies (ICTs) to influence the planning praxis. The process of urbanisation has reshaped the outlook of South African cities and, thus, requires the adaption of integrated transport planning approaches. The adoption of technological model systems such as geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing and urban building energy models (UBEMs) to map the development activities of green agendas, brown agendas, integrated transport routes and biodiversity is at the core of municipal spatial and urban planning in South Africa. This chapter provides insights into the status of the South African cities and attempts for the regeneration of inner cities. It also reflects on the successes and failures in revitalising city centres, thereby providing planning approaches that are influenced by GIS and remote sensing towards urban planning and spatial development.

Keywords: city revitalisation, GIS, spatial development, technological model systems, transport planning, urban planning

Introduction

South Africa, like many other African countries, emerged under the auspices of colonial planning systems, which were fragmented, discriminatory and exploitative towards the non-white population (Mokoele, 2023). It can be argued that South Africa's spatial design was historically weaponised, and orchestrated the division and separation of communities through the ideology of racialisation and white supremacy (Forde, 2024). This assertion stems from the planning architecture employed in South Africa before 1994. Colonial and apartheid planning systems created divided settlements that were established through racial lines where non-white populations were not allowed to reside in cities and towns. Consequently, the task of the post-independence administration was to redress the harm caused by colonial and apartheid regimes. In response, the South African Government promulgated several acts and policy frameworks such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996), the Spatial Planning and Land-Use Management Act, 2013 (RSA, 2013), the Spatial Development Framework (DALRRD, 2023), and the National Spatial Development Perspective (The Presidency, 2006) to address urban challenges (Mbambo & Agbola, 2020; Rachekhu et al., 2023).

During this period, local, district and metropolitan municipalities were confronted with urban challenges such as the mushrooming of informal settlements, informal sector economies, unprecedented urbanisation rates, changing urban demographics and shifting climatic conditions. Especially the unprecedented rate of urbanisation in South African cities changed the urban landscape with issues like urban expansion, traffic congestion, unorganised informal economies, unplanned informal settlements, high energy consumption, poor waste management, the reduction of green spaces, and water challenges (Anand & Deb, 2024; Mokoele, 2023). Therefore, spatial planning became a vital instrument that enabled municipal councils to respond to these challenges and trends. It provides local decision-makers with the necessary perspectives regarding local development and the growth of urban areas. Given the complex and integrated nature of demographical and environmental challenges, Jooste et al. (2019) argue that cities and towns need to demonstrate resilience to respond to urbanisation, population growth and environmental challenges like climate change. This chapter will contribute towards a more inclusive and participatory approach towards spatial and urban planning in order to provide

efficient management of waste, stormwater, energy consumption and emission, and the use of technology to map future development initiatives in South African cities.

Theoretical Perspectives to Actor Dynamics in Spatial and Urban Planning

The chapter adopted actor–network theory (ANT) as a theoretical perspective to analyse the dynamics between actors involved in spatial and urban planning (Onyenechere et al., 2023). The theory posits that in the social and natural world, things are forever changing and require the establishment and maintenance of a network of actors to effectively respond to these changes. ANT was developed by Latour et al. in the 1980s in an attempt to understand the social construction of laboratory practices (Onyenechere et al., 2023; Quinn et al., 2025). The theory recognises the interaction between people, objects and organisations in a system. ANT is an approach that can take into account the nuanced interactions that happen within the field of social enterprise development (Quinn et al., 2025). The theory postulates that for any action to occur, many other actions must take place as well. This means that ANT emphasises the need for collective and coordinated efforts to address the complex nature of urban challenges (Onyenechere et al., 2023). This means that within a system such as a city or urban area, there is no actor that acts independently, but it is influenced by the input and support of other actors in a network. According to Onyenechere et al. (2023), network actors need to contribute to others by sharing expertise, resources, and infrastructure. ANT can thus be regarded as a type of post–structuralist semiotics that helps to track how a particular spatial reality comes to exist and persist.

Evolution of Spatial and Urban Planning in South Africa

Spatial planning is mainly concerned with the understanding of the relationship between land use and infrastructure components. It aims to ensure the coordination and management of spatial development (inclusive of both rural and urban development), focusing on the relationship between people, space and the environment (Akinola, 2015; Forde, 2024). On the other hand, urban planning can be understood as the design and management of urban spaces to ensure that urban spaces are liveable, sustainable and equitable

environments (Forde, 2024). This means that urban planning involves balancing the social, economic and environmental needs of the areas.

Spatial and urban planning are important as they ensure that there is efficient and effective land-use planning and proper infrastructure such as road construction, green infrastructure and streetlights. Spatial planning considers and manages demographic trends and environmental concerns. In contrast, urban planning predominantly focuses on ensuring that there is efficient and effective urban design, housing and community development. Spatial planning is anchored to the principles of spatial integration, sustainability, participatory approach, coordination, evidence-based decision-making and holistic approach. These tenets are significant in spatial planning to guide the development of spatial plans such as the Integrated Development Plan and the Spatial Development Framework. On the other hand, urban planning is encored on issues such as sustainability, compact city, resilience and adaptability and mixed land use development in urban areas. This guides the development of urban planning to influence the responsiveness of the area towards the needs of the community and environment. Urban planners are responsible for the development of the Municipal Spatial Development Framework, the Integrated Urban Development Framework, the National Spatial Development Framework, and urban policies, amongst others.

Colonial and apartheid planning systems

South African cities and urban areas continue to show fragments of unreformed urban centres (Monama et al., 2022; Rachekhu et al., 2023). The high commuting cost, informal settlements, existence of townships, slums and planning that exclude the poor from cities demonstrate an undying DNA of colonial and apartheid planning systems. Before 1994, South African spatial planning was guided by an extensive legislative framework such as the Group Areas Act 1 of 1950 and the Urban Areas Act 21 of 1923, which was later reinforced by the ideology of a separate development approach (Mbambo & Agbola, 2020; Mokoele, 2023; Monama et al., 2022). This ideology, according to Mbambo and Agbola (2020), saw the forceful removal of black people who flocked to the cities in search of better services and improved quality of life. This form of rural-urban migration stems from the land dispossession that took place in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The enactment of the Urban Areas Act of

1923 recommended the clearance of informal settlements in urban areas where black people lived (Mbambo & Agbola, 2020). Later, in the 1950s, the Act was reinforced by the enactment of the Groups Areas Act to force the establishment of separate towns for different racial groups such as white, black, coloured and Indian people. This demonstrates that the spatial planning, which was orchestrated through a legal framework during the colonial and apartheid era was purposefully crafted to exclude the non-white population in cities, thereby resulting in the establishment of townships. Consequently, many black people who left rural areas commenced residing in townships such as Soweto, Khayilitsha, Umlazi, KwaMashu, Seshego and Soshanguve. Therefore, the significance of spatial and urban planning was reinforced by the former separate development approach. This period was characterised by strict promulgation and enforcement of laws and policies against non-white populations in urban areas (du Plessis, 2014; Mbambo & Agbola, 2020; Mokoele, 2023). However, successive events have influenced the change in the spatial planning practised during the apartheid era. For example, the Women's March on 9 August 1956 to the Union Building can be seen as a major turning point towards the promotion of free movement in South Africa.

During the apartheid era, spatial planning was understood as using a master planning approach to urban planning to manage urbanisation and maintain racialised settlement patterns. However, the master planning approach was heavily criticised for its inability to address urban growth and the fact that it was static (du Plessis, 2014). Despite these criticisms, master planning during the apartheid era achieved its intended objective, which was to manage black urbanisation and keep the non-white population outside the city centres. Pertaining to the black population who managed to migrate to the fringes of the cities or townships, they were provided with inferior or no services at all. Therefore, the form and structure of South African cities and towns have been influenced by what can be referred to as 'high apartheid' in the period from the 1940s to the 1970s (du Plessis, 2014), which orchestrated the development of narrow streets, townships and settlements that are located far from the city.

Democratic spatial and urban planning

The post-1994 era is characterised by the realisation that planning should be used as a key tool to foster the reconstruction of the cities

and economies to redress the past colonial and apartheid setup (UN–Habitat, 2018). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996) (hereafter referred to as the Constitution) is supreme and was promulgated to redress the colonial and apartheid relics. The preamble of the Constitution states that the Constitution was adopted to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, principles, social justice and fundamental human rights. Entrenched with this preamble is that urban and spatial planning will now be implemented within the framework of democratic principles, inclusivity and equality. Section 25(5) of the Constitution continues to stipulate that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis. This provides the basis for spatial development and enables all citizens to access land even around the city, especially the non–white population that was denied through the control of the apartheid legislative framework.

Under the auspices of the Constitution, the democratic government promulgated the Spatial Planning and Land–Use Management Act (SPLUMA) 13 of 2013 (RSA, 2013) and the Development Facilitation Act 67 of 1995 (RSA, 1995), as well as an extensive regulatory framework, inclusive of the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF, 2025), the Spatial Development Framework (2022), and the National Spatial Development Framework (DALRRD, 2023). Collectively, the statutory and regulatory frameworks aim to establish a coherent and democratic spatial planning architecture. Section 3(b) of the SPLUMA states that the object of the Act is to ensure that the systems of spatial planning and land use management promote a social and inclusive economy. Subsection (b) of the Act provides for sustainable and efficient use of land. This provision requires a balance between development and growth in urban areas as well as the maintenance of the environmental health of these areas. Cooperative governance is at the core of achieving this balance. South Africa's system of cooperative governance refers to a constitutional and legislative framework that mandates all spheres of government, namely national, provincial, and local, to work together in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing manner to promote effective service delivery, development, and democratic governance. Chirisa et al. (2019) postulate that various statutory and non–statutory plans that have been established have tended to be reactionary and populist in nature. Therefore, the goodness of the

legal framework governing spatial planning and urban development in South Africa remains populist and reactionary.

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was officially implemented in 1994, shortly after South Africa's first democratic elections. The RDP focused on the investment in infrastructure and service delivery for all citizens regardless of race and location (du Plessis, 2014). The RDP focused on the increment of infrastructure investment and the provision of basic services. The central approach to infrastructure investment and service delivery was to establish a comprehensive spatial planning framework in urban areas. It adopted the notion of a "compact city", implying the densification and unification of urban fabric (du Plessis, 2014:72). The adoption of this approach meant that there would be a high density of people and a mixture of land uses such as economic and social activities. Furthermore, the promulgation of the Spatial Development Framework at the early stages of democracy produced Land Development Objectives, which represented the first step towards decolonising spatial planning in South Africa (du Plessis, 2014). This framework aimed to achieve more investment in the infrastructure while guiding the spatial patterns of growth and addressing the historical spatial imbalances. The promulgation of Spatial Planning and Land–use Management Act 16 of 2013, National Spatial Development Framework, Integrated Development Plan, Spatial Development Framework, Integrated Urban Development Framework demonstrate a commitment by the South African Government to reform and transform the spatial planning from the colonial and apartheid eras towards a more democratic and inclusive planning (Mokoele, 2022).

The Spatial Development Framework and National Spatial Development Framework are currently the primary frameworks that foster the promotion of infrastructure investment and harness the opportunities presented by the space economy to ensure effective and efficient spatial planning. These spatial planning instruments have been adopted and implemented to mediate a range of objectives such as attracting and guiding private and public infrastructure investments, protecting environmental resources, protecting inappropriate development and mitigating environmental risks (de Visser & Poswa, 2019). "If municipalities use their planning instruments to extend greater security of tenure to informal dwellers, it improves their connection to public services, their access to capital and makes life more dignified and predictable" (de Visser a&Poswa,

2019:2). These planning instruments provide municipalities with transformative tools for effective spatial planning to redress the relics bequeathed and created by apartheid administration.

Building Urban Resilience Through Efficient Infrastructure Planning

By 2023, approximately 68.82% of the South African population resided in urban areas. The United Nations projected that by the year 2030, 71.5% of South Africa's population will reside in urban areas (IUDF, 2025). Alarmingly, it was projected that by 2050, 8 in every 10 people will be forming an urban population (UN-Habitat, 2018). These projections show that the decline of green spaces, high production of waste and water use will continue as people look for places to stay and economic activities. The decline of green spaces in urban areas coupled with the dominance of hard surfaces has reduced the ability of cities to be resilient. This is because the reduction of green spaces reduces the absorption capacity of the surface in terms of runoff. These projections prompt or require proactive spatial planning and land-use management to ensure that the city remains functional and resilient.

According to Schoeman (2015), spatial planning aligns and interfaces with transport planning and environmental planning towards the attainment of sustainable planning and development. Furthermore, the rate of urbanisation will increase energy consumption because of an increase in the number of buildings (Mokoele, 2022; Utami & Susetyo, 2017). Furthermore, in most cities such as Polokwane, when it rains, most parts of the city are flooded, making it difficult for business to continue. In some cases, the water encroaches into the shops. This has always been associated with a lack of maintenance of drainage systems to flush the rainwater quickly. Therefore, the lack of green spaces within the cities, coupled with unmaintained drainage systems in cities makes it difficult to foster urban resilience.

Spatial and urban planning must guide the development and growth of South African cities. According to Chirisa et al. (2019), the unprecedented urbanisation was not marked or complemented by expansion in infrastructure development and investment, contributing to too many challenges such as informal settlements, land grabs and backyard dwellings. These issues deeply affect service delivery planning and provision (Utami & Susetyo, 2017). Interestingly, the increasing informal settlement establishment and

backyard dwellings take place within the context of reformed spatial planning systems and the yearly migration projections in South Africa.

Urban infrastructural planning is very important to ensure efficiency and climate resilience. According to Mokoele (2023), the generation of waste in cities continues to pose environmental and health hazards for people staying in urban areas. For example, in Polokwane City, the sewerage plant presents communities such as Legae la Batho, Emdo and Polokwane International Airports with a permanent smell that is unpleasant. These disparities contribute towards environmental injustice (Olatoye & Naidu, 2024).

According to Jooste et al. (2019), urban planning as a profession arose as people started gathering to bring resources, security and amenities closer to many people. South African cities are fast experiencing increasing traffic congestion, which is attributed to the overreliance on private vehicles, unreformed public transport systems and lack of integrated road networks. UN–Habitat (2018) posits that traditional urban planning has sought to increase efficiency and effective transport systems by creating wide roads and keeping their edges clear from footpaths or hawkers and traders. Apartheid architecture was complicated by high population growth and overreliance on private vehicles. Furthermore, the spatial distribution of urban settlements made it difficult to integrate cycling and footpaths to access the cities because of the distance between the settlements and the city centre.

Urban areas consume more than two-thirds of global energy and account for more than 60% of the overall carbon dioxide emission (Anand & Deb, 2024). According to Anand and Deb (2024), buildings in urban areas are responsible for approximately 80% of emissions. However, for the functioning of the city and urban areas, this energy import is necessary to drive economic activities. With South Africa's dependence on fossil fuels to generate electricity, this high consumption of energy is not sustainable and has the potential to deter the achievement of sustainable development. Therefore, with the projected urban population by 2030 and 2050, the consumption of energy and emissions will continue to rise in South Africa. According to Mokoele (2023), some institutions such as Netcare hospitals, hotels, and many households around Polokwane have retrofitted their parking and rooftops with solar panels to generate green energy. It should be noted that this energy transition was not attributed to the need to produce green energy but was the result

of *load-shedding*, which is a term for power cuts. This continues to demonstrate that spatial planning in South African cities does not seem to be taking the lead in terms of guiding energy transition, management of urbanisation, transport planning, environmental planning, waste management and energy use.

At a micro level, cities should implement the use of solar systems to operate government building lights, traffic lights and streetlights. This is because the lights of many buildings in the cities are permanently switched on, thereby increasing energy consumption (Mokoele, 2023). Therefore, the use of sensory lights in these buildings, that automatically switch off when the door closes but can be switched on if there is a person inside the building, can potentially reduce energy consumption. Furthermore, there is a need to change the nature of energy consumption by intensifying the use of solar geysers and retrofitting houses and company roofs with solar panels as alternatives towards the implementation of renewable energy in cities. Consequently, this will reduce the amount of energy consumed and emissions produced by buildings around the city. Therefore, the employment of a participatory approach where businesses and ordinary citizens participate in the transition to renewable energy becomes key towards environmental management and climate change mitigation.

Emerging Trends in Spatial and Urban Planning

South African cities are confronted with multifarious challenges such as high resource consumption (water, energy and land) and waste generation. Robbins and Culwick (2015) argue that to address these challenges in South African cities, the consumption patterns and production that characterise cities should be reconfigured to foster more efficient, sustainable and equitable growth paths. Given this context, some major trends in spatial and urban planning are outlined below.

Urbanisation

The challenges associated with planetary urbanisation are complicated by the effects of climate change in most South African cities (Chirisa et al., 2019; Matamanda et al., 2017; Utami & Susetyo, 2017). This multiplicity of challenges in urban areas continues to overwhelm the capacity of local government to manage. This is because municipalities are constitutionally mandated to deliver

basic services to the ever-increasing urban population while maintaining the existing infrastructure. Therefore, the inability of most local municipalities located in urban areas to meet the service demand such as housing and adequate water and the dilapidating infrastructure paints a bleak picture. The patterns of urbanisation depict that cities are becoming more populated by the youth who are searching for employment, and places for settlements.

The IUDF (2025) reflect that the youth constitute 39% of the inner-city population while children make up 26%. In 2024, approximately 64% of South African youth reside in urban areas and cities. This status of urban areas requires proactive planning initiatives to manage and guide urban growth in terms of efficient transportation, settlement development sites for both low-income and middle-income populations, and infrastructure development. The IUDF (2025) states that apartheid spatial patterns have largely remained unchanged. This means that it is harder to reverse the apartheid spatial geographies and layouts such as townships, rural areas and Bantustans (IUDF, 2025). Critical questions in this regard include the need and nature of the altering of spatial geographies.

Amid rapid urbanisation and population growth in South African cities, the preservation of green spaces and efficient utilisation of land have become a pressing challenge to urban planning (Olatoye & Naidu, 2024). It is widely acknowledged that because of the unprecedented rate of urbanisation, population growth and the pressure to accommodate new urbanites, municipalities are increasingly forced to prioritise residential and commercial development, often at the expense of ecological sustainability, open public spaces, and long-term spatial equity. The planetary urbanisation and urban population growth have put pressure on local municipalities to provide adequate basic services and this was not accompanied by expansion and enhancement of infrastructure (Chirisa et al., 2019). Consequently, many cities are characterised by huge housing backlogs, lack of multimode transport systems, inadequate social amenities, high waste production and inadequate water provision (Chirisa et al., 2019). With the increasing urbanisation and urban population growth, cities are compelled to be resilient and build infrastructure that is efficient and that promotes energy conservation efficient transport systems and water conservation (Jooste et al., 2019). This is because the densification of people in urban areas makes these areas more vulnerable to climate change and climate variabilities (Mokoele, 2023). The continuous increment of urbanisation in South

African cities such as the City of Tshwane, Johannesburg, Polokwane and Cape Town prompts multiple factors within urban spaces like transport systems, basic services, and settlement for both middle- and low-income households.

Transport planning

It can be argued that South Africa must chart a new direction by reforming urban spaces and settlements to ensure efficient, effective and transformed transport systems charaterised by varied transport infrastructure (bicycles, motorbikes, walkways, buses and trains), and access to economic activities and recreational activities to ensure that spaces reflect democratic principles. All these initiatives must be embedded in the SDF and actioned through integrated development plans of every municipality in South Africa. It is worth noting that the struggle of the local government to provide basic services to the growing urban population paints a blurry picture of the transformation of urban spaces. In most South African cities, urban planning did not transform the road infrastructure to foster multiple road systems to enable cycling, motorbikes and footpaths. Currently, cycling and motorbikes use roads meant for cars and buses. For an effective and sustainable public transport system, urban planning must provide road designs that integrate motorised and non-motorised transport systems such as cycling, motorbikes, buses and footpaths. In cities such as Polokwane City, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, the integration of bus rapid transit systems (BRTs) into the road infrastructure has reduced the width of the roads, which potentially leads to increasing traffic congestion in city centres. However, the introduction of BRT in South African cities was an attempt to provide multiple transport opportunities and reduce commuting costs. Mostly, these buses continue to operate within cities and towns, along middle-income settlements. For example, *Leeto* buses operate in the city of Polokwane, *Legae la Batho*, Madiba Park, Flora Park, along Serala View and Seshego (Zones 1, 2, 3 and 4), which are all middle-income settlements. Areas such as Lithuli, Seshego (Zones 5 and 6) and extensions 71 and 75, which are predominantly made of low-cost housing provided by the municipality, do not have access to cheaper transport systems like *Leeto* buses. Therefore, the current developments and initiatives somewhat continue to reinforce the past apartheid features where the urban poor population continued to use, as referred to during apartheid, 'black taxis' (Mbambo & Agbola, 2020).

Despite the establishment of new municipal transport planning apparatus, the creation of new informal settlements still sees poor black people at the periphery of urban centres. This continues to be visible under the auspices of legislative 'goodness' that has been promulgated during the past three decades of democracy. Therefore, there is a need to create BRT streets within the city to avoid factoring the buses on already-congested city roads. The introduction of bicycle parking areas and appropriate infrastructure within the city to support the use of bicycles as a mode of transport. The improvement in the public transport system by reforming from the apartheid naming of 'black taxis' will assist in reducing the overuse of private vehicles thereby reducing greenhouse gases. Furthermore, the design and delivering footpaths, cycle lanes, good lighting and safe and regular ones for women and children who are most dependent on non-car transport (UN-Habitat, 2018).

Mechanisms for Controlling and Guiding Development Activities

According to Olatoye and Naidu (2024), the utilisation of GIS and remote sensing in a study revealed that the green spaces have reduced from 1,104.2 km² in 2004 to 203.2 km² by 2024. This demonstrates that contemporary urban planning and spatial development do not adequately foster environmental planning and management. To some extent, these challenges are attributed to the development trajectory that is not guided and controlled by the planning apparatus used by municipalities. It is stated in the SDF that its objective is to guide patterns of urban growth. This means that development initiatives and the direction of growth should be guided by the SDF, particularly in spaces considered as brown spaces. The compact city, which is characterised by high density, mixed land uses and an efficient transport system was adopted by many local governments as a strategy to redress the apartheid architecture. This approach was used to reduce urban sprawl, minimisation of reliance on private vehicles, and provision of efficient public transportation (Matamanda et al., 2017).

Many cities in South Africa lack projections in terms of growth patterns and development initiatives, which indicates the location of the projected new residential areas (low-, middle- and high-income houses), business areas, industries, environmentally protected areas and green places. Mapping these projected growth patterns through GIS and remote sensing ensures that urban growth is controlled and

managed effectively and efficiently to ensure that spatial planning is at the core of managing and guiding these patterns.

South African cities are continuously undergoing implementation of development initiatives. These development initiatives continue to suffocate already-stressed green planning in and around the city. These interventions are important to map the direction of urban growth and environmental protection for the development of the city and fostering economic growth. In Durban, the planning strategy implemented to redress the apartheid relic in KwaMashu, where the buffer zone separated the township from surrounding racial communities was used to develop new town centres (Mbambo & Agbola, 2020). This mechanism was envisioned to foster integration against existing communities. However, some of these initiatives to address past legacies come at a cost to the environment and biodiversity, subsequently reducing the city to be resilient amid climate-induced effects. Therefore, spatial planning should ensure that cities undergo the process of re-greening urban spaces. The preamble of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) 107 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) stipulates that the law should develop a framework for integrating good environmental management into all development activities. Chapter 1, Section 2(2), dealing with environmental management stresses that people's needs must be placed at the forefront during municipal planning. It stipulates that planning must serve the physical, psychological, developmental, cultural and social interests of communities in an equitable way. This means that the destruction of the environment and the drastic reduction of green spaces reduces the ability of the environment to adapt to climate change effects, thereby affecting the urban population. Therefore, local government should map the green places that need to be protected to ensure the management of biodiversity and thus, improve climate resilience. Matamanda et al. (2017) postulate that the lack of green spaces contributes to the non-adaptive capacity of the environment to climate change effects such as floods and heatwaves, which leads to continued damage and destruction to infrastructure. Therefore, there is an urgent need for plans and policies focusing on the promotion of the development of resilient infrastructure (Matamanda et al., 2017) and development initiatives should be initiatives along brown spaces.

Utilisation of Geospatial Technologies in Urban Planning Processes

Geospatial technologies offer urban planners the opportunities to influence urban planning, thereby providing visualisation and mapping of urban development. According to Yeh (1999), the mapping of spatial features provides the most powerful visualisation tools in GIS. According to Anand and Deb (2024: 958), "apart from generating 3D models of cities, there have been successful attempts to acquire building geometries, their age and retrofit state using remote sensing data in combination with machine learning and when utilising for calculating heat demands, these produced satisfactory results in lesser time than manually investigating these inputs through field survey". Furthermore, there are faster and more efficient methods of estimating the height of a building using Google Earth Engine, which involves the assessment of the ratio of building heights to shadow lengths for a group of buildings. These methods enable urban planners to estimate building energy demand, thereby providing informed plans in the quest to reduce and manage energy use in cities. However, one of the major challenges in acquiring building-level data using remote sensing is the high density of buildings with mixed-use and construction types. Additionally, Adand and Deb (2024) posit that acquiring high-resolution satellite images can be very expensive.

Remote sensing is important for providing global climate datasets to depict temperature, humidity, precipitation, wind speed and directions and solar radiation are freely available in coarser resolution (Anand & Deb, 2024). It is becoming essential to integrate these data with urban building energy models (UBEMs) to depict accurate analysis of building energy demand in urban areas and cities. This is because it has been established that there is an impact of urban microclimate on the thermal load in buildings. Furthermore, the development of heat islands around the city has a bearing on the heating and cooling demand of the buildings in the city (Anand & Deb, 2024). Therefore, this important tool factored into urban planning will enable urban planners to influence the re-greening of urban spaces to reduce heat islands, which influence the cooling and heating of buildings in the city. An analysis of a city's energy demand makes it easy to foster green energy to reduce energy consumption and emissions. In this regard, this tool provides a proactive measure of managing energy demand and use in urban areas and providing green solutions to the challenges. Importantly,

this will demonstrate the efficiency of urban planning apparatus to guide development and energy management in urban areas.

According to Yeh (1999), mapping provides powerful visualisation tools in GIS to enable planners to project the type of development that the city requires. According to Calitz (2023:21), "cost-effective, environmentally sustainable urban development is dependent on the rapid and accurate identification of geologically or geotechnically stable land". Remote sensing, UBEM and GIS offer urban planners instruments that can guide urban growth, energy and waste management. The most frequently involved sectors of urban planning are associated with land use, transport planning, housing, land development and the environment (Yeh, 1999). According to Yeh (1999: 878), "at each scale of planning, there are different stages such as determination of planning objectives, the analysis of existing situations modelling and projections, development planning options, selection of planning options, plan implementation, and plan evaluation, monitoring and feedback". Therefore, the implementation of GIS in urban planning provides cities with an efficient apparatus to manage urban development and guide urban growth.

Conclusion

It is evident that urban and spatial planning play a pivotal role in shaping the future of South African municipalities by promoting spatial justice and addressing historical inequities. Effective planning ensures that land use, infrastructure investment, and service delivery are aligned with the needs of growing urban populations, while fostering inclusive, resilient, and economically vibrant communities. As municipalities confront rapid urbanisation, climate risks, and persistent socio-economic disparities, integrated spatial planning becomes not only a technical necessity but also a strategic tool for achieving long-term developmental goals and improving the quality of life for all residents.

For effective spatial and urban planning of South African cities, maintenance of infrastructure such as drainage systems, and road infrastructures, should be ongoing to improve adaptability of cities to climate change effects. This helps in ensuring that the cities continue to be resilient. The projections that the cities will host increased population are not used to prepare for the incoming urbanites in terms of settlements, transport planning and provision

of various services. This shows that there are no spaces reserved for low-cost housing and middle-income households even before the people arrive. However, this holds the potential to increase rural-urban migration. Therefore, spatial and urban planning is at the core of influencing the resilience, adaptability and management of green spaces in South African cities. GIS and remote sensing are key technological tools to assist in mapping and providing visualisation of the current and projected city.

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Chapter 4

Human Resource Planning in South African Municipalities

Leigh Anne Naicker

Consultant, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Abstract

The new political landscape in South Africa, under the Government of National Unity (GNU), is rapidly changing as it tries to align itself with different governance philosophies from multiple political parties. This has consequences for human resource planning (HRP) practitioners in municipalities because they need strategic knowledge and tools that will capacitate them to make informed decisions for effectiveness and service delivery. HRP is a critical function that is embedded in the duty of municipalities to ensure efficiency, financial sustainability, and capability to deliver quality services to citizens. Effective HRP is more than just addressing challenges relating to workforce instability characterised by staff shortages and inefficiencies, financial mismanagement, and service delivery failures. Effective HRP in municipalities is about capacitating municipalities to realise their long-term service delivery and infrastructure goals as outlined and committed to in their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

This chapter uses a desktop review of relevant literature and secondary data to provide a comprehensive perspective to designing and implementing effective HRP strategies in municipalities under the new political and administrative dispensation. The chapter opens with a brief overview of the evolution and current state of HRP in South African municipalities and lays the foundation for examining the complexities of HRP and its significance for municipal effectiveness and service delivery. By highlighting the current workforce capabilities and forecasting future skills needs for municipalities, this chapter emphasises why HRP strategies should align with long-term municipal goals and strategic plans. Further, this chapter provides a guide to understanding how effective HRP strategies that prioritise talent management and succession

planning, training and development, and performance management can lead to enhancing efficiency and productivity. The topic of labour relations is also explored before an overview of emerging trends in HRP concludes the chapter.

Keywords: human resource planning, performance management, skills development, skills planning, succession planning, talent management, training and development

Introduction

Human resource planning (HRP) is a critical function in municipalities because it is meant to ensure that local governments have a skilled and capable workforce to effectively and efficiently meet service delivery demands. In the context of the new political dispensation of the Government of National Unity (GNU), municipal HRP faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities, wherein governance philosophies from multiple political parties influence municipal operations. This means that a strategic approach to workforce management is necessary and municipalities must be efficient, financially sustainable, and capable of effectively providing basic services and promoting local economic development while navigating workforce instability, financial constraints, and governance complexities.

This chapter provides an overview of HRP in South African municipalities, emphasising its role in aligning workforce strategies with long-term municipal objectives. It explores workforce capabilities, forecasting future skills needs, and strategic HR interventions such as talent management, succession planning, capacity-building, and performance management. Labour relations and emerging trends in HRP are also explored to provide a holistic perspective on municipal workforce management. This chapter adopts a desktop review approach, drawing from reports, policy documents, academic literature, and relevant legislation to offer a comprehensive understanding of HRP strategies suitable for contemporary municipal governance. It further integrates insights from digital transformation discourse and labour relations dynamics that shape human capital outcomes in the public sector. Each section builds towards the argument that effective HRP is essential for municipalities to realise the long-term goals outlined in their integrated development plans (IDPs), while also adapting to a rapidly changing governance landscape.

Evolution and Current State of Human Resource Planning in Municipalities

Human resource planning is more than a technical or bureaucratic function; it is an enabler of efficient governance, institutional continuity, and developmental outcomes. The core responsibility of municipalities is to provide basic services, infrastructure, and local economic development and for this, municipalities need a well-planned, capacitated, and committed workforce (Benxa, 2022; Delphus et al., 2024). In a context where service delivery protests, financial mismanagement, and skills shortages are prevalent, HRP must be used to not only stabilise staffing levels but to transform the performance and responsiveness of local government.

Human Resource Planning and its Significance for Municipal Effectiveness

HRP in municipalities plays a crucial role in enabling effective service delivery, sustainable workforce development, and institutional resilience. This mandate is challenging for municipalities because they are constantly navigating the challenges of aligning divergent political and administrative philosophies. Delphus et al. (2024) assert that political interference in administrative matters hampers municipalities' ability to align their operations with national objectives, such as those outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) (NPC, 2011). This implies that the fragmentation requires municipalities to adopt strategic HRP frameworks that can respond to shifts in governance structures, policy priorities, and community needs.

Relevant Policies, Legislation, and Regulatory Frameworks Guiding Human Resource Planning

The road to stability has not been easy for municipalities; it has been fraught with many challenges which started with redressing of the inequities of the past. Following the democratic transition in 1994, local government was restructured to reflect constitutional imperatives including equity, accountability, and improved service delivery (RSA, 1996). Municipalities were tasked with transforming into developmental local governments. This corresponds with Selepe (2023), who states that the mandate of local government as envisaged in Section 152(1) of the Constitution (RSA, 1996) includes objectives such as providing democratic and accountable government for local

communities and ensuring the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner.

The White Paper on Local Government (COGTA, 1998) builds upon the Constitution (RSA, 1996) and redefines local government as a distinct and autonomous sphere which emphasises its role in promoting democratic governance and socio-economic development. Further, the White Paper on Local Government (COGTA, 1998) establishes that HRP is central to institutional performance and service delivery, with the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (RSA, 2003), and the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) providing a legislative framework for HRP in local government. Together, these Acts prescribe the integration of HRP with IDPs and budgeting. However, in spite of the encompassing legislative framework implementation, gaps persist. The Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) (2024a; 2024b) reported that in 2022, 45% of municipalities did not comply with laws on strategic planning and performance management, which encompasses broader issues beyond human resource planning and highlights significant weaknesses in performance planning and reporting processes across municipalities.

While the legislative and policy framework for efficient HRP in municipalities exists, its realisation at the operational level remains uneven. This means that municipalities may need to prioritise capacity development, digitalisation, and aligning HR practices with service delivery goals to overcome implementation gaps. These initiatives are essential to ensuring more effective and sustainable municipal service delivery, as outlined in the NDP (NPC, 2011).

Workforce Capabilities in Municipalities

To effectively address the challenges outlined, the South African Local Government Association's (SALGA) and the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) are crucial role players in supporting HRP in municipalities. SALGA and LGSETA do, however, operate at different levels and with distinct mandates. According to SALGA (2024), its mandate is advocacy, capacity-building, policy support, and knowledge-sharing, whilst its focus is on strategic HRP, institutional development, and leadership capacity within municipalities. LGSETA, on the other hand, as one of the twenty-one sector education and training authorities (SETAs) is

responsible for education, training, and workforce development in the local government sector, and focuses on operational HR (human resources) development through training programmes, skills planning, and funding for qualifications and learnerships (LGSETA, 2024). Municipalities may therefore rely on SALGA for help in developing its long-term HR strategy and performance management systems, while turning to LGSETA to fund and accredit training for employees and interns aligned to that strategy.

Despite these national and sectoral interventions, many municipalities continue to face difficulties in implementing effective HRP frameworks. While most are aware of their HRP responsibilities, challenges such as outdated organisational structures and functions, unfilled vacancies, fragmented HR data systems, and a persistent mismatch between workforce skills and service delivery demands hinder alignment with IDPs (COGTA, 2022; LGSETA, 2024; SALGA, 2023a–e).

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs' Municipal Capacity Assessment Report (COGTA, 2022) revealed that technical departments such as engineering, finance, and project management are most affected by skills shortages. These constraints affect not only the quality of service delivery but also a municipality's ability to absorb infrastructure grants and to implement developmental projects. The inability to recognise workforce capabilities and address skills forecasting undermines long-term strategic planning and contributes to systemic backlogs in critical service delivery areas.

Current Workforce Profile

According to SALGA's assessments, municipalities face challenges related to ageing technical personnel and shortages in critical skills areas, impacting service delivery and institutional stability (SALGA, 2023a). It is imperative that HRP takes into account the growing implications of an ageing workforce in municipalities, as it will inevitably pose both strategic and operational challenges. Strategically, municipalities are compelled to prioritise succession planning to mitigate the risk of knowledge loss and leadership vacuums as experienced employees near retirement. This includes identifying key positions vulnerable to retirement and implementing mentoring and knowledge transfer initiatives (UTS, 2019). Operationally, HRP should be future-focused and must

incorporate tailored training interventions to support older workers in adapting and embracing evolving digital service delivery tools, while also accommodating health-related needs through wellness programmes and flexible work arrangements (Wang et al., 2024). Regular workforce audits are essential to anticipate retirement trends and address skills gaps proactively. An age-inclusive policy framework that values the contributions of older employees and supports intergenerational collaboration is therefore critical for sustainable municipal workforce development. These measures, taken collectively, enhance institutional resilience and ensure continuity in service delivery amid demographic transitions.

The LGSETA Sector Skills Plan 2024/2025 (LGSETA, 2024) provides a national picture of the workforce across the sector and notes some concerning statistics. In Gauteng's district municipalities, youth make up only a small fraction of the workforce: 67 individuals or 6.8%. Similarly, Limpopo has a low youth representation at 383 employees (9.1%) and a significant number of workers aged over 55, totalling 1,210 or 28.7%. Notably, only Limpopo's district municipalities and the Free State's metropolitan areas have more than 25% of their workforce aged over 55. This demographic trend poses a long-term risk of an ageing workforce without an adequate supply of younger employees to sustain service continuity.

The impact on HR planning is significant. An ageing workforce requires deliberate succession strategies to preserve institutional memory and uphold service quality. At the same time, widespread vacancies in technical positions highlight the need to attract and retain skilled personnel. This calls for HR practitioners to implement focused recruitment efforts and invest in capacity-building initiatives that prepare a pool of competent candidates for these essential roles.

Skills Forecasting Mechanisms

Effective HRP relies on the use of forecasting tools. Effective skills forecasting mechanisms are central to strategic human resource planning in South African municipalities, particularly in light of an ageing workforce and persistent shortages in critical technical skills. The Municipal Capacity Assessment Report by COGTA (2022) highlights the critical role of data-driven workforce planning in enhancing municipal effectiveness. It emphasises the need to anticipate staffing requirements by considering demographic trends, shifting service priorities, and ongoing digital transformation. Accordingly,

HR professionals in municipalities must go beyond simply gathering data; they must apply it strategically for forecasting and long-term planning. To support this shift, SALGA has introduced key instruments to promote forward-thinking HR practices. The Human Resource Management and Development Strategy Blueprint provides policy guidance to align workforce development with municipalities' developmental and service delivery goals. It promotes the use of workforce analytics and proactive succession planning to address potential skills shortages in advance (SALGA, 2023b). In addition, SALGA's HR Pulse Platform offers a digital tool for collecting and analysing up-to-date HR data, including demographic patterns, vacancy trends, and competency levels. This supports more accurate forecasting of municipal staffing and skills requirements.

At the national sphere, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has developed frameworks to support data-informed HR planning in the public sector. The 2023 Public Service Skills Audit Methodology Framework (PS-SAMF) provides municipalities with a structured process to evaluate current competencies, identify gaps, and anticipate future human resource needs. The long-standing Competency Framework for Senior Management Service (DPSA, 2008) also continues to inform the recruitment and development of municipal leadership. These frameworks collectively strengthen institutional capacity, enabling municipalities to adopt forward-looking HR strategies that are responsive to urbanisation, demographic changes, and infrastructure demands. Whilst these frameworks facilitate the integration of HRP into broader governance mechanisms like IDPs, SALGA noted that mismatches between staff profiles and required competencies, particularly in smaller and under-resourced municipalities persists (SALGA, 2023e). To mitigate this mismatch, Dzansi et al. (2016a) recommend implementing standardised HRP procedures and merit-based recruitment which will also serve as protective mechanisms against such interference which will safeguard municipal institutions.

Institutional Innovations in Municipal Human Resource Planning

There is a growing awareness of the need to strengthen institutional capacity at the local government level so that turnaround times in addressing critical vacancies, especially in departments requiring scarce technical skills, can be improved (LGSETA, 2020b). Innovative strategies and plans are required in this regard. The eThekwini Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, for example, has made notable strides

in modernising its human resource planning systems, representing an important example of localised practice within the broader context of municipal reform. Through the adoption of an advanced human resource information system (HRIS), the municipality has begun to shift from reactive staffing models towards more anticipatory workforce management in terms of attrition trends, retirement forecasts, and emerging service needs, thereby informing proactive recruitment and training strategies (Gwambe, 2020). Importantly, eThekwini's approach aligns with systemic sectoral trends in skills forecasting across municipalities, where predictive analytics is increasingly recognised as essential to bridging workforce planning gaps and ensuring resilient service delivery (Gwambe, 2020).

The Municipal Capability Assessment Tool (SALGA, 2023e) developed by SALGA, serves as a critical mechanism for enhancing strategic HRP within local government. The tool is designed to assess and diagnose institutional capacity gaps across municipal departments, in order to target developmental interventions that align with both service delivery objectives and human resource needs (SALGA, 2023a) and to support municipalities in forecasting skills needs and developing anticipatory workforce strategies The tool also aligns with national imperatives to professionalise local government and build an ethical and capable public administration , as articulated in the National Framework for the Professionalisation of the Public Sector (DPSA, 2022).

In sum, skills forecasting should not be treated as a peripheral HR function but rather as a central pillar of institutional resilience. As municipalities confront increasingly complex governance environments, investing in predictive analytics and long–term HR strategies will be fundamental to building adaptive capacity and maintaining service delivery standards in the years ahead. Effective HRP in municipalities hinges not only on understanding current workforce capabilities but also on the ability to project future staffing needs. Strategic HRP requires a shift from reactive staffing to anticipatory workforce management, which is possible only through the use of data–driven tools that analyse workforce demographics, retirement trends, and skill gaps (COGTA, 2023b).

Talent Management and Succession Planning in Municipalities

Talent management, succession planning, training and development, and performance management are critical components to ensuring

that municipalities can effectively meet their constitutional mandate, operational goals, address emerging challenges, and build the necessary leadership capacity to drive sustainable service delivery. Strategic talent management and succession planning are vital for maintaining a skilled workforce and ensuring leadership continuity, while training and development initiatives help to address skills gaps and promote municipal transformation. Additionally, effective performance management systems align municipal objectives with service delivery imperatives, ensuring accountability and transparency in local governance. Each of these areas is shaped by both internal and external factors, including national policies, the evolving demands of the workforce, and emerging trends such as digital transformation and sustainability. As municipalities navigate these dynamics, integrated HR strategies will play a central role in fostering resilience, adaptability, and effective governance.

Strategic talent management is essential for municipalities to ensure continuity and preserve institutional knowledge. It encompasses structured recruitment, mentorship, and retention strategies aimed at maintaining a skilled and committed workforce. Mathebula and Sebola (2019) emphasise the importance of effective management planning within municipalities, particularly through tools like the IDP, which indirectly influences human resource planning and talent management. In the context of the South African public sector, developing a compelling employee value proposition (EVP) is crucial to attract and retain talent, especially in a constrained labour market. Theys and Barkhuizen (2022) highlight the development of how a tailored EVP framework can offer valuable insights that municipalities can adapt to their own talent management practices. By crafting competitive EVPs, municipalities can align employees' needs with organisational goals, thereby enhancing talent attraction and retention efforts in the public sector.

Succession planning within municipalities can often be criticised for lacking a structured and proactive approach. Thus, SALGA emphasises the need to embed succession planning into broader human resource strategies, which advocate for regular succession audits and alignment with departmental objectives (SALGA, 2023f). An illustrative example is the City of Tshwane's leadership pipeline initiative, designed to prepare historically disadvantaged junior staff for managerial positions. which has shown promising results in enhancing staff retention and promotion rates. Mmatabane et al. (2023) state that such initiatives highlight

the critical role of succession planning in fostering institutional resilience and ensuring leadership continuity. As municipalities confront increasing service delivery demands, implementing structured succession plans becomes essential to address leadership gaps and maintain organisational stability. Integrating these plans into existing human resource frameworks enables municipalities to proactively develop future leaders capable of navigating both current and emerging challenges.

Succession planning, as a critical HR intervention, mitigates leadership vacuums by preparing municipalities for leadership transitions, thus minimising disruptions. The DPSA provides several essential tools for municipalities to integrate succession planning into their strategic frameworks that will foster a proactive approach to workforce readiness and leadership capacity. The Guidelines on Integrated Human Resource Planning in the Public Service (DPSA, 2006) provide a structured approach to workforce planning, highlighting the need for leadership succession to ensure long–term organisational sustainability. In addition, the Human Resource Planning Strategic Framework (DPSA, 2015) promotes comprehensive HRP, emphasising succession planning for leadership continuity in municipalities, while the Review Report on Human Resource Development Strategy focuses on the need for HR development strategies, including succession planning, to build capacity in the public sector and encourages municipalities to prepare future leaders through targeted developmental programmes. Finally, the Organisational Functionality Assessment (OFA) Tool (DPSA, 2022) helps to assess the effectiveness of HR strategies, including succession planning, in municipalities so that leadership gaps and the relevant talent are identified.

Training and Development in Municipalities

Training and development are fundamental to municipal transformation and sustainable service delivery and should encompass technical training, professional development, and organisational learning that enhances performance at both the individual and institutional levels. According to COGTA (2023a), municipalities must prioritise sector–specific training in areas such as engineering, project management, public finance, and regulatory compliance. This can be achieved through partnerships with SETAs, which are crucial role players for ensuring effective workforce development in the sector. Furthermore, the National

Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030 (DHET, 2021) promotes the implementation of workplace-based learning, internships, and collaborative training with technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and universities. The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2021) strengthens this assertion by emphasising the importance of integrating work-based learning into vocational education and training to enhance employability and meet labour market demands. The implication of this for municipalities is that by engaging in partnerships with TVET colleges and universities to offer work-based learning opportunities, municipalities can work towards building a more skilled and adaptable workforce pipeline that is better aligned with the specific needs of local governance and service delivery. COGTA (2023a) also emphasises the increasing relevance of digital tools and digital literacy, particularly as municipalities face the challenges of adapting to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). This requires a shift towards digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and innovation-oriented training amongst municipal staff. Insights from Emmanuel et al. (2023) indicate that implementing such training strategies can aid in modernising HR practices, improving service delivery, and ensuring that workforces are equipped to meet the demands of the 4IR.

LGSETA as the driver of skills development in municipalities

In line with the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (DHET, 2019), the LGSETA plays a pivotal role in driving skills development in municipalities. By identifying priority areas for skills development, LGSETA ensures that local government employees are equipped with the necessary skills to meet emerging challenges and improve service delivery (DHET, 2019). The National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030 (NPC, 2011) further supports this by providing a comprehensive framework for developing critical skills in the public sector, including municipalities, and aligning training initiatives with national development goals (DHET, 2021). LGSETA promotes professional development, supports workplace-based learning initiatives, and collaborates with universities and TVET colleges to enhance leadership and technical capabilities, all while fostering partnerships that align with national skills priorities to strengthen human capital and improve public sector performance (LGSETA, 2020a).

It is evident that training and development are vital for municipalities to address challenges like urbanisation and evolving

service demands. Strategic HRP ensures that municipalities identify skills gaps and foster skills development to improve service delivery. Collaborations with SETAs and higher education institutions play a key role in upskilling the workforce. These efforts, complemented by digital literacy programmes, will help municipalities to build leadership capacity and adapt to emerging needs.

Performance Management in Municipalities

Performance management within South African municipalities is a pivotal mechanism for aligning institutional goals with service delivery imperatives. Municipalities are the most immediate level of government for citizens, so municipalities' ability to plan, implement and account for performance directly affects public trust and developmental outcomes. In the South African context, the legislative framework guiding performance management is primarily grounded in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000), which mandates the establishment of performance management systems across municipalities. This is further elaborated by the Municipal Performance Regulations for Municipal Managers and Managers Directly Accountable to Municipal Managers (DPLG, 2006), which provides detailed prescriptions for setting performance indicators, conducting evaluations, and ensuring the alignment of individual outputs with institutional goals. Together, the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) and the Municipal Performance Regulations (DPLG, 2006), establish a foundation for evaluating the performance of senior officials and aligning organisational objectives with IDPs and Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIPs).

Despite this regulatory foundation, some municipalities continue to face persistent challenges in translating policy into practice. Political interference, for example, is a significant obstacle to effective performance management in South African municipalities. Research indicates that political interference, such as the appointment of unqualified personnel through cadre deployment, undermines the effectiveness of municipal performance management (Mlambo et al., 2022). This practice leads to the placement of individuals in key positions based on political affiliations rather than merit, resulting in compromised service delivery (Mbandlwa, 2023). Additionally, a lack of adequate training and capacity development for municipal staff further exacerbates the challenges in implementing effective performance management systems (SALGA, 2019). The Western Cape Government has recognised these challenges and has

developed a comprehensive support strategy to enhance municipal performance. Amongst its key objectives, the support strategy (WCG, 2022:2) seeks to enhance political leadership, reinforce mechanisms that protect municipal institutions, uphold good governance, and build both administrative leadership and institutional capacity. To develop political leadership capability, Makapela and Mtshelwane (2021) argue that HRP should encompass policies that are well-articulated and consistently applied because they have the ablity to build trust and accountability amongst political leaders, which in turn, will enhance governance. When HRP is performed right, it has the potential to thwart the detrimental effects that practices such as cadre redeployment, nepotism and discrimination in promotion have on service delivery to the public (Dzansi et al., 2016b).

Labour Relations in Municipalities

Labour relations in South African municipalities is a critical component of institutional stability and service delivery. Given the sector's highly unionised environment and complex regulatory framework, managing labour dynamics effectively is essential for maintaining operational continuity. Municipalities should navigate a landscape shaped by legislative obligations, collective bargaining agreements, and evolving employee expectations. Challenges such as labour disputes, strike actions, and wage negotiations can exacerbate labour tensions and disrupt service delivery. According to SALGA (2021) wage-related disputes, encompassing disagreements over salaries, bonuses, and other forms of compensation, were the predominant driver of industrial action, responsible for more than 60% of the working days lost during the period 2010 and 2019 in South Africa.

HRP should be proactive by addressing these issues by fostering robust labour relations frameworks, by engaging in continuous dialogue with labour unions, ensuring compliance with collective agreements, and developing contingency plans to mitigate the impact of labour disputes. In responding to these challenges though, it is critical that HRP remains grounded in legal compliance, institutional support, and stakeholder engagement to promote stability and workforce peace, predictability in municipal planning and resilient municipal governance. Further, by promoting a culture of open communication and mutual respect, effective HRP can empower municipalities to enhance workforce stability and maintain consistent service delivery. SALGA (2021) found that by convening

provincial mandate-seeking sessions that lobby for acceptance of multi-year salary and wage collective agreements, agreements can be swiftly concluded.

Labour relations within South African municipalities are governed by the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (RSA, 1995), which provides the legal framework for collective bargaining, dispute resolution, and the rights of trade unions. The South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC) serves as the primary platform for collective bargaining in the local government sector. The SALGBC was established voluntarily in terms of the Labour Relations Act, by agreement between the employer organisation (SALGA) and trade union parties. The SALGBC comprises SALGA as the employer representative and trade unions such as the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) and the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU) representing employees (SALGBC, 2024). The SALGBC plays a pivotal role in shaping labour relations and HRP within municipalities. It provides a formalised platform for collective bargaining, dispute resolution, and the development of HR policies, which are essential for maintaining a well-organised labour environment. The SALGBC influences key aspects such as employee compensation, capacity-building initiatives, and workplace conditions, contributing to a more skilled and motivated workforce. By ensuring the stability of labour relations and facilitating the professional development of municipal employees, the SALGBC supports improved governance and service delivery within South African municipalities (CoGTA, 2023c; SALGA, 2022). This structured approach is critical for aligning HRP with the needs of municipalities, ultimately enhancing their operational efficiency.

Labour Disputes and Service Delivery

Unprotected strikes and non-compliance with collective agreements often disrupt municipal services. SALGA (2021) found that these challenges are often barriers to effective labour relations in municipalities. These disruptions emphasise the critical need for municipalities to implement effective labour relations strategies to ensure the continuity of essential services. According to the Labour Relations Act (RSA, 1995), key institutions like the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration (CCMA) play a pivotal role in resolving labour disputes and because the CCMA provides structured processes for dispute resolution, aiming to prevent conflict escalation and maintain stability within the workplace,

it supports improved governance (Bendix, 2010). Research also suggests that the capacity to manage disputes proactively can help to mitigate the adverse effects of industrial actions on municipal governance (Cottle, 2023).Through the CCMA, effective labour relations strategies, such as transparent communication, adherence to grievance procedures, and timely mediation, are essential for safeguarding institutional performance and ensuring the delivery of public services in municipalities (SALGA, 2021).

In terms of HRP in municipalities, these labour relations strategies directly impact workforce stability, productivity, and overall service delivery. HRP involves ensuring that municipalities have the right number of employees with the appropriate skills to meet their service delivery goals (COGTA, 2021). Proactively addressing labour disputes and maintaining good labour relations align with HRP objectives by creating a stable and motivated workforce. A focus on understanding industrial action and resolving conflicts swiftly can allow municipalities to minimise workforce disruptions (Cottle, 2023), thus contributing to better human resource allocation, improved employee morale, and, ultimately, more effective service delivery. Furthermore, HRP frameworks that incorporate labour relations management can ensure that municipalities are adequately prepared for potential disputes, fostering a resilient and adaptable public service workforce.

Proactive Labour Engagement Strategies

Proactive management of labour relations involves transparent communication, adherence to grievance procedures, and investment in conflict resolution capacities. The City of Johannesburg's (CoJ) Department of Public Safety has implemented labour engagement measures to address workplace disputes and this has contributed to improved labour relations (CoJ, 2018). By establishing initiatives to improve and sustain emotional, physical and financial well–being of employees, the CoJ has created a dedicated platform for fostering an environment that prioritises the employee. This proactive approach which contributes to maintaining employee well–being is crucial for sustaining productivity and engagement. This is an example of understanding the criticality of integrating employee wellness and conflict resolution strategies so that labour relations can improve, absenteeism is reduced, and overall service delivery is enhanced.

Emerging Trends in Human Resource Planning for Municipalities

Human resource planning in South African municipalities is evolving rapidly because of technological advancements, shifts in societal expectations, and changing governance needs. Municipalities are tasked with enhancing service delivery while addressing the challenges of demographic shifts, environmental sustainability, and workforce diversity. Emerging trends such as digital transformation, green HR practices, diversity and inclusion, and remote work models are reshaping how municipalities approach workforce management. The adoption of digital tools like e-recruitment systems, artificial intelligence (AI)-based analytics, and cloud HR platforms is aimed at improving HR processes and decision-making (Chilunjika et al., 2022). In addition, municipalities are aligning their HR practices with sustainability initiatives to meet national goals, integrating green skills into job profiles to foster climate resilience. These initiatives are gaining momentum in municipal leadership, supported by national policy reforms and local directives that promote diversity (CEE, 2023).

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has accelerated the shift to remote and hybrid work models, highlighting the need for flexible HR strategies to enhance municipal resilience (Mamoso et al., 2022). These trends highlight the importance of adaptable HR systems in municipalities, ensuring they remain responsive to the evolving socio-economic and technological landscape.

Digital Transformation and e-Government

Digital transformation is becoming a cornerstone of HRP in municipalities, with tools such as e-recruitment systems, HR dashboards, and AI revolutionising workforce management. These technologies enable municipalities to make data-driven decisions, optimise recruitment, and enhance employee engagement (Chilunjika et al., 2022). The integration of cloud-based systems and AI analytics is improving operational efficiency, making it possible to forecast staffing needs and trends, and ensure that the right talent is in place to meet service delivery objectives (Anthun et al., 2024). Predictive analytics and real-time data support HR planning professionals in making informed decisions, improving both recruitment processes and workforce planning efforts (Benabou et al., 2024; Devaraju, 2024). When effectively used, these tools contribute significantly

to municipal performance and service delivery, ensuring that the right skills and competencies are aligned with emerging needs. This further aligns with Dzansi et al. (2016b) who found that prevailing practices like cadre deployment, nepotism, and biased promotion, regardless of how they are justified, are incompatible with fair and equitable human resource management.

Greening HR Planning Practices

As municipalities increasingly align with national sustainability frameworks, HRP needs to also adapt to incorporating green skills and environmental management into workforce strategies. Mpunga (2025) states that the implementation of green HRP practices such as environmental training, sustainable recruitment, eco-friendly workplace policies, and performance appraisal for sustainability, positively influenced decent work conditions. The employees in Mpunga's (2025) study expressed higher levels of job satisfaction, work–life balance, health and safety, and opportunities for growth.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

The progress of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in municipal leadership has been gradual and according to Khaile et al. (2021), most government documents do not provide explicit and coherent approaches and objectives to be pursued by municipalities to facilitate social cohesion and a sense of belonging. The Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) (2023) stresses the importance of embedding DEI objectives in municipal hiring, promotion, and leadership development policies. DEI goals, such as increasing representation of women, youth, and individuals with disabilities in municipal leadership roles, are supported by the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (DoL, 1998) and other national directives. Mechanisms to encourage DEI within municipalities should be more explicit and coherent so that inclusive, transparent leadership structures can thrive to facilitate social cohesion and a sense of belonging (Khaile et al., 2021), governance and enhance public trust (CEE, 2023).

Remote and Hybrid Work Models

The adoption of remote and hybrid work models has significantly impacted HRP in municipalities, particularly because of the global shift following the COVID-19 pandemic. These models offer municipalities greater flexibility, allowing them to adapt to

various crises and ensuring business continuity during disruptions. Mamoso et al. (2022) highlight the importance of classifying roles as remote-first or remote-enabled to build resilience within municipal operations. As municipalities continue to implement flexible work models, HR strategies must adapt to ensure that both employees and citizens benefit from improved service delivery while maintaining operational effectiveness.

The emerging trends in HRP reflect a need for municipalities to evolve with the changing technological, social, and environmental landscape. By embracing digital tools, prioritising sustainability, fostering DEI, and adapting to new work models, municipalities can improve governance, service delivery, and operational resilience. These trends require municipalities to develop agile HR systems capable of responding to evolving demands and challenges, ensuring better outcomes for citizens.

Conclusion

Human resource planning remains the backbone of functional and responsive municipalities. In a dynamic political and socio-economic environment, municipalities must adopt strategic, evidence-based HRP practices that align workforce development with service delivery imperatives, institutional resilience, and emerging trends. This will enable municipalities to thrive under the GNU and beyond. Effective HRP enables municipalities to fulfil the long-term infrastructure and developmental commitments as outlined in their IDPs. This means that municipalities must commit to not only responding to current workforce challenges but to also shaping the skills base needed for future service delivery innovations. As governance philosophies converge and evolve within the framework of the GNU, HRP practitioners must adopt flexible, forward-looking strategies that embed sustainability, inclusion, and local responsiveness into workforce planning.

HRP is foundational to responsive, ethical, and high-performing municipalities. In a political and administrative environment shaped by coalition governance, service delivery pressures, and digital transition, HRP must evolve from a compliance exercise to a strategic function.

This chapter has demonstrated that effective HRP strategies which are anchored in skills forecasting, talent management and

succession planning, training and development, performance management, labour relations and embracing emerging trends are essential to realising municipal objectives. It also illustrated the criticality of municipalities prioritising merit and competence over personal or political agendas by appointing individuals who possess the appropriate skills and qualifications. By strengthening HRP, municipalities can build resilient institutions capable of navigating uncertainty, delivering quality services, and restoring public trust in local government institutions. This will ultimately strengthen municipalities' capacity to deliver on their constitutional mandate.

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Chapter 5

Municipal Financial Planning in South Africa

Adebimpe Esther Ofusori

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Abstract

Municipalities in South Africa undertake a wide range of services, including infrastructure development, waste management, water supply, public safety, basic healthcare and social services. Effective financial planning is crucial in this regard. It enables municipalities to function efficiently and deliver essential services to communities. In addition, proper financial planning ensures that these services are sustained and evenly distributed.

There has been remarkable transformation of municipal financial planning in South Africa. In the pre-apartheid era, municipalities operated under a racially segregated system, leading to inconsistencies in service delivery and infrastructure development. Financial management was also fragmented, with limited accountability and transparency. However, government in the post-apartheid regime prioritised restructuring local governance to promote equitable service delivery and sustainable development. Through the stipulations of the Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA) and other statutory and regulatory frameworks, municipalities develop a budget based on priority community needs identified in the integrated development plans (IDPs) and operationalise it by means of medium-term revenue and expenditure frameworks (MTREFs), and service delivery and budget implementation plans (SDBIPs). Despite the improvements made by municipalities through legislative reforms and strategic frameworks, National Treasury and the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) confirm that serious financial challenges persist. These include limited tax and revenue bases, financial control inefficiencies, inadequate technical and managerial skills related to municipal finances, significant municipal debt, as well as good corporate governance issues. However, strategic and operational

financial planning, supported by oversight structures and systems such as municipal public account committees, internal audit, audit and risk committees, and the ward committee system can help to improve financial accountability and foster long-term economic growth in the country.

Through a qualitative design and a robust literature review, this chapter provides a summary of the evolution and current state of municipal financial planning in South Africa. Secondly, the statutory and regulatory framework guiding financial planning will be outlined, and, thirdly, typical challenges associated with municipal financial planning will be analysed. Finally, strategies that can be adopted to ensure effective financial planning for improved service delivery by municipalities in South Africa will be proposed.

Keywords: accountability, asset management, budgeting, capital planning, expenditure, financial planning, financial reporting, infrastructure financing, investment, municipal finances, revenue generation

Introduction

Financial planning in South African municipalities has evolved significantly over the years, shaped by legal frameworks, economic conditions, and governance challenges (Munzhedzi & Makwembere, 2019). For municipalities to function efficiently, deliver quality services, and ensure economic stability to the community, sound financial planning is imperative (Munzhedzi & Makwembere, 2019; Ngwakwe, 2012).

In the pre-apartheid regime, municipal finances were highly fragmented, racially segregated, and unequally distributed. In addition, transparency and accountability in financial management was also limited, with inconsistency in revenue collection and financial planning, resulting in disparity in service delivery (Maropo, 2018). In the post-apartheid era, South Africa's municipal financial planning laid more emphasis on economic development, community needs, and efficient management of resources (Juta, 2023). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996) established municipalities as independent spheres of government with financial management responsibilities. The Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) 56 of 2003 (RSA, 2003a) introduced modern financial planning, budgeting, and reporting

frameworks to enhance accountability (Shuping, 2021). In addition, the Equitable Share and Conditional Grants System was introduced to ensure fair allocation of national funds to municipalities. In addition, the implementation of Integrated Development Planning (IDP) became a core component of municipal financial planning, aligning budgets with socio-economic priorities (Hlongwane, 2010). Despite all these restructuring initiatives, municipalities still face challenges such as corruption, poor revenue collection, overspending and lack of skilled financial personnel (Mantzaris, 2014).

The financial state of municipalities is an area of serious concern. Financial distress because of poor revenue collection, irregular expenditures, failure in financial management and inadequate skills remains to be a significant challenge. The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) consistently reports on persistent issues of unauthorised, irregular, and wasteful expenditure, debt load, with municipalities owing billions to Eskom and water boards (Ntoyapi, 2021). The effect of municipal financial incompetence is not only felt by large businesses but also on small- and medium-scale businesses, households and other stakeholders in local markets (Bushe, 2019). Municipal financial planning in South Africa is hindered by a mixture of structural, institutional, and governance challenges. Addressing these issues requires capacity-building, stronger oversight, better revenue management, and improved community involvement to ensure sustainable and responsive local governance. In summary, this chapter presents the previous and current state of municipal financial planning in South Africa, the legal and regulatory framework guiding financial planning, challenges associated with municipal financial planning and the strategies that can be adopted to ensure effective financial planning for improved service delivery by municipalities in South Africa.

Municipal Financial Planning in Perspective

Financial planning in South Africa involves creating a structured plan to manage income, expenses, savings, investments, and retirement, putting into consideration local regulations, taxation, and economic factors (Hendriks, 2012). The Financial Planning Institute (FPI) of Southern Africa is one of the top, professional, self-regulating bodies of financial planners on the globe (Paterson, 2017). The FPI helps to ensure that South Africans have access to a competent, moral, financial planners who has the interest of the people at heart. Most of the big financial institutions have embraced the FPI as a self-

dependent standards partner. Members of FPI can include general practitioners and specialists in some divisions of financial planning (Paterson, 2017).

Significance of Financial Planning for Municipal Effectiveness and Service Delivery

Financial planning plays a crucial role in ensuring that municipalities in South Africa function efficiently and deliver essential services to communities (Dorasamy & Kapesa, 2024). A financial plan provides details of the current state of finance, the financial goals and how to implement them. A well-planned municipal budget ensures long-term financial sustainability, preventing service disruptions (Dorasamy & Kapesa, 2024).

Effective financial management allows municipalities to allocate resources efficiently, maintain infrastructure, and improve service delivery, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for residents. Municipalities depend on sources such as service charges, property rates, and grants from government. Proper financial planning ensures that revenue collection is efficient and expenditures are controlled, lowering the risk of financial misconduct and accumulation of debt (Grozdanovska et al., 2017). Financial planning also improves governance by ensuring transparency in the allocation and use of community funds. Adherence to the MFMA promotes accountability and prevents corruption and mismanagement. Annual audits and financial reports keep the public informed and build trust in municipal governance (Haustein & Lorson, 2023; Dorasamy & Kapesa, 2024). In addition, sound financial planning helps municipalities to generate revenue and optimise revenue collection from rates, taxes, and service fees. It identifies areas for reducing unnecessary expenditure and improving cost efficiency. It also encourages innovative financial solutions such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) to fund major projects (Farvacque-Vitkovicand & Kopanyi, 2014).

Municipal Financial Policy and Legislative Frameworks

In South Africa, financial planning operates within a well-defined policy and legislative framework to ensure consumer protection, ethical financial practices, and regulatory compliance. Financial planning operates within a framework shaped by legislation and regulatory policies that ensure stability, transparency, and ethical practice within financial systems. In the recent ever-changing

political settings, characterised by changes in leadership, global economic pressures, and evolving public priorities, these frameworks are undergoing significant transformation. Governments and regulatory bodies worldwide are adapting their policies to address emerging challenges such as digital finance, climate-related risks, income inequality, and global market volatility (Graves & Dollery, 2009). This new political context has given rise to updated laws and regulations that influence taxation, investment strategies, financial disclosures, and consumer protections. As a result, financial planners must remain vigilant, adaptable, and well-informed to align their practices with current legal expectations and client needs. Understanding the legislation and regulatory environment is now more important than before to ensure sound, compliant, and future-ready financial planning (Graves & Dollery, 2009).

The legislation and regulatory frameworks guiding financial planning are significantly influenced by the political setting at a given period in time. In a new political setting that can probably be characterised by unstable economic priorities and a change in government, there is often a review of financial regulations, tax policies, and compliance requirements. These changes can lead to new strategies in financial planning to align with evolving legal obligations and economic conditions. Below, some of the most prominent laws and policies governing financial planning are briefly outlined.

Pension Funds Act No. 24 of 1956

The Pension Funds Act No. 24 of 1956 (SA, 1956) protects the interests of members, govern retirement funds and ensures proper management of pensions. It helps to provide for the registration, integration, regulation and termination of pension funds and for incidental matters. The pension funds are required to register with the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA) (Sithole, 2024).

Income Tax Act No. 58 of 1962

The Income Tax Act No. 58 of 1962 (RSA, 1962) regulates the taxation of financial investments such as retirement annuities, capital gains tax, and tax-free savings. It also influences financial planning decisions regarding tax-efficient investment strategies (Dippenaar & Van Wyk, 2017).

The Financial Advisory and Intermediary Services (FAIS) Act No. 37 of 2002

The FAIS Act (RSA, 2002) is a South African law which came into effect on 15 November 15 2002. This Act regulates financial advisors and intermediaries and ensures that financial planners act in the best interest of their clients. The Act helps to protect the interests of consumers and to professionalise the financial services industry. It requires advisors to be licensed by the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA) and establishes the FAIS Ombud Council for resolving disputes between clients and financial service providers (Mabilane, 2019).

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act No. 53 of 2003

The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act 53 of 2003 (RSA, 2003b) is aimed at establishing a legal framework which promotes the empowerment of black economy by the Minister and issues codes of good practices and transformation charters. It establishes the Black Economic Empowerment Advisory Council and makes provision for anything associated with it. Moreover, it influences corporate financial planning through transformation policies and encourages investment strategies that align with B-BBEE principles (Van de Rheede, 2020).

National Credit (NCA) Act No. 34 of 2005

The National Credit Act (RSA, 2005) protects consumers and regulates credit agreements with individuals and other entities, such as companies, trusts, and partnerships. It also establishes the National Credit Regulator (NCR) to oversee credit providers, thereby regulating consumer credit and lending practices that promote responsible lending and prevents reckless credit agreements. It also promotes responsible lending, and protects consumers from over-indebtedness (Roestoff et al., 2009).

Consumer Protection Act (CPA) No. 68 of 2008

The CPA (RSA, 2008a) protects consumers from unfair financial practices and ensures clear disclosure of financial products and risks. The Act also creates a structured financial planning environment in

South Africa, ensuring consumer protection, responsible financial advice, and fair market practices (Lombard, 2021).

The Companies Act No. 71 of 2008

The Companies Act (RSA, 2008b) governs the formation, registration, management, and operation of companies, defining the relationships between companies, shareholders, and directors. This is performed to promote transparency, accountability, and efficient corporate governance practices, by providing for mergers, takeovers, rescuing financially distressed companies. In addition, it establishes a regulatory body to oversee compliance, financial release, and provide a comprehensive framework for company operations within the country (Mongalo, 2010).

The Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) No. 4 of 2013

The POPIA (RSA, 2013) is a South African law that regulates how personal information is collected, stored, and processed by both public and private entities, essentially acting as the country's data protection legislation, ensuring that individuals have control over their personal information and protecting their privacy rights; it is designed to promote transparency on how data is handled by organisations. This policy regulates the processing and protection of personal financial data and ensures that financial advisors handle client information responsibly and securely (RSA, 2013).

Financial Sector Regulation Act (FSRA) No. 9 of 2017

The FSRA (RSA, 2017a) was signed into law in August 2017 with two new financial sector regulators: the Prudential Authority (PA) that see to the stability of financial institutions, and the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA), which ensures fair financial market conduct, strengthens consumer protection and promotes financial inclusion (Kunaka, 2023; Mabilane, 2019).

The Insurance Act No. 18 of 2017

The Insurance Act (RSA, 2017b) regulates the insurance industry. It establishes a legal framework which complies with the South African Constitution to ensure a stable and safe insurance market, and to promote financial inclusion. It also regulates temporary and permanent insurance providers and ensures the just treatment of

policyholders. In addition, it strengthens the governance and risk management of insurers (Ballack, 2019).

Municipal Budgeting Processes

Budgeting processes are the major aspect of municipal governance, which plays an important role in establishing a strong association and building of trust between municipalities and communities. It is divided into three categories: annual budget cycle, multi-year budgeting and participatory budgeting (Samson et al., 2024). These budgeting methods help to ensure transparency, efficiency, and public participation.

Annual budget cycle

The annual budget cycle is the standard budgeting process adopted by municipalities to plan, approve, and monitor financial resources for a fiscal year. The process proceeds in four major stages: (i) Planning and Preparation, (ii) Consultation and Approval, (iii) Implementation and Monitoring, and lastly, (iv) Reporting and Accountability (Khan, 2024). In these stages, municipalities assess service delivery priorities and align budgets with strategic development goals. Budgets are then submitted to relevant oversight bodies for compliance verification before approval. After approval, funds are allocated to departments and municipalities to track spending against the approved budget. Lastly, municipalities are encouraged to publish financial performance reports and the Auditor-General conducts audits to ensure compliance (Matlala & Uwizeyimana, 2020). Feedback from the public is also used to improve future budgeting (Samson et al., 2024).

Multi Year Budgeting

This is also called Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). It extends financial planning beyond a year, covering a period of three to five years. It also helps municipalities to plan for long-term development projects and financial stability. This budgeting ensures continuity in funding for major projects, and allows better resource allocation across multiple years, which aligns with national and provincial funding frameworks (Khan, 2024).

Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting empowers communities by allowing residents to directly influence how municipal funds are spent. Online platforms are created and public meetings are held to gather information and suggestions. It also strengthens democracy and public trust. Community representatives and municipal officials review proposals, and citizens vote on priority projects and lastly approved projects receive funding and are monitored. This type of budget ensures transparency, which helps to reduce corruption and mismanagement. It also builds trust between municipalities and communities (Matsiliza, 2012).

Revenue Generation and Management

Effective revenue generation and management are crucial for any organisation, whether in the public or private sector. This involves identifying revenue sources, enhancing revenue collection, and exploring innovative revenue streams to ensure financial sustainability (Kulkarni et al., 2024). Revenue sources can vary depending on the type of institution. According to Erzurumlu et al. (2010), traditional revenue sources typically include:

· sales of goods and services
· income from property taxes, sales taxes, tariffs, and licensing fees
· payments from customers for continued access to a service
· earnings and dividends from financial investments
· stocks, or bonds and grants
· donations from government agencies, whether non-profits, or philanthropists.

Alternative revenue sources are revenue generated from renting out properties, equipment, or intellectual property, financial support from corporate sponsors in exchange for marketing opportunities, and franchising and licensing, which means allowing third parties to use a brand name or intellectual property for a fee (Kulkarni et al., 2024).

Maximising revenue collection is another way by which inefficiencies and losses can be reduced. This can be achieved by utilising technology, such as, digital payment systems, automation, and AI-driven analytics to enhance collections. Giving incentives and discounts to customers and data analytics to identify revenue

leakages and improve forecasting. Operational costs can also be reduced by streamlining operations to ensure that revenue is optimised while minimising expenses (Namaliya, 2017).

Innovative Revenue Streams

Innovative revenue streams are critical for addressing financial challenges and ensuring sustainable service delivery. Traditional sources like property rates, service charges, and government grants are often insufficient to meet growing demands. As a result, municipalities are exploring new approaches such as making use of PPPs, commercialising municipal assets, introducing smart metering for utilities, and implementing digital platforms for service payments. Some local governments are also tapping into renewable energy initiatives, tourism development, and urban land value capture to boost income (Mashamaite, 2020). These innovations aim to diversify revenue bases, improve efficiency, and enhance financial resilience, but their success depends on strong governance, community engagement, and effective management (Namaliya, 2017).

Expenditure Planning

Expenditure planning is essential for financial sustainability, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently while minimising waste. This involves cost control strategies, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms, and continuous financial optimisation. Effective expenditure planning also entails monitoring spending, creating a budget, and using data to make informed decisions, ultimately ensuring that resources are used efficiently and effectively to achieve desired outcomes (Masuku & Ijeoma, 2015).

Cost control strategy

Cost controls are adopted to track and monitor all expenses against the budget and analyses cost factors to identify areas where costs can be reduced. It assists in negotiating better terms with suppliers to manage and cut costs and increase effectiveness. In addition, technology-based tools are used to track and analyse spending, identify potential savings, and meet budget targets (Masuku & Ijeoma, 2015).

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) for Expenditure Management

Monitoring is essential for the regular tracking of expenditures, activities, and outputs to ensure budget compliance and timely implementation while evaluation goes deeper to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact of spending and programmes, guiding future planning and resource allocation (Bottrill & Pressey, 2012). Collectively, these are essential tools for ensuring that municipal expenditures are efficient, effective, and aligned with intended goals. In expenditure management, M&E helps to track how funds are spent, assess their impact, and improve decision-making and accountability (Bottrill & Pressey, 2012). In addition, M&E ensures accountability and effectiveness in expenditure planning. It also involves tracking spending patterns, assessing outcomes, and making data-driven decisions. This is indispensable in managing public expenditures effectively. An effective M&E system fosters accountability, improves efficiency, and enhances trust in financial governance. As fiscal pressures and stakeholder demands for accountability grow, strengthening M&E in expenditure management is both a necessity and an opportunity (Masuku & Ijeoma, 2015).

Poor data quality, limited capacity, and weak institutional frameworks are common challenges of M&E. To overcome these challenges, municipalities should invest in strong M&E systems and integrate them into the budget process. This will ensure that results are used to inform financial decisions (Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2010).

Financial Reporting and Accountability

The process of producing a statement which displays the financial status, performance and the flow of cash of an organisation over a specific period is called financial reporting. It includes documents such as income statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements, and notes to accounts (Dalnial et al., 2014).

Accountability is a legal obligation of municipalities to provide transparent, accurate, and timely financial information to political structures for oversight and taxpayers. Financial accountability clarifies the way in which funds were allocated and utilised to demonstrate sound stewardship and responsible financial management. It also informs financial decision-making and financial policy formulation. In addition, financial accountability is essential to foster political oversight, financial auditing, and

evaluation (Dalnial et al., 2014). Components of financial reporting and accountability include:

- compliance with standards
- internal controls and audits to detect and prevent misuse of funds, and
- timely and accurate reporting and disclosure of financial risks and liabilities.

According to Dalnial et al. (2014), the main benefits of applying these components are that it builds trust with stakeholders, it enhances organisational credibility and performance, it reduces risks of fraud, waste, and mismanagement and it supports long term sustainability and fiscal discipline.

Challenges of Financial Reporting and Accountability

Despite clear benefits as highlighted, financial reporting and accountability still encounter significant challenges such as: weak financial systems and lack of capacity; delayed or incomplete reporting; poor data quality and weak internal controls; and political and institutional resistance to financial transparency. In this regard, Xaba and Ngubane (2010) propose the following strategies to overcome these challenges:

- strengthening internal controls by implementing strict financial management systems
- enhancing capacity-building by training municipal officials on financial governance
- improving public participation by ensuring transparency through open budget processes, and
- making use of technology such as digital systems to ensure accurate reporting and tracking.

Statutory and Regulatory Framework for Financial Reporting and Accountability

South Africa has a comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework for financial management in local government in general and for financial reporting and accountability in particular. Municipalities thus operate under a strict financial governance framework to ensure compliance and accountability. This framework is designed to promote responsible financial management, prevent corruption,

and enhance public trust. The following legislation (statutes) and regulations govern financial reporting and accountability:

· The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996) requires the responsible management of financial municipalities and orders financial accountability and transparency at all levels of government.
· The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1999 (National Treasury, 1999) governs the financial management of national and provincial governments, with indirect effects on municipalities. The AGSA conducts annual financial audits of municipalities and issues audit opinions on compliance with financial regulations and governance (Alonge et al., 2024).
· The Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), 2003 (RSA, 2003) ensures complete financial governance, expenditure control, and revenue management. It motivates municipalities to prepare and circulate annual financial statements, mandates quarterly financial performance reports and establishes financial oversight roles for municipal councils and committees (Alonge et al., 2024)

Financial Risk Management and Mitigation Strategies

It is imperative that municipalities foster financial stability, prevent losses, and enhance financial sustainability. In this regard, Kulshrestha (2022) emphasises the need for the continuous identification of potential financial risks, the regular assessment of their impact, as well as the implementation of mitigation strategies. As far as the identification of potential risks is concerned, it should be noted that such risks may emanate from several sources. These sources can be categorised as follows:

· market risks, which are risks of financial losses caused by fluctuations in market variables such as interest rates, exchange rates, and stock prices
· revenue collection risks, stemming from non-payment by households, businesses, and government departments, often exacerbated by poor billing systems and weak enforcement
· liquidity risks, arising from the inability to meet short-term financial obligations as a result of shortages in cash flow while credit risks develop from unsustainable borrowing practices and the inability to service municipal debt

- operational risks, arising from issues such as system failures, internal control weaknesses, and staff incompetence and negligence
- legal and compliance risks, arising from non-compliance with regulations, lawsuits, or legal penalties, and
- strategic risks, emanating from poor financial decisions, changes in consumer demand, or competition that may impact financial performance of municipalities.

Effective financial risk management is key to municipal financial sustainability. By identifying risks early, implementing mitigation strategies, and continuously monitoring financial performance, the local sphere of government can safeguard their financial health and ensure long-term stability (Kulshrestha, 2022).

Financial risk management strategies in municipalities typically commence with systematic risk identification and assessment, where municipalities create detailed risk registers, prioritise risks based on likelihood and impact, and integrate risk management into their planning processes. Strong financial controls should be instituted to govern finance-related functions such as procurement, revenue collection, and expenditure management, ensuring transparency and accountability. Realistic and data-driven budgeting is essential in this regard since regular budget reviews are necessary to adjust financial forecasts and align spending with available resources. Medium- and long-term financial planning tools may help municipalities to anticipate future financial challenges and set more sustainable development targets.

Investment Planning and Asset Management

Investment planning and asset management are essential components of effective municipal financial planning. Municipalities are responsible for planning and managing infrastructure investments that support service delivery, economic development, and the well-being of their communities. Investment planning at the municipal level involves systematically identifying, prioritising, and funding capital projects such as roads, water systems, electricity networks, and public facilities (Zeb, 2022). It ensures that public funds are directed towards initiatives that are strategically aligned with municipal development goals as outlined in the IDPs and linked to the budgeting processes through the MTREF. Investment planning and management are critical for individuals, businesses, and

municipalities to grow wealth, ensure financial security, and achieve long-term financial goals. Effective investment management involves selecting the right assets, balancing risk and return, and continuously monitoring performance (Hani, 2020).

Asset management in local government refers to the structured process of maintaining, upgrading, and operating physical assets in a cost-effective manner (Kuchanur, 2015). Municipalities must ensure that they have accurate and comprehensive asset registers, as required by the MFMA and accounting standards. Proper asset management practices help municipalities to maximise the value of assets over their entire life cycle, ensuring that infrastructure remains reliable, efficient, and sustainable. By systematically monitoring the condition and performance of assets, municipalities can plan for maintenance, refurbishment, and eventual replacement, thereby avoiding costly emergency repairs and service delivery failures. However, many South African municipalities face considerable challenges in both investment planning and asset management, including ageing infrastructure, underinvestment in maintenance, lack of skilled personnel, and weak institutional capacity (Mazele & Amoah, 2022). These issues often lead to service delivery breakdowns and financial instability. In response, there has been an increasing push for municipalities to adopt life-cycle asset management strategies, develop asset management plans (AMPs), conduct regular asset condition assessments, and integrate asset management with financial planning and risk management processes.

Sound investment planning and asset management are fundamental to achieving the objectives of developmental local government. They enable municipalities to use their limited financial resources wisely, ensure long-term infrastructure sustainability, and promote better quality of life for residents. Furthermore, they build public trust by demonstrating that municipalities are capable of managing public assets responsibly and planning investments that meet the needs of both current and future generations. Strengthening these areas remains a key focus of national initiatives aimed at improving municipal performance, financial sustainability, and service delivery outcomes across South Africa (Mazele & Amoah, 2022).

Capital Planning and Infrastructure Financing

Capital planning and infrastructure financing are critical functions within South Africa's local government framework, aimed at ensuring that municipalities can deliver essential services and support economic development within their financial means. Capital planning involves the strategic identification, prioritisation, and implementation of long-term investment projects such as roads, water and sanitation systems, housing developments, and energy infrastructure. It requires municipalities to align their infrastructure needs with their IDPs, SDBIPs, and MTREFs. This alignment ensures that infrastructure projects are not only based on current community needs but are also financially sustainable and adaptable to future growth and development (Garvin et al., 2000).

Infrastructure financing refers to how municipalities secure the funds needed to implement their capital plans. Municipalities finance infrastructure through a combination of sources, including own revenues such as property rates and service charges, Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) and Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG), borrowing from financial institutions, and PPPs. Effective infrastructure financing strategies require municipalities to balance affordability, debt sustainability, and the need for critical investments, ensuring that long-term liabilities do not compromise financial health. Municipalities must also develop credible and bankable project pipelines to attract external funding and private investment (Calitz & Fourie, 2010).

Capital planning and infrastructure financing are central to the goal of developmental local government in South Africa. Well-planned and well-financed infrastructure provides the backbone for economic growth, poverty alleviation, improved service delivery, and the building of sustainable communities. Strengthening municipal capabilities in these areas is essential to overcoming service delivery backlogs, promoting urban and rural development, and achieving inclusive growth across the country (Calitz & Fourie, 2010).

Technology and Innovation in Municipal Financial Planning

Technology and innovation have become critical enablers of improved financial planning in South African local government. The adoption of financial management information systems (FMISs), such as the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (mSCOA), has transformed the way that municipalities manage, report, and analyse financial

information (Azarenkova et al., 2017; Enwereji, 2022). These systems standardise data collection and improve the transparency, accuracy, and accountability of municipal financial transactions, enabling real-time tracking of budgets and expenditures (Enwereji, 2022). Digital innovations, including online billing systems, electronic payment platforms, and mobile applications for service delivery reporting, have enhanced revenue management by making it easier for citizens to interact with municipalities and fulfil their financial obligations. Moreover, data-driven financial decision-making is increasingly being recognized as a powerful tool for strategic planning. By leveraging big data analytics, municipalities can better forecast revenue trends, identify spending inefficiencies, and prioritize investment decisions based on evidence rather than assumptions. Predictive modelling and financial dashboards allow municipal officials to visualize financial health indicators, track performance against targets, and quickly adjust plans when risks are detected. Innovations such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are also being used to map municipal assets and optimize infrastructure investment decisions (Enwereji, 2022).

Despite the clear benefits, many municipalities face challenges in fully harnessing these technologies, including limited technical skills, financial constraints, and cybersecurity risks. However, national initiatives like the Local Government Digital Transformation Strategy encourage municipalities to embrace digital tools as part of building capable, modern institutions. Ultimately, the effective use of technology and innovation in financial planning is essential for strengthening financial sustainability, enhancing service delivery, improving governance, and achieving the developmental goals of local government in South Africa (Debbarma & Sharma, 2023).

Digital innovations in financial planning within South African municipalities are transforming how municipalities manage budgets, forecast expenditures, and deliver services. Tools such as automated financial management systems, cloud-based budgeting platforms, and data analytics software enable more accurate, transparent, and efficient financial processes. These technologies help local governments to streamline reporting, improve compliance with regulatory frameworks, and enhance accountability to citizens. Digital platforms also support better scenario planning and risk management, allowing municipalities to adapt more quickly to economic shifts. Despite these advances, challenges like limited digital infrastructure, cybersecurity risks, and the need for staff

training remain significant barriers to full implementation (Debbarma & Sharma, 2023).

Technological advancements are reshaping financial planning, making it more accessible, accurate, and efficient. Cloud–based financial planning tools and platforms, such as SAP (Systems, Applications, and Products in Data Processing), Oracle, and Microsoft Dynamics allow remote access to financial data. It also improves coordination and collaboration across municipal departments.

Data–Driven Financial Decision–Making

Data–driven financial decision-making in South African local government involves using accurate, real–time data to guide budgeting, resource allocation, and strategic planning (Gautam & Bhimavarapu, 2022). With growing financial pressures and accountability demands, municipalities are increasingly relying on data analytics to improve transparency, optimise spending, and forecast future needs. By analysing trends in revenue collection, service delivery costs, and community needs, local governments can make more informed, evidence–based decisions that enhance efficiency and service outcomes (Rane et al., 2024). The integration of digital tools, performance dashboards, and financial management systems is crucial in this process (Rane et al., 2024). However, challenges such as data quality issues, skills shortages, and infrastructure limitations must be addressed to fully realize the benefits of a data–driven approach (Gautam & Bhimavarapu, 2022).

Challenges of Municipal Financial Planning

A significant portion of the country's 257 local, district and metropolitan municipalities are failing in their responsibilities to provide financially sustainable and adequate services that promote socio–economic development. Because of poor financial management and lack of necessary financial skills and capacity, many municipalities in South Africa are experiencing failure in service delivery (Laubscher, 2012). There are many challenges, but one major challenge is the general weakness in revenue management, with many municipalities struggling to gather sufficient income from property rates, service charges, and other local sources. This problem is compounded by high levels of consumer debt and a heavy reliance on intergovernmental grants, which limits financial autonomy (Liphoko, 2023; Van Niekerk & Sebakamotse, 2020).

Poor budgeting practice is another critical problem, where budgets are often unrealistic, unfunded, or not aligned with the strategic priorities outlined in the IDPs. This leads to service delivery failures and financial instability (Mafuwane, 2024). Capacity constraints present a further obstacle, as many municipalities lack skilled financial management personnel and technical expertise to properly plan, implement, and monitor budgets and financial strategies. Weak internal controls, inadequate financial systems, and poor asset management also contribute to inefficiencies, wastage, and vulnerability caused by fraud and corruption. Oversight structures such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs) and Audit Committees are often ineffective because of political interference or lack of technical support. Furthermore, municipalities frequently fail to comply with financial reporting standards and deadlines set by the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), resulting in negative audit outcomes from the Auditor-General (Rane et al., 2024). Compounding these issues are broader governance challenges, including political instability, poor leadership, and a lack of accountability, all of which weaken strategic financial planning and service delivery performance (Maropo, 2018). Rapid urbanisation, ageing infrastructure, and limited investment in maintenance put additional strain on municipal budgets (Mafuwane, 2024). Lack of community engagement in budget processes, ineffective use of technology, poor integration of financial management systems and limited transparency and accountability on how funds are allocated and spent are other challenges of municipalities (Mafuwane, 2024).

Collectively, these challenges lead to systemic financial distress that hinders the achievement of broader national development goals as well as the adherence to municipal obligations. This also threatens long-term financial sustainability, economic growth, and general societal prosperity and well-being. It also erodes public trust in government, and more specifically in municipalities as the sphere of government directly in contact with communities.

Possible Strategies to Overcome Challenges of Municipal Financial Planning

To overcome these challenges, several key strategies can be adopted. Strengthening institutional and human capacity is fundamental; municipalities must invest in the recruitment, training, and continuous development of qualified financial management personnel (Retnandari, 2022). Improved revenue management

practices are also crucial, involving more efficient billing, collection, and debt recovery processes, as well as diversifying revenue sources beyond grants and property taxes. Enhancing the credibility and realism of budgets through proper alignment with IDPs and SDBIPs is essential to ensure that planned expenditures match actual financial resources.

Municipalities should also implement robust internal controls, risk management systems, and transparent financial reporting practices to reduce irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure. Strengthening oversight structures, such as MPACs and audit committees, will improve accountability and foster better financial discipline. Adopting modern financial management systems, such as the mSCOA, can help to improve data integrity, reporting accuracy, and decision-making processes. Moreover, municipalities need to focus on long-term financial sustainability by preparing realistic MTREFs and developing financial recovery plans where necessary. Building a culture of ethical leadership, enforcing consequence management, and encouraging community participation in financial planning processes are critical to restoring trust and improving governance (Retnandari, 2022).

In summary, overcoming municipal financial planning challenges requires a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach that combines technical improvements, stronger governance, better planning integration, ethical leadership, and greater community engagement. These strategies are vital to ensuring that municipalities achieve their constitutional mandate of developmental local government and deliver sustainable services to their communities.

Conclusion

Municipal financial planning in South Africa plays a significant role in ensuring sustainable development, service delivery, and good governance at the local level. As the sphere of government closest to the people, municipalities are tasked with delivering essential services. Effective financial planning is fundamental to achieving these commands. Despite progressive legislation, South African municipalities continue to face significant challenges such as poor revenue collection, mismanagement of funds, irregular and wasteful expenditure, capacity constraints, and political interference. These issues have contributed to a growing number of municipalities being declared financially distressed. However, there are notable

efforts and improvements, including the promotion of transparency through audited financial statements, citizen participation in budget processes, and the use of performance management systems. The National Treasury's role in providing oversight and capacity-building support has also been instrumental in strengthening financial governance.

For financial planning to be truly effective, municipalities must prioritise long-term sustainability over short-term political gains, improve revenue management and expenditure control, and invest in financial skills development and institutional capacity. In addition, fostering community involvement and accountability in planning and budgeting processes and embracing technology and innovation for better financial data management and forecasting.

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Chapter 6

Community-Based Planning

John Mamokhere
University of Limpopo

Abstract

In South Africa, community-based planning (CBP) can be regarded as a participatory process that complements the implementation of the integrated development plan (IDP). A comprehensive statutory framework, such as the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, affirms the importance of community participation in municipal affairs. The CBP process is designed to promote community participation and make municipal planning processes more people-centred. This process enables and empowers community members to drive local development. However, the CBP process faces both challenges and opportunities. The CBP faces challenges such as poor governance, lack of institutional capacity and resources, political-administrative interference, digital inequalities, shortage of skilled facilitators, and coordination issues (e.g., working in silos). Contrarily, CBP has the potential to enhance local development by empowering marginalised communities to participate in the decision-making process.

   This chapter aims to achieve the following objectives: (i) to explore the nature of CBP and its significance for sustainable development; (ii) to assess the evolution and current state of CBP in South African municipalities; (iii) to analyse the impact of new political frameworks on community engagement and planning; (iv) to explore good governance principles that promote CBP, along with various engagement strategies and methodologies; and (v) to examine the CBP challenges in South Africa. To realise these objectives, the chapter employs a qualitative research methodology in the form of a conceptual study. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The findings show that CBP is confronted with both challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in South Africa. In conclusion, the chapter stresses the need for municipalities to improve resource allocation and monitoring for participatory

planning. It recommends allocating financial and human resources to community workshops and enhancing monitoring and evaluation processes. To minimise political-administrative interference, clear role definitions and necessary legislative revisions are encouraged. The chapter also indicates the need to close the digital divide. Municipalities should prioritise better resource allocation for participatory initiatives and ensure equitable access to digital resources for all communities.

Keywords: community-based planning, community engagement, good governance, integrated development plans, participatory processes, South African municipalities.

Introduction

In South Africa, community participation, also referred to as community involvement or engagement, is enshrined and embraced in the country's extensive legislative framework as a constitutional obligation and democratic principle. Specifically, community participation is encouraged by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996), the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000), the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998) and the White Paper on Local Government of 1998 (COGTA, 1998). In general, community participation refers to the involvement of communities in development decision-making to address their needs, concerns and aspirations. This is also absorbed in the Constitution as a basic human right and as a fundamental principle of local democracy. Kgobe (2024) affirms that community participation is a foundational political tenet that aims to involve citizens in administrative policymaking activities, such as determining service levels, budget priorities, and infrastructure development projects. Such involvement can be facilitated through needs assessments, collaborative planning, and community mobilisation (Botes & Van Rensburg, 2000).

Community participation aims to orient government policy programmes towards community needs, build public support, and promote a sense of cohesiveness within society. In this regard, Van der Waldt (2019) argues that participation is crucial for democratising service delivery by empowering local actors to participate in decision-making processes. This empowers individuals from across the socioeconomic spectrum to shape their own circumstances and determine their developmental needs.

Conventional and more traditional notions of community participation were largely characterised by top-down approaches. With the advent of democratisation in 1994, this approach has been replaced by collaborative community-based decision-making approaches. These approaches, according to Mamokhere and Meyer (2023), demonstrate the recognition that community participation can act as an empowerment tool because it enables citizens to actively engage local decision-makers. It also allows the incorporation of marginalised voices, inculcates a sense of community ownership, and increases municipal transparency, responsiveness and accountability. In this respect, the South African Cities Network (SACN) (2014:2) confirms that CBP is intended to make municipal planning (e.g., integrated development plans, spatial planning, and service delivery and budget implementation plans) within the District Development Model (DDM) more people-centred and responsive to the needs of communities. CBP enables and empowers people in communities to drive local development. The process involves systematic analysis by the local people who then jointly plan suitable development interventions (Ouwencamp, 2023). This promotes ownership of these interventions and also fosters social cohesion.

Despite the ideals of community participation in municipal planning, it remains a contested field. Scholars such as Malatji (2019), Mamokhere and Meyer (2023), and Thusi and Selepe (2023) criticise municipalities for a lack of community involvement in municipal affairs, while Ideas42 (2021) and Banerjee et al. (2022) argue that municipal officials often do not prioritise engagement. In addition, community members often show high levels of apathy when it comes to participation in formal IDP processes. A survey conducted by Ideas42 (2021) revealed that this apathy stems mainly from the perception that participation is unlikely to bring about any significant change to their lives. Furthermore, Kgobe (2024), Malatji (2019), and Mamokhere and Meyer (2023) reason that many municipalities employ top-down approaches that typically overlook the voices of marginalised groups, leading to disillusionment, lack of trust and, in some cases, violent protests as communities express their frustrations over unfulfilled service delivery promises.

Given this context, this chapter will explore the nature of CBP and its significance for local democracy and sustainable development. Attention is paid to the evolution and current state of CBP in South African municipalities and the impact of new political frameworks on community engagement and planning will also be explored. Finally,

various engagement strategies and methods will be highlighted, serving as recommendations to build trust and foster strong relationships between municipalities and communities. With these purposes in mind, a qualitative research design was followed to gain insight, primarily focusing on "why" and "how" questions (Busetto et al., 2022:14). Secondary data was gathered through an extensive literature review concerning CBP. This search was conducted across various platforms, including Google, Google Scholar, Scopus, and scientific Internet sources.

The Nature of Community-Based Planning and its Significance for Sustainable Local Development in South Africa

The SACN (2014) draws attention to the fact that CBP in South Africa is a participatory approach that actively involves local communities in the development and implementation of plans that directly affect their lives. This approach aligns with Section 152 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996), which mandates local governments to provide democratic and accountable governance while encouraging community involvement in municipal affairs. By engaging residents, councillors, municipal officials, and various community structures such as ward committees and community-based organisations (CBOs), CBP should foster a collaborative environment where citizens are empowered to manage their own development. This inclusive approach should furthermore ensure that IDPs are more responsive to the specific needs and priorities of local populations, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of municipal services and planning intervention (Fourie & Van der Waldt, 2021). CBP thus ensures that development plans are sustainable and community-driven by employing local strengths and support from the IDP and sector departments as implied in Section 26, as well as Chapters 4 and 5 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (RSA, 2000). It should be noted, however, that CBP is not officially legislated, since it is intended as a tool to complement the IDP (Everatt & Gwagwa, 2005; SACN, 2014).

The significance of CBP as an instrument for sustainable local development in South Africa is multifaceted. Firstly, it aims to improve the quality of development plans and municipal services by incorporating diverse community perspectives, leading to more targeted and effective interventions. Secondly, CBP is intended to

enhance community control over development initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and reducing dependency on external entities. Additionally, by promoting active participation, CBP aspires to strengthen social cohesion and reconciliation within communities. Thirdly, this planning process aims to build local capacity by training facilitators and community members, equipping them with the skills necessary for ongoing development efforts. Overall, CBP serves as a crucial mechanism for achieving participatory local democracy and sustainable development in South Africa by ensuring that development initiatives are community-driven and contextually appropriate (eThekwini Municipality IDP, 2025; SACN, 2014). Moreover, it enables municipalities to transition from consultation-based planning to active engagement, thereby empowering citizens and ensuring that development initiatives align with local realities (Nel & Binns, 2003). In this regard, Parnell and Pieterse (2010) and Pieterse (2019) argue that CBP also helps to create a network of development facilitators who assist municipalities in identifying and addressing community priorities. The implementation of CBP typically follows a structured process requiring trained facilitators who work closely with ward committees. These facilitators can be drawn from municipal officials, CBOs, or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in local governance (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2023; Reddy, 2016). Effective training equips them with the skills to lead participatory planning sessions, ensuring that community voices are integrated into municipal planning processes.

While aiming to improve service delivery and address local needs, CBP can face several challenges, including low community participation, potential for misaligned priorities, and the risk of perpetuating existing inequalities. Furthermore, the process can be resource-intensive and may not always lead to effective or sustainable solutions (Lizarralde & Massyn, 2008). Municipal officials are constitutionally mandated to create an environment that promotes community participation. This ideal is, however, seldom realised. As a result, community participation may fail to bring diverse perspectives and local knowledge to the decision-making table. A conducive environment, characterised by openness and transparency, is essential to establish a sound bottom-up approach for participation (Malatji, 2019). In this regard, Kgobe (2024), National Treasury (2022), and Turok (2014) affirm that CBP offers a viable mechanism for addressing typical local governance challenges. For instance, the iLembe District Municipality has been successful in the implementation of CBP by establishing creative

platforms for continuous community engagement. These platforms assist the municipality to identify, analyse and prioritise the diverse needs of the local population.

The Evolution and Current State of CBP in South African Municipalities

The evolution of CBP in South Africa reflects a significant shift towards participatory governance following the transition to democracy in 1994. This shift aimed to address historical inequalities in governance (Everatt & Gwagwa, 2005). Recognising the need for inclusive decision-making, the post-apartheid government introduced frameworks such as the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000, that mandates municipalities to implement participatory planning processes (RSA, 2000).

By the early 2000s, CBP emerged as a structured method for integrating community priorities into municipal IDPs, emphasising a move from top-down to bottom-up planning that involved local stakeholders directly in identifying development needs and projects (Malatji, 2019; Nel & Binns, 2003). The former Department of Provincial and Local Government and various NGOs played critical roles in piloting CBP initiatives, refining methodologies for broader municipal planning (Reddy, 2016). For instance, CBP piloting was developed through a collaborative project involving South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Ghana.

CBP underwent further refinement in South Africa between 2003 and 2005. During this period, pilot programmes were implemented in eight municipalities, namely Nkonkobe (Eastern Cape), Greater Tzaneen and Bela-Bela (Limpopo), eThekwini and Msunduzi (KwaZulu-Natal), Mangaung and Maluti-a-Phofung (Free State), and Mbombela (Mpumalanga), resulting in an approach informed by diverse experiences and expertise across Africa (SACN, 2014). Chimbuya and Ambert (2004) note that the CBP approach gained prominence, particularly through the IDP framework, which mandates citizen involvement in decision-making. Kgobe (2024), Mamokhere and Meyer (2023) and Mukumbuzi et al. (2021) therefore maintain that CBP represents a transformation in governance practices, aimed at fostering inclusive democracy, community engagement and addressing past inequalities.

It seems that CBP emerged in response mainly to two key challenges, namely institutional constraints in promoting sustainable livelihoods and the limited impact of decentralisation when focused solely on local government structures rather than their service delivery functions. As far as the first challenge is concerned, CBP should be grounded on sustainable livelihood principles emphasising community empowerment, particularly for marginalised groups, by ensuring active participation in their development. It should also advocate for a well–coordinated, accessible network of service providers, including municipalities, local business, and community–based organisations. However, especially rural local municipalities are severely hampered by limited institutional competency and capacity to promote sustainable livelihoods. As far as the second challenge is concerned, CBP should promote the effective, responsive, and accountable provision of services. However, unfunded mandates and limited devolved powers and authority constrain municipal councils to effectively respond to local needs and priorities. Furthermore, focus being placed on the establishment of structures (i.e., organisational arrangements) often divert attention away from assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of functions that these structures should perform (Kgobe et al., 2024; Mukumbuzi et al., 2021; SACN, 2014).

While CBP has been largely institutionalised in municipal planning frameworks, its implementation remains inconsistent across municipalities. Some local, district and metropolitan municipalities have successfully embedded CBP within their IDP processes, leading to improved service delivery and accountability (Pieterse, 2019). However, challenges such as limited financial resources, inadequate facilitator training, and political interference hinder the full realisation of CBP's potential in many areas (Thusi & Selepe, 2023; Turok, 2014). While the Municipal System Act (RSA, 2000) supports participatory governance, the practical application of CBP often encounters challenges. Studies by Ideas42 (2021) and Reddy (2016) indicate that many residents feel undervalued in the planning process, suggesting a disconnect between municipal objectives and community experiences. In some municipalities, CBP remains a rather symbolic exercise instead of being a transformative planning tool (National Treasury, 2022). Weak institutional capacity, lack of dedicated funding, and insufficient technical support continue to hamper its effectiveness (Parnell & Pieterse, 2010).

The Impact of New Political and Governance Frameworks on Community-Based Planning

Kariuki (2024) contends that the 2024 national and provincial elections marked a significant shift in South Africa's political, and by implication, also its local governance landscape. The dominance of a single, powerful political party, namely the African National Congress (ANC), was ended with the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). This governance model influencse governance arrangements on all spheres of government. It also impacts mechanisms for public participation. In municipalities, where local government acts as the front line for service delivery, the implementation of a GNU presents both opportunities and challenges for community engagement and planning. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) (2024) states that the "current political framework of the GNU emphasises constitutionalism, non-racialism, non-sexism, and community safety, particularly for women and children", as foundational principles. While the GNU aims for broad political inclusion, gender parity in public policymaking appears to be a lower priority. The coalition, comprising 11 diverse parties, reflects political inclusivity but lacks adequate representation of South Africa's demographic diversity. Some participating parties have questionable commitments to non-racialism and non-sexism, undermining the constitutional mandate for inclusivity and gender equality. This is evident in the decline of women's representation in parliament from 46% in 2020 to 43% in 2024, highlighting a gap in prioritising female participation in public policymaking and CBP (IJR, 2024).

Maleka (2024) maintains that the GNU is a crucial framework in diverse political landscapes, particularly in South Africa, where no single party secures a majority. This framework emphasises inclusive and representative governance, with strategic planning influenced by consensus amongst coalition partners. This approach impacts governance, policy formulation, and implementation in the country. A GNU, by its nature, fosters collaboration amongst multiple political parties, often requiring consensus-driven decision-making. While this approach promotes political stability and inclusivity, it can also introduce bureaucratic complexities that affect municipal operations (Maleka, 2024; SAGNA, 2024; Selelo & Lebotsa, 2024). Municipalities, guided by the principles of the Municipal Systems Act (RSA, 2000) and Section 152 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996), are mandated to ensure democratic governance, community

participation, and accountable service delivery (RSA, 1996; Kgobe et al., 2024). However, the integration of diverse political ideologies within a GNU may either strengthen participatory governance or lead to administrative inefficiencies caused by policy inconsistencies and political contestation (Makgamatha, 2024; Maleka, 2024). Furthermore, Thusi (2024:690) states that "the South African government sector has been plagued by a lack of accountability, community participation and transparency, leading to service delivery protests. The GNU's initiative aims to improve stability and service delivery by involving multiple parties in a push for transparency. This will ensure that no single party dominates South Africa's political space and government for the next five years. The GNU parties can promote transparency, effective public participation and accountability by promoting anti-corruption reforms, legislative strengthening, and consequence management in the public sector".

Maleka (2024) argues that strategic planning under a GNU might face challenges such as delays in decision-making, conflicting priorities, and institutional capacity. These issues can lead to fragmented development planning and strained efficiency in municipal administrations. Maleka (2024) further offers recommendations that to maximise the potential of a GNU, municipalities should strengthen public participatory mechanisms, improve policy alignment, and invest in capacity-building. This includes strengthening ward committees and public forums for community involvement, streamlined coordination between national, provincial, and local government structures, and investing in training for municipal officials and local representatives. These measures can help to ensure sustainable development and improve overall efficiency in planning and governance. Mamokhere and Meyer (2023) opine that community participation in municipal planning is a cornerstone of South Africa's democratic framework. The IDP and CBP processes are designed to empower local communities in decision-making (CoGTA, 2022). Thusi (2024) states that the GNU's emphasis on coalition governance may influence community participation in several ways:

- **Enhanced inclusivity**: A multi-party governance approach could increase representation of diverse interests, ensuring that marginalised communities have a voice in local planning.
- **Policy uncertainty**: Conflicting political agendas within the GNU may lead to delays in decision-making, affecting the implementation of community development projects.

- **Strengthened accountability Mechanisms**: A coalition government may foster stronger oversight and transparency in municipal management, potentially improving trust in local authorities.

The GNU framework introduces a new era of coalition politics in South African municipalities, shaping the landscape of community engagement and planning. While it presents opportunities for inclusiveness and accountability, it also poses challenges for policy coherence and administrative efficiency.

Community-Based Participatory Planning: Steps and Process

CBP, as a participatory process in municipal planning initiatives such as IDP and budgeting, follows different steps. CBP emphasises community involvement in the planning process and outlines the various steps taken to ensure participation. Table 6.1 outlines the phases or steps to ensure the inclusion of community members in planning processes.

Through inclusive processes such as trust-building, resource profiling, and shared visioning, CBP empowers communities to co-create development solutions that are locally relevant and sustainable. This approach, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022) fosters transparency, accountability, and social cohesion while ensuring that municipal plans reflect grassroots realities. By integrating CBP into IDP frameworks, local governments can strengthen democratic governance, improve service delivery, and ensure more effective and equitable use of resources (Kgobe, 2024).

Challenges of Community-Based Planning in South Africa

As alluded to earlier, CBP in South Africa, while widely considered as a vital tool for inclusive development and participatory governance, faces a range of persistent challenges that hinder its full potential. This section briefly elucidates some of the most significant challenges.

Insufficient Resources and Funding

The 2014 report from the South African Cities Network (SACN, 2014) indicates that many municipalities lack the financial resources and capacity necessary for meaningful community participation. Shongwe and Meyer (2023) confirm that resource constraints hinder

Table 6.1: Key Steps in CBP

Phase	Step	Purpose and Alignment to the IDP and Community Participation
Pre– Planning	Awareness and Buy– In	To build early consensus and institutional alignment between government and communities, ensuring integration with IDP processes and encouraging ownership of development frameworks.
	Formation of Core Facilitation Team	To establish a representative team (including government and community members) responsible for managing inclusive community participation.
	Training of Facilitators	To equip the facilitation team with participatory planning skills aligned with IDP methodology and inclusive governance principles.
	Community Mobilisation	To initiate awareness campaigns amongst leaders and broader communities, ensuring transparent communication and inclusive representation during planning.
Planning Execution	Trust Building Exercise	To foster community cohesion and confidence, vital for deliberative dialogue, participatory decision–making, and long–term IDP success.
	Community and Resource Profiling	To serve as a participatory mapping and data collection tool that informs the socio– economic and spatial baseline for IDPs and municipal planning.
	Seasonal Livelihood Analysis	To analyse livelihoods across the calendar year to ensure IDPs are responsive to economic cycles and household vulnerabilities.
	Landscape and Land Use Mapping	To identify environmental assets and challenges critical for spatial planning and sustainable development within the IDP.
	Service Provision Analysis	To assess service delivery gaps and public sector performance, enabling evidence– based planning for IDP service improvement. This assessment involves a thorough examination of the legal framework, institutional context, socio–economic conditions, spatial context, environmental factors, and development priorities.

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Phase	Step	Purpose and Alignment to the IDP and Community Participation
	Shared Visioning	To facilitate community-driven future scenarios, supporting vision statements within IDP frameworks that reflect grassroots priorities.
	Project Identification	To prioritise initiatives aimed at alignment with IDP goals such as improved service delivery, resilience, and livelihood enhancement. Just like in the IDP step 2 of strategies identification, this phase focuses on developing a vision and mission statement, defining a value system, identifying key performance areas, and formulating strategies to achieve development objectives.
	Disaster-Proofing Projects	To enhance resilience through risk analysis and preparedness planning, supporting sustainable and adaptive development in the IDP.
	Technical Support and Partner Mapping	To identify institutional, technical, and financial support required, feeding into the IDP's multi-stakeholder implementation strategy. This planning step involves identifying capital projects, developing their business plans, and aligning them with performance management systems.
	Prioritisation for Year 1 Implementation	To allocate resources in IDPs by selecting projects with the highest community and development impact.
	Targeting and Phasing	To conduct strategic sequencing and allocation of projects to specific villages, groups, and community members to improve IDP implementation efficiency and service delivery.
Post-Planning	Community Action Plan (CAP) Documentation	To produce a structured and comprehensive plan that feeds into the municipal IDP, ensuring consistency and community ownership. To further ensure community ownership of the IDP, communities are consulted before the approval of the plan.

Phase	Step	Purpose and Alignment to the IDP and Community Participation
	Community Monitoring & Reflection System	To establish participatory monitoring mechanisms, promoting transparency and continuous learning in IDP implementation. This step also ensures that there is monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure that the projects are implemented in line with the approved plan.
	CAP Launch & Integration	To formally hand over to local government for incorporation into IDPs and mobilisation of resources from government and partners. In the IDP process, this step focuses on integrating various processes, including institutional restructuring and alignment, and developing integrated communication plans.

Source: Adapted from the International Organization for Migration (2022)

follow-up activities, monitoring, and sustained engagement. The absence of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of CBP and to identify areas for improvement. Without clear indicators, it is challenging to measure whether CBP processes are achieving their intended goals of community empowerment, improved service delivery, and enhanced development outcomes. In many cases, success is measured by the number of meetings held rather than the quality of engagement or the extent to which community priorities are reflected in actual projects. This results-driven culture limits learning and innovation in participatory planning practices (Shongwe & Meyer, 2023). Moreover, Masiya et al. (2021) reason that the financial and human resource constraints significantly limit the scope and impact of CBP, IDP and the budgeting process, with many municipalities lacking sufficient budgets for participatory planning activities such as community workshops, outreach and employing skilled facilitators. According to the SACN (2014), many municipalities have limited personnel dedicated to facilitating effective community participation in the IDP and CBP processes. The SACN (2014) report implies that the CBP and IDP are often poorly compiled and hurriedly facilitated. Incentives for participation, particularly in economically distressed areas, are lacking, with some participants expecting financial compensation or meals as a condition.

Politics-Administrative Interference and Bureaucratic Inefficiencies

Meny-Gibert and Brunette (2023) claim that the recent legislative amendments to the Municipal Systems Act and the Public Service Act aim to strengthen the distinction between political and administrative roles in municipal government, making certain officials permanent employees and prohibiting administrators from holding political office. However, Meny-Gibert and Brunette (2023:2) found that the "tensions in the political–administrative interface in South Africa are a persistent challenge to organisational stability and functioning in South Africa's public administration. Sometimes these observations relate simply to strained personal relations between a political representative (i.e., councillor) and a municipal official around how to interpret policy or manage a department. Though more often tensions and instability in the political–administrative relations refer, in somewhat more politically palatable terms, to the inappropriate interference of politicians in operational matters, especially concerning public procurement and public participation.

Abuse of political prerogative in appointment and dismissal processes has been the primary mechanism of state capture, as shown by the Zondo Commission in the case of state-owned entities and the public service in general.

De Visser (2010) asserts that municipalities face challenges in managing the political–official interface, with political interference and strained relations between key officials. This often stems from the lack of a separation of powers between legislative and executive authority at the local government level. Equally, the SACN (2014) indicates that the politics–administrative interference and bureaucratic inefficiencies have a profound and often detrimental effect on CBP in South African municipalities. Political actors, particularly ward councillors and party-aligned officials, often dominate and manipulate CBP processes to serve their own interests or political agendas, thereby compromising the inclusivity and objectivity of community participation. This interference can lead to the prioritisation of projects that serve politically connected individuals or factions rather than addressing the genuine needs and priorities of the broader community. Additionally, excessive bureaucracy slows down decision-making and implementation, creating frustration amongst community members who feel that their contributions are not translating into tangible outcomes. The rigid, hierarchical nature of bureaucratic systems often sidelines community-driven initiatives in favour of top-down directives, further alienating citizens from local governance. Compounding these challenges is a pervasive lack of political will, as many leaders and officials do not view CBP as a critical or strategic component of development. Instead, they often regard it as a procedural requirement or public relations exercise, leading to minimal investment in building institutional support for participatory planning. This lack of commitment undermines the sustainability and impact of CBP (De Visser, 2010; SACN, 2014).

Poor Governance

Holtzhausen and Naidoo (2011) and Van der Waldt (2022) argue that the failure to implement good governance principles, such as service delivery, the IDP and CBP, in municipal affairs severely undermines the democratic rights of stakeholders. Inadequate governance affects the execution of municipal plans and ultimately impacts the effectiveness and credibility. The SACN (2014) suggests that poor communication between local government and communities leads to

misinformation, low awareness of planning processes, and minimal community participation. For instance, there is often insufficient communication and follow-up after CBP engagements, leaving communities uninformed about what happens to their inputs and whether they are considered in final plans. This lack of feedback undermines accountability and erodes community trust in local governance. Mamokhere and Meyer (2023) contend that without meaningful community engagement, IDP and CBP become top-down exercises that fail to reflect the genuine needs and priorities of the people. Thusi et al. (2023) note that the absence of transparency fosters mistrust, as communities are unsure how decisions are made or how their inputs are utilised. Furthermore, a lack of accountability results in no clear mechanisms for holding officials responsible for poor performance or unfulfilled promises, undermining public confidence in governance structures. Inclusiveness is also frequently compromised, with marginalised groups such as women, youth, and people with disabilities often excluded from planning processes, leading to development outcomes that are neither equitable nor sustainable. Collectively, these governance failures hinder the transformative potential of CBP and perpetuate inequality and hinder service delivery prospects (Holtzhausen & Naidoo, 2011; Mamokhere & Meyer, 2023; Thusi & Selepe, 2023).

Reddy (2016) suggests that local government aims to bring the government closer to the people by fostering community participation in political processes. However, South Africa faces obstacles like limited resources, a lack of public interest, corruption, ineffective governance, and a lack of feedback from the government (Van der Waldt, 2022). To improve public participation, municipal stakeholders like ratepayers' associations, CBOs, vigilante groups, political parties, and all community members should be consulted. Equally, Matloga et al. (2024) imply that one of the primary challenges is the lack of community participation and empowerment of community members. In many instances, communities are invited to participate in IDP processes not as active partners, but merely to endorse plans that government officials have already formulated. This tokenistic approach undermines the very essence of CBP, which is intended to be a bottom-up, inclusive planning process that incorporates the voices, needs, and priorities of community members. As a result, citizens often feel disillusioned and disconnected from local governance processes, leading to a lack of trust and reduced civic engagement, while Umoh (2022) states that municipal stakeholders frequently find themselves involved only in the final stages of

the planning process, limiting their capacity to shape important decisions. This approach to public participation often lacks depth, with community members as the key stakeholders being encouraged to simply endorse plans that have already been established, rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue or contributing their insights. As a result, opportunities for authentic engagement and collaboration are missed, leaving residents feeling disconnected from the decision-making that directly impacts their lives and communities.

Adapting to Digital Governance

Umoh (2022) indicates that digital or e-governance and technology have the potential to enhance public participation in rural municipalities. However, several barriers limit their effectiveness. In South Africa, despite frameworks promoting democratic innovation, public participation remains hindered by socio-economic disparities, limited access to digital tools, and inadequate communication. Rural communities often lack Internet access, media exposure, and digital literacy, which restricts their ability to engage with parliamentary activities and policy processes. Information is typically disseminated through newspapers and digital platforms that are either inaccessible or irrelevant to illiterate or under-resourced citizens. Additionally, the dominance of English in online democratic platforms alienates non-English speakers and excludes many rural residents from meaningful participation. These "digital divides" strengthen existing inequalities, allowing well-resourced, educated, and connected individuals to influence policymaking, while marginalised communities remain voiceless. Without investment in inclusive digital infrastructure, language services, and community outreach, digital governance may further entrench exclusion in municipal planning processes such as the IDP (Mankuebe & Manicom, 2020; Umoh, 2022). It can thus be argued that digital governance often fails to prioritise inclusiveness, a fundamental principle of good governance within a democratic framework. Limited inclusivity presents a significant challenge for CBP processes. Public participation is frequently directed towards specific groups, such as the unemployed or those closely tied to political structures, while other segments of the population, such as women, youth, individuals with disabilities, and the private sector, are marginalised. This selective engagement results in an incomplete understanding of community needs and priorities, ultimately impacting the quality and relevance of development plans (Townley & Koop, 2024).

Limited Institutional Capacity and Misalignment

According to Davids et al. (2022:3), capacity constraints refer to the insufficient human, scientific, technological, organisational, institutional, and resource capabilities to fulfil the constitutional mandate of a government. These constraints can exist at system, institutional, and individual levels and can manifest in various ways, such as the absence of qualified individuals, inadequate certification, and deficiencies in attributes like experience and leadership. Skills are a key component of capacity, and skills constraints refer to the absence of specific attributes, qualifications, and competencies in individuals, including soft skills, appropriate educational qualifications, and the ability to produce a particular product or service. These constraints can also occur in specific departments within an institution, such as supply chain, finance, information and communication technology (ICT), and human resource development. Furthermore, Davids et al. (2022:2) emphasise that "local government capacity is multi-dimensional, and includes expectations (i.e., perceptions and attitudes on adequate levels of public services, appropriate styles of political leadership, and accepted ways of conducting public affairs), resources (i.e., money, knowledge, administrative skills, private sector associations, neighbourhood organisations, and political popularity), and other community issues that involve different preferences regarding the accomplishment of some objective". Moreover, according to the SACN (2014) report, capacity constraints within municipalities and government institutions pose a major barrier to the effective implementation of CBP. The SACN (2014) indicate that many municipal officials lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and training to facilitate participatory planning processes. Inadequate understanding of CBP principles results in poorly designed and executed planning activities, where community engagement is superficial or poorly coordinated. This is exacerbated by the absence of institutional frameworks and guidelines that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and methodologies for CBP, leading to inconsistent practices across different municipalities. In addition, political interference and patronage often shape planning priorities, with ward councillors and political parties influencing which projects are prioritised, thereby compromising transparency and inclusiveness (SACN, 2014).

The SACN (2014) identify a significant issue regarding the fragmented integration between CBP and formal municipal planning processes, such as the IDP. Often, the outcomes of CBP

fail to be meaningfully incorporated into the IDP, which can be attributed to misaligned timelines or the perception that CBP serves as a supplementary rather than an essential element of the planning process. This disconnect not only diminishes the impact of community input on actual development plans and budgets but also leads to frustration amongst community members who feel that their contributions are overlooked. Additionally, CBP is frequently executed as a one-time or sporadic event instead of being institutionalised as a continuous and iterative process. This short-term approach hampers the establishment of long-term relationships between communities and local government, and it undermines the institutional memory required for sustainable development (SACN, 2014; Sebei, 2014).

Good Governance Principles to Promote Effective Community-Based Planning

Good governance principles can be implemented to effectively address the above CBP challenges. According to Van der Waldt (2023:211), "good governance has major characteristics which include: public participation, consensus-oriented, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, and the rule of law. Good governance ensures that the views of minorities are considered while the voices of the most vulnerable communities are heard in policy and decision-making. Good governance minimises corruption, for instance, it is also responsive to the present and future needs of communities". Mamokhere's (2022) study concurs with Van der Waldt's (2023) study by indicating that good governance involves empowering the people to invest in basic education, healthcare, and clean water facilities. This investment is crucial for eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development. Upholding the rule of law ensures security and predictability in social, political, and economic affairs. Good governance also demands accountability, transparency, openness, decentralisation, and increased civil society involvement. Kgobe et al. (2024) found that public participation in municipal affairs, particularly during the service delivery planning process, is often inadequate. This finding, according to Kgobe et al. (2024), emphasises the need for municipalities to consult and engage stakeholders in ward development priorities. In the professionalisation of municipalities' operations, Zvoushe (2025) recommends that the government officials should take responsibility

for their actions and decisions, especially during the implementation of IDP and CBP. Allegretti (2022) avers that CBP should prioritise inclusivity, ensuring that all groups, particularly marginalised ones, can engage and benefit without discrimination. Moreover, municipal planning must be goal-oriented and adhere to legal frameworks to uphold the rule of law. Effective communication strategies, including innovative feedback mechanisms, are necessary to share information with the community and facilitate understanding of projects and their progress (Alma'arif & Wargadinata, 2022). Lastly, it was found that there is misalignment between IDP and CBP, as the CBP is not legislated but is used to complement the IDP, therefore, it is recommended that the municipalities should uphold the rule of law and align planning with legal frameworks to ensure legitimacy and fairness. By embedding these principles into planning practices, municipalities can enhance service delivery, strengthen democratic governance, and promote sustainable development at the community level (IOM, 2022; SACN, 2014).

Community-Based Planning Strategies and Methods

For CBP to be effective, there are strategies and methods that are followed. Table 6.2 presents the relevant strategies and methods followed by municipalities in South Africa when facilitating the CBP.

Table 6.2: CBP Strategies and Methods

Strategies and Methods	Description	Source
Participatory Planning	Engages the community in identifying problems and solutions.	Masiya et al. (2021)
Community Workshops and Forums	Platforms for sharing ideas, concerns, and priorities.	SACN (2014)
Surveys and Interviews	Collects data on community needs and preferences.	IOM (2022)
Focus Groups	Facilitates targeted discussions for deeper insights.	IOM (2022)
Visioning and Strategic Planning	Helps communities set a long-term vision and key priorities.	SACN (2023)

Strategies and Methods	Description	Source
Capacity Building	Empowers individuals with skills to participate effectively. The government is calling for a capable and developmental state that will help in improving some of the inefficiencies in the public service.	Davids et al. (2022)
Partnerships	Encourages collaboration amongst stakeholders.	Mamokhere and Meyer (2023); Kgobe (2024)
Mayoral *Imbizos*	Mayoral *Imbizos* serve as direct engagement platforms where municipal leadership interacts with citizens to listen to their concerns, provide updates on service delivery, and build trust between communities and local government	Sebei (2014)
Ward committees	Ward committees act as grassroots structures that link communities with their elected ward councillors, ensuring that local needs and priorities are communicated in municipal planning processes. These committees facilitate bottom-up communication and serve as an early warning system for emerging issues in communities.	Sebei (2014)
Traditional and New Media (e.g., community radio and social media)	Traditional media like community radio and social media are crucial for disseminating information in rural areas with limited Internet access. Community radio broadcasts in local languages, reaching illiterate populations, while social media offers real-time engagement for youth and technology-savvy citizens, fostering transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in local governance and community-based planning.	Umoh (2022)
Monitoring and Evaluation	Tracks progress and assesses impact.	Shongwe and Meyer (2022)

Source: Author's own compilation

As reflected in Table 6.2, effective CBP is strengthened through the integration of participatory tools and approaches that ensure inclusive engagement and informed decision-making. Participatory planning actively involves community members in identifying local challenges and crafting viable solutions (Masiya et al., 2021; SACN, 2014), fostering a sense of ownership and relevance in development initiatives. Community workshops and forums serve as interactive platforms where residents can voice concerns, share ideas, and establish collective priorities (SACN, 2014). Surveys and interviews gather essential data on community needs and preferences (IOM, 2022), while focus groups allow for in-depth discussions that yield richer insights into specific issues (IOM, 2022). Visioning and strategic planning empower communities to articulate long-term goals and key development priorities, aligning local aspirations with municipal objectives (SACN, 2023). Capacity-building is critical in equipping individuals with the skills needed to engage meaningfully in planning processes, supporting the government's agenda for a capable and developmental state (Davids et al., 2022). Partnerships amongst government, civil society, and private stakeholders further enhance planning by leveraging diverse expertise and resources (Kgobe, 2024; Mamokhere & Meyer, 2023). Finally, monitoring and evaluation systems ensure that implementation is regularly observed and impact is assessed, fostering accountability and continuous improvement (Shongwe & Meyer, 2022). Together, these elements contribute to more responsive, equitable, and sustainable CBP.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, while CBP holds significant promise for enhancing participatory governance and aligning development initiatives with grassroots priorities, its implementation in South Africa faces numerous systemic and institutional challenges. These include insufficient resources and funding, political-administrative interference, poor governance, digital exclusion, institutional capacity gaps, and weak integration with formal municipal planning processes such as the IDP. Collectively, these issues undermine the effectiveness, credibility, and inclusiveness of CBP in the IDP process.

To address these challenges, the following recommendations for improving CBP are offered:

· Municipalities should harness more resources and support to enhance revenue collection and allocation. For instance,

municipalities should allocate adequate financial and human resources specifically for participatory planning activities, including community workshops, and skilled facilitators.

· Municipalities should set clear performance indicators to monitor and assess the quality and impact of CBP initiatives, beyond the mere number of meetings held.

· To curb political interference, it is recommended that the role of councillors within the local sphere of government be clearly defined. In cases where it is necessary, applicable legislation should be enforced or revised. Legislative measures should be implemented to demarcate the responsibilities of political and administrative actors, thereby preventing undue interference in the CBP and IDP processes. Additionally, promoting ethical governance is essential to safeguard public participation processes from politicisation.

· The promotion of good governance principles and effective two-way communication should be strengthened. It is essential to improve transparency and feedback mechanisms between municipalities and communities to build and maintain trust. Regular updates and follow-ups after engagements will ensure that communities see the value of their participation in the IDP process.

· Strategic partnerships between all actors in the local arena should be fostered. This includes fostering partnerships with civil society, citizens, academia, and private sector entities to co-create innovative, context-specific solutions and to expand the capacity for participatory planning.

· Since most municipalities are moving towards full digitalisation, there is a need to bridge the digital divide and inequalities between those in rural areas and those in urban areas, and those who have resources and those who do not have resources. Inclusive digital infrastructure should thus be expanded, inclusive of community radio in local languages and mobile platforms, to enhance outreach and participation. Municipalities should thus ensure that marginalised groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and illiterate citizens, are actively included in CBP processes through targeted outreach and inclusive facilitation.

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Chapter 7

Municipal Disaster Risk Planning

Olivia Kunguma
University of the Free State

Abstract

The 2024 South African general elections, aimed at electing a new National Assembly and provincial legislature, mark a significant but challenging shift in the country's political landscape. This shift brings diverse political interests to the disaster management sector, significantly impacting governance, particularly in planning and decision-making processes. Establishing a Government of National Unity necessitates extensive stakeholder engagement to promote social, economic, environmental, and political development. In this context, the disaster management fraternity – already characterised by its multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature – needs efficient, rapid, and robust decision-making. Unfortunately, the diversity of political engagements often exacerbates the bureaucratic delays experienced by disaster management practitioners. Given this context, this chapter investigates the status of disaster management within the context of municipal planning in this new dispensation. Political influence plays a crucial role in shaping disaster management efforts, directly affecting investment in disaster risk reduction and response planning. Furthermore, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the municipal disaster risk planning context, emphasising its significance for municipal safety, resilience, and sustainable development. It investigates the policy and legislative frameworks guiding disaster risk planning, detailing the evolution and current state of disaster risk practices in South African municipalities. The chapter examines the municipal risk profiles through assessments of risk evaluations and the application of geographic information systems (GIS) to identify community vulnerabilities. It further highlights municipalities' various risk reduction strategies, including community-based disaster risk planning to enhance community resilience. Effective disaster risk planning hinges on functional institutional arrangements and coordination amongst relevant stakeholders, bolstering emergency

response and rehabilitation efforts for affected communities. Financial strategies, encompassing insurance and funding opportunities, are also explored, alongside discussions on monitoring and evaluation systems. The chapter emphasises the importance of learning from past experiences, ensuring transparency and accountability, and employing technological innovations in disaster risk planning.

Keywords: disaster management legislation, disaster management planning, disaster risk, Government of National Unity, municipal disaster management, South Africa.

Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996), prescribes the establishment of three government spheres: national, provincial, and local (RSA, 1996). In support of this, the South African National Disaster Management Framework of 2005 (NDMF) (DRMIMS, 2005) and the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (RSA, 2002) (as amended by Act 16 of 2015, RSA, 2015) (DMA) state that there must be a disaster management centre at each sphere of government. This chapter focuses on disaster management operations, particularly planning at the local sphere of government. This sphere of government is critical when planning for disaster risks because disasters are localised. According to the DMA and the NDMF, disasters always start at the local level, and the community is always the first to respond when a disaster is occurring or threatening to occur (Campbell & Passen, 2019). The primary responsibility for coordinating and managing disasters thus rests with local, district and metropolitan municipalities. Therefore, effective disaster risk management planning and coordination are key to saving lives and limiting damage to property, infrastructure and the environment. Since disaster management is multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary in nature, it requires stakeholder participation from various agencies, institutions and municipal departments as well as suitable institutional arrangements to plan for and respond to disasters (Kunguma, 2020).

Wentink and Van Niekerk (2017) assert that disaster risk planning and implementation should be coordinated at the local sphere of government. All operational activities related to disaster management, such as air pollution control and firefighting, occur within this sphere. Thus, local authorities must develop and implement disaster-related strategies, bylaws, procedures, and

regulations, and align them with community values, traditions and cultures. Capacity development, public education, and fostering political engagement are essential components of this process.

Municipal planning is characterised by significant challenges. One such challenge emanates from the highly dynamic and often turbulent political landscape. The establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU), for example, ushered in a new planning dispensation demanding innovative governance arrangements, decision-making processes, and leadership dynamics. Given this context, this chapter explores how this new political shift affects the already complex multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature of municipal disaster management. Subsequently, a comprehensive overview of the municipal disaster risk planning context is provided, emphasising its significance for municipal safety, resilience, and sustainable development. The chapter also explores the policy and legislative frameworks guiding disaster risk planning, detailing the evolution and current state of disaster risk practices in South African municipalities. The author further examines the municipal risk profiles through assessments of risk and their application of technological innovations such as geographic information systems (GISs) to identify community vulnerabilities. In addition, the significance of community-based disaster risk planning to enhance community resilience is explored. Finally, the chapter emphasises the need for suitable functional institutional arrangements and coordination amongst relevant stakeholders, appropriate financial strategies as well as effective monitoring and evaluation systems for a planned response to emergencies.

Research Design and Methodology

The study utilised a qualitative systematic literature review to develop a comprehensive overview of the challenges and strategies related to municipal disaster risk planning aimed at building resilient communities. Systematic literature reviews are a method for identifying and synthesising all available research on a particular topic to achieve specific research goals (Scheerder et al., 2017). This research method enables the researcher to identify theories, methods, findings, recommendations, and gaps in existing literature. Google Records was used to locate documents, including municipal reports, disaster risk management plans, legislation, policies, and other relevant materials. Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016)

describe this process as one that involves comparing and contrasting various sources with other literature on the same topic, highlighting how each source contributes to the existing body of knowledge. This integration of discussions adds new insights from different perspectives and contexts, making it a relevant methodology for advancing knowledge in the field.

Municipal Disaster Risk Planning as Statutory Mandate

The disaster planning mandate and management function of municipalities are outlined in several legislations, regulatory frameworks, and official guidelines. Legislation is mainly aimed at establishing an integrated and coordinated national response on the various spheres of government. According to the Constitution (RSA,1996), municipal disaster risk planning is a key developmental mandate of municipalities. This mandate demands suitable organisational arrangements, operating procedures, and adequate resources and skills. Legislation also prescribes how the disaster management function should be aligned with existing municipal plans, notably integrated development plans (IDPs). According to Dlamini and Reddy (2018), the IDP can be regarded as a five-year medium-term strategic planning document that serves as a legal instrument of municipal planning. It is a municipal plan to improve the quality of life by guiding socio-economic, spatial development and service delivery within a municipality.

Kunguma et al. (2021) postulate that international and national disaster risk management frameworks, legislation and policies are the foundation of the operations of any institution. As discussed earlier, they mandate the functions of all disaster management activities, such as risk reduction planning (Moises et al., 2024). What is important to note is the significance of international agreements in informing disaster risk reduction and response planning, even at the municipal level. Examples of these international agreements are the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in 2015, which supports and encourages local authorities to take the leading role in disaster risk reduction planning, strategy development and implementation, investing in disaster risk reduction, encouraging community participation amongst many other activities (UNDRR, 2015). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals requires local-level disaster risk reduction planning (SDG localisation) to achieve the 17 SDG goals and their targets (UN, 2015). The

Paris Agreement (Article 7), an international treaty to combat climate change, recognises the significance of traditional or local knowledge, knowledge of indigenous people and local knowledge systems in strengthening disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Therefore, local municipalities should be at the forefront of encouraging the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies through their planning (UNFCCC, 2015). At the regional level, the African Union developed an 'Extended Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2005–2015)' to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This Agenda 2063 recognises that local disaster planning is important to achieving this vision. It further ensures that communities must be prepared for disasters and have the capacity to respond and recover effectively (AU, 2025).

Various legislative and regulatory frameworks in South Africa encourage and guide municipal disaster risk planning. The overarching law is the Constitution (RSA, 1996). The stipulations of the Constitution are supplemented by the South African National Disaster Management Framework of 2005 (NDMF) and Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (as amended by Act 16 of 2015). Table 7.1 illustrates other legislation which supports disaster risk reduction and response.

Table 7.1:   Municipal legislation supporting the implementation of municipal disaster risk planning

Legislation	Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Support
Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000)	Support municipalities in developing disaster management plans
Municipal Structures Act No. 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998)	Support the establishment of disaster management structure
Public Finance Management Act No. 1 of 1999 (National Treasury, 1999)	Financial support for the capacity to implement disaster management plans
Fundraising Act No. 107 of 1978 (RSA, 1978)	Support the implementation of disaster management plans
Division of Revenue Act (DORA) No. 2 of 2013 (RSA, 2013a)	Section 19 enables municipalities to reallocate funds to support disaster response

Source: Author's own

While the Constitution establishes that disaster management falls under the concurrent legislative competence of both national and provincial levels of government, it mandates that these levels ensure the implementation of disaster management activities (Part A, Schedule 4 of the Constitution, RSA, 1996). With this, it may seem that municipalities are exempt from disaster management responsibilities, but this is not the case. A limiting factor is that the Constitution states that a municipality can manage a disaster only if it has the capacity to do so (Chapter 7, Section 156(4)(b)). The National Disaster Management Framework (NDMF) further clarifies that it is at the discretion of metropolitan or district municipalities to establish formal structures, such as municipal disaster management advisory forums. These forums are crucial for facilitating interdepartmental and stakeholder participation. Additionally, the NDMF specifies that a municipality is not obligated to create specific internal structures for disaster risk management (RSA, 2005:17). Such prescriptions from the Constitution, DMA, and NDMF somehow give decision-makers, policymakers, relevant authorities, or government officials less power or an excuse not to fully capacitate municipalities that are primarily responsible for the application of disaster management. In their study on the role and adequacies of disaster management units in municipalities, Mamabolo and Sebola (2021) support this assertion, indicating that each municipality's role is to develop disaster management plans that should be part of their IDPs for enhancing service delivery. Unfortunately, many municipalities still face socio-economic, environmental, political, technological and developmental challenges. Moreover, poverty is a significant barrier preventing municipalities from investing in disaster management efforts, as they tend to prioritise other developmental issues such as health and education. This is what Van Niekerk (2007:259) refers to as the "disaster risk reduction conundrum." He argues that it is challenging to justify spending public funds and resources on a phenomenon that may not occur, especially when immediate pressures such as poverty and poor service delivery deserve immediate attention.

The Constitution, along with the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998)and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 (RSA, 2000), requires the establishment of disaster management institutions at all three spheres of government. The Constitution (Schedule 4, 5, Part P) mandates local government to provide for functions closely related to disaster management, including air pollution control and building

regulations. These measures contribute to fulfilling the constitutional mandate to "secure the well-being of the people in the Republic" and to "ensure a safe and healthy environment" (Constitution Section 152(1)(d)). The following institutional arrangements are crucial for promoting participation, preparation, and planning in disaster risk management:

· Municipal Disaster Risk Management Framework
· Municipal Interdepartmental Disaster Risk Management Committee
· Municipal Council
· Municipal Disaster Risk Management Framework

The DMA makes provision for the establishment of municipal disaster management centres (MDMC) (RSA, 2002). These centres are responsible for specialising in issues concerning identifying, analysing, planning and managing risks in the municipal area. This demands an integrated and coordinated planning approach since these centres are also mandated to coordinate their efforts and support provincial and national disaster management centres. Furthermore, effective risk planning requires sufficient managerial and administrative capacity as well as adequate resources to provide guidance to other organs of state, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, communities and individuals in the municipal area regarding the assessment, prevention and reduction of risks. MDMCs must develop guidelines for establishing and reviewing disaster management plans, strategies, emergency procedures, and contingency plans and integrate these plans with the municipal development plans and programmes. They must also advise stakeholders in the municipality regarding disaster management issues, such as risk prevention and effective disaster response through proper planning. These centres are also responsible for the recruitment and training of volunteers, promoting disaster risk management research and capacity-building in the municipal area. Development and implementation of prevention and mitigation research methodologies and capacity building entail risk reduction, vulnerability assessment, capacity increase, and monitoring of the state of alertness to potential disasters. These methodologies will assist with guiding relevant stakeholders in risk prevention and reduction in their activities and encourage risk avoidance. Furthermore, the methodologies should be integrated with municipal development plans. In this regard, monitoring and evaluation of

disaster management plans and risk reduction and response activities are significant to assess progress made.

MDMCs are also obligated to submit annual reports to the municipal council, province and national disaster management centre. These reports must include risk reduction efforts and responses to disasters and other emergencies that occurred in the area. Reports must also include results of the monitoring and evaluation of the risk reduction and response activities, focusing on the impact that they had on those affected, how they were handled, and lessons learnt. The municipal disaster management centre must furthermore guide the municipality to develop disaster management plans which must include conducting risk assessments, compiling risk maps, identifying households and areas at risk, specifying disaster management roles and responsibilities, assessing the disaster response capacity of the municipality, and formulating contingency plans related to disaster risk reduction. These reports are essential to review and update existing disaster management plans and serves as an early warning tool.

The DMA makes provision for organisational arrangements and operational procedures for identifying, assessing, and managing hazards and vulnerability in municipalities. Procedural activities of municipal disaster risk planning include collecting, storing and managing records of municipal disasters and disaster management. It is this imperative to establish and maintain a directory of disaster management stakeholders and maintaining communication links with them. In this regard, the DMA stipulates that municipalities must establish disaster management advisory forums. These forums must serve as platform for engagement, joint planning, coordination and cooperation amongst various stakeholders. These advisory forums typically consist of heads of MDMCs, heads of other municipal departments, traditional leaders, non-governmental organisations, private sectors, insurance companies, and religious and academic nstitutions.

Conceptual Framework: Significance of the Disaster Management Continuum in Municipal Planning

In the 1980s, notions of disaster management saw a shift from a reactive approach to a more proactive stance mainly because of the growing realisation that the world was facing not only human-made disasters but also disasters resulting from natural hazards.

As a result, the international community embarked on developing models and methodologies that could be applied to ensure a balanced and better application of disaster risk reduction and response strategies (Van Niekerk, 2007). Several theoretical frameworks and models were developed in response to support disaster risk planning (RSA, 2002; Van Niekerk, 2007). In this regard, the conventional and well-established Disaster Management Continuum serves as a suitable conceptual framework to analyse municipal disaster risk planning. According to Van Niekerk (2007), the Disaster Management Continuum (DMC) outlines an integrated approach to disaster management. This approach views disaster management as a sequence of phases, each requiring specific interventions. These phases are divided into two main domains, namely planning and disaster impact. The planning phase includes the activities of preparedness, prevention, mitigation, and warning. The disaster impact phase includes response and rescue, relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery activities.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1992) is one of the key international agencies that promote the application of the DMC, since it succeeds in integrating pre- and post-disaster activities to protect lives and property against disasters. While the way that disaster management is viewed in this model has been criticised by several scholars in the past decade, it remains the most used and applied model in research and practice. One critique of this model relating to municipal disaster planning is that it does not adequately consider the importance of risks, vulnerability, capacity, manageability, and hazards. It suggests that all disaster risk planning is geared towards responding to and implementing contingencies surrounding the disaster event (Van Niekerk, 2007).

The DMA and the NDMF support, guide and mandate the operations of disaster management institutions in South Africa (RSA, 2002; RSA, 2005). Figure 7.1 illustrates that at the centre of the DMC, four key performance areas and three enablers support disaster management planning. At the municipal level, key performance area (KPA) 1 focuses on institutional arrangements and capacity. This involves the establishment of municipal disaster management centres, followed by the creation of municipal disaster management advisory or consultative forums that are aimed at engaging all relevant disaster management stakeholders. It also includes IDP structures, ward structures, and volunteers who will participate in disaster response.

KPA 2 covers disaster risk assessment and municipal disaster risk reduction efforts, such as contingency and response plans. Supported by reliable monitoring systems, disaster risk assessments are essential for activating response actions. KPA 3 entails disaster risk reduction and involves creating risk reduction plans that enhance preparedness for effective disaster response, such as providing social relief. If the response and recovery KPA is implemented successfully, it will facilitate immediate response and relief measures, early warnings, and reduction of loss and damages during the response phase, while also enabling quick rehabilitation and reconstruction strategies. Additionally, the legislation mandates the early identification of stakeholders who will respond to specific hazards or disasters, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to avoid confusion during the response phase.

Enablers 1, 2, and 3 support all the KPAs by ensuring that information management and communication, training, and funding are available for an effective response. The phases in the DMC encompass the general functions of a disaster management centre.

The phases illustrated in Figure 7.1 can be understood from the perspective of disaster management stakeholders' activities. Although there is no specific order of events, Preparedness refers to actions taken by communities, local governments, and both non–governmental and international organisations to enhance administrative capabilities aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of hazards. Preparedness plans include various projects such as training for relevant response officials, conducting simulations, community education and awareness, identifying hazards, vulnerabilities, manageability, and capacities, and preparing warning systems, procedures, evacuation routes, and communication systems.
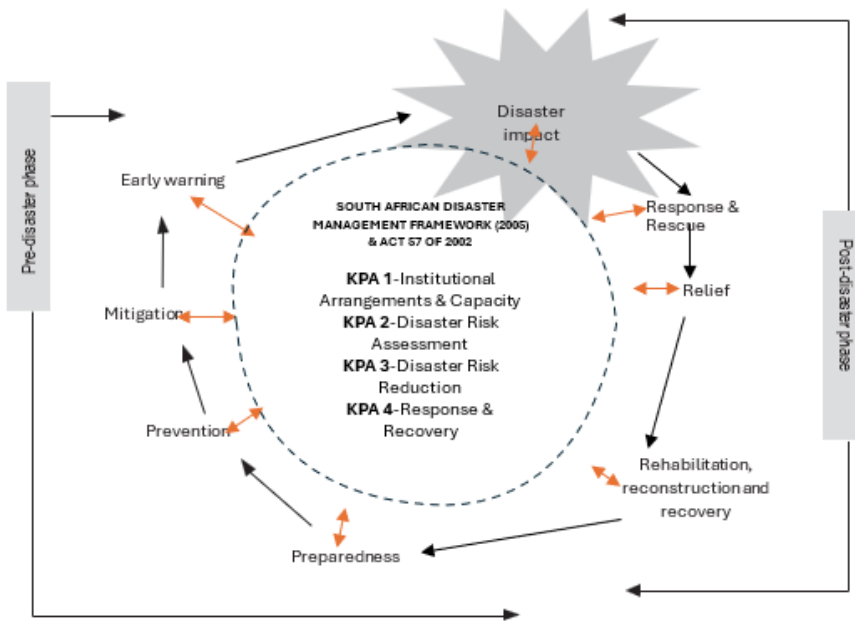
Figure 7.1: Disaster Management Continuum. Source: Adapted from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1992) and Van Niekerk (2007)

Prevention involves measures to stop a hazard from occurring or escalating into a disaster (RSA, 2002). Examples of prevention programmes include building dams or levees to control floodwaters and relocating settlements away from hazardous locations. Mitigation focuses on reducing the magnitude of a disaster, whether caused by natural or man-made hazards (Bullock et al., 2012). When developing a mitigation plan, the actions should be specific to the hazards involved, such as constructing structures that can withstand strong winds.

According to Moises et al. (2024), early warning involves providing timely and effective information to at-risk communities and individuals. When prompt action is taken, effective preparation and response help to reduce risk. Early warning includes forecasting and predicting impending events and disseminating warning information to relevant authorities, who then communicate the warning to the community.

Regardless of pre-disaster planning, disastrous events can still occur. A disaster is a hazardous event that disrupts everyday life because of the pre-existing vulnerabilities within communities, leading to significant losses in human life, flora and fauna, trade, and industry activities. This disruption often prevents the community from addressing the situation effectively, especially as resources become scarce (Pizzorni et al., 2024). Response and rescue are critical phases in municipal disaster risk planning. These phases can be divided into early and late stages of response. Early reactions involve rescue and relief efforts, while later responses focus on rehabilitation and reconstruction. The primary responders to any catastrophe are typically the members of the affected community rather than municipal personnel. Depending on the hazard, the main activities during the response phase include rapid assessments, search and rescue operations, supply provision, assistance, and evacuations (Lunga et al., 2025).

Rehabilitation, reconstruction, and recovery involve activities necessary for disaster victims' physical and psychological recovery and the affected environment. These activities occur weeks or months after a disaster and include restoring basic services, livelihoods, and infrastructure to help communities to become more resilient. After a disaster, individuals may experience post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health issues. Therefore, counselling, well-being programmes, and trauma care for victims are crucial to minimise long-term impairments. Rehabilitation, reconstruction, and recovery require a long-term vision and should involve collaboration with other stakeholders to establish community-based rehabilitation, reconstruction, and recovery programmes.

The intensity and severity of a disaster can impact the socio-economic, environmental, political, and cultural systems within an area. Hence, municipalities must consider these factors in their planning. In addition to the aforementioned community-based programmes, planning should involve business continuity strategies. Key disaster management principles include planning, organising, and leadership, encompassing coordinating and controlling efforts. In summary, the effective implementation and compliance with legislation and policies that govern these activities are crucial for enhancing the efficacy of municipal disaster risk management planning.

Overview of Municipal Disaster Risk Planning

This section explores the profile of South Africa's municipal disaster management institutions and institutional arrangements. It also details the municipality's operations, focusing on planning for its safety to hazards and risks it is exposed to, building resilience and sustainable development.

Disaster management is a more tactical and operational materialisation of strategic decisions, such as policies, programmes and strategies. At the national sphere, decision-making responsibilities are placed at the strategic level; the provincial sphere at the tactical level; and the local sphere at the operational level. Even though the three spheres of government are at different management levels, municipal disaster risk planners need to take note that each sphere of government has different internal management levels (strategic – top management; tactical – middle management; and operational – junior management) levels. For example, a municipal disaster management centre's decisions are made at different management levels: strategic, tactical and operational. Even at the municipal level, strategy is a key factor in the success of the development and implementation of their plans. Strategy is used to make an appropriate plan or methodology to help to achieve the organisation's objectives. Worboys et al. (2015:255) conclude that the operational level (i.e., municipalities) involves on-the-ground enforcement of disaster management. This management level supports the tactical and strategic management levels by implementing objectives identified at both levels. The operational level is fundamental to management because it transforms and contributes to service creation. At this level, people, structures and systems are explored to implement disaster management (Kunguma, 2020).

Before municipal disaster risk planning commences, it is essential to consider various factors, including local risks, hazards, and the community's vulnerability to these elements and their capacities to manage them. In this context, risk can be defined through the equation:

risk = hazard + vulnerability (capacities and manageability).

Risk is understood as the probability of a harmful event (hazard) occurring in conjunction with its potential consequences, which include losses and damages resulting from vulnerability to that

occurrence (UNDRR, 2015). Thus, risk reflects the interaction between humans, hazards, and vulnerable conditions as a product of both hazards and vulnerabilities.

A comprehensive understanding of a hazard requires knowledge of its nature, causes, and potential impacts. Additionally, it is crucial to recognise other hazards that may arise from its occurrence. Hazards can be complex and may interact in various ways; they can be single, sequential, or combined events (Alexander, 2002; Van Niekerk, 2007). Assessing the location, intensity, and probability of a hazard is vital. It is also necessary to determine whether the hazards are natural or anthropogenic. For hazards to significantly impact a community, specific vulnerabilities must be assessed regarding the community's social, economic, environmental, political, and technological conditions, which may heighten susceptibility (Nirupama, 2012). These conditions are critical in shaping the community's capacity to respond to catastrophic events. Closely linked to vulnerability is the community's capacity and manageability. Understanding a community's resources and abilities before and during a disaster is imperative for effective municipal disaster risk planning. By gathering this information, disaster management officials and relevant stakeholders can identify specific resources needed to strengthen community resilience and mitigate potential losses and damages (Wisner et al., 2012). This knowledge enables them to determine how the community will cope and recover from disasters.

As discussed earlier, municipalities often lack the financial capacity to manage the losses associated with disasters. Instead, they are compelled to use the limited resources that they have to invest in disaster risk reduction strategies and interventions. The DMA mandates that disaster management officials must develop disaster management plans and allocate budgets for the risks and hazards relevant to their areas of responsibility. This approach helps to strengthen overall disaster response, improve stakeholder relations, and reduce disaster impacts and costs.

Municipal disaster risk planning must incorporate risk vulnerability reduction into all developmental plans, taking into account climate finance (both mitigation and adaptation), nature–based solutions, sustainable livelihoods, and infrastructure. Increased settlement and population distribution heighten hazards and vulnerabilities, with most flooding and fire hazards reported in informal settlements, as hazards occur at the local community level and costs are often higher.

The Constitution (as amended by the Constitution Seventeenth Amendment Act of 2012 – RSA, 2013b), Chapter 3, Section 40(1) prescribes that the government is constituted as national, provincial and local spheres that all are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated (RSA, 2013b). Given this constitutional prescription, South Africa has 257 municipalities, as shown in Figure 7.2.
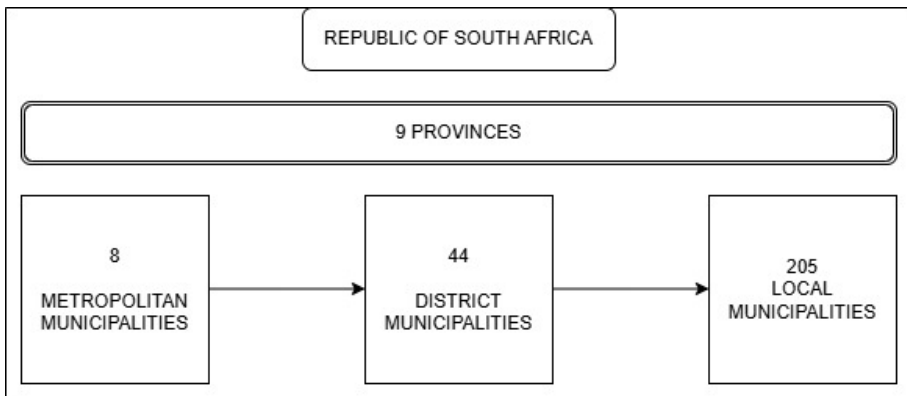
Figure 7.2: Government Spheres of South Africa. Source: Municipalities of South Africa (2025)

The current 257 municipalities are responsible for organising and managing their administrations, budgets, and planning processes. They must prioritise the basic needs of their communities and promote social and economic development within those areas (RSA, 1996). The powers granted to municipalities by the Constitution are particularly important, as disasters typically begin or threaten to occur at the local level, and the community is always the first to respond (Campbell & Passen, 2019; RSA, 2002; RSA, 2005).

South African Municipal Risk Profiling and Application of Technological Innovations for Risk Planning

Like many other developing countries, the South African risk landscape encounters a fair share of social, economic, political, technological and environmental challenges. In 2024, the unemployment rate was between 31,9% and 44,6% (Stats SA, 2025), political instability and geopolitics like the Trump administration over South Africa's land reform legislation, the Russia–Ukraine war and the economic infighting in the recent Government of National Unity (2024) (Solomons et al., 2024), inadequate infrastructure like

the rise of informal settlements to 4,075 in 2024, 25 million potholes on roads and 272 dilapidated hijacked buildings (Master Builders Association, 2024; Metelerkamp, 2024). These stated challenges further exacerbate the impact of natural hazards on an already vulnerable society.

Table 7.2 shows the disasters in South Africa between 2022 and 2025; such occurrences show how vulnerable South African communities are because of some of the earlier stated socio-economic challenges they are exposed to and the possibilities of poor municipal planning.

Year/ Month	Area	Hazard/ Occurrence	Impact
2022 (11–12 April)	KwaZulu-Natal Province	Flooding and landslides	459 deaths, 12,000 houses destroyed, 40,000 displaced, 88 missing, 4000 homes destroyed, public infrastructure destroyed
2022 (12 September)	Free State, Kopanong Municipality	Jagersfontein Mine tailings dam collapse	Three deaths, four missing, 40 hospitalised, 164 houses destroyed
2022 (8–9 January)	Eastern Cape Province, Buffalo City/ OR Tambo/ Amathole/ Alfred Duma Municipality	Flash flooding	20 deaths, 34 displaced, 1 person treated for post-traumatic stress disorder, infrastructure destroyed (bridges, water etc.)
2022 (10–11 December)	Gauteng and North-West Province (Soweto, Erkhuleni, Johannesburg, Vereeniging, Brakpan, Rustenburg and Bojanala	Flooding	40,000 people affected, 3826 households affected
2023 (23 January)	Gauteng	Flooding	One death, damage to property, and infrastructure

Year/ Month	Area	Hazard/ Occurrence	Impact
2023 (9 February)	Eastern Cape Province (Komani Town)	Flooding	1,000 evacuated, flooded hospitals, bridges and roads
2023 (13 February)	Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu–Natal, Limpopo, the Northern Cape and North West provinces	Heavy rains/ Flooding	48 deaths, 12 missing, 1,568 displaced, vehicles swept away, overflowing dams, sewerage facilities destroyed
2024 (1–5 June)	Eastern Cape and KwaZulu–Natal province (Newcastle, oThongathi and Utrecht)	Storm, tornado, heavy rainfall and winds	12 deaths, 7,000 houses destroyed, 1,200 displaced, US$ 68.6 million worth of damages (KZN) 11 deaths, 2,000 displaced, US$ 275 million worth of damages
2024 (18 November)	National	Foodborne Illness	3,000 cases reported, 22 deaths
2024 (18 – 22 September)	National but mostly Eastern Cape, KwaZulu–Natal, Free State	Extreme cold weather (4–10 degrees), Snowfall (15 to 30cm)	More than 2,000 vehicles stuck on national roads, one death
2025 (30 January)	Eastern Cape, KwaZulu–Natal, Free State, Limpopo, North–West, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces	Thunderstorms, disruptive rains, floods, windstorms and hail	10 deaths, road accidents, infrastructure damage, Kruger National Park closed, affecting tourism
2025 (16–28 February)	KwaZulu–Natal province	Heavy rains/ mudslide	22 deaths, R3.1 billion damages

Source: Authors own

Given South Africa's risk profile, it is imperative to note that municipal disaster risk planners must accept and understand that disasters and development are inextricably linked. Development is

one of the causes of disasters, and vice versa. Disaster risks exist or are created in a social system. Mshelia and Belle (2024) postulate that risks and disasters are complex social problems. It is therefore important to understand that various communities may understand risk from different social circumstances, which the planners must consider when planning for different parts of the municipalities in their research.

Another important factor for planners is to comprehend the elements contributing to certain hazards to create effective plans and policies to manage them and the communities at risk. Long- and short–term elements lead to various hazards, such as flooding. It is a rapid development of the economy, accelerated urbanisation, climate change, low elevation, poor drainage, impermeable surfaces like concrete that lead to increased surface run–off, areas of sparse or non–vegetation cover, residential areas susceptible to flooding, areas in low–lying areas, areas close to water bodies (Mshelia & Belle, 2024). To analyse these elements, scientific risk assessments need to be conducted through the application of scientific methodologies such as multicriteria analysis and modern technologies such as GIS and remote sensing. GIS and remote sensing offer a logical foundation for allocating resources, infrastructure design, improving risk reduction, urban planning and response plans. With all of this, it is important for planners to not forget the incorporation of local knowledge for mapping hazards that will be incorporated in emergency planning. The type of data source examples used for GIS maps are: South Africa Roads (OpenStreetMap Export) from https://data.humdata.org/dataset/hotosm_zaf_roads; Landsat 5, 8, and 9 from https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/; and World Digital Soil Map – High resolution, from https://www.fao.org/soils-portal/data-hub/soil-maps-and-databases/faounesco-soil-map-of-the-world/en/ (Mshelia & Belle, 2024). The type of data generated for maps, depending on the hazard, could be soil type, settlement, roads, rainfall data, vegetation data and fire index data.

Important to note when planning for disaster risks and applying the GIS and remote sensing technologies is the application of 'assumptions'. The assumptions should be made using empirical data from local knowledge. This will aid in better disaster risk management planning. Examples of assumptions for flooding are:

· rainfall is a primary driver of flooding;
· elevation and slope affect water run–off patterns; and

· the infiltration process is influenced by the kind of soil (e.g., fine-textured soil increases run-off).

It is essential to construct flood control infrastructure, such as retention ponds. Additionally, maintaining natural landscapes and incorporating green infrastructure are crucial for effective water retention. Ongoing monitoring and adaptive land planning are also necessary to ensure resilience against flood risks.

Disaster Risk Management Planning Challenges

In her study on assessing the status and dynamics of establishing information management and communication systems, Kunguma (2020) found that disaster management centres struggle with different issues regardless of their sphere. First, the government's idealised policies (i.e., DMA and NDMF) are not being implemented as expected. The implementing institutions are under-capacitated regarding human resources, irrelevant and inadequate qualifications and infrastructure. Also, politicians do not fully support or comprehend the disaster management function. Wentink and Van Niekerk (2017) and Nemakonde and Kunguma (2024) made similar findings in their review of disaster management legislation and institutions. The findings show a lack of equipment and funding, which are barriers to implementing the legislation. Furthermore, there is maladministration, limited understanding of the legislation and placement of the disaster management function in a line ministry instead of the highest political office.

As identified, political will is a challenge regarding disaster risk reduction investments. However, while the Government of National Unity brings in several advantages, it also has the disadvantage of bloating an already bureaucratic disaster management institution because of delays in decision-making. The advantages of the GNU for the disaster management fraternity are that it supports the District Development Model and brings it to life; it fosters inclusivity, social cohesion, and innovative policy solutions. Its disadvantage is that it introduces complexities in coordination and decision-making processes (Maleka, 2024).

Conclusion

In conclusion, effective municipal disaster risk planning is essential for building resilient communities in South Africa. This chapter highlights the critical role of the local government sphere in disaster management, underscoring the need for robust planning, coordination, and stakeholder collaboration. The complexities posed by South Africa's political landscape and the multi-disciplinary nature of disaster management present significant challenges. However, municipalities can enhance their disaster preparedness and response capabilities by appropriately applying policy frameworks, technological innovations such as GIS, and community-based strategies.

While obstacles exist, there are ample opportunities for mitigating challenges through informed planning and targeted interventions. Municipalities can improve emergency response and recovery efforts by fostering functional institutional arrangements and ensuring active participation from various stakeholders. Furthermore, learning from past experiences, embracing transparency, and maintaining accountability are vital for nurturing community resilience. Ultimately, this chapter stresses the necessity of evolving disaster risk planning practices to protect vulnerable communities and promote sustainable development in the face of increasing risks. As South Africa continues to grapple with the realities of disasters, prioritising effective municipal disaster risk planning will be instrumental in safeguarding lives and securing the future of its communities.

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DDP

Democracy Development Program
www.ddp.org.za

32 Dullah Omar Lane (Masonic Grove), DDP
House, 2nd Floor, Durban 4001

Po Box 11376, Marine Parade, Durban 4056

Telephone: +27 31 304 9305
Email: info@ddp.org.za
Website: www.ddp.org.za

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