

# Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme Phase I evaluation: Nodal Review

Researched and written for the  
Independent Development Trust

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## Introduction

1. The Independent Development Trust (IDT) commissioned Strategy & Tactics (S&T) to help evaluate the first phase of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP). Our work focuses not on internal or management issues, nor on impact. Rather, we were commissioned to undertake a nodal review to assess the way in which the ISRDP has been rolled out since being announced by President Mbeki in January 2001 and the extent to which co-ordination and integration have (or have not) been achieved. We did so by interviewing a range of local officials involved with the ISRDP (from Executive Mayors to local officials and staff working in support organisations); this report is a 'bottom-up' view on the ISRDP from inception to late 2003.
2. A team from S&T, the IDT and Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) helped design the questionnaire and finalise methodological issues. The questionnaire was evenly divided between qualitative and quantitative questions, both of which are analysed in this report.
3. This report combines the quantitative and qualitative data, allowing us to provide more detail and nuance on overall findings. In response to requests from the nodes, we have also incorporated a set of quantitative findings per node (see Appendix A). The data in these tables, although based on a relatively small number of respondents in each node, should allow the nodes to develop a more detailed understanding of their own specifics, as well as benchmark themselves against the other nodes in the ISRDP.

## Focus and methodology

4. The focus of the study was to review the first two years of the ISRDP. During this time, much of the work done in the 13 nodes (see Figure 1 below) dealt with parallel and/or supporting activities: building capacities in the nodes, many of which were newly created by the Municipal Demarcation Board when the ISRDP began; developing expertise in drafting Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and associated sectoral plans; and unpacking the very real complexities that lie behind notions of 'co-ordination' and 'integration' when these apply to local, provincial and national spheres of government.
5. The report covers various issues, including:
  - Understanding of the ISRDP
  - Who is 'driving' the ISRDP
  - Assessment of local/provincial/national co-ordination
  - Relations between District and Local Municipalities
  - Role definition
  - Participation of national and provincial spheres
  - Institutional arrangements
  - Impact of ISRDP on budgeting (nationally and provincially)
  - Status of IDPs
  - Role of champions
6. We interviewed 147 respondents – all officials working on the ISRDP – from all 13 nodes. Respondents included Executive Mayors, Municipal Managers, and various officials including IDP Managers, Planning Managers, as well as officials

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from the Programme Implementation Management Support Systems (PIMSS) centres and Nodal Delivery Teams (NDTs) in each node. In each case, we tried to interview the local Mayor, Municipal Manager, and local political champion; additional respondents involved in management and operation such as officials responsible for planning, IDP managers, and the like. We also interviewed respondents from support structures including PIMSS centres and Nodal Development Teams (NDTs).

7. We did not interview provincial level officials or champions; although this would have added a valuable layer of detail, cost and time constraints made it impossible. Furthermore, we did not focus on impact, and as such did not interview community members – although this remains an important outstanding area that needs to be dealt with.
  
8. Fieldwork was lengthy and complex. Fieldwork began with a pilot phase, in the Kgalagadi node (situated at Kuruman). A draft questionnaire was applied to 25 respondents, from which important lessons were drawn and a considerably revised (and expanded) questionnaire was developed. One unfortunate result is that questions introduced into the revised instrument were not applied in Kgalagadi; wherever common questions were asked, the datasets have been merged. Fieldwork took longer than planned because of the workload of local officials, the end-of-year vacations, and difficulties in securing interviews. Fieldwork began in late October and stretched through to our final interview on Christmas Eve in 2003.

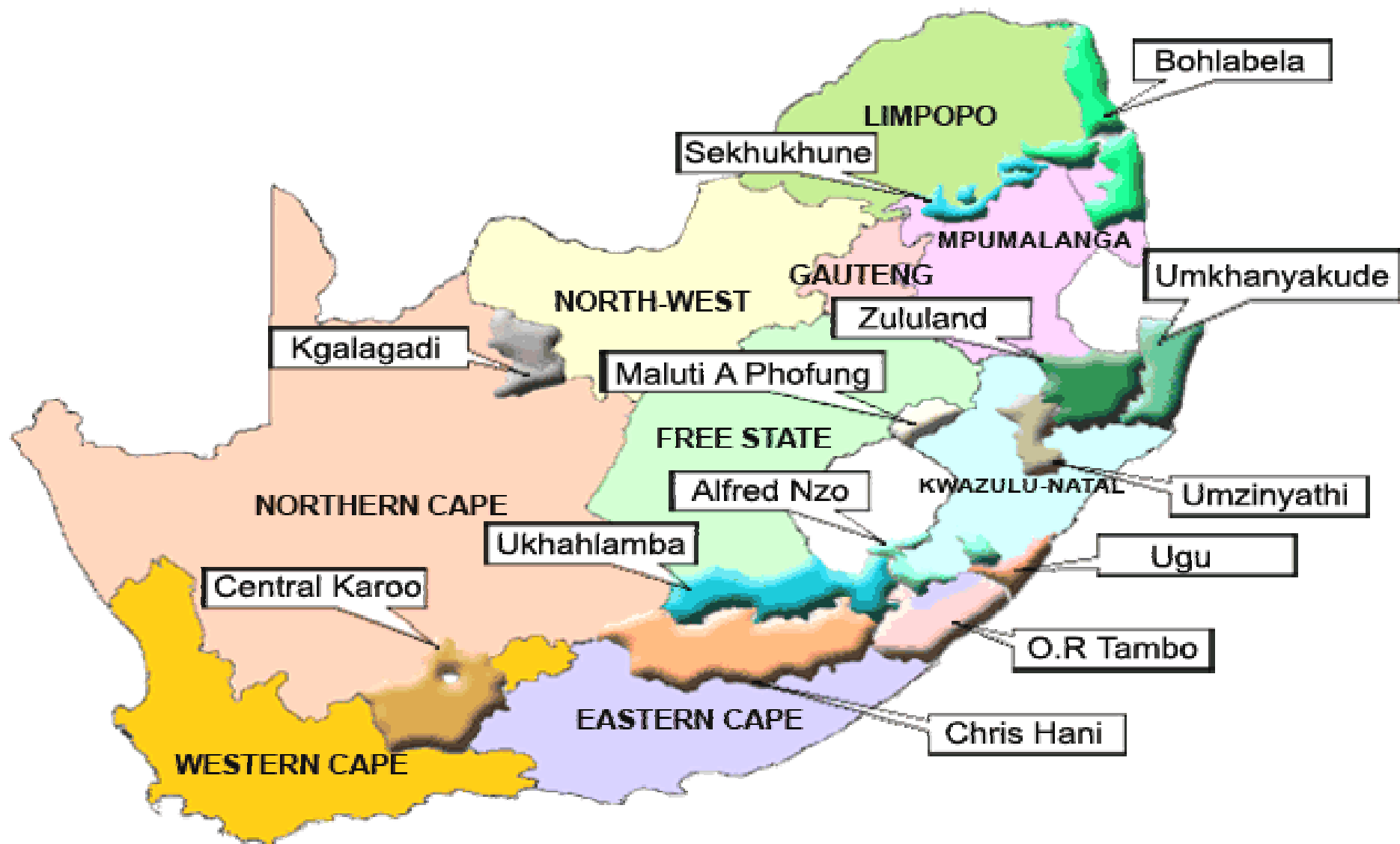
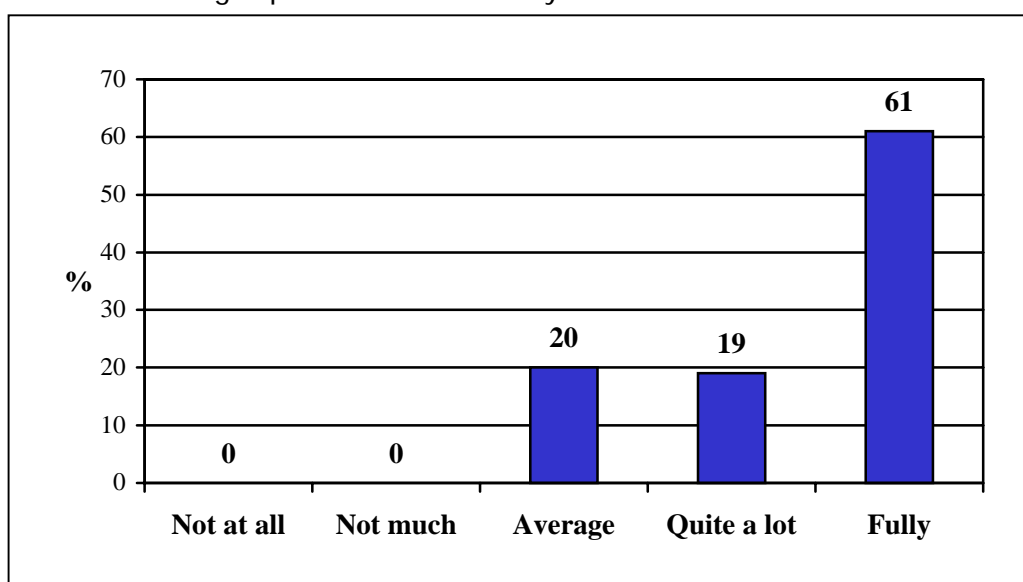


Figure 1: The 13 ISRDP nodes

## Understanding and implementing the ISRDP

9. The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) is a lengthy document, densely written and in places difficult to understand. To be implemented, the strategy was turned into a programme and the name changed accordingly. But the strategy became a programme without accompanying documentation that either simplified or clarified the strategy or programme. As a result, the strategy remains the key document regarding the ISRDP.
10. At its heart, the ISRDS is an elegantly simple idea, namely that local demand-driven development in the context of empowered local government should provide the fulcrum around which sectoral departmental delivery would be co-ordinated, resulting in more integrated (and responsive) development. The ISRDS was not a stand-alone programme but a mechanism for working differently; the ISRDP, accordingly, has no budget, for its work is to better co-ordinate existing expenditure and delivery.



**Figure 2: 'How well do you understand the ISRDS?' (Executive Mayors and Municipal Managers)**

11. But anecdotal evidence suggested that the introduction of anchor projects, used to fast-track the ISRDP and give it a visible presence in nodes, had had the effect of confusing people as to the nature and purpose of the ISRDP, either in its own right or compared with the ISRDS. In other words, it appeared that many people had come to regard the ISRDP as 'just another government programme' with its own budget and deliverables, rather than a macro-level mechanism for co-ordinating existing programmes to better effect.
12. Survey questionnaires have to be sensitively phrased in order to keep respondents at their ease and not feel they are being tested. We read the following question to two categories of respondent, namely Executive Mayors and Municipal Managers: "Understanding of the ISRDS has varied. What is your understanding of the ISRDS?" and gave 5 categories (from 'Understand it fully' to 'Don't understand it at all'); this was followed by an open-ended probe question. In other words, we merely asked respondents how well they felt they

understood the ISRDS – we did not seek to measure the accuracy of their perceptions. We asked about the ISRDS because the strategy document remains the base document of the ISRDP.

13. As we can see from the results in Figure 2, no respondents felt their understanding was poor. A fifth (20%), however, told us they have an ‘average’ understanding of the ISRDS; another fifth (19%) felt they understood ‘quite a lot’, while almost two-thirds (61%) believe they fully understand the ISRDS. The 39% who feel their understanding is less than full underscore the importance of producing and disseminating ISRDP documentation such as the Programme Design Document.

## Understanding the ISRDP: problems and solutions

14. The above question was followed by an open-ended probe, where we asked respondents why they had responded the way they did. Most respondents mentioned that they understood that the ISRDS is a strategy to develop rural areas. They mentioned that this strategy is a long-term plan. Others said they saw the ISRDS as a motivator to showcase delivery, or that it is a strategy to correct imbalances of the past. Respondents saw it as a strategy to uproot poverty amongst rural people and a programme whereby all people irrespective of social standing will benefit towards economic fulfilment.
15. However, not all respondents understood it fully. We saw that a fifth (20%) of respondents said they had ‘average’ understanding of the ISRDS. Among the more common reasons given by those who did not understand the ISRDS were that they are new in their positions and therefore had limited understanding of the strategy.
16. But in other areas, the problem is knowledge-based. In Umzinyathi municipality, for example, the Deputy Mayor mentioned that

the ISRDP cannot be compared with CIMP or DWAF as their funds come directly to us as grants, whereas funds for ISRDP are not like that I don't know how does it operate<sup>1</sup>.

17. The Deputy Mayor was not alone in expressing such sentiments, which strongly suggest that officials operating in the nodes – many of whom are also new in their jobs – need a ‘refresher’ introduction to the ISRDP. We cannot rely on the information-sharing work done in 2001 in this regard.
18. Among respondents, 16% had first been introduced to the ISRDP at a workshop, while 13% had done so at a meeting. One in twenty (5%) had first heard about the ISRDP through the media. In part, this reflects the fact that many of our respondents have not been in their job for more than a year (in turn reflecting the establishment of new local authorities), and would not have attended the introductory workshops held in 2001/2.

<sup>1</sup> Interview held with Deputy Mayor, Mzinyathi Municipality.



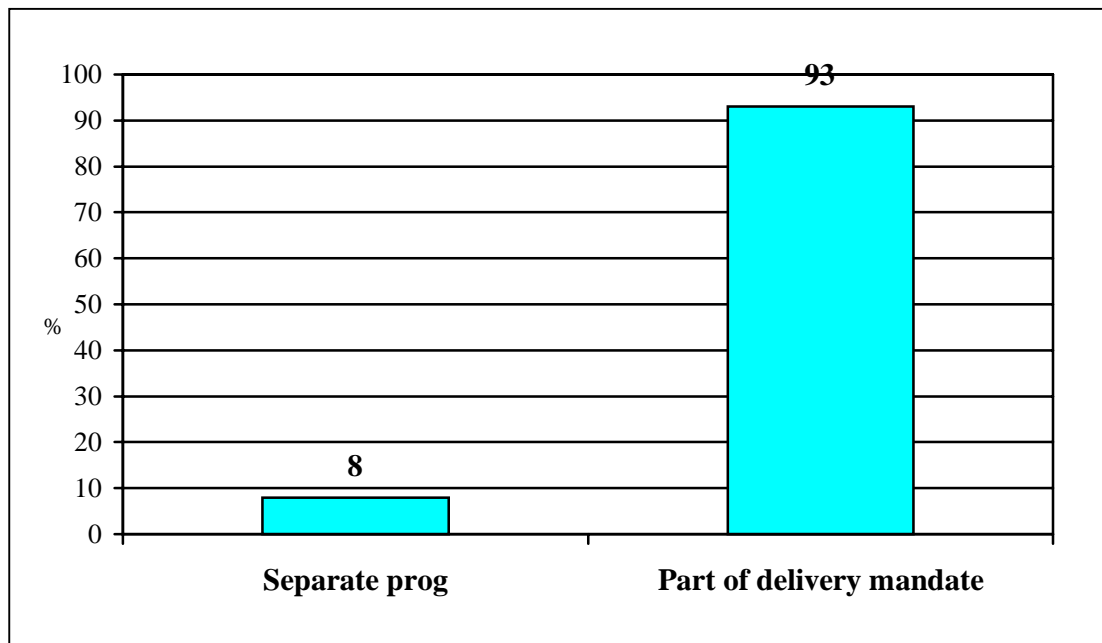


- 25. Support needs to go further than officials, as Table 1 makes clear. Less than half of respondents (42%) told us that ISRDP-related communications campaigns had been in their node.

<b>Incidence of ISRDP communication campaigns</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	42
<b>No</b>	58

**Table 1: Incidence of ISRDP communication campaigns (District & Local Municipal Managers, PIMSS, NDT and planning officials)**

- 26. Supporting nodes to run effective communication campaigns in their nodes regarding the ISRDP would be important in both bolstering the relevant District and Local Municipalities, and (more importantly) in helping develop local understanding of, support for and participation in local development initiatives.



**Figure 3: 'Do you see the ISRDP as a separate programme or as part of your delivery mandate?' (all respondents)**

### Capacity gaps and capacity building

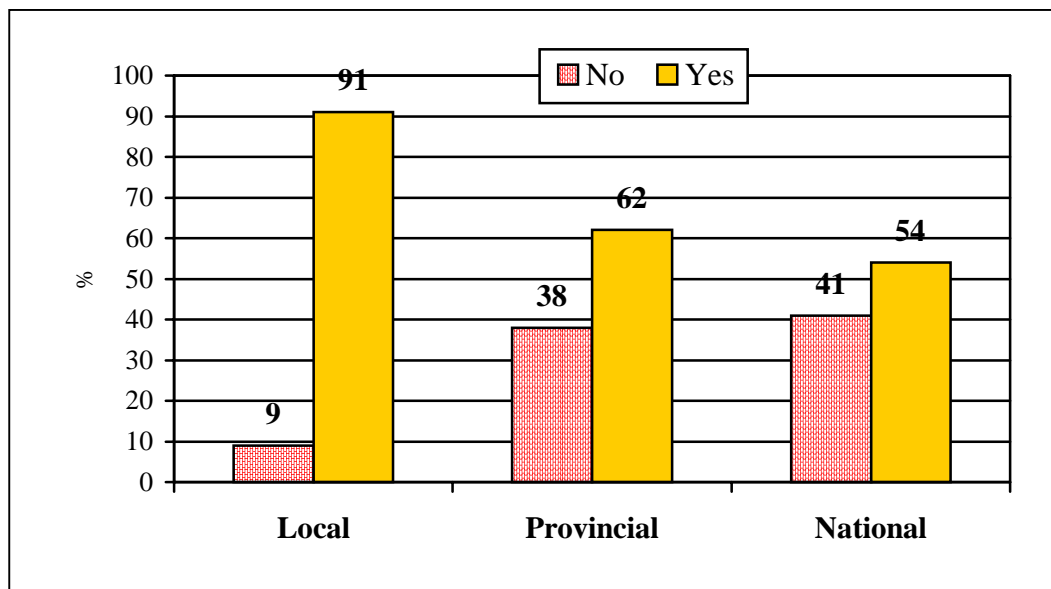
- 27. This evaluation has found that the ISRDP has only really gotten off the ground in recent months, after 2 years of support to deal with capacity gaps. It is strongly recommended that 'state of readiness' in the District and/or Local Municipality be a key variable in the identification and selection of new nodes.
- 28. We noted earlier that ISRDP-related work at nodal level has had perforce to concentrate on building local capacity. Many nodes were situated in newly created municipalities, and IDT officials found situations where the elected Mayor had either limited or no office space, staff or equipment.





## Co-ordination and participation

37. The central tenet of the ISRDP is that better co-ordination of delivery is a prerequisite for sustainable development in rural areas. But sector departments (and, traditionally, spheres of government) work in a vertical manner, where departments decide where to deliver and then implement projects at their selected sites. Co-ordinating them horizontally – from planning and budgeting through to implementation – has proved internationally to be a major challenge, with limited examples of success. Moreover, in the case of the ISRDP, co-ordination potentially includes virtually every national and provincial department, given the multi-faceted nature of poverty and appropriate responses to it.
38. We asked Executive Mayors, Municipal Managers, Planning Directors and IDP Managers to tell us whether or not there was co-ordination across each of the three spheres of government, in their respective nodes.
39. The results, shown in Figure 5, are not good. On the positive side, the local sphere seems to be performing very well, with nine out of ten respondents (91%) telling us that co-ordination was occurring in their respective local sphere. From that point on, however, there is a steady decline: some two-thirds (62%) of respondents told us that co-ordination extended to the provincial sphere, dropping to just over half (54%) who said the same of the national sphere. As we shall see, for some, the experience of co-ordination across the 3 spheres has been “horrible”; and it is clear from the results that the local sphere faces a major challenge with regard to intervening in the planning and resource allocation processes of the provincial and national spheres.



**Figure 5: 'Is there co-ordination in your node?' (Mayors, Municipal Managers, Planning Directors, IDP Managers) ('don't know' not shown)**

40. Respondents were asked to provide comments if they had any with regards to this. There was concern that the national level is not actively involved in the

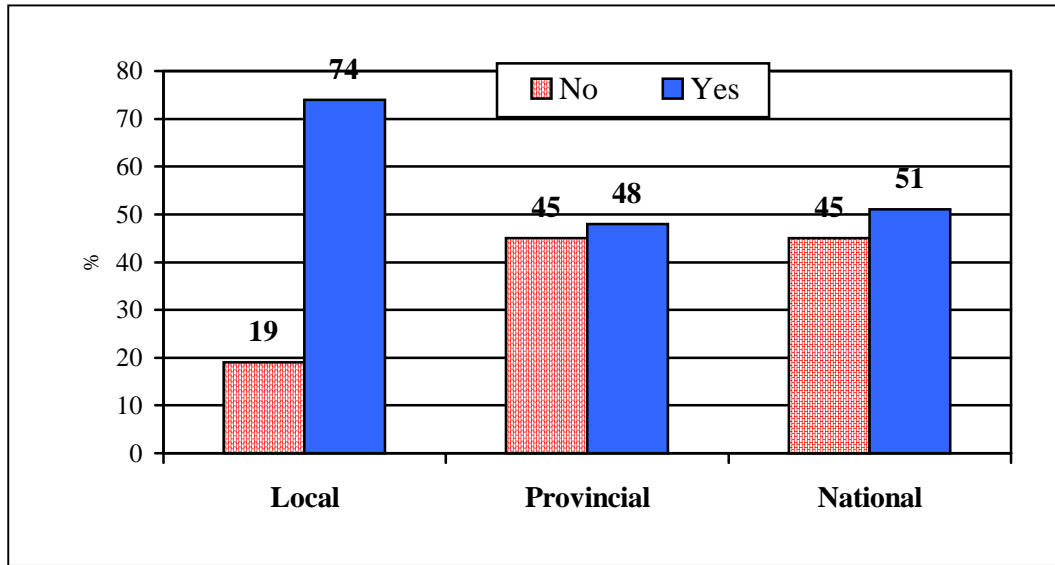








- 55. Defining roles for the different spheres must be jointly undertaken with the spheres if they are to work and not be regarded as externally imposed. It seems, however, that a great deal of work is needed where the provincial and national spheres are concerned.
- 56. This is not a negative result *per se*: the ISRDP demands that new, sometimes novel arrangements are needed precisely in order to get government to work differently from the way it has done in the past. Rather than concentrate on the absence of such arrangements, it is recommended that DPLG and/or IDT commission a set of case studies to describe and analyse the nature and efficacy of role definition in different nodes, in order to identify good practice and help all sector departments in all spheres to fast-track the design and implementation of appropriate arrangements.



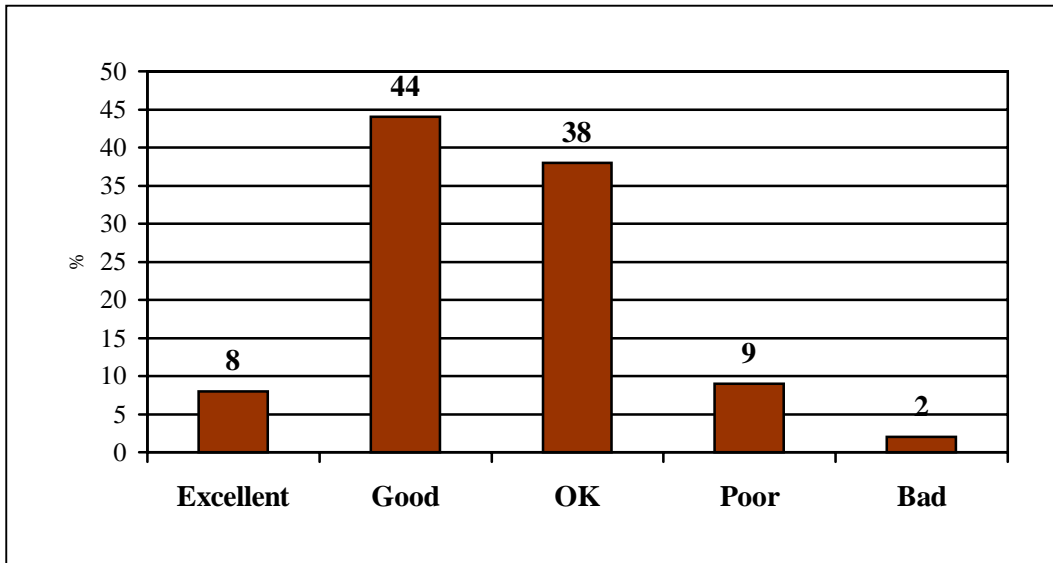
**Figure 6: 'Are there clearly defined roles for each level of government in relation to the ISRDP?' (all respondents) ('don't know' not shown)**

- 57. The failure to put appropriate functional arrangements in place directly affects the presence or absence of sector departments in the nodes, shown in Table 2. We find a very uneven and patchy picture. On the whole, echoing earlier findings, provincial departments are seen by all respondents to be more active than their national counterparts. It is of some concern that key departments for rural development are not actively involved in all the nodes, at either provincial or national level, including Water Affairs, Public Works, Transport, Housing, Land Affairs and Agriculture.
- 58. Equally worrying is the very limited showing of some important departments, notably Social Development, Labour, Transport and Trade and Industry. Given the fact that the 13 nodes are pilot sites for the ISRDP, it is vital that this situation is considerably improved. This is also true of those departments with a consistently low profile, such as Science and Technology.

<i>Department</i>	<i>% national</i>	<i>% provincial</i>
<i>Agriculture</i>	40	67
<i>Arts &amp; Culture</i>	19	33
<i>Environment &amp; Tourism</i>	30	43
<i>Education</i>	21	34
<i>Foreign Affairs</i>	3	N/A
<i>Health</i>	31	49
<i>Home Affairs</i>	3	19
<i>Housing</i>	25	78
<i>Labour</i>	23	22
<i>Land Affairs</i>	37	35
<i>Minerals &amp; Energy</i>	32	23
<i>Provincial &amp; Local</i>	69	N/A
<i>Public Works</i>	49	55
<i>Science &amp; Technology</i>	5	5
<i>Social Development</i>	36	49
<i>Sport &amp; Recreation</i>	21	N/A
<i>State Enterprises</i>	7	3
<i>Trade &amp; Industry</i>	13	17
<i>Transport</i>	23	27
<i>Water Affairs &amp; Forestry</i>	64	50

**Table 2: National and Provincial departments actively participating in the nodes (all respondents) (departmental names differ in some provinces)**

59. Before more nodes are announced, DPLG and IDT (as we saw earlier) require far greater clarity on the mechanisms for achieving co-ordination across all three spheres, notably provincial and national; but they also need to know how better to incentivise all departments to identify their role and function within the ISRDP. (See also the section dealing with IDPs below.)
60. We asked senior officials in the nodes – Executive Mayors, Municipal Managers, Planning Directors and IDP Managers – to describe the relationship among stakeholders in their particular node.

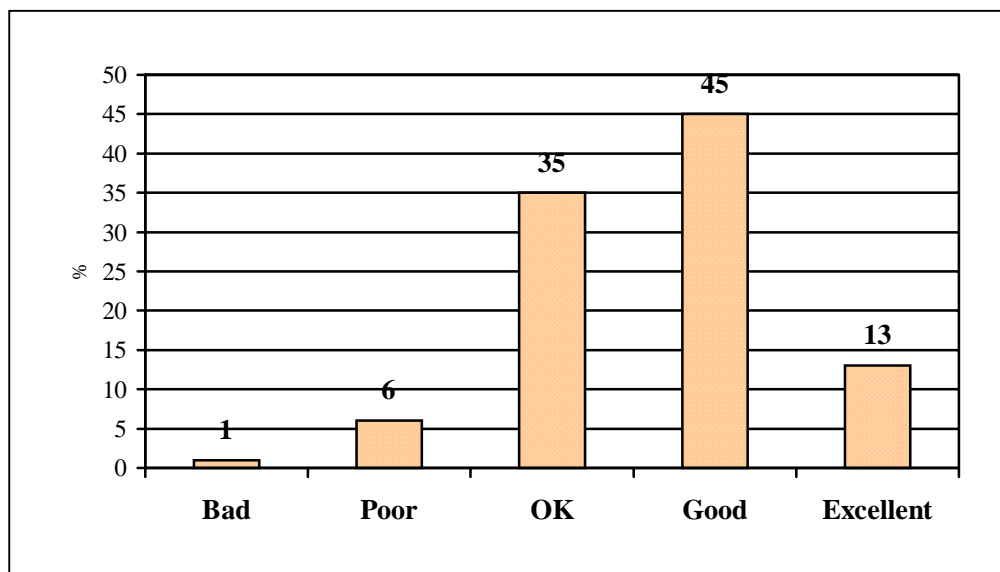


**Figure 7: 'Describe the relationship amongst stakeholders in this node' (Mayors, Municipal Managers, Planning Directors, IDP Managers)**

61. While just 8% described relations amongst stakeholders as 'excellent', four in ten (44%) felt that relations were 'good' and a slightly smaller proportion (38%) that relations amongst stakeholders were 'OK'. While the DPLG and IDT may wish to follow up with the 11% who told us relations were 'poor' or 'bad', the results suggest that a largely positive attitude exists at nodal level. This should facilitate on-going work to enhance co-ordination across the spheres.

## Institutional arrangements

62. The 13 nodes are not identical. Some are cross-border nodes; some are located in District Municipalities, others in Local Municipalities. We have seen that capacity constraints remain prevalent. As such, institutional arrangements are particularly important.
63. If we look firstly at who 'drives' the ISRDP at nodal level, we find that the majority of respondents (76%) believe the District Municipality does so.<sup>3</sup> Considerably fewer (36%) feel that the Local Municipality does so.
64. Perhaps more worrying, almost a fifth of respondents (17%) believe that the local PIMSS centre drives the ISRDP; while less than one in ten believe either the DPLG (7%) or IDT (9%) do so. Given the fact that respondents come from a wide range of positions and backgrounds, it is perhaps not surprising to find a wide range of perceptions on this issue. However, to the extent that it reinforces the sense that the ISRDP is uneven when assessed at programme-wide level, these results are of some concern.
65. One aspect of the problem in a number of nodes is the relationship between District and Local Municipalities. We asked all respondents to describe relations between the District and Local Municipality in their node.



**Figure 8: 'Describe the relationship between the district and local municipality in the node' (all respondents)**

66. Relations between District and Local Municipalities seem mainly to range from good to cordial; just 7% of respondents described them in negative terms, while twice that number (13%) described them as 'excellent'. One problem area seems to be inter-sphere communication: two-thirds (67%) of District and Local Municipal Managers, Planning Directors and respondents from PIMSS and NDT centres told us that effective communication exists within the local sphere in

<sup>3</sup> This was a multi-mention question, where respondents answered 'yes'/'no' to each option, so that scores do not add up to 100%.



respondents) is to co-ordinate and mobilise funds for the ISRDP, play a political monitoring role, act as the technical champions of the ISRDP, and as the custodians of the programme.

74. We went on to ask how better the DPLG could respond to the needs of those we interviewed across all the ISRDP nodes. Most respondents agreed that DPLG was doing well thus far. However, additional issue for consideration included the suggestion that the DPLG should decentralise its decision-making processes in issues relating to the ISRDP.
75. Also, it was suggested that DPLG should ensure that all stakeholders do participate at their appropriate strategic level. This is not surprising when taking into account some of the concerns raised in previous sections about lack of participation and consultation especially at both national and provincial levels. That said, a number of participants recommended that the DPLG focus on enhancing participation at provincial level in particular.

### **The IDT**

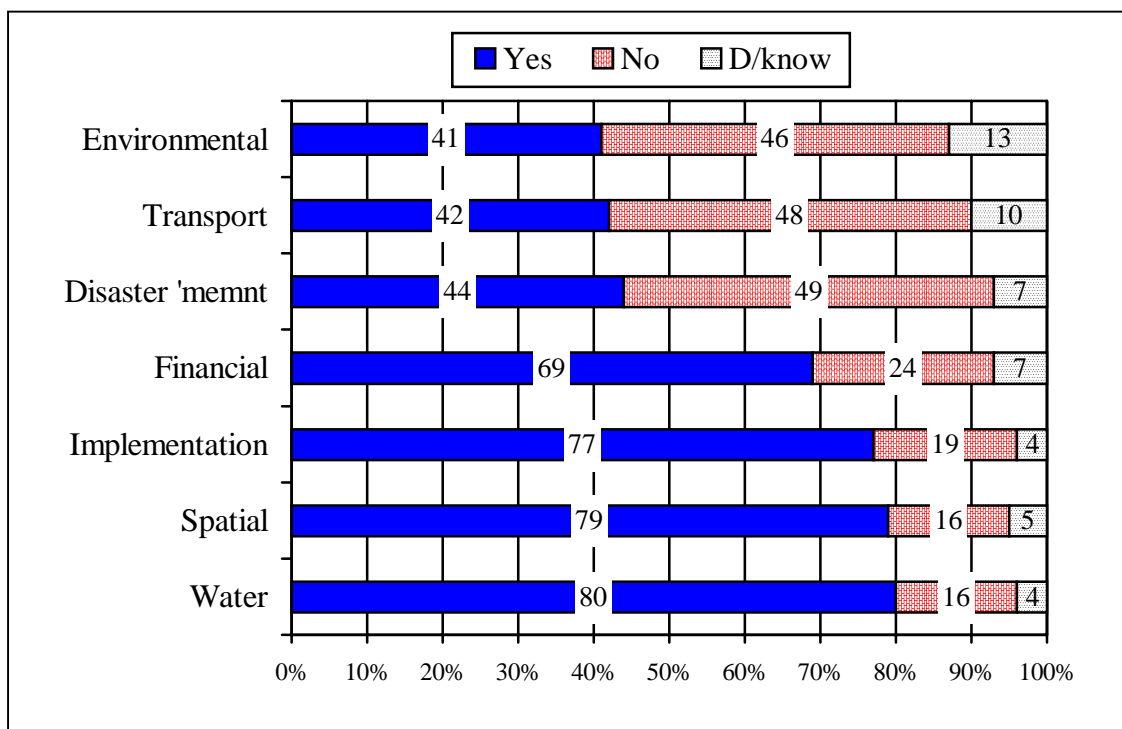
76. Generally, respondents appeared to understand the roles of the IDT to include facilitation, planning, strategic management, technical support, capacity development and guidance in accordance with the IDPs, and (with the DPLG) as the custodian of the ISRDP. They understood the role of the IDT as of providing strategic support, playing a facilitating role to ensure that the node was on board in terms of its goals, advise the node on institutional arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation of the progress and performance of the ISRDP.
77. While most respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the role the IDT has played thus far, they were however a few issues where they argued the IDT role could be strengthened. For example, some respondents stressed that the IDT should play a uniting role between local and district municipalities. This (where it occurs) is a particular point of friction, where the IDT could intervene with considerable effect. For example, one node argued that R40m was not spent in 2003 and the local municipality was disadvantaged, negatively affecting its planning and frustrating its communities.
78. Furthermore, people stressed that the IDT should focus more on strategic planning as some district do not have the requisite capacity or resources. However, there should be clear agreement as to the extent of their involvement.

## IDPs and the ISRDP

79. Integrated Development Plans are central to the success of the ISRDP, as they are to development efforts (urban and rural) more generally. If development is to be responsive to local needs and demand-driven, the process of devising IDPs as well as their content must operate optimally. In the hands of effective local authorities, robust IDPs – drawn up in consultation with provincial and national spheres – will be the tool that coheres delivery and allows co-ordination by the local sphere. This is vital if we are to break the current logjam, seen earlier, where the local battles to co-ordinate with other spheres of government.
80. We have seen that the ISRDP had to negotiate problems associated with new and under-resourced local authorities; it also had to cope with the learning curve associated with the Interim IDPs (IIDPs) and subsequent IDPs. We asked respondents a number of IDP-related questions, covering both their current status and their impact on the resource planning decisions of other spheres of government.

### Current status of IDPs

81. We first asked District and Local Municipal Managers, Planning Directors, and PIMSS and NDT respondents, whether IDP planning is mainly outsourced or done in house. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, which argues that IDPs are commonly outsourced to consultants (with often negative results), three-quarters of respondents (76%) told us their IDP planning mainly occurs in house; the remainder (24%) told us IDP planning was outsourced.



**Figure 9: Incidence of sectoral plans (District and Local Municipality respondents)**





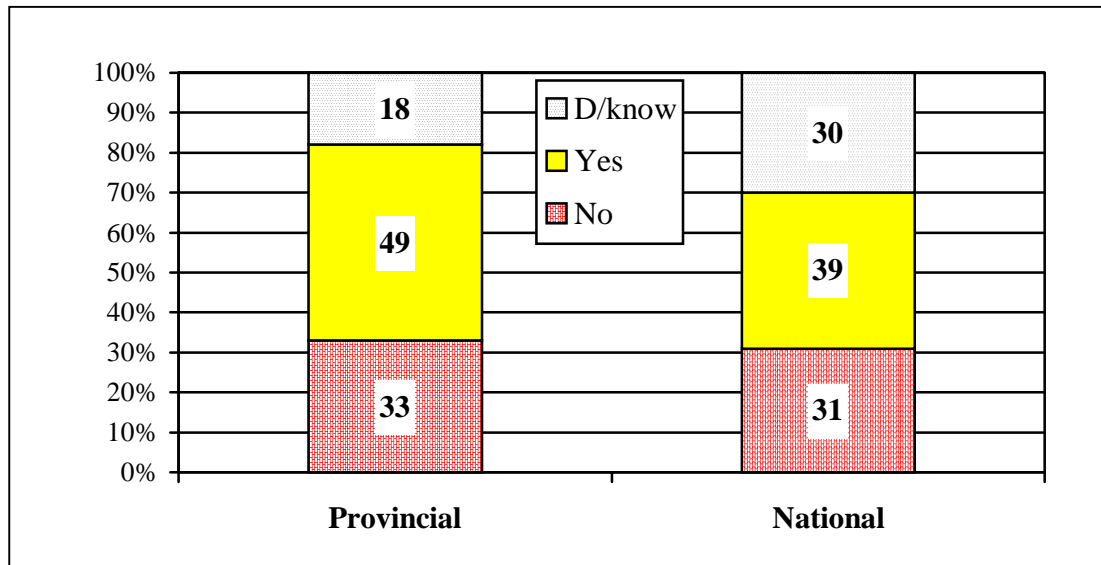
89. There are of course problems and challenges associated with the IDP process, many of which may be found at the local level. But these results suggest (and reinforce points made earlier in this report) that one of the main problems is the limited participation in the IDP process by the national sphere. (Space limitations disallowed us from asking the same question about the provincial sphere.)
90. We asked respondents to what degree they felt the IDP process influenced the municipal budgeting process. When analysing qualitative responses given by respondents, it emerged that the overwhelming majority agreed that the IDP process influenced their own budgeting process. As one summed it up:

Our budgeting process is influenced by the IDP of local municipalities, and also their budgeting process is influenced by the IDP. All the projects that were included in the budget were taken from the IDPs.

91. There were however some respondents of the view that while the IDP is impacting on the local sphere, this is less true of other spheres. As one put it:

There are insufficient resources to finance projects. For example, it seems that both national and provincial Departments do not understand the role of the IDP; they need to understand the IDP process.

92. If the ISRDP is to achieve its fundamental goal – to better co-ordinate the planning, budgeting and delivery sequencing of all three spheres of government – it seems clear that the national sphere has to become far more involved in the IDP process. The current situation cannot be allowed to persist, if the ISRDP is to succeed; and must not in turn ‘infect’ the next set of nodes to be announced. To test this point we asked more pointed questions, namely whether or not the nodal IDP process influenced the budgeting processes of national and provincial departments.



**Figure 10: 'Did your IDP influence the budgeting decisions of national/provincial departments?' (District and Local Municipality officials)**

- 93. Again the results are not very positive. Half of respondents (49%) told us their IDP influenced departments from the provincial sphere; this dropped to just 39% where the national sphere is concerned. These are very worrying, given the centrality of IDPs to the ISRDP described above.
- 94. Interestingly, considerably more respondents did not know whether or not their IDP had influenced the national sphere (30%) than the provincial sphere (18%), suggesting that there is very limited contact between local and national spheres. Respondents were more confident in their knowledge of the impact (one way or another) of the IDP on the provincial sphere.

**Key IDP-related challenges**

- 95. We asked all respondents to tell us what had been the main challenge in their node with regard to the IDP process. A number of responses were given but most centred on funding, participation from both national and provincial spheres, as well as from communities. These themes were mentioned in all the nodes across all levels of respondents.
- 96. Respondents mentioned that funding had been a particular challenge. They told us that it was difficult to get projects off the ground because of lack of funding. On the same issue, one respondent said 'we don't have someone who will mobilise funds for us since the social facilitator resigned.'<sup>4</sup> This comment indicates the link between capacity gaps and key elements of the ISRDP, where the absence of an individual can lead to a considerably depleted process.
- 97. Responses also indicate that municipalities do not yet fully understand the IDP process, compounded by capacity limitations. Most accepted that the very first IDPs were rushed; the revised IDPs were widely regarded as a considerable

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Municipal Manager, Central Karoo.



104. In most instances respondents told us they had put structures in place that were dealing with community involvement. In most municipalities, structures such as Ward Committees had been established, which attempted to involve communities. Respondents also mentioned that they also had councillors and traditional leaders in these Ward Committees. This was not true of Maluti A Phofung and Umkhanyakude. Maluti A Phofung indicated that there were no structures in place to involve communities yet. Umkhanyakude District Municipality mentioned that they were still a new municipality and were still trying to put their house in order.
105. However, besides these structures having been put in place respondents felt that more could be done to ensure that communities are *actively* involved. Zululand District Municipality was very vocal about the issue of communities not being actively involved. Respondents from this District Municipality believe that communities do not feel any direct benefits from being involved with the ISRDP. Other respondents mentioned that communities often had to grapple with the technical jargon used in the planning phase in particular, and hence were excluded either by choice or by the jargon.
106. Departmental bureaucracy – in the national and provincial spheres - was also mentioned as a limiting factor. Some respondents believed that departments were paying lip service to the concept of community involvement, which was not occurring in any tangible form. Some respondents felt that departments and consultants continued to identify projects as they had previously, to the exclusion of community and local municipality participation.
107. So, although we note that efforts are being made by municipalities to engage communities, it is still important that they improve their relations with the community. This includes the need for some introspection: one respondent simply waved away the issue, claiming that communities in the node were ignorant and could not be expected to participate.

### Anchor projects

108. We noted earlier that the introduction of anchor projects had had an initially negative impact in some areas, by giving the ISRDP the incorrect appearance of being a stand-alone programme with its own budget and deliverables. To probe the issue we asked respondents to tell us their understanding of anchor projects. This question was posed to the Executive Mayor, District Municipal Manager, Planning Unit, PIMS manager, the NDT unit and where applicable the technical and IDP officers.
109. Responses differed from node to node. In some, anchor projects were described as key projects with potential spin-offs linking to other projects. Anchor projects were also seen as projects that should assist in eradicating poverty through job creation and economic spin-offs. Other respondents said that the anchor projects were part of the ISRDP. Some saw anchor projects as part of their IDP, others did not.
110. What we can conclude is that there is no uniformity with regard to how the nodes understand anchor projects. This is reflected in the fact that we had



116. Lastly, some respondents indicated that while the lack of a budget was initially a problem, it is one they have overcome:

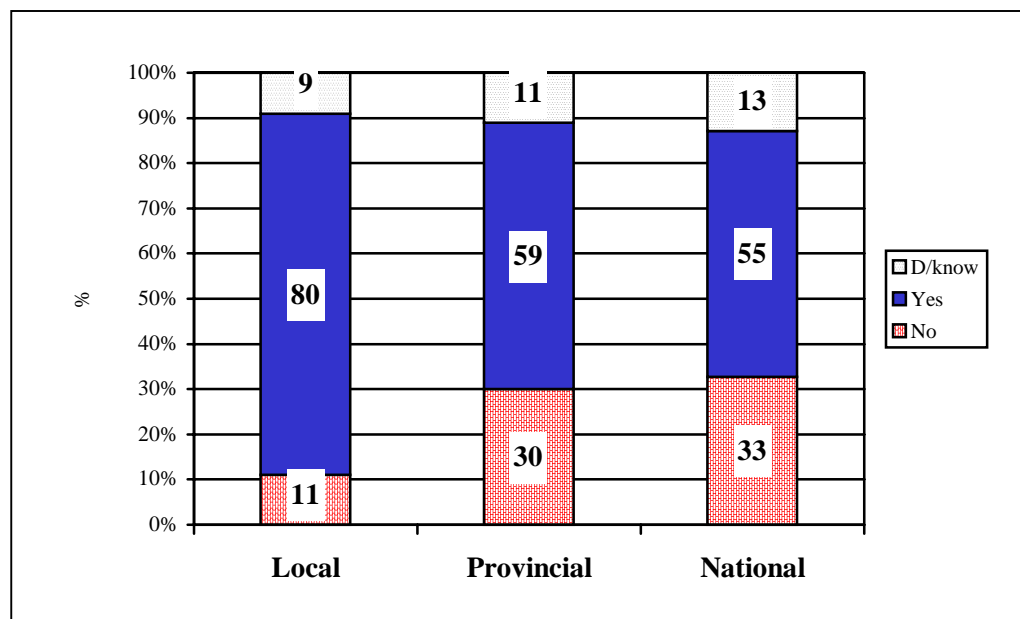
In the beginning it was difficult for government departments to give finances to the ISRDP so implementation of projects suffered, but now because of political pressure from the IDP things are much better.

## Partnerships

117. We asked Executive Mayors; Municipal Managers, Planning Directors and IDP Managers if any partnerships had been formed to complement existing resources within their nodes. Both district municipalities and local municipalities mentioned that they had formed partnerships within the nodes. In virtually all the nodes we noted that partnerships have been formed with donors, parastatals, the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The exception was Mzinyathi District Municipality.
118. The Deputy Mayor at Mzinyathi District Municipality said that so far they had not been able to form any formal partnerships with parastatals or line departments. The only partnerships had been formed with NGOs that particularly deal with HIV/AIDS. He mentioned that attempts were being made to form partnerships with institutions such as Eskom, Department of Water and Forestry and Land Affairs.

## Political champions

119. Finally, we ended the interviews by asking respondents some questions about the role played by ISRDP champions. The various levels of champion were put in place to help the nodes generate support and access different spheres of government, as well as other resources. However, there has been some confusion as to the precise role of champions; and the different champions (national, provincial and local; political and technical) have played an uneven role.
120. We began by asking Mayors, Municipal Managers and PIMSS and NDT respondents if they felt the roles of national, provincial and local champions in their node have been well defined or not.



**Figure 11: 'Has the role of local/provincial/national champions been clearly defined? (Mayors, Municipal Managers, PIMSS, NDT respondents)**

121. Once again, a pattern emerges that sees the local better defined than the provincial, and the national least well defined. Four in five respondents (80%) told us their local political champion had a clearly defined role in the node; this dropped to 59% where the provincial political champion was concerned, and again to 55% where the national political champion is concerned.
122. We went on to ask whether or not the national political champion has ever visited the node (space limitations disallowed us from probing the local and provincial champions). In response, just two-thirds of respondents (64%) told us their national political champion has visited their node.
123. We repeat a point made earlier: the local sphere seems to be best organised around the ISRDP; the provincial sphere is betwixt and between; while the national sphere lags behind both. This situation must be rectified – as a matter of some urgency – if the initial 13 pilot nodes are to play their role of highlighting challenges and resolving them before more nodes are announced.

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## National champions

124. While a number of respondents told us they had no idea who their national champions were nor of any visits made to their nodes, there were also positive responses pointing to the national champions playing a significant role. These include playing an advisory role and making sure that sector departments get involved as well.
125. Still on the positive side, national champions were credited for playing a co-ordination role between departments and for ensuring that time frames are set for delivery. Furthermore, the national champions were praised for influencing departments to participate in the node and thereby securing funding for projects. Meetings were said to have taken place as a result of the role of the national champion. These serve as monitoring meetings because discussions centre on performance and progress in the nodes. It is during such meetings where gaps are identified and corrective action or remedial steps are suggested.
126. On the negative side, however, there were concerns raised about the fact that national champions are not always consistent in playing their roles, their visits to nodes are *ad hoc*, and so on.

## Provincial champions

127. In analysing qualitative data about the roles played by provincial champions, we found that similar sentiments to those expressed about the national champions. For example, the provincial champion was generally said to regularly visit the nodes, and conduct meetings that monitor progress and performance. The provincial champions were further credited for mobilising the participation of other departments in the provincial sphere, ensuring community participation, facilitating urgent service delivery and providing political leadership.



## Conclusion: has the ISRDP made you work differently?

128. The ISRDP has been put in place to make government as a whole work *differently*. We posed this as an open-ended question to respondents.
129. Responses to this question varied depending on the different roles played by respondents, but most respondents agreed that the ISRDP was valuable in that it provided a framework and a structure to deal with priority issues. Without the ISRDP people would not have had the focus the programme has given them.
130. For example, many argued that while communities would have identified their development priorities, it would have been difficult to mobilise funding without the ISRDP. As such, the ISRDP helped in speeding the delivery of projects, assisted in securing funding and provided space to mobilise external technical assistance in the form of the IDT and DPLG.
131. In general, respondents believe that the ISRDP has helped secure (with the limitations outlined earlier) improved intergovernmental relations and co-operation between departments; in-depth community participation in planning and implementation; and has ‘forced’ departments to develop sector plans as well as proper participation by line function departments.
132. We went on to ask if and how nodes have benefited from the ISRDP. As one respondent put it,

As a result of the ISRDP we were afforded guidelines and assistance, money for implementing development projects is more accessible and as such, we were better placed and equipped to improve the quality of life of our rural and needy communities. Most importantly, the ISRDP have [sic] enabled us to have a well-integrated service delivery in all municipalities and has benefited the communities with viable and sustainable projects.

133. Overall, respondents recognised the fact that they were afforded the opportunity for proper planning which they now appreciate, access to basic resources, improved employment opportunities within the nodes, improved skills level amongst the poor, speedy service delivery and visible intervention by local government.
134. Overall, therefore, the ISRDP appears to be playing a key role in helping nodes access resources. Problems exist in translating the idea of inter- and intra-sphere co-ordination into a set of practices that all three spheres adhere to. The ISRDP appears to have picked up speed as capacity grew in the nodes, suggesting that capacity audits and provision should *precede* the announcement of future nodes, so that the ISRDP can hit the ground running.
135. The following table summarises the recommendations made in this report.

## Summary of recommendations

<i>Issue/problem</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<b><i>Understanding the ISRDP</i></b>				
Less than two-thirds of respondents believe they have a full understanding of the ISRDS and/or ISRDP	IDT and DPLG should consider staging a second round of ISRDP workshops. These may be a useful forum for introducing the Programme Design Document and enhancing officials' understanding of the ISRDP. These would also benefit those officials who are new in their positions.			
A number of respondents were initially confused about the ISRDP, thinking it had its own budget				
A number of officials, across all nodes, are new in their jobs and did not benefit from the first round of ISRDP introductory workshops				
A small minority of respondents continue to regard the ISRDP as a separate programme and not part of their delivery mandate.				
<b><i>Communication campaigns</i></b>				
Less than half of respondents said their nodes have run communication campaigns among local residents	Supporting nodes to run effective communication campaigns in their nodes regarding the ISRDP would be important in bolstering the relevant District and/or Local Municipalities, and in helping develop local understanding of, support for and participation in local development initiatives.			



<b>Capacity</b>				
The ISRDP is only really getting off the ground now, because of capacity gaps.	<p>'State of readiness' should be a key variable in the identification and selection of new nodes.</p> <p>On-going, rigorous capacity assessments are needed. It is important that the DPLG and IDT help develop and implement standard procedures for measuring capacity, identifying key gaps, and sourcing skills to fill the gaps</p> <p>Provision of capacity should be clarified with single-point accountability.</p> <p>It is important that a capacity building strategy and appropriate set of tools are in place before the next set of nodes is announced.</p>			
Less than half of respondents believe their nodes have sufficient capacity to manage the ISRDP effectively.				
Respondents differ over who should provide capacity; this is especially true where Local Municipalities expect their District to do so.				
<b>Co-ordination &amp; alignment</b>				
Co-ordination is most evident within the local sphere, but steadily worsens across the provincial and national spheres.	<p>Consistent attendance by senior officials should be a basic requirement of all spheres.</p>			
Respondents do not believe that the provincial and national spheres are fully committed to co-ordination.				



<p>Respondents noted that junior officials, without decision-making authority, are frequently sent to represent the provincial and/or national spheres at co-ordinating/planning meetings.</p>	<p>Negative perceptions must be dealt with, through clear explanation of the planning cycle and the responsibilities of all 3 spheres to ensure that co-ordination leads to alignment.</p>			
<p>Respondents argue that the planning and budgeting cycles of the 3 spheres is out of sync and that IDP priorities as a result are not reflected in the resource planning of the provincial and national spheres. Others argued that synchronisation is not a problem – but that the provincial and national spheres do not involve local authorities (via the IDP process) in their own planning</p>	<p>The MTEF and related planning cycles must be made more accessible to the local sphere, which feels shut out of the process.</p>			
<p><b><i>Role definition</i></b></p>				



<p>Almost half of respondents said there are no clearly defined roles for the provincial or national sphere regarding the ISRDP at nodal level.</p> <p>Participation in the ISRDP at nodal level by national and provincial sector departments is patchy and uneven.</p>	<p>Defining roles must be jointly undertaken with the spheres if they are to work and not be regarded as externally imposed.</p> <p>It is recommended that DPLG and/or IDT commission a set of case studies to describe and analyse the nature and efficacy of role definition in different nodes, in order to identify good practice and help all sector departments in all spheres to fast-track the design and implementation of appropriate arrangements.</p> <p>Before more nodes are announced, DPLG and IDT require greater clarity on the mechanisms for achieving co-ordination across all three spheres, notably provincial and national; but they also need to know how better to incentivise all departments to identify their role and function within the ISRDP.</p>			



<b><i>Institutional arrangements</i></b>				
Considerable confusion exists as to who 'drives' the ISRDP.	Establishing and supporting good working relations and clear communication between these two local authorities is critical for the ISRDP.  Institutional arrangements at local level need to be refined and more clearly defined; problems need to be understood and resolved (and documented) before new nodes are announced.			
Relations between District and Local Municipalities seem adequate, but have negative undercurrents that need to be dealt with.				
The role of the NDT is unclear, and only half have been absorbed into the local organogram.				
The role of the DPLG is generally well understood.	Respondents suggested that the DPLG decentralise its decision-making processes in issues relating to the ISRDP.  It was also suggested by respondents that DPLG should ensure that all stakeholders participate at their appropriate strategic level.			
The role of the IDT is generally well understood.	Respondents stressed the IDT should play a uniting role between local and district municipalities.  Respondents stressed that the IDT should focus on strategic planning as			



	some district do not have the requisite capacity or resources.			
<b><i>IDPs</i></b>				
Three-quarters of respondents said their IDPs are done in-house; just a quarter said they use consultants.	Support is needed to ensure that all sector plans are produced as required  The national and provincial spheres must become far more involved in the IDP process. The current situation cannot be allowed to persist, if the ISRDP is to succeed; and must not in turn 'infect' the next set of nodes to be announced.  The national sphere in particular must align its budget and planning cycles with the IDP process			
The existence of sector plans are very uneven				
Nodes are insufficiently proactive in securing provincial and national participation in the IDP process.				
The national and provincial spheres are patchy in responding to invitations to participate in the IDP process.				
<b><i>Champions</i></b>				
The roles of local champions is considerably better defined than those of provincial or national champions.	The DPLG needs to ensure a more even (and active) participation by all champions.			
National champions in particular seem to be uneven in the work they do in and for the nodes.				