REPORT: IDP REGIONAL LEARNING EVENT
11 August 2007, Social Housing Foundation (SHF) Offices, Johannesburg

Facilitated by PLANACT,
member of the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN)

1. BACKGROUND/MOTIVATION FOR EVENT

Despite the progress that has been made in developing new planning systems post apartheid era, there has been very little advancement in practice around physical, economic and social integration. South Africa's cities and towns continue to develop and grow without satisfactory integration happening, urban sprawl is still the order of the day, poor communities continue to live on the periphery of the cities. In some instances, the provision of adequate services as envisaged in the South African Constitution has ground to a halt; hence there have been some sporadic protests against local councils by communities citing poor service delivery as a reason.

Since 2000, a new process of planning has been initiated by government known as the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process. This process is different in a number of ways: it is based on participation, where all stakeholders in the municipality are invited to participate in the planning process (government, communities, business, labour and other sectors). It is a process where communities are provided with an opportunity of identifying and giving local government their priority needs. However, it appears that the process of needs prioritizing is still a sticky point; the practice seems to be that it is the council that has the final decision on what goes into the final integrated development plan document. This necessitates a revisitation on the concept of public participation in the IDP process.

In addition, it is evident that some local municipalities do not spend their budget as expected of them; the issue of roll-over as a result of under-spending is a reflection that the capital budget in particular is not being spent on infrastructure. The alignment of the budget and the needs identified in the IDP is still a major challenge for most municipalities.

As a result of the challenges noted above, Planact, a member of the Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN), decided to host an IDP learning event for various communities and public representatives. While Planact has facilitated individual IDP training workshop with the respective communities, this event intended to bring community leaders from different communities together to share experiences of the IDP processes including recommendations for best practices. In addition, Planact believes that by bringing community leaders and public representatives (ward councilors) together, the communication gap that

exists between public representatives and the respective communities will be narrowed.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT

The objectives of the event were:
- To provide communities with an opportunity to share their experiences of their participation in the IDP process.
- To provide communities with an opportunity to identify challenges facing communities in the IDP process.
- To provide information on legislation underpinning IDP process and community participation in the process
- To provide communities with an opportunity of making recommendations on what an "ideal IDP process" should look like.

3. OUTCOMES

The outcomes of the workshop are intended to inform how future effective public participation processes need to take place, to identify gaps in the IDP process and how they could be resolved. The outcomes will be shared with the respective municipalities with the view of enhancing the IDP processes. Planact, together with other social partners intends to lobby policy makers on issues identified during the event.

4. PARTICIPANTS

The workshop was well attended by a range of participants including community leaders, ward committee members, municipal and city officials, and also NGO representatives from the GGLN network.

The following communities participated in the IDP workshop: Thembelihle, Muldersdrift, Ivory Park, Zandspruit, Protea South, Diepsloot, Vosloorus and Sol Plaatjies. Municipal officials included a representative responsible for public participation in the Speaker's office in Mogale City local municipality, and also the ward councilor for Ward 64 in Vosloorus which falls under the jurisdiction of Ekurhuleni metro. The South African Cities Network was also represented as well as the GGLN through representatives from EISA (Electoral Institute of South Africa), BESG (Built Environment Support Group) and FCR (Foundation for Contemporary Research).

In total 42 participants attended the workshop, of which 14 were females, and 28 were males**.**

5. PRESENTATIONS

The first session consisted of a presentation by Planact providing background on the various elements and phases of the IDP, the status of the IDP, the legislative framework, and issues for consideration. (Presentation attached)

The second session consisted of presentations by representatives of different communities drawing on the broader experiences of their respective communities as well as their personal and organizational experiences. The key challenge raised in these presentations is that of limited participation including communication, preparation time, decision making on priorities; councilors not fulfilling their duties. Issues of implementation; party politics; coordination between different roleplayers; and limited understanding of the overall vision for Johannesburg's development were also highlighted as further challenges. The different presentations provided insight into the different ways in which communities are affected by these challenges:

The presentation for **Vosloorus** was done by a ward committee member who has served for two terms. He outlined a range of problems faced in Vosloorus highlighting that while legislation was in order, actual implementation was problematic. Participation is limited since meetings called by the municipality are too large and there is not enough time allotted for community members to speak. Officials presenting the IDP process at community meetings come to the meetings with their own priorities and politicians put forward and implement party political decisions, not the priorities of people. Hence the meetings are mere formalities.

Poor planning was also emphasized and was linked to a lack of departmental coordination at local level as well as the need for proper integration between the IDP and the budget.

A member of the youth forum in **Ivory Park** who participated in the recent annual IDP review process presented a more positive picture of the experience in Ivory Park particularly in terms of information provision and noticeable development in the area, although he pointed out that the community has not been involved in the integration and approval phases of the IDP. Councilors were praised for involving the community and for compiling issues that need to be addressed yet there is frustration with local government as ward councilors must be pushed to do work; often they do not understand the portfolios they are heading. There seems to be a lack of project management capacity at a council level.

The presentation emphasized the importance of the community's knowledge and understanding of the vision for Johannesburg.

The situation in **Diepsloot** was presented by a key religious community leader who had participated in the annual IDP process. The presentation emphasized

the value of adequate preparation of communities prior to the IDP process as in Diepsloot's case where Planact had helped the community with preparations prior to the IDP reviews. Much critique was directed toward ward councilors and ward committees described as "white elephants" who take decisions regardless of community input and who do not communicate information about the IDP to community members effectively, hence the lack of knowledge about the IDP. Instead, the need for community development forums (CDF) to facilitate community participation was stressed.

The presentation also highlighted positive developments in the area despite the problems mentioned. These included developments such as street lights, schools, a fire department, and the construction of shopping centres. Needs still to be addressed included an old age home, hospitals, and a proper police station.

The presentation on the IDP process in **Muldersdrift** was provided by a community leader who has been involved in the IDP process of Mogale City local municipality. He pointed to the municipality's subdivision of Muldersrift into three regions to facilitate easier public participation since the area is too vast including semi-rural areas.

The particular challenges facing the IDP process in Muldersdrift include attendance and opposition along racial lines in this case lack of attendance by white members of the community. However, when implementation has to happen white community members oppose decisions particularly when it comes to housing.

There also tends to be a repetitive focus on housing, toilets, and water and the presentation suggested that perhaps a shift in focus is needed, possibly to integrate other priorities and to ensure that development is spread between rural and urban priority needs.

The presentation on **Thembelhile** by a community leader indicated that the IDP process does not work for people on the ground. Participation is limited in the sense that often at meetings people are instructed about what topics will be discussed and if they speak on any other subjects they are cut off.

The presentation also pointed to the challenge of balancing priorities of different groups and sectors in this case particularly balancing the concerns of black and Indian residents for example ways to address crime and to meet other community needs simultaneously for example by providing sports facilities for young people to divert them from criminal activities.

A community leader and member of the Landless People's Movement presented the report for **Protea South**. She raised concerns related to participation in decision making highlighting that the municipal authorities have informed them

that decisions taken on what needs to be done in Protea South are non-negotiable. The community's role is to fill the attendance register during the IDP process as an indication of community participation. Demands put forward by the community are not taken seriously and community members are uncertain about promises of housing being fulfilled.

The presentation for **Sol Plaatjies** by a ward committee member highlighted a lack of communication between the various roleplayers in the community and municipality, and time constraints for adequate participation. Since the ward committee was elected, not a single meeting was called to introduce it to the entire community. As a result, there is a lack of knowledge as to who is heading the various portfolios in the ward committee. Sol Plaatjies' community members participated in the IDP process in an uncoordinated manner with the ward councilor informing the community to submit their needs by the end of the day and that failure to do so would result in the ward's needs not being included in the IDP document.

The presentation also referred to a housing project currently taking place in the area and that the main challenge is the scarcity of land.

6. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The third session consisted of participants breaking into four smaller groups to address the following questions:

1. As different sectors in the community, how did you prepare yourselves to participate in the IDP process?
2. What are the key challenges of public participation in the IDP process? – refer to community presentations.
3. What would be an "ideal IDP process" based on your own experience? (Pre/Actual/Post IDP)
4. Any recommendations that you would like to suggest to improve the IDP review process?

Discussion Responses:

1. Community preparations to participate in the IDP process
- Invitation letters were delivered to the different sectors inviting community members to a meeting where community needs were discussed; the meeting was coordinated by the ward committee. The needs were then handed over to the ward committee to be presented to the ward councilor.
- Community mass meetings were called to discuss the IDP process by the community IDP forum; the needs were then presented to the ward committee.

- In some communities there was no preparation prior to the IDP process, community members were just called into a community hall for a presentation by officials

2. Key challenges of public participation in the IDP process
- **Communication** about the IDP process is often lacking. Community members lack information and do not have a clear understanding about the IDP and about how local government works. Competence of officials in communicating the IDP process to the communities is a problem. Communication between the community and council is poor in general.
- Adequate **time** is not set aside for public participation. The timeframe of the IDP process must be well communicated to the community so that the community can prepare itself. People should participate from the beginning to the end of the process.
- There should be **incentives** to encourage communities to participate; the best incentive is service delivery.
- An effective **presentation style** (including local language) should be used when officials make IDP presentations so that people can understand and are in a better position to ask and make meaningful input into the process.
- Meeting **venues** must be central and accessible or necessary transport should be organized by council for community members to attend.

3. An "ideal IDP process" based on community experiences (pre / actual / post IDP)
- NGO's like Planact and young people must organize awareness workshops and campaigns about the IDP so that there is a common understanding.
- Communities should own the IDP process, not individuals. Adequate representation is necessary; all sectors of the society must be represented in the IDP representative forum not only the ward committee. Maximum participation should be encouraged.
- Different sectors should identify their needs and submit them to the ward councilor prior to the IDP evaluation process.
- Council officials and facilitators must explain the process of prioritization clearly to communities, because the impression is that someone in council decides what eventually goes into the final IDP document. Councilors must explain to communities what is contained in the final IDP document. The municipality should explain when the projects identified in the IDP document are to be realized.
- An IDP progress report should be provided to the community by the ward councilor in all ward meetings. The IDP should be a standing item in ward meetings. Prior to council approving the IDP and the budget, the ward committee must have an opportunity of making input and recommendations to the process.

- There should be a better performance management system, and communities must be involved in the development of that system as required by the law.
- A monitoring and evaluation process must be included in the IDP and be communicated to communities. The IDP process should be monitored by the community until the plans are implemented. Communities should receive a report back periodically.
- Inter-departmental coordination is necessary.
- Style of the IDP presentations by council officials must be user friendly.

4. Recommendations to improve the IDP review process*:*
- The municipality must provide constant feedback to communities about IDP processes.
- Ward councilors should do preparatory work for the IDP process. Information gathering is part of the preparation and entails visiting and organizing groups. Sector heads should gather and share information and should consolidate a report with prioritized issues that are most dominant. Problematic areas must be addressed and should not be trumped by mayoral priorities.
- Community members need to know who makes decisions about what goes into the final IDP document and what criteria is being used.
- The media can be used to monitor the implementation of the IDP
- An enabling environment needs to be created by the municipality for communities to participate effectively in the IDP process without fear or favour.
- During the annual IDP review meeting, report backs must be provided about failures and successes on addressing community needs.
- The community must play an important role in reviewing priorities.
- Public participation should not be a matter of compliance; communities should be considered equal partners in local governance.
- There should be better coordination of state bureaucracy
- Community members need to be informed about both capital and operational budgets; the tendency is that communities only monitor capital budgets intended for projects.

In the plenary discussion the following aspects were noted as key considerations for the **way forward** in terms of the IDP process.
- There is a need for ward based planning to be implemented so that ward plans can inform the municipal plans
- Roles and responsibilities must be clarified of each sphere of government, intergovernmental coordination must be strengthened
- Ward committees should be capacitated so that they are able to communicate the IDP process to communities.
- Communication must improve in terms of language, more consultation, feedback, and even how meetings are announced.

- Need for transparency and accountability to enable a true monitoring and evaluation process.
- Resources must be made available for an effective public participation to take place.
- Officials must not take decisions on behalf of communities.
- Adequate time must be provided for participation from the advertisement to the process itself.

7. PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE WORKSHOP

A range of generally positive responses and further recommendations were provided including the following specific comments:

The ward councilor of Vosloorus, Councilor Fuzile Booi, indicated that the workshop was very useful in identifying the problems and concerns of communities. He agreed that the policies themselves are strong but implementation is the problem. In relation to whether the IDP is achieving the desired results, he articulated that it is a tool, a mechanism, a process by which to achieve strategic priorities and that ward councilors should explain the powers and resources they hold. There is also a need for education on how government functions and how to balance competing priorities. Accountability must be tied to those with decision making power and responsibility for implementation.

Tshepo Mathodlana, an official from the Speaker's office of Mogale City commented that the workshop served as an indication that communities have come a long way in demanding their rights. The workshop was an eye opening event and he will now communicate the problems and concerns raised in the event to others in government. He emphasized that there is still a lot of work to be done to realize good governance al a local level and that communities have the responsibility to hold officials accountable He challenged the participants to initiate participation and not to wait for officials .

Comments from community participants:
Participants wished that more ward councilors were present to hear their concerns. They agreed that it is the responsibility of the communities to assert their concerns but questioned whether there were adequate platforms to do so.

The point that there is a need to promote democratic participation and advance the IDP process in communities was reiterated and participants made a pledge to inform their communities.

The workshop was viewed as having a lasting impact since it provided insight and a better understanding of the IDP concept, and community members' roles, rights and responsibilities in the process.