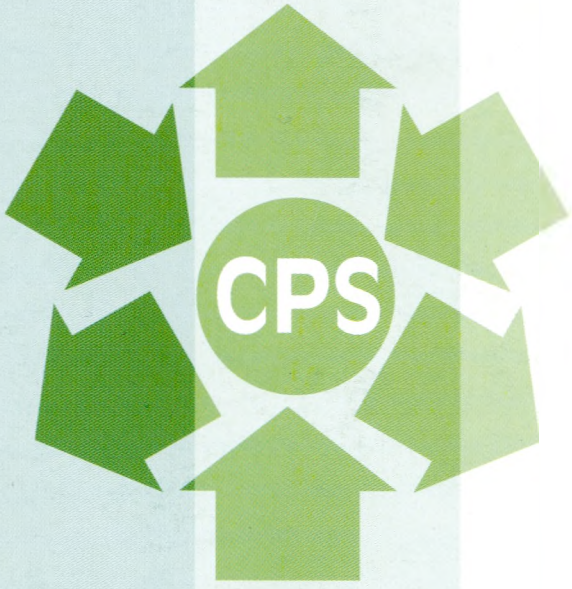
Social Policy Series

MAKING THE MEANS JUSTIFY THE ENDS?:

The theory and practice of the RDP

Thabo Rapoo



Centre for Policy Studies

The Centre for Policy Studies is an independent, autonomous, research institution operating under the aegis of the Human Sciences Research Council.

Construction House
130 Sivewright Ave
New Doornfontein 2094
Johannesburg, South Africa

P O Box 16488
Doornfontein 2028
Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel (011) 402-4308
Fax (011) 402-7755

e-mail: cps@wn.apc.org

ISBN 0-9584079-8-3

Contents

Introduction

So much has been said and written about the Reconstruction and Development Programme by a bewildering array of development specialists, politicians, bureaucrats and commentators that it seems inconceivable that anyone familiar with policy debates would still lack an understanding of it.

But amid the speeches, publications, policy documents and newspaper articles, the RDP has lost its meaning and coherence. It has come to mean anything anyone wants it to mean; with a little ingenuity, anything can be made to fit in with the goals of the RDP. It has thus become too broad and imprecise to refer only to what was originally intended.

This paper offers an analysis of the RDP's approach at national and provincial levels, and provides a conceptual framework within which the RDP's Basic Needs approach to development is assessed. It forms part of a continuing project which seeks to examine the RDP and its implementation by the provinces, and was based on interviews with provincial and national RDP officials, development planners in the provinces, and a thorough content analysis of official policy documents, memoranda and minutes.

The institutionalisation of the RDP will be examined by analysing problems faced in the course of implementing it in the provinces. Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West were chosen as case studies; while they were selected randomly, the goal was to examine three provinces with different socio-economic profiles, allowing significant lessons to be extrapolated from their short experience of implementing the RDP. Their priorities and strategic approaches will be assessed, and problems examined, to suggest lessons for policy and planning that might throw light on similar issues in other provinces. Finally, the paper will analyse indications that the government is making subtle strategic changes towards rearticulating the RDP within a new time frame, and moving towards a tightly co-ordinated set of institutional structures and intergovernmental planning systems.[1]

'Integrated approach', incoherent priorities

The original RDP document[2] was formulated not merely as a development framework but as a programme for the complete reordering of politics, the economy and society. To this end, five programmes where outlined:[3] Meeting Basic Needs; Developing our Human Resources; Building the Economy; Democratising the State; and Implementing the RDP.

This is too broad a set of goals to be achieved simultaneously within a short period. It therefore requires a rigorous process of priority setting to determine what the government is able to tackle first in the context of resource constraints and its commitment to fiscal discipline on the one hand, and the election prom-

ises the ANC alliance made to its largely impoverished supporters on the other. But the government is still to articulate a coherent meaning for the RDP, and to offer a clear list of priorities that clearly differentiates between short- and medium-term goals.

Statements by government ministers have not done much to identify what the government wants to tackle first, and what it proposes to address in the long term. Alternating objectives and priorities have been juggled inconsistently, making the RDP's set of priorities somewhat arbitrary and sometimes highly imprecise.

The RDP is, admittedly, meant to be a set of 'integrated' programmes. But this does not remove the need to spell out what the government can do in the short to medium period within the context of limited resources (human resources, institutional capacity, finances and the like). For instance, the RDP base document pointedly stated that Meeting Basic Needs would be achieved in five years,[4] which theoretically makes it a top priority. But if this is indeed the priority, political decisions would be needed as to what constitutes a realistic set of Basic Needs goals that could be met within specified periods.

Basic Needs generally refers to goals that are immediately necessary for eliminating absolute rather than relative poverty: a strict definition is needed to avoid virtually anything passing for Basic Needs, as social groups compete for the legitimacy and resources which the RDP is seen to bestow. There is a strong tendency, within government as well as among various 'components of civil society', to describe everything that is considered desirable as a Basic Need without adequate regard for the serious constraints imposed by, among other factors, the government's commitment to fiscal restraint and macro-economic discipline. Besides this, a lack of adequate policy and planning capacity at provincial level and in civil society has yet to be acknowledged as a constraint on progress towards RDP targets.

A large number of items have therefore been listed as Basic Needs – jobs, land, housing, water, electricity, telecommunications, transport, a healthy environment, nutrition, health care and social welfare – all of which are to be achieved in the five years' duration of the current government.[5] The RDP white paper has added security to this list.[6] Various ministers and officials in RDP institutions continue to add more items to the list, making prioritisation unmanageable and often very personalised.[7]

This tends to blur the necessary distinction between immediate Basic Needs goals and other RDP programmes. RDP projects are often defined as 'special projects that meet Basic Needs ... while building the economy and fundamentally transforming government and society';[8] the Department of Defence believes that 'the most critical programmes are those aimed at meeting Basic Needs, namely human resources and urban development, building the economy and democratisation of society'[9] – and insists that its own restructuring process will contribute towards achieving these objectives. (Note that 'Building the

Economy' and 'Democratisation of Society' are RDP programmes in their own right, separate from 'Meeting Basic Needs'.) Elize Keyter, editor of the official *RDP News*, has argued that the maintenance of roads is aimed at meeting Basic Needs[10]. Others seem to think that adult basic education ought to be added to the list of Basic Needs priorities[11]. Jay Naidoo, minister without portfolio responsible for the RDP, also says that 'the first goal is the meeting of Basic Needs of our people for electricity, water, proper education, health, roads and safe communities'[12], the significant point being the inclusion of roads and safe communities as Basic Needs.

There are countless occasions on which politicians and ministers have added to this confusing mixture of 'Basic Needs', making it less clear what exactly is meant by the term. If the country had endless resources, this extensive and inconsistent way of defining Basic Needs could perhaps be accommodated, although even then only in the long term. But it does not. Nor is it clear how urgent Meeting Basic Needs is as an RDP priority in relation to other programmes to which the government has committed itself with equal vehemence.

In theory, the RDP base document and white paper do attempt to determine certain priorities by spelling out targets and time frames in which they are to be achieved. But even a cursory attempt to measure these against fiscal and capacity constraints shows that the targets express an aspiration, not a plan. Some goals could conceivably be achieved in one to five years; others could take perhaps five to seven years, and still others between 10 and 20. Any attempt to measure the targets against available resources and capacity would entail revising, at the very least, the time in which they are to be achieved. Until this is attempted, it is difficult to regard the targets as a serious attempt to establish priorities.

The following section will explore the concept of Basic Needs, to illustrate the lack of clarity in the way this notion has been used in relation to the RDP.

Basic needs: conceptual issues

Literature on Basic Needs[13] as an approach to development seems to agree that it involves, at least, a political decision to focus on the fulfilment of certain 'minimum human needs'.[14] In addition, Basic Needs tends to be seen as an approach, not a strategy. It is concerned with giving priority to particular types of development goals rather than dictating the means to achieve them. But there are different ways of defining Basic Needs, which invariably creates confusion and difficulties for the planning process. The literature notes that Basic Needs invariably includes meeting certain standards in food and water and the universal provision of services in health and education.[15] Sometimes, material needs such as shelter and work and non-material ones such as popular participation in governance and political freedom are included, but this is rare.

The Basic Needs approach emanated from new development thinking stemming from the failure of the growth maximisation and industrialisation approach to development in the 1950s and 1960s, which led to modest rates of GDP growth in some developing countries but failed to address high levels of poverty.[16] The Basic Needs approach is therefore based on the idea that the goal of development should be the immediate elimination of absolute poverty,[17] which in principle appears to be the underlying approach of the RDP base document.[18]

But conceptually Basic Needs can be viewed in a number of ways, two of which are examined here.[19] Firstly, it is conceived of as comprising those elements that are essential for a decent human life. An approach based on this conception is aimed at eliminating absolute poverty, not improving the circumstances of citizens in general. Once minimum Basic Needs goals are identified, strong political will is needed to commit resources to their achievement, since this requires that they be withheld from other, perhaps better organised, constituencies. But the advantage of this approach is that there is a well-defined set of targets for planning purposes. Deficiencies can be measured, costs of meeting them estimated, and so on.[20]

Stewart argues that the problem with this view lies in justifying a particular selection of goals. What criteria should be used to select 'access to clean water' rather than just 'access to water' as a priority? In Sri Lanka, where the Basic Needs approach was adopted in the 1970s, resource constraints made it necessary to select just 'access to water', so that people had to boil water to clean it before consuming it.[21] There is no 'objective' measure, and these criteria are therefore determined by the interplay between politicians and interest groups. But whatever goals are chosen, they must be clearly and publicly defined.

The second view can be called the 'quality of life' definition. Rather than focusing on the minimum required to address absolute poverty, the goal becomes the improvement of the conditions of life of the citizenry or a part of it,[22] whether or not they are absolutely poor. Since the goal is to improve the conditions of people not necessarily living in absolute poverty, aims become more ambitious and the pool of recipients grows. Even within this approach, it is possible to tailor programmes to available resources if a minimal definition of quality of life is used which restricts it only to items considered to be essential, such as primary health care and primary educational services. But the quality of life approach is more likely to lend itself to an extensive definition which will tend to include an endless number of items – sport and recreation, arts and culture, human rights, environmental protection, full participation in social and economic life, and safety and security. An extensive definition tends to present problems, since it generates a lengthy list that may not be affordable. In many instances, items tend to be included on the whims of individuals.

This has been the tendency of the RDP's Basic Needs programme, and the consequences may have rebounded on those responsible for implementing it, since it has ensured that there are many fronts on which the government might

be judged to have failed to deliver, even though some of them might not originally have been designated as urgent Basic Needs goals. For perfectly understandable reasons, politicians are endlessly tempted to add a large number of items to the list of Basic Needs programmes essential for improving the quality of life. An extensive definition could spiral out of hand, which makes it imperative that the RDP ministry and political leadership in general tighten the definition of the Basic Needs approach.

A minimal definition of quality of life, particularly in the context of limited resources, has the advantage of focusing on a limited number of basic goods and services, whose provision can be matched to available resources and realistic time frames. As in the approach aimed at tackling absolute poverty, selecting priorities is a political rather than a technical process, and political decisions are necessary in the face of attempts by pressure groups to claim a share of limited resources.

The RDP base document seems to adopt both views of Basic Needs. On the one hand, it lists goods and services essential for decent human life, to be achieved within one to five years. But it also states that 'the central objective of the RDP is to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, and in particular the most poor and marginalised sections of our communities'[23] without indicating whether a minimal or extensive definition is being used. In the absence of a definition, the normal tendency among politicians is to use the extensive one, as it tends to be politically popular even though it fails to generate a manageable list of affordable priorities that can be achieved within realistic time frames. While the RDP white paper has toned down some aspects of the original RDP document, this does not resolve the apparent contradiction between the two views of Basic Needs, nor does it resolve the common tendency among politicians to use an extensive, instead of a minimal, definition of quality of life as an objective of the Basic Needs component of the RDP.

Stewart argues that there need be no conflict between spending on non-Basic Needs and urgent Basic Needs,[24] since non-Basic Needs items could play an important role in making life tolerable for the poor.[25] But she adds that planning for non-Basic Needs should not be part of Basic Needs planning.[26] In the RDP system, however, planning for Basic Needs does seem indistinguishable from planning for other priorities.

The framework offered by this brief discussion suggests that the Basic Needs concept has a very specific meaning as a policy tool – one which is 'fudged' or ignored by politicians and government officials, posing severe problems for planning and implementation.

Questions on the RDP as an 'integrated approach'

The introductory paragraph of the ANC's original RDP document – commonly known as the base document – states that it 'is an integrated, coherent, socio-

economic policy framework'.[27] The white paper maintains the same approach.[28] This simply means that the RDP is a framework for social, economic and political transformation. It is integrated in the sense that it attempts to subsume all goals into the broad sweep of transforming the entire apartheid legacy. This implies that no single aspect of this legacy can be tackled unless all others are as well. In practice, however, it is not possible to devote the same degree of attention and resources to all of them at the same time. Therefore, the 'integrated' approach masks the reality that hard political choices must be made about what comes first in the face of practical constraints on delivery.

The seeming coherence of labelling the RDP as an integrated political and socio-economic programme also ensures a serious lack of clarity about broad strategy. The central question is whether addressing inequality or economic growth should be the priority. This is a key issue: business tends to stress growth,[29] while an important section of the ANC alliance's leadership emphasises inequality. Reported splits between 'populists and pragmatists' in the ANC are prompted precisely by the tension between increased spending on Basic Needs and the government's commitment to macro-economic discipline and fiscal moderation.[30] We may see more tensions not only within the ANC alliance, but also between social movements and other elements of civil society over this fundamental policy choice.[31]

The broad orientation of the RDP seems to be that these approaches can be integrated, without the need to prioritise one over the other. The white paper states, on the one hand, that development is expected to stimulate the economy through the increased demand for goods and services.[32] This seems to say that growth will be stimulated through social development. But it goes on to say that addressing poverty and inequality is only possible if the economy can be placed on the path of high and sustainable growth.[33] One approach is occasionally emphasised over the other in sections of the white paper, while in others both are equally stressed.

Ministers and officials have tended to emphasise these two strategies interchangeably on different occasions. In a report to parliament in June last year, Naidoo stated that the Macro Economic Working Group still had to determine whether South Africa needed to focus more on growth before consumption or on expenditure on Basic Needs priorities, which would create employment and stimulate sustainable growth.[34] He went on to endorse both approaches. On the one hand, he stated emphatically that a growth strategy was needed to achieve the RDP targets of redistribution and equity.[35] On the other, he said manufacturing had enjoyed increasing growth since the election, prompted by signals to the construction industry as a result of government spending on housing, bulk infrastructure and services. While the accuracy of this claim can be questioned on the grounds that spending has been very modest, and that there have therefore been few signals to the building industry, this implies that private investment comes in the wake of government spending on goods and services.

Like the white paper, much of the report is shot through with a mixture of emphases on these two strategies: spending on Basic Needs, which would presumably stimulate sustainable growth, as well as achieving higher growth before attempting RDP goals such as meeting Basic Needs. Similarly, in the RDP's first annual report released in April last year, Naidoo stated that the challenge was to 'meet the Basic Needs of our people' and at the same time stimulate growth.[36] These statements sound coherent, but play down the conflict between growth maximisation and broader social development. A constant insistence that the RDP is an integrated programme does not resolve the crucial question of which strategy is to be followed as an immediate priority.

It has been argued that it is possible to see the RDP as a strategy that prioritises growth, but leaves room for social spending. In this view the immediate priority is growth, accompanied by a recognition that, in South African conditions, macro-economic moderation can only be sustainable if it is perceived to benefit the poor through social spending on urgent Basic Needs. For many years. growth could be too slow to finance significant spending on Basic Needs, prompting severe political pressure on the government and demands that it intervene in the economy. Economic growth and social development should therefore be mutually reinforcing: investment directed towards growth should include programmes such as education and training, since they contribute to the type of sustainable growth that creates a surplus to be invested in social programmes identified in the RDP's Basic Needs component[37] – but spending on absolute poverty reduction is also needed to defuse political pressure on the 'growth first' strategy.[38]

This neat view of a mutually reinforcing mix of social spending and growth maximisation begs crucial questions. What priority is to be given within the mix to growth strategies and poverty reduction, since, in some cases, the two will be contradictory? As an example, Gauteng is devoting resources to combating crime and violence, as this is seen to threaten economic activity and investment.[39] This clearly entails diverting resources away from anti-poverty programmes – whatever the merits of the decision, it does show that some clear choices must be made even within a strategy that assumes a 'virtuous cycle' between growth and development. In any event, a strategy of this sort is itself a clear policy choice, since it implies that the reduction of inequality should be pursued within a strategy whose primary goal is growth; social spending would thus have to be limited to ensure that growth is not curtailed.

And, even if the 'virtuous cycle' view of the RDP is accepted, the government would still be required to set priorities. What growth target must be achieved or what Basic Needs goals reached before attention shifts to more ambitious RDP goals? If these are not defined, objectives will remain hazy and decisions will be seen to be arbitrary.

These issues will increasingly come into focus given recent reports of the government's claimed decision to prioritise growth.[40] It was widely reported

that, as the government faced the prospect of constrained growth and an RDP which was failing to meet urgent Basic Needs, a cabinet committee had been appointed to focus entirely on stimulating growth. If this is indeed the government's planned direction, it would presumably have to define what role, if any, broader social goals are to play in this strategy.

The provinces: institutional issues and processes

RDP implementation must be examined not just at the national level but also that of the provinces, since they have apparently been assigned a key role in this – although there is once again a lack of clarity on their role.

The RDP base document and white paper are vague on provincial responsibility for the programme. The base document is more so, mostly confining itself to assigning RDP responsibilities and functions to 'the democratic government' in conjunction with 'organisations of civil society'.[41] The white paper goes some way towards correcting this by acknowledging the need to establish provincial RDP structures within the national policy and implementation framework. This seems to provide national government, through the RDP office and line function ministries, with the prerogative to set priorities. Provinces would then be responsible for implementation within nationally determined policy. But in some provinces, national ministries are also responsible for implementing projects, particularly Presidential Lead Projects (PLPs), at times despite the presence of provincial departments[42] with similar responsibilities. Sometimes this situation arises because provincial departments lack plans to implement projects that have been determined nationally.

Since provinces have been assigned a key role in implementing the RDP, they have all established structures to address this task. But nothing could have prepared some provinces for the obstacles they have faced. Given that the RDP's fate will depend to some degree on the way in which the provinces tackle their task – and that the way in which they do so could have an important bearing on provincial governments' future, since it will influence their relationship with national government and their electorates – examining the provincial role is important both for an analysis of the RDP and of provincial government. This section will therefore examine the selected provinces' experiences in implementing the RDP.

Gauteng: from populism to prudence?

This province is most richly endowed with financial resources. This should help cushion the harsh aspects of prioritisation, since it should, in theory, be possible to devote significant resources to social development without overtaxing the provincial economy.

But at present this point is hypothetical: the provinces have no revenue-raising powers, and their budgets are determined by national government. Richer provinces such as Gauteng have, much to their chagrin, been forced to accept budget cuts in key areas as resources are deployed in poorer provinces. The same choices that affect the RDP nationally therefore face this province.

A few months after this provincial government was established, an enthusiastic process of institutionalising the RDP began with the drafting of a discussion document and the establishment of an Economic Development Forum, in which elements of civil society were to take part in formulating RDP policies and planning for projects.[43] The provincial authorities stressed that the second tier of government was the ideal site for implementing the RDP, and that Gauteng possessed the economic resources to deal with apartheid inequalities in access to Basic Needs goods and services. A commitment was made immediately to redeploy resources, 'with a special bias towards meeting Basic Needs as well as ensuring sustainable development'.[44] The goals stressed by the premier was a better life for all.[45] and a commitment to spending R90 billion on building 150 000 houses a year.[46]

In general, Gauteng's strategic RDP objectives during the first few months tended to emphasise spending on social development, particularly housing and community development, to kick-start the economy. The provincial authorities have constantly emphasised the importance of increased investment, and a growth strategy for the provincial economy.[47] But a broader development path rather than growth maximisation was seen as more urgent, although on some occasions the two were stressed equally.

The problem created by trying to focus simultaneously on two strategies for driving the RDP, without making clear choices between priorities, has been discussed above. How successful has Gauteng been in juggling the two? To some extent the question is hypothetical, since the province has experienced problems unrelated to priority setting that may have debilitated prospects for delivery on urgent Basic Needs.

Firstly, there were problems related to institutional and structural arrangements. These ranged from institutionalisation problems within the formal structures of government to logistical problems related to co-ordination, policy-making and planning at departmental level.[48]

To formally institutionalise the RDP in government, Gauteng initially established an RDP Commission in the premier's office, a step designed to show that RDP implementation was the government's core function. Initially, the commission was responsible for determining the vision and policies for RDP-related activities; the RDP commissioner, its political head, was an ex officio provincial executive council member. But serious problems led to the commission being restructured early last year.

In the first instance the constitution provides for 10 MECs only, which meant that the RDP commissioner was an additional MEC. Many argue that this was not

only unconstitutional,[49] but also placed the commissioner in a less influential position in executive meetings, as he did not enjoy the same political status as the 10 MECs. He also did not have a budgetary allocation for his support staff,[50] since Chapter J of the Public Service Act, which governs appointments, did not provide for staff to be appointed by an extra MEC.

This situation was later resolved by abolishing the post and assigning political responsibility for the RDP to the MEC for Economic Affairs. The RDP Commission became one of five provincial executive subcommittees, responsible for overall vision, co-ordination, monitoring, and 'evaluating development policy formulation and implementation'.[51] All the MECs take part in the work of the RDP Commission. Under the new arrangement, the commission works in tandem with the interdepartmental committee in which the director-general, heads of departments and managers of units such as the chief directorate for corporate strategy participate.

One apparent goal of this change was to address the lack of a co-ordinated approach to development prompted by the appointment of an RDP Commission as a distinct entity within the provincial government.[52] The former RDP Commission, not unlike those in other provinces, had apparently tried to take over responsibilities designated to specific departments. This created the danger that of parallel RDP structures developing alongside line departments, leading to fragmentation and incoherence.[53] This had tended to be the case with PLPs. It appears that the exact roles of the RDP Commission and the division of responsibilities between it and provincial departments in implementing PLPs had not been properly resolved in advance: as a result, the commission became involved in implementing projects, prompting time-consuming intra-government tension that obstructed delivery. This has, it appears, been avoided by ensuring that all MECs have a role in RDP decisions.

Secondly, the many problems experienced in implementing PLPs in Gauteng are often explained as short-term logistical difficulties. Restructuring the administration has, for example, apparently taken longer than anticipated. And the school nutrition scheme experienced problems in finding capable distributors from local small businesses, and so large companies were contracted.[54] Not much information is available to assess prospects in other sectors such as housing, public transport, social welfare, and human resource development. Gauteng is due to undertake an audit of the projects currently being implemented, which will provide vital information on the prospects for successfully implementing the RDP in different sectors.

But some problems may be more political than logistical, more permanent than temporary. Thus it seems that the involvement of local 'communities' in the nutrition scheme has become more complex than anticipated. The province has made a huge effort to set up a vast array of Community and Local Development Forums,[55] but some seem to be bogged down by political wrangles over issues such as the exclusion and inclusion of some groups,[56] as well as lack of

resources and infrastructure.[57] This may illustrate a more enduring capacity constraint: implementing development policy is a political as well as a technical exercise, since it affects the interests of social groups; this poses a constraint on delivery that is rarely if ever mentioned in government planning.

Despite these obstacles, Gauteng's MEC for Finance, Jabu Moleketi, emphatically pronounced the first year of the RDP in the province a success, in his budget speech to the legislature in June 1995.[58] The speech was up-beat, emphasising current projects and announcing proposed new ones:[59] a mental health care centre would be built on the East Rand, wheelchairs and hearing aids provided to those who needed them, rehabilitation services provided to people with mental and physical disabilities, and further nutrition projects begun for mothers and children.

Nevertheless, Moleketi strongly emphasised an overall vision and long-term strategic objectives, adding that the first year had inevitably been spent in establishing the framework, institutional arrangements and procedures for sustainable delivery.[60] This goes some way to corroborating what some officials in the provincial government have hinted at, namely that much energy went into dealing with the problem of capacity and institution-building at the expense of delivery.[61]

The restructuring of RDP structures earlier last year, and the placing of responsibility for setting priorities and determining a political vision at a very high political level in the provincial executive, could point to internal government dynamics that result from implementation difficulties. Issues that still need to be dealt with relate to, among others, the problems encountered in carrying out business planning as a component of programmes. There is evidence in other provinces that enormous logistical and bureaucratic difficulties, including a widespread lack of skills and capacity in drafting business plans, have seriously delayed delivery[62] – and Gauteng is no exception.

Gauteng's experience – and, as we shall see, that of other provinces – illustrates some of the constraints on delivery that are unrelated to the availability of funds. In the first year, at least, energy was devoted largely to institutional issues. This may well have been inevitable, but it underlines the point made earlier about the need to match RDP goals not only to available financial resources but also to capacity – whose limits must clearly force a revision of targets. This may explain why the MEC, despite his optimism, emphasised longer-term vision rather than progress made in meeting targets.

The most important current developments, however, are signs that the Gauteng government is shifting away from the earlier strategy of development through increased expenditure on social development as a way of stimulating the economy, towards an increased focus on growth maximisation as an urgent strategic objective. In a discussion document on economic policy, released in May last year, the Department of Finance & Economic Affairs states that 'the role of the Gauteng government in the economy is to facilitate the creation of an

enabling socio-economic environment in which the economy grows significantly, in a manner which creates sustainable employment opportunities, meets the basic needs of all in the province, and empowers those who have been historically excluded from economic opportunities'.'[63] The document seems to identify a new set of priorities aimed at boosting prospects for growth: among others, the spatial distribution of economic activity, the promotion of small and medium enterprises, an internationally competitive economy, and trade and investment, particularly in economic infrastructure.[64]

The fact that the provincial government has committed itself to stimulating growth, and that a particular document mentions this goal as an apparently greater priority than meeting Basic Needs, does not necessarily show that priorities have shifted – indeed, the portion of the document quoted above could show that, as at the national level, no choice has been made between priorities, since both growth and social development are mentioned.

It could also show that the government, having committed itself to both growth and development, has found that the former is occurring and the latter is not. Therefore, it may find it more politic to emphasise the success rather than the failure, and thus stress economic growth. A similar dynamic may be at work nationally, although it is too early to discern whether this entails a change in strategy as well as rhetoric.

But switching from an emphasis on Basic Needs to one on economic growth could be a response to other, more substantive, difficulties related to implementation. Having confronted the constraints to delivering social goods and services, the national and provincial governments could have concluded that their ability to address poverty is limited and that the task ought to be left to the market economy – the government's role would then focus primarily on strengthening the latter. This explanation would imply that a substantial change in strategy has indeed occurred.

Mpumalanga: institutions above all?

Mpumalanga, too, was quick to establish provincial RDP structures. The province was divided into three regions, seven subregions and a large number of districts. Reconstruction and Development Committees (RDCs) were established at each level, with the RDP Planning Forum as the overall non-statutory policy structure, bringing together actors involved in RDP policy-making. The provincial RDP discussion document was released as early as two months after the 1994 election.[65] One unusual aspect of the province's process of institutionalising the RDP is that it released its document before creating the provincial RDP Commission. It had an advantage, though, in that it possessed important and relatively active policy-making institutions in the Eastern Transvaal Economic and Development Forum, former homeland development corporations, and

structures that had served the former Region F Regional Development Advisory Committee.[66]

The underlying approach of the Mpumalanga document was informed by the priorities and framework of the RDP base document, but the province went further in establishing a unique planning process. It outlined a four-stage process of implementation: Phase 1 referred to the preliminary stage of engaging political parties, interest groups and social movements in establishing relations of responsibilities in terms of which the RDP would be driven. This phase also dealt with identifying structures that would be crucial in implementation, such as the regional Economic Development Forum.[67] Phase 2 dealt with policy and planning for the short-term priority programmes (PLPs). Phase 3 was seen as the official establishment of the provincial RDP process, with its own priorities, structures and functions. Phase 4 was to be 'the first cycle of planning, programming and budgeting'.

The strategy therefore stressed a highly rationalised and sequential approach to RDP implementation, which indicates the extent to which the province had a relatively advanced development policy-making framework and appropriate structures during the early months of the new government. Like Gauteng's, however, the Mpumalanga RDP document concentrated more on structural processes, frameworks and institutions to be established than on setting out specific priorities and targets for delivery. It therefore seemed to gloss over the substantive issues of identifying the most important priority areas in the short, medium and long term. This is consistent with the situation in North West and Gauteng, where much time and effort were spent on institution-building, leaving too little time for planning substantive implementation and delivery.

Only late in 1994 did the most important issues of identifying needs, setting priorities and engaging in proper planning enter public debate in the province in earnest: in December, a report was released on RDP civil society structures in the province in which the discrepancy between goals and constraints was discussed.[68] It revealed that clarity was still being sought on a wide range of issues, such as the role of the provinces and civil society organisations in implementing the RDP. Duplication, the debilitation caused by the lack of functioning local government, and the problems encountered in implementing the 'business planning' component of the Project Preparation Facilities[69] programme were also identified as pressing concerns.

As in Gauteng, institutional arrangements have created problems for delivery, but less progress seems to have been made in resolving these. There is an RDP cabinet committee, with an RDP MEC as political head, an RDP unit, and other task teams. Beside this, Mpumalanga's RDP Commission is placed in the premier's office. But several institutional weaknesses are seen to hamper the RDP unit's ability to perform its allocated tasks. As in Gauteng, the position of RDP commissioner is considered to be technically unconstitutional[70] – which places the legal status of appointments by the MEC for the RDP into question, since

these are said to run foul of Chapter J. Consequently, the MEC is said to have less political control than other MECs. He also does not have the requisite formal contact with the strategic planning process, leading to fragmentation and a lack of co-ordination. Therefore, the structural relationship between development and strategic planning on the one hand and the co-ordinating role of the RDP office on the other is seen as problematic and 'disruptive'.

Some officials in the provincial RDP office recommend that these problems be resolved by appointing a political head (RDP commissioner) inside the premier's office, with a chief director for development working directly under him or her, to direct the work of RDP units and strategic planning.[71] The faults in the relationship between the work of RDP units and strategic planning will, it is implied, be resolved by linking these two functions in one office. Accordingly, the constitution would have to be amended to provide for RDP commissioners and their staff.

Another area of concern is that many other government officials regard appointments to the RDP units as political ones, made outside normal public service procedures; this has created tension within government. As a result, the Mpumalanga RDP office has apparently asked the national RDP office to step in and resolve the issue by indicating whether or not these appointments are political.

It also seems that problems related to a lack of clarity on the division of responsibilities between various departments on the one hand, and the provincial RDP office and its units on the other, have frequently prompted turf battles.[72] In particular, the introduction of PLPs seems to have created problems similar to those in Gauteng: that of line departments feeling threatened by the RDP commission's initial tendency to dominate implementation. Apparently, there has been a lack of clarity on the division of responsibilities between line departments responsible for implementing particular PLPs and the RDP commission, creating fragmentation in development planning and therefore incoherent approaches – this, it is said, has been common.[73]

Officials also acknowledge that problems have been experienced in integrating existing and planned projects.[74] Provincial budgetary priorities are still dominated by the expenditure commitments of the previous administrations of KaNgwane, KwaNdebele and the Transvaal Provincial Administration, which means that very little restructuring in favour of RDP commitments has been possible. But there are indications that the province is set to commit itself, in the next budget, to a variety of RDP projects, including the supply of potable water to all communities, clinics and hospitals, and the provision of more school facilities.[75]

A unique element in the province is the personality of the premier, Matthews Phosa; officials say his he has played a crucial role in institutionalising the RDP. Development planners say Phosa has been able to push the process forward despite the widespread difficulties encountered. For instance, besides campaigning

for powers and responsibilities for the provinces, he has also pressed for Mpumalanga to be allowed to form relationships with international development agencies and foreign governments, such as those of Germany and Taiwan.[76] This is seen as indicative that development in general and the implementation of the RDP in particular could be enhanced by the premier's political persona.

But the character of politicians does not necessarily resolve some of the most complex questions faced by provinces. Mpumalanga, like Gauteng, seems to have spent much energy on trying to design appropriate institutions and processes, including those for involving civil society in development policy-making.[77] It is not clear how the integration of bureaucratic structures from former administrative entities has been handled. And the premier's intervention has not eliminated problems experienced in other provinces too: for example, the provincial line departments apparently lack leaders with adequate skills in policy and planning. There is also a perceived lack of capacity in departments to develop coherent visions, policies and proper plans for implementing the RDP.[78]

Besides these, other issues on which not much information is available are the logistical problems that always arise because of the complexity of the RDP Commission and its units on the one hand, and institutions such as provincial, regional, subregional and local RDCs and elements of civil society such as civics, community-based organisations and trade unions on the other. The relationships among these organisations as well as between them and the formal structures of government, such as line departments, are complex and unpredictable, making co-ordination difficult for provincial RDP Commissions.

There is great potential for conflict over responsibilities, duplication of structures and functions as well as lack of proper co-ordination of RDP implementation policy. Officials in the Mpumalanga RDP office have pointed out that 'institutionally, the RDP structures are completely new and thus do not automatically slot into existing public service arrangements'.[79] Importantly, the complexity of structures, overlapping responsibilities and duplication could create conflicting priorities, making RDP prioritisation almost impossible and planning very cumbersome.[80]

It seems that a tendency to over-institutionalise has become a common characteristic of RDP implementation in many provinces, and Mpumalanga illustrates this.

Another factor on which information has not been readily available is 'business planning' and the logistical problems related to it – particularly the processes and institutions through which funds can be accessed, as well as procedures for doing so. The introduction of business planning as a component of RDP implementation imposes disciplines and accountability that are unfamiliar to civil service managers, and thus unwelcome; obviously this applies to all the provinces, not Mpumalanga alone.[81] The national RDP office has indicated that this resistance has been overcome by providing training for project managers in

national ministries, but the situation in provincial departments probably remains unchanged.

Another crucial issue is that the important role civil society could play in development planning and policy-making is hampered by the fact that citizens lack the resources to engage fully in RDP policy structures.[82] This lack of resources, particularly among many rural communities with the greatest Basic Needs, is widespread in other provinces too and could undermine planning and implementing of the RDP at provincial level. It has also been pointed out that the lack of skills and resources, particularly among the poor, in designing and preparing projects has led to projects being imposed by 'experts', while the funding is often not transparent and accountability criteria are often missing.[83]

Finally, as regards strategic prioritisation, Mpumalanga has not done any better than Gauteng in resolving conflicting strategies. It appears that national RDP priorities, inconsistent and conflicting as they are, were adopted unmodified. Therefore, on the one hand, a higher priority tends to be placed on providing social welfare goods and services in the form of the primary school nutrition scheme, health care and water provision, all of which are current nationally determined priorities.[84] On the other, the premier constantly stresses fast growth in the economy as a priority.

Many provinces, including Mpumalanga, have used the 'integrated approach' argument of the national RDP office to deal with the potential conflict of strategic priorities. But the latest policy statements out of Mpumalanga seem to indicate that growth through the promotion of industry, trade and investment would be emphasised a little more than greater spending on social welfare. The MEC for Economic Affairs has indicated in a budget speech that control over spending and growth will be prerequisites for an attempt to address the needs of the poor.[85] It could be that a strategic choice is being made in favour of growth, given the inability to achieve adequate delivery targets on a wide range of RDP programmes.

Mpumalanga does not seem to have spelled out clearly what it regards as minimum urgent Basic Needs items, besides the School Feeding Scheme, Health Care and the provision of water, all of which are nationally determined priorities and funded by the national RDP office. Sooner or later, a commitment will have to be made as to whether or not the province focuses entirely on growth, hoping to distribute its benefits later for social welfare spending to relieve poverty.

North West: no plan, no priorities

North West is considered to have inherited a functioning infrastructure and a relatively strong economy compared to other provinces which house former 'homelands': the core of its administration is the former Bophuthatswana's civil service. This would suggest that RDP implementation here would be easier here

than in some other provinces. Again, however, enquiries reveal significant obstacles.

The earliest RDP structure was a directorate in the premier's office; the RDP Commission was established later. Like the other two provinces, North West also had to go through an initial process of establishing RDP structures and processes through which development planning and consultation with organisations of civil society could occur.[86] A publication setting out guidelines on the formation of RDP forums throughout the province was published late in 1994,[87] but it appears that this process was not as thorough or extensive as in Gauteng or Mpumalanga.

Although North West did indicate on many occasions that it was consulting widely with community organisations[88] to institutionalise RDP implementation, there is no adequate information on the actual role that groups outside government have played in policy-making. It is not yet clear what framework or strategy for implementing the RDP is being followed, and how priorities, if any, were determined. An RDP progress report released in February last year indicated that, besides PLPs, not much had been accomplished in the province. It indicated that there were RDP projects in the province based on 'community-determined' priorities but these were few, apparently confined to farming and classroom building projects.[89]

Despite occasional statements by the provincial premier to the contrary,[90] North West does not have a clear overall plan and strategy for implementing the RDP.[91] The February report indicated that the formation of district forums had still not been completed, and that one-year and three-year development plans would be produced by March and September respectively. But recent evidence suggests that the province does not have any kind of strategic approach, overall plan or even an approach to dealing with implementation in a coherent way.[92] The plans proved to be nothing more than budgetary processes for the projects currently under way, some of them inherited from Bophuthatswana and others begun under the present government. The February report identified some plans, including the introduction of a rural water project, the extension of municipal services, and a human resource development plan. But it listed the provision of water even though water is a national competence and all the water projects in the province are being implemented and funded by the national Water Affairs ministry.[93]

There is no evidence of coherent priority-setting: it is not obvious what North West's policy is towards meeting Basic Needs, since there is no sign of a clear set of Basic Needs goals that are considered to be urgent. Indeed, it is not even clear whether Meeting Basic Needs is still a primary focus outside the national government's PLP.

It could be that the province has adopted national priorities for meeting urgent Basic Needs instead of determining its own, thus duplicating the difficulties posed by the national list of Basic Needs goals. In addition, central government,

through national ministries, has been able to determine Basic Needs priorities through the implementation of PLPs.[94] The potential problem here is that if the province does produce a clear plan with its own set of RDP priorities, it would have to take into account those already set by national ministries. A difficulty would arise if current implementation priorities set by national ministries do not fit in with those the province might set for itself.

At the level of formal governmental institutions for the RDP, problems of co-ordination, fragmentation and lack of policy and planning capacity in line departments have been cited.[95] The formal RDP institutions consist of the provincial executive's RDP standing committee as well as the RDP Commission, headed by a commissioner who is a political figure. Under the RDP Commission are several structures, the most important of which is the RDP unit, which manages implementation, is responsible for policy and planning, and is in charge of PLPs. RDP structures exist outside the formal structures of government, creating the problem of parallel structures of policy-making alongside the line departments, which Gauteng dealt with immediately by restructuring its original RDP Commission.

Development planners argue that the existence of parallel RDP structures creates similar problems to those noted in Mpumalanga: separate RDP structures with a strong vertical line of reporting and accountability up to the executive's RDP standing committee have ensured a lack of horizontal linkages to other departments. The office of the director-general is seen as very strong in policy capacity, and the director-general and chief director of the RDP unit, also considered politically powerful and predominant in managing RDP related projects, co-chair the Interdepartmental Committee (IDC). RDP policy and planning priorities are determined in the IDC, and some in the province argue that this allows RDP structures to exercise dominance over the departments while the vital horizontal linkages between departments and the RDP structures are missing.

In sum, RDP structures in North West are very influential in policy and planning. But they form parallel policy and planning institutions outside the line departments, leading to a lack of horizontal co-ordination, fragmentation, and serious turf battles. There is a perception in the province that the RDP structures have on occasions attempted to 'build an empire' by attempting to take control over the work of departments. It is also argued that the current RDP unit is not new – it is, in effect, the old Bophuthatswana Department of Development Planning, which was a centralised structure with total responsibility for development policy and planning.[96] It therefore remains centralised, taking on all matters related to RDP policy and planning, leaving the line departments without policy and planning responsibilities and therefore dependent on the RDP unit in those areas.

The upshot is that the RDP unit is, by default, able to control departmental access to funds from the national RDP office. The absence of policy and planning competencies has apparently placed even business planning inside the RDP unit.

When departments identify their projects and motivate for funds from central government, they have to submit proposals to the RDP unit which then, if it approves, draws up the business plans and submits them to the national office for funding. The departments therefore do not possess the power to draw up business plans, despite the fact that they possess the capacity to do so.[97] A development specialist in the province has recommended that the only remedy is to spread RDP responsibilities and make implementation the general basis for the work of all departments. In this way, RDP structures could be abolished or made an integral part of the structures of provincial government.[98] It is also argued that the director-general's office should have policy and planning capacity to effectively monitor as well as horizontally and vertically co-ordinate the work of departments as they carry out RDP functions.

On the surface, it appears that the province has fared well in matters such as restructuring and reintegrating the formerly fragmented civil services of Bophuthatswana, the Cape Provincial Administration and the TPA, as well as integrating new RDP projects into those inherited from Bophuthatswana.[99] But in a budget speech to the legislature earlier last year, the MEC for Economic Affairs pointed out that the reintegration of bureaucracies had been cosmetic and that the former Bophuthatswana structures were still predominant and resistant to change.[100] He also charged that the 1995/96 budgetary inputs were dominated and 'influenced by the programmes of the past Bophuthatswana regime'. This has serious implications for reprioritising RDP projects. It does seem, however, that the major problems in implementing the RDP in North West are structural as well as institutional, and apparently not much has been done to deal with them.

As in other provinces, such as Gauteng, there is a discernible shift in North West towards emphasising growth maximisation and private sector investment as priorities. As suggested above, that this apparent shift could be explained by the slow progress in delivering on expected RDP targets, and the fact that modest progress in economic growth has been achieved. Politicians may therefore be hoping that growth will achieve the improvements in living standards which social development plans have thus far failed to secure. It is also worth noting that limited economic growth, unlike failure to achieve promised RDP targets, can be blamed on factors other than government performance – the shift could therefore enable politicians to spread responsibility for failure to deliver on RDP promises of improvements in the circumstances of the poor.

Clear and unambiguous statements on a strategic approach to realising the objectives of the RDP have emanated from North West's premier, Popo Molefe, over the past 18 months. This has occurred within a context in which foreign interests, particularly from the Far East, have shown a measure of interest in investing resources in RDP-related projects. Japanese conglomerates, for instance, have entered into investment contracts with the provincial government in low-cost housing, township renewal, mining, electrification and infrastructure.[101] Besides this, the MEC for Finance pointed out earlier last year that even

though the government and its institutions were responsible for addressing poverty in the region, it 'simply does not have the capacity to meet all the needs of our people'.[102]

There has been increased emphasis in the province on strong financial and institutional support for the business sector, particularly smaller enterprises; earlier last year, R20 million was allocated to help businesses destroyed during the violent overthrow of former Bophuthatswana president Lucas Mangope's regime. The current premier argues that these were smaller enterprises owned by historically marginalised groups which had been 'excluded from the mainstream of economic activity', even though many of the businesses belonged to members of Mangope's government who were hardly disadvantaged. He states that 'we take into account that one of the objectives of the RDP, which is the very soul and essence of our governance, is to develop small and medium enterprises from a set of marginalised survival strategies into dynamic enterprises that can provide a decent living for both the entrepreneur and the employee'.[103]

According to the premier, the province should concentrate on promoting tourism, stimulating manufacturing, and promoting targeted industrial development linked to mining and agriculture, even though it is noted that the contribution of agriculture to the province's economy has been declining since 1980.[104] In a speech at a summit with the mining industry in June last year, the premier said that democracy could not be sustained under conditions of extreme poverty and inequality and high levels of unemployment, but went on to add that a preferred economic strategy would be to strengthen the mining sector, given its predominant contribution to the provincial economy (60 percent of GGP). But the clearest indication of a preferred strategic choice by the province was the premier's statement at the handing over of small business premises at Winterveld in August last year that the government was committed to a strategy of a 'high and sustainable economic development ...', the achievement of which meant that 'the economy needs to move on a growth path of increased investment, enhanced productivity and expanding employment opportunities.'[105]

Speaking at a business seminar later that month, the premier expanded on the preferred central strategy of economic growth by saying that 'the people and government of South Africa believe that economic growth is the means towards achieving sustainable human development. We believe that sustainable human development will be achieved only if the economy is on a sustainable growth path.'[106] He went on to argue that the South East Asian economies had shown that 'high rates of economic growth improve human development and the quality of life of the people'. It also seems as if the province regards the role of small business as crucial 'in the efforts of our people to meet basic needs and help previously disadvantaged communities'. The premier added that this sector was the 'core of our plans for economic growth', and that the government was 'committed to lending the small enterprise sector maximum support as we believe that through this we can attain high, sustainable and egalitarian growth'.

There is almost a presumption in all this that support for small business will result immediately in economic growth, which will in turn provide a solution for the province's economic problems as well as the challenge of meeting the enormous social welfare responsibilities identified by the RDP.

This might be reading too much into politicians' normal habit of tailoring their speeches to their audiences. But in statements over several months to diverse groups such as small business, mining, tourism, farmers and foreign investors, the premier has consistently placed more emphasis on economic growth as a strategic approach to meeting the challenges identified in the RDP. Meeting Basic Needs does not appear to be an urgent priority any longer. There is a clear indication that the provincial government now believes that broader economic and human development can only be achieved through growth maximisation.

Restructuring the RDP system

Problems encountered

When the RDP institutions were established in 1994, there were no clear indications of how they would operate in practice, nor was there enough clarity on they would relate horizontally and vertically. Importantly, the constitution does not provide for RDP structures even though the RDP white paper provides for each province 'to develop a strategy for implementing the RDP in the context of its particular circumstances'.[107]

There are indications that the government is reacting by attempting to restructure the RDP system – and by rearticulating its vision within a different time frame to take account of capacity constraints. Officials in the national office have begun to point to widespread problems, some logistical and capacity-related, as causes of delays in implementing projects.[108] In contrast with the pre-election emphasis on targets for delivery, there has been a perceptible shift in recent months towards emphasising long-term planning and strategic goals, and the work that needs to be done to ensure that government structures at national and provincial levels are equipped with the capacity to carry out RDP-related tasks.

Officials in the provincial and national RDP offices also point out that the RDP structures and their activities are completely new and not easily integrated into existing public service practices.[109] And Naidoo's report to parliament in June last year noted unco-ordinated approaches and incoherent priorities between provinces and national government in strategic planning.[110] The report argued, for instance, that the provinces had taken long to establish their structures and had tended to follow different priorities. All these concerns indicate that not just the time frame but the RDP system itself may be restructured.

Some provincial RDP officials have also expressed concern over the differing institutional arrangements in the various provinces, and the problems of com-

munication with the national RDP office that this creates.[111] It is argued that the role of RDP units in various provinces differ widely because there is no clarity over their role and composition. This lack of clarity often lead to a duplication of functions, leading to turf battles. Besides this, there are apparently some problems related to the process of accessing funds from the national office. RDP funds can be accessed in a number of ways - provinces can receive or solicit funds from central government, raise funds through their own efforts, or approach the national RDP office directly; this is seen as a source of confusion.

Late last year, the parliamentary standing committee on the RDP visited the provinces to gather information on the way in which the RDP is being implemented. Its report was made public as this paper was being completed, and appeared to confirm the broad argument here. The committee listed a wide range of problem areas, such as:[112]

- a lack of clarity over the exact meaning of the RDP, compounded by conflicting statements about it by politicians;
- provincial allocations of RDP funds based on incorrect statistical bases;
- inadequate provincial inputs into budgetary allocations, leading to the near-collapse of certain projects (such as school feeding schemes);
- a lack of funds for alleviating poverty in the provinces;
- inadequate financial controls and unaccountable channels for transferring funds from central government directly to communities creating opportunities for corruption;
- funds allocations still unspent;
- duplication of development efforts between provincial government and the Independent Development Trust; and
- a lack of communication between provincial RDP structures and between national and provincial departments in dealing with RDP matters.

The cumulative impact of these factors seems to be leading the government towards rationalising the operation of the RDP system.

Proposed solutions

The changes proposed by the parliamentary committee to address these problems are substantive as well as systemic. In other words, they deal with specific problem areas as well as the structural relationships between levels of government.

The committee proposed various solutions to substantive issues. Firstly, it recommends that similar RDP structures be created in all provinces, to make communication between the national RDP office and provincial offices easier. This is a controversial proposal, since premiers such as Phosa are keen to establish structures that reflect their particular political dynamics. Secondly, and linked to the first proposal, the committee believes that RDP unit directorships

across the provinces should be made uniform in job content and function, to make communication with the national office simpler.

The report also makes several proposals for dealing with substantive problem areas, including:

- better communication, consultation and co-operation between central government and the provinces;
- the establishment of RDP select committees in provincial legislatures to help create 'a shared national vision and welfare priorities';
- the allocation of RDP funds from central government directly to provincial departments instead of communities;
- more programmes for alleviating poverty;
- A budgetary process based on reliable information;
- placing RDP structures in premiers' offices, to establish them as the driving force in the provinces; and
- better guidelines on issues such as capacity-building, business planning, organisation, implementation and evaluation.

Proposals for systemic and operational changes include establishing a more integrated, nationally co-ordinated, system. The committee argues that a new approach to the RDP is needed, based on a redefinition of development planning as 'a participatory process to integrate economic, sectoral, spatial, social, institutional, environmental and fiscal strategies in order to support the optimal allocation of scarce resources between sectors and geographical areas and across the population, in a manner that provides sustainable growth, equity and the empowerment of the poor and the marginalised'[113].

It says strategic and operational planning are to be brought together at the various levels of government. Also, short-term provincial and national strategies for development and planning are to contribute to a National Strategy for Growth and Development.[114] The Forum for Effective Planning and Development (FFEPD), in which the provinces and national government sit, will become central to this process, and is working out an integrated and co-ordinated system of development planning. This will rationalise the RDP system, subjecting the setting of priorities, planning and budgeting in individual provincial and national departments to a more coherent process. The committee calls for an agreement on standard outputs and consistency among provinces, so that their strategies may form the basis for national planning.[115]

The proposed systemic changes do not necessarily herald more central government dominance over the provinces and their priorities. But they do seem to call for a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to planning and budgeting, aimed at the better use of resources and the achievement of agreed and identifiable goals. This could go a long way towards addressing the problem of inconsistent approaches and strategies. It could, however, run into difficulties, particularly in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape which might insist on creating their own, distinct, RDP systems.

Besides rationalising the system, the RDP is now being rearticulated as a long-term process. Instead of the urgent delivery commitments the RDP programmes emphasised in the pre-election period and immediately after the election, Naidoo has stated that the RDP is to be understood as a 25-year, step-by-step vision.[116] This is, of course, a response to the difficulties experienced in implementing the RDP and particularly in meeting urgent Basic Needs, which many political leaders had committed themselves to addressing. Part of this task will therefore be to articulate to the public, most of whom expected the government to deliver on RDP programmes in a shorter period, the need to see social and economic development as a protracted process.

Conclusion

This paper's central argument, that it is not possible to achieve all the goals stated in the RDP base document at once and that it is therefore necessary to set priorities, is illustrated by the three provincial case studies.

They suggest that there are aspects of RDP implementation that might have been handled differently, and that need to be addressed if adequate delivery is to become possible: a stress on institutional issues rather than substantive delivery plans is one, the decision to establish a separate RDP entity within the government is another (a point which raises doubts about the wisdom of maintaining a separate RDP office within national government – and about the parliamentary committee's apparent view that this practice should be retained and indeed extended), and the checklist of issues identified by the parliamentary committee offer still more.

But while remedies to these problems, such as those suggested by the parliamentary committee and others proposed by officials and planners interviewed in the course of this study, could contribute to more effective implementation, they will not remove the need to address the single greatest weakness of the current RDP system – the failure to set priorities, which not only inhibits planning but ensures that voters remain uninformed about government goals. The provincial studies show that whatever remedies are introduced, a host of capacity limitations will combine with funding constraints to place limits on progress to RDP goals, because they underline that development is not purely an act of will, and that goals will not be achieved simply because a policy document says they will.

In one sense, the new stress on a longer-term plan addresses this issue by aligning planning with the reality of these constraints. In another, it does not address the issue at all. To say that the RDP is a longer-term process rather than a five-year plan may be realistic, but it still avoids spelling out precisely what this plan is and what its priorities are. This risks maintaining the confusion and incoherence, but spreading it over a longer period. Having recognised that it cannot achieve all the aims of the base document in the first five years, the gov-

ernment still faces the need to grapple with what can be achieved, over what period, and what resources are to be deployed in achieving it.

The central ambiguity remains the choice between a strategy that prioritises growth as a prerequisite for action against inequality, and one that stresses the latter as a means to the former. There is some evidence that a choice is being made here too –in favour of growth – but this remains sketchy, and it is partly contradicted by the parliamentary committee's continued concern with measures to attack poverty. It remains possible that there has been no strategic decision, and that growth is receiving more emphasis only because it is easier to point to successes in this area than with addressing inequality.

If a decision has indeed been made to focus on growth rather than development, this may create fresh problems, particularly at the provincial level. Maximising growth prospects is a complex task, and poorer provinces in particular may find that their best efforts yield slow and limited progress. A Basic Needs strategy tailored carefully to provincial capacity could be more achievable than an attempt to engineer rapid growth.

It may well be that, in the world of real politics, it is far easier not to make such a choice, and that the RDP will continue to assume that both can be pursued simultaneously, with the emphasis shifting in the light of political circumstances, and in particular the balance of power between those interest groups favouring a 'growth first' strategy and those who prioritise spending to reduce inequality. But this cannot hide the reality that it is not possible to pursue both strategies at once, and that repeated choices between will continue to be needed. Obscuring the tensions between the two strategies in official statements will ensure that confusion about the RDP and its goals will persist, both among many of those who implement it, and those who are meant to benefit from it.

Endnotes

1 J Naidoo, *Taking the RDP Forward: Report to Parliament*, 8/6/95, pp 6 – 9; Forum for Effective Planning and Development, *Guidelines for the Development Planning Process in Government*, July 1995.

2 African National Congress, *Reconstruction and Development Programme: a policy framework*, 1994.

3 Ibid, pp 7–12.

4 Ibid, p 8.

5 Ibid, pp 7–8.

6 Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Reconstruction and Development*, 1994, p 9.

7 Interview, development planner, 4/8/95.

8. *African Business*, February, 1995, p 12.

9. *RDP News – Official Newsletter of the Reconstruction and Development Programme*, March 1995, p 6.

10 Ibid, June 1995, p 6.

11 Ibid, June 1995, p 3.

12 Ibid, May 1995, p 4.

13 P Streeten, J Burki, m ul Haq, h Hicks & F Stewart, *First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in Developing Countries*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, 1981.

14 F Stewart, *Planning to Meet Basic Needs*, London: MacMillan, 1985, p 2.

15 Ibid, p 1.

16 Streeten et al, *First Things First.*

17 A Webster, *Introduction to the Sociology of Development*, London: MacMillan, 1982.

18 See the problem statement in 'Meeting Basic Needs', chapter 2 of the RDP base document, *Reconstruction and Development Programme: A Policy Framework*, 1994.

19 Stewart, *Planning to Meet Basic Needs*, p 2.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid, p 78.

22 Ibid, p. 3.

23 ANC, *RDP: A Policy Framework*, p 15.

24 Stewart, *Planning to Meet Basic Needs*, p 6.

25 Ibid, p 7.

26 Ibid.

27 ANC, *The RDP: A Policy Framework*, p 1.

28 SA government, *White Paper* ..., p 8: 1.3.2.

29 *Financial Mail*, 28/7/95; 18/8/95.

30 *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 15/7/94.

31 V Padayachee, 'Can the RDP Survive the IMF?', *Work in Progress*, July 1994, p 25.

32 SA Government, *White Paper* ..., p 9: 1.4.3.

33 Ibid, p 4.

34 Naidoo, *Report to Parliament*, p 9.

35 Ibid, p 10.

36 National RDP Office, *The RDP – April 27: The First Year Reviewed*, 27/4/95, p 2.

37 *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 28/4/95.

38 *Weekly Mail & Guardian*, 28/4/95.

39 Interview, provincial RDP official, 8/8/95.

40 *Natal Mercury*, 1/8/95.

41 ANC, *The RDP: A Policy Framework*, p 1.

42 Interview, development planner, 25/8/95.

43 Gauteng Government, 'Building a New PWV Province: A Reconstruction and Development Programme for the PWV, first draft for discussion', 2/5/94.

44 Ibid, p 1.

45 Minutes of PWV–RDP Township Summit Vista 1, 4/6/94, p 3.

46 Ibid, p 8. Also see Gauteng Provincial Government, *RDP Vision*, vol 1 no 1, January 1995, pp 19, 22.

47 Gauteng Government, 'Building a New PWV Province ...', p 2.

48 Interview, provincial RDP official, 8/8/95.

49 Ibid.

50 Mpumalanga RDP Office, 'Memorandum', 30/6/95, p 1.

51 Gauteng Government, 'Proposed Role and Structures of the RDP', 1/6/95, p 1.

52 Interview, provincial RDP official, 8/8/95.

53 Ibid.

54 Gauteng Government, *RDP Vision*.

55 Minutes of RDP–Township Summit Vista 2, 29/7/95.

56 Ibid, p 3.

57 Ibid, p 11.

58 J Moleketi, 'Budget speech, Vote 16', 6/6/95.

59 Ibid, pp 7 – 8.

60 Ibid, p 8.

61 Interview, provincial RDP official, 8/8/95.

62 Interview, development planner, 4/8/95; Interview with Frank Meintjies, *RDP Newsletter*, May 1995, p 3.

63 Gauteng Government, Department of Finance & Economic Affairs, 'Economic Policy Document for stakeholder discussion', 9/5/95, p 3.

64 Ibid, pp 13 – 28.

65 Mpumalanga Government, *The Provincial RDP: Some thoughts Regarding the Process of Implementation*, 1994.

66 S Bekker & R Humphries, 'Regional Forums: New Frontiers, New Creations', *Indicator South Africa*, vol 10 no 4, 1993.

67 Mpumalanga Government, *The Provincial RDP* ..., p 2.

68 Mpumalanga Government, Office of the Minister for the RDP, *Consolidated Report: RDP Civil Society Structures in the Eastern Transvaal Province*, 5/12/94, p 3.

69 The PPFs are facilities in terms of which funds are made available by the national RDP office to provinces and communities for training in managerial expertise, and project preparation and design skills.

70 Mpumalanga RDP Office, 'Memorandum', p 1.

71 Ibid, p 7.

72 Ibid, p 1.

73 Interview, development planner, 4/8/95.

74 Mpumalanga Government, *Consolidated Report* ..., p 10.

75 B J Modipane, '1995/6 Budget Speech', 9/6/95, pp 16–17.

76 Mpumalanga Government, 'Memorandum: Overseas Funding for Transformation and Reconstruction in the Provinces', 2/11/94.

77 Mpumalanga Government, *Consolidated Report* ..., p 4.

78 Interview, development planner, 4/8/95.

79 Mpumalanga RDP Office, 'Memorandum', p 2.

80 Interview, development planner, 4/8/95.

81 Interview, national RDP official, 11/8/95.

82 Mpumalanga Government, *Consolidated Report...*

83 Ibid, p 10.

84 Ibid., p 7.

85 J I Mabena, 'Policy and Budget Speech – 1995/6', undated.

86 North West Government, *The North West: South Africa's Platinum Province*, undated.

87 North West Province, 'RDP Forums Guidelines: Community Participation Strategy', 18/11/94.

88 North West Government, *RDP Commission Report*, 15/2/95.

89 Ibid, p 2.

90 P Molefe, 'Speech at the summit of North West Province and the mining industry: Kwa Maritane', 6/6/95.

91 Ibid. p 3.

92 Interview, development planner, 25/8/95.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 M Kascus, '1995/96 Budget Speech', undated.

101 North West Government: 'Memorandum of Intent with Japanese Trading Company', 4/10/94.

102 Press conference by M Kascus, North West MEC for Finance, Mmabatho, 10/2/95.

103 North West Government, 'Relief Fund to Assist Small and Medium-Sized Business', South African Press Association, 7/3/95.

104 P Molefe, 'Speech at the summit ...'.

105 P Molefe, 'Speech at the handing over of small business premises at Winterveld, 18/8/95.

106 P Molefe, 'Speech at a business seminar at Sun City', 22/8/95.

107 SA Government, *White Paper* ..., p 17.

108 D Ewing, 'Is the RDP Working', *Towards Democracy*, Second Quarter, 1995, pp 24 – 29.

109 Interview, national RDP official, 11/8/95.

110 Naidoo, *Report to Parliament* ..., p 6.

111 Mpumalanga RDP Office, 'Memorandum'.

112 *Business Day*, 31/8/95; Parliament, 'Draft Report of the Select Committee on the Reconstruction and Development Programme and Labour' (Senate), 29/8/95.

113 Forum for Effective Planning and Development, *Guidelines* ..., p 5.

114 Naidoo, *Report to Parliament*, p 3.

115 Forum for Effective Planning and Development, *Guidelines* ..., p 4.

116 Naidoo, *Report to Parliament*, pp 2–3.