



Support for rural infrastructure investment prioritisation in Priority Rural Districts (Department of Rural Development & Land Reform)

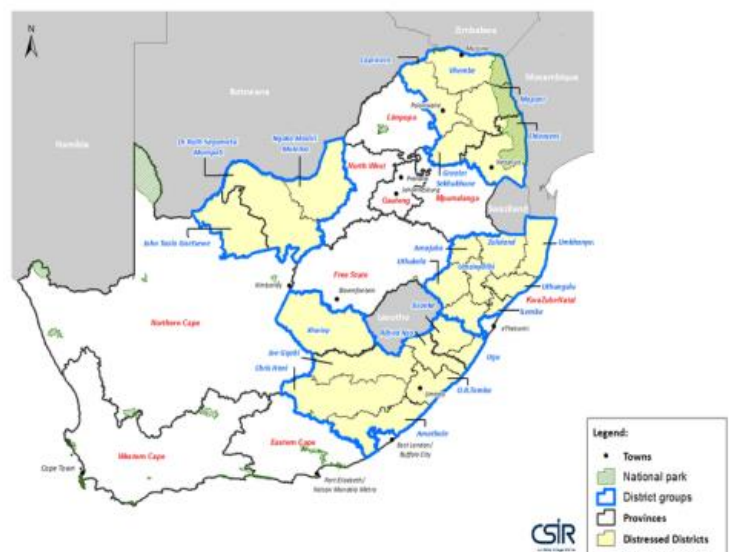
stepSA collaboration and innovation enables crucial decision support for government investment prioritisation in areas of need

In response to Government's commitment to rural development and Action Plan 6, Department of Rural Development & Land Reform (DRDLR) initiated the Priority Rural District Infrastructure Investment Project to actively align the spheres of government and other state entities around core investment areas for catalytic infrastructure investment priorities to support socio-economic development within South Africa's distressed rural districts.

DRDLR Rural Infrastructure Branch in collaboration with CSIR, Spatial Planning Support team, engaged relevant municipalities, provinces and sector departments to identify existing investment programmes and develop a "Framework for Rural Infrastructure Development". In support of this bottom-up and collaborative approach the basis provided by the spatially refined *socio-economic indicators* within stepSA's Regional Profiler, innovations in temporal comparisons and advanced spatial analyses capability enabled the project teams to develop a spatially refined development trend profile for four clusters of distressed districts, as well as identify priority settlements and areas for investment. The analyses for decision-support considered spatial location priorities for targeted high impact (catalytic), differentiated municipal service, as well as economic infrastructure investment (Action Plan 6, as well as SIP11 and also informing SIP6).

Value add to the DRDLR and Rural Investment Initiative

The project highlighted that in many areas, ongoing government investment in basic services and infrastructure, will remain by far the biggest investment that will take place in a number of years. Targeting and focussing government investment in distressed rural areas thus provides the single biggest opportunity for the transformation of investment in support of government's goals (as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP) of stronger regional economies and employment and increased





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quality of life. Such investment also provides an opportunity for household food security to be addressed in a much more integrated way, including employment and entrepreneurship opportunities through unlocking regional economic and agricultural potential. First time spatial specific analyses and trends identified in the project included:

- Settlement specific population growth and decline analyses (indicating vast differences between regions);
- Inter-regional migration patterns (showing vast numbers of regional and local movements and centralisation trends);
- Detection of settlement change (illustrating local concentration and settlement consolidation, especially in tribal authority areas);
- Identification of place specific economic growth pockets;
- Resource rich and priority ecosystem service areas;
- Areas of opportunity and vulnerable areas; and,
- Spatial decision support for government investment through basic service provision and larger scale catalytic projects.

The project supported **interventions** in the form of:

- A framework of rural economic transformation to fundamentally shift the nature of inter-governmental infrastructure investment and implementation support;
- The identification, validation and implementation support for a number of locally identified catalytic projects in the respective districts as a first tangible step in the process; as well as,
- The identification of priority settlements and areas for high impact (catalytic) and differentiated service, as well as economic infrastructure investment (Action Plan 6, as well as SIP11 and also informing SIP6).
- The DRDLR's on-going implementation support to local municipalities and sector departments, as well as monitoring and evaluation of catalytic project implementation (Action Plan 6).
- This initiative also directly supported the Department's responsibility in relation to SIP11 (Agri-logistics and Rural Infrastructure) and will also make a significant contribution to other role players and initiatives such as SIP6 (Integrated Municipal Infrastructure Project) and fed into the DRDLR's later agricultural hub initiatives.

Value add to stepSA and other role players

Having this project commissioned as part of the stepSA Collaborative Initiative, not only supported the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform but facilitated the advancement of ongoing research methodologies on the sub-regional analysis on the demographic and socio-economic dynamics of towns and settlements. Due to the varying periods and demarcations that the diverse input datasheets (consisting of demographic, social and economic data) were collected in, it has been difficult in South Africa to conduct spatially refined trend analyses on socio-economic data. Advanced data analysis techniques and sets of spatially specific socio-economic indicators in the stepSA Regional Profiler developed by the CSIR and collaborators over the last few years, that were refined through this project allowed for fine grained spatio-temporal analyses of national data, adding to the study and understanding of place specific (towns and settlement) changes, inter and intra-regional fluctuations in economic activity; population growth, decline and movement; and changes in service provision, employment and education rates.



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The updated sets of socio-economic change indicators and methodologies that were refined during this project are now available through the stepSA Regional Profiler. This can support districts and sector departments to understand the spatial dynamics and trends in their areas of jurisdiction and supports ongoing research on towns, settlements and regions. The project is a clear illustration of how enhanced research & development clearly provides crucial decision support for government investment prioritisation in areas of need.

For more information on the project and project findings, contact:

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