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Post-apartheid municipal planning: an assessment of the Ehlanzeni District Municipality IDP in terms of its alignment with the principles of sustainable development

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ABSTRACT

Municipal Planning in South Africa has evolved since the dawn of democracy. Before 1994, planning in the local sphere of government was characterised by segregation and disintegration of settlements and plans, respectively. After being welcomed back to the international community, particularly the United Nations, South Africa engaged in a process of reforming local government specifically - planning. As part of local government reforms, Integrated Development Plans (IDP)s were introduced in 2002 as the main tools for integrated planning in local, district and metropolitan municipalities. Integration requires that economic, social and environmental development initiatives are integrated in order to achieve “sustainable development”. During 1992, the United Nations Environmental Programme hosted a Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The conference developed and agreed upon *specific* principles of sustainable development which member states were to institutionalise as part of their development agenda and this culminated in the so-called “Agenda 21 Report”. The programme for further implementation of Agenda 21 and the commitments to the principles of sustainable development were re-affirmed at the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. This study assesses the alignment of the Ehlanzeni District Municipality IDP with the principles of sustainable development as outlined in Annex 1 of Agenda 21. A questionnaire was designed and used to conduct semi-structured interviews with ten Planners from the District and the Mpumalanga Provincial Government. The findings indicate that the IDP of the EDM is not aligned with most of the principles of sustainable development that the assessment was based on.