Implementation Evaluation of Operation Phakisa

POLICY SUMMARY, EXECUTIVE AND SUMMARY REPORT

05 September 2022

National Evaluation Plan Report

planning, monitoring and evaluation
Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Submitted by:	**Submitted to:**
Stanford Muhomba	Mrs Nox Chitepo
Director of Evaluations	Director: Evaluation
CITOFIELD	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
90 Sovereign Road Corporate 21 IRENE Tel: 012 807 0871/ 071 910 3636 Email: stanford@citofield.co.za	Private Bag X944 Pretoria, 0001, South Africa Fax: +27 86 686 4455 Email: Nox@dpme.gov.za

Institution	**Member Details**
The Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)	1. Ms Nox Chitepo 2. Ms Ahn-Lynn Poniappen 3. Shadrack Mbatha
The Intervention Support Unit: DPME	1. Mr Rudzani Mudau
Sector Specialists	1. Nkateco Mkhacane 2. Lwandile Socikwa 3. Phendukhani Hlatshwayo
Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries	1. Kwena Cholo 2. Hombakhazi Blou 3. Chumani Mangcu-
The Department of Health	1. Kgwiti Mhlako
The Department of Basic Education	1. Elspeth Kembo
The Department of Mineral Resources	1. Shonisani Manyaga
National Treasury	1. Gcobisa Magazi
The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development	1. Julius Mashapu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Abbreviation in Full
ANC	African National Congress
AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South
BFR	Big Fast Results
CEF	Central Energy Fund
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMT	Coastal and Marine Tourism
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DDM	District Development Model
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DG	Director General
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment[1]
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Cooperation
DMR	Department of Mineral Resources
DoE	Department of Energy
DoL	Department of Labour
DoT	Department of Transport
DPE Department	Department of Public Enterprises
DPME	DPME Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPME	Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (2010-2014)
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DPW	Department of Public Works
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DST	Department of Science and Technology
DTF	Delivery task force
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DU	Delivery Unit
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
EBPM	Evidence-based policy making
EDD	Department of Economic Development
ETP	Economic Transformation Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution

[1] A number of government departments changed their name following the presidential election and cabinet reshuffle in 2019.

GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
GTP	Government Transformation Programme
HDI	Human Development Index
ICRM	Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance Programme
ICT	Information and communication technology
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
IOPC	International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund
ISU	Intervention Support Unit
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LCC	Lab Coordinating Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MKPI	Ministerial Key Performance Indicator
MPG	Marine Protection and Governance
MS	Multi-stakeholder
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTM	Marine Transport and Manufacturing
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan (South Africa)
NEM	New Economic Model
NGP	New Growth Path
NKEA	National Key Economic Area
NKPI	National Key Performance Indicator
NKRA	National Key Result Area
NPAI	National Public Administration Initiative
NPM	New Public Management
NRF	National Research Foundation
NT	National Treasury
NTP	National Transformation Programme
O&G	O&G Oil and Gas
OPASA	Offshore Petroleum Association of South Africa
OPMS	Operation Phakisa Monitoring System
OPOCT	Operation Phakisa Occupational Coordinating Team
OPSMC	Operational Phakisa Sector Ministerial Committee
PASA	Petroleum Agency of South Africa
PCAS	Policy Coordination and Advisory Service
PDI	Previously Disadvantaged Individual
PDIA	Problem driven, iterative adaptation
PE	Public Entrepreneurs
PEMANDU	Performance Management and Delivery Unit
PetroSA	Petroleum South Africa
PIA	Phakisa Implementing Agent
PIRC	Presidential Issue Resolution Committee
PMDU	Performance Management and Delivery Unit

POA	Programme of Action
PSCBC	Public Sector Coordinating Bargaining Council
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACP	South African Communist Party
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SRI	Strategic Reform Initiative
TNPA	Transnet National Ports Authority
UCT	University of Cape Town
WDR	World Development Report

POLICY OVERVIEW

Operation Phakisa was identified by the South African government as a planning and implementation methodology modelled around the Malaysia's "Big Fast Results" (BFR) delivery mechanism. This methodology was then domesticated to the South African context and reflected the government's commitment to deliver on priorities outlined in the National Development Plan of 2030 (NDP) in a faster, more efficient, and effective way. The Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism was viewed as heuristically viable to fast track the convening of delivery Labs, as well as accelerating the planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes related to the plans developed by each Lab. This thinking was premised on both political and developmental imperatives to catalyse a service delivery paradigm shift towards doing "business unusual" to meet the commitments outlined in the ruling party's election manifesto as well as commitments made in the NDP.

An achievement of Operation Phakisa so far has been the ability to address disjointed planning and working in silos, particularly, the establishment of intergovernmental platforms to streamline work in a systematic and cost-efficient manner. Labs have been a relevant problem-solving platform, ushering consensus building and bringing various stakeholders together with new ways of thinking. This is a significant departure from a system that is fundamentally fragmented, lacking inter-agency trust with almost no effective coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, while the aim behind bringing a 'new way' to deliver government programmes may be relevant and urgent for the South African context, it is likely to continue being enervated if the relevant officials, particularly those at the apex of the organisations at ministerial and DG level, do not have sufficient motivation to adapt to this way of working and adjust their plans and processes accordingly.

One strong opposing viewpoint that emerged from the evidence gathered during the implementation evaluation was that Operation Phakisa in its entirety had not achieved its ambitious objective of fast-tracking progress on critical national development priorities. The inability to accelerate delivery can be attributed mainly to the difficulties that the government has faced in adapting departmental systems to the BFR model imperative of "business unusual" – the cutting of red tape, speeding up procurement, resource constraints, and fast-tracking critical decision making. In addition, realising the ambitious targets established by the Operation Phakisa Labs was always going to be dependent on the availability of adequate financial and human resources for planning, delivery, and monitoring. A key constraint facing implementing partners has been the lack funding to implement projects and this is further compounded by the fact that resources are now limited in the public sector currently. The initial conceptualisation was premised on the notion that government was going to avail resources to the early phases of implementation and that this would then catalyse and unlock private sector investment. Thereafter, government would gradually divest and permit "crowding in of the" private sector.

The majority of the respondents mentioned that the government at cabinet level should use the findings of this evaluation to take a strategic decision to phase out (terminate) Operation Phakisa as a standalone development initiative and absorb its more successful and functioning components into relevant line department programmes or migrate these components into other currently operational strategic interventions. In addition, DPME Intervention Support Unit (ISU), in collaboration with sector experts and other key stakeholders should come up with a strategy to infuse the three feet plans and associated implementation activities into other Departmental/ Sector Plans and use the sector monitoring branch to monitor implementation. The concept of "business unusual" should continue to be infused into the operational culture of departments – and perhaps even branded as a set of working principles similar to the Batho Pele model.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of the implementation evaluation of Operation Phakisa (OP) conducted by Citofield, who were commissioned by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the Operation Phakisa Intervention Support Unit (ISU). Operation Phakisa was identified by the South African government as a planning and implementation methodology whose key features included acceleration of service delivery by bringing a range of key stakeholders together for intensive practical planning, detailed solution finding and aimed at fast tracking the delivery of collaborative projects. While modelled around the Malaysia's "Big Fast Results" (BFR), this delivery mechanism was domesticated to the South African context and reflected the government's commitment to deliver on priorities outlined in the National Development Plan of 2030 (NDP) in a faster, more efficient, and effective way.

1.2 Background to the Evaluation

The terms of reference states that this evaluation should provide information and evidence to DPME, project partners and other stakeholders on the programme results achieved so far in each of the seven (7) OP Labs, to identify what has been working or not working, and what lessons have been learned in terms of the resources allocated over the past seven years of implementation. In summary, the main objective of this implementation evaluation has been to assess the progress of the project's implementation to date and to identify lessons and/or remedial actions needed to achieve the desired results moving forward. Whereas the terms of reference sets out multiple questions to be addressed, these questions can be grouped into four (4) main evaluation questions as listed below:

Number	Evaluation Question
EQ1	To what extent has the Operation Phakisa planning and implementation methodology been appropriately designed for the achievement of its objectives?
EQ2	Three years after the convening of the seven Operation Phakisa delivery Labs, are the various Operation Phakisa Labs likely to achieve the intended outputs and outcomes?
EQ3	To what extent has the Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism inculcated the "business unusual" approach in government?
EQ4	What lessons can be learned from the implementation of Operation Phakisa in South Africa?

1.3 The Programme

Operation Phakisa was designed to be a cross-sector programme where a coterie of stakeholders could engage and collaborate to implement initiatives and concrete actions to address constraints to delivery in a prioritised focused area. A key element of Operation Phakisa was to strengthen cooperation between government, organised business, civil society, and organised labour. This included working on detailed problem analysis, priority setting, intervention planning, innovation, and delivery envisaged to be impactful, fast tracked, characterised by the business unusual, hands-on approach that is results driven to ensure attainment of the projected outcomes.

1.4 Key Findings from the literature Review

In the development context, delivery units (and delivery unit-style programmes) are bound to encounter significant challenges when implementing large-scale changes in complex environments, due to similarities in fragmented institutional environments[2]. According to Jordan and Sabel (2013), replicating a PEMANDU-like programme requires at least three conditions: **first**, a political consensus in favour of carrying out reforms in public service (or at least lack of possible political hindrances), **second**, a government that is responsive towards information in terms of enacting changes and penalties, and **third**, a minimal level of variation in the capabilities of government, firms, and agencies so that there is space for improvement[3]. In addition, the World Bank warns that countries looking to learn from the Malaysian (PEMANDU) experience will have to carefully weigh the benefits in terms of cost associated with replicating the whole structure in its entirety.

The delivery unit approach, which has emerged over the past 15 years, is designed to direct focus of the authority and influence of the centre of government on facilitating the effective implementation of a small set of key priorities[4]. The emergence of delivery units has been driven by the political and reputational risks associated with governments struggling to deliver on their commitments, which has promoted a shift towards a greater focus on implementation. In this period many governments have sought to strengthen the link between the centre of government and citizen outcomes to address principal-agent problems, create stronger performance incentives, and improve oversight[5]. This has led to the introduction of specialised Delivery Units (DUs) around the world as one type of such solutions. Delivery units have been developed in many countries as a way of using the political authority of the centre of government to ensure a sustained focus on the key priorities of the administration, and to assist departments in overcoming blockages. Delivery units are generally comprised of a small cadre of highly skilled staff, often with a combination drawn from the public and private sectors, that seeks to work in partnership with ministries/agencies. They all have direct access to the political leadership to initiate authoritative and binding problem-solving meetings of senior policy makers and senior civil servants. They focus on a limited number of explicit, public government priorities and establish a light, nimble data collection and reporting system at the apex of a system of regular performance monitoring to ensure that responsible ministers maintain a continual focus on the objectives.

1.5 Key findings from the country comparative analysis

According to Operation Phakisa draft blueprint, the Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism was expected to complement the South African government's five-year strategic planning, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). Just as the Malaysian model was linked to national development planning, Operation Phakisa has been clearly linked to the NDP 2030 and the MTSF. This is indicative of the Delivery Unit concept, which is generally used by heads of state to accelerate progress on key national development priorities and often to meet commitments made in their election manifestos. South Africa should learn from Malaysia from the below regard:

[2] Narasimhan, A. and Pillai, A. A Paradigm Shift in Public Service Delivery: The Malaysian PEMANDU. Eruditio E-Journal of the World Academy of Art and Science Volume 2 Issue 5, December 2018.

[3] Sabel, C. and Jordan, L. "Doing, Learning, Being: Some Lessons Learned from Malaysia's National Transformation Program," January 2015.

[4] Oxford Policy Management. (2016). The role of the centre in driving government priorities: the experience of 'delivery units'. OPM Working Paper July 2016 at https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/corporate-publications/working-papers/wp-role-centre-driving-government-priorities.pdf?noredirect=1

[5] World Bank (2010). Global Expert Team Note: Center of Government Delivery Units at https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/923311468337217269/pdf/600920BRI0GET010BOX358310B01PUBLIC1.pdf

In Malaysia, the Prime Minister, or the Deputy Prime Minister Heads the apex decision-making and conflict resolution structure - **PEMANDU's success depends critically on the Prime Minister's direct involvement in its routines**: PEMANDU not only tracks progress in implementation but it is actively involved in clearing up bottlenecks between Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). These incentives work only with the regular involvement of the Prime Minister through routines, such as the performance reviews. The trade-off is the potential politicization of the technical implementation process, which in turn requires a strong leader of the delivery unit (DU) that can manage these issues.

1.6 Methodology

The evaluation team conducted a process evaluation where an eclectic mix of methods (using quantitative and qualitative research techniques) was employed, and both primary and secondary data was collected. As far as possible, the evaluation team used disaggregated data (race, gender, age, location) to meet the accountability objective for this evaluation, assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Operation Phakisa delivery mechanism and to understand whether the intervention represented Value for Money.

1.7 Key Evaluation Findings

The evaluation team triangulated both the primary and secondary data, as well as the qualitative and quantitative data. Interwoven with this analysis are perspectives by key informants, reference to data provided by the DPME, the respective implementing departments and presentation of findings from the literature that either lend weight to or contradict the survey findings. The overlap between the quantitative and qualitative dimensions is deliberate, allowing for the triangulation of data primarily from the three major sources – survey, statistical, and interviews – but also with information from secondary sources (reports, PowerPoint presentations, and academic literature). Where there are insufficient or potentially unreliable data upon which to base conclusions, this is indicated in the text. Recommendations are based on the available evidence with caveats about data quality where appropriate.

1.7.1 To what extent has the Operation Phakisa planning and implementation methodology been appropriately designed for the achievement of its objectives?

The avowed purpose of the Operation Phakisa methodology has been to induce the government to act differently and to engage in systems change. Part of the rationale for introducing the so-called "Delivery Units" into government to speed up planning and implementation processes was the recognition that conventional ways of doing business in the public sector were overly slow and bureaucratic.

Overall, the evaluation has found that the design of the Operation Phakisa is logical, and the outputs and outcomes are clearly defined. What emerged from the qualitative data was a strong sense that in theory the BFR approach had enormous potential and that in the settings where Operation Phakisa was implemented systematically and successfully using the tools of BFR, it became more relevant to the South African economic context, well-aligned with the government's overall economic growth, transformation, and supportive of job creation objectives. Operation Phakisa as a methodology responds to the underlying problems and commonly accepted challenges that impedes accelerated service delivery, unfortunately in most instances, the theory failed to become practice and most participating departments have reverted to "business as usual". The responses indicate that the Labs were relatively effective in the design, strategic focus, and planning components of the Lab work, but much weaker on implementation arrangements. A total of 63,6% of the respondents felt that the conceptual design of the Operation Phakisa was effective, with only a total of 20,5% stating the ineffectiveness of the design of the intervention.

On the other hand, a total of 67% of the respondents believe that with proper institutional arrangements, legislative realignment and streamlining supply chain management processes as well

as strong accountability, the delivery model can produce the desired results and long-term sustainability. A key achievement of Operation Phakisa so far has been the ability to address disjointed sector planning and the tendency to work in silos, particularly, the establishment of intergovernmental platforms to streamline work in a systematic and cost-efficient manner. Labs have been a relevant problem-solving platform, ushering in consensus building and bringing various stakeholders together with new ways of thinking. This is a significant departure from a system that is fundamentally fragmented, lacking inter-agency trust with almost no effective coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, while the aim behind bringing a 'new way' to deliver government programmes may be relevant and urgent for the South African context, it is unlikely to succeed if the relevant officials, particularly those at the apex of the organisations at ministerial and Director General (DG) level, do not have sufficient motivation to adapt to this way of working and to adjust their departmental planning processes accordingly.

Lastly, the findings of this evaluation indicate that Operation Phakisa as a flagship presidential initiative is unlikely to continue in its current format, but what is more likely is that the concept of accelerating service delivery may continue to resonate in departments and within other priority government initiatives. At the time of this evaluation Operation Phakisa has been operational for eight years. This is an expansive window from which to assess its performance and reflect on whether it is a model that, based on experience, needs to be adapted to fit current circumstances. Survey respondents were asked whether they felt that changes needed to be made to the current format (design) of Operation Phakisa. The majority (71%) of the respondents felt that Operation Phakisa model requires change, with only 16% feeling that the model was still fit for purpose. Respondents who answered yes were asked to elaborate on the answers that they had provided and to suggest what changes they thought were necessary. These contributions are infused into the recommendations that this evaluation is proposing.

1.7.2 Three years after the convening of the seven Operation Phakisa delivery Labs, are the various Operation Phakisa Labs likely to achieve the intended outputs and outcomes?

One of emerging issues arising from the appraisal of the Operation Phakisa methodology is that the approach has experienced some kind of slippage between planning and implementation. The BFR methodology was intended to deliver improved implementation of government goals through an understanding that goal setting cannot be separated from implementation, and that solutions to problems that arise amid implementation will often lead to important changes in goal setting. As such, a core part of the Lab planning process was to identify realistic outcome targets and timelines for implementation. Survey respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, it was possible to successfully deliver on BFR with the current government staff component (in terms of commitment, skills and capacities). A total of 27% of the respondents believed that government departments had strong or adequate commitment, skills, and capacities to deliver on the Lab plans, while a total of 17,8% were unsure and a further 55% felt that there was insufficient commitment, skills, and capacity to deliver at departmental level. From the interviews, a total of 55% of the respondents claims that the government has limited capacity in terms of human and financial resources to drive the successful implementation of Operation Phakisa to achieve the envisaged outputs and outcomes. A range of views have been expressed on scaling up Operation Phakisa and these entail different perspectives on supporting government capacity to deliver. On the one hand, there is a view about embedding reforms successfully in some of the Labs to learn how processes work well, and then scaling up based on what is known from those initiatives, taking account of the complexities of local and national contexts, and appropriately building the capacity of government to deliver.

In addition, the initial link between Operation Phakisa and apex political power, suggested that the methodology came with the necessary authority, resources, flexibility and striving for provision of timely advice and quick turnaround to potentially cut through bureaucratic roadblocks. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with Operation Phakisa, as standard bureaucratic

processes resumed just after the Labs were set up. Several respondents cited that Government and lead departments are still using bureaucracy for delivery and reporting, which is against the spirit of BFR. If Operation Phakisa had a business unusual approach, then a significant number of outcomes would have been achieved, impacting positively on growth, investment, and employment. The reality is that government has, over the years, established stringent cost-pruning and administrative frameworks based on legislation such as the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and the Public Service Act (PSA) to ensure good governance of public money and recruitment transparency. Without amendments to legislation, it was always going to be a challenge for Labs to circumvent regulations to fast-track processes such as procurement and recruitment. Unfortunately, at this juncture, there is no longer demonstrated political, and executive will to support the methodology as processes have gone back to the routine "business as usual" operations of the public service bureaucracy, and with all these challenges the majority of the labs are not likely to achieve the intended outputs and outcomes.

Some respondents from the interviews conducted indicated that they saw the BFR methodology as conceptually worthwhile in the context of South Africa's implementation challenges but pointed out several critical constraints such as limited political will, constrained financial resources and bureaucratic red tape - that they felt ultimately hampered the success of the delivery mechanism. These views are substantiated by the views of the respondents where a total of 71% felt that there has been a lack of political will in creating the optimal conditions for the implementation of Operation Phakisa and that there had also been a lack of leadership from the executive within departments to drive the various Lab implementation plans. A further 15% were unsure and only 14% felt that there had been an adequate level of leadership. An oblique sense was expressed that currently government systems and processes lack the flexibility and adaptability to integrate an innovation that demands a "business unusual" mindset.

In summation, already economically precarious, the majority of the labs has been impacted by the countries' protracted economic crisis. An analysis of the lab performance from inception to this juncture, directs that the majority of the labs are still lagging behind their targets which casts doubt that under the prevailing conditions, the envisaged outputs and outcomes targets will be realised before 2030.

1.7.3 To what extent has the Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism inculcated the "business unusual" approach in government?

The BFR as articulated in Malaysia was an approach to service delivery acceleration that was premised on the capacity of government sectors to change their delivery modalities by building a consensus for multisectoral, multi-stakeholder change, speeding up planning and implementation processes, creating efficiencies and cutting back on red tapes. The ultimate goal was to change the attitude and mentality of public officials towards service delivery in a way that at the end they should embrace a "business unusual" approach to service delivery. Several respondents, with a total of 45% felt that Operation Phakisa had failed to promote "business unusual" as a practice within government, and 18% were unsure. While a total of 33% of the respondents felt that the "business unusual" approach had to some extent been successful and only 4% were convinced of its value.

Some of the respondents mentioned that efforts to strengthen public institutions have in the past decade suffered setbacks because the political context has not been ready for change or conducive to transparency, accountability, and good governance issues. The sustainability of accelerated service delivery mechanisms was essentially at risk from the outset in this context. Efforts to improve service delivery in any country are embedded in the prevailing socio-economic and political context and the confluence of forces that exist at a given time, and for many respondents the prevailing circumstances in 2013 and subsequent years were not amenable to an intervention such as Operation Phakisa. A common thread of the main barriers identified was the lack of continuity of

public policies and priorities from one government administration to the next, as well as the high rotation of middle management and technical staff that affects government institutions.

1.7.4 What lessons can be learned from the implementation of Operation Phakisa in South Africa?

Realising the ambitious targets established by the Operation Phakisa Labs was always going to be dependent on the availability of adequate financial and human resources for planning, delivery, and monitoring. A key constraint facing implementing partners has been the lack of funding to implement projects and this is further compounded by the fact that resources are now limited in the public sector currently. The initial conceptualisation was premised on the notion that government was going to avail resources to the early phases of implementation and that this would then catalyse and unlock private sector investment. Thereafter, government would gradually divest and permit "crowding in of the" private sector. The sustainability of the methodology hinges on this assumption. As a result, the government needs to have access to sufficient budget to fund the initial phases of the initiatives.

In the Malaysian context, PEMANDU's success critically hinged on its access to the Prime Minister and his direct involvement in the routines and practices introduced by the unit. This does not appear to have happened in the Operation Phakisa case in South Africa. On the other hand, international literature points to the fact that many of the experiments in establishing tailored Delivery Units are associated with charismatic and visionary political leaders (either at the national or sub-national level). These leaders often have a specific stake (either reputational and/or electoral) in the manifest success of the Delivery Units and the achievement of development priorities. When these leaders are no longer in office the impetus is often lost and new leadership may not place the same value on the approach. In the case of Operation Phakisa, such dynamics may be playing a role in the lagging performance of many of the Labs. In South Africa, when President Ramaphosa took office in February 2018, replacing President Zuma who had initiated Operation Phakisa, there was an unfounded perception that he may not want to continue providing centre of government support for an initiative developed by his predecessor. While some of the Labs continued to operate post-Zuma, their impact appears to have been different – with evidence suggesting that still functioning Labs have been more focused on the way the civil service operates than its immediate delivery on key priorities using the BFR methodology. It is unclear within government circles whether Operation Phakisa is expected to be a short-term intervention linked to a particular administration or whether in some form or other it becomes a permanent feature at the centre of government. What was obvious from most of the engagements the evaluation team had, was the feeling that Operation Phakisa had lost its impetus and was being overtaken by other strategic initiatives. One of respondents mentioned that:

> *"Each subsequent leader obsesses with his own legacy and doesn't seem to want to continue with a programme from his predecessor, which is the root of our implementation challenges. So, every time a new administration comes in, there is something new coming in even though the previous one that was agreed upon with the same ruling party hasn't been concluded.'* - ***Respondent 67.***

1.8 Recommendations

While recognising the unique purpose, priority focus and composition of each of the Labs the scope of this evaluation was to look at Operation Phakisa in its entirety, and the recommendations are therefore generic across all Labs rather than specific to any individual Lab. The below table shows the recommendations suggested as a way forward for the Operation Phakisa methodology:

Table 1: Recommendations and required actions

Track 1: Government should take a strategic decision to phase out Operation Phakisa as a standalone initiative in a structured manner and absorb its functioning parts into line department programmes.	
Recommendation	**Required Action**
R1: Phase out Operation Phakisa	Government at cabinet level should use the findings of this evaluation to take a strategic decision to phase out (terminate) Operation Phakisa as a standalone development initiative and absorb its more successful and functioning components into relevant line department programmes or migrate these components into other currently operational strategic interventions.
R2. Streamline National Efforts to Meet Priorities	To avoid a dilution of resources and effort, the government should make a strategic decision to integrate OP into components of other national strategic development initiatives to create one or two highly focused and well-resourced responses to key national priorities.
R3. Develop a phased strategy to migrate Operation Phakisa activities	DPME ISU in collaboration with sector experts and other key stakeholders should come up with a strategy to infuse the three feet plans and associated implementation activities into other Departmental/ Sector Plans and use the sector monitoring branch to monitor implementation. The concept of "business unusual" should continue to be infused into the operational culture of departments – and perhaps even branded as a set of working principles similar to the Batho Pele model.
R4. Redeploy key personnel	Government officials who have been working full time on OP activities must be redeployed to other lines of duty within government where they can effectively utilise the expertise, knowledge and skills gained through their involvement with OP.
R5. Intergovernmental and Multi-Sectoral Coordination	The positive lessons learned from the establishment and operations of the Operation Phakisa Labs should be documented and shared as good practice for future initiatives that require inter-departmental collaboration, or multi-sector engagement. This will ensure the maintenance of relevance and commitment, as well as the potential sustainability of the tools developed.

1.9 Conclusion

1.9.1 Relevance - the project is strategically placed within an overall strategic goal of addressing longer-term solution to the challenges faced in the delivery of the NDP priorities. The Operation Phakisa methodology theory was appropriate and relevant in general terms, but could have been more defined, explicit, clear regarding the financial protocols in the majority of the Labs and better linked to other government processes after the design and inception phase. Although there are areas of improvement, in general, the methodology is relevant, aligned to the NDP, needs of the citizens and the general economic environment of South Africa.

Further to the point of relevance, the initial design of the methodology was not based on a Theory of Change (ToC) as confirmed by KII findings. Usually, a ToC should be discussed and agreed by key actors (both in the intervention design and in the evaluation processes) so that it represents a shared understanding that describes the intervention. In essence, a TOC reflects a negotiated understanding or interpretation of the project intervention logic – it is both contextual and temporal. It should also be regarded as dynamic - subject to changes / modifications as contexts change over time. As such, a lack of a ToC created from the early stages exhibits a narrowed understanding for the interventions. However, given the strong understanding of the DPME ISU officials and the methodology stakeholders of the realities and needs on the ground and given the continuous engagement with beneficiaries, additional findings and causal and effects linkages were identified.

1.9.2 Effectiveness - Overall, findings indicate that the Operation Phakisa methodology has been well received, and in particular, Operation Phakisa's integrated and systematic multi-sectoral intervention helped to overcome some logistical implementation obstacles, promote scale-up and synergistically maximize the effect of each sector, leveraging the strengths and diverse approaches in different initiatives. Unfortunately, several programmatic problems associated with funding constraints and absence of political support that are critical to ensure success were identified. According to the analysis conducted as part of this evaluation, several of the weaknesses in administrative efficiency and implementation can be traced back to a lack of adequate planning, follow up and contingency measures to address resource constraints. The methodology for example, reflects well on commitments and agreements made during the Lab process but it does not establish how and where there are going to ensure uninterrupted supply of financial resources to implement the activities and plans.

1.9.3 Efficiency - As mentioned throughout the present evaluation report, most of the Labs or focus areas do not have a dedicated budget apportioned to them for implementation. The implementing departments are required to redirect their existing funds which has a negative impact to other equally significant programs. This is quite different from how PEMANDU in Malaysia where we learnt the methodology from operates. One of the respondents mentioned that there are doubts if National Treasury is sufficiently supportive of the Operation Phakisa process. Realising ambitions targets espoused by Operation Phakisa depends on the availability of adequate financial and human resources for planning, delivery, and monitoring. A key constraint facing implementing partners is the lack funding to implement projects. The initial conceptualisation was premised on the notion that government was going to avail financial resources to the early phases of implementation and that this would culminate in unlocking private sector investment, thereafter, government would gradually divest and permit the private sector to crowd-in funding.

1.9.4 Emergency Impact - The NDP Chapter 13, details a comprehensive vision for a well capacitated state, underscoring coordination, cooperation, and synergy across all three spheres of government. In South Africa, many of our service delivery challenges and reforms such as inequality, basic health care, food security etc are complex interventions. Operation Phakisa has demonstrated the value of using a structured approach to tracking the performance of such complex programmes even within the constraints of available capacity, expertise, and governance arrangements. In addition, an

achievement of Operation Phakisa so far has been the ability to address disjointed planning and working in silos, particularly, the establishment of intergovernmental platforms to streamline work in a systematic and cost-efficient manner. Labs have been a relevant problem-solving platform, ushering consensus building and bringing various stakeholders together with new ways of thinking. This is a significant departure from a system that is fundamentally fragmented, lacking inter-agency trust with almost no effective coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, while the aim behind bringing a 'new way' to deliver government programmes may be relevant and urgent for the South African context, it is likely to continue being enervated if the relevant officials, particularly those at the apex of the organisations at ministerial and DG level, do not have sufficient motivation to adapt to this way of working and adjust their plans and processes accordingly.

1.9.5 Sustainability - Lack of continuity of public policies and priorities from one government administration to the next, as well as the high rotation of middle management and technical staff is a threat to sustainability of government interventions. Sustainability in this context connotes the ability of the Operation Phakisa to sustain the flow of benefits over time. In addition, threats to sustainability abound as sustaining the Operation Phakisa methodology may require frequent adjustments in investment patterns and forms of organization, especially in the framework of an integrated and volatile global economy.

A range of views have been expressed on scaling up and these entail different perspectives on supporting government capacity to deliver. On the other hand, there is a view about embedding reforms successfully in some of the Labs to learn how processes work well, and then scaling up based on what is known from those initiatives, taking account of the complexities of local and national contexts, and appropriately building the capacity of government capacity to deliver. However, the findings of this evaluation indicate that Operation Phakisa as a flagship presidential initiative is unlikely to continue in its current format, but what is more likely is that the concept of accelerating service delivery may continue to resonate in departments and within other priority government initiatives.

2. PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

2.1 Social Context

Despite its progressive development agenda, the South African government has struggled to implement many of its social and development interventions. Significant efforts have been made to develop policies, plans and strategies but the desired results have not always been achieved. While the Government has done much to address its most pressing development challenges, the triple threat of high unemployment, poverty and inequality remain as pressing as ever. Many of the challenges facing the government are well known, but structurally difficult to address. This emanates from the fact that government resources are constrained, the country has a narrow tax base that yields insufficient resources, and also has limited human capital that could enable the government to address its critical development challenges more comprehensively. Seeking service delivery solutions Government looked in 2013 at the Malaysian experiment with accelerated service delivery (Big Fast Results). Efforts to improve service delivery tend to come from the national government level, and many of the initiatives are potentially useful but the impact tends to decrease as they reach provincial and municipal levels. Under South Africa's devolved system of government, local government has been mandated to deliver quality sustainable services that communities require to maintain and improve their welfare, but it is at this level that service delivery failures have been most acutely experienced.

In 2012, the National Development Plan (NDP) recognised that the persistent and intransigent challenges of inadequate service delivery were a critical area of intervention for strengthening the capacity of the "developmental state" to deliver equitable services to all its citizens. There have been many individual initiatives, but there has been a tendency within the public sector to move from one strategy or policy initiative to the next – often a result of political pressure. These frequent changes have created instability in organisational structures and policy approaches that further strain limited capacity. The search for a quick fix has diverted attention from more fundamental and long-term national developmental priorities. New initiatives to address individual development problems are often slowed down by bureaucracy and implemented without adequate consideration being given to the cumulative longer-term consequences of poorly designed and funded interventions and questionable stewardship of public resources. Based on its understanding of the "delivery unit" model that has been experimented with in countries as diverse as the UK, Chile, Tanzania, and Malaysia the Government of South Africa at the time (2013) believed that this approach, translated into the domesticated "Operation Phakisa", could serve as the ideal service delivery transmission mechanism for implementing key development priorities within the NDP by 2030. Its envisaged role was to serve as a fast-results delivery mechanism involving the setting of clear plans and targets, monitoring of progress, and making results public.

2.2 About DPME

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) was established in January 2010, initially to launch the outcomes approach to planning. This has involved managing the M&E of government's top priority outcomes approach and facilitating, influencing, and supporting effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of government programmes aimed at improving service delivery, outcomes, and the developmental impact on society. The focus of DPME is on the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 using the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) as an implementation and monitoring tool. Critical government programmes are

periodically evaluated to determine the efficiency and effectiveness, as well as their impact, on society.

Since the inception of Operation Phakisa in 2013, the intervention has been closely monitored by DPME which has also been responsible for the overall management of the Operation Phakisa methodology and the coordination of the work of the seven Labs. Through the Operation Phakisa Unit (OPU), later to become the Intervention Support Unit (ISU), DPME was also tasked with the performance monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Operation Phakisa initiatives to ensure that the departments leading various Phakisa Labs reported regularly on progress made with regards to implementation. The custodianship of the Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism has been based in the DPME, so the ISU is also responsible for the development and maintenance of the public reporting system and related infrastructure. In pursuit of fulfilling the monitoring mandate as part of the DPME, the ISU conducts independent monitoring of delivery in implementing agencies. The ISU was also tasked with knowledge management related to the work of the Labs.

2.3 Programme Background

Operation Phakisa was identified by the South African government as a planning and implementation methodology in 2014. While modelled around Malaysia's "Big Fast Results" (BFR) and the central role of a Delivery Unit called PEMANDU, this delivery mechanism was domesticated to the South African context and reflected the government's commitment to deliver priorities outlined in the NDP 2030 in a faster, more efficient, more effective, and sustainable way. Operation Phakisa, designed as a result-oriented delivery mechanism, was seen as an opportunity to elevate planning for results in implementation plans based on the agreed solutions that were evidence based and that had clear and measurable timelines and targets. The appeal of the BFR Methodology to the Government of South Africa was that it was framed as a holistic and evidence-based transformation approach designed to deliver a specific goal within a stipulated timeframe. It was premised on the notion of transformational leadership that could enable fundamental change in the way that government conducted its business and emphasised the powerful enabling role of the "centre of government" in driving transformational change through BFR.

The intended aim was a comprehensive paradigm shift from business as usual to **"business unusual"**, and an embedding of accelerated delivery as the new normal for the public service. This "business unusual" mindset was regarded as adaptive to the different stages in the team's development throughout the transformation journey, where a more directive style was appropriate in the early planning stages, but which would evolve into a more empowering style as implementation geared up. Operation Phakisa was designed to be a cross-sector, multi-stakeholder programme where various stakeholders could engage with each other and pool complementary expertise to implement initiatives and develop concrete actions to address constraints to delivery in a prioritised focused area for public accountability and transparency. In the period 2013 to 2021 seven Operation Phakisa Labs were undertaken with the one consistent objective of assisting the country to address and overcome the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality:

- Oceans Economy.
- Health (Ideal Clinics).
- Education (ICT in Education).
- Mining.

- Biodiversity.
- Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.
- Chemicals and Waste Economies.

Following the convening of the first Operation Phakisa delivery Lab in July 2014 (the Oceans Economy) six more Labs were convened in rapid succession between 2014 and 2017.

Underpinning the purpose of this implementation evaluation is the concern that the approach has not been working optimally and that its perceived lack of impact has raised concerns within government about the cost and utility of the Operation Phakisa model. Findings of an evaluation of the Oceans Economy and observations by the Operation Phakisa Unit suggest that the speedy delivery which the Operation Phakisa intervention envisaged has often not been realised and, in most cases, this has been due to human and other factors. There is also a growing concern that there is no substantive evidence of the impact each of the delivery Labs had made so far. Government resources are increasingly scarce, and the current structure and format of these Labs is extremely expensive to convene and maintain. Additional concerns relate to the perception that the initial 'business unusual' approach has in fact lapsed into the routine administrative and operational functions of lead Operation Phakisa departments.

3. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation has utilised a pragmatic paradigm that blends the interpretivism paradigm and positivism paradigm using a mix of data collection methods. The methodological approach used qualitative methods (sampling, data collection and analysis techniques) that were applied together with the quantitative methods.

3.1 Evaluation Purpose

According to the South Africa's National Evaluation Policy Framework (2011), implementation evaluations aim to "evaluate whether an intervention's operational mechanisms support the achievement of the objectives or not and understand why". The overall purpose of this evaluation has been to provide information to DPME, project partners and other stakeholders with evidence on the programme results achieved so far, as to what is working or not working, and what lessons have been learned in terms of the resources allocated over the past seven years of implementation.

3.2 Key evaluation questions

The approach adopted in this evaluation is to use a set of questions to focus and structure this implementation evaluation and is fundamentally about answering these questions. This evaluation was framed by a set of overarching evaluation questions that yielded the kind of evidence that enabled the evaluators to answer the key evaluation questions and to make substantive recommendations. The overarching evaluation questions posed were:

1. *To what extent has the Operation Phakisa planning and implementation methodology been appropriately designed for the achievement of its objectives?*
2. *Three years after the convening of the seven Operation Phakisa delivery Labs, are the various Operation Phakisa Labs likely to achieve the intended outputs and outcomes?*
3. *To what extent has the Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism inculcated the "business unusual" approach in government?*

4. *What lessons can be learned from the implementation of Operation Phakisa in South Africa?*

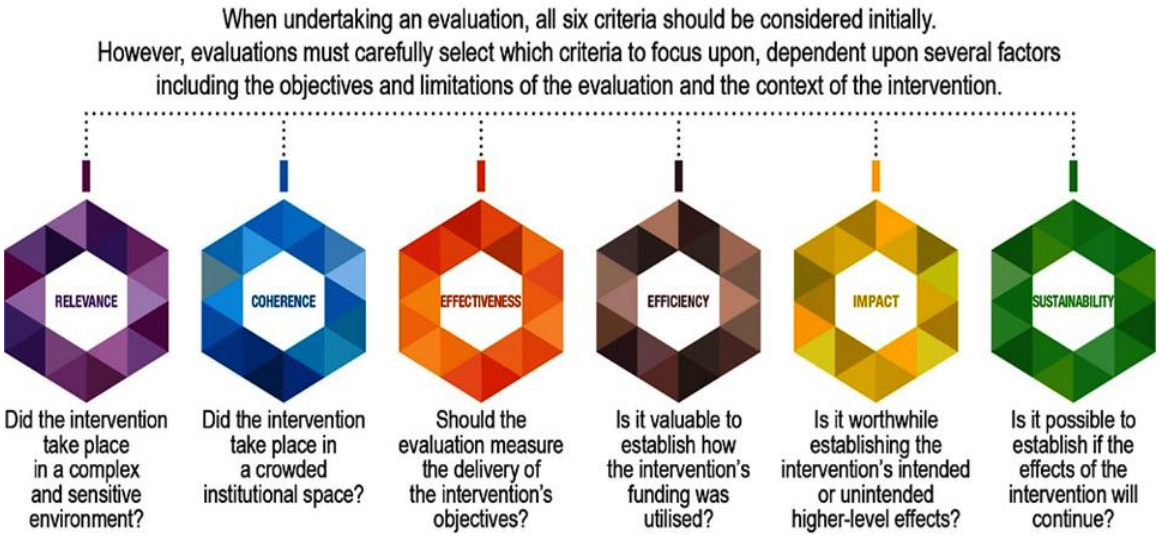
3.3 Evaluation Design and Approach

The evaluation approach that was undertaken in this evaluation is the Utilisation Focused Approach. Complementing the UFE, the evaluation team undertook a theory-based approach as it sets out to describe and test the theory of change for the Operation Phakisa, to validate the connections and assumptions across each level of the underlying results chain, and to identify a set of indicators which can be used to monitor the performance of the programme against its theoretical framework. This report is based on methodologies that incorporate both quantitative and qualitative approaches that consider various dimensions of the programme.

3.4 Evaluation criteria

Drawing on the OECD DAC[6] evaluation model the purpose of these evaluation criteria is linked to the purpose of this evaluation. In the case of the Operation Phakisa implementation evaluation, these criteria have been used to enable the evaluators to determine the merit, worth or significance of the methodology. The evaluators worked with these criteria to assess how the Operation Phakisa methodology could, based on the already achieved outcomes, be made more strategic and which technical areas of operation could be improved. Figure 1 below summarises the criteria applied in this evaluation.

Figure 1: OECD:DAC evaluation criteria



Source: OECD

The evaluation team is aware that the definitions of the criteria should be understood within the broader context of how South Africa's public sector functions.

3.5 Implementation of the evaluation

The evaluation was conducted over the course of six distinct phases, as shown in Table 1 below.

[6] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

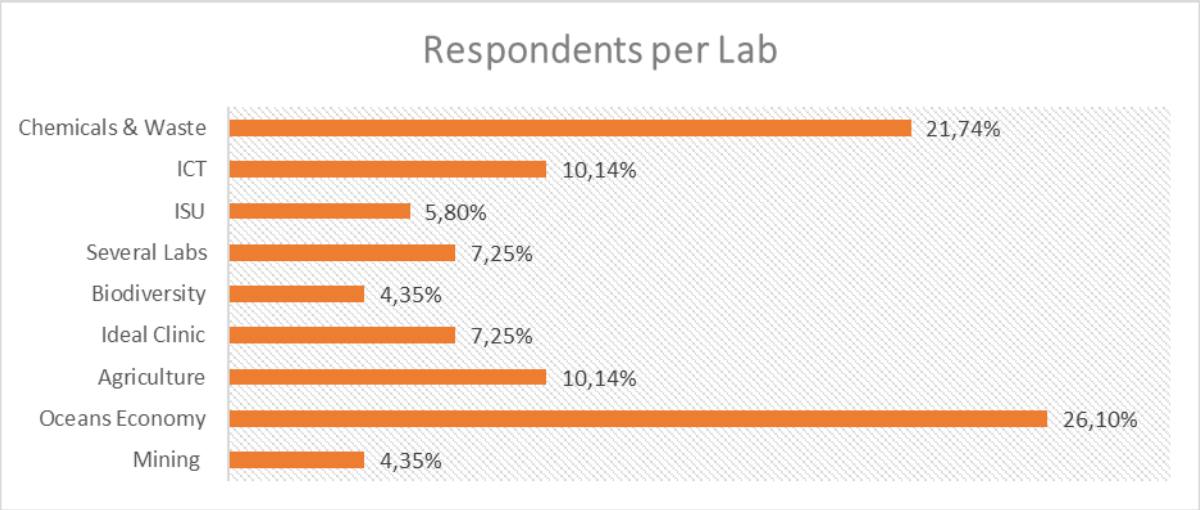
Table 1: Map of evaluation phases

Activities	Outputs
Phase 1 – Inception	
l Inception meeting l Literature Review and Document Analysis l Stakeholder Analysis l Submission of an inception report	• Inception report
Phase 2 – Literature Review and Programme Documents analysis	
l Review literature and international benchmarking l Stakeholder Analysis	• Stakeholder map • Literature review
Phase 3 – Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework	
l Theory of change workshop with DPME and Steering Committee l Develop Evaluation Framework l Develop evaluation instruments Develop the Report Structure	• Theory of change • Evaluation framework • Report structure • Evaluation Instruments
Phase 4 – Field Work and Field Work Report	
l General key informant interviews l Survey	• Field work report
Phase 5 – Analysis and Synthesis	
l Thematic Analysis and Summary of key findings l Qualitative and quantitative data analysis l Development of recommendations l Validation workshop	• Validation workshop • Value assessment
Phase 6 – Reporting and Close-Out	
l Draft evaluation report l Present to the Steering Committee and receive comments l Incorporate comments l Final report and presentation	• Draft final report (full and 1/5/25) and PowerPoint • Final report (full and 1/5/25) and PowerPoint Presentation

3.6 Sampling Strategy

The sheer number of people, departments and organisations who have been involved in Operation Phakisa is enormous, so the evaluators used a sampling approach for key informants. Purposive sampling of the officials and different stakeholders involved or who were involved in Operation Phakisa was used as the preferred approach. The approach was useful to provide descriptive, interpretative, and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon, a cost effective and time effective approach that accommodated a very small population to work with. A total of seventy-four (74) key informant interviews were conducted online from November 2021 to March 2022. As shown in Figure 2 below most of the respondents (26.10 %) are from Oceans Economy Lab, followed by a total of 21,74% from Chemical and Waste Lab. Unfortunately, despite numerous documented efforts, the evaluation team did not manage to find the desired number of respondents from the Biodiversity and Mining Labs.

Figure 2: Percentage of evaluation respondents per Lab n=74



3.6.1 Survey

An additional component of the fieldwork was a survey. The rationale for including a survey was that it would allow the evaluation team to reach a broader group of stakeholders and generate quantitative data, although the limitations of this type of survey were noted. After consideration and mutual agreement, the DPME sent out the ninety-three (93) email request in December 2022 and the link to the online survey to the database of individuals involved in the Operation Phakisa. Survey responses were anonymised, and data collection was managed independently by Citofield. Another component of the fieldwork was a survey.

3.6.2 Focus group

One focus group discussion was conducted online with stakeholders from the mining lab on 14 January 2022. The focus group comprised of four (4) colleagues. Unfortunately, despite requests and reminders that were sent to the other stakeholders in the mining lab, they did not attend the focus group discussion.

3.7 Process of analysis

The collected data was analysed using both qualitative (through AtlasTI) and quantitative techniques (using Excel). The process of analysing qualitative data began by confirming the collected data by means of ensuring that all the pre-selected participants were interviewed with all questions answered and verifying if the pre-identified documents were analysed as per the evaluation criteria. Once the data was confirmed, detailed notes were made to decide on the valuable pieces of information as they emanated leading to decoding themes, creating categories and sub-categories.

3.8 Triangulation

To ensure the validity of the results obtained during the evaluation, a triangulation methodology was employed. The advantage of the triangulation method was that it provided for in-depth and richer data sets by integrating multiple data from various sources through collection, examination, comparison, and interpretation. The evaluation team triangulated the results of the quantitative and qualitative approaches within and across both components of the evaluation. The evaluation team used quantitative data drawn from programme reports, departments datasets and the survey conducted for this evaluation, information drawn from a literature review, and qualitative data derived from interviews and discussions with a range of different participants in different Labs or

those with knowledge and experience of the Operation Phakisa delivery methodology. All these sources of information, combined with iterative reflections within the team, comprised the three points of the triangulation process.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

The implementation evaluation of the Operation Phakisa aimed to be transparent and accountable for the information provided by the respondents. At every key informant interview, respondents were briefed on the purpose of the evaluation and were asked to give consent as to whether they wished to proceed with the interview or not without being coerced. This was done to ensure that consent was obtained from participants after an informed understanding of the scope of the evaluation. Clear agreements on the ground rules about attribution (e.g., whether they could be personally identified, and whether they could be directly quoted or paraphrased) was requested and granted in all the interviews conducted. In addition, the survey and focus group respondents were also requested to give their consent to be interviewed. A consent form was sent to them, with detailed explanation of how their confidentiality was going to be ensured and that their participation was voluntary.

3.10 Limitations

Several limitations in this evaluation stem from the staged design of the assessment, which was based on a combination of discourse analysis and theory-driven content analysis of data from a range of sources. Triangulation has been used within and across different stages of investigation and different data sources. Each of these stages in the evaluation have been potentially subject to errors and bias in interpretation. The reliance on primary online interviews for the key informant interviews meant that statements could not be evaluated with reference to actual observations, and that non-verbal cues could not be recorded or interpreted[7]. However, according to some evaluators, this also created a sense of safety and confidence to address questions that might otherwise have been challenging. The evaluation team struggled to have performance data from different labs despite several reminders and follow ups and it should also be noted that despite numerous reminders the response to the survey was poor.

4. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE.

4.1 Review documents and collect data.

Over the eight (8) years of its programmatic work, Operation Phakisa has generated a substantial quantity of documentation, including quarterly reports, evaluation reports, M&E reports, programme related reports and other governance-related materials. In conducting the traditional literature review, the evaluation team built up a set of relevant resources that informed the literature review using meta synthesis. This approach allowed the evaluation team to combine the findings of the studies and identify their common core elements and themes. In collecting information, the evaluation team consulted a variety of sources, including the publications of governmental and

[7] At the time of the interview process COVID-19 restrictions meant that most government officials were working remotely.

multilateral organisations, journals, books, and the publications of think tanks. The evaluation team analysed these programme and organisational documents. Moreover, the literature review process included papers from academic journals, research theses, and grey literature (including published government reports and publications from NGOS and internal Operation Phakisa publications). The evaluation consulted a comprehensive range of documents as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Category of documents reviewed for the evaluation

Category	Source	Usage
Operation Phakisa Background	✓ Operation Phakisa website ✓ Online ✓ Operation Phakisa Blueprint	This assisted the evaluators to have a detailed understanding of the Operation Phakisa methodology and what it stands for.
Programme background and implementation	✓ Operation Phakisa Lab Concept notes ✓ The Operation Phakisa progress reports and slides ✓ Implementation Evaluation of the Oceans Economy	This was reviewed to understand the institutional, contextual, and other factors of the programme and comprehend the issues the programme is aiming to address.
Literature Review	✓ Google scholar search ✓ Operation Phakisa website ✓ Lab Reports	This assisted the evaluators to fully understand the intervention under study and informed the design of the evaluation

4.2 Findings from the Literature Review

Operation Phakisa was designed to be a cross-sector programme where various stakeholders could engage and collaborate to implement initiatives and concrete actions to address constraints to delivery in a prioritised focused area. A key element of Operation Phakisa was to strengthen cooperation between government, organised business, civil society, and organised labour. This included working on detailed problem analysis, priority setting, intervention planning, innovation, and delivery envisaged to be impactful, fast tracked, characterised by the business unusual, hands-on approach that is results driven to ensure attainment of the projected outcomes.

4.2.1 Understanding Operation Phakisa

Operation Phakisa was designed to be a cross-sector programme where various stakeholders could engage and collaborate to implement initiatives and concrete actions to address constraints to delivery in a prioritised focused area. It also committed participating government departments to the principles of public accountability and transparency. A key element of Operation Phakisa was to strengthen cooperation between government, organised business, civil society, and organised labour. This included working on detailed problem analysis, priority setting, intervention planning, innovation, and delivery. Furthermore, DPME (2020), acknowledges that the Operation Phakisa projects were envisaged to be impactful, fast tracked, characterised by the business unusual, hands-on approach that is results driven to ensure attainment of the projected outcomes.

According to Barber (2016), a delivery unit is supposed to lead to cultural change in government and throughout delivery chains such that institutional buzzwords become “ambitious, focus, clarity, urgency and irreversibility.” In simpler terms, Operation Phakisa was supposed to be a pledge-fulfilment tool that would help the government to address the bounded rationality problem of policy makers by proposing a simple plan with a set of clear goals, prioritization, tracking of key metrics and the delivery capacity to act quickly. In essence, the success of a Lab hinges on the ability to facilitate

substantive engagement of citizens in defining goals and targets, as well as flexibility to change, rather than a vertical delivery pattern.

As mentioned above, one of the most important tools of the Operation Phakisa methodology is target setting – prioritized sets of measurable, ambitious, and time-bound goals and trajectories. A projected progression towards these goals creates a tight link between planned interventions and expected outcomes. According to Mouton (2021), setting targets and developing trajectories are a central component of the BFR approach. In the Malaysian context the view was that real transformation began with setting an 'impossible' target or what they called 'the game of the impossible. As lead agents PEMANDU encouraged their BFR teams and clients to "shoot for the stars because even if they miss, they'll at least land on the moon"[8]. Once the target is set, the next step is to plan a detailed action plan, prioritising the initiatives that would move the needle quickly. While nearly all public sector organizations set targets (most notably in the departmental APPs) many of these targets are imprecise or unmeasurable or they simply operate under unclear time horizons. The centrality of stringent target setting within the BFR approach is that it establishes the milestones for accelerated programme delivery.

According to DPME (2021), a total of seven (7) Labs have been undertaken so far, with varying degrees of success. Moreover, these seven Operation Phakisa Labs were undertaken with one consistent objective of assisting the country to address and overcome the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. All the Labs have had their own individual Lab aspirations, which have been collectively aimed at contributing to the targets set in the NDP, in terms of contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), job creation and transformation (inequality). Following the convening of the first Operation Phakisa delivery Lab in July 2014 (the Oceans Economy) six more Labs were convened in rapid succession.

4.2.2 Learning from international experience

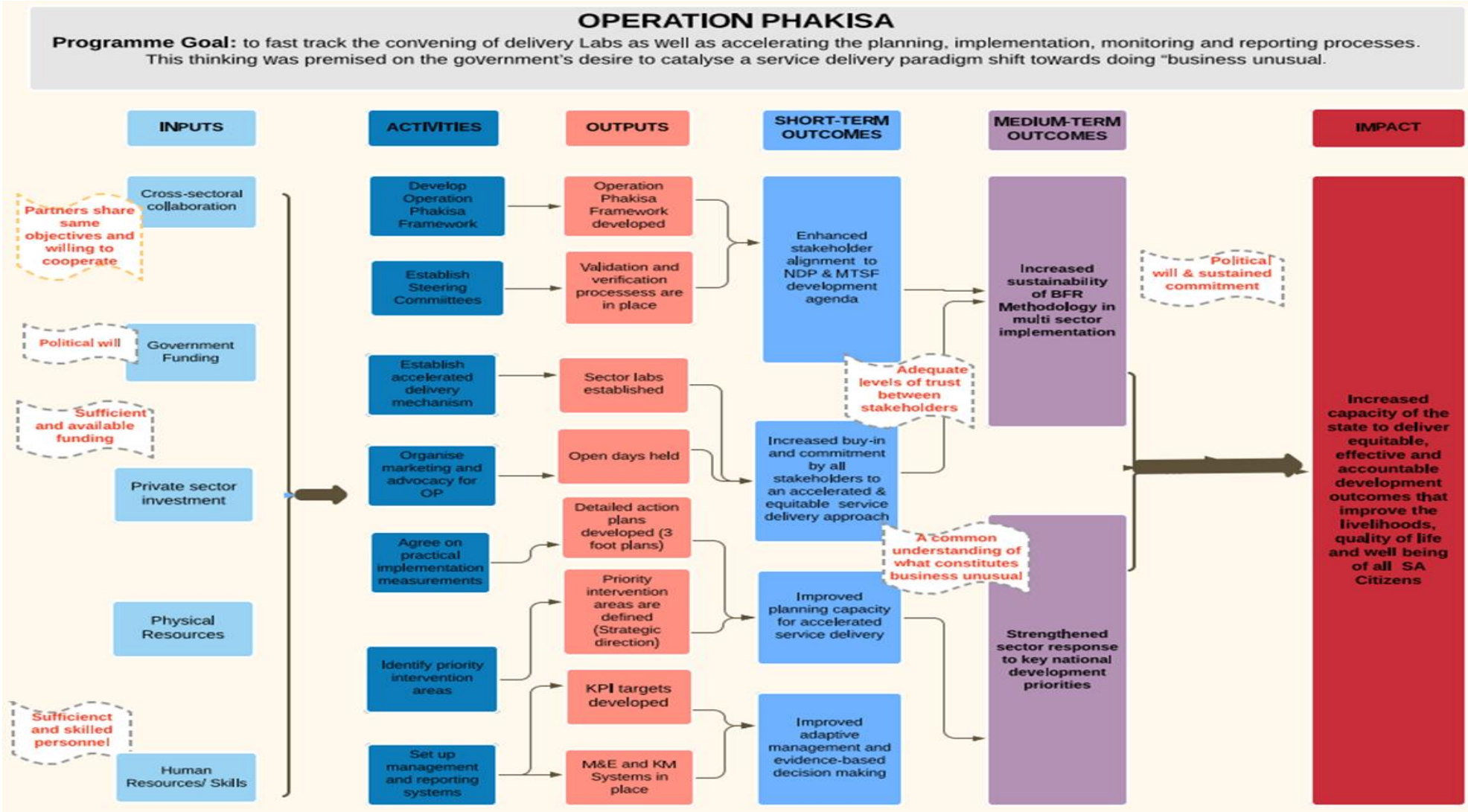
The conceptualisation of Operation Phakisa was based on the earlier experiences of other countries around the world – including the United Kingdom, the United States, India, Tanzania, Australia, and Malaysia – in attempting to fast-track government service delivery performance. In most cases these initiatives were driven by leaders determined to short-circuit the bureaucratic inertia and bottlenecks that typified government processes and to leverage specialised "Delivery Units" to accelerate the achievement of key government priorities. The Malaysian version of the Delivery Unit (the Performance Management and Delivery Unit or PEMANDU) became the leading exponent of this approach through its adoption of the BFR methodology. Delivery units are an innovation with both technical and cultural components, bringing new sets of technical approaches to resolving the planning and implementation barriers to getting results. They are designed to instil a culture of data-led decision making and to support governments in keeping their focus on top development priorities. The literature suggests that Delivery Units are often not institutionalized in any structured

[8] PEMAMANDU and Associates. The Game of the Impossible at https://pemandu.org/pursuing-big-fast-results-in-climate-change/

way within government systems, and that this appears to be a common factor for the delivery management units with mandates emanating from the highest political authority.

5. OPERATION PHAKISA THEORY OF CHANGE

Any evaluation of a programme like the Operation Phakisa needs to be informed by a theory of change (ToC). It is fundamental for a ToC to ensure that activities and their related outputs are properly aligned to the desired outcomes of a programme and make as significant a contribution as possible to the desired impact. This has implications for the project selection process as one of the key elements in the logic chain, as project selection must promote effectiveness and efficiency. The Operation Phakisa methodology would have benefitted from using a ToC from the outset as the basis for testing the strategies (coherence and linking of strategies) to ensure that they are logically sound and, ultimately, to adjust strategies and activities for greater programmatic impact. In this case, the ToC has been developed retrospectively around the activities and outputs that are outlined in the Operation Phakisa methodology. At the impact level Operation Phakisa seeks to bring about increased capacity of the state to deliver equitable, effective, and accountable development outcomes that improve the livelihoods, quality of life and wellbeing of all South African citizens as evidenced in the below diagram:


OPERATION PHAKISA
Programme Goal: to fast track the convening of delivery Labs as well as accelerating the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes. This thinking was premised on the government's desire to catalyse a service delivery paradigm shift towards doing "business unusual.
INPUTS
ACTIVITIES
OUTPUTS
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES
MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES
IMPACT
Cross-sectoral collaboration
Partners share same objectives and willing to cooperate
Political will
Government Funding
Sufficient and available funding
Private sector investment
Physical Resources
Sufficienct and skilled personnel
Human Resources/ Skills
Develop Operation Phakisa Framework
Establish Steering Commiittees
Establish accelerated delivery mechanism
Organise marketing and advocacy for OP
Agree on practical implementation measurements
Identify priority intervention areas
Set up management and reporting systems
Operation Phakisa Framework developed
Validation and verification processess are in place
Sector labs established
Open days held
Detailed action plans developed (3 foot plans)
Priority intervention areas are defined (Strategic direction)
KPI targets developed
M&E and KM Systems in place
Enhanced stakeholder alignment to NDP & MTSF development agenda
Adequate levels of trust between stakeholders
Increased buy-in and commitment by all stakeholders to an accelerated & equitable service delivery approach
A common understanding of what constitutes business unusual
Improved planning capacity for accelerated service delivery
Improved adaptive management and evidence-based decision making
Increased sustainability of BFR Methodology in multi sector implementation
Political will & sustained commitment
Strengthened sector response to key national development priorities
Increased capacity of the state to deliver equitable, effective and accountable development outcomes that improve the livelihoods, quality of life and well being of all SA Citizens

6. KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section presents results from the analysis of data generated through the survey, focus group discussions, interviews, and document analysis. Given that a mixed methods approach was followed, the analysis and presentation of the results is objectives based. The findings are based on the qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods conducted with different Operation Phakisa stakeholders and the DPME staff. These findings were triangulated with the findings from the desktop review (of project documents and relevant secondary literature) conducted by the evaluation team. The rating reflects the evaluation team's informed judgement, based on qualitatively or quantitatively captured indicators and data collected during the evaluation. The rating scale was applied to the applicable sub-questions, and then an overall rating was applied to each criterion.

6.1 To what extent has the Operation Phakisa planning and implementation methodology been appropriately designed?

Respondents were asked to reflect on the relevance of the Operation Phakisa planning and implementation methodology to South Africa's service delivery challenges and the extent to which South Africa's political context and institutional arrangements were ready for a model (BFR) that introduced a new public service delivery transmission mechanism. The following sections document the varied perspectives elicited from respondents.

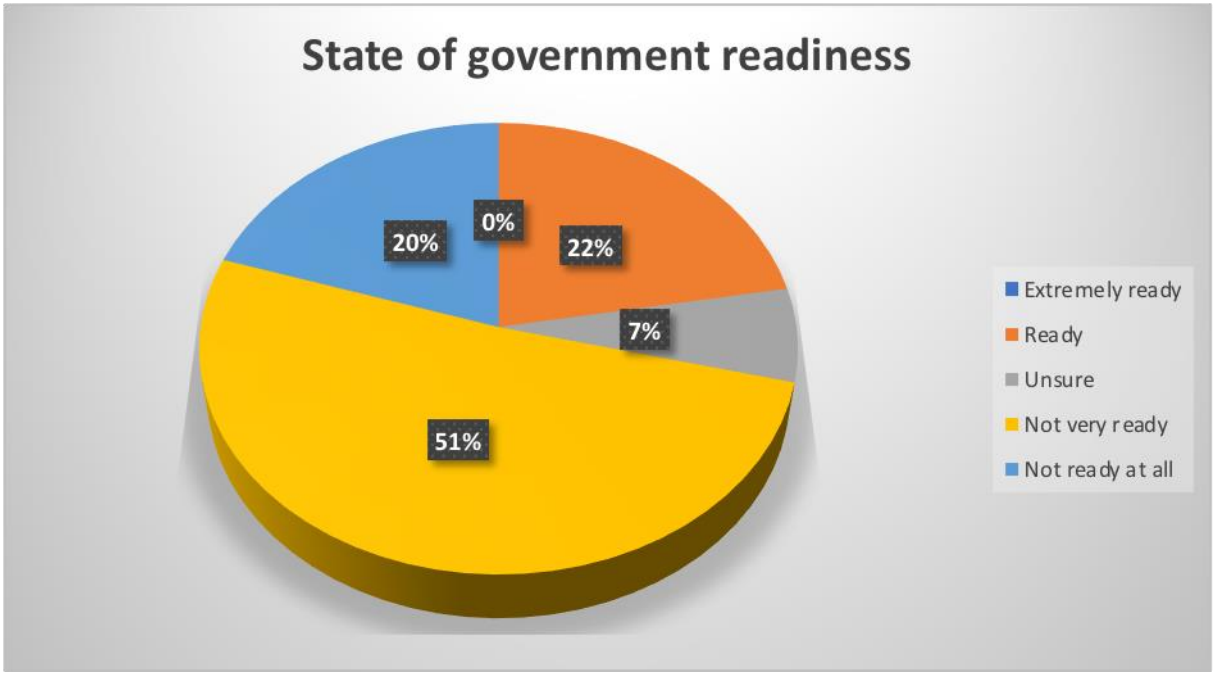
6.1.1 Level of Understanding of BFR

Most of the respondents had a common understanding that the adoption of the BFR methodology demonstrated the governments' commitment to deliver priorities set out in the NDP 2030 in a faster, more efficient, and more effective way by bringing a range of key stakeholders together for intensive and detailed practical planning to collaboratively translate solutions into detailed implementation plans. The response rate of 72% suggests that from the outset of the initiative, there was a fairly common understanding of the BFR methodology and its potential for accelerating service delivery.

6.1.2 Government Readiness

In the survey conducted, respondents were asked to reflect on whether they felt that the 2013/14 South Africa's political context and prevailing institutional arrangements were ready for a model such as the BFR that would initiate new delivery transmission mechanisms into government. A total of 71% of the respondents indicated that conditions were not ideal at the time for the introduction of such an innovative and transformational approach.

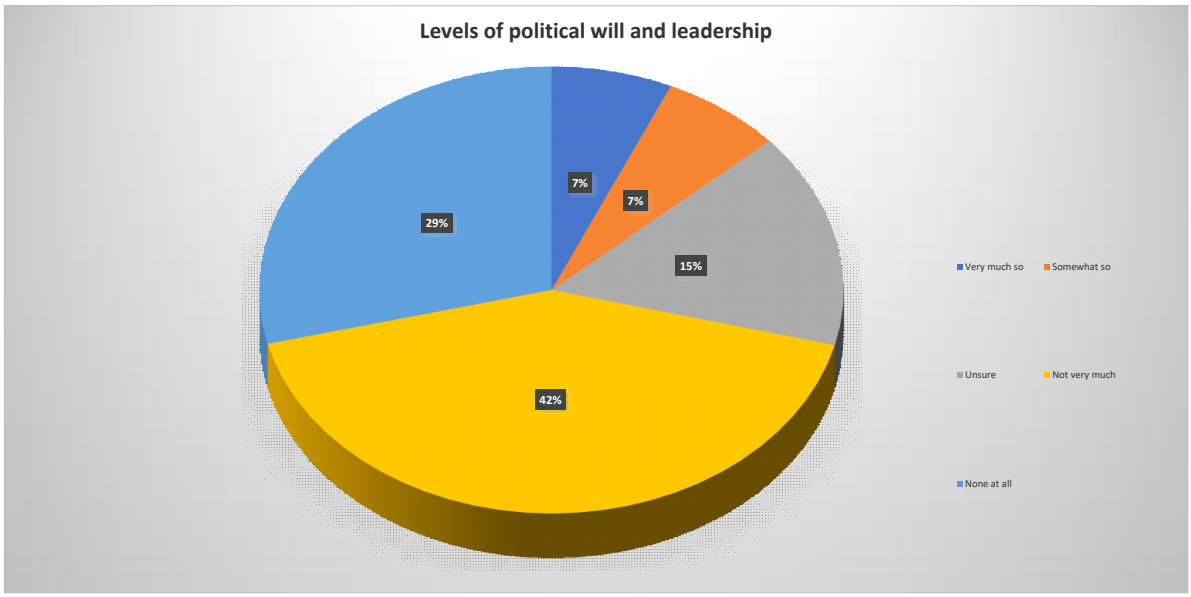
Figure 3: State of government readiness for BFR n=44



6.1.3 Political Will and Leadership

Survey respondents were asked whether they felt that there was strong political will and a commitment from the senior officials (Director Generals). The responses as indicated in Figure 4 below show that a total of 71% of the respondents felt that there has been a lack of political will in creating the optimal conditions for the implementation of Operation Phakisa and that there had also been a lack of leadership from the executive within departments to drive the various Lab implementation plans. A further 15% were unsure and only 14% felt that there had been an adequate level of leadership.

Figure 4: Level of political will and leadership n=44



The evidence suggests that there is no longer sufficient demonstrated political and executive will to support the BFR methodology as processes have gone back to the routine "business as usual" operations of the public service bureaucracy.

6.1.4 Levels of Support and Investment by Government Departments

Survey respondents were asked to assess the extent to which government departments involved in Operation Phakisa Labs were fully committed to the BFR approach and the following results were obtained:

Figure 5: Level of Commitment of government departments to BFR n=44

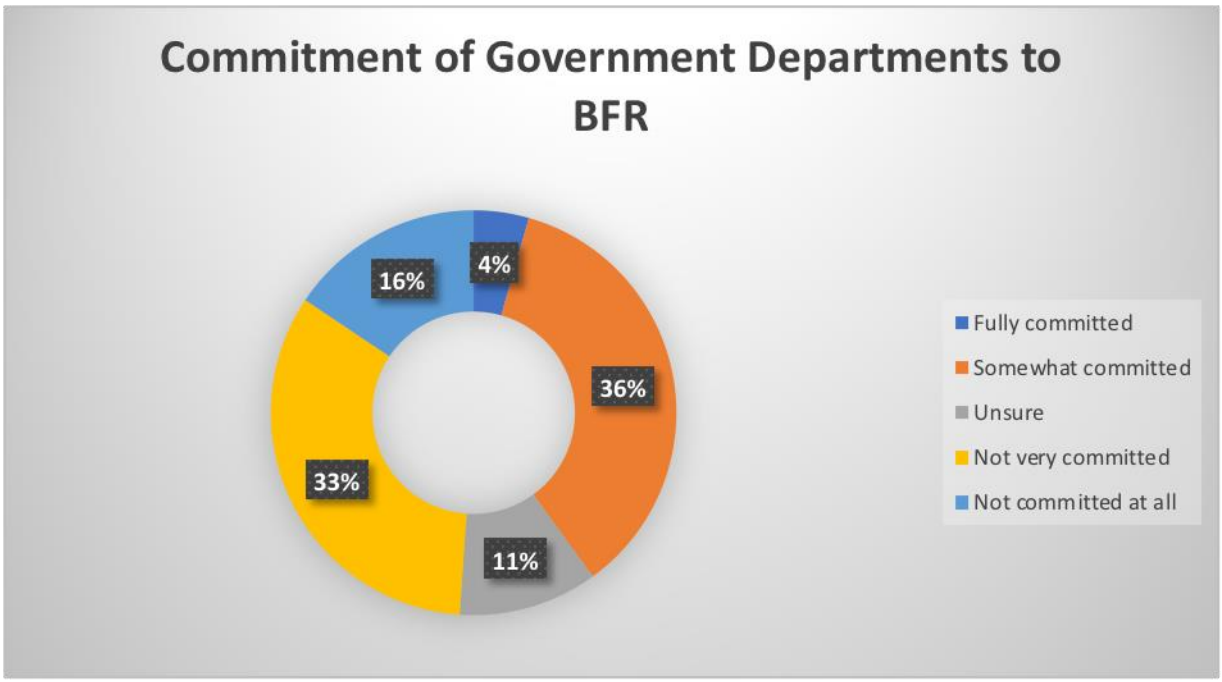
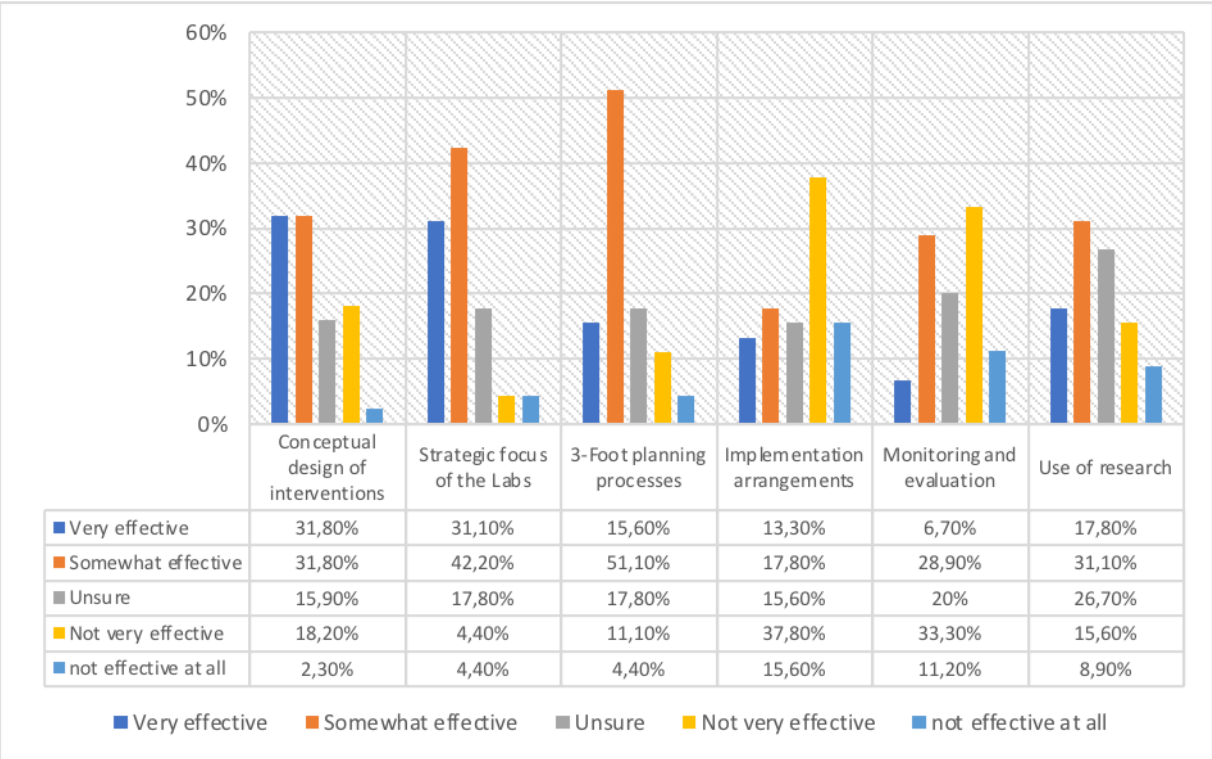


Figure 5 above shows that a total of 49% of the respondents indicated that they felt that several government departments had not fully invested themselves in the BFR approach, while a total of 40% felt that there had been an effort and commitment by government departments to align with the approach. The lack of commitment by some departments has also been exacerbated by the National Treasury's reluctance to commit financial resources to the methodology.

6.1.5 Lab Planning Processes

The responses indicate that the Labs were relatively effective in the design, strategic focus, and planning components of the Lab work, but much weaker on implementation arrangements. Responses regarding the effectiveness of the M&E and research elements of the Lab work were mixed as shown in Figure 6 below.

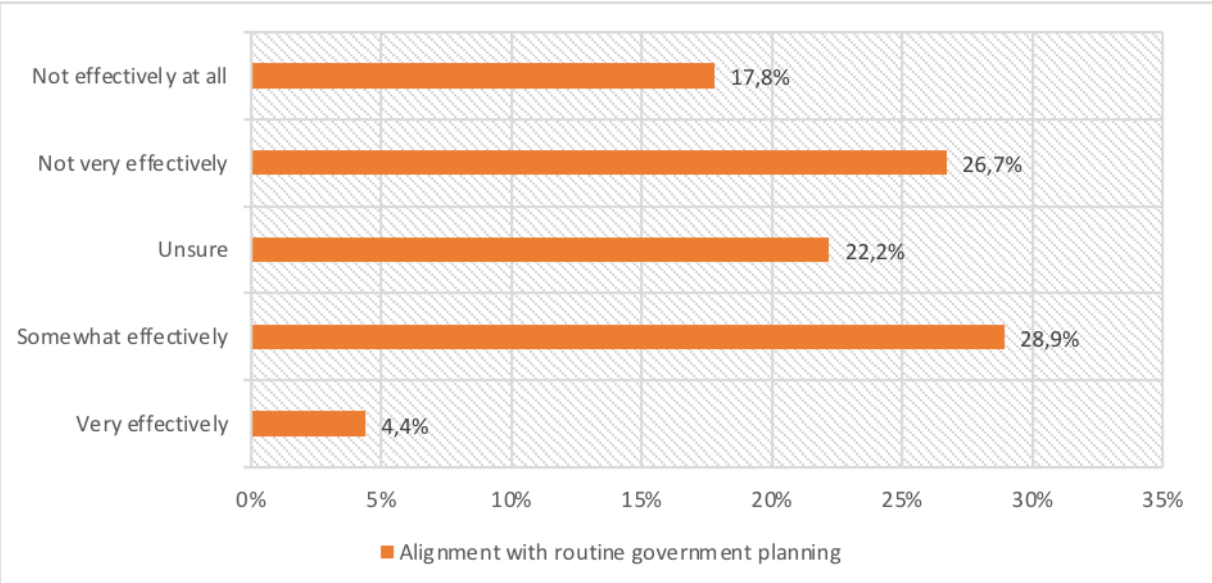
Figure 6: Perspectives on Operation Phakisa Lab planning processes n=44



	Conceptual design of interventions	Strategic focus of the Labs	3-Foot planning processes	Implementation arrangements	Monitoring and evaluation	Use of research
Very effective	31,80%	31,10%	15,60%	13,30%	6,70%	17,80%
Somewhat effective	31,80%	42,20%	51,10%	17,80%	28,90%	31,10%
Unsure	15,90%	17,80%	17,80%	15,60%	20%	26,70%
Not very effective	18,20%	4,40%	11,10%	37,80%	33,30%	15,60%
not effective at all	2,30%	4,40%	4,40%	15,60%	11,20%	8,90%

Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which Lab planning processes were strategically aligned with departmental medium term strategic and annual performance planning processes. Most of the respondents (44.5%) and as well triangulated with the qualitative analysis were of the view that the Lab planning process was not strategically aligned with most of the department's medium term strategic and annual performance planning. Two of the Labs that were interviewed noted that the activities associated with Operation Phakisa had been absorbed into routine APP processes and were no longer viewed through the lens of "business unusual" but rather routine activities.

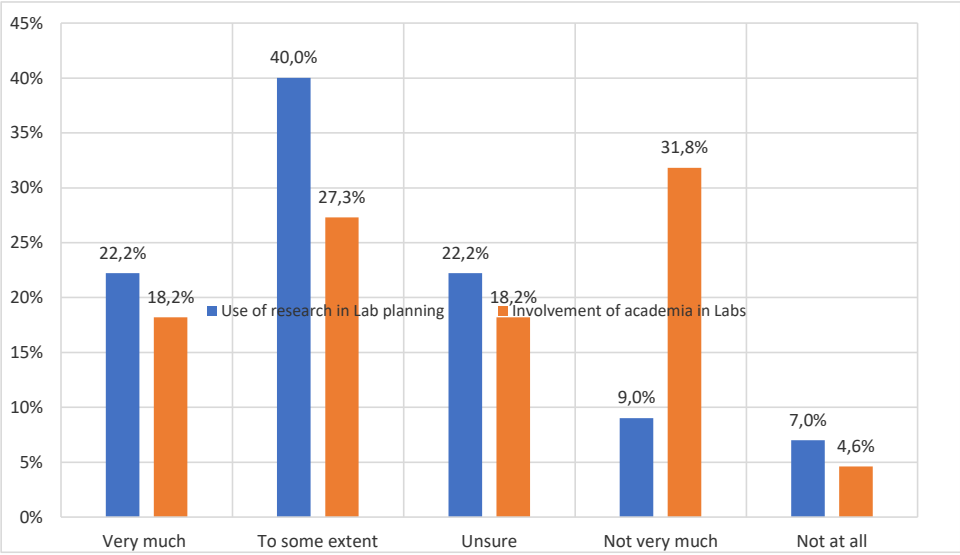
Figure 7: Extent of BFR planning alignment with routine department planning n=44



6.1.6 The Use of Research to Inform Planning

Survey respondents were therefore asked whether in their experience in the Labs the design and planning processes were sufficiently informed by new and / or up-to-date research and data.

Figure 8: The extent to which research was used in Lab planning n=44



Generally, both research and academia were key components of the Labs process. A total of 62% of the respondents felt that research had been a significant component in the design of the three-foot plans, whereas only 15% felt that research had not been a significant contributor to planning processes. A total of 45.5% of the respondents felt that academia had been brought on board during Lab planning, while 36.4% felt that the academic community had not been adequately engaged.

Overall, the evaluation has found that the design of the Operation Phakisa is logical, and the outputs and outcomes are clearly defined. What emerged from the qualitative data was a strong sense that in theory the BFR approach had enormous potential and that where Operation Phakisa was implemented systematically and successfully using the tools of BFR, it became more relevant to the South African economic context, well-aligned with the government's overall economic growth, transformation, and supportive of job creation objectives. In practice and in most instances, the theory failed to become practice and most participating departments have reverted to "business as usual". This conclusion is summed up in the table below:

Table 3: Ratings for the design of Operation Phakisa planning and implementation

Evaluation Questions	Definitely yes	Yes	Undecided	No	Definitely no
To what extent is the political context & institutional arrangements ready for a BFR model and new delivery transmission mechanisms?					
Is there demonstrated political will for the BFR model?					
To what extent is the Operation Phakisa methodology relevant in achieving objectives?					
Is the methodology of Operation Phakisa consistent throughout all the Labs?					

Could deviations from methodology be justified?					
Were the Lab participants and Implementing Agents correctly chosen?					
Was the process transparent and appropriate?					
To what extent have resources been used in an efficient manner throughout the planning and delivery phase?					
Could there have been an improved manner in which resources were used?					
Was research and development (R&D) undertaken for Labs?					
Have the available skills development been optimally used?					
Has there been benefit in bringing skills and R&D under one Unit (DHET and DST)?					

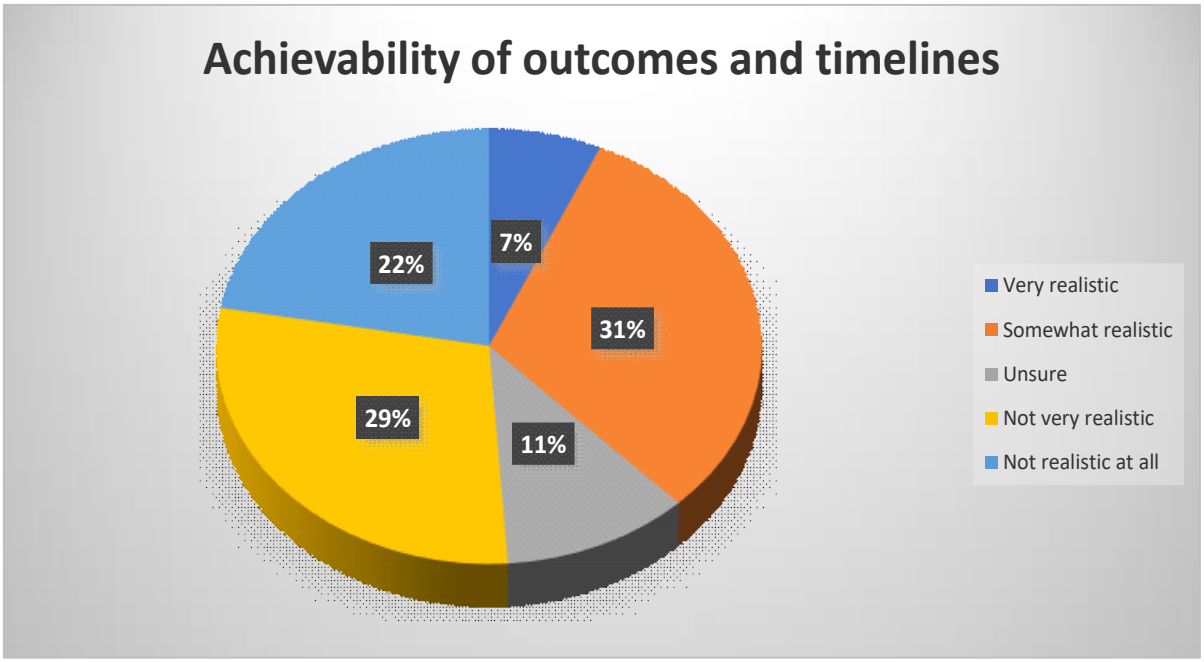
6.2 After three years of convening the last Lab of the seven Operation Phakisa delivery Labs, do you think the various Operation Phakisa Labs are likely to achieve the intended outputs and outcomes?

Among Operation Phakisa methodology most effective tools are targets – prioritized set of measurable, ambitious, and time-bound goals and trajectories, a projected progression towards these goals creates a tight link between the planned interventions and expected outcomes. According to Mouton (2021), setting targets and developing trajectories are part of the target between now and the targeted date of completion. While nearly all public sector organizations set targets, many of these targets are somewhat vague or immeasurable or they simply operate under unclear time horizons. Targets should be both ambitious and realistic. An unambitious target generates acceptance of incremental rather transformational change, and an unrealistic target will discourage those responsible for achieving it. This section looks at the achievability of the targets set in different Operation Phakisa initiatives and labs, and also gives a brief analysis of what worked well and what did not work well regarding implementation.

6.2.1 Achievability of Outcomes and Timelines

One of emerging issues arising from this review of the Operation Phakisa methodology is that the approach has experienced the same kind of slippage between planning and implementation that routine department delivery often experiences. The BFR methodology was intended to deliver improved implementation of government goals through an understanding that goal setting cannot be separated from implementation, and that solutions to problems that arise amid implementation will often lead to important changes in goal setting. As such, a core part of the Lab planning process was to identify realistic outcome targets and timelines for implementation. The results in figure 9 below were perspectives of respondents on the achievability of outcomes and timelines:

Figure 9: Perspectives of respondents on achievability of outcomes and timelines n=44



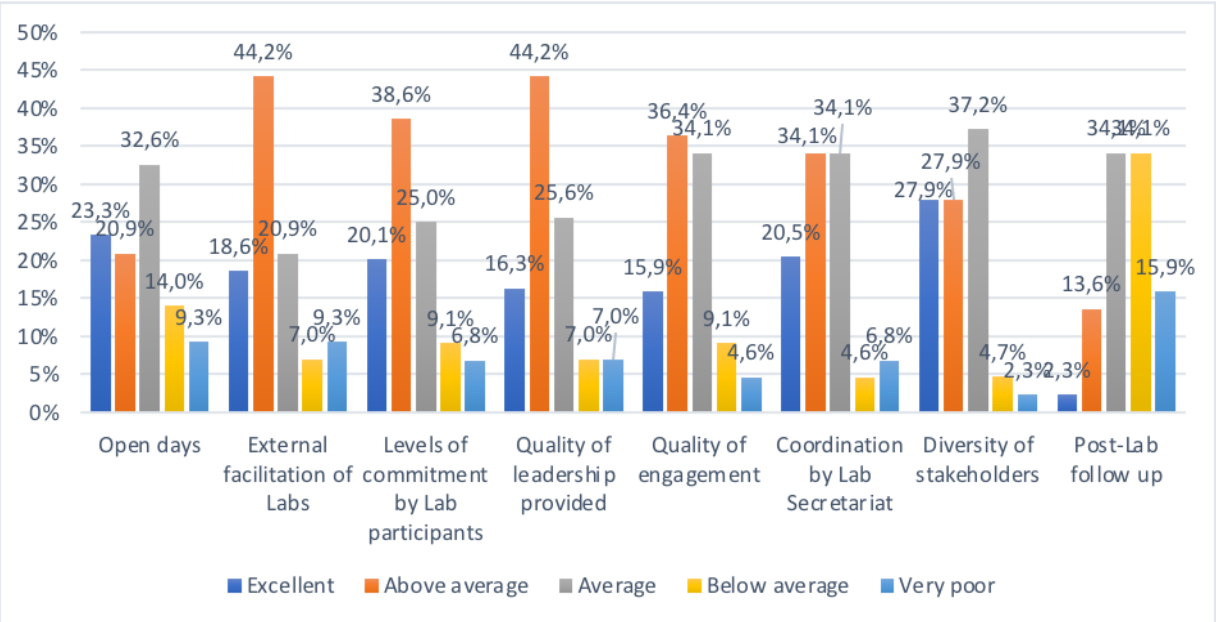
Survey responses on this issue were quite mixed with a total of 37% of respondents noting that outcome targets and timelines were realistic, while a total of 51% felt that the outcome targets and timelines had not been realistic. The fact that less than 40% of respondents felt that the outcome targets and timelines set out in the Lab plans were realistic suggests that from the outset there was some level of scepticism about implementation capacity.

According to the Operation Phakisa blueprint, the BFR methodology encouraged ambitious target setting within tight timeframes. For many departments this runs counter to their routine approach of setting modest targets to avoid under-performance.

6.2.2 Overall Performance of the Operation Phakisa Labs

The concept of the Operation Phakisa Labs was drawn from the experiences of delivery units over the past twenty years in various countries. Survey respondents were asked to assess the performance of the Labs on a range of performance criteria as shown in Figure 10 below:

Figure 10: Ratings of Lab performance n=44



The following section of the report indicates performance per Operation Phakisa Lab where data was made available:

6.2.2.1 Biodiversity Lab

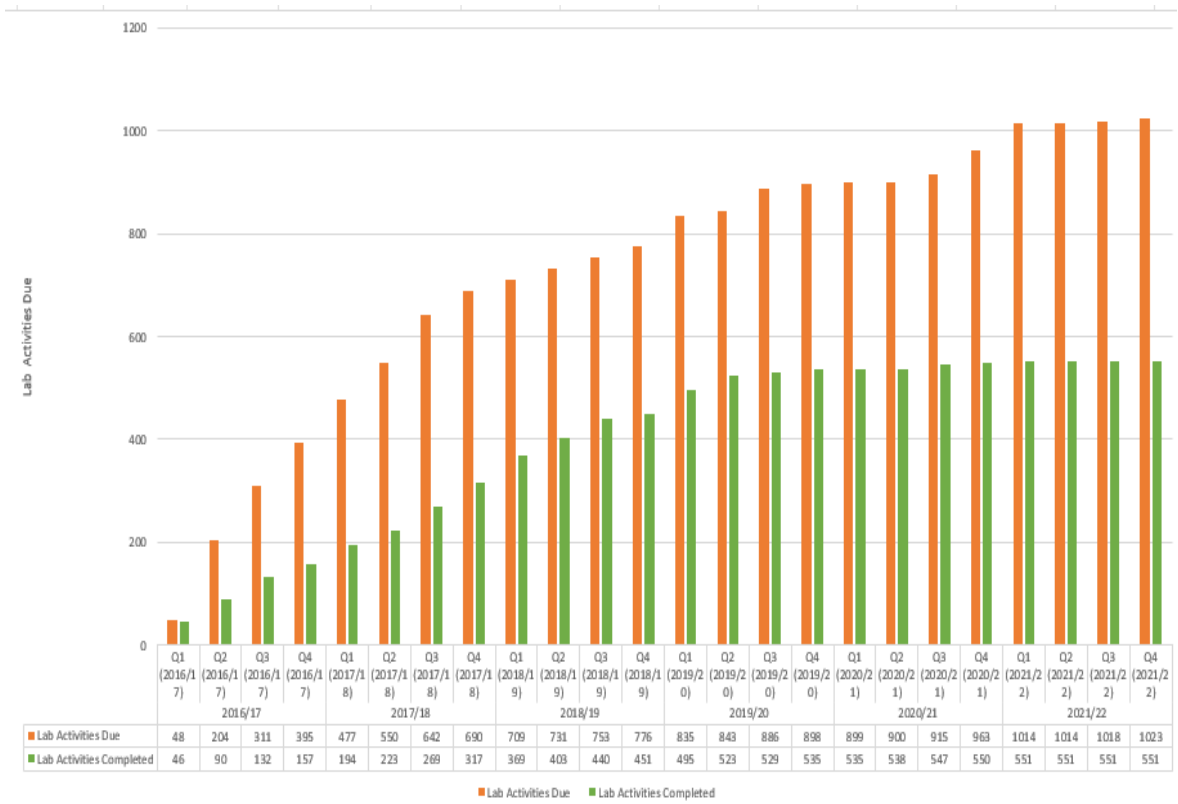
According to Lab respondents the Biodiversity and Tourism Lab has different components. Biodiversity Economy is a Lab on its own while CMT is a mini-Lab for Oceans Economy. For cost efficiency, it was decided that the mini-Lab piggyback on the convening of the Biodiversity Economy Lab. The Biodiversity Economy Lab has two arms: Bioprospecting and Wildlife Coastal Marine Tourism, Bioprospecting and Wildlife whose objectives are aligned to the NDP and include achieving an average yearly GDP increase within the sector and creation of new jobs.

The Bioprospecting arm is responsible for collecting, harvesting, and extracting living or dead indigenous species or derivatives and genetic material thereof for commercial or industrial purposes whilst the Wildlife arm is centred on game and wildlife farming / ranching activities that relate to the stocking, trading, breeding, and hunting of game and all the services and goods required to support this value chain. The Coastal and Marine Tourism (CMT) mini lab of the Biodiversity Lab focused on recreational activities along the coastal zone and/or the marine environment. It was assumed that major infrastructural projects would have the potential to significantly contribute to the economic growth and job creation aspirations of the sector.

The targets were that by 2020/21, there would be R1.915 billion revenue generated from the sector that would create 24 800 jobs. The wildlife businesses or operations would have 30% PDI ownership. The target of 24 800 jobs and R1.9 billion revenue were most definitely impacted by the COVID-19 lockdowns and the bans placed on international travel. The hectarage target was 2 million ha of wildlife under PDI ownership of use rights. Another important target that the Department had set was supporting 1 000 SMMEs to engage in the wildlife economy. Given the impact of Covid-19 as a major economic disruptor in 2020 and into 2021, there was 0% achievement of the targeted number of jobs in the same period. Impressively, the Lab surpassed the number of entrepreneurs who were supposed to be trained in 2020-2021 as a total of 192 instead of 150 were trained. Figure 11 below

gives an overview of the performance of this Lab regarding the envisaged set targets and the actual implemented.

Figure 11: Performance of the Biodiversity Lab 2016 to 2022



Source: DPME (2022)

6.2.2.2 Chemicals and Waste Lab

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) together with the DPME initiated a Chemicals and Waste Phakisa programme from 24 July to 24 August 2017 (DEA, 2018). The purpose of the Lab was to engage around opportunities that could lead to the reduction of the impact caused by chemicals and waste on the environment, while growing the GDP contribution and creating jobs. When it comes to quarterly performance, table 4 below summarizes the analysis of activity performance.

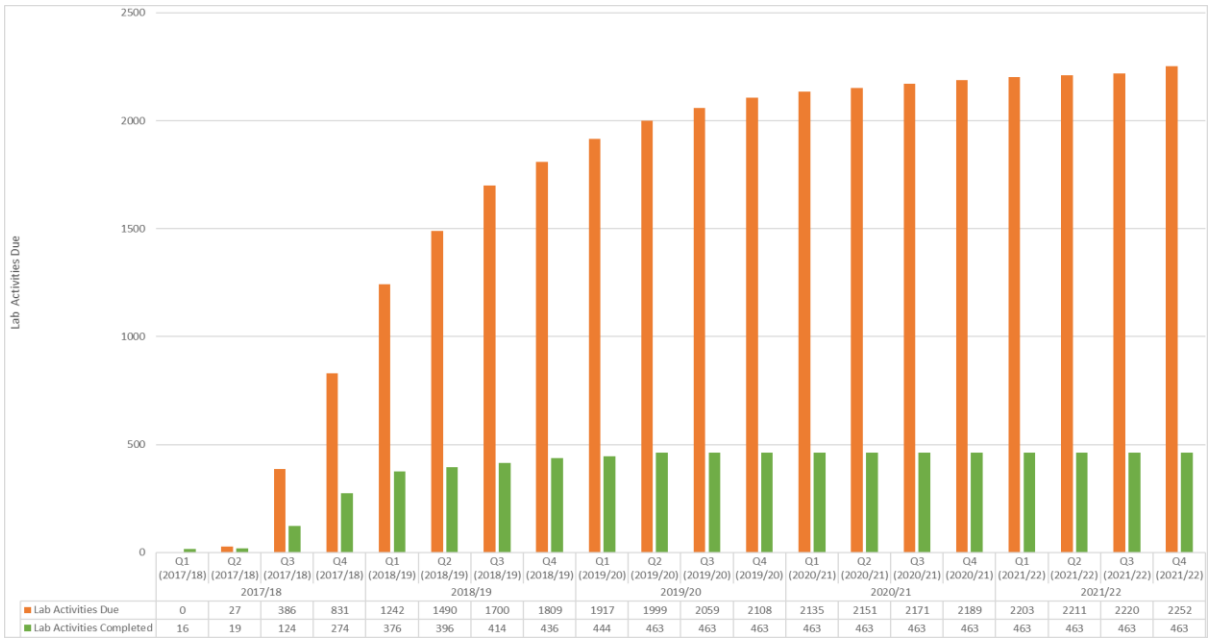
Table 4: Lab summary of activities expected,due and completed

Summary of activities expected, due, and completed				
Year / Qtr.	**Lab Activities**	**Lab Activities Due**	**Lab Activities Completed**	**% Of Lab Activities Completed**
2017/18 Q1	2442	0	16	0,66%
2017/18 Q2	2442	27	19	0,78%
2017/18 Q3	2442	386	124	5,08%
2017/18 Q4	2442	831	274	11,22%
2018/19 Q1	2442	1242	376	15,40%
2018/19 Q2	2442	1490	396	16,22%
2018/19 Q3	2442	1700	414	16,95%
2018/19 Q4	2442	1809	436	17,85%
2019/20 Q1	2442	1917	444	18,18%
2019/20 Q2	2442	1999	463	18,96%
2019/20 Q3	2442	2059	463	18,96%

2019/20 Q4	2442	2108	463	18,96%
2020/21 Q1	2442	2135	463	18,96%
2020/21 Q2	2442	2151	463	18,96%
2020/21 Q3	2442	2171	463	18,96%
2020/21 Q4	2442	2189	463	18,96%
2021/22 Q1	2442	2203	463	18,96%
2021/22 Q2	2442	2211	463	18,96%
2021/22 Q3	2442	2220	463	18,96%
2021/22 Q4	2442	2252	463	18,96%

According to table 4 above, as expected percentage of completed activities gradually increased each quarter, starting from 0.7% in Q1 of 2017 to 19% in Q4 of 2021. A huge jump in performance was witnessed between Q2 2017 and Q3 2017, and between Q3 2017 and Q4 2017, from 0.7% to 5.1% and from 5.1% to 11.2%, respectively. In summary, there is still work to be done for the department to be compliant because the rate of activity completion is very low. Figure 12 below tracks the performance picture of the Lab in relation to the projected activities.

Figure 12: Chemicals and Waste Economy Lab overall performance 2017 to 2022



Source (DPME, 2022)

6.2.2.3 Oceans Economy

The Oceans Economy hub of Operation Phakisa focuses on delivering on a range of maritime and marine-related sector initiatives to support the objectives of the NDP 2030. Thus, South Africa's maritime road map envisages a future where *"South Africa is globally recognised as a maritime nation"* by 2030. Operation Phakisa focuses on unlocking the economic potential of South Africa's oceans, which could contribute up to R177 billion to the GDP by 2033 and between 800,000 and 1 million direct jobs. Investments is mainly in the list focus areas of Aquaculture, Coastal and Marine Tourism, Marine Protection Services and Ocean Governance, Marine Transport and Manufacturing, Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration and Small Harbours Development. Table 5 below show the investments realised by the Operation Phakisa Oceans Economy Lab:

Table 5: Levels of public and private sector investment in the Oceans Economy

Delivery	Gov Investment	Pvt Sector Investment	DTI Incentives	Total Investment	Jobs
Marine Transport and Manufacturing	R 7,6 billion	R1,1 billion	R428,8 million	R9,2 billion	4,589
Oil and Gas	R15 billion	R14,8 billion		R29 billion	234
Aquaculture	R260 million	R940 million		R1,2 billion	2,367
Marine Protection and Oceans Governance	R58,5 million			R58 ,5 million	41
Small Harbours Development	R500 million			R500 million	719
Coastal and Marine Tourism	R164 million			R164 million	433
Total	**R23,6 billion**	**R16,9 billion**	**R428,8 million**	**R41 billion**	**8,383**

Source: Ocean Economy (LCC) Progress Report (November 2021)

Table 6 below shows progress made towards 2019 targets as reported on 1 October 2021 and broken down into focus areas is as follows:

Table 6: Oceans Economy Lab progress report 2021

Initiative	Focus Area Activities Due	% Focus areas complete	Government tenders & Expenditure	Jobs	Private Sector Investment	Jobs
Maritime Transport and Manufacturing	346	18	R2.7 billion Transnet Infrastructure	3684	R1.15 billion	705
			R4.94 billion	200		
			R429 million DTI Incentives			

Source: Ocean Economy (LCC) Progress Report (November 2021)

6.2.2.4 Scaling Up the Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance Programme (ICRM)

Implementation of the Ideal Clinic programme has its roots in the findings of a Baseline Audit commissioned by the National Department of Health (NDoH) in 2011. The Ideal Clinic programme therefore aimed to systematically transform all primary health care (PHC) facilities to meet national standards in preparation for the introduction of the ICRM programme. The ICRM programme entered its seventh year of implementation in 2021/2022 financial year. After the conceptualisation and identification of a few learning sites from 2013 to 2014, the programme was fully implemented in 2015/16 Financial Year. Several facility quality improvement activities were initiated to achieve the goal of converting all PHC facilities in the country to "Ideal" status. The ICRM programme uses the Operation Phakisa Ideal Clinic Laboratory initiated quality improvement plans to improve the functionality of these primary healthcare facilities (clinics and community health centres).

A target of 600 facilities were selected for improvement in the first year of implementation which is 2015/16 financial year and 322 facilities achieved Ideal Clinic status. More facilities (1,430) were targeted for the year 2016/17 and by the end of March 2017, 786 additional facilities were rated as “Ideal”. Unfortunately, of the 322 facilities that were Ideal at the end of the 2015/16 year, 71 clinics

lost their status. ***This means that by the end of 2016/17, there were 1,037 Ideal Clinics in the country.*** These regressed facilities were subjected to peer review updates at the end of the financial year. In the 2017/2018 financial year another new 100 cohort of facilities were identified for scaleup. At the end of the 2017/2018 financial year, the total number of the ideal clinic were 1,507 Ideal Clinics (43.3% of the 3,478 facilities). This represents an increased number of Ideal Clinics by 470 facilities in 2017/2018. At the end of the 2018/19 financial year, a total of 1,920 (55%) clinics were ideal. This represents an increased number of Ideal Clinics by 428 out of 1000 facilities in 2018/19 for scale up. (Ideal Clinic Lab Progress Report, 2022).

Although there is an increase of facilities that are turned ideal each year it has been noted that some facilities regressed and lost their Ideal Status. During the 2019/20 financial year, 226 facilities lost their IC status. At the end of the 2019/2020 financial year, a total of ideal clinics was 1,906 (55% of the 3,467 facilities). This represents an increased number of Ideal Clinics by 212 facilities in 2019/2020. By the end of the 2020/21 financial year, the total IC dropped from 1,906 at the end of 2019/2020, to 1,444. This means 462 facilities lost their IC status. At the end of 2021/2022 financial year, the total number of ideal clinics increase to 1,928, which is a 484 increase. Since the year 2017/2018 to date in the last quarter of each financial year districts teams are allowed to subject regressed (lost/ dropped Ideal status) facilities to peer reviews updates after the facility managers worked on quality improvement plans. (Ideal Clinic Lab Progress Report, 2022). Three thousand and eighty-nine (3,089) clinics and 341 Community Health Centres were subjected to the baseline status determination, using version 19 and version 1 respectively for the ideal clinic realisation and maintenance programme in the 1st quarter of the 2021/2022 financial year. Two hundred and nine (209) PHC facilities were put on the scale-up plan for 2021/2022. (Ideal Clinic Lab Progress Report, 2022).

6.2.2.5 Leveraging on ICT in Basic Education

In 2015, the government launched Operation Phakisa Education (OPE), an implementation strategy aimed to fast-track digital technology into all public schools. It is imperative to note that this strategy was not funded but the DBE used the Universal Service Access Obligation (USAO) initiative as well as the voted funds to implement some of the projects. The issue of lack of resource commitment by the government was cited by several respondents as one of the enablers of implementation failure as mentioned below:

> *Operation Phakisa promised a lot of returns but for the government to get returns there should invest as well. The challenge is that for benefits to be harvested, the government should have invested more resources, but this was opposite – Respondent 11*

The OPE model was designed to ensure the realisation of the plan to transform basic education with computer technology first formulated in the 2004 White Paper on e-Education: *Transforming Teaching and Learning through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)*. This Lab projected to ensure the digitalization of 75% of learning materials and a total of 100% enriched, digitised textbooks developed and available as well as 100% of broadcasting content materials developed. Additionally, it was the aim of this Lab to ensure that the cloud service should be fully functional (100%) and 100% of all content was stored and available offline. Moreover, all (100%) of post level 1 teachers were to be enrolled in ICT learning pathway training. Five work streams were identified by the Operation Phakisa Education Lab process:

1. Connectivity
2. Devices
3. Teacher Professional Development
4. Digital Content Development and Distribution
5. E-Administration

1. Universal service access obligations

The DBE, DCDT and ICASA in collaboration with the Mobile Network Operators namely, Vodacom, Cell C, MTN and Liquid Intelligent Technologies implemented the Universal Services Access Obligation (USAO). ICASA imposed obligation to MNOs to provide 5250 schools with connectivity as well as assistive devices. The school were divided as follows:

- ✓ Phase I: 4690 Ordinary schools and
- ✓ Phase II: 560 Special schools

Phase 1: Ordinary schools

The DBE, ICASA, DCDT in collaboration with the licensees completed the installation of ICT equipment and connectivity (LTE) to the 4834 ordinary schools as part of Phase I of the Universal Service Access Obligations and the breakdown is as follows:

Table 7:Number of Installations per Province

#	PDES	Cell C	Liquid Intelligent Technologies	Vodacom	MTN	Total	Number of learner devices
1	Eastern Cape	201		377	204	782	18 480
2	Free State	21	186	236	166	609	14 592
3	Gauteng	92			72	164	3 000
4	KwaZulu-Natal	218	187	306	358	1069	25 608
5	Limpopo	260		51	205	516	12 360
6	Mpumalanga	210		107	43	360	8 136
7	Northern Cape	176		220	141	537	13 368
8	Northwest	86	56	143	70	355	6 528
9	Western Cape	96	184	61	101	442	10 656
	Total	**1360**	**610**	**1501**	**1360**	**4834**	**112 728**

Source: DBE (2022)

It should be noted that Vodacom provided additional 141 schools with ICT equipment and connectivity as part of the USAO. Furthermore, a total of 112 728 ICT devices were provided to the ordinary schools as part of the USAO project.

Phase 2: Special Schools

The licensees completed the installation of ICT equipment, assistive devices relevant to the needs of each school and connectivity (LTE) to the 275 Special School as part of Phase II of the Universal Service Access Obligations and the breakdown is as follows:

Table 8: Installations in Special Schools

#	Province	Vodacom	MTN	Cell C	Liquid Telecoms	Total	No of laptops
		140	**140**	**140**	**140**	**560**	
1	EC	16	9		7	32	960
2	FS	11	2		5	18	540
3	GP	38	17			55	1650
4	KZN	19	7	1	16	43	1290
5	LP	13	11	1	8	33	990
6	MP	4	3	1	2	10	300
7	NC	5	1			6	180
8	NW	13	12	3	7	35	1050
9	WC	21	4		19	44	1320
	Total	**140**	**66**	**6**	**64**	**275**	**8280**

Source: DBE (2022)

It should be noted that Vodacom provided has provided all the 140 Special Schools that were allocated to them as part of the obligations. A total of 8280 ICT devices were provided to the ordinary schools as part of the USAO project. Furthermore, each Special School received assistive devices appropriate to the needs of the learners.

2. Digital Content Development

The DBE has developed a total of 1075 titles of free digital state-owned content resources consisting of

- ✓ 344 Workbooks,
- ✓ 594 Graded Readers,
- ✓ 25 Mind the Gap Study Guides; and
- ✓ 112 Textbooks.

These resources are in various formats such as pdf documents, ePub and HTLM 5. Furthermore, approximately 96% of the high-enrolment subject textbooks have been digitised. The table below indicates the number of resources developed, per grade and the digital format of the resources.

Table 9: Number of resources developed per grade

Grades	Subjects	No. Titles	DIGITAL FORMAT			
			PDF	ePUB/ eBook	HTML 5: Interactive	Teacher Guide
2017-20						
Grade R	Numeracy and Literacy Workbooks	44	√	√	√	
Grade 1-3	Life Skills Workbooks	66	√	√		
Grade 1-3	Mathematics	66	√	√	√	
Grade 1-6	Languages (HL) Workbooks	132	√	√		
Grade 1-6	Languages (FAL) Workbooks	12	√	√	√	
Grade 4-9	Mathematics Workbooks	24	√	√		
Grade 1-3	Readers & Big Books	594	√	√		
Grade 4-6	Natural Science & Tech	12	√	√	√	√

Grade 7-9	Natural Science	12	√	√		√
Grade 7-9	Technology	12	√	√		√
Grade 4-12	Mathematics	36	√	√		√
Grade 10-12	Physical Science	12	√	√		√
Grade 10	Maths Literacy	4	√	√	√	√
Grade 10	Life Science	4	√	√		√
Grade 10-12	Technical Mathematics	7	√	√		√
Grade 10-12	Technical Science	7	√	√		
Grade 12	Study Guide: Mind the Gap	25	√	√		
Grade 10-12	Computer Application Technology (CAT)	9	√	√		√
Grade10-12	Information Technology (IT)	9	√	√		√
Grade R-12	Open Educational Resources (OER)	2755	√			√

Source: DBE (2022)

3. Connectivity

The schools are connected using various connectivity models such as 3G, fibre, satellite, and other technologies. Many of the connectivity models are not ideal for teaching and learning. Some of the schools in various provinces have broadband connectivity that is ideal for teaching and learning. The table below indicates the cumulative number of schools that are connected to the internet.

Table 10:Connectivity per Province

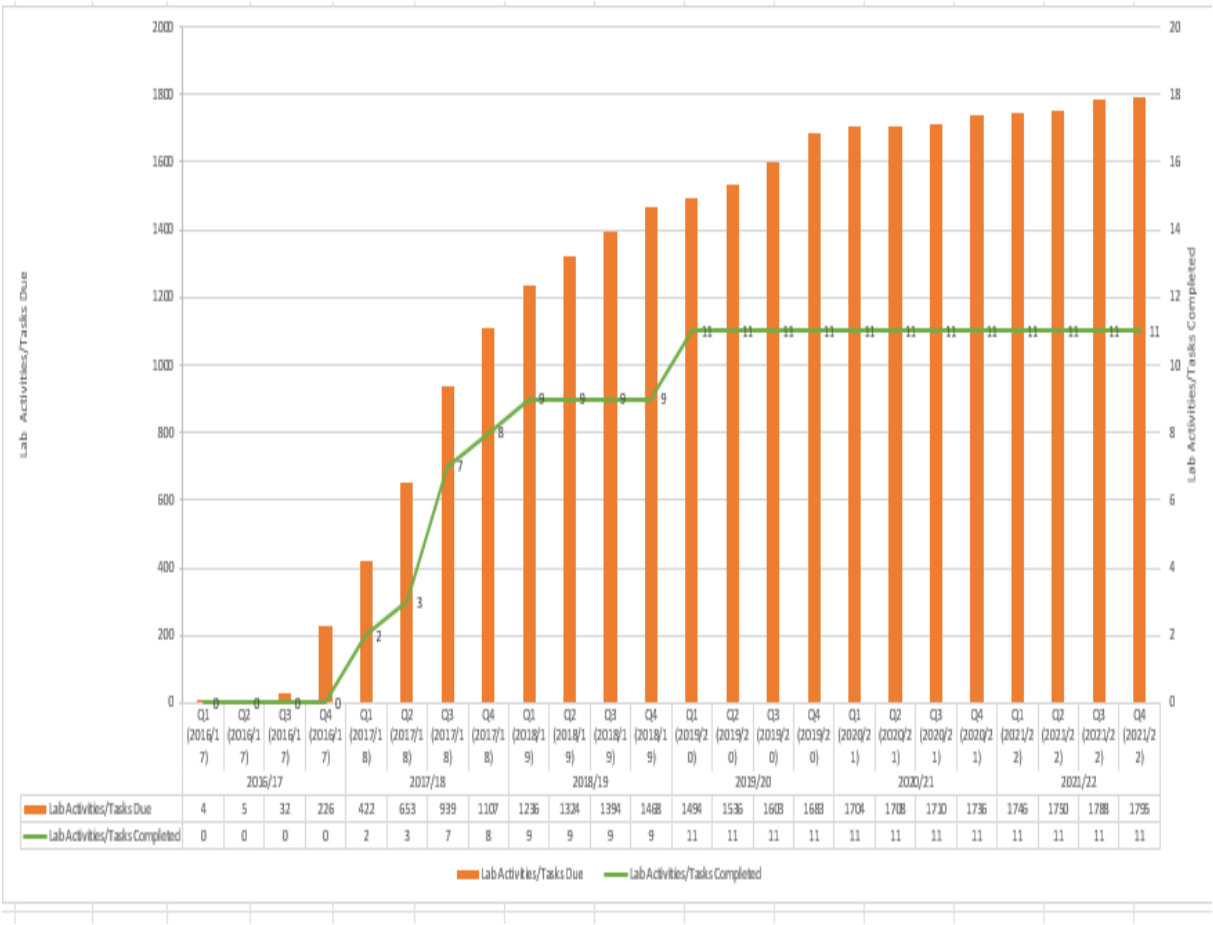
Province	Total no schools	Baseline 2014/15	USAASA	USAO 2017	Baseline 2017/18	USAO 2018	Baseline 2018/19	USAO 2019	Baseline 2019/20	SA Connect	USAO 2020	Baseline 2020/21
Eastern Cape	5 727	2 521	537	723	3 781		3 781	47	3 828	138	25	4 036
Free State	1 327	781		384	1 165	185	1 350	39	1 389	99	13	1 501
Gauteng	2 183	2 164		125	2 289		2 289	0	2 289	0	55	2 344
KwaZulu Natal	5 937	1 667		1 034	2 701		2 701	33	2 734	110	26	2 870
Limpopo	3 924	1 150		281	1 431	200	1 631	34	1 665	46	24	1 735
Mpumalanga	1 948	879		340	1 219		1 219	0	1 219	64	8	1 291
Northern Cape	573	460	10	424	894		894	133	1 027	39	6	1 072
Northwest	1 542	1 029	8	220	1 257		1 257	52	1 309	103	25	1 437
Western Cape	1 614	1 610		353	1 963		1 963	91	2 054	0	44	2 098
Total	24 775	12 261	555	3 884	16 700	385	17 085	429	17 514	599	226	18 384
%					67,41%	770	68,96%	858	70,69%	910		74,20%

6.2.2.6 Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development

Based on policy imperatives this Lab aimed to enhance and transform the agricultural sector as well as accelerate land reform to ensure an inclusive rural economy. This was viewed as critical for addressing constraints in ensuring the equitable access to land, both towards economic development and agrarian transformation. According to DAFF (2017), the broad aim of the Lab was to stimulate

growth, foster job creation and instil transformation along the agriculture and rural development value chain. Objectives of this Lab included growing sustainable rural enterprises and industries, creation of one million jobs, acquiring a total of 2 million hectares of strategically situated land by 2019, developing a total of one million hectares of under-utilised in communal areas and land reform projects for production, and developing and implementing spatial development plans to guide how land is used while prioritizing resource poor districts as contained in the Revitalisation of Agriculture and Agro processing Action Plan (RAAVAC). Figure 13 below shows the progress regarding activities attained as October 2021 and the Lab failed to meet the targets set in most the activities that were due:

Figure 13: Progress on revitalisation of Agriculture and Agro processing action plan, 2021



Source: DPME

6.2.2.7 Galvanising Growth, Investment and Employment Creation along the Mining Value Chain and Mining Related Communities

The broad aim of the Mining Phakisa was to galvanise growth, investment, and employment creation along the mining value chain in relevant input sectors and in mining related communities (Chamber of Mines South Africa, 2016). Alongside this broad aim, shorter-term priorities were also prioritised to deal with the immediate financial and employment challenges created by the global downturn. Longer term priorities underpinning this Lab included building a foundation for next generation mining systems, beneficiation technologies, capital goods production and sustainable community development. The Mining Phakisa focused on some of the immediate challenges facing the industry as well as putting in place the foundations for the Next Generation Mining Cluster. The aim of this Lab was to intervene in the mining sector to keep the industry afloat during commodity price slumps. Unfortunately, no reports regarding progress were received at the time of report writing. We

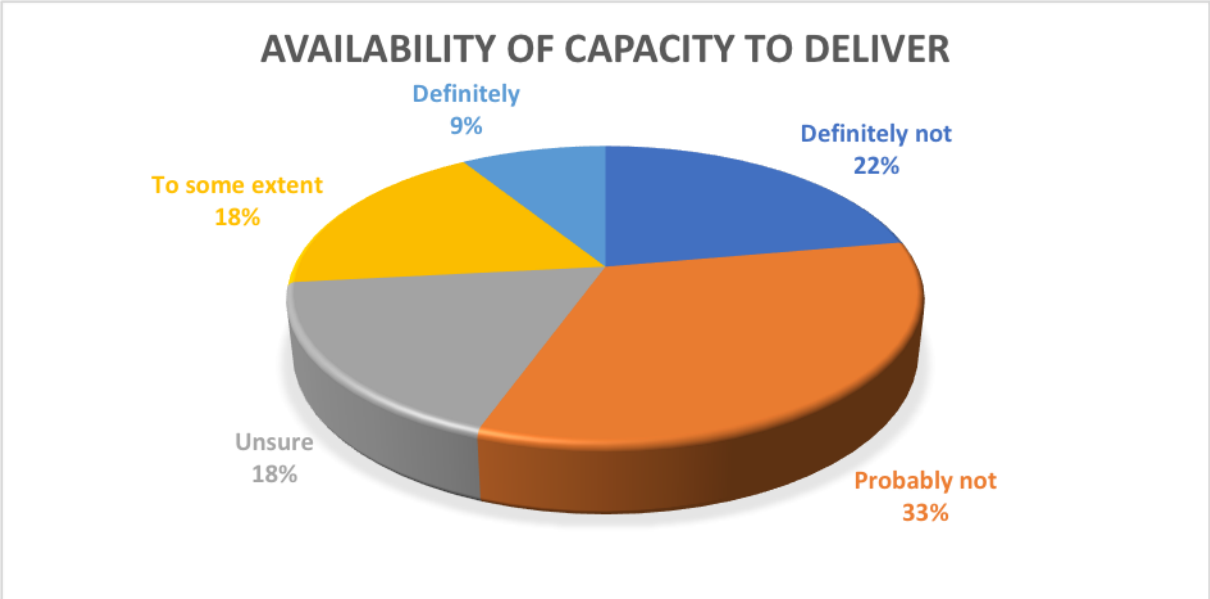
understand from information provided that there had been disagreements between the DPME and the DMRE mining Lab right from inception, and that this had significantly impacted performance. This was in part due to the fact that DPME took a lead role during the convening of the Lab, which resulted in the DMRE taking a back seat and not leading implementation.

6.2.3 Drivers for Success

6.2.3.1 Availability of commitment, skills, and capacities

Evidence from the interviews and surveys conducted during this evaluation suggest that the success of the "delivery unit" model in achieving BFR has been heavily dependent on core capacity issues. The concept of the Delivery Unit, which is central to achieving BFR, is based on the premise that small and highly skilled teams can gather and analyse a constant stream of performance data and be on the alert for any roadblocks. In looking at the achievements (and non-achievement) of the Operation Phakisa Labs this emerged as a critical issue. One of the challenges in improving government effectiveness is the way in which capacity and expertise within the public sector is identified and deployed. Within the framework of the BFR methodology the conditions under which an initiative such as Operation Phakisa is likely to succeed is premised on the availability of understanding, skills and expertise that are commensurate with the capacities required to achieve Lab outcomes and targets.

Figure 14: Level of availability of capacity to deliver n=44



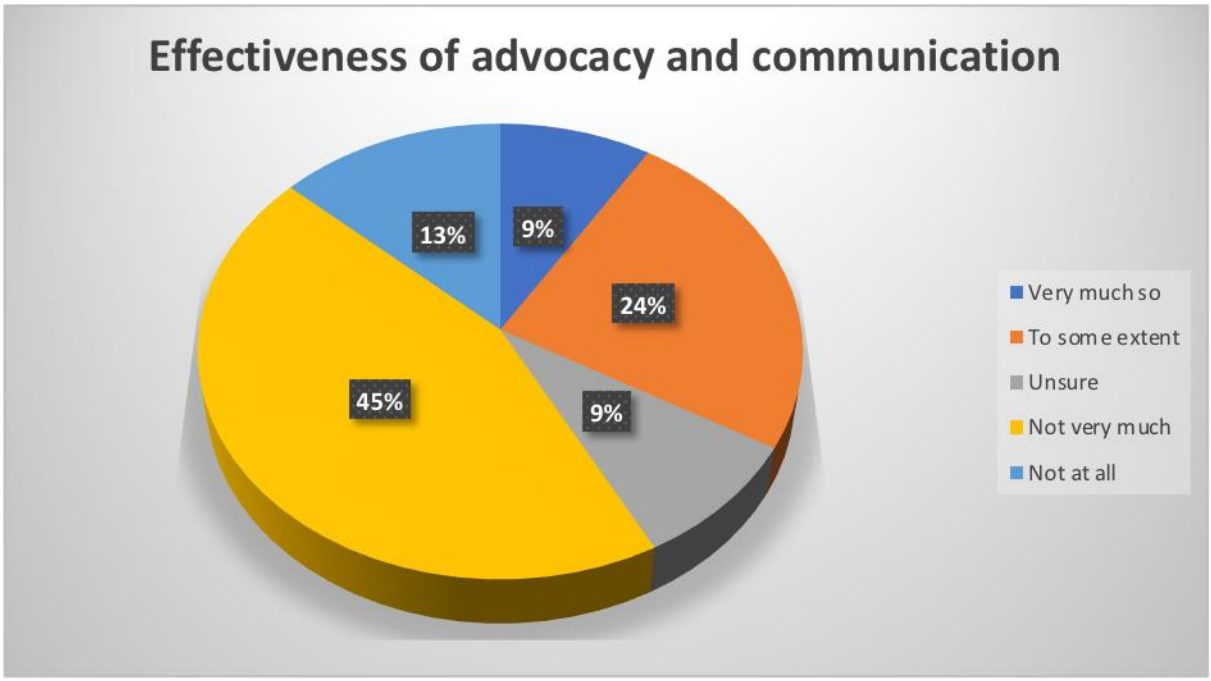
Survey respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, it was possible to successfully deliver on BFR with the current government staff component (in terms of commitment, skills and capacities). A total of 27% of respondents believed that government departments had strong or adequate commitment, skills, and capacities to deliver on the Lab plans, while 17,8% were unsure and a further 55% felt that there was insufficient commitment, skills, and capacities at departmental level. From the interviews, a total of 55% of the respondents claims that the government has limited capacity in terms of human and financial resources. This has been evidenced from the many references to the lack of technical and financial capacity to implement and manage some of the Labs.

6.2.3.2 Advocacy and Communication about Operation Phakisa

According to the blueprint *Operation Phakisa Framework* document, the Operation Phakisa Unit was supposed to be the custodian of the Operation Phakisa Communication Strategy and Plan. This

strategy spells out the communication processes, sharing of information and the institutional arrangements to achieve this, the frequency of reporting on the various Labs, as well as distribution to different media and communication costs. In 2015 a guidance note for *Process for the Communication of Operation Phakisa-related content on the Operation Phakisa Website* was released. This document determined the process for the acquisition, quality assurance and publishing of content. The understanding was that the BFR delivery mechanism should advance the achievements of the Labs. Survey respondents were asked whether in their experience the information sharing and messaging (advocacy) about Operation Phakisa in their respective departments, agencies or organisations had been clear, consistent, and effective. Respondents stated that that there was minimal or no effectiveness (58%) in the advocacy and communication function of Operation Phakisa, whilst 9% and 24% cited very much so and to some extent. This points to limitations within the ISU capacity to undertake this critical task in an efficient and effective manner and highlights the opportunity costs related to poor communication and information sharing.

Figure 15: Levels of effectiveness of advocacy and communication n=44



The status and performance of the Operation Phakisa website illustrates the poor performance of the Operation Phakisa communications strategy. According to the drop-down menu the Operation Phakisa communications centre has had no information to share since the 2014 launch. The public and broader stakeholder groups of Operation Phakisa hoping to see progress or deepen their knowledge would find a national government programme that has either stalled or is no longer active.

6.2.4 Role of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the Intervention Support Unit (ISU)

Since the inception of Operation Phakisa in 2013, it has been monitored by the DPME which has also been responsible for the overall management of the Operation Phakisa methodology. Through the Operation Phakisa Unit (OPU), later to become the Intervention Support Unit (ISU), DPME was also tasked with the coordination, performance monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Operation Phakisa. For many of the key informants moving the DPME out of the Presidency deprived

Operation Phakisa of its political legitimacy and apex leadership, as well as its proximity to the President. The DPME's role was generally viewed as weak and lacking in the necessary levels of leadership, authority and management capacity that were required to coordinate the implementation of the seven Labs. Even though DPME had in-house Outcome Facilitators with sector expertise many departments felt that DPME did not have a sufficiently deep understanding of sector issues to coordinate and oversee the work of the Labs, and that the tracking of implementation needed to be fully controlled by the responsible departments. Based on this background survey respondents were asked to reflect on the extent to which they believed that DPME was the appropriate and strategic location for the coordination of a multi-sectoral initiative like Operation Phakisa.

Figure 16: Extent to which DPME was appropriate location for coordination n=44

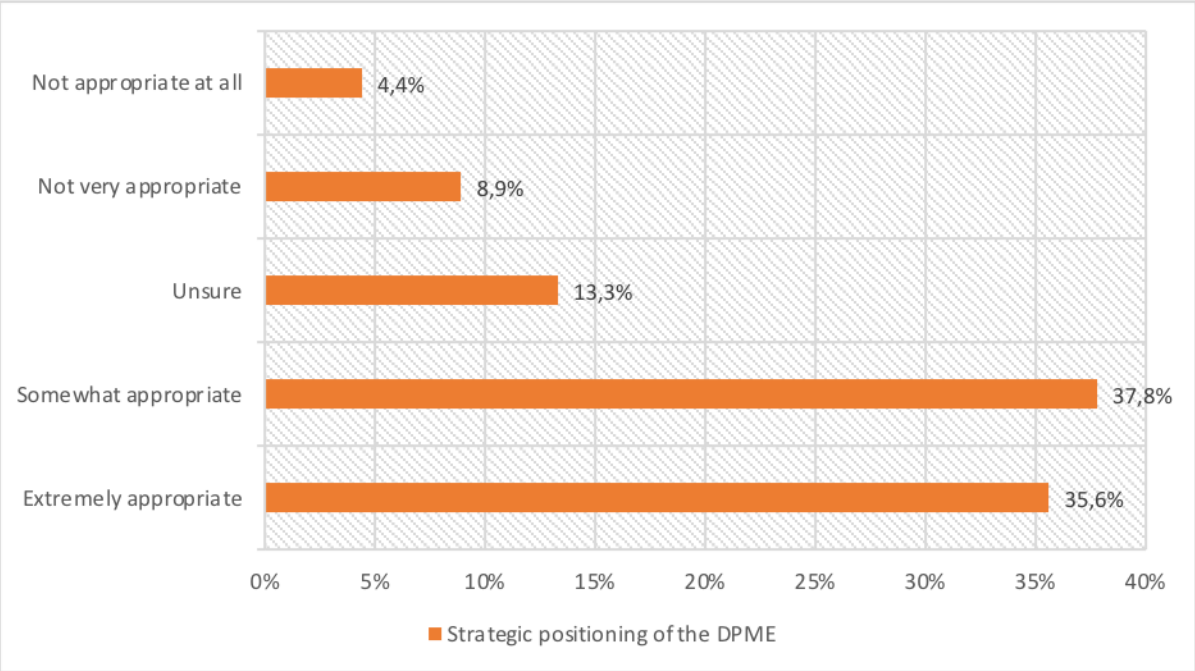
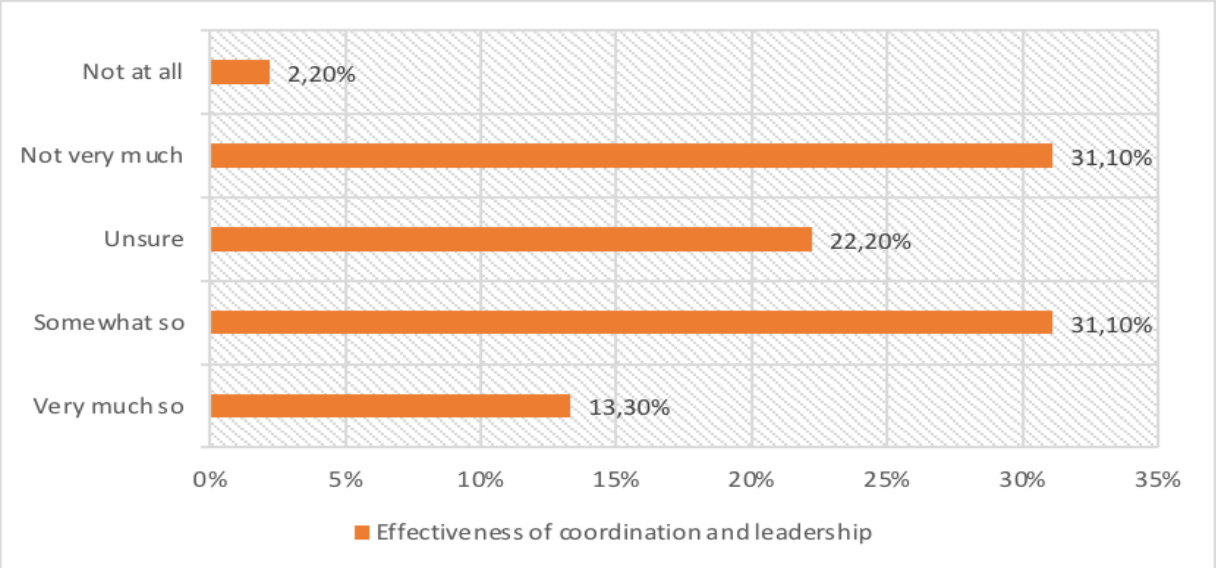


Figure 16 above shows that a total of 73.4% of respondents felt that DPME was appropriately located to strategically manage and coordinate activities under Operation Phakisa, while only 13.3% felt that DPME was not the appropriate agency to undertake this role. This data may however be somewhat skewed given that a significant number of survey respondents were DPME staff members. Survey respondents were asked to reflect on whether, in their view, the DPME through the ISU had played a responsive and decisive leadership and oversight role in Operation Phakisa.

Figure 17: Extent to which the ISU had played a decisive leadership and oversight role n=44

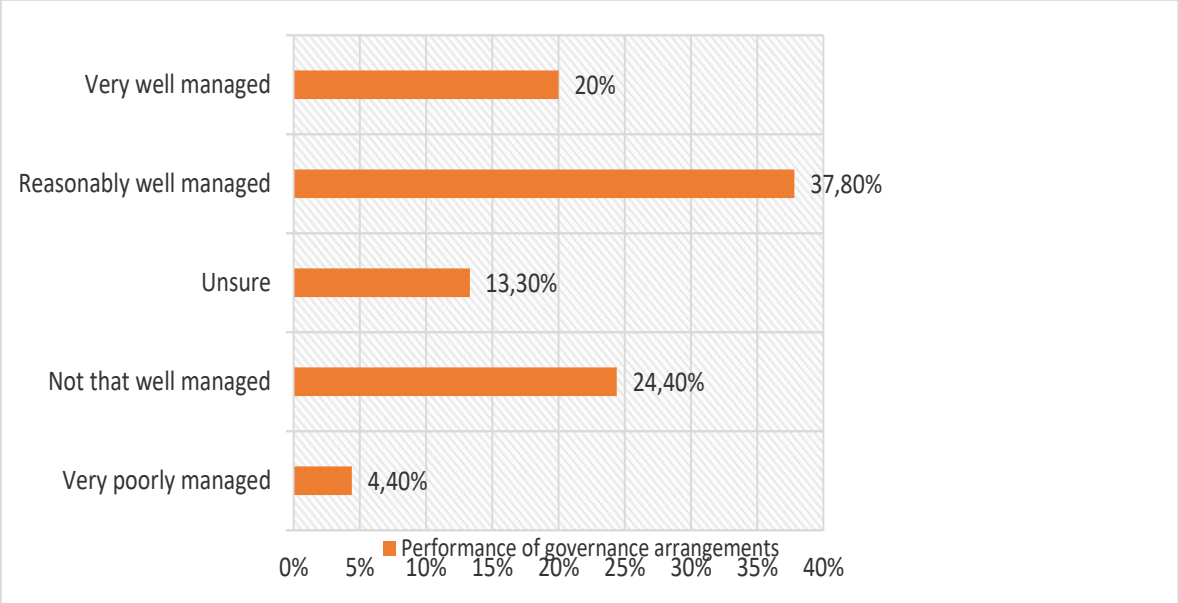


As shown in figure 17 above, a total of 44.4% of respondents felt that the DPME has played a strong strategic role in overseeing the roll out of Operation Phakisa, while 33.3% expressed misgivings as to DPME's role in leading coordination efforts. Key informants were generally critical of the poor performance of the ISU, noting that it was poorly managed, lacked capacity and fell short of the competence required to coordinate complex, multisector initiatives.

6.2.5 Governance Arrangements

The Operation Phakisa methodology is premised on governance structures that are mandated for monitoring, issue resolution, coordination, and implementation. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report, the governance structures put in place have not been fully executed and utilised for their intended purposes. This has led to several critical good practice functions essential to the success of Operation Phakisa not being satisfactorily implemented. With Operation Phakisa there was no direct governance links to the NDP priority outcomes. The effectiveness of the Operation Phakisa model has, therefore, been limited by the broader public sector capacity as well as its governance architecture and design. In the survey conducted respondents were asked to reflect on the governance arrangements set up for the Operation Phakisa Labs and the extent to which they were efficiently and effectively operationalised.

Figure 18: Performance of governance arrangements n=44



These responses, taken together with the open-ended responses provided suggest a wide variation in governance performance across the different Labs. Some of the responses claim that Operation Phakisa has required government departments and their key stakeholders to operate in a "business unusual" paradigm. The resultant Lab structures have effectively been created as structures operating parallel to existing state structures, with their own mandates, rules, and responsibilities. The below table summarises the findings for the evaluation question two (2).

Table 11: Rating of likelihood that Labs will achieve intended outputs

Evaluation Questions	Definitely yes	Yes	Undecided	No	Definitely
Were the outcome targets set out in the various Lab processes realistic?					
How realistic were the timeframes?					
Are the Operation Phakisa Labs likely to achieve outputs and outcomes within the set timeframes?					
Are outputs or outcomes likely to ever be achieved?					
Biodiversity Lab					
Chemical and Waste Lab					
Ocean Economy					
Ideal Clinic					
ICT in Education					
Agriculture					
Mining					
Are there factors that have influenced the achievement or non-achievement of objectives?					
Are the institutional & administrative arrangements in place to implement Operation Phakisa working as envisaged by the initial strategy?					
Have key success drivers for the success of Operation Phakisa initiatives been applied?					
Can key success drivers be replicated easily in other sectors?					
Has there been buy-in and ownership of the Lab outcomes by key stakeholders?					

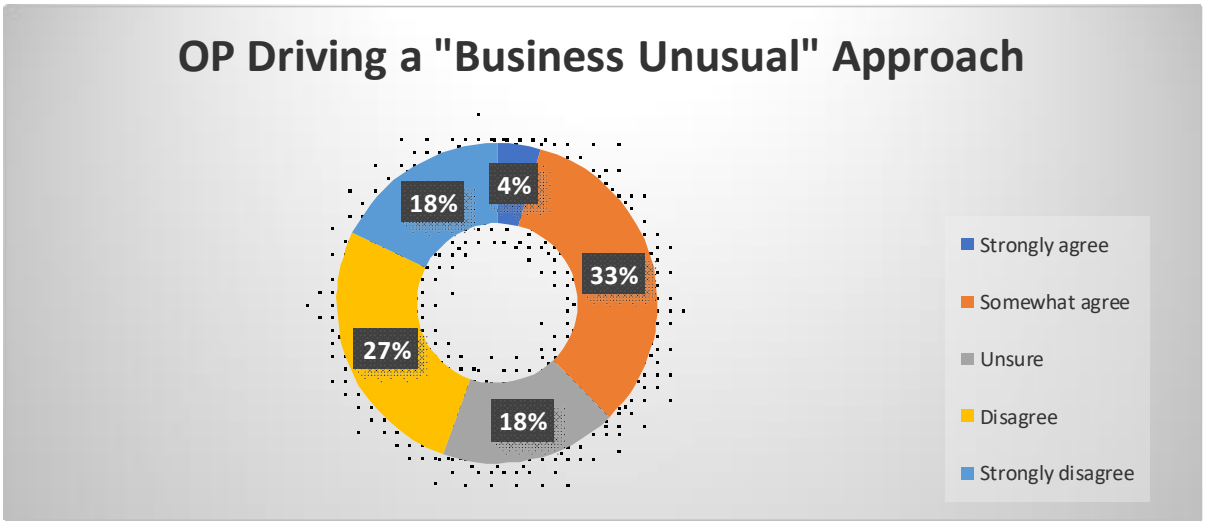
6.3 To what extent has the Operation Phakisa delivery transmission mechanism inculcated the "business unusual" approach in government?

A key element of Operation Phakisa was to strengthen cooperation between government, organised business, civil society, and organised labour. This included working on detailed problem analysis, priority setting, intervention planning, innovation, and delivery. Furthermore, DPME (2020), acknowledges that the Operation Phakisa projects were envisaged to be impactful, fast tracked, characterised by the business unusual, hands-on approach that is results driven to ensure attainment of the projected outcomes. This section looks if Operation Phakisa succeeded in inculcating a business unusual approach in government processes:

6.3.1 Promoting a "Business Unusual" Approach through Operation Phakisa

While modelled around the Malaysia's BFR this delivery mechanism was domesticated to the South African context and reflected the government's commitment to deliver priorities in the NDP 2030 in a faster, more efficient, and effective way. Survey respondents were asked to reflect on whether they felt that Operation Phakisa, since its inception in 2013, has in fact promoted a "business unusual" approach within government. Figure 19 below shows that a total of 45% of respondents felt that Operation Phakisa had failed to promote "business unusual" as a practice within government, and 18% were unsure. While 33% of respondents felt that the "business unusual" approach had to some extent been successful only 4% were convinced of its value

Figure 19: Extent to which Operation Phakisa drove a "business unusual" approach n=44



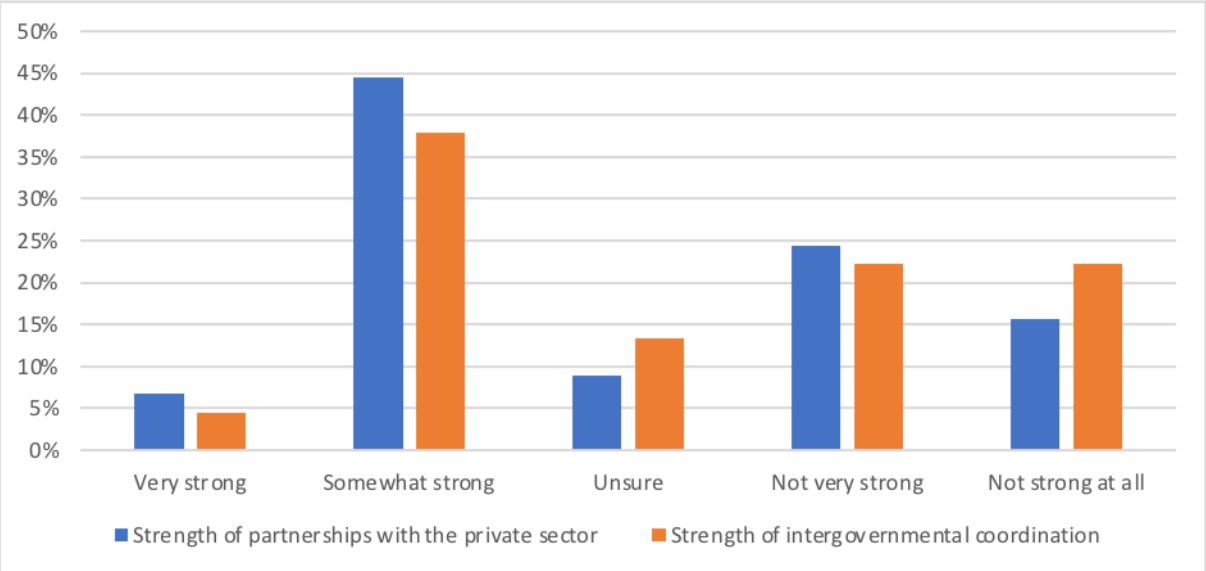
Overall, findings indicate that the Operation Phakisa methodology has been well received. This is not surprising given the pressure that government has been under for many years to meet the service delivery demands of the country. Operation Phakisa's integrated and systematic multi-sectoral intervention has helped in some ways to overcome logistical implementation obstacles, promote scale-up and synergistically maximize the effect of each sector, leveraging the strengths and diverse approaches in different initiatives were praised by several interview participants. However, most of the programmatic problems are associated with funding constraints and absence of political support.

6.3.2 Partnerships for Delivery

In a resource-constrained environment of government austerity it was critical that through Operation Phakisa government was able to convince key private sector partners, through the establishment of strategic public-private partnerships, to invest and co-fund critical interventions so

that there is sufficient and available funding for activities. Reflecting on the strength of partnerships with the private sector and strength of intergovernmental coordination, Figure 20 below shows that respondents felt that these were very strong (6,7% and 4,4%) or somewhat strong 44,4% and 37,8%).

Figure 20: Levels of achievement on partnerships and coordination n=44



Most of the respondents agreed that strengthened technical competencies and skills to forge strategic alliances have been institutionalized, as shown by the sustained publication of reports, the permanence of the networks built and their continuous engagement in working together on a common agenda. Additionally, new specialised knowledge, stronger skills and opportunities for dialogue and forging consensus are clearly identifiable contributions that the Operation Phakisa has made to the strengthening of partnerships between the private sector, and other government departments.

Attracting private sector expertise into the work of the Labs has to some extent infused the public sector with innovations and urgency. Several respondents noted, however, that mutual mistrust remains. Government is often suspicious of private sector agendas and is cautious in ceding any of perceived authority to "external" agencies. At the same time, against the backdrop of "state capture" the private sector has been cautious in how it engages with government. The existing literature finds that that the types of skills that a successful Lab must attract include specialised technical skills as well as "soft" skills such as negotiation, creative problem solving, and collaboration. Although their natural reservoir appears to be in private sector consulting, such skills can arguably be found in both private and public sectors.

Finding the right balance of public and private sector partnership, collaboration and approaches can mitigate the downside risks and reduced costs. The interviewed government officials felt that the private sector did not fully support them as envisaged for several reasons. One of the reasons was that the private sector is profit driven, and as such, at the beginning they thought they were going to harvest financial benefits from Operation Phakisa and when they discover that it was not the case, they chose not to fully involve themselves. The other reason was that some of the stakeholders from the private sector just chose not to be fully supportive in the implementation phase. This conclusion is summed up in the table below:

Table 12: Extent to which the BFR inculcated a "business unusual" approach

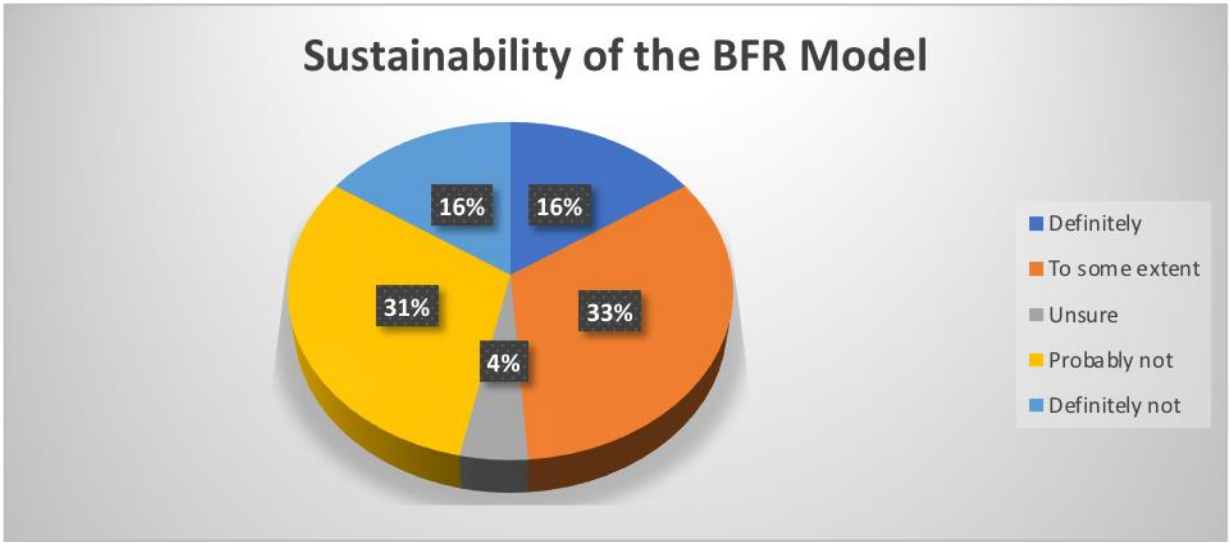
Evaluation Questions	Definitely yes	Yes	Undecided	No	Definitely no
Has the programme provided the country with a ***blueprint model for faster and more accountable service delivery***?					
Has the programme empowered civil servants and created a streamlined policy decision-making process?					
Has the programme improved intergovernmental coordination and collaboration, including between the state and non-state entities?					
Have there been unintended consequences / externalities of the Operation Phakisa programme?					
Is there observed change in the attitudes of those responsible for delivery of Operation Phakisa Lab outputs?					

6.4 What lessons can be learned from the implementation of Operation Phakisa in South Africa?

6.4.1 Replicability and Sustainability of the Operation Phakisa Delivery Model

Based on their understanding and experience of the BFR approach in Malaysia the Delivery Unit model envisaged by the South African government was intended to be a longer-term solution to the challenges faced in delivering on the NDP priorities. The initial vision was to test out the BFR approach in several key NDP priority sectors with the intention at a later stage of somehow integrating the accelerated service delivery model as a "whole of government" approach. This understanding implied that the model would be both replicable across sectors and sustainable in the medium to longer term. Survey respondents were asked whether, in their view, the Operation Phakisa model of BFR (accelerated service delivery) was sustainable under South Africa's current developmental conditions.

Figure 21: Extent to which the BFR model is sustainable n=44

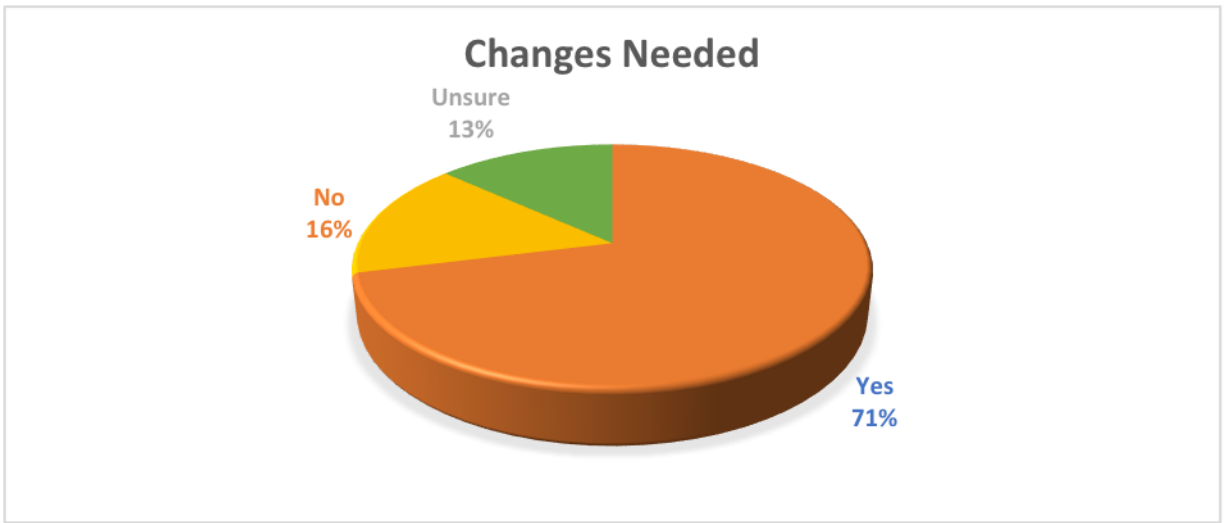


Some of the respondents believe that with proper institutional arrangements, legislative realignment and streamlining supply chain management processes as well as strong accountability, the delivery model can produce the desired results and long-term sustainability. Figure 21 above shows that a total of 49% of respondents were positive or cautiously optimistic that the BFR model was a sustainable approach that could be integrated into government's way of operating.

6.4.2 Adaptation of Operation Phakisa

At the time of this evaluation Operation Phakisa has been operational for eight years. This is an expansive window from which to assess its performance and reflect on whether it is a model that, based on experience, needs to be adapted to fit current circumstances. Survey respondents were asked whether they felt that changes needed to be made to the current format (design) of Operation Phakisa.

Figure 22: Extent to which changes to the Operation Phakisa model are required n=44



A majority (71%) of the respondents felt that Operation Phakisa model requires change, with only 16% feeling that the model was still fit for purpose. Respondents who answered yes were asked to elaborate on the answers that they had provided and to suggest what changes they thought were

necessary. These contributions are infused into the recommendations that this evaluation is proposing.

6.4.3 Addressing Cross-Cutting Developmental Issues

In the South African context – where inequalities are so prevalent – planning for service delivery must take the complex issues of equity and inclusion into consideration to ensure that the transformative promises (leave no one behind) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and the NDP are realised. This includes core transformation concerns around racial and gender equity, as well as inclusion issues that relate amongst other issues to skills development. While the concept of accelerated service delivery is built into the BFR model, speeded up planning and implementation processes still need to keep the issues of equity and inclusion at the core of the development agenda. Survey respondents were asked to reflect on the extent to which the plans developed in the Labs responded adequately to equity issues, as well as the broad area of skills development as a direct outcome of implementation. Overall, it appears that these issues were factored into planning processes. It is important in this evaluation to mention some of the success stories that several respondents cited, listed in Table 13 below:

Table 13: Operation Phakisa success stories

Respondent	Lab	Quote
4	Ideal Clinic	When we started Operation Phakisa, there were only 10 registered Ideal primary health care facilities (clinics), but by 2020, there were about 1920 primary health care facilities (Clinics and Community Health Centres).
16	Ideal Clinic	When the lab ended, people went back to their original activities. With the Ideal Clinic, they managed to get right, the availability of medication at their facilities (90%), the waiting time has been reduced to less than 3 hours. They are now having an appointment system; they are able to schedule the appointments accordingly. Clinics are not as full. Supply chain management processes managed to improve and the turnaround time for ordered supplies period shortened. There were small improvement strides made in Infrastructure and human resources for health though challenges still persist due to financial challenges in provinces. In addition, maintenance of buildings and equipment is still a challenge, and lastly the sustainability of good gains is still a challenge since some facilities happen to drop or regress when the focus is shifted to others. To date more than 55% of primary health care facilities had been turned ideal.
33	Oceans Economy	Liked about the methodology – its ability to illuminate pathways to doing what was required to resolving complex problem and complex challenges. In the oceans economy – to resolve the problem of South Africa not fully leveraging our oceans economy's potential. The methodology gave them an incredibly detailed set of proposals and pathways through the 3feet plans in addressing issues.

24	Oceans Economy	The upstream oil and gas exploration activities that were borne by OP are one example, bar the global fall in the price of oil. For in the middle of the planning phase of OP, beginning in June 2014, the nominal blend price of crude oil began a rapid decline, falling from $112 in June to $62 in December, a 6-month decline of 44%. This price drop had a negative impact on exploration budgets of oil majors, and SA suffered a share of this exploration withdrawal. But the successes of organising the institutional, regulatory and governance arrangements for the upstream oil and gas sector through OP, were a resounding success
24	Oceans Economy	The biggest outcome that OP ushered in was time reduction concerning the applications, registrations and licences relating to mining activities e.g., Water Use Licences, (WULA) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), a one stop shop was implemented, and this assisted in speeding up the processes. This was possible because several government departments had to work together and speed up the processes – Efficiency. There were many institutional reforms that were brought about through the collaborative approach in solving problems. The government was supposed to invest more to get more, where there was limited investment, there are less returns.
38	Chemicals And Waste	The collaboration has been excellent e.g., people understood that it is a presidential programme, and they are willing to participate. Also, the other work that we have done with the other partners (Consumer Goods Counsel) has started off well to an extend that every time they are seeing positive results and are keeping on coming back. Some SMMEs are having collaborations with big companies such as Pick and Pay and Woolworths by feeding off from their waste e.g. (boxes, food waste or plastics). The consumer goods counsel and Phakisa therefore is giving support to the small businesses for their mutual benefit.
12	Biodiversity	At the initial stages they were very enabling. As a lab we had a lot of challenges, e.g., in EC and KZN there were nature reserves that were stuck for the past 20 years because they were reserved as agricultural land and with the OP, we managed to resolve this, and got permissions in the form of authorisations from the Department of Environmental Affairs for those lands to be rezoned. This happened successfully because of the priority assigned to Phakisa projects and the interdepartmental dialogues and cooperation that was taking place.
18	Oceans Economy	Key to OP is its “business unusual” element, meaning that South Africa can be overly ambitious and aspirational in the future, and dedicate resources to implement agreed-upon plans, and faster to achieve desired results. There are many good practice examples and results that can be cited. One being the creation of a one-stop-facility for the offshore oil and gas upstream exploration activities.

		In the past, an oil company had to deal with multiple departments for the necessary licensing requirements. But with the advent of OP, not only were all these activities centralised into one entity – Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) – but PASA was also migrated out of one government department (Department of Energy) to another (Department of Mineral Resources) at the time, for the said smooth and centralised one-stop functions.
18	Oceans Economy	Detailed way of planning is the incontrovertible strength of the methodology. The second OP good practice example was the significant lowering of number of years/months/days for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and issuing of certain licenses in the fisheries sector. So, one can indeed profess that this OP methodology is a feasible approach to planning and implementation of its programmes.
71	Oceans Economy	To find evidence-based answer in public policy is difficult but Operation Phakisa added a certain amount of value, it raised awareness of some of the problems with the key priorities. It had success in the oceans economy i.e., fishing sector, aquaculture, work around the harbours, some of the successes there had their origins and roots in Operation Phakisa. It had some impact but not to the extent that BFR had in Malaysia. "We produced relatively small, dispersed results in some areas."

6.4.4 Value for Money

This question examines the systematic elements in an assessment of the adequacy and efficient usage of the financial and human resources to support the implementation of the Operation Phakisa activities. The study reveals that the challenges in the implementation of Operation Phakisa are linked with budget constraints and the anaemic state of the South African economy. There were very few positive statements on the allocation of national resources to Operation Phakisa initiatives. Several respondents expressed frustration at the perceived lack of support provided by National Treasury and the limited role that they played in supporting Operation Phakisa initiatives. The lack of additional financial allocations to the Labs was criticized by numerous respondents as leading to the lack of commitment to and prioritization of activities related to Operation Phakisa.

Because of the technical demands and high stakes involved in the Operation Phakisa methodology implementation, the Labs were facilitated by experienced international consultants such including McKinsey and Deloitte, and they required a substantial budget that could only be committed by waiving standard public-procurement rules. The evaluators found that the process of determining the true costs of convening the Labs was a challenging one, as some departments were unwilling to provide the necessary information. Some of the figures are partial, as they consist of either facilitation only or some parts of facilitation. Table 8 below depicts the funding from the public purse that was allocated to support the costs of convening the Labs.

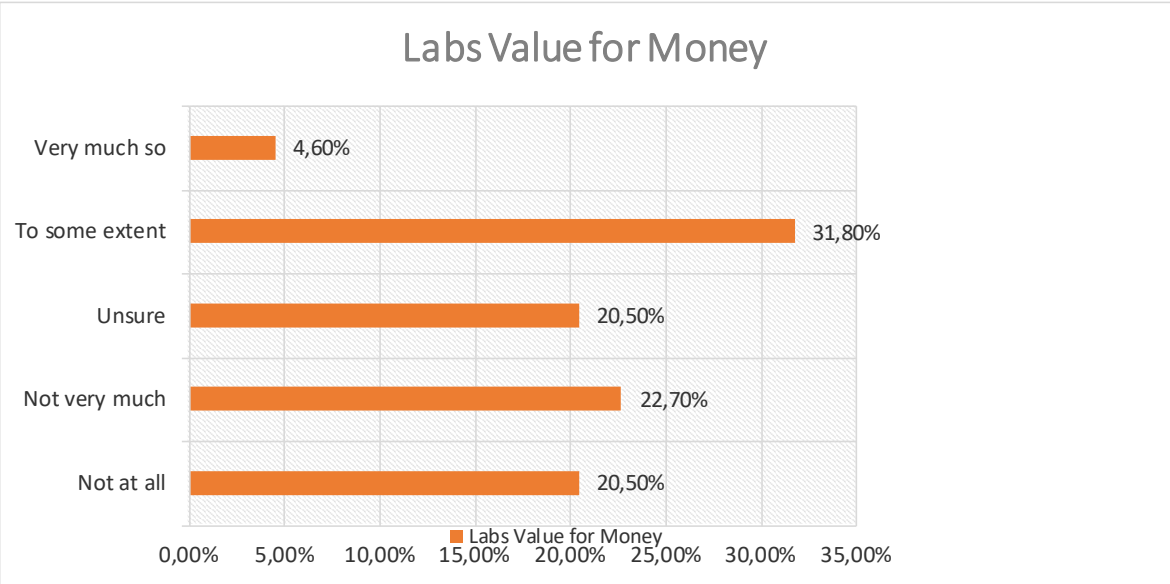
Table 14: Expenditue of Lab convening

Lab	Cost of convening the Lab
Agriculture	R65,15 million

Biodiversity	R 4,400 million
Chemicals and Waste	Not provided
ICT in education	R16 million
Ideal Clinic	R17 million
Mining	R13 million
Oceans Economy	R48,72 million

Realising the ambitious targets established by the Operation Phakisa Labs was always going to be dependent on the availability of adequate financial and human resources for planning, delivery, and monitoring. A key constraint facing implementing partners has been the lack funding to implement projects and this is further compounded by the fact that resources are now limited in the public sector currently. Most of the respondents have repeatedly noted this as a shortcoming of the Operation Phakisa process and have suggested the urgent need for the Operation Phakisa Unit to source or unlock funding for implementation to take place as envisaged. Operation Phakisa in its entirety involves an arena of large projects that involve huge capital investments from several hundred million to several billion Rands. The survey responses as shown in Figure 23 below show a mixed picture of the value of money for the Labs, where a total of 43.2% impeccably stated that the Labs do not exhibit any value for money, whilst 36.4% consider these costs a reasonable investment. However, a total of 20.5% were unsure as to whether the Labs demonstrate any value for money and the return on investment is likely going to be significant.

Figure 23: Extent to which Labs were perceived as "value for money" n=44



This conclusion is summed up in the table below:

Table 15: Lessons learned from the implementation of Operation Phakisa

Evaluation Questions	Definitely	Yes	Undecide	No	Definitely no
How desirable is it to continue to use this methodology for policy imperatives going forward?					
Are there aspects of the methodology that should be improved, or be					

improved upon in the future?					
Are there aspects of the methodology that can be adapted to make future roll out of the methodology more effective?					
Are there distinguishing factors that make one Lab more effective than the others?					
Are these successes factors observed specific to a particular sector?					
Are the successes peculiar to a particular lead department and its leadership?					
Have the convened Labs shown value for money?					

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

While recognising the unique purpose, priority focus and composition of each of the Labs the scope of this evaluation was to look at Operation Phakisa in its entirety, and the recommendations are therefore generic across all Labs rather than specific to any individual Lab. The results of the evaluation point to a mixed perspective on the utility of Operation Phakisa as an accelerated delivery mechanism for key priorities in the NDP. The recommendations are informed by the following:

- A review of the global literature on Delivery Units and lessons learned from implementing accelerated service delivery models.
- Engagement with key DPME staff.
- The consolidated perspectives obtained from the survey.
- The perspectives of key informants who were interviewed.
- The quantitative performance data from the Labs.

One strong viewpoint that emerged from the evidence gathered during the implementation evaluation was that in its entirety Operation Phakisa had not achieved its ambitious objective of fast-tracking progress on critical national development priorities. The inability to accelerate delivery can be attributed in the main to the difficulties that government has faced in adapting departmental systems to the BFR model imperative of "business unusual" – the cutting of red tape, speeding up procurement, and fast-tracking critical decision making. The majority of the respondents recommend that government make a policy decision to phase out Operation Phakisa as a stand-alone flagship initiative but also ensure that those components of OP that have actually worked well are retained within relevant departments or clusters of departments.

Table 16: Recommendations and required actions

Government should take a strategic decision to phase out Operation Phakisa as a standalone initiative in a structured manner and absorb its functioning parts into line department programmes.	
Recommendation	**Required Action**
R1: Phase out Operation Phakisa	Government – at cabinet level – uses the findings of this evaluation to take a strategic decision to phase out (terminate) Operation Phakisa as a standalone development initiative and absorb its more successful and functioning components into relevant line department programmes or migrate these components into other currently operational strategic interventions.

R2. Streamline National Efforts to Meet Priorities	South Africa currently has numerous ongoing national development initiatives – including Operation Phakisa. To avoid a dilution of resources and effort the government should make a strategic decision to integrate OP into components of other national strategic development initiatives to create one or two highly focused and well-resourced responses to key national priorities.
R3. Develop a phased strategy to migrate Operation Phakisa activities	DPME ISU in collaboration with sector experts and other key stakeholders should come with a strategy to infuse the three feet plans and associated implementation activities into other Departmental/ Sector Plans and use the sector monitoring branch to monitor implementation. The concept of "business unusual" should continue to be infused into the operational culture of departments – and perhaps even branded as a set of working principles similar to the Batho Pele model.
R4. Redeploy key personnel	Government officials who have been working full time on OP activities must be redeployed to other lines of duty within government where they can effectively utilise the expertise, knowledge and skills gained through their involvement with OP.
R5. Intergovernmental and Multi-Sectoral Coordination	The positive lessons learned from the establishment and operations of the Operation Phakisa Labs should be documented and shared as good practice for future initiatives that require inter-departmental collaboration, or multi-sector engagement. This will ensure the maintenance of relevance and commitment, as well as the potential sustainability of the tools developed.

8. CONCLUSION

In line with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria, this evaluation assessed the findings against relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Relevance: The Operation Phakisa strategic vision is founded on strong logic and is compelling. The review findings have emerged from an assessment of the extent to which the Operation Phakisa methodology design and approach was suitable in terms of achieving its desired effect and working in its given context. The Operation Phakisa is logical, and the outputs and outcomes are clearly defined. Operation Phakisa as a methodology responds to the underlying problems and commonly accepted challenges that impedes accelerated service delivery and it is clear that *if* Operation Phakisa is implemented systematically and successfully, it becomes more relevant to the South African development context, well-aligned with the government's overall economic growth, transformation, and job creation objectives. Given the strong understanding of the DPME ISU officials and the methodology stakeholders of the realities and needs on the ground and given the continuous engagement with beneficiaries, additional findings and causal and effects linkages were identified. The Operation Phakisa methodology theory was appropriate and relevant in general terms, but could have been more defined, explicit, clear regarding the financial protocols in most of the Labs and better linked to other government processes after the design and inception phase. Although there are areas of improvement, in general, the methodology is relevant, aligned to the NDP, needs of the citizens and the general economic environment of South Africa.

Efficiency: Efficiency is linked to the ability of the Operation Phakisa Labs to spend its funds according to the agreed budget and work plans, and to ensure that its reporting includes accurate forecasting to ensure that financial shortfalls are not experienced. Most of the Labs or focus areas do not have a dedicated budget apportioned to them for implementation. The implementing

departments are required to redirect their existing funds which has a negative impact to other equally significant programs. One of the respondents mentioned that there are doubts if National Treasury is sufficiently supportive of the Operation Phakisa process. A key constraint facing implementing partners is the lack funding to implement projects. The initial conceptualisation was premised on the notion that government was going to avail financial resources to the early phases of implementation and that this would culminate in unlocking private sector investment. Thereafter, government would gradually divest and permit the private sector to crowd-in. As a result, the government needs to have access to sufficient budget to fund the initial phases of the initiatives. Sufficient buy-in from the private sector is crucial to funding the implementation of the 3-feet plans.

Effectiveness: Based on the understanding and experience of the BFR approach in Malaysia, the Delivery Unit model envisaged by the South African government was intended to be a longer-term solution to the above-mentioned challenges faced in delivering on the NDP priorities. Overall, findings indicate that the Operation Phakisa methodology has been well received, and in particular, Operation Phakisa's integrated and systematic multi-sectoral intervention helped to overcome some logistical implementation obstacles, promote scale-up and synergistically maximize the effect of each sector, leveraging the strengths and diverse approaches in different initiatives. Unfortunately, several programmatic problems associated with funding constraints and absence of political support that are critical to ensure success were identified. The supposed link of Operation Phakisa to political power has not been the case with Operation Phakisa, as bureaucratic traits have gradually infiltrated back just after the Labs were set up. Several respondents cited that Government and lead departments are still using bureaucracy for delivery and reporting, which is against the spirit of BFR. If Operation Phakisa had a business unusual approach, then a significant number of outcomes would have been achieved, impacting positively on growth, investment, and employment. According to the analysis conducted as part of this evaluation, several of the weaknesses in administrative efficiency and implementation can be traced back to a lack of adequate planning, follow up and contingency measures to address resource constraints.

Sustainability: The delivery unit approach depends on the visible backing of the head of government and effective delegation to key decision makers. Evidence suggests that still functioning Labs have been more focused on the way the civil service operates than its immediate delivery on key priorities using the BFR methodology. However, even a Lab that only existed for a short period of time or that has been non-functional may have used the experience and the opportunity of being exposed to the BFR model to embed new practices within the work of their departments and may see some of this work continue even if this happens under a different name or organisational form. It is unclear within government circles whether Operation Phakisa is expected to be a short-term intervention linked to a particular administration or whether in some form or other it becomes a permanent feature at the centre of government. It appears that the current administration is placing less emphasis on Operation Phakisa and focusing its resources more on post-COVID recovery interventions and on the work of Operation Vhulindlela and Master Plans.

Emerging Impact: Operation Phakisa has demonstrated the value of using a structured approach to tracking the performance of such complex programmes even within the constraints of available capacity, expertise, and governance arrangements**.** An achievement of Operation Phakisa so far has been the ability to address disjointed planning and working in silos, particularly, the establishment of intergovernmental platforms to streamline work in a systematic and cost-efficient manner. Labs have been a relevant problem-solving platform, ushering consensus building and bringing various

stakeholders together with new ways of thinking. This is a significant departure from a system that is fundamentally fragmented, lacking inter-agency trust with almost no effective coordination mechanisms. Nevertheless, while the aim behind bringing a 'new way' to deliver government programmes may be relevant and urgent for the South African context, it is likely to continue being enervated if the relevant officials, particularly those at the apex of the organisations at ministerial and DG level, do not have sufficient motivation to adapt to this way of working and adjust their plans and processes accordingly.

9. REFERENCES

1. Balozi, M.A. Othman, S., and Issa, M.F.M. (2014). Constructing Theory with Big Fast Result Now (BFRN): Contribution of Tanzania to the theory of knowledge sharing behavior. International Journal for Innovation Education.
2. Desta, A. (2012). The viability of the Malaysian developmental state for Africa in an era of economic globalization. International Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences, 2(12):26-31.
3. PEMANDU (Performance Management and Delivery Unit of the Government of Malaysia). 2015. Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). [Online]. Available: http:// www.pemandu.gov.my accessed on 8 August 2021.
4. Idris Jala, D S. (2014). New growth strategies: Perspectives from Malaysia's transformation programme, World Bank Group Conference. [Online]. Available: http://www.worldbank.org accessed on 7 August 2021.
5. Malaysia (Government of). (2014a). Government Transformation Programme. [Online]. Available: http://www.pemandu.gov.my/gtp/Big_Fast_Result-@- Big_Fast_Results.aspx
6. Malaysia (Government of). (2014b). What is transformation? [Online]. Available: http://pemandu.gov.my
7. The Presidency. (2014). Operation Phakisa. [Online]. Available: http:// www.operationphakisa.gov.za/Pages/Home.aspx
8. Heywood, A. 1999. Political theory. An introduction. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
9. Kwet, Michael (2017). Operation Phakisa Education: Why A Secret? Mass Surveillance, Inequality, and Race in South Africa's Emerging National E-Education System (August 8,2021). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3672408
10. Bob, U. (2018). Methodological challenges in assessing the economic impacts of coastal and marine tourism in South Africa.
11. Department of Agriculture/ Department of Land Reform and Rural Development. (2016) Concept Document – Transforming the Agricultural Sector towards an Inclusive Rural Economy "Food for All and 1 million Jobs, by 2030". https://static.pmg.org.za/170614operationphakisa.PDF
12. Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries (Power Presentation). (2015). Aquaculture Year One Review Oct 2014 – Oct 2015. https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/reports/operationphakisa_aquaculture201415_oneyearreview.pdf
13. Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries/ Department of Land Reform Development (Power Presentation). (14 November 2017). Operation Phakisa - Presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
14. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries / Department of Land Reform and Rural Development. (Undated). Report of Operation Phakisa.
15. Department of Environmental Affairs/ Department of Tourism. (Power Prestation). (13 May 2016) Biodiversity and Tourism Lab.
16. Department of Tourism. (Power Prestation). Coastland Marine Tourism. (Undated). Broadening horizons.
17. Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. (Undated) Tender/ Call for Proposals Terms of Reference/ Specifications.
18. Operation Phakisa for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). (F.P). (4 January 2018).

19. Province of the Eastern Cape Education (Power Prestation). (23 June 2015). Challenges and Opportunities in Basic Education in the Eastern Cape. A panel Discussion.
20. Province of the Eastern Cape. Operation Phakisa. (Power Prestation). (E.L). (24 June 2015). ICT In Education Lab.
21. Department of Education/ Free State Province. (Power Prestation). Operation Phakisa Presentation. (N.L). (24 June 2015). www.fs.gov.za
22. South Africa Department of Basic Education and Operation Phakisa/ Scoping Lab: Uncovering Challenges in Education and ICTs. (Power Prestation). The World Bank. (29 June 2015). Pretoria, South Africa.
23. Department of Education/ Republic of South Africa. Draft Digital Content Resource Plan for Education. (3 January 2014). D Curriculum Innovation: & e-Learning Draft 6
24. University of Western Cape/Education Policy Unit, UWC. A national survey of Information Communication Technology in South Africa schools. (Undated). Computers in school. Project Coordinators: P.L and C.H. Sponsored by the International Development Research Centre.
25. Department of Education/Feasibility Study on ICT in Education. (2009). Concept Document on Connectivity Plan for Schools and FET Colleges.
26. Guidelines for Teacher Training and Professional Development in ICT. (2007). (Mr. D.H) – Director-General. https://www.schoolnet.org.za/sharing/guidelines_teacher_training.pdf
27. Teacher Centers. Draft Report on The Connectivity Status of Schools in the 20 KM Radius of Teacher Centers.
28. Department of Basic Education. Directorate: Curriculum Innovation And E-Learning. (2015 – 19). Draft school's Connectivity Sector Plan.
29. Financing E-Education and Achieving. Policy Goals in Public Ordinary Schools in South Africa. (Undated). (Chapter 2). (L.A). (D.S). URL
30. Department of Basic Education/National Education Collaboration Trust. Operation Phakisa – Signs, sources, and sustainable solutions in Education. (Mr. G.K). (2015). URL
31. Department of Basic Education. Guidelines for Schools. ICT Hardware Specifications. (August 2012). https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/Guidelines_for_Schools_ICT_Hardware_Specifications.pdf?ver=2014-11-28-122120-000
32. Basic Education Sector Implementation Plan For E-Education. (2014 – 2019).
33. TEACH4RED/ Enhancing Education. Transforming Learning & Teaching Through ICTs: ICT for Rural Education Development (ICT4RED). (Undated).
34. NAPTOSA. Presentation to the DPME/DBE Operation Phakisa ICT Lab. (25 June 2015). (H.H).
35. A Study of Existing e-Education Initiatives. (Undated). (J.M Ostrowick, Technologist). https://nect.org.za
36. Department of Basic Education/ National Education Collaboration Trust. (Power Point). Operation Phakisa – Signs, sources, and sustainable solutions in Education. (2015).
37. Saide, South African Institute for Distance Education/Rapid research on the use of ICT in education, RFP – 15/1116, (28 August 2015). (A.A; F.R; E.M).
38. Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology. (2015). Cite as: Buitendag, (A. A. K.), (Hattingh, F. G.), & (M, Hains,). (2015). Towards the realization of an ICT education living Lab – The TechTeachers.co.za success story. Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology, 12, 55-70. Retrieved from http://iisit.org/V ol12/IISITv12p055-070Buitendag1835.pdf
39. Draft: South Africa ICT in Education. Challenge Scoping Lab. (2015). Executive Summary.

40. White Paper on e-Education. Transforming Learning and Teaching through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). (26 August 2004). Notice 1869 of 2004, published on page 3 of Government Gazette No. 26734. https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/white%20_paper_on_e-education_2004.pdf
41. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. The Road Ahead: The Elusive Nature of Technological Knowledge. (24 June 2015). (R.D, PhD).
42. Department of Basic Education. Action Plan To 2014/Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025. (October 2011).
43. Department of Communications/South Africa Connect: Creating Opportunities, Ensuring Inclusion. (15 November 2013). South Africa's National Broadband Policy.
44. Department of Communications/ The doc. South Africa Connect: Creating Opportunities, Ensuring Inclusion. (20 November 2013). South Africa's National Broadband Policy.
45. Operation Phakisa. Ideal Clinic Realization and Maintenance. Overview of 3 feet plans and KPI's. Post Lab Team (5 December 2014).
46. Operation Phakisa. Ideal Clinic Realisation and Maintenance. (May 2015). Final Lab Report. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjsjNWsnqvyAhVDoVwKHe-ODVIQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.idealhealthfacility.org.za%2FApp%2FDocument%2FDownload%2F83&usg=AOvVaw2iFuudf0ILHxTc3fZtjG1L
47. Department of Planning Monitoring and Evolution. Rough Draft concept note for Mining LAB: Transforming the mining sector and doubling real investment in the sector by 2030. (Draft 6 February 2015).
48. Department of Planning Monitoring and Evolution. Concept note for Mining Lab: Transforming the mining sector and doubling real investment in the sector by 2030. (Final Draft 4b, 17 February 2015).
49. Department of Planning Monitoring and Evolution/Genesis Analytics. (27 July 2018). Review of Operation Phakisa Oceans Economy. Final.
50. Department of Environmental Affairs/ Operation Phakias: Ocean Economy Unlocking the Economic Potential of South Africa. (31 August 2016). Draft Report.

planning, monitoring and evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

CONTACT

The Presidency
Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
Private Bag X944
Pretoria, 0001, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 312 0155
Fax: +27 86 686 4455