

# NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA MUNICIPALITY: CASE STUDY REPORT

*By* DCES

# NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA MUNICIPALITY

## **1** CASE STUDY REPORT

*Submitted by*

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## 1. Introduction

The Public Officials Skills and Capacity Assessment Study conducted by the <sup>22</sup> Developmental, Capable and Ethical State (DCES) research division has three key objectives as outlined in the previous reports:

- To conduct a skills and capacity assessment to understand the capacity realities and support requirements of entry-level, mid-level and senior-level municipal officials in South Africa to inform training and capacity-building interventions.
- To assess whether existing or envisaged/planned training and capacity-building strategies and interventions are appropriately aligned with expressed and actual priority needs as identified in the LGSETA Work Place Skills Plans (WPSPs) and National Development Plan (NDP).
- To produce a final report on the findings of the assessment, including recommendations for policy and practice.

As has been noted in other outputs of this study, municipalities, specifically the smaller ones, <sup>15</sup> lack the technical knowledge, skill and expertise necessary to perform core operational and financial functions (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2012). Municipalities are also often unable to fill vacant posts which affects municipal governance and administration (Sheoraj, 2015). Service delivery is particularly hampered by capacity constraints in critical areas of municipal governance and administration (De Visser 2009: 24). <sup>9</sup> Capacity constraints can be defined as the lack of adequate and suitable human, scientific, technological, organisational, institutional and resource capabilities to deliver on the constitutional mandate of government (Soko, 2006; Development Network Africa, 2006). Generally, these shortfalls include skills in planning, engineering and project management. Such constraints currently exist in the system broadly, including at the institutional and individual levels. Notably, mainly due to the absence of adequately and appropriately qualified people already in the system and responsible for management and recruitment, the uneven quality of certifications, deficiencies in attributes like experience, and shortages or absence of skills among both incumbents and applicants are less likely to be identified, like leadership capabilities (Development Network Africa, 2006).

The National Development Plan (NDP) identified capacity issues as a leading challenge that undermines the <sup>21</sup> creation of a capable, democratic developmental state able to respond to the social and economic challenges confronting the country. <sup>32</sup> Chapter 13 on building a capable and developmental state identifies several training and capacity building initiatives for public officials to enhance their skills and capacitate them to meet their responsibilities (National Planning Commission, 2012). The varying degrees of success of some of these initiatives and programmes until 2015 <sup>7</sup> (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2015), illustrates the need to keep reflecting on the matter and undertake further research with the aim of better understanding capacity constraints within local government. As the literature notes, there are major disparities across municipalities (e.g. economically, politically, in terms of location) which have different impacts on their capacity and performance (see Monkam, 2014), making comparisons difficult. In an effort <sup>33</sup> to provide a deeper understanding of some of the nuances at play, this report offers some valuable insights from the experiences and ideas of municipal officials <sup>11</sup> in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality (NMMDM). Bearing in mind the relevance of local context, as noted above, the insights are nevertheless useful for municipal officials to understand some of the capacity realities and support requirements at municipal level at large, and to inform training and capacity-building interventions.

This report is structured around the background of this municipality and the <sup>6</sup> key themes that emerged from the data collected throughout the field work exercises in terms of overall governance challenges, but most specifically related to skills and capacity constraints.

## <sup>13</sup> 2. Background: Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality

The Ngaka Modiri Molema Municipality (NMMDM) is a district municipality located in the North West province and based in the city of Mafikeng. Estimates from Statistics South Africa's 2016 Community Survey suggest that the municipality is home to nearly a million, (889 108) residents. It is estimated that the district municipality <sup>2</sup> experienced an overall increase of 5.21 percent in its population from 2011 to 2016. The <sup>2</sup> NMMDM is one of four

district municipalities in the North West and covers an area of about 28,206<sup>2</sup> kilometres. From a local tourism standpoint, the NMMDM is the home of the Mafikeng people? and the city is renowned for traditional SeTswana heritage.

The NMMDM <sup>4</sup> is a Category C municipality and is one of four district municipalities in the North West Province. It is situated centrally within the province and shares an international border with Botswana. It is comprised of five local municipalities: Mahikeng, Ratlou, Ramotshere Moiloa, Ditsobotla and Tswaing. The district is home to the city of Mahikeng (previously Mafikeng), the capital of the province (Figure 1). The capital is nicknamed 'The City of Goodwill', which is also the city's slogan. It is a rapidly growing, modern, residential, administrative and commercial city, which contrasts with its fascinating history.<sup>1</sup>

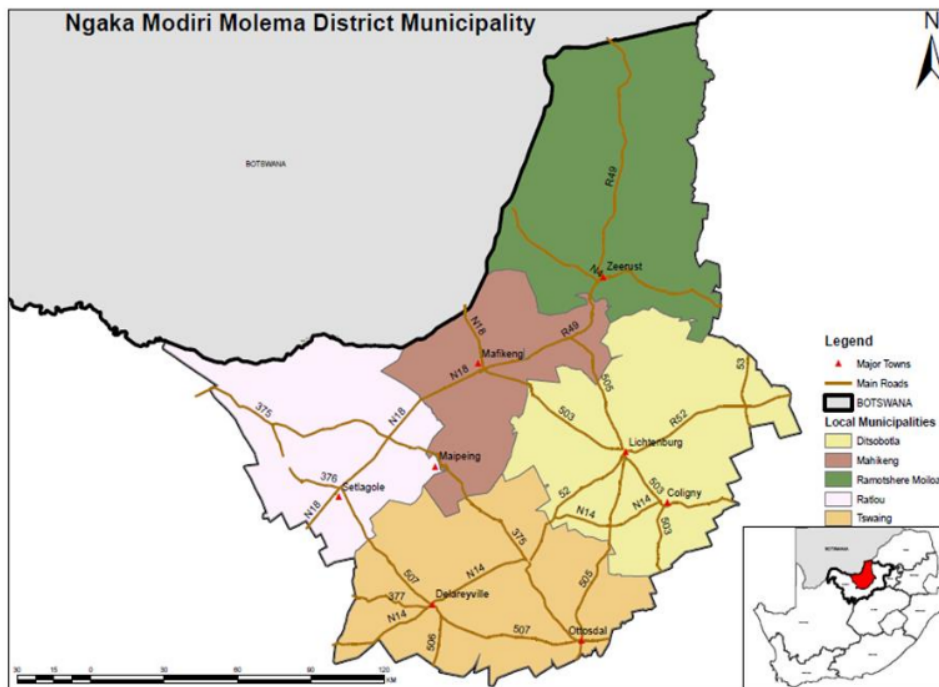


Figure 1: Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality

Source: <https://www.nmmdm.gov.za/overview>

<sup>1</sup> See <https://municipalities.co.za/overview/142/ngaka-modiri-molema-district-municipality>.

Organisationally, the municipality consists of an executive mayor, municipal manager, speaker of the municipal council, and its administration comprises five departments (financial services, community services, IDP<sup>2</sup> and development, corporate resource support services, and public works and basic services).

The administrative structure is headed by the municipal manager and the political branch comprises the mayor, speaker, single whip and the MPAC<sup>3</sup> chairperson. Given the transformation of local government post-democracy, the positive strides taken since the early 2000s can be credited to democratically elected councils which characterise the local government system (De Visser, 2009: 14). The municipal council in the NMMDM is the highest decision-making authority in the municipality. The administrative branch oversees corporate governance and administers the daily operations of the municipality guided by the legislative frameworks whilst also implementing the resolutions adopted by the political branch (NMMDM, 2019: 27 ?). The municipality has faced several challenges including senior staff turnover. This is also evidenced in the municipality's annual report, which notes that five senior managers left the organisation in a period of less than one year. However, through the municipal manager, the municipality has been able to somewhat steady the ship and meet its administrative targets which are centred around the municipal committees, including the Municipal Public Accounts Committee, as well as portfolio committees on Corporate Services, Infrastructure, Development and Planning, Finance, Community Services, LED<sup>4</sup> and Intervention, Special Projects, and the Budget Steering Committee (NMMDM, 2019).<sup>5</sup>

According to Census 2011 data, 80% of the population has access to electricity, and 66% live in a formal dwelling. The municipality is responsible for water provision in the entire district . However, despite being the primary municipality, the municipality has a relatively low number of residents with access to running water within dwelling .

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<sup>2</sup> Integrated Development Planning.

<sup>3</sup> Municipal Public Accounts Committee.

<sup>4</sup> Local economic development.

<sup>5</sup> Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, 2019. 2018/2019 annual report.



## 2.1 Financial Services

Effective financial management is essential for municipalities, and ensures that they are able to meet all their service delivery objectives. Literature from Ndevu and Muller (2018) highlights that improved financial management is achievable only if there is strong capacity in that department, but that lack of capacity continues to be a challenge facing local municipalities. The NMMDM financial services department's primary objective is to ensure that there is sound management and governance of financial resources, along with prudent spending in line with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 Community Services

According to Mubangizi (2008), in line with its service delivery mandate, local government is also tasked with ensuring that community services are readily available to citizens. In the NMMDM, three types of community services are offered (i) Fire and Rescue Services, (ii) Municipal Health Services and (iii) Disaster Management Services.

### 2.2.1 Fire and Rescue Services

The Fire Brigade Services Act of 2000 outlines that fire and rescue services is a unit equipped to manage and contain fires in the eventuality of a fire breakout.<sup>7</sup> The functions of this unit are to:

- Manage fire brigade and rescue services within the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality.
- Liaise with all relevant government departments, NGOs and other entities on issues pertaining to fire brigade services.
- Lead and manage all fire stations in the district in line with applicable powers and functions and other relevant statutory requirements.
- Exercise control over usage of the brigade fleet and other equipment in the fire and rescue service.

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<sup>6</sup> Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Fire Brigade Services Act No. 14 of 2000.

- <sup>2</sup> Enforce and implement fire legislation and by-laws.

### **Municipal Health Services**

Municipal health services form part of the decentralisation of services that has been undertaken in local government. Christmas (2008) argues that overlapping powers have at times led to duplication, inefficiencies and turf battles between provinces and local municipalities. However, as per the regulations issued <sup>4</sup> in terms of the Municipal Structures Act, municipalities are expected to provide primary health services to its communities.<sup>8</sup>

The NMMDM health services functions are to:

- <sup>2</sup> Ensure that stakeholders' data is maintained and communication lines between Municipal Health Services and stakeholders are open and updated regularly.
- To record statistics and report on trends in the workstation, compile monthly reports and submit to Council. This must be aligned to the Batho Pele principles.
- Undertake routine inspections, assessments and recommend remedial actions on non-compliance.

### **Disaster Management**

Disaster management can be defined as the process of reducing the risk of vulnerability to hazards (Roy and Pandey, 2016: 127). When providing an <sup>12</sup> assessment of South Africa's disaster management legislation, Van Niekerk (2014) notes that <sup>12</sup> South Africa was amongst the first developing countries to enact disaster management legislation. The Disaster Management Act acknowledges that all three spheres of government must make provision for mitigating and dealing with any potential disasters that may arise.<sup>9</sup> In keeping up with these disaster management guidelines, the NMMDM's Disaster Management Services have the following objectives:

- <sup>2</sup> Initiate the implementation of any contingency plans and emergency procedures.

<sup>19</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>8</sup> Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Disaster Management Act No 57. of 2002.

- <sup>2</sup> Promote disaster management capacity-building in disaster management services.
- Implement risk reduction plans and recovery strategies in communities in the district.
- Ensure that all operational tools and equipment are in good working condition.
- Prepare monthly reports of statistics of incidents and formulate service level agreements with bordering municipalities.

### 2.3 IDP: Planning and Development

The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) approaches planning with a key focus on local issues instead of sectoral issues, which involves an integration of different plans with an intention of solving local issues (Africa, Magwaza and Patel, 2000). Kanyane (2008) points out that this essentially entails a detailed plan for the municipality which it looks to adopt with the intention of setting out a long-term development vision for the municipality. Each municipality must formulate and adopt its own IDP. This forms part of the decentralisation of services along with the recognition of local municipalities as being the primary role player in local development, particularly through local economic development (LED) which can advance economic development in local municipalities as outlined by the Constitution (Khambule and Mtapuri ,2018).<sup>10</sup> The NMMDM IDP outlines plans including but not limited to:

- Building an economy beneficial to all citizens.
- Strengthening policing with the intention of ensuring that the prevention of all forms of crime, gangsterism and violence, especially against woman and children.
- Getting rid of corruption and capture of the municipality through procurement corruption.

The IDP unit within the municipality further makes provisions to ensure support for the following:

- <sup>3</sup> Facilitation of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME) training and development;

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<sup>10</sup> Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2020.

- <sup>3</sup> Facilitate the establishment and registration of enterprises and cooperatives;
- Exposure of SMMEs to potential market opportunities; and
- Facilitate access to finance for SMMEs.

## 2.4 Corporate Support Services

In municipalities, corporate support services are an integral aspect of municipal operations. Yusoff and Zainol (2014) state that corporate services in government departments across local, national and provincial spheres are critical to ensure that there is profitability and sustainability, along with the creation of business opportunities especially for SMMEs. In addition, corporate services are also required to create a harmonious relationship between the different units within a municipality.

Corporate services within NMMDM focus on the following:

- <sup>2</sup> Promote sound labour relations management within the Municipality.
- Provide employees with quick and easy access for the lodging of grievances and application of discipline.
- Ensure that discipline is applied in a prompt, fair and consistent manner.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the SALGBC<sup>11</sup> code of conduct for municipal employees.
- Advocate fair and equal treatment of all employees.

## 2.5 Public works and basic services

Service delivery is the single most important objective of municipalities (Reddy, 2018). <sup>18</sup> Since it is the sphere of government closest to the people, many service delivery responsibilities rest on local government (Khale and Worku, 2013). It therefore no surprise that the Executive Mayor, Cllr Tshupo Justice Makolomakwa, during his media briefing at the opening of the new office block for the municipality, reiterated that vandalism of infrastructure and theft of

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<sup>11</sup> South African Local Government Bargaining Council.

cables is another cancerous situation.<sup>12</sup> The Mayor emphasised that the <sup>7</sup> state has a responsibility to provide its citizens with basic resources such as clean and drinkable water and <sup>35</sup> sanitation services to meet basic human needs. It is therefore very disappointing when communities suffer because of damage to and misuse of infrastructure (Figure 2).



<sup>25</sup> Figure 2: The ugly face of water and sanitation infrastructure vandalism

Source: <https://www.nmmdm.gov.za/ugly-face-water-and-sanitation-infrastructure-vandalism>

The NMMDM public works and basic services is no different. Water is the primary service offered by the municipality and the responsibilities of this department also include:

- <sup>8</sup> Local Water Services Institutional Arrangements
- Section 78 Assessment
- Service Level Agreements with Water Services Providers

#### **Ensuring Access to Water Services.**

- Construction of Water Supply Facilities
- Construction of Sanitation Facilities
- Refurbishment of Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nmmdm.gov.za/ugly-face-water-and-sanitation-infrastructure-vandalism> (n.d.). Accessed July/August 2021?

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### **Water Services Planning**

- Water Services Development Planning
- Water Services Master Planning
- Feasibility Studies, Technical Assessment and Approval of Designs

### **Water Services Local Regulation**

- Development of Water Services By-Laws and Policies
- Enforcing Water Services By-Laws and Policies
- Regulating local water services provision

### **Functions of the Department**

#### **Water Services Provision**

- Drinking Water Quality Management
- Water Resources Management (Surface and Ground Water Source)
- Operation and Maintenance of Water Supply Schemes
- Operation and Maintenance of Waste Water Treatment Works
- Customer Care<sup>13</sup>

Source: ??

## **2.6 Skills Development**

The municipality reports that it has a functional Performance Management System in place. In terms of skills and the workforce, training is provided to staff <sup>34</sup> in line with the Workplace Skills Development Plan (WSDP) that was drafted and co-signed by labour representatives as required by legislation. The workforce improvement initiative focuses on capacity development in the municipality and falls under the responsibility of senior managers in their respective units.

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<sup>13</sup> Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality website, Overview of departments.

*Table 1: Training conducted during 2018 and 2019*

<b>This table provides details for the training embarked upon in 2018/2019. The following training courses have been conducted for 2018/19: No.</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
1.	Electronic records management	16
2.	Office management	21
3.	Project management	16
4.	Certificate Programme in Municipal Finance Development (Councillors and Employees)	7
5.	Law enforcement training	14
6.	Municipal Finance Management Programme	5

Source: Adapted from NMMDM Annual Report 2019/2020

Table 1 above details the number of training programmes initiated by the municipality across the different departments. Most of these programmes were outsourced to private service providers. Municipal officials are encouraged to attend these training programmes with the intention of capacitating them to ensure that they can meet the service delivery demands of the municipality. Fisher (2007) lists 12 competencies which are critical for local government officials to possess; these include communication, decision making, policy making, financial management and institutional leadership. The training programmes initiated by the NMMDM municipality attempt to build these competences. However, the frequency of these training programmes remains unclear. In order for competencies to be developed, training ought to be consistent and a regular feature in the municipality's programme. This is especially important because lack of skills and capacity has been cited as the predominant challenge facing local municipalities in South Africa which affects service delivery ability. These competencies also enable municipal officials to deal with any arising service delivery challenges that the municipality may face, including financing in the light of reduced budgets, human resource practises and development to ensure that staff are capacitated, and intergovernmental relations between the municipality and stakeholders including the private sector, civil society, business and members of the community (Zandamela and Mphahlele, 2021).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Ethics

The DCES<sup>1</sup> secured research ethics clearance from the HSRC Research Ethics Committee (REC) before commencing the study. The ethics approval is an important requirement because the research detailed in this report involves human subjects, meaning that ethical protocols must be strictly adhered to in order to ensure participants in the study do not experience undue harm. The ethics clearance received for the research project denotes that the study complies with the South African National Research Ethics Guidelines (2004), South African National Good Clinical Practice Guidelines (2006), and with the HSRC REC ethics requirements as contained in the HSRC REC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures.

Additionally, in line with ethical guidelines,<sup>24</sup> informed consent was requested from all participating individuals. In the present study, all key informant participants<sup>1</sup> signed the consent forms before they proceeded with their interviews. The consent forms make provision for participants who have any complaints or ethical concerns to exercise their rights by contacting the HSRC REC Administrator<sup>1</sup> or by contacting the HSRC's toll-free ethics hotline (0800 212 123 or email research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za). In addition, participants were informed about the aim of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as their ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

#### 3.2 Research Methods

The overall research study consists of a mixed-methods approach that included a literature review<sup>1</sup>, and both quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative component consisted of focus group discussions as well as<sup>10</sup> key informant interviews. The quantitative component consisted of an online survey with municipal officials. The final main study report will include all these methods and report on all eight target municipalities.<sup>14</sup> This mixed methods

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<sup>14</sup> In the Free State we visited Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality and Ficksburg District Municipality. We also visited Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Municipality and Makana District Municipality in the Eastern Cape; Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality and Ba-Phalaborwa Local Municipality in Limpopo; and Bojanala Platinum District Municipality and Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality in the North West.



approach was important in order to better understand the support requirements of municipalities, gathering insights from a broad range of sources on the nuances of and the possibilities for improving skills and overcoming capacity constraints. However, this case study report relied mainly on qualitative key informant interviews and a qualitative desktop methodology, which entails a review of prior documents such as policies, legislation and relevant academic sources including books and journal articles.

Panchekeo and Samovilova (2012:2) state that:

5 Secondary data can be numeric or non-numeric or qualitative data. Qualitative secondary data include data retrieved second-hand from interviews, ethnographic accounts, photographs, documents, conversations and other. The list of sources of numeric or quantitative data that are suited to secondary analysis would include: population census, government surveys, cohort and other longitudinal studies, administrative records and other regular or continuous surveys, university and college records, author websites and other sources.

Prior work conducted by Haradhan (2018) notes that desktop research draws predominantly on secondary sources of data, which is cost-effective, reliable and easy to undertake. It is important for secondary sources to be reliable and be of sound quality (Martins, Cunha and Serra, 2018). For this report, secondary sources of data drawn upon included legislation, municipal reports and academic articles on local governance, skills and capacity. Furthermore, similar studies conducted on the municipality (see Bogopane, 2012; Bogopane 2012a; Mabe, Makamu and Juta, 2018) provided an empirical and academic perspective for the drafting of this report. As noted in the work of Hox and Boeijs (2005), secondary sources of data must be used with an understanding of the prior research that has been conducted in the area and keeping in mind the differing objectives that each study sought to accomplish. Upon utilising the different sources of data, the researchers were mindful of the importance of not just the reliability of the secondary sources of data but also the relevance of it in this research study.

### ***Case Study Methodology***

The case study approach is a common one in social sciences research. Generally, case studies are most suitable to analyse a phenomenon and gain greater perspective on how the phenomenon in question manifests itself in that particular locale (Teegavarapu, Summers and Mocko, 2008). Qualitative case study methods enable researchers to study the particular social phenomenon through a variety of lenses, which allows for multiple perspectives to be understood and researched thoroughly in order to develop a deep understanding of the research topic in question and to provide suitable solutions (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Harrison et al (2017) highlight that conducting case study research is complex and requires careful planning and coordination. A similar approach was used when undertaking the NMMDM case study research report. This included a careful analysis of the secondary data that was used to compile the report, along with a comparative aspect of the research phenomenon in question.

## **4. Findings**

Skills and capacity constraints persist in the NMMDM. These are also tied to persistent maladministration challenges due to a lack of capacity particularly in corruption prevention within the municipality. It is also worth noting that although corruption cannot be solely linked to skills and capacity constraints, in certain instances, challenges of corruption occur as a result of a lack of political will to deal decisively with it. Due to its role as a district municipality, the municipality faces a much bigger responsibility to oversee service delivery at a district level. Table 2 below outlines the number of vacancies across the NMMDM that are to be filled, including that of municipal manager and several key director positions. These posts can be considered as critical for purposes of delivering services at a district level. This finding is consistent with findings from the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), which reported that lack of capacity and skills development is hurting service delivery especially at the local government level (Financial and Fiscal Commission Policy Brief, 2012). Additionally, the need for critical and scarce skills requires remuneration and compensation in order to convince skilled workers to take up the challenging positions offered by sometimes remote and often under-resourced local or district municipalities.

Respondent<sup>15</sup> 1 noted that there is a need for technical skills because of the work that is done by the municipality:

*“...The issue of skills is brought forth by us being a water authority, meaning that we are responsible for the bulk of the water supply across the board. What does that tell you? That is exactly where the numbers will be, but what do these numbers do? These are your manual kind of work, when the nature of the service expected requires some technical skill to go with it. For example, we have one geohydrologist, and to put that in context, there are five municipalities that we work with in the same district. We are a district municipality, which means we cannot afford to be proactive but rather we have to be reactive [i.e. responsive to needs expressed or identified]. That is just on the side of water; the same can hold on the side of sanitation. We all know the story of sewerage treatment plants that are spilling all over the show...”*

When asked about the current challenges facing the municipality, one senior official (key informant 1) who was interviewed alluded to the challenge of skills or lack of capacity. KI 1 further said:

*“ ...The level of skill will always be a challenge, the worker’s expectation of the employer, you know that people work to earn a level [of income] and unfortunately, as we all know, money can never be enough because people work to earn a living”*

At this present moment, there is little evidence to suggest that there are sufficient attempts being made to address the skills and capacity challenges facing the municipality. Table 2 below outlines the number of <sup>11</sup> local municipalities in the Ngaka Modiri Molema district with vacancies in senior or critical positions.

Respondent 1 acknowledged the politicisation of the municipal environment by saying:

*“...it is a difficult one, and also a [systemic] one, because whether we like it or not, this is a political space; I am sure you have heard the phrase ‘deployment’,. That ... becomes a frustration on its own, but the only way to get by that is to professionalise the sector so that you have consistency. In the past, there used to be intergovernmental grants, the money*

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Respondent’ is the term used to refer to participants in the online survey, while ‘key informant’ (KI) refers to participants in individual interviews.

*would be dished down to municipalities but we realise that this actually caused problems for municipalities because they could not plan and budget...”*

**Table 2: Number of vacant posts**

<b>Municipal Name</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>No. of vacant posts</b>
Mafikeng Municipality	Municipal Manager	26
Mafikeng Municipality	Director: LED	27
Ditsobotla Municipality	Director: Community Services	28
Ditsobotla Municipality	Director: Planning & Development	29
Ditsobotla Municipality	Director: Technical Services	30
Ditsobotla Municipality	Director: Corporate Services	31

(Source: National Department of CoGTA)

Challenges of governance and mismanagement have beset the province of the North West and its local municipalities. <sup>16</sup>The Auditor-General’s (AG) 2020 findings revealed that not a single municipality in the North West province managed to get a clean audit.<sup>17</sup> Research conducted by Aadnesgaard and Willows (2016: 546) found a correlation between audit outcomes and service delivery challenges - if a municipality struggled to keep a clean audit, it will in all likelihood also battle with providing service delivery. However, Wadesango et al (2017) argue that, in some instances, the findings of the AG are not always realistic and feasible because factors affecting performance at the local municipal level were overlooked. On the relationship with the AG, respondent 1 had this to say:

*“...as big as we are, there are somethings we simply cannot do, it is so overregulated. It is so frustrating. Sometimes we get the sense that the Auditor-General thinks that by tomorrow, I should know that the pipe will burst. If you were to look at the expectations of the AG, it will get to a point whereby people will be afraid to work because it is so overregulated. The new animal now called the Public Audit Act, the new amendment, ... essentially says that you could go to jail for sins you did not commit. [Given] the definition of an accounting officer within the municipal space, people tend to think you are a know it all and you can do it all as you so wish. That is a perception that has been created over the years, which we are trying to reverse, but*

<sup>16</sup> Auditor-General South Africa, Consolidated general report on the local government audit outcomes. MFMA 2019-2020.

<sup>17</sup> See ‘AG’s report reveals the municipalities where money goes to waste’, 2020. *Mail and Guardian online*. Online: <https://mg.co.za/news/2020-07-02-auditor-generals-report-reveals-the-municipalities-where-the-money-goes-to-waste/>.

*it is not easy... so while we appreciate the understanding and importance of some of these concepts, I do not think the understanding of them is where it should be”*

In addition, our findings suggest that issues relating to governance and compliance have persisted over time in the local municipalities, as well as in the Ngaka Modiri Molema DM. This finding is consistent with similar research conducted by Moyo (2016), which found that municipalities in the North West battled to meet their Auditor-General obligations and that the NMMDM had an outstanding report, which had not been submitted to the Auditor-General by the cut-off date. In addition, the NMMDM has been placed under provincial administration on several occasions, including in 2015 after failing to meet its service delivery obligations.<sup>18</sup> However, similar research conducted further reveals that although the municipality challenged the decision to place it under administration, the court found that if municipalities fail to meet their service delivery obligations the municipality can therefore be placed under administration (Makoti and Odeku, 2018: 70-71). In 2018, the NMMDM was amongst eight other municipalities in the province that were placed under administration for poor performance.<sup>19</sup> The relationship between financial administration and corruption continues to be an issue that requires attention particularly in local government.

The key informant acknowledged that corruption in the municipality certainly does exist:

*“The reality is that you can never stop corruption, but you can manage it. What we need is frameworks which will ensure that we categorise corruption and ensure that the unacceptable [level of] corruption does not ”*

In its role as the primary water supplying municipality in the province, the NMMDM was unable to procure water-related infrastructure at affordable prices<sup>20</sup>. Supply chain management (SCM) issues are not unique to the NMMDM, however, as noted in the research of Eposi, Potgieter and Pelsler (2021 :56). Their findings suggest that SCM compliance has

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<sup>18</sup> <sup>14</sup> ‘North West Local Government on Ngaka Modiri Molema district municipality under administration’, 2015. South African Government News. Online: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/ngaka-modiri-molema-district-municipality-gets-administrator-run-its-affairs-22-may-2015>.

<sup>19</sup> ‘North West municipalities placed under immediate administration’, 2018. SABC News. Online: <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/north-west-municipalities-placed-under-immediate-administration/>.

<sup>20</sup> More,N.,2009. North West’s water contamination: A dark story of lost and ruined lives. Daily Maverick, Online: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-07-09-north-wests-water-contamination-a-dark-story-of-lost-and-ruined-lives/>.

proven to be a challenge that the municipality could not yet overcome, mostly because of inadequate skills, including skills related to relevant legislation, policy and practice, particularly <sup>31</sup> in the local government sphere due to the importance of prudent spending of public resources. An AG report revealed that there was a frequent overpayment for water tankers meant to deliver water to rural communities.<sup>21</sup> For the NMMDM, the governance challenges identified in this case study are similar to those highlighted by Mahole, Moroke and Mavetera (2014) who found that the NMMDM poverty alleviation programme suffered several setbacks including poor compliance with SCM regulations, and wasteful and irregular expenditure. In addition, the Public Protector's report of 2017 made several findings against senior management of the NMMDM, including an irregular contract for the branding of 35 municipal vehicles, along with the appointment of several senior officials in the municipality that were irregular and amounted to improper conduct (PPSA, 2017: 113-118?).

## 5. Conclusions

Local government continues to <sup>6</sup> play a critical role in the rendering of essential services to residents. Services ranging from water and electricity to housing are critical for the wellbeing of residents, and district and local municipalities have the huge responsibility of ensuring that these services are readily available. Skills and capacity are critical particularly for municipal employees <sup>28</sup> in order to ensure that these services are rendered efficiently whilst maintaining quality standards. This case study report has highlighted the essential need for the maintenance of high standards of ethics and governance in how municipalities function, given their proximity to residents at the local level. The NMMDM continues to face significant challenges that have been highlighted in the report. However, efforts relating to financial support, capacity development and competitive recruitment practises which will ensure that the municipality is <sup>20</sup> able to attract the best talent available in the market are likely to resolve some these challenges which can only improve the functionality of local and district municipalities.

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<sup>21</sup> 'REVEALED: 18 of the worst municipal money horror stories in SA', 2020. Business Insider South Africa. Online: <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/worst-municipality-mismanagement-according-to-ag-report-2020-7/>.

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