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1 Introduction

South Africans recently voted their local representatives into power. The local government elections held in December 2000 earmarked the beginning of the final stage of a lengthy process of transforming local government. The transformation process aims to establish a local government structure, which will ensure democratic local governance and development of local communities. The enactment of this developmental orientated mandate coincided with the demarcation of municipal¹ boundaries. The number of municipalities in the country has been reduced to less than 300, which means a reduction of about two-thirds. Municipalities now cover larger and more diverse areas than they did ever before.

The institutional change, in terms of the mandate of local government to promote development and democracy as well as to represent and serve enlarged areas, confronts them with serious challenges. A strong need for guidance and building the capacity of local government has been identified. In response to this, the South African Government has developed the Local Government Transformation Program (LGTP) in order to assist local government in overcoming the existing challenges. The Capacity Building for Local Governance (CBLG) program, which is a collaborative initiative of the Government and the United Nations, supports the LGTP in its endeavor to establish the new local government system.

As part of the CBLG program, a series of situational analyses are being conducted in two provinces of South Africa. Here will be reported upon findings of the analysis of the first municipality that has been taken under the loop: Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality. The Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipal boundary embraces a population of approximately half a million people living in predominantly tribal rural areas in the northeastern part of the Northern Province in South Africa. The newly established Local Municipality of Thohoyandou-Malamulele has to improve its capacity to perform. This report aims to provide an overview of the current situation of the municipality and to suggest practical recommendations for integrated capacity building.

¹ The Municipal Structures Act (Act 117, 1998) defines a municipality as the structures, political office bearers and administration of the municipality; a geographic area; and the community of the municipality. In other words, a municipality consists of a municipal institution (political and administrative structures), and the people who live in the local area. The term can also be used to refer to a local area, which falls within a municipal boundary. The municipal institution is an organ of state, and has a separate legal personality. The local community cannot be held liable for the actions of the municipal institution.

1.1 Transformation of local government in South Africa

In the build-up to the elections, municipal demarcations reduced the number of municipalities from 845 to 284, and in many cases merged established, wealthy, white communities with previously disadvantaged black ones. Most of the municipalities, i.e. 232, are local municipal councils, 46 are district municipal councils and 6 are metropolitan councils.

In his speech to Parliament on the day after the local elections, Provincial and Local Government Minister Sydney Mufamadi put the transformation process in context. He reminded his public that "Successive colonial and apartheid regimes introduced systems of local government, which marginalized urban black communities as well as traditional rural communities - people have for many years felt the 'down draught' of this exclusion." Mufamadi said that these persisting conditions of underdevelopment motivated the urgency with which the government viewed the establishment of new municipal entities."

Decades of apartheid rule have contributed to the widening of inequalities between black and white South Africans. The racial division was enforced by a system of separate development of black and white communities. The white minority regime enforced the black population to live in homelands in the rural areas and townships at the peripheries of urban centers. These non-white areas were poorly serviced and administrated, both in the homelands where they fell under the authorities of traditional leaders and in the urban areas where local government bodies ruled.

Against a background of extreme inequalities between the rich and the poor, rural and urban communities and the legacy administrations of former homelands and provinces of South Africa – which were interwoven with the deeply cut division between white and black people – the new municipalities will play a primary role in the socio-economic transformation of the country.

The Minister of Provincial and Local Government asserted that: "New municipal demarcations will help end decades-old marginalization," and that it will contribute to "Democratizing the structure of government and the substance of local democracy. [...] Whereas traditional rural communities were condemned to remain islands of poverty with no meaningful prospects of development, the demarcation process allows them to form part of larger municipalities and to more effectively achieve the economies of scale."

The demarcation of municipal boundaries implies the revision of powers and functions of municipalities. In particular, the roles of district municipalities and that of local municipalities are being reassessed.

1.1.1 Legislative and policy framework

Since 1994, South Africa's government structures have been undergoing a number of changes. Immediately after the first democratic election, a government of national unity was announced. The amalgamation of former homeland and self-governing states and "white" South Africa into one country with nine administrative provincial government structures coincided with this process. Parallel to this national process, further structural changes were introduced at local government level.

The 1996 Constitution envisages a complete transformation of the local government system, which until the municipal elections on 5 December 2000 remained subject to the provisions of the transition process as regulated by the Local Government Transition Act, 1993 (Act 209 of 1993). In 1998, government mandated local government to "promote the socio-economic" conditions of its constituency (South African Constitution, 1996, and Local Government White Paper, 1998).

According to the Constitution the municipal council must:

- Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- Ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- Promote social and economic development;
- Ensure a safe and healthy environment; and
- Encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in matters of local government.

The Municipal Structures Act (Act 117, 1998) prescribes that councils need to be organized in such a way that they can fulfill their obligations effectively. The Act argues for adoption of new values, and structural reforms in recognition that, "genuine development and real progress can be achieved only by people themselves, acting individually and collectively, in response to the specific concerns and needs of their time and place."²

Specifically the act prescribes:

- Systems for delegating powers and duties and
- Systems to enhance community participation and accountability to communities.

Furthermore, the Municipal Structure Act allows for three types or categories of municipalities:

- Category A municipalities, which have exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in their area. In other words, there is only one municipal council in an area with a category A municipality. Category A municipalities will be established in metropolitan areas.

² Turning points for all nations, October 1995

- Category B municipalities, which share municipal executive and legislative authority in their area with a category C municipality within whose area they fall. A local municipality is an example of category B municipality.
- Category C municipalities, which have municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality, for example, a district municipality.

In addition, the Act makes provision for participatory systems: the ward participatory system and the sub council participatory system. The latter only applies to large metropolitan areas. A ward system could promote public participation in governance. A ward system allows for the establishment of ward committees to facilitate community participation in the matters of local government.

Although recent enacted measures provide for a legal framework for the delegation of powers and functions of municipalities, a process of reviewing the capacities of district and local municipalities will determine the concrete responsibilities of the respective authorities. This process will come to an end in December 2002.

1.2 The "bread and butter" level of government

Practically, local government is now responsible for the implementation of national government policies and is expected to respond to its constituency needs. This entails the delivery of basic services such as clean water, electricity, transport, and proper infrastructure,

In contrast to the laudable achievements in establishing an enabling constitutional and policy framework for participatory democracy and socio-economic development, the government faces serious challenges in enacting upon its mandate. Implementation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of programs and projects will certainly take considerable time, effort and resources to successfully tackle the challenges.

The dark side of the current stage of development shows amongst other things that: the unemployment rate has increased; the gap between the poor and the rich is widening; the redistribution of land is following a worrisome slow pace; numerous households do not have access to clean water and electricity and are living in unhealthy environments; petty and serious crime have reached frightening heights; attempts to curb nepotism and corruption do not make a significant impact; the majority of women still find themselves in undermined positions; racial tensions in government and other institutions are poorly managed; the government's statements with regard to the relation between HIV and AIDS as well as its prolonged measures to seriously fight against the damaging impact of the epidemic have not yielded positive reactions; and the enthusiasm that characterized participation in the former democratic elections is speedily waning among South Africans.

The increasing apathy in participation was evident in the local elections in December 2000; less than half of the electorate made effort to cast their vote. Despite the government's attempts to bring the government closer to people, South Africans seem to become alienated from politics. This collective withdrawal from the elections should, however be seen against the background of the recent developments in South Africa.

Democracy is new to the majority of South Africans. Many people do not know and understand the legislative framework in which their government operates. This is reflected in numerous national studies showing people's inability to distinguish between the national, provincial and local spheres of government. Local government (District and Local Municipalities) is being held responsible for the delivery of services for which they might not be accountable. In the same vein, the national government is being accused of lack of delivery of services, which belong to the mandate of local government.

The new dispensation affecting local government has also implications for the role of civil society organizations. During the apartheid era they were excluded from participation in the political system and/or found them in a marginalized position. However, within the young democracy, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and other forms of civil organizations are in the process of redefining their relation with local and national authorities. Civil society organizations can and many of them do perform an important role in bridging the public and the authorities. They provide information, educate citizens and offer concrete resources for engaging the public in political decision-making process. Civil society organizations also play a role as watchdogs of government. While protecting the interests of their support base, they make people aware of the distinctive functions of the various spheres of government and who should be targeted with demands or complaints. In many cases local authorities are the first to be targeted. As a representative of the Women's Development Foundation, which campaigned for women to stand as councilors during the 2000 local elections, rightfully said: "The Local government is where bread and butter issues are."

In the same vein, local government has to redefine its relation with civil society. In contrast to its former role of local oppressor, it now has the duty to promote public participation in the political system. Participatory democracy benefits both the public and the local government. On the one hand, local government provides an opportunity to directly voice grievances and issues within local communities. On the other hand, local government enables councilors and officials to better understand and to act upon relevant local issues in a suitable manner. It is this principle of a two-way interaction between the community and the municipality that underlies the principle of bringing the government closer to the people.

1.3 Capacity Building

Given the importance, scale and complexity of the transformation process assigned to the newly established local authorities, practical measures were taken by the national government, in collaboration with international agencies such as the United Nations, to strengthen the operational abilities of these institutions. Among immediate steps is the South African Local Government Transformation Program (LGTP) developed in order to assist local government in overcoming the existing challenges of transformation process.

The precise definition of functions and powers that will be assigned to Local Municipalities and to District Municipalities will depend on their respective capacity to perform. In the wake of uncertainties over the new responsibilities and duties the Capacity-building for Local Governance (CBLG) program, funded by the Government and the United Nations, supports the LGTP in its endeavor to establish the local government system. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) executes the program in cooperation with the United Nation Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS/Habitat), and Provincial Departments of Local Government³. The Department of Local Government and Housing in the Northern Province is the host of the CBLG program.

1.3.1 Integrated capacity building strategy

As part of the CBLG program the UN assist the Government in building capacity in the North West and the Northern Province. The main objective of the CBLG program is to build the capacity of local authorities to adapt to their new roles as the enablers of development. Municipalities will be expected to work together with all sectors of civil society to promote good governance, economic development and poverty alleviation. The program will also assist local authorities to improve service delivery, adopt the right approach to development and focus on issues relating to gender and HIV/AIDS. These objectives are related to the three major components of the CBLG program, namely the improvement of service delivery, institutional capacity building and the integration of rights approach to development.

The program operates at three levels:

- At a national level a National Integrated Capacity Building strategy has been prepared.
- At a provincial level the CBLG is covering the Northern Province and North West Province. Coordinating committees have been set up to co-ordinate the CBLG activities and similar programmers in each province. In the Northern Province the Local Government Directorate has set up a CBLG unit to assist with the effective implementation of the program.
- At the local level the focus will be on six municipalities, three in each province. The idea is to assist each municipality to build its capacity in the areas covered by the program.

³ Local Government Transformation Program support document

Experience, and lessons learnt from this exercise will be fed back to inform provincial and national policy development.

At local level, each municipality will be assisted to prepare and implement an Integrated Capacity Building Program (ICBP), through a process, which involves the following:

- Situation analyses;
- Development of a tailor-made capacity building program for each municipality;
- Implementation of the capacity building program in each municipality; and
- Monitoring and evaluation of the exercise.

1.4 Situation analysis of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality

This report is the result of the first step in the ICBP. It reports on the situation analysis of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality, a predominantly rural area where traditional and democratic authorities rule. The Department of Local Government and Housing in the Northern Province, the former two District Councils of the Northern Province and the Northern Province Local Government Association (NPLGA) selected the municipalities of Thohoyandou-Malamulele and Mogalakwena as pilot projects. A Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC) under the chairmanship of the department was established to coordinate the program on local level. It comprises of various stakeholders perceived to be relevant to local governance.

1.4.1 Aim

The purpose of the situational analysis was to describe the social, economic, spatial, demographic, administrative and political aspects in the municipality, in order to develop an understanding of current development dynamics and appropriate capacity building responses.

1.4.2 Methodology

This report is the result of two weeks of field study in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele area and in Pietersburg, the capital of the Northern Province. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed.

The executing agency the CBLG program, UNDESA, appointed a team of consultants to undertake the initial stage of the program, namely a situation analysis. The team worked with the Local Municipality in March 2001 and covered the following areas:

- The availability of socio-economic, geographic and demographic data, and the extent to which it is familiar to the Municipality and used by it (Marlene Roefs)
- Social and economic institutions within the Municipal area and their economic growth potential (Kevin Allen and Mulalo Nemavhandu)

- Organizational development (Michael Meyer and Andrew Manson)
- Gender and HIV/AIDS (Barbara Watson);
- Information Technology (Thulani Maphanga)

The individual reports of the team members formed the basis for this document, which has been compiled by the team leader, Hamid Massoudi.

The situation analysis of Thohoyandou-Malamulele is underpinned by a participatory approach. This means that the municipality and members of the local community have taken part in shaping and conducting the research. During the process of information gathering, municipal staff, councilors, traditional leaders and other members of the local community participated in the situational analysis.

A series of consultative meetings were planned to conduct the situational analysis at provincial and local level. The Provincial Program Officer in collaboration with the PCC; and the municipality of Thohoyandou-Malamulele organized briefing sessions with the municipal officialdom, the Department of Local Government and Housing and civil society organizations to seek buy-in and partnership of the process.

Orientation on Thohoyandou-Malamulele was achieved by means of literature reviews and other desktop research. Literature on demarcation processes and the legal framework for the establishment and working of new municipalities was reviewed. The fieldwork comprised several mass meetings with traditional leaders, councilors, officials and representatives of civil society organizations. In-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with councilors, officials, service providers and other stakeholders. Focus group interviews were organized with members of the local community, with councilors and with officials. Informal interviews with knowledgeable members of the community were held as well as informal round table discussions with traditional leaders.

In addition to these qualitative types of research, two survey questionnaires tapping knowledge and usage of information on the municipality were distributed among officials and councilors. Another survey questionnaire, which dealt with HIV/AIDS issues, was distributed among schoolchildren at several secondary schools in the area. Furthermore, a preliminary pilot study of a potential census/household type of survey was conducted.

Observation techniques were employed to gain fuller understanding of the situation where verbal and written information could not offer reliable insight into the situation due to the sensitive nature of the topics (gender, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and a healthy environment). Photographic material was obtained in order to highlight certain specific aspects of the municipality.

PICTURE MEETING in WITH TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES

1.5 Structure of the report

Following this introduction, chapter two describes the status quo of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality. It deals with the historical, traditional and political aspects of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipal municipality. This is followed by an overview of public service performances and economic growth potential in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipal area.

Chapter three offers a profile analysis of Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality (the institute) and an assessment of the existing capacity of the municipality. This includes an appraisal of political, administrative, financial, developmental and information management capacities of the Municipal Administration and Council.

Chapter four provides a framework for “good governance” in which it incorporates the recommendations suggested in the previous two chapters. More specifically, it focuses on ways to use the recommendations in the process of integrated capacity building.

1.6 Acknowledgements

The CBLG program wishes to thank the members of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele community for the valuable insights they have given on the municipality. The tribal authorities we very much thank for their hospitality and co-operation. The time and effort officials and staff of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality put into numerous interviews are greatly appreciated. We also thank the provincial, regional, and local Government Departments for their cooperation and are grateful for the valuable information businesses, parastatals and civil society organizations that provided us with. Lastly, special acknowledgements go to the students from the University of Venda, who voluntarily assisted in the research and gave invaluable inputs to the analysis.

2 Thohoyandou–Malamulele Community

The Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipal area harbors a variety of communities, environments, social problems and potentially fruitful growth sectors. This chapter sketches the demographic, historical and socio-economic characteristics of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipal area. In addition it provides recommendations with regard to social and economic upliftment of the community.

2.1 The community

Since December 2000, more than half a million South Africans find their home in Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality. The local elections on 5 December 2000 symbolized the start of a new local municipal government. The inauguration of the new Local Municipal Council took place in February 2001.

The recently formed municipality is an amalgamation of different (parts of) former Rural and Transitional Local councils, which in the apartheid era fell under the jurisdiction of Venda and Gazankulu, two former homelands in the northern part of what is presently known as the Northern Province.

2.1.1 Demarcation and location

The young Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality comprises the whole area that used to fall under the Greater Thohoyandou Transitional Local Council (TLC) and parts of the areas that belonged to the former Levhuvhu-Shinwedzi Rural Local Council (RLC) of which Malamulele was the capital, as well as smaller parts of the former Elim-Tshitale-Hlanganani, Mutale-Masisi-Vhutswema and Nzhelele-Tshipise RLCs.

The Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality is located in Vhembe, District Council 34 (DC34) on the far north of the Northern Province. The district covers large parts of the former Venda and Giyani areas. From the south to north, Soekmekaar and Messina define the boundary respectively, while from the east to west, the Kruger National Park and Alldays town form the borders. The district is comprised of four municipalities: Louis Trichardt; Musina; Mutale and Thohoyandou-Malamulele.

The district is relatively poor in terms of resources as compared to other districts within the province. It is mainly dominated by tribal rural land, while most of the inhabitants are farm laborers and Public Service employees. However in the Growth and Development Strategy of

1997/98 of the Northern Province, the Northern Region has major trading, tourism, game, farming and agro-processing opportunities⁴.

PICTURE MAP

⁴ Municipal Demarcation Board. Justification Report: District Council 34. October 1999

2.1.2 Thohoyandou + Malamulele

The two largest population clusters in the municipal area are concentrated in and around Thohoyandou town and Malamulele town. The two areas used to fall under the jurisdiction of different homelands. They harbor different tribes who speak different languages. Because of these differences, the historical, traditional and political aspects of Thohoyandou-Malamulele will be briefly discussed for each of the two amalgamated Councils.

Thohoyandou

Residents in former Thohoyandou TLC, the most densely populated part of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality fell under the jurisdiction of the former Venda homeland. Venda was one of the three homelands in the Northern Province, together with Lebowa in the west and Gazankulu in the east. The homelands were created under apartheid rule and were founded on the Black Authorities Act (Act 68 of 1951). In accordance with the system, 27 tribal authorities and one Territorial Authority known as the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority were established. With the independence of Venda in 1979, it was decided to name the capital Thohoyandou, after the leader who had originally brought the Venda people to the area. The concentration of people and activities that developed here became known as Sibasa, which is a township near the center of the capital.

Malamulele

The former Malamulele RLC was located in the Gazankulu homeland, which was attached to the eastern side of Venda. Gazankulu was also called Machanganaland, or Matshangana-Tsonga. It was a former non-independent black state, in the north/eastern part of South Africa. The homeland was designated for the Shangaan and Tsonga-speaking people. The capital, Giyani, was located on the northern bank of the Klein (Little) Letaba River west of Kruger National Park. When the new constitution of South Africa abolished apartheid, Gazankulu and Venda became part of the new Northern Province in 1994.

2.1.2.1 Population

According to the official population statistics in South Africa the total population of Thohoyandou-Malamulele amounts to 537 454. Almost all residents are black (99%). The youth (people less than 20 years old) forms the largest age group (56%). As in most rural areas in South Africa, females outnumber men (55% females). The population density is estimated at 178 people per square km. A dependency ratio of 5.34 prevails in the area and the number of households is estimated at 101 829.

The majority of the households (52.6%) have an estimated income of between R2 400 and R6 000 per annum, which is significantly below the poverty line⁵.

Statistics

The Municipal Demarcation Board, which was established following the enactment of the Municipal Structures Act (1998), provides these and other statistics on municipalities on its website (www.demarcation.org.za). At the time that the situation analysis was conducted, no printed information on population statistics on the newly formed municipality or district areas was available yet.

The 1996 census data on which the above population figures and related statistics are based, should be treated with caution, however. The accuracy of the 1996 census has been subject to various uncertainties (significant undercount, selected recounts, sampling bias). In addition to this, the census data have been adjusted as to reflect statistics for the new municipal areas. However, the boundaries of the smallest units of sampling and analysis employed in the census survey, i.e. the Enumerated Areas (EAs) do not coincide with the boundaries that were drawn in the demarcation process. This implies that some Enumerated Areas had to be split in two or more parts depending on the demarcation of municipal boundaries. This poses a serious threat to the reliability to the population statistics since one EA can contain more than 150 000 residents.

However, the usage of the 1996 data is preferable over the current praxis in the Northern Province. The Regional Department of Statistics in Thohoyandou still works with the 1991 census data. Consequently, the supportive information this Department is able to give to other departments and the municipality or to other stakeholders, is ten years out of date. Other sources of information, for instance the number of schools in the new Thohoyandou–Malamulele municipality, or statistics on fertility and morbidity are not reliable according to the provincial Department of Health and Welfare and do not cover the whole newly demarcated area. The most reliable and up-to-date data and maps one presently finds in the private sector. Town planners and engineers in the private sector are rich sources of information. However, the costs attached to their services limits access to such information.

HIV/AIDS and morbidity

The threat posed by HIV/AIDS in the area is not adequately assessed and there is a gross lack of statistics and information. At municipal level no official information was available at all. Interviews and group meetings with members of the community revealed that HIV/AIDS is hardly talked about.

⁵ Research conducted by the Department of Provincial and Local Government in 1998 defined the “minimum living level” income at approximately R9 600 per annum [Parnell, et al: 1998]

Although the prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection in the Northern Province is relatively low compared to other provinces like the Eastern Cape or KwaZulu-Natal, morbidity statistics of the regional offices revealed that in the larger Thohoyandou area⁶ HIV/AIDS is the fourth most frequent cause of death. Diabetes, asthma, arthritis are respectively the most common forms of morbidity.

Clearly, the silence around HIV/AIDS does not indicate the non-existence of the disease. Interviews with members of the local community revealed that according to local culture, women are not culturally inclined to discuss sex education with their children. For this reason, they would find it difficult to talk about the disease. Furthermore, people in the rural areas indicated that they use other than the common names for diseases. This has implications for designing informative and educational materials as well as for researching epidemics in the community. In these circumstance more in-depth research is needed.

Educational level

According to Land Development Objectives Status Quo report on the former Thohoyandou TLC (1999), about 19% of the Thohoyandou population had no education at all, and about 58% had limited education (below standard 10). Only 8.4% of the population have a tertiary qualification.

If these figures are compared to the recently released figures in the Municipal Demarcation website, one will see how much lower the level of education is in the vast rural areas. According to the adjusted census data 26% of the population has not enjoyed formal education at all, 28% only had primary education, 6% passed matric and 3% reached the level of tertiary education.

The above statistics explain the high percentage of laborers in the area. Although the inhabitants can work in any sector, their income remains restricted. Upward mobility in terms of employment does not exist for the majority of the population of Thohoyandou-Malamulele.

PICTURE ...CHILD with pencil

⁶ The Department of Health and Education does not use municipal boundaries, but aggregates data for the Thohoyandou district, which largely covers the Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality.

Unemployment and migration

The census data of 1996 suggest that almost half of the economically active population of Thohoyandou-Malamulele is unemployed. According to these statistics, of a total of 117 937 employable people only 46.2% are employed, while 52.3% are unemployed. At the same time, only 2702 residents have registered themselves at the employment & skills development services of the Thohoyandou Labor Center (data from February 2001). Of these 1676 were female and 1620 were male.

A further cause for concern is that 44% (236 505 people) of the total population of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality are under the age of 15. The implication is that almost half the population is not economically active and therefore consuming local resources without producing anything and placing a further strain on the local community.

Large numbers of people who became unemployed in the last few years (1.1% per year) made their way into the informal sector to survive. Other people who cannot find a job might migrate. A reason for the higher unemployment rate in the rural areas is that subsistence agriculture provides a means for survival for the unemployed. In the peri-urban areas, this dependence of some form of agriculture is about 88.7%, as opposed to Thohoyandou town with only 49.2%. This is classified as part of the informal sector.

Views from the public suggest that the situation in Malamulele does not differ from the above pattern. Appropriate training could make the most of Thohoyandou-Malamulele's greatest asset, their labor force. Too many funds however, were at the time absorbed into "traditional" or stereotype education and training.

It is estimated that there are about 120 000 migrant workers who live in the Thohoyandou areas but who work mainly in Gauteng and other areas. The migratory labor system is unpopular, and the expectation is that in the long run even more "productive" workers will leave the area, and that the families of them will follow in increasing numbers. But in the medium term the employment situation will probably worsen.

Settlements

A realistic assessment of the situation indicates that the human settlement in the area can be categorized as four different types of settlements, which include:

- Formal Towns (Thohoyandou and Malamulele)
- Proclaimed "R 293" settlements, i.e. townships
- Proclaimed "R188" settlements, i.e. rural (tribal) villages

Scattered urban settlement and discarded rural settlements

2.1.2.2 Political landscape

Although the Demarcation Board's justification report on the demarcation of Thohoyandou and Malamulele did not make mention of potentially serious opposition to the amalgamation of the municipalities, a substantial group of residents showed fierce dissatisfaction with the new Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality. According to the local residents, there was an organized attempt to "boycott or block" the electoral process which would lead to the effective merger of Thohoyandou and Malamulele. This was reflected in the results of the local elections in December 2000, which were even more disappointing than in the rest of the Northern Province. The exit poll was the second lowest in the province at about 39% (78 366 voted out of 201 932 registered voters). Overall, this did not significantly differ from the exit poll in the rest of the province of (42%).

More than three-quarters of those who did cast their vote, supported the African national Congress. Each ward – 36 in total – is represented in the council through one elected representative. Proportionally elected representatives have been allocated 35 council seats.

Traditional Authorities

In most rural areas of Thohoyandou-Malamulele, tribal authorities rule the villages. The 17 tribal authorities that are located within the newly demarcated municipality have exercised governmental functions for decades. These ranged from the preservation of law and order to the allocation of land held in trust. Consequently, the emergence of democratically elected local government is being perceived as a challenge to the role and power of Traditional Authorities, and therefore necessitating clarification and negotiation on their perceived future role. Local government is entrusted with the responsibility for service delivery and facilitating development in rural areas. This has generated tension between Traditional Authorities and local Councilors. This tension continues to be an emotive issue in most of the provinces, and has a negative impact on the emergence of effective local government in rural areas.

Much of this tension arises from the fact that the current legislative framework provides for the co-existence of two legal structures, the Traditional Authorities and the local government. No mechanism has been provided to specifically define the 'developmental' role of Traditional Authorities to ensure proper integrated service delivery. The types of roles and power distinctions to be articulated will, along with economic issues, determine the success or failure of democratic local government in rural areas. They can also play an important role in development processes. For example, implementation of the housing subsidy program in the village Lwamondo (named after its chief) was delayed for some time by the local chief's refusal to allocate land for such a purpose.

The following Traditional Authorities are found in Thohoyandou-Malamulele: Giyani, Khakhu, Lwamondo, Madonsi, Mhinga, Mphaphuli, Mtititi, Mulamula, Mulenzhe, Shigalo, Shikundu,

Shirindi, Tshikonelo and Tshivhase. Given this number, it is apparent that over 95% of land in Thohoyandou/Malamulele Municipality are under the ownership of traditional leaders.

TEXT BOX ELECTIONS

2.1.2.3 Civil society organizations

South Africa's history of apartheid and local disenfranchisement led to the growth of civil society organizations in those areas previously excluded from local government or administered by discredited black local authorities (BLAs). Church, youth, women, burial, economic organizations and Civics (a type of neighborhood organizations) mushroomed. The development of civic organizations was part of a national civic movement. Many civics were affiliated to the South African National Civics Organization (SANCO).

In Thohoyandou-Malamulele, civics organized the communities living in the defined areas around issues affecting the community. Also organizations that mobilize residents around issues of principle exist, such as church groups. While many of these organizations continue to lobby around local issues, the advent of local democracy has led to a slump in the popularity of such organizations as local communities express more confidence in, and patience with, democratically elected local authorities.

However, a number of civil society organizations have come into existence, which represent specific service interests. Most of these are "committees" or "Forums". These include for instance "Water committees" set up by regional offices of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), and "Community Development Forums" (CDFs) set up specifically by communities to engage with local authorities on local development plans (Integrated Development Plans or Land Development Objectives) in the late 1990s.

There are a few women's organizations in the area. Most of these organizations are small, work in fragmented ways and lack human and financial resources. The main focus of activity is on income-generating projects, to address the high levels of poverty in the area. There are none that specialize in either capacity building/advocacy for women in leadership or women's rights within the context of human rights. The result is that there is no organization that has gender-related expertise in area.

2.1.2.4 Status of women and gender sensitivity

During the study, an assessment regarding gender issues in the area revealed that, although women form the majority of the population, men dominate in significant important ways. Women are politically marginalized. This is partly enforced by traditional authorities, which prohibit women to participate in village meetings. Discussions at these meetings are often intended for men only and the Amakhosi or "headmen" dominate the deliberations. If, on occasion women are allowed to attend, they are totally out-numbered or are intimidated by the number of men and do not participate fully in the discussions.

The local tradition and some cultural practices are to a large extent not gender-sensitive. The cultural perception of the role of a woman is that of belonging at home and not as being part

of the decision-making process. This became very clear during various meetings in the villages, as attendance by women was very poor.

Further research is needed to gain insight into the extent to which women indeed feel marginalized or have internalized their disadvantaged position and whether there is a mobilization potential among women to change their situation to the better. In addition, perceptions of the male counterparts need to be assessed in more depth in order gain understanding of the male-female relationships. To complicate matters, there seems to be a generation gap between the modernized youth and traditional elderly and parents. Whether this implies a higher sensitivity towards gender issues remains to be seen, however.

PICTURE MAN ANSD WOMAN T-SHIRT

2.1.2.5 Environmental issues

Most people in the rural area, out of desperation depend entirely on their natural surroundings. With 18% of the total households living in Thohoyandou-Malamulele area having no access to any form of commercial energy, wood is the only source of energy. In addition, selling wood as a means for survival and economic activity among many unemployed poor people is another contributing factor towards environmental degradation. Furthermore, lack of proper waste disposal facilities has contaminated natural water resources in some areas.

Though there is a definite need for increased environmental awareness on the part of the Municipality and the community, the need for provision of basic social services, as a preventive measure for protecting the environment is much greater.

2.1.3 Conclusion and recommendations

A realistic assessment of the situation indicates that, rural and small towns in Thohoyandou-Malamulele contain a wide range of special settings and settlement types created by apartheid removals, which, for their survival, depend on public sector involvement, migrant labor remittances and small scale farming. Previous corrupt and inefficient systems of governance increased poverty and unemployment, which handicap the residents of the geographically large area of Thohoyandou-Malamulele. In addition, there are ethnic divisions and tensions regarding the merger of Thohoyandou and Malamulele. Also, the dissatisfaction of the traditional authorities over the clauses in the constitution, which in their opinion diminish their long-standing executive power and control over the allocation of resources, pose many challenges for the new Municipality.

2.1.3.1 Recommendations

- Since traditional leaders continue to hold considerable influence in the rural communities, they should be encouraged to act as a link between the provincial government, local government and their communities, especially in the dissemination of government policy and in realizing the new dispensation's developmental programs. Consequently the utmost efforts are needed to devise ways and means to incorporate the tribal authorities into the consultative process.
- All stakeholders should get clarity on what the new constitutional dispensation entails for local governance, in order to establish firm partnerships and harmony between the stakeholders. It is therefore recommended that a campaign to familiarize the Thohoyandou-Malamulele public about the democratic nature and process of the new local government structure be mounted.

- The Municipality acknowledges the critical need for close co-operation of the two participatory systems, namely the village committees and the newly established ward committees. It is suggested to develop a participation policy. Since surrounding municipalities face the same situation in this regard, it is recommended to co-operate with them in finding proper ways to integrate the old and new participatory systems.
- Currently, the input from community organizations in policy-making is weak. Effort should be made to support those organizations and in particular those that address issues of human rights, gender inequalities and HIV/AIDS. Civil society organizations are needed to facilitate communication with members of the community. This is particularly relevant with regard to precious issues such as abuse, HIV/AIDS and gender inequality.
- Further research is needed to gain insight into: gender inequality in traditional versus relatively modern areas; the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, risk behavior, and reactions to HIV/AIDS infected people; and the role of the youth in gender and health related issues.
- The lack of reliable demographic data is extremely worrisome. Proper population statistics are a sine qua none for planning and evaluating development initiatives. A reliable census recount and household type of survey should receive urgent attention. This should coincide with in-depth qualitative research on sensitive issues, such as HIV/AIDS, gender inequality and traditional versus modern lifestyles.

2.2 Public services

As mentioned earlier, Thohoyandou was the capital of the now disbanded Venda Government. Consequently many of the services being delivered in the municipality were provided by what used to be the Venda Government and what has now become the Northern Province Provincial Government. Similarly, after the advent of democracy in 1994, the Provincial Department of Local Government and Housing administered Malamulele as a R293 town. The budget for the administration of the town was then transferred to Levhuvhu-Shinwedzi RLC in late 2000 and it formed part of this municipality.

Service delivery is partly the responsibility of the Northern Province, the Vhembe District and the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality. There is clearly a large degree of overlap between the delivery of services by the provincial government and that of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality. The new role of the municipality and its incapability to deliver basic services to its community necessitate a better organization of service delivery.

In the following paragraphs will be focused on the extent to which the community is serviced, however, not all areas of service delivery are covered. The basic services will be touched upon. However, firstly the indigency policy in South Africa and its impact on Thohoyandou-Malamulele will be reviewed.

2.2.1 Indigency policy

The National Treasury has developed a formula for the introduction of an equitable share of national revenue for local governments and which is currently in its third year of implementation. Municipalities like Thohoyandou-Malamulele generally benefit from the new transfer system since they are in the worst financial position and most in need of support. The largest part of the formula aims to provide an essential minimum package of service to all indigent households in a sustainable manner⁷. It is Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality's responsibility to determine the mechanism for passing this subsidy onto the poor and establishing an appropriate targeting system for this purpose.

Presently, the indigence program takes the form of a monthly subsidy to poor households to ensure these households obtain a minimum level of services (such as water and electricity). In 1999/2000 this subsidy amounted to R 25 per month per household (R 300 per annum), 2000/2001 this subsidy amounted to R 70 per month per household (R 840 per annum). In 2000/ 2001 the equitable share grant received from National Treasury equaled approximately R 19.5 million. The Thohoyandou-Malamulele Treasury Department estimates that the entire grant will be spent and that approximately 23 214 poor households will be assisted over the year.

PICTURE

⁷ Section 214(1) of the constitution

However, while the indigence program seems to be functioning adequately, it is worrying that the municipality's general lack of management capacity seems to be impacting on the effective running of the program. It is necessary to clearly define the program and list the different criteria to determine indigency locally. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the program is also lacking and a more effective monitoring and evaluation system would contribute not only to a more effective use of resources in the program but also to the long-term sustainability of the program.

2.2.2 Basic services

Basic services for which the Vhembe District / Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality are responsible include the provision of for instance clean water, electricity, housing and infrastructure. Provincial basic services include health, welfare and education. These are services of a more "social" nature.

2.2.2.1 Water

The Constitution makes it clear that local government has a mandate to deliver "water and sanitation services limited to potable water supply systems and domestic waste-water and sewage disposable systems"⁸ (interpreted as including water reticulation to households and business premises). However, Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality is at present unable to fulfill this mandate due to a lack of appropriate capacity⁹. To this end, personnel of the provincial Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) assist the municipality by also carrying out household and business connections (reticulation) and by maintaining the municipal water supply systems. The former Thohoyandou TLC derived an income of R1.7 million for connection fees, which is at present paid over to DWAF for performing this function.

Although the former Thohoyandou TLC area has a Water Division and a post for a Water Technician within this division, the post is at present vacant and water related issues are dealt with by the Treasury Department (in regard to billing), or directly by the Regional Office of DWAF¹⁰. This is considered a temporary problem and it is anticipated that Thohoyandou-Malamulele will develop the internal capacity to carry out this function over the long term.

With the general infrastructure to deliver water services seemingly adequate, an assessment of household access to water portrays a worrying picture.

⁸ Schedule 4. Functional Areas of Concurrent Competence: Part B [Local Government Matters]: The Constitution of South Africa: Act 108 of 1996

⁹ Interview with Mr. NVS Bvumbi: Thohoyandou Municipality Assistant Town Treasurer

¹⁰ Interview with Mr. MH Mathivha: Thohoyandou Chief Executive Officer and interview with Mr. S Musetsha, Regional Office representative DWAF.

Of a total of 101 829 households, only 15.3% have water delivered to their dwelling, a further 17.36% have water “on site”, 53.39% rely on a public tap, and 7.3% (7 473 households) rely on natural resources.¹¹

Considering that more than 50% of the households in Thohoyandou-Malamulele are living significantly below the poverty line, it becomes clear that the majority of households in the Municipality can not afford the cost of water delivery to their dwelling or, struggle to pay without assistance from the indigency grant.

Approximately a fifth of the households in the municipality currently benefit from the indigence grant. In Thohoyandou town this proportion increases to approximately 50%. A matter of concern is the municipality’s plan for the newly demarcated municipality, which contains double the number of the households, with a majority living in the rural area.

If delivery of clean water to every household is a target of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality, then it is failing to deliver to more than 50% of its residents. Taking the municipality’s current capacity constraints into account. It is, however, probably more realistic to expect the delivery of water to all households over an extended period of time.

2.2.2.2 Sanitation

The system of delivery of sanitation services in Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality is very similar to the system of delivery of water services in the area and to a great extent the delivery of both services is combined. To this extent the delivery of bulk and local (household and business connections) sanitation services is controlled by DWAF and the co-ordination of billing services by the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality - the explanation in the previous section applies.

Access to sanitation facilities in Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality is low, and below acceptable standards. Of a total of 101 829 households, only 7.3% have flush toilets in their dwellings. The majority of households, 61.9%, use pit latrines, while a rather alarming 30% of households have no access to toilets¹².

2.2.2.3 Energy

An overview of the use of different energy sources in Thohoyandou-Malamulele reveals that 32.9% of the households use electricity purchased from the municipality. Electricity is provided by ESKOM. The semi-state electricity-company ESKOM provides most of the electricity throughout South Africa. In comparison with access to adequate potable water and sanitation this represents a significant improvement.

¹¹ Demographic for NP 343 Demarcation Board

¹² Ibid.

It is however, a cause of concern that 46.7% still use paraffin as their primary source of energy, and 17.9% use candles.¹³ This group of the population relies heavily on natural sources of energy such as wood, which have environmental consequences such as deforestation and land degradation in some areas.

Although ESKOM does not have an indigence policy as such, it has found the pre-paid system of electricity delivery to be a very effective way of delivering electricity to the poor. Over the last five years ESKOM has embarked on a major electrification program nationally using the pre-paid system with major success.

Fieldwork in Malamulele showed that the current strategy for supplying electricity to the poor does not adequately meet the needs of the very poor. There is a significant gap between what people use and what is supplied. The “take up” or utility rate has been significantly lower than expected and in most households it is under-utilized. Most often it is used only for light. Alternative sources of energy are used for other household tasks, as they are perceived to be cheaper.

PICTURE ?

¹³ Demographic for NP343, Demarcation Board.

2.2.2.4 Waste management

The former Thohoyandou TLC area has a functioning waste management system, the responsibility for which lies with the Refuse Removal Department. The Environmental Health Control Officer manages this department as part of the Environmental Health Division.

An assessment of the provision of waste services in former Thohoyandou TLC area showed that this represents a significant part of the municipality's service to the local community and is a highly significant source of income to the municipality. In fact, the income derived from refuse removal, R 20.57 million, is higher than that derived from the provision of water and sanitation (17.708 million). This is particularly significant considering that the former Thohoyandou TLC had to pay R 3.119 million of the income from water to DWAF for bulk water supply in 2000/ 2001.

However, according to some of the councilors, the lack of solid waste disposal facilities has caused considerable environmental problems. People in some areas tend to openly dump garbage and dead animals in non-designated areas and public places.

There are no waste management services carried out by the Levubu-Shingwedzi TLC or in the surrounding rural areas or other proclaimed settlements. The lack of waste management service in these areas has led to unauthorized dumping on site or dumping in dry water sources and erosion furrows on the outskirts of the villages. In some instances this has resulted in the contamination of water sources and the death of livestock.

2.2.2.5 Housing

The need for housing and proper shelter is vividly clear in Thohoyandou-Malamulele area. With a great number of people leaving rural areas in search of work and coming to the small towns and urban areas the Municipality has to adopt specific new policies and approaches in this regard.

According to some of the councilors the allocation of houses that have been build according tot the national Government's Redistribution and Development Program (RDP) has many flaws. People who are in need of houses are overlooked, particularly the elderly. These houses are being used for other purpose, even unlawful activities. The necessity was emphasized for more policy and procedures to be put in place to safeguard the transparency of the process.

2.2.2.6 Roads

Due to the dualistic nature of the economy, for many rural communities in the area access to the local town or urban areas provides the opportunity for economic activity. Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality's roads are at present inadequately maintained to service the needs

of the community or to act as a stimulus to the local economy. There is also a clear need to both upgrade current gravel and earth roads and to build new roads.

The need for drafting a comprehensive transport policy and plan is quite evident. This could be a collaborative effort between the municipality and the provincial Department of Transport. The network of roads in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality is maintained by both provincial and local government agencies. While local roads are the responsibility of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality, provincial roads and highways are the responsibility of the provincial government¹⁴. In reality, however, the two agencies combine responsibilities in the maintenance of the local roads.

There is an extensive Roads Division in the former Thohoyandou TLC consisting of three departments: Road Maintenance, Road Construction, and Inspection. There are in total 75 positions within the Roads Division, a significant number of these are, however, currently vacant. The majority of existing personnel working on local public works projects such as roads are actually– a legacy of the past where the maintenance of Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality's infrastructure was carried out by the Venda government. It is anticipated that people employed by the provincial government will be transferred shortly to the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality.

2.2.3 Social services

The following “social” services are mainly performed by provincial Departments.

2.2.3.1 Health

The provincial Department of Health's Regional Office is located in Thohoyandou. There are three hospitals (Tshilizini, Donald Fraser and District Hospital) and 34 clinics throughout the Greater Thohoyandou area. Services offered include attention to minor ailments, deliveries, childcare and family planning, and hospital referral. There is no indigency policy regarding health services.

The threat posed by HIV/AIDS in the area is not clearly defined. It is clear, however, that a coherent indigency policy should link HIV/AIDS as a health issue to poverty in the area especially in regard to the increase in unemployment and orphans in the area.

2.2.3.2 Welfare

There are only six social welfare offices in Thohoyandou-Malamulele area with approximately 10 active social workers. There are 43 registered crèches, and two children's homes.

¹⁴ Schedule 5. Functional Areas of Exclusive Provincial Legislative Competence: Part A [implied provincial jurisdiction]; Part B [local government matters]; The Constitution of South Africa: Act 108 of 1996

This is not enough for the ongoing need to accommodate the ever-increasing number of street children in the area. According to one social worker “HIV/AIDS is putting our children into the street”.

While the Welfare Branch of the provincial Department of Health and Welfare identified a need to “promote and establish Integrated Poverty Alleviation Programs” as a strategic priority over the period 2000–2003¹⁵, it is difficult to see how this has been implemented in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele area. There is a need to focus welfare activities more coherently in terms of a consolidated indigency policy.

2.2.3.3 Education

In total there are 427¹⁶ schools within the boundaries of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality. There are 177 701 pupils and 4 658 teachers. In addition there are a number of tertiary education facilities in the area (University of Venda, Thohoyandou Technical College, Nurses Training College and Madzivhandila Agricultural College).

In Malamulele, an estimated 92% of schools have a pupil to classroom ratio of more than 40:1, which indicates a serious shortage of classroom facilities. The classroom shortage is calculated at about 1 800 classrooms. It is recommended that more classrooms should be built in order to eliminate the existing classroom backlog.

The provincial Department of Education, which oversees and funds the provision of educational services in Thohoyandou-Malamulele, has no clear indigency policy or poverty focus. There is a need to consider educational service issues in an indigency policy in Thohoyandou-Malamulele. A potential area of co-operation around an indigency policy or program is the work of the “Project and Funding, Early Childhood Development and Adult Basic Education and Training Directorate” (ABET). This directorate has a number of ongoing projects that aim to extend educational services to those communities currently without access¹⁷.

Since 1999, the ABET centers are already mushrooming in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipal area. Adults follow training programs, which are aimed at training people in basic skills, such as reading and writing. The pass rate is high and the dropout rate is very low. Unfortunately no impact studies have been done, yet.

¹⁵ Official website of the Northern Province Government, Department of Health and Welfare: 2001

¹⁶ Supplied by the regional office of education

¹⁷ Official website of the Northern Province Government, Department of Education: 2001

PICTURE SCHOOL

2.2.4 Conclusion and recommendations

This service delivery situation in Thohoyandou-Malamulele is far from ideal. Not only is there confusion between the respective constitutional mandates to deliver services by provincial and local government, but there is a lack of effective co-ordination between the different service delivery agents at national, provincial and local levels as well. This is in a large part due to the lack of effective management capacity in the municipality to effectively deliver services at the local level, or to co-ordinate delivery at a variety of levels. This is also indicative of a general lack of service delivery capacity locally.

2.2.4.1 Recommendations

- As the Municipality relies heavily on other spheres of government to deliver services, it is recommended that this cooperation should continue, especially in the short term.
- However, long term strategic planning should begin now to develop the idea among the provincial and local government agencies that Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality will eventually assume responsibility for the delivery of all local services (as is its constitutionally defined mandate).

- The existing indigency program being managed by Thohoyandou TLC is commendable, especially the system of linking the indigency policy to the billing systems in the Treasury Department and the Indigency Committees in the community. However, a list of criteria to define those in need of subsidization is lacking and the system is vulnerable to local abuse.
- Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality would benefit from a review of its current indigency policy and program and assistance in the structuring of the operational management of the system. The review should be conducted with all the other Government's Departments and service providers in the area.
- The Municipality should establish clear mitigating criteria for the indigency grant and establish qualified and impartial indigency grant committees throughout great Thohoyandou - Malamulele area.
- The Municipality should appoint a qualified program co-coordinator to operate, monitor and evaluate the impact of the indigency program. It should also take note of current national policy research on indigency in the National Department of Provincial and Local Government, specifically in regard to clarifying criteria to determine those qualifying for an indigency subsidy.
- There is a need to focus welfare activities more coherently in terms of a consolidated indigency policy. The threat posed by HIV/AIDS in the area is not clearly defined. It is clear, however, that a coherent indigency policy should link HIV/AIDS as a health issue to poverty in the area especially in regard to the increase in unemployment and orphans.
- The provincial Department of Education, which oversees and funds the provision of educational services in Thohoyandou-Malamulele, has no clear indigency policy or poverty focus. There is a need to consider educational service issues in an indigency policy in Thohoyandou-Malamulele. A potential area of co-operation around an indigency policy or program is the work of the "Project and Funding, Early Childhood Development and Adult Basic Education and Training Directorate".
- The operational management of the supply of services such as water, sanitation and electricity is complex and an assessment of those without adequate access to such services shows that the current system needs to be expanded. However, the expansion should be well planned in advance. This means, other local and provincial Departments (such as DWAF, Public Works, Housing and Environment) should be consulted in order

to avoid overlap but also to avoid misplacement of services. This is all the more important since there is no planning scheme or spatial plan for the municipal area.

- In the short term the municipality should focus on delivering water to the 7% of households currently relying on natural sources. In addition, the Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality should focus on a more strategic approach to the delivery of water taking into account its current capacity problems, its long-term relationship with DWAF, and the needs of the local community.
- Clearly the sustainability of the Refuse Removal Department is critical not only to the community but also to the financial sustainability of the municipality. Therefore it is recommended that the municipality reinvest some of the revenue generated through this exercise and safeguard the sustainability and progressive growth of this service to other communities. There is every possibility to turn this operation into a viable and profitable waste management service in the Municipal area. With some extra attention it can generate employment, renew and at the same time produce a healthier environment.
- The Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality should take a more active role in co-ordinating and monitoring the work of the different role players. This can be realized through formation of an intergovernmental forum, meeting on a monthly basis with various sub-committees. The responsibility of these sub-committees, which comprise of representatives of different role players, would be to assess, in more detail, the complexity and strategic solution for increasing effectiveness of each sector, and consider the possible expansion of services as a support system to LED.
- The staff of the municipality would benefit from training, which would assist them to more clearly define and understand their respective roles in a more strategic manner regarding basic services.
- There should be a close collaboration with the Department of Transport and Road Agency to explore possibilities regarding revitalizing the division. The Roads Division has a significant budget and staff compliment. To this end, any future strategic planning or capacity building should include this division. Also, the labor-intensive nature of the work of the division could have a bearing on any future job creation projects.

2.3 Socio-economic situation and potential for growth

The economic base of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality has been shaped by the historical legacy of Thohoyandou as an ex-homeland capital. In many ways, its very existence and expansion was determined by its status as the 'capital' of Venda.

2.3.1 Status quo

After the advent of democracy in 1994, Pietersburg became the administrative capital of the Northern Province Provincial Government and many of the functions of government, through which Thohoyandou was deriving an income, were moved to Pietersburg. The shifting of the administrative focus to Pietersburg also meant a significant loss of employment in the Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality. Local businesses in Thohoyandou town estimate shrinkage in turnover by at least 25%¹⁸.

2.3.1.1 Sectors

Currently the economy of the area consists of the following sectors: farming (4%), mining (1%), manufacturing (6%), utilities (1%), construction (9%), trade (8%), transport (4%), business services (4%), social services (28%), private household (11%), Institution (14%), and 10% other forms of employment not adequately defined by the census categories¹⁹.

PICTURE/Graph

¹⁸ Greater Thohoyandou Land Development Objectives: Status Quo Report: June 1998: pp.157

¹⁹ This includes informal employment

2.3.1.2 Incomes/poverty

Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality is still deriving a significant income from government related services (public services). In fact, more people in formal employment are employed in this sector (28%) than in any other. It is presumed that increased attrition in the public sector will significantly lower this percentage and continue to impact negatively on the local economy.

Although not assessed in the above discussion, the income of economically active adults working *outside* the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipal area is possibly the single most important source of household income in the area. In fact, although difficult to verify, fieldwork carried out in the area suggested that the majority of economically active adults from Thohoyandou-Malamulele work outside the area.

Most poor households in Thohoyandou-Malamulele practice some form of subsistence farming - most households plant crops and/or keep small herds of cattle or goats. Some households sell produce beyond the area, but this activity is limited. More importantly, the sale of vegetables by women in local village markets is a significant source of household income. Subsistence farming also provides a stable source of basic food. Communities' relative access to land means that households do not face the sort of overcrowded and unhygienic conditions often found in urban informal settlements. Many poorer households also earn an income from the activities of household 'spazas', hawking, or peddling goods. This is especially important in smaller villages.

The local economy is extremely stagnant. The main constraints to economic development have been identified as a lack of water for both human consumption and agricultural development – the construction of the Luvuvhu Dam should, however, assist in overcoming this problem and an increasing shortage of land due to an increase in population and livestock numbers.²⁰:

2.3.1.3 Land redistribution and land use

Thohoyandou town and Malamulele town are the only major urban nodes in the municipal area and contain most of the developed infrastructure and economic activity. The main concentration of business occurs in two areas: Thohoyandou Business Area and Miluwani (at Sibasa). In these areas a number of different businesses are active. Industrial development is focused primarily in the Thohoyandou Industrial Area where 267 sites were initially created for occupation. A small number of service industries have also emerged at Makwarela (adjacent to the Thohoyandou/ Dzingahe Road). Apart from the two main nodes of business activity, there are several smaller activity nodes located in the various residential suburbs around

²⁰ Greater Thohoyandou Land Development Objectives: Status Quo Report: June 1998: pp.148-149

Thohoyandou town. These nodes consist predominantly of local trading stores providing basic foodstuffs and are predominantly run by women.

PICTURE STREET SELLERS

The Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality contains within it many rural villages. Land distribution in the rural areas in and around these villages is controlled by traditional authorities entrenched in the rural areas. The villages serve primarily as places of residence with limited support services such as small trading businesses. Residents of the villages depend on Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality for economic activities and primary and higher order services. There is some subsistence farming being carried out to supplement household income but large-scale agricultural activity is extremely limited.

The current land ownership system (ownership by tribal authorities) does not lend itself to efficient use of the land or commercial farming. The main reasons for this include the fact that the levels of skills among the population are low, that there is limited public and private investment in the area due primarily to the absence of any significant industrial or business

development and the diversification in the economy is limited. As was made clear in the discussion of the economic base of the area, farming makes up only 4% of the income of the area. A cursory assessment of the level of development in the rural areas shows that the physical infrastructure and service delivery in these areas is extremely limited.

In addition to the difficulties experienced in land distribution due to traditional customs. There is no focused land use management system. The Town Planning Technician in the Planning Division of Thohoyandou TLC currently manages land use management in Greater Thohoyandou on an ad hoc basis²¹. There is no zoning approach to land use planning, as there is no town-planning scheme. It seems that development proposals for either business or domestic land use are simply assessed on individual merit.

2.3.2 Growth Potential

A cursory assessment of the different economic sectors shows little realistic growth potential in any sector, especially given negative factors such as the lack basic social services and potential investment in the area. Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality's isolation from any potential markets, and the general economic stagnation of the area dictate the need for concentration and promotion of a small-scale home-based economy.

2.3.2.1 Agriculture

In view of the importance of small-scale farming to household income, this sector possibly has a higher growth potential in the local economy than any other does, especially given increased access to water through the development of new water schemes. There is already a number of innovative emerging farming schemes such as 'Marula farming' in the area. These schemes are labor intensive and impact positively on the lives of poorer community members. They are, however, stunted by a lack of strategic skills such as marketing. This can be further promoted through establishment of local economic development forums in various areas to accelerate collaborative efforts between private and public sectors.

Water for irrigation is by far the most critical constraint on agricultural production in the area. The extreme heat during summer months (causing high rates of evaporation), the general acidity of the area and the irregular incidence of rainfall preclude extensive dry land cultivation²². Developplan, the company that compiled the Land Development Objectives (LDO) for the Greater Thohoyandou TLC stressed the importance of agriculture in the area as follows: "Ways in which agriculture can contribute to the economic development of the area include:

- Increased food production and raw material supplies;

²¹ Interview with Mr. TS Vele: Town Planning Technician: Thohoyandou Municipality

- Foreign exchange earning through export possibilities;
- Employment creation and labor transfers to the non-agricultural sector;
- Capital formation for overall economic growth; and
- Increases in disposable income which counteract poverty and generate investment opportunities.“

According to Developlan, a major threat to the agricultural potential in the area is the high rural population density in the Thohoyandou area and the extent of poorly planned and / or controlled rural settlement patterns. Furthermore, very few agricultural projects were located in the former Thohoyandou TLC area – even though the area has potential for such developments to be undertaken. The only existing project at the time of study was the Muledane Citrus Project. Furthermore, an initiative has been launched under auspices of the Department of Agriculture, known as “Community Agricultural Development Projects”. The main purpose of this initiative was to ensure household food security, but it also encompasses the following aspects: training to establish poultry farming e.g. broiler chickens, production of fencing, knitting, baking and brick production.

2.3.2.2 Tourism

At present tourism does not represent a significant source of income to the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality’s economy. Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality’s key advantage in regard to tourism is the unspoiled beauty of the area. This represents a significant potential in regard to eco-tourism.

However, there is at present very little infrastructure or strategic thinking in the municipality in regard to tourism. Although the Thohoyandou Municipality has committed R 300 000 to tourism to be spent by the Public Relations Officer in 2000/ 2001²³, this has not been spent yet. It is planned that this money will be spent on further defining a tourism strategy²⁴. It is still noteworthy that the municipality is aware of the potential income from the tourism sector.

Another drawback is the relative isolation and inaccessibility of Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality in the far north of the country and Northern Province. Relatively long distances from major urban areas and lengthy traveling times make it difficult to attract tourists to the area. This is further exacerbated by Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality’s relatively low competitive advantage compared to other tourism and eco-tourism destinations in Northern Province or Mpumalanga. Nevertheless, existing eco-tourism projects, game lodges, game parks and similar ventures have established a market in the area and attract domestic and international tourists through sophisticated marketing campaigns.

²² LDO Developlan, 1999, p. 33

Greater Thohoyandou TLC Budget for 2000/ 2001 Financial Year: Repairs and Maintenance

²⁴ Interview with Mr. A Netsianda: Public Relations Officer: Thohoyandou Municipality

In view of these drawbacks, committing resources to a tourism project at the present time would not be strategically viable. It is necessary to carry out an in-depth feasibility study on the potential growth of the tourism sector in order to balance the costs of the investment of local resources against the potential benefits of tourism projects to the local economy. Added to this, any future tourism project should be part of a greater local economic development strategy in the municipality and as such should be linked to other potential growth areas and strategic advantages, such as the linking of Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality to a regional transport corridor. Also, tourism should be linked to existing or potential local development initiatives as defined in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP)²⁵. In this way the municipality can be assured that the growth of the tourism sector is impacting on poverty in the area.

A local economic development strategy should be commissioned to identify potential growth in specific areas and niche markets such as eco-tourism. This strategy should conclude by recommending realistic and practical suggestions, which will have a positive impact on the lives of local people and assist the poverty reduction process. According to LDO Draft document [1998,p.157] a number of opportunities exist to revitalize the economy, particularly in the trading, agriculture and tourism sectors. These include:

- Eco-tourism / game farming and related activities;
- Subtropical and citrus fruit processing;
- Timber / wood furniture and related activities;
- Vegetable (tomatoes) production and processing; and
- Import / export related to trading and transport sectors.

2.3.3 Conclusion and recommendations

While there is significant existing governance capacity in the Thohoyandou Malamulele municipal area, this existing capacity is not being utilized in the most strategic way. An example of this is the ongoing confusion of roles in the provision of service delivery between local, provincial and national government. The stagnant nature of the economy of the district of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality should be a cause for concern to all spheres of government and the municipality would do well to consider a focused and realistic local economic development strategy to assist in economic stimulation. It has to be concluded that the Thohoyandou Malamulele Municipality lacks strategic management capacity and needs to take a more active role in co-coordinating and monitoring the work of the different role players as a an auxiliary component of IDP process in the area.

²⁵ As defined in Section 5 of the Local government: Municipal Systems Act: 2000

2.3.3.1 Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Thohoyandou-Malamulele recognizes its mandatory status as a “Change Agent” and takes an active center-stage role in co-coordinating the developmental activities in the area. At the same time through precise consultation and constructive dialogue, it should develop a common vision and objectives. These objectives must be articulated by the community, and in accordance with their priorities.
- Perhaps most worrying is the state of the local economy. There is very little opportunity for expansion or growth in the different sectors of the local economy due largely to Thohoyandou Malamulele’s geographical isolation vis-à-vis the regional economy and any potential regional growth opportunities. However, the establishment of an LED desk at the Municipality, which in collaboration with local organizations, could undertake research and assess the real economic strength and problems of each community would be ideal.
- While tourism is a potential growth sector, the current lack of any strategic planning around tourism is a significant drawback. Any capacity building in regard to local economic development should focus firstly on defining local opportunities and potential economic growth areas. Such a study should include tourism as one potential growth sector, but should not focus exclusively on tourism.
- Considering the fragile economic base of the area and the level of poverty, it is advisable for the Municipality to extend its developmental efforts beyond the conventional terms of the LED. In other words, the promotion of community based development projects involving rural women could be a viable proposition. Of course, this should be done in close collaboration with various departments and expert agencies, with the Municipality playing a catalyst role.
- To assist the poor and encourage them to engage in some form of economic activity, the Municipality could provide the public with information regarding various options and economic possibilities in the area. This could take the form of disseminating information regarding seed options, stock control, basic rules of marketing, co-operative economic activities at household level, provision of kick-start loans and other useful information.
- There seems to be no focused land use management currently being applied to land use in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality area. A more focused land use strategy would assist to stimulate the economy. This should be done as part of the annual Integrated Development Plan.

3. The Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality

The municipality of Thohoyandou-Malamulele is one of the newly established municipalities, which is currently in the process of establishing itself in accordance with the criteria prescribed in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act No 32, 2000. In this chapter the municipal system will be reviewed. In the second part of the chapter the capacity of the municipality will be assessed. This entails a review of the political, administrative, financial and development aspects of capacity.

3.1 The municipality

The Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality is an amalgamation of five previously known Transitional Local Councils (TLC):

- Thohoyandou Transitional LC, plus previously proclaimed portions of²⁶;
- Nzhelele / Tshipise Rural Local Council;
- Mutale / Masisi / Vhutswema Rural Local Council;
- Levhuvhu / Shinwedzi Rural Local Council; and
- Elim / Tshitale / Hlanganani Rural Local Council.

The matter regarding the position of two officially amalgamated authorities remains unresolved, and the MEC for Local Government and Housing, has not endorsed “Thohoyandou-Malamulele” as the official name of the Municipality. Despite this uncertainty however, there appears to be willingness on the part of the employees at both centers to work towards some form of amalgamation. In addition the new Mayor of Thohoyandou-Malamulele is himself a Traditional Leader and is therefore in a good position to help reconcile the opposing positions.

The following paragraphs explain the municipal system and the roles of politicians, officials, traditional authorities and other community members in the workings of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality.

3.1.1. Municipal system

The Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality has a collective executive system. In this system the council elects an executive committee, and then delegates executive responsibilities to

²⁶ [Schedule of existing municipalities in newly demarcated boundaries for category A/B municipalities in NP343 (Thohoyandou – Malamulele Municipality): Municipal Demarcation Board, 2000].

this committee. In a plenary executive system, by contrast, executive powers are exercised by a full meeting of the municipal council. The Mayor of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality chairs the 10-member executive committee. The composition of the executive committee regarding gender is well balanced. There are 5 women and 5 men who form the membership of the committee.

The municipality has 71 councilors, of whom 58 are male councilors and 13 are women. This means they comprise 18% of the total number of councilors. It is evident that there is a tendency to not take issues surrounding gender-equality seriously. This has caused lack of genuine participation of women in the decision-making process. A majority of women councilors are of the opinion that they are used to garner votes rather than act as partners in the governance process.

There are 8 standing committees with various portfolios. A Woman chairs one of these committees – the Health, Environment, Youth and Gender committee.

The Municipal Structure Act (No 117 of 1988) clearly makes provision for a participatory system: the ward participatory system. Each of the 36 wards in Thohoyandou-Malamulele is represented by one elected councilor. It is the specific responsibility of the ward councilor to establish and convene the ward committees that enable the interests of the community to be presented. The Thohoyandou-Malamulele community has not yet established ward committees. Moreover, the community is not well informed about the workings of a ward participatory system. The ward representatives in the council will have to inform their wards about the new system.

3.1.1.1 Relation with Traditional Leaders

The tension that exists between the municipal administration and the Traditional Leaders regarding the amalgamation of Thohoyandou and Malamulele is problematic and has created a difficult situation, which is not conducive for joint action or decision-making. For this reason, it is important for political leaders to work towards resolving this issue.

Not surprisingly, during the field study, it could be perceived immediately that the Traditional Leaders within the Thohoyandou–Malamulele area are apprehensive that their control and influence over the rural population will decline. In the Thohoyandou-Malamulele area the result has been increasing uneasiness between the council and the Traditional Authorities on the one hand, and elected councilors and traditional leaders and their representatives on the other. This condition has been exacerbated particularly in the Malamulele region. In some instances, some traditional authorities refused to allow the RDP project in their areas. In others, they have refused to make land available to the Municipality to provide social services facilities.

During interviews, traditional authorities expressed their displeasure with the manner in which the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality conducts its activities. They indicated that, in many instances, they are not consulted but only informed about the development of land they perceive to control. It is clear that traditional leaders must be included in any development processes in the rural areas of the municipality. There is a need to forge partnerships between the traditional leaders, municipality and communities. However, in spite of such tension, some Traditional Leaders have been co-operative and the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality feels that tribal authorities have a very important role in ensuring effective service delivery and should be seen as partners in the development of this rural area.

3.1.1.2 Relation with the community

As far as the acting manager for the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality is concerned, there appears to be “no structured and established links with stakeholders. This is currently unhelpful.” Rural NGO’s are not particularly strong or functional and are based mostly in Pietersburg, which hampers the Municipality’s capacity to interact with external stakeholders in local government affairs. However, some civic structures “are quite strong, and they are communicated with on an *ad hoc* basis.”

Discussions with members of civil society organizations indicated that they had limited knowledge of their socio-economic rights and the right of the community to be consulted and engaged by the municipality in the governance process. Importantly, also among officials within the municipality few had knowledge of and understood their rights as citizens and their duties towards the municipality. This was especially so with women. This gap was identified in all interviews and group discussions. Very few officials were familiar with the various acts and policies that deal with issues like public participation or gender-equality.

The mandatory consultations of Council with the local community about the quality range and impact of municipal services provided by the municipality, either directly or through another service provider, has not materialized. On the other hand, members of the local community have no knowledge of their obligations to observe the mechanisms, processes and procedures of the municipality. The municipal administration has not established a clear relationship, which might facilitate co-operation and communication and give members of the local community full and accurate information about the level and standard of municipal services they are entitled to receive.

3.1.2 Conclusion and recommendations

Although there is strong opposition from significant elements within the Malamulele community, the merger of the two offices should be seen as a *fait accompli*, since it is unlikely that the Demarcation Board’s decision will be overruled. What matters at this point should be

the focus of all parties involved is the precise relationship between Thohoyandou and Malamulele offices, and how much autonomy Malamulele should hold.

3.1.2.1 Recommendations:

- It is recommended that there should be a national and provincial intervention in the dispute between the residents, officials and Traditional Leaders, over the Thohoyandou-Malamulele merger. If not, then effective local governance, service delivery and poverty alleviation will be constrained even more than it is at present.
- Traditional Authorities wield political and economic influence in the rural areas and have an important role to play in the development process, and should participate actively in the affairs of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality. It is recommended that Traditional Leaders should sit in the Municipality in an *ex-officio* capacity.
- It is recommended that the new Mayor of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality, who is himself a Traditional Leader, and is therefore in a good position to help reconcile the opposing positions, should take the lead in trying to quell the fears of Malamulele residents and Traditional Authorities.
- The Municipality is planning to introduce a newsletter and a quarterly report on its activities for householders. This plan has been in the pipeline for several months. It is recommended that its implementation take priority.
- The opening of a tourist office to distribute information to tourists and visitors has been approved by Council during 2000, but has not been implemented as yet. This should be expedited. Further, the recommendation by PRO, that this office could be used as a general information center for residents, should be put into operation.

3.2 Current capacity of the municipality

This part of the study expands upon the four major areas of local government capacity, namely: political, administrative, financial and developmental capacity.

3.2.1 Political capacity

The political capacity of a municipality refers to the capacity to engage in political decision-making among politicians within the municipal councils as well as the capacity to participate in politics among members of the community.

3.2.1.1 Council

The majority of councilors in Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality are unfamiliar with their code of conduct prescribed in the Municipal Systems Act, and this is a cause for concern. Some councilors believe that they are on the Municipality to serve members of their political party, and not the whole community in their ward. As a result, issues have been politicized to such an extent that when a ward meeting is arranged, councilors sometimes appear to be only addressing members of their own party. This results in members in the ward who are not of the same political party being excluded from sharing information or being included in the development process of their areas. Similarly, Traditional Authorities, which have their own system of traditional councilors, remain hostile to elected local councilors. The end result is that instead of local councilors, traditional authorities and other organs of society accepting each other as partners in development, they tend in many instances to view each other with mistrust. In order to change the situation to a better environment for development and cooperation, councilors true understanding of their roles and responsibilities are most fundamental.

In general, there is limited evidence to suggest that the new councilors have attempted to reach out and incorporate the needs and experience of local organs of society, private sector, and traditional authorities. In addition, it was found that councilors' inexperience with regard to modern organizational management and systematic decision-making was a hindrance to effective government. This is due to the fact that a majority of them had no formal training. Interviews and a mini-survey suggest that councilors and official's understanding of what the IDP, LDOs and LED actually entail is minimal.

In terms of the ability of councilors to operate effectively, councilors had two general arguments in this regard. Firstly that the distance that they had to travel to consult with remote communities and attend meetings were exceedingly far, and allied to this, that transport is insufficient for their needs. Secondly councilors felt that salaries were too low, especially as a number of the rural councilors have no alternative employment, and in some cases salaries

have not been paid on time. All councilors from wards falling under the Malamulele region have all moved to Thohoyandou.

Although there seems to be no conflict within the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Council, councilors still need to establish guidelines, target indicators and developmental direction.

Presently there are 8 standing committees appointed by the council with various portfolios. The responsible councilors have mostly not yet convened these committees, or in some instances have just met for the first time. There is a general dissatisfaction among the Councilors and some of the staff members of the standing committees with regard to the selection criteria for membership. The complaint is that there is no clear criterion for the membership of these committees, which results in a lack of interest to convene them.

3.2.1.2 Public participation and accountability

The Municipal Systems Act specifies that municipalities must enable communities to participate and compel councilors and staff to facilitate community participation. For example in the draft of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele IDP, the Thohoyandou-Malamulele community must be consulted on its development needs and priorities and it must also participate in the drafting of the plan. But with very few mechanisms in place it is difficult to clarify precisely how consultation and participation in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele IDP process have taken place. It was also found that in some instances constituents are not aware of their councilor and have never been visited them since the Election Day.

Nevertheless, the reality is that there is very little interest on the part of public to interact with their municipal officials or political representatives. Generally, public meetings are ineffective and are not well attended.

3.2.1.3 Conclusion and recommendation

In summary, the capacity of the Council to fulfill its political objectives is constrained, and it lacks the organizational structure to reflect an ability to achieve these objectives. Constructive and inclusive representation in the consultation process is necessary. The structures and capacity that do exist, however, do not contribute meaningfully enough towards formulation of policies and strategies. Without capacitating councilors and the public the implementation of policies may not have positive impacts on the lives of the ordinary people.

Recommendations

- Encourage councilors to become more familiar with their constitutional code of conduct and operate in a non-politicized environment to be able to perform their required duties more effectively.

- Conduct a “Gap Analysis” to identify training needs for ward committees, and councilors. Training activities should be practical and relevant.
- Facilitate common workshops for traditional leaders and councilors and stakeholders on vision building, and the realization of departmental programs.
- Develop specific membership selection criteria and terms of reference for each standing committee.
- Establish links with other municipalities (beside Mayors forum) to exchange ideas.
- Encourage the councilors to be more proactive and try to establish a regular and standing meetings with ward committees and traditional authorities.
- It is recommended that a shortened version of the rights of the communities as contained in the Municipal Systems Act will assist the Councilors and ward committee members to educate themselves and their constituents about their rights and duties in terms of local governance.

3.2.2 Administrative capacity

While there is recognition of the necessity to adapt to the needs of the new requirement of the new dispensation in terms of the developmental role of the Municipalities, there appears to be little practical sense on how this could be realized. This is largely due to the “underdeveloped” economic infrastructure in the region, which is largely rural and based on small-scale agriculture. However, strategies for extension of services to provide resources to regions of the Municipality have been considered, but current uncertainty regarding composition of the municipality and financial restraints make this difficult. Moreover the present organizational structures of the Municipality do not really reflect this urgent need.

3.2.2.1 Human resource system

There is only a skeletal human resources division at both offices. For example at Malamulele, the officer responsible for human resources is responsible for four divisions, (including administration, transport, Traditional Authorities), and has only one accounting subordinate.

At Thohoyandou, there is no official directly in charge of Human Resources. The Town Secretary is charged with the duties of this person and the post remains effectively unfilled. There is no Human Resources strategy in place. As the responsible officer at Malamulele bemoaned “Human Resources is a white elephant, we were not trained, and we are just using our own skills.”

Lastly, the Acting Manager of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele office reiterated that “one of the key shortcomings in terms of smooth running and survival of the Municipality, is the need to build a system of Human Resources Management, to capacitate the Municipality to identify the particular needs of the Municipality and to identify suitable candidates for appointment, and also identify on a regular basis, further training and capacity building.”

3.2.2.2 Personnel related administration

In Malamulele, most employees are on the pay role of the NDC (Tzaneen). Employees over the age of 55 (77 from a total of 382) are on the pay role of the provincial department of Local Government and Housing (Pietersburg). This fragmented pay role system has caused some problems. As it was indicated the “biggest headache” at month end, is to ensure that all staff receive their remuneration. Because of bureaucratic error, a number of employees do not receive their salary on due date from the NDC office. The pay system at Thohoyandou appears to be more streamlined, since this office makes use of a computerized system (Venus), and all employees are directly paid from this office.

At both offices, leave administration is not computerized, but done manually. During focus group discussion general workers and sectional heads indicated that they know how to request for leave – however, since leave administration is done manually, most employees indicated that they do not know the number of leave days that they have at their disposal.

No “formal” performance management systems are in place at the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality. Since a Municipality must establish a performance management system and set appropriate key performance indicators as a yardstick for measuring performances including outcomes and impact with regards to the Municipality’s development objectives set out in its integrated development plan, the reality is that Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality does not have a formal performance management system. In term of work ethics, no appraisals have been conducted according to a majority of the staff in the Municipality.

Lines of accountability, however vague, do exist; i.e. officials know to whom they are accountable. However, the lack of report-back mechanisms and regular and systematic meetings blurred the process. A major concern, raised by all senior heads, is that they used to meet with their superiors once a month, but that regular contact and communication have broken down to the extent that they now meet once every six months. Sectional heads indicated that they meet with their subordinates on regular bases.

3.2.2.3 Internal information and communication

With the virtual non-existence of a human resources office, internal information pertaining to conditions of employment, the keeping of records, payment and information regarding remuneration are not well maintained and do not reflect the current circumstances of the

employees. In addition records are kept manually which leads to discrepancies and lack of accuracy.

There are no set policies or guidelines describing both vertical and horizontal communication and information sharing procedures adapted by the municipality. This hinders a smooth and transparent flow of activities and information sharing.

In addition, lack of a communication system results in inability of various section of the municipality to share valuable information that they may possess with one another. Furthermore, it was observed in most instances, there is duplication of data across different sections and applications, and on various software platforms. This disorganized situation increases the cost of data storage and backup and consumes the much-needed resources of the municipality. However, resources for gathering, compiling and analyzing information and data do exist in the commercial sector and partly in the tertiary sector. Partnerships with these sectors should be sought. Through workshops and consultation stakeholders could be mobilized to provide assistance in developing a strategic and cost-effective information system.

Strategic planning and effective implementations of operational procedures imply that information should flow freely and should be comprehensive and accurate. Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality does not have the capacity to provide such information. Furthermore, one may conclude that data are badly organized, not updated and not relevant to the requirements of the newly demarcated municipal boundaries. This is all understandable given the short history of the Municipality and its limited capacity to collect, organize and analyze information in order to gain an overview of the existent state of affairs in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality.

3.2.2.4 Gender sensitivity and related issues

There is a lack of understanding of such concepts throughout the municipality. Some women had a better grasp of the concept in that they did not see gender as a “woman’s thing” but rather a reflection of the power relations between women and men.

There is little capacity internally to react positively to issues of gender. It is therefore understandable that service delivery and the functioning of the municipality will not be capable of advancing gender mainstreaming. Senior management showed some low level of gender awareness and the need to integrate gender in their internal work and service delivery but acknowledged their inability to do so due to conceptual shortcomings related to gender.

Furthermore, internally, the municipality has not institutionalized the practice of disaggregating its information. This made it difficult to assess how women and men were

represented in various positions of leadership (there are no women at senior positions in the Municipality).

3.2.2.5 Information Technology

Presently there are 37 personal computers (PC) and Venus terminals, and an AKTEX system (not utilized) at the Thohoyandou – Malamulele Municipality. 22 of the PC's are running on Window 95, 15 on Window 98 and one UNIX server with four terminals. The UNIX is stationed at the treasury section.

Network and Communication Structure

There is a network structure in place, and network points are installed. All computer workstations have allocated IP addresses with network cards being attached to a network point but the network is not yet functioning and information sharing between different sections has not materialized. Furthermore, there is no internal or external e-mail provision, which results in intense communication problems and financial implications by excessive usage of telephone lines.

Data Storage

As indicated previously, the need for useful and equitable information and data at the municipality cannot be overemphasized. Presently there are very few information and data storage mechanisms available to the council.

Billing and Payroll System

The Municipality is using Venus Billing System, which runs from a UNIX system with several terminals. The system is not very user friendly and has inadequate storage capacity, which is problematic and unreliable.

The payroll system operates in a similar manner as the billing system, with the exception that the staff from Malamulele is paid through an outdated system of "manual" preparation of payments. Furthermore, some of the staff at Thohoyandou center are still employed by the provincial department and are not part of Thohoyandou payroll system.

Town Planner

The Town Planner uses an outdated MCAD system, and TPS for drawing and planning purposes. The systems are outdated and the Town Planner is facing difficulties from the perspective of both technical capacity and human resources.

3.2.2.6 Conclusion and recommendations

The organizational structure at both the Thohoyandou and Malamulele offices is not encouraging. Since key posts are not permanently filled, many staff members are employed

in acting posts; and several people hold many portfolios jointly. Added to this is that a Human Resources system, in the accepted sense does not exist. Performance management systems are not formally in place, although the Municipality appears to have some key performance targets. In addition there is no information or information management system. The data are badly organized, outdated and not adjusted to the newly demarcated municipal boundaries.

Recommendations

Administration

- The Malamulele office should function as a “cost and pay” center. However in addition, it should continue to be responsible for the provision of essential services. No executive powers should however be devolved to Malamulele.

- The status of the staff at Malamulele should be resolved as soon as possible. If the current *status quo* is retained, the precise relationship in respect of staffing between the two offices needs rationalization. Currently there are 382 employees at Malamulele and 108 at Thohoyandou. Many of these, especially in the Division of Technical Services, could be transferred to Thohoyandou. Furthermore, the relation between the managers at Malamulele and the Thohoyandou office needs to be clarified in terms of functions and power.

- All staff should have detailed job descriptions, criteria for promotion and be aware of lines of accountability. In addition there is a need to establish a thorough skills audit of all employees and councilors, and to determine their development needs.

- It is crucial that a properly functional Human Resources Division needs to be established to deal with all problems related to skills audits, the need for training and incentives, the introduction of performance management systems and leave and salary issues.

- Concurrently, the capacity building programs should be intensified in all areas of the Municipality’s operations, namely, at management level, in human resources, in the finance department and technical services.

- The issue of gender equality needs serious attention. It is therefore recommended that a specific women’s portfolio be created to scrutinize the policies and activities of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality for gender sensitivity and to increase female representation on the Council.

Information management system

- Thohoyandou–Malamulele would benefit from access to reliable information about poverty and inequality in the community, and from receiving assistance in determining what, why, where, for whom and how services should be delivered and sustained. Proper information about the situation will enable the municipality to identify the most appropriate partners to co-operate with, and assist them in making informed decisions about what activities should be prioritized and how they could be performed. Therefore, one crucial task for the new municipality of Thohoyandou-Malamulele is to develop management and information systems to control and monitor its functions, i.e. implementation and planning and sustainable adequate service delivery.
- The Municipality can also not depend on proper databases and information from the Northern District or Provincial Departments. Resources for gathering, compiling and analyzing information and data do exist in the commercial sector and partly in the tertiary sector. Partnerships with these sectors should be sought. Through workshops and consultation stakeholders could be mobilized to provide input in developing a strategic, up to date, and cost-effective information system. More importantly perhaps, is that awareness of the need for proper information should be raised first and that a shared vision and will to collaborate still needs to be developed. The acquisition and establishment of a reliable database is a priority.
- In order for the municipal senior personnel to fully comprehend the need for reliable information on Thohoyandou-Malamulele and to design/evaluate proper strategies to collect, organize and use such information, training in basic statistics and methodology is suggested. The Provincial Department of Local Government and Housing could be approached with a collective (municipalities within the district, for instance) proposal for developing a cost effective and efficient training program.

Information technology

- In order to plan future development in IT it is recommended to develop an IT inventory with explicit indication of the number of PC's, workstations, installed software and licenses etc. An IT skills-assessment / inventory should be put in place in order to develop relevant IT training program and criteria for performance appraisals.
- An integrated information system should be developed, so that within each Department and Division information is easily accessible and understandable. This should also assist in avoiding the duplication of gathering and / or organizing data across various Department and divisions.

- Some immediate concerns include the improvement of the billing system (i.e. storage and capacity), updating of the town planning system and attending to the unutilized AKTX system.

3.2.3 Financial capacity

The issue of the financial capacity and management ability of Municipalities is a well-known national problem. Although no rigorous assessment of financial capacity was conducted, impressions confirmed the fact that Thohoyandou-Malamulele is not an exception and encounters the same problem as most municipalities elsewhere in the country.

Moreover, a serious need for financial skills has been identified by other organizations involved in capacity building programs in the area of budgeting, cash flow management, planning and control, revenue and taxation, procurement and cost recovery. In addition, it is justifiable to say apart from lack of skills, and a sound financial management program, that the tension between traditional leaders and local government has been a major contributing factor towards effective revenue collection.

3.2.3.1 Financial management and control

Since municipalities like Thohoyandou-Malamulele have very little control over their budgeting process and most budgeting is proscribed at the provincial level. There is consequently very little relation between municipal expenditure and revenue collection.

Due to the non-existence of a systematic and comprehensive credit policy, payment flows are often irregular with obvious inconsistencies. Consequently the level of payment is generally way below what it should be. In Thohoyandou there is a serious need for proper credit control system and collection procedure.

Another area of concern is staff payment. In Malamulele, most employees are on the payroll of the NDC (Tzaneen). Also employees over the age of 55 (77 of total of 382) are on pay role of the Provincial Department of Local Government and Housing. This has impacted negatively on proper financial management.

3.2.3.2 Billing and rates

Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality does, however, carry out billing in the municipal area and will derive an anticipated income of approximately R 45 million in the financial year 2000/2001 for services. This includes primarily the collection of rates from water and electricity consumption within the municipal area, specifically R 9.8 million for water purchased by businesses, R 2.9 million for water purchased by general users, and R4.9 million for water purchased residential users. Municipality also derives an income of R 1.7 million for connection fees, which is at present paid over to DWAF for performing this function.

Thohoyandou-Malamulele, being an ex-R293 town, suffers from a fundamental problem, which is the lack of rate policy and very little rate base. In Thohoyandou-Malamulele's surrounding areas. The majority of the residents lives on tribal land and is not in the position of "title deeds" or any form of legal documentation to make them tax payers. In Thohoyandou many residents have the individual right to occupy land, but collective ownership of land is still the general practice.

Thus urban ratepayers (mostly in Thohoyandou town) are effectively subsidizing rural households, who, according to the Acting Manager of Thohoyandou, "do not pay anything". "The only levy Malamulele office can raise is a R 10.00 per month water levy which the local residents can hardly afford". This dilemma needs resolution.

3.2.3.3 Budget

In the financial year 2000/ 2001, Thohoyandou Municipality estimated an income R3.63 million for business refuse removal and R16.93 million for residential refuse removal. An assessment of the provision of waste services in Thohoyandou-Malamulele area reveals that the municipality's refuse removal service significantly contributes to the municipal revenue. In fact, the income derived from refuse removal, R 20.57 million, is higher than that derived from the provision of the water and sanitation. This is particularly significant considering that municipality had to pay R 3.119 million of the income from water to DWAF for bulk water supply in 2000/ 2001.

While the municipality anticipates an income of approximately R 45 million, the town treasurer is operating without data processing, or an internal audit division.

Indigency grant

The municipality receives an indigency grant, which is meant to enable the council to provide minimum basic services to all destitute households in a sustainable manner. An assessment of the indigence grant policy in the area proves that there is no formalized list of criteria for selection of the households, and also there is no clear policy on the distribution process and very little information has been collected before or after each distribution. Hence, a sensible and genuine evaluation of the impact and sustainability of the indigency program in Thohoyandou-Malamulele would not be easily possible.

In the light of the above analysis, it is clear that without a proper system, procedures and by-laws to enforce "credit control", and "rate" policies no organization will enjoy a healthy cash flow.

3.2.3.4 Conclusion and recommendations

Despite the lack of a sound financial management system and shortage of experienced senior staff, an assessment of the current situation shows that Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality has the capacity to co-ordinate the extensive billing and collection system for services used. However, low payment rates, limited rate basis, the lack of a rates system and inefficient credit control policies has caused major cash flow problems.

Furthermore, the sustainability of the Refuse Removal Department is clearly critical not only to the community but also to the financial sustainability of the municipality.

Recommendations

- Appoint an external agency to undertake a comprehensive financial audit and identify restructuring needs of the finance department. This study should include all the developmental steps required for the establishment of a sound finance department with the requisite divisions.
- As is mandatory, ensure the collection of accurate information regarding financial activities of the municipality and make it available to all parties concerned. This will increase the credibility of the Municipality and encourage more public participation in the affairs of the Council.
- Encourage the Council to enlist the support of the village and ward committees and Traditional Leaders to mobilize community organizations to improve their payment levels.
- Devise a rate policy, efficient credit control policy and collection procedures. Establish by-laws to complement the enforcement of credit control and collection procedures.
- Increase the Municipality's administrative capacity to develop clear and impartial selection criteria for indigent households in order to be able to differentiate between indigent and non-indigent households.
- Capacitate the Municipality's Technical Department to have better understanding of the monitoring system of the services provided to the community.
- In close collaboration with the Department of Land Affairs, investigate means for the legal transformation of sites from municipal ownership to individual title. This increases the rate base of the Municipality. The identification of sites that could be transformed could be done in conjunction with the proposed household type of survey.

- Negotiate with DWAF and Eskom, as the license holder in the area, regarding development of a mutually beneficial service charge policy. This will help the Municipality to better balance tariffs with actual expenditure on operation and maintenance.
- Adopt a systematic approach to compile development priority lists and translate them into sets of reasonable budget proposals to avoid compulsive decision-making.

3.2.4 Developmental capacity

A private consultant has completed a Management Support Program (March 2001) in which the officials from Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality drafted their own mission statement. It covers ways and means of delivering services and identifying a key clientele base. Strategic objectives and goals over a two-year horizon were also formulated. However, a strong need for knowledge about institutional transformation and legislative process became apparent.

Another serious area of concern relates to the capacity to plan development. Little use is being made of planning documents on the Municipal area. An important reason for this was the absence of officials that usually work with information on the status quo of the municipality as well as on development priorities and strategies. However, despite a number of attempts to attract senior and experienced technical officers the key posts at the technical service sections, remain vacant. Without technical capacity to plan and co-ordinate the activities of the service providers in the area is difficult to take the process forward, let alone to use the plan as the vehicle to consolidate developmental activities.

3.2.4.1 Planning: LDO, LED and IDP

The development of Land Development Objectives (LDO) for the Greater Thohoyandou TLC was completed in 1999. The aim of the LDO was to facilitate the upcoming Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and to co-ordinate discussion across the following sectors: land use and management; housing; environment management; transportation; engineering infrastructure; social and community services; economic development and institutional aspects.

The LDO stipulates a total of 234 proposal and projects with no order of priority. This hampers a strategic approach in implementing the objectives. More importantly, the current reality is that the municipality does not have the necessary organizational, administrative and financial resources to develop detailed projects based on the LDO project proposals. The development of detailed project plans, an institutional transformation plan and a change management process are viewed as critically important for achieving the developmental vision of the municipality.

Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality's inability to plan in a systematic way without capacity and trained personnel has been a drawback. Although the Municipality has received funding from the local Government Transformation Program (LGTP) and was provided with IDP templates and guidelines, still they have not managed to prepare an "interim IDP" for reasons stated above.

The IDP process and process of initiating Local Economic Development (LED) can be used as a stepping-stone for learning, capacity building and reinforcement of collaborative efforts among main actors. Presently there is no LED in the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipal jurisdiction. This remains a major impediment to local economic development and poverty alleviation in the region. This is closely linked to the fact that there is neither sufficient capacity nor resources in the Municipality to establish an IDP, and consequently apply for LED funding. The weak economic infrastructure in the region makes this an even greater challenge.

Constitutionally rural economic upliftment is an integrated part of the municipal council's function. Its effective implementation requires co-operative strategic planning with other players in the area both at provincial and local level. Due to the economic nature of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele area (former homeland), insufficient land or access to piped water, and lack of proficiency, there is a need to cooperate with various governmental and private organizations in this regard.

3.2.4.2 Participation

As far as the Acting Manager is concerned there appears to be "no structured and established links with stakeholders". The mandatory consultations of Council with the local community about the level, quality range and impact of municipal services provided by the municipality, either directly or through another service provider or about the available options for service delivery have not materialized. On the other hand, members of the local community have no knowledge of their rights and duties to engage in the mechanisms, processes and procedures of the municipality.

However, the newly inaugurated Mayor emphasized the importance of public participation and co-operation with local community members, business, traditional and church leaders, civic organizations, labor movements and other stakeholders. The Mayor placed further emphasis on implementing a "consultative program". He added that the council would present its plan to such structures, adding, "my appeal is that we must have these meetings and positively discuss serious issues, so that we can have end-products we can all be proud of."²⁷

²⁷ See *Mirror*, Thohoyandou, March 2001.

3.2.4.1 Conclusion and recommendations:

An assessment of the current situation in Thohoyandou-Malamulele council suggests it needs to seek solutions for its developmental problems in the context of available resources and overall policy and legislative guidelines.

Despite the recent formation of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele municipality, the culture of systematic planning and strategic thinking has to be implanted in these organizations as soon as possible. In so doing, the whole concept of “strategic planning/development” from both human and financial resources perspectives will become part and parcel of the municipality’s mental conception.

Recommendations:

- Currently the municipality is strongly dependent on initiatives and support from provincial structures. This should not only be interpreted as a negative state of affairs. While the municipality is preparing its IDP, close collaboration with provincial and district structures could be sought, which might provide useful insights into how to co-operate with other organs and spheres of government in future. The development of an IDP could benefit from such contact. A close monitoring of current co-operation, in terms of procedures and outcomes, is therefore strongly recommended.
- The development of detailed project plans, an institutional transformation plan and a change management process are viewed as critically important for achieving the developmental vision of the municipality. Therefore, it is important that an understanding of the analytical framework pertaining to the new municipal dispensation, for both Municipal staff and councilors, should be cultivated through an extensive training program, which also focuses on the areas of analysis, need assessment and prioritization, strategic planning and project development/management.
- The establishment of an LED desk at the Municipality, which, in collaboration with the local organizations, could undertake research and assess the real economic strength and problems of each section of the community, would be ideal. The outcome of such an exercise based on the “community demand driven concept” will constitute the nature of the intervention most appropriate for the area. In addition it will function as a learning experience of how to involve the community in policy-making and development.

4 Overall recommendations

This chapter includes a series of recommendations to provide a suggested framework for addressing some of the weaknesses and shortcomings highlighted in the previous chapters of this report. In the main, the ensuing section of the report is dedicated to the following issues:

- General guidelines for participatory system and consultative process
- Administration and performance management
- Strategic and developmental planning
- Information management and usage

4.1 Major components of “Good Governance”

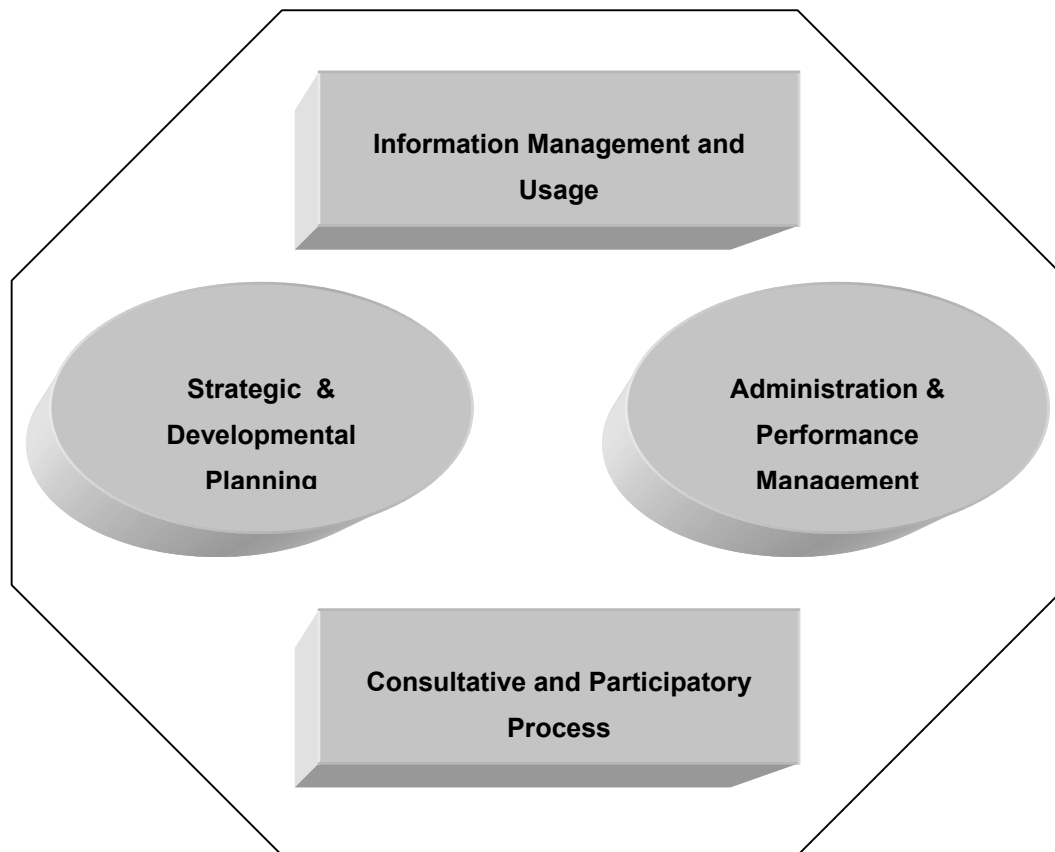
In a consideration of local government capacity building intervention, some attention needs to be given to the preparatory steps needed to ensure an effective and operative implementation strategy.

There are some basic principles, which need to be adhered to in this process. Among these firstly is the issue of the **consultative process**, which ensures the purposeful involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the decision-making process and ultimately allows ordinary people to take responsibility for their own destiny.

Secondly, is the issue of the **strategic planning process**, which simply means a systematic and progressive search for the most appropriate and effective solution (plan of action) to the developmental problems within the community. Similarly, such an exercise has to be the product of a collaborative effort by all the stakeholders and also commensurate with the community’s needs and the availability of resources.

Third, is the issue of **competent management** and administrative **operational strategy** in support of the effective implementation of the community’s developmental aspirations and program objectives, including planning implementation and monitoring.

Fourthly, it is important to recognize the importance that **useful information** plays in the process of establishing “good governance”.



4.2 General guidelines for recommendations

The following recommendations are purely suggestive and the authority lies with the council management to either make provision for its adaptation/ implementation or modification

Considering the fact that capacity building requires a series of simultaneous and closely linked interventions, and in reality the budgets are generally restricted, the best option would be a phased structured type implementation strategy.

As a point of departure, one option would be to workshop this document at the municipal level. This is to say that after the adoption of the document, the council management would appoint a capacity building task team to study the document and facilitate a focused workshop to discuss detailed issues and undertake the primary level of planning for its implementation. It is advisable to include stakeholders representative involves in the process right from the start.

A point to be held in mind regarding public participation is how to resolve the problem of involving certain stakeholders who do not have the means to travel to the municipal offices and do not receive compensation for their contribution. It is suggested that the municipality

should perform an “outreach” function. This means that the administrators and councilors meet communities at the communities’ premises. At least, meetings should be organized at accessible locations.

Executive Summary

The Capacity Building for Local Government program has conducted a situation analysis of the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local Municipality in the Northern Province of South Africa during March/April 2001. Thohoyandou-Malamulele is one of the almost 300 municipalities that have recently been established following the process of demarcation of municipal boundaries in the country, which implied a reduction of approximately 600 municipalities.

The current socio-economic situation in South Africa urges for strategic and sustainable integrated development of local communities. The newly formed municipalities have a crucial role to play in this process. Capacity building of local government is needed in order to live out their mandate of local enablers of development and democratization. The situation analysis aims to assist the Thohoyandou-Malamulele Local municipality in building its capacity.

Overview

The last decade, one of the most critical periods in South Africa's social and political history has been marked by numerous attempts to transform the political system and move away from the past. The abolishment of the apartheid system, the establishment of a new government of national unity, the development of a new constitution and consequently the establishment of the newly elected local government, has spurred much positive social, political, cultural and economic transformation. The way has been cleared for new definitions of human rights and affirmations of personal dignity, which have expanded the opportunity for individual and collective achievements.

Despite these unprecedented achievements in recent years, great problems persist. While new levels of consensus have been reached on national and local government programs to promote health, suitable development and human rights, the situation on the ground in many areas remains the same. The lack of basic social services, the high rate of unemployment, the rise in crime, the disparity between rich and poor, the continuous inequities faced by women and the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS underscore this point.

In order to address some of the above-mentioned social and economics issues, the South African Government since the mid-1990s, has launched and set in motion the process of restructuring local government. The national goal is to correct the neglect of the apartheid regime, and to create a new local government throughout the provinces that is representative, transparent, developmental and accountable.

Last December's (2000) local government election marked the final stage of the transitional period that led to the establishment of 232 democratically elected local councils, 46 District councils and 6 metropolitan councils.

Despite present achievements in this regard and successful completion of the final phase, the challenges are many. Among them is to formulate a strategy that can engage South Africa's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny and solving these chronic problems through effective participation in "Local Governance". The Municipal Structures Act, no 117 of 1998), argues for adoption of new values, and structural reforms in recognition that, "genuine development and real progress can be achieved only by people themselves, acting individually and collectively, in response to the specific concerns and needs of their time and place"²⁸.

A radical reform of local government remains a long way off. Lack of capacities in local councils and the inability to be responsive has caused concern among many. However, the process is at an embryonic and infant stage and needs considerable care and assistance.

Summary of the findings

The outcome of the study depicts a number of familiar challenges, which are common in many newly established municipalities elsewhere in South Africa. Due largely to the underdeveloped local economy and a high rate of unemployment there was an inability on the part of the Municipality to deliver basic social services. Although the municipality is the primary agent for local economic development, there was very limited evidence of progress in this respect.

The dissatisfaction of the traditional authorities towards the clauses in the constitution, which in their opinion diminish their long-standing executive power and control over resources, makes them reluctant to fully submit to a new "authority" in the form of Thohoyandou-Malamulele Municipality. It is clearly evident that the attitude adopted by some of the traditional authorities leaves them outside the process of South Africa's social and political transformation.

In political terms, it was found that the inexperience of councilors, and their unfamiliarity with modern management systems, together with the skeptical attitudes of the traditional authorities towards the newly elected council, to have hindered the service delivery process.

A challenge of similar nature faces the administrative operation of the Municipality. Findings regarding administrative capacity of the council indicate the inability of the council to retain or

²⁸ Turning points for all nations, October 1995

attract competent staff, more specifically at a senior level. Presently, many senior positions are vacant or filled by acting officers. The lack of a defined Human resources division restricted staff development programs. A lack of essential information was another restraint upon effective management within the Municipality.

The financial capacity/management is the most vulnerable area in most municipalities. The inability to collect rates, to expand the rate base, and the lack of strategic use of financial resources and resource misuse are another issues for management to consider. In addition, it was found that the concept of strategic planning within the developmental context not be fully appreciated. Most activities in this respect are inadequately planned and the search for best possible solutions with limited resources has not yet begun.

Not surprisingly, there is a vivid disparity between the social and economic conditions of men and women in the area. Although, women form more than half of the population and shoulder the larger portion of household responsibilities, they are still confined by certain inequalities. Consequently, they contribute little to the decision-making process.

The issue of HIV/AIDS is still confined to the realm of silence and denial. Statistics are not available and awareness campaigns to expose its threat to the community are very limited.

Findings suggest that, while the need for capacity building initiatives are quite obvious; due to in part to the lack of cooperation among various national and international agencies, there is in any event a negative attitude towards these activities in the community and amongst Municipal officials. The majority of senior officials in the council believe these activities have no "follow up" and suffer from lack of continuity.

In another hand it seems most capacity building programs are confined to a series of theoretical or academic workshops for either senior managers or councilors and have not always been effective. Some officials and Councilors expressed serious reservations regarding so-called "capacity building workshops".

During interviews and in questionnaires councilors and administration officials have indicated a lack of access to supportive information. A streamlined information system within the Municipality is almost non-existent. No plans have been made to improve the quality and accessibility of information that could support planning and implementation of integrated development projects.

However, it is not justifiable to expect new municipalities like Thohoyandou-Malamulele to respond effectively and immediately to every new function and responsibility it faces and to be responsive to all the needs of the community within such a short time. The development of

detailed project plans, an institutional transformation plan and a change in management process is in all likelihood too much to deal with at once. The crucial question is to find answers to what the councilors regard as the highest priority and to what extent the municipality can mobilize its efforts to transform and perform at the same time.

An opportunity for reflection (the challenges)

One of the fundamental challenges facing both the community (including the traditional leaders) and the council of Thohoyandou-Malamulele is to unify all the role-players to reach a common definition and vision of development, and to accept responsibility for their own destiny and personal development.

Given the political and historical context of Thohoyandou-Malamulele, and the fact that Municipal council is constitutionally designated as the “change agent” there is a crucial need for a systematic and pragmatic approach for building key capacities if this “agent” is to succeed and transform to a true developmental institution.

The issue of a support system for local governance and the crucial need to create a systematic and well-coordinated approach with clear target indicators is another challenge. Presently there are a number of national, international and UN agencies that are engaging themselves with “local government “ programs in various ways. Their efforts are uncoordinated and some have very little direction and exert little impact on the ground. There is a danger that, unless these shortcomings are resolved, outside interventions will lose credibility.

A final challenge to local government is the subject of the inequality between men and women. The effect of the persistent denial to women of full equality with men retards the process of eradicating poverty within communities. In addition, a commitment to the establishment of full equality between men and women in all departments of local governance themselves, will be central to the success of efforts to conceive and implement a strategy of development.

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