

Community Participation in a Democratic Dispension: A Sine Qua Non for Integrated Development Planning in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to explore if weather community participation can receptively be used as a conducive condition for effective planning and implementation of the integrated development planning with a view to revamp on service delivery in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. The debate about deadlock of community participation become pertinent in the recent and on-going political transformation in South Africa post 1994, through the realisation of democracy rooted in the cognitive convergence to the notion that "*The People Shall Govern*". Notably, this paper is grounded on the pragmatic repercussions felt by the ordinary citizens, in which the South African government is confronted and characterised by some form of upheavals and service deliver challenges. This paper argues that the genuine and authentic form of participatory governance is deemed to ameliorate on the long-standing patterns of service delivery backlogs in almost all South African municipalities. The study utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches for data collection and analysis. However, the study was predominately qualitative. Twenty semi-structured questionnaires (N=20) were used to solicit data from household members. Interview schedule was also used to collect data from IDP manager (n=1). The major finding of the study is that IDP as part of the municipal planning process is largely ineffective as a strategy for unending service delivery backlogs within Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. The deficiency in terms of IDP planning is as the results of inadequate involvement and representation of communities in the preparation and implementation of municipal plans. The conclusion that can be made from this paper is that authentic promotion of community participation in the formulation and implementation of the IDP can deal effectively with service delivery challenges.

Keywords: Community Participation, Developmental Local Government, Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Planning, Service Delivery

1. Introduction

South Africa is a unitary state which is divided into three distinctive and interrelated spheres of government in which are national, provincial and local government. The local government sphere is the only sphere which explicitly lamented and made the realisation of community participation purpose and its objective (Vivier & Wentzel, 2013). Continuingly, the local government is also on the other hand regarded as the delivery arm of the state simply because of its nature of being in close contact with its constituents, and this strategic position makes it the ideal tool for pragmatic evidence of community participation (Ababio, 2004). Some ample amount of scholars postulated a conception that no other sphere of government can exert more meaningful development that can inculcate community development than local government (Ababio, 2004; Vivier & Wentzel, 2013; Cash & Swatuk, 2010; Beyers, 2015). Therefore, the debate about deadlock of

community participation become pertinent in the recent and on-going political transformation in South Africa post 1994, through the realisation of democracy rooted in the cognitive convergence to the notion that "*The People Shall Govern*". This paper is grounded on the pragmatic consequences felt by the ordinary citizens, in which the South African government is confronted and characterised by some form of upheavals and service deliver challenges.

The point often overlooked is that, the development need to be a participatory process that encompasses all section of community, local business and other interested stakeholders (Cash & Swatuk, 2010). In actual fact, no local authority can effectively make a meaningful and productive contribution to improve the standard of living of its community without the necessary support and commitment from the communities themselves and other affected stakeholders. Sihlogonyane (2015) stated that the mood

of transformation especially in term of planning and implementation in the past development effort or apartheid planning practices is characterised with top-down authoritarian modernist systems served as predicaments towards effective community participation. Ultimately, the post 1994 government enacted the bottom-up post-apartheid democratic systems in which it was deeply marked by the emergence of a deluge of African metaphors such as indaba, Batho-Pele, lekgotla and twele pele *inter alia*. These metaphors immediately entered the contemporary planning and policy documents in which there are conspicuously seen largely and fundamentally as signifying the increased participation of black people marking moments of inclusion, transformation and empowerment (Sihlogonyane, 2015; Sinxadi & Campbell, 2015). This paper advances its argument that effective community participation in local government affairs inextricably lead to improved and accelerated service provision to an ample amount of service delivery beneficiaries at the local level. It is evident that following the outcry of the planning exertion of the preceding, it is then that culminated and calls for participatory planning by progressive planners especially academics, unions and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) (Harrison, Todes & Watson, 2008). In response, the African National Congress (ANC) which led the first black democratic government in 1994 promoted the principles of community participation in its policy statements and adopted participatory planning with a revolutionary zeal to mark a fundamental paradigmatic break with the past (ANC Policy Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa, 1992; Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), 1995). It is then that community participation became a serious undisputed euphoric concept and its principles became central to the institution of local structures, processes and procedures of local government (Watson, 2011).

The state of Local Government report compiled by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) indicated that several municipalities are in a serious distress or challenges of effectively delivering services to its constituents (CoGTA, 2009). Additionally, more concerns have been raised regarding the local government failure and inability to deliver basic services (Akinboade, Mokwena & Kinfact, 2013; Makalela, 2017). Therefore, literature research reveals that local government failure to deliver services is largely attributed to lack of inculcation and mainstreaming

of community needs and interest in local government planning and implementation (Madzhivandila & Asha, 2012; Beyers, 2015). Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality is a predominately rural municipality with deadlock and impasse of service delivery backlogs (Lepelle-Nkumpi IDP, 2013/2014). The failure of the municipality to eradicate the deadlock of service delivery backlogs is attached to inability of the municipality to incorporate the views and opinions of community members in their planning processes.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework compliment and infuses the study arguments and give the base within which the study unfolds. It aims to underpin the researchers philosophical, epistemologically and analytically approach to the study (Eisenhart, 1991). Theoretical framework to development is a structured way of enabling the researcher to rely on a formal theory for coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships Eisenhart (1991). This paper is epistemologically grounded from the Humanistic People-Centred theory in which people and the community become increasingly the focus of development. People centred is a process enable members of the society to be able to realise their potential through capacity building and mobilisation of local resources for improved standard of living concomitant with their own aspiration (David, Theron & Maphunye, 2009). The reason for the adoption of People-centred development is simply because the micro-level development thinking places the interest and needs of the people at the forefront. This study therefore, postulate the fact that community participation should be rooted within humanistic paradigm in a sense that community members should be able to identify, prioritise, lead and manage their own development.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Conceptualisation of Community Participation in South African Local Government Realm

Fox and Meyer (1995:20) define community participation as "the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy-making activities including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programmes toward community needs, build public

support and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within society". This conceptualisation denotes the involvement of the community in processes that determine the agenda and focus of development. On the other side, the development literature edifies that community participation is a concept adopted to ensure participation and give opportunities to communities to determine their own destination in terms of their needs (Sinxadi & Campbell, 2015). It is a means of empowering people by developing their skills and abilities to enable them to negotiate with development delivery system and equip them to make their own decisions in terms of their developmental needs and priorities. Important to realise, is the fact community participation is often in the discourse erroneously used interchangeably with public participation particularly giving inference to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (Mathebula, 2010). Ababio (2004) believes that community participation and public participation mean one and the same thing. This is evident by where he also refers to the two concepts as 'community public participation'. However, according to Mafunisa and Xaba (2008), community participation in the IDP exists only if the affected stakeholders particularly the municipal community integrally takes part in decision-making and the implementation process. As the results people are able to determine what constitutes their own development and able to influence their decision in any development effort of some sort.

3.2 South African Developmental Local Government

Developmental local government is apparently found to serve as an approach to development that intrinsically fathoms the grounds within which community participation is emanated. With that being said, it is clear that in order to eradicate the legacy of the past; the South African democratic government adopted a developmental approach (Section A of White Paper on Local Government, 1998). Davids (2005) notes that in addressing the injustices of past development efforts, a people-centered development was adopted as a starting point. Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005) describe developmental local government as a shifting of interventions to the public and away from objects, delivery and production. A developmental approach aims to enhance the skills and capacity of the public by encouraging their participation in their own development process (Theron, 2005). The

White Paper on Local Government (WPLG) (1998) defines developmental local government as government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community, to find sustainable ways of meeting their social, economic and material needs and of improving their quality of life. The characteristics of a developmental local government are spelled out as follows in Section B of the WPLG (1998):

- Maximizing social development and economic growth – the powers and functions of local government should be exercised in a way that has maximum impact on the social development of communities.
- Integrating and coordinating – developmental local government must provide vision and leadership for all those who have a role to play in achieving local prosperity.
- Democratizing development, empowering and redistributing – municipalities can render support to individual and community initiatives, directing community energies into projects and programmes which benefit the area as a whole.
- Leading and learning – developmental local government requires that municipalities become more strategic, visionary and ultimately influential in the way they operate.

In order for a democratic government to exist, the community must govern by way of participating in issues of local government. The *Municipal Systems Act* (Act 32 of 2000) requires that every municipality develop a culture of municipal governance that complements representative governance within a system of participatory government. Thus, a municipality should create concerted and conducive environment for local community participation in the affairs of the municipality.

3.3 Community Participation for Effective Planning and Implementation of IDP in a Democratic Dispensation

It is argued that in order for development to address the needs of the community, communities have to play a role in the process (Madzhivandila & Asha, 2012). It is unabated that community participation currently constitutes an important element of the South African government's policy on integrated

development planning in local government (Coetzee, 2012). Important to realise in this paper is the conceptual clarification of Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and integrated development planning. Integrated Development Plan (IDP) refers to the output or product of the integrated development planning processes. This basically means that IDP is a document produced through integrated development planning process. Section 23(1) states that IDP as a strategic document must be produced by all municipalities as a super plan that gives the overall framework for development.

Integrated development planning process aims to coordinate the work of local and other spheres of government in a coherent plan to improve the quality of life of all people living in a particular area (Mautjana & Mtapuri, 2014; Makalela, 2016; Mashichidi & Moeti, 2016). Continuingly, the IDP should on the other hand take into cognizance the existing conditions and problems, as well as resources available for development (Tshabalala, 2006). Tshabalala further elucidated that community participation in its roots it cannot be left to the few, but however, it should embrace and transcend the needs of communities and also to make a true reflection of needs and prioritises of the municipal constituency. Section 17(1) of the *Local Government: Municipal System Act* sets out the mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation in the affairs of a municipality. According to Ndevu (2011) the community must have a say in both the content and the process of drafting the IDP. The IDP as a management planning tool is used in municipalities to create a platform for sharing ideas with the public affected by such development initiatives as proposed in the plan. Worth noting is that, community participation in the IDP planning processes is rudimentary grounded from various pieces of legislation. *Inter alia*, is section 152 of the *Constitution of South Africa*, Act 108 of 1996, which complemented community participation as the integral part of the IDP planning process (RSA, 1996; Cash & Swatuk, 2010). The Constitution of the South Africa states the object of local government as to:

- Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- Ensure the provision of service to communities in a sustainable manner;
- Promote social and economic development;

- Promote safe and healthy environment;
- Encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government (RSA, 1996).

This, therefore, implies transcending just consulting communities as an aid to deliberation. The *Local Government: Municipal System Act* in section 16 makes an obligation to municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose encourage and create conditions for the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including being encouraged to participate in:

- Integrated development planning.
- Decisions on the provision of municipality services.
- Monitoring and evaluation of performance.
- The budget and strategic decisions relating to services (RSA, 2000).

3.4 Community Participation and Integrated Development Planning: A Receptive Approach to Service Delivery

Chapter 4 of the *Local Government: Municipal System Act*, 32 of 2000 provides mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation in order to fathom that there is a community ownership of an IDP given the fact that IDP is about providing services that addresses the challenges faced by communities in a systematic manner. To this end, it is of highly imperative to strengthen the role of communities in the entire process of developing and implementing an IDP. Additionally, the experience would suggest that improving community participation in the municipal administration can enhance good governance in the following key strategic areas of the municipality: Improved service delivery, community empowerment, better resource distribution and better needs identification for communities. Community participation for effective service delivery in South Africa is on the other side complemented by various structures such as Ward Committees at the local government that are established to ensure that relevant needs and priorities (services) of people are met through

participatory system (Akinboade, Mokwena & Kinfack, 2013; Makalela, 2017). The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (108 of 1996) also envisaged and endorsed that effective and promotion amid of service delivery is the results of democratic participatory governance systems (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Mashiachidi and Moeti (2016) elucidated that for local government to strategically achieve its mandate of service delivery, community needs and interest must be inculcated and mainstreamed in the municipal planning and implementation. This similar said by Robinson (2008) who echoed that overwhelming service delivery backlogs and structural imbalances were as a results of apartheid imprints that alienated the people at the ground with no hope and opportunities to drive their own development efforts. These however, stifle access and the effective provision of services by the government. Mautjana and Makombe (2014) assert that participation of community members in decisions influencing their future and wellbeing is one of the building blocks for democratic value. Mautjana and Makombe (2014) further supported the assertion that community participation enables community members to identify their needs and how they should be addressed, fostering a sense of community ownership and responsibility. Community participation at the local level is pragmatically deemed to empower communities, which leads to choice and greater acceptance of services delivered on their areas of jurisdiction.

4. Methodology

4.1 The Study Area

Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality is one of the municipalities within the Capricorn District Municipality (CDM) in Limpopo Province. The municipality is located 55km south of the district municipality and Polokwane city. The municipality is pre-dominantly rural with a population of approximately 230 350, with a total of 59 682 households and an average household size of 3,9. The municipality covers 345 478 km squared, which represents 16% of the district's total land area (Lepelle-Nkumpi IDP, 2013/2014). The municipality has 29 wards and 93 settlements. The researcher chose ward 11 as the researcher is familiar and because this ward is situated far away from Lebogakgomo Township in a remote rural context.

4.2 Research Method

This study used a mixed methods approach, which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques for data collection and analysis. But however, the study was pre-dominantly qualitative. The empirical data was collected was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire from household's members. In which, twenty (N=20) out of 520 households were conveniently sampled. Convenient sampling was habitually used precisely because of the researchers familiar with the area. An interview schedule was also used to solicit data from the key informant (n=1). The secondary data sources or the literature review processes were used to collect information regarding the involvement of community in the municipal planning processes. The degree of community involvement in the municipal affairs dominantly limited to the planning and implementation of the IDP. Lastly, the data was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis techniques.

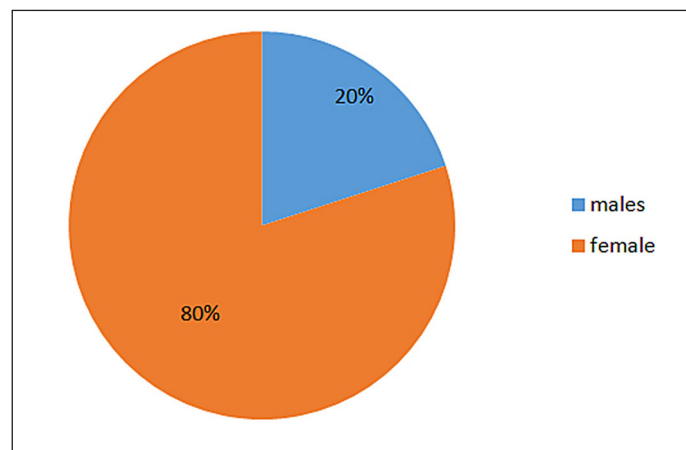
5. Presentation of Findings and Discussions

5.1 Demographic Profile

Figure 1 on the next page shows that (4) respondents who constitute 20% percent are males, while (16) respondents which constitute 80% are females. Therefore, this implies that Sehlabeng Village is dominated by females and men are in minority. The implication of this to the study is that women were found to be available and interested in participating in the study, as most of the men were found to be away in search for better opportunities. However, the main reason for majority of woman to be available for the study was because of their role as house wife's doing domestic work in their homes, so most of them were the ones which were found to be available to answer the semi-structured questionnaire.

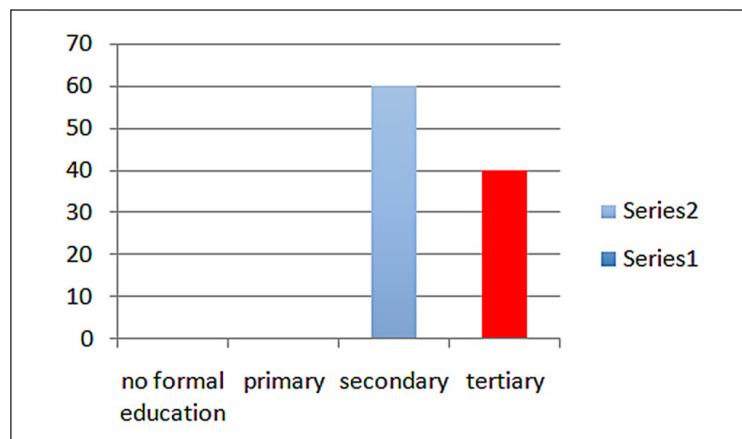
Figure 2 on the following page represents the (12) respondents which constitute 60% in the area are having the secondary educational level, while (8) respondents which yield 40% with tertiary level. Therefore, the findings are that majority of people in the village dominated by secondary entrance and followed by the minority with tertiary level. The implication of the findings to study is that the situation could lead to higher chances of the majority

Figure 1: Gender of Respondents



Source: Author

Figure 2: Educational Status



Source: Author

of people in the village to lack employment opportunities due to lack of market related skills. Lack of sponsor in the village to promote social development is also a key for example, such as bursaries. Another implication is that the municipality seems not to be doing well in encouraging and promoting education through conducting of career wise programmes that can make people in the village aware of taking informed career choices that will suits their interests and capabilities.

Table 1 shows that in Sehlabeng Village (5) respondents which yield 25% are formally employed, (11) respondents which constitute 55% are unemployed and lastly (4) respondents constituting 20% are self-employed. The finding is that unemployment is the highest in the area since majority of people are unemployed, then followed by formally employed which is the second highest while people who are self-employed are only the minority. Therefore, the implication of this to study is that majority of people

in the village are unemployed due to lack of educational facilities in the village and majority being unable to attain university entrance

In Table 2 the analysis of the finding revealed that 25% of the respondents explicitly indicated that they sometimes participate in the formulation of municipal IDP, 15% demonstrated that they always participate and 60% never participated in the formulation and implementation of the municipal IDP. Therefore, the results indicate that an enormous amount of people in the community are in alienation in the preparation and implementation of the municipal IDP. Some of the community members confidently demonstrated that in most of the instances the municipality keeps much of its planning processes in isolation from service delivery beneficiaries. The imprecision that can be drawn from the latter is that inadequate community participation of the people at the ground is inextricably led to poor and fragmented planning

Table 1: Employment Status

Employment Level	Frequency	Percentage
Formal employed	5	25
unemployed	11	55
Self-employed	4	20
other	-	-
total	20	100

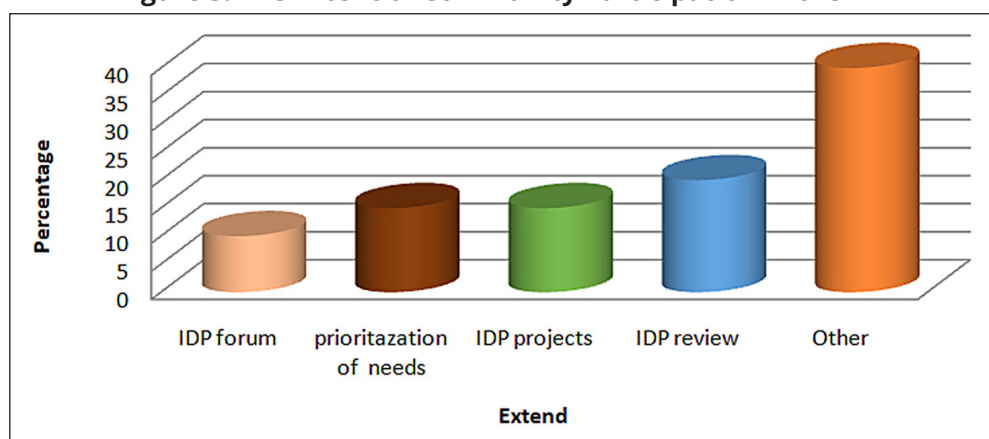
Source: Author

Table 2: Community Participation as the Integral Gist of IDP Planning Process

	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	5	25
Always	3	15
Never	12	60
Total	20	100

Source: Author

Figure 3: The Extent of Community Participation in the IDP

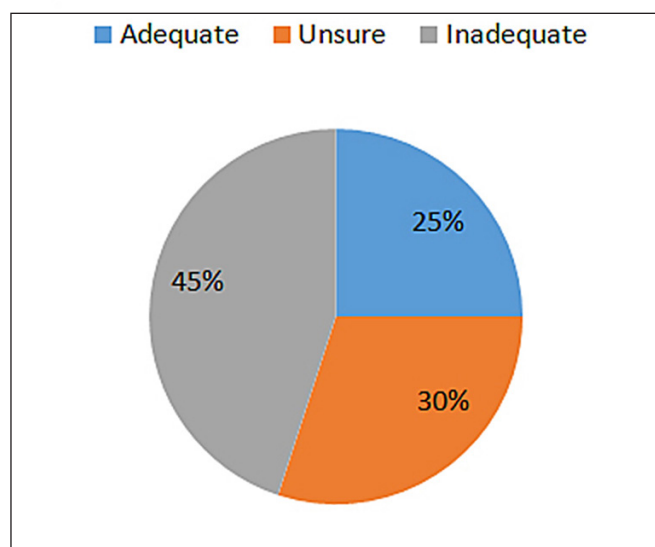


Source: Author

that is not reflective of the needs and priorities of communities. The development literature edifies that community participation lead to better design of development projects given the anecdotal fact that participants' concerns are incorporated within strategies (UN-Habitat, 2009). But however, an array of authors are found to be still sceptical about the latter, in which Mautjana and Makombe (2014) are of the opinion that, an assortment of communities within many municipalities in South Africa are still not represented municipal planning processes.

The findings in Figure 3 indicate that 10% of the respondents participate in the municipal IDP forums, 15% participate in the prioritisation of community needs, 15% participate in IDP projects,

20% participate in the IDP review process or meetings and lastly 40% never participated in any of the aforementioned extend of the IDP. Therefore, the results indicate that an enormous proportion of community members are found not to be compelled with genuine form of participation in the IDP. The latter is complemented and accompanied by the study that was conducted in Aganang Local Municipality in Limpopo Province. The study revealed that 85.3% of the community members are found not to be talking part in matters that affects the municipality, while 14.7% are found to be participating. The aforesaid problem is found to be perpetuated by lack of knowledge especially in terms of IDP forums, IDP review process plan and IDP projects identification and prioritisation. The

Figure 4: Ranking the Level of Community Participation in the IDP

Source: Author

above findings are complemented by the literature research which revealed that within the IDP processes in most municipalities in Limpopo Province, is that the convergence to the cognitive notion of community participation is incorporated mainly for the sake of compliance with the legislation (Mafunisa & Xaba, 2008). Mafunisa and Xaba (2008) further lamented that pragmatically no attempt is made by the municipalities to enrich communities by actively involving them.

The findings in Figure 4 reveal that 25% of the respondents demonstrated that they are adequately involved in the IDP planning activities, 30% were found to be unsure, while 45% arguably agreed that they are inadequate with regard to the level of participation in the IDP planning. The imprecision is that large proportion of respondents argued that the level participation in the IDP is inadequate, only few members of the community demonstrated that the level of participation in the IDP is adequate. This basically means that the municipality does not take into cognizance the community participation principles more especially inclusivity as a principle that is the one that embraces all the views and opinions of all relevant and affected stakeholders in the community. Asha (2014) echoed similar sentiments in the study conducted in Capricorn District Municipality (CDM), Limpopo Province. The study revealed that dissatisfaction of communities in terms of participation in the local government affairs results in unending service delivery backlogs. Another study conducted in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality revealed that the slow pace in terms

of service delivery in the municipality is as a result of community participation deficiency. The study further indicated that low level of community participation during the identification and prioritization of community needs lead to disconnect between the needs of communities and the actual services that the municipality provides (Makalela, 2016).

5.2 Summarised Responses: Key Informant (IDP Manager) and Community Members

The question was asked to the IDP manager with regard to municipal planning and IDP. The question was about the processes that the municipality is undertaking to involve community members in the IDP planning processes. The question was asked in the intention to evaluate and explore mechanisms that Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality is using to inculcate the views of communities in the IDP planning processes. The IDP manager indicated the following:

"The municipality is using ward consultation meetings and IDP forums for identification and prioritization of community needs the municipality is a position to give people at the ground an opportunity to make inputs and comments in the drafting, formulation and identification of needs and priorities. But however, in most of the instance community members are reluctant when municipal meetings are called."

The latter is complemented by the findings of the study conducted in Aganang Local Municipality

by Mashiachidi and Moeti (2016). The study revealed that community members at Aganang are provided with free transport when municipal consultation meetings are called, but however, the attendance by communities is still not satisfactory.

The other question was asked to the IDP manager with regard to the roles and responsibilities of community members in the formulation and implementation of municipal plans. The intention of the question was to check whether the municipality is putting at the forefront the interest of communities. Therefore, the IDP manager demonstrated the following:

"Community members are given an opportunity to make input the allocation of budgets in the different projects and programmes of the municipality."

An open-ended question was asked concerning the level understanding of the IDP by the local communities. Only few members of the community appeared to have little understanding of the IDP and what it entails, while the largest proportion of the members of the community were found to be lacking an understanding of the IDP. Those who appeared to have an understanding of the IDP they defined it as follows:

"IDP is a tool that is concerned about the needs of community members and their priorities". The other said respondents said, "IDP is considered to be municipal strategies to direct investments in the municipal area of jurisdiction."

Therefore, the imprecision from the above responses revealed that majority of community members do not understand the term IDP and what it entails. The latter is complimented by the study conducted in Aganang Local Municipality. The study revealed that lack of understanding of the IDP and its processes is in most cases as the results of the municipal officials' explanation of the tool that is not to the level of understanding by less literate community members. One of the community members highlighted the following:

"Understanding of the IDP processes and active involvement on the municipal plans is only limited to those who are educated and those who work closely with the municipality. Moreover,

there are the ones that are able to engage in discussions. Another challenge that affects our knowledge and understanding is that IDP documents are written in English which makes it difficult for us to read and understand."

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be deduced from the study that community participation is highly significant in making the planning and implementation of the IDP a true reflection of the community needs and aspirations. It can be said also on the other hand that a credible and authentic IDP needs to mainstream the interest and the input of the community members. But however, the point often overlooked is the diverse population size of the municipalities which serves as impediments for inclusive participation. For example, the other scholars such as Bogopane (2012), contends that many municipalities in South Africa are too large to allow for active and direct community participation of all the residents in a complex planning processes. The results, thereof, is that active and direct participation in IDPs requires clear rules and procedures specifying who is to participate or to be consulted, on behalf of whom, on which issues, through which organisational mechanisms and with what effect. Therefore, it is pragmatically evident that the current policy prescripts and legislation regrettably fall short of spelling out how details of the aforementioned must take place. Further and additional challenge that give birth to lack of active community participation in the IDP relates, inter alia, to lack of explicit processes and structures of participation and lack of information. The analysis of the overall respondent's demonstrated that the municipality is faced with low level of community participation during the identification and prioritisation of community needs which lead to disconnect between the needs of communities and actual services that the municipality provides. Additionally, the analysis of the degree of respondents also revealed that is predominately affected by vast amount of factors that are also attributed to serve as impediments in which it includes, inadequate capacity of local government officials dealing with planning and implementation, alleged act of corruption in the municipality, lack of community participation guidelines and principles, lack of vertical collaboration between the municipality and community members.

The paper recommends the following:

- Capacity building as an intervention should be promoted to improve the overall functioning of the municipality. Capacity building includes the development of workplace skills plan (WSP), which it informs on capacity in terms of training of community members to acquire certain skills.
- There is a need for successive session or IDP workshops conducted by the municipality to enable community members an opportunity to gain insight knowledge about municipal planning processes. Excessive community meetings with community members will help in addressing service delivery problems in the community.
- As IDP processes is politically driven, there must be an opportunity for opposition parties to make comments and inputs in the planning processes in order to hold the ruling party accountable.
- The municipality must lastly be in a position to address the existing communication breakdown by making the use of local media, both print and electronic media, loudhailers as matters lobby the community members to attend the meetings.

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