



LIMPOPO: THABAZIMBI MUNICIPALITY

1. Executive Summary

One notable and recurrent theme in some of the discussions held in the municipality are those boding on what the values, culture and objectives of a municipality should be and how does none mobilize a municipality to perform better on basis of a common understanding of its developmental mandate. These observations were discernable in the manner in which the mayor and the municipal manager understood the extent of deep engagement they need to have with their senior management and communities that they serve. The idea of a reciprocal responsibility across the various spheres of government, communities the municipality serves was seen as a foundational step in inculcating a different set of value system that are required to change the face of municipalities. Part of this realization was notable in the unitary and cordial relations that underpinned working relations amongst its officials. One of the cardinal achievements of the municipality is its ability to draw the private sector in furtherance of its LED objectives. The Municipality has demonstrated mining to be one of the sectors depicting tremendous growth in its local economy. The mining sector has huge potential in terms of employment and increasing the revenue base of the municipality through public private partnership initiatives. Indeed, the Local Government Turnaround Strategy conducted by CoGTA in 2009 identified Thabazimbi's Local Economic Development (LED) as a model case in the country given its ability to draw productive developmental relations with the private sector namely the mining companies in the area. The municipality has established good relationship with the mining companies to the extent that the mines have funded the feasibility studies done in the municipality with regard to infrastructure development. The municipality is also busy with the Dutch Government negotiating for R 20 million to be used for infrastructure upgrading since the current infrastructure is ageing. The establishment of a newsletter in the municipality was hailed as a key achievement. Prior to the commencement of the newsletter, the community was relying on local media, which reported mainly in Afrikaans. The introduction of a newsletter has galvanized communication between the municipality and the community. Due to a series of financial reforms, there is has been a marked increase in revenue collection and accountability mechanisms instituted within the municipality's accounting system. In addition, from a human resource perspective, all section 57 posts are filled, and the municipality had developed a work place skills plan. However, irrespective of these gains, capacity shortages in the areas of technical skills continue to undermine various spheres of service delivery. Technical skills in the

water, sanitation departments and roads are lacking especially in the field of artisanship. Undue political interference in areas such as senior appointments was cited as a potential area that could undermine service delivery in the affected portfolios due to lack of competent skills of persons appointed on basis of political capital.

2. Municipality's Perception of its Performance - Political Perspectives and Administrative Perspectives

Nature of Relationships and Role of Private Sector

As per the IDP¹ document of the municipality, the need to enhance a collective ethos of development goals and aspirations the municipality has set to actualise is acknowledged as follows:

All role-players in a municipality need a joint vision as a common ground, which provides guidance to the municipality and the residents. The Council's decisions have to be oriented towards clearly defined and agreed objectives, which at the same time give orientation towards management, and which form the basis for performance management and the accountability of the municipal government towards the residents. The activities of the Council (Councillors and officials), as well as all stakeholders (Sector Departments, Private Sector, Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's), etc) need to be guided and focused by strategies relating to and addressing the issues (problems, constraints, opportunities etc) as identified from the analysis.²

In view of the aforementioned, it was inferred from the interview discussions held in the municipality, that the mayor has a clear and intimate understanding of what his responsibilities are and how these impact on the relationship he holds with the various stakeholders within the municipality:

The Mayor is the face of the municipality. My role in Mayoral Committee is as a Chief Administrator, I advise them in terms of the legislature. I am in a political management team, which consists of the Mayor, Speaker, municipal manager and the chief Whip. I advise and inform on what is happening. On the Council level I prepare the report for them, it's an overall advisory role but it is up to political management committee to make an overall decision. On service delivery, I oversee the needs of the community,

¹ 2009/2010 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, pp. 72

² 2009/2010 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, PP. 72

the administrative issues and ensure I meet the expected needs. I interview people/staff about their needs and advise the council. We do that in order to avoid protests. We do assessments for the communities, this we prefer to do because even if there are councilors, I prefer a more intimate engagement with the community. The Section 57 managers, advise me on what needs to be done, they lead their team and we meet regularly as management. I take what has been identified to the Council for approval. I have a good working relationship with the Section 57 staff. With other officials such as Superintendents, I hold regular dialogues with them, we interact directly (Interview Discussions with the mayor).

From the discussions held with the mayor, it was evident that the density of relationships the mayor has with other stakeholders outside the confine of the municipality was of a general and limited nature.

I hold good relations with other spheres of government and the province is a key tier in that, it has structures within the District level that ensures integration of the Inter Governmental Relations (IGR). On National level we have had interactions regarding Policy Implementation Process. However, the community is not well educated regarding Local Government issues, for example, Rate Payers Association, when they have issues they engage with the Chairperson Forum and claim that the Local Municipality is not doing things satisfactorily (Interview discussions with the mayor).

For instance, the relationship with SALGA was characterized as “functional and hands on”, whilst that with the adjacent municipalities was touted as generally absent despite having such relationships in the past. Interactions with stakeholders mostly happen through the Inter Governmental Relations (IGR) structures (Interview discussions with the mayor). Although DBSA *Siyenza Manje* programme was acknowledged as an excellent programme, the issue of sustainability was decried after the exit of the experts in their respective programmes without any clear strategy on skills transfer. In sum, the municipal manager’s current tenure in office and relationships he had with stakeholders within the municipality were noted as follows:

When I came here there was a high level of maladministration, there were problems with cash flow. It was a difficult appointment for people I had to work with. We had a legacy problem where people had to be made aware that they must work for their money (Interview Discussions with the mayor).

Part of the development challenge the mayor has to grapple with is that of an overburdened perception. The municipality is within the public domain a conduit for employment and wealth accumulation. There is a clear issue of managing perceptions, people hold very high expectations about what a municipality can do, for instance for community members, a municipality is a potential employer and business partner. As a Mayor,

...too much is expected from me due to the Position that I occupy, that is my biggest frustration. The resources are a big problem, for example people expect you to attend every funeral some are high profile funerals. I am always trying to explain the role of the Mayor.....when you want to drive a particular vision, then they present you with two sides, which then result in the vision falling away. This then leaves one with a political challenge that hampers on your administration. Subsequently, your administration lags behind and this becomes an issue eventually. Selling a vision is a serious challenge people have different ideologies and expectations about the municipality (Interview discussions with the mayor).

Despite the fragmentary nature of what ideally the values, mission and objectives of a municipality are and whether indeed these are sufficient to mobilize stakeholder support in the development of the municipality, internal relations within officials of the municipality (political and administrative spheres) were of a unitary and cordial nature:

We meet at least twice per week to discuss all the matters of service delivery, the Speaker, Chief Whip, Municipal Manager and the Mayor sit in the Political Management Team (PMT) to deal with issues of service delivery, we meet once a month, where we discuss the reports, implementation process, HR issues and any other issue that requires attention (Interview discussions with the mayor).

Other officials interviewed decried the difficulties they face working with sector departments such as housing given the fact that housing is not a municipal competency. Within the social services division, the following was cited as some of the inter-departmental difficulties they faced and which stymied development efforts:

At the present moment we have problems with the department of Economic and Environmental Affairs in Limpopo. They are not giving approval for developments. For instance, one of our cemetery is about to be full. I have written a letter to them and they have not responded. They have given authorizations which do not match with the earmarked area initially proposed. In terms of amendments it should be done in fourteen days, but it takes them five months. Incompetency and shortage of staff on their side seem to be contributing to this impasse. There was also a request to Public Works to release some land to us, it takes them three months to respond, so far we have not heard from them (Interview discussions with Social Services Manager).

Within the communications division, it was evident that the unit closely collaborates with the district and provincial communication's forums:

We have Local Government Communicators Forum where all the departmental sectors are represented. I represent the municipality at the District Communicators Forum. I

also participate in the Provincial Government Communicators Forum. All national and provincial departments have representatives at these forums.

Achievements

- With the MIG allocation the municipality has paved 20 kilometers of the roads in the township, we intend to continue with paving of roads, and storm water in the next two years.
- The municipality's has established good relationship with the mining companies to the extent that the mines have funded the feasibility studies done in the municipality with regard to infrastructure development. The municipality is also busy with the Dutch Government negotiating for R 20 million to be used for infrastructure upgrading since the current infrastructure is ageing.
- The establishment of a newsletter in the municipality was hailed as a key achievement. Prior to the commencement of the newsletter, the community was relying on local media, which reported mainly in Afrikaans. The introduction of a newsletter has galvanized communication between the municipality and the community. The municipality has also organized a slot for the Mayor in the Community Radio Station to interact with community members (Interview Discussions with Communications Manager).
- There is has been a marked increase in revenue collection and accountability mechanisms instituted within the municipality's accounting system.
- The municipality has managed to get the Local Labour Forum back on track and have thus far held policy workshops which never happened before (Interview Discussions with Communications Manager).
- As noted in the Municipality IDP³, the municipality is having powers and functions on internal roads in Thabazimbi, Northam, Rooiberg and Leeupoort. The road infrastructure is 56 km. The total value of roads infrastructure planned for 2008/09 of 6 km were successfully completed. In addition, 9.50 km total value of roads infrastructure planned from 2009/10 were also been successfully completed in 2009. There are now a total of 63 kms of internal roads that need to be maintained and rehabilitated.
- All section S 57 managers posts are filled, performance contracts ahs thus far been signed by all managers and divisional heads in December 2009.
- A workplace skills development plan was developed and submitted to LGSETA. Section S 57 managers

³ 2010/2011 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, pp. 49

have PDPs in place. The municipality has also developed a comprehensive employment equity plan which is in place. In total, there are two female S 57 managers, a total of 236 males and 88 females appointed by the municipality.

Technical Perspectives (Electricity; water; sanitation; refuse removal; transport; roads)

The informal settlements are a problem because most of the land within the municipality is under Land Claims. Of all claims filed before 31 December 1998, only 54 are within the Thabazimbi area. These applications are all rural claims and represent a total of 20 346, 0237 ha. Of the 54 claims 37 have been validated, 9 have "no status" assigned against, 7 are still being researched and 1 has been lodged. As of 1 June 2004, 13 claims comprising 24 895,918 ha are still outstanding.⁴

Some of the settlements have 17000 inhabitants and the municipality is busy trying to formalize these informal settlements. Access to services prior to proclamation of these settlements undermines the development livelihoods conditions in these settlements. As noted in the municipality's IDP (2010/11), informal settlements are located in the following areas:

- Schilpadnest ("Smash Block): This area is located adjacent to Amandelbult. A number of efforts have been made by the Waterberg District Municipality, the Department of Local Government and Housing in collaboration with Amandelbult Mine to formalise the area for residential purposes.
- Rooiberg: The informal settlement located adjacent to Rooiberg is currently being addressed. A Low Cost Housing Subsidy Project has been approved by the Department of Housing and the Township Establishment process is in its final stages. Provision has been made for 200 new houses.
- Raphuti Stad (Leeupoort): A low-cost housing project is being planned for this area.
- Dwaalboom: Most of the Communities reside in the farming areas or PPC houses. Land need to be identified for these developments.
- Regorogile: There are 827 informal settlement units
- Jabulane: There are 288 informal settlements units on a private land that is in the process of being transferred to the municipality by the owner
- Groenvlei: There are 76 informal settlement units and is a farming area.
- Kwa-Botha: There are 237 Informal settlement units

The challenge of capacity is an urgent issue within the municipality. According to the Mayor, the municipality has inherited a lot of incompetent people who have been politically appointed:

⁴ 2009/2010 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, pp. 21

If we had skilled people service delivery could have linked with the community, it has to do with such people. Now we are trying to employ the skilled personnel to the appropriate areas. Since appointing the correct people they have restructured the PMU department. We train people who are no longer trainable because the Finance department is refusing. The big problem is that the Local Municipality sold its property, we have to employ people and Properties are very expensive. We have to attract young people, retaining people with skills is a huge challenge directly (Interview Discussions with the Municipal manager).

Appointments of Section 57 managers are sometimes a political process and three of the Section 57 managers have been appointed at the insistence of the council. In this regard, the mayor has been able to influence the appointment of the CFO (Interview Discussions with the Mayor) despite the frustration noted in other appointments:

As the Municipality Manager officer you should be able to appoint skilled personnel, have power to delegate. The council is politicized councilors can manipulate communities to be against you, one needs power as Municipal Manager to appoint competent people, without the Political influence. Allocation of resources process, needs to be changed a lot of money goes to the Provincial Government. The local municipality is overlooked (Interview Discussions with the Municipal manager).

The challenges facing recruitment were aptly captured in the following excerpt:

Get rid of 90% of my finance staff and get people with skills. I will ensure that there is no political intervention where it is not needed. There is no way you can render services to the community, without public participation, you need to engage them, you need to take a proactive approach with the community, tell them what the issue/strains are as a Local Municipality and not wait for them to come to you (Interview discussions with Chief Financial Officer).

Capacity shortages in the areas of technical skills continue to undermine various spheres of service delivery. Technical skills in the water, sanitation departments and roads are lacking especially in the field of artisanship (Interview Discussions with Technical Services Manager). Electricity connection in the informal settlement remains unresolved. The municipality cannot provide this service in informal settlement since this would fall outside the jurisdiction of the municipality.

From the discussions held in the municipality, most officials have devised their own systems of monitoring and evaluation:

The only thing I am doing is that when I receive an enquiry I write it in a book, and I also write down the solutions, on the day I receive an enquiry I also set out a date which I must have come up with a solution. I also limit the enquiries to three months

they must be attended to in that period (Interview discussions with Social Services Manager).

A major political challenge noted by most officials is undue influence from political leaders on the running of the municipality:

When you want to implement programmes, politicians go to the community and tell them not to accept. With regard to housing which is my portfolio there are backlogs, this year local government allocated me one hundred houses, whereas my backlog is four thousand nine hundred. I am experiencing problems with informal settlements. CoGTA is not giving us the necessary support (Interview discussions with Social Services Manager).

Municipal Finance

Limited financial resources and management capacity have undermined the development potential of the municipality. One of the key problems with financial management is revenue collection which is pegged on two factors namely culture of non-payment and high levels of poverty (indigent population) in the municipality. For instance, the municipality currently has 16 million rands in arrears from the community and Government departments. Communities are not paying for their rates. Government departments such as Public Works owe the municipality a total of 3 million rands (Interview Discussions with the Municipal manager). The fact that non-payment is a rampant problem is further aggravated by the funding mechanisms municipalities are subjected to:

The MIG and Equitable Share are old and important issues. A "one size fits all" approach to financing municipalities will not work. You cannot allocate the same amount without considering the backlogs. With equitable share they do not take into consideration the growth of the municipality, it should be based on that, our internal debts are R67 m, and our internal resources have shrank by half (Interview discussions with the mayor).

In addition, unfunded mandates also present new set of problems for the municipality. For instance, the lack of housing amongst community members is indicative of the inability of the municipality to deliver houses as far as community members are concerned and not that of the provincial department of housing. This is despite the fact that this is not the competency of the municipality but the department of human settlement. Water treatment is still outstanding in the municipality. The municipality requires about 44 million rands for upgrading of infrastructure (Interview Discussions with the Municipal manager). The problem of infrastructure outlay is aptly noted in the current IDP (2010/2011) document which lists the following within its energy sector⁵:

⁵ 2010/2011 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, pp. 48

- Coping with the challenges of electricity reform process
- Upgrading electricity supply to meet the demand and development of business operations
- Ensuring access to free basic electricity in communities
- Propagate, register and supply all deserving beneficiaries
- Limited number of vending stations
- Lack of finance for ring fencing process
- Approximately 94 households are without electricity in 2008 (electricity back-log)

Overall, the revenue collection is limited. The allocation formula does not reflect reality on ground, poorer municipality should get a bigger portion of the allocation, but the formula does not cater for the needs of the poorer communities. Rich Metro's like Cape Town get a higher amount but Cape Town has few informal settlements. In Limpopo, we have a large number unemployed people, they are poor and need to be provided with free basic services, and yet you need to maintain the infrastructure. Due to these competing demands, the conditional grants are grossly inadequate (Interview discussions with Chief Financial Officer).

The implementation of Property Rates Act (PRA) is faced with resistance because farmers are reluctant to pay. It seems organized farming unions want to undermine the operations of the Local Municipality. Their objection regarding the PRA is that they read it subjectively, e.g. valuation roll objections are based on farmers' perception that their properties are not evaluated properly and correctly (Interview discussions with Chief Financial Officer)

Compliance in terms of the demands made by the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) has intensified the work load demands and need to augment capacity of the municipality as aptly noted:

Managers feel they are bottled up with this compliance issue. Supply Chain Management was not centralized, when I came here the managers could get the service providers to do the work and pay them. I have centralized it, which has created a tension between me and the managers. But now things are done through procurement. Section 71 of the MFMA stipulates that you have to report every month on the revenue, expenditure, but a lot of municipalities do not comply with that provision. Thus there are a lot of backlogs of Section 71. I have managed to push the backlog reporting, which will take two to six months to come back as a result of this you have an MFMA. The challenge is over-reporting to the Treasury and other similar demands made by sector departments such as CoGTA (Interview discussions with the Chief Financial Officer).

Planning: Integrated Development Plans (IDPs)

Thabazimbi Municipality is located in the South-western part of the Limpopo Province and has Botswana as its international neighbor. The Municipality has Marakele National Park, which is a subsidiary of National Parks Board, and in the same standard as the Kruger National Park and

Mapungube. Thabazimbi town was proclaimed in 1953. Approximately 40% of the land situated within the municipal area is utilised for game farming, 2% for irrigation, 3% for dry-land farming, 0.4% for mining and approximately 5% for towns, roads and other infrastructure. The remainder of the area is utilised for extensive cattle farming. Of economic significance to the local economy is that Iscor Steelworks in Tshwane draws much of their raw material from Thabazimbi Kumba Resources (Iron Ore mine). Apart from Iron Ore, the Thabazimbi Municipality is surrounded by Platinum producing areas such as: Northam Platinum mine, Anglo, i.e. Amandelbult and Swartklip mines. Other minerals produced in the area include Andalusite, which is mined by Rhino Mine and limestone for the production of cement by Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC). The size of the Municipal area is 986 264,85 ha.⁶ The Municipality has demonstrated mining to be one of the sectors depicting tremendous growth in its local economy. The mining sector has huge potential in terms of employment and increasing the revenue base of the municipality through public private partnership initiatives.⁷ Indeed, the Local Government Turnaround Strategy conducted by CoGTA in 2009 identified Thabazimbi's Local Economic Development (LED) as a model case in the country given its ability to draw productive developmental relations with the private sector namely the mining companies in the area.

An Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is defined, in the Municipal Systems Act, as the principal strategic planning instrument through which all municipal planning, development and decisions are guided and informed. The purpose of an IDP is:

- To enable a municipality to align its financial and institutional resources behind agreed policy objectives and programmes.
- It is a vital tool to ensure the integration of local government activities with other spheres
- It serves as a basis for engagement between local government and the citizenry at the local level
- It enables a municipality to weigh up its obligations and systematically prioritise programmes and resource allocations.⁸

The IDP is geared towards enabling municipalities to manage the process of fulfilling their developmental responsibilities. The IDP defines the problems affecting a municipal area and, by taking into account available resources, enable the development and implementation of appropriate strategies and projects for municipalities to address these problems. Overall, the IDP assists municipalities make more effective use of scarce resources by focusing on identified and prioritised local needs and by searching for more cost-effective solutions. According to the

⁶ 2010/2011 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, pp. 2

⁷ 2010/2011 Thabazimbi Municipal IDP, pp. 2

⁸ Dlamini, V. 2007. Local government implementation of policies for integrated water services provision – the practice in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.

national IDP guide, this should allow municipalities to address causes of poverty and underdevelopment, rather than just allocating capital expenditure to dealing with symptoms.⁹

Section 34 of the Systems Act requires that a municipal council must review its integrated development plan annually in accordance with its performance measurements. Thus far, the Mayor has managed also in terms of section 21 of the MFMA to co-ordinate the process for preparing the annual budget and reviewing the municipality's IDP with a time schedule outlining key deadlines, and presented same at least 10 months prior to the start of the budget year for adoption by Council.¹⁰

IDP is the strategic tool for the municipality and from the interview discussions held in the municipality, it was acknowledged that SALGA has provided the necessary support (Interview Discussions with IDP Section Manager). As aptly noted in the municipality's IDP programme (2010/2011), IDP is conceived as 'a reflection of the whole of government involvement in a geographic area' and assumes effective relations to allow the targeting of resources across government spheres. This means alignment of investment in IDPs with the relevant Provincial Growth Strategy and sector and strategic plans of line departments. In many ways, the previous status of the IDP as 'strategic plan for the whole of government and the private sector and social partners' is a shift away from the view of an IDP as a municipal plan. The new Inter-Governmental Relations Act and its Forums' role in inter-governmental planning and budgeting have indeed become paramount. Thus a District and local municipalities IDP cannot be approved unless it has been served before a District Inter-Governmental Forum. In this new approach, the collective GOAL of an IDP is "to achieve integrated and sustainable human settlements and to support a robust and inclusive local economy". By implication, IDPs must be underpinned by a strong spatial orientation to settlements. Therefore the credibility of the IDP is not contingent on rigorous analysis, effective public participation and stakeholder involvement, and intergovernmental planning alignment and monitoring, but consideration of the financial situation of the municipality and its ability to deliver.¹¹

Despite this new paradigmatic shift in the approach the municipality has taken towards its IDP programme and as mandated in the second generation IDP model, the principal problem cited was that the IDP department despite its strategic role remains grossly understaffed and suffers from perception deficit. Staff members do not take IDP as a critical strategic sector of the municipality and one often struggles to ensure compliance is achieved with regard to processes. This view was not only acknowledged by the IDP section manager but re-affirmed in the current IDP (2010/2011) programme, "There is still a challenge in terms of understanding the IDP and its related processes among the stakeholders....sector plans are included in the IDP despite the fact that financial constraints remains a challenge in terms of developing and reviewing sector

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ 2009/2010 Thabazimbi IDP document

¹¹ 2010/2011 Thabazimbi IDP document, pp. 141

plans.¹² In terms of the organogram of the municipality, the municipality manager has committed to employ five personnel in the IDP department as reflected in the municipality's turnaround strategy. In addition, the structure of the organogram should also reflect the priorities indicated in the IDP (Interview Discussions with IDP Section Manager).

The main challenge with IDP is public participation across the various stakeholders including councilors who do not attend even though this is their mandate. Sector departments do not attend representative forum meetings and when they do, they send junior personnel who cannot make authoritative decisions and hence cannot commit implementation of projects (Interview Discussions with IDP Section Manager). As per the legislation the municipality is tasked to establish ward committees - ten in total. In addition, they have Community Development Workers. IDP representative forums are set up as spaces where stakeholders meet in all the phases of the IDP. As noted earlier, full participation of senior managers is notably inadequate. IDP processes are not viewed as crucial by senior officials and this impact on the efficiency of the process.

Human Resource: Appointment

Senior officials interviewed in this municipality bring on board a range of notable and relevant work experience, and this is notable in the levels of services provided for in its various divisions. For instance, the Municipal manager has thus far worked for a period of three years and his contract expires in 2012. Prior to his current employment, he worked as the corporate service manager. The Mayor was involved in the Mining Sector where he was a Shop steward with the National Union of Mine Workers of South Africa (NUMSA). He became actively involved in Politics in 1990, at that time one could serve on various branches, the COSATU, ANC, etc. In 1994 he became one of the pioneering participants in the Transitional Local Government reforms and was part of the Statutory and non statutory bodies of the Local Government. In his view, he has experienced and participated in the various reforms that marked local government transition in the post-1994 era and is therefore able to draw on his experience in his current role as the mayor. The Technical Services Manager is currently on a five years contract. He started in November 2007 and he has been with the Local Municipality since 2005, in the Technical division where he started as a Divisional Head, acting for two years, and was then appointed as Technical Manager in 2007.

The Chief Financial Officer is on a five year contract and the contract is performance based, of which he avers could potentially undermine service delivery. The contract period may undermine one's own performance because it takes about two to three years to get the system in place, before one does the real execution. Towards the end of one's contract there is pressure from senior management (not all, some) to comply with their demands and if one does not, your career at the municipality may be in jeopardy. The CFO hailed from the private

¹² 2010/2011 Thabazimbi IDP document, pp. 81

sector prior to his current employ at the municipality. In the private sector, he interacted with the financial systems of government as articulated at the different tiers (national, provincial and local). This experience is immeasurably useful for him as he is able to draw on his past insight in shaping the financial reforms he is currently undertaking in the municipality. Other personnel interviewed in the municipality have acquired tacit skills and have been able to rise up the career mobility within the municipality. The IDP section head is a case in point. She has been in this position for one and half years having started on the job in 2008. In 2002 she was a secretary to the Mayor and was then elevated as a Liaison officer from 2005-2007, and appointed as senior Community Developer in 2007 to November 2008 before taking up the post of IDP section head in 2008.

One key problem that encumbers the successful recruitment of skilled personnel is the level of underdevelopment the municipality finds itself in within a rural setting:

We are far from the cities, first of all housing is a problem, secondly the prices for houses whether for buying or for rental is expensive, and the salary that we are offering makes it difficult for people to apply. Scarcity of skills recruitment is also a problem, referral by councils also contribute to inability to recruit, you might get the right person, but if has not been referred by councils then it will be problematic (Interview discussions with Human Resource Manager).

Attempts towards harnessing skills of workers have unfortunately not borne the desired outcomes despite the resources that the municipality continues to invest:

Unfortunately we do have a problem, also the other problem is we absorb a lot of general workers, we send them for training but you do not ever get the quality that you need for your services, some of them are good because they have been working in that position, but you get the other part that do ever not deliver quality services. We don't get new skills we keep on absorbing temporary workers. You never get time to advertise and get new skills, and if you do the Unions are on your back, they actually force us to just absorb. People just get appointed whether they are competent or not. Your skills get exhausted within the department. We have a draft staff retention policy, we are going to a workshop on Friday at SALGA we are going to discuss the draft. At this stage there is nothing one can do unless you have the retention policy you are not in the financial situation to do that (Interview Discussions with Communications Manager).

Inability to attain professional appointment of key and qualified officials and accord them the opportunity to appropriate adequate skills undermines succession planning in the municipality:

The biggest threat is the continuity and succession of the Local Government. The political leadership at the local level does not guarantee continuity and succession planning, there will be no time to sit with your successor and say these are the issues to look into. The exit of senior officials and political leaders after elections can be very

abrupt, and hence there is no proper handover process between the new and old mayors for instance. In the ANC resolution, 60% of the Councilors must come back, but mayors are often the target to be removed from the office. You equip people with the tools and knowledge and after the local elections you lose them, which then results in the Local Government becoming the centre for infighting, you must stick with the Local Government if you want to be a leader at the provincial level of the ANC. Unfortunately, the Local Government becomes a victim of these battles (Interview Discussions with the Mayor).

3. Conclusion

Overall, this municipality serves as the role model to others with regard to its ability to draw the mining sector in its LED initiatives. This synergy has generated tangible development dividends which were previously acknowledged by CoGTA's Turn Around Strategy project. Despite the burdened nature of regulatory compliance municipalities have to comply with from provincial and national governments, the financial reforms instituted in the municipality clearly herald a new developmental phase in the municipality that will improve on its financial management and increase its revenue base. Compliance in terms of the demands made by the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) has intensified the work load demands but in the long run, this will improve audit outcomes of the municipality. Conventional problems facing municipalities such as capacity limits, limited opportunities to significantly grow revenue, political influences in management of the municipality (e.g. appointment of senior managers) are viewed as potential threat that could reverse some of the gains the municipality is making. Undue political influences and jostling for power and positions in the wake of local government elections significantly compromises on the succession planning of the municipality. The consensus that emerges from discussions held is that municipality management must be de-linked from undue political dynamics in order to allow it to function like any other bureaucracy intent in optimal and rational outcomes that meet its development mandate.

4. Role of SALGA

Whilst SALGA overall responsibilities were cited as legitimate and good, officials who have interacted with SALGA proposed a wider scope of support regimes to be accorded to municipalities:

I have interacted with SALGA on numerous occasions, while I was working for the Provincial Government, under the water and Sanitation forum. But on the Local Municipality I have had no interaction so far. I will really appreciate if they can provide us with training and skill development, would really like them to go an extra mile and consider these issues. Constraints in the employment of artisan/electrician affect your personnel and this makes it difficult to run the municipality effectively. The other issue

of concern is Salary discrepancy we need to be able to develop an attractive package for the electricians that will make it easy for us to retain them. Currently we do have qualified assistants, so SALGA can play a role here, by assisting us in this regard (Interview Discussions with Technical Services Manager).

Further proposals to expand the SALGA's mandate were noted as follows:

Implementation of the Project Management Unit (PMU) is a big issue and SALGA should intervene in this regard. We are experiencing protests over service delivery, but SALGA has not explicitly intervened in this issue. Audit reports show no capacity at all, SALGA's input is very much needed in capacity constraints. SALGA should bring in people who are relevant to assist on these issues (Interview discussions with Chief Financial Officer).

I think they can assist with the issue of capacity, I am the only communications officer in the municipality, I know that SALGA has been putting pressure on Local Government that they should appoint staff. I have been here for five years and in all the time I was alone, there is no unit at all (Interview Discussions with Communications Manager).

The Mayor's view of SALGA was however unique and demonstrated his intimate links he had held with SALGA prior to taking up his current position:

I have served on SALGA Provincial Executive Committee, I was directly involved in the inception of SALGA in the province (Limpopo). I started it from the beginning. I have served on the National level as well. I was deployed to be the Controller of the District in 2000, I then became a Mayor in this municipality in 2006, the development of Local Government happened in front of my face (Interview discussions with the Mayor).