

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF BASIC SERVICE  
DELIVERY IN THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

By

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## ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to investigate the roles of public participation in the improvement of basic service delivery in Thulamela Local Municipality (TLM), Limpopo Province. The study concentrates on matters of public participation and basic service delivery in order to find out how public participation in the municipalities can influence the improvement of basic services delivery to the community. Municipalities must develop systems that are best suited for their unique circumstances, in order to ensure maximum public participation and the delivery of basic municipal services in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996, which are clean water, electricity, basic sanitation, refuse removal and housing.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this research. The study was conducted in Thulamela Local Municipality. A non-probability sampling technique were applied to purposively select respondents of the study who have an idea about public participation and the delivery of basic services in the municipality. Data was collected using both questionnaires and interview schedules. The quantitative data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0, while the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. In the process of data collection all forms of ethical considerations were taken into consideration to ensure that the respondents participate freely without force or intimidation.

### **The findings of the study are:**

- The study findings revealed that the major challenge of public participation in the improvement of basic service delivery is when the stakeholders are invited in public participation the attendance is very low in such a way that they fail to get progress report in terms of service delivery issues. There is lack of consultation by municipality on the issues of public participation. The other challenge mentioned is that most of the municipality documents are written in English language which makes it difficult to some of community members to read.
- The findings of the study revealed that the role of public participation is to bring governance closer to the people and also create an improved climate for future service delivery actions. The researcher found out that public participation makes communities aware of their needs and these are prioritised in the municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The findings revealed that the role of public participation in Thulamela Local Municipality is to bring the community and the municipality together and work hand in hand towards the improvement of basic service delivery.

- The findings of the study revealed that the importance of public participation in local municipality encourages community ownership of the municipal service projects introduced from the ground. The findings also revealed that public participation also gives people better understanding of what government is doing concerning basic service delivery and other matters of the municipality.
- The findings of the study revealed that councilors and traditional leaders play important roles in the encouragement of public participation within the community.
- The findings of the study revealed that there are types of public participation in Thulamela local municipality which are; Mayoral outreach programmes (*Imbizo*), Integrated Development Plan (IDP) Forums, Tribal authority visits, Disaster management awareness campaign, Nodal point visits, Mayor *tihosi mahosi* traditional leaders forum, extended council meeting, Pastors forum and Youth and people with disability forum.
- The findings of the study revealed that Thulamela Local Municipality promote effective public participation, through the municipality website, newsletter, media and community outreach programmes. The findings of the study revealed that most managers and assistants managers, including councilors were not aware of IDP meetings.
- The findings of the study further revealed that Thulamela Local Municipality ensures that communities are aware of IDP meetings.

**The recommendations of the study are:**

- It is recommended that stakeholders should be capacitated about the importance of attending public participation meetings so that when there are invited they will attend in large numbers which can improve the reporting systems in terms of basic service delivery issues. The municipality should also consult its residents on the issues of public participation. The municipality documents must be written in a language that all residents can be able to read; for example, Tshivenda and Xitsonga can be used in Thulamela Local Municipality.
- The researcher recommends that municipalities must encourage public participation to bring governance closer to the people and create an improved climate for future service delivery actions. The researcher recommends that municipalities must provide resources to enhance public participation in order to assist communities to be aware of their needs to be prioritised according to the municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

- The researcher further recommends that municipalities should make provision of budget to improve public participation in order to bring community and government together in working towards the improvement of basic service delivery.
- The researcher recommends that municipalities should involve community members in community development projects as it encourages community ownership of the municipal service projects introduced from the ground. The researcher recommends that public participation meetings must be done regularly to give community members a better understanding of what government is doing concerning basic service delivery and other matters of the municipality.
- It is recommended that councilors and traditional leaders should be capacitated by municipality through training and workshops for them to actively encourage public participation within their communities.
- It is recommended that Thulamela Local Municipality should maintain the types of public participation they already have which are; Mayoral outreach programmes (*Imbizo*), IDP Forums, Tribal authority visits, Disaster management awareness campaign, Nodal point visits, Mayor *tihosi mahosi* traditional leaders forum, extended council meeting, Pastors forum and Youth and people with disability forum and also look at the possibilities of introducing another types of public participation for the smooth running of the municipality.
- The researcher recommends that municipalities must improve their systems of communication to promote effective public participation and basic service delivery.
- The researcher further recommends that the municipality must ensure that managers, assistant managers and the municipal councilors are aware of IDP meetings in order to promote community ownership of municipality projects and effective public participation towards the improvement of basic service delivery.