

An investigation into the Management and implementation of local economic development initiatives and their impact on the improvement of socio-economic conditions in Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District

By

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out at Thulamela Municipality in Vhembe District Municipality in the Limpopo Province, Republic of South Africa. The study is about **The Management and implementation of local economic development initiatives and their impact on the improvement of socio-economic conditions in Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District.** Local economic development (LED) is about local people working together to achieve sustainable economic growth that brings economic benefits and improves quality of life for all in the community (World Bank,2002:3). The role of local government has always been to develop local economies to uplift the local communities (Ishmael et al, 1997:3). As stated in the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) document, local government must, amongst other objectives attain socially cohesive stable rural communities with viable institutions, sustainable economies and access to social amenities so to contribute to the growth and development of local communities.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act of 1996 encourages the involvement of communities, particularly stakeholders to become involved in matters relating to development of local government, thereby promoting socioeconomic development. The Local Economic Development programme established by the Department of Provincial and Local government is an outcome- based initiative driven by local stakeholders. It involves identifying and harnessing local resources, ideas and skills to stimulate economic growth and development. The aim of LED is to create employment opportunities that will benefit all local people. The South African Local Government White paper on local government defines local government as a sphere of government that is committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve their quality of life. Needs of the community should be responded to and the community has to be seen as taking the lead.

The study used quantitative technique for data collection and analysis. Quantitative techniques were mostly used in that they provide the researcher with an understanding of experiences and Management and implementation of local economic development initiatives and their impact on the improvement of socio-economic conditions in Thulamela Municipality. Random and purposive samplings were used for the selection of sample for the study. Both primary and secondary data were used for analysis in this study. Secondary data were obtained from government publications, research publications, and reports. Primary data were obtained through personal observation, and questionnaires.

The research contained the following as findings:

- The finding showed that about 64.5% of the officials interviewed participated in ward committee structures. A low percentage participated in structures outside the ward committees.
- The finding indicates that 87.1% of the respondents were involved in integrated development planning of the municipality
- Also 93.5 % of the respondents indicated that employment creation strategies were not in existence in the municipal area
- The findings were further supported by the literature review, which indicated that considerable progress was being made in putting in place constitutional policy and institutional frameworks in terms of local government transformation and mandate. Now attention needed to be focused on implementation.
- Since the municipality is very slow to develop resources and infrastructure. Funding for implementation of municipal strategies came largely from the Municipal budget with very little coming from donors and grants

The following were recommendations which were made to the local government:

- It was recommended that the Thulamela Municipality secure greater participation by residents in matters of governance. Besides the fact that this is a constitutional and legislative requirement, it is also one of the important principles of good corporate governance.
- It was recommended that the Municipality focus on acquiring skilled qualified and competent officials. Furthermore, staff should not be appointed based on their political connections, but on their ability to do the job. An open, flexible and transparent but effective recruitment framework is also recommended.
- This recommendation also complements recommendation, which proposes the use of monitoring and evaluating systems to measure the service delivery and development performance of the Thulamela Municipality. What will be monitored and evaluated is the implementation of plans.
- It is also recommended that relevant municipal officials should attend service excellence training courses.

The above findings and recommendations suggest that much still needs to be done on the Management and implementation of local economic development initiatives and their impact on the improvement of socio-economic conditions in Thulamela Municipality.