



# Report on the Assessment of Public Participation Practices in the Public Service

Public Service Commission

December 2008

A decorative header featuring a red-to-white gradient background with a white grid pattern.

## Vision

The Public Service Commission is an independent and impartial body created by the Constitution, 1996, to enhance excellence in governance within the Public Service by promoting a professional and ethical environment and adding value to a public administration that is accountable, equitable, efficient, effective, corruption-free and responsive to the needs of the people of South Africa.

## Mission

The Public Service Commission aims to promote the constitutionally enshrined democratic principles and values of the Public Service by investigating, monitoring, evaluating, communicating and reporting on public administration. Through research processes, it will ensure the promotion of excellence in governance and the delivery of affordable and sustainable quality services.

# Report on the Assessment of Public Participation Practices in the Public Service



Published in the Republic of South Africa by:

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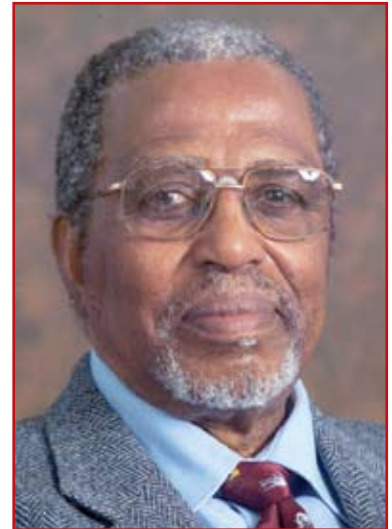
Compiled by Branch: Monitoring and Evaluation

Distributed by Directorate: Communication and Information Services  
Printed by: Blackmoon Advertising  
ISBN: 978-0-621-38461-1  
RP: 15/2009



# FOREWORD

Public participation plays a critical role in deepening democracy and promoting good governance. Citizens' involvement in governance processes ensures that their experiential and grounded perspectives inform government on their needs and how these needs can best be addressed. Given our past, where prior to 1994, the practice of critical engagement between citizens and government was frowned upon by an insular and self-perpetuating state, the new democratic government emphasised the need for critical engagement between itself and its citizens. It therefore, came as no surprise that public participation is a key Constitutional principle which clearly states that "people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making." For the first four years of democracy, in emphasising this aspect, the policy framework was characterised by White Papers that clearly articulated government's policy intent and proved an effective mechanism in ensuring extensive consultation and public participation.



Unfortunately, over time, this focus has waned somewhat. The PSC's research in this area suggests that public participation by departments is implemented and managed in an *ad hoc* manner, and that the understanding of consultation by most departments reflect a misalignment with what was intended in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*) (1997). In this respect, departments' understanding of consultation includes information sharing, discussions and conferences, whereas the White Paper states that citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive. Recent protests on service delivery have acutely driven home the concerns around effective participation and space for citizens' voices to be heard. These are clear signals that government cannot afford to take "its eye" off this fundamental priority.

Likewise, the PSC strongly believes that continued research in this area remains vital to raise awareness and to offer guidance on better practice. Within this broader context, this study sought to examine the current public participation methodologies and mechanisms used in the Public Service, and offers improvements to the practise. The findings of the study are not very encouraging. Public participation practices in the Public Service are still varied. While some departments have public participation guidelines in place and well-established public participation units, other departments have chosen the route of decentralising the promotion of citizen engagement to line function directorates, without clear guidelines.

I trust that the findings and recommendations contained in this report will contribute to on-going initiatives to deepen public participation in the Public Service, and that they will also encourage departments to reflect on their own public participation and consultation mechanisms, and effect the much-needed improvements where necessary.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sangweni". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.

**PROFESSOR SS SANGWENI**  
**CHAIRPERSON: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**



# Table of Contents

FOREWORD	ii
CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ACRONYMS	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	v
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Objectives of the Study	2
1.3 Structure of the Report	3
<b>CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Scope of the Study	5
2.3 Methodology	5
2.4 Data Analysis	6
2.5 Limitations of the Study	7
<b>CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Introduction	9
3.2 Public Participation Defined	9
3.3 Types of Public Participation	10
3.4 Public Participation Challenges	11
3.5 Perspectives of Public Participation	11
<b>CHAPTER 4: KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Introduction	18
4.2 Key Findings	18
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>31</b>
5.1 Introduction	32
5.2 Conclusion	32
5.3 Recommendations	34

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Ability to meet citizens' expectations	24
Figure 2: Departments with Public Participation Units	25
Figure 3: Citizens' views and inputs	28
Figure 4: Proportion of Stakeholders	29

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: List of Selected Departments	5
Table 2: Core values and principles of public participation	10
Table 3: Municipal participatory budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil	12
Table 4: Methodologies applied by departments to effect public participation	20
Table 5: Processes of conducting <i>izimbizo</i> and Exco-meets the people in the Free State Office of the Premier	22
Table 6: Challenges in the application of public participation practices	24
Table 7: Functions of the public participation units	26

## ACRONYMS

CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DG	Director-General
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
EXCO	Executive Committee
FBOs	Faith-Based Organisations
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
MEC	Member of Executive Council
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAC	Pan African Congress
PPU	Public Participation Unit
PSC	Public Service Commission
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SOPS	State of the Public Service
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UN	United Nations



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The involvement of citizens in matters of service delivery is important in a democratic society. Public participation is a mechanism for entrenching democracy and it promotes social cohesion between government and the citizens, particularly in the provision of quality and sustainable services. In South Africa, prior to 1994, the government suppressed all forms of public participation especially among the black communities. However, post 1994, the new elected government committed itself to and embraced a people centred development approach. With this approach, public participation became a Constitutional imperative where it is stated that “people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making”<sup>1</sup>.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has always appreciated the significance of public participation, and has over the years investigated the practice of public participation in the Public Service. Through these investigations, the PSC made several observations, key of which points to uneven and *ad hoc* implementation of public participation, and that the Public Service’s capacity to effect public participation was rather sporadic and rudimentary<sup>2</sup>. Given its continued interest in the area of public participation, the PSC decided in 2008 to conduct a study on the assessment of public participation practices in the Public Service. The purpose of the study was to analyse the public participation practices used by departments to establish their strengths and weaknesses, and based on the information gathered develop a set of recommendations to effect and consolidate public participation in the Public Service.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to assess public participation practices in selected departments in the Public Service. The specific objectives of the project were to:

- Assess departments’ guidelines or policies for promoting public participation in order to establish what these guidelines provide for.
- Assess the types of structured methodologies or processes of public participation used.
- Identify the weaknesses and strengths of public participation practices in relation to service delivery within the Public Service.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study included the following eleven provincial and five national departments:

- The national Department of Agriculture and provincial departments of Agriculture in the Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.
- The Department of Provincial and Local Government and provincial departments of Local Government in the Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.
- The national Department of Housing and provincial departments of Housing in the Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.
- The Offices of the Premier in Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga.
- The Presidency.
- Government Communication and Information Systems.

<sup>1</sup> Republic of South Africa. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*

<sup>2</sup> Republic of South Africa. *Public Service Commission. State of the Public Service Report. 2006.*



## METHODOLOGY

The processes followed in conducting this study included a literature review of key documents, development of a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews with relevant persons from each department as well as data analysis.

### *Sampling*

The study applied a purposive sampling procedure. Attention was given to the departments which reported having had effective consultative mechanisms, and departments that had recently drawn attention through service delivery protests. The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), Offices of the Premier (Gauteng, Free State and Mpumalanga) and the Presidency were included given their role in coordinating the *izimbizo* and institutionalised programmes of public participation in the Public Service.

### *Literature review*

Local and international literature on public participation was reviewed to establish challenges, lessons learnt and best practise. Documents such as the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, the *Batho Pele* Handbook and public participation guidelines of selected departments were also reviewed.

### *Research instrument*

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed and administered as a data collection tool. This approach was chosen because it allows for greater flexibility during the data collection process. The questionnaire was divided into the following themes which were derived from the objectives of the study:

- Departments' understanding of public participation.
- Departmental guidelines and policies on public participation.
- Methodologies applied to effect public participation.
- Resources allocated to public participation practices.
- Consideration of citizens' views raised during public participation.

### *Interviews*

In-depth interviews were arranged and conducted with designated officials from the participating departments. An interview as a data collection method provides an opportunity for critical areas to be probed and where necessary a follow-up is made with a respondent to enhance the quality of data collected. Departments were also requested to prepare and furnish the PSC with documents such as public participation guidelines.

### *Data Analysis*

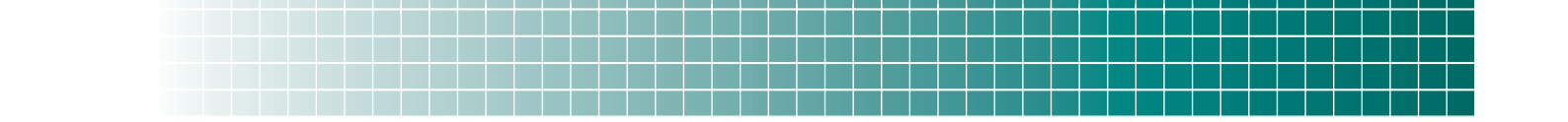
The data was analysed as follows:

- The qualitative data was analysed by organising the findings according to themes.
- An Excel based data analysis tool was used to analyse and present quantitative data. Results were drawn from score sheets and presented in graphs and charts for ease of interpretation and analysis.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was based on a sample of selected government departments, therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised as reflective of the views of all government departments.





Some departments did not furnish the PSC with documents such as public participation guidelines and copies of public participation budgets.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERSPECTIVES

Public participation is an important pillar for building and sustaining democracy throughout the world. It creates a platform for critical engagement between the citizens and the government. For the purpose of this study, only public participatory processes of developing countries (both international and regional) that have similar development challenges and living conditions to those of South Africa were analysed. Internationally, particular attention was paid to Brazil and India. In Brazil, the most common stated example of effective public participation is the municipal participatory budgeting initiative<sup>3</sup> whereas in India a bottom-up approach is applied wherein communities are mobilised to participate in all forestry interventions.

Regionally, public participation approaches of Uganda and Ghana were analysed. In Uganda, efforts to promote public participation have taken the form of both policy frameworks and the development of implementation modalities. As a result of public participation led by government departments, the country has been able to significantly reduce the levels of HIV/AIDS whereas in Ghana, public participation played a significant role in reducing corruption<sup>4</sup>. The government conducted several diagnostic surveys, where citizens were invited to provide possible strategies government can apply to deal with corruption through diagnostic surveys<sup>5</sup>.

In South Africa, since 1994 the government has applied several initiatives to effect public participation. These include methodologies such as *izimbizo*, Exco-meets the people, public hearings, ward committees, community development workers, Citizen Satisfaction Surveys and Citizens Forums. In addition, various structures such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and the National Anti-Corruption Forum were established to create a platform for public participation.

## KEY FINDINGS

The following are the key findings of the study:

### **There is a common understanding of public participation**

The findings show that all 16 departments that participated in the study seem to have a common understanding of public participation as a process of engaging citizens to allow them to have a say in policy making and service delivery initiatives of government. However, this understanding is not matched with the departments' actual implementation of public participation.

### **The existence of public participation guidelines/policies is uneven**

The findings show that only 25% of the departments that participated in the study had public participation guidelines/policies in place. These departments were the Presidency, Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), Offices of the Premier in the Free State and Gauteng. Seventy five (75%) percent of the departments did not have public participation guidelines. This suggests that public participation is not institutionalised in these departments and if it does happen, it is implemented in a haphazard manner without the necessary guidelines/policies to anchor public participation initiatives.

3 Sprague, A. *LBJ Journal of Public Affairs*. 2000.

4 Carrillo, S. *The World Bank Institute*. 2002.

5 Carrillo, S. *The World Bank Institute*. 2002.



## **Stakeholders are aware of the departmental public participation guidelines/policies**

All departments with public participation guidelines/policies indicated that their stakeholders were aware of their public participation guidelines. However, none of the departments, except DPLG, mentioned the role played by stakeholders in the development of their public participation guidelines/policies. DPLG stated that its stakeholders, especially local municipalities, were involved in the development of the public participation guidelines where their views were sought and incorporated.

## **Departments apply different methodologies to effect public participation**

The findings show that the selected departments apply different methodologies to ensure effective public participation. Amongst the public participation methodologies applied by these departments are:

- Presidential *izimbizo*.
- Ministerial *izimbizo*.
- Exco-meets the people.
- Citizen Satisfaction Surveys.
- Ward committees.
- Community development workers.
- Integrated development planning forums.
- Premier excellence awards.
- Media related initiatives such as radio talk shows and television programmes.

*Izimbizo* and Exco-meets the people were the most applied methodologies by departments that participated in the study.

## **There is common agreement on what the benefits of public participation are**

All departments that participated in the study indicated that opportunities were created through the use of various methods. The value of personal interaction between leaders from tiers of government and citizens was especially highlighted. During such visits, leaders get a first hand experience of the reality and challenges people face on the ground.

## **Departments still have challenges in the application of their public participation practices**

The following were the key challenges raised by departments in the application of their different public participation practices:

- Budgetary constraints.
- Lack of feedback-report on issues raised by citizens.
- Inadequate human resources.
- Poor institutional arrangements such as weak ward committees and local government.
- Poor planning.
- Translation of documents into different languages.
- Political dynamics where political parties always fight for influence.

Despite the challenges faced by the departments in the implementation of public participation, they have developed plans to address such challenges.



## **Some departments have established public participation units**

The findings of the study showed that 44% of the departments had functional public participation units. These public participation units are responsible for the facilitation of public participation. Fifty six percent (56%) of departments did not have public participation units. In the departments that did not have public participation units, public participation is implemented through line function directorates. However, it was not spelt out how such directorates go about ensuring that public participation is adequately undertaken.

## **Functions of public participation units are varied**

The study showed that in those departments where public participation units existed, the functions of such units varied. The functions include, amongst others, the following:

- Facilitation of *izimbizo* and EXCO-meets the people.
- Mobilising departments and municipalities to engage in public participation.
- Encouraging and facilitating the establishment of ward committees.
- Coordinating the work of community development workers.

## **Staff have not received special training on public participation**

The findings of the study show that in all departments that participated in the study, staff have received training in diverse backgrounds. For instance, professional qualifications were in the fields of Sociology, Anthropology and Communications. The execution of participatory models require a particular set of skills from public servants, such as the ability to negotiate, understand community dynamics, conflict management, and work with, rather than work for communities.

## **Budget allocation for public participation varies from one department to another**

The findings show that for the 2008/09 financial year, 62% of departments had a budget allocated for public participation, while 38% of departments did not have a budget for this purpose. Budget allocation for public participation within the sampled departments varied from R1.1 million to the highest being R12 million per annum.

## **Departments do consider citizens' views during planning**

The findings show that all 16 departments often consider the views of citizens during planning, policy development and implementation. The views of the citizens have led to the development of new programmes and responsive intervention strategies in the respective departments.

## **Departments do consider views of populations with special interests**

All departments that participated in the study mentioned that they do not discriminate against people due to their socio-economic and geographical location when inviting participation from members of the public.

## **Departments make use of local languages**

The findings of the study show that all departments (16) make use of different languages spoken in their respective provinces. The use of the local languages has created an enabling environment for public participation. During citizens' engagement, people are better positioned to express themselves in the languages of their choice and as such active public participation is deepened.



## Engagement with citizens affected by service delivery protests is varied

Only one of the 16 departments (namely DPLG) that participated in the study, mentioned that it has initiatives to engage citizens in areas affected by service delivery protests. This finding suggests that in the other departments there are no strategies to engage citizens affected by such protests and officials may not have the necessary skills to manage community conflict.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in the study:

#### *Guidelines/policies on public participation*

Departments should develop guidelines/policies on public participation to inform and manage critical engagement with citizens. The guidelines/policies on public participation should clearly articulate the objectives of public participation and the process to be followed during engagement with citizens. During the development of such guidelines/policies, departments should ensure that the views and inputs of stakeholders are solicited.

#### *Institutionalisation of public participation*

Departments at both national and provincial governments, should institutionalise public participation as a service delivery and good governance mechanism. In order to institutionalise public participation, departments should ensure that public participation units are established and have the necessary financial and human resources to support critical citizen engagement.

#### *Departments to familiarise themselves with the Citizens Forums Toolkit*

Departments in both provincial and national governments need to familiarise themselves with the PSC's Citizens Forums Toolkit as a public participation practice. The Citizens Forum Toolkit allows departments and citizens to find solutions to programme specific issues, rather than focusing on department's issues in its entirety. For technical support with application of the Citizens Forums, departments can approach the PSC for assistance.

#### *Use of findings contained in Citizen Satisfaction Surveys*

Departments need to make use of findings contained in reports on Citizen Satisfaction Surveys as a measure to gauge the level of citizens' satisfaction or lack thereof on services they provide. Such finding will pro-actively assist departments to engage with citizens and address their concerns. It is during such engagement on the findings of the reports where potential service delivery protests can be averted.

#### *Training of officials involved in public participation*

There is a need for departments to ensure that officials involved in public participation are adequately trained to engage with citizens. Departments need to ensure that officials acquire the necessary skills, especially in the areas such as conflict management, negotiations and understanding community dynamics. Trained officials in public participation will ensure that public participation initiatives in the respective departments are not only led by the elected officials, but are also initiated and led by officials.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The involvement of citizens in matters of service delivery is important in a democratic society. Public participation is a mechanism for entrenching democracy and it promotes social cohesion between government and the citizens, particularly in the provision of quality and sustainable services. People, as both citizens and consumers of services, should be allowed and encouraged to express their views on governance and service delivery matters. In South Africa, prior to 1994, the government suppressed all forms of public participation especially among the black communities. The opinions and socio-economic needs of the majority of the people were not considered important by the apartheid-led government. Access to information on social, economic and security matters was suppressed in an effort to stifle opposition and criticism of its policies of racial supremacy<sup>6</sup>. As a result, black communities were least serviced by the government.

Post 1994, the new elected government committed itself to and embraced a people centred development approach. With this approach, public participation became a Constitutional imperative where it is stated that “people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making”<sup>7</sup>. For both evidence-based planning and policy making, the Public Service needs to work pro-actively to ensure that the voices of the widest possible public are heard and considered during delivery of government services. The implementation of public participation should, therefore, transcend mere technical compliance and should become an integral part of service delivery in the Public Service. Without proper public participation mechanisms, citizens are likely to find other ways to mobilise and express themselves.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has always appreciated the significance of public participation, and has over the years investigated the practice of public participation in the Public Service. Through these investigations, the PSC made several observations, key of which points to uneven and *ad hoc* implementation of public participation. In a State of Public Service Report (SOPS), the PSC underscored the importance of citizen engagement and observed that the Public Service’s capacity for such engagement was rather sporadic and rudimentary<sup>8</sup>. In a later report, the PSC reported that building capacity for public participation would not always be easy, but this should be accepted as a challenge to further strengthen the resolve of the Public Service to ensure that public servants acquire the skills to work with communities<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, working with communities poses various challenges that require responsive strategies which need conflict management skills by the Public Service officials involved. Public Service officials should be able to, amongst others, negotiate and understand communities and their dynamics. Recently, the PSC has observed that lack of proper engagement mechanism in the Public Service has prompted citizens, in several parts of the country, to adopt alternative ways to draw attention to the need for public participation through service delivery protests and rising activism<sup>10</sup>.

Given its continued interest in the area of public participation, the PSC decided in 2008 to conduct a study on the assessment of public participation practices in the Public Service. The purpose of the study was to analyse the public participation practices used by departments, to establish their strengths and weaknesses, and based on the information gathered develop a set of recommendations to effect and consolidate public participation in the Public Service.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to assess public participation practices in selected departments in the Public Service. The specific objectives of the project were to:

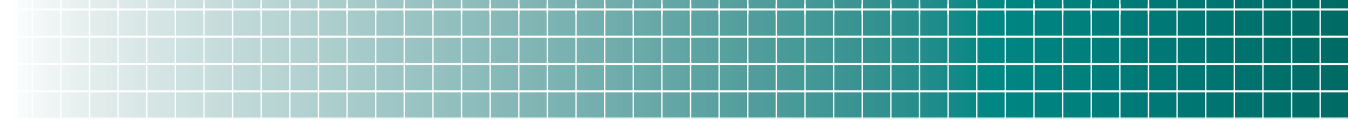
<sup>6</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. Report on the Implementation of the Batho Pele Principle of Openness and Transparency. 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Republic of South Africa. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. State of the Public Service Report. 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. State of the Public Service Report. 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. State of the Public Service Report. 2008.

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- Assess departments' guidelines or policies for promoting public participation in order to establish what these guidelines provide for.
  - Assess the types of structured methodologies or processes of public participation used.
  - Identify the weaknesses and strengths of public participation practices in relation to service delivery within the Public Service.

### 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is structured in the following manner:

- **Chapter two** presents the research methodology applied in the study.
- **Chapter three** presents the overview of public participation.
- **Chapter four** presents an analysis of the findings of the study.
- **Chapter five** presents a conclusion and recommendations for implementing public participation practices in the Public Service.

# Chapter Two

## Methodology



## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methodology that was applied during the study. A study of this nature, which has both qualitative and quantitative elements, required a combination of various data collection methods. The processes followed in conducting this study included a literature review of key documents, development of a data collection instrument and interviews with relevant persons from each department as well as data analysis. Limitations that impacted on the study are also identified in this chapter.

## 2.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study included eleven provincial and five national departments. The table below shows the list of departments that were included in the study:

**Table 1: List of Selected Departments**

National Departments	Provincial Departments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Department of Agriculture</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Free State Department of Agriculture</li><li>Gauteng Department of Agriculture , Conservation and Environmental Affairs</li><li>Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Department of Provincial and Local Government</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Free State Department of Local Government and Housing</li><li>Gauteng Department of Local Government</li><li>Mpumalanga Department of Local Government</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Department of Housing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gauteng Department of Housing</li><li>Mpumalanga Department of Housing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Presidency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Free State Office of the Premier</li><li>Gauteng Office of the Premier</li><li>Mpumalanga Office of the Premier</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)</li></ul>	

## 2.3 METHODOLOGY

### 2.3.1 Sampling

The study applied a purposive sampling procedure. Such sampling seeks to select a section of the research population which in the researcher's judgment will provide the most useful information for the study. Attention was given to the departments that, in a PSC study on the Evaluation of the *Batho Pele* Principle of Consultation, 2007, reported having effective consultation mechanism with their stakeholders<sup>11</sup>. For this reason, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environmental Affairs was sampled. Departments that have recently drawn attention through service delivery protests were also considered in the study. Accordingly, the national and provincial departments of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), Housing and Local Government were included in the sample. The inclusion of the national and provincial departments of Agriculture (Free State and Mpumalanga) was meant to facilitate the comparison of the state of public participation practices and the challenges experienced. The sampling of departments was also biased towards those that have concurrent competencies (national and provincial), in order to assess the application of norms and standards on public participation that are set at national level and implemented at provincial level. The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS), Offices of the Premier (Gauteng, Free State and Mpumalanga) and the Presidency were included given their role in coordinating the *izimbizo* and institutionalised programmes of public participation in the Public Service.

<sup>11</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. Report on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Batho Pele Principle of Consultation. 2007.

## 2.3.2 Data Collection Process

Data collection was conducted through the following process:

### 2.3.2.1 Literature review

In a study of this nature, it was deemed necessary to review literature on public participation. In this regard, both local and international literature on public participation was reviewed to establish challenges, lessons learnt and best practise. Documents such as the Constitution<sup>12</sup>, White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery<sup>13</sup>, the *Batho Pele Handbook*<sup>14</sup> and public participation guidelines of selected departments were also reviewed.

### 2.3.2.2 Research instrument

A semi-structured questionnaire was developed and administered as a data collection tool. This approach was chosen because it allows for greater flexibility during the data collection process. Inputs from the literature reviewed were utilised during the development and refinement of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into the following themes which were derived from the objectives of the study:

- *Departments' understanding of public participation:* In this regard, the study sought to determine departments understanding of the concept of public participation, because it is such understanding that would inform department's implementation of the concept.
- *Departmental guidelines and policies on public participation:* The study investigated the availability of public participation guidelines and the objectives thereof.
- *Methodologies applied to effect public participation:* The study investigated the methodologies applied by departments to effect public participation, and the opportunities and challenges created by such methodologies.
- *Resources allocated to public participation practices:* The study sought to establish the availability of public participation units, functions of these units, staff training on public participation and the allocation of financial resources towards public participation activities.
- *Consideration of citizens' views raised during public participation:* The study sought to establish the initiatives applied by departments to incorporate views of special populations such as people living with disability, women and citizens affected by service delivery protests.

### 2.3.2.3 Interviews

Letters were sent to the selected departments to inform them about the study and to request them to identify and designate relevant officials who would serve as sources of information during the study. In-depth interviews were arranged and conducted with designated officials from the participating departments. An interview as a data collection method provides an opportunity for critical areas to be probed and where necessary a follow-up is made with a respondent to enhance the quality of data collected. Departments were also requested to prepare and furnish the PSC with documents such as public participation guidelines.

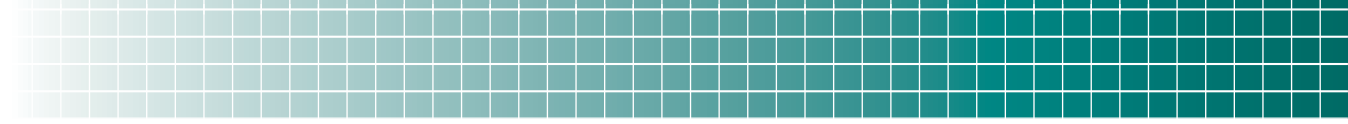
## 2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis commenced with a process of organising data into key themes and sub-themes. The data was analysed as follows:

<sup>12</sup> Republic of South Africa. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*

<sup>13</sup> Republic of South Africa. *The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery. 1997.*

<sup>14</sup> Republic of South Africa. *Department of Public Service and Administration, The Batho Pele Handbook. 2003.*

- 
- The qualitative data was analysed by organising the findings according to themes. These themes were developed according to the objectives of the study.
  - An Excel based data analysis tool was used to analyse and present quantitative data. Results were drawn from score sheets and presented in graphs and charts for ease of interpretation and analysis.

## 2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following were the limitations of the study:

- The study was based on a sample of selected government departments, therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised as reflective of the views of all government departments. However, the findings are useful indicators of the state of public participation in the Public Service.
- Some departments did not furnish the PSC with documents such as public participation guidelines and copies of public participation budgets. Therefore, such documents could not be analysed for purposes of this study.

# Chapter Three

## Overview of Public Participation

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Citizens are not just consumers of services rendered by government, but are also critical role players with a stake in the election of governments and how such governments should run the affairs of the country. Given this, it is important that government ensures meaningful mechanisms for citizen engagement, especially in the development and implementation of government policies and programmes. At the same time, however, it is important to appreciate that the nature and extent of public participation is context sensitive thus different realities may require different modalities in engaging citizens.

This chapter presents an overview on public participation. The chapter specifically focuses on the definition of the concept of public participation, the types of public participation and the significance of public participation in service delivery. The chapter also draws both on international and regional experiences as well as South African perspective on public participation. Such an approach hopes to understand the challenges, draw from the lessons learnt and inform better practice in the field of public participation.

### 3.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION DEFINED

Public participation as a concept has been defined differently by various authors. Pring and Noe<sup>15</sup> define public participation as an all encompassing label used to describe various mechanisms that individuals or groups may use to communicate their views on a public issue. They argue that public participation is used to build and facilitate capacity and self-reliance among the people. Therefore, public participation is an involvement of the citizens in initiatives that affect their lives. White defines public participation as an active involvement of the local population in decision-making concerning development projects or their implementation<sup>16</sup>. In development planning and implementation, people as citizens and consumers of the services are the most valuable resource, since they know and understand their needs and how such needs can be met. This definition is supported by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) which further highlights that in public participation, people themselves are afforded an opportunity to improve their conditions of living, with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative<sup>17</sup>. In South Africa, public participation is defined as an open and accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making<sup>18</sup>. This definition is in line with one of the Constitutional principles of the Republic which states that people's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy making<sup>19</sup>. The common theme amongst these various definitions of public participation places citizens at the centre stage and the emphasis is on the active participation in their own development-related matters to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

Having regard for the above, it is useful to draw from Ife's core values and principles of public participation<sup>20</sup>. The following table highlights the core values and principles of public participation:

15 Pring, J. and Noe, F.Y. *Human Rights in Natural Resources*. 2002.

16 White, A. *Community Participation in Water and Sanitation: Concepts, Strategies and Methods*. 1992.

17 Davids et al. *Participatory Development in South Africa*. 2005.

18 Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government. *Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation*. 2007.

19 Republic of South Africa. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996*.

20 Ife, J. *Community Development: Community-based alternatives in an age of globalisation*. 2002.

**Table 2: Core values and principles of public participation**

Core values and principles of public participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.</li><li>• Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.</li><li>• Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.</li><li>• Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.</li><li>• Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.</li><li>• Public participation communicates to participants how their inputs affect decisions.</li></ul>

### 3.3 TYPES OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Literature shows that there are different types of public participation. These range, amongst others, from voting in elections, participating in party politics, holding public demonstrations, petitioning local or national leaders, lobbying decision-makers, making written or verbal submissions to committees, and the use of ward committees at local government level. Arnstein and Pretty as quoted by Davids, *et al*, developed seven typologies to demonstrate the different concepts of public participation.<sup>21</sup>

These include:

- **Passive participation.** People participate by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened. In this context, participation relates to a unilateral top-down announcement by the authority or project manager.
- **Participation in information giving.** People participate by answering questions posed in questionnaires or telephone interviews or similar public participation strategies.
- **Participation by consultation.** People participate by being consulted while professionals, consultants and planners listen to their views. The professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of the people's responses.
- **Participation for material incentives.** People participate by providing resources, such as labour, in return for food and cash.
- **Interactive participation.** People participate in a joint situational analysis, the development of action plans and capacity building. In this context, participation is seen as a right, not just as a means to achieve project goals.
- **Self-mobilisation.** People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems.

From the above, it is evident that public participation is multifaceted and takes place in various forms. In South Africa, most of the above types of public participation are applied. They all create a platform where citizens' views find their way in development planning and policy making processes. However, when citizens participate in information giving, they are often not informed of how the information will be used and they rarely receive the end products of such participatory process. In the South African context, according to the findings of the PSC's study on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the *Batho Pele* Principle of Consultation, participation in information giving was the most popular type of public participation applied by departments. However, this approach is not in line with the *Batho Pele* White Paper which states that citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered.

<sup>21</sup> Davids *et al*. *Participatory Development in South Africa*. 2005.

### 3.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CHALLENGES

While the global drive towards promoting public participation holds considerable promise and benefits for sustainable development, the implementation of public participation approaches is not without challenges. For example, the more sensitive the issue, the less likely that consensus will be reached. According to Sisk, the World Bank study on participation in practice identified the following key barriers to effective public participation in planning<sup>22</sup>:

- *Lack of government commitment to adopting a participatory approach:* Public participation is often seen as a time consuming process.
- *Unwillingness of the project officials to give up control over project activities and directions:* Officials are often not receptive and do not acknowledge the importance of citizens' views. This is because officials consider themselves experts in their field.
- *Lack of incentives and skills among project staff to encourage them to adopt a participatory approach:* Public participation requires a set of skills amongst officials to be able to interact with diverse communities and understand dynamics of the society. Without incentives, officials do not go an extra-mile to involve the public. Lack of community engagement skills also compromises effective public participation.
- *Limited capacity of local-level participation and insufficient investment in community capacity building:* Community members require information about available platforms for participation. They need to be capacitated on how to get involved in matters that affect their lives so that they appreciate the importance thereof and make a meaningful contribution.
- *Participation starting too late:* Often communities are not involved at the beginning of programmes or projects, they are only brought on board when development initiatives have not succeeded in order to manage the crisis and rectify the processes.
- *Mistrust between government and communities:* lack of transparency and openness often disrupts public participation. Due to past experiences, certain communities have lost trust in government departments.

It is important that the above-mentioned barriers are considered when designing any public participation initiative, in order to avoid them. Public participation should not be seen as an act of kindness by departments. Government departments need to recognise and appreciate the importance of communities taking part in initiatives that affect their own lives.

### 3.5 PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

#### 3.5.1 International Perspective

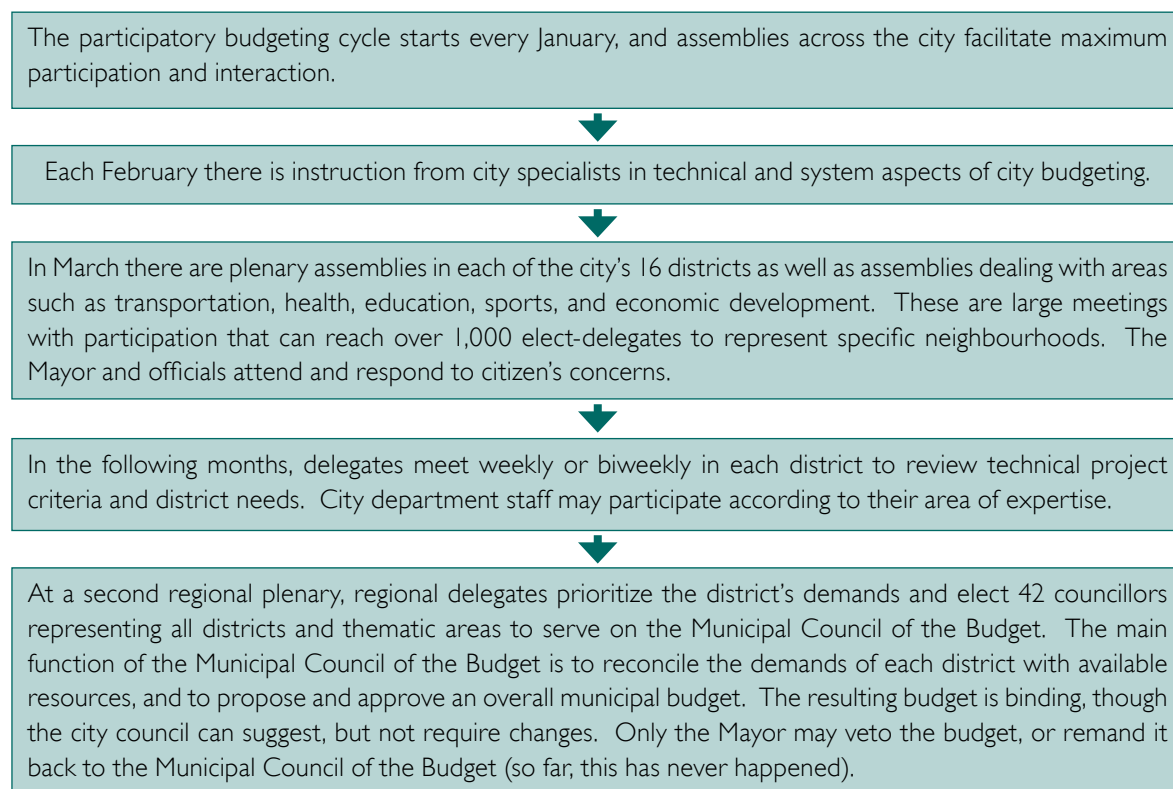
Public participation is a useful tool to promote the involvement of the public in governance. The World Development Report states that governments at all levels have begun to understand the importance of inclusive, participatory and consensual models of public participation<sup>23</sup>. As a result, various strategies are applied to consult and engage with members of the public in progressive nations across the globe. For the purpose of this study, only public participatory processes of developing countries that have similar development challenges and living conditions to those of South Africa were analysed. Particular attention was paid to Brazil and India. These countries have community forums that meet regularly to address community issues such as poverty, hunger and homelessness. Members of the communities are organised by civil society organisations (CSOs) such as Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs) and trade unions to participate in local matters. Community leaders ensure that issues raised at community level reach the government authorities that have power and influence to address them. There are feedback sessions that are meant to allow flow of information between the government and the communities.

<sup>22</sup> Sisk, T. D. *Democracy at the local level: The International IDEA Handbook on Participation, Representation, Conflict Management and Governance*. 2001.

<sup>23</sup> *The World Bank Report*. 1999/2000.

In Brazil, the most common stated example of effective public participation is the municipal participatory budgeting initiative<sup>24</sup>. This participatory process is one of the creative programmes developed by the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil. The aim of the participatory budgeting process is to address severe disparities in the living standard of the city residents, by bringing these residents on board during participatory processes. The participatory budgeting process takes place annually and starts with a number of neighbourhood, district and regional assemblies, where residents from diverse economic and political background, and elected budget delegates identify spending priorities and vote on the priorities to implement. In order to appreciate the type of public participation, it is useful to highlight the process followed during participatory budgeting in the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil.

**Table 3: Municipal participatory budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil**



According to Sprague the inclusion of participants in the process of budgeting for capital improvement brings people into the realm of negotiation, compromise, and prioritisation of many worthwhile and necessary projects. This type of participatory budgeting brings transparency into budgeting and educates people about the scope of possibilities. As a result of public participation, people develop a better understanding of government and its programmes. They learn and understand why certain projects cannot be conducted at a particular time, but later. It is for these reasons that Brazil's participatory budgeting process is hailed as a success in participatory activism.

In India, a common stated example of effective public participation is the community and sustainable forest management. Sustainability of forest management comes through community participation at all levels from planning, intervention and monitoring<sup>25</sup>. In this regard a bottom-up approach is applied wherein communities are mobilised to participate in all forestry interventions. During the planning phase, community members are central to the needs assessment and mobilisation of funds whereas during intervention, community members allocate themselves tasks and responsibilities. Monitoring and evaluation is built into the forestry management initiative and community members are central in determining the milestones.

<sup>24</sup> Sprague, A. LBJ Journal of Public Affairs. 2000.

<sup>25</sup> Kotwal et al. Sustainable Forest Management through Community Participation. Vol. 95, no 8. 25 October 2008.



### 3.5.2 Regional Perspective

In keeping with efforts to promote good governance, many African countries have also identified public participation as a key principle to promote and uphold good governance. For example, in adopting the African charter on democracy, elections and governance in 2007, the 53 member states of the African Union committed themselves to, amongst others, promote the conditions that are necessary to foster citizen participation and transparency<sup>26</sup>.

In Uganda, efforts to promote public participation have taken the form of both policy frameworks and the development of implementation modalities. The government took appropriate steps to put in place supporting legislative framework to promote public participation. In this regard, the enactment of the 1993 Local Councils Statute was a way of broadening the space for citizen participation<sup>27</sup>. The legislation was designed in such a way that it facilitates effective involvement of communities in articulating their needs and influencing programme planning and implementation. The main aim was to foster citizen participation in the processes of rural development. In addition, according to the United Nations Development Report, Uganda has been able, through public participation to significantly reduce the levels of HIV/AIDS<sup>28</sup>. In this regard, there was recognition by the health sector that HIV/AIDS had multi-sectoral causes and consequences which were beyond its mandate. According to Mutabwire, this led to the establishment of the Uganda AIDS Commission (UAC) in 1992<sup>29</sup>. The Commission was tasked with preparing the Multi-sectoral Approach to the Control of AIDS (MACA). The underlying principle of MACA was that persons, individually or collectively, have a responsibility to fight the epidemic and to join forces with government to deepen public awareness on HIV/AIDS. Amongst others, MACA emphasised the involvement of private and public sectors, individuals and groups in formulation of policies regarding HIV/AIDS.

This process involved various civil society organisations, among others, national NGOs, faith based organisations, international NGOs and the private sector that played an active role in government's initiative in the reduction of HIV/AIDS. These organisations have greatly contributed through the provision of integrated services for care and prevention of HIV/AIDS. In addition, post HIV-test clubs were created in most centers to provide the much needed social support to people living with HIV/AIDS. Some partners focused on the issues of ethics and human rights in general, whereas other partners focused specifically on those infected and affected by HIV. In this regard, increased human rights awareness reduced stigmatisation and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS considerably. These interventions by civil society organisations largely compliment the central efforts by government. The model applied in Uganda is lauded widely as the most practical due to its impact on reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Uganda.

In Ghana, public participation played a significant role in reducing corruption. The government conducted several diagnostic surveys, where citizens were invited to provide possible strategies government can apply to deal with corruption<sup>30</sup>. Diagnostic surveys are an in-depth oriented and participatory research process that provide reliable evidence on governance and corruption issues to place on the public agenda, and promote multi-stakeholder dialogue. The purpose of the multi-stakeholder dialogue is to articulate and design realistic action plans and responses for policy reform. The diagnostic surveys normally take place as a result of the request by government to monitor and evaluate how poor governance and corruption have negatively impacted on the development process and economic growth in their country.

In Ghana the public institutions and civil society advocacy groups have been established purposefully to combat corruption. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, was established with the duty to

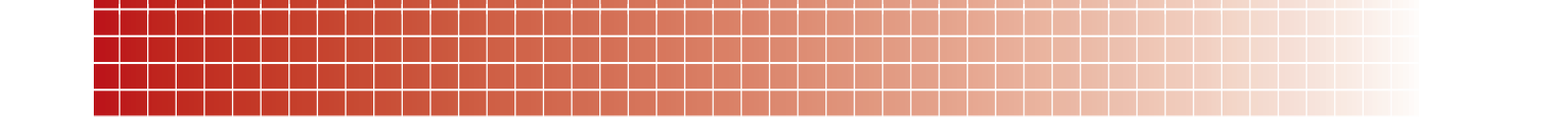
26 African Union's Commitment to Human Rights. 2007.

27 Kakumba, U. and Nsingo, S. *Journal of Public Administration*. Volume 43, Number 2, June. 2008.

28 United Nations Development Report. 2006.

29 Mutabwire, P. Ministry of Local Government. *Participatory Health Service Delivery: The fight against HIV/AIDS in Uganda*. 2006.

30 Carrillo, S. *The World Bank Institute*. 2002.



investigate all instances of alleged or suspected corruption and the misappropriation of public moneys by officials<sup>31</sup>. To strengthen government anti-corruption initiatives, public hearings were conducted and written submissions were forwarded for consideration. The findings of the diagnostic survey, public hearings and written submissions were used to institute reforms that led to more transparency and public participation.

### 3.5.3 South African Perspective

Prior to 1994, the practice of critical engagement was frowned upon by an insular and self-perpetuating state. The apartheid-led government stifled public participation and excluded the vast majority of people in governance and service delivery matters. With the democratic transition in 1994, there was a clear commitment to consultation and participation by citizens as service users of the Public Service. This stems from a rich history of consultation during the liberation struggle and at the advent of democracy, the Constitution made public participation a fundamental priority and the policy environment was characterised by White Papers that clearly articulated government's intent and invited extensive consultation and public participation. In this regard, members of the public were invited to make inputs thus making the process of drafting the Constitution and the various White Papers inclusive and open to the public. The Constitution states that all spheres of government (national, provincial and local) should create mechanisms which would make it easy for people either as individuals or groups to participate in government-led initiatives<sup>32</sup>.

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, commonly known as the *Batho Pele* White Paper was introduced in (1997)<sup>33</sup>. The White Paper provides a framework through which public services are to be delivered. The White Paper contains eight *Batho Pele* Principles. These Principles are key directives to the Public Service towards being efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of the citizens. Furthermore, the Principles guide the Public Service on how it should engage with members of the public and provide platform for the public to participate in the provision of services.

One of the key principles contained in the *Batho Pele* White Paper is the Principle of Consultation. This Principle builds on the Constitutional requirement of public participation and emphasises the need for citizens to be consulted about the services they receive from the Public Service. The *Batho Pele* Principle of Consultation states that citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice about the services that are offered. However, the *Batho Pele* Principle of Consultation should not be seen in isolation to the other *Batho Pele* Principles. All eight Principles are interlinked. For example, the promotion of the Principle of Access requires that consultation takes place with citizens to better understand their needs and to ensure that services can indeed be accessible to them. Without such consultation, the risk exists that what government regards as accessible service delivery may be different from what citizens have in mind. Furthermore, consultation is critical in the deepening of good governance and democracy because it invites active participation of the public not as service recipients but also as players in decision-making on service delivery.

At local government level, the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000) puts emphasis on the need to develop a culture of community participation<sup>34</sup>. According to section 16 (1) (a) of the Municipal Systems Act, a municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance and must for this purpose do the following:

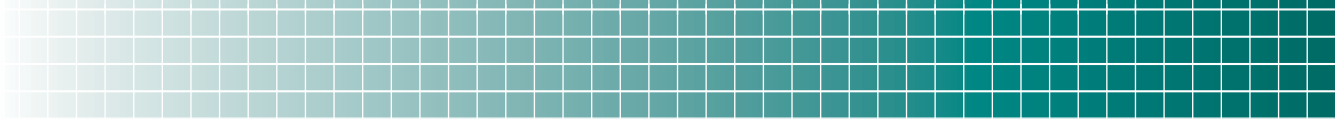
- Encourage and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in the preparation and implementation and review of its integrated development plan.
- Contribute to building the capacity of the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of the municipality.

31 Agyeman-Duah, B. *Curbing corruption and Improving Economic Governance*. 2002.

32 Republic of South Africa. *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Act 108 of 1996.

33 Republic of South Africa. Department of Public Service and Administration. *The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery*. 1997.

34 Republic of South Africa. Department of Provincial and Local Government. *Municipal Systems Act*. 2000.



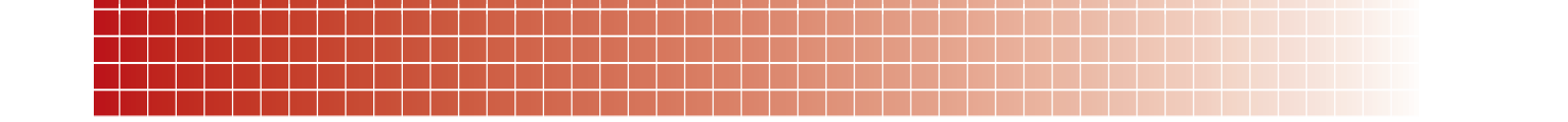
In South Africa, since 1994, various structures were created to afford sections of the society to participate in socio-economic issues. For instance, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) was established as a forum where government together with organised business, labour and community groupings at a national level meet to discuss and strive to reach consensus on issues of socio-economic policy. In addition, government has also through its programmes prioritised the eradication of corruption in the South African society. In pursuance of this priority, various role players such as business, civil society and government have joined hands through the creation of a National Anti-Corruption Forum which is a coalition against corruption<sup>35</sup>. Both these processes create a platform for public participation.

To facilitate practical implementation of public participation, the government has since 1994 implemented various initiatives. These include the following:

- **Izimbizo:** The political leadership of government, including the President, the Deputy President, members of the cabinet Premiers, members of the Executive Councils, Mayors, councillors accompanied by senior government officials hold public meetings to engage with communities on issues of government policies and service delivery. Cabinet ministers also conduct their ministerial *izimbizo* wherein national ministers and provincial Members of Executive Councils (MECs) embark on public meetings to engage citizens on matters of their respective portfolios.
- **EXCO Meets the People:** This is the provincial initiative undertaken by the Premier and Members of the Executive Council in a province to engage with communities on government policy and service delivery issues.
- **Public Hearings:** Public hearings of different types are organised by different organs of the state, including Parliament and National Council of Provinces (NCOP) to engage with the general public on policy and service delivery issues.
- **Ward Committees:** Ward committees are statutory bodies created in terms of the Municipal Structures Act (Act No. 117 of 1998). The purpose of ward committees is to assist the democratically elected representative of a ward (the councillor) to carry out his or her mandate. Ward committee members are members of the community representing the needs of the people in areas where they live. Chapter 4 (part 4) of the Act requires that municipalities must establish ward committees, with the objective of enhancing participatory democracy in the local government.
- **Community Development Workers (CDWs):** CDWs are community-based resource persons who collaborate with other community workers to help fellow community members to obtain information and resources from government departments. The aim of CDWs is to facilitate community participation in government initiatives.
- **Citizen Satisfaction Surveys:** Citizen Satisfaction Survey is a methodology used to engage with citizens and to establish their views and expectations on service delivery. It is a means of collecting citizens' feedback on the quality and adequacy of public services directly from the service users of government services. Furthermore, Citizen Satisfaction Surveys provide a thorough basis and sets a proactive agenda for citizens and government to engage in dialogue to improve the delivery of services to the public. Most departments apply Citizen Satisfaction Surveys to solicit feedback from the citizens on the quality of the services they render. The PSC has, since 2001, been instrumental in obtaining citizens views on an annual basis with its launch of a series of Citizens Satisfaction Surveys.
- **Citizens Forums:** The Citizens Forums model is a mechanism to facilitate public participation in the Public Service. The overall purpose of Citizens Forums is to evaluate the delivery of particular services throughout the country, and to enable active involvement of people affected by government programmes in service delivery improvement processes<sup>36</sup>. The PSC was instrumental in piloting these forums and has since developed a toolkit containing an instrumental video and a step-by-step guide to the implementation of Citizens' Forums.

35 Republic of South Africa. Annual Report on the activities of the NACF. 2006-2007.

36 Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. Ste-by-step Guide to Holding Citizens Forum. 2005.



In addition, several departments have indicated that they apply consultation initiatives such as workshops, seminars, summits, public awareness campaigns and community outreach campaigns to allow public participation in their initiatives<sup>37</sup>. Departments should appreciate that information dissemination alone does not amount to public participation. Undoubtedly, availability of comprehensive and accurate information about service rendered by departments lead to informed service users. However, there is a need for active involvement in the actual planning and implementation of programmes and policy development processes.

The above-mentioned South African specific initiatives on public participation have created a platform for critical engagement between government and citizens. Feedback received during such engagements has assisted government in the improvement of service delivery. However, the challenge remains for departments to institutionalise public participation practices and consolidate lessons to deepen citizen engagement.

<sup>37</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. Report on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Batho Pele Principle of Consultation. 2007.

# Chapter Four

## Key Findings of the Study

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the key findings of the study. Findings are presented according to the key themes which were derived from the objectives of the study. The themes include:

- Departments' understanding of public participation.
- Departmental guidelines and policies on public participation.
- Methodologies applied by the respective departments to effect participation.
- Resources allocated to public participation practices.
- Departments' consideration of citizens' views raised during public participation.

## 4.2 KEY FINDINGS

### 4.2.1 There is a Common Understanding of Public Participation

The study sought to ascertain departments' understanding of public participation. The purpose of the question was to establish if there was a common understanding of what public participation entails. The findings show that all (16) departments that participated in the study seem to agree that public participation is a process of engaging citizens to allow them to have a say in policy making and service delivery initiatives of government. For instance, the Office of the Premier in the Free State Province defined public participation *"as the way in which departments interacts with its various stakeholders wanting to get their views on how to best address their needs"*, while the Office of the Premier in Mpumalanga defined public participation *"as an active involvement of people who are beneficiaries of government services to ensure that their views about service delivery are heard and considered by departments."*

The findings suggest an improvement on the PSC's study on the Evaluation of the *Batho Pele* Principle of Consultation where departments showed misalignment on their understanding of the concept of consultation to that of the intention of the *Batho Pele* White Paper. In that particular study, departments' understanding of consultation includes information sharing, discussions and conferences, whereas the White Paper states that citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the services they receive.

### 4.2.2 Departmental Guidelines and Policies on Public Participation

#### 4.2.2.1 The existence of public participation guidelines/policies is uneven

The study wanted to determine the availability of public participation guidelines or policies within departments. This was deemed necessary since a public participation guideline/policy is important in informing and giving direction to the public participation initiatives of the departments. In addition, it also usually stipulates both the allocation of financial and human resources in the respective departments.

The findings of the study show that only 25% of the departments that participated in the study had public participation guidelines/policies in place, which inform their efforts in implementing public participation. These departments were the Presidency, Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) and the Offices of the Premier in Gauteng and Free State. The remainder of the departments (75%) mentioned that they did not have public participation guidelines/policies in place. This suggest that public participation is not institutionalised in these departments, and if it does happen, it is implemented in a haphazard manner without the necessary guidelines/policy to anchor public participation initiatives.

More disconcerting is the fact that when requested to provide the OPSC with the guidelines/policy, departments only produced their communication strategies. So despite the common understanding that departments have on public participation, in the act of implementation there remains confusion. A communication strategy and a

public participation guideline/policy serve different responsibilities. This is not to say that the functions of one could not be factored into the other. However, none of the communication strategies submitted were explicit on public participation. This would, therefore, suggest that there remains a misalignment on departments' understanding of consultation as intended by the White Paper on *Batho Pele*.

#### 4.2.2.2 Objectives of public participation guidelines/policies are varied

The study sought to determine the objectives of public participation guidelines/policies. It is critical to understand the objectives of public participation guidelines/policies as they provide an understanding of what departments aim to achieve in relation to public participation. The table below shows the objectives of public participation as outlined in the guidelines/policies of the respective departments.

**Table 4: Objectives of public participation contained in the guidelines/policies of the departments**

- Provide feedback to communities on service delivery issues
- Provide platform for frequent interaction between political leaders and communities
- Maintenance of *izimbizo* protocol
- Consolidation of post-*izimbizo* reports
- Engage on issues to be explored further
- Heighten fact-finding process

The findings show that of the four departments that indicated that they had public participation guidelines/policies in place, only three departments have clearly articulated objectives in their public participation guidelines/policies, namely, the Presidency, the DPLG and the Office of the Premier in the Free State. The common thrust that emerged out of the objectives of these departments' public participation as contained in their guidelines/policies was the need to provide feedback to communities on issues raised during public participation. This objective indicates the commitment these departments have to genuine interaction with communities. Departments should be able to share with their service users the progress made on the issues they have raised on service delivery and challenges thereof. It is possible that when citizens as service users know the progress and challenges that departments experience to address service delivery and policy development matters, they would appreciate the process that are followed to get services delivered to them. Provision of feedback is likely to strengthen the relationship between government and communities. Communities would be informed of the steps the government is taking to address their concerns and as such they would not feel ignored by the government.

The findings show that the Presidency and the DPLG guidelines/policies on public participation emphasised the need to institutionalise public participation within government departments. To this end, DPLG suggests that public participation units within municipalities should be resourced properly and adequately with both finance and human capacity. Institutionalisation of public participation within all spheres of government is critical to assist with the maintenance of proper coordination and a feedback mechanism on issues that concerns communities.

#### 4.2.2.3 Stakeholders are aware of the departmental public participation guidelines/policies

The study sought to determine if departments make sure that their stakeholders are aware of their public participation guidelines. The findings show that all departments with public participation guidelines/policies indicated that their stakeholders were aware of their public participation guidelines. However, none of the departments, except the DPLG, mentioned the role played by stakeholders in the development of their public participation guidelines/policies. The DPLG indicated that its stakeholders, especially local municipalities, were involved in the development of the public participation guideline/policy wherein their views were sought and

incorporated. In the departments that had public participation guidelines/policies but their stakeholders were not invited to make inputs during the development of such guidelines/policies, the findings suggest that once these guidelines/policies were developed, they were shared with the stakeholders so that they can know how to engage with the respective departments.

### 4.2.3 Methodologies to Effect Public Participation

#### 4.2.3.1 Departments apply different methodologies to effect public participation

The study sought to establish the methods applied by departments in effecting public participation. In this regard, departments were asked to indicate the methodologies that they apply to effect public participation. The findings show that departments apply different methodologies. **Table 4** shows a variety of methodologies applied by different departments in their engagement with the citizens.

**Table 4: Methodologies applied by departments to affect public participation**

Departments	Public Participation Methodologies
The Presidency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presidential <i>izimbizo</i></li> </ul>
The Office of the Premier in Gauteng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Izimbizo</i></li> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Public Service Week</li> <li>• Premier's Excellence Awards</li> </ul>
The Office of the Premier in Free State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Izimbizo</i></li> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> </ul>
The Office of the Premier in Mpumalanga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Izimbizo</i></li> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> </ul>
Department of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministerial <i>Izimbizo</i></li> <li>• Farmers week</li> </ul>
Department of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministerial <i>Izimbizo</i></li> <li>• The "Builds"</li> <li>• Media related initiatives such as radio talk show and television programmes</li> </ul>
Department of Provincial and Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministerial <i>Izimbizo</i></li> <li>• Ward based planning processes</li> <li>• Ward Committees</li> <li>• IDP Forums</li> <li>• Community Development Workers</li> </ul>
Gauteng Department of Agriculture Conservation and Environmental Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Citizen Satisfaction Survey</li> </ul>
Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Farmers week</li> </ul>
Free State Department of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Farmers week</li> </ul>
Free State Department of Local Government and Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Ward Committees</li> <li>• IDP Forums</li> <li>• Community Development Workers</li> </ul>



Gauteng Department of Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Citizen Satisfaction Survey</li> <li>• Ward Committees</li> <li>• IDP Forums</li> <li>• Community Development Workers</li> </ul>
Mpumalanga Department of Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Ward Committees</li> <li>• IDP Forums</li> <li>• Community Development Workers</li> </ul>
Gauteng Department of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Citizen Satisfaction Survey</li> <li>• The "Builds"</li> </ul>
Mpumalanga Department of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exco-meets the People</li> <li>• Media related initiatives such as radio talk show and television programmes.</li> </ul>

**Table 4** above shows that the key methodologies mentioned by departments to effect public participation are the presidential and ministerial *izimbizo*, and Exco-meets the people. The Presidency's public participation guideline/policy indicates that this department apply *izimbizo* programme as a method to effect public participation. *Izimbizo* is a participatory programme which was adopted by Cabinet in 2000 as a form of unmediated interaction between government and the people to advance participatory governance in the implementation of government programmes. According to the Presidency's public participation guidelines, the main aim of *izimbizo* is to expose political principals to the public at large focusing on closer interaction with the communities<sup>38</sup>.

The Offices of the Premier that participated in this study also mentioned the *izimbizo* as well as the Exco-meets the people as their methodologies to effect public participation. According to the public participation guidelines of the Office of the Premier in the Free State, the purpose of the *izimbizo* and Exco-meets the people campaigns is to create a platform where face-to-face interaction between government leaders and communities takes place. During such interaction, the leadership of government attains first-hand experience of residents' reactions to government's service delivery process and provide responses that address these reactions, and explain government policies. In addition, the public participation guidelines of the Office of the Premier in Gauteng focuses on providing Gauteng citizens with high quality, caring and integrated government services delivery. For this reason, the public participation methodologies applied by the Office of the Premier in Gauteng includes initiatives such as Public Service Week and Premiers' excellence awards.

At the provincial level, all line function departments that participated in the study indicated that Exco-meets the people was one of the most applied methods to promote public participation. In Gauteng province, the departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Environmental Affairs, Housing and Local Government indicated that they apply annual citizen satisfaction surveys where views of the citizens are sought to establish their level of satisfaction with departments' services. It was indicated that citizen satisfaction surveys allow public participation in programme and policy development of the departments as their views are considered by the departments during planning and service delivery implementation phases. However, no proof of such surveys was provided to the PSC.

The Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG)'s public participation methodologies include, amongst others, ward based-planning processes, the use of the ward committee system, community development workers and integrated development planning (IDP) forums at local government level to effect

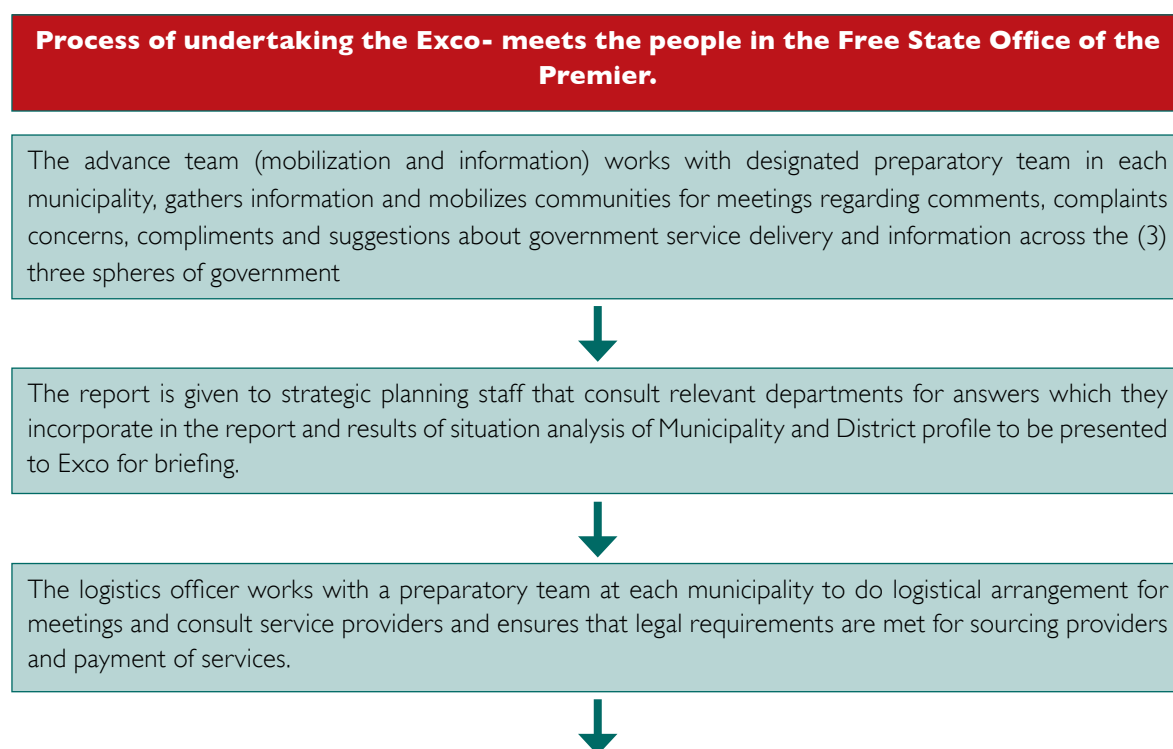
38 Republic of South Africa. Presidency. Public Participation Unit: Strategic Plan.2008-2009.

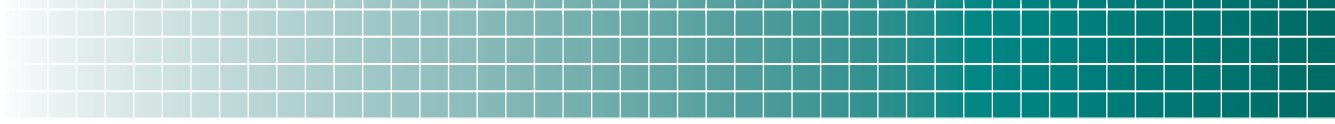
public participation. It should be noted that DPLG is mandated to create enabling mechanism for communities to participate in governance. Therefore in achieving this, DPLG is assisting municipalities in ensuring that communities are afforded a platform to participate in matters of governance. DPLG's efforts to assist municipalities are important since local government is the sphere of government located closer to the people and is tasked with the provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, roads and infrastructure. If communities are not empowered and capacitated to participate on matters of basic service delivery at local level, it is unlikely that they would be able to participate at other levels of governance. The assistance provided to municipalities to effect public participation was also mentioned by the provincial departments of Local Government that participated in this study. This approach confirms that the concurrent methodologies that are performed at national and provincial departments of Local Government. Constitutionally, provincial departments apply norms and standards that are developed at national level.

The national departments of Agriculture and Housing apply ministerial *izimbizo* as methodologies to effect public participation. During the *izimbizo*, citizens are expected to express their concerns on service delivery programmes of departments and are afforded an opportunity to suggest possible solutions. Citizens are also informed about ways to access public services which they are entitled to. It is important to note that these departments also have their very own departments' specific campaigns which contribute to public participation. For instance, the department of Agriculture apply annual events such as Farmers Week, and the department of Housing apply "the builds", a housing construction programme. Both the Farmers Week and the builds are meant to encourage citizens to participate in the initiatives of these departments.

The above findings suggest that *izimbizo* and Exco-meets the people are the most common applied public participation practices by most of the national departments that participated in this study. It is likely that *izimbizo* is the most applied as it is led from the top where there is a standing arrangement whereby the Presidency (President and Deputy President) conducts *izimbizo* and all departments are expected to participate. The public participation guidelines of the Office of the Premier in the Free State provide a good example of the process of conducting the Exco-meets the people campaign. The following table highlights how these process is undertaken in the Free State:

**Table 5: Processes of conducting *izimbizo* and Exco-meets the people in the Free State Office of the Premier**





Visits take the form of identical meeting at each town with communities segmented according to their areas of interest that match the four (4) clusters of the Executive Council, i.e. that are Economic Employment and Investment, Governance and Administration, Justice, Crime Prevention & Safety, as well as Social and Human Development. (The report of the mobilization team recommends which clusters will take place in each town. The Executive Council decides finally on any changes recommended.)



At small towns, (of below 20 thousand residents) where the two visited towns share the same municipality, the community gathering (*izimbizo*) may be the only meeting.



Where the profile indicated a need, a walk-about among projects may be undertaken. Recordings are done at each meeting in respect of issues raised by attendees and these are compiled into a report. Again the issues are referred to relevant departments/Districts/Municipalities for responses and appropriate action. A final report is then prepared for approval and appropriate distribution.



Each year different towns are visited. Each year a review of the projects takes place and information gathered informs future planning.

The above-mentioned process highlights the depth of engagement between the government and the communities prior and during Exco-meets the people. It further shows that senior Public Service officials seem to engage with citizens only when accompanying elected officials. In such a situation, a perception is developed that public participation can only be led by the executive. For public participation to be sustainable, the Executive (President, Deputy President, Cabinet Ministers, Premiers and MECs) cannot carry the burden of institutionalising public participation<sup>39</sup>. To deepen public participation, departments should have their own well-developed citizens' engagement mechanisms which are led by both the public servants and the executive.

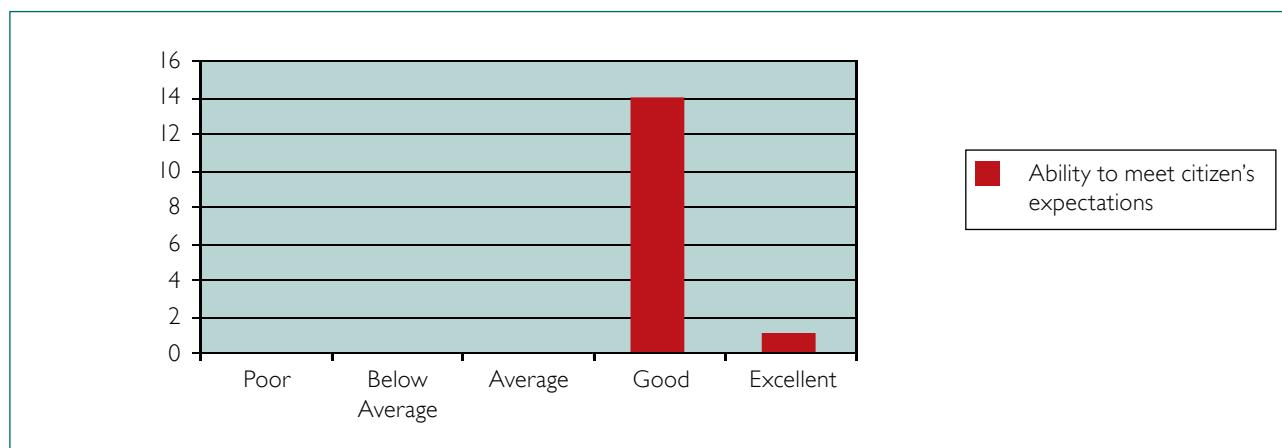
#### 4.2.3.2 *There is common agreement on what the benefits of public participation are*

The study sought to establish the benefit derived by the public participation practices applied by the departments. According to the findings of the study, all sixteen (16) departments indicated that opportunities were created through the use of various methods. The value of personal interaction between leaders from all tiers of government and the citizens, was especially highlighted. Through *izimbizo* and Exco-meets the people, citizens interact with the President, Deputy President, Premiers, Ministers, MECs and senior administrative officials of the respective departments. During such interactions, citizens obtain a sense that their political principals take their developmental needs seriously. Members of the public seem to appreciate it when their leaders come and observe their living conditions and listen to their service delivery challenges. During such visits, leaders get a first-hand experience of the reality and challenges people face on the ground, especially in the rural areas and informal settlements where the need of social services such as water, sanitation, roads, infrastructure and electricity is pronounced.

It is one thing to hear citizens' expectations, but ensuring they are met is another. In this regard, departments were asked to rate their ability to meet the needs of the citizens who are key stakeholders, especially through the application of the public participation practices they have in place. The findings of the study show that 94% of the departments rated their ability to meet the needs of the citizens as good, and only 6% of the departments rated themselves as excellent.

39 Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. State of the Public Service Report. 2006.

**Figure 1: Ability to meet citizens' expectations**



Departments mentioned that active public participation of citizens in their initiatives have led to the introduction of new programmes and intervention strategies. In a developmental state, public participation leads to evidence-based planning and evidence-based policy development which are critical for sustainable development.

#### 4.2.3.3 Departments still have challenges in the application of their public participation practices

The study sought to determine if departments experienced challenges in the application of their various public participation practices. The following were the key challenges raised by departments:

**Table 6: Challenges in the application of public participation practices**

Challenges in the application of public participation practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgetary constraints.</li> <li>• Inadequate human resource.</li> <li>• Lack of feedback-report on issues raised.</li> <li>• Poor institutional arrangements such as weak ward committees and local government.</li> <li>• Poor planning.</li> <li>• Political dynamics where political parties always fight for influence</li> <li>• Translation of documents into different languages.</li> </ul>

The findings in the above table show that the key challenge raised by the majority of departments (80%) was budgetary constraints. Departments indicated that they were expected to effect effective public participation practices whereas not enough funds were made available. Lack of capacity in the form of human resource was also raised by most of the provincial departments. It was indicated that public participation units were not adequately resourced and as such their performance was affected. Availability of relevant and appropriate resources plays a significant role in the implementation of any programme. The practice of engaging with citizens is not easy. It can be labour intensive, time consuming and mired in conflict and tension<sup>40</sup>. However, public participation is necessary.

40 Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. State of the Public Service Report. 2007.

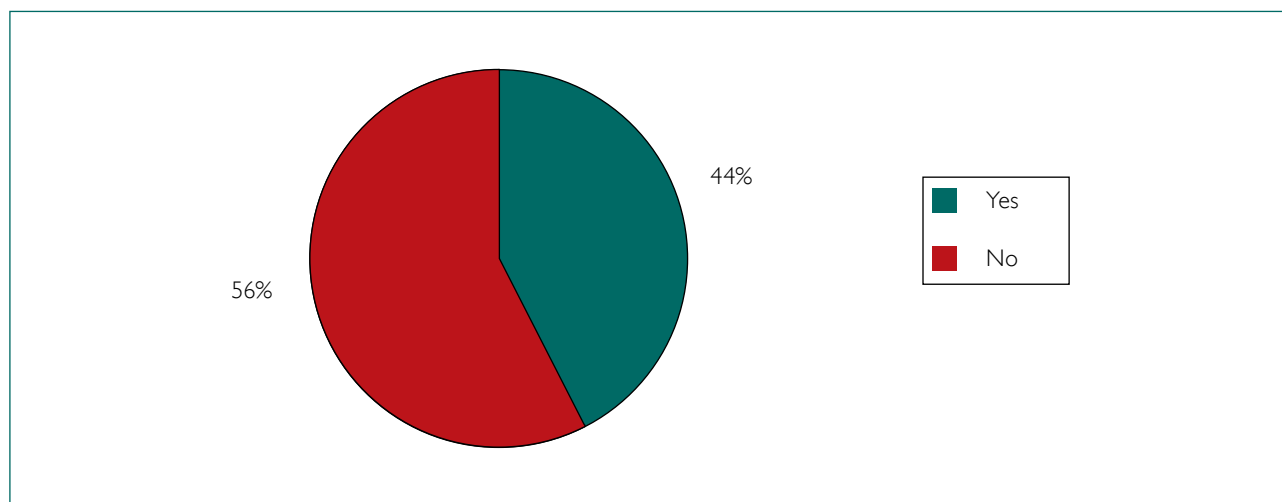
The findings of the study show that as much as departments have experienced several challenges to the implementation of public participation, they have developed plans to address such challenges. The plans included continuous engagement with the communities, development of brochures in different languages, appointment of officials who are multilingual, establishment of a fully-fledged public participation unit, ensuring that there is adequate budget for public participation, translation of officials document that are predominantly in English to local languages spoken in the areas department render services and training of the existing staff in the public participation unit as capacity building initiative. It is hoped that if effectively implemented, the developed plans would contribute significantly to the success of public participation in the respective departments.

#### 4.2.4 Resources Allocated to Public Participation Practices

##### 4.2.4.1 Some departments have established public participation units

The study sought to establish if departments had Public Participation Units (PPUs) to effect public participation activities. The existence of a PPU in a department would indicate that the department values public participation as an integral part of its service delivery strategies. The findings of the study show that 44% of the departments sampled indicated that they have functional public participation units, and fifty six (56%) do not have public participation units.

**Figure 2: Departments with Public Participation Units**



The departments that have public participation units were the three Offices of the Premier that participated in the study, The Presidency, Department of Provincial and Local Government, Department of Local Government and Housing in the Free State and Department of Local Government in Mpumalanga.

Departments that did not have public participation units indicated that public participation initiatives are spread and implemented across the line function components/directorate of the departments. Each line component/directorate in such departments is encouraged to effect and implement public participation in its endeavours. However, it was not spelt out how such directorates go about ensuring that public participation is adequately undertaken. Where public participation is left to respective components/directorate for implementation, it is difficult to manage and monitor such practice. **Figure 2** above shows the percentage of the departments with PPUs and those that do not have PPUs in place.

In the absence of a public participation unit, it is likely that public participation practices are not coordinated and as such implemented haphazardly.

#### 4.2.4.2 Functions of public participation units are varied

The study wanted to establish the functions of the public participation units within departments. It was deemed prudent to establish the functions of such units as it would confirm the functionality and mandates of such units. The findings of the study show that the Presidency, Offices of the Premier in Gauteng and Free State as well as the DPLG had a comprehensive set of functions for their public participation units. These were the same departments that had developed public participation guidelines/policies. The following table shows the different key functions performed by public participation units in the mentioned departments:

**Table 7: Functions of the Public Participation Units**

Departments	Functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presidency Public Participation Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete <i>imbizo</i> Protocol and public participation calendar.</li> <li>Coordinate and organise public participation (<i>imbizo</i>) campaigns and facilitate/host such campaigns.</li> <li>Co-ordinate follow-up enquiries on the Presidential <i>imbizo</i> in consultation with relevant government departments.</li> <li>Create and maintain an information management system for all <i>izimbizo</i> and other public participation events.</li> <li>Design a plan to strengthen the role of PCAS in the planning and implementation of public participation events.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Premier in Free State's Public Participation Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepares, confirms and distribute approved annual schedule of dates and towns/districts to be visited.</li> <li>Prepares Exco-meets the people and <i>imbizo</i> event plan in consultation with project leader.</li> <li>Prepares project meeting schedules and distributes agendas and minutes.</li> <li>Scribes at meetings.</li> <li>Distribute consolidated reports provincially and approved reports to National.</li> <li>During the Exco-meets the people, supports facilitation of event.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DPLG's Public Participation Unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage and co-ordinate public partnerships and empowerment.</li> <li>Establish an enabling environment for civil organisations to participate in governance processes.</li> <li>Develop an appropriate public participation strategy and guidelines for empowerment and participation.</li> <li>Develop support mechanisms for the three spheres of government.</li> <li>Develop a monitoring and evaluation system for community participation.</li> </ul>

Departments	Functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Premier in Gauteng's Public Participation Unit</li> </ul>	<p>Organising and coordinating the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Departmental awards and Premier's Service Excellence Awards.</li> <li><i>Izimbizo</i>, community awareness day and other outreach and public communication and consultation programmes.</li> <li>E-governance and Gauteng Provincial Government portal.</li> <li>Community Development Workers Programme.</li> <li>The Gauteng provincial government services database, services directories, exhibitions and other information products and mechanisms.</li> <li>Anti-corruption campaign.</li> <li>Africa Public Service Day.</li> </ul>

**Table 7** above shows the different key functions performed by public participation units in the respective departments. The common thrust among the responsibilities of the public participation units is the creation of a platform to enable critical engagement between the departments and the citizens as service users. Such platform provides an opportunity for citizens' views to be captured and incorporated in the departments' initiatives.

#### 4.2.4.3 *Staff have not received special training on public participation*

The study sought to establish if staff responsible for public participation has any form of special training that prepared them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Qualifications are an important part of the professional credentials and identity of a public servant. Although they do not directly signify ability and competence, qualifications still imbue their bearer with a certain degree of value and could guide critical recruitment and selection process<sup>41</sup>.

The findings of the study show that in all departments that participated in the study, officials responsible for public participation were trained in diverse professional fields. These professional fields ranged from degrees in Communication, Sociology, Anthropology and History. As much as they were qualified officials, their professional background was not in public participation. However, it was indicated during data collection that whenever possible, officials are taken to courses that would enhance their ability to carry out the job effectively. This was referred to as part of staff development initiative effected by the departments. It is important that staff is capacitated with the necessary skills to work with community members and should have an understanding of the ever-changing dynamics of societies. The execution of participatory models requires a particular set of skills from public servants, such as the ability to negotiate, understand community dynamics, conflict management, and work with, rather than work for communities<sup>42</sup>. In a South African context, this would require reorientation and re-skilling of public servants to address the challenges posed by working in such a context.

#### 4.2.4.4 *Budget allocation for public participation practices varies from one department to another*

Budget allocation to a programme is one of the key indicators of commitment. The study, therefore, sought to determine the budget allocated to public participation activities in the respective department. The findings of the study show that for 2008/09 financial year the majority of departments (62%) had a budget allocation for public participation and 38% did not have a budget allocated specifically for public participation. For those

41 Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. *Oversight Report on the Verification of Qualifications in the Public Service*. 2007.

42 Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. *State of Public Service Report*. 2007.

departments with budget allocations, the amounts ranged from R1.1 million to R12 million. The Office of the Premier in Gauteng was found to have the highest allocation at R12 million, followed by the Department of Agriculture in Gauteng at R7 million. The findings also show that departments that did not have public participation guidelines/policies or public participation unit to perform public participation activities were allocated a budget for public participation. This particular finding suggests that indeed public participation was not only carried out in those departments that have public participation units. It was also conducted in the departments where such units do not exist through various line function directorates. Therefore, the absence of public participation guidelines/policies in a particular department does not necessarily mean that department does not effect public participation.

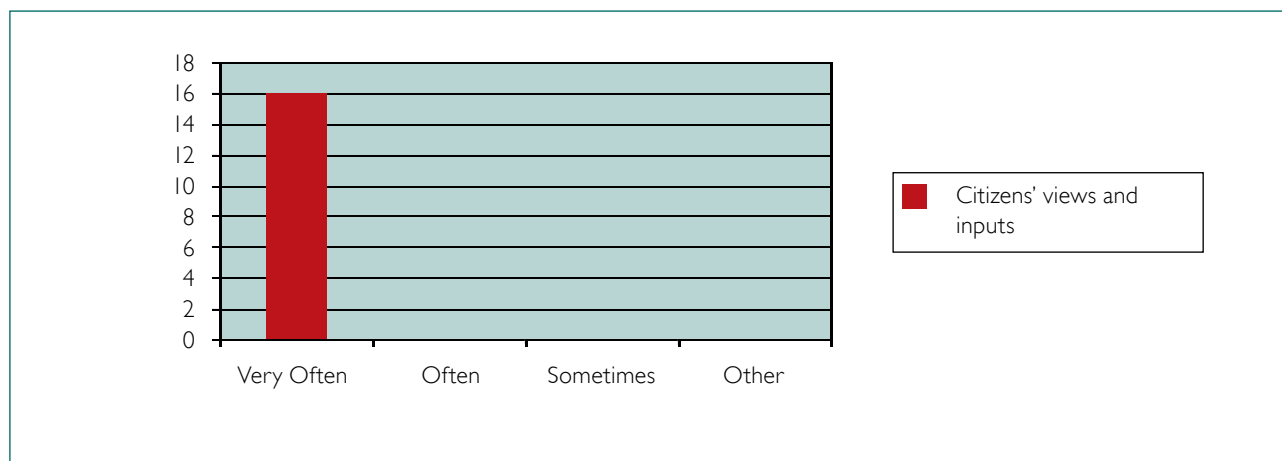
## 4.2.5 Departments' Consideration of Citizens Views Raised During Public Participation

### 4.2.5.1 Departments do consider citizens' views during planning

Public participation is not a ceremonious exercise and the views obtained from the citizens as consumers and service users should be considered seriously if sustainable development is to be effected. The study sought to establish if departments take views obtained during public participation seriously and if such views were considered during departments' planning initiatives.

The findings of the study show that all sixteen (16) departments have indicated that they often take views of the citizens into consideration during planning, policy development and implementation of intervention strategies. Indeed, for departments to develop responsive policies and intervention strategies, it is important to consider the views of the citizens. Citizens are not only consumers of the services, but also key role players in planning of such services. They are well-placed to know issues that concern and affect them most and their views cannot be ignored.

**Figure 3: Citizens' views and inputs**



**Figure 3** above shows the frequency at which departments take the views of citizens into consideration during planning and policy making. It is encouraging that all departments indicated that they very often take the views of citizens into consideration. The findings further show that departments record citizen' views through the following systems:

- The use of audio visuals that are later translated.
- Manual recording by designated officials.
- Registering of all correspondence received from the public by the public participation unit.
- Use of the toll-free number.

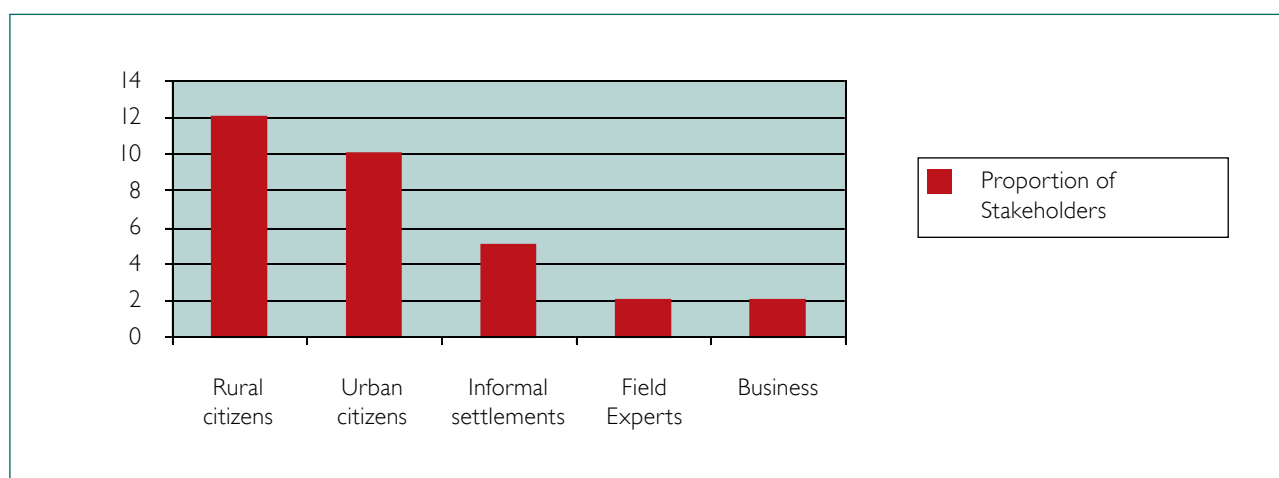


#### 4.2.5.2 Departments do consider views of populations with special interests

The study sought to establish if departments consider views of populations with special interests in their service delivery initiatives. In this regard departments were asked about measures they have put in place to ensure that views of special populations were adequately captured and considered during the departments planning. There is a possibility that views of special populations such as people living with disabilities, people in the rural areas and informal settlements, women, the aged and people living with HIV/AIDS can be easily ignored during departments' planning process. The majority of such populations have no adequate resources to access the services that would improve their livelihood.

The findings of the study show that all departments have indicated that they do not discriminate against people due to their socio-economic and geographical location when inviting participation from members of the public. Departments mentioned that it is within government's policy to mainstream every sector of the society in government activities and initiatives. It was further indicated that during the planning and execution of Presidential *izimbizo*, Exco-meets the people and Ministerial and MECs *izimbizo*, such special populations are high on the agenda of government, and efforts are made to prioritise visits to their location, especially rural areas and informal settlements. It is important to mainstream such populations in government initiatives to ensure that responsive policies are put in place. It is therefore imperative that concerted efforts are made by respective departments to reach out to such populations and solicit their views on how to improve service delivery to them. The figure below indicates the proportion of stakeholders popularly engaged by departments.

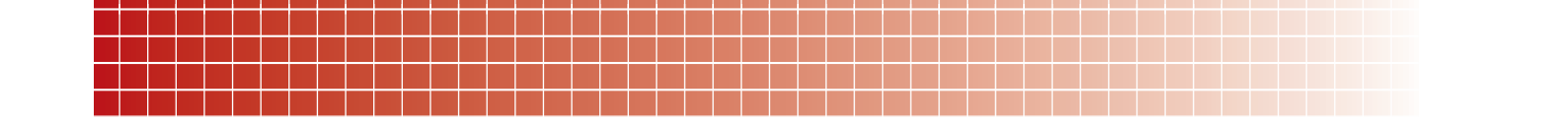
**Figure 4: Proportion of Stakeholders**



**Figure 4** above shows that the highest proportion of stakeholders regularly consulted by departments are from rural areas. In South Africa, rural areas and informal settlements are the underdeveloped and less privileged in terms of accessing services from government departments. South Africa is largely a rural country and as it has become evident through this study that public participation is critical to facilitating development in such areas.

#### 4.2.5.3 Departments make use of local languages

The study also sought to determine if departments use local languages in their effort to effect and facilitate public participation. South Africa is a diverse country with eleven official languages which are spoken across the country. Certain languages are predominantly spoken in certain geographic areas of the country than others and as such, any effort that is meant to effect meaningful public participation should consider such dynamics. The findings of the study show that all departments (16) make use of different languages spoken in the respective provinces.



The use of indigenous languages plays an important role in facilitating interaction with citizens which in turn will influence the actual development and the rate of service delivery. In a country like South Africa where there is high rate of illiteracy, it is imperative that people are allowed to use the languages they feel comfortable with, when expressing themselves during public participation. In this way, people would not be intimidated to express their views and any potential ambiguity can easily be avoided.

#### *4.2.5.4 Engagement with citizens affected by service delivery protests is varied*

At the time this study was conceptualised and conducted, the country was experiencing service delivery protests and xenophobia related attacks on foreigners. Therefore, the study also sought to establish how departments have engaged with citizens affected by service delivery protests and xenophobia attacks. The findings show that only the DPLG has mediated between municipalities and citizens in areas affected by service delivery protest. The involvement of the DPLG in the service delivery protests might have stemmed from the fact that this is the department responsible for the local government sector.

None of the other departments that participated in this study mentioned their initiatives with regard to engaging citizens affected by service delivery protests. The national departments of Housing, provincial departments of Local Government and Housing were selected to participate in this study because of, amongst others, the nature of service delivery protests that have taken place in the country were complaints on services which are delivered by such departments directly or indirectly. Services such as housing, water, electricity, and social infrastructure fall within the competencies of such departments. Therefore, it was hoped that such departments would have dealt with service delivery related protests. This is an interesting finding especially against the backdrop of several service delivery protests and xenophobia-related attacks on foreigners.

Either departments do not want to acknowledge and accept that there were such protests or they do not know how to deal with them. Reluctance by government structures to expose problem areas was earlier highlighted by the Presidency as a threat to public participation<sup>43</sup>. Service delivery protests can be addressed by consulting with the affected communities and ensuring that public participation is effected.

<sup>43</sup> Republic of South Africa. Presidency. Public Participation Unit: Strategic Plan. 2008-09.

# Chapter Five

## Conclusion and Recommendations

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Public participation allows active involvement of citizens in matters of service delivery and it is a critical requirement in a democratic society such as South Africa. It deepens democracy and contributes towards sustainable service delivery. This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study. Recommendations are presented according to the objectives of the study.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

Institutionalisation of public participation in the Public Service is still problematic, despite its importance. While there seems to be a greater understanding of the concept and its importance, this is not matched with implementation. The following summarises the findings of this study:

### **There is a common understanding of public participation**

All 16 departments that participated in the study seem to have a common understanding of public participation as a process of engaging citizens to allow them to have a say in policy making and service delivery initiatives of government. There is a need for the departments to ensure that their understanding of the concept of public participation is matched with the implementation thereof.

### **The existence of public participation guidelines/policies is uneven**

Only 25% of the departments that participated in the study had public participation guidelines/policies in place. Public participation guidelines/policies anchor citizen engagement initiatives and they clearly articulate departmental processes to be followed during engagement with citizens.

### **Stakeholders are aware of the departmental public participation guidelines/policies**

All departments with public participation guidelines/policies indicated that their stakeholders were aware of their public participation guidelines/policies. However, none of the departments, except the DPLG, mentioned the role played by stakeholders in the development of their public participation guidelines/policies.

### **Departments apply different methodologies to effect public participation**

Departments apply different methodologies to ensure effective public participation. *Izimbizo* and Exco-meets the people were the most commonly applied methodologies by departments that participated in the study.

### **There is common agreement on what the benefits of public participation are**

All departments that participated in the study indicated that opportunities were created through the use of various methods and the value of personal interaction between leaders from tiers of government and citizens was especially highlighted.

### **Departments still have challenges in the application of their public participation practices**

Several factors were raised by the departments as the key challenges to the application of their different public participation practices and amongst these, were budgetary constraints, inadequate human resources, lack of feedback on issues raised by citizens and poor institutional arrangements. Notwithstanding these challenges, departments have developed plans to address these.



### ***Some departments have established public participation units***

In 44% of the departments that participated in this study, there were functional public participation units whereas in 56% of the departments there were no public participation units. This finding suggests that public participation in those departments that did not have public participation units is applied haphazardly.

### ***Functions of public participation units are varied***

The study showed that in those departments where public participation units existed, the functions of such units varied. The functions include, amongst others, facilitation of *izimbizo*, EXCO-meets the people, and mobilising departments as well as municipalities to engage in public participation.

### ***Staff have not received special training on public participation***

In all departments that participated in the study, staff have been trained in diverse background and not specifically in public participation. The execution of participatory models requires a particular set of skills from officials such as the ability to negotiate, understand community dynamics and work with, rather than for, communities.

### ***Budget allocation for public participation varies from one department to another***

For 2008/09 financial year, 62% of departments that participated in the study had a budget allocated for public participation and 38% of departments did not have a budget allocated for public participation. Adequate and relevant resources enable departments to implement public participation effectively.

### ***Departments do consider citizens' views during planning***

All 16 departments often consider the views of citizens during planning, policy development and implementation. Consideration of citizens' views during planning and policy development processes ensures a sense of ownership of government programmes by the citizens.

### ***Departments do consider views of populations with special interests***

All departments that participated in the study mentioned that during public participation, they do not discriminate against people due to their socio-economic and geographical location. The inclusion of views from different stakeholders ensures that responsive strategies are developed and implemented in the respective departments.

### ***Departments make use of local languages***

All departments that participated in the study use local languages when engaging with members of the public. The use of local languages encourages people to participate freely and openly without fear.

### ***Engagement with citizens affected by service delivery protests is varied***

With the exception of the DPLG, none of the departments mentioned initiatives undertaken to engage citizens in areas previously affected by service delivery protests. Regular critical engagement between the government departments and citizens would avoid service delivery protests as people would have been kept in the loop about service delivery and policy development processes.



## 5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in the study:

### 5.3.1 Guidelines/policies on public participation

Departments should develop guidelines/policies on public participation to inform and manage critical engagement with citizens. The guidelines/policies on public participation should clearly articulate the objectives of public participation and the process to be followed during engagement with citizens. During the development of such guidelines/policies, departments should ensure that the views and inputs of stakeholders are solicited.

### 5.3.2 Institutionalisation of public participation

Departments at both national and provincial governments, should institutionalise public participation as a service delivery and good governance mechanism. In order to institutionalise public participation, departments should ensure that public participation units are established and have the necessary financial and human resources to support critical citizen engagement.

### 5.3.3 Departments to familiarise themselves with Citizens Forums Toolkit

Departments in both provincial and national governments need to familiarise themselves with the PSC's Citizens Forums Toolkit as a public participation practice. The Citizens Forum Toolkit allows departments and citizens to find solutions to programme specific issues, rather than focusing on department's issues in its entirety. For technical support with application of the Citizens Forums, departments can approach the PSC for assistance.

### 5.3.4 Use of findings contained in Citizen Satisfaction Surveys

Departments need to make use of findings contained in reports on Citizen Satisfaction Surveys as a measure to gauge the level of citizens' satisfaction or lack thereof on services they provide. Such finding will pro-actively assist departments to engage with citizens and address their concerns. It is during such engagement on the findings of the reports where potential service delivery protests can be averted.

### 5.3.5 Training of officials involved in public participation

There is a need for departments to ensure that officials involved in public participation are adequately trained to engage with citizens. Departments need to ensure that officials acquire the necessary skills, especially in the areas such as conflict management, negotiations and understanding community dynamics. Trained officials in public participation will ensure that public participation initiatives in the respective departments are not only led by the elected officials, but are also initiated and led by officials.

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