THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP IN PROMOTING GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF THE MGWALANA TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how well the Mgwalana Traditional Authority (MTA) is performing its role of governing and developing its area and the municipal area of Nkonkobe in the Province of the Eastern Cape. The Chief of the MTA is one of the 2 400 traditional leaders in South Africa who are responsible for giving leadership and development services to approximately 16 million people living in the rural areas. This article tries to find answers to two research questions:

1) What part does the Mgwalana traditional council play in governance and development? 2) Has the South African government managed to add traditional leadership to the local government structures? The article will show that the MTA is finding it difficult to do much socio-economic development because the Nkonkobe local municipality considers governance and development to be its own role, and the traditional leadership is supposed to join only in customary and cultural activities. The research concludes that these two bodies could break this impasse if they follow the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 41 of 2003, and if the municipality works with local stakeholders, including the MTA, to achieve the goals for local government laid down in section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

INTRODUCTION

Political changes started in South Africa in 1992, with the CODESA negotiations which led to our new interim constitution in 1993, and the completion of the final Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. The
Constitution gives the background to what the institutions of traditional leadership and the municipalities in the rural areas are, and what they are supposed to do. However, since the establishment of local government in 1995/1996, it has still not become clear what part the traditional leadership should play in governance and development for the benefit of their communities. Governance and development were part of their domain before the advent of the 1994 democracy.

Houston and Somadoda (1996:3) agree that before the democratic and liberalisation process began, the institutions of traditional leadership had far-reaching administrative and judicial powers in terms of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. Their functions included the ‘allocation of land held in trust; preservation of law and order; provision and administration of services at local government level; social welfare administration ... including the processing of applications for social security benefits and business premises; and promotion of education, including the erection and maintenance of schools and administration of access to education finance.’ Ntsebeza (2003:32) writes that before colonial rule, traditional leaders had even more authority and power, and were in charge of almost all the areas of their subjects’ lives. Traditional leaders had control over political functions, and safety and security, governance and development were their responsibility. The political functions included the overall protection of the local people as well as relations with people from the outside. They also had control over the economy, as they distributed land and collected taxes. They made court decisions and judgments and carried them out, and controlled the health systems. Finally, traditional leaders had control over cultural functions, which included the sacred and spiritual, custom and tradition, and general cultural matters (Ntsebeza 2003:32-33).

Chief Zibi of the Mgwalana traditional authority agrees with the above, saying that historically a traditional leader held all the leadership functions of his community. He was a symbol of unity for his people. He was a religious leader, a guardian of the culture, customs, and values of his people, and their defender as well as judge. He kept law and order, was responsible for the development of his community, and saw to it that there was good governance in the administration of the traditional council. Tooke (in Ntsebeza 2003:33) supports this view when stating that ‘the King or Chief is not merely the most important and most powerful member of the nation or tribe, he is the nation or tribe, the embodiment of all the attitudes, emotions and values that ensure its solidarity.’

In the CODESA negotiations, the traditional leaders argued for their institution to keep its historical functions. Their strength in terms of their existence for centuries, their number and the population rate of the rural areas could not prevent negotiators from the old Nationalist Party government and the African National Congress (ANC) from limiting their roles and functions only to matters of customs and culture. As a result, their part in governance and development planning processes had to be shared with the municipalities (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:93).

Some of these functions and roles mentioned above are shared by the three spheres of government in terms of Section 152 and Part A and B of Schedule 4 and 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. It is in this regard that the elected democratic leaders such as councilors consider themselves more powerful. They have the authority to perform the roles of development and governance for all communities in their respective areas. With the allocation of municipal budgets by Parliament, the availability of human and financial resources puts municipalities in the centre of development at a local level. Municipal leaders have the respect of the communities, unlike the traditional leaders who only get salaries from the government, and donations from municipalities and from other organs of state to celebrate birthdays or heroic events of their kingdoms.

Traditional leadership is the oldest form of societal organisation that delivered on developmental needs of communities, and preserved the culture, traditions, customs and values of African communities (Khunou 2009:1) but it has been degraded in the post-democratic South Africa. This needs to be debated further. The point of departure in this regard would be to revisit the ANC’s Constitutional Guidelines which stated that ‘the institution of traditional leadership shall be transformed to promote the democratic interests of the people’ (ANC 1987). According to the Memorandum from Nkosi Phathekile Holomisa (A. Dilizintaba) to the President of the ANC, Jacob Zuma, Holomisa requested a meeting between the ANC and Contralesa, saying that the ANC and its government failed to deliver on its promise as enshrined in their Constitutional guidelines. This article will discuss whether the government of the ANC has successfully enabled the institution of traditional leadership to promote the democratic interests of communities in rural areas. In this context, the legal framework of traditional leadership with specific reference to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (TLGFA), 2003 (Act 41 of 2003) will be critically examined to determine what role the institution of traditional leadership could play in improving the quality of life of the rural poor. A case study of the Mgwalana traditional council is given as an example.

The Mgwalana Traditional Authority

The MTA is in the Province of the Eastern Cape, and is located in the Amatole District in the Nkonkobe local municipality. It lies between the towns of Alice and Middledrift, with Alice situated on the south-west and Middledrift on the south-east. On the east lies the Fort Cox Agricultural College. There is a branch road running from Alice to the south of the MTC through Middledrift to King Williamstown and Bisho. Middledrift District lies in a fertile basin in the foothills of the Amatole Mountains. There are mountains – the Amatolas from the north-east to the north-west – then rolling hills take over to the south-east. There are streams running through the villages which act as boundaries for the different villages (Cherry, in Bentley et al. 2006).
The MTA is situated in Ward 16 of the Nkonkobe local municipality and therefore falls under the Amatole district municipality, which is one of the six district municipalities in the province. In relation to magisterial and electoral districts, the MTA falls under Middledrift. It is made up of five villages, namely Zibi (Mahlu- bini), Zali (Mabheleni), Cildara (Nxasana), Ngele and Nothenga (Upper Regu). The Chief’s homestead is situated in Zibi village, which is the village chosen for this in-depth study. The homesteads at Zibi village are scattered into three sections: the first cluster of homesteads is called KoMkhulu, the second Kwa-Madakana, and the third Kwa-Mnqayi. There are 135 households1 in Zibi village and nearly half (64) are female-headed. The so-called ‘betterment planning’ experienced in the 1960s is evidenced in the close proximity of the houses and the distance of the fields from the residential settlement. Zibi village has a population of over 1 702 (234 families)2 of Fingo (Mfengu) and Gaika-Mbo (Ngqika-Mbo) (HSRC 2006).

THE HISTORY OF THE MGWALANA TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Mgwalana traditional area was granted to Chief Shadrack Zibi by the British colonial government in return for the support of the amaHlubi during the frontier wars. The area then became known as Emahlubini. The history of the amaHlubi is a complex and interesting one and deserves to be recorded in more detail. An initial outline is given here in order that the dynamics of traditional leadership in the research site may be properly understood. The local historian and Key Informant 1 told the history of the Zibi chieftaincy and their role in the frontier wars in the following manner:

The Zibi chieftaincy originates from nature and tradition – they were born to be chiefs, starting from Bhungane, the person who made sure that this chieftaincy got recognition. He was the person above all people in the Hlubi tribe, who bred all these chiefs. The Zibi people came from Natal where they fled the Shaka wars, the Mfecane, and ended up in their current location. When they first arrived it was difficult for the Mfengu, because on the way from Natal, moving and looking for a place to settle, they arrived at locations with people already settled. They also needed a place to live and the first question they were asked was whether they had a chief among them. They realised that if they revealed their chief, he would be killed, so that they could easily be captured and incorporated into the other tribes.

When the Miengu left Natal, the amaXhosa had already occupied the Eastern Cape. The Miengu decided to hide their chiefs and chieftaincy and claim to have left them in Natal and to have fled without them. This is how the Miengu chieftaincy got suppressed throughout the years.

During those years, the wars between the blacks and whites were still in force. In the early decades of the 1800s (the wars of Ngayechibi), blacks became more powerful and it was becoming more difficult for whites to conquer them. Seeing this, the whites decided to survey the land to create new boundaries, and in that process they created buffer zones (places where no one was allowed to settle and live). These buffer zones (also known as ‘no man’s land’) were meant to create space between blacks and whites so that when blacks decided to attack the whites they could be seen before reaching the whites’ area. People who were found residing in these areas were arrested. Even after this strategy was put in place, the Xhosas made means to get to the whites and they went to the extent of organising attacks which were executed during the night.

The Miengu, on the other hand, were being ill-treated and insulted now and again by the Xhosas because they resided in the Xhosa land. Realising these tensions between the two groups, the whites decided to make friends with the Miengu with the aim of gathering support among them in exchange for land. The deal was that the Miengu would assist the whites to conquer the Xhosa and capture take over land; the Miengu would in turn be awarded a share of the land where they could live peacefully. That is how the Miengu became informers for the white people. They fought these battles and defeated the Xhosas and this is how the so-called buffer zones were awarded to the Miengu. Zibi’s people were awarded the land where they currently reside (which was also a buffer zone); the buffer zone included the Peddie area up to the Kei River. After the Miengu were awarded these buffer zones, they decided to reveal their chieftaincy and were recognised.

The British colonial policy was annexation and rule of the Xhosa people and other Nguni (Xhosa-speaking) people through their chiefs. Between Mbem and Alice, there was a band of villages which were organised on the basis of quitrent land holding, with free commonage. Schools and missions were established as part of Sir George Grey’s ‘civilising mission’ and to form a buffer zone between the white settlers and the amaXhosa further to the east.

1 The number was obtained during the field work period (site scan) done in September 2005
2 The number was obtained during the fieldwork period (focus group) conducted 19/09/2005
3 Interview conducted w th Key Informant 1 on 4 October 2005
Cape reclaimed their chieftaincy in a difficult and protracted process of negotiations:

About the Zibi residents who refused to move with the chief, Shedi wanted to punish them and make sure that no chief would be installed in his place even though he was far away. The Zibi residents went to the magistrate offices but were informed that Shedi had not granted permission to inaugurate a new chief in his place. It was not difficult for him to do so because most of the work including overseeing residential and field sites demarcations had already been done. Shedi wanted to rule in both places i.e. in Rustenburg, as well as in the Cape. He appointed one man from within the Royal family to be a headman for the people remaining behind. After the headman passed away, the Zibi residents under the leadership of a new headman started talking about investigating their own chieftaincy. They decided to appoint Mr Yorwana Zibi from the Right Hand House and he was appointed headman so that he could familiarise himself with governing matters with an intention of making him the chief after their chieftaincy had been granted back. It was around the 1960s when this matter became very serious, and Zanoxolo was the living son from the Right Hand House. The government advised the Zibi people to go and seek written permission from the chief in Rustenburg allowing them to appoint a chief to rule among the people who were left back home.

Old men were elected to go to Rustenburg to seek the permission. Chief Shedi had already passed away and his wife was the one acting on behalf of his son, Madoda Zibi. She gave them the permission which they took to the magistrate office. They went to Port Elizabeth where the late Zanoxolo was working, to inform him of the community’s decision to make him a chief. He refused, stating that he was working for his family, but the people persuaded him, stating the fact that the Zibi community was ill-treated by Chief Mhlambiso’s authority. Mhlambiso employed only his people and that created resentment towards Chief Mhlambiso amongst the Zibi community. Chief Mhlambiso was also against Zibi people obtaining their chieftaincy.

After the trip to Rustenburg in 1976, the Zibi chieftaincy was eventually reinstated, and Chief Zanoxolo Zibi was officially appointed in 1978. The Mgwalana traditional area was named Mgwalana, who was the first-born son from the Right Hand House. Chief Zanoxolo is the fourth generation of Mgwalana. In 1981, with Ciskei independence, Sebe’s regime attempted to co-opt traditional authorities and

One informant from Zibi explained:

The Hlubi allowed the missionaries to come to their villages and they built churches with missionary schools in the area, i.e. the Reformed Presbyterian, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian churches. The Zibi community was among the first communities to have schools operational in their area, especially Standard 6. Children used to come from faraway places to study at Zibi. Falconer is the name that was given to the Reformed Presbyterian church school; hence the Zibi village was at some stage known as Falconer. In general, this is how people from Zibi village became well educated and enlightened at an early stage.

This understanding of the history of the amaHlubi (Mgwalana Traditional Authority) is confirmed by Key Informant:

Chief Shadrack Shedi Zibi was among the first chiefs to lead the Zibi people. He was educated and was able to read and understand various government laws. This is where the problem emanated because he could understand the laws. The Native Land Act, 1913 (Act 27 of 1913) became a source of conflict because it provided that all the land belongs to the government – a chief could not do anything on the land without the approval of the magistrate. Shedi hated this Act because he felt that one cannot be declared chief if he does not have control over his own land. He gathered support from his people, including the KeiskammaHoek area, informing people of the provisions of the Native Land Act, 1913 (Act 27 of 1913). He felt that the Zibi people should buy their own land wherein the chief would have land rights and powers. This is how Chief Shedi ended up in Rustenburg.

In the 1950s, with the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act, 1951 (Act 68 of 1951), the amaHlubi were incorporated against their will into the Ngqika-Mbo Tribal Authority under the leadership of Chief Mhlambiso. This event was remembered as ugunyaziwe 1 (the first authority) and is remembered as a painful event by some of the older residents of Zibi village, for Chief Mhlambiso, although an amaHlubi chief, was not the chief of the Zibis. This was thus a typical case of the imposition of traditional leaders on a particular community. However, the area did not become a dumping ground for people forcibly moved from the ‘black spots’ of white South Africa in the apartheid era. In the 1970s, the amaHlubi of the Eastern

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4 Interview with a senior resident on 28 September 2005
5 Interview on 4 October 2005
6 Interview on 28 September 2008
enforce a system of headmen on people who strongly resisted control and rejected the homeland system in its entirety. The Zibi community and chieftaincy had good relations with Sebe’s government. Following their vow to follow the government of the day, many of them were active in the Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP) and the Ciskei bureaucracy. These good relations were also cemented by the marriage of L.L. Sebe to N. Mkhosana from the Zibi village, whom he met while they were school teachers. Sebe was therefore the son-in-law of the Zibi community. In 1996, Chief Zanoxolo passed away, and Chieftainess Nongamile was appointed as regent.

There are 16 traditional representatives of the MTA, 13 of whom are elected by villagers. Although this is meant to be a democratic process, it is not clear when last these representatives were elected, as the committee has not changed composition for more than 18 years. There is thus no clear understanding who should be appointed as headmen according to tradition, as the chief did not have any sons who could be appointed as inkosana (headmen). MTA members state that they are waiting for the implementation of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003, to reconstitute headmanship. It will be interesting to see how the MTA will be reconstituted in line with the TLGFA, where only 40% of the members will have to be elected. The question that arises is whether the MTA will be more or less democratic, and more involved in local government affairs.

THE ROLE OF MGWALANA TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY IN DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The roles and functions of traditional leadership are provided for in the National House of Traditional Leaders Act, 2009 (Act 2 of 2009), and the Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2009 (Act 41 of 2003), and are discussed below. Section 11(1)(a) of the National House of Traditional Leaders Act, 2009 (Act 2 of 2009), states that traditional leaders must cooperate with the provincial houses of traditional leaders in order to promote:

(i) the role of traditional leadership in a democratic constitutional dispensation
(ii) nation building
(iii) peace, stability and cohesiveness of communities
(iv) the preservation of the moral fibre and regeneration of society
(v) the preservation of the culture and traditions of communities
(vi) socio-economic development and service delivery
(vii) the social well-being and welfare of communities
(viii) the transformation and adaptation of customary law and customs so as to comply with the provisions of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, 1996, in particular by preventing unfair discrimination; promoting equality; and seeking to progressively advance gender representation in the succession to traditional leadership positions.

In addition to the above, the traditional leaders must be consulted on national and provincial government development programmes that affect traditional communities. In this regard, they are required to complement and support the work of government at national and provincial spheres. For them to succeed in performing these duties they must form cooperative relations and partnerships with government at national level in development and service delivery, and may participate in international and national programmes geared towards the development of rural communities (see Section 11(2) of the National House of Traditional Leaders Act, 2009 (Act 2 of 2009).

The institution of traditional leadership or council may also perform the following roles provided for in Section 20(1) of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2009 (Act 41 of 2009): ‘arts and culture; land administration; agriculture; health; welfare; the administration of justice; safety and security; the registration of births, deaths and customary marriages; economic development; environment; tourism; disaster management; the management of natural resources; and the dissemination of information relating to government policies and programmes.’ These duties and functions are not given to traditional leaders on a silver platter, but national or provincial government, as the case may be, may, through legislative or other measures, decide when and what role(s) and function(s) to allocate to a traditional leader or council. It is the responsibility of the allocating sphere of government to monitor and evaluate the performance of the traditional leader to ensure that the latter in, performing such a function or role implemented, is consistent with the Constitution; and the function is being performed in an excellent manner. It is in this regard that the role of the Mgwalana traditional leadership or authority with reference to it performing the roles or function of governance and development is discussed. The focus is on how the MTA is improving the sustainable livelihoods of its communities, and the extent to which it is using land for improving human settlement and whether the people have access to land for agriculture purposes. In addition, how the MTA is working with the Nkonkobe local municipality to develop and maintain the infrastructure necessary for socio-economic development, and whether the participation of the Mgwalana traditional leadership and her communities in the integrated development planning of the Amathole District municipality and Nkonkobe local municipality have improved service delivery in the area are discussed below.

A CASE STUDY RESEARCH APPROACH

The case study research approach was selected because it is qualitative in nature and because it allows direct observation, and a researcher can understand complex issues of roles and duties performed by the Mgwalana tradi-

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7 Interview 28 September 2005
tional leadership. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of the qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods (Babbie 2007:148). Yin (1997:23) defines the case study research method as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are discussed. The use of case studies can be time-consuming because of the large amount of time required for the fieldwork stage. In this article, the research was made somewhat easier by the fact that the first author knew the area very well. She grew up in the area, and one of the Key Informants (Mr George) is her grandfather. This situation ensured that the researcher obtained maximum participation in direct observation, thereby enhancing the quality of information gathered.

The research started in 2005 as part of a bigger Human Sciences Research Council project which was a longitudinal study on ‘the effect of the legislated powers of traditional authorities on rural women’s rights in South Africa’ (Bentley et al. 2006). At this time the first author was registered for a Masters degree in Developmental Studies with a treatise titled ‘The role of traditional leadership in promoting governance and rural development in South Africa: a case study of the Mgwalana Traditional Authority’ which was submitted for examination in December 2010. The first author was then employed by the HSRC to be the field worker for the bigger study while she was also gathering data for her own research project.

The following case study research techniques were used.

**Questionnaires**

During the field research for the study, a semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. This type of questionnaire was appropriate as it took into consideration the need of the respondents to elaborate on issues asked and those relevant to the history of the Mgwalana traditional leadership, and its role in governance and development. The questionnaires were written in English, but interpreted for the respondents in isiXhosa as the mother-tongue of all the respondents was isiXhosa. The researcher translated the responses back into English at the end of the interviews.

**Interviews**

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and a total of nine key informants were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviewees comprised the chief, the chief’s councilors, elderly men and women, the local ward councilor, the ward committee representative, and the secretary of the MTA. All the respondents were available for the interviews, and participated willingly in the project. The only challenge was that it took a long time to translate the interviews into English. The informants were requested in the interviews to comment on the history of the MTA and its current role in promoting good governance and development in the area. The interpretation and analysis of the data are provided below.

### The interpretation and analysis of data

#### Improving the sustainable livelihoods of the local communities

The MTA has helped its communities to receive income from the government in the form of old age pensions, child support grants, and disability grants. There are some families who are sent cash by family members working in towns and cities. Those who have no family member in the towns live on subsistence farming that the MTA has developed with financial help from the government. Communities are encouraged to farm livestock such as cattle, goats, sheep and chickens, and use these as sources of food or income. There are also a few people who are self-employed, running spaza shops, shebeens, or selling goods such as vegetables and amasi in Middledrift and Alice. Both the primary and high schools in Zibi have school gardens that are ploughed by the pupils and teachers, and the produce is sold to the local community. The households who have no income and food rely on the MTA, on other people’s generosity and on government food parcels that are distributed now and then.

#### Land access and land usage

Land is surveyed and in the old days was held on a quitrent system of tenure. Quitrent landholding is like freehold land tenure, but there are restrictions on the right to sell land. Land could be subdivided only under particular conditions and had to be passed from the father to the eldest son. When land is sold, the traditional leader or her representative must be informed and must give her consent. There are currently 189 families in the Mgwalana traditional area who have land rights, and who have been assisted by the Chief to get them (Minkley & BRC in Bentley et al. 2006).

In the household survey of Zibi village, of the 135 households, 64 have access to land in the form of field sites. Of these 64, 31 are female-headed households. But it is necessary to qualify by means of a clear definition what a female-headed household consists of. It is unclear whether there are any title deeds registered in the names of women (but it is unlikely since at the time the title deeds were just granted, not registered). Although, African women were not legally entitled to own land, currently, the MTA does allocate land to them on request.

A land claim was lodged in 1998 by the MTA for land dispossessed before 1913 (in the 1870s) according to the Border Rural Committee (BRC). There was also a claim by the community for compensation for their forced removal and relocation through betterment planning in the 1960s. Both these claims are being processed by the Department of Land Affairs, and many households will benefit.
The respondents mentioned a problem with the lack of productive agriculture in the MTA which does not seem to be an absolute shortage of land. Rather, it is a combination of factors which have led to the steady decline in productivity in the area. Residents of Zibi complained that since the ‘betterment planning’ of the 1960s, the fields were located too far from their homes, and that the lack of fencing for fields results in livestock straying onto crops and destroying them. In addition, the absence of an irrigation system, and of money to buy seeds, fertiliser and tractors for ploughing also contribute to the problem. Field sites are now overgrown with trees (alien vegetation) which will have to be removed before ploughing can take place. General issues identified by the BRC include fencing, soil conservation, grazing and camps.

According to the ward councilor, women would like to engage in poultry and pig farming, but there are no funds available for the MTC to help them to do so. Lastly, there is a lack of will power and a labour force among the Zibi residents because the majority of the working-age population has left the village in search of work in nearby towns and cities. In relation to land usage, the projects that have been started include various gardening projects as well as the provision of a ward tractor by the Amatole district municipality through the Nkonkobe local municipality. This ward tractor has been granted to the Masincedane group under the umbrella of the Middledrift Farmers Association (MFA), a project which the MTA has to monitor together with the MFA.

**Infrastructure and service provision**

The MTA had approached the Amatole district municipality as it is the main source of infrastructure development and service provision in ward 16. As a result of traditional leadership in partnership with government, in 1997 the villages of the MTA received electricity, as part of the government’s programme to extend services to rural areas. While Zibi and other villages forming part of MTC are not far from the towns of Alice and Middledrift, they are situated in a hilly area which has extremely poor dirt roads, making them inaccessible by vehicles in times of rain. The Nkonkobe local municipality has no money to provide for the maintenance and upgrading of public roads, so it referred the matter to the Amatole district municipality. The Amatole district municipality, however, claims that public roads maintenance is the responsibility of the provincial Public Works Department.

While there are dams and rivers in the area, several villages still do not have access to clean drinking water. In Zibi village there are two community gardens which do not produce anything, and the villagers cite the lack of irrigation water and facilities as the main problem. The members of the project are not motivated to fetch water by hand from a nearby stream to use for irrigation purposes. Although Zibi village has water taps, the installation of water taps throughout the MTA has been identified as a priority by the Municipality. The Amatole district municipality and the National Department of Water Affairs, who were asked by the MTA to assist, are engaged in a process of providing water in Zibi, Zali and Nothenga villages. This service has already been provided in other villages.

With regard to sanitation, the available toilets are in a poor condition and the construction of ventilated improved privies (VIP) has also been identified as a priority by the members of the community. Zibi village is relatively well supplied with infrastructure; it has a clinic, public telephones, and a primary and high school in the area. These resources provide services to members of the village as well as the neighbouring villages. Zibi village is positioned at the seat of the MTA, but there is no community hall in the area. Meetings are held in a hut at the chief’s Great Place, even though a community hall was built by the Municipality at Zali location in 2005.

**Improving governance through participation in development planning and projects**

The Nkonkobe Local Municipality has an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) which is reviewed annually. Ward 16, which is the ward area making up the MTA, has its own Ward Community Based Planning (CBP), which was developed by the communities themselves with guidance and support from the Municipality. In January 2004, a series of interviews and discussions were held with the participation of 298 people from the villages. A community-based development plan was produced based on the information that was obtained. Projects that have been identified as priorities include tourism, income-creating programmes, and irrigation for existing vegetable gardens. A tourism centre is also planned for Zibi village.

All the respondents agreed that the MTA and the communities do participate in the governance processes including policy development, IDPs and budgeting of the municipalities. One of the respondents stated that since 2000 there has been a CBP process which invited participation of the MTA and community members for the review of the IDP and ‘to identify gaps and ensure equal distribution of resources’.

The Chiefainess also encourages members of her community to take part in the election of ward committee members, which happens after the ward councilor has been elected. Each village holds a meeting in the presence of the ward councilor and one member gets elected to represent his or her village in the ward committee. It is interesting to note that local government elections in rural areas take the same form as those of traditional authorities, which is the election of a representative from each of the villages. Apart from the ward committee, each village is required to call a general meeting at which three members should be elected to work hand-in-hand with the ward committee member.

The Mgwalana traditional area has both ANC and South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) structures which work together. As a result, an outsider cannot tell the difference between the two. SANCO is, however, very instrumental
in finding jobs (jobs such as cleaning of villages, which usually have a maximum period of a month, known as ukaty). SANCO is also known as the Residents Association, and unlike the ANC sub-branch, the Residents Association accommodates everybody without considering their politics. When SANCO meetings are called, everybody living in the village is expected to attend. The chieftainess is allowed to attend the SANCO meetings. She is not necessarily expected to attend these meetings in person, as long as she sends her representatives. A Ward Committee member representing Zibi village claims that there is a working relationship between her and the chieftainess, including the MTA, because when she goes to deliver letters, reports, inter alia, ‘she is not chased away’ (Interview on 20 October 2005).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

District municipalities are the main agents for rural development in South Africa. They are given the task of ensuring effective and efficient implementation of integrated development planning for the district as a whole which includes areas of traditional leadership. This implies that in addition to preparing their own IDPs, district municipalities must prepare a framework for the IDPs of their local municipalities, and opportunities for traditional leadership to participate. Since many rural municipalities lack the organisational, technical and administrative ability to do these difficult tasks, they leave the work to traditional leaders to encourage their communities to take part in the development of CBPs, IDPs and budgets. The Zibi community agreed with these statements during a focus group discussion, in which the residents said that ‘they are aware of an IDP for their area, but they are not always involved in its development’.

Traditional leadership provides a challenge for local municipalities, as the role that should be played by the institution is still not clear. The TLGFA outlines the roles for traditional leadership, but applying the Act and working with the municipalities still remains a problem. Traditional leadership is seen to be a challenge to the local municipalities because the ANC government originally took the position that traditional leadership would undermine democracy and that as an illegitimate institution, it should be phased out Galvin 1999: 107). The ANC position changed after realising that traditional leadership has strong support in its constituencies, although the claims to this support are open to political manipulation (Ntsebeza 2003:75-76).

Lastly, the Constitution recognises the institution of traditional leadership, and provides it with a role to play in government. Despite the provisions of the Municipal Structures Amendment Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998) that provide for the participation of the institution in council meetings, traditional leaders are still in strong disagreement with municipal councilors about who legally represents rural people, and which structures are responsible for their well-being. The Zibi community also experienced these tensions when the ward committee member of the village, together with the ward councilor, refused to attend meetings held at Zibi Great Place, citing ‘political differences’ 10. Until some agreement is reached and the current tensions replaced with cooperation, it is most unlikely that local government will be able to deliver on rural development. Partnerships between local municipalities and traditional councils must be strengthened through legislative and other measures to improve good governance, and development in rural areas.

REFERENCES


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9 Focus group held in Zibi in September 2005

10 Interview with Key Informant no 8 on 05/10/2005


