



BRIEF

The Role of Civil Society Organisations in the Pilot District Development Model in Waterberg District Municipality, Limpopo Province



cooperative governance & traditional affairs

Department:
Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



planning, monitoring & evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

The South African Government adopted the District Development Model (DDM) as an operational model for improving cooperative governance and building a capable, ethical and developmental state. In his 2019 Budget Speech, President Cyril Ramaphosa concluded that the poor coordination within government departments results in incoherent planning (silo approach), and poor monitoring and implementation of programmes. Subsequently, Cabinet approved the model, through which, the Government sought a paradigm shift whereby 52 District and Metropolitan Municipalities in South Africa are to develop and implement 'One Plan' to improve coordination of state institutions in infrastructure development and service delivery. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) began piloting the DDM in three districts – eThekweni, OR Tambo and Waterberg District Municipalities.

In 2022, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) in partnership with Twende Mbele – a multilateral government partnership – commissioned a study on the DDM piloted in the Waterberg District. The main purpose of the study was to develop a consensus on the role of civil society organisations in the DDM, in particular their contribution to the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the DDM 'One Plan'. Planact conducted the research for the study over a three-month period. A total of 136 people representing 113 civil society organisations across all five local municipalities participated in the study.

The study focused on six thematic issues, which served as a basis of reporting the findings, namely:

- Awareness about the District Development Model (DDM);
- Awareness of the Waterberg One Plan;
- Modes of communication about the DDM and One Plan employed by the municipalities;
- Extent and quality of civil society involvement (including the DDM Hub);
- Challenges and opportunities regarding involvement of the civil society organisations in the One Plan; and
- Possible strategies that can improve the participation of civil society organisations in the development of the One Plan.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

1. To identify current practices in Waterberg District in Limpopo regarding the participation of civil society in the formulation and implementation of the Waterberg District One Plan.
2. To explore possible areas of collaboration between the Waterberg District and CSOs necessary to improve the implementation and evaluation of the One Plan.
3. To identify mechanisms/tools/ideas concerning collaboration in the DDM, that can be scaled and tested nationally.
4. To develop recommendations for strengthening the collaboration between Metro/District Municipalities and civil society in developing the 'One Plan'.

As such the study will serve as a basis for the development of the mechanisms that support productive and sustainable government–civil society collaboration within the South African national monitoring and evaluation system. While this project examines the subject in the context of the Waterberg District, the main users of the research will be local government officials and other state institutions involved in facilitating the DDM. Other target audiences include civil society organisations and communities eager to understand their role in the DDM.

DEFINITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY (CSO)

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) refer to the following formations: non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations (FBOs), voluntary organisations (VOs), social movements (SM) and unions. CSOs in *professional development* provide services to vulnerable groups of people in society by advocating innovative and or alternative approaches to processes of government and public development programmes, for transformation purposes. CSOs apply advocacy and/or activism interventions. Those in *charity and social welfare* provide an on-going service to vulnerable groups of people in society, and animals e.g. institutional homes for abused women and children, health care centres, old age homes, animal welfare etc.

THE ONE PLAN

The model's implementation is based on a One Plan, long-term 25 to 30 year strategic intergovernmental (IG) framework guiding investment, development and service delivery in relation to each of the district and metropolitan spaces (CoGTA 2020). In essence, One Plans must outline the development commitments and expected impacts of projects implemented by the various municipalities. The One Plan Process guidelines stipulate that the different categories of municipalities located in a particular geographic space must develop the One Plans jointly. This collaboration should include, among other factors, intergovernmental planning sessions, reflection on research and innovation-oriented dialogues.

Critically, CSOs should be engaged, and their views incorporated in the One Plans. Also, CoGTA highlights that a catalytic network of support must be established to facilitate collaboration among the various state institutions, and between CSOs and the government. Another important instrument underpinning the One Plan is the Content Guide which outlines the elements of content comprising the One Plan, thus promoting uniformity and quality control. This study, therefore, investigates the nature of the participation of CSOs in the Waterberg District One Plan in relation to these stages outlined in the One Plan Process Guidelines.

The diagram below (Figure 1) shows the seven stages of a One Plan, and the requirement for public participation in stages one to four is indicated.

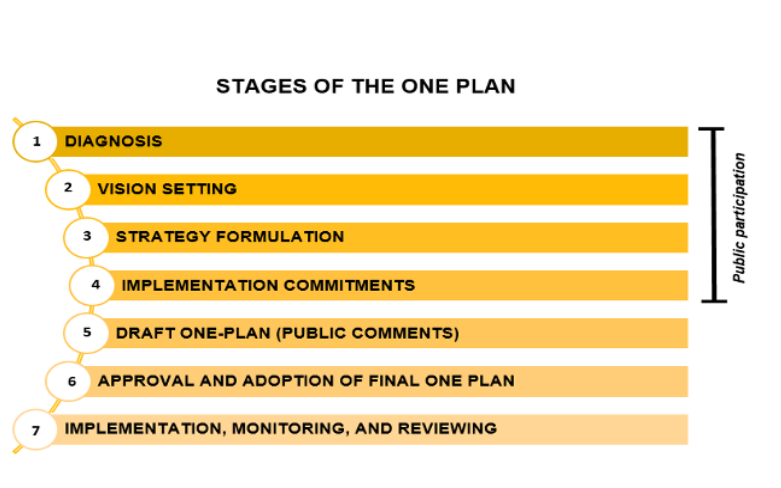


Figure 1: Stages adapted from CoGTA, 2020

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite being positioned as a framework to improve intergovernmental and integrated planning and budgeting, and improved involvement of other actors in local government, participation of civil society organisations has not yet been realised in the DDM One Plan system. The framework inadequately stipulates processes for systematic engagement with civil society in developing plans for each district.

The technical aspects of intra- and inter-departmental coordination come at the expense of other district-level coordination activities and processes, and the exclusion of non-government actors further limits the potential success of the DDM to affect change in communities. Khawuleza Forums have been the primary tool used to access community members/civil society to date. However, the process for mapping an ongoing role for civil society, and how to implement it systematically, have not formed part of these forums.

RATIONALE

The need for meaningful CSO and local community consultation and input into municipal processes, policies and programme development is well established under South African law and public policy. For example, the Municipal Structures Act (1998) mandates that decision-making in the local government sphere must be based on the needs of the people, and that municipalities need to develop community consultation mechanisms. The Municipal Systems Act (2002) provides for a system of participatory governance where citizens have a right to contribute to decision-making processes. Likewise, the National Development Plan (2013-2030) commits the local government to build relationships of trust with communities in order to establish lasting partnerships.

These mandates are of prime importance if core provisions of the DDM are to be delivered successfully through the municipal One Plans. The Waterberg One Plan will only possibly be effective if a deep understanding of the needs of the affected communities is fully integrated into the Plan's objectives and delivery methods, and this can only be achieved through in-depth engagement with the communities themselves. Communities must feel a sense of inclusion and ownership of such initiatives in order to participate in them. This study, sought to evaluate the depth and quality of civil society and community participation in the development of the Waterberg One Plan in order to identify lessons learned to inform the inclusive, integrated and participatory role of the DDM across the country.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research project employs the Arnstein Ladder of Citizen Participation, which provides a continuum of participatory power that moves from non-participation to *citizen participation* (actual power).

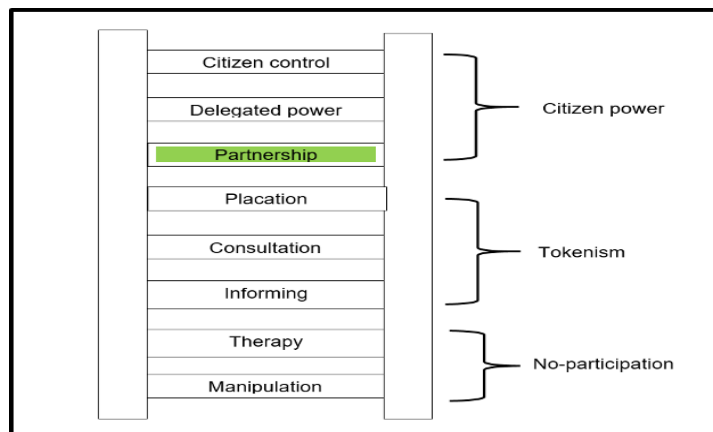


Figure 2: Arnstein Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein 1969)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed qualitative research methods in order to understand the role of civil society organisations in the DDM. The qualitative approach provides a deeper understanding of the issue under study by describing phenomena and explaining how and why they occur, and under what circumstances (Dawadi et al 2021: 27). The research methods included a desktop review and in-depth interviews with three stakeholder groupings: national department officials, municipal officials, and civil society organisations. The research team also reviewed literature about civil society input into programme development, particularly CBOs operating at the local level.

This study employs a transformative worldview, which is concerned with “an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work and live or even the researchers’ lives” (Creswell 2013). For this reason, triangulation or a combination of different research methods was necessary to increase the credibility of the data.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question is how can civil society organisations effectively collaborate with state institutions in South Africa’s District Development Model value chain? **The sub-research questions are:**

1. What is the current nature of relations between government and civil society, as it relates to the DDM?
2. Which parts of the DDM value chain are most amenable to CSO–government collaboration?
3. What are the critical success factors for strengthening collaboration in the pilot site (Waterberg District), that might be able to be expanded (and supported by literature) to ensure that the DDM Implementation plan also has critical success?
4. What contextual factors determine the success of the government–CSO collaboration?
5. What existing tools/platforms/systems can be built upon to harness existing resources for government–CSO communication and collaboration?

WATERBERG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

The largely rural Waterberg District is made up of five local municipalities: Bela-Bela LM, Lephalale LM, Modimolle-Mookgopong LM, Mogalakwena LM, and Thabazimbi LM. The district is also made up of 80 wards, 6 towns, 11 townships, 216 villages, and 30 informal settlements. The district has 11 Traditional Councils with about 47% of the district’s population living in traditional authority areas (IDP 2021). Below are brief profiles of the municipality generated from municipal documents, including their IDPs.

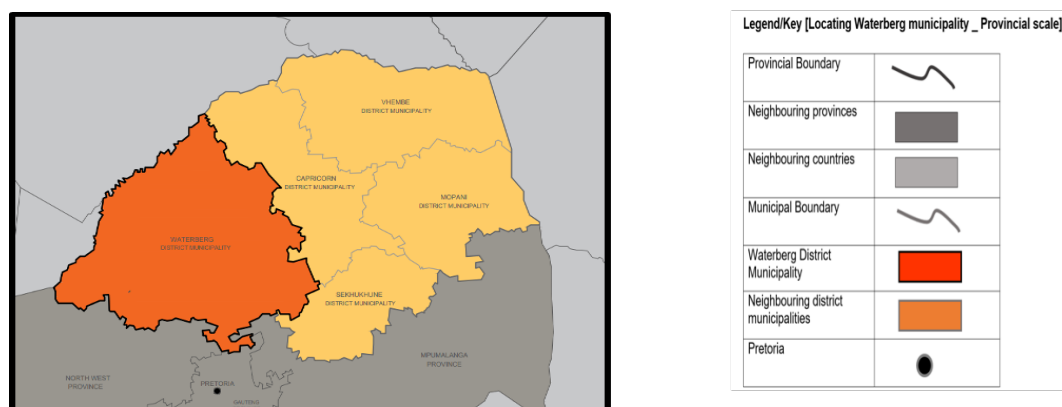


Figure 3: Map showing the location of Waterberg and other district municipalities Adapted from Google Maps by Planact

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETIES (CSO)

The important role of civil society in helping shape municipal policies and practices that are pro-poor is also emphasised by CALUSA (2019:1) which asserts that:

The marginalised and disadvantaged people of a community benefit when civil society is engaged in shaping policy, particularly when engagement is legitimate and well-informed.

Genuine community participation is a process in which people, and especially disadvantaged people, influence resource allocation, and policy and program formulation and implementation (Imparato and Ruster 2003:42). This suggests that people should be involved in all stages of development planning and project design.

Underlying the importance of CSO inputs into the development of the DDM One Plan, the official Implementation Guidelines mandate stakeholder and community involvement in the following stages:

- Diagnostics (situation analysis);
- Vision Setting;
- Strategy Formulation; and
- Implementation Commitments.

However, the Waterberg District One Plan document (2021) acknowledges that civil society engagements in the formulation of the One Plan were limited both in terms of the number of meetings held and the number of people who attended. This was, in large part, due to the necessary observance of COVID protocols. Consequently, few people attended the IDP representative forums whereby the draft Waterberg One Plan was presented and discussed, along with the IDP. The Plan concluded that, therefore, that broad public engagements were not conducted to the expected scale, standard and norm.

Greater involvement in the vision-setting stage would have helped ensure that the CSOs, and the communities they represent, had a sense of ownership and a stake in helping realise the One Plan vision. Similarly, greater involvement in strategy formulation and implementation commitments by the CSOs may have made the One Plan more impactful.

This study, sought to evaluate the depth and quality of civil society and community participation in the development of the Waterberg One Plan in order to identify lessons learned to inform the inclusive, integrated and participatory role of the DDM across the country.

FINDINGS

1. Most of the consultations for the One Plan occurred at a high level, thereby missing most organisations based in communities. The consultations did not reach many CSOs, instead it focused on inter- and intra-department engagements. Consequently, more than 90% of CSOs were not aware of the DDM and did not participate in the stages of the One Plan. For example, in Thabazimbi Local Municipality, only two of the 30 participants were fully aware of the DDM.

2. Under-consultation of municipalities concerning the One Plan resulted in their passive response and engagements with CSOs. The municipalities observed that the Waterberg District failed to properly integrate the One Plan into the local municipalities' systems. This has contributed to the exclusion of CSOs in the One Plan in the sense that municipalities had not planned for tailor-made awareness and education programmes and did not engage them specifically on the One Plan.

3. Civil Society Organisations consider the diagnostic, vision-setting and strategy formulations as critical stages warranting their active involvement. Greater involvement in the diagnostic, vision setting and strategy formulation stages would have helped ensure that the CSOs, and the communities they represent, had a sense of ownership and a stake in helping to realise the One Plan vision.

4. There is scope for much greater effort by municipalities to consult civil society organisations (CSOs) comprehensively. Notwithstanding the fact that municipalities are not allocated specific funding for involvement of CSOs in the One Plan, broadened community engagement processes are required to facilitate the participation of community-based organisations (CBO). Such an effort should not require substantial additional skills or resources.

5. Engagement with communities is critical and must go beyond inclusion of CSOs only. Not all community members are represented by CSOs in terms of their needs, experiences, and ideas. Municipalities need to make a concerted effort to create alternative spaces of engagement to reach such communities and to facilitate their meaningful input into the development of the One Plan.

6. Existing local government processes for participation are ill-equipped to effectively promote CSOs' engagement in the One Plan. Few initiatives were undertaken by municipalities to create an effective relationship with CSOs and, as such, consultation for the development of the DDM One Plan for Waterberg Municipality mainly utilised the standard Integrated Development Plan (IDP) consultative process. The traditional spaces of participation (which are already weak) were further constrained by the Covid-19 pandemic-related lockdown restrictions, which limited movement of people and interaction.

7. Lack of an inclusive CSO network exacerbates the marginalisation of CSOs in the District Hub. The study finds that the municipalities lack a vibrant CSO network, which could catalyse the involvement of its members in the One Plan and the District Hub. Critical success factors for strengthening collaboration in the pilot site include educating the community around the DDM One Plan, facilitating the creation of an inclusive network of CSOs and supporting their representation in the Waterberg District Hub.

8. Many CSOs lack the resources to participate in local government processes. Therefore, even if they were aware of the DDM, their participation would have been limited. Currently, municipalities are only funded for the operation of the DDM Hubs, thus suggesting that municipalities have limited funding to support CSOs' participation in the DDM. Municipalities need to leverage the existing resources and develop mechanisms for attaining this mandate. The alternative mechanisms do not seek to replace the existing local governance processes such as the IDP and Municipal Budgeting, which have been poorly implemented, resulting in apathy from CSOs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CoGTA and municipalities should create an enabling environment by developing comprehensive guidelines for involving CSOs in the One Plan development process.
2. Provincial CoGTA and district municipalities should develop a comprehensive DDM awareness-raising programme aimed at reaching many more CSOs, with the inclusion of community-based organisations (CBOs) in particular.
3. Provincial CoGTA and the district municipality should establish an intergovernmental public participation forum comprising all the local municipalities to implement the awareness-raising programme about the DDM aimed at reaching all the CSOs.
4. Provincial CoGTA, district and local municipalities should (possibly utilising the intergovernmental forum outlined above) mobilise CSOs and facilitate a network that will actively engage and represent CSOs in the development, implementation and evaluation of the One Plan.
5. Drawing on support from the Hub, district and local municipalities should provide technical support (such as legislative compliance, planning and budgeting, and outcome assessment) to CSOs during the engagement on each stage of the One Plan to maximise the CSOs' capability to meaningfully contribute to the plan.
6. District and local municipalities should mainstream One Plan consultation processes with disadvantaged groups, such as women, youth and people with disabilities, and encourage awareness of rights and solidarity in preventing attempts to divert benefits.
7. In consultation with the local municipalities and other stakeholders, the district municipality should conduct a comprehensive stakeholders mapping exercise and create and constantly update a central database of CSOs active in the Waterberg area.
8. Currently, municipalities are only funded for the operation of the DDM Hubs. National Government (Treasury and CoGTA) should make funds available to municipalities to enable them to undertake much broader civil society engagement. Such funds need to be ring-fenced specifically for community engagement around the One Plan.
9. At the same time, municipalities must make civil society engagement around the One Plan a top priority and should maximise the use of their existing resources towards this objective.
10. CoGTA and DBSA should publish a report or develop a clear mechanism of publishing and implementing changes emanating from the public consultation, with regards to the One Plan. Such mechanisms will help restore the confidence of CSOs in local government and promote their participation in the DDM.
11. Municipalities should ensure that public participation occurs earlier in the development of the One Plan, in particular the diagnostic and vision setting stages.

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