



The Impact of Implementation of Socio-economic Strategies in the Amathole District Municipality: A Review of the Environmental Policy

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KEYWORDS IDP Policy. Policy Framework. Socio-economic Strategies

ABSTRACT The paper examines the impact of implementation of socio-economic strategies in the rural communities focusing on the case of Amathole District. The objective of this paper was to identify the strategic plans used by the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic strategies used for improving the rural communities in South Africa. This paper used a literature review methodology to unpack the strategic plans used by the ADM managers and its local municipalities in achieving successful socio-economic policy. Similarly, the study presented the findings pertaining to the impact of strategic plans used in implementing socio-economic strategies and provided measures or government actions that should be taken by the municipality management in their policy guidelines and procedures. The findings from previous studies revealed that indeed, the ADM Managers faced challenges in implementing socio-economic policy such as LED policy and practical steps that can be taken to address these challenges. The paper gives some contextual framework on the study and explores the ADM Integrated Development Plan (IDP) policy framework for implementation. This together with document analysis, were the sources of data used in the study. The implication of the findings are that unless the impediments stated above are rectified, the role of ADM managers in implementing socio-economic strategies on rural communities will continue to experience deprived socio-economic development and execute poor or substandard policy.

INTRODUCTION

The term socio-economics is occasionally used as a key term with different practices and procedures. A strategy is about consistent behaviours, values and principles against which managerial and planning decisions can be tested and resources allocated (Amathole Regional Economic Development Strategy (AREDS) 2015). According to Simon et al. (1987: xii), 'social economics' may refer broadly to the use of economics in the study of society. Additionally, contemporary practice considers behavioural interactions of individuals and groups through social capital and social markets and the formation of social norms (Becker 1974). More importantly, Durlauf and Young (2001) state that socio-economics studies the relation of economics to

social values. Income should not merely be considered as the only underlying factor or variable for determining socio-economic status of the people living in the communities or rural areas in South Africa. Therefore, there could be other socio-economics variables such as wealth and education among others that also needed to be considered. The rural communities' socio-economics standing have an effect on their sustainable livelihoods. It is on this note that socio-economic status is also viewed as an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure. Socio-economic status depends on a combination of variables, which include occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence. Sociologists often use socio-economic status as a means of predicting behaviour (Cox 2008: 32; Dictionary.com 2016).

According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2011), Amathole District is located in East London and is one of the seven Districts of Eastern Cape Province. According to ADM IDP (2015-2016), the District consisted of seven Local Municipalities which include: Mbhashe,

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Amahlathi, Mnquma, Ngqushwa, Great Kei, Nkonkobe, Nxuba Municipalities. In contrary to this view, the District was composed of eight local municipalities, one of which, Buffalo City has since become a Metropolitan Municipality (Khumalo and Thakhathi 2012; Amathole Regional Economic Development Strategy (AREDS)/LED Strategy 2015). In fact, this district has more than ninety percent (90%) of its 892,637 people speaking Xhosa (Stats SA 2011). Contradictorily, the District's Integrated Development Plan Review (DIDPR) 2008–2009 (ADM 2009) statistics show that seventy percent (70%) of the Amathole District Municipality's populace of about 1.7 million fell below the poverty datum line, with an unemployment rate of forty-nine percent. The major occupation of the people living in the rural areas of ADM is agriculture (Buthelezi 2004: 7). The district accounts for more than a quarter of the province's poverty gap of 26.17 percent (McCann 2005: 8 cited in Khumalo and Thakhathi 2012). Amathole is a Category C2 municipality, which is indicative of its largely rural character and low urbanisation rate, as well as a limited municipal staff and budget capacity (Khumalo and Thakhathi 2012).

In South Africa, Eastern Cape Province has the largest rural population where the majority of people live in poor socio-economic conditions such as high rate of unemployment, poor or worst service delivery by the government. Realistically, rural development is definitely slow in this part of South Africa. In addition, this region is exemplified by exorbitant rate of poverty, rampant rate of unemployment particularly among the youth, lack of quality and sound education, rampant pace of crime and poor infrastructural facilities as well as excessive crime rate. Undoubtedly, the majority of these rural communities impediments have been recognised in post 1994 and policy formulation has taken place but the situation for the rural communities has not changed until today (Macanda 2014).

Objectives of the Study

To identify the strategic plans used by the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic strategies used for improving the rural communities.

Research Question

What are the strategic plans used by the ADM managers in implementing socio-economic

strategies used for improving the rural communities?

Problem Statement

Despite the fact that the implementation of the socio-economic strategies and their impact bringing opportunities such as creation of employment and empowerment to the rural communities to be more productive and poverty reduction, ADM managers in South Africa are still failing to perform well in servicing its citizens (Oyelana and Thakhathi 2017a). This is seen from many service delivery protest and demonstrations (Oyelana 2015). Coupled with this, the Integrated Environmental Management Plan for Amathole District Municipality (IEMPADM) (2011-2012) reveals 2012 State of Environment Report (SoER) that was developed in conjunction with review and update of the combined Integrated Environmental Plan (IEMPS)/Environmental Management System (EMS) of the district towards a sustainable and social state. The gaps in operations, implementation and management were identified. These gaps were arranged into 5 action plans; namely: economic development, water resources and sewer systems, waste management, biodiversity and conservation, and climate change (IEMPADM) (2011-2012: 1). It is important for the ADM management or managers to build their own capacity and competency in the implementation of socio-economic strategies so that they can improve their performances and efficiency by providing qualitative service delivery to the rural communities (Oyelana and Thakhathi 2017b). More importantly, given the scenario of the execution of the socio-economic strategies and their impact in providing effective services to the rural communities within the ADM, there is a need to examine the reasons behind the impact of the implementation of the socio-economic strategies in ADM.

METHODOLOGY

This paper used a systematic review of literature from journals, books, conference reports, dissertations and internet sources. The researchers' intuitive experience and knowledge in Public Administration, Government, United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) publications to raise debates and discourses on issues pertaining to the impact of implementation of so-

cio-economic strategies for improving the rural communities of ADM in South Africa were also used.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Plans

The focus of strategic plans must be on issues that are strategically important, linked to and flowing from various plans developed within institutions to fulfil their mandates, especially on Service Delivery Agreements entered into in terms of the broad strategic outcomes (National Treasury 2010: 11). Operational issues such as an institution's finances, supply chain management, information systems or human resources can be considered strategic priorities if they have to be addressed to facilitate improved performance (National Treasury 2010: 11).

Purpose of Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan sets out an institution's policy priorities, programmes and project plans for a five-year period, as approved by its executive authority, within the scope of available resources (National Treasury 2010: 6).

Focus of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan focuses on strategic outcomes oriented goals for the institution as a whole, and objectives for each of its main service-delivery areas aligned to its budget programmes and, where relevant, also its budget sub-programmes (National Treasury 2010: 6). Strategic Plans do not replace project plans or programme and policy plans appropriate to the activities or responsibilities of institutions. A Strategic Plan should draw on these and other plans or project proposals, and should indicate the likely sequencing of implementation in the period ahead.

Timeframe for the Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan should cover a period of at least five years (National Treasury 2010: 6). Although plans may have a longer timeframe, they should be revised at least every five years, and a draft new or revised strategic plan should generally be prepared for consideration early in

the final year of the prior planning period (National Treasury 2010: 6).

Legal Requirements and Guidelines

Realistically, literature has also showed that the chapter 7 of the South African Constitution of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 2006) also reveals an essential function and role of Local government (LG) in facilitating Local Economic and Social Development (LESD). In fact, section 152(1) of 1996 Constitution reveals the objectives of Local government in improving and ensuring that participation on economic and social development are maintained and sustained (Magwa 2011; Khumalo and Thakhathi 2012). Strategic Plans identify strategically important outcomes orientated goals and objectives against which public institutions' medium-term results can be measured and evaluated by Parliament, provincial legislatures and the public (National Treasury 2016).

Statutory Mandate

The ADM Managers' activities must be founded in the legislative mandates that the District is directly responsible for implementing, managing or overseeing. It is important to note that Strategic Plans give effect to District's statutory responsibilities. Strategic Plans should also reflect broad strategic outcomes of government (National Treasury 2010).

Key Planning Concepts

The focus of Strategic Plans must be on issues that are strategically important, linked to and flowing from various plans developed within institutions to fulfil their mandates, particularly on Service Delivery Concurrence entered into with regard to the extensive strategic results (National Treasury 2010: 11).

Core Essentials Planning Documents

In May 2012, the District Municipality adopted the following strategic plan (ADM IDP 2015-2016: 19):

- ♦ Vision;
- ♦ Mission; and
- ♦ Core Values

(i) Vision

A vision is an inspiring picture of a preferred future. It is not time-bound and serves as a foundation for all policy development and planning, including strategic planning. It should be specific to the institution but linked to the overall vision of a particular sector or cluster. ADM focused its commitment towards selfless, excellent and sustainable service to all her communities.

(ii) Mission

A mission statement sets out the reasons for an institution's existence based on its legislative mandates, functions and responsibilities. The mission should succinctly identify what the institution does, why and for whom.

The Amathole District Municipality, in its developmental mandate, is dedicated in contributing to:

- ♦ Ensuring equal access to socio-economic opportunities.
- ♦ Building the capacity of local municipalities within ADM's area of jurisdiction.
- ♦ Ascribe to a culture of accountability and clean governance.
- ♦ Sound financial management.
- ♦ Political and administrative interface to enhance good service delivery.
- ♦ Contributing to the betterment of our communities through a participatory development process.

(iii) Core Values

Values identify the principles for the conducts of the institutions in carrying out its mission. The ADM, in its developmental mandate and dedication with its core values are as follows:

- ♦ **Selflessness:** In all ADM business activities commit that corruption and unscrupulous business practices will be dealt with decisively and objectively.
- ♦ **Pro-poor:** The poorest of the poor will be the main focal point for ADM's business and service delivery.
- ♦ **Responsiveness:** ADM will continue to strive for improved turnaround time in the delivery of services and in dealing with our valuable customers.
- ♦ **Transformative:** ADM will make considerable strides to ensure that adequate ca-

capacity (skills and human capital) equates the mandate and business of ADM.

- ♦ **Inclusivity:** ADM will include all our stakeholders in our planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting in ensuring an integrated effort towards service delivery.
- ♦ **Dignity and Respect:** ADM will ensure that our service delivery restores human dignity and respect.
- ♦ **Good Work Ethics:** ADM will be professional in their conduct and ascribe to the Batho Pele principles.
- ♦ **Transparency:** Throughout their business operation they will ensure access to information and fairness to their stakeholders.
- ♦ **Integrity:** ADM will constantly conduct themselves with utmost integrity as councillors and officials of ADM
- ♦ **Accountability:** ADM are committed in being held to account by their stakeholders and primary customers.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic objectives should state clearly what the institution intends to do (or produce) to achieve its strategic outcomes oriented goals. The goals should clearly be stated like an output statement, though in excellent state of affairs, organizations might indicate them in relation to inputs and activities or results.

Amathole District Strategic Plan or Strategic Approach

The approach used for the Amathole Regional Economic Development Strategy (AREDS) diverges from "Strategy as plan" and tends to "strategy as a series of processes and evolving interventions" focussed on achieving the overall objective (AREDS 2015). This implies that the strategy and framework used by the Amathole District do not detail all projects and activities, but rather encourage and support a culture of continuous learning, "joining-up" and innovation that builds on, and actively invest in, chains and sectors where (AREDS 2015):

- ♦ Competitive advantage exists and
- ♦ Distinctive dependencies can be built that will result in dramatic leaps forward in economic value addition, innovation, competitiveness and higher order economic opportunity.

Culture

Positive cultural features of the district that have been considered in the strategy development and that will influence the strategic vision are (AREDS 2015):

- ♦ Moral conservatism and strong religion beliefs
- ♦ High values place on heritage and culture
- ♦ Willingness to build a non-racial society
- ♦ Support of principles of inclusiveness, solidarity, mutual respect and support
- ♦ Hard working
- ♦ “Laid back” approach to life
- ♦ Pride in role in the struggle history
- ♦ High level of politicization
- ♦ Value placed in the beauty and diversity of the natural environment

Negative aspects include high level of interpersonal violence, poor status of women, high levels of alcohol and substances abuse, marginalisation of those not ascribing to social and cultural norms, lack of respect for public property and property of others and breakdown of moral standards.

It is, therefore, very important for this District Managers to focus their implementation of socio-economic strategy on projects and programmes that will assist them to achieve the purpose of the strategic plan and build on the positive cultural attributes and passively reduce the negative attributes.

The Impact of Environmental Policy on the Implementation of Socio-economic Strategies in the ADM

The “Environmental Policy for ADM from the 2004 Environmental Management System (EMS) is retained for application in this repetition or restatement of the Integrated Environmental Management Plan (IEMP).

Environmental Policy of the Amathole District Municipality

It is the ADM’s overall policy to provide sustainable services and functions that balance with the need to promote the social and economic upliftment of its communities and the need to a safe and healthy environment. ADM is committed to achieve the following objectives by (Integrated Environmental Management Plan

for Amathole District Municipality (IEMPA 2011-2012: 14):

- ♦ Understanding the manner in which the planning and undertaking of its activities services and functions positively and negative affects the environment within its boundaries and how this affects the availability of resources for its communities;
- ♦ Promoting the principle that the environment defines the type and location development;
- ♦ Ensuring strategies for environmental management and sustainable resource use development are coordinated and integrated into all ADM planning activities and enforced according in decision making processes and service delivery;
- ♦ Providing for appropriate and adequate institutional structuring, resourcing and support within ADM for the establishment, implementation and continual improvement of the ADM IEMP;
- ♦ Setting the example for effective environmental resources use management and sustainable service deliver performance for its constituent local municipalities;
- ♦ Coping fully and maintain open relationships with all regulatory authorities with its constituent local municipalities and bordering District Municipalities;
- ♦ Communicating this environmental policy throughout ADM and encouraging commitment and involvement by all staff and officials with the application of the ADM IEMP;
- ♦ Communicating the environmental policy to the public and regularly monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of its implementation;
- ♦ Providing environmental awareness training for all staff and officials and key influential representatives from the constituent Local Municipalities (LMs); and
- ♦ Ensuring the continued performance improvements and evolution of the ADM IEMP through a regular programme of monitoring, reviewing, auditing and updating”.

ADM’S Action Plans

ADM action plans are important implementation of the IEMP. The term action plan can be defined as an operational plan for an organisation. In this study context, the ADM action plans

are defined for the operation of the District (IEMPADM) (2011-2012: 24). In addition, these action plans are specific to the identified significant environmental impacts, and consist of a number of different components that describe the context, actions, and control mechanisms. For reason or practically, the action plans are presented in two parts – firstly an overview that includes details such as intervention actions and resource requirements, and secondly, detail of monitoring requirements.

IEMPADM (2011-2012: 24) emphasized that each action plan is defined by:

- ♦ Potential or actual environmental impacts: brief description of an identified impact;
- ♦ Responsibility: The individual who should be responsible for implementation mitigation plans;
- ♦ Targets: specific thresholds to be reached;
- ♦ Regulatory Requirement and operational Control: Define set parameters to be compiled with;
- ♦ Response Actions: The mitigation or management actions aimed at reducing negative impacts;
- ♦ Monitoring: Key element for a monitoring and reporting framework;
- ♦ Information required: The type of information required to inform mitigation plans;
- ♦ Resources: The types of resources the responsible body will need to ensure is available for the success of mitigate plans; and
- ♦ Priority scoring: Each environmental impact has been rated in term of social flexibility, economic development and environmental integrity.

The ADM's action plans priority is based on numerical values allocated to issues in terms of the effectiveness of the proposed implementation plan (IEMPADM 2011-2012: 24). It can therefore be seen as a reflection of the magnitude of the effect of reporting to priority issues. The magnitude of effect is rated on two levels – whether the intervention improves certain dimensions of sustainability (that is, economic, social or environmental), and whether the intervention will benefit individual components of the different dimensions or the system as whole.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical issue used for this study include Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA).

Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA)

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) identifies the main constraints and opportunities of the poor people's livelihoods. It is used in planning new development activities and assesses the contribution that existing activities have made to sustaining livelihoods (Huttunen 2012). De Haan (2012) defines livelihood as comprising the capabilities, assets (material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. In this context, capabilities refer to a person or household's ability to cope with stress and shocks, and the ability to find and make use of livelihood opportunities. Assets refer to the basic material and social resources possessed by people (Anthony 2013). Activities refer to the ways in which capabilities and assets are combined to achieve livelihood outcomes, and a livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resources base (De Haan 2012). The SLA comprises seven core principles. These principles are people-centred, holistic, dynamic, and built on strengths, macro linkages, partnerships and sustainability.

SLA identifies the interventions that poor people can pursue in their poverty reduction work. Interventions such as counselling programs, education, loans, training, advice, technology and any other activities improve the livelihood of SMEs to employ the growing workforce that can no longer be absorbed by the government or in large-scale industry (Rasheed 2015). This framework enables SMEs to follow diverse activities and accomplish their livelihood goals. SLA recognizes the restrictions of SMEs. Business development services such as entrepreneurship training, management and planning advice and improved market information and access are needed for the purpose of enhancing the livelihood of SMEs as well as their families (Tsoabisi 2012). Financial support from various financial institutions is very essential for the development of SMEs in LED in order to improve the socio-economic development. Realistically, skills improvement and financing allows enhancing the SMEs' capacities and leading to business growth and development. Importantly, physical infrastructure, such as roads, water, electricity, telecommunications together with

business skills training and education are vital both for the well-being of SMEs in general and also for enabling to increase in the contribution of the SMEs.

Undoubtedly, SLA facilitates an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty by focusing on variety of factors, at different levels, that directly or indirectly determines poor people's access to resources or assets of different kinds, and thus their livelihoods (Carney 1998).

The ADM IDP Legislative Structure Plan

The previous studies reveal that on 22 August 2014, the Amathole District Municipality adopted its District IDP Framework Plan together with the IDP/PMS/Budget Process Plan (ADM IDP 2015-2016). These plans were adopted in accordance with the relevant legal prescripts and have dictated the process to be followed for the development of the IDP and the Budget. The District IDP Framework served as a guide to all local municipalities falling within the Amathole area of jurisdiction, and for purposes of alignment in the preparation of their respective process plans.

Most importantly, the District Framework Plan (DFP) outlines the timeframes of scheduled events/activities, structures involved and their respective roles and responsibilities (ADM IDP 2015-2016: 6). The IDP/Budget Process Plan outlines in detail, the way in which the ADM embarked on its 2015/16 IDP review and Budget processes from its commencement in July 2014 to its completion in June 2015.

In the process of developing the IDP and the Budget, a strategic planning session was held from 14-16 January, 2015 (ADM IDP 2015-2016: 7). The session was intended to facilitate provision of a framework that will guide the municipality's strategic direction as reflected in the 5 year strategic document. The strategic framework encompasses the strategic objectives and strategies aimed at realising the mandate of ADM. Furthermore, as part of the IDP process, an analysis was conducted in respect of various sector plans attached to the ADM's IDP (ADM IDP 2015-2016: 7). Some were found to be still relevant and required minor update done in-house, others required a major review, whilst new sector plans were developed. It is very imperative to stress that the draft reviewed IDP and Budget for each year are usually tabled and ap-

proved by Council on 27 March each year. These documents are widely publicised for comments before being tabled before Council for adoption on 22 May each year.

In order to address the IDP comments from the Members of Executive Council (MEC), these were forwarded to the relevant departments and IDP cluster teams where they were discussed and used as a basis for improving the credibility of the IDP (ADM IDP 2015-2016: 7). Strict compliance with Regulation 3(5) has been ensured through an ongoing process of consultation between the ADM and its 7 local municipalities through the operations of the abovementioned structures as well as through the activities of the Municipal Support Unit (ADM IDP 2015-2016: 7).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have shown that the Municipal Strategic Plans (MSP) is needed in order to implement effective socio-economic strategies in the rural areas in South Africa. As a matter of fact, the Municipal Environmental Policy Framework (MPF) also shows that there is the need to provide sustainable services and functions that would balance the need to promote the social and economic upliftment of communities and the need to a safe and healthy environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ♦ ADM managers should focus their socio-economic policies by encouraging more investment so as to create more jobs for all unemployed citizens within the communities. They should formulate and implement LED Policy that would bring about an improvement in the socio-economic problems, like, poverty and unemployment that is faced by people of the District.
- ♦ The ADM managers should try as much as possible to implement "Back-to-Basics" approach thereby ensuring that the communities service delivery sustainability is effectively maintained and essential social infrastructure are provided for rural communities in South Africa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like to thank the University of Fort Hare. This research would not be possible without the institution's funding.

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Paper received for publication on August 2016
Paper accepted for publication on December 2016