Multipurpose Community Centers in South Africa
An Empirical Study of Select Municipalities

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Abstract

The provision of basic services to citizens in a fair and equitable manner has been a challenge for the South African government, given the history of segregation based on race and color that was instituted by the apartheid regime. It is such a challenge that compelled the present government to identify various alternative strategies that will enhance service delivery, hence the birth of an idea to establish Multipurpose Community Centers (MPCCs), which later became known as Thusong Service Centers (TSCs), to serve as the vehicle in enhancing service delivery. The aim of this study was to evaluate if the MPCCs (herein also referred to as TSCs or Centers) established by the South African government do enhance service delivery to the previously marginalized communities. The study was conducted in three provinces in South Africa, and in each province three municipalities where TSCs have been established were randomly chosen on the basis of their geographical location, namely rural, semi-urban and urban areas where previously marginalized communities dwell. Stratified random sampling was utilized in gathering information as the researcher targeted four population groups, namely the beneficiaries of services, government officials who service clients in the TSCs, center managers and provincial coordinators of the TSCs. The researcher utilized structured questionnaires to gather information from beneficiaries of services, semi-structured interview schedule for government officials, and an observation sheet to record how TSCs operate, and whether the government officials practice Batho Pele Principles in serving recipients of services. This article argues that although the introduction of such Centers was a noble idea and that the household access to basic services has changed for the better in certain communities, the Centers have not been successful in accelerating services in some communities as revealed by the study. One of the reasons these Centers are not successful is lack of consultation by government with communities and other relevant stakeholders in the establishment of some Centers to establish what services need to be rendered. Furthermore, some Centers do not have adequate physical and human resources, and the managers running these Centers are not adequately trained in managerial and other relevant skills. The study also revealed that lack of funding makes it impossible for these Centers and services rendered sustainable, and lack of communication and coordination of activities between departments utilizing the Centers render integrated service delivery. The article concludes by giving recommendations that were carefully drawn from the analysis of the findings and the entire study.

1. Introduction

The advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 and the demise of the apartheid regime brought hope to millions that were deprived of decent basic services. The democratically elected government led by the African National Congress, however, was faced with a monumental challenge of addressing the inherited inequalities of the past in, among other things, the provisioning of basic services. Previously inequality and segregation based on race and Color prevailed, therefore the new government was obliged to transform the public service in order to provide quality services to all citizens on an equitable basis, regardless of race, Color and population group. As mentioned by Harsch (2001, 12), democracy ushered a new dispensation as far as the provision of basic services to citizens. However, the inequalities created by the apartheid regime would still linger for a long time.

  A few years after democracy came into being; service delivery to the previously marginalized still remained a big challenge for the newly elected government. Levin (2004, 78), the former Director-General in the Department of Public Service and Administration, acknowledged the fact that the South African Public Service was to a certain extent inaccessible particularly to those in remote and or rural areas due to transport costs that were high and unaffordable. He further stated that lack of information and communication makes it impossible for ordinary citizens that were previously disadvantaged to be aware of what the government offers as far as benefits and services are concerned. It was, therefore, necessary for government, in the interest of the poor, to bring services closer through the creation of "one-stop-shop Centers", especially in previously marginalized rural communities.

  These concerns led the government to explore various methods in which services can be brought closer to the people, and therefore the introduction multipurpose community Centers, herein referred to as Thusong/Assistance Service Centers (TSCs), was seen as the solution.

  The idea of establishing such Centers was first conceptualized in the G-7 Information Society and Development Conference (ISAD) held in 1996 in South Africa through the support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). It was then that the National Information Technology Forum (NTF) appointed a Community Access Task Team (CATT) to look into the possibility of the development of such Centers and their role as integral points in disseminating information and improving service delivery in the South African community (Ladikpo 2005).

  According to Pahad (2005, 7-10), in 1999 the Cabinet mandated GCIS to roll out the program as the pilot project in the delivery of services. The reason for delegating this program to GCIS was that the Department as mouth-piece of government had to ensure that citizens become active participants in government and are well informed on the services they are supposed to be receiving. The Centers were seen as the vehicle that will speed up service delivery and improve the lives of citizens by bringing services closer to them, particularly the poor and previously disadvantaged. From

these Centers, citizens would be empowered through accessing information on government services and resources, and also be utilized as Centers for development and empowerment.

In order for the programme to be successful, as mentioned by the Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS, 2008), the national and provincial public institutions had to be involved in developing an effective community-centered communication, with the main focus on integrated service delivery offered in one locality, that is, citizens have to access a number of services in one place. The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) and its provincial counterpart, the Government Information Centers (GICs), were to support the TSCs initiative by continually assessing information needs in communities and developing creative ways to meet these; identifying and promoting the utilization of the most appropriate mediums available in each area; working with communities and all the stakeholders involved to develop creative ways of passing on messages for all-round development; organizing events for national, provincial, local and other stakeholder leadership to interact with communities; helping communities understand and utilizing all available sources of information including radio, TV and the internet; promoting the need to maintain specific focus on gender, youth and other sectoral issues; and sustaining intergovernmental relationships between national, provincial and local government.

2. The Concept of Multipurpose Community Centers

According to Benjamin (2008, 2) a Multipurpose Community Centre is an adequately resourced establishment in which government provides diverse services to a community in an efficient, cost effective manner, and enables a community to develop itself through programs initiated by both government and a community involved. Service delivery in the Centre needs to be integrated, where information and a variety of services can be accessed by a community in one place within five minutes of a residence. A Centre is also to empower the poor and marginalized through access to information, services that were expensive to obtain, and resources from both government and non-governmental organizations for community development. In other words, access to information by communities was perceived as the driving force to development. The concern was that recipients of services often struggled to get prompt services because of inefficient officials who would send them from one office to another. Government Communication and Information Service (2008) further states that for integrated service delivery to be successful, all stakeholders need to play an important role. It is not only government that needs to utilize such buildings, but also the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based Organizations (CBOs), parastatals and private sector. Expanding further on community involvement in the affairs of government on matters that affect them directly and in the development of their socio-economic status, Chiliza (2004: 34) asserts that no

community needs to be left out, but all communities need to have equal opportunity to participate. This is further articulated by Mubangizi (2007, 6) who states that the Government needs to have people-centered programs of development that are based on meeting both the material and non-material human needs.

   Bruiner (2003:4) says the Centers are meant to be utilized not only to develop less privileged or previously marginalized communities in the use of technology as far as communicating is concerned, but also to improve their socio-economic status.

3. The need for TSCs in South Africa

From 1999, the Government engaged itself in improving strategic planning and management in order to effectively implement the plethora of policies developed for the betterment of lives of citizens, particularly those that were disadvantaged prior to 1994. The managers of public institutions were entrusted with the responsibility of implementing these policies. One of the challenges faced by the managers was the turnaround time between decision making and implementation that extended to 18 months because of bureaucracy which often caused lack of communication between different levels of authority. Other challenges facing institutions are shortage of office administrators who have basic administrative skills, leadership that cannot take prompt decisions, and the non-implementation and monitoring of *Batho Pele* Principles in public institutions (Ramaite 2002: 20 - 21).

   Shilowa (2006:62-66) attests to the fact that there is a need to have interventions in all spheres of government that will serve as a method of accelerating service delivery, and to be prompt in responding to the needs of the public. He further says that "improving the efficiency and performance of government is therefore not a 'nice to have', but rather an essential prerequisite in achieving government's objectives. While there is a lot we can be proud of, we cannot be fully satisfied with the current pace and quality of delivery".

   The above-mentioned challenges had a negative effect on service delivery, particularly in the remote areas of the country where the poorest of the poor are found.   It therefore became imperative that government should introduce an innovative strategy that would further transform public service delivery in order to take care of the needs of those that are unreachable, thus the birth of MPCCs also known as Thusong Service Centers.

   The establishment of TSCs was seen as a means of providing valuable information about Government and also as Centers of community development by bringing projects that will improve communities' economic status (Ladikpo 2005). It was also envisaged that the TCCs will also serve as Information Technology Centers (ITCs), bringing technology closer to the communities and enabling them to access online information through Public information Terminals (PIT) that will be based in the Centers. The Centers would offer services from three spheres of Government, availing as many services as possible in a single place. Services to be given were, but not

limited to, obtaining and processing of all kinds of government application forms, legal services, arts and culture, passports and identity documents, information on welfare, health, housing, education and bursaries (GCIS 2008).

The target is to establish one Centre in each of the 283 local municipalities that will have representatives from various departments who will expedite services like social grants, identity documents, passports, housing and any other relevant service by the year 2014 (GCIS 2008). The roll-out plan ran from October 1999 to March 2000 in a form of pilot projects in rural and areas where communities have not been receiving adequate services. Three Centers built within that period were in Tombo in the Eastern Cape Province, Kgautswane in the Limpopo Province (the then Northern Province), and in the Western Cape Province in Worcester. By the year 2008 there were already 101 Centers and satellites throughout the whole country (GCIS 2008).

With these Centers the Government aimed at covering 43 districts and 6 Metropolitan Municipalities by the end of March 2003. In the same year, there were 54 TSCs and 7 satellite sites established throughout the country and by the end of 2005 there were already 60 Centers. In March 2007, there were already 96 of these Centers and the services rendered were from Departments of Home Affairs, Labor, Housing, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), Social Development, GCIS, and Health.

About 96 TSCs were already established by the end of March 2007, as the Government was determined to expand infrastructure for citizens to access information and services. By the end of March 2009, 137 TSCs were in operation. Services rendered in these Centers vary according to the needs of the communities, and they are from the Departments of Home Affairs, Labor, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), Social Development, GCIS, and the Department of Health. In other areas they will serve as Telecasters[1], Post Office, Libraries, Agricultural Extension Offices, Municipal Services and South African Police Service Offices. Community Development Workers, NGOs and community-based organizations will use these Centers to offer services to communities (GCIS 2008).

Services offered in these Centers are supposed to be client-oriented and need to vary according to the needs and demands at the time. They range from giving advice on education to health matters and any other relevant issue to the community. People who come to these Centers include jobseekers, community organizations that may require information on internet, small businesses that require consultation to get ideas on how to write a business proposal for tendering purposes, development officers that may need telephone, fax and email services (GCIS 2008).

4. Brief Profile of Centers

They are "one-stop, integrated community development Centers" that offer poor and

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[1] A telecaster is a building that is equipped with a set of television in which community members gather to watch live broadcasted television programmes.

disadvantaged communities an opportunity to access Government services and resources that are relevant to their needs, thus enabling them to engage in the programmers that are offered by Government in order to improve their lives. In these Centers communities get empowered through access to information not only to government services but also to NGOs, parastatals, business and any other relevant institution. Each Centre is expected to have a minimum of six Government departments that will offer a variety of services to clients (GCIS 2008).

In his 2004 State of the Nation Address President Thabo Mbeki emphasized that his administration was committed to offer better services to communities, and therefore every municipality must have an MPCC by the year 2014. In March 2007, there were already 96 of these Centers and the services rendered were from Departments of Home Affairs, Labor, Housing, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), Social Development, GCIS, and Health. Services rendered in these Centers vary according to the needs of the communities. Community Development Workers and NGOs will use these Centers for developmental projects that will empower communities to be economically skilled to fend for themselves, other than depending on government grants and handouts. The Multipurpose Community Centers will ensure that the already existing facilities are optimally utilized (GCIS 2008).

According to Pahad (2005,7) the GCIS Thusong Service Centers Business Plan 2006-2014, there are supposed to be three categories of TSCs which offer six types of integrated services, and they are hubs, satellite and mobile service units. These categories were identified on the basis of different services offered, the frequency of offering those services, and also on the availability of infrastructure and facilities. The infrastructure of the hub and satellite Centers in different provinces can be offered in different forms. For instance, it can be one big building that offers a variety of services under one roof, separate buildings that are very close to one another, or buildings scattered in a wider area, preferably utilising existing infrastructure to cut the costs. The Government proposed that such Centers may be established in already existing buildings such as shopping Centers or buildings that are privately owned. Mobile units may be based at a hub but not bound in one position; they have to be moved from one place to another, stopping at defined points. The population density determines what type of centre to be provided to a particular community (National Treasury 2009: 18).

5. Research Method

The research required the researcher to be in different places to collect and analyze data that would be used to evaluate if the introduction of TSCs in South Africa has improved service delivery, particularly in areas that were disadvantaged during the apartheid era. The researcher saw it necessary to use both the qualitative and quantitative approaches.

5.1 Method of Data Collection

In order for the research to weight in terms of the findings, the researcher saw it fit to use a variety of data collection methods, as the use of a single method may not give a true state of circumstances. For this research the following data collecting methods were employed:

5.2 Sampling Method

In this study stratified random sampling was utilized because of the different population that was divided into relevant strata based on one or more attributes. The sample was representative of all population groups to avoid bias. The researcher used two different types of samples, and they are the beneficiaries of services who are also referred to as clients, and officials who are responsible to render services to clients. The latter represents the knowledgeable population because of experience, position, and information in the field of service delivery. They are officials who hold senior position in the public service and are directly involved with policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The former represents citizens who benefit from services rendered. It was crucial to get information from them as they experience service delivery first hand. The study was conducted in three provinces in South Africa, and in each province three municipalities where Centers have been established were randomly chosen on the basis of their geographical location, namely rural, semi-urban and urban areas where previously marginalized communities dwell.

5.3 Primary Data

Both structured and semi-structured interviews were utilized. The structured interview schedule, directed to nine managers and 18 government officials working in the Centers, served as a tool to ask questions that are written down in their correct order as they appear on the interview schedule, ensuring that both the researcher and the interviewee do not deviate from the pertinent issues that will enable the researcher to reach the objectives of the research. The schedule had Sections A and B. Section A composed of nineteen questions, focused on biographical details of respondents, and Section B with seven questions, intended to inform the researcher about the types of resources available at the Centers. The semi-structured interviews were directed to three key role-players and strategic provincial government officials who are responsible for the Centers in their respective provinces, and three Senior Communications in Centers where the study was conducted. These are in direct contact with various Centers in provinces where they have been placed, and have in-depth information on the operation of Centers.

The use of semi-structured interviews assisted the researcher to gather more information as this type of interview allowed the researcher to follow-up on an answer

given by an interviewee in order to gather more information on a question asked. The semi-structured interviews were directed to two government employees working in each centre who interact face-to-face with clients on a daily basis. The total number of government employees interviewed in the three provinces using semi-structured interviews was eighteen (six in each province).

5.4 Questionnaires

As another form of gathering data, a total number of 180 questionnaires were distributed to clients of these Centers at selected municipal offices where Centers are based, taking into account the geographic representation from rural, semi-urban and urban areas. In each of the nine Centers visited by the researcher, twenty clients who were at the Centre on the day of the researcher's visit were randomly chosen. This was done in order to draw comparison between external clients' views on service delivery and those of officials with respect to customer satisfaction. The questionnaires were designed to obtain information relevant to the objectives of the research, and had eighteen questions divided into four categories, namely the biography of respondents, their knowledge of TSCs, customer service as per the Batho Pele Principles, and a section on whether the Centers are bringing projects that will uplift the socio-economic standard of communities.

5.5 Observation Sheet

Observation is one of the methods used in research to gather, analyze and interpret data in order to evaluate whether the objectives of the research have been achieved or not. This method ensured that the researcher did not have to rely on participant's perceptions which may be unreliable or misleading. In this research the researcher used a structured observation sheet to record how Centers operate, the infrastructure, surrounding environment, how staff treated clients and general observations about the functioning of the Centers. The sheet focused on the geographical details of the Centers, taking into consideration aspects such as the distance of the Centers from the community, mode of reaching the Centre by the clients, accessibility of the Centre to clients, the availability of furniture and safety equipment, whether the vision and mission of the Centre and *Batho Pele* principles were displayed, and general behavior and attitude of personnel towards clients and other visitors of the Centers.

5.6 Analysis of Data

It was important to analyze data by grouping each response according to themes and patterns from the questions asked in the questionnaire, and from personal contacts. As stated by Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell, (2005: 211), theme identification in the process of analyzing data is the fundamental component in research. Themes are

"described as an 'umbrella' constructs which are usually identified by the researcher before, after and during the data collection".

6. Findings

The chart below indicates that only 1% of respondents indicated that they do not have any formal education, 58% indicating that they have secondary education, and 16% have reached tertiary institutions, therefore they can read and write, enabling them to understand and answer the questionnaire. Although the respondents have secondary education, most of them are unemployed and do not have necessary skills that are needed in the labor market. The Centers, therefore, were a beacon of hope in the creation of employment opportunities.

Figure 1: Respondents according to level of education[2]
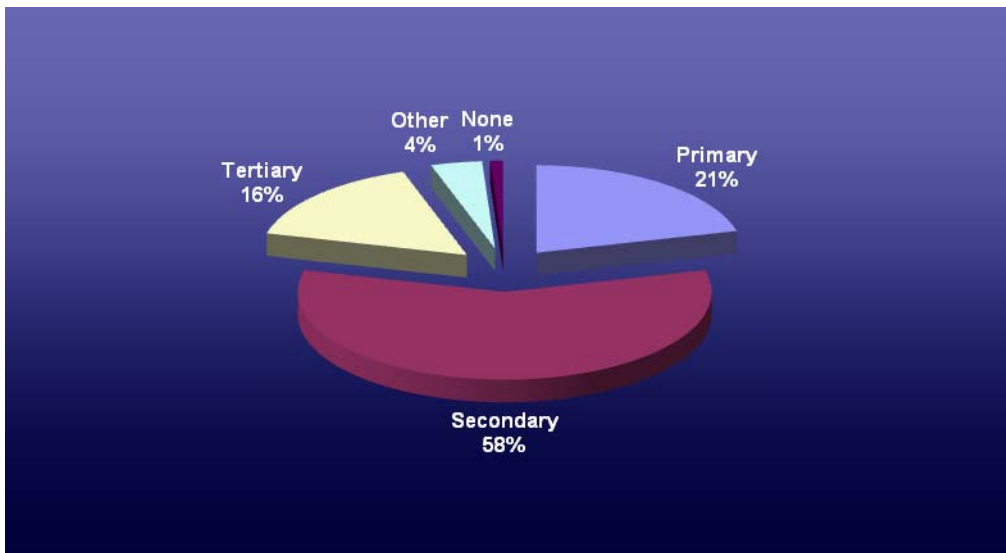
6.1 Respondents by race

About 3% of respondents were Coloreds and 97% were Blacks. This is due to the fact that the discriminatory laws that were passed by the apartheid regime that promoted inhumane and unjust forced removals that led to classification of inhabitants according to race. Areas that were mostly marginalized are historically black townships, followed by Indian and Colored residential areas. For that reason, the

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[2] Respondents in this section refers to community members where these Centres have been established, who are supposed to be recipients of services .

majority of Centers are placed in formerly black residential areas, as this shows that politics and societies in the democratic South Africa are still shaped by the apartheid architecture.

Figure 2: Race Representation
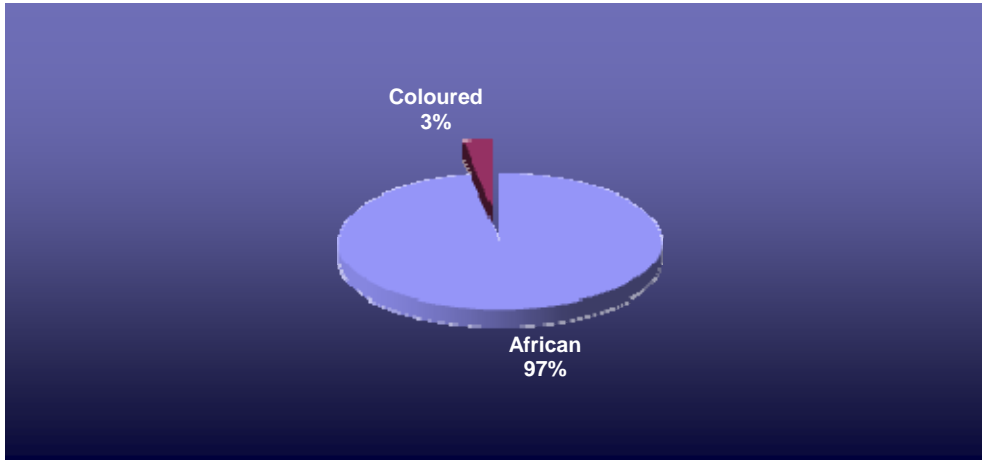
6.2 Respondents by age

Figure 3 below shows that the majority of respondents (57%) were from ages 20 to 39, and those that are 60 and above were at 25%. Those that fall between the ages 40-59 and teenagers are 10% and 8% respectively. Most teens interviewed said that they visit the Centers either to apply for identity documents or birth certificates, as some were accompanied by parents or guardians. The majority of those that fell between the ages 20-39 solely came for child support grant which was introduced by government in 1999 for persons responsible for looking after a child younger than 15 years old. These parents are mostly single and earn R28 800.00 per year or R2 400.00 per month as specified by government, and some are married with a combined salary of R57 600 per annum or R4 800.00 per month. Many of the respondents who fall between 40 and 59 years of age visit the Centers for social grants and were looking for job opportunities.

Figure 3: Age categories
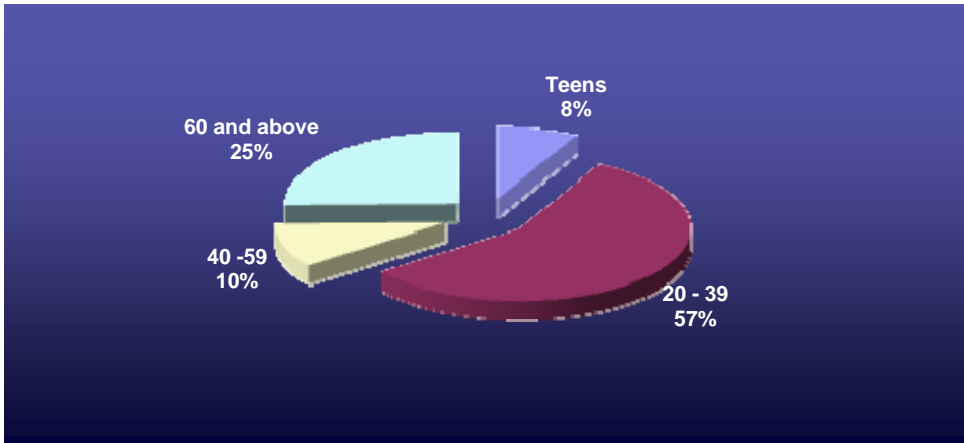
6.3 Respondents by Sex

67% of respondents were females whilst males were only 33%. This is due to the fact most households were headed by single females that were both young, unemployed (see Figure 4 below) or pensioners. According to Lehohla (2007), the South Africa's Statistician-General and Head of Statistics South Africa, the 2007 mid-year estimates statistics showed that 24.3 million (about 51%) of the 47,9 million South Africa's population are female, and that life expectancy at birth for men is shorter than that of women. It is further asserted by Hassim (2005) that households headed by females in rural areas are at 65%, as compared to 54% households headed by females in other areas. African women who are under the age of 30 are most likely to be unemployed at a rate of 75%.
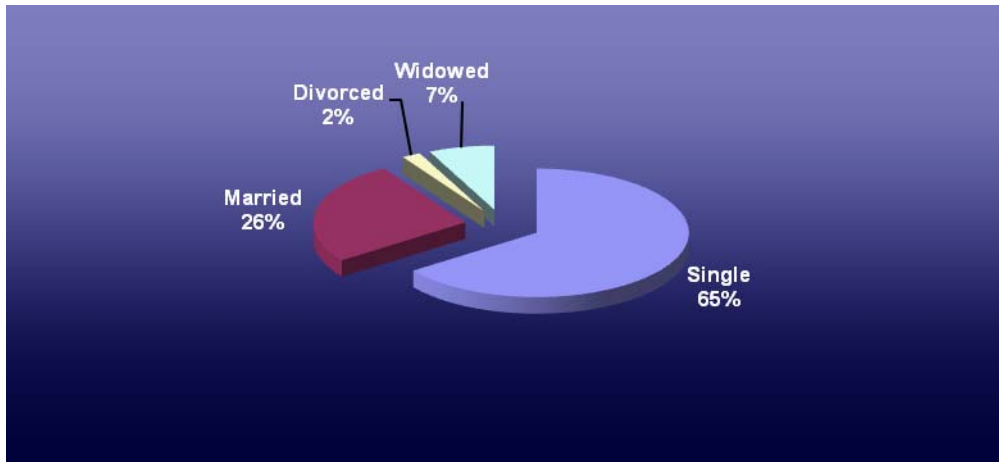
Figure 4: Sex category
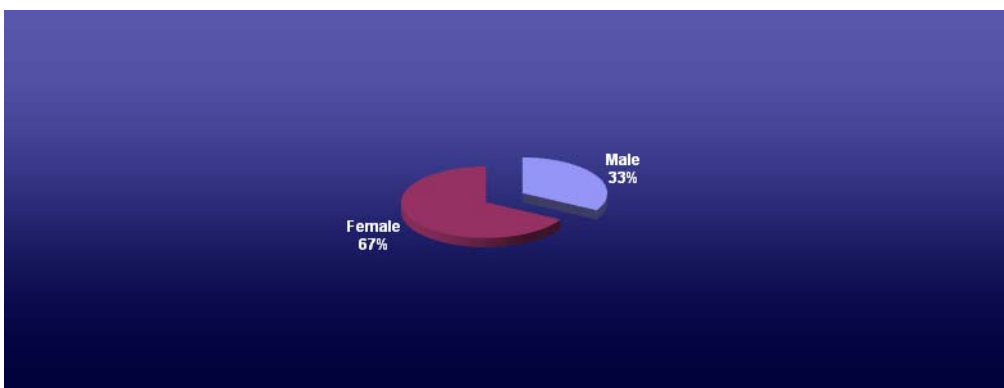
6.4 Respondents by marital status

According to Figure 6 below, 65% of the respondents were single, whilst only 25% were married. Those that were divorced and widowed were 2% and 7% respectively. As mentioned before, most households were headed by single female parents.

Figure 5: Respondents According to Marital Status

6.5 Respondents by gross income per month

Figure 6 below depicts that the majority (71%) of respondents do not have an income that exceeds R1 000.00 per month. This is due to the fact that most respondents are unemployed and do not have steady income as depicted in Figure 8. These are the residents that get less than a dollar per day. They often go to the Centers, particularly to the Department of Labour, with the hope of finding employment. Respondents who get a gross income from R1 001.00 to R3 000 are at 20%, whereas those that fall in the R3 001 and R6 000.00, and those within R6 001 and R9 000.00 categories are at 6% and 2% respectively. Respondents who fall in the R9 001 and above category are at one percent.

Figure 6: Respondents according to their income
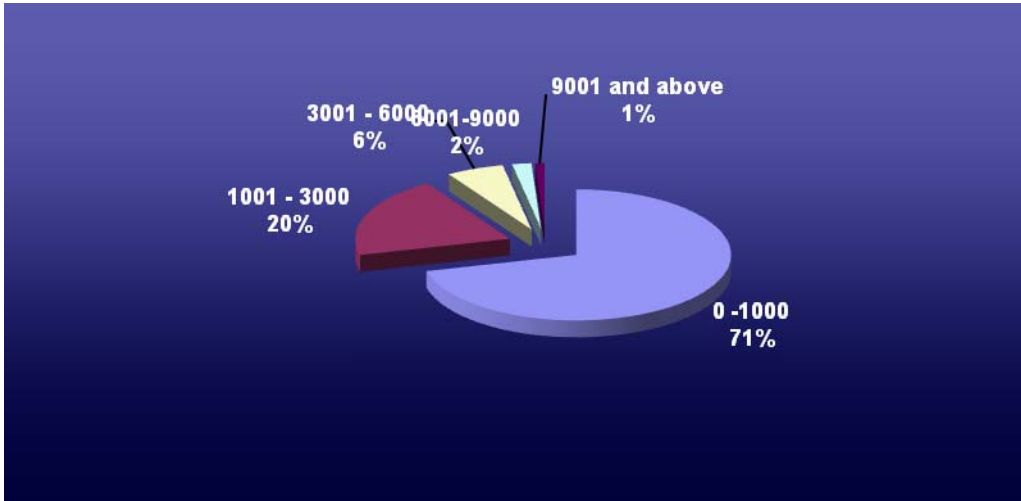

7. Utilization of Centers

These Centers were supposed to be the nucleus of community development by offering education, knowledge, and providing relevant basic services and projects to benefit communities.   Although certain Centers have libraries, schools, clinics and other relevant facilities, some Centers are not optimally utilized. The reason given by respondents who are recipients of services is that services rendered are not the ones needed by them, in other words a Centre was placed in the community and services provided were of no relevance to the community. Again, some Centers that have telephone facilities charge clients for the use of the equipment, and therefore are not accessible to ordinary citizens who do not have money.

8. Skills Development and Economic Projects

One of the objectives of establishing such Centers was to bring projects that will equip communities with the development of necessary skills that will enable them to be employers. The Centers were also expected to bring about job opportunities that will benefit communities such as construction of roads, toilets and houses by municipalities, and upgrading of the sewage system. The survey, however, showed that Centers seldom brought projects for the benefit of communities. About 36% of respondents said there were not enough projects brought by the Centers, whilst 34% said there were no projects brought by Centre. Only 17% said the Centers brought projects, and only 8% said they completely agree that Centers brought projects. Respondents alleged that if there are projects brought by municipalities through the

Centers, corruption becomes the norm; people who often get employment and lucrative tenders in such projects are relatives and friends of politicians in power.

Figure 11: Skills Development and Projects Brought by Centers
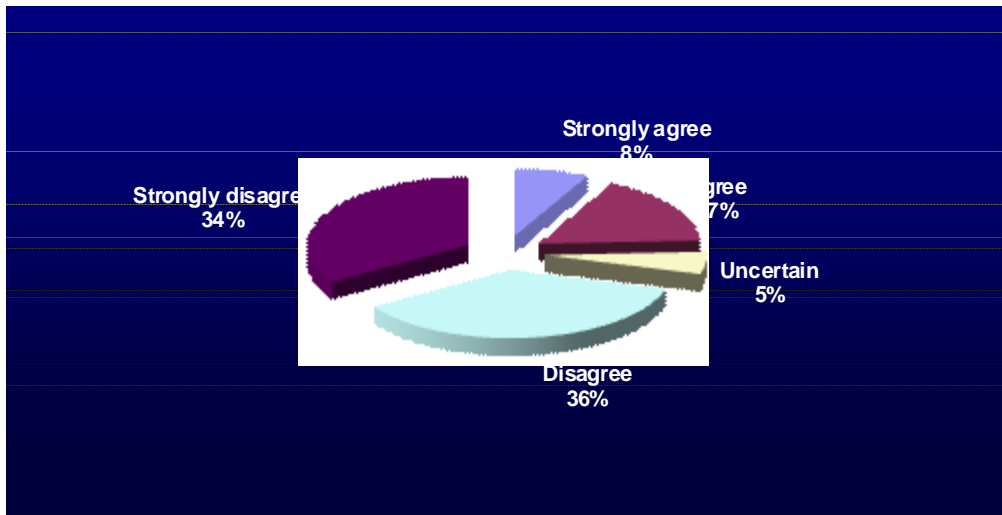
9. Batho Pele Principles

This part focused on the implementation of Batho Pele Principles in the Centers. Batho Pele Principles are meant to serve as guidelines for achieving quality service delivery. The aim was to determine if the principles were practiced by government officials in the carrying of their duties in the Centers.

Courtesy

Q: Are staff members in the centre very helpful and demonstrate an acceptable behaviour and attitude that is of high standard?

Courtesy is that behavior or gestures that should be exhibited by providers of services to clients. It can be shown, for instance, in cases where an elderly person needs to be taken by the hand to counters without the person having previously asked for help, thanking the customer after he/she has been served, or just greeting the customer with a smile. These little gestures convey the message to the customer that he/she is important and valued, and also tells the customer that he/she is noticed. Some of the

gestures that can be attributed to courtesy are listening with interest, giving a polite word, and saying a word of kindness.

Although 59% of the respondents indicated that government officials working in the Centers were very helpful, and displayed an attitude of high-standard caring, 13% strongly disagreed and 16% disagreed. According to these clients, treatment meted on recipients of services by officials in the Centers was bad. This kind of behavior made clients feel they were not valued and unimportant.   Even though the bad attitude of officials was reported to the relevant superiors, the disrespectful behavior of officials still continues.

**Figure 7:** Demonstration of Acceptable Behavior and Attitude by Staff
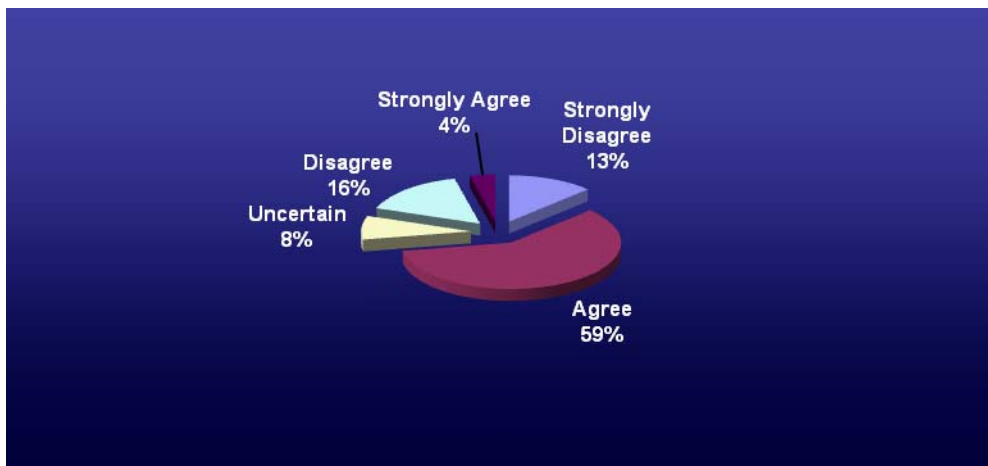
Redress

Q: Are your complaints addressed by the concerned departments in the centre?

Redress is one of the ways that an organization can be able to evaluate itself as far as service delivery is concerned. One way of knowing whether customers are satisfied or not is to listen to their compliments and complaints. In this research study most respondents (40%) said government officials did not address issues raised on services that are poorly provided or on those they do not receive. In many instances complaints are attended to, but very late, which makes clients feel that the service they get is not worth the money they pay. Examples of poor service delivery, as mentioned by clients, is when sewage pipes leak, it takes an average of a week before being fixed, and street lights generally are fixed a month after they have been

reported. It is noteworthy that respondents also mentioned that government officials do not take kindly to complaints.

**Figure 8:** Complaints addressed by relevant departments
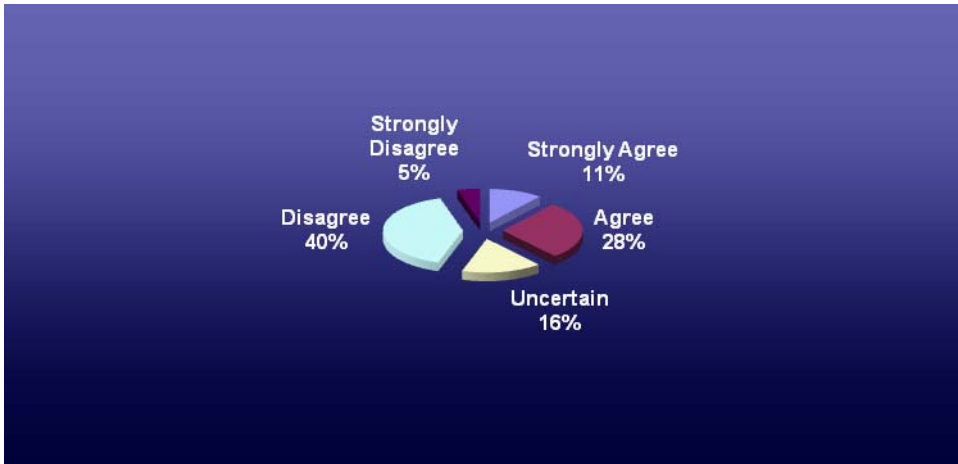
Openness and Transparency

Q: Are you informed as a community member how the Centre operates, and how money is spent on services you are supposed to be receiving?

Openness and transparency, as stated by Johnsen, Howard & Miemczyk (2009, 273) is an important ingredient in fostering partnership between government and electorate who are major stakeholders, and that partnership entails four attributes namely commitment to the course, proper and effective coordination, interdependence and trust. Wood and Winston (2007,177) further say that transparent and open organizations show consistency in the treatment of both the internal and external clients, and have the attribute of openly listening to clients' perspectives that may not necessarily be the same as that of an organization, always explains why a certain decision was taken, always keeps records that can be easily accessible to constituents, always explains why a certain decision was taken, always keeps records that can be easily accessible to constituents.

Figure 9: Openness and Transparency
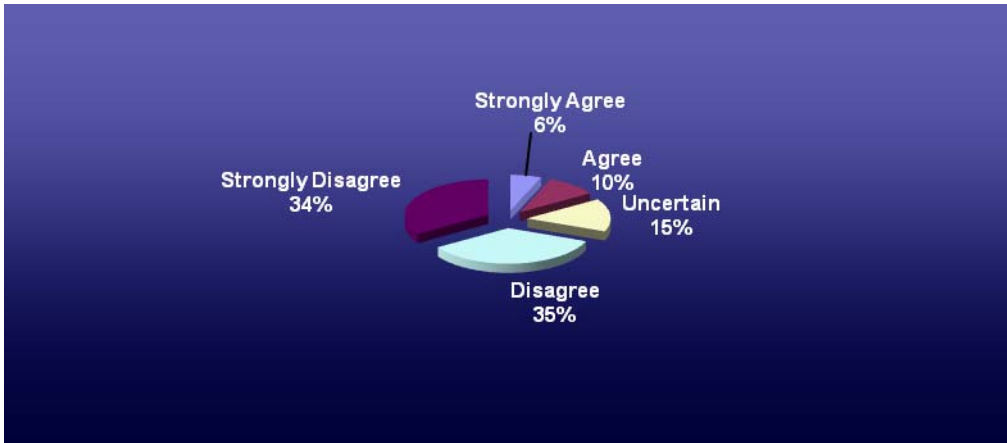
Information

Q: Does the centre provide up-to-date, easy to understand information concerning services rendered?

According to Figure 10 below, 38% of respondents said the Centers do not give them up-to-date information concerning services they receive, whereas 29% said they are informed on a regular basis, and that the information given them is easy to understand. The latter said there were brochures and information leaflets offered to them when they visit the Centers. Respondents who strongly disagreed and those that strongly agreed are at 13% and 10% respectively, whilst 10% was uncertain. Those who strongly disagreed contest that there are no road shows that take place and that in itself is a barrier to information flow. They also alleged that councilors and government officials do not bother bringing necessary information to them.

   Again, these Centers were supposed to have fully fledged computer laboratories that would enhance knowledge and bring information to communities on health, education and economy. In some Centers visited the computer laboratories were not functional, and others were not fully utilized because of illiteracy level of communities that served as a stumbling block in the usage of computers.

Figure 10: Centers providing up-to-date and easy to understand information
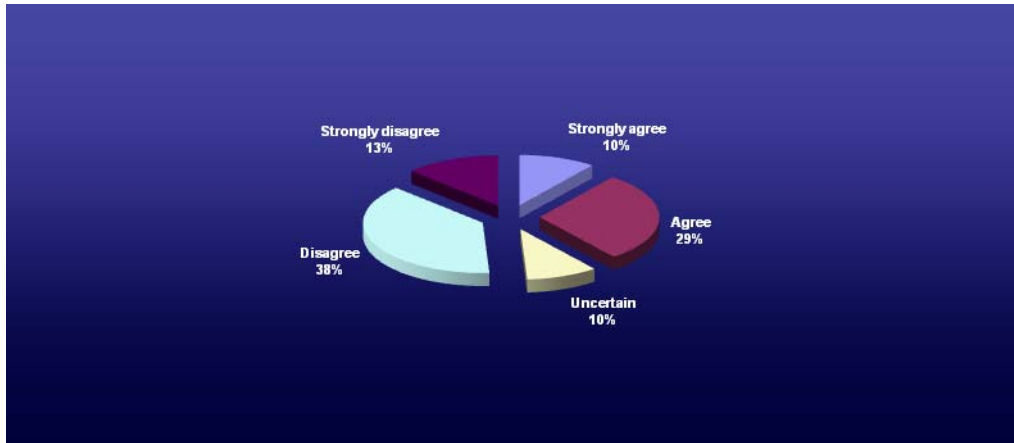
10. Other Challenges Identified

The following challenges were identified when using the structured interview schedule to interview the nine managers of the Centers and eighteen government officials placed in these Centers.

10.1 Knowledge of Legislation that Impacts on Centers by Managers

Of the nine centre managers interviewed, six of them did not know of any legislation that impacts on the Centers. That is a major concern as these managers are expected to enforce Batho Pele Principles, and abide by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, especially Chapter Two that has the Bill of Rights and Chapter Ten that deals with public service issues. They are also either not aware of, or have limited knowledge of, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper). The managers blame employers for not offering induction program to newly recruited managers, particularly on legislation, in order to equip them with necessary knowledge. They are employed, put into Centers and left on their own without proper support.   They have to learn through trial and error.

10.2 Lack of Motivation

Firstly, contract staff members are demoralized because of the uncertainty of their future employment in the departments they serve. The issue of low salaries was raised by a number of employees as one of the causes of demotivation. Secondly, the

number of clients that by far outnumber officials causes staff members to be overworked, and therefore affects productivity. Finally, staff members allege that they do not get the needed support from their respective departments.

10.3 Departments Working Together (Integrated Service Delivery)

Another reason that necessitated Government to come up with the idea of services offered under one roof in the TSCs was the fact that currently each government department does not offer a wide variety of services to clients. Bringing the departments together, and the availability of online services in the Centers will enable these departments to work together and know the details of what the other departments are offering, and what documentation is needed from clients to access a certain service. This will prevent a client waiting on a queue for a long time and be turned away at the counter because of standing in the wrong queue. Again, integrated service delivery was envisaged to eliminate traveling from one department to another by the client and in the process time is lost.

   Although these Centers are in operation, there is still lack of government departments working together to ensure that the Centers serve their purpose: in some Centers it became evident that departments do not know what programs are planned by other departments; each department works in isolation and without proper collaboration with other departments. In one case there were community meetings arranged at the same time in the same community by two different departments. Community members did not know which one to attend as both meetings were important to them. In another instance one official from a department was asked if he knew what the other department next door was offering to clients as far as services are concerned, he responded by saying he had no clue. It turned out that representatives of departments each day just come to do what they need to do for their departments, and are not conversant with what other departments are offering or how they operate. This, of course, goes against the basic motivation for the establishment of these Centers.

10.4 Management of Centers

One Centre is remotely managed by someone who is not based at the Centre but in the nearest town. The reason given by the said manager is that she is responsible in managing a number of other Centers who are not necessarily TSCs. The person who really monitors the day-to-day running of the Centre is the supervisor who also attends to complaints by the public on municipal services.

   The other issue is the qualifications of managers. Seven out of nine do not have public administration and management qualifications, with four having degrees, and others just diplomas. They expected to be given in-service training in order to equip

them with necessary management skills, but it did not happen. Raising his concern, one official said:

> "*I wish our employer can take this (position of managers) seriously. In-service training is crucial for some of us who do not have relevant qualifications as it will keep us abreast and informed of latest developments in management issues,*" (Manager D: 16 October 2009).

10.5 Political Conflict

Internal politics also hinders some services in the Centers: Centre B manager expressed concern over a computer laboratory that is well equipped but not functioning because of internal politics. The Center has been there for two years but no service provider that would render the centre effective has been chosen as yet as there is still internal strife on who has the authority to offer a contract to the service provider. It became evident from respondents that a power struggle within the majority party in the municipality has a negative impact on the smooth running of the Centers, particularly the proper functioning of the computer laboratory.

   It is also a perception that politicians interfere a lot in the employment of a centre manager, particularly councilors; it is evident that the employment of managers is based on political affiliation. If there are two candidates and one of them belongs to the majority party, he/she will be favored for employment at the expense of the one who does not belong to the majority party. It does not matter how good that person can be, even if he/she has relevant qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience. It is also alleged that employing relatives, friends and people they know they will benefit one way or the other from them, is common practice.

10.6 Frequency of services

Some respondents would have preferred services to be offered on a daily basis. There are departments that do not honor their appointments with clients. Instead of arriving on the agreed-upon time, they come two to three hours late. Sometimes they do not offer services at all. This makes people unsure whether service providers will be coming or not the next time.

   The main cause of service providers not honoring their appointments, as mentioned by one manager, is the lack of control over government officials providing services in the Centers by managers. Service providers do not stick to the time-table given to the manager. They come and go as they wish; others come late, whilst some often do not come on stipulated dates. These service providers do not regard managers of the Centers managers as their immediate supervisors. This attitude

renders managers powerless as they do not have authority to discipline these government officials. This causes despondency in clients as they wonder if going to the Centre will be a fruitful exercise or not.

10.7 Community Needs Not Taken Care Of

The issue of community engagement still needs to be taken seriously. As stated by one government official, there is a communication gap that exists between the elected and the electorate.   Politicians usually think they know what communities need, and therefore bring programmers that are irrelevant. The South African system of choosing Members of Parliament is flawed; it is not a constituency-based election system.   Members of Parliament are chosen from the political party list. This has caused serious problems as far as representation of constituencies and their views in parliament is concerned. It has given rise to politicians, particularly members of parliament not really serving the communities they say they represent, instead serving their own interests.

11. Recommendations

The following are recommendations that emanate from the findings of the empirical study:

11.1 Center Managers need to be equipped with appropriate management skills

Managers who assume responsibilities of running a Centre, and those that have not been inducted but manage the Centers should go through an induction program that will familiarize them with management issues and government legislation that have an impact on the running of Centers. When Centre managers were recruited they were not told what was expected of them, and they also did not know how these Centers looked like. It came as a shock to them to find Centers to be what they did not expect. Induction programs will help managers to manage resources better, make them aware of leadership and managerial skills in order to be competent, familiarize them on policies, legislation and other service delivery concepts, and gain knowledge on performance management issues.

11.2 Politicians to be guided by ethics and professionalism

From the research it emerged that internal strife in the ruling party and its supporting structures do harm to service delivery. The strife is often caused by individual's self interest that supersedes that of an organization, especially in public institutions where politics play a major role. Some individuals are driven by power whilst others by material gain. For public institutions to survive suicide brought by such infighting, it is

advisable that strict adherence to ethics and professionalism be the guide. Politicians should know that they are in those positions because they have been voted for by the people, therefore they need to serve the people without fail, and put self-interest last.

11.3 Ensuring Frequency of Services in the Centers

Departments using these Centers should ensure that their staff members do go to offer services to clients where these Centers are. That can be done by giving more power to the manager in administering their regular presence, and to take disciplinary measures against the defaulting service providers. It is also important that managers of Centers should be given the latitude of providing a comprehensive report on the attendance of employees of different service providers to relevant departments, and the departments to take drastic disciplinary measures in addressing the rate of recurrence. It is also important that managers of Centers should be given the latitude of providing a comprehensive report on the attendance of employees of different service providers to relevant departments, and the departments to take drastic disciplinary measures in addressing the rate of recurrence of such unacceptable behavior. Failure to deliver services promptly and regularly is detrimental to the clients' trust, demotivates those that come regularly, promotes employee and customer dissatisfaction, as a result there will be a decreases in employee and customer retention.

11.4 Service delivery programs: Community needs to be taken into consideration

It became evident from the research that communities are seldom consulted on matters that affect them directly as far as services are concerned. The representation of communities at both national and provincial levels needs to be reviewed. The current system of appointing Members of Parliament by the ruling party needs attention as it does not address service delivery issues. Communities need to play a vital role in the appointment of MPs; they need to elect their own people that will represent them in Parliament other than the ruling party using the party's list to choose candidates for Parliament. Stringent measures also need to be put in place to ensure that the representatives perform`. It is very important that a representative of community communicates time and again with the community in order to know what the needs of that community are.

11.5 Introduction of skills development and economic projects at the centers

As skills shortage is a challenge in South Africa, the DoL should promote skills development rigorously in communities by utilizing Centers in offering courses and training to this regard. If properly done and well coordinated, developing skills by giving appropriate training to communities will help eradicate dependency but

promote self reliance, and then improve the socio-economic conditions of the communities.

12. Conclusion

The success of any government depends on its effective and efficient delivery of services to its citizens. In the quest to transform service delivery, the South African government aimed at to be a client-oriented and offer services in an equitable manner, and relevant to the needs of each community. These services also have to be of good quality and be given to citizens in an equitable manner, regardless of race, color, status and religion   For that reason the new Government faced a mammoth task of dismantling the malpractices of the past and provide services to all citizens on an equitable base, thus the enactment of new policies that sought to transform the public sector from a racially segregating one to the one that promotes equality, fairness and justice.

Although the government has taken strides towards improving service delivery, there is still much to be achieved in reaching the poor communities that still do not have basic services. The establishment of TSCs should be accompanied by, among other things, the supply of relevant resources such as well-trained and skilled staff and functional technological equipment to expedite service delivery.

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