



**EXPLORING CHALLENGES TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES AT LOCAL
GOVERNMENT LEVEL: A CASE STUDY OF MSUNDUZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

By:

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I, ANTHONY WALDHAUSEN student number 402000643, hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my investigation and research and that this has not been submitted in part or full for any degree or for any other degree to any other University. I am familiar with the rules regulating higher qualifications at Richfield Graduate Institute of Technology.

Where I have used the work of others, I acknowledge by means of reference. Any study of a similar nature that I have used in the development of my research project is also referenced.

Name: ANTHONY WALDHAUSEN

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Waldhausen', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Date: 30 September 2025

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to explore what are the challenges of public participation processes at a local government level and to use Msunduzi Local Municipality as a case study. The researcher is a community activist and co-founded a civic organisation that focuses on providing a voice for residents and holding the municipality accountable. The researcher has vast experience in engaging with elected officials and municipal staff on a wide range of issues and has actively participated in various public participation processes. The research project would look at the negative outcomes of not implementing public participation correctly and offer possible solutions that municipalities could adopt to ensure cohesive and proper public participation processes that would ensure public participation and solution-driven ways of implementing solutions within local municipalities.

The sample size will be 120 and will use the main methods to access the data (online and written questionnaires, interviews, observations and reviewing policies and legislation). The findings have revealed that 50% residents did not participate in any public participation processes initiated by the Msunduzi Local Municipality; 94% residents mentioned that Msunduzi Local Municipality does not seriously take into consideration all inputs, submissions, suggestions, needs surveys by the public; 63% residents mention that their ward councillor is not active in any public participation processes within their wards; and 77% of residents who rated the municipality's commitment to public participation processes as very poor.

List of Acronyms

ABM	Area Based Management
ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
CBP	Community Based Plans
CDW	Community Development Workers
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
KZN	KwaZulu- Natal
MARRC	Msunduzi Association of Residents Ratepayers and Civics
MPAC	Municipal Public Accounts Committee
MRRT	Municipal Rapid Response Team
PRRT	Provincial Rapid Response Team
SDF	Spatial Development Framework

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction/Background

The researcher is a community activist who is committed and dedicated to making changes at a local government level. I am a co-founder of a civic movement that provides a voice for citizens, addresses community issues, is solution driven and holds its municipality accountable. It aims to educate and create awareness to communities on how local government works. I have over 30 years' experience in the NPO sector and community development.

I am deeply concerned that communities are not involved in their own development and in decision-making processes in local government.

Multiple legislations and the South African Constitution govern public participation by communities and stakeholders at the local government level. These include the following:

- Chapter 7 of the South African constitution refers to Local Government and Section (152) (e) which states “to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.”
- Further there is a whole chapter in the Municipal System Act, Chapter 4 that is dedicated to public participation of communities in the decision-making processes of local government.
- The Municipal Finance Management Act, Chapter 4 Section 23(1). When the annual budget has been tabled, the municipal council must consider any views of - (a) the local community; and...

South Africa is well known for its great constitution and progressive legislation and policies, but the downfall has been the poor implementation of the constitution, legislation and guidelines. This has been proven time and time again with the lack of genuine public participation at the local government level despite numerous legislation and policies governing public participation.

The municipal officials do not promote active public participation processes, and all communities/stakeholders are always left out of the decision-making processes which negatively affect the lives of the public. This is despite numerous occasions where elected officials when making speeches make mention of not leaving anyone of the citizenry left behind. But this is more obvious in the lack of genuine public participation of communities/stakeholders where decisions are made without input from all and only by elected officials and municipal staff.

The decisions are made on behalf of communities/stakeholders which impacts progress and planning, with poor outcomes that have a long-term negative effect on communities. While public participation in municipal affairs is a legal requirement, much remains to be done to achieve effective participation.

The research proposal would look at the outcomes of not implementing public participation correctly and offer possible solutions that municipalities could adopt to ensure cohesive and proper public participation processes that would ensure public participation and solution-driven ways of implementing solutions within local municipalities.

This research project fills a specific gap in academic literature notably the limited empirical studies on the actual implementation of public participation processes at a local government level.

1.2 Research Problem

The poor or lack of implementation of public participation processes is hindering social cohesion, innovation, creativity and economic potentials of our municipalities. Communities/stakeholders are solution-driven and have much to offer to the many challenges faced by municipalities. By ignoring communities/stakeholders through a public participation process harms the development of the municipality, as decision-making processes do not take into consideration the vast experiences and expertise of the affected communities/stakeholders. By not involving all communities/stakeholders in decision-making processes leaves a gap of high expectations for all to better and improve the lives of all communities.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The main objective of the study is:

- To investigate what Public Participation is in Msunduzi Local Municipality
- To make recommendations on how to inform the communities about Public Participation processes is required by law.
- To make recommendations based on the research findings on how Public Participation can be improved in Msunduzi Local Municipality

The aims of the study are to:

- Investigate what the current methods of the Msunduzi Local Municipality's approaches to public participation.
- Develop the meaning of what public participation is all about and how it should be implemented.
- Make recommendations of possible solutions to encourage and implement a proactive methodology for public participation.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions comprise of an online questionnaire for communities and focus group discussions, businesses and ward councillors and interview questions for Msunduzi municipality staff, KZN and Gauteng COGTA. Refer to appendix D for the list of all questions.

1.5 Design of research chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research methodology Chapter 4: Analysis of data and findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter represented and introduced the topic for the research; it outlined the aims and objectives of the research. It sets the tone for the research, what it will contain and what it is achievable. Chapter 2 will present a literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This research proposal will focus on the current ways that public participation is implemented against the constitution, legislation and policies that focus on public participation.

The literature review will look at the meaning of what public participation is supposed to be and link that to the practical implementation with communities and stakeholders. It would look at history of local government during apartheid and towards the transition phase, government guides, policies, frameworks, legislation, perspectives, reports, assessments and models on public participation.

2.2 History of local government in respective public participation

According to the White Paper on Local Government, (1998), Apartheid has left its imprint on South Africa's human settlements and municipal institutions. Apartheid was not the beginning of geographic, institutional and social separation at the local level. Segregation was already a policy by the time apartheid was introduced in 1948. However, the Group Areas Act, the key piece of apartheid legislation, instituted strict residential segregation and compulsory removal of black people to “own group” areas.

Through spatial separation, influx control, and a policy of “own management for own areas”, apartheid aimed to limit the extent to which affluent white municipalities would bear the financial burden of servicing disadvantaged black areas. Various attempts were made under apartheid to introduce “own management” structures for black residents at the local level. This was in part to compensate for restricted rights, and in part to bolster the political and economic privileges of racial exclusion.

In the late 1980s the apartheid state attempted to prop up collapsing Black Local Authorities and calm political tensions by redirecting funds to disadvantaged areas. A system of ad-hoc intergovernmental grants was developed to channel resources to collapsing townships.

Regional Services Councils and Joint Services Boards were established to channel funds to black areas. However, these interventions were “too little too late”. By the late 1980s most townships and many homelands rural areas were effectively ungoverned, and it was clear that Black Local Authorities (or any similar structures) would never be viable.

The crisis in local government was a major force leading to the national reform process which began in 1990. National debate about the future of local government took place in the Local Government Negotiating Forum, alongside the national negotiating process. The Local Government Negotiating Forum framed the Agreement on Finance and Services writing off arrears to Black Local Authorities. It also negotiated the Local Government Transition Act of 1993. The Local Government Transition Act did not provide a blueprint for a new local government system but simply sketched a process for change. The process put forward in the Local Government Transition Act was essentially a locally negotiated transition and it has resulted in a wide diversity of forms of local government.

The Local Government Transition Act mapped out three phases of transition:

- **The pre-interim phase**, which prescribed the establishment of local forums to negotiate the appointment of temporary Councils, which would govern until municipal elections.
- **The interim phase**, beginning with municipal elections and lasting until a new local government system has been designed and legislated upon.
- **The final stage**, when a new local government system will be established.

While newly elected councils in many areas have made significant progress in addressing backlogs and extending services, they face many constraints. The huge infrastructural disparities and inequalities resulting from apartheid local government remain. The transition process has clearly shown that delivery on new municipal mandates cannot be achieved within the existing institutional framework.

2.3 What is public participation?

According to the guide on public participation in public service by the Department of Public Service and Administration (2008) provides the terms to explain public participation.

There is a vast body of literature dealing with this subject of interacting with members of the public, sharing information with them, and trying to afford them the opportunity to express their views on contemplated policies, programmes and projects. However, there is also a problem of terminology to overcome, because in the literature dealing with this subject several terms are used; in some cases, some of the terms are even used interchangeably. The most common of these terms are:

- i. Public participation;
- ii. Citizen participation;
- iii. Political participation;
- iv. Public involvement;
- v. Citizen engagement;
- vi. Community participation; and
- vii. Community engagement.

Brynard (2023), distinguishes between citizen participation and public participation in the following way: ***“Public participation is not synonymous with citizen participation – mainly because the former is a wider concept which may include citizen participation. The reason for this is the fact that the word “public” in public participation refers to all the people, whether or not they possess the rights and obligations of citizenship (cites Langton: 1978:20).”***

The Department of Public Service and Administration Task Team that developed the guide on public participation concluded that public participation is a process that;

- i. Is inclusive;
- ii. Is voluntary;
- iii. may be used as a complement to legal requirements;
- iv. is fair and transparent;
- v. is based on good faith from participants; and
- vi. does not guarantee or predetermine what the outcome will be

2.4 Public Participation Models

2.4.1 South African Parliament

Parliament of South Africa, Public participation model, Oversight & Accountability Series 4, refers to the public participation model of parliament model seeks to outline and mainstream

minimum norms and standards for public participation processes and procedures to achieve meaningful involvement of the public in the legislative and other processes of Parliament. The Model intends to provide a shared understanding on and alignment of processes and set minimum requirements and guidelines for the involvement of the public in the legislative and other processes of Parliament and those of its committees. This Model also attempts, although not exhaustively, to set out goals and objectives, outline public participation mechanisms, determine a best Model that would fit Parliament, the role of public education and information dissemination, meaningful public participation opportunity, institutional co-ordination of public participation programmes and reporting on the outcomes thereof.

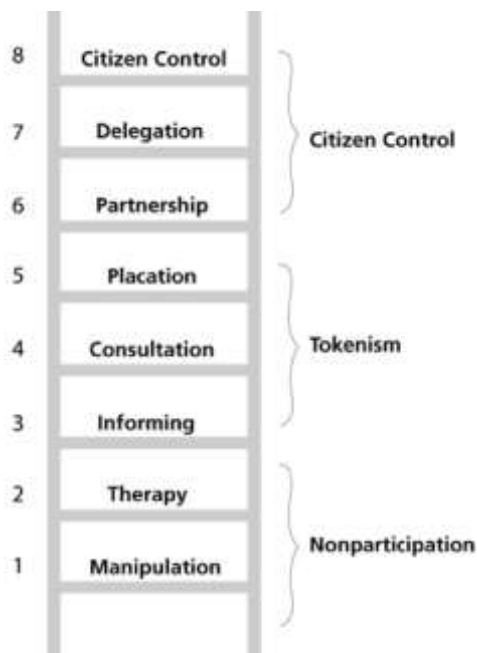
Minimum standards for effective public participation are a set of guidelines for meaningful public involvement in decision-making processes by those affected by the decision. The Model recognises informing, consulting, involving and collaborating as stages of effective public participation.

Public Participation best fit approach' is about crafting institutional Models that take into cognisance the institutional characteristics such as goals, culture and business processes. There are different mechanisms through which the public can participate in the processes and activities of Parliament. These include Project/Programme Plan, Governance, Stakeholder identification and consultation, Logistical arrangements: SCM, Pre-visit (inform, educate, consult), During (provide involvement opportunities), post-visit (feedback, monitoring and evaluation of programme outcomes).

Parliament's public participation mechanisms amongst others include People's Assembly, Taking Parliament to the People, and Taking Committees to the People, Sectoral engagements, Petitions and Participation in law making and other processes. The Public Participation Model was developed to integrate public participation into the core functioning of Parliament. The Model therefore serves to inform all public participation programmes of Parliament as well as all supportive communication initiatives.

2.4.2 Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

To address public participation by government and especially municipalities as they are closet to the people, we will examine a model of citizen participation by Sherry Arnstein's Ladder (1969). According to Sherry Arnstein writing in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States, described a "ladder of citizen participation" that showed participation ranging from high to low. The ladder is a guide to seeing who has power when important decisions are being made. It has survived for so long because people continue to confront processes that refuse to consider anything beyond the bottom rungs. Here is how David Wilcox (19 August 1996) describes the eight rungs of the ladder <https://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/main1.html#:~:text=Choosing%20a%20level%20%2D%20taking%20a,support%20within%20your%20organisation%20...>



Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Figure 1 Degrees of Citizen Participation

1 Manipulation and 2 Therapy – Both are non-participative. The aim is to cure or educate the participants. The proposed plan is best, and the job of participation is to achieve public support through public relations.

3 Informing – A most important first step to legitimate participation but too frequently the emphasis is on a one-way flow of information with no channel of feedback.

4 Consultation – Again a legitimate step attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings and public enquires. But Arnstein still feels this is just a window dressing ritual.

5 Placation – For example, co-option of hand-picked ‘worthies’ onto committees. It allows citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retains for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice.

6 Partnership – Power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared e.g. through joint committees.

7 Delegation – Citizens holding a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions. The public now has the power to assure accountability of the programme to them.

8 Citizen Control – Have-nots handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a programme e.g. neighbourhood corporation with no intermediaries between it and the source of funds.

According to David Wilcox (1996), Participation is not necessarily achieved just by setting up a forum, working group, committee, steering group or other structure. On the other hand, if you are planning or managing a participation process you will need some point of accountability, and the key interests may need to work together formally as well as creatively.

2.5 Public Participation Framework for the South African Legislative Sector

The South African Legislative Sector has developed the Public Participation Framework for the South African Legislative Sector (2013). The framework covers the legal framework which includes Promotion of Public Participation as a Constitutional Imperative, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Right to Participate in Law-Making and all other Legislative Processes, the South African Legislative Sector Governance Structures, Common constitutional powers of the sector, Legislative Authority, Oversight Authority and Public Participation.

The goal of the Public Participation Framework is to provide a written guideline that contains integration opportunities and minimum norms and standards for Public Participation within the Legislative Sector to improve alignment and the practice of Public Participation.

Although there are both structures and processes in place to ensure Public Participation in legislative processes, it is clear from the above review that there are many gaps between how systems are intended to work and how they operate in practice. The evident overlap of activities and lack of coordination between national and provincial Public Participation practices further points to the need for an integrated national Public Participation Framework and the subsequent alignment to the Minimum Standards contained within the Framework. In this sense, much of the Public Participation practice in South Africa remains an aspiration. The Public Participation Framework seeks to provide guidelines that contain integration opportunities and minimum requirements for Public Participation within the Legislative Sector to improve alignment and the practice of Public Participation.

2.6 South Africa Constitution and Legislative Mandates on Public Participation

The South African Constitution and various legislation mandate national, provincial and local spheres of governments on legislative processes to implement public participation. These include the following:

2.6.1 Basis in SA Constitution

Section 17

The right to assembly, demonstration, picket and petition.

Section 152(1)(e)

One of the objectives of local government is to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.

Section 195(1)

Basic values and principles governing public administration such as that the People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making and, public administration must be accountable.

2.6.2 Basis in local government and other law (legislation)

- Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000
Chapter 4 (ss 16-22): Community participation
- Local Government: Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003
Section 22: publication of annual budgets
Section 23 (1) (a) : consultation on tabled budgets

Section 33(1)(bb): contracts having future budgetary implications

Section 34 (a) (b) asset transfer regulations

Section 120(1)(a): conditions and process for public-private partnership

- Local Government: Municipal Property Rates Act 6 of 2004

Section 4: Community participation

- Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Plan (SPLUMA) 16 of 2013

Section 12(1)(a) and Section 20(3)(b): Preparation of spatial development frameworks

- National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998

Section 2: Principles

Section 24(4)(v): Environmental authorisation

- Water Services Act 108 of 1997

Section 14(1)(a) and (b): Draft water services development plan

- National Environmental Management: Waste Act 59 of 2008

Section 73: Public participation

- White Paper on Local Government 1998

Section 3.3: Working together with local citizens and partners

According to Nonhlanhla Ngcobo, (2022), the primary objectives of the SA Constitution and legislation is to promote public participation and Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 allows for various methods to be used to foster public participation. The relevance of public participation is to ensure inclusive environmental decision-making at local government level. The municipality may receive the opportunity to receive a community's view on matters relating to the environment during the design of key instruments such as the IDP and SDF. Public participation is an ongoing process between municipalities and local communities. Councillors and municipal officials must foster community participation. The design, implementation and enforcement of public participation may differ from legislation to legislation. Where the process is not expressly outlined in a said Act, Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 processes must be applied.

Serviced communities must also foster democracy and support social transformation. Participatory democracy is a tool through which public participation is enhanced. Public participation in relation to environmental governance is an effective tool to establish

environmental priorities, offer solutions to challenges and prepare, execute, and apply the most accurate decision possible.

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

The Public Service Commission commissioned a study on the public participation practices in the public service in 2008 and an evaluation of public participation in 2023. We can assess from the reports in 2008 and 2023 on how public participation has improved or regressed in the past 15 years.

The main aim of the 2008 study was to assess public participation practices in selected departments in the Public Service. The specific objectives of the project were to:

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

The following are the key findings of the 2008 study:

- *“There is a common understanding of public participation*
- *The existence of public participation guidelines/policies is uneven*
- *Stakeholders are aware of the departmental public participation guidelines/policies*
- *Departments still have challenges in the application of their public participation practices*
- *Some departments have established public participation units*
- *The functions of public participation units are varied*
- *Staff have not received special training on public participation*
- *Budget allocation for public participation varies from one department to another*
- *Departments do consider citizens' views during planning*
- *Departments do consider the views of populations with special interests*
- *Departments make use of local languages*

- *Engagement with citizens affected by service delivery protests is varied*” (Public Service Commission, 2008: pages 32-33).

The following recommendations are made in the study:

- *“Departments should develop guidelines/policies on public participation to inform and manage critical engagement with citizens*
- *Departments at both national and provincial governments, should institutionalise public participation as a service delivery and good governance mechanism*
- *Departments in both provincial and national governments need to familiarise themselves with the PSC’s Citizens Forums Toolkit as a public participation practice*
- *There is a need for departments to ensure that officials involved in public participation are adequately trained to engage with citizens.”* (Public Service Commission, 2008: page 34).

The objectives of the evaluation project in 2023 were to –

- a) “work together with Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) (as a leading partner) and other stakeholders to assess the extent of public participation and to develop mechanisms for its strengthening”.*
- b) “inform policy change for public participation within the legislative framework”.*
- c) “engage with communities to assess the level of public participation”.* (Public Service Commission evaluation of public participation in 2023, Page 4).

The findings of the evaluation are *“that the research team utilised the spectrum of community engagement as the barometer to assess how the different institutions (DMRE, Tau Lekoa Gold Mine and City of Matlosana local municipality) bring together efforts to implement projects and programmes within the communities of Khuma, Kanana, Tigane and Jouberton. The identification of stakeholders was done during the engagement session during the first phase of the evaluation and there are various systemic issues identified during the engagement sessions”.* (Public Service Commission evaluation of public participation in 2023, Pages 32-35).

The key findings of the evaluation were *“that there was a lack of cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, PSC found that there was a lack of working relationship among*

stakeholders, a lack of knowledge on the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and SLP Projects for 2015 -2020 and 2021-2025 were not fully implemented". (Public Service Commission evaluation of public participation in 2023, Pages 32-35).

2.8 A South African local government perspective

According to N Maphazi, K Raga, J D Taylor and T Mayekiso (2013) reveal strategies for enhanced public participation include ward committees, community development workers, community-based planning / ward-based planning, traditional authorities and other forms of participation including advisory panels, focus groups, forums and sector groups. These are complemented by community izimbizo (outreach programmes) and *Masithethisane (come let us talk together)* programmes, which aim to establish community needs and their feelings on governance and how it should be improved.

Community participation is an integral part of the new developmental local government mandate. Communities should not merely be consulted but should take an active role in matters of local governance. As a feature of developmental local government, the challenge to maximise enhanced and more effective public participation strategies will remain a challenge for many municipalities in South Africa. This is despite a broad spectrum of legislative prescriptions about local government on the issue of public consultation and participation requirements.

2.9 Review of the White Paper on Local Government (WPLG), 1998

Currently there are processes underway to review the White Paper of Local Government (1998). In September 2022, the Department of Cooperative Governance, in partnership with the Presidency, convened a Presidential Local Government Summit, where an official call was made to review the WPLG98. The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa, formally introduced the WPLG98 Review at his budget vote in Parliament in July 2024.

This *Discussion Document* is a step in the process of reviewing the WPLG98, which is part of a process of local government reform and restructuring over the short, medium, and long term. The intention is to publish a revised Local Government White Paper in March 2026 (WPLG26),

following an extensive and inclusive process of consultation based on the Discussion Document.

According to the Discussion Document, 2025 it highlighted poor relationships with citizens in that there is a large divide between many municipalities and their communities (including residential, business, university, and institutional communities). The fact that as of 2024, households owe municipalities a staggering R230.5bn (74% of total municipal debt) is an indicator of the broken social contract.

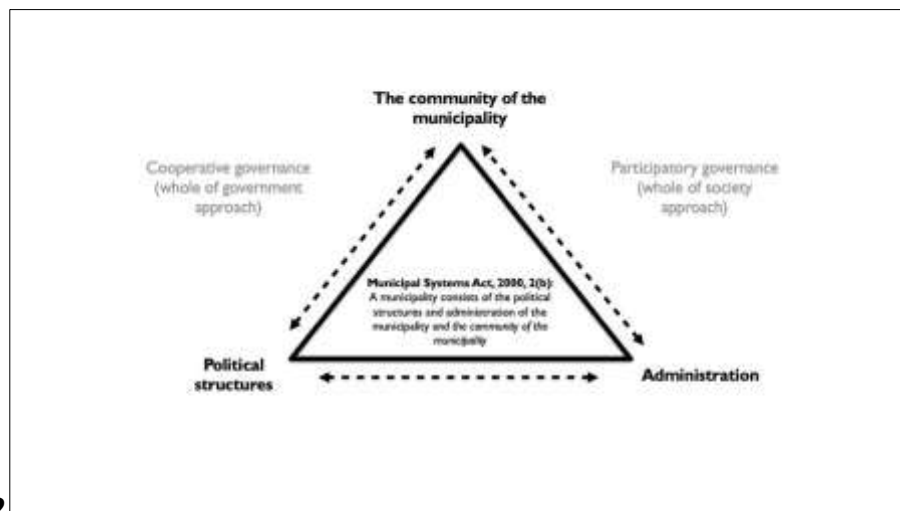


Figure 2

As illustrated in Figure 2, a three-way partnership between the elected political structure, the administration, and the community is part of the original conceptualisation of municipalities in the WPLG98. However, relationships have increasingly become strained and, in some cases, have broken down, hence the need for a focus on ways to improve three-way relational governance at the municipal level, within a whole of government and whole of society framework.

Creating an enabling environment also means adopting more adaptive programming and delivery methods, where the municipality and its partners are able to take joint action and simultaneously pause, reflect, and learn from new data and intelligence generated by the process at regular intervals, to adjust and adapt plans to make them more implementable, feasible, and legitimate. This approach also includes the development of individual and organisational learning techniques, communities of practice, and knowledge-sharing and learning networks.

For this new approach to take root, a shift beyond the limited concept of ‘community engagement and stakeholder management’ will need to occur. Building a ‘capable local state’ will need to focus on building the capabilities of both councillors and municipal staff to prioritise relationships of trust with their community and on building the capabilities of communities to partner meaningfully with their municipality.

In order for the changes to become effective the citizens need to get involved through the WPLG26 process, in assessing the role and value of local government in their lives and must be part of a joint agreement on how to rebuild an effective and sustainable local government system. Government will not be able to achieve this alone.

2.10 The Msunduzi Municipality’s Public Participation Strategy

According to the Msunduzi Municipality’s Public Participation Strategy, the purpose of the strategy seeks to provide a guideline of how participation by communities on municipal matters and/or affairs ought to be approached and implemented. The compilation of this strategy was guided by five interrelated elements, i.e.: -

- Ensuring that Msunduzi Municipality is open, transparent and accountable through involving communities in its decision making and implementation of service delivery as guided by the requests from community members.
- That Msunduzi Municipality must ensure consistent flow of information from the Municipality to the communities and vice versa through regular community meetings by Ward Councillors and their Ward Committees.
- That Msunduzi Municipality must empower communities and relevant stakeholders, through guidance by the Public Participation Directorate in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, on how they can participate.
- There exists a legislated interrelation amongst the Community, Council and the Administration of municipalities. Council are representatives of communities, voted for by the communities to represent them in matters affecting their Wards and their municipality in general.
- The Administration exists to implement the needs of communities as guided by the

Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The implementation of needs of communities is therefore monitored by Council through various committees of Council.

The strategy covers the following areas: role/functions of ward committees and terms of reference, rules, terms and conditions, role-players, public participation process, types of community participation structures in Msunduzi municipality and encourage and create conditions for communities to participate. The research project would review and assess the Msunduzi Municipality's Public Participation Strategy against the actual practical implementation of the strategy during the findings section of the research report.

2.11 Are the Msunduzi Municipality's consultation processes a "tick box exercise"?

The researcher tested this question through AI and asked the following question to source a response **"Are municipal consultations a tick box exercise in South Africa?"** and this is the response:

"In South Africa, while municipal consultations are intended to be a meaningful way for communities to participate in local governance, they are often perceived as a "tick-box exercise". This perception arises when consultations are seen as superficial, failing to genuinely incorporate community input into decision-making processes.

Why the Perception of Tick-Box Exercise Exists:

- **Lack of Genuine Engagement:**

Consultations are sometimes conducted with predetermined outcomes in mind, making community involvement feel superficial.

- **Flawed Planning Processes:**

When community voices are not heard, projects and programs may not reflect their needs or aspirations, leading to community disengagement and potential project rejection or vandalism.

- **Limited Impact:**

Consultations may be seen as a way for officials to simply "tick the boxes" rather than as a genuine opportunity to shape decisions.

- **Lack of Transparency and Accountability:**

If communities are not kept informed about how their input was used, or if decisions are made without proper justification, the process can feel like a formality.

Consequences of Consultation as a Tick-Box Exercise:

- **Damaged Relationships:**

When communities feel their voices are not valued, it can erode trust and worsen relationships with local government.

- **Ineffective Projects:**

Projects that do not align with community needs are more likely to fail or be undermined.

- **Increased Conflict:**

Lack of meaningful engagement can lead to tension and conflict between communities and local government.

Importance of Genuine Consultation:

- **Better Decision-Making:**

Involving communities in the consultation process can lead to better-informed and more effective decisions.

- **Increased Accountability:**

When communities are involved, they are more likely to hold officials accountable for their decisions.

- **Strengthened Governance:**

Genuine consultation can build trust and improve the overall quality of local governance. In essence, while South Africa's Constitution mandates public participation, the effectiveness of this participation often falls short of the ideal, leading to the perception of consultations as a mere formality.

AI sources: (https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SACN-Community-Engagement-Guide_v9-low-res.pdf)

<https://plaas.org.za/blog/page/4/#:~:text=BlogLand%20Publication-,The%20government's%20%E2%80%9Cconsultation%E2%80%9D%20on%20communal%20land%20t enure%20was%20just%20a,Sadly%2C%E2%80%A6>

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<https://saicawebprstorage.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/resources/SAICA-Submission-%E2%80%93-Discussion-Document-on-White-Paper-on-Local-Government.pdf>

<https://www.ibabs.com/en/local-authorities-and-governments/local-government-transparency/#:~:text=What%20are%20the%20benefits%20of%20transparency%20in,and%20hold%20themselves%20accountable%20for%20their%20activities.>

<https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollchap/book/9781803929392/chapter6.xml#:~:text=Improved%20transparency%20and%20openness:%20Making%20council%20meetings%2C,elected%20officials%20are%20doing%20on%20their%20behalf.>

www.saflii.org/za/journals/SPECJU/2020/10.pdf#:~:text=The%20South%20African%20Constitution%20makes%20it%20pertinent,pass%20the%20test%20of%20legality%20and%20rationality.

[https://www.mcgarrrigle.co.uk/post/critical-analysis-of-public-consultation-processes-crewe-town-centre-are-the-community-truly-bein#:~:text=The%20current%20state%20of%20this%20public%20consultation,to%20become%20ge nuinely%20inclusive%20and%20impactful%20processes\).](https://www.mcgarrrigle.co.uk/post/critical-analysis-of-public-consultation-processes-crewe-town-centre-are-the-community-truly-bein#:~:text=The%20current%20state%20of%20this%20public%20consultation,to%20become%20ge nuinely%20inclusive%20and%20impactful%20processes).)

2.12 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

According to SPACE an overview of ABCD, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) has happened organically since the beginning of mankind and has been taking place all over the globe... often out of necessity but also out of a natural inclination to collaborate and utilize what is readily available. Recently (in the 1980s), the principles of ABCD have been formulated into an approach to development, pioneered by the ABCD-institute (U.S.) and the Coady Institute (Canada).

ABCD builds on the principles of the participatory approach to development. It is a response to the needs- and problem-based approaches to development, which assess communities in terms of what is lacking and is often conducted by outside agencies. The identified problems and needs translate into necessary interventions by external entities. This approach turns citizens into recipient clients and also paralyzes and neglects the assets, resources and energy that exist within people and their communities.

The Asset-based core principles to development are community-led development, stories of success, acknowledging the power of collaboration and social capital, appreciation and

mobilization of existing assets in the community, stimulating an opportunity-seeking seeking mindset and social entrepreneurship.

The ABCD methodology supports the ABCD process by providing tools to map out all the existing assets in a community by the community members themselves: appreciative inquiry, organising and mapping, community economic analysis (by means of the leaky bucket), linking and mobilizing and monitoring and evaluation (significant change technique).

ABCD could be seen as an alternative and creative way of public participation where all communities and stakeholders are actively involved in addressing developmental issues and problems through solution-driven approaches offered by ABCD.

2.13 Conclusion

Public participation at the local government level is governed through the South African constitution, legislations, frameworks and policies but the challenges are the implementation of all these instruments. Decision-making that does not involve communities and stakeholders are a useless exercise as political leadership, and municipal officials will implement projects and forms of development that would not make an impact on the intended beneficiaries. This is evidence of buildings of community halls, youth centers, sport facilities that have become white elephants. There are alternative ways like ABCD to involve communities and stakeholders to participate in decision making processes where it would benefit all involved to improve citizens' lives and opportunities. There is an opportunity for citizens and civic organisations to participate in the review of the White Paper on Local Government and provide input on to overhaul local government for the betterment of the people.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Research Methodology

The Udemy blog (2020) defines the difference between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics, while qualitative research involves pulling information from experiences and stories.

Qualitative data is defined as non-numerical data such as language, text, video, audio recordings, and photographs. This data can be collected through qualitative methods and research such as interviews, survey questions, observations, focus groups, or diary accounts.

The research project will encompass both qualitative and quantitative methods, focusing on respondents lived experiences with public participation processes. This includes providing input for submissions and attending consultations, such as imbizos. Additionally, the project will analyse the response rates of the Msunduzi municipality to respondents' inputs on submissions, survey forms, and questions.

It will include observations of consultation meetings, izimbizo, feedback sessions, and interviews with participants in attendance at these platforms.

The qualitative methods will involve an analysis of all responses collected from the online questionnaires. This process will include categorizing the data to identify patterns and trends, followed using various graph charts to visually represent the findings. These visualizations will help in illustrating the main themes and insights drawn from the participants' feedback, enabling a deeper understanding of the underlying sentiments and perspectives.

3.3 Target population and sample size

The target population would include the following: Msunduzi residents, business chamber, municipal officials, Speaker and ward councillors.

The residents are the ultimate beneficiaries who are invited to consultation meetings, known as imbizos, to contribute to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the budgeting processes and policies. They can attend and observe council meetings and other gatherings, such as the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC). This research project aims to examine their participation in these processes and assess whether their involvement was valuable and if their input influenced the decision-making processes.

Interviews will be held with the Speaker who is the champion of public participation and public participation departments at Msunduzi municipality, KZN and Gauteng COGTA. This would look at their responsibilities, mandates and implementation of public participation activities.

The sample size would be 100 and will be broken down as follows:

- 41 ward councillors
- mayor as the leader of the imbizos
- Speaker
- Three representatives of the public participation departments at Msunduzi municipality, KZN and Gauteng COGTA
- Four municipal staff (IDP manager, acting municipal manager, CFO, Area Based Management)
- Representatives of the business chamber
- 50 Msunduzi residents

3.4 Design of the research instrument

The following research instruments would be used to collect data from the above target population:

- **Online questionnaire** – according to Pritha Bhandari, (22 June 2023), a **questionnaire** is a list of questions or items used to gather data from respondents about their attitudes, experiences, or opinions. Questionnaires can be used to collect [quantitative](#) and/or [qualitative](#) information. Questionnaires are commonly used in market research as well as in the social and health sciences.

The research project will use Google Forms which would allow for the analysis of the data on the application, and the data will be presented in an Excel spreadsheet and include graphs which illustrate the response to each question as well.

- **Interviews** – According to Dr. Karim Abawi, (2017), interviews consist of collecting data by asking questions. Data can be collected by listening to individuals, recording, filming their responses, or a combination of methods. There are four types of interviews: 1. Structured interview 2. Semi-structured interview 3. In-depth interview 4. Focused group discussion.

Interviews will target the Speaker, participation departments at Msunduzi municipality, KZN and Gauteng COGTA and municipal staff. The interview with the representative of Gauteng COGTA will be done virtually.

- **Observations** – According to the intrac website (2017). Observation is one of the most basic data collection methods. It involves ‘seeing’ things and recording and analysing what is seen. Observation is sometimes used as a method on its own but is more often used in parallel with other data collection and analysis methods. There are many different types of observation methods. These include structured observation, expert observation and participant observation.

<https://www.intrac.org/app/uploads/2017/01/Observation.pdf>

The researcher will attend consultation meetings and imbizos to observe proceedings and take minutes/prepare brief report on the process undertaken and the outcome of these activities. This would include reports of experiences of previous public participation processes that the researcher has contributed and observed. This includes participation in a three-day training workshop on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in February 2025.

Refer to Annexure D for the online questionnaire questions and interview questions. The online questionnaire will provide an opportunity for respondents completing the online

questionnaire to include their personal details as an optional addition which would be used to share the final report with the respondents.

3.5 Transcription and recording

Transcription is converting spoken language into written form, a crucial step in qualitative data analysis (Amberscript Global, 2024). Transcription bridges between the raw audio or video data collected from interviews, focus groups, or observations, and the written text that researchers analyse (McMullin, 2023). The fidelity of the transcription process plays a critical role in ensuring the integrity and trustworthiness of qualitative data. Inaccurate transcription can compromise the validity and depth of the data, potentially leading to the loss of nuanced insights and contextual details, misinterpretation of participant responses, and erosion of data richness and reliability (McMullin, 2023). It ensures the data's credibility and reliability, allowing researchers to revisit and analyse the data multiple times. After carefully recording the responses of participants, the researcher went on to do verbatim transcription using the Artificial Intelligence platform by TurboScribe.ai. The researcher used a mobile phone to record all responses during the interview process. Verbatim transcription is a detailed method involving transcribing every utterance, including fillers, repetitions, and false starts, offering a comprehensive account of the dialogue. The researcher recorded each participant's responses in a single document.

Source: <https://turboscribe.ai/?msocid=3040b1a3773369a427a4a4e576336877>

3.6 Methods of analyse the raw data

The data will be collected through an online questionnaire as it would be easier for participants to complete and to distribute on all social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp and Facebook community groups). The questionnaire would be easy to administer to the participants and to obtain responses speedily. The questionnaire also makes it simpler to compare the answers of various respondents.

The questionnaire for this study will be created using Google Forms application which will allow the analysis of the data on the application, and the data will be presented in Excel spreadsheets and graphs.

The interviews and observations will be captured through verbatim recording and verbatim writing, and a report would be compiled from the interviews and observations. The observations will be done at consultation meetings and imbizos and participants at these events would be interviewed to get their opinions and perspectives on public participation processes and to get their experiences and insights on the processes documented.

3.7 Pilot study

A pilot study will be done before the implementation of the research project. As part of the pilot study the online questionnaire will be shared with 10 respondents to test the questionnaire to check for any discrepancies and technical issues for the online questionnaire that may occur during the pilot study. All questions for the questionnaires and interviews will also be shared to ensure that the questions are relevant and easy to understand and to answer before developing the online questionnaire. Any amendments will be made before the start of the research project.

3.8 Testing for validity and reliability

According to [Fiona Middleton \(2019\)](#), reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research. They indicate how well a [method](#), technique or test measures something. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure, and validity is about the accuracy of a measure. It's important to consider reliability and validity when you are creating your [research design](#), planning your methods, and writing up your results, especially in [quantitative research](#). Failing to do so can lead to several [types of research bias](#) and seriously affect your work.

Reliability refers to how consistently a method measures what the objective of the research is testing for. If the same result can be consistently achieved by using the same methods under the same circumstances, the measurement is considered reliable.

Validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. If research has high validity, that means it produces results that correspond to real properties, characteristics, and variations in the physical or social world.

High reliability is one indicator that a measurement is valid. If a method is not reliable, it probably isn't valid. Validity is harder to assess than reliability, but it is even more important. To obtain useful results, the methods you use to [collect data](#) must be valid: the research must be measuring what it claims to measure. This ensures that your [discussion](#) of the data and the [conclusions](#) you draw are also valid.

The researcher will test the validity and reliability of the research project by comparing the literature reviews on what has been researched and their findings compared to what the researcher has identified during the research project to ensure the research project is valid and reliable. The researcher will ensure that all information captured is correct and what the respondents have submitted or spoken about interviews. The researcher will respect the research processes and not be biased in the research project.

3.9 Limitations of the study

The following could be identified as limitations of the study:

- Not reaching the sample size of the participants of the research study
- Respondents not responding adequately or correctly to the questions
- Nonresponses from ward councillors and municipal staff

The researcher would ensure that all participants respond to the online questionnaire through ongoing reminders and follow-ups.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter three provided an outline of the research methodology used and presented the techniques for identifying, selecting processing, and analysing information for the study. This entailed using online questionnaires that targeted the general community and ward councillors in Pietermaritzburg, in-person and virtual interviews with municipal staff, KZN and Gauteng COGTA and HSRC, review of Msunduzi municipality's Public Participation Strategy document and observation of consultation activities which included rates and tariff presentation and the IDP and budgeting process at public meetings. The complete questionnaires, transcription of the interviews, review of documents and observations will be utilised as inputs to organise and construct the results of the findings. Data received will be summarised to find meaning that will assist in understanding the challenges to public participation processes within Msunduzi Local Municipality. Data received in the online questionnaires will be analysed using Google forms and charts to determine correlation and to find meaningful information necessary for this research study. This would also include analysing transcripts of interviews, reviewing documents and observations. This chapter presents the analysis of the main research findings and reviews the study problem, research questions, and the study's goals.

4.2 Results of Findings

Before the research study was to commence the research protocol needed to be adhered to and approval was required. This proposal detailed the objectives, methodology, and potential implications of the research. In addition to the research proposal, obtaining a letter of permission from the following institutions Msunduzi Local Municipality, KZN and Gauteng COGTA was imperative. All institutions granted permission on the condition that once the research was completed, a comprehensive report would be shared with them to ensure transparency and foster engagement. A review of Msunduzi municipality's Public Participation Strategy and existing literature was done in order to collect secondary data on public participation.

The findings would start with the results of the online questionnaires with residents, ward councillors and two business forums, followed by outcomes of the interviews with municipal staff and Gauteng COGTA and HSRC, review of Msunduzi municipality's Public Participation Strategy and observations of the consultation activities which included rates and tariff and the IDP and budgeting presentations at public meetings. It also includes findings from a Focus Group Discussion session with residents from rural wards was also implemented as the responses from residents were biased towards suburb areas only and the research needed to get responses from residents from diverse populations in Pietermaritzburg on their experiences of public participation.

The online questionnaires generated 87 responses from residents, two ward councillors out of 21 ward councillors responded and two representatives from business forums responded. It was important to receive responses from residents as they are the ones that should be benefiting from public participation and decision-making processes. The interviews from representatives from Msunduzi Local Municipality and Gauteng COGTA would provide insights on how they implement public participation or not. The manager at Area Based Management at Msunduzi Local Municipality did not respond to the request for an interview despite numerous follow-ups.

Each result was accompanied by relevant statistical evidence or qualitative insights that reinforced the conclusions drawn from the study, ensuring that the analysis was both transparent and credible. Annexures D – J provides the list of various questions to residents and responses, ward councillors, municipal staff, Gauteng and KZN COGTA and Senior Research Specialist at Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

4.3 Presentation of data

The data presented here was derived from the completed online questionnaires, which contained questions to each target group and was related to the research objectives. Annexure D provides a list of all questions that were asked by each target group. The statements in the questionnaires were designed to address each research question and related to a research objective and discussed below.

The main objective of the research study is:

- To investigate what Public Participation is in Msunduzi Local Municipality.
- To make recommendations on how to inform the communities about Public Participation processes is required by law.
- To make recommendations based on the research findings on how Public Participation can be improved in Msunduzi Municipality.

4.3.1 Findings from literature

A critical and systematic review of the existing literature on public participation was carried out in chapter two, and this forms the basis of this section. The literature that was reviewed was gathered from books, academic journals, research reports, policy reviews, conference papers and Government legislation. The findings from the literature that was reviewed are on the Msunduzi Local Municipality's public participation strategy and Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act.

a) Review and critique of the Msunduzi Local Municipality's public participation strategy

The Msunduzi Local Municipality's public participation strategy covers the following areas: role/functions of ward committees and terms of reference, rules, terms and conditions, role-players, public participation process, types of community participation structures in Msunduzi municipality and encourage and create conditions for communities to participate. The strategy is not aligned to s16(1) (a) (b) (c) of the Municipal Systems Act. All stakeholders should not only be given the opportunity to engage in the drafting of the IDP and budget but to be involved in the monitoring and review of both. Stakeholders should also be entitled to be involved in the drafting and of the municipality's performance management system and actual performance. The role of communities in oversight of development planning, budget drafting and implementation, and performance management, is not reflected.

The researcher who is part of a civil society organisation called the Msunduzi Association of Residents Ratepayers and Civics (MARRC) held a meeting with the Speaker on the 19 July 2022 who revealed that there is no budget being allocated towards public participation processes and was further confirmed by the research interview with the IDP manager and manager in the Speaker's office. The strategy does not explain in detail how public participation should be implemented in practice and is vague.

b) Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act

Chapter 4, section 16 (1) of the Municipal Systems Act refers to a system of participatory governance and according to France K.L. Kgobe, Mohamed S. Bayat, Abdulrazak Karriem, (28 May 2025) refers to participatory governance as a system of participatory governance in South Africa involves citizen engagement in decision-making and policymaking to ensure that government plans and services are more relevant and responsive to community needs. Mandated by the [Constitution](#) and the [Municipal Systems Act](#), this approach empowers citizens to move beyond being passive recipients of services to active contributors who hold government accountable, promoting transparency and trust. Key mechanisms for this include public meetings, workshops, and [Integrated Development Planning \(IDP\)](#) processes, with the goal of empowering communities and ensuring equitable development. The key aspects of participatory governance include the following:

- **Citizen Empowerment:** The system aims to empower citizens to actively influence decision-making processes that affect their lives, rather than just being passive recipients of government services.
- **Legal Basis:** The [Constitution of the Republic of South Africa](#) (Section 152) and the [Local Government: Municipal Systems Act](#) (Chapter 4) explicitly mandate and encourage community involvement in local governance.
- **Improved Service Delivery:** By engaging citizens, the system seeks to make developmental plans and services more aligned with local needs, leading to better outcomes and increased accountability.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Participatory governance emphasizes inclusivity by involving communities and community organisations in processes like IDP development, budget creation, and the review of by-laws.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Citizen involvement fosters greater accountability from government officials and promotes transparency and trust between the government and the public. Mechanisms for Participation
- **[Ward Committees](#):** These committees act to enhance public participation and provide a platform for citizens to voice their concerns.
- **[Integrated Development Plans \(IDPs\)](#):** Municipalities use IDP processes to facilitate citizen input, ensuring that development plans are inclusive and address historical inequalities.

- **Public Meetings and Workshops:** Citizens engage with government officials through various forums, symposia, meetings, and hearings to provide input on government plans and decisions.
- **Citizen Advisory Committees:** These committees provide structured opportunities for citizens to input into specific policy or project areas.
- **Consultation:** Municipalities are obligated to communicate their activities to the community and consider residents' interests and concerns when crafting policies and implementing programmes.

Section 16 (1) (c) states as follows: “use *its resources, and annually allocate funds in its budget, as may be appropriate for the purpose of implementing paragraphs (a) and (b)*”. Due to budget containment at Msunduzi Local Municipality this section of the Municipal Systems Act is not implemented.

Findings from literature reviews have revealed extensive research and review of the public participation processes which exist on paper but the poor implementation of various local government legislation on public participation and the Msunduzi Local Municipality’s own public participation strategy is nonexistent.

4.3.2 Discussions of findings of online and written questionnaires with residents

The research project will use Google Forms which would allow for the analysis of the data on the application, and the data will be presented in an Excel spreadsheet and include graphs which illustrate the responses from the respondents. There were 87 respondents who answered each question which provided a way of analysing the responses to each question. The researcher also received seven written responses from residents that reside in wards in townships which increased the responses to 94. Both online and written responses will be analysed together.

a. Demographic data

The demographic information of the respondents includes age, gender and location of the respondent like suburb or ward which was collected as part of the questionnaire.

Residents' responses

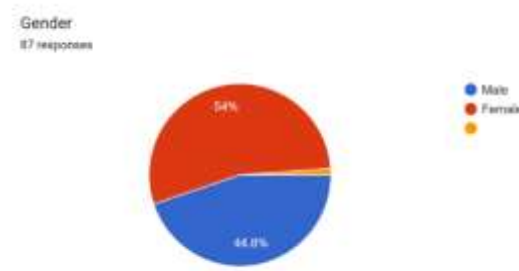


Figure 3: Gender of participants, Source: Author

Figure 3 presents the gender distribution of the participants, indicating that 54% identified as female and 44,8% as male and 2% did not respond. There were written responses from seven males.

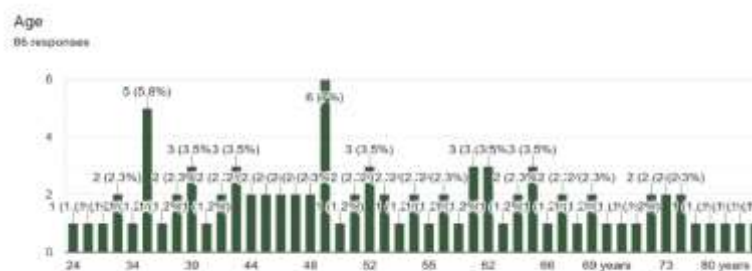


Figure 4: Age of participants, Source: Author

Figure 4 illustrates the age distribution of the respondents. The data indicates that respondents were from the 24 to 80-year age ranges. There were written responses from seven males from the age groups 40–60-year age ranges.

Figure 5: Ward / Suburb 88 responses, Source: Author

Ward	Suburb	Total Responses
1	Peacehaven	1
2	Mount Michael	2
17	Imbali	2
19	Plessilaer	1
22	Imbali	2
23	Mason Mill	1
24	Bisley	5
25	Athlone, Montrose, Lester Park	7
26	Prestbury, Clarendon	10
27	Central town	1
28	Northdale, Mountview, Bombay Heights	11
30	Raisethorpe	8
32	Woodlands	3
34	Glenwood, Eastwood, Panorama	5
35	Lincoln Meade	6
36	Bellevue, Pelham, Cleland, Scottsville	11
37	Hayfields	9
41	Imbali	2
		Total 88

Figure 5 provides a synopsis of where the respondents reside, and some indicated their ward or suburb. Most respondents reside in wards that are based in the suburbs and excluded township areas. The researcher has also done focus group sessions with residents who reside in the townships to capture the representation of residents in all parts of Pietermaritzburg as much as possible.

b. Discussion of findings with online and written research questions to residents (Refer to Annexure D on questions and responses)

Q1. What is your understanding of what public participation is at a municipal level?

The question is related to research objective 1 of this study to know what residents understand of what public participation is about. There were 89 respondents and 90% of the respondents understood what public participation is about and 10% did not understand what public participation is about. By analysing the responses from residents, it reveals that they have a good understanding of what public participation is about and that it involves decision making, engagement, solution driven, making recommendations, dialogue and feedback.

Q2. Have you participated in any of the following public participation activities by Msunduzi Local Municipality: public consultation, imbizo, IDP and budgeting processes or other? If yes, please describe your experiences at these activities and how you participated in these activities.

This question was requested to find out if respondents participated in any form of public participation activities conducted by Msunduzi Local Municipality. The question asked a yes and no response and if respondents responded yes then they were to explain their experiences with public participation activities. There were 94 responses and 50% did not participate in any public participation activities whereas 50% did. This shows that the municipality's public participation processes are partially reaching the communities. It also reveals that communities have experienced poor feedback by the municipality where they have participated in some public participation processes. They feel disappointed as nothing positive comes back from the municipality and are ignored.

Q3. Do you think Msunduzi Local Municipality seriously takes into consideration all inputs, submissions, suggestions, needs surveys by the public? YES/NO Please comment.

The purpose of this question is to establish whether the municipality considers or implements submissions made by the public to be included in their policies, IDP and budgeting processes, by-laws etc. There were 94 responses and 5% of the respondents agreed and 95% disagreed. This high percentage of disagreement shows the lack of faith in the Msunduzi Local Municipality and that the municipality does not take the public input seriously. Despite input by communities, they feel that their inputs are not included in the final decisions and that the municipality still goes ahead with their own recommendations or plans regardless of inputs made by communities. The exercise of public consultation is a futile exercise and is seen merely as a tick-box exercise and there is no genuine consideration by the municipality towards all inputs made.

Q4. Does your ward councillor actively involve the community in public participation processes such as IDP and budget consultations, annual rates and tariff discussions, development planning, or public meetings? Please give examples if possible.

The focus of this question is to identify the involvement of the ward councillors with residents in the public participation processes as they are closest to the community. There were 87 responses with 63% mentioning that their ward councillor isn't active in any public participation processes and 37% said that their ward councillor is involved in public participation processes. This shows that ward councillors are not involved in encouraging communities' public participation processes at a ward level which is vital part of development. This is further illustrated by the poor responses from ward councillors to this research where only two out of 21 ward councillors responded to the online questionnaire. It is known that ward councillors are not complying with the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 of the Code of Conduct of Councillors where ward councillors are also not hosting their quarterly public meetings.

Q5. How do you rate Msunduzi Local Municipality's commitment to public participation processes?

This question was to rate the level of commitment of Msunduzi Local Municipality to the public participation processes using a 5-style Liert scale.

The respondents had to rate from Excellent to Very Poor and received 83 responses. From the responses 77.1% rated the municipality's commitment to public participation as Very Poor, 15.7% – Poor, 3.6% - Fair, 2.4% - Good and 0% as Excellent. There were 1.2% who didn't know.

The responses to this question indicated a highly negative perception of Msunduzi Local Municipality commitment to public participation processes by its residents.

If one combines the rate of very poor and poor it totals 93% which is a true reflection of the perception of Msunduzi Local Municipality's lack of commitment towards public participation.

Q6. What suggestions do you have for Msunduzi municipality to improve on the public participation processes? Comment.

This question provided residents with an opportunity to provide suggestions on how Msunduzi Local Municipality could improve the public participation processes that are more inclusive and genuine to have more participation of residents in the decision-making process. There were 86 responses, and all provided productive feedback, but some were despondent on the current situation at the municipality. Many suggested that the municipality listen and understand the contributions made by communities, that the municipality follow the legislation and public participation framework, create accessible platforms, use technology, clear communication, feedback mechanisms, multi layered approach and communication, collaboration with residents on financial issues concerning residents, youth programs, follow up, evaluations and empower residents and regular outreach programs.

Q7. Any other comments

This was to provide residents with any other comments that were not included in the questionnaire or any last responses. There were additional comments from 60 respondents, and all noted the poor service delivery, corruption, decline of the city, lacks political will, despondency in some of the comments. This shows the high rate of frustration and disillusionment from communities at the Msunduzi Local Municipality.

4.3.3 Findings from online questionnaires with ward councillors (Refer to Annexure E on questions and responses)

The researcher targeted all 41 ward councillors as they are close to the community and are the link to public participation through the ward committees and other public activities like hosting the compulsory quarterly public meetings in their respective wards. The researcher obtained the contact list of all ward and PR councillors from the Speaker's Office to email the online questionnaire.

Of the 41 ward councillors 14 ward councillors did not have an email address, and the balance of 27 ward councillors had email addresses.

The researcher submitted the link and instructions of the online research questionnaire to the 27 ward councillors who had email addresses. Of the 27 emails submitted six were returned undelivered so only 21 email addresses were initially sent. Despite following up emails and WhatsApp messages to remind the ward councillors to complete the online questionnaire only two ward councillors submitted their responses.

Chapter three looked at the limitations of the study, and one was the nonresponses from the ward councillors which have been demonstrated by the poor response rate from the ward councillors. The ward councillors are the custodians of our democracy and a direct link to all stakeholders for public participation to happen in a ward. The following is a summary analysis of the responses from the two ward councillors from wards 24 and 39 respectively.

Q1. In your own words, how do you define public participation, and why do you think it is important at the local government level?

Both councillors were able to define public participation in their own words.

Q2. The following question was asked. What public participation activities have you been directly involved in within your ward over the past year? Please describe your role and the nature of these engagements.

They suggested having regular monthly and quarterly public meetings and sectoral meetings. This shows that the councillors only know the traditional public participation activities which are public meetings for them to comply with the Councillors Code of Conduct.

They have not been exposed to other forms of public participation activities and are not able to describe their role and nature of these engagements.

Q3. What strategies or methods do you use to promote and encourage community involvement in public participation processes (e.g., meetings, surveys, campaigns)?

Again, they just mentioned public meetings and included social media to promote and encourage community involvement. This is repeated from the above question and not being exposed to other forms of public participation activities. The researcher would provide recommendations on how the ward coucillors could use other forms of public participation activities in the next chapter.

Q4. How do you ensure that various stakeholders — including ward committees, community organisations, and marginalised groups — are included in key public participation processes such as the IDP, budget consultations, war rooms, and community-based planning?

They could not provide any reasonable response but to mention traditional methods like public meetings and community imbizos. This illustrates that ward councillors do not know their roles and responsibilities other than being the political head of the party in the ward that they represent.

Q5. In your experience, what are the main barriers to effective public participation in your ward, and what support do you need from the municipality to overcome these?

The responses were that communities were occupied with personal activities and failure on promised deliverables by the municipality. They did not provide any information on what support they would need to address effective public participation. They couldn't express on their lived experiences in the ward which shows that they were unable to articulate what support they need to make public participation effective.

Q6. What recommendations would you make to the Msunduzi Municipality to strengthen public participation in your ward?

The questionnaire provided an opportunity for the respondents to add any comments, and they responded that the municipality needs to beef up communication tools like social media

and local radio stations and suggested hoisting virtual meetings over public meetings.

Ward councillors play an important role in the public participation processes, especially by including all stakeholders at ward level to participate in all municipal activities e.g. IDP and budgeting processes and the annual rates and tariff announcements etc. It is important that all stakeholders be involved in the development of their wards so that it can improve the livelihood and upliftment of communities.

According to COGTA's website on [What you need to know: Municipal Ward Committees](#) it states that a ward committee may make recommendations on any matter affecting its ward to the ward councillor, or through the ward councillor to the municipal council, the executive committee or the support committee. The ward committee will be regarded as a statutory structure recognised by the municipal council as its consultative body and communication channel on matters affecting the ward.

According to a case study by Piper, L. and Deacon, R. (2009) of Msunduzi Municipality indicate its ward committee system was feeble and poorly developed, with its effectiveness heavily dependent on ward councillor performance, local political will, and municipal support. While ward committees serve as statutory consultative bodies and communication channels for municipalities to engage with communities on integrated development plans and budgets, the Msunduzi system appeared ineffective in influencing council processes as of the time of the research. This case study was done in 2009 and after 16 years to the current date things have not changed and we witnessed that many ward committees are dysfunctional and operate at an adhoc level. There needs to be a review of the ward committees and to improve public participation at the ward committee level with all stakeholders within the wards.

4.3.4 Findings from online questionnaires with two Pietermaritzburg business forums (Refer to Annexure E on questions and responses)

The researcher approached two business bodies who both represent small to large businesses in Pietermaritzburg with a combined membership of 800 to get their responses on public participation for the business community. Both understand what public participation is about and have participated in municipal consultation processes but complained about the lack of

transparency and that the submissions were not acknowledged or responded to.

Also documents that were requested were not provided by the municipality, e.g. the Cost of Supply Study used to determine electricity tariffs.

When asked about the if the Msunduzi Local Municipality seriously takes into consideration all inputs, written submissions, suggestions, needs surveys by the public and both said no. The most important question was if their suggestions to the municipality during the IDP, SDF or budgeting process have been used to promote economic development and both replied yes to an extent and no, but their suggestions have not been implemented by the municipality. They were also asked to list the five most important things a municipality can do through public participation to improve growth and productivity and rank them from 1 to 5 in importance. These are their responses:

Respondent 1: *“Be transparent, listen, consider with an open mind, respond, act in the public’s interest.”*

Respondent 2: *“Hear the people on the ground, note their concerns, do something about it, implement ways to improve, address corruption.”*

The Msunduzi Local Municipality has role to play to ensure that local businesses can contribute towards employment and prosperity for the municipality and should involve them in the public participation processes. The main challenges that all have with the municipality are the lack of acknowledgment and responses to the submissions and the municipality are not serious about all submissions made by business and are not considered.

4.3.5 Findings from interviews with representatives from the 1. IDP Manager, 2. Manager, Speaker’s Office and 3. Municipal Manager at the Msunduzi Local Municipality (Refer to Annexure F on questions and responses)

The researcher interviewed both the IDP Manager and Manager in the Speaker’s Office and both were asked the same questions and their responses would be combined as part of analysing their responses. Please refer to Annexure E for the questions and responses from both IDP Manager and Manager in the Speaker’s Office.

The role and strategic importance of public participation in local government was the importance of all the role players, especially the public, to be aware of what the municipality is doing, and for them to influence the plan of council. If the municipality engages the public more often and has meaningful engagements with all stakeholders, they will have an idea in what the municipality wants to do. It's important that the plans are responsive to the actual community needs. This means that the municipality must listen to the views and that those views must be considered. It must not be a tick box or rubber stamp to say we have consulted.

For the municipality to ensure inclusive and broad-based representation in public participation activities across wards, demographic groups, the municipality has 41 wards, but the demographics are not the same.

This municipality, for operational purposes, is divided into five zones. There's one zone, rural area, that is zone one, Vulindlela upper areas, where you've got traditional leaders, iZinduna, and all of that, which is the area that is far behind in terms of development. The second zone is Edendale, which is somehow developed, but not entirely. And then you've got your Imbali, the third zone. You've got your central town, the fourth zone. And you've got the northern part of it, the fifth zone. The IDP focused on low-income public participation but now they have invited big companies within the city, CEOs, to come and contribute to the IDP process. There is a challenge to link the IDP process with the ward committee discussions and the councillors' community meetings. They both mentioned that there is room for improvement in aligning the discussions and influencing that alignment between the CBPs and the IDP which needs to be improved. There is an opportunity with technology and there is a need to use social media much more actively, maybe once or twice a month and have development issues posted there.

The following processes are used as part of the public participation process which includes advertising in the newspaper, social media and community radio and on the municipal website. They also have the IDP forum, which is held on a quarterly basis virtually. As well. From time to time, the speaker or even the mayor in this regard meets with the traditional leadership to source their views. There was a resolution to say traditional leaders must be part of EXCO and council. There are also ward committees and it is mandatory for the committees to sit once a month in every ward. In the policy for the ward committees, it is

stated that at least twice a year there must be a ward committee forum. A ward committee forum is when you gather all the ward committees from all 41 wards together and get their views and inputs on some of the things and listen to whatever advice they can give. They monitor the ward committee forum to ensure that each financial year we have two of those as prescribed in the policy. You've got what we call a ward committee monitoring programme where we go to different ward committees to see whether ward committees do take place and when they sit, do they consider things in a proper manner. And we also have got what we call a done-by-quarter to us, a ward committee verification process where they verify in each quarter to say, they rate you on a percentage to say how effective are you monitoring your activities as public participation.

The municipality has the following public participation programmes or activities IDP imbizo, Ward Councillors, Area-Based Management Office, ward committees, and invite the public to these meetings, but there is a very significant high number of the public who are not attending in terms of public participation. They run media campaigns to ensure that they have continuous engagements on radio. The mayor has a slot every week on Tuesdays on the local community radio station, uMgungundlovu Radio. They want to form those relationships with the larger radio stations so that people broadly know what is happening. They have the IDP Forum, which is also a stakeholder engagement, which meets virtual. They do have a performance management system through their service delivery budget implementation plan, where they are compelled to have these sessions five times a year and four times for the IDP Forum. The councillors are required to have quarterly ward committee meetings and that is monitored to ensure the meetings take place. He mentioned that there is room for improvement. When something is resolved, they have a tracker to say this was resolved and how far there was a resolution about this item and whether we will be able to address it. They did have a monitoring tool for their IDPs two or three years back, but they need to bring that back.

They have a ward committee monitoring programme where they go to different ward committees to see whether ward committees do take place and when they sit, do they consider things in a proper manner. They also have a ward committee verification process where they verify in each quarter to say, they rate you on a percentage to say how effective

are you monitoring your activities as public participation. There is also a rapid response committee where they check the number of protests that happen in each quarter in the municipality and what each protest or march or picketing is about and monitor what it is. The rapid response committee needs to deal with the situation and to avert these disruptions before they even happen. It is difficult to monitor as the people responsible do not act on the information timeously to address the issue, and due to the slowness in terms of responses avert such situations.

Both the IDP unit and Speaker's Office have a budget but due to budget containment most activities have been cut. Before the municipality hosted IDP imbizos which had a budget for tents, PA systems for public meetings but due budget cuts this cannot happen.

The IDP manager suggested that the municipality needs to be more innovative and look at the cost-benefit analysis for future IDP activities.

The researcher has also observed the disconnect between the IDP units as ABM are responsible for developing community-based plans but are not integrated into the RDP and budgeting processes. The researcher asked the IDP manager on how the IDP unit and ABM should work together and he suggested that they pilot an ABCD workshop with ABM in three wards to test the concept as part of the IDP process plan and for them to champion the ABCD concept. *He mentioned, "that's how CBPs were meant to be done. You scan the wards, see what the assets are. Also, the wards are not the same."*

The researcher asked about the municipal's communication plan around public participation and was informed that the municipality uses social media namely its Facebook page, advertises notices in the local newspaper, posters in rural areas, loud hailer, local community radio station. The researcher provided suggestions on improving the municipality's communication to the public in general and will include recommendations in the next chapter.

The researcher asked about what systemic changes or support mechanisms are needed to strengthen public participation across the municipality — including capacity, resources, interdepartmental coordination, and community trust.

The IDP Manager suggested that they need to capacitate their ABM office as champions as they are close to the ground on what's going on throughout municipality. They don't have a basic understanding of what's happening in the departments, and they are working on integration and introducing an internal alignment session which sits every month where units know what other units are doing. The manager in the Speaker's Office suggested that ward committees needed to be properly trained to understand what powers they have and that their contributions need to be considered at council meetings and that submissions by stakeholders should be taken into consideration as well and would boost the morale of all stakeholders which would encourage participation in municipal activities. He also suggests that councillors need capacity building and some formal qualifications to make informed decisions at council.

Q10: What recommendations would you make for improving Msunduzi Municipality's public participation framework at both ward and city-wide levels?

The researcher did mention about the ABCD process that Gauteng COGTA who are piloting at various municipalities in Gauteng and they are keen to partner with Msunduzi municipality to implement ABCD as part of public participation. The researcher will introduce the IDP manager to the director of Public Participation at Gauteng COGTA to start the process of collaboration on ABCD.

The question about what recommendations would be needed to make for improving Msunduzi Municipality's public participation framework at both ward and city-wide levels was asked and it was suggested that there needs capacity of the public participation champions in public participation to work hand in hand with communication and the point that was raised is actually amplified the fact by public participation matters that we rely on communication only which is distinct from other municipalities like we communicate and we do the public participation so that's why we end up relying on social media we need more bodies that have the capacity to engage community members and include activations. We need to invest in more on putting up more budget in the Speakers office for public participation, invest in capacity building of ward committees, strengthen the relationship between stakeholders.

The researcher mentioned that he interviewed the director of Public Participation unit at Gauteng COGTA, and they have implemented Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) in some of the municipalities in Gauteng as part of public participation processes and was asked if they would be interested in partnering with them to introduce the same concept at Msunduzi municipality. They both supported this wholeheartedly and would be keen to partner with Gauteng COGTA.

The researcher was scheduled to meet the municipal manager for an interview, but the municipal manager was delayed and could not attend the interview. The researcher submitted the interview questions and requested that the municipal manager provide written responses to the interview questions. There was no response at the time of submitting the research report.

4.3.6 Findings from virtual meeting with the Director: Public Participation, Gauteng COGTA (Refer to Annexure G on questions and responses)

The purpose of interviewing the Gauteng COGTA Public Participation Department was to get more information on their successful piloting of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) methodology at municipalities in Gauteng that they use as part of their public participation processes. The following municipalities are part of the pilot Johannesburg, Mogale and Emfuleni which started in 2019. The respondent is well versed about what is aware of public participation and referred to the constitution and various municipal legislation that mandates public participation. The outcome of the interview is that the director of Public Participation at Gauteng COGTA is available to engage with Msunduzi municipality to assist them to pilot the ABCD model at the municipality. The researcher would introduce the IDP manager and the manager at the Speaker's office to the director of Public Participation at Gauteng COGTA to start the discussions. The researcher would provide the ABCD model as recommendation in the conclusion and recommendation chapter.

4.3.7 Findings from virtual meeting with Senior Research Specialist at Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (Refer to Annexure H on questions and responses)

The researcher was introduced to the Senior Research Specialist at HSRC by the Director: Public Participation, Gauteng COGTA who are piloting e-participation technology at eight

municipalities in South Africa. The purpose of the interview was to find out more about the e-Participation technology, and which recommendations could be made as possible for the research project. The e-Participation and Policy Modelling Platform for South Africa (ePPMOSA) project aims to pilot e-participation and policy modelling technologies and methods in selected municipalities between 2022 and 2025, with the goal of supporting and enhancing existing local government public participation initiatives. The following were questions of the interview and responses to the questions.

The following is the HSRC website which provides detailed information about the e-Participation project: [e-Participation project - HSRC](#). The project is piloted in eight cities as mentioned above and the following are technologies that have been developed and include three publicly accessible ones:

Pilots:

- e-Participation website at [City of Johannesburg](#)
- WhatsApp bot at [eThekweni Municipality](#)
- e-Participation website at [Mogale City Local Municipality](#).

Technology mapping:

- [Database and mapping](#) on e-participation spectrum
- [e-Participation Toolkit](#) which profiles a sample off the database from the perspective of a specific technology capability, like identity verification or moderation
- [Policy Brief](#) on implementation and e-participation 'stack'

Implementation approach

- [ACM journal article \(open access pre-print\)](#) reviews technologies from the database from the perspective of public officials implementing
- [Systems journal article](#) on e-participation implementation approaches

Policy/ legal

- [IST Africa paper](#) on enabling policies and laws
- [Policy Brief](#) on enabling policies and laws

The above technologies provide a basis on which to include as part of the recommendations in the following chapter of this research report as well.

4.3.8 Findings from online questionnaire: Public Participation Unit, KZN COGTA (Refer to Annexure I on questions and responses)

The researcher reached out to Public Participation Unit, KZN COGTA and received three written responses to the research questionnaire from both the Community Development Workers (CDW) and Provincial Rapid Response Team (PRRT) at KZN COGTA. The researcher notes the responses from the respondents and the work of CDW and PRRT which is very interesting but is not aware of the of the work of CDW and PRRT within Msunduzi Local Municipality. This includes the Municipal Rapid Response Teams, training of ward committee members, profiling of communities etc. It was noted from one of the respondents that COGTA is supposed to deploy CDW in all municipal wards throughout the country but due to financial constraints not all wards have CDW but hopefully soon all wards will have a dedicated CDW. KZN COGTA have a number of public participation programmes which are currently being implemented by the Public Participation unit to support municipalities in KZN and includes the following: community outreach programmes championed by the MEC, conduct ward functionality assessments and this is to ensure that councillors do meet regularly with the ward committees and to check whether do they convene community feedback meetings as required by the legislation. Provincial Rapid Response Team (PRRT) is currently implementing a ‘Responsible Protesting’ campaign, where they encourage communities to exercise their right to protest in a responsible and non-violent manner. Through this programme they visit municipalities across the province to engage directly with communities, raising awareness and promoting constructive dialogue. They also support Operation Sukuma Sakhe (OSS), which is a flagship programme that was designed to be the service delivery mechanism. Their CDWs have a significant role as they assist with administrative duties for the functioning of the OSS war rooms. Integrated Complaints Management System is another strategy by the department to assist the municipalities to address community concerns.

The researcher provided feedback on the Public Participation unit at Gauteng COGTA about the ABCD methodology of public participation and KZN COGTA Public Participation unit is keen to partner with them to implement ABCD into KZN municipalities. The researcher has linked both the representatives from the public participation units from the Gauteng and KZN COGTA and a formal virtual meeting will be held in October 2025.

The respondents also provide valuable recommendations which the researcher will include in the chapter on recommendations.

4.3.9 Findings from observations of IDP and Budget and rates and tariff consultations and imbizos

The researcher attended the rates and tariff consultations in February 2025 and the IDP and budget for 2025/2026 consultations on the 17 May 2025.

Both consultations were held at the city hall. There were no imbizos held this year due to budget containment, but the researcher would provide input from previous imbizo consultations.

The basic outline/agenda of both consultations followed the same process which included presentations, question and answer session and request for residents to make submissions. The rates and tariff consultations in February 2025 included a presentation of rates and tariff increases and a question-and-answer session. The presentations were poorly presented, and the sound system was not up to grade. There were over 1000 residents attending and the atmosphere was filled with anger and objections by all speakers during the Q&A session. The only participation that residents were able to participate in was to vent their frustrations and anger at the poor service delivery by the Msunduzi municipality and objections to the rates and tariff increases as residents mentioned that they are paying for no service rendered to them.

The IDP and budget for 2025/2026 consultations on 17 May 2025 were held similarly with presentations on high level projects, Q&A sessions and requests for submissions. The observation is that both activities were just consultations where all presentations and IDP and budget were prepared in advance without any participation of all the stakeholders. The consultations were just to consult the communities and impart information and requests were made for submissions to be made. The concern is that the IDP and budgeting process is a rushed process as the council had to approve both IDP and budget for 2025/2026 before the end of June 2025.

The IDP and budget consultation was targeted towards residents and ratepayers but there was a low turnout of residents in attendance. The invite was also extended to ward and proportional councillors and ward committee members. The following is the tally of those in attendance which was provided through the attendance registers which the researcher was able to obtain from the IDP unit.

- Residents present – 65
- Ward and proportional councillors – 14 (Msunduzi municipality has 83 councillors (41 ward and 42 proportional councillors. That means that only **17% of councillors** attended the IDP and budget consultations).
- Ward committee members – 109 (There are 10 ward committee members per ward and x by 41 wards there are 410 ward committee members. It means that only **27% of the ward committee members** attended the IDP and budget consultations).

The researcher had observed previous mayoral imbizos in the past and are like the consultations whereby the mayor provides an overview of what the municipality has achieved and announces some of the potential projects. Thereafter is a Q&A session, where some community members praise the municipality and then refreshments are provided for all participants. The challenge with the mayoral imbizos is that they are held in selected communities only. An example is there were only three mayoral imbizos held in 2024.

It is the opinion of the researcher is that the imbizo is not an effective and inclusive process; community submissions have no bearing on the prioritisation of development; no feedback is provided to communities on what is prioritised and how; and there is no process for communities to engage in the review and implementation of the IDP.

As mentioned before the researcher is part of an NPO called MARRC and since the establishment of the organisation in 2019 they have submitted numerous correspondence to the political leadership and municipal officials which includes submissions to the rates and tariff increases and IDP and budgeting processes. From 2019 to date, it is documented that 95% of correspondence and submissions have not been acknowledged and not responded to. This is in contravention of Chapter 2, Section 5(1) (b) and Chapter 4, Section 17(2)(a) of the Municipal Systems Act.

The Msunduzi municipality does not comply with various legislation around public participation which is most notable to be Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 and Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013. This is validated by the recent [protest by Bisley residents](#) to stop the construction of a community hall as the affected parties were not consulted and there was no public participation process to include residents in the project. The residents were successful in halting the project and the project was moved back to the original project site as previously adopted.

4.3.11 Discussion and interpretation of the results

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings obtained from various data sources which includes online questionnaires from residents, ward councillors and business, one-on-one interviews, written responses to questionnaire and observations.

South Africa has been complimented on its constitution and great policies and legislation that govern our different spheres of government including at a local municipal level. The obvious criticism of having the constitution and various policies and legislation is the practical implementation thereof. This can be said about sections of the constitution with reference to local government and especially Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act and other local government legislation.

The results reveal that public participation within the Msunduzi Local Municipality is nonexistence, and it is a tick box exercise and not much value is provided to have public participation is made at the decision-making process. Through the observation of the IDP and budgeting process on the 16 May 2025 where the public was consulted on the IDP and budget then a question-and-answer session was provided and calls made to make submissions. This did not constitute a public participation process as there was no public participation in this process, and all stakeholders were not involved in any decision-making process at the beginning as well.

Figure 6 represents the responses from residents both online and written responses showed that 50% residents did not participate in any public participation processes initiated by the Msunduzi Local Municipality.

Figure 6: Participation in Msunduzi Municipality activities

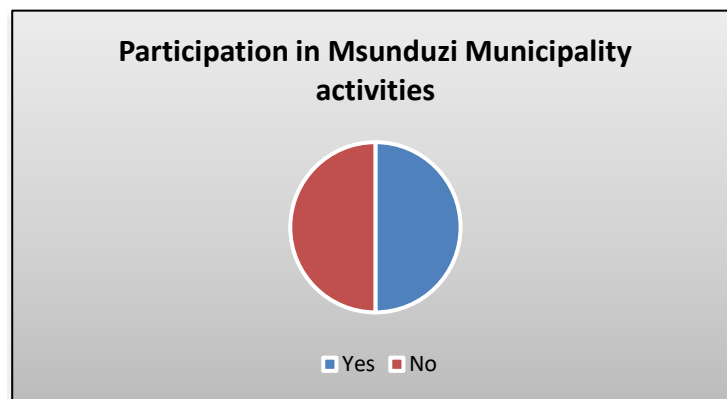
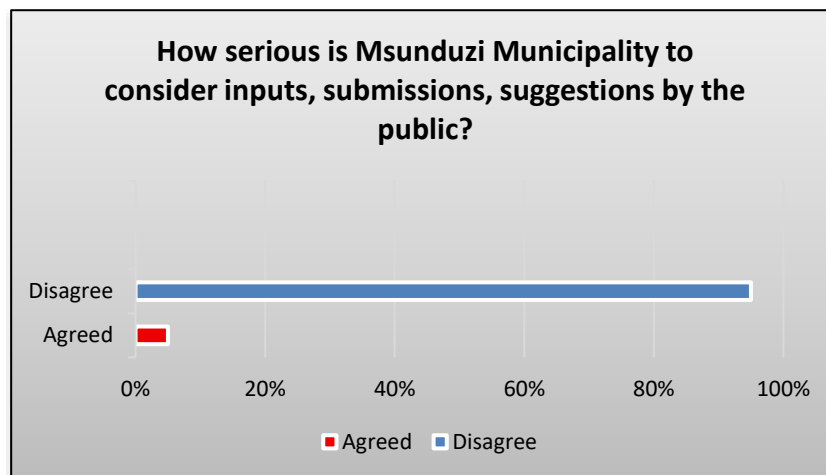


Figure 7 shows that 94% residents mentioned that Msunduzi Local Municipality does not seriously takes into consideration all inputs, submissions, suggestions, needs surveys by the public.

Figure



7

Figure 8 shows that 63% residents mention that their ward councillor is not active in any public participation processes within their wards.

Figure 8

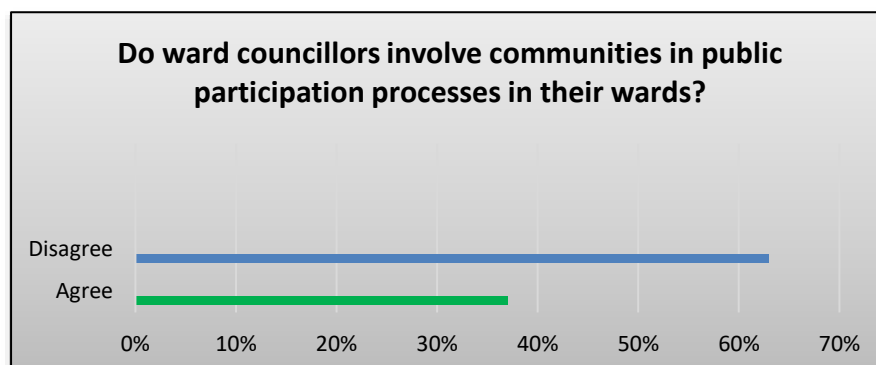
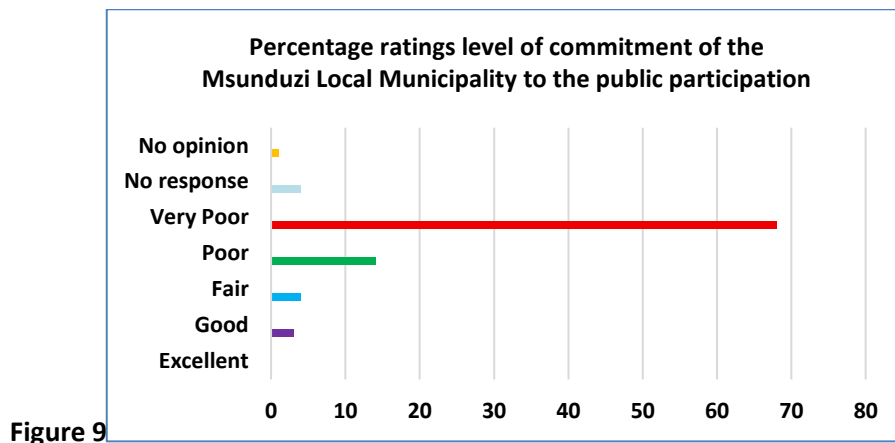


Figure 9 represents 77.1% of residents who rated the municipality's commitment to public participation processes as very poor.



This is further illustrated from a research study by Lungile Mkhize on service delivery in Msunduzi Local Municipality (2024) where it was revealed that 46% of respondents to the study did not attend public participation meetings organised by Msunduzi Municipality. The Msunduzi Local Municipality Public Participation policy is not aligned to s16(1) (a) (b) (c) of the Municipal Systems Act. Sections 7 and 8 of the strategy appear to have been issued in an incomplete form. Text is missing or paraphrased from the Act, without substance. The strategy does not explain in detail how public participation should be implemented in practice and is vague.

According to Chapter 4, s16(1) (a) (b) (c) of the Municipal Systems Act requires that a municipality must “*encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality*”, build the capacity of communities, councillors and officials to this end, and provide resources and budget annually in order to implement these measures. This is crucial to create conditions for public confidence in the systems and processes adopted by the municipality. Public confidence has been seriously undermined because of systemic non-compliance with these provisions. Officials have almost total control over the drafting of the IDP, with “Community contributions” largely being confined to one-off annual izimbizo and flawed engagements with Ward Committees. The IDP unit and the Speakers office need to ensure that a budget is available that would contribute towards the inclusion of all stakeholders in the public participation processes. Communities need to be encouraged and capacitated, not only ward committee members.

According to Dr Mmabatho Mongae (2025), democratic participation is meant to influence decision-making processes. But its effect on local governance appears limited. One contributing factor may be how the government interacts with citizens. For example, planning and budget documents presented by the local government are often lengthy, use technical terminology and are released shortly before public consultations. As a result, the timeframe available for citizens to read, interpret and respond to them is constrained, which restricts the potential for informed input into planning, budgeting, and service delivery. From a data perspective, there is an overall decline in civic engagement. But what does this suggest, what modes of civic interaction are declining and what does this tell us about political behaviour in South Africa?

This is evident during the IDP and budget consultation process where the IDP document is 700 pages and not accessible from the Msunduzi municipal website. The submissions by all stakeholders are not acknowledged nor are they responded to, and the municipality does not include any feedback on submissions submitted into any policy or the IDP or budget. Public views and suggestions are completely ignored.

4.3.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of the study; the data was examined in line with the research objectives and questions. The findings revealed that Msunduzi Municipality lacks the foresight into the interpretation of its own public participation policy, South African constitution, and various local government legislation especially Chapter 4 of the Municipal Act. It is not implementing genuine public participation processes and is just focused on tick box exercises and not involving all stakeholders in the decision-making processes. The municipal staff interviewed have noted their shortcomings and are looking at receiving all inputs from all stakeholders to improve the public participation process.

The next chapter will focus on recommendations of the study and includes recommendations from the researcher and participants of the research which are implementable to make public participation a reality.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented an analysis of the collected data and a discussion of the study's findings. This chapter will conclude the study by summarising the research and an overview of the general findings and recommendations.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study suggest that public participation is a tick box exercise and that respondents to the research are of the opinion that Msunduzi Local Municipality does not involve all stakeholders in the decision-making processes and does not include any feedback on submissions submitted into any policy, by-laws, IDP or budget processes. The majority of respondents concluded that their ward councillor is not active in any public participation processes within their wards and rated the municipality's commitment to public participation processes as very poor. The municipality is also not compliant with the South African constitution and all relevant legislation on local government and most notably not implementing Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and not complying with their own internal policies and by-laws. Ward committees and war rooms in most wards in Msunduzi municipality are dysfunctional and not working in the interests of the communities.

There needs to be a major paradigm shift on behalf of Msunduzi Local Municipality to meet communities halfway through becoming more proactive and involving communities in decision making processes and to trust communities who know the challenges and problems in their communities and can come up with solutions. This engagement would provide communities with the opportunity to collaborate on viable solutions, fostering a sense of partnership and shared responsibility in improving public participation within the municipality.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out recommendations to Msunduzi Local Municipality on the improvement and overhaul of public participation.

The recommendations are based on the analysis of data that was collected through the online questionnaires, interviews, observations and focus group discussions. The recommendations seek to provide clear, realistic and specific suggestions to the municipality based on the issues identified in the research.

The researcher also provided the target groups for the research to also include recommendations, and these recommendations would be incorporated into the overall recommendations of this report.

5.3.1 Recommendation 1: Enhancement of the public participation process

Public participation is a reliable method for aligning service delivery, long-term development, IDP and budgeting processes with the expectations and needs of residents. Moreover, by initiating stakeholder involvement early in the process and communicating legal and budgetary constraints, community member's expectations can be realistically managed.

The participation of communities can offer valuable insights into shaping community expectations. By understanding the processes, individuals are empowered to provide valuable input that contributes to cost-effectiveness and solution driven options. This will also lead to more pragmatic and constructive evaluations from the community.

According to the research study on service delivery at Msunduzi Local Municipality by Lungile Mkhize (2024), local government can increase decision-making effectiveness, legitimacy, and transparency by involving the community in these discussions. By welcoming and promoting collaboration, policymakers can interact with local communities and meticulously map out their needs, viewpoints, and perspectives on problems that are important to them, allowing them to make better judgments. It encourages sustainable decision-making by acknowledging and sharing the interests and requirements of all parties involved, including those who implement actions. As local expertise develops and inclusive, successful solutions are generated, the overall community commitment to outcomes and acceptance of decisions will be improved. Ultimately, this will foster greater trust in institutions and governance.

From the responses by residents this is not the fact as they do not receive any feedback on submissions to policy and by-law changes, inputs to rates and tariff and IDP and budget consultations. Msunduzi Local Municipality needs to become more proactive and transparent to involving all stakeholders in the decision making and public participation process in order to get buy-in and trust from stakeholders. The responses by residents and businesses had a common thread in that Msunduzi Local Municipality needs to be transparent, **LISTEN**, consider with an open mind, respond, act in the public interest.

5.3.2 Recommendation 2: Compliance to the South African constitution and local government legislation and public participation policy

The Msunduzi Local Municipality does not adhere to the South African constitution (Section 152(1)(e), Section 195(1)) and various local government legislation especially Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and their own public participation policy.

This is evident by the local organisation MARRC, that since its inception in 2019, 95% of all their correspondence and submissions have not been acknowledged nor responded to. This is not in compliance of Chapter 2, Section 5(1) (b) and Chapter 4, Section 17(2)(a) of the Municipal Systems Act.

The Speaker's office, who is the champion of public participation needs to review and adopt a new public participation policy and look at practical ways to give effect to s16(1) of the Municipal Systems Act and to also involve all stakeholders in these processes. This needs to be linked to the Public Participation Framework and aligned with the SA Constitution and legislative mandates on public participation as mentioned in Chapter Two on literature review, section 2.6 of this research report.

5.3.3 Recommendation 3: Improvement of communication channels

According to the research study on service delivery at Msunduzi Local Municipality by Lungile Mkhize (2024), having a clear understanding of your audience facilitates effective communication by leveraging their communication strengths. In turn, effective communication results in an increase in the trust the public has in local government. By fostering such trust, citizens will be more motivated to get more involved in their

communities. As governments and residents develop a relationship, community members will eventually recognise the importance placed in their issues. Communication techniques continue to evolve as technology advances. As they continue to develop, citizens desire communication that is accessible, truthful, prompt, and sincere.

The researcher would like to suggest the following communication tools in order to improve on the public participation process and would create awareness of municipal developmental projects and activities and general information etc. This would also be an opportunity for the municipality create awareness of who the municipality is and to introduce various municipal departments and how they function etc. The researcher provided these recommendations as part of the interview with the former IDP manager as part of the research.

Communication tool	Comments
a) Email notices	Msunduzi Local Municipality has an extensive email list of all consumers that they email municipal accounts to and could use the email list to communicate other messages, campaigns, notices or information to all consumers.
b) WhatsApp Channel	The researcher suggested a WhatsApp Channel to the IDP manager at the interview and the municipality now has a WhatsApp Channel. Respondent from interview: <i>“Personally, I will talk to our communication to set up the Msunduzi IDP WhatsApp Channel and update people”</i> . The channel provides an opportunity to communicate to all followers of the Channel. Here is the link to the WhatsApp Channel https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vb7062vEKyZOP02jAB3f
c) Information tables at malls	The municipality can engage with mall management to host information tables and provide general information about the municipal. Like “Get to Know Msunduzi Municipality”. This would also provide an opportunity for the municipality to do account queries as well.
d) Community activations	Host community activations whereby the municipality can partner with major companies who have stage and sound systems like Coco Cola and have information sessions. This could be a fun-filled event and get sponsorships of gifts to give-away and handout leaflets that give out information about the municipality and other information like the IDP and budgeting processes.
e) Electronic newsletter	The electronic newsletter would provide summary information about the municipality and other information etc. The newsletter can be one of the items to be posted on the emails to customers.
f) Municipal website	The municipal website needs to be overhauled to make it user friendly, easily accessible, professional and able to download documents or have links to large files that are not downloadable.

g) Linkages to Civil Society Organisations	The municipality needs to create a database of all stakeholders so as to be able to engage with and be able to share information, notices, etc. These stakeholders would be able to share with their members e.g. resident and ratepayer associations are able to share in all their community WhatsApp groups and membership.
h) Public documents	The municipality needs to provide summaries of major public documents which less technical e.g. IDP document, which is 700 pages, too technical, not downloadable from the municipal website as the document size is too large. To improve on transparency by publishing easy to understand budgets, IDPs and SDBIPs in local languages.
i) Media campaigns	Msunduzi municipality engage with local print media and local radio stations to run media campaigns to create awareness of the municipality and IDPs etc. Can include educational inserts in community papers to capacitate communities on relevant issues etc.

The notices by the municipality for comments and inputs like to the IDP, budget, policy and by-laws amendments are not provided feedback on what was submitted. This discourages public participation, and trust is lost by communities, and the municipality needs to drastically improve on this urgently.

5.3.4 Recommendation 4: E-Participation and technology

The researcher interviewed the senior research specialist at HSRC who introduced e-Participation pilot projects at eight municipalities in South Africa. The e-Participation and Policy Modelling Platform for South Africa (ePPMOSA) project aims to pilot e-Participation and policy modelling technologies and methods in selected municipalities between 2022 and 2025, with the goal of supporting and enhancing existing local government public participation initiatives.

The following are examples of the e-Participation projects:

Pilots – they are working on about eight municipalities of them, but these are three publicly accessible ones.

- Running in City of JHB now – [Efalia platform](#) (also used in City of Cape Town)
- Running in eThekweni Municipality now – [WhatsApp bot](#)
- Running in Mogale City Local Municipality now – [Flourish dashboard](#)

Technology mapping

- [Database and mapping](#) on e-participation spectrum

- [e-Participation Toolkit](#) which profiles a sample off the database from the perspective of a specific technology capability, like identity verification or moderation
- [Policy Brief](#) on implementation and e-participation ‘stack’

Implementation approach

- [ACM journal article](#) ([open access pre-print](#)) reviews technologies from the database from the perspective of public officials implementing
- [Systems journal article](#) on e-participation implementation approaches

Policy/ legal

- [IST Africa paper](#) on enabling policies and laws
- [Policy Brief](#) on enabling policies and laws

The senior research specialist emphasized that we cannot only rely on technology, but we need to keep human connections between the municipality and residents as there still needs to be accountability structures. The researcher recommends that Msunduzi Local Municipality engages with HSRC and to see if the municipality can be part of this project or to partner with HSRC to implement these e-Participation products into the municipality. The researcher is able to link the municipality with senior research specialist at HSRC.

The following are other technologies that the municipality could look at adopting as well:

- SARS: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18rqkzsF47/>
- Parlimeter - <https://www.parlimeter.org.za/>
- How South Africa's municipalities are finally getting smart - TechCentral <https://share.google/erVs3jl49C17D5NNU>

The following is a comment from a resident from the online questionnaire where residents were asked to provide recommendations to the municipality:

Respondent 1 – “Technology has improved a lot, they must try some other means of consultation, like electronic communication, or surveys, rather than inviting us to physically attend meetings, in such a busy world”.

5.3.5 Recommendation 5: Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as a public participation model

According to SPACE an overview of ABCD, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD),

ABCD builds on the principles of the participatory approach to development. It is a response to the needs- and problem-based approaches to development, which assess communities in terms of what is lacking and is often conducted by outside agencies. The identified problems and needs translate into necessary interventions by external entities. This approach turns citizens into recipient clients and also paralyzes and neglects the assets, resources and energy that exist within people and their communities.

The Asset-based core principles to development are community-led development, stories of success, acknowledging the power of collaboration and social capital, appreciation and mobilization of existing assets in the community, stimulating an opportunity-seeking seeking mindset and social entrepreneurship. The ABCD methodology supports the ABCD process by providing tools to map out all the existing assets in a community by the community members themselves: appreciative inquiry, organising and mapping, community economic analysis (by means of the leaky bucket), linking and mobilizing and monitoring and evaluation (significant change technique).

The researcher interviewed the director of Public Participation Unit, Gauteng COGTA and who is piloting the ABCD model as part of public participation with the three municipalities in Gauteng. He is keen to work with both KZN COGTA and Msunduzi Local Municipality to introduce the ABCD model into the Msunduzi municipality. The researcher has taken the initiative to link all parties through introductory emails and there is a scheduled meeting with all parties in October 2025. ABCD can also be integrated into the IDP and budgeting process as well.

5.3.6 Recommendation 6: Accountability of ward councillors, ward committees and war rooms

The ward councillors are the link between the residents of a ward and the municipality and need to play their part in public participation processes. However, according to the responses from residents to the research online questionnaire 63% mentioned that their ward councillor is not active in any public participation processes. This shows that ward councillors are not involved in encouraging communities to be part of public participation processes at a ward level which is vital part of development.

Also, the researcher engaged with 21 ward councillors to participate in the research and only received two responses. This directly shows the noncommitment from the ward councillors.

The following are recommendations from residents who completed the online research questionnaire:

Respondent 1: The ward councillor to improve visibility in the ward he represents, not only half a ward. It all starts at ward level.

Respondent 2: The councillor who oversees the ward should encourage and set up forums for citizens to participate in.

According to a case study by Piper, L. and Deacon, R. (2009) of Msunduzi Municipality indicate its ward committee system was feeble and poorly developed, with its effectiveness heavily dependent on ward councillor performance, local political will, and municipal support. While ward committees serve as statutory consultative bodies and communication channels for municipalities to engage with communities on integrated development plans and budgets, the Msunduzi system appeared ineffective in influencing council processes as of the time of the research. This case study was done in 2009 and after 16 years to the current date things have not changed and we witnessed that many ward committees are dysfunctional and operate at an adhoc level. There needs to be a review of the ward committees and to improve public participation at the ward committee level with all stakeholders within the wards.

According to the response to the research questionnaire, the public participation unit at KZN COGTA made the following recommendations:

Respondent 1 – “Councillors of Msunduzi must be compelled to convene public meetings and to collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure that communities play their part, again the community should also hold councillors accountable. The Speaker of the council as the custodian of public participation must be able to closely monitor the performance of councillors in terms of public participation and apply the councillors code of conduct to deal with councillors who do not call public feedback meeting and those who do not convene ward committee meetings.”

Respondent 2 – “More outreach programmes should be organised to provide communities with platforms for direct engagement. These sessions should allocate sufficient time for residents to ask questions and seek clarity on matters relating to the development of their areas.”

It is also recommended that all councillors be provided with a job description and linked to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which all stakeholders can monitor and evaluate all councillor's performances and to hold councillors accountable. The Municipality must use all available communication channels to ensure that the contact information of ward councillors and their ward committees are easily accessible to the community. The ward councillors also have a responsibility to ensure their availability when residents need assistance.

Just like ward committees, the war rooms are not functional, and we find that municipal department staff and provincial departments do not attend war room meetings and issues are not able to be discussed and must be held over to the next meeting. It is recommended that the relevant staff members be reported to the head of department and be sanctioned. It is also recommended to provide training and logistical support to ward committees and OSS war rooms.

5.3.7 Recommendation 7: Partnerships and support from SALGA and KZN COGTA

Both SALGA and KZN COGTA need to provide additional support to Msunduzi Local Municipality with capacity building to ward councillors, ward committees and communities on public participation and to review their public participation policy. To also assist them on how to interpret all legislation and regulations pertaining to local government and the SA constitution. This includes identifying and supporting champions at Msunduzi municipality to implement ABCD.

5.3.8 Recommendation 8: Public Participation Budget

In order to make public participation accessible to all stakeholders it is imperative that the Speakers office and IDP unit receives the required budget in order to bring into effect s16(1)(a)(b)(c) of the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. This includes allocating a budget for building the capacity of the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of the municipality; and councillors and staff to foster community participation. The budget needs to be allocated during the 2026/2027 annual budget as a matter of priority.

5.3.9 Recommendation 9: Coordination of Area Based Management unit, IDP unit and Speaker's Office

There needs to be better coordination between the Area Based Management unit, IDP unit and Speaker's Office. In the focus group discussion and general anecdotal discussions communities are not aware of the work of Area Based Management and who are responsible for Community Based Plans (CBP). It is recommended that Area Based Management unit to be move into the office of municipal manager.

5.3.10 Recommendation 10: Role of Civil Society Organisations

It is important for civil society organisations like MARRC, resident and ratepayer and civic associations and other stakeholders to provide support to Msunduzi municipality to implement various public participation processes. This could include providing training on behalf of the municipality and to be the contact of the communities to participate in municipal activities. MARRC has been trained on ABCD and could be part of a pilot ABCD project with Gauteng and KZN COGTA. This would include preparing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MARRC and Msunduzi Local Municipality.

The researcher is part of MARRC, and he has seen active citizenry in action where communities are taking the initiatives to engage with Msunduzi municipality and also holding them accountable. The following community initiatives provides such evidence and includes [Panorama RRA engages Afrisam](#), [Lincoln Meade residents patch potholes in Father's Day fix-up drive](#), [Bisley community wins fight against hall and expose lack of public participation in the project](#) and residents at Mount Michael submitting a proposal to the Municipal Demarcation Board on the delimitation of the wards and proposed reallocating to another ward.

5.3.11 Recommendation 11: Establishment of a public participation structure

In order to have the representation of all stakeholders in decision-making and public participation processes it is important for Msunduzi Municipality to engage with all stakeholders and to build the trust, transparency and accountability. This can be done by establishing a structure where all stakeholders participate in the decision-making process of the municipality.

This can be done by establishing a Council/Citizen Advisory Committees: These committees provide structured opportunities for citizens to input into specific policy, IDP, budget or project areas. According to the manager, Speakers Office, traditional leaders have been assigned to participate in the decision-making process of Exco and council and this needs to be expanded to include all stakeholders. All decisions made on these committees are then approved by the council and implemented. If this recommendation is implemented it would be revolutionary and provide genuine public participation practices.

5.4 Conclusion

According to Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) one can rate Msunduzi Local Municipality position on the ladder for public participation to that of manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation and placation. The municipality needs to work on improving public participation on partnership, delegation and citizen control. The researcher has indicated that the research report will be made available to Msunduzi Local Municipality, and it is hoped that they will implement all these recommendations in order to address the lack public participation by the municipality. The ABCD pilot project looks promising which can be used as a means of public participation, and the researcher will be actively involved if it takes place. A concerted effort needs to be started to develop the trust between the municipality and the community in order to foster long-term service delivery and development for the community in Msunduzi municipality.

6. Sample Community Recommendations:

Take the
people's
input into
consideration

**Listen
and act**

Involving
all to
participate

Involve us
the public

Inform and
obey public
participation

Be
transparent
and show
you care

Listen to the
people and
fix our city

Report back
on
consideratio
n given

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Appendix A



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: EXPLORING CHALLENGES TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL: A CASE OF MSUNDUZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Researcher: Anthony Waldhausen

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

E.g. The purpose of this study is to investigate Public Participation processes at Msunduzi Municipality. South Africa is well known for its great constitution and progressive legislations and policies, but the downfall has been the poor implementation of the constitution, legislations and policies. This has been proven time and time again with the lack of genuine public participation at the local government level despite numerous legislation and policies governing public participation.

The public participation processes adopted by municipalities include consultation and imbizos which are merely tick box exercises to comply with legislation. The elected officials do not promote active public participation processes, and all communities/stakeholders are always left out of the decision-making processes which negatively affect the lives of the public. This is despite numerous occasions where elected officials when making speeches make mention of not leaving anyone of the citizenry left behind. But this is more obvious of the lack of genuine public participation of communities/stakeholders where decisions are made without input from all and only by elected officials and municipal staff.

The decisions are poorly and recklessly made on behalf of communities/stakeholders, which negatively impacts progress and planning, with poor outcomes that have a long-term negative effect on communities. While public participation in municipal affairs is a legal requirement, much remains to be done to achieve effective participation.

- **Outline of the Procedures:**

The participants who have consented to partaking in the survey, will be requested to complete a questionnaire administered by the researcher and this will take about 20 minutes to complete

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: The participants will not be asked to perform any acts or make statements which might be expected to cause discomfort, compromise them, diminish their self-esteem or cause them to experience embarrassment or regret. There are no foreseeable adverse reactions

Benefits: The benefits of the research include the following:

- The participants and the community will benefit from the study by having an opportunity to share their opinions which will be recommended to Msunduzi to improve public participation processes.
- Develop alternative methods of public participation that is engaging and promotes active participation of all stakeholders.

- It is envisaged that the research results will be presented at a local or international conference, and the findings will be published in an accredited journal and media outlets.
- Participants will be able to see a holistic picture as to where the problems lie in terms of the way the various departments are run and attempt to fix them.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the study for their own personal reasons, like a lack of time to complete the questionnaire. There will be no adverse consequences for the participants should they choose to withdraw.

Remuneration: The participant will not receive any monetary or other types of remuneration.

Costs of the Study: The participants are not expected to cover any costs for the study.

Confidentiality: The data collection process will not involve access to confidential personal data. Participants will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. The completed questionnaires, which do not contain the name of the participant or his/her enterprise, will be stored for a period of five years, and will, thereafter, be shredded. All electronic data will also be deleted after a period of five years.

Research-related Injury: There is no anticipated injury to the participants as the participants will not perform any physical acts.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Queries: Anthony Waldhausen at 072 536 2978

[ANNEXURE B: Letter to Dept. / municipality seeking permission to conduct research.](#)

[ANNEXURE C: Letter from institutions/municipality granting permission to conduct research.](#)

[ANNEXURE D: Research instrument \(written questions and online questionnaire with detailed responses from respondents\)](#)

[ANNEXURE E: Online questionnaire for ward councillors](#)

[ANNEXURE E: Online questionnaire for business](#)

[ANNEXURE F: Interview questions and responses for Msunduzi Municipality IDP Manager, manager, Speaker's office and Municipal Manager](#)

[ANNEXURE G: Interview questions and responses for Gauteng COGTA Public Participation Department \(Interview done virtually via Zoom\)](#)

[ANNEXURE H: Interview questions and responses for Senior Research Specialist at Human Sciences Research Council \(HSRC\), \(Interview done virtually via Zoom\)](#)

[ANNEXURE I: Online questionnaire and responses: Public Participation Unit, KZN COGTA](#)