

Published by the University of KwaZulu-Natal  
<https://journals.ukzn.ac.za/index.php/JICBE>  
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*Journal of Inclusive cities and Built environment*. Vol. 2 Issue 3

**How to cite:** M.N. Moloji. 2022. Effective Service Delivery Strategy Adoption and Implementation: A Panacea for Social Inclusion in Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality. *Journal of Inclusive cities and Built environment*. Vol. 2 Issue 3, Pg 57-68.

## **EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION: A PANACEA FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN INKOSI LANGALIBALELE MUNICIPALITY**

**By M.N. Moloji**

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*Published 11 July 2022*

### **ABSTRACT**

Over the past twenty years, service delivery has increasingly received much attention to promoting positive social effects that address social inclusion and exclusion issues. A growing body of research suggests that central to the need to improve service delivery, at both national and local government level, is the need to guarantee that all groups within the community are integrated in the sustainable development effort development trajectory. This paper investigates the role of service delivery in fostering social inclusion in a typical local municipality in post-apartheid South Africa. The study used a qualitative case study approach to examine the role of service delivery in promoting and ensuring inclusive communities in Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality. In-depth interviews (n=26) including community members (n=16) and councillors (n=10) were conducted to understand the impact of service delivery towards social inclusion. The research had two main interests: (i) to unpack the service delivery strategies is implemented in the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality; and (ii) To find out if these service delivery strategies are enhancing the prospects of social inclusion. Three broad strategies were identified from the data: increasing citizen participation, flexible response to service user complaints, and partnering with other players and outsourcing services. The results of this study reveal that, while the strategies may have enhanced the prospects of an inclusive municipality, the llangalibalele municipality needs to do more to ensure that their strategies are equitable and thus inclusive and foster social inclusion.

**KEY WORDS** service delivery, social inclusion, social exclusion, local governments, municipality

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Post-apartheid South Africa continues to grapple with the challenges of social exclusion that are aggravated by unequal distribution of resources and limited access to service and social amenities (Mubangizi 2008; Nyahodza and Higgs 2017). In an effort to resolve social exclusion challenges, among its many approaches, the South African government prioritized local government reforms to promote social inclusion through direct service delivery to communities. As a result, service delivery's role in addressing marginalization, social exclusion, and inclusion has become very important. According to the Constitution of South Africa and the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, local governments are the primary vehicles for transforming local communities. They do so by ensuring the equitable and sustainable provision of services to their communities. Continually, the role of service delivery in enhancing and cementing social inclusion has dominated discourse on the impact of service delivery in local communities. Jenkins, Lancashire, McDaid, Samyshkin, Green, Watkins, Potasheva, Nikiforov, Bobylova, Gafurov and Goldberg (2007) acknowledges the impact of service delivery initiatives as viable mechanism that foster social inclusion. In their study, Waddington, Sonnenfeld, Finetti, Gaarder, John and Stevenson (2019: 1) found that "interventions promoting citizen engagement by improving direct engagement between service users and service providers, are often effective in stimulating active citizen engagement in service delivery and realising improvements in access to services and quality of service provision". Available evidence suggests that service delivery in post-apartheid South Africa should serve the purpose of creating inclusive communities (Sithole and Mathonsi 2015). In this process, local municipalities should equitably distribute social amenities and allow the equal participation of all citizens that are either

directly or indirectly affected by the services. Therefore, the role of service delivery and service delivery initiative is critical because equitable access to service allows for the improvement for the once deprived and marginalized communities. Further, it also bridges the divide that characterized South African communities.

Unfortunately, the state of service delivery provision in most South Africa's municipalities needs to be improved (Masiya, Davids, Mangai 2019; Ndevu and Muller 2017; Nnadozie 2013). For instance, Masiya, Davids, Mangai (2019) argued that most municipalities in South Africa fail to provide service to their citizens. As a result, there is a lack of public confidence in the local government system as evidenced by the spate of service delivery protests in the last two years (Ndevu and Muller 2017). Amongst the many reasons for the failure to provide such services, organizational failure and corruption have been cited as the major reasons for unequal and poor service delivery. According to Kroukamp (2008: 651), another important contributory factor is management capacity: inadequate or irrelevant training of managers, including minimal usage of competency testing methods in the recruitment of managers and non-rotation of senior managers to ensure exposure to all facets of service delivery. The direct consequence of municipal failure to provide quality and equitable service is that some communities do not have access to the services. This leads to the inequitable distribution of service in various communities and thus the growth and strengthening of the social exclusion phenomenon in already sidelined communities. For instance, available evidence suggests that failure to provide equitable and quality service in most South African municipalities has made worse the exclusion of marginalized and deprived communities (Lucas 2011; McEwan 2003; Tozer, Hörschelmann, Anguelovski, Bulkeley and Lazova 2020).

More recently, researchers have shown a heightened interest in the field of social

inclusion and service delivery (Makwande 2020; Masiya, Davids and Mangai 2019; Simatele, Dlamini, Kubanza 2017). For instance, Makwande (2020) examined the inclusion of communities in determining the infrastructure services that are provided to them by government. His findings concluded that there is rampant exclusion of the citizens in the public participation process that relates to service delivery initiatives. Similarly, Masiya *et al.* (2019) found that the inclusion of service delivery beneficiaries is important the drafting and implementation of public policies. The scholars further argued that the multiparty decision involving the municipal authorities and the citizens taken on a specific issue accomplishes and weilds more power more than the decisions that are unilaterally adopted. . In another study, Simatele *et al.* (2017) illustrate how waste collectors are a crucial element in the city solid waste management and contribute to the municipal's economic growth and environmental wellness. However, despite their contribution, the city's policy and institutional framework has not integrated the informal waster collectors into the formal system of solid waste. However, much of the research on service delivery and social inclusion up to now has been limited in scope. It fails to thoroughly investigate the emerging role of service delivery in enhancing the prospects of social inclusion Surprisingly, the subject of service delivery as a strategy adopted by municipalities to enhance the prospects of social inclusion has not been closely examined particularly, the strategies employed by the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality to foster social inclusion. This gap in literature has prompted this study.

Therefore, this paper examines the existing strategies to improve social inclusion through service delivery in the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the approaches and strategies that were implemented to enhance the prospects of social inclusion, a qualitative approach has

thereby been pursued. This paper asks two empirical questions: what are the service delivery strategies exist at the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality and what is the perception of the citizens of service delivery as a vehicle to enhance the prospects of social inclusion?

The next section reviews literature. Three sets of literature are reviewed in this section: service delivery and participation, social inclusion through service delivery and social exclusion a result of poor service delivery. After review of literature, the paper discusses the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion are discussed. Finally, the methodology and the findings are discussed.

## 2. SERVICE DELIVERY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The existing body of research on service delivery and public participation suggests that there is a lack of proper integration of the public in service delivery in the local government system in South Africa (Makwande 2020; Simatele et al. 2017). For instance, Makwande (2020) believes that there is a widespread exclusion of the citizens in the service delivery initiatives in South Africa, citing a top-down approach as a challenge to effective municipal service delivery. To illustrate, Makwande (2020) argue that often, municipal authorities and municipalities tend to pursue their development priorities they set for communities, and they do so with less to not less involvement of the ultimate beneficiaries of the development initiatives. Moreover, recent research has also established that the process of services delivery initiatives does not always include all interested parties in the communities (Castro-Arce and Vanclay 2020). de Haan, Haartsen, Meier and Strijker (2018) found that there is a continuous marginalization and exclusion of citizens in taking part in service delivery processes and initiatives. As a result, the marginalization has resulted in the implementation of service delivery programs that does

not address the needs of the citizens and thus, increased social exclusion of certain in groups in the community. Zarei and Nik-Bakht (2021: 103137) buttress de Haan et al (2018) assertion when they argue that the process of public participation and citizen involvement is a cornerstone of the service delivery process when done using “a bottom-up approach as its intention is to solicit views from the grassroots level where service will be delivered.”

Moreover, Zulu (2020) established that public participation is a milestone in any democratic set up. The participatory approaches provide mechanisms for social inclusion and allow community members to participate in the governing process. Following this further Kundu (2020) states that the inclusion of the public in service delivery initiatives is crucial because it brings development to the communities. In the same way, Mziba (2020: 44) establishes that public participation “promotes democratic principles such as political equality, majority rule, popular sovereignty, and popular consultation.” Mziba’s (2020) argument seems to be well-grounded when he illustrates that public participation is a form of citizen power, where the distribution of power is enhanced to include the undeveloped deliberately.

## 3. SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH SERVICE DELIVERY

### 3.1. Social inclusion

Various scholars argue that efforts to enhance social inclusion arose from the concerns over social exclusion (Hunter 2009; Rimmerman 2013). Social inclusion refers to the process of augmenting the terms of participation in communities for individuals who are underprivileged based on “age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.” (Moutafidou and Bratitsis 2018: 219). However, it must be noted that nurturing

social inclusion may or may not augment the capability of people to live together in congruence. Delhi, Behnke, Dragolov, Ignaz, Larsen, Lorenz and Koch (2018) argued that cohesive societies may exclude some facets of the population. Littlewood and Herkimer (2017) echo the same sentiments and argue that “social inclusion is not the same as social integration, even though the two terms are at times used interchangeably.” However, both social inclusion and social integration must contribute to social cohesion.

Simatele et al. (2017) argue that despite the contribution by waste collectors to the city’s waste management, municipal policy and institutional frameworks have not successfully integrated the informal waster collectors into the formal system of solid waste management. As such, waster collectors remain informal and excluded from the city’s service delivery initiatives. Pursuing this further, Simatele et al. (2017) argue that for many reasons, authorities are failing to provide services and struggle to meet the aspirations of the citizens in relation to socio-economic services and facilities. To that end, the groups that are not receiving the are increasing marginalized. In another study, Dlamini and Simatele (2016) found that the authorities in Johannesburg’s city were reluctant to integrate the waste picker into the formal systems. This is because the authorities believed that there are various socio-economic and political circumstances that hinder the integration of the informal sector into contemporary and established systems of waste management (Dlamini and Simatele 2016).

### 3.2. Social exclusion as a result of poor service delivery

There is no universally agreed definition for social exclusion (Kronauer 2019). However, the issue of participation in society is at the center of almost all definition known so far (Delhey et al. 2018). In light of this, social exclusion refers to a state where individuals are incapable to participate fully in the socio-economic, political, and cultural

life, and in the process of leading to and supporting such a state (Feng, Jones, and Phillips 2019). Scarborough, Sin and Risman (2019) argued that participation in society may be hindered when people do not have access to the material resources. This includes lack of income, land and housing, employment or service like health care and education. The Unit, S.E. and Britain (2001: 88) conceptualized social exclusion as a state when “people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poor health and family breakdown.” Consequently, Van Vollenhoven (2015) stressed that participation can also be restricted when individuals are not able to exercise their voice or interact with one another, when their rights are not given equal protection and respect.

From various studies, it is now well established that the poor and inequitable service delivery system stimulates the scourge of social exclusion (Mamokhere 2019; Mogale 2005). In a study that investigates the reasons behind the service delivery protest in South Africa, Mamokhere (2019) found that lack of citizens inclusion and inequalities in the service delivery initiative was amongst the leading causes of service delivery protests. Mogale (2005) argues factors such as lack of access to information and lack of public participation are underlying factors behind service delivery protests most of the service delivery protests in local municipalities. In another study, Mathebula (2014) cited in Mamokhere (2019: 373) found a slow pace of service delivery due to the poor municipal performance regarding sanitation, water, housing, electricity, and other services. One should note that the local government’s failure to provide these services has reduced the development, increased deprivation and marginalization of their communities. Furthermore, Chikulo (2016:54) states that social exclusion is made worse by the lack of service delivery in most municipalities. In this case, despite the milestone that has been made on the service delivery front, litter progress has

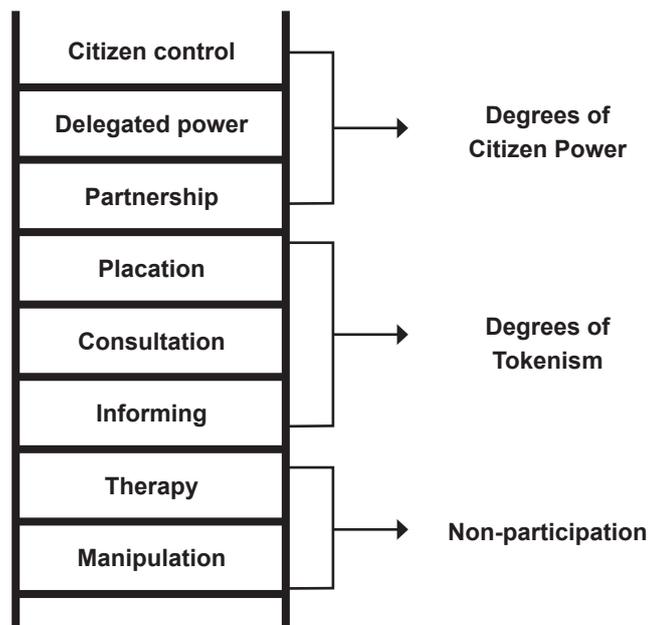
been registered on the fundamental objectives of alleviating poverty and inequality.

### 3.3. Theoretical framework: Arnstein’s typology of citizen participation

Sherry Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation (hereafter referred to as LCP) describes how empowered public institutions and officials deny power to citizens, and how levels of citizen agency, control, and power can be increased. The LCP is applied in this study a theoretical lense through which the researcher explain an conceptualise citizens in public service initiatives could have enhanced the prosepcts of social inclusion. The ladder of participation was first developed by Arnstein in 1969. The LCP is one of the most and widely cited theory in the field of citizen participation and involvement in service delivery initiatives. The LCP is a foundational work for other theories that were latter developed. For instance, it is from the LPC that Elizabeth Rocha’s Ladder of Empowerment and Roger Hart’s Ladder of Children’s Participation were developed.

The central argument of the LCP is that citizen participation in democratic participation, if it is to be considered “participation” in any genuine sense, it requires the redistribution of power between the authorities and the citizens. Arnstein (1968) argued that in the absence of equitable allocation of power, participation merely “allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered but only the other side benefits more than the other.” To that end, Arnstein defined citizen participation as “the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future.” Moreover, Arnstein argues that citizen participation is the strategy where those who do not have are made to join in the determining how goals are set, information is being shared and the manner policies are set. Put in simple terms, Arnstein’s theory of citizen participation describes the means by which significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society.

Figure 1: Sherry Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation



Source: Arnstein (1968)

Arnstein conceptualized public participation in the form of eight various steps of participation that she described as the eight “rungs” of participation. Arnstein includes a descriptive continuum of participatory power that moves from nonparticipation (no power) to degrees of tokenism (counterfeit power) to degrees of citizen participation (actual power). At the stages where there is non participation (manipulation an therapy) from the citizens, Arnstein stressed that there is no meaningful participation from the citizens in that the authorities deceive the public into believing that they are actually participating. Additionally, at the delegation and citizen participation stage of the ladder, Arnstein stressed that it is “when public institutions, officials, or administrators give up at least some degree of control, management, decision-making authority, or funding to citizens.” Arnstein conceptualization of the levels of citizen participation is illustrative what happens when the citizens are involved or not involved in the decion making process. It applies in this study’s conceptulasation of the evaluation of how service delivery strategies may have been used as a vehicles public participation, and thus social inclusion.

#### 4. METHODOLOGICAL PROCESSES

This study was drawn from a broad PhD research study by the author, examining the governance sphere and service delivery challenges in Inkosi Langalibalele local municipality. The study originated from the need to evaluate how the service delivery strategies implemented at Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality enhanced the prospects of social inclusion. The study was conducted using a qualitative case study design. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis to provide an in-depth insight of the service delivery phenomenon affecting or impacting social inclusion. Therefore, 16 community members and 10 ward councillors (n=26) were conveniently sampled from 22 municipal wards to participate in the study. The

selection of participants considered the combination of community members and the councillors most likely to be directly or indirectly involved in the service delivery initiatives in the community.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to draw responses from the participants. The average time for all the interviews conducted ranges between 30 minutes to 1 hour. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. Though, some interviews yielded 20 pages of transcript, relevant data relating to service delivery and social inclusion was sorted and gleaned to answer two main questions formulated for the study. These questions are as follows:

- What are the service delivery strategies being implemented at the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality?
- How are these service delivery strategies enhancing the prospects of social inclusion?

With the interest to establish how service delivery strategies impact or affect social inclusion, these questions helped draw relevant perspectives from participants. Thus, a grid of responses was organized to help reflect participants’ views. The data was analyzed closely, reflecting on existing secondary information gathered from Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality service delivery initiatives, newspapers and journal articles, and other government service delivery reports. The next section presents the findings of the issues that were identified. These findings provide a detailed understanding of the hindrances and opportunities to effective social inclusion through service delivery practices.

#### 5. FINDINGS

This study set out to evaluate the role of service delivery initiatives in enhancing the prospects of social inclusion in local municipalities. A case study of INKOSI Langalibalele local municipality was employed. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 26 participants drawn the Escourt

area. From the data, three broad strategies were identified. These are increasing citizen participation, flexible response to service user complaints and partnering with other players and outsourcing services. The participants were asked: What are the strategies that the municipality implemented that ensured that there is an inclusion of all stakeholders in the municipality?

#### 6. INCREASING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The participants felt that the most striking and remarkable approach that the local government adopted to ensure quality and equitable service delivery was widening public participation platforms. Most participants indicated that the local authorities have gone great lengths to ensure that all citizens are involved in the public service delivery initiatives. There was an establishment of ward forums and weekly meetings in every single ward. From the participants, there was a sense that the ward meetings were important in that they allowed for the inclusion of all community members in the decision-making process. For instance, one participant stressed that:

*The local authorities have done so well by allowing us to have meeting at the ward level regularly. I think these meetings are crucial because we all got a chance to say what we feel is affecting us and what we think the municipality should do.*

*The development of public participation forums has seen a reduction of community challenges we previously faced. The forums allowed for citizens to identify the areas that needs urgent municipal attention. For instance, the forums have been so helpful in the establishment of schools and clinic in marginalized areas.*

Moreover, another participant also echoed the same sentiments when they argued that,

*we feel valued by the local communities in that we are being asked questions on what type of projects and development we need to see happening in our*

*community. What is good is that they [authorities] asks for everyone's opinion.*

Put together, the above responses point to the fact that widening the net of public participation as was done by the municipality played a pivotal role in allowing the inclusion of all stakeholders in the society.

Results from our secondary data also indicate that the municipality initiated a myriad strategy to augment the level of citizen participation in the service delivery initiatives. Among the notable strategies that were identified is the setting up of Imbizo (community meetings), the ward meeting. It emerged from this source of data that there bi-weekly ward meetings were conducted in every ward. These meeting were conducted at the grassroot level and sought to attract contributions from the most marginalized person in the community. The Imbizo were held at a council level where representatives from the ward level would deliberate on the issues and discussions that ensured at the ward level. This level involved the councilors and the municipal staff.

## **7. FLEXIBLE RESPONSE TO SERVICE USER COMPLAINTS**

While there is a consensus among the participants that the municipality introduces emergency response system to respond to service user complaints. Opinions differs between community members and ward councilors over how this approach improves service delivery and enhances the prospects of inclusivity in the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality. For ward councilors, the toll-free system that the municipality introduced was yielding results and ensured that the services were equitably delivered in all parts of the municipality. For instance, one councilor argues that

*the introduction of the emergency response calling system was one way that allowed the municipality to address the challenges of unequal service delivery. We can now attend and sent our personnel to any part of the municipality to address any service*

*delivery challenge.*

Similarly, another councilor buttressed the previous assertion by stressing that

*the community can lodge a service delivery complain at any time and from any location within the municipality jurisdiction.*

Put together, these observations points to the point that the councilors were confident that the introduced flexible user complain system was an antidote to address and speed up the process of attending to challenges of service delivery rocking the communities. On the other hand, responses from the community members indicated that the emergency response system was not effective and did not improve the quality and quantity of delivered services in the municipality. Participants indicated that the toll-free was most of the time not available when the citizens tried to call. It also emerged that the availability of the toll-free is dependent on the location where one was calling from. What this means is that complaints logged from the remote parts of the municipality, hardly got through to the municipality complain desk. For example, one community member said that,

*when you try to report a sewage burst or leaking pipe from our area it takes more than five days before you get hold of the person who answers the calls. Sometimes the calls do not get through or its simply not answered. Here also we struggle a lot with network. So yes, it difficult for us to report our complains and get them attended to.*

Moreover, another community member buttressed the previous assertion by saying that

*the municipality is slow to attend to our calls when we request them to fix things. They only fix things in town and suburbs. Here is the location they take years to come and attend to our service delivery challenges.*

From this response, one gets to understand the ineffectiveness of the toll-free systems as they are used by

the local residents. Their ineffiveness have contributed to the disparity and unequal distribution of services in the municipality. The participant stress that the municipality gives priority to selected areas that are close to the town. As a result, they tend to neglect attending to services delivery challenges in remote parts of the municipality. Therefore, these participants' responses suggest that the municipality's slow and selected response to calls for service delivery has created a scenario where some parts of the municipality have access to service while other areas are marginalized.

The results discussed above seem to be in sync with the results from our analysis of secondary data. It emerged from this data source that the local authorities established a Helpline for service delivery complains to be lodged at any time of the day. The helpline operates for 24 hours of the day. The main motivation for establishing a helpline was to ensure that service-related issues were reported and responded to within 24 hours. While our analysis of the data proves that the helpline was a step in improving service delivery and enhancing the prospects of inclusivity in the municipality. Our data could not show the extent to which the helpline enhanced the quality-of-service delivery and how the community benefited from such a helpline.

## **8. PARTNERING WITH OTHER PLAYERS AND OUTSOURCING SERVICES**

Our data shows that the municipality has entered in two partnerships with various private stakeholders to improve the delivery of service in the municipality. Interviewed councilors indicate that the municipality has a documented policy that improves government-private partnerships to improve service delivery to the different constituencies. From the responses it emerged that while the government-private sector partnership has been marred by a lot administrative and corruption challenges, these partnerships have assisted in bolstering the capacity on the municipality in

providing services. As one councilor indicated, the partnership between government and private sector has assisted in reducing the service delivery backlog that has existed for years in the municipality. Another councilor stressed that

*“you see in this area, the municipality has been struggling to provide housing, water, electricity and other public services, and the main challenge was that the municipality was not fully equipped to do so. But now we see improvement in service delivery because of the partnerships that the municipality is involved with.”*

Another councilor expressed the same view when they argued that the municipality faced a huge backlog of service delivery and this delay in service delivery has hampered the economic growth and lessened the prospects of improving the lives of its citizens. For this councilor, overcoming the service delivery backlog requires a government-business partnership. Below are the sentiments of the councilor:

*we are confronted with huge infrastructure service delivery backlogs, which has a negative impact on the economic growth and improvement of the lives of its citizens. As local government, we could not address the challenges alone because it requires that the government collaborate with the business and private sectors.*

In support of the opinions aired by the councilors concerning the government-business partnership and improvement in service delivery, community members also expressed that they are witnessing private companies doing work that is improving the service in the area. As one of the participants reasoned that,

*it is now better that the roads and sewage is attended to people from outside these days, back then when the municipality oversaw everything, we could go for years without water and our roads bad.*

More generally, another community member expressed the feeling that “we prefer it when the outside companies are doing it, because they know what they are doing more than the municipality workers.” Put together, responses above at least hint on the impact that government collaboration with private sector has on improving service delivery. The municipality on its own cannot address the challenges it faces and this necessitates an intervention of private sector in the form of service providers and partners in ensuring the local development

However, our results also revealed that the public-private partnership was characterized by corruption and maladministration. All this negatively impacted the municipality capacity to provide amenities to its constituencies. Both councilors and community members voiced concern over the way procurement and outsourcing systems was administered at the municipality. There was a sense that the procurement and outsourcing system is hampered by corruption. The participants believed that most companies being awarded tenders to offer services do not meet the standards stated in the municipality policies and regulations. It also emerged that there are a lot of irregularities in the awarding of tenders. All these practices were cited as the main causes of poor service delivery and in turn necessitated the underdevelopment of most parts of the municipality, particularly remote areas of the municipality. One councilor expressed the view that, *lights, water and roads are not well maintained in this municipality because there is a lot of corruption.* In the same light, another councilor argued there

*we need to investigate the procurement and tendering system in this municipality, the corruption and awarding of tenders to companies that does not deserve is the reason why our communities remain underdeveloped. These companies are not developing our communities, but they are getting a lot of money from our taxes.*

Put together; therefore, these results point to the fact that suspected corruption and maladministration in the municipality increased the menace of poor service delivery. And it is the already underdeveloped communities that suffer the consequences of such municipality malpractices.

## 9. DISCUSSION

Findings from this study suggest that opening and widening citizen participation enhances and create inclusive communities. To illustrate, the findings shows that the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality established deliberative platforms in the form of Imbizos and Ward meetings. These platforms were crucial in that they allowed for the participation of all community members from different levels in the municipality. This finding has implication on theory. First by allowing the participation of all community members is especially important in that it attracts opinions and contribution from all corners of the society (Arstein 1968). Moreover, the findings are in line with Arnstein’s conceptualization of public participation as a means to give power to the citizens through means of full delegation of power. To illustrate, from from this studyhas shown that the decision-making power was introduced and accessible to most essential areas in all constituencies. More so, platforms such as ward workshops gave citizens the autonomy to make decisions. This state of citizen engagement in the process of service delivery initiative ties well with what Arnstein (1986) described the delegation and citizen control stage where the authorities give some power to the citizens to decide what they deem necessary. To illustrate, our findings revealed that, all public establishments like government offices, schools, clinics, shebeens and tuck-shops were all involved in the power matrix of the municipality. The widening of the citizen participation platforms in the municipality points to the positive improvements in the delivery of services (Tavanapour, Poser and Bittner 2019). While at the same time allowing the establishment of an all-inclusive community whose

service delivery initiatives are guided and represent the needs of all community stakeholders.

The study established that broadening citizen participation augments the chances of creating inclusive communities. This evidence corroborates findings from previous studies. For instance, the study of Makanyeza, Kwandayi and Ikobe (2013) established that local municipalities in Nairobi successfully created inclusive municipalities by increasing citizen participation in the affairs of the local authority and partnership with the community in service delivery. In the case of Inkosi Langalibalele, the municipality augmented the participation forums such as Imbizo and monthly community meeting that involve the municipality staff and the community members. At these platforms, equal opportunity to discuss and suggest possible solutions to service delivery challenges were afforded to all. As a result, the increased involvement of all community members in these service delivery initiatives allowed for creating solutions based on consensus and inclusivity.

Another interesting finding to emerge from this study was that, to improve service delivery, the Inkosi Langalibalele adopted the "lean" government approach. In this approach, the municipality opened its doors to partnership with various stakeholders, including private sector, non-profit organization, and other civil society groups. The local government continuously engaged these stakeholders to advise and add input on issues related to service delivery. Thus, drawing on this "lean" government approach. The local government allowed for a wide-reaching decision making and governance process that encompassed and was equally represented by all sector of the society. To that end therefore, it can be concluded that the "lean" government approach as adopted by the Inkosi Langalibalele was a step towards inclusivity. To say the least, it can be argued that partnering with various stakeholders could improve the prospects of social inclusion in the

municipality. It does so by attracting participation from all spectra of the society. The findings showed that partnering with various stakeholders and outsourcing service in Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality improved the prospects of social inclusion. This was also established in previous studies which reflect that municipalities that are run through partnership with numerous stakeholders "focuses on promoting the advancement of the private sector and citizens through a well-managed policy and regulatory environment", have been successful in creating inclusive communities (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss 2012: 246).

Another finding that emerged from this study is that the government-business partnership and outsourcing of service delivery improved the quality of services in the municipality. Responses from our participants indicate that the collaboration between the local government and the municipality assisted in reducing the backlog that hampered growth and development in the municipalities. The findings here seem to be inline with arguments from previous scholars that emphasise that, when there is full and integrated participation that values contribution from all sectors in the community, service delivery challenges are normally minimal (Agarwal, delos Angeles, Bhatia, Chéret, Davila-Poblete, Falkenmark, Villarreal, Jønch-Clausen, Kadi, Kindler, and Rees 2000). To illustrate, our findings revealed that that since there is now involvement of the private sector in the delivery of services, there is notable efficiency and quality services compared to when government was only involved in the delivery of services. Overall, our findings here suggest the public-private partnership speed up the planning, implementation, and delivery of services in the Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality. When that is done, it is safe, therefore to conclude that by ensuring equitable and quality service in its constituency, the municipality's service delivery approach was a step closer to enhance the prospects of inclusivity. Social inclusion is enhanced when all citizens in the constituency

have access to public service and have the equal opportunity to participate and benefit from the development and growth of their community. These findings are of interest particularly because they seem to confirm the argument of Mashwama, Aigbavboa, and Thwala (2018) who established that projects done through the public-private partnership are of high quality and meet the communities' needs they are implemented. Additionally, these scholars also stressed that "public-private partnership should be practiced as often as the traditional method because it breaches the gap of abandonment, unfinished and delays in projects." While our results could not identify the specific projects and service delivery projects that were improved because of the public-private partnership, the findings at least hint that such partnerships can register success in reducing service delivery backlog that hinders growth in the municipality. Furthermore, the findings are also comparable to findings of Nokulunga, Didi, and Clinton (2003: 78) who found that "private-public partnerships speed up the infrastructural projects; completes the infrastructure projects much quicker than the traditional method; PPP increase the effectiveness of projects; completes work on time or even ahead of schedule; greater cost transparency; cost savings; reduction of life-cycle maintenance costs; reduction of the service delivery backlog." The improvement of service delivery is particularly interesting in this study because it allows us see service delivery's impact on improving the prospects of inclusive communities. When services and equitably and effectively delivered to communities, there are heightened chances of growth and development of under-developed communities. Their growth and development are accelerated to the speed of those communities that already developed.

In addition, the findings also revealed that while the public-private partnership strategy improved the quality of services in the municipality, the whole system that involved procurement and awarding of tender to private sector

was characterized by high levels of corruption and maladministration. Participants expressed concern over how undeserving companies were given tenders to deliver services that they could not deliver to the citizens' satisfaction. Failure to deliver services to the communities is an area that deserves careful consideration. When communities do not receive the services they ought to receive, the inevitable consequence is underdevelopment. To illustrate, underdeveloped communities experience stagnant growth. Unemployment becomes rife and poverty increases in those communities. To that end, the municipality efforts of creating inclusive communities through delivering services is bound to fail. The discussion above bears semblance with findings of Mathebula (2014) cited in Makhokere (2019: 373) who found that the local government failure to provide services leads to the reduced development that is coupled with increase deprivation and marginalization of their communities. Drawing on this line of reasoning, it can be argued that the reduced delivery of service in Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality hampered the ability of the local government in establishing collaborative and inclusive communities. The municipality instead creates a situation where participation is restricted. This argument is supported by previous studies that stress that social exclusion in a community refers to a state where individuals are not allowed to participate and benefit fully in the socio-economic, political, and cultural life, and in the process of leading to and supporting such a state (Feng, Jones, and Phillips 2019).

## 10. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to investigate the service delivery strategies adopted at Inkosi Langalibalele Municipality and ascertain how they could have enhanced the prospects of social inclusion. This study has identified three broad strategies- increasing citizen participation, flexible response to service user complaints and partnering with other players and outsourcing

services. It seems that while these strategies may have increased public participation and in turn inclusivity, the strategies' effectiveness in fostering inclusive communities were affected by various factors that this study could not determine. . The contribution of this study has been to confirm arguments in previous studies that service delivery initiatives that emanates from a collaboration of government and various stakeholders are an effective vehicle that establish inclusive communities. The major limitation of this study is that it could not provide quantitative results showing the extent the service delivery strategies impact on social inclusion. Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight into the importance of public participation in creating inclusive communities.

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