

Report on the First Meeting of the
Proposed "Vhembe Civil Society Network"
Avkhom Hotel, Thohoyandou
Friday November 13th 2009



Introduction

Vhembe District municipality is located at the North-western tip of South Africa in the Limpopo Province. It is bordered by Zimbabwe to the north and Botswana to the northwest. The Limpopo river valley forms the border between the District and its International neighbours. Through the Kruger National Park the Vhembe District also Borders Mozambique on its Eastern border.

Within South Africa the Kruger National Park to the east, the Mopani District to the Southeast, and the Capricorn District to the Southwest border the Vhembe District.



The District Municipal offices as well as the Thulamela Local Municipality offices are located in the Town of Thohoyandou. The Largest towns in the District are: Messina, Makhado (Louis Trichardt) and Thohoyandou, located in Musina, Makhado and Thulamela respectively. There are four Local Municipalities in the Vhembe District Municipality namely Thulamela, Makhado, Mutale and Musina (See below Map).

Distribution of population and growth rates per Local Municipality

Population	Year	Musina	Mutale	Thulamela	Makhado	Vhembe	Limpopo	South Africa
	1995	32,795	69,399	532,933	455,479	1,090,606	4,876,898	40,171,605
	2004	42,656	81,234	606,075	515,050	1,245,015	5,466,932	45,857,655

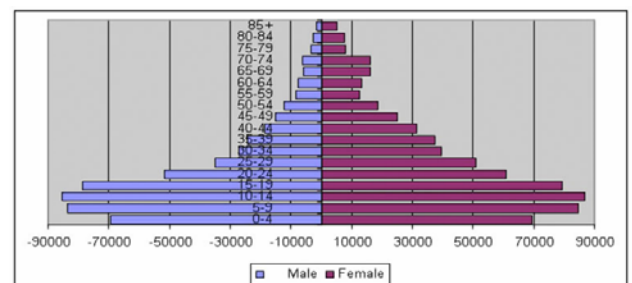
Source Quantec, 2006 and Kayamandi Calculations

The above Table shows that the total population of the Vhembe District Municipality is approximately 1.2 million people. The population of Vhembe District Municipality grew by 1.5% between 2000 and 2004, and between 1995 and 1999. During the 2000 to 2004 time period, the Vhembe District's growth rate exceeded that of South Africa. The fastest growing area of the Vhembe District Municipality, during both time periods, was the Musina Local Municipality with a growth rate of 3 %. The population Growth rate has been slowest in the more rural Local Municipalities. Both the Thulamela and Makhado Local Municipalities had the lowest population growth in both time periods. Although the growth rate of the District has remained constant over the two time periods the Mutale and Thulamela Local Municipalities have experienced a slight decline in the second time period.

According to the District's Draft Spatial Rational (2006), the population of the Vhembe District is predicted to increase by approximately 91,100 people by 2008. Between 2000 and 2008 the population growth rate is predicted to decline by 0.4% to just slightly more than 1% growth rate (1.06%).

Gender and Age Distribution

The majority (55%) of the residents of the Vhembe District Municipality are women (see below). In each of the four



Local Municipalities the majority of the total population is female: Musina (52%), Mutale (55%), Thulamela (55%), and Makhado (55%). On average there are 0.7 Men to every Woman in Vhembe. The average number of Men to Women, across age groups, is the same as that of the District in the Makhado and Mutale Local Municipalities (0.7). There is a higher average ratio of Men to Women in Musina (0.9) and a lower one in Thulamela.

Civil Society

At the dawn of the new democratic dispensation the province was referred to as 'the smallest provincial economy in the country after the Northern Cape, and the poorest after the Eastern Cape' (PGDS 2004-2014). However, this bleak scenario has since undergone some significant improvements and changes.

Economic growth has been accelerated considerably and as such the province ranks as one of the fastest growing provincial economies in the country. This is attributable to the discoveries and exploitation of huge mineral deposits in the form of platinum, vanadium, coal in Sekhukhune, Vhembe and Waterberg respectively to mention a few. A spectrum of more than 70 minerals, which includes precious metals and stones and industrial minerals are to be found in the province.

The province boasts the widest diversity of agricultural resources, tourism destinations and mineral reserves in South Africa. Tourism and agriculture together with their associated manufacturing industries are the additional driving forces for economic development. Despite all the above achievements, poverty levels have not decreased as one would have expected. Regarding job creation, diversification and poverty reduction, much more still needs to be done to improve the quality of life and to stimulate economic activities; more especially in Maruleng (formerly Bothlabela) and Sekhukhune where the unemployment rates are at 69.4% and 56.9% respectively. (Source: Development Index Framework: Limpopo)

The fact that more than 40% of the population consists of youth and the high infection rates of HIV/AIDS suggest a greater need for human resource development and more expenditure on education and health. Owing to its predominant rural nature the province experiences enormous urban migration with the result that skilled people leave the province in a search for greener pastures. Hence there is a dearth of skilled people. Another challenge is posed by the fact that Limpopo shares borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique. As a result there are large unquantifiable numbers of illegal immigrants in the province. The recent relaxation of entry visas needed by Zimbabwean Nationals to enter South Africa as well as the annual rise in the contraction of Cholera has worsened the standard of living in the area.

A cursory glance at the report on the Review of the State of Civil Society Organisations in South Africa by Case (2008) shows that civil societies in South Africa have been adversely affected by the previous undemocratic dispensation. This is much more evident in the Limpopo province where civil society organisations are at their weakest, hence there is a need for a vigorous capacity building programme for civil society organisations in the province.

The Host

The Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme (TVEP) hosted the first meeting of the proposed network. TVEP is a holistic programme that exists to mitigate the impact of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse and HIV and AIDS related stigma in the Thulamela Municipality of Limpopo. TVEP sits on the South African National AIDS Councils Women's and Law & Human Rights Sectors. TVEP also leads the countries advocacy work on Universal Access to Female Condoms. For more information please visit www.tvep.org.za

The Participants

Munna Ndi Nnyi
Thandululo Community Organisation
Dilonde AIDS Awareness & HBC
Care SA – Lesotho
Denzhe Arts & Culture
Akanani Rural Development Ass
A.M.E. Church
Makhado Youth Development Org
Centre for Positive Care
Tshedza Makhuvha H.B.C.
Mutale VEP
Far North Network FV
Action Aid International

Shikundu Home Based Care
Amukelani Resource Centre
Sasekani Home Based Care
Faranani Arts & Culture
Dzata VEP
AIDS Consortium
Focus Youth Organisation
Ditshidze Health Care
Thusalushaka Home Based Care
Youth Circle
TVEP
Rotenda Victim Support

The Expectations

- To identify Common Issues and possible interventions
- Formation of a Unified Network
- Vocal & Active Network that holds stakeholders accountable
- A network that recognizes the role of Arts and Culture in addressing abuse
- A network that recognizes the role of People Living with Disabilities
- A network that recognizes the prevalence of Human Trafficking
- An opportunity to get practical fundraising advice
- A network with clear guidelines for the structure of the committee
- Enhanced opportunities for Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building
- Opportunities for Solidarity
- Capacity on how to deal with funding challenges and resource allocation
- Recognition of men as a vulnerable group as well
- Capacity to deal with levels of professionalism within NGO's
- Capacity to strengthen pro active , human rights based relationships with Government.
- NGO to NGO Peer Education
- Skills on how to make our Advocacy on DV & HIV more effective
- More effective use of resources



Group Work – Our Challenges (Collated)

Funding (Access to and Administration of)
Human Resource Capacity
Management Capacity
High Staff Turnover
Ineffective Boards
Lack of Networking Opportunities
Duplication of Services
Lack of Political Support at all levels
HIV
Religious and Traditional Fundamentalism
Skewed donor relations



What are the possible interventions with regard to our challenges?

1. Capacity Building
2. A network to improve smarter use of resources
3. Clarifying the role of Civil Society in the context of Vhembe District
4. Relevant influence and inputs regarding policy and implementation of plans that are relevant to our sectors
5. Revisit our methods of selecting board members.
6. Relooking at the design (not focus area) of our programmes to ensure donor relevance
7. The identification and updating, refining of existing NPO District database

Why do we need a network?

- o Effective NGO to NGO Peer Education
- o Collective Advocacy and Solidarity work
- o Enhances our ability to measure the impact of our work
- o Enhances our impact in strategic partnerships
- o Smarter use of limited resources
- o Conduct oversight activities of service delivery and policy proposal, development and implementation in the district.



Who should form the membership of the proposed Network ?

The meeting agreed that representatives of the South African Government at any level for the purposes of membership will not be permitted. It was further agreed that Government Departments will be engaged and consulted where relevant by the network.

All registered NPO's operating in the district of Vhembe

In addition it was agreed that the Steering Committee should ensure that membership representation is from as wide a range of sectors as possible. Sectors mentioned were Womesn Sector, Youth, Faith Based, Legal, People Living with Disabilities, LGBT, Home Based Care, Traditional Healers, Traditional Leaders and Community Media.

NB :This list is not exhaustive

What would the proposed networks relationship with other networks be?

It was acknowledged that other networks do exist at Provincial Level such as SANGOCO (Limpopo Province) and The AIDS Consortium (Mopane District). However there is no civil society network that exists in Vhembe District. Other networks will be welcome to join the proposed Vhembe Civil Society Network.



Way Forward

It was agreed that an Interim Steering Committee be set up to

- o Organise the next meeting (27 January 2010)
- o Draft a Terms of Reference for the proposed Network (taking into account the TOR's of other Networks working within the Province)
- o Develop a draft set of Governance Tools
- o Develop a budget for the network
- o Ensure the representation of sub districts
- o Develop an election guideline for the next meeting

A nomination process took place and the following organizations were elected to form the Interim Steering Committee

1. *Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme represented by Tian Johnson*
2. *Akanani Rural Development Association represented by Richard Manamela*
3. *Far North Network on Family Violence represented by Fancy Malapela*

TVEP wishes to thank the AIDS Consortium for facilitation support provided for this meeting.



The AIDS Consortium is human rights organisation committed to openness and non-discrimination on the basis of HIV/AIDS. The AC supports a 1000-strong affiliate network of AIDS Service Organizations and individuals.

Services include Training, Advocacy, Libraries, Distribution hubs, Cyber cafés, Community fora and networks, building AIDS Competent communities and bridging the gap between local and national, communities and SANAC. For more information on the AIDS Consortium please go to www.ac.org.za .

Report compiled by the Interim Steering Committee