



NEWS

A NEWSLETTER FOR P³ PARTNER MUNICIPALITIES & ASSOCIATIONS | 2010/6

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Otjiwarongo Leads the Way in Services Improvement

The town of Otjiwarongo, affectionately known as the »Cheetah Capital of the World« and more recently as »The Gateway to Opportunities«, has as part of its strategic objectives, the continuous improvement of service delivery and full transparency. This municipality is keen on constantly reviewing and evaluating work flow with the view that municipal services should be accessible to all and all residents be treated fairly. With this in mind, the municipality adopted a »Front Office/ Back Office« concept with the aim of creating a customer friendly one-stop shop system.

The Chief Executive Officer, Manfred/ Uxamb described the philosophy behind the Front Office/ Back Office concept as “an essence to serve our customers at a friendly, effective and efficient one stop centre, thus eliminating inconveniences of sending the customer from one end to the other for submissions and queries.”

Otjiwarongo is also a P³ Project partner municipality and taking full advantage of the project offerings within the Service Improvement component, and reports that the project is adding value to their ongoing efforts.

– The knowledge and expertise obtained through the P³ Project has added value in mainstreaming the various departmental services, map the processes and, to achieve faster and more efficient service delivery – thus fulfilling our mandate as an efficient service provider, states Agatha Mwet, Strategic Executive: Community Services & Economic Development.

So far, the municipality has selected three services for

improvement following the P³ model i.e. (1) business registration and applications for fitness certificates, (2) building plan approval and (3) complaints handling mechanisms.

Business Registration and Applications for Fitness Certificates

Previously, customers had to complete a number of separate application forms for each type of business, but these have now been reduced to only one standard form making it more user friendly and faster.

– Unnecessary delays and bottlenecks during the application will also be eliminated in the process, adds Pedros Kuteue, the Manager for Economic Development.

Building Plan Approval Process

This has been identified as a service highly in demand. With relative prosperity on the rise in Otjiwarongo people are either expanding existing properties or building new ones. The application process, although it is being carried out at a central



point, i.e. the Front Office and mailed to relevant departments through a document routing system still experiences unnecessary time delays.

Complaints Handling Mechanisms

In order to enhance transparency and the Council's open door policy, sound communication channels are in place for consultations and feedback to determine the priority needs of citizens. However, effective communication and complain handling mechanisms remain a challenge. With this in mind, the third process selected for improvement is the information registry and data base system. The objective being, to improve feedback mechanisms and complaints handling for improved service delivery. A complaint handling manual and an electronic information registry have been produced with the assistance of the P³ Project facilitators.

– Enquiries, complaints, and request for services etc. will now be logged on the electronic database thus officials will be

able to log in on the system, without having to go through paperwork and files, which in itself are time consuming when assisting customers, concludes Burgert Liebenberg, the Strategic Executive for Finance and Information Technology.

However, Burgert is also quick to admit that, – the process of identifying services and setting new service standards came with its set of challenges e.g. hectic discussions, time delays and agreeing on a new set of standards involves lengthy debates. Amidst these challenges, improving service standards for Business Registration has been finalized and will also be available online with other service products, on the municipal website, making Front Office operations available to our users in an effort to enhance digital interface and communication with our customers, Burgert said.

Desire' Theunissen, PRO and Member of Steering Committee



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Threat of Floods Makes Mariental Rethink LED!

The people of Mariental have come to realize that being situated near an abundant water source in the hot and arid south-central region of Namibia can be both a reward and a curse. The town is situated about 274 km south-east of Windhoek, near the Hardap Dam – the largest water reservoir in Namibia.

With the rainy season fast approaching, the residents and business owners alike, are now bracing themselves for yet another potential flood as the Fish River which is fed by the Hardap Dam and flows in a southerly direction past Mariental is likely to cause problems again. The most recent flooding of Mariental in February 2006 caused losses exceeding N\$ 80 million and it led to insurance companies cancelling all flood insurance for the town's residents and businesses. This has been a major economic set-back.

The effects of the floods have also lingered well after the event. For example, a moratorium is currently in place on any new developments on the western side of the town (the flood prone area). This presents the town with some critical decision points.

Clearly it becomes difficult to attract any new business activity and existing businesses may want to look for places where there is no risk of floods.



For this reason the Mariental Municipality has been working together with the ALAN P³ Team, looking at ways of engaging with the business community on finding a permanent solution. After several lengthy discussions and workshops we agreed on using the P³ Project's Business Retention and Expansion Tool (BR&E). Essentially, the BR&E Tool offers the municipality a structured approach to

identifying and supporting the needs of existing local businesses.

It will help with opening up channels of communication between the municipality and local business. The municipality wants to engage with existing business to prevent them from moving to nearby towns. Also to see what they (existing businesses) require in order to expand, we find it more sustainable than untested new businesses, which tend to have a high failure rate.

The threat of the flood is for now, something that we must live with. Fortunately, a task force was created by the national government to look at a permanent solution to the Mariental flood problem. There are now several recommendations in place, including the clearing of reeds in the Fish River as one of the shorter term solutions. Other recommendations include the gradual development of the town, more to the eastern side which is not under threat currently. Some businesses have already taken up this measure and moved to the eastern part of town. Many more have shown interest. This has given the Mariental Municipality new hope and the realization that all is not that gloomy after all.

*Catherine Boois,
PRO and LED Focal Point*

Botswana LED Survey

Need for Systematic Understanding of Impact of Local Authorities

The results of the Business Enabling Environment (BEE) carried out in six Councils i.e. Chobe, Gantsi, Kgatleng, Lobatse, North West and Southern District Councils, show that the business climate in Botswana is seemingly stagnating in some crucial areas, important for robust local economic development. The BEE Survey highlighted some critical and interconnected issues, that:

- for all enterprises, the immediate interface with governing institutions be at local authority level (council/municipality)
- constant interaction between councils and private sector is vital for collaborative growth
- there is limited reliable information to facilitate strategic local economic decisions and broader understanding of local business environment.

In general, the results of the BEE surveys show that to a large extent, Councils have and are doing well in reducing and cutting the red-tape, particularly in areas such as the issuing of licenses, health inspections

and improvement of time spent at the municipality in request for service. It also reveals that the most problematic areas for local economic development and doing business at municipal levels include: poor road infrastructure thereby limiting access to markets, high cost of product, certification with Botswana Bureau of Standards, delayed payment to suppliers, poor



customer service, bureaucratic compliance and waiting periods, limited access to information on council plans and policies, limited access to business financing, limited access to land and lack of appropriately skilled local personnel especially in heavy duty driving and machine operations.

The missing key to our understanding

of how to promote local economic growth, diversification and innovativeness of the private sector in Botswana and thereby assist in job creation and poverty alleviation lies in a systemic understanding of the impact of local authorities. This being the case, any transparent service improvements could have a huge impact on local business expansion and employment.

Segametsi Moathaping, P³ Country Project Manager at BALA



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