MBIZANA MUNICIPALITY

AUGUST 2017

Introduction

Good Governance Africa (GGA) commissioned in-depth research that was done along an approximately 32km transect in the municipality, running from Nkantolo village to the central business district of Bizana town. It comprised of three components: a) a citizen survey with close on 1000 participants; b) interviews with leaders in various sectors and c) an informal business survey. The first reason for the study was a need to understand the lived experiences in Bizana, birthplace of former African National Congress president Oliver Reginald Tambo in the year of his centenary celebration by government. The second reason was to visit what was the worst performing municipality in the GGA Government Performance Index (GPI), an initiative to rank South Africa's local municipalities, published in 2016.

Our study has resulted in three major focus areas:

1. Demographic snapshot
2. Social mobility and economic reality
3. Governance and democratisation

Demographic snapshot

In the citizen survey there were 974 respondents and most (67%) of them were female, with 32% being male. This means there is possibility of a high concentration of female-headed households in the area with these women mainly being single parents, grandmothers and some as students. Our survey only included people from 18 years upwards, meaning the respondents either fell in the working-age population group or were pensioners. About 55% of the people interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 39 (mainly known as the youth), while the working-age population (18 to 59 years) made up 85% of the respondents.

This means those caught in the unemployment trap could be without jobs for a long time if no interventions are made - and the majority of them are women who often have to fend for their children and grandchildren over time. Most households (52%) house one to five people and over a third (37%) house six to nine people.

In the Business Survey 328 economic activities were identified, the great majority entailed subsistence agriculture: over 200 separate smallholder activities and a total of 112 businesses were identified. A large number of crops was grown in the area. In some cases livestock was reared – predominantly sheep, cows and goats, and to a smaller extent horses, pigs, chickens and donkeys. The remainder, which were the focus of this analysis, were cash-based micro-enterprises, including retail grocery outlets ("spaza shops"), street traders and liquor outlets.

There were 74 owners of micro-enterprises that answered questions, the majority (89%) being South Africans and the remainder being non-South African. Among the South African owners there are more females (60%) than males (40%), while the non-South African owners are made up of only males, indicating it is men who are likely to migrate away from home in search of economic opportunities.

Age of citizens in Mbizana

Age	Number
>20	61 (6%)
20-29	245 (25%)
30-39	236 (24%)
40-49	150 (15%)
50-59	145 (15%)
60-69	70 (7%)
70-79	41 (4%)
80+	12 (1%)
Unknown	14 (1%)

Social mobility and economic reality

We found that 84% of the people have access to electricity. Among them just under two-thirds (61%) indicated that they could afford it and over a fifth (22%) claimed they could not afford electricity. Access to sanitation for most people (77%) is through toilets that are located outside the house. About a tenth (11%) of the people had no access to sanitation. An overwhelming majority (74%) said they were not happy with the sanitation they received. This is important given that sanitation has implications for both health and dignity, constitutional rights that all citizens should enjoy.

There was also serious material deprivation due to high levels of unemployment (67%), with 22% of the unemployed indicating they are no longer looking for work due to lost hope.

People's individual incomes are low, with over two thirds (71%) of all respondents earning less than R1500 a month, while 30% earn less than R400 a month. Household incomes are slightly better indicating that there are not many sources of income, and where there are they combine low incomes. The majority (55%) of households have an income of less than R1500 a month.

Sources of income among citizens living in Mbizana

Income grant **458** (47%)

Work **223** (23%)

Sales/business **102** (10%)

Pension **94** (10%)

Donations **79** (8%)

Remittances **46** (5%)

Unknown **51** (5%)

Three areas citizens would like the municipality to address most urgently

Areas to address urgently	Top Priority	2nd most important	3rd priority
Healthcare & Nutrition	326 (2)	43	18
Safety & Security	164	58	21
Employment	513 (1)	91	44
Education	265	52	20
Water & Sanitation	274 (3)	39	35
Electricity	86	36	19
Social & Community Development	75	30	19
Local Economic Development	42	13	18
Transport & Infrastructure	37	19	20
Land & Housing	177	33	37

The most reliable source of income for most people (57%) are social grants. These are often inadequate to meet people's needs due to the number of dependents per household.

This material deprivation could be responsible for the poor attainment in education outcomes. Some 60% of the respondents have only achieved primary (22%) or secondary (38%) school as their highest level of education without achieving a matric certificate. Only about a fifth (22%) have a matric certificate and 10% have a post-school qualification in the form of a certificate, diploma or a degree. Some 75% indicated they had no access to scholar transport, while 50% indicated access to healthcare facilities, and 48% had access to early childhood development. In order to secure the future of today's children access to these three core services should be at 100%.

Given the high rate of unemployment, coupled with low levels of education the prospects for social mobility are significantly reduced for most people unless interventions on adult development such as vocational training are conducted.

In the Business Survey we found that most micro-enterprises are run as an attempt at survival not necessarily to generate profits for prosperity. Some 43% of respondents indicated that their income from working in the micro-enterprise was not sufficient to sustain them and their dependents. Of these only 40% could supplement their income through other work.

Almost a third (29%) responded that their income was enough to sustain them and their families. For most micro-enterprise owners (64%) alternative sources of income included social grants (25%), other business (24%) and other unidentified forms of income (15%).

The average business profit in the area is R274 a day, R752 a week and R2 261 a month. It must be noted that profit per day may not necessarily be representative of the income earned every day – a micro-enterprise may only operate one or two days per week.

Governance and democratisation

There were great similarities in how people responded in both the citizen and business surveys on how the municipality was performing in meeting its vision for the people of Mbizana. The vision translates into six goals that the municipality aims to achieve:

a) Investing in it's people poverty fight [sic]; b) Providing affordable services; c) Facilitating a people-driven economy; d) Building sustainable communities; e) Protecting and preserving its environment; f) Strengthening a culture of performance & public participation.

In the business survey over 60% of the respondents were dissatisfied on all of the above. In the citizen survey dissatisfaction ranged from 53% to 64% on all the above.

When citizens were asked about their relationship with their ward councillor, 84% said they know their councillor, but 36% indicated not to have direct access to their councillor. Worse still was that only 35% were happy with the services provided by their councillor.

An interesting finding was the high number of people who abstained on technical questions relating to the administration of the municipality on issues like overall management of the municipality (35%), opinion on expenditure of the municipal budget (32%) and their view on the Government Performance Index (27%).

Either they feared speaking out against the municipality or they lack enough knowledge on affairs of the municipality. The latter is most possible given that when asked Does the municipality provide access to formal work opportunities? 56% said NO.

Surely the answer is yes as the municipality employs people and creates projects, but clearly there are knowledge gaps which can be attributed to a poor information spread – indicating a need for strengthened public outreach, especially to deep rural areas, by the municipality itself. This lack of information has, we found, affected how citizens at times understand democracy.

In some instances our researchers were refused interviews because citizens expected to be informed first by their councillor or chief that there would be a study taking place in their communities. However, a study of this nature where 'gatekeepers' are under scrutiny avoids seeking permission in order for citizens' views not to be tailored to align with politics or any other considerations that may compromise the authenticity of their answers.

Asked what areas the municipality should address most urgently, it was not surprising that top of the list was a call for employment creation.

The other urgent priorities for citizens were: health-care and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, safety and security, as well as land and housing.

Citizens satisfaction levels with the Mbizana Municipality's performance

	Investing in poverty fight	Providing affordable services	Facilitating a people-driven economy	Building sustainable communities	Protecting the environment	Performance and participation
👍 Satisfied	**117** (12%)	**120** (12%)	**71** (7%)	**161** (17%)	**132** (14%)	**186** (19%)
👎 Dissatisfied	**621** (64%)	**574** (59%)	**621** (64%)	**516** (53%)	**569** (59%)	**519** (53%)
Room for improvement	**205** (21%)	**230** (24%)	**223** (23%)	**223** (23%)	**213** (22%)	**197** (20%)

GGA
GOOD GOVERNANCE AFRICA