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PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA.

Abstract

Public-Private Partnerships have become an important instrument in sub-national government's development assistance because; it adds a new variant to cooperation between governments and the economy of their countries. It concerns the establishment of purposeful joint business ventures at programme level, which aims at providing a more efficient and effective service delivery. Furthermore, it aims to ensure that the approach being use is pro poor. In this regard the capital city of Namibia, the City of Windhoek, has embarked on such a public private partnership arrangement to enhance the living conditions of the residents within the city. In this regard the ward contractor project was launched and implemented. The main purpose of the project is to create a clean and healthy environment, to create an entrepreneurial spirit amongst small scale independent providers and to ensure that the most vulnerable groups within the Namibian society, especially women, benefit from this arrangement.

The purpose of the research project study was to determine the perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the solid waste management public-private partnership arrangement in the City of Windhoek to ensure that the specific project lives up to its goals and objectives. Through the research conducted, knowledge has been generated that will be of benefit to decision makers, and scholars interested in public-private partnership arrangements within the Namibian, regional and global context. The article concludes by looking at the way forward for future improvement of the project.

Introduction

The public sector has been the main actor in service delivery and development activities in most countries in Africa until the mid 1980s. The public sector was the main actor in providing basic services such as primary education, health care, clean water supply and distribution, waste water collection and removal and treatment, solid waste collection and removal and energy supply which is vital to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. From the mid 1980s, following the winds of change in the form of far-reaching social, political and economic reforms the role of the public sector in the development process has changed in many African countries. It is becoming increasingly clear that governments cannot meet the growing demand for services by acting alone and that there is indeed a need to look for support from other employers within society to contribute towards service delivery. However, since basic services are public goods and since markets fail to provide such services equitably, the primary responsibility and accountability for their delivery remains with the state. The main role of the public sector is therefore to act as facilitator for the private-led economic development and growth

Provision of Local Service Delivery through a Public-Private Partnership arrangement

A public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement can be explained as conceptually collaboration between public and private organisations in public service delivery (Commonwealth 2003; Sohail, 2003; Base and Walt, 2002 and Nkya, 2000). According to Plummer (2002) a PPP describe some form of partnership endeavour involving the public and private sectors, but not excluding the involvement of the third sector, namely, civil society. This approach is been echoed by Gildman et al (1995:vii) in Ngowi (2006: 29), which indicate that four groups of actors are relevant in a PPP. These four groups are the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs), and the private sector. Current literature and experiences indicate that faith-based organisations (FBOs) such as churches can also play a major role in PPP arrangements.

According to Gildman et al (1995) in Ngowi (2006: 31) the most commonly form of PPP is contracting out. Sohail et al (2003) indicate that there are no strict PPP classifications that can be made because partnership classification depends on the type of services, the nature and strengths of the partners and the objectives of a PPP. Nkya (2000) and Sohail, et al (2003), further argues that partnerships are basically institutional arrangements which constitute rules defining the relationships that govern the partnerships, roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. The overall aim of a PPP is to meet public needs, which would not have been realised without joint efforts. Ngowi (2006:31) concludes that through a PPP, inter-alia, the public sector will be able to maintain partial ownership and management of services, avoid accusations of “whole state” transfer of service delivery to the private sector and at the same time be effective in its role of political accountability to its constituents.

A Public-Private Partnership for Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Solid Waste Management in the City of Windhoek

After independence in 1990, the population of the City of Windhoek have grown substantially. This influx of people has lead to an increase in waste generated, especially in the informal settlements. Furthermore, the high concentration of people in these informal areas poses a dangerous health issue and has the potential for disease outbreaks. The limited availability of serviced land is a burning challenge to which the City of Windhoek has no immediate solution. The management of solid waste in informal areas is difficult and the increase in waste generated in the City of Windhoek has resulted in the approval of the Open Space and Street Cleaning System (OSSC) in 1991. The purpose of the project was to create new employment opportunities and to provide a more community based approach to open space cleaning and to curb the ever escalating refuse removal costs.

Since the implementation of the OSSC system in 1991, the City of Windhoek has advanced in population and new developmental projects that has taken place. This has resulted in an increase in solid waste in the entire city. Currently, the unprecedented annual growth rate of the City of Windhoek is 4% which presented serious challenges to the management of the City of Windhoek (Mayoral Report, 2006 – 2007: 22). This harmful manifestation of the problem was more

apparent in the industrial areas and informal settlement areas. Numerous challenges facing the system allowed for another review in 2002 and 2006 culminating into the introduction of the Ward Contractor System towards the end of 2006. In this regard the City of Windhoek was divided into 16 functional wards, each with a ward contractor tasked with the responsibility of coordinating all solid waste management activities in that ward, on grass-roots level. The City of Windhoek has entered into 5 year contracts with 16 independent Ward Contractors who are responsible for the rendering of the following services, while the City of Windhoek is responsible for the supervision and contract management in order to ensure that the provisions of the contract are adhered to and that the level of cleanliness within the City is maintained.

The Local Authorities Act, 1992 (Act No. 23 of 1992) as amended, which is the governing law in Namibia relating to local government affairs, Section 94 A (1) (b) and (c) of the Act empowers the Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development to make regulations relating to the entering into a joint business ventures by a local authority council and the commercialisation of any service rendered or function or duty exercised or carried by a local authority council, respectively. The minister has made regulations relating to the entering of joint business ventures by local authority councils under section 94 A (1) (b) of the Local Authorities Act, as amended in 2000, and those regulations were promulgated by Government Notice No. 40 of 5 March 2001 (MRLGH, 2004:10). The effect of this government notice is that a local authority council may enter into a joint business venture in order to exercise, perform or carry out any power, function or duty of the local authority council. The manner in which a local authority council may enter into a joint business venture is to take up shares in an existing company registered or a company to be registered in terms of the Companies Act, 2004 (Act No 28 of 2004), or to accept the position of beneficiary of a trust established or to enter into an agreement with the government, ministry, a regional council, another local authority council, a public enterprise or an NGO to the joint business venture.

Research problem and objectives

Since PPP arrangements is a fairly new concept among most Local Authorities in Namibia, the Namibian Government has adopted a strategy to promote pro-poor service delivery partnership

contracts for services such as refuse removal, street cleaning, solid waste material resource recovery/recycling, management, parks, cemeteries and recreational centres. This approach provides opportunities for entrepreneurs, small-medium enterprises and civil society organisations to pool resources together and participate in the delivery of services for the poor. However, the challenge is whether all partners can work together to ensure that quality services are delivered in a speedy manner and to meet realistic standards at affordable tariffs. The challenge is further to ensure that the national development objectives of job creation, empowerment of disadvantage groups, poverty reduction, local economic development and environmental sustainability can be achieved. In this context the project was undertaken. The research problem was to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the ward contractor project in the City of Windhoek based on perceptions of the various role players involved.

The objectives of the research project were to:

- Investigate the perceptions of the various role players involved in the ward contractor project within the City of Windhoek;
- Compare the perceptions of the various role players involved in the ward contractor project within the City of Windhoek; and
- To make recommendations regarding the improvement of the ward contractor project in the City of Windhoek.

Research methodology

The researcher made use of a qualitative research approach. A qualitative data collection approach is been used because it is a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanation of processes in identifiable contents (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 10). In order to complete this task the City of Windhoek and especially the Solid Waste Division is demarcated as a case study to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the ward contractor project in the City. A questionnaire has been designed and used during the research. The questionnaire consists of three sections namely, a biographical section, a section on perceptions regarding certain PPP statements and a general comment section. Furthermore, the perceptions on statements were

grouped according to the four main stages of a PPP as identified by the United Nations Development Programme: Public-Private Partnership for the Urban Environment Tools for Pro-poor Municipal PPP (UNDP: PPPUE, 2005), namely;

- Starting out a PPP project;
- Preparation stage of a PPP;
- Development stage of a PPP; and
- Implementation stage of a PPP.

The population for the research project consist of the following groups of people, namely:

- 13 Employees of the Solid Waste Division (SWD) of the City of Windhoek, representing 100% of the sample;
- 16 Ward Contractors (WC) who are self employed, representing 100% of the sample; and
- 72 Employees (EMP's) employed by the 16 Ward Contractors, representing 25% of the sample.

Research findings

The biographical data revealed that 51% of the respondents were female while 49% are males. In terms of educational background 31% of the respondents have less than a Grade 10 qualification while 27% had a Grade 10 qualification. The rest of the respondents namely, 25% had a Grade 12 qualification, 11% a Graduate qualification and the remaining 6% had no qualification. With reference to years of employment, the majority of respondents, 67% has been employed for three to five years.

The remaining part of the research findings will be discussed according to the four main stages of a PPP as identified in the UNDP Toolkit. Furthermore, the research findings will be discussed according to the holistic perceptions of the respondents.

Starting out a PPP project

There are three main conditions that favour the formation of a partnership namely, a crisis, the involvement of a champion and some kind of catalyst. With reference to a crisis it takes a widely acknowledged crisis before partners decide to cooperate in order to resolve the problem. Even if the crisis is clear and the interest is there, partnership arrangements will not succeed without the drive and commitment of a few individuals. Such champions can be government officials, community organizations, business people, or citizens who make partnerships happen. There is also a need for some kind of catalyst to bring the partners together (UNDP: PPPUE Module 1, 2005: 4).

In the case study all three conditions were met namely, since the implementation of the OSSC system in 1991, the City of Windhoek has advanced in population and new developmental projects have taken place. This has resulted in an increase in solid waste in the entire city. This harmful manifestation of the problem was more apparent in the industrial areas and informal settlement areas. Numerous challenges facing the system allowed for another review in 2002 and 2006 culminating into the introduction of the ward contractor project towards the end of 2006. In this regard the City of Windhoek was divided into 16 functional wards, each with a ward contractor tasked with the responsibility of coordinating all solid waste management activities in that ward, on grass-roots level. The City of Windhoek has entered into 5 year contracts with 16 independent ward contractors who are responsible for open space and street cleaning.

The cornerstone of any PPP is the creation of an enabling regulatory, legal and political environment. This implies that the public sector must establish an appropriate legal framework for contract procurement and private sector investment. The creation of a regulatory framework alone does not necessarily guarantee effective regulation. As all local governments are different, the public and private sectors will face a steep learning curve as they try to define and regulate their relationship with one another and their roles in providing services. In particular, the public sector needs to define a clear allocation of responsibilities between the national and municipal governments, and a clear statement of its role as a provider and regulator (UNDP: PPPUE Module 1, 2005:4).

Within the Namibian context the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development in Namibia, has identified a PPP as mean of improving services. The definition adopted by the Namibian Government emphasised the view that a PPP can contribute towards the improvement of service delivery at local level. In this regard the Namibian Government defines a PPP as follows namely, “a Public-Private Partnership describes a range of possible relationships between public and private actors for the cooperative provision of municipal services. It therefore offers alternatives to full privatisation by combining the social responsibility environmental awareness and public accountability of the public sector, with the finance technology, managerial efficiency and entrepreneurial spent of the private sector” (MRLGH, 2004:5).

One of the laws in Namibia which deals with a PPP is the Local Authorities Act, 1992 (Act No. 23 of 1992) which is the governing law in Namibia relating to local government affairs. Section 94 A (1) (b) and (c) of the Act empowers the Minister of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development to make regulations relating to the entering into a joint business ventures by a local authority council and the commercialisation of any service rendered or function or duty exercised or carried by a local authority council, respectively. The minister has promulgate regulations relating to the entering of joint business ventures by local authority councils under section 94 A (1) (b) of the Local Authorities Act, as amended in 2000. The effect of this government notice is that a local authority council may enter into a joint business venture in order to exercise, perform or carry out any power, function or duty of the local authority council.

With reference to above-mentioned criteria, 66% of the respondents acknowledged the fact that the City of Windhoek created an enabling environment suitable for the arrangement. The majority of respondents, namely, 76% agree that the private sector can contribute towards the improvement of services at local government level. In terms of whether they are familiar with the concept PPP, 78% of the participants indicated that they understand the concept of PPP which is an arrangement between the private sector and the local authority in service delivery. These findings concur with the requirements lay down regarding the starting out of a PPP arrangement.

Preparation stage of a PPP

Once there is agreement to pursue a partnership approach, it is necessary to plan the process. In particular, the local authority should consider

- What work will be undertaken;
- How the work will be undertaken; and;
- Who will undertake the work (UNDP: PPPUE Module 2, 2005:1).
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The first step is to ensure that the process is properly planned and organised. This implies that a management team should be the main planning and organising body in a PPP. It not only facilitates the establishment of the PPP through the stages of planning and organising, but it also participates through implementation, management, monitoring and adjustment. For the better planning and organising, it is crucial that the management team involves relevant representative from all sectors, namely, input from NGOs, CBOs, FBOs and the community. However, a partnership approach can bring additional benefits to the planning and organising stage, despite the possibility of difficulties in communication and understanding (UNDP: PPPUE Module 2, 2005: 2 -7).

With reference to the case study 68% of the respondents indicated that they understand the reasons why the City of Windhoek has set up this arrangement. This implies that the majority of the participants were aware or consulted before the City of Windhoek embarked on this arrangement. In terms of whether the City of Windhoek consulted other parties such as NGOs, CBOs, FBOs and the communities before they engaged in this project only 37% of the respondents said yes, while the majority 51% indicated that they were not sure whether these consultations did take place or not. This is linked to the response that 60% of the respondents indicated that they don't know of other partners besides the private sector (ward contractors) involved in the project.

Development stage of a PPP

Once the preparation stage is completed the development stage takes place. This stage consists of the following activities, namely;

- Identifying constraints;
- Define the PPP objectives;
- Define the scope of the PPP;
- Establishing the partnership principles;
- Establish the partnership processes;
- Selecting options;
- Financing (investments and cost recovery);
- Preparing plans of action; and
- Regulating the PPP (UNDP: PPPUE Module 3, 2005: 1 - 71).

With reference to the case study, 76% of the participants agreed that the division of the City of Windhoek into 16 functional wards is the most appropriate system to render the open space and street cleaning service. This implies that consultation took place between the main partners, namely the City of Windhoek and the newly appointed entrepreneurs (WC) and the EMPs and that all partners agree on the scope and objectives of the project. The research reveals that 84% of the respondents are familiar with the roles and responsibilities of each partner in the agreement. The majority of respondents, 77% indicated that they are familiar with the content of the contractual agreement in place and 72% also indicated that the service delivery agreement is the most suitable agreement for this arrangement. Furthermore, 88% of the respondents agree that the City of Windhoek provided the necessary supervision and contract management and that the City of Windhoek pay agreed fees promptly and in full. This implies that the City of Windhoek is adhering to its commitments. In comparison with the other main partner the WC, the research reveals that 88% of participants agree that the WC provide the agreed service while only 64% of the respondents agree that the WC meet the agreed standards of service delivery. This implies that although the majority agreed that the WC provide the services, less is of the opinion that the standard of service delivery is met.

Referring to the partnership principles applicable to the project, 73% of the respondents indicated that all partners act in a transparent manner, while 64% indicated that the appointment of the WC was done in a transparent manner. Furthermore, 29% of the respondents indicated that they know of any anti-corruption measures in place to avoid favouritism of a specific WC, while 42% indicated that there are no anti-corruption measures in place to avoid favouritism.

Adherence to legal requirements/laws of the country is one of the most important criteria which any PPP need to adhere to in order to sustain the project. In terms of regulating the arrangement, 70% of the respondents indicated that all partners adhere to the general legal requirements/laws in Namibia. Besides the low response on the lack of anti-corruption measures in place, the majority of respondents agreed that the development stage of the arrangement meets the criteria for a successful PPP.

Implementation stage of a PPP

Once the development stage is completed, the PPP project can be implemented. In this regard the following activities need to be conducted, namely;

- Managing the PPP;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Managing conflict; and
- Capacity building (UNDP: PPPUE Module 4, 2005: 1 - 33).

Proper performance measures should be in place to make a success of the arrangement. In this regard 82% of the respondents indicated that there are performance measures in place to monitor the performance of partners. At the same time 69% indicated that the arrangement allow for innovative and creative ideas to be implemented. This implies that partners are flexible and that they allow for new ideas and inputs to be generated to make a success of the arrangement. Conflict is a natural and normal part of any working relationship. Without conflict growth is limited, however many fear and avoid conflict because they don't know how to deal with it. Noteworthy 69% of respondents indicated that conflict between partners is properly solved.

Capacity building is one of the main features to sustain an effective PPP arrangement. A PPP represent a new field, requiring new skills as municipal functions are delegated to the private sector and the role of the municipality is changed. Capacity building entails the sustainable creation, utilisation and retention of that capacity, in order to reduce poverty, enhance self-reliance and improve people's lives (UNDP:PPPUE Module 4, 2005: 33).In terms of the research 69% of the respondents agreed that the project contributed towards capacity building. Furthermore, 84% of the respondents agreed that new jobs have been created while 74% of the respondents indicated that the program lead to the empowerment of the poor. Overall 74% of respondents agreed that the project contributed towards economic development in the City of Windhoek.

One of the tools used to build capacity is training. In this regard 63% of respondents indicated that they receive some type of training in comparison with 34% of the respondents who indicated that they did not receive any type of training. In the case of those who received training, 70% indicated that the training was relevant and applicable to the project.

Monitoring and evaluation is a routine management methodology, not just an ad hoc activity instituted for the purpose of an external performance audit. Performance monitoring requires effective communication and interaction between project partners and other stakeholder such as the consumers for problem solving and adaptive project management (UNDP: PPPUE Module 4, 2005: 19). In general 82% of the respondents agreed that there is consensus amongst the partners that the project is properly monitored. However, only 50% of the partners are of the opinion that the communities which they serve is satisfied with the service rendered. The remaining 50% disagree with the statement that the project contributes towards the improvement of the livelihood of the citizens of the City of Windhoek while 65% of the respondents are of the opinion that the services provided is affordable to the communities. The remaining 35% don't support the statement that the services are affordable to the consumers. The majority, 74%, agreed that the project contributes towards the cleanliness of the City and especially the informal settlements. Furthermore, 83% agreed that the project can be used as a benchmark by other towns in Namibia as a successful PPP arrangement. Lastly, the overall view of the respondents

indicated that the project is a success and sustainable for the future while 63% indicated that the project demonstrates value for money.

Conclusions

Service delivery is the primary function of a government and in this process the Namibian government has a responsibility to ensure that citizens have access to their fundamental rights as enshrined in the Constitution. Due to limited financial resources the Namibian government has been compelled to find alternative service delivery mechanisms in order to fulfil its mandate of ensuring that services meet the expectations of the people. In this regard the Namibian Government has identified PPP arrangements as an instrument in addressing service delivery problems experienced on local government level.

Urban growth in the capital city of Namibia since independence has outstripped the City of Windhoek's ability to cope with the growing demand for the most basic and essential public services such as sanitation, water and waste. Therefore, the City of Windhoek has introduced a ward contractor project to alleviate the problems experienced especially with solid waste. The implementation of the ward contractor system by the City of Windhoek has created a favourable environment for the rendering of defendable and suitable services and ensures economic empowerment within the various communities of the City. This new approach has led to the creation of new jobs but also contribute towards sustainable community development. The creation of an entrepreneurial culture amongst the newly established entrepreneurs has created an understanding that non or under performance in service delivery will result in cancellation of the contracts. Furthermore, the City of Windhoek in consultation with the WC defined performance targets and builds them into contracts with appropriate incentives for private operators to meet service delivery targets and enforce penalties for failure doing so.

The study reveals that the majority of participants agreed that the ward contractor project adheres to the criteria and four stages of a PPP as identified by the UNDP Toolkit and they perceive the project a success. However, the main area of concern is the lack of involvement and support of

the community in the project. This implies that there is a need for the community to be empowered to participate effectively in the project.

The study acknowledges the need for all partners to act in a transparent and accountable manner in order to make a success of the project. The absence of anti-corruption measures could harm the success of the project and should therefore be addressed by all partners. The main challenge facing the WC is to ensure that they employ ethical business practices in performing their duties. This implies that a new business culture be created amongst the WC through training and exposure to best practises. Lastly, the study concludes that further research is necessary and that it should include the perceptions of the consumers who receive and pay for the service.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed at enhancing the ward contractor project:

Enhancing a participatory approach in service delivery: A platform should be created for the community to be present when decisions are taken that affects their livelihoods. The platform can be used to allow communities to air there views and concerns about the service rendered by the ward contractor and to improve the relationship between the partners.

Empowerment: In order for the community to participate, it is essential for the community participants to be well informed. The use of capacity-building workshops is a tool that can be considered to engage the community. External service providers such as academic institutions can be engaged to conduct this training. This would add to ensuring that the imbalance between the municipal officials, the ward contractors, the employees of the ward contractors and the community respondents are eliminated. It is also recommended that the training offered and the learning gaps currently experienced be revised and that empowerment became more progressive.

Strengthening adherence to the public private partnership principles of transparency and accountability: Transparency and accountability are vital aspects of democratic and inclusive form of urban governance. Transparency and accountability requires keeping stakeholders

informed and curtail corruption. Keeping stakeholders informed implies that all stakeholders, consumers, labour organisations, bidders and the local authority have information about potential impacts, policies, partnership objectives and procurement criteria and processes. In this regard anti-corruption measures should be made available to all partners to prevent possible corrupt practices.

Employing ethical business practices and innovation in service delivery: The challenges facing the new entrepreneurs (ward contractors) are to ensure that they employ ethical business practices while fulfilling their contractual obligations. Furthermore, they need to become more creative and innovative in seeking to expand the service coverage, quality and affordability of the service to the poor. They should also transfer skills to the poor to empower them to become providers and business owners in the long turn.

Further research: The research could be strengthening by expanding the research project to include the perceptions of the consumers who receive and pay for the services provided by the Ward Contractor.

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