



## Case Study One: **NO WAY OUT!**

Baba Makhatini was worried. He had dedicated his entire life to serving his people, his community. During his sixty years he had endured so much, and he had hoped now that freedom had come, changes would happen quickly. But it seemed that now even after democracy things had not changed. Judging from the last round of service delivery protests, some of which had turned pretty ugly he wondered whether it was time for him to pack up and move on.

When he was appointed Mayor of the Khanya District Municipality nearly two years ago Baba Makhatini had high hopes for the municipality his Council. His team of Executive Councillors and his Municipal Manager, Baba Gumede knew that the challenges they faced were many, but they thought they would be able to rise above them. Now, he was not convinced that they were moving fast enough, or whether they were all moving together on a common and shared destination. How would he convince his team of politicians from different political parties to focus on their goal of improving the quality of life of their citizens? Forget about the other political parties, his own ruling party was split down the middle, three ways actually, and sometimes their differences seemed irreconcilable!

You know, the truth of the matter is that both Baba Makhatini and Gumede felt a little overwhelmed. It was not as if they were not doing the best that they could. God knew that they tried so hard. It was just that the challenges were so complex. There was so many fires to put out in a day, so many crises to solve, and just so many meetings to attend!!!

Baba Gumede employed 800 staff members, and paying for them consumed a hefty proportion of the Council Budget. You know, if their level of productivity was high, then perhaps he could live with this high expenditure. But, in honesty, most of the workers were not really adding value in the organization, and yet the overtime budget was totally exhausted. Out of touch with the realities of the community, and entrenched in the old bureaucratic ways of doing business, the workers dared not innovate or think about creative ideas or solutions to their administrative problems.

In fairness to his administration, Gumede knew that even if they had made the mindset shift, they would still be so de-motivated because the Council

did not have the financial resources to get things done. For some of the tariffs that they had set were clearly unaffordable, and this accounted for such a low collection rate. As a result service delivery suffered and hence the service delivery protests and generally poor public image. Their city's infrastructure was poor and ageing rapidly. Whatever plant and equipment they had was broken, nearly broken or grossly underprovided for. For example, Gumede had given up continuously criticizing the Head of Solid Waste, as there was no money to fix the City's only refuse compactor!

He cringed when he thought about the financial affairs of the City. Sure his Financial Officer was doing a great job, but what was needed was a miracle. Managing a negative cash-flow budget, without basic financial controls in place, and an Audit Report done only four years, the Chief Financial Officer had to be a modern day Houdini!!! It was no wonder that the City's Ratepayers association were up in arms.

He was glad that their town's IDP had made mention of the state of the municipal finances. At least that was being recorded somewhere formally. As for the content of their Development Plan and whether people actually engaged with the document – or even read the document for that matter, he knew that right now it was but a very expensive paper-weight.

It said all the right things, had an "airy fairy" vision, but was not visionary! Actually, the IDP was really a compilation of sectoral plans put together quickly and submitted to the Provincial Authority. Compliance, compliance, compliance!!! And to make things worse the line managers did not really take ownership of the plan. And besides, the plan was totally changed each time the leadership changed... there was no continuity at all! The pressures of running an ailing administration seemed to be taking a toll on the senior executives. Baba Makhatini was frustrated that some of the Councillors were not pulling their weight. He knew that most of the Councillors did not even consult their wards, nor understand their needs. But this did not deter Baba Makhatini.

Rather than wait for his Councillors to consult communities, he was intent on leading by example. He was out there weekend after weekend, asking people their problems, listening and taking notes. In fact, the reason for his recent despondency was because of him understanding his communities concerns. As he listened to the wise words of his people, he knew that they were right. If nothing was done, and done soon, everything that they had fought for all these years would have been in vain. Now was the time to act, now was the time!!!

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## **POINTS TO PONDER:**

1. What do you think are the Municipality's critical challenges?
2. Which challenges are more important than others? In other words, do you think addressing them all right away are necessary, or should some be prioritised?
3. If you were the Municipal Manager / Mayor where would you start?
4. Does this story sound even vaguely familiar? To what extent can you identify with at least some of the issues raised in this fictitious story?