CITY OF TSHWANE
"we are the same"

Conference Report
13 – 14 June 2010

Hosted by City of Tshwane

2010
Conference Report

In partnership with

Ekurhuleni
METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

PanSALB
PAN SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE BOARD

COMMISSION
FOR THE PROMOTION & PROTECTION
OF THE RIGHTS OF CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS
& LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES

Local government at work: improving service delivery through multilingualism

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Acknowledgements

The City of Tshwane and its partners, the City of Ekurhuleni, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission), acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable inputs of the conference participants from government departments and institutions, non-government organisations and academic institutions. A special word of thanks goes to those who chaired and facilitated the sessions, as well as to the speakers whose papers/presentations raised significant and practical issues that triggered debates about viable solutions. The outstanding inputs of all contributed to the success of the conference.

Participants in high offices also deserve acknowledgement for recognising the need for importance of this event, and for giving the support that made it a success. They include Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa (the Speaker of the City of Tshwane Council), Cllr Khorombi Dau (MMC for Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture), Rev Dr Wesley Mabuza (Chairperson of the CRL Rights Commission), Prof Sehawukele Ngubane (Chairperson of PanSALB) and Prof Zodwa Motwa (Deputy Chairperson of PanSALB).

Compliments are also due to the conference staff and organising committee led by Ms Landela Nyangintsimbi (City of Tshwane); Ms Sally Maepa (PanSALB); Ms Tirhani Mabasa, Dr Monwabisi Ralarala (CRL Rights Commission); and Mr Vincent Maumela (City of Ekurhuleni).

The four institutions that presented the conference deserve special mention for the resources they made available to ensure the success of the event. All the partners were given an equal opportunity to display their marketing material such as brochures, reports, calendars and banners at the conference, and some of the materials were also distributed to the attendees.

1.2 Introduction

From 13 to 14 June 2010, language professionals from various institutions gathered for a language conference organised by the City of Tshwane in partnership with the City of Ekurhuleni, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) to consider the theme: *Local government at work: Improving service delivery through multilingualism.*

For two days, the cream of language professionals and activists enjoyed the opportunity of meeting with and learning from each other. Common goals and experiences were discussed and clarified, the obstacles to successful multilingualism in local government were identified and so were the opportunities to develop realistic strategies to overcome the challenges.

The participants proceeded to discuss substantive issues, taking into account the existing and pressing gaps related to multilingualism in a diverse social context. Central to the discussions was the importance of a viable and practical language policy for municipalities.

1.3 Objectives

The following were the expected outcomes of the conference:
- *Developing a framework for the practical implementation of multilingualism;*
- *Raising awareness about the importance of multilingualism for service delivery;*
- *Establishing collaboration between municipalities to share information on projects and maximise resources;*
- *Assisting municipalities to develop their language policies;*
- *Establishing a language forum for municipalities with a view to promoting interaction; and*
- *Formulating a strategy for the integration of disability programmes.*

2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Setting the scene

Session Chair: Mr Console Tleane, Executive Director: Tshwane Communication and Information Services.

In his introduction, Mr Tleane announced that the conference had the blessing and support of the leadership, which meant that whatever deliberations the conference was going to enter into would be supported on that level.

2.2 Opening remarks

Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa, the Speaker of the Council of the City of Tshwane, opened the conference and remarked that it was an opportune time to meet and deliberate on language because the country would be playing host to visitors of at least 31 nationalities during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™. The extent to which the country's hospitality establishments and related businesses understood different languages (other than English) would determine to some extent the impression the guests would form of the country. That was how important language could be.

The City of Tshwane, in hosting this conference, tacitly admitted that although it appreciated and lauded the fact that language was central to its mandate of service delivery, all did not appear to be well with its handling of this mandate. However, by holding the conference the City of Tshwane reaffirmed its commitment to address issues of language and their impact on service delivery. It was his understanding that there was no debate about the importance and the equality of languages.

Father Mkhatshwa continued by saying that the South African Constitution mandated the importance and equality of languages, and it was against that background that the conference sought through its objectives to develop a framework for the practical implementation of multilingualism; raise awareness about the importance of multilingualism for service delivery; promote collaboration among municipalities to share information; assist one another with the development of language policies; establish a language forum for municipalities; and formulate a strategy for the integration of language programmes.

A question that the conference had to debate was whether citizens are implicitly enjoying multilingualism as per the Constitution; or the use of all the languages in that context is dependent upon specific circumstances; or whether there should be continuous arrogate to some language supremacy which in the process may result in failure by others to communicate effectively with those South Africans whose languages are being marginalised.

Another question was whether there was the political will to affirm that all the languages were part of the government's development mandate, instead of placing some of the key languages on the periphery while continuing a regressive development which had begun with the colonial mentality, masterly interrogated and unpacked by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his book called *Decolonizing the Mind* and also by the famous Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth,* of downgrading our own home languages right in our homes.

The trend in schools was to sideline indigenous languages, and this was a disadvantage for both workers and clients in the public and private sectors who did not know and speak English, which quite often resulted in poor service as we failed to communicate with the very people that were meant to be assisted.

Research had indicated that poor service delivery was mainly a manifestation of poor communication. That meant that government was not reaching its peoples' hearts and minds because ivory-tower languages were being used instead of the languages of the people.

Father Mkhatshwa acknowledged the challenge that we were both literally and figuratively not talking the languages of the people. And that was the reason for holding the conference: The question then was whether the conference should turn these concerns into practical interventions to resolve these challenges or not. Another question was whether the conference genuinely wanted to pull the ignored and almost forgotten languages from the margins to the centre and from the periphery to the mainstream. It was easy to talk, and that was why most workshops and conferences ended up as mere talk shops. The real challenge was action, and this challenge was not limited to municipalities: it was a national one involving individuals, families, whole communities, schools, public institutions, the private sector, NGOs, CBOs and civil society.

The need to reclaim and restore the dignity of all languages through conscious actions and interventions had to be emphasised. This meant that they had to be used, and in so doing the importance and dignity of the people who were being served would be underlined. This required partnerships between institutions responsible for the transmission of linguistic knowledge, primarily schools. Empowerment of people should be encouraged through using their languages in every possible situation, in policy documents, in by-laws and at all service points. Every South African, especially those in the public service, such as municipalities, should be multilingual.

Cost should not be cited as a problem – not winning people over to government's side by communicating with them in languages they found more accessible and were comfortable with, was more expensive in real terms and in the long run. Communities were not likely to understand the government's development projects or pay for services rendered if communication with them was not in a language they understood.

South African local government was constitutionally developmental in mandate, the essence of which was public participation via such processes as integrated development planning and participatory budgeting. Consider the benefit of getting communities' full and genuine inputs into these critical processes if languages other than English were used. True development began with a full understanding by and buy-in from the intended beneficiaries. Language was the beginning of understanding and a precursor to any buy-in. Speaking the languages of the communities in one voice and in documents would enhance the capacity to render improved service delivery and development.

Understanding people's languages meant understanding the people better, for languages carried people's experiences, histories, cultures, aspirations and heritage. To facilitate truly beneficial development among the people, it was critical to understand their make-up, and language was a primary embodiment of that make-up. The general belief was that your home language helped you to understand, appreciate, integrate and internalise values. Language was at the very heart of the processes of intelligibility, learning and loving, and an extremely important tool in our lives. Speaking of service, however, meant that there was a need to go beyond language as something written and spoken and enter the realm of what linguistic specialists would probably refer to as metalanguage.

On that note, Father Mkhatshwa declared the conference officially open.

2.3 Welcoming remarks

Cllr Khorombi Dau, member of the Mayoral Committee responsible for Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, welcomed participants and imparted a few words of wisdom.

He referred to the City of Tshwane's enthusiasm in welcoming the different nations during the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ and to the additional hosting responsibility of speaking different languages to prove that Tshwane was the heartbeat of diversity.

He pointed out that progress had been made to improve and accelerate service delivery at local government level, but a great deal still needed to be done, especially if one took into account that local government was the level where people expected and demanded their rights to be respected. Based on the fundamental democratic principle that "the people shall govern" they expected to be involved in governance where the provision of basic services was concerned. That called for an exchange of ideas between the State as the custodian of resources and those who did not have any resources.

Local government in South Africa was undergoing radical changes as part of national transformation, and the integration of smaller municipalities into the bigger ones was a case in point. Whereas a municipality might have met 60% of its service delivery targets, once an underdeveloped area was included in that municipality's area, the services had to be revised to accommodate the new dynamics. This in fact increased the scope of work of the local government. That affected not only the provision of electricity and water but also issues such as transport, transformation patterns and language barriers.

Cllr Dau said that the ways messages were packaged and received was critical. The packaging referred to the language that the message used. The way that language was transferred to the recipient played a big role.

Account had to be taken of language's contribution to stability, peace, economic growth and development, but he acknowledged the existence of the major challenge of implementation.

He concluded by stressing that if we worked together, more could be done to build relationships and share information. That would consolidate the base established by the conference, from where one could proceed with the knowledge that there were blessings and guidance from the leadership.

3. INSTITUTIONAL MANDATES

3.1 Role clarification in relation to local government

Session Chair: Rev Dr Wesley Mabuza, Chairperson: CRL Rights Commission

3.2 Imperatives towards improved service delivery
Presentation by Mr Sabela Gwala on behalf of Cllr K Mogotsi, Chairperson: SALGA, Gauteng

Mr Gwala stated that there were two important areas of living heritage, namely the performing arts and languages. Firstly they were valuable resources for future generations, and secondly they made for social cohesion in the community by offering tangible and intangible benefits which improved the quality of life. No specific functions around culture were allocated to local government in terms of the Constitution. The question was how these could be performed best at local government level.

While South Africa was classified as a middle-income country, research indicated that it was one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and race. In addition, there was a need for locally designed perspectives and community participation.

He argued that local government in South Africa faced the challenges of poverty, unemployment, HIV and Aids and strained internal capacity. When seeking to develop policies that addressed developmental challenges, migration was introducing added new dynamics in local communities. Local communities were facing rapid urbanisation, resulting in the creation of urban sprawls, separation of families, breakdown of rural communities and loss of social capital.

Failure to adequately integrate immigrants into the society led to tension over time, which resulted in conflict that harmed social capital. The mandate of local government to create capital could be converted to the creation of life-sustaining capital such as environmental, financial and productive capital.

Municipalities and local communities had to accommodate spatial changes as well as cultural dynamics. As societies changed there was increasing pressure not only to render services and infrastructure but also to preserve artefacts that brought about social cohesion.

If it was accepted that language brought about a celebration of history, culture and diversity on an individual level, then the protection of languages offered communities an opportunity to share in their rich history resulting in civic pride and helping to forge positive identities. These positive identities resulted in what was called social capital. Research done in countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Bangladesh suggested that social capital could be converted into other forms of capital, resulting in, for example, access to finance, which had been identified by the UN as a challenge for development and also an opportunity to break poverty traps.

He made mention of the fact that although no specific functions around culture were allocated to local government by the Constitution, a case could be made out that these functions were best practised at local government level because it was in fact the communities themselves that knew best which languages were valuable to them and which reflected their cultures the best.

Mr Gwala indicated that SALGA was very excited that the Department of Arts and Culture had developed a discussion document on living heritage, which included languages. As outlined in the draft document, intergovernmental collaboration had to include all levels of government, from local government to ministers, MECs and technical committees.

He concluded by confirming that SALGA would continue to foster stronger partnerships with its social partners, in particular civil society, the private sector and national and provincial government in an effort to ensure that communities received services but also participated actively in the construction of the enablers of those services.

3.3 Multilingualism as a resource for service delivery
Presentation by Professor Sihawukele Ngubane, Chairperson: PanSALB

Prof Ngubane started off by giving a historical background on the language planning process initiated by the Language Planning Task Group (LANTAG) in preparation for the language policy. The need had arisen due to the lack of tolerance among speakers of different languages. Previously only speakers of English and Afrikaans were viewed by many as intelligent, and people who did not speak these languages were primitive and unintelligent. That view was still held by some individuals who thought they were "smart" if they were fluent in English. He expressed the view that speaking in foreign tongues did not make them different, no matter how fluent they were in such tongues: they remained the same African men or women that they were.

He declared that language was about people and should not be viewed in isolation. When one dealt with issues of language one dealt with the speakers of that language. Therefore any matter of language became a sensitive issue considering the history of the indigenous languages in South Africa.

Prof Ngubane argued that speaking one's home language was a fundamental right which had to be fulfilled without any compromise. The right to speak your language of choice at any given time without prejudice was recognised in the Bill of Rights and enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. The Constitution stipulated that all official languages spoken in the country were resources that had to be harnessed.

Language was always a contentious issue in communities where more than one language was spoken. Some conservatives believed that multilingualism was not possible as far as government policies were concerned, and preferred to use only two official languages as the only practical solution to effective communication. South Africa had 11 official languages and these languages should be used in an equal manner.

In terms of the Constitution, cultural diversity was regarded as a valuable national asset and not a liability. It was for this reason that organisations such as PanSALB were constituted to enhance and promote multilingualism and respect for all the languages used in our country and to create a conducive environment for the development of all 11 official languages. South African Sign Language and other languages referred to in the Constitution were included. Departments such as Arts and Culture and Education, together with PanSALB, had introduced numerous efforts to achieve multilingualism, such as Human Language Technologies, the Language in Education Policy, and SA Sign Language and telephone interpreting services (TISSA).

He reminded the conference that the Department of Arts and Culture had presented a language policy framework on 12 February 2003 which set the scene for language policy formulation in all sectors and spheres in the country.

Nevertheless, communities were still unable to access services in their own languages, and municipal services were also guilty of this. There was no clearly defined language policy for our municipalities and as a result English and Afrikaans dominated the domains of our societies at the expense of indigenous languages. Those municipalities who had managed to create such policies were still faced with the challenges of implementation. There was no provision in budgets for the development of multilingualism, nor any attempt to remedy the situation.

Municipalities were obligated by the Constitution to promote languages by good management to ensure they provided efficient service and administration to meet the demands of the people they served. This might only be realised when the communities themselves were involved in the language planning and became partners in all aspects of language development. That would assist in creating ownership of the entire process. Sharing information and comparing notes were crucial for the effective implementation of any policy.

Prof Ngubane touched on guidelines regarding the ways municipalities communicated with the public through their publications and documents. These should be formulated to provide for all the languages. Besides that, translation and interpreting services should be put in place by all public sectors to assist people whose English proficiency was limited. As the Constitution required that all official languages enjoyed parity of esteem and be treated equitably, legislative measures had to be put in place to promote indigenous languages.

He reiterated that PanSALB catered not only for the 11 official languages but also for the Khoi, Nama and San languages and SA Sign Language. It had been tasked with the responsibility to promote respect for the heritage languages spoken by some sections of the community and for those languages that were used for religious purposes.

He also moved for proper infrastructure to facilitate effective communication, but acknowledged that a lack of funds prevented the implementation of language plans. In his opinion, a lot had been achieved politically through democracy, and multilingualism was one of the cornerstones of social cohesion in South Africa. Progress had been made in respect of technology, orthography, rules and lexicography. It was imperative that all stakeholders worked together despite limited resources to fulfil the goal of reaching full realisation of multilingualism in the country.

He concluded his presentation by proposing that local government and traditional leadership should work with PanSALB to improve the status of languages used in communities. He encouraged decision makers to push the agenda of multilingualism and to see diversity as a resource and a valuable asset of South Africa.

4. PANEL DISCUSSION (parts 2 and 3)

The panel discussion between speakers outlined and concretised areas of common interest in relation to the responsibilities of the various institutions mandated to deal with language matters. Roles were clarified with a view to improved collaboration in the interest of advancing multilingualism. Achieving political support to move from intent to action would go a long way to achieving multilingualism.

Ms Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, Senior Manager: Public Education and Advocacy: CRL Rights Commission

The CRL Rights Commission's responsibility was to promote and protect the linguistic rights of communities in South Africa, and the role of the CRL Rights Commission differed from that of local government. First and foremost, the CRL Rights Commission's functions as a constitutional institution were defined in Chapter 9 of the Constitution. The Constitution mandated the Commission to perform several functions, for instance to promote respect for and further the protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities, to promote and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance and national unity among and within cultural, religious and linguistic communities on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and free association.

Ms Mkhwanazi-Xaluva stated that the Commission was the only one in the country that had been established not to rule on right or wrong but instead to bring peace, friendship and understanding. If communities approached them for assistance with a problem and presented their case, the Commission's role was to make sure that the people made contact and came to understand one another. Issues of culture, religion and language normally did not involve rights or wrongs. All that was needed was for people to understand each other.

More often than not it was a case of mediation and conflict resolution rather than arbitration and a ruling of right or wrong. In that way the CRL Rights Commission brought about peace, friendship, harmony and tolerance.

The CRL Rights Commission was also tasked to recommend the establishment or recognition of a community council for all cultural, religious and language communities in South Africa, in accordance with national legislation, to help to protect and promote the rights of a particular group.

The Commission was also mandated to deal with particular communities. For instance a community that spoke a particular language expressed itself through a particular culture or practised a particular religion.

The vision was to contribute meaningfully and constructively to social transformation and nation building for the attainment of a truly united South Africa. This unification also involved the rights of linguistic communities. One of the critical issues was access to services and resources in people's home languages.

The difference in the mandates of the CRL Rights Commission and PanSALB was that the Commission was not confined to the 11 official languages, nor to individual rights, but was involved with the rights of all languages regardless of whether they were official or not. Their role was to promote and protect all the languages spoken within the borders of South Africa, not just the 11 official languages. That reality gave rise to numerous challenges.

Professor Zoldwa Motsa, Deputy Chairperson: PanSALB

In her introduction, Prof Motsa explained that since Prof Ngubane had outlined the role of PanSALB very ably, she would speak about this big elephant called language and its relevance to the business of the day. She would speak about her passion which was that "if you do not speak your mother tongue you are doomed".

She wished to raise the issues of how the challenges of language in education could be perceived as matters of service delivery, because service delivery in her book not only referred to dustbins lying on the ground or water and electricity issues, but service delivery also meant delivering a service to our children in school. She argued that service had to include access to education and she challenged all the citizens of this country to think about the children.

The main challenge in Tshwane was access to education in children's mother tongues. She made suggestions about creating a syllabus at university level that would take care of multilingualism without short-changing the brotherhood. All had to enjoy speaking and learning their mother tongues, but also learning another person's mother tongue.

That was the thrust of her view about multilingualism and service delivery. She concluded by saying that she believed that PanSALB and other stakeholders should take care of the little ones, otherwise the children of tomorrow would only be speaking a language that their parents did not recognise.

Mr Sipho Manganyi, Deputy Director Language Policy: Department of Arts and Culture

Mr Manganyi was standing in at short notice for Dr Jokweni who was held up in another meeting with the Minister.

He referred to some of the services rendered to the public by the National Language Service of the Department of Arts and Culture. These projects were uploaded on the Department of Arts and Culture's website.

The Terminology Coordination Section, for instance, was busy with a number of terminology projects, and information on these was available on the website. On the website there was also a link under Services to the National Language Policy Framework and the Implementation Plan.

Another project that the National Language Service was busy with was the South African Language Practitioners Council Bill, which was due to be tabled by the Cabinet in September for submission to Parliament in November 2010. The aim of the Bill was to redress the unequal treatment of language professionals, and the standardisation of the profession itself.

Mrs Nonkosi Tyolwana, Senior Manager: Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Her presentation addressed the role of multilingualism in turning local government around, its role in the core business of municipal planning and budgeting, and language equality as an equity issue or parity of esteem.

Mrs Tyolwana said that "whenever we speak our very flamboyant English we are leaving behind quite a number of people". The country was heading for local government elections and the government should ask itself if it was talking to communities in languages they understood better, bearing in mind that about 16 million could not understand a word of English and could not read or write.

These were the issues that needed to be addressed when talking about multilingualism and the level of illiteracy in South Africa. That was the mandate of local government in terms of the Municipal Structures Act (MSA), in particular as set out in Chapters 4 and 5. It was important to accommodate all the people who could not read or write, as well as those with special needs, and to ensure that the language preferences in local areas were taken into account.

She argued that there was a need to look into issues of multilingualism in terms of not solving today's problems with yesterday's solutions but to look at what was happening in local government today and not to say "it used to be like this".

She mentioned that her Department, the CoGTA, had conducted a fact-finding mission in all the municipalities in order to address the issue of service delivery. They had gone from door to door and had consulted councillors and officials on the issue of service delivery. The issues that the residents of Tshwane had raised had been that apart from service delivery, governance, public participation and communication were also challenges. The CoGTA was very excited to be part of this conference as it dealt with all these issues and particularly the critical issue of using multilingualism to ensure that all these problems were addressed.

The above four issues indicated a need for a turnaround strategy, and this was mandated and endorsed by Cabinet in December 2009. The strategy was to ensure that there was a turnaround at local government level, and multilingualism was one of the issues not to be left behind.

Mrs Tyolwana called for the integration of all these issues and for a move away from the event-based approach. Having established that it was a service delivery issue, multilingualism had to be used to ensure that the communication with the people was successful. She stressed that language could not happen in isolation: it had to appear in the context of service delivery, of governance.

Another challenge was that even though the policy regarding the use of the 11 official languages was in place, there was still a challenge for those who could not read or write (including Braille). She argued that these issues needed a broader vision and to be integrated into all areas of service delivery. Another issue she touched on was that of planning which was very important in local government because issues had to be budgeted for and had to comply with Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

She concluded by stating that Chapters 4 and 5 of the MSA were critical to the integration of multilingualism in planning, as well as spatial development. Multilingualism did not happen in isolation in local government and had to form part of the turnaround in the way things were done on local government level.

5. OUTLINE OF MUNICIPAL LANGUAGE POLICY

The presentations dealt with language policies in municipalities. The need for the development of language policies was clarified, and the need for proper consultative processes was outlined with a view to making sure that these language policies addressed the needs of the people that local government was serving. Great importance was attached to the need for policies to encourage a change of attitude towards language services. The general consensus of the conference was that language was the key to service delivery.

5.1 Steps towards developing a language policy for a municipality
Presentation by Ms Hannelie Swart, Manager: Policies and Research, City of Ekurhuleni

Ms Swart used the City of Ekurhuleni as a case study for the development of a language policy. She started off by saying that language was the roadmap of culture because it told you where the people came from.

A language policy for local government was a question of national unity, and because of the function of language as the medium of communication and the transmitter of culture it was also a social question. In addition, because of the function of language as an instrument of production, it was an empowerment question. The functions of language were economic, political and cultural.

The guidelines were the Constitution of South Africa that made provision for the 11 official languages, the Municipal Systems Act that emphasised community participation in local government, and the National Language Policy Framework that indicated the language use and preference of the community.

She provided language statistics as per the census of 2001 which indicated that isiZulu speakers totalled 21,5%; Afrikaans speakers 14,5%; Sesotho speakers 13,1%; and English speakers 12,5%.

The objectives would be to ensure that the municipality had equitable government services, knowledge and information, redressed the imbalances of the past, protected language diversity, implemented Batho Pele principles, promoted multilingualism and provided for the use of sign language. The guiding principles were that of language rights, language equity, redress, non-discrimination, people centredness, partnerships and good governance.

A practical process had been followed in developing the language policy for the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, namely that of consultation and seeking advice from internal and external stakeholders. The language policy had eventually been approved as per item A-SR(11-2007) on 31 January 2008.

For internal communication five official languages had been recommended: one language from the Nguni group (isiZulu), one language from the Sotho group (Sesotho), Xitsonga, Afrikaans and English. English was to be used as a working language and at Portfolio and Mayoral Committee meetings. Any of the recommended languages could be used at Council meetings where simultaneous translation services would be made available. Disciplinary hearings, job interviews and performance assessments had to be conducted in English, and sign language had to be readily available when required.

The recommendations for external communication had been that the Municipality, in its spoken communication, had to strive to serve its community. Clients had to be served in the languages of their choice. At IDP or any other public participation meetings the municipality had to provide liaison interpreters, especially when strategic or important information was conveyed. Other rules applied for internal and external written communication.

Ms Swart explained that when they started their implementation process, they realised that the core function of arts, culture and heritage pertaining to multilingualism was that of the development and empowerment of the community, and they managed that through preserving and cultivating heritage. She emphasised that the only way to ensure the proper establishment of a language policy was to establish a language unit for the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, but that was very difficult to attain. The main objectives of a language unit would be to render language services, language research and language development, and its functions would be to look at external and internal communication, facilitate the use of simultaneous interpreting services, advise the municipality on language use, and provide internal translation and editing services, among other things.

When established, the language unit would draft a language policy to streamline all its implementation processes. Ms Swart outlined the processes and recommendations, as well as the resources and financial support required to promote the previously disadvantaged languages, including sign language, with a view to promoting multilingualism in the service of a diverse nation.

5.2 The City of Tshwane as a case study
Presentation by Ms Landela Nyangintsimbi, Director: Language Services

Ms Nyangintsimbi pointed out that unlike the City of Ekurhuleni, the City of Tshwane was lucky to have a Language Unit. The focus of the presentation would therefore be on the services rendered by this Unit and its future objectives.

It was critical for the Unit to look at its contribution towards good governance, community participation, the service to a diverse public, access to services and the redress of language inequality.

As far as context was concerned, she referred to practicality and the expense of choosing any particular language(s), the consideration of the right of everyone to use the language of their choice, as well as the economical and effective use of resources.

She explained the critical areas in addressing multilingualism, because "one size did not fit all". There was a need to identify what was critical, for example, in the case of internal written communication (agendas/memos), debates in Council/committees/public meetings, disciplinary hearings, written communication to the municipality, public announcements and official notices, promulgated by-laws, annual reports, IDP reports, customer care points, care centres, clinics, notice boards, municipal signage, and people living with disabilities.

Under needs analysis, she referred to a monitoring exercise conducted at the municipal customer care centres, clinics, etc over the three to four months prior to the conference. The findings were that people were unaware of the language facilitation services offered by the City of Tshwane. Another critical need was that of training in SA Sign Language, and the provision of Braille, for instance in an area in Ga-Rankuwa where there was a blind community.

In her presentation, Ms Nyangintsimbi gave an overview of the services provided by the Language Unit, namely translating and editing in six languages (Sepedi; Afrikaans; Xitsonga; Setswana; isiZulu and English). Demand versus capacity was a challenge, however, because it was not always possible to meet the demand. In addressing these, they employed prioritisation. Interpreting services were also offered during Council meetings, disciplinary hearings, Disability Forum meetings and public participation meetings.

In addition to language training, there was a monthly language awareness campaign during which a specific language was promoted. Under consideration were a multilingual website, focus on the promotion of literacy and literature in collaboration with the libraries and interpreting services for clinics and call centres.

She concluded by stressing the need for coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. The challenges of allocating resources and advancing multilingualism at the same time were problematic. The promotion of African languages was critical to prevent them from dying a natural death.

6. PANEL DISCUSSION

6.1 Integrating disability programmes in municipalities

The discussion focused on the following subthemes:
- Training;
- Awareness campaigns;
- Disability audit;
- Disability forums;
- Accessibility in municipal offices; and
- Induction programmes for employees.

Common patterns of progress involving technological development were touched on. The need to develop comprehensive programmes that addressed access by persons with disabilities was pointed out as important.

Mr D Moodley: University of South Africa

Mr Moodley spoke on the unavailability of Braille material in meetings. He mentioned that when it came to language issues, the development of policies and so forth, people talked about the cost of the technology and other adaptations required. In his view, if people had taken that into account before they started designing their solution, it would not have cost anything extra.

He introduced the organisation Daisy South Africa (Digital Accessible Information System), a local chapter of the Daisy Consortium which promoted literacy among the blind. In the past, libraries for the blind had produced analogue or audiotape material. After a while this had posed challenges so the libraries had come together and designed an open-source multimedia format called Daisy. Daisy was based on open standards, in other words no cost was involved and one could download and play back the audio tools from the Daisy website free of charge.

Daisy was synchronised multimedia. This meant that text was generated on screen, and each sentence was highlighted as the "reading" progressed, and at the same time an audio version was generated so that one could listen to the text. The benefits were therefore that a single format catered for a number of different disabilities. Daisy catered for blind people (with the audio version), for people who were computer illiterate, for people with dyslexia (with the highlighted audio version), and for partially sighted people (the font size, background, contrast etc could be changed). In addition, Daisy had the capability to navigate a document very quickly.

He called on interested parties to assist in translating the manuals to make sure they were in all the official languages. He mentioned that the draft had been completed and would be available by the end of the year. Daisy 4 Standard incorporated close-capturing for the deaf and hard-of-hearing people, motion picture and screening audio so that one could screen a Daisy production or Daisy material straight from the website or anywhere else.

Mr Sabelo Gwala, Human Development Specialist: SALGA

Mr Gwala indicated that a disability campaign had been developed according to which at least one person at councillor level in local government had to be a disabled person. The leaders of the National Members Assembly (NMA) had subsequently decided to increase this figure from one to two. They had also made a number of other recommendations, such as that SALGA had to lobby political parties to prioritise disability and have people who were disabled on their party lists. SALGA had also been identified to lobby other institutions, such as the Independent Electoral Commission, to set up disability forums. Political parties and municipalities had to be encouraged to elect/employ people with disabilities. The NMA also mandated SALGA to discuss with the IEC the possibility of designing ballot papers that made it easier for the disabled to vote.

He responded to the issue of language, but not as a developmental issue or in terms of giving access to government resources, but in terms of giving access to the resources within each of us. When two people met for the first time it was the language that unlocked the value in each other. It was that value that allowed a person, on meeting a stranger, to value that stranger as a human being, and to develop signs or other forms of artefacts to communicate in order to unlock the value in the other person. Of importance was the need to find each other as communities, and value communicating in all languages.

Mr Gwala concluded by emphasising linguistic tolerance and the need to recognise that language unlocked value in other people, which had to start with recognising one's own value first.

Mr Alphonce Dzaphansi: SA Council for the Blind

The speaker began by mentioning that the history of service provision for people with disabilities spanned many centuries, meandering on its course through annihilation, philanthropic care and integration.

Media should be made available to different groups of people with disabilities according to their communication needs. For example, in the case of people with visual impairments, various public offices should be aware of the need to make compatible communication media available to potential users. That media could be in the form of computers with voice simulation for those who were computer literate, Braille copies for those who could read Braille and large print for those with impaired vision.

He argued that systems should also be put in place for the training of individuals who could assist those with disabilities who visit their offices for services. Such assistance could be in the form of giving directions, completing forms or anything else which would make them feel welcome, while expediting their business in those offices. No client should feel left out, ignored or avoided as all clients mattered to a focused organisation.

Business philosophy was steadily shifting towards an interest in satisfying every client and worker. Local governments should gear themselves towards building the capacity to help business to achieve that new philosophy.

Disability programmes could also be integrated into mainstream access programmes through consultation and collaboration between local government and the disability sector. Collaboration with organisations of and for people with disabilities would give guidance on the best fit in local provision for their sector. What seemed most important in any inclusive approach was thorough consultation.

He advised that local government authorities should mainstream training programmes at various levels, both through creating an enabling environment for "the training of all" and making information available about training opportunities to all population sectors. Although city councils could lead by example by involving people with disabilities in their training programmes, they should also influence other organisations in their areas of jurisdiction to participate fully in the process of integrating disability factors into their operational set-ups. Communication and joint initiatives remained the main avenues for successful coordinated efforts.

Integrating disability programmes into the mainstream of public engagements also required the expansion of the number of forums in which people with disabilities participated so that they expressed their needs as and when necessary. The aim would be to make an environment suitable for all people regardless of their abilities. The current service provision philosophy which demanded of society to improve the social and physical environment for utilisation by all who dwelt there required that all individuals and social institutions had to work hard to make the environment habitable for all people. This meant that, more than ever before, there was a greater need for joint activity among different organisations.

Induction programmes for people with disabilities could also be included into the regular cycle of the employment and induction programmes of all public organisations. There were many reports by people with disabilities, especially those with visual impairment that they were often absorbed into the workforce of some organisation or other and left to their own devices to discover who they worked with or find out about the buildings they had to visit for various services. Induction into the workplace, the work process and ideal access ways were important for anybody who was new to a work environment. Infusion of induction programmes for people with disabilities into similar programmes for the non-disabled should not be a problem for any organisation as it could be easily written into organisational policy that there was such an induction requirement for all workers who joined the organisation. The role of local authorities was to disseminate proactive information to all public concerns so that there would eventually be voluntary compliance. Local statutes could also be put in place and applied as a deterrent where there was evidence of a breach of regulated practice.

He concluded by indicating that proper community-based educational social intervention should take place where there was active transfer of correct information by all who had adequate mandates to coordinate the affairs of whole communities. This was where local governments played a critical role as representative governments of general society and its different institutions.

6.2 Overview of day one

Summary of the day's proceedings
Dr Monwabisi Ralarala

Dr Ralarala referred to one of the highlights of the conference, which was the acknowledgement that language is a tangible/intangible heritage thus it should be used as a vehicle of service delivery. He suggested therefore, a bottom-up approach had to be considered in moving from intent to implementation, which called for proper strategies and resource allocation. The emphasis was on synergies in order to achieve functional multilingualism and address its challenges.

It was also acknowledged that, because language was central and relevant to the mandate of service delivery, there was a need to be pragmatic about language matters.

Another important factor was the work being done to redress the imbalances of the past, as well as regulating the language profession. Another highlight was the introduction to Daisy – an instrument to improve access.

The disability campaign was discussed, as well as the creation of opportunities at municipal level for people with disabilities. Disability programmes needed to be incorporated in order to render services to diverse communities.

7. PACKAGING MESSAGING

Session Chair: Dr Monoreng, University of Johannesburg

Adequate understanding of a charter was explained. While acknowledging that South Africa had the best language policy, factors that were essential when reviewing the policy were discussed with a view to having a coherent language policy that was practical to implement. Participants emphasised that the profession was not standardised and that language professionals were being exploited. To address this, there was a need for enforceable legislation so that punitive measures could be taken when there was non-compliance.

7.1 Exploring a language charter for municipalities
Presentation by Dr A Beukes, Chairperson: SA Translators' Institute (SATI)

Dr Beukes said that, in her view, language at local government level was critical because it indicated that things were about to happen. It was the one area where she thought client attitudes and client demands would provide for a speedy journey into an area or a situation where good progress could be made in terms of implementing and giving concrete effect to policies, statements and policy revisions.

Her introduction contextualised language management in South Africa as well as the current status of language policy implementation. She touched on obstacles and challenges of language management, as well as a need for a language charter for municipalities. Very little had been mentioned in previous policy documents regarding language charters, so before talking about language charters, one had to look at what was happening in terms of putting into concrete effect those apparently good policies that had been devised in the past.

She briefly dealt with a few challenges or barriers that had been facing the language fraternity. The context was on language policy and management; the provision of the Constitution; management of multilingualism at national level; the pyramid at provincial level (nine provincial governments) and at municipal level. She asked whether language policies were compatible with provincial policy taking into account the language usage preferences of residents.

Dr Beukes paid specific attention to enabling legislation and she referred to the Constitution (section 6) which stated that municipalities had to take language usage and preferences into account. The Municipal Systems Act also stressed the importance of language preferences and usage of residents and the special needs of people who could not read or write. The national language policy framework published in 2003 stated the need to facilitate equitable access to government services, knowledge and information. Good language management had to be promoted with an eye to efficient public service administration in order to meet client expectations and needs.

She further indicated that obstacles to service delivery were the result of bureaucratic failure to recognise the role of language in service delivery; difficulty to mobilise executive and political support for multilingualism; inequality of opportunity for residents as regards access to government services, lack of knowledge and information; lack of resources for implementation; language domination; and the marginalisation of indigenous languages.

In addition, people had negative attitudes towards multilingualism. Universities were battling to keep African language departments open as student numbers dwindled. The publishing of books in the indigenous languages was almost on its deathbed. The use of these languages among native speakers was becoming unfashionable (according to an editorial in the *Sunday Times*).

There was a need to explore the possibility of a language charter to support the implementation of a language policy.

As for primary legislation, there was the PanSALB Act, but there was still not a South African languages act. In terms of secondary regulations we could have regulations and ordinances, which could be used for a language charter at local government level.

Dr Beukes pointed out that the language charter would address the disjunctions and gaps between effective policy development and implementation. She argued that there was a need to review policies and a need to have another look at what were the real needs and the real priorities of the customers and to get clarity on legislative measures and on the long-awaited SA languages act. Clarity was also required about the long-awaited SA language practitioners' council act to counteract the backyard mechanics working in the language field, and about the proper organisational arrangements to eliminate the overlaps and the huge proliferation of language agencies and structures.

She proceeded to explain what a charter was. It was a document or a law recognising basic rights and privileges: the rights of citizens to have access to languages they preferred. A charter guaranteed such basic rights and privileges. A charter delineated the possible areas where government could deliver in terms of a language, and signing it was a guarantee that it should be done. A charter was a written statement that specified the rights of a specific group of people. Some of its features would clearly explicate the roles and responsibilities of the local government structures and constitute an authoritative reference for future implementation.

She then discussed the historical background of the notion of a charter.
Important issues to address in a language charter (based on broad consensus) were:

- Designation of official language/s in a municipality;
- Decision on link language/s;
- Language/s of communication with clients/residents;
- Rules and regulations on language use, for the purposes of control;
- Supervising body/department;
- Budgetary provision; and
- Implementation plan and mechanisms.

In order to consider a language charter, policies would have to be reviewed. She argued that policy development was never complete, and that it was a dynamic process.

She concluded by saying that a language charter was perhaps a profoundly important principle to consider. Rules and regulations were made for people or groups of people. She stressed the need to revisit and remake language policies to ensure, in the words of Dr Neville Alexander, "a consistently democratic language policy for the simple reason that empowering the individual citizen to develop to the full extent of his or her capacity is the very point of a democratic system".

8. PANEL DISCUSSION

8.1 Technology and language development

The discussion focused on technological interventions that had been developed to advance multilingualism, as well as access to services by communities. The developments assisted people with disabilities and those who could not read or write to access government services. Community development workers also provided assistance in that regard.

Options for technological language development
Presentation by Mr Isaac Mohlamme: Thibologa

Mr Mohlamme, a developer of products for sign language services for the deaf, discussed technological interventions for the advancement of language development. He was from the company Thibologa that developed CDs and booklets to assist the hearing-disabled to learn basic communication skills in SA Sign Language. They also developed technology that worked well on mobile phones and were planning to develop a visual version for deaf people.

Human Technology Research Group
Presentation by Dr Karen Calteaux: CSIR

The presentation concerned language development using human language technologies. Dr Calteaux gave some background on the projects the CSIR was busy with, what human technologies were and how they could contribute to language development and assist local government. She also introduced a product they were involved in that was sponsored by the Department of Arts and Culture.

Dr Calteaux defined human language technology (HLT) as technology that facilitated interaction between humans and computers through the use of natural language. Basically it could be divided into two groups, namely speech technology and text technology.

Different institutions in the country specialised in one or the other. The CSIR HLT Research Group was one of the few institutions that specialised in speech technology. The North West University, for instance, specialised in text technology. The CSIR was busy developing automatic speech recognition systems, which were computer systems for recognising human speech and rendering it into text. These could be used for various things, such as speaker verification, coupled with some automatic speech recognition.

She referred to a major development in the field of speech technology, namely text-to-speech technology, which involved the computer changing text into synthesised speech. The synthesised speech one heard on user interface systems was an example of the use of text-to-speech technology.

Dr Calteaux proceeded to explain what human technology could do for language development, for instance provide services to people. If people could access services and information through spoken language (by speaking on a cell phone or to a computer, and not by typing an SMS or a computer message) probably more people would start using their home languages. In that regard we should start moving away from the idea that information should be requested and received in English.
Lastly of course in her opinion, technology could improve and develop languages.

Dr Calteaux then introduced the Lwazi project which was driven by the CSIR's HLT Research Group and which aimed to provide a telephone-based speech-driven information system. It was supported by the Department of Arts and Culture financially and otherwise. One of the main aims of the project was to enable government, also local government, to improve service delivery by unlocking the system's potential to enable the government to give workers, for instance community health workers, access to information so that they could communicate more efficiently with each other and with the community.

The CSIR had discussed several possible applications of this technology with potential beneficiaries in order to establish their needs, and had then come up with an application which they called the CD doubly.

The CD-doubly project was piloted at Thusong Centres (previously known as multipurpose community development centres) around the country, where local government and different government departments stationed their representatives. Community development workers were targeted specifically. That had been a good place to pilot that kind of project/technology to see what the results, uptake and needs were, and to use that information to improve the process, technology and service.

Community development workers could enter information into a computer, which was stored on a server hosted by the CSIR. Other community development workers and the community had access to that information which was available via a spoken or telephone interface. The community development worker or the community member gave the system a missed call, after which the system called the person back and allowed information to be retrieved. At this stage it was completely free of charge. People could access information via their cell phones and then relay the information to a member of the community, for instance.

Complete information on Lwazi was available on the website http://www.meraka.org.za/ and could be downloaded free of charge. The drivers of the project wanted to understand what the needs of local government were, how the government communicated with the local community and how the CSIR could assist to improve communication using its speech technologies.

8.2   Communication plan for implementing multilingualism at local government level

The discussions revolved around the ways in which the media could assist in conveying messages to communities in languages they understood better. That was in the interest of local government because it had to serve people in their own languages. Local government should embrace the local and/or community media as a resource for better communication with communities. It was the view of the conference that coordination efforts regarding communication would be beneficial.

Mr Diphete Bopape, Editor: *Seipone*

Mr Bopape provided some background on the newspaper, which was produced by PanSALB. At his suggestion PanSALB had agreed to publish this newspaper in the indigenous languages. However, this organisation later set some conditions, for instance that the paper had to incorporate Tshivenda, Xitsonga and Northern Sotho with the aim of uniting the people of Limpopo.

PanSALB donated about R250 000 to get the paper off the ground and they had been involved since then. The response of readers was that talking to people in their mother tongues was like talking to their hearts. Old copies of these newspapers were available for distribution to communities through municipalities. He argued that the paper was in some ways completely different from an English publication, in the sense that when you talked to people in their mother tongues they attached a depth of meaning to the message that was so powerful that word of mouth took over and the message was spread.

However, the paper was not getting government support and was on the brink of collapse. He called for support from all spheres of government to become involved in the preservation of African languages. One way to do that was to communicate all messages concerning service delivery in all the indigenous languages.

Mr Franklin Huizies, CEO: National Community Radio Forum

Mr Huizies spoke about community media, gave a brief history of the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF), and called on local municipalities to become involved. The NCRF was a member-based organisation that represented community sound broadcasters or community radio stations in South Africa. The community radio sector started off in the mid-eighties with a conference on freedom of the airways in the Netherlands. SA subsequently campaigned for the establishment of a three-tier broadcasting system, and eventually the ICASA Act to regulate the sector was enacted in 1993.

The community broadcasting sector was regulated by the independent regulator that issued licences. There were 110 community radio stations that broadcast daily and had a collective audience of 7,7 million. (Audience research figures were available on the website of the SA Advertising Research Foundation.) These stations were situated in communities, had small geographic footprints and served local communities through broadcasting in local languages.

For the past 10 to 15 years these stations had been able to sustain themselves through selling airtime? or getting sponsorship or support from their local communities. They were eager to participate in disseminating information and entering into partnerships in participatory government platforms for local municipalities to empower communities so that they can be able to also speak up for themselves.

Community broadcasters were eager to partner with municipalities. For instance, a community radio station would like to consult with a municipality on using priority aspects of its IDP to develop programme content and to enter into dialogue about it with its community, in that way assisting with the development of local government. The community radio sector had a clear developmental objective. In section 34(4) of the Broadcasting Act the public service mandate to be carried out by community broadcasting services was prescribed clearly, even though it was relegated to a community level.

He proposed that in terms of planning, a communication plan for implementation of the multilingualism strategy with the municipalities was the key. Municipalities (for instance the communication departments in the municipalities) had to look at how to utilise all the local media platforms and also inform them about the way local government operated so as to ensure effective cooperation.

9. CONCLUSION

The points raised by the audience during this conference highlighted the need for the makers and implementers of language policies to work together and to involve stakeholders and communities to ensure that the benefits of multilingualism were achieved.

The provision of services to communities in the languages that they understood was part of service delivery. It should not be seen as a luxury but as a necessity for successful communication. When government was perceived as not communicating, it would create dissatisfaction, and could give rise to strikes. It also stood to reason that it was not so much about the volume of information communicated, but the manner in which it was communicated.

Section 6 of the Constitution mandated local governments to take the languages of their residents into account.

A number of actions had to be taken, and all of these impacted on moving forward or giving direction.

It was agreed that the key to promoting indigenous languages was for public figures to make a concerted effort and also encourage others to use their mother tongues more often to beat the perception that indigenous languages were not intended for mass communication.

The closing discussion focused on the next step in strengthening cooperation and influence.

Ms Tirhani Mabasa of the CRL Rights Commission summarised the conference proceedings with specific reference to key recommendations.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of language in enhancing service delivery was discussed and the following recommendations were agreed on:

- Political leaders were called upon to support language matters (multilingualism).
- It had to be acknowledged that language was one of the keys to successful service delivery.
- Municipalities had to speak the language of the people.
- The promulgation of the SA Languages Bill was important.
- The adoption of a language charter was important.
- Policies had to be reviewed regularly.
- There was a need to implement language policies to improve efficiency and the impact of the services rendered.
- Proper strategies and the allocation of resources were necessary.
- Disability programmes were needed to create opportunities for the deaf community at municipal level.
- There was a call for all to support SA Sign Language.
- Everyone was encouraged to strengthen partnerships and collaboration.
- Closer collaboration with Thibologa/Meraka, among others, regarding the use of technology to enhance service delivery had to be explored.
- Local government had to keep community media informed on governance matters.
- Community media (audio) had to be supported in broadcasting to local communities in their home languages.
- IDPs had to be shared in all media platforms in order to capacitate the media and to guide programming schedules.