

# MOHOKARE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY CREATING A BUSINESS ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

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Municipal Council has a political responsibility for sound governance and effective service delivery. It is further responsible for promotion of economic growth and development leadership on the area's physical development and well-being of the country at large.



The Local Economic Development unit in Mohokare Local Municipality had received many complaints with regard to the influx of non-South Africans in their area of operation as well as residence. There were allegations from the South African business owners that the Non-South African businesses are selling expired goods at low prices as a way to compete.

Upon receiving such complaints, the LED Officer (Me Ntswaki Mokati) convened a meeting with the Environmental Health Practitioner in order to work towards resolving the issue. The two therefore agreed that there is a need to make inspections in all the businesses in the area. The intention to make inspections in all businesses was raised in the section 79 committee meeting.

On the 18th of April 2012 inspections were made in all businesses (South African and Non-South African). The inspectors discovered expired goods in most Non-South African businesses (confirming the allegations) and consequent to that those goods were confiscated. The guilty parties were issued with warning letters which were based on the Environmental Health Act. Mokati realised that it is critical to rope in the relevant sector department in order to ensure closure of businesses that were illegal.

In preparation of the rolling out of the programme, Mokati convened meetings with the following sector departments; Department of Justice (Magistrate and prosecutor), South African police Services, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Labour, Migration and NGO (OVV). Several meetings were held between the municipality and all the sector departments whereby each stakeholder identified their role. There was a mutual agreement on the approach to dealing with that delicate matter, of foreigners. It was resolved that there is need to meet with all the businesses in order to give all the parties feedback about the inspections that were made. It should be highlighted that the municipality was cautious not to spark the xenophobic flame and thus the meeting went on smoothly.

A road-show amongst citizens and non-citizens business community was convened whereby all sector departments made presentations on their different roles and responsibilities. The aim of that exercise was to bring to the attention of everyone involved that it will be a waste of time to rectify a mistake by mistake and will never reach a desired goal. Everyone was reminded that the constitution of South Africa accommodates equal treatment to everybody within the country.

During the road shows the following were amongst important issues that were raised the community:

- Who approves the application for the foreigners to be in the country and on which conditions?
- Does the non-citizens have legal documentation to a operate business?
- Are the non-citizens allowed to operate business on RDP houses while citizens do not have places to stay?
- Is it lawful to operate a business on a residential site?
- Refusal to employ security personnel.
- Citizens are not employed in their businesses.

***This article was prepared by Ms Ntswaki Mokati, LED Officer at Mohokare Local Municipality.***