

The Role of Traditional Leadership Institution, Governance, And Fight Against Covid-19

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of traditional leadership institutions, governance, with specific reference to the fight against COVID-19. The rationale behind the investigation is by Section 212 (1) of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996, which states that national legislation may provide for a role for traditional leadership as an institution at the local level on matters affecting local communities. For data collection, the study will rely considerably on both primary data and secondary data. The study will use both conceptual and empirical approaches to explore the role of traditional leaders and governance in combating COVID-19. The paper also discusses the challenges of traditional leadership in the fight against COVID-19. It further explores the role played by the Free State Province traditional leaders as well as the role played by the Royal Bafokeng Nation in the fight against COVID-19. The recommendations of this study will enable both traditional leaders and government to synergies to achieve the set governmental objectives. The paper concludes by presenting the findings from the literature review and the empirical study.

Keywords: Covid-19, Traditional Leadership, Governance, Municipalities, Councillors, Role, Traditional Councils, Pandemic and Rural areas.

Introduction

Traditional leadership is a central component of African thought. In the African context, leaders are born in the royal family or consanguinity and he/she is expected to take over when they come of age. During sickness or pandemics, the subjects look upon the king to solve the problem. As a result of that, a king must have the wisdom to address all his subject's needs. With 59 million people struck by the Covid-19 pandemic, the South Africa indigenous societies were also not left behind by the scourge, which led to their subjects looking at them for solutions. Although the South African government created policies to combat the outbreak of the virus, there is little understanding in the involvement and non- involvement of traditional leaders in how they handle the spread of the virus within their local communities (Bhuda *et al.* 2021)

Traditional leaders effectively functioned as the only local governance structure in rural areas, vested with significant powers and responsible for a variety of functions such as land allocation and dispute resolution before 1994. Essentially, the institution of traditional leadership was the form of local government with the highest authority in a community or village. Traditional leaders did not like the new democratic local government structures in rural areas which were debated during the early 1990s. This was inevitable as it would mean a loss of power for traditional leaders. It is thus unsurprising that many traditional leaders resisted the establishment of municipalities

in rural areas. When the system of local government was entrenched in the 1996 Constitution and given the mandate, in 2000, to deliver major public services and drive development throughout South Africa, tensions and contestations between municipalities and traditional leaders began to emerge sharply. These tensions and contestations have once again surfaced during the national Lockdown being implemented to contain the coronavirus. Traditional leaders made drastic decisions and played a notable role in the fight against COVID-19 (Poswa, 2020).

The President expected all organs of State to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by putting in place control measures targeted at containing the virus. In urban areas, it is municipalities that are at the forefront of implementing national, provincial, and local measures to curb infections. The municipalities forged synergies to work with traditional leaders in rural areas, to fight against the pandemic. The municipal councillors are always threatened when the traditional leaders are providing services to the rural communities because they perceive them as rivals and instead of cooperating with them they create unnecessary competition. This competition creates tensions and conflicts between municipal councillors and traditional leaders. These tensions harm the effectiveness of the response to COVID-19 (Poswa, 2020).

Challenges of Traditional Leaders in Combating Covid-19

Traditional leaders are faced with many challenges related to combating the deadly COVID-19 in rural areas, and there is, the need for concrete solutions to strengthen their leadership's skills in the prevention of the pandemic. The challenges range from limited knowledge on the part of traditional leaders amidst fears of the pandemic. The news from across the globe showing patterns of transmission and the rate of Coronavirus contagion, the fears of the traditional leaders are exacerbated and many people's sense of safety has been disturbed. The fear in traditional leaders is worsened by the fact that WHO is yet to confirm a cure for this pandemic. This makes traditional leaders to be sceptical to move around disseminate COVID-19 information to the rural communities. Amidst these fears, the activities of traditional leaders have been limited to virtual information dissemination through the use of cell phone calls and text messages to their decentralized structures. While important for their safety and that of the wider society in COVID-19 prevention, virtual communications are not easily accessible to all rural communities (Dziva, 2020).

The tensions between democratically elected municipal councillors and traditional have been in existent since the early 1990s and strategies to diffuse or resolve them have not been unsuccessful. The tensions and contestations have resurfaced during the national Lockdown being implemented to contain the coronavirus. Traditional leaders took significant decisions and are playing various roles added value and impacted positively on the government's response to COVID-19 (Poswa, 2020). The traditional leadership institution is faced with generic problems across the country such as lack of funding, lack of resources and insufficient skills and capacity building programs.

Legislative Framework on The Role of Traditional Leadership

Traditional leaders play a pivotal role at the local sphere of government. There is a need for more resources to enable traditional leadership institutions to function more effectively. The functions of traditional councils are, among others, supporting municipalities in the identification of community needs; facilitating the involvement of the traditional community in the development or amendment of the Integrated Development Plan of a municipality in whose area that the community resides. Traditional leaders are public office bearers. The Remuneration Commission has by way of Government Notice (No 693 of 29 August 2011) made recommendations about the nature of appropriate tools of the trade for qualifying traditional leaders and members of the house of traditional leaders (Indigenous and Traditional Leaders Indaba with Government and Stakeholders Report, 2017: 9-10).

Section 212(1) of the Constitution stipulates that national legislation may provide for a role for traditional leadership as an institution at the local level on matters affecting local communities. In line with this constitutional imperative, the national parliament enacted the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 128, which is intended to regulate traditional institutions at the national level. This piece of legislation entrenches and guarantees the customary role and the powers vested in the traditional leaders within the new constitutional order (Khunou, 2017: 27).

Section 81 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, no.117 of 1998 permits the participation in the affairs of a municipal council by traditional leaders to whom the splitting of traditional authority areas applies. It must be borne in mind that several traditional authority areas need not be contiguous. One of the components of kingship is the possession of rights over land, not in the sense of tenure, but as a domain, a sphere of control or influence. Some of the Domains were made up of subordinate chieftainships, but all of them were within the scope of the king's commands. Another main feature of kingship is that the kings should command. The role of traditional leaders in local politics is still old. They are the fathers of the nation, the chief priests, judges, and the rainmakers (in some cases). They are endowed with the ability to ensure the prosperity and well-being of their people (Bekker, 2008: 9-10). The recognition and roles traditional leaders are enshrined in the South African constitution and the issues of traditional authority were negotiated to address the damage done to traditional systems of leadership by previous administrations. Chapter 11 of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996 recognizes the role and status of traditional leadership according to customary law. Several amendments and legislative proposals have been adopted, including different programs that have been implemented to ensure that traditional leadership contributes to the development of society. For example, legislation has managed to transform the composition of traditional councils to reconcile these councils with a measure of democratic consolidation. The current requirements are that 40% of the council must be elected, and one-third must be women. Furthermore, legislation opened channels for traditional councils and municipalities to work more cohesively to ensure that traditional councils have a voice in government and may also enter into partnerships and service delivery agreements with the municipalities (CONTRALESA, 2019). The existing challenge of the tensions between traditional leaders and local government democratic structures needs immediate reconciliation intervention by the provincial

government. The country's political system is founded on the Western European model, which at times contradicts the values of other South African cultures, more especially those whose leadership focuses on the hierarchy of authority. Within some of these cultures, their political authority is centralized, which allows chiefs and kings to intervene in social conflicts (CONTRALESA, 2019).

The primary objective of the capacity-building program is to enhance and empower traditional leaders and traditional institutions to enable them to respond to challenges arising from the White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance and the Constitution.

Literature Review

Historically, traditional leaders during the colonial and apartheid regime used to perform certain functions for the community. Functions such as, judging in traditional courts whereby communities that were found to be guilty in the traditional courts were fined cows or corporal punishment was used to rehabilitate a community member. The practice is in existent in Botswana 's traditional leadership processes. However, the functions in which traditional leaders performed on courts issues were stipulated in the Black Administrative Act 192 Section 12 and Section 20. The Act required traditional leaders to work on minor cases in the courts as stipulated in Section 12. Furthermore, the Act allowed the Minister of Justice to deal with cases relating to criminal matters. The two systems of governance traditional leaders and government worked in harmony without any challenges. The traditional leader's work was formalized and paid for the services rendered, and the role of government leaders was understood. The government did not only allow the leaders to take charge in traditional courts. However, the system allowed the community to use their native languages and also allowed the community to practice their culture and customs. Thus, many South Africans today can converse in different native languages and enjoy the cultural diversity in the country (Tlou, 2020)

A traditional leader or a chief is defined as an individual who, by his or her ancestry, occupies a stool of an area, and this person has been appointed to it by the traditions and customs of the area. This individual has traditional authority over the people who live in that area. A chief or a traditional leader is further defined as a traditional leader of a specific traditional community who exercises authority over several headmen by customary law, or within whose area of jurisdiction several headmen exercise authority (CONTRALESA, 2019).

Khunou (2009) avows that the institution of traditional leadership represents the early form of societal organization. It embodies the preservation of culture, traditions, customs, and values. During the pre-colonial era, the institution of traditional leadership was a political and administrative centre of governance for traditional communities. The institution of traditional leadership was the form of government with the highest authority. The leadership monopoly of traditional leaders changed when the colonial authorities and rulers introduced their authority to the landscape of traditional governance.

The advent of the post-apartheid government marked the demise of apartheid and

the Bantustan system for traditional leaders and the beginning of a new struggle for the freedom of the traditional authorities. The institution of traditional leadership is obliged to ensure full compliance with the constitutional values and other relevant national and provincial legislation. The right to equality, including the prohibition of discrimination based on gender and sex, has an important impact on the institution of traditional leadership. For example, under the new constitutional dispensation, women may become traditional leaders in their traditional communities, which are contrary to the old and long observed African customary rule of male intestate succession, which excluded women from succession to the position of traditional leadership (Khunou, 2009).

The value-add of the institution of traditional leadership in South Africa contributes positively to the development of South African society at large and rural communities in particular. Indeed, traditional leadership is a *sine qua non* for good governance in rural areas. It is very important to acknowledge that the efforts of the South African democratic government to redefine the traditional system of governance and the role it should play in the new dispensation must be prioritised. However, one also needs to point out the ambiguity and vagueness with which the same government treats the role traditional leadership should play in the democratic dispensation (Koenane, 2017).

The discourse on whether the institution of traditional leadership has a role in democratic dispensations or not is polarized between traditionalists and modernists. In a sense, these represent two points of extreme divergence. The two schools do not see eye-to-eye regarding the institution of traditional leadership. On the one hand, traditionalists argue that the institution is a legitimate institution that is more democratic than the modern political order. Therefore, as the basis of their argument traditionalists believe that the institution could still play a vital role. The traditionalist argument is based on the premise that the institution of traditional leadership is compatible with modern democracy since it possesses democratic features. Therefore, for this group of scholars, the modern democratic system of governance and the institution of traditional leadership can be integrated. Modernists are completely sceptical about integrating the system of traditional leadership into modern governance structures. Modernists regard the institution of traditional leadership as old-fashioned, patriarchal, and oppressive to women and young people and excluded from their structures traditional leadership governance. They further look at the institution as irrelevant in a democratic era. For modernists, the system of traditional leadership is backward. The main argument of modernists is that the institution of traditional leadership was distorted and corrupted by colonial powers. This group of scholars thus objects to the institution being integrated into the modern democratic order (Koenane, 2017). I am the proponent of the traditionalists because Kingship and Queenship for example, in the United Kingdom is vested with more authority than the democratic structure because the country is a constitutional monarch. In South Africa, more authority is constitutionally vested in the political office bearers. As such, I am the opponent of the modernists because they are enforcing the western systems and approaches in government and it is very complex to forge synergies between the democratic system and the indigenous traditional leadership system.

According to Baloyi (2016), the key role of traditional leaders is about resolving problems faced by the rural communities. Traditional leaders provide a mechanism, through which conflicts about local issues can be resolved. Traditional authorities have remained a significant social, cultural and political force, and exercise their power, particularly in rural areas. Traditional leaders should not be viewed as individual citizens with a uniform democratic system, but as a special interest group, worthy of consultation and active participation in local government.

Tlou (2020) avows that traditional Leaders play an important role in their communities in dealing with epidemic diseases such as, for example, HIV/AIDS. They assist in lobbying to influence service delivery prioritization. In addition, they have a unique role in traditional courts; their role is to repair relationships between the wrongdoers and the community. It is further stated that, the traditional leaders in courts ensure that the defendant and aggrieved come to terms with the ills they have committed. They play an important role in advising the government and legislators on issues about tradition and customs. However, the leaders do not have the power to reject or amend legislation. Furthermore, traditional leaders are required to mobilize resources such as building schools and clinics at the local level to compensate for a lack of adequate support from the government, there is the discussion of whether the mixture of local government and traditional leadership is possible to enable local government to implement developmental outcomes.

The Role of Traditional Leadership in Combating Covid-19

According to Medie *et al.* (2020) as infections and the death toll for the new coronavirus pandemic mount, African countries have introduced and implemented measures to reduce the spread, raise awareness among communities and gain citizens' compliance. However, the potential contribution of traditional leaders has been ignored by governments. This is despite the role they have played in addressing health crises in many African countries. In several cases, governments have relied heavily on actors within the formal sector to ensure that citizens comply with measures to control the pandemic. The trend is, the police are responsible for this task. However, in some countries, such as South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, police and the army have on occasion used extreme violence to enforce COVID-19 regulations.

As the second wave of COVID-19 affects the global health and economic community, the World Health Organization (WHO) is supporting the government to engage strategic stakeholders as part of concerted efforts to reverse the trend of the pandemic. This engagement builds on the lessons learned from the important role played by traditional leaders in the achievement of a polio-free status in Nigeria. In March 2021, the WHO supported the Nigerian government to engage 7,350 traditional leaders across 11 priority States to execute community-based interventions including sensitization for voluntary testing, survivors' declaration of status during heroes' campaign, a voluntary declaration of contacts by confirmed cases, and adherence to preventive measures of COVID-19. In Kwara State, the traditional leaders' engagement increased in individuals presenting for COVID-19 testing. Shortly after the sensitization of traditional leaders by the government in Kwara State during

epidemiological week 46 in 2020, testing increased from zero to 875 by week 52. In Sokoto's State, the increase in community testing was associated with the sensitization and engagement of the traditional leaders (Onuekwue, 2021).

The potential capabilities of traditional leaders to combat pandemics in rural Zimbabwe hinges on a myriad of factors. Amid community challenges to access credible broadcasting and print media, traditional leaders remain one of the rural people's reliable sources of information about pandemics. The rural communities often rely on traditional leaders for wisdom and answers when faced with calamities of the Coronavirus' nature. Due to the respect, traditional leaders command in rural areas, many rural communities look to traditional leaders for wisdom and important information about pandemics. The fact that the rural communities have benefited from the government's rural electrification infrastructure and program, many chiefs in Zimbabwe have access to credible government communications on television and radios. It is upon receiving this credible COVID-19 information that chiefs utilize their networks that include the headmen and village heads to mobilize and cascade the Coronavirus information and knowledge to the wider society for improved adoption and implementation of prevention measures. Similarly, traditional leaders in Zimbabwe take advantage of the varied governance and community development forums such as village groups and contacts including their police to disseminate credible pandemic information to rural communities. Traditional leaders are able to travel across the communities with State-provisioned vehicles, to sensitize them about the COVID-19 pandemic and its preventative measures. Traditional leaders revealed how they take advantage of crowds at their meetings, traditional court sessions, funerals, and food distribution points to educate communities about the need to observe good hygiene and social distancing for effective pandemic prevention (Dziva, 2020 p.514).

According to (Poswa,2020) shortly after President Ramaphosa announced the initial 21 Day COVID-19 Lockdown in mid-March of 2020, almost all houses of traditional leadership in the country announced the suspension of the initiation schools. This was aligned to response to fears that the initiation schools would become breeding grounds for infections as there was unavoidable close contact among initiates and those assisting with the initiation process. The rapid and decisive intervention was aimed at managing the spread of the virus, particularly, among young men who are already exposed to numerous health risks while undergoing traditional initiation.

Poswa (2020) further asserts that at the end of April, the AmaMpondomise Kingdom under King Zwelozuko Matiwane took a drastic decision to suspend all gatherings including funerals, as part of efforts to combat the increasing number of infections in the Eastern Cape Province. Even though the Lockdown Regulations were in force at the time, which banned mass gatherings of people in general, infections continued to rise partially because people were not adhering to them. The increase of infections was attributed to funerals that were held, with scores of people in attendance disregarding social distancing rules and not wearing masks. To ascertain that people buried their deceased family members in a manner that was consistent with the safety measures provided under the COVID-19 Regulations, the AmaMpondomise nation revived a historical-cultural practice to combat the spread of the virus regard-

ing funerals. The King postponed all funerals and only allowed burials that were to be strictly attended by close family members. In other words, a deceased is buried by close family and the dignified funeral is then held at a later date. The provincial government health MEC, as well as municipalities, appreciated the Kingdom 's proactiveness in the fight against the spread of the virus.

Traditional Leaders in certain parts of the Eastern Cape handed out sanitizers to their respective communities. These were purchased by the King Sabatha Municipality which gave these sanitizers to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to officially hand them over to traditional leaders. Similar trends were experienced in the North West province where the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA) handed over 3 611 hand sanitizers and soaps to the North West MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements, and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA). These sanitizers and soaps were subsequently handed over to the North West Provincial House of Traditional Leaders which gave them to its members for onward distribution to various communities. It is evident that Municipalities are often far from members of rural communities. The presence and role of traditional leaders in rural communities have enabled the smooth dissemination of hand sanitizers (Poswa, 2020).

The Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN) is a traditional leadership Institution situated in Phokeng in the North West Province. The RBN owns several platinum mining company and one of their mining entity which is Royal Bafokeng Platinum (RBPlat) played a notable role in the fight against COVID-19 from March 2020.

According to the Royal Bafokeng Platinum (2021) when South Africa entered a three-week level 5 lockdown on 26 March 2020 to protect its health system from surging COVID-19 infections, mining companies were required to shut down operations and cease production. This increased RBPlat 's exposure to several risks that threatened the sustainability of their business. These included not being able to operate and generate revenue for 45 days, not meeting their production targets, employees not being able to work because of being infected with COVID-19 or having been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, the possibility of losing employees to the virus, and not being able to source critical stock items, etc. Robust risk management, and an effective Covid-19 response and containment plan, supported by good cash flow and a strong balance sheet, made it possible for the company to successfully mitigate these risks. RBPlat swiftly evaluated the impact of the initial three weeks of lockdown and developed operational and financial responses to ensure the business remained robust, despite limited information regarding the longer-term impacts of the pandemic.

RBPlat continually monitored infection rates in their operations and their impact on their operations. The management team made adjustments to their short, medium and long-term models that took into consideration the impact that varying levels of lockdown and the severity of the pandemic might have, and they allowed for a proactive and rapid response to changing conditions (Royal Bafokeng Platinum Report, 2021).

Despite the company's successful return to operating, significant uncertainty remained as to what the actual impact of Covid-19 on their operations would be as the peak

approached, and whether that might lead to further lockdowns or restrictions on operations. When RBPlat recommenced operations at full capacity from the beginning of June 2020, the company continued to strictly adhere to protocols to minimize the risk of outbreaks at its operations and in the community, while operating its assets efficiently and cost-effectively to maintain production at an economically sustainable level (Royal Bafokeng Platinum Report, 2021).

The company's detailed post-lockdown measures have ensured that the employees are continually briefed and informed. RBPlat implemented measures designed to manage the impact and spread of the virus by continuing the operations within the broader national guidelines, as well as their health and safety framework, while also limiting the economic impact on their communities through their community support program. RBPlat provides its employees with essential personal hygiene care packages and PPE. The company ensured that social distancing is practiced at all times and that all areas of work, including confined areas such as mine cages, are continually sanitized (Royal Bafokeng Platinum Report, 2021).

Royal Bafokeng Platinum (RBPlat) together with the North West Provincial Department of Health played a significant role in officially opening the 200-bed Royal Bafokeng Platinum Field Hospital in Rustenburg, at a cost of approximately R10 million, to support the government's already overburdened resources in the fight against COVID-19. Working with the North West Provincial Department of Health and the Bojanala District Health Department, RBPlat converted its unused Maseve Mine, South Shaft Change House in the North West Province, into a 200-bed Field Hospital to provide initial COVID-19 medical treatment to its employees and communities. The 2940m² treatment facility includes five wards, each with separate beds. Each bed has its television and personal lockable locker to store patient valuables and is individually screened off from other patient beds for privacy. The wards have all been installed with Sani-disc ultraviolet lights to kill any airborne diseases, as well as 108 Caribbean 2 000w infrared heaters. The facility is well-ventilated and can cater for mild to moderate COVID-19 positive cases, supported by all the medical facilities and healthcare professionals as required (Montshiwagae, 2020).

Methodology

The study used empirical and conceptual approaches to explore the role of traditional leaders and governance in the fight against COVID-19. The empirical study consisted of two respondents who are traditional leaders from Kholokoe Traditional Council in the Free State Province near Harrismith and Royal Bafokeng Nation in Phokeng near Rustenburg. The interviewees were interviewed telephonically to minimise the risk of COVID-19 infections. The study used the primary data deduced from two Traditional leaders from the Free State Province and the North West Province. The two Traditional Leaders. The conceptual approach adopted the qualitative method of research and accredited journals, books, governmental documents, and other material were used to gain this understanding of the role of traditional leadership in combating COVID-19.

Discussion and Findings

Findings of the Literature Review

The study gave an exposition of the legislative framework governing traditional leadership institutions and their role in South Africa. The challenges faced by traditional leaders were briefly discussed. The role of traditional leaders in general were discussed in detail. The study revealed that traditional leaders played a significant role in the fight against COVID-19 since March 2020. It was found out that in Nigeria the government and the WHO engaged 7,350 traditional leaders across 11 priority States to execute community-based interventions including sensitization for voluntary testing, survivors' declaration of status during heroes' campaign, a voluntary declaration of contacts by confirmed cases and adherence to preventive measures of COVID-19 (Onuekwue, 2021). In Zimbabwe, traditional leaders upon receiving credible COVID-19 information, Chiefs utilized their networks that included the headmen and village heads to mobilize and cascade the COVID-19 information and knowledge to the wider society for improved adoption and implementation of prevention measures. Similarly, traditional leaders in Zimbabwe took advantage of the varied governance and community development forums such as village groups and contacts including their police to disseminate credible pandemic information to rural communities. With their state-provisioned vehicles, traditional leaders can also travel across communities to sensitize them about the COVID-19 pandemic and its preventative measures (Dziva, 2020). The Royal Bafokeng Platinum played a significant role in the fight against COVID-19 by providing measures designed to manage the impact and spread of the virus by continuing the operations within the broader national guidelines. RBPlat provides its employees with essential personal hygiene care packages and Person Protection Equipment (PPEs). The company ensured that social distancing is practiced at all times and that all areas of work, including confined areas such as mine cages, are continually sanitized. The key finding at the Royal Bafokeng Nation was the official opening of the 200-bed Royal Bafokeng Platinum Field Hospital in Rustenburg, at a cost of approximately R10 million, to support the government's already overburdened resources in the fight against COVID-19. According to Poswa (2020), traditional leaders played a significant role to combat COVID-19 by suspending initiation schools in the Eastern Cape, suspension of gatherings and funerals, and handing out sanitizers to the members of the rural communities.

Findings of the Empirical Study

The researcher interviewed two traditional leaders from Kholokoe Traditional Council in Free State Province and the second traditional leader is from the Royal Bafokeng Nation and he is the Chief of Kanana village and Head of the Bafokeng Nation Infrastructure Development.

Firstly, the Free State Province has five recognized traditional communities, which are Bakoena ba Mopeli, Batlokoa ba Mota both in Qwaqwa, Barolong boo Seleka in Thaba 'Nchu, Makhlokoe in Kholokoe near Harrismith, and Batlokoa ba Mokgalong in Vrede. The province consists of two Principal Traditional Leadership positions

namely, Morena e Moholo Moremoholo Mopeli of Bakoena ba Mopeli and Morena e Moholo Moentoeli Mota of Batlokoa ba Mota. The province has twelve recognized traditional councils in Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality and one in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. During the interview the respondent indicated that all the traditional leaders were trained by COGTA Free State about COVID-19. They were tasked to educate the members of their communities about COVID-19 and to persuade them to go and vaccinate. It was a joint effort for both traditional leaders, the National House of Traditional Leaders representatives and COGTA Free State Officials. In addition to that, COGTA Free State deployed the youth in all the five regions and thirteen traditional councils to assist traditional leaders with the COVID-19 campaign awareness, distribution of PPEs and the importance and benefits of vaccinating.

Secondly, at the Royal Bafokeng Nation, the respondent indicated that, the RBN consist of five regions which are Central, South East, Capital, Greater Capital, and North East Regions. He also stated that RBN consists of twenty-nine (29) villages, twenty-nine (Headmen), and seventy-two (72) councils. One of the interventions to combat COVID-19 by the RBN's Secretariat or the Traditional Council was to shut down the operations of all the services rendered by the Headmen in all the twenty-nine villages and the closure of the Royal Bafokeng Administration. The RBN and the North West Department of Health had a joint approach and strategy to educate the Bafokeng communities about COVID-19 and the importance of vaccination. Royal Bafokeng Nation funded the COVID-19 PPEs for the nation. The respondent indicated that the RBN consists of the Royal Bafokeng Health and Social Development Service (HSDS) which is committed to supporting the South African Government's primary healthcare system in the RBN region and ensuring that the Bafokeng people have access to high-quality healthcare and social services. The HSDS runs the Bafokeng Health Centre and six satellite health clinics, which are also equipped with physiotherapy and radiography departments, and has its own Emergency Medical Response Service (EMRS). It operates seven childcare centres in the RBN, runs proactive vaccination and health awareness programs, oversees a mental healthcare system and, administers nutritional support and, interventions for the destitute. The Bafokeng Health and Social Development Service played a notable role in admitting the Bafokeng members of the community with COVID-19.

Conclusion

The institute of traditional leadership was marginalized during the pre-colonial, colonial, Apartheid eras and the current democratic dispensation. The Democratic legislative framework recognizes traditional leadership and clearly outlines its roles. However, the legislative frame has vested more authority in the democratically elected Councillors. Based on the background given in the study it is evident that traditional leaders are capable and capacitated to render services such as the fight against COVID-19 and HIV/AIDS. Therefore, the government must start formulating policies that will empower traditional leaders regarding service delivery in rural settings. The study revealed the capabilities and tenacity of traditional leaders in combating

COVID-19.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the government must prioritize skills and capacity building for traditional leaders and the members of their traditional councils. The study further recommends synergies between traditional leadership institutions and municipalities. There is a need for the government's immediate intervention to diffuse the tensions. The outbreak of COVID-19 forced both parties to work together to achieve governmental set objectives. It is also recommended that all the provincial COGTAs must initiate the process of traditional leaders' skills audit and identify competency gaps and close them through formal training. Leadership training must be a prerequisite to all traditional leadership institutions. Most importantly, traditional leaders and the members of the traditional councils must be trained about the traditional leadership legislative framework and local government legislation. It is also recommended that budget allocation from the provincial COGTAs must be reviewed and adjusted because most traditional leaders are living under impoverished conditions. There is too much inconsistency within various provincial legislatures, for example, the Kwa-Zulu Provincial government is making annual financial provisions to the Zulu Monarch and the funding is even legislated in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Fund Act of 2007, which caters for the renovation and development of the King's palace. It is therefore recommended that the provision must be generic and provided to all traditional leadership institutions nationally. It is recommended that traditional leaders must be exposed to socio-economic and development training programs to ensure their cooperation with the rural municipality in executing similar projects such as the fight against COVID-19.

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