

TOWNSHIP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT 5: FACEBOOK VIRTUAL IMBIZO





Published by
Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation
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www.livelihoods.org.za

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TOWNSHIP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT 5: FACEBOOK
VIRTUAL IMBIZO**

For

CITIES SUPPORT PROGRAMME AND UK FOREIGN,
COMMONWEALTH & DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

by

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FOUNDATION
MARCH 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Facebook Virtual Imbizo was an initiative under the Township Economic Development (TED) Project, implemented by the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation (SLF) to enhance community engagement and support economic development in South African townships. The initiative was part of the TED Project's final phase (2020–2025), funded by the Cities Support Programme (CSP) under National Treasury and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

The Virtual Imbizo was conceptualised as a digital engagement platform to facilitate discussions, share project updates, and foster participation in township economic development initiatives. Given Facebook's accessibility and widespread use in townships, it was selected as the preferred platform. The initiative established five Virtual Imbizo pages, each dedicated to a township site: Delft, New Brighton, Pinetown South, Thembisa, and Hammanskraal.

The Virtual Imbizo successfully created an online space for community-led discussions on economic development, enabled continuous engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, replacing in-person meetings, shared valuable information on entrepreneurship, public safety, and township infrastructure, and encouraged community participation through interactive posts, video content, and live discussions.

The initiative achieved notable success in enhancing digital participation, with community members actively engaging in discussions about local economic opportunities and township revitalisation. Posts on entrepreneurship, public spaces, and crime prevention garnered significant engagement, particularly in Delft and Hammanskraal.

However, key challenges included limited engagement from municipal authorities, affecting feedback loops; digital access disparities, with some communities struggling due to data costs and connectivity issues; and competition with existing community Facebook and WhatsApp groups, making it difficult to sustain engagement.

The Facebook Virtual Imbizo demonstrated the value of digital platforms in community engagement but also highlighted the need for stronger partnerships with local government and tailored content strategies to sustain participation. Key recommendations include encouraging metro officials to actively participate in digital discussions, strengthening the integration of Facebook engagement with in-person activities, expanding outreach through other digital platforms (e.g. WhatsApp) and community radio, and implementing smoother transitions to community-based organisations for long-term sustainability.

As the TED Project concludes, the Delft Virtual Imbizo will be handed over to a local community-based organisation (CBO), while the remaining pages will be archived. This transition ensures that valuable knowledge and community connections remain accessible for future engagement.

The Virtual Imbizo model serves as an innovative blueprint for digital community engagement in urban development projects, offering insights into how technology can bridge the gap between policy, participation, and local economic growth.

This series of Knowledge Products is based on the technical assistance provided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation for the Township Economic Development Project (2020 – 2025). The project was initiated by the Cities Support Programme, under the National Treasury. The final phase of the project was conducted with the support of the UK Government Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

This series of Knowledge Projects covers 5 themes: i) catalysing development through investment, ii) business infrastructure provision and programming, iii) urban management, iv) promoting the circular economy and v) community engagement via virtual imbizos. These Knowledge Products are intended for decision-makers across a range of sectors, including civil servants, civil society actors, researchers, policymakers, practitioners and the general public seeking to promote South Africa's socio-spatial transition towards a more equitable, just society.

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A



A. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

The Township Economy Development (TED) Project was designed to promote economic growth and development in South African townships, aiming to create sustainable economic strategies, foster community engagement, and improve local livelihoods. This report evaluates the role and impact of the Facebook Virtual Imbizo within the TED Project, focusing on its effectiveness in community engagement, information dissemination, and project support. Covering the Virtual Imbizo's development, implementation, and outcomes across various township sites, the report utilises data from Facebook analytics, community feedback, and project documentation to provide a comprehensive assessment. Each project site – Delft, New Brighton, Pinetown South, Thembisa, and Hammanskraal has its own dedicated Virtual Imbizo to facilitate engagement.

The Virtual Imbizo (isiZulu for a gathering) was conceptualised as a digital platform to engage communities within the TED Project during COVID-19. The Virtual Imbizo was a strategy employed by the TED Project's implementing partner, the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation (SLF), as part of the Technical Assistance (TA) teams' support to metros. The platform aimed to facilitate dialogue, share project updates, and support implementation efforts across township sites. The respective cities were invited to participate in this initiative but ultimately did not take up the opportunity.

Given the TED Project's area-based nature, Facebook was chosen as the platform due to its accessibility, familiarity among township communities, and ability to reach a broad audience. Importantly, Facebook can be accessed on mobile phones, ensuring engagement is not limited to those with computers or internet access. Additionally, Facebook's free basicxxx service allows users to browse certain features without incurring data costs, making it an inclusive tool for community participation, particularly in low-income areas.

The project was structured into four phases, and in its final phase, the virtual Imbizos aimed to transition from engaging with local organisations to transferring page management to community-based organisations (CBOs). This report evaluates the performance of the Imbizos during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on phases three and four of the TED projects.

**11,252
FOLLOWERS**

PINETOWN SOUTH

674

HAMMANSKRAAL

2310

THEMBISA

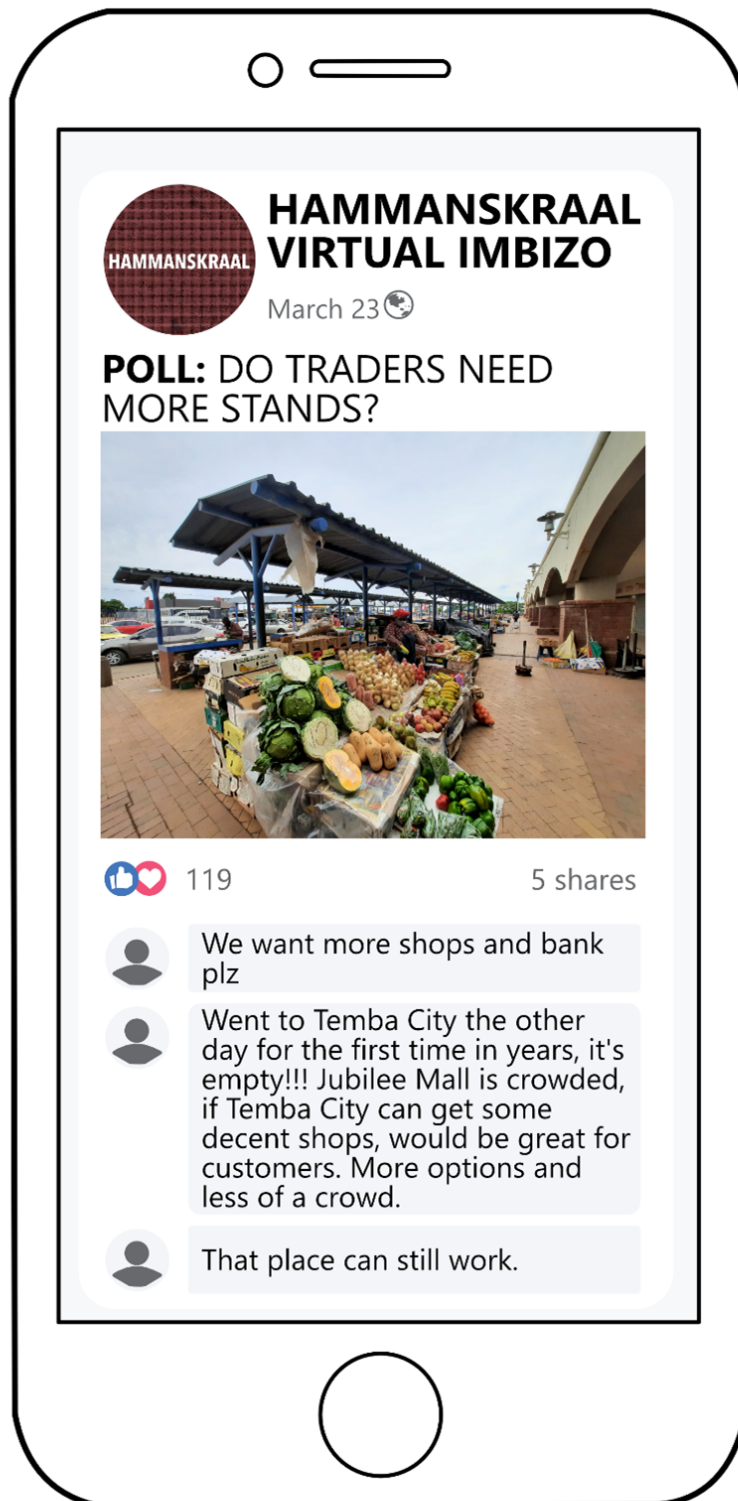
3489

NEW BRIGHTON

3664

DELFT

1115





Bobo Moko, an entrepreneur and founder of Bobo Moko Originals in Thembisa (Photograph by Bobo Moko)



Residents use newly installed public furniture made from green pavers in Pinetown South



Cyclists attending a workshop in Hammanskraal



Participants at a Hackathon in Thembisa, hosted by SAAction in partnership with Microsoft and the Empire Partner Foundation



Safe cycling ambassadors were recruited to distribute information and guidelines on safer cycling in Hammanskraal



A workshop participant designs a public sign in Delft



A fieldworker interviews a barber as part of the business survey in Hammanskraal



Placemaking workshop with residents in Delft



The Home of Arts Centre in Hammanskraal



Members of the community at the launch of the Postharvest film in Hammanskraal



Moses from Filpro facilitates training in NMB - 12 Oct 2023



Workshop participants visit the uMhlathuzana River in Pinetown

B.

B. RATIONALE FOR USING VIRTUAL IMBIZOS

1. UTILISATION OF PAGES TO
REACH COMMUNITIES & SECURE
PARTICIPATION

I. RATIONALE FOR USING THE VIRTUAL IMBIZOS

The Virtual Imbizo aimed to create a centralised virtual meeting space to encourage discussions, disseminate information, and facilitate community participation in the TED Project. By aligning with the TED Project's goals of promoting economic development and community engagement through innovative digital means, the imbizos provided an accessible and interactive platform for community members. Facebook was chosen for its widespread accessibility, user-friendly interface, and robust features for community engagement, such as events, campaigns, and visual content sharing. A Facebook page was conceptualised for each TED site, namely, Pinetown, Tembisa, Hammanskraal, New Brighton, and Delft. These pages served as digital hubs for each community, providing tailored content and facilitating local discussions.

During the COVID-19 period, the Virtual Imbizo proved essential in maintaining communication and engagement, replacing traditional in-person interactions. The platform enabled continuous communication, project updates, and community involvement despite the restrictions on physical gatherings. This adaptability was crucial in ensuring the project's momentum and community engagement throughout the pandemic. The sustained online presence of the Virtual Imbizo allowed for ongoing interaction, feedback collection, and information dissemination, which extended across all four phases. By leveraging Facebook's features, the Virtual imbizo ensured that each site maintained an active and engaged social media presence, supporting the overarching goals of the TED Project.

Facebook's effectiveness as a community engagement tool depends on several factors, including how content is structured, promoted, and made accessible to users. Unlike personal profiles, Facebook pages do not automatically reach wide audiences; instead, they require consistent content creation, user interaction, and strategic promotion. Engagement is further influenced by Facebook's algorithm, which prioritises content that receives likes, shares, and comments. Additionally, data accessibility plays a key role—many township residents rely on mobile networks with limited data, which affects their ability to engage with video-heavy content. Understanding these factors was essential in shaping the Virtual Imbizo's approach, ensuring that content was engaging, accessible, and relevant to the community.

To grow support for the Virtual Imbizo pages, a combination of targeted investment in page promotion, featuring popular and relevant topics, providing information beneficial to communities was utilised.

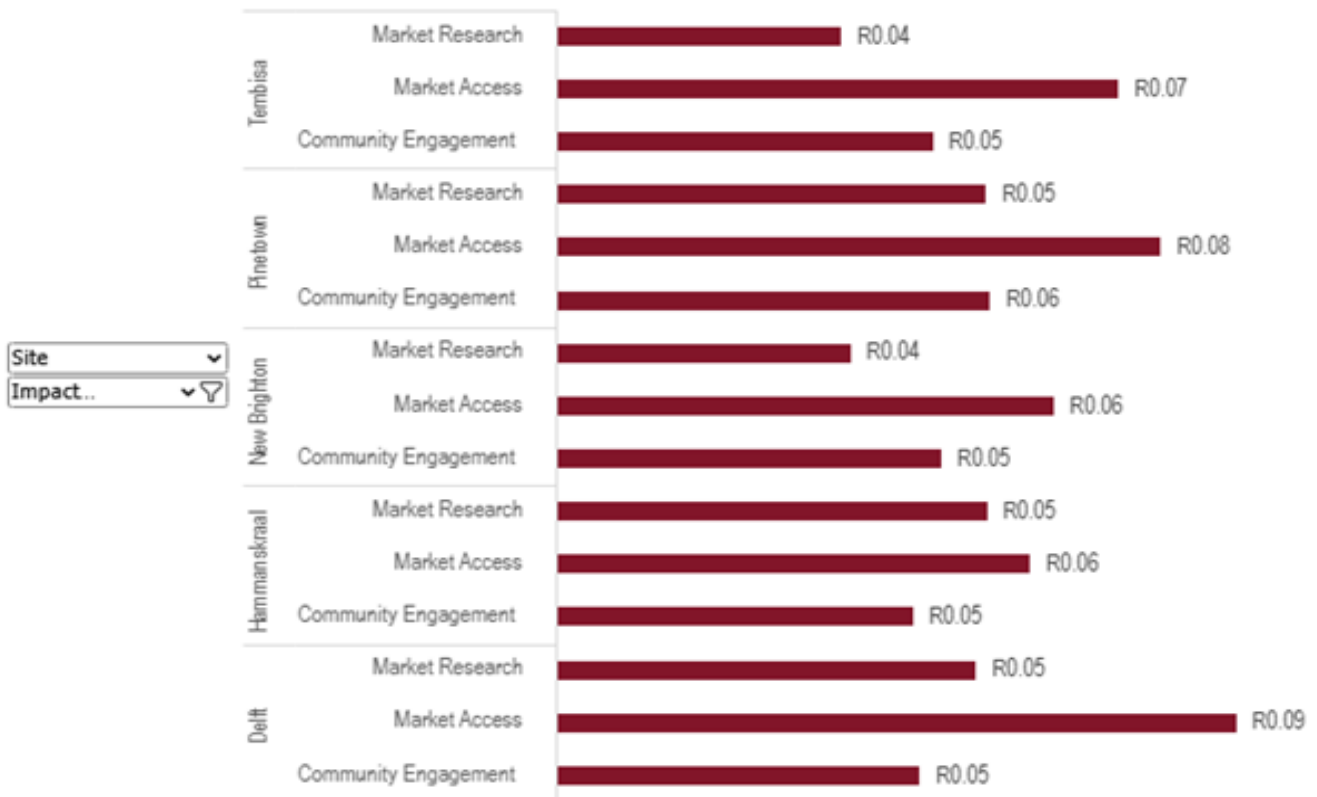
Targeted Investment in Page Promotion

Targeted advertising campaigns were employed to enhance visibility and attract new followers. These investments ensured the pages reached a broader audience, especially within the township communities, fostering greater engagement and participation. The pages consistently featured topics that resonated with the community. Content such as local entrepreneurship, public safety, and advocacy for improved public spaces were regularly highlighted. By focusing on issues that mattered most to the communities, the pages managed to maintain relevance and capture their audience's interest.

The content shared on the Virtual Imbizo pages was tailored to meet the specific needs of the communities. Information on local resources, upcoming events, and success stories from community members were provided, helping to build trust and position the pages as valuable community resources. Several strategies proved particularly effective in boosting engagement. Content that proved to matter to communities were development news, issues around safety and crime, violence and any type of content that affected their livelihoods. For example, posts advocating for better public spaces in Delft generated substantial engagement (public space management), as did content promoting local microenterprises in Hammanskraal (entrepreneurship). These case studies demonstrated the importance of addressing community-specific issues and the impact of visual and narrative-driven content in driving community involvement.

Sum of Cost / Beneficiary

Total Cost per Beneficiary per Type of Post Boosted



Amount spent on advertising and boosting content across the five pages

1. UTILISATION OF PAGES TO REACH COMMUNITIES & SECURE PARTICIPATION

To grow support for the Virtual Imbizo pages, targeted investments were sought to promote the pages through advertising and community outreach. The pages featured popular and relevant topics that resonated with the community, enhancing engagement and relevance. The pages became a trusted source of information by providing valuable information and resources tailored to the community's needs. This is evident from the Facebook metrics, including the number of followers, post interactions, and comments. Additionally, feedback from community members and local organisations indicated that the pages were seen as a reliable source for accessing relevant information and opportunities.

Key methods used to reach communities included the creation and sharing of multimedia content such as videos, infographics, and visual repositories that depicted project updates, fieldwork, and local events. These visual elements helped make complex information more accessible and engaging. The pages also functioned as platforms for various types of engagement, including:

- **Field Research:** Community members were invited to contribute to research efforts through surveys, polls, and discussions, providing valuable insights and data for the project.
- **Content Creation:** Local stories, success narratives, and business profiles were highlighted, creating a sense of ownership and pride within the community.
- **Workshops and Events:** The pages were used to promote and coordinate workshops, site visits, and other events, ensuring broad community participation despite physical distancing requirements.

The Virtual Imbizo's interactive features encouraged active community involvement, with participants contributing feedback, sharing personal stories, and discussing project developments. This level of engagement was crucial in fostering a collaborative environment and ensuring that the project remained responsive to community needs.

Community members engaged with the Virtual Imbizo pages with different expectations, often linked to economic opportunities and local development. Many users followed the pages in search of job opportunities, small business support, and access to funding or training programmes. Others were more focused on broader urban development concerns, such as improving public spaces, infrastructure, and municipal service delivery. This was evident in the types of posts that generated the most engagement, job postings and entrepreneurship stories consistently performed

well, as did discussions on township revitalisation efforts. The diversity in expectations meant that the pages had to balance economic empowerment content with community development themes to maintain engagement.

Community needs were explicitly expressed through the Facebook pages, particularly in comment sections and discussion threads. Many users raised concerns about unemployment, lack of business support, and inadequate public services. In some cases, these discussions aligned with the TED Project's objectives, particularly when users engaged in conversations about township economic development, informal trade, and local enterprise growth. However, there were also instances where expectations did not align, some users sought direct financial assistance or job placements, which fell outside the project's scope. These mismatched expectations sometimes led to frustration, highlighting the importance of clear communication about what the Virtual Imbizo could and could not provide.

Participants from TED Project workshops were encouraged to join the Virtual Imbizo pages after attending workshop sessions. While some did engage with the pages post-workshop, overall participation varied. In areas where workshop content was directly linked to ongoing Facebook discussions (e.g. township entrepreneurship or public space improvements), attendees were more likely to contribute online. However, in other cases, the momentum from in-person workshops did not always translate into sustained online engagement. Future strategies could explore integrating workshop activities with page engagement more deliberately, such as encouraging attendees to share key takeaways or initiate discussions based on their learning experiences.

The effectiveness of the Virtual Imbizo pages was influenced by the presence of existing community Facebook groups. In some townships, strong, pre-existing digital networks already served as primary platforms for local discussions, including WhatsApp groups and informal Facebook communities, focused on business support, crime prevention, or service delivery issues. In areas where the Virtual Imbizo pages successfully aligned with these groups, by sharing content in common spaces or engaging local community leaders, engagement levels were higher. For example, the Delft page benefited from pages that belonged to community-based organisations that focused on the development of the township. It also followed and engaged with content from the Delft Public Library, one key site of the TED project. However, in cases where the pages operated separately from well-established digital networks, participation remained limited. This suggests that integration with existing online communities is key to ensuring broader reach and engagement.



Delft Virtual Imbizo

1K likes • 1.1K followers



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Delft Virtual Imbizo's post



Delft Virtual Imbizo is at Delft Library.



Published by Abongile Mfaku



· 25 April · Cape Town, South Africa · 🌐

The [Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation](#) (SLF) team was invited to the [Delft Library](#) Career Expo on the 24th of April 2024. The event was a massive success with various stakeholders in government, private and academic institutions in attendance. SLF's Felipe Puentes from Columbia taught learners and community members about the 'origami'. The idea was to Learn a new skill. Link the new skill to a hobby.



Comment as Delft Virtual Imbizo



c.

C. KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES
2. FOCUS ON COMMUNITY-METRO ENGAGEMENT
3. LIMITATIONS OF THE VIRTUAL IMBIZO
4. RECOMMENDATIONS

II. KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ONLINE ENGAGEMENTS: SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

The Virtual Imbizo's online engagements were aimed at fostering community participation and dialogue across multiple township sites. Successes in online engagement included the effective use of visual and narrative-driven campaigns to capture community interest. For example, showcasing local businesses and entrepreneurial stories helped generate positive engagement, allowing community members to share their experiences and perspectives.

Successful campaigns often featured visually compelling content and relatable stories, which resonated with the community. These included the use of video profiles, interactive polls, and community-driven photo competitions that encouraged participation and dialogue. Events such as Youth Day celebrations and thematic discussions on public transport and social distancing during the pandemic were particularly engaging and well-received.

However, challenges were also encountered, particularly in Pinetown, where engagement was notably lower. Initially, this was attributed to limited internet access and digital literacy, but further analysis suggests additional factors. Unlike other TED Project sites, Pinetown is not a township but a broader urban area, making it difficult to target a distinct community. Without a well-defined local network, outreach efforts may have struggled to gain traction. Additionally, some community members may not have been aware of the Virtual Imbizo pages, as organic reach on Facebook is often limited unless supported by targeted promotion.

Digital accessibility also played a role in engagement levels across all sites. Most township residents access Facebook via mobile phones, often relying on prepaid data, which discourages prolonged browsing or video streaming. Some mobile networks offer Facebook Free Mode, allowing users to browse text-based content without using data; however, this feature does not support images or videos, limiting engagement with multimedia content. Given these constraints, text-based posts and static images may have had a broader reach compared to video-heavy content.

The lessons learned from less effective campaigns provided valuable insights. For instance, the importance of timely responses to community feedback, the use of vernacular languages to foster inclusivity, and the adaptation of strategies to better align with community needs were identified as key factors for improving future engagements. Analysis of Facebook analytics showed that short, community-driven videos, especially those featuring local businesses, personal success stories,

and advocacy campaigns, performed particularly well. However, in areas with data limitations, engagement with video content was lower, reinforcing the need for data-efficient communication strategies.

The Virtual Imbizo Facebook pages attracted a diverse demographic, with notable participation across different age and gender groups. Younger followers, particularly those aged 18-24, were prevalent on the Delft page, where 43% of the audience fell into this category, with men slightly outnumbering women. In contrast, the 25-34 age group was the dominant demographic in New Brighton, Thembisa, Hammanskraal, and Pinetown, accounting for 30% to 48% of the followers. Hammanskraal had the highest engagement from this age group, with a majority female audience. The 35-44 age range was also significant, particularly in Hammanskraal and Thembisa, comprising 33% to 40% of the followers, with a slight male majority. Older age groups (45-54, 55-64, and 65+) maintained a steady but smaller representation across all sites.

Participants related strongly to content that addressed local challenges and opportunities. Posts advocating for community improvements, such as public open spaces and local entrepreneurship, garnered significant engagement. For instance, a video advocating for better public spaces in Delft reached 4,560 users, highlighting the community's interest in urban development initiatives. Similarly, the Hammanskraal page effectively engaged audiences with content on agri-processing and local microenterprises.

Competition with other online platforms may have also influenced engagement. Many township communities already had active Facebook groups or WhatsApp groups focused on topics such as local business support, crime updates, and job opportunities. Compared to these informal digital spaces, the Virtual Imbizo pages may have been perceived as too structured or formal, which could have affected participation. Future engagement strategies should consider balancing professionalism with more conversational, community-driven content to enhance relatability.

Content in the native language, particularly isiZulu, consistently performed better, underscoring the importance of culturally relevant communication. This approach enhanced inclusivity and resonated well with the audience, fostering greater engagement and dialogue.



Pinetown Virtual Imbizo

647 likes • 675 followers



Posts

About

Mentions

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Reels

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Pinetown Virtual Imbizo's post



Pinetown Virtual Imbizo is 😊 feeling excited in Durban.

Published by Abongile Mfaku



· 15 May · 🌐

Day 2: Pinetown South Community Engagement workshop

[Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation](#) is back in Pinetown, diving deeper into important topics: the environment, the circular economy and public open spaces! Today we visited [Giba Gorge MTB Park](#) and the [Adopt-a-River](#) site on the Umhlathuzana River. It was an eye-opening experience that reshaped our perspective on the environment. 🌱🌿

[#greenspaces](#) [#environment](#) [#circulareconomy](#)



Comment as Pinetown Virtual Imbizo



2. FOCUS ON COMMUNITY-METRO ENGAGEMENT

The Virtual Imbizo facilitated several initiatives aimed at strengthening community-metro relationships. These included collaborative projects like public consultation sessions on urban development plans and joint workshops addressing local economic challenges. For instance, in Hammanskraal, community members engaged directly with municipal officials to discuss improvements in public transport infrastructure. In Delft, the platform supported dialogues around upgrading public facilities, bringing together local leaders and metro representatives to co-create solutions.

While there were notable successes, such as increased transparency and direct communication between communities and metro authorities, some gaps remained. A key limitation was the lack of active participation from metro officials on the Virtual Imbizo pages. While some officials were aware of the pages and may have monitored discussions, there is no clear evidence that they followed, liked, or engaged with the content. This absence of direct interaction reduced the effectiveness of the platform as a tool for sustained dialogue between government representatives and community members. Community members frequently raised issues related to service delivery, infrastructure, and local economic policies, but these discussions rarely received responses from municipal officials, leading to frustration in some instances.

The Virtual Imbizo pages were community-led, and we did not have a partnership mandate from cities. However, we did feature metro events and any information relevant to communities. Facebook has restrictions on political events, which at times limited the types of discussions and engagements that could take place on the platform.

The lack of metro engagement also meant that important feedback loops, where community concerns could be acknowledged and addressed in real-time, were missing. This highlights the need for future strategies that encourage metro officials to participate actively in digital community engagement efforts, ensuring that the Virtual Imbizo or similar platforms can serve as effective bridges between local government and township communities.

In areas like Pinetown, the engagement was less effective due to inconsistent follow-through on community feedback and limited availability of metro representatives for ongoing dialogue. Additionally, some community members felt that their input did not always lead to tangible outcomes, which impacted trust and sustained engagement.

To enhance community-metro collaboration, several recommendations emerged. Firstly, establishing dedicated liaison officers within metro authorities who

can maintain consistent communication with community members would foster stronger relationships. Secondly, integrating community feedback into actionable plans with clear timelines and updates would build trust and show commitment to addressing local issues. Lastly, expanding the use of local languages in official communications and engagement activities would improve inclusivity and ensure broader participation. These steps would help create a more cohesive and participatory approach to urban development, ultimately strengthening the partnership between communities and metro authorities.

3. LIMITATIONS OF THE VIRTUAL IMBIZO

Despite its successes, the Virtual Imbizo faced several limitations that impacted its overall effectiveness. One significant challenge was achieving 'area-wide' interventions and promoting urban socio-economic transformation. Digital literacy and internet access disparities were particularly problematic in areas like Pinetown South, where engagement levels were notably lower. This digital divide hindered the ability of many community members to participate fully, limiting the platform's reach and inclusivity.

Another limitation was the difficulty in maintaining consistent and meaningful dialogue between community members and metro authorities. Notably, metro officials did not participate in any discussions via their social media pages, which created a significant communication gap. This lack of engagement from metro representatives hindered the platform's ability to facilitate effective dialogue and collaboration. Community members expressed frustration and disengagement, as they felt their feedback was not acknowledged or acted upon, they felt their feedback did not always lead to tangible outcomes.

Furthermore, the content strategy faced challenges in balancing broad appeal with local relevance. In some cases, content that resonated well in one township failed to engage audiences in another due to differing local priorities and cultural contexts. For example, while advocacy for improved public spaces in Delft saw significant engagement, similar campaigns in New Brighton and Pinetown South did not achieve the same level of success, highlighting the need for more tailored content strategies.

The platform also struggled with the consistency of content updates, which impacted user engagement. In areas where content updates were irregular, community members were less likely to remain engaged, leading to a decline in interaction and participation over time. This was particularly evident in Pinetown, where limited updates and a lack of fresh content contributed to a gradual decline in user interest.

To address these limitations, it is essential to enhance the alignment of content with community priorities through regular feedback loops and localised content creation that can help maintain engagement and relevance. Strengthening the commitment of metro authorities to consistent participation and follow-through on community feedback is also critical to building trust and fostering long-term collaboration.

By addressing these challenges and building on its successes, the Virtual Imbizo can serve as a model for community-driven digital platforms, contributing to sustainable urban development and socio-economic transformation.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Facebook Virtual Imbizo played an important role in the TED Project, facilitating community engagement, information dissemination, and collaborative dialogue. The platform's ability to adapt during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored its value as a tool for maintaining connections and informing the communities about project initiatives. However, the limitations of the pages, such as inconsistent engagement and digital access issues, provided valuable lessons for future virtual engagement strategies.

One of the key takeaways from this initiative is that Facebook should not only be seen as a tool for engagement but also as a mobilisation and communication strategy. The success of the Virtual Imbizo pages depended on how well they connected with existing community networks, encouraged participation, and kept discussions relevant to local needs. Future efforts should focus on strengthening Facebook as a mobilisation tool by integrating it more effectively with in-person events, cross-promoting content through other digital platforms (such as WhatsApp and community radio), and fostering stronger links between digital conversations and real-world action.

Additionally, metro authorities should be encouraged to participate actively in online discussions, ensuring that digital platforms can function as legitimate spaces for dialogue between communities and government stakeholders. This requires not just content improvements but also policy changes within municipal structures to formalise digital community engagement.

It is also important to recognise what could not have been achieved without the Virtual Imbizo pages. Without this platform, there would have been fewer opportunities for direct interaction between communities and metro representatives, reduced access to real-time updates on urban development issues, and limited avenues for community members to voice their concerns in a public, accessible forum. The ability to sustain engagement across multiple communities simultaneously would also have been significantly constrained.

Ultimately, the investment in the Virtual Imbizo proved worthwhile. While challenges existed, the platform played a critical role in bridging communication gaps, enhancing transparency, and empowering communities to participate in local decision-making.

D.

D. CONCLUSION

III. CONCLUSION

The Facebook Virtual Imbizo played an important role in the TED Project, acting as a digital bridge between communities, project implementers, and local stakeholders. The platform successfully facilitated community engagement, information dissemination, and discussions on township economic development. By leveraging Facebook's interactive features, the Virtual Imbizo enabled community members to participate in conversations about local business opportunities, public space improvements, and economic challenges, despite the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, while the platform demonstrated strong engagement in some township sites, challenges such as limited digital access, inconsistent metro participation, and competition with existing community groups affected its overall impact. In some areas, the absence of metro officials on the platform meant that discussions lacked direct responses from the local government, reducing its effectiveness as a tool for community-government dialogue. Additionally, mismatched expectations, where some users sought direct financial support or job placements, highlighted the need for clearer communication on the role and scope of the platform.

Moving forward, future digital engagement strategies should focus on integrating online platforms with on-the-ground initiatives, fostering stronger partnerships with metro authorities, and optimising content to be more accessible to township residents. By addressing these key areas, the Virtual Imbizo or similar digital engagement models can continue to serve as powerful tools for inclusive, community-driven development.

As the TED project approaches its conclusion, careful consideration is given to the future of the Virtual Imbizo platforms. One of the Virtual Imbizo pages, the Delft Page will be handed over to a local community-based organisation (CBO) that has the capacity, interest, and community trust to manage the platform effectively. This organisation will continue to use the page to share updates on community projects, mobilise resources, and engage residents on various local issues. A formal handover process will involve transitioning administrative access, conducting training sessions on page management, content creation, and moderation, updating the page information to reflect the new organisation's branding and mission, and providing mentoring support for the first three months post-handover.

The remaining four Virtual Imbizo pages will be archived due to the lack of a sustainable handover option. Archiving will preserve the content as a historical record of the TED project while disabling new posts and comments, ensuring that stakeholders can access past information without requiring ongoing management. A final post will be made to inform the community about the archive decision and provide details on alternative resources or organisations for future engagement.



Hammanskraal Virtual Imbizo

2.2K likes • 2.3K followers



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Hammanskraal Virtual Imbizo's post



Hammanskraal Virtual Imbizo is 😊 feeling happy.

October 3, 2024 · 🌐



Over the past two months, our team has been working with amazing members of the Hammanskraal community to bring attention to the important yet often underserved agro-processing industry. To showcase the incredible contributions of local businesses, we've produced a short film that highlights the post-harvest processing of food and health products by township microenterprises.

🌟 Featured in the film are [Moringa Lifestyle](#), Rokotla Honey by [Roman Tladi](#), Ntate Patrick's deliciou... [See more](#)



Comment as Hammanskraal Virtual Imbizo

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