



Chapter 7

Service Delivery Inequality

Constance Motsitsi 

Introduction

Service delivery is the fundamental responsibility of governments all over the world; moreover, the provision of public services has a direct impact on people's lives and thus enhances their wellbeing. Service delivery and inequality have always been a central focus in South Africa, pre-democracy and post-democracy. In the last 30 years, South African public service delivery has gone through transformation systems, all aimed at enhancing equality in the provisioning of service delivery. However, 30 years later, public service delivery remains utterly poor and unequal among the citizens of South Africa. Nnadozie (2013) is of the opinion that the "current socioeconomic inequalities in service delivery are the effects of the apartheid regime," which unfortunately continue to haunt the South African service delivery system.¹

Democracy promised a better life for all, and although the democratic government has achieved the objective of providing more access to services than during apartheid, the quality of these services remains poor in most parts of the country.² The South African government is bound to provide equal service delivery. It is a right enshrined within its Constitution so as to enhance human dignity and achieve quality goods and services.¹ The government of the day has successfully extended essential services to poorer areas, towns, and rural communities, which were previously "ignored". However, the quality of these services remains unequal and more disastrous in some areas. Nkomo (2017) further indicates that these "service delivery deficits reflect the apartheid era's spatial design of most towns" resulting from a lack of racial and class integration and equality, which negatively affects the daily lives of many South Africans.

The current government has taken steps and decisions that continue to derail the achievement of effective service delivery.

Service delivery inequality is often reviewed using basic services, as these are services that are essential and crucial for the quality of life of all citizens. These services are provided mainly by local governments. This discussion uses the Service Delivery Inequality IPIO framework (Inputs, Processes, Indicators, and Outcomes) by focusing on four indicators in which service delivery inequality is measured, namely, refuse removal, water, electricity, and sanitation.

Service Delivery Inequality IPIO (Input, Process, Indicators, and Outcomes) Framework

There is no universally acclaimed formula, framework, or structure for measuring service delivery inequality. However, international and South African researchers use the basic services established in the Constitution to measure and review service delivery inequality. As a result, this chapter discusses the process that has led to service delivery inequality in South Africa by establishing a new framework: The Service Delivery Inequality IPIO Framework. This framework focuses on the following:

- 1. Input:** Who are the role players responsible for providing these services?
- 2. Process:** This relates to the policies implemented to ensure equal service delivery.
- 3. Indicators:** These are the services used to measure service delivery inequality.
- 4. Outcomes:** These look at the causes and effects of service delivery inequality.

The following figure is an illustrative diagram of the framework the study will follow in discussing service delivery inequality in South Africa (Figure 1).

Service Delivery Inequality

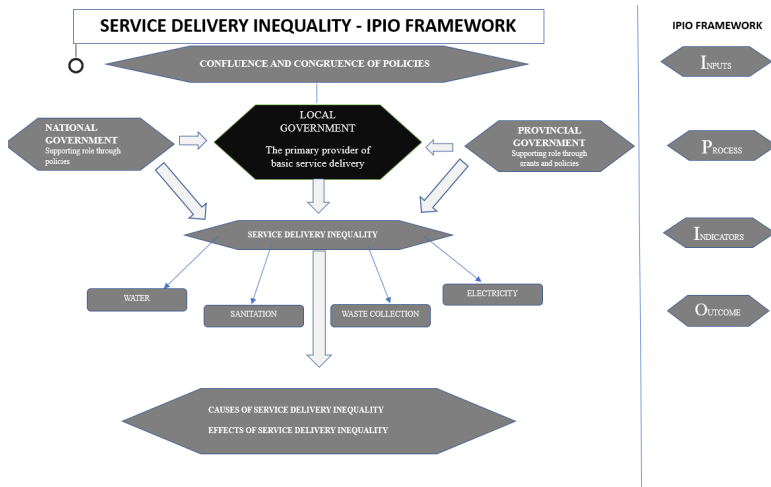


Fig. 1 Service delivery inequality – IPIO framework. Source: Author's Compilation

Following the IPIO framework above, the chapter follows a retrospective literature review.

Inputs

Legislative Frameworks in Essential Service Delivery

The Constitution

The transformation of the new democracy aimed to achieve improved service delivery through implementing the local government, which is required to affect essential transformation in the legislative frameworks, institutional structures, and processes. With the newfound democracy, the first legislative framework implemented by the democratic government was the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The Constitution is the heart of democracy and the most critical legislative framework. Thus, any legislative framework inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is considered null and void.

The provisioning of services is enacted in the Constitution. Chapter 2 of the Constitution introduces the Bill of Rights, which

establishes the human rights of South Africa and thus enforces the government as the gatekeeper in ensuring these rights are protected. Providing essential services is linked to the basics necessary for a dignified human life, thus giving relevance to Sections 10 and 11 of the Constitution. Thus, providing the essential services enlisted in the Constitution is mandatory for the government.

The Constitution further enables the formulation and implementation of policies, reforms, and measures to ensure equality in the people's lives. Section 152 of the Constitution charges the local government as the primary provider of essential service delivery, as it is the government division closest to the people. To achieve the objective of local government to transform and promote the new vision enshrined in the Constitution, the government subsequently implemented various legislations and policies that replaced former fragmented apartheid approaches, such as the Municipal Structures Act and the Municipal Systems Act that further give the processes, mechanisms, and core principles aimed at developing local economies and enhancing service delivery.

The White Paper on Local Government

In 1998, the government implemented the White Paper on Local Government. It has been the primary driver of service delivery and the restructuring of local government, and supports the developmental role of the municipalities. The White Paper on Local Government introduced the amalgamation and restructuring of the municipal administration, which subsequently led to the formulation of the new local government system to help adopt and extend government structures and functions without bringing instability.

The White Paper on Local Government channelled the implementation of various policies – such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the Population Policy of South Africa, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy, and the Black Empowerment Equity Act – all of which aimed to establish a South Africa that would provide equal services to each citizen, while simultaneously empowering the previously

disadvantaged. The White Paper on Local Government further charged municipalities with ensuring that they are accessible to the community and provide the community with a minimum level of service delivery that is affordable, convenient, timely, safe, and accessible continuously. The White Paper on Local Government remains the driving policy behind local government development.

Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Framework Act and Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act

Section 40 of the South African Constitution establishes three spheres within the government system: national, provincial, and local. The duties and responsibilities of these three divisions were established in the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act of 2005. These three spheres of government are distinctive, interrelated, and interdependent; as a result, no division can exist without the other.³ Moreover, to reduce the inequality gap, these three divisions of government must work together to provide public services. Thus, when reviewing service delivery inequality, it is essential to do this in all three levels of government, as all three divisions are responsible for implementing service delivery. Therefore, service delivery is the responsibility of all these three divisions of government, and the effectiveness of government depends on the proper co-ordination and facilitation within all three divisions.

The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act of 2005 gives exclusive and concurrent powers, functions, and responsibilities to the three divisions of government. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations Act was established to effect Section 214 of the Constitution and to establish a framework for how nationally raised revenue must be shared amongst the three divisions of government through an equitable share system. However, the '*per capita*' system used to share nationally raised revenue has contributed to the inequalities in service delivery due to the system's imbalances.⁴

Process

Local government

The local government was established as having the prime responsibility for essential service delivery. Section 152 of the South African Constitution advocates the local government as the engine for essential service delivery. This is because service delivery plays a greater role in local government, as the division closest to the people. Thus, local government is entrusted with creating an atmosphere of social inclusion, and thus improving the lives of the poor majority previously disadvantaged by the apartheid government. If it fails to achieve this, then it forfeits its existence. Therefore, the local government was established as the gatekeeper of essential services, delegated to reduce poverty and facilitate economic development opportunities within municipalities.³

The local government is the provider of the four fundamental service delivery indicators. Electricity, water, sanitation, and waste removal are considered. These essential services are intended to be a tool to reduce poverty and inequality, raise living standards, and facilitate economic opportunities.⁵ However, the national and provincial departments support the local government in providing these services. The Constitution established three categories of municipalities, through which services are delivered to communities concerning the type of municipality concerned. The three categories of municipalities include metropolitan municipalities (Category A), local municipalities (Category B), and district Municipalities (Category C). The Municipal Infrastructure Framework further classifies local municipalities under four categories:

1. **B1 municipalities** consist of urbanised, secondary cities with large populations and budgets.
2. **B2 municipalities** are made up of large towns, which are made up of large populations and have sustainable budgets.
3. **B3 municipalities** comprise small towns, with proportions of large towns.
4. **B4 municipalities** consist mainly of rural areas with communal tenure and several small towns.

The natures of these municipalities differ, and the factors influencing municipalities differ from one municipality to the next. As a result, the provisioning of services by each category varies. This is because the allocation of services is mostly prioritised in areas with more economic potential, where the provisioning of service delivery can be matched to tax contributions. Therefore, B1 and B2 municipalities fall under urban municipalities. These municipalities consist mainly of large populations that can maintain their living standards and pay municipal service charges. These municipalities can generate large amounts of municipal revenue, which makes it easier for municipalities to provide goods and services to their communities consistently. Subsequently, most B3 and B4 municipalities fall under rural municipalities. Most of the population under these municipalities live in poverty; they cannot pay for municipal services and depend on government social grants. Thus, these municipalities need help generating municipal revenue collection, which negatively affects the provisioning of services. This subsequently affects the delivery of essential services and creates service delivery inequality amongst the different municipalities.

National and provincial government

The national government is the highest sphere of government. It is primarily responsible for formulating policies, determining regulations and legislative frameworks, and monitoring and evaluating provincially implemented programmes. The national government is entrusted to mainly and exclusively provide public services such as water and electricity resources, national defence services, criminal justice, and higher education and training.⁹ However, the national government has shared responsibility with the provincial division in providing public health, primary education, social welfare, housing, and agricultural services, etc. Regarding essential services signified by the Constitution, the national and provincial governments are responsible for providing health and education services to their citizens. Policies have enabled free education and healthcare systems for those unable to pay for such services. However, many South Africans

still need access to safe water, which forms part of the national and provincial governments' obligations.⁶

The overall service delivery inequality at the national and provincial levels has significantly decreased with the introduction of democratic legislative frameworks and reforms. These reforms have significantly improved the lives of the previously advantaged by providing essential services; however, inequality remains high in the South African public sector. Unfortunately, service delivery inequality at the municipal level is reflected at the provincial level, as there is a pattern of inequality between the rural and urban provinces.

Although the local government is the provider of the four essential services identified, the national and provincial governments support these services through policies, reforms, and conditional grants. Through policies and reforms implemented at both the national and provincial levels, these government spheres are mandated to support municipal services through the financial support of conditional grants such as the Municipal Infrastructure Grant, the Implementation of Water Services Project (Capital) Programme Grant, the Consolidated Municipal Infrastructure Programme, and many others. These grants assist municipalities in developing, repairing, and maintaining their functionality regarding these essential services. For example, provinces support water provisioning in municipalities through the Water Services Infrastructure Grant, which assists in developing interim and intermediate water supply aimed at reducing backlogs in water and sanitation provisioning.

Indicators

Four indicators are used to illustrate service delivery inequality within the public sector.

- **Access to water** – providing clean and consistent water is a universal priority and a human right the South African government has committed to providing to every citizen.
- **Access to sanitation** – providing sanitation services is essential to having a healthy, dignified, and clean

environment, and the government has obligated itself to provide such an environment to all South Africans.

- **Access to refuse removal** – providing an environment that is safe and clean to live in requires the removal of solid waste from communities, to promote sustainability and pollution-free communities.
- **Access to electricity** – Schedule 4B of the Constitution entrusts the local government with the authority to distribute electricity to municipalities through provincial and national legislative frameworks. Thus, municipalities are entrusted with ensuring fair and equal access to electricity within their jurisdictions.

To measure service delivery inequality at the local level, we view statistics (from the General Household Survey 2002–2017, in conjunction with the Census 2002–2017 and the Inequality Trends in South Africa Report). Refuse removal inequality between the different municipalities is observed in the 2017–2021 statistics. At the provincial level, 2002–2021 statistics are reviewed. At the national level, racial service delivery inequality is reviewed using 2002–2022 statistics in different variations. The statistics were limited to the available GHS statistics from Statistics South Africa.

Access to water

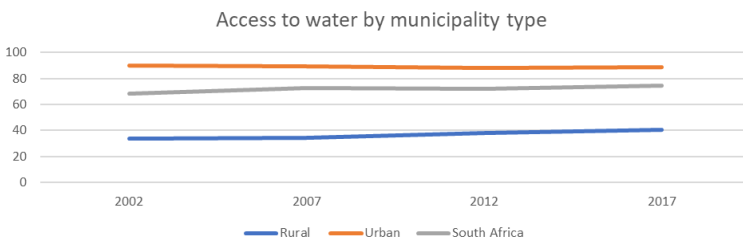


Fig. 2 Access to water by municipality type. Source: GHS, 2021–2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Figure 2, above, illustrates the unequal access to water by municipality type. Rural municipalities are still lagging with only

50% access to water, while urban municipalities are trending with 80% access to water.

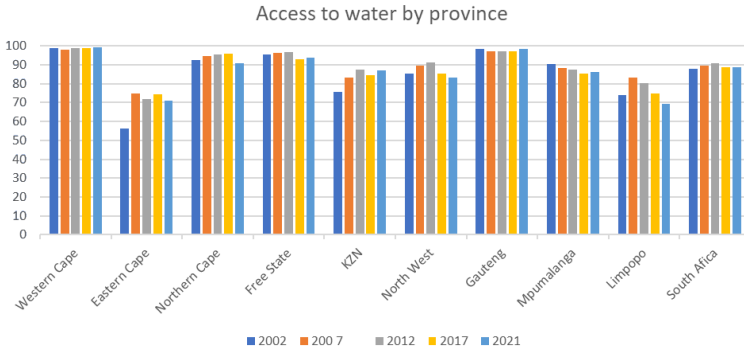


Fig. 3 Access to water by province. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Figure 3 shows inequality in access to water service delivery at the provincial level. There has been a substantial increase in water access overall. However, inequalities remain in rural municipalities. Limpopo and the Eastern Cape need to catch up, with around 70% access to water, while urban provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng have over 90% access to water.

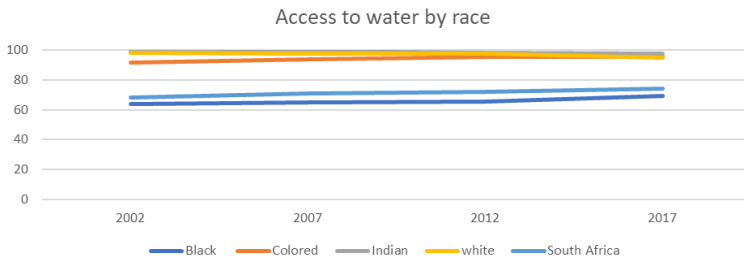


Fig. 4 Access to water by race at the national level. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

From Figure 4 above, it is evident that service delivery inequality by race is still prominent 30 years post-democracy, as the black population still lags with less than 80% access to water

in comparison to the other races, who have over 90% access to water.

Access to sanitation

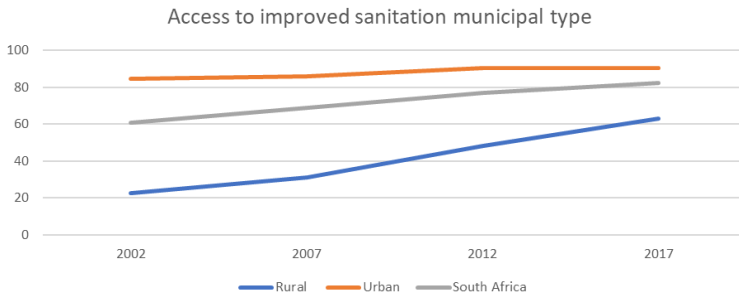


Fig. 5 Access to sanitation by municipal type. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Figure 5 further draws on the pattern of service delivery inequality between rural and urban municipalities. Although there has been an increase in sanitation within rural municipalities, there remains a vast difference in access to improved sanitation between rural and urban municipalities. While rural municipalities have reached 62.8% access to improved sanitation, urban municipalities have achieved 90.2% access to improved sanitation. There is a vast difference of access to sanitation of 27.4% between the two types of municipalities.

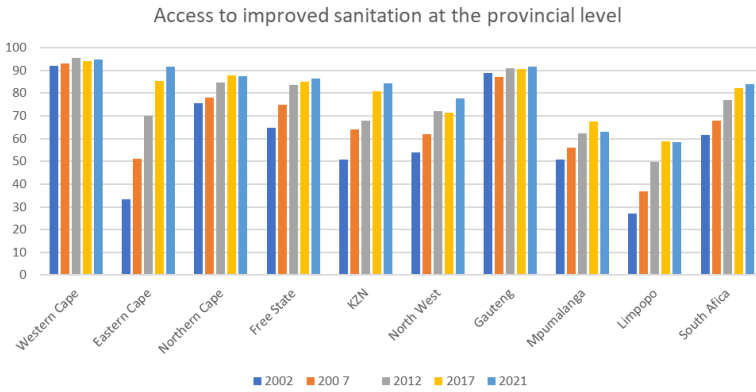


Fig. 6 Provisioning of sanitation service delivery at the provincial level. Source: GHS, 2021–2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

At the provincial level, the difference in access to improved sanitation remains significant between local, rural, and urban provinces. While overall access has improved in every province over the years, rural municipalities once again have the lowest access to sanitation. However, not all rural provinces are low. The Eastern Cape and the North West province have achieved over 90% improved sanitation, though they are rural provinces. However, Limpopo still needs to reach 60% access to sanitation, while Mpumalanga achieved 63.8%. Conversely, Gauteng and the Western Cape achieved over 90% improved sanitation.

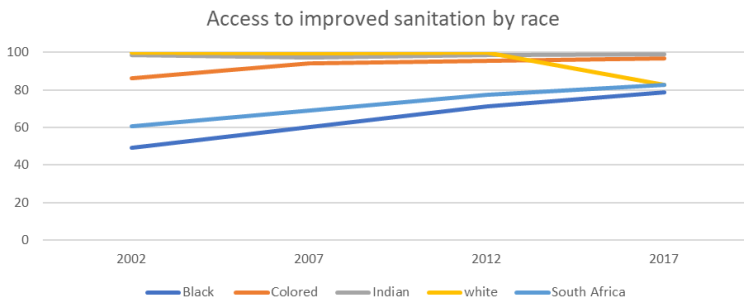


Fig. 7 Provisioning of sanitation by race. Source: GHS, 2021–2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Access to improved sanitation by race remains unequal. However, there has been significant progress, and the inequality gap has reduced significantly. While the black population has increased access from 49.2% in 2002 to 78.7% in 2017, the white population's access has decreased from 100% in 2002 to 82.5% in 2017. It is important to note, however, that the provision of sanitation amongst the Coloured and Indian populations has remained steady at over 90% between 2007 and 2017.

Access to refuse removal

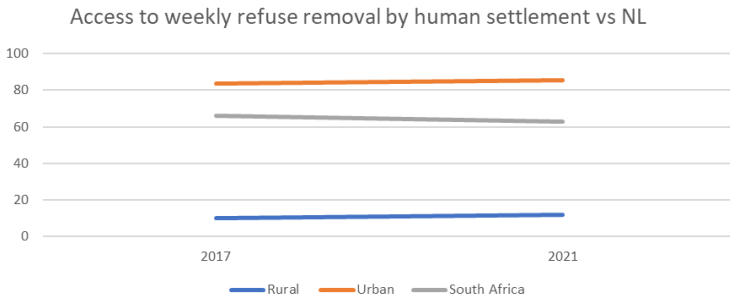


Fig. 8 Provisioning of refuse removal service delivery by municipality type. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Figure 8, above, indicates a massive service delivery inequality in refuse removal between the urban and rural municipalities between 2017 and 2021. While rural municipalities are behind with 18% access to weekly refuse removal, urban areas have achieved over 80% weekly. There is a huge gap in the delivery of these essential services.

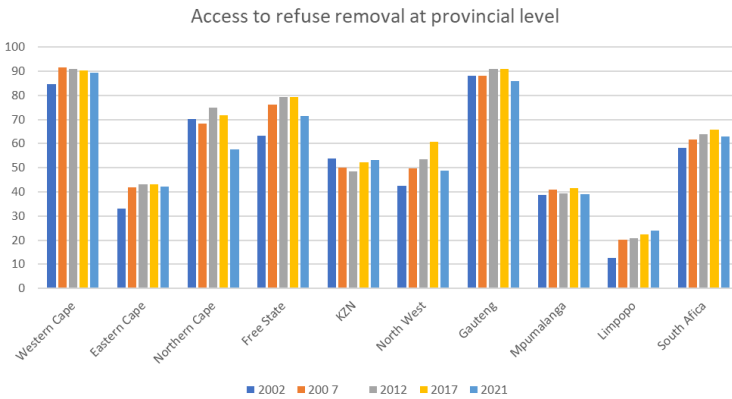


Fig. 9 Provisioning of refuse removal service delivery at the provincial level. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

The difference between weekly refuse removal of urban and rural municipalities, and between provinces, is as significant. While Gauteng and the Western Province essentially receive over 80% of weekly refuse removal, the rural municipalities barely receive 50%. Limpopo trails behind with 22%, while the Eastern Cape is at 41%, and Mpumalanga’s refuse removal falls behind with 39%.

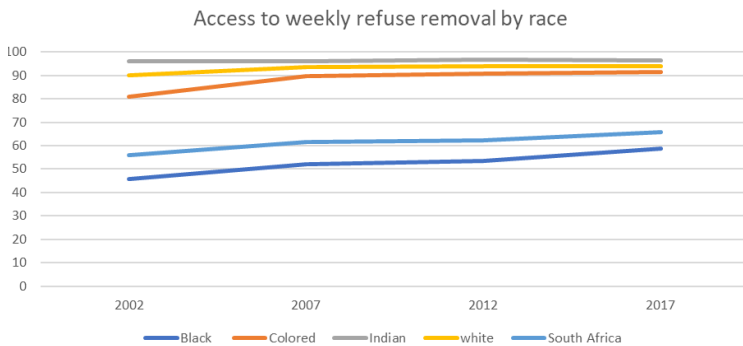


Fig. 10 Provisioning of refuse removal by race. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Figure 10, above, further highlights the service delivery inequality between the different races in South Africa. The pattern of the

black population at the bottom of the chain continues, with blacks achieving 58.8% refuse removal, while the Coloured population, Indians, and whites have steadily achieved over 90%.

Access to electricity

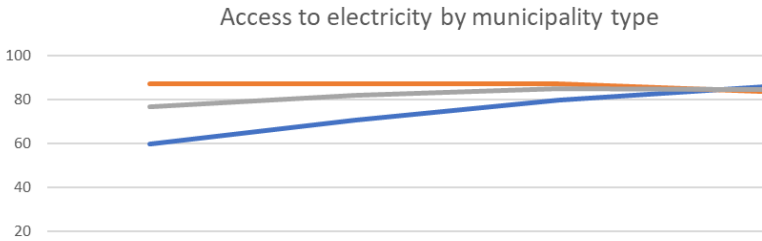


Fig. 11 Provisioning of electricity service delivery by municipality type. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

The provision of electricity has increased throughout the years, thus closing the gap that existed between rural and urbanised areas. Electricity access in rural municipalities increased from 60% in 2002 to over 85.8% in 2017. At the same time, access to electricity in urban municipalities has decreased from 87.2% in 2002 to 83.7% in 2017. The gap between rural and urban areas in electricity provisioning has reduced over the years. Access to electricity within the country has improved overall from 76% in 2002 to 84.47% in 2017.

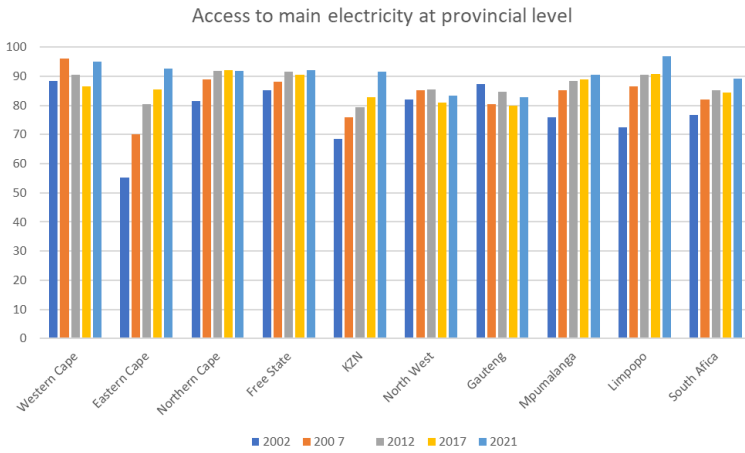


Fig. 12 Provisioning of electricity at the provincial level. Source: GHS, 2021-2022; Statistics South Africa, 2019

Figure 12 shows a reduction in the gap in the inequality of electricity-related service delivery. It is important to note that electricity provisioning in rural provinces is higher than in urban municipalities. Over the years, electricity provisioning in rural areas and urban municipalities has increased. There are several reasons for this; however, one of the critical factors is that when people migrate to urban areas, they settle in informal settlements with no electrical connections, thus reducing access to electricity within these areas. Moreover, statistics relating to racial differences were limited and thus not included.

Service delivery inequality

Over the years, the local government has failed to provide basic public services that meet the essential needs of its citizens – more especially in poor municipalities, as the residents of such municipalities are unable to pay for services, thus impairing the municipality’s ability to collect revenue and deliver effective and efficient services.¹⁰ Municipal service tariffs are intended to form the bulk of local government’s operating expenditure. However, many municipalities maintain that the actual costs of providing services are five times higher than the expenditure estimated

by the national government. For this reason, they fail to deliver services to as many households as possible, which only curbs the local government's objectives and delays improvement in people's lives.¹ Additionally, high levels of corruption and a lack of skilled leaders and officials in rural municipalities lead to worse conditions.⁷

In a study conducted by Sartorius and Sartorius (2015), the authors find that "the best levels of service delivery are found in richer municipalities, and the poorest municipalities deliver the worst services", which creates inequality amongst the residents of a municipality. This is because municipalities need to assess and plan strategically for the appropriate and effective service delivery mechanisms within each area.¹⁰ The Municipal Systems Act prioritises infrastructure development and service delivery in municipalities with the most significant economic potential, which mandates urban planners to focus on providing public services to the urbanised areas, leaving minimal essential services for the poorer communities. This creates segregation and inequality between a municipality's poor and wealthy residents.¹ The municipal administration must, therefore, choose delivery options that will ensure maximum benefit and efficiency; thus, a household's ability to access free essential services is determined by where they live, rather than by their poverty.

Rural municipalities need more funds and human resources. Moreover, protests over service delivery seem to arise from poorer neighbourhoods, informal settlements, and townships rather than in the suburban areas. These urban-rural differences reflect long-standing national policies and local decisions that the municipalities need to change before we can bring spatial equality and achieve effective service delivery.⁸

Furthermore, statistics indicate that rural municipalities, B3 and B4, experience higher disruptions in water and electricity supply than urbanised areas. Sanitation backlogs are too frequent in rural areas, and waste collection is hardly done in most rural areas. These communities have resolved to create dump sites to dispose of their refuse. More than anyone, the poor rely on the government and municipalities to provide essential services;

therefore, the government's governance affects the poor and vulnerable the most.¹³ For the poor, efficient and effective public services by the government is their way out of poverty.⁹ The inability of government institutions to provide efficient goods and services leads to lack of opportunities for the impoverished and disadvantaged, thus preventing generations from escaping poverty.

It is undeniable that service delivery in the national and provincial spheres of government has improved over the years. However, we must acknowledge high service delivery inequality in essential services between the provinces and municipalities.

Causes of Service Delivery Inequality

There are a number of causes of service delivery inequality at every level of government. Below are the three primary and most common reasons for this. They are interconnected and often affect each other. These three primary causes also create more challenges, deepening the problem.

Poor leadership and administration

The cadres within the local government require skills, competencies, and technical expertise in the administration and management of municipalities. The lack of such capabilities compromises the delivery of services by municipalities within their respective communities.^{9,10} The lack of leadership and skills has led to the financial instability of municipalities. Poor leadership has led to high levels of corruption within the public sector due to poor governance.⁶

For the past ten years, the office of the Auditor General has been warning against poor financial management and lack of skills within the municipalities. In the last five years, less than 20% of municipalities have been able to produce qualified audit opinions, with high levels of unacceptable forms of expenditure, high financial mismanagement, and corruption.¹¹ This is worse in rural municipalities, which often have the worst service delivery in the country. This is often caused by poor governance, and although poor governance is a problem in local government, it remains

poorer in rural municipalities, subsequently affecting service delivery.¹² The corruption within the leadership of municipalities has adversely affected not just service delivery but the functioning of municipalities, especially in rural municipalities, with the need for more accountability.

Poor policies

Some of the post-apartheid policies continue to exclude a large number of citizens from development.³ This relates to policies and systems that enable government officials to focus more on urbanisation, thus automatically neglecting rural areas. As a result, disparities remain high after decades of democracy and rural areas remain neglected by the government.¹ For example, the Municipal Systems Act enables municipalities to prioritise towns that pay for services, thus neglecting poor municipalities.

Households have to pay for the majority of services they receive from their municipality. This cost directly reduces their disposable income for other essential expenditures. The increase in municipal services directly affects these households. The municipality's ability to provide essential services is determined by factors such as size, growth, and distribution of households, as well as the individual citizen's ability to pay for municipal services.¹⁷ Thus, the free basic services policies implemented in all three spheres of government are, in reality, making little contribution to the white paper's goal of affordable universal access, because many of the poor households are effectively excluded and continue to live with inferior public services.

Vertical and horizontal imbalances

South Africa uses the *per capita* system, which shares the nationally raised revenue based on "a way of averaging values on a *per-person* basis to better understand each share in aggregated figures. This equitable share system has created horizontal and vertical imbalances, leading to service delivery inequality.¹³ From the equitable share, municipalities only receive 3%. They must generate most of their revenue from service charges related to municipal services, such as property rates, levies, and service charges from water and electricity provision. Unfortunately, many

municipalities struggle to collect revenue, and this is worse in rural municipalities, making it difficult for rural municipalities to develop and create economic development opportunities within their jurisdictions. This poses vertical imbalances, a challenge the national government needs to consider.

The provincial government receives 48% of the national revenue, accounting for over 90% of its budget. However, the distribution of this budget is horizontally imbalanced between the different provinces, thus creating inequality trends and patterns.²⁰ In this regard, the high-economic provinces, due to migration and high population, receive a higher distribution of revenue in comparison to rural provinces with less population.¹⁴ The systems and policies again allocate revenue by the population density. Urban provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape benefit from this. In contrast, rural provinces such as Limpopo, the Eastern Cape, and Mpumalanga continue to report the highest service delivery inequality and lowest mean and median expenditure within the country.¹⁵

Effects of service delivery inequality

Urbanisation

Urbanisation is a global challenge, due to people seeking to settle in places with better opportunities and development. The poorest people with poor skills, development, and training are mostly found in rural areas.¹⁶ Such people live in poverty and rely on government grants for survival. They often cannot find better opportunities within their area, so they migrate to urban areas for a better life and more opportunities.¹⁷ The South African policies and systems favour urbanised areas. Skilled people migrate to urban areas as well, leaving rural areas with mostly unskilled people. Urban areas are often better managed than rural areas. People tend to move to urban municipalities and provinces, abandoning rural areas, which they feel are neglected by the government.

Social conflicts and protests

The inequalities in service delivery between the rural and urban areas have led to social conflicts among the people of South Africa. These are racial conflicts between the black and white populations as well as conflicts between the rich and the poor. The poor people often feel left out and ignored by the government, and this has led to a rise in service delivery protests across the country.¹⁸ However, there is a pattern to these protests, as they are more frequent in rural municipalities (more specifically, B3 and B4 municipalities). Additionally, protests are unlikely in areas dominated by white populations. Protests are a way in which people display their dissatisfaction with the government.

Conclusion

There remains high inequality in delivering essential services in South Africa throughout the three divisions of government. At provincial and local governments, inequalities exist between rural and urban areas. The government policies still encourage urban development, while the rural areas still need to catch up. This has led to inequalities in service delivery within the different divisions and areas throughout the country. Service delivery inequality is affected by many factors, such as unemployment, income inequality, governance, and South Africa's political history.

The South African government has, without doubt, managed to decrease service delivery inequality that existed during the apartheid regime. However, the equitable share system and policies implemented post-democracy still need to alleviate the service delivery inequality within the country effectively. Additionally, these policies and different systems prioritise urbanised municipalities and provinces, thus leaving behind the rural municipalities and provinces. The poor leadership and governance within the South African government further widen the inequality gap in delivering these services and promote a culture of corruption. There is a need for policies and reforms that will actively and effectively address imbalances while enhancing good governance and consequence management within the government. This will promote rural development and

enhance service delivery through infrastructure development, technological advances, and better opportunities.

It is essential to note that electricity provisioning has improved throughout the country. There is higher access to electricity in rural areas than in urban areas, presenting opposite results from the other three services in the study. The IPIO Framework as discussed makes it easier to follow the process of service delivery inequality. There is a need for policies and reforms that will encourage and shape rural areas and enable equal development in both rural and urban municipalities so that the citizens at large may access equal delivery of services from the government.

Endnotes

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