

Bornwell C. Chikulo, Department of Development Studies, North West University

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTH AFRICA: PROGRESS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

ABSTRACT

With the advent of the democratic dispensation in 1994, the South African Government was faced, with a host of daunting development challenges inherited from the Apartheid regime . Local government which constitutes the third sphere of governance in South Africa has been mandated by the Constitution to address apartheid era inequalities and facilitate local economic development amongst the previously disadvantaged black majority. This paper reviews the progress, achievements and challenges faced by the South African local governance in its attempt to facilitate the access to basic social services and reduce poverty among the previously disadvantaged majority. It outlines the socio-economic profile, the local governance legislative policy frameworks and discusses the institutional arrangements established to facilitate and anchor effective service delivery, as well as integrate “voice” of local communities. The paper also analyses the basic social service delivery and the resultant municipal service delivery protests .The paper concludes that the recurrent ,widespread, violent and increasingly xenophobic municipal service delivery protests, are indicative of the fact that, despite the progress made in the past seventeen years to establish the policy framework and institutional structure, to effectively facilitate socio-economic development, and address the backlogs of access to basic social services and poverty alleviation, challenges still remain at local governance level

1. INTRODUCTION

Following the demise of apartheid and the transition to a democratic dispensation in April 1994, the new South African Government inherited a well-developed economy characterized by sharp socioeconomic inequalities, which were particularly marked in the backwardness of the *Bantustan* homelands inhabited by the majority of blacks against the backdrop of the affluence of the “white” centres. During the apartheid era, development initiatives were largely concentrated on high-income white urban enclaves, thereby neglecting a majority of the black population. In addition, the poor were pushed to the margins of urban areas, as well as repatriated to the Bantustans, thereby concentrating the problem of poverty in the rural areas. This duality was further complicated by the parallel interracial inequality, with the best socioeconomic facilities being reserved for whites while poor limited facilities were reserved for blacks. The racial segregation in the economic, education, and health and social welfare sectors, “left deep scars” of inequality and poverty: the majority of the population – the black section – was characterized by abject poverty and minimal access to basic social and economic services (Chikulo, 2003, 2004).

In an effort to reduce not only socioeconomic imbalances, but also meet the high expectations among the majority of the black population, the government pledged itself to rapid socioeconomic development by placing alleviation of poverty and inequality at the centre of its development agenda. The eradication of poverty was therefore not only made a priority but also identified as one of the greatest challenges facing the government. The critical aspect of this strategy entails equitable sustainable access to social services. Consequently, following the 1994 first non-racial national democratic elections, the South African government, embarked on programmes of service delivery in an endeavor to provide quality, equitable and accessible services to all its citizens. In order to achieve this objective, local government is constitutionally mandated to play a critical role in the country's local socio-economic development and poverty alleviation strategy. Consequently, local government has been assigned a pivotal role in service delivery of basic social services to communities. This paper reviews the role of local governance in service delivery in South Africa. It assesses the role of local governance in the provision of basic services in the period 1994 to 2010.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa, with an estimated population of 47.9 million people (SSA 2007b), has one of the most sophisticated free-market economies on the African continent and is characterized as a middle - income developing country. South Africa accounts for approximately 40 percent of all industrial output, 25 percent of gross domestic production (GDP), over 50 percent of generated electricity and 45 percent of mineral output in Africa (Mqadi and Steynor, 2005). While the economy displays many world-class features, including a sophisticated financial and physical infrastructure, good telecommunications and energy supply networks, and one of the top ten stock exchanges in the world, the country is, however, plagued with wide disparities in wealth. According to the Human Development report (UNDP 2007), South Africa's Gini Co-efficient ranked the country at 117th most economically unequal out of 126 countries for which data was available. Similarly, South Africa's ranking according to the HDI is 121 out of 177 countries. With regard to GDP per capita (PPP), South Africa is ranked 53rd indicating a wide gap between economic wealth and development (UNDP 2007).

Furthermore, as a consequence of the legacy of Apartheid, the country's economic system has the highest marked dualities in the world, with a sophisticated industrial economy existing alongside with an underdeveloped "informal" economy. This duality was further complicated by the parallel interracial inequality, with the best socio-economic facilities being reserved for whites, and the poor facilities reserved for blacks. Thus racial segregation in the economic sector, education, health and social welfare, "left deep scars" of inequality and poverty: the majority of the population — the black section of society — was characterized by abject poverty, and minimal access to basic social and economic services (Chikulo 2003). The affluent sectors of South African society have access to infrastructure (including power, water and sanitation) and economic and social facilities comparable to those found in the developed Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In addition, South Africa's population has grown from 40 million people in 1994 to nearly 47.9 million in 2007 (SSA

2007b), with the number of households growing faster than the population, from 8.7 million in 1994 to 13.3 million in 2007(SSA ,2007a) thus posing addition challenges for service delivery.

3. LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The *1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* [Section 40] organizes government at three spheres which are distinctive, interdependent and interrelated. What section 40 implies is that local government is an autonomous, coordinate level of government. In terms of the principles of cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations, the other two spheres, namely national and provincial, must respect the constitutional status, powers and functions of local authorities of the three spheres of government. The *1993 Local Government Act* established transitional councils, integrating white and black areas into joint municipalities. The result was the creation of 843 “wall to wall”, non-racial municipalities in the whole country. *The local Government Demarcation Act, 1998 (Act 27 of 1998)* facilitated the consolidation of transitional municipalities, by reducing over 800 local authorities around the country to a total of 284 demarcated municipalities. This was followed by the last demarcation in 2006 leading to a total of 283 municipalities. South Africa has 283 municipalities, based on three Constitutional categories (COGTA, 2009:7):

- Metropolitan municipalities: six (6);
- District Municipalities: forty six (46); and
- Local Municipalities: two hundred and thirty one (231).

The above division signaled the drawn of a new era of transition towards democratic and developmental local government in South Africa. In particular, the *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 2000* determines three categories of municipalities six metropolitan council, “metros” (Category A) which include the largest cities and have exclusive executive and legislative authority within their respective areas of jurisdiction, local municipalities (Category B) which share executive and legislative authority with district municipalities and districts municipalities(category C), which include several local municipalities within their borders. The latter have legislative and executive authority in areas with more than one local municipality. The Act also extends the definition of municipality to include residents and communities within the municipal area, working in partnership with the municipality’s political and administrative structures.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No.108 of 1996) provides for local governance in section 152(1). Local government has been mandated to address local economic development and poverty alleviation issues by the Constitution and the local government legislation. The critical role of local government is clearly spelt out in section 152(1) of the Constitution which defines the objectives as follows:

- to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- to promote social and economic development;
- to promote a safe and healthy environment; and
- to encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in the matters of local government.

The *1998 White Paper on Local Government* coined the concept of a “*developmental local government*”, thereby placing municipalities at the centre of addressing developmental backlogs and granting them great autonomy and responsibility in undertaking this mandate. “*Developmental local government* is defined as local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives” (DPLG,1998: 17). Furthermore, the *White Paper* continues, “developmental local government” has four inter-related characteristics:

- Maximizing social development and economic growth;
- Integrating and co-coordinating development activities of a variety of actors;
- Democratizing development by empowering communities to participate meaningfully in development,;
- Providing leadership, promoting the building of “social capital”;and
- creating opportunities for learning and information-sharing.

Local government has, therefore, been given a pivotal and distinctive mandate in the promotion of social development and democracy at the local level. This recognition of the *developmental role of local governance* in the Constitution, has given it a new dynamic as an instrument of sustainable service delivery and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, two key pieces of municipal legislation were subsequently passed: *The Municipal Structures Act (1998)*, and *Municipal Systems Act (1999)*. These Acts give substance to the *developmental role of local governance* by introducing such innovations such as ward committees, cross-border municipalities, a code of conduct for councilors, integrated development planning, performance management, development partnerships, and alternative service delivery.

The provisions for participatory democracy are spelt out in the following policy and legislative frameworks:

- Chapter 7 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996)* provides the imperatives for democratic and accountable local government for local communities, through the establishment of ward committees.
- The *Local Government Municipal Structures (Act No. 117 of 1998)* in Chapter 3 (Section 19) requires municipalities to achieve the objectives set out in Section 152 of the Constitution to develop mechanism to consult communities and community organizations in the performance of their functions and exercise of their power. Chapter 4 (Part 4) of this Act also provides for the establishment of Ward Committees.
- The *Local Government Municipal Systems (Act No. 32 of 2000)* requires municipalities to develop a “culture of participation” by developing mechanisms, processes and procedures for community participation.
- The *White Paper on Local Government of 1998* defines developmental local government as local government committed to working together with communities to find sustainable ways to meet the social, economic and material needs to improve the quality of life of communities in the country. To this effect, the White Paper demands active participation of citizens in local government issues.

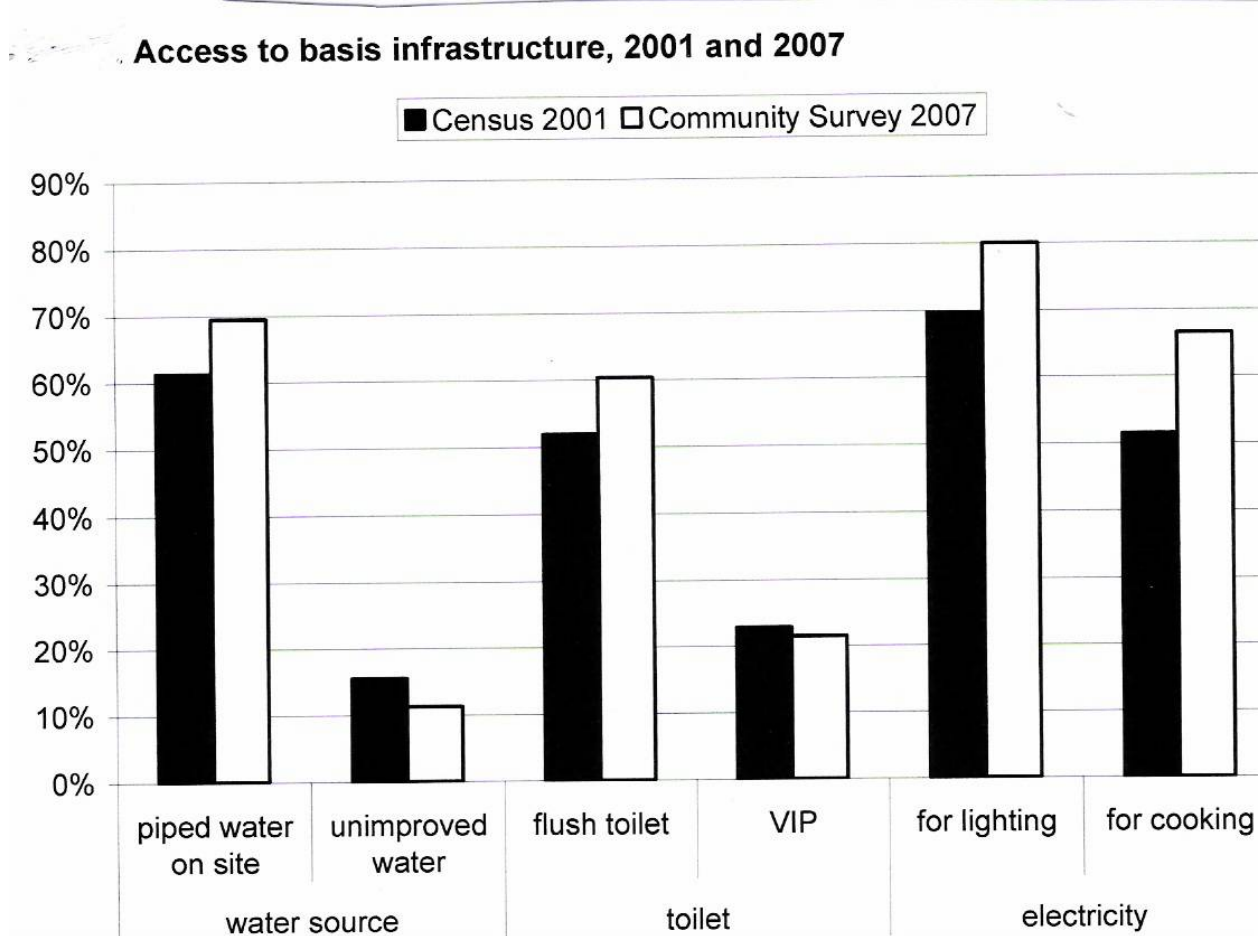
There are 3,895 demarcated wall-to-wall Wards in the whole country. The number of wards per municipality varies from 10 in smaller municipalities to 109 in larger ones. The Wards form the basic units for participatory and democratic local governance. A Ward Committee is established in each Ward. Each Ward Committee consists of elected councilors and 10 members nominated by the community, representing 40,000 residents or more. Each committee is chaired by an elected councilor, who is supposed to ensure that the issues and needs of the residents are effectively represented on the municipal council. Elected councilors are, therefore, supposed to serve as a link between the residents in the Ward and the municipality, as well as other spheres of government with respect to the planning and implementation of programmes impacting on the wards (COGTA, 2009).

Thus one of the defining characteristics of *developmental local government* is to 'democratize development' and 'to work together with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve the quality of their lives. Consequently, municipalities are expected to play a key role in the provision of basic services to communities. The most important of these services are electricity, refuse removal, water supply and sanitation, as well as providing housing for the poor (RDP houses). By providing these services, local governance is expected to play a critical role in fulfilling Constitutional socio-economic rights of the majority of South Africans (Constitution 1996, section 26 and 27). The Constitutional imperative thus puts pressure on local governance to effectively deliver social services. It is the provision of these that contribute not only to socio-economic development but also to poverty alleviation and the achievement of MDGs. In short, service delivery is supposed to have a direct positive impact on the quality of "well-being" and poverty alleviation.

4. LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Local governance in South Africa has made significant inroads to the delivery of basic services. Statistical evidence indicates an improvement in the level of service delivery across South Africa in general (SSA, 2001, 2007; COGTA, 2009:3).

Figure 1. Access to Basic Social Services



(Source:StatSA,2007)

Between 1996 and 2007 the increases in service delivery were as follows (SSA, 2007:55):

- Refuse removal by the local authority at least once a week increased from 51, 2% in 1996 to 55, 4% in 2001 and to 60, 1% in 2007;
- on toilet facilities there was an increase in the proportion of households with access to flush toilet connected to a sewerage system from 49,1% in 2001 to 55,1% in 2007;
- there has been an increase in the proportion of households which use piped water from 84,5% in 2001 to 88,6% in 2007;
- electricity usage s increased since 1996 to 80,0% for lighting 58,8% for heating and 66,5% for cooking;
- the overall proportion of households living in formal dwellings increased from 64,4% in 1996, to 68,5% in 2001 and 70,5% in 2007;and
- there was also a corresponding decrease in the proportion of households living in traditional dwellings over the same period from 18, 2% in 1996, 14, 8% in 2001, to 11, 7% in 2007..

However, a significant service delivery gap exists between the urban and rural areas. In

particular, areas in former Bantustans in Eastern Cape, North West, Limpopo Provinces and rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal have low level of service delivery to communities. In addition, the level of service provision in informal settlements, as shown in Table 2, is far below the national averages.

Table 1 Services Available to Informal Settlements, 2009

Services available to informal dwellings, 2009		
	Number	Proportion
Piped water in the dwelling	95 000	5.1%
Piped water inside yard	850 000	46.0%
Flush toilet connected to a public sewage system	810 000	43.9%
Pit toilet ventilation pipe	57 000	3.1%
Electricity for lighting	1 030 000	55.8%
Electricity for cooking	902 000	48.9%
Electricity for heating	528 000	28.6%
Total number of informal settlements	1 846 000	

(SAIRR,2010)

However, despite inroads made in the provision of basic services, by 2009 the following service delivery backlogs were recorded (COGTA,2009):

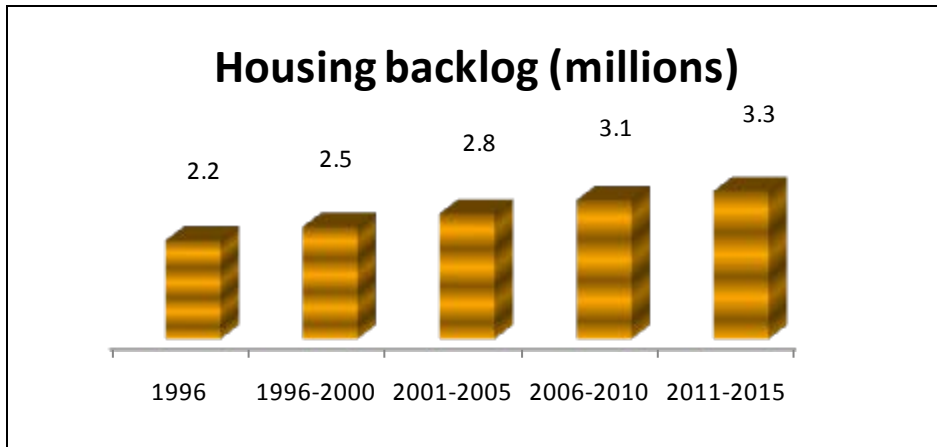
- Piped water: 1,069,152 out of 12,996,300 household;
- Basic sanitation: 3,002,152 out of 12,996,300 households;
- Electricity: 9,010,056 out of 12,996,300 households; and
- Refuse Collection: 7,478,334 out of 12,996,300 households.

Thus despite improvements in service provision, poor households continue to lag behind in access to services (RSA, 2008:36; SAIRR, 2010:565).

With regard to delivery of housing, housing policy and strategy lies at the centre of the government's effort to alleviate poverty. In the past 17 years, 2.7 million low cost houses have been delivered to beneficiaries thereby housing 13 million citizens. In addition, between 1994 and 2008, 3 132 769 housing subsidies were granted (Harsh, 2011:23).

Despite this, rate of delivery South Africa still has a housing crisis after 17 years of democracy. The estimated backlog for poor for the poor remains at 2 million houses. It has estimated that at on average there are six people per household this works out about 12 million people in need of housing (Harsh, 2011:23). The figure below presents estimated housing backlogs.

FIGURE 2: Trends and projections for housing units in the low-cost housing sector (1996-2015)



(Source: Pelser and Redelinghuys 2009)

However, shack settlements keep on increasing thereby putting additional pressure on the housing backlog. Many people live in 2700 informal settlements across the country(Harsh,2011).The increase in the housing backlog could also be attributed to natural population growth, rapid urbanization due to rural – urban migration and inadequate delivery of housing units to meet historical backlogs.

Table 2 Households residing in informal dwellings by province,1996 and 2009 (proportions)

Households residing in informal dwellings by province,1996 and 2009 (proportions)				
	1996		2009	
Province	Not backyard	Backyard	Not backyard	Backyard
Eastern Cape	21.5%	78.5%	17.5%	82.5%
Free State	31.1%	68.9%	45.7%	54.3%
Gauteng	32.8%		39.0%	61.0%
	67.2%		21.1%	78.9%
KwaZulu-Natal	23.9%	76.1%	43.5%	56.5%
Limpopo	32.7%		21.0%	79.0%
	67.3%		25.5%	74.5%
Mpumalanga	26.0%	74.0%	32.0%	68.0%
North West	28.3%	71.7%	47.0%	53.0%
Northern Cape	18.9%	81.1%		
Western Cape	20.4%	79.6%		
South Africa	27.8%	72.2%	35.1%	64.9%

(Source: SAIRR,2010)

The expansion of unplanned informal settlements has not only resulted in the increase of the housing backlog but led to rapid urban sprawl on the outskirts of most metropolitan areas.

As the DoWE (2010:25) observes:

” The rapid influx of people into already overcrowded urban areas with large service delivery backlogs has led to the formation informal settlements in vulnerable locations, on the banks of streams, n steep hillsides or marshy areas, such as the on the Cape Flats”.

By 2006, it was evidently clear that the housing programme was barely keeping pace with the expanding with over 2.1 million households lacking adequate housing and millions more lacking access to basic services. At an estimated average of six people per household, this works out to about 12 million people still in need of housing (Harsh, 2011:23; Tissington, 2011:33-34). According to the Department of Housing, from 1994 to 2010 the housing backlog has grown from 1.5 million to an approximate figure of over 2.1 million. This increase means that approximately more than 12 million people are still in need of adequate housing. According to Stats SA (2010), in mid-2009, 13.4 percent of households in South Africa lived in informal dwellings.

However, despite the overall ,rosy picture painted by statistics, even where services have been effectively delivered, there are gaping gaps that may help explain the contradiction between statistics and reported municipal service delivery .This could be attributed to the following:

- the nationally-good statistical averages in basic service delivery may hide local and regional exclusions where delivery may not yet have been as effective;
- in many localities service delivery may have been effective , and these sites are counted in the statistics, but the level of services have decayed and are in dire need of maintenance.
- in some places people ‘have access to’ services like water and electricity, but the free amounts are limited and quality is often poor and these individuals cannot afford to top up with payments;
- in some areas, clinics have been delivered, but the quality of services is poor, queues are overwhelming, and the general feeling is that ‘things have not changed’ because, in effect, communities do not have ready access on demand; and
- informal settlement communities, for example, may have access to public taps and toilets, but lack other essential services such as effective roads for ambulances to enter or refuse removal.

According to various reports the rate of service delivery has been uneven across the country reflecting the varying socio-economic conditions and local authorities’ competence. Service delivery in six metros in general had improved steadily; however, these municipalities also face the greatest challenges due to the growing number of poor households who live in informal settlements on their periphery. As a result the metros cannot keep pace with the growth in demand for basic social services thereby failing to improve living conditions for the poor (COGTA, 2009:39).

5. MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY PROTESTS: CAUSES AND MAGNITUDE.

While significant progress has been made in addressing historical backlogs in basic social services, shifting patterns of demand to urban areas is outstripping capacity of local authorities to satisfy demand. Fast growing informal settlements are increasingly putting pressure on local authorities to provide more services. The challenge, therefore, is how to keep pace with demand of urbanization. Thus despite the in-roads made provision of basic services in the last 17 years, the backlog remains considerable leading to frustrations, especially in poor communities. As a consequence, South Africa has been witnessing a plethora of violent service delivery protests. *The State of South African Cities* (SA Cities Network,2011:134)SACnet,2011:135) describes the protests thus:

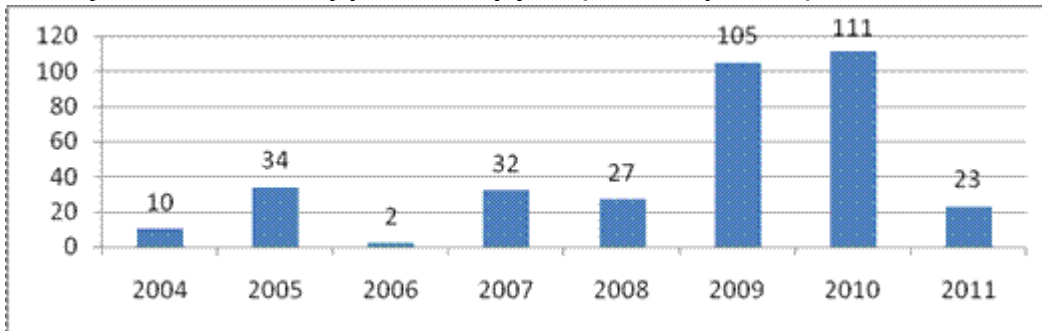
“Service delivery protest are an extreme form of direct political action seemingly born out of frustration with the pace and quality of state provisioning of housing, water, sanitation, roads,schools and other essential services. Most protests have been targeted at local government and linked with accusations of incompetence, misconduct and corruption. some marches and demonstrations have ended up in violent confrontations and caused considerable damage to public facilities and disruption to every day life”

The service protests have been attributed to the following amongst others:

- Firstly, the poor quality of services quality of services rendered:
- perceived growing culture of corruption, nepotism “a culture of patronage and nepotism is now so widespread in most local authorities local authorities;
- ineffective and inaccessible the formal municipal accountability system to many citizens
- lack of performance and accountability by municipal councilors;
- councilors are accused of being arrogant and insensitive to the needs of the community;
- political opportunism, infighting and factionalism have contributed to the dysfunctionality of some local authorities;
- dysfunctional ward committees, and in some cases these committees have degenerated into spheres of exclusion.

Furthermore, since 1994 there has been a growing culture of dependency on the state. Communities sit back and expect the state to provide everything. This results in impatience with those in queues for delivery not being prepared to wait any longer as they see others around them receive services. This reinforces their sense of marginalization leading to protests.

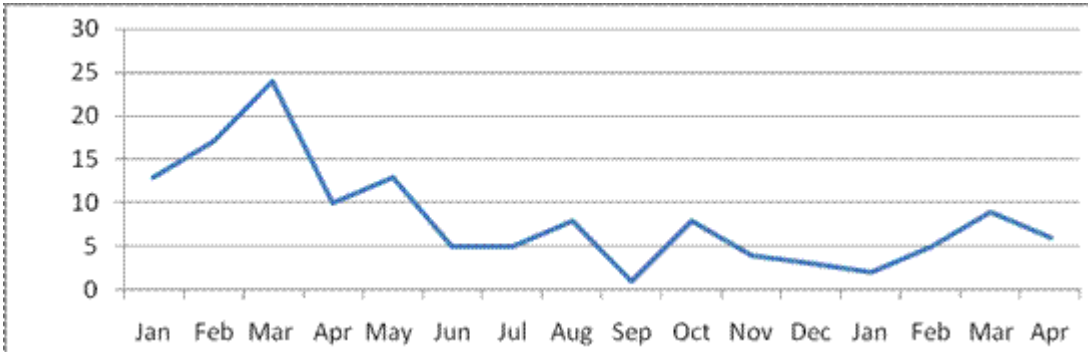
Figure 3: Major service delivery protests, by year (2004 – Apr 2011)



(source: COGTA,2009:12)

Figure 3 provides an indication of the trend in municipal service delivery protest over the past eight years.

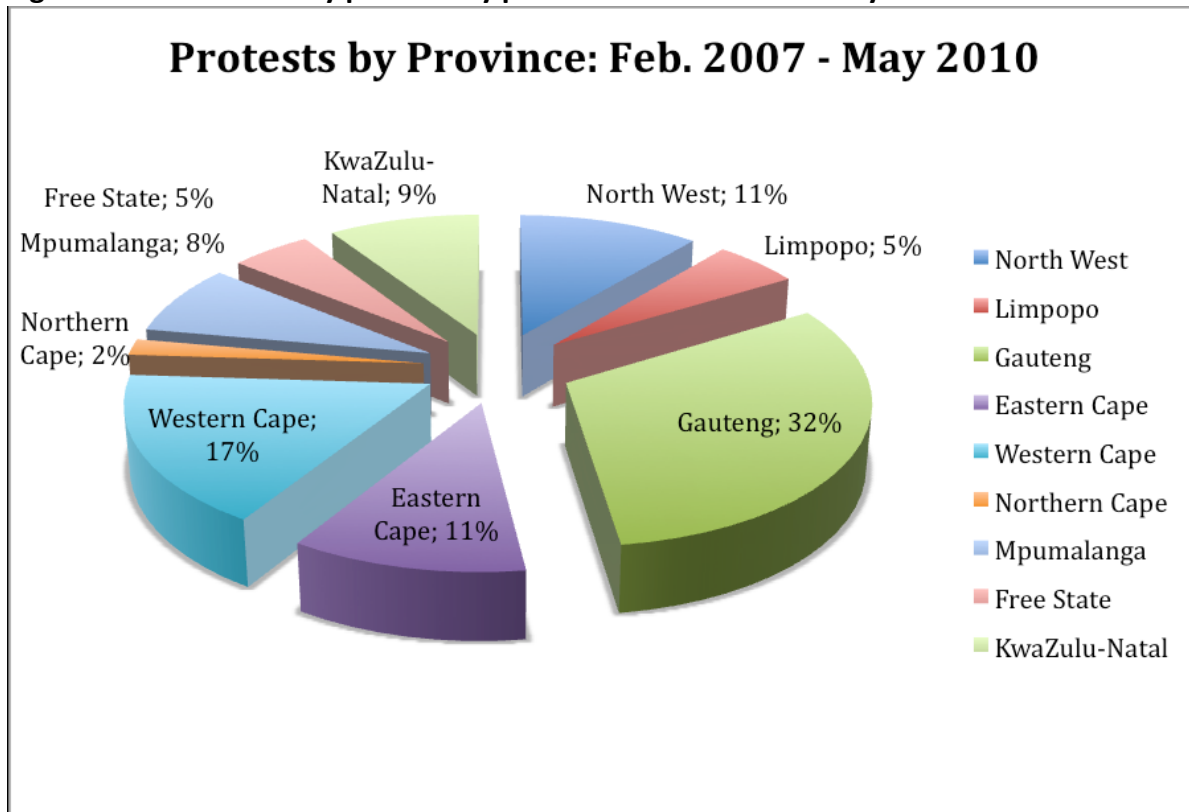
Figure 4: Service delivery protests by month (January 2010 to April 2011)



[Source: **Municipal IQ** Municipal Hotspots Monitor]

The figure above clearly indicates an increase in protests in March 2010 and again an increase in March 2011. According to the Municipal IQ, the “protests captured on for 2011 represent only 7% of protests reflected between 2004 and 2011”.

Figure 5: Service delivery protests by province for Feb.2007 –May 2010



(Source:Karamoko &Jain, 2011:24)

Figure 5 shows 2011’s provincial breakdown with the Western Cape having the highest incidence of protests According to Karamoko,and Jain,2011:24) between 2002 and 2011,Gauteng accounted for31.46% of the protests, Western Cape for 17.05%,while North West accounted for 11.09 %. Furthermore, the spate of violent conflicts tend to be predominant t in metro areas(HSRC,2008: South African Citynetwork,2011).This means that service protests do not necessarily occur in poor local authorities or wards with the worst basic service delivery backlogs (COGTA,2009:12 SACitiesnet,,2011:134). Gauteng and the Western Cape are particularly vulnerable to protests given their rapidly urbanizing populations. Since 2004, some 48% of protests on the Hotspots Monitor have been recorded in metro areas.

Normally the ritual of service protests takes the form of burning of tires, the barricading of streets and the throwing of rocks at passing traffic. Increasingly, however, these municipal street protests have degenerated into a spate of violent xenophobic attacks on foreigners and burning of public infrastructure and buildings, as well as houses belonging to councilors. The impact of the service delivery protests have been devastating, with soaring destruction of public infrastructure and property, as well creating a humanitarian crisis which have culminated in the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of African foreigners living informal settlements and townships. During 2008, more than 50 people were killed and tens of thousands of foreign immigrants displaced as a result of ‘xenophobic’ violence. The violent xenophobic attacks were

attributed mainly to competition for resources such as housing, water, sanitation and health services together with employment and business opportunities amongst poor communities(CRAI,2008;HSRC,2008:7;Alexander,2010).In other words, xenophobia rears its ugly head in the resource constrained informal settlements and poor townships but is very rare in rural areas.

6.POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY

Despite irrefutable, overall impressive service delivery statistics, little progress has been made on the central objective of reducing poverty and inequality. In many poor communities around South Africa people have lost hope of improving their well-being. They are saddled with poverty, unemployment. and marginalization. According to official figures (The Presidency, 2009) the number of total employed people raised from 11.2 million in 2002 to 13.8 million in 2008 and then declined to 12.7 million in 2011. Similarly, the unemployment rate had peaked at 31.2% in 2003, dropped to 23% in 2007 and then increased to 24.2 % at the end of 2009. Consequently, the share of working-age people with employment (which includes self-employment) rose from 39 percent to 42 percent, and the official unemployment rate fell from 30 percent to 26 percent (RSA 2008:26). However, despite this growth in job creation, it is insufficient to address the employment needs of the entire country's population, especially the growing number of unemployed youth.

The continued social and economic exclusion of millions of South Africans is reflected in high levels of poverty and inequality. Among the population groups, the incident of poverty is highest amongst blacks with 54.8 percent, Colored with 34.2 percent, Indians 7.1 percent, and Whites 0.4 percent. (SSA 2008a). As a consequence of the legacy of apartheid , poverty is not only deep-rooted but the structure of the economy locks the majority of the population into a poverty trap. Thus, poorer households who are mostly blacks still have unsatisfactory access to basic services such as clean water, energy, health care and education.

Table .3 Poverty Rate, Population Share and Poverty Share by Population Group

Group Population	Percentage shares Poverty rate of individuals	Percentage Shares Population Poor Individuals	
Blacks	54.8	80.1	93.3
Coloureds	34.2	8.7	6.3
Indians	7.1	2.5	0.4
Whites	0.4	8.6	0.1
All	47.1	100	100

Source: *Statistics South Africa (2008a)*

With regard to poverty, 49 percent of the population were classified as poor in 1994, in 2006 the figure dropped to 47.1 percent (SSA 2008a). Among the population groups, the incident of poverty is highest amongst blacks with 54.8 percent, Colored with 34.2 percent, Indians 7.1

percent, and Whites 0.4 percent. (SSA 2008a). As a consequence of the legacy of Apartheid, poverty is not only deep-rooted but the structure of the economy locks the majority of the population into a poverty trap. Thus, poorer households who are mostly blacks still have unsatisfactory access to basic services such as clean water, energy, health care and education. Poverty is unevenly distributed amongst provinces. According to 2006 figures, poverty rates range from 26 percent in Gauteng, 23.4 percent in the Western Cape, to 53.2 percent in Eastern Cape (SAIRR, 2010:277).

Table 4. Poverty levels: people living in poverty by province and race, 2009 (proportions)

Poverty levels: people living in poverty by province and race, 2009 (proportions)					
Province	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
Eastern Cape	57.8%	0.8%	36.6%	12.7%	53.2%
Free State	49.7%	1.3%	53.3%	25.0%	45.1%
Gauteng	32.7%	0.6%	26.4%	14.9%	26.0%
KwaZulu-Natal	58.2%	0.6%	26.9%	9.7%	50.9%
Limpopo	50.5%	3.1%	24.9%	23.7%	49.4%
Mpumalanga	51.1%	1.0%	35.7%	13.1%	47.8%
North West	51.5%	1.7%	50.9%	18.1%	47.6%
Northern Cape	50.9%	1.0%	46.1%	10.8%	43.8%
Western Cape	38.4%	0.7%	24.1%	14.0%	23.4%
South Africa	49.5%	0.9%	29.4%	11.5%	42.1%

(Source :(SAIRR, 2010).

There has been some noticeable decline in the rate of poverty albeit modest, decline in absolute poverty since 1994. Similarly, recent official statistics show that between the end of apartheid and 2007, South Africa's Gini coefficient dropped slightly, but also that the income of the poorest 20% of the population declined from 2.7% to 2.3% of total income (Presidency 2009). Nonetheless, after 17 years of democratic rule, the country's Gini coefficient remains one of the highest in the world. Consequently, Comparative poverty, that is, impoverishment relative to some locally important reference group, is probably more significant. A South

African Government's *Millennium Development Goals Mid-term Report* attests to this reality by noting that between 1993 and 2006 "inequality between races has declined, *while inequality within race groups has grown*" (RSA 2007:15 emphasis added).

There seems to be a link between perceptions of relative poverty, inequality, feeling of exclusion and marginalization and the spate of service delivery protests. According to evidence provided by Municipal IQ's Municipal Hotspot Monitor, service delivery protests do not necessarily take place in the poorest local authorities, nor do those local authorities with the worst service delivery records account the highest levels of protests. Instead, better performing local authorities in urban areas tend to register higher levels of protest activity. It can thus be concluded that relative, rather than absolute, deprivation may be regarded as one of the primary underlying causes the wave of violent protests. Indeed the big metros that are perceived to have a better service delivery record also serve as attractive magnets for settlement options for migrants, who are subsequently met with the stark reality of high levels of unemployment and competition for already scarce resources in mostly informal settlements on the periphery of the cities. It is competition for employment, business opportunities and for resources such as water, sanitation, as well as health which is responsible for the recent spate of violent protest (CRAI, 2008; HSRC, 2008; Alexander, 2010). An GGLN report (2011:23) explains the primary factor for violence thus.

"The sense of relative deprivation, and inequality within an urban context, is key to understanding why protests take place...Add to this the marginalization and exclusion felt by communities in informal settlements and the general desperation for services in these areas, and top it up with a lack of information from the municipality".

Xenophobic attacks on foreigners living in the settlements have taken place in the resource constrained environments: foreign nationals –especially African residents have become targets of the violent municipal service delivery protests (HSRC2008:7; GGLN, 2011:23).

6. THE CHALLENGES FACING LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Notwithstanding the fact local governance been given a critical in the development process and the legal, policy and institutional frameworks in place to establish and democratise local governance with the objective of deepening democracy, and improving service delivery. However, despite the significant progress achieved since the local governance reforms challenges still remain. The key issues are as follows.

Dysfunctional local Committees

The majority of participatory committees are do not function effectively, or just exist on paper. In South Africa, although the principal of community participation is entrenched in the Constitution which requires local government to "encourage the involvement of communities and community organizations in matters of local government" (RSA, 1996:81) and , the Systems Act 2000 obligates local government to establish mechanism to enable communities to participate, the ward committees in general have not been operating effectively. Despite the local government legislative and policy frameworks being in place to establish a system of

participatory democracy at the local government, for the most part, most of these committees are largely dysfunctional and not operational in most local authorities across the country (COGTA, 2009:13) The functionality and effectiveness of the ward committees is a matter of serious concern (COGTA, 2009:13). In short, the committees in general have not been effective channels and there is a lack of connectivity between communities and municipalities as a result (Atkins, 2002; de Visser, 2009; Christmas & de Visser, 2009). As Atkinson (2001) has observed, although wards are government created platforms for community engagement with local government, communities in South Africa still elect to take their grievances to the streets.

Management Capacity Deficit

Management capacity deficit is a major hindrance to effective local governance. There is insufficient human resources capacity to cope with the multiplicity of mandates .The scarcity of qualified staff – especially the shortage of qualified professional and technical staff – has been a major constraint for most of the local authorities in the region (*Chikulo, 2004*) The problem of the shortage of skilled manpower is widespread, and in some instances was exacerbated by the exodus of experienced municipal managers from council employment(*Pycroft,2000b; De.Visser and Christmass 2009*) Furthermore, the lack of capacity skills has been exacerbated by the by appointments based on political patronage rather than skills and expertise. Pycroft (2002) has noted that while municipal capacity tends to be concentrated within metropolitan municipalities, administrative capacity deficit is prevalent at district level.

As a consequence, there is insufficient human resources capacity to cope with the multiplicity of mandates which have to be carried out more or less simultaneously by the democratic local governance structures.)In South Africa, the problem of the shortage of skilled manpower is widespread, and in some instances was exacerbated by the exodus of experienced municipal managers from council employment. The management capacity deficit has been exacerbated by appointments based on political patronage rather than skills and expertise , with the result that the existing fragile skills base of local authorities has been even further eroded(*De Visser and Christmas 2009; Atkins,2002*).In addition, rural local authorities lack the organizational, technical and administrative capabilities to fulfill their mandate. The lack of a lack of scarce skills was highlighted by an official report (COGTA, 2009:32):

“It was widely pointed out during the assessments that effective professional administration in municipalities is undermined by the difficulty of attracting qualified and experienced technical and management professionals outside of the urban areas. “

Consequently, as Harrison had pointed out: “many local authorities in South Africa are so weak institutionally that they cannot perform even the most basic functions of management, service delivery, a sophisticated level of integrated and coordinated planning remains a long way off” (Harrison 2001:191). Under such circumstances, local authorities struggle to fulfill their responsibilities in terms of the constitution and the relevant local government legislation.

Paucity of Fiscal resources

Another fundamental challenge faced by local governance is the gap between financial resources and municipal expenditure needs, coupled with inadequate financial management systems. Consequently, dependency on central government grants is a common feature of local governance. Although South Africa is characterized by a high degree of fiscal decentralization, and local government is entitled to an equitable share of nation revenue, the majority of local authorities are highly dependent on central government. This problem is exacerbated a 'culture of non-payment' of charges for basic services, mainly by township dwellers, a habit which has origins the apartheid legacy. This has resulted in massive accumulated deficits from non-payment of such services as refuse collection and water supplies (Pycroft, 2002; Nel & Binns, 2001). Furthermore, local governance has been saddled with a burden of "unfunded mandates" – although additional responsibilities have been devolved to local governance, appropriate levels of funding have not followed (Nel & Binns, 2002; NPC, 2010). An official report (COGTA, 2009:20) established that "most local government departments were found to be under-resourced, receiving only, on average, 3.5% of the provincial budget. Finally, poor financial management in local authorities, such as inadequate financial and budgetary management systems, and poor record-keeping, often results in the mismanagement of scarce financial resources.

Development Planning and Management

There is also a lack of a holistic, integrated planning and management at district level. Effective integrated planning and management is undermined by the absence of an effective coordinating mechanism under the direct control of local authorities. The local authorities have no legal administrative authority over central government line departments. Institutionally IDPs means that that specific local government is responsible for ensuring the preparation of spatially defined development plan, to which all role players – the private including community sector, central and provincial government, including parastatals, and local government itself come to an agreement to what is best for the community. The communities are expected to participate in this process through the IDP forums. For the most part these committees are ineffective. However, observers (*Bardill, 2000; Tapscott, 2000*) have identified weaknesses in intergovernmental relations, poor coordination among various levels and departments of government, as well as the dominance of central and provincial governments and external consultants. As Ashley (*et.al, 2008:8*) have aptly observed in spite of commitment to decentralization, political and institutional power still resides at the centre: "The resources and responsibilities vested in the local sphere of government continue to set largely by other spheres of government, particularly line departments at provincial levels, such as Water Affairs, Public Works and Housing. With specific regard to the IDP, according to Municipal Systems Act, 2000, community participation in both content of IDP and process by which it is drafted is compulsory. In short, it is supposed to be a 'bottom-up' participatory process. Yet although District Councils have been allocated the role of 'ensuring integrated development for the district as a whole'(s 83(3)) they have to align their IDP the Provincial Growth Plan, and in turn prepare the framework for the IDPs of local municipalities in their areas of jurisdiction (*Nel & Binn, 2002; Pycroft, 2000a*). In most instances, this means that development projects are only

approved when they fit into central government plans and vision (*Oluwu& Wunsch, 2004*).As a result the planning tends to be top-down, and in most cases,' consultant –driven' with a token community participation.

7.CONCLUSION

Local governance has been given a pivotal and distinctive mandate in the promotion of participatory democracy and delivery of basic social services at the local level. This recognition of the developmental role of local governance in the Constitution and other key legislation, has given it a new dynamic as an instrument of sustainable development and service delivery .However, in spite of the legislative framework to facilitate the smooth delivery of basic services to communities. The recurrent violent service delivery protests have brought into sharp focus the challenges afflicting local governance and, more specifically, the lack of effective accountability and meaningful inclusive public participation in local governance and development. In most cases, it is evident communities have resorted to protests only d after unsuccessful attempts to engage with local authorities over issues of failed service delivery. In short, The paper concludes that the recurrent, widespread, violent and increasingly xenophobic municipal service delivery protests, are indicative of the fact that, despite the progress made in the past seventeen years to establish the policy framework and institutional structure, to effectively facilitate socio-economic development, and address the backlogs of access to basic social services and poverty alleviation, challenges still remain

8. REFERENCES

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