

Challenges and tensions faced by rural based municipalizes in delivering basic services in South Africa

Xolisile Ngumbela*

Department of Public Administration, University of Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa

*Corresponding author. E-mail: xolisile.ngumbela@gmail.com

Received: 11-Aug-2022, Manuscript No. JPAPR-22-71728; **Editor assigned:** 13-Aug-2022, PreQC No. JPAPR-22-71728 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 26-Aug-2022, QC No. JPAPR-22-71728; **Revised:** 10-Jan-2023, Manuscript No. JPAPR-22-71728 (R); **Published:** 17-Jan-2023, DOI: 10.15651/JPAPR.23.1.011.

ABSTRACT

The goal of this paper is to investigate why rural towns are struggling to provide services and to provide possible remedies. The goal of this study was to critically examine the level of rural municipalities service delivery deficits in South Africa and to identify solutions to improve service delivery in the study region and beyond. Poor service delivery has been a serious issue in many rural municipalities in South Africa, mainly due to corruption, political favoritism, and skills shortages at the local administrative level. Poor service delivery has been a severe problem in many South African rural municipalities, owing to corruption, political favoritism, and a lack of skills at the local administrative level. The study relied on primary data gathered from 120 people. A questionnaire and content analysis of official documents were employed in a descriptive quantitative manner. To put this in context, rural municipalities income base is found to be challenged by a culture of nonpayment of services, corrupt supply chains, and insufficient accountability systems. Several of the following key aspects are among these impediments; To begin with, there is a lack of reform in rural communities. Second, local governments continue to lack institutional ability and expertise. Also, there is a dearth of robust technology and trustworthy data to inform decision making processes. Finally, municipal efficacy in organizing and coordinating development plans must be maintained. As a result, municipalities are not self-sufficient, and many require national government bailouts, which sadly leads to a dependency syndrome and a vicious cycle over time.

Keywords: Financial management, Municipalities, Public policy, Rural communities, Financial management, Non-payment

INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a dual economy, with prosperous parts in large cities coexisting with underdeveloped areas in townships, informal settlements, and destitute rural areas. Due to the dualistic character of the economy, both market and government failures in service delivery are possible. Government service delivery problems are more obvious at the local level in South Africa, and the quest for service delivery is long overdue. Batho Pele has been the philosophy regulating public service delivery in South Africa since democratic dispensation in 1944. However, in many municipalities, poor service delivery has been a serious issue, partially due to corruption, political favors, and skills shortages. However housing, water and sanitation, land, energy, and infrastructure are among fundamental services that both developing and developed countries must offer to their citizens in an

efficient, equitable, and sustainable manner (Beall J, et al., 2005). From the standpoint of economic efficiency, it is necessary to balance market and government (*i.e.*, administrative) shortcomings in service delivery. While government should supply pure public goods despite of its flaws, pure private goods should largely be left to the market. The public sector of a country is determined by its current economic circumstances as well as its history, politics, resources, and the expectations made on it by its citizens, according to a global overview of the public sector. Section 151(1) of the South African Constitution provides for the creation of municipalities in the local government realm (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Section 152 of the South African Constitution declares local government to be the engine of basic service delivery (Hammer JS, 2013). The municipality, or local government, is the one closest to the people. However, in many areas, inadequate service delivery has

slowed racial and class integration and equality in South Africa.

This research is based on the ideas of the social contract theory, which explains how the state and society interact. The goal of this research is to look at the issues of service delivery that rural South African municipalities confront in general. Furthermore, this research proposes approaches to improve service delivery (Farrugia L, 2019). Furthermore, this research focuses on the compliance and execution of laws in the local government sector, as well as the obstacles that municipalities confront in providing services (Hinchliffe S and Whatmore S, 2006).

After decades of colonial and settler colonial rule, the 1994 democratic dispensation in South Africa was a miracle. Prior to 1994 political dispensation African populations have been subjected to various forms of discrimination and oppression in both cases. The year 1994 marks a turning point in South Africa's political history (Liddle B and Lung S, 2010). With the exception of African rural residents, who have been constitutionally denied the right to own property, a peaceful transition from years of persecution to freedom was made for all. To demonstrate this argument, Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, looked at the province of the KwaZulu-Natal where the majority of political activity on constitutional issues occurred. According to them the constitutional discussions on the position of the Zulu king in particular and traditional authority in general in South Africa have never stopped since 1992 (Loewe M, et al., 2020). The (provincial) constitution, according to their article, seemed to relegate rural African people to permanent poverty by placing land under the control of traditional leaders and communal land legislation instead of individual ownership of land rights. The purpose of this article therefore is to demonstrate and argue how the political process in South Africa disadvantages rural people. As a result, this paper it's not just a paper on rural development and rural municipalities but it's also about service delivery reform as a whole. And according to the World Bank's collection of development indicators derived from officially recognized sources, South Africa's rural population (percentage of total population) was 32.65% in 2020. According to the World Bank, about 55.5 percent of the population (30.3 million people) lives in poverty at the national upper poverty line (ZAR 992), whereas 13.8 million people (25%) live in food poverty. Subsistence agriculture, social handouts, and remittances from family members working in cities or mines are also important sources of income for poor rural households (Munzhedzi PH and Phago K, 2020). Traditional systems of land tenure typically bind household assets, making it harder for households to use their holdings to build prosperity. Limited access to essential municipal services such as water, sewage, and electricity, as well as a lack of high quality social services (education, health, and ambulances) and transportation

services, exacerbate poverty and unemployment (roads and buses). Rural municipalities may play a critical role in reducing the worst forms of poverty and enabling development in rural regions by effectively delivering basic services, leveraging municipal spending to create local jobs, and facilitating Local Economic Development (LED). It is important to note, however, that municipalities are not completely responsible for addressing the massive difficulties of rural poverty and development. Indeed, the long term viability of rural towns is reliant on overall government policies towards rural areas and the development of rural economy. Government policy began the process of prioritizing the transformation of rural areas from 'surplus labor reserves' into dynamic local economies capable of providing sustainable self-employment opportunities and remunerative jobs, initially through the rural development strategy and the rural development framework. Several rural development programs, including land reform and restitution programs, as well as numerous LED efforts, are now pursuing this goal. In the short term, the most pressing task is to guarantee that municipal expenditure is in line with local development requirements and priorities. In the medium term, rural municipalities must ensure that their own revenues are raised in accordance with their fiscal capacity, reducing their reliance on national payments while also maximizing their ability to supply services and encourage growth (Scott C, 2002).

Defining Rural Development

Following apartheid, the restructuring of local government resulted in a large scale re demarcation of municipal boundaries. This procedure abolished the administrative divide between urban and rural communities, recognizing the deep ties that exist between the two. While this is generally a good thing, it has complicated the administrative decision of what constitutes a rural region and, by consequence, a rural municipality (Shaidi EW, 2018).

The mechanisms and aims of development are often used to define rural development. It was defined as a structural restructuring of the rural economy as it moved away from agriculture in the 1970's. Another prominent school of thought focused on providing social services to the rural poor when defining rural development. This definition was founded on the fact that equitable access to social services in rural areas was not always assured, even when income grew rapidly. The term "rural development" has been broadened to cover the development of human capital, as well as the enhancement of living standards, through social services such as education and health. However rural development is defined as "positive advancement of communities in rural regions through enhancement of rural institutions and systems, expansion of rural infrastructure, and increase in rural economic activities" by the South African rural development quarterly. This

concept recognizes that rural development encompasses more than just agricultural activities, and also includes poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and other efforts aimed at improving people's economic standing in rural areas. And currently the comprehensive rural development strategy informs current government policies on rural development (Yip C, 2016). The cornerstones of rural development under this strategy are agrarian transformation and land reform, as well as infrastructure (such as schools, clinics, boreholes, and water reticulation systems) that may support both agricultural development and basic service delivery to rural families. This indicates that local government, in collaboration with other players, will play an essential role (Chattopadhyay S, 2012).

Van Donk postulates that following the fall of apartheid system, the restructuring of local government resulted in a large scale re demarcation of municipal boundaries. This procedure abolished the administrative divide between urban and rural communities, recognizing the deep ties that exist between the two (Morgan B, 2006). While this is generally a good thing, it has complicated the administrative decision of what constitutes a rural region and, by consequence, a rural municipality. Rural areas are characterized as possessing two distinct qualities, as also mentioned on the rural development framework as villages and small towns that are distributed throughout sparsely inhabited areas, where people farm or rely on natural resources for their daily

survival. Secondly according to van Donk it's where large villages are found in former homelands that solely rely on migrant labor system and remittances, as well as government social grants, to survive, and which often have traditional land tenure arrangements at the perils of the traditional leader of the area (Reddy P and Kauzya JM, 2015). In the same vein Hinchliffe and what more, further mention that that the constitutional classification of municipalities, on the other hand, makes no distinction between urban and rural communities. And also according to the municipal structures act and the constitution, municipalities are classified in the same way in the constitution, regardless of whether they are in urban or rural areas. The only differentiation made outside of metropolitan municipalities is between local (category B) and district (category C) municipalities. It's also worth noting that many large urban municipalities, including the eThekweni and Tshwane metros, contain functionally rural districts. The technique proposed by Scott and supported by the department of cooperative governance is the principal mechanism used in this paper and by treasury to define rural municipalities (Lasserve AD and Royston L, 2012). This method groups towns into seven categories depending on the setting in which they operate and variables such as the number of impoverished households, the proportion of households with access to services (water, sewage, and electricity), and information on capital and operational budgets (Table 1).

Table 1: Classification of municipalities into categories.

Class	Characteristics	Number
Metros	Category A	6
Secondary cities (B1)	All local municipalities referred to as secondary cities	21
Large towns (B2)	All local authorities have a central business district. These municipalities have a wide range of population sizes, and they all have a sizable urban population.	29
Small towns (B3)	They are distinguished by the absence of a large town as a central urban community. These municipalities often have a tiny population, with a large proportion of the population living in one or more small towns. The existence of commercial farms characterizes rural places in this category, as these communities livelihoods are mostly reliant on agriculture. Its inclusion in the analysis of rural municipalities is due to the presence of such important rural areas and the agriculture sector.	111
Mostly rural (B4)	These are distinguished by the presence of only one or two small villages in their territories, community land tenure, and villages or scattered clusters of houses, and are usually found in former homelands.	70

Districts (C1)	District municipalities that are not water services providers.	25
Districts (C2)	District municipalities that are water services providers.	21

In the typology presented in Table 1, rural municipalities are those categorized as B3 (small towns) or B4 (mainly rural). The geographic location of municipalities in B3 and B4 closely matches the concept of rural areas established in the rural development framework. As shown in Figure 1, they are concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, and Limpopo (Chattopadhyay S, 2022). Some rural (mainly B3) municipalities can be found in the free state, Northwest, Mpumalanga, and Western Cape. According to the table above, rural municipalities appear to be concentrated in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, and Limpopo.

make up 54% of the population, while in B3 municipalities, they make up 52%. Rural municipalities have a much smaller economically active population (defined as people aged 20 to 64) than urban municipalities. This demographic makes up 41% of the population in B4 municipalities and 51% of the population in B3 municipalities, as well as 60% of the population in urban regions. According to STATS SA mid year population data, young people under the age of 20 account for 52% of the population in B4 municipalities and 43% in B3 municipalities, compared to only 36% in urban municipalities. People in rural municipalities are also less likely than their urban counterparts to hold school credentials, according to STATS SA's mid year population figures for 2020. In B4 municipalities, 10% of the population over the age of 20, and 8% in B3 municipalities have no school qualifications, compared to only 3% in metropolitan regions (Basu AM and Sharma R, 2021).

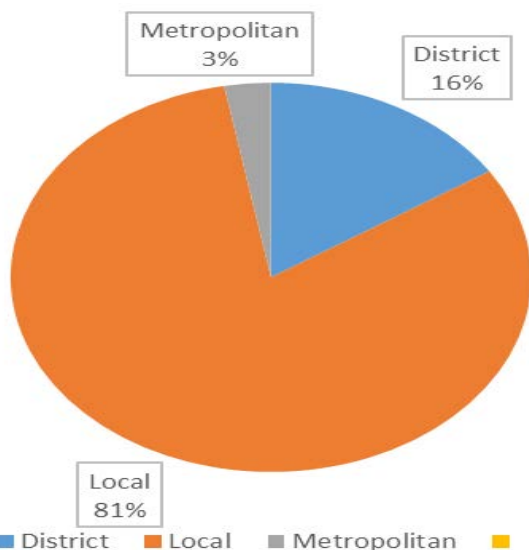


Figure 1: Number of municipalities

Source: South African local government association and COGTA

Mid year population estimates, 2019, declares that between B3 and B4 municipalities, there are substantial changes in settlement types. In census 2001, statistics South Africa indicated that 52% of households in B3 municipalities live in small urban communities, 29% on farms, and 10% in settlements on tribal territory. In B4 municipalities, tribal settlements account for 83% of households, while farms and small towns account for 7% and 7%, respectively. STS SA further claims that in rural municipalities, the economically active population (defined as those aged 20 to 64) is significantly lower than in urban regions. If STATS SA's argument is correct, rural municipalities have a higher proportion of women than men, as well as a generally younger population than metropolitan municipalities. In B4 municipalities, women

Local Economic Development Programs in Rural Areas

Rural municipalities are not the only agency attempting to help rural local economic development, according to Munzhedzi and Phago. Rural development projects are supported by national and provincial governments, state owned enterprises, and the private sector. Land reform programs, agricultural support programs, tourism support programs, human capital development, agency development and support program, and local economic development initiative are among the national and provincial government programs, according to Munzhedzi and Phago, who also support and agree with the 2011 local government budgets and expenditure review committee. It should also be borne in mind that a variety of governmental agencies and state owned corporations are also responsible for various LED efforts, in addition to national and provincial government initiatives. In some cases, these efforts are part of the entity's corporate responsibility program; in others, separate programs have been developed to provide technical assistance to municipalities as well as financial assistance for project implementation. Private sector LED projects span from activities by individual businesses, farmers, and churches to research institutes and non-profit organizations focusing on certain components of development such as microfinance, subsistence gardening, and skills development. The Women's Development Bank (WDB) and the old mutual group's project imbizo are two examples of micro finance programs.

The Economic Profile of Rural Municipalities

According to de Noronha and van Leeuwen, rural economies are less diverse than their metropolitan counterparts. The economies of rural places are less diverse than those of urban ones. According to COGTA, B4 municipalities, government, community, and social services are thought to provide more than 35% of total Gross Value Added (GVA). Agriculture accounts for 20% of GVA in B3 municipalities, indicating the presence of commercial farming, but it accounts for just 10% of GVA in B4 municipalities. In all rural (B3 and B4) municipalities, wholesale and retail trade, infrastructure, and manufacturing all contribute significantly to GVA. Rural municipalities total GVA increased in real terms from 2005 to 2008, after which the economic downturn had an impact on rural areas, resulting in a minor fall. Manufacturing sector development drove the increase, while fundamental rural industries like agriculture remained unchanged. Rural growth is expected to return in 2012, though at a slower pace than in metropolitan regions, according to GVA projections. While the increase in GVA will be accompanied by an increase in rural household incomes, it will most likely be concentrated in municipalities in the B3 category. In rural locations, formal employment possibilities are scarce, and most are seasonal. It's hardly surprising, then, that adopting the official (or restricted) definition of unemployment, jobless rates in the B3 municipal regions average 23% and 36% in the B4 municipal areas. Wide variations in demographic, social, and economic circumstances and requirements, as well as available institutional capacities, must be factored into development strategies.

Rural municipalities are diverse, and development strategies must take into account the vast range of demographic, social, and economic circumstances and demands, as well as available institutional capacities. Many B3 communities, for example, have active agricultural sectors with great development potential, but this would necessitate concurrent improvements in farmer support services for new farmers. Other areas, such as women's health and education, may need to prioritize human capital development.

Rural Development and Local Government

Successful rural development is crucial for the long-term survival of rural communities, according to the 2011 local government budgets and expenditure review. It further goes by saying that local economies that are thriving generate demand for fundamental municipal services as well as the resources to pay for them. Rural development has been highlighted as a critical priority topic by the government, and the department of rural development and land affairs was established to focus specifically on this subject. Rural development is a wide notion that encompasses both public and private sector organizations. In terms of rural development,

municipalities have two main responsibilities: Providing adequate basic services and supporting Local Economic Growth (LED). Other government agencies, state owned corporations, and the private sector must also contribute in their respective areas of responsibility.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study collects data using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A questionnaire was utilized to collect quantitative data, while a focus group discussion was employed to acquire qualitative data. For data collecting, Kumar supports the use of questionnaires and focus group discussions. Quantitative data collected through surveys aids in the generalization of findings, whilst findings from focus group discussions aid in the gathering of particular information on the topic under consideration. This research was carried out in a number of rural municipalities in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The study's target population is 5 conveniently selected municipal councilors who will serve as the focal group, as well as 15 randomly selected municipal officials from five municipalities in Eastern Cape Province. Municipal authorities were chosen using a convenient sample method based on time, availability, and interest. According to Kumar, convenient sampling is beneficial since it takes into account participants availability and interest in learning. To eliminate prejudice and give all councillors the same chance to participate in the study, random sampling was employed to pick councilors who answered questionnaires.

Ethical Clearance

The researchers received ethical approval from the national department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to perform the study (COGTA). The agreement of the selected municipalities was sought in order to carry out the study in the South African local government realm. After receiving consent from COGTA, the researchers obtained permission from the municipalities management. Once the researchers had gotten authorization, they explained the goal of the study to the municipal personnel. The following were taken into account when determining ethical standards.

Informed Consent

When human subjects are participating in a research study, informed permission is essential in order to carry out the study and tell the participants about the potential dangers. Informed consent is defined by Yip, Han, and Sng as the ethical condition of such a study. After getting informed consent from the researchers, every police officer agreed to participate in the study. Throughout the study, the researcher made sure that participants were informed that they might withdraw at any moment if they thought their rights had been infringed or for any other reason, without having to explain their motivations to the researcher.

Avoiding Harm during the Research

During the study, damage is defined as an injury to a respondent's rights, safety, or well-being that encompasses both physical and mental components. In this study, the participants were not tricked or misled in any manner, causing them mental distress. During the study, none of the volunteers were injured as a result of their conduct. A method of informed consent was completed to safeguard respondent's autonomy. The researchers evaluated the long term consequences of the researcher's actions as part of the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity during Research

According to Kumar, privacy is an issue, as is consent to access, distribute, and use information. Data confidentiality, according to Farrugia, is essential for ethical research. It was discussed how the informed consent method will keep information private.

Furthermore, all information submitted was kept totally confidential and was solely utilized for academic purposes. Anonymity is the best way to secure personal information and records. The researchers ensured that no identifying information was revealed in the questionnaires distributed to the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis confirms that residents prioritize critical utilities such as water and power over other services. The municipality's service delivery is classified as inadequate. Residents, on the other hand, believe that if the municipality sticks to its IDP for the next several years, improvements in service delivery are possible. Many rural communities in the municipality cannot afford to pay for services since unemployment is so high. People are more worried about the availability of water in their communities than other services since water is a basic requirement for everyone. Water is frequently unavailable for 2–3 days in most communities. Water scarcity is caused by mostly dams that are not properly maintained, which have dried up due to the protracted dry season. In terms of sanitation, many ward inhabitants use pit toilets that are provided by the municipality, while others use flush toilets that they pay for the municipality to come and empty. Waste removal is not available in all places; it is only available in those that pay for it. Waste is deposited on the side of the road in other regions.

Despite the resources provided by the government to reduce poverty, the quantitative analysis and responses from participants in this study demonstrate that the majority of residents in the study area remain poor. There are persistent issues related with disobedience that impede rural municipalities from addressing financial mismanagement crises. Most villages in South African municipalities are impoverished and rural, making them reliant on government aid for basic amenities such as water, garbage management, and sanitation. The study

reveals that because the local municipality could not earn adequate cash from the public services provided to the communities, the delivery of municipal services has been reduced in certain rural municipalities. Less service delivery leads to more frequent protests and public dissatisfaction, which has a negative impact on the municipality's social welfare. The absence of fast response by political leadership to issues highlighted by communities is another factor for frequent protests. The responses to the poll questions further demonstrate that the leadership is inept and corrupt, with a greater contempt for communities. Ward committees are also understaffed, resulting in a lack of communication with residents. People tend to protest when essential municipal amenities like as running water, power, and sanitation are not provided, particularly in informal communities. Another reason for regular protests is that people believe politicians only exploit them to gain votes and do not follow through on their promises. Residents become enraged and resort to protests as a result. When locals demonstrate, infrastructure and property are damaged even more.

According to data from the most recent publication of STATS SA's financial census of municipalities report, rural municipalities continue to rely largely on national government to finance their budgets. Thus according to STATS SA, municipalities got 33c in the form of grants and subsidies from the national and provincial governments for every R1 in income earned in 2014. Municipalities generated the remaining two-thirds of revenue, with important sources being power sales (29 cents per R1), property rates (15 cents per R1), water sales (9 cents per R1), and sanitation costs (3 cents per R1)¹. It is evident that, on the surface, local governments appear to be in a strong position, as they are able to self-finance two thirds of their revenue. When the financial data is divided down by kind of municipality, however, a more nuanced picture emerges. Local and metropolitan municipalities are divided into five classes by the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Framework (MIIF). Metropolitan municipalities/big cities (A); secondary cities (B1); municipalities having a large town as their core (B2); municipalities with minor towns (B3); and municipalities with primarily rural populations (B4) (B4). In addition, a breakdown of STATS SA's municipal budget statistics by these groupings reveals the extent to which rural towns rely on grants and subsidies. In 2014, this kind of revenue accounted for 73% of total revenue received by B4 municipalities. The map below illustrates that municipalities in the erstwhile 'homelands,' particularly the old Transkei and Ciskei, have high percentages. STATS SA also indicated that Hlabisa and Vulamehlo in KwaZulu-Natal (95,9% and 95,0%, respectively) and Ntabankulu in the Eastern Cape were the three municipalities in the country that relied the most on government assistance (93,5 percent). Electricity sales, on the other hand, were the primary source of revenue for largely urban municipalities (A and B1). It

may also be argued that if municipalities were less reliant on grants and subsidies, national and provincial governments could utilize those funds to address other priorities. It might also help people and businesses save money on taxes. A decrease in government revenue as a percentage of total revenue would indicate that a municipality is achieving better levels of sustainability, development, and growth with resources generated from its own revenue base. The graph below illustrates that B4 municipalities' reliance on grants and subsidies has been largely consistent throughout time. In 2010, the national and provincial governments provided 74c for every R1 that B4 municipalities collected in income. In 2014, this declined marginally to 73c.

Over the past year, global economic trends have been dominated by the COVID-19 epidemic and legislative reactions to it. Despite the fact that the virus has progressed significantly more rapidly than predicted at this time last year, the world economy has fared slightly better. According to Schulz, everyone over the world, households and businesses have adapted to live with the virus, and economies have become more resilient, despite the fact that the pandemic is still ongoing. Tensions in delivering municipal services in rural areas by rural municipalities as discussed in this article shows that rural areas are the hardest hit areas in most countries. Schulz goes on to reveal that supply restrictions will continue to stifle growth for the rest of the disaster period. These, along with other temporary causes, hint to higher inflation rates for a while. However, there is still a lot of slack in the global labor market, implying that inflation risk is still present on both the upside and downside. According to Schulz, the likelihood of a big budgetary tightening, as occurred following the 2008-2009 crisis, is low, and financing conditions are expected to remain benign. The risk of financial volatility remains high after such a long recession, so central banks will depart their exceptional pandemic era support with caution. One of the most pressing concerns for policymakers is ensuring that the savings amassed by people and businesses during the pandemic are put to productive economic use rather of just pushing up asset prices. The post pandemic situation in the rural economies of scale and in municipalities in particular will need a rigorous revenue collection supported by strengthened levels of participation and commitment from the service consumers. Municipalities had to greatly improve on their accountability and encourage councilors to improve their community engagements that will result on improved ward committee participation.

Access to Basic Services in Rural Areas

The provision of basic services is a powerful tool for reducing poverty and unemployment while also building social capital. It can also help revive agriculture, tourism, and other non-farm rural businesses. Road infrastructure, for example, connects rural areas to metropolitan centers

and allows commodities and people to move freely throughout the area. Roads provide the links that allow local markets to grow and make public services like ambulances and policing more accessible. Perishable foods can be delivered to high value urban markets *via* good feeder highways (access roads) as emphasized by Tobgay, and McCullough, 2008. They go on to say that, according to them, Job creation opportunities through labor based maintenance initiatives can also help to boost household income and keep resources in the community. Development is hampered by a lack of transportation infrastructure. Depending on the nature and size of technology, water infrastructure has a lot of potential for supporting local and large scale agricultural activity. It is impossible to overstate the importance of energy infrastructure in rural communities. It has the potential to improve people's lives as well as small company development. The South African government has often said that rural towns must play a major role in decreasing backlogs in accessing basic services. However, careful decisions must be taken to match service levels to household budgets. The adoption of appropriate technology is critical in ensuring that existing resources are exploited to their full potential to satisfy the demands of households. As we stand now according to STATS SA's community survey 2019, it is clear then that rural municipalities (both B3 and B4) have the most sanitation, electricity, and water backlogs. This is in contrast to large urban towns, where a lack of affordable housing is a major issue.

According to Shaidi, current trends in access to essential services in rural towns show a slowing in delivery across the board. Except for electricity, there was limited development in access in 2009 in small town (B3) municipalities. And 80 % of respondents also agreed that there is a drop in availability to water services in predominantly rural (B4) towns. Sanitation service delivery has been flat since 2008. It's worth noting that the majority of these municipalities (B4) rely on government transfers to fund their capital projects. The municipal infrastructure grant is the most important of these disbursements (MIG). Even in rural areas, however, it is obvious that tremendous progress has been achieved in providing basic infrastructure. It must also be acknowledged that there is still much work to be done. Due to the dispersed nature of rural populations, the delivery of these services has frequently been attempted using urban based technology, which has proven to be costly. Concerns have been voiced that the MIG's design and management will not allow for the long term elimination of backlogs in remote villages. Because town based households are more likely to be able to pay for services, municipalities use it to upgrade and rehabilitate network infrastructure in towns. Given water limitations, low population density, and characteristics that make conventional technologies costly to install and run, there is also a general lack of experience with

alternative, relevant technology solutions that might be used to deliver services to communities.

Extending and Sustaining Access to basic Services

Extending and sustaining access to basic services in rural areas, as supported by treasury, necessitates several policy orientations, the first of which is a new consensus among rural communities on the importance of using appropriate and inexpensive technology. Networked utilities like waterborne sewerage and piped water are simply too expensive to establish and run in many rural locations. This must be acknowledged, and alternative technologies must be deployed to maximize access given current affordability levels and resource availability. Not to mention the need for more creativity in the development and deployment of technologies that are acceptable for rural areas with limited capacity and technical skill sets to operate such systems. Water harvesting, ground water supply *via* boreholes for water, on site sanitation, and non-grid energy solutions are among them. These are not only ecologically friendly service solutions, but they could also provide a more efficient and inexpensive manner of supplying rural services if they are effectively managed. It's also worth noting that technical skills supporting infrastructure delivery are thought to be a rare resource in the country, particularly in rural areas where acquiring these skills is difficult. Municipalities must develop new institutional forms of service delivery that allow them to capitalize on local knowledge and capabilities.

The Rural Households Infrastructure Grant

According to the national treasury, the government allocated the Rural Households Infrastructure Grant (RHIG) to fund rural infrastructure in addition to the MIG in the 2022/23 budget allocation. During the 2022/23 MTEF, the government allocated R87.3 billion for municipal equitable share, R236.3 billion to community development and R42.9 billion to municipal infrastructure. The goal of this funding is to continue eradicating sanitation and water shortages in rural towns by utilizing on site solutions such as VIP latrines and rainwater tanks. The technologies in question will rely on rural communities to help implement the program, and they should be taught to oversee the installation's operation and upkeep. This could help towns come up with new ways to provide services while lowering their running costs.

Municipalities' Local Economic Development Efforts

One of the aims of local government, according to sections 152(1)(c) and 153 of the constitution, is to promote social and economic development. The municipal systems act (200) expresses these goals in further detail. According to treasury 2022/23 budget it's been revealed that since 1995, a lot of effort and money has gone into making it possible for all municipalities to

participate in Local Economic Development (LED) in a significant way. The goal of LED amongst other things is to increase a community's economic potential in order to improve citizens quality of life. It is a collaborative process in which governmental, private, and social sector stakeholders collaborate to improve economic growth and job creation. While municipalities play an important role in LED, they typically lack the resources needed to accomplish large scale projects without the help of significant public private partnerships. LED projects must be evaluated in terms of their costs and benefits as part of a planned regional economic strategy. Rural development's potential as a driver of job creation is also highlighted in the government's new growth strategy of 2009. The strategy also emphasizes the significance of establishing a clear spatial development perspective in order to improve rural development prospects in respect to local areas true comparative advantages. Furthermore, the spatial perspective will outline the opportunities available and serve as the foundation for government spending decisions on infrastructure, housing, and local economic development initiatives. The approach also emphasizes the necessity of infrastructure investment in terms of creating jobs and allowing ratepayers to pay for services supplied at the same time for their convenience and survival, which will ultimately in a way translate into better life for all as was promised during local government electioneering engagements.

Despite the fact that LED has been acknowledged as a vital function for local government, spending on LED projects is reportedly quite low when compared to other service delivery objectives as argued by Treasury. On average, most municipalities devote less than 1% of their operating budgets to LED projects, either directly or indirectly through municipal bodies (development agencies). Depending on the municipality's geographical location and comparative advantages, initiatives range from tourism to agriculture. Most coastal towns, for example, are focusing their LED projects on tourism development and urban regeneration programs in order to attract more investment and tourism. National treasury has also stated that a portion of the municipal infrastructure grant may be used to assist LED related economic infrastructure developments in accordance with the municipality's integrated development strategy (IDP).

Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant

In trying to further assist the municipalities financially assist the South African government came up with a grant for a neighborhood development partnership which was called a neighbourhood development partnership grant. The Neighbourhood Development Partnership Award (NDPG) was launched in 2006 as another conditional grant to municipalities. The award was aimed at improving household quality of life by establishing economically feasible and long term community and

corporate infrastructure. It favors investments that encourage people to participate in LED efforts, hence it has an LED bias. The grant is primarily intended for municipalities with the highest concentrations of poor people, in order to take advantage of economies of scale, or a critical mass of people required to maintain certain types of development. As shown in table, the neighbourhood development partnership grant was targeted at around 54% of South Africa's poorest population, with R5.2 billion going to metros and secondary cities and R3.6 billion going to other places, including rural municipalities. It is allegedly reported that no new applications are not being accepted at this time due to tight budgetary constraints the country is facing with COVID-19 contributing as well with its Person Protective Equipment (PPE).

According to the NDPG case study as reported by National treasury Ngangelizwe township revitalization, King Sabata Dalindyebo local municipality (KSD) in Maratha, to drive more public and private sector investment in Ngangelizwe, the KSD local municipality was given a neighbourhood development partnership grant for R59 million (R10.8 million in technical assistance and R48.2 million in capital grant). Letters of intent worth R1.3 billion have been secured as part of the municipality's drive to encourage investment into the

township. KSD designed a township regeneration approach that focuses on building a number of prioritized neighborhood nodes, according to the case study. Construction of a light industry business site, the development of athletic facilities, and the upgrade of health facilities are just a few of the initiatives. This is the art of a project facilitated by the development bank of Southern Africa's sustainable communities initiative, which is based on a social compact signed with the local communities involved. As a result, it is a people centered approach that emphasizes involvement, value addition, and training support for existing SMMEs in the township. According to the case study, the grant also enhances current services, such as updating and extending the local clinic in collaboration with the Eastern Cape department of health, and rebuilding and upgrading sports facilities in collaboration with the private sector. The KSD approach emphasizes the importance of viewing the redevelopment as "not business as usual," but rather as an opportunity to try new and innovative techniques to enhance better service delivery. In this case, the department of human settlements encourages the adoption of alternative technologies to create a more sustainable neighborhood by incorporating solar energy and labor intensive construction methods that help local SMMEs grow (Table 2).

Table 2: Neighbourhood development partnership grant awards per type of municipality.

Category	Type of municipality	Number of type	Number of NDPG municipalities	Number of programmes	NDPG allocation (Rbn)	As % NDPG committed	Number of people in poverty (Millions)
A	Metros	6	6	35	3.44	39	3
B1	Secondary cities	21	11	14	1.74	20	2
B2	Large towns	29	11	12	0.82	9	1
B3	Small towns	111	11	11	0.66	7	0
B4	Mostly rural	70	12	12	1.47	17	2
C	Districts	46	6	6	0.69	8	2
Total		283	57	90	8.82	100	11

Source: National Treasury local government database

Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

The extended public works program is a government wide initiative aimed at increasing job opportunities through delivering infrastructure. According to Ngumbela, the program allocates allocated funding to province and municipal governments for labor intensive projects like as road construction, environmental projects, water and sanitation, and other social and economic services. It

also encourages the creation of long term capacity for infrastructure maintenance, the provision of community services in health, welfare, and other sectors, and investments in early childhood development programs. Municipalities have taken little advantage of the increased public works program so far, completing fewer than 13% of the total number of projects (in number). The infrastructure sector has accounted for the majority of

municipal activities, which are frequently linked to MIG projects. In 2008/09, the program was linked to a total of 1 866 infrastructure projects, out of a total of 2 266 municipal infrastructure projects that year. Although exact data by municipality is not available, rural municipalities, particularly in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, have benefited the most from the increased public works program. According to Ngumbela, the infrastructure sector of the program provided almost 1 million job possibilities between 2004/05 and 2008/09, exceeding a target of 750 000, as shown in table above.

Institutional Capacity Deficits

The basic developmental responsibility of municipalities is outlined in section 53 of the 1996 constitution, which includes the requirement to establish and administer administration, as well as budgeting and planning. This constitutional article continues to outline this duty, stating that the basic requirements of communities must be prioritized, with a focus on community member's socioeconomic growth. Unfortunately, weak institutions have arisen, with mechanisms that have been penetrated and paralyzed by political interests, diverting public resources and undermining municipalities constitutional mission. AGSA is one of a number of government studies that show a demonstrable failure to meet stated performance targets in areas such as Service Delivery and Budget Implementation (SDBIPs). As many towns are unable to account for their budgets and make poor administrative judgments, these types of weak institutional practices have become the norm. Recklessness and obstinacy have triumphed as a result of these glaring political failures to realize their developmental objective. Interference in municipal administration, corruption culture, and a lack of critical skills are identified as some of the key contributors to deficient institutional capacity in this section, which will inevitably necessitate bailouts and massive budget injections in the post COVID-19 period in order to digitize. The next paragraphs go over each of these in depth.

Shortage of Critical Set

Munzhedzi and Phago indicate that many rural municipalities in provinces including Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the North West are struggling to pass audits. Lack of crucial skills, such as accountants and internal auditors, is one of the reasons for the inability to conduct a clean audit. Many mostly rural towns continue to struggle to hire engineers, project managers, and experienced managers, in addition to a shortage of finance related expertise. These abilities are required for South Africa's development plan to be realized. The local sphere of government would be unable to fulfill its constitutional developmental duty without these skills and capacity to provide basic municipal services. Clearly, all municipalities within their authority must collaborate with local communities and other stakeholders to fulfill the

development objective, which includes, in the current context, the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Municipalities are more likely to fail in their development objective if they lack the expertise and competence to produce well-balanced budgets, internal auditors to advise on early deviations, and internal accountability measures to combat corruption. In some cases, the location of rural municipalities is a factor to consider. Rural municipalities struggle to attract and retain qualified applicants for important posts, owing to a lack of capability in most rural municipalities. The skills and capacities of most municipalities in South Africa have also been a source of concern for the auditor general.

CONCLUSION

Even in modern day South Africa, it is evident and will always be clear that rural municipalities play a crucial role in rural development by providing basic infrastructure, especially access roads. Municipalities must investigate the use of relevant technology that may be implemented and managed sustainably in rural settings. To be sure, the rural household support grant continues to play an important role in this area, supporting the need for the continuous distribution of enclosed, VIP toilets and rainwater tanks to rural homes. Innovative service delivery options, such as contracting families to offer road maintenance services, can also boost the development impact of municipalities regular activities. Municipalities should play a vital role in LED by gradually expanding basic infrastructure and ensuring that current infrastructure is maintained, as well as by establishing a user friendly regulatory environment and facilitating catalytic partnerships with other stakeholders. It has been proven that the ability of rural municipalities to collect own revenues are largely influenced by their socio-economic circumstances and the skill set available given that it is difficult for them to attract the necessary skill set needed. For many years, it has been reported that rural residents have struggled with poor wages and a lack of job possibilities. Due to constraints such as insufficient production inputs, a lack of farm machinery and equipment, limited access to loans, and low market access, many are poor and uncompetitive. However, and most notorious is that rural municipalities themselves also show little or no fiscal effort in raising own revenues from non-poor households, businesses and from charging for services rendered. The consequence is that these municipalities are becoming increasingly dependent on government grants and transfers.

Whether a municipality is an impediment or a catalyst for local development is largely determined by the quality of leadership provided by the mayor and council, the improvement of the skills of the officials employed by the municipality, the presence of corruption and maladministration, and the municipality's ability to mobilize and use the resources available to it effectively. Municipalities in many rural areas must find ways to

collaborate with traditional authorities in order to facilitate appropriate land use management, the delivery of basic services, and the collection of rates from non-poor households and businesses on traditional land.

REFERENCES

- Beall J, Mkhize S, Vawda S (2005). Emergent democracy and 'resurgent' tradition: Institutions, chieftaincy and transition in KwaZulu-Natal. *J. South. Afr. Stud.* 31(4): 755-771.
- Hammer JS (2013). 'Balancing market and government failure in service delivery', Lahore. *J. Econom.* 18: 1-19.
- Farrugia L (2019). 'WASP (Write A Scientific Paper): The ongoing process of ethical decision making in qualitative research: Ethical principles and their application to the research processes. *Early. Hum. Dev.* 133:48-51.
- Hinchliffe S, Whatmore S (2006). Living cities: Towards a politics of conviviality. *Cult. Sci. J.* 15(2):123-138.
- Liddle B, Lung S (2010). Age structure, urbanization, and climate change in developed countries: Revisiting STIRPAT for disaggregated population and consumption related environmental impacts. *Popul. Environ.* 31(5):317-343.
- Loewe M, Zintl T, Houdret A (2020). The social contract as a tool of analysis: Introduction to the special issue on "Framing the evolution of new social contracts in Middle Eastern and North African countries. *World. Dev.* 145:104982.
- Munzhedzi PH, Phago K (2020). Necessitating a Germane Developmental Local Government Agenda in South Africa: A Post COVID-19 Contemplation. *Afr. J. Gov. Dev.* 9(11):181-199.
- Scott C (2002). Accountability in the regulatory state. In *Administrative Law*. 1st edition, Routledge, England, UK. 397-419.
- Shaidi EW (2018). Investigation into causes of service delivery protests in municipalities: A case study of Nelson Mandela Bay municipality. Unpublished Thesis. Nelson Mandela University. Port Elizabeth.
- Yip C, Han NLR, Sng BL (2016). Legal and ethical issues in research. *Indian. J. Anaesth.* 60(9): 684.
- Chattopadhyay S (2012). Decentralization and delivery of urban basic services: The West Bengal experience. *Dev. Pract.* 22(1):57-70.
- Morgan B (2006). Turning off the tap: Urban water service delivery and the social construction of global administrative law. *Eur. J. Int. Law.* 17(1):215-246.
- Reddy P, Kauzya JM (2015). Local government capacity in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. *Public. Policy. Adm.* 14(3):200-224.
- Lasserve AD, Royston L (2012). International trends and country contexts from tenure regularization to tenure security. In *Holding Their Ground*. 1st edition. Routledge, England, UK. 17-50.
- Chattopadhyay S (2022). Spatial Analysis of Access to Basic Services in Urban West Bengal: Disparities and Determinants. *J. Asian. Afr. Stud.* 22(1).
- Basu AM, Sharma R (2021). Urban-rural dichotomy in planning: Review of legal framework on four states of India. *Int. J. Public Adm.* 67(1): 40-53.