

Survey Shows Good Progress in RDP Principles



The mobile nature of the South African population and constant influx into urban areas has resulted in a continuous 'moving target' for municipal service delivery.

While basic service delivery has increased in all of South Africa's provinces, some municipalities still have much work to do to improve the living conditions of their constituents. This is the message from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) based on the municipal data from its Community Survey, released in March. Lani van Vuuren reports.

About 250 000 households participated in the survey, which was undertaken in February 2007. According to Statistician-General Pali Lehohla, the R600-million sample survey was the first of its kind undertaken in South Africa. Never before had data been delivered at such a low geographic (i.e. municipal) level. "There was a great need for relevant information to enable municipalities to undertake more accurate infrastructure development planning and monitoring," Lehohla told the media at the launch of the Community Survey municipal results at Gallagher Estate, in Midrand.

"This has been quite a learning experience for Stats SA, but I believe we have delivered a product that will enable municipalities to get a more accurate view of the present status of service delivery and provide a good basis on which to move forward to improve the lives of all South Africans. No longer can municipalities say they have no data available."

MOBILE POPULATION

The survey covered the basic service areas of housing, electricity, refuse removal, access to piped water and sanitation. The survey did not measure quality or sustainability of services, and only quantitative data has been supplied.

A critical factor influencing the rate and quality of service delivery in municipalities was the highly mobile nature of South African society, reported Stats SA Deputy DG Kefiloe Masiteng. The survey indicated changes in population numbers in most of the municipalities, with some losing and some gaining population numbers.

In line with international urbanisation trends, people are generally moving towards South Africa's metropolitan areas, with Gauteng and the Western Cape showing the highest annual growth. Gauteng, while the smallest

province in terms of land area, has the largest population (about ten million). Interestingly, only 5,8 million of its residents were actually born in the province, with the remainder migrating from other provinces.

People migrate from one municipal area to another for a variety of reasons, such as the prospect of a better education, jobs and a better living environment. "The survey has shown that bigger is definitely better," explained Lehohla. "All of the municipalities which indicated a decline had populations of less than 124 000."

Another determinant is service delivery. "When people see better service delivery in another municipality they tend to want to move there," noted Masiteng. "Unfortunately, this means that underperforming municipalities are placing more pressure on those municipalities that are delivering the necessary services, notwithstanding existing capacity constraints."

This can be seen in provinces such as Gauteng which, despite the efforts of its municipalities still has one of the highest proportions of households living in informal areas (22,7%). The municipalities with the highest percentages of informal dwellings are Nokeng tsa Taemane (24,8%), Kungwini (19,5%), Mogale City (27%), Westonarea (41%), Ekurhuleni (26%) and the City of Tshwane (26,8%).

ACCESS TO PIPED WATER

As much as access to piped water has increased since the last census in 2001, this basic service remains relatively low compared to other services measured in the Community Survey, according to Stats SA. Nationally, the proportion of households obtaining water from piped water inside the dwelling rose from 32,3% in 2001 to 47% in 2007. There has also been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of households obtaining water

from piped water inside the yard (from 29% to 22,2%) and obtaining piped water from an access point outside the yard (from 23,2% to 19,1%).

Looking at the provinces, the Western Cape had the highest proportion (98,95) of households with access to piped water (inside the dwelling, inside the yard or less than 200 m from the dwelling), followed by Gauteng and the Free State with 97,9% and 8,2% respectively.

However, the survey showed very disproportionate service delivery across most of the provinces. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, the proportion of households with access to piped water within 200 m in the various municipalities ranged from 3% in Msinga to 88% in uMhlatuze.

THE SANITATION LADDER

Nationally, the percentage of households with a flush toilet connected to a sewerage system increased from 49,1% in 2001 to 55,1% in 2007. At the same time, the use of ventilated improved pit latrines declined from 22,8% to 20,6% as did the proportion of households without any toilet facility (from 13,6% to 8,2%). The percentage of households still using the bucket system also declined in all the provinces.

There is still concern over the large percentage of households that have no toilet facilities in provinces such as the Eastern Cape (23,5% in 2007). Most of these households are in municipalities located in the north-eastern part of the province. For example, in Mbhashe 74,2% of households have no toilet facilities, while in Intsike Yethu the figure is 56,5%.

Stats SA was to launch a roadshow between April and July to all the municipalities in the country to share the information and assist them in using the data to its full potential. To access the Community Survey results go to www.statssa.gov.za. 