

*Facts, Fiction or Fabrication? Service Delivery under Mandela in South Africa*

# **Facts, Fiction and Fabrication? Service Delivery in South Africa under Mandela**

Dr Meshack M. Khosa  
Acting Executive Director  
Human Sciences Research Council  
Private Bag x41  
Pretoria  
0001  
South Africa  
Email (work): [mmkhosa@hsrc.ac.za](mailto:mmkhosa@hsrc.ac.za)  
Email (home): [khosa@iafrica.com](mailto:khosa@iafrica.com)

**Paper presented at the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Annual  
Conference, February 28 to March 3, 2001, New York, USA**

1774

So five years of work has been almost completely useless. Worse, millions of precious rands have been lost. But it is the way my village looks that breaks my heart. There are massive holes in the roads ... Everything looks poor, shoddy and done as quickly as possible by contractors – fronted by black people who seem to know nothing about the business – out for a quick profit.

(Justice Malala, cited in *Sunday Times*, 17 December 2000)

## 1 Introduction

At the heart of the struggle for liberation from the apartheid regime was the need to address the aspirations of the poor, who were politically oppressed, socially marginalized and economically exploited. As the first democratic election in 1994 was coming up, the African National Congress (ANC) used a radical program of reconstruction and development as an election manifesto, and later proclaimed this program an instrument of fundamental change in the new South Africa. However, in less than 24 months after the new government assumed power, a neo-liberal economic policy was introduced, which in essence replaced the initial reconstruction and development program (Bond, 2000). The nature of the new policy caused heated debates, with the labor movement and some civil society organizations accusing the government of “selling out the people’s mandate” to the powerful private sector and the International Monetary Fund. However, the ANC-led government published several statistical figures after 1995, arguing that its social delivery program, especially service delivery, was successful (Bond, 2000). In addition, South Africa spent close to half its budget on social services.

Getting to the bottom of the contradictory claims of civil society and the government requires an investigation of the organization of service delivery (Hemson, 2000). This paper therefore examines service delivery based on three survey datasets of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). Nationally representative, the surveys were carried out in November 1999, September 2000 and November 2000. The paper explores the following critical questions:

- Who provides services and infrastructure and under what conditions?
- In what ways can the quality and quantity of the services and infrastructure be assessed?
- How have recipients responded to the quality and quantity of such services?
- What are the roles of the state, labor, civil society and capital in the provision of services in contemporary South Africa?

## **2 Methodology**

The survey instrument was a 34-page questionnaire. The questions were arranged around themes and it took respondents between 60 and 90 minutes to complete the questionnaire. A sample of 2 704 respondents was selected throughout South Africa, grouped in clusters of eight and drawn from 338 census enumerator areas (EAs) as delineated for the 1996 census. In order to ensure adequate representation, the sample was stratified by province and lifestyle category.<sup>1</sup> Disproportionately large samples were selected from areas known to be inhabited by the two smallest population groups,<sup>2</sup> namely areas with predominantly Asian (Indian) populations and areas with predominantly Colored populations. The realized samples for the surveys of November 1999, September 2000 and November 1999 were 2 700, 2 611 and 2 700 respectively, only slightly smaller than the intended sample of 2 704.

## **3 Infrastructure and service delivery mandate**

In his opening of Parliament in February 1999, former President Nelson Mandela reported an impressive list of achievements of the ANC-led government since April 1994. Mandela correctly observed that South Africa was undergoing a momentous change, blazing a trail towards what he called "a secure prosperous future". The tenets of Mandela's speech were also captured in the ANC manifestos for the 1999 national election and the 2000 municipal elections. These manifestos claimed that, since 1994, the ANC-led government

- delivered running water to more than 3 million people (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, 1998);
- connected 2 million households to electricity (Department of Communication, 1998);
- improved health care for the poor, with over 500 new clinics being built or upgraded, and free medical care being provided for children under six years and pregnant women (Department of Health, 1998); and
- provided housing to nearly 3 million people, with 750 000 houses being built or under construction (Department of Housing, 1998).

---

<sup>1</sup> The HSRC categorised each EA in terms of one of eight dominant lifestyles (called "living standard measures" (LSMs)), based on an analysis of the 1996 census data.

<sup>2</sup> Discrimination on the basis of race is outlawed in South Africa. However, the apartheid classification of the population into Africans, Coloreds, Asians and Whites has become deeply entrenched in South African society by virtue of its concurrence with class, residential area, health status and education. Hence this chapter makes use of this classification, but does so without accepting racial discrimination.

At face value, the achievements were remarkable given the structural legacy of the apartheid system. Echoing the same self-congratulatory message, the Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, reportedly declared the following in 1998: "We have made substantial investments in social development over the past four years, in social welfare, education, health, housing, water and sanitation, electrification and other social infrastructure." Indeed, few other countries in the world spent as much on social services as South Africa. Roughly R100 billion per year went to social services. This translated into R2 500 per person, compared to the total GDP per capita of about R17 000 (Hemson, 2000).

However, these impressive facts and figures raise more questions than answers. To what extent can the infrastructure and services be sustained within the context of the current fiscal restraints? What are the differential social and ecological impacts of service delivery on the beneficiaries? Who are the beneficiaries and how have they been selected? To what extent are the newly created delivery mechanisms empowering, respectively, the poor and the private sector providers of infrastructure and services? Given the shrinking employment opportunities and the increasing cost of living, will the poor be able to pay for such services in future?

#### **4 Governance and service delivery**

The democratic government led by the ANC committed itself to confronting inequality through, amongst others, providing basic infrastructure and social services to those who need them most. One of the goals of welfare and infrastructure delivery is to ensure access to basic services. In terms of the South African Constitution, local government is clearly mandated to promote local economic development and to ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively at a local level.

In many respects, transforming local government throughout the world is far more challenging than transforming provincial or national government. Local government transition in South Africa has been painstakingly under way for some ten years, and has included a re-demarcation of municipal boundaries, which has resulted in a reduction in the number of municipalities from 843 to 284. However, the transformation has only just begun.

According to the Local Government White Paper, the re-demarcation of municipal boundaries was essential to:

- co-ordinate municipal, provincial and national functions, services and programs;
- integrate social and economic planning and development;
- create an inclusive tax base.

In addition, the re-demarcation was aimed at transforming local government by bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, and between rural and urban areas, in relation to access to basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity and other infrastructure. In deciding on the new boundaries for municipalities, Demarcation Board considered the following factors:

- the interdependence of people, communities and economic aspects such as employment, public transport, human settlement, migration patterns and access to services and infrastructure; and
- the relationship of districts, voting areas, health, policing, population, existing and expected land use, type of land in the area and environmental implications.

In some countries, part of the revenue collected in wealthy areas is used for the upliftment of poor communities. In other countries the main role of government is to collect revenue from all (according to their ability to pay) and to allocate those funds to poor areas. In South Africa, the majority of local councils have relied on grants from the provincial or national budget to develop infrastructure and address backlogs. In 1995/1996, integrated development plans (IDPs) were proposed as a way forward for local council areas. Some municipalities only drafted their IDPs, others began implementing them and yet others produced no plan at all. The amalgamation of the old municipalities thus implied that different IDPs would have to be combined, which could prove to be difficult as service delivery was generally slow and uncoordinated in former townships and rural areas, in contrast to that in well-developed urban and metropolitan areas. Hence the different sectors in the new amalgamated municipalities may have had different priorities for fund allocation.

The re-demarcated municipalities had to introduce administrative and structural reforms based on new and rapidly changing policies and newly mandated responsibilities. For example, ongoing integrated development planning inhibited the local economic development and administrative profile of local authorities that had been successful in developing their own plans. The Demarcation Act therefore had the difficult task of dealing with a moving target as local authorities responded to varying degrees to the prevailing legislative environment.

Local government affects the lives of ordinary citizens in important ways. For example, it gives people in local communities a voice through elected representatives, and encourages citizen participation in the definition of issues and policy making. Local politics also impacts directly on the lives of women, as it is responsible for the delivery of goods and services. Indeed, municipal health services, water provision, electrification, child-care facilities, sanitation and transport affect all people at the local level, but women and children suffer the most when these services are not provided.

Public perceptions of local government performance in South Africa have been negative, largely because fundamental transformation takes time and the public has not seen major changes. In addition, lack of funds, resources, capacity and skills largely resulted in slow delivery and improvement of services by municipalities. A survey conducted by the HSRC in November 2000 indicated that 52% of the respondents were not satisfied with the performance of their municipalities, 18% were satisfied, 22% felt that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 8% were uncertain. Of the 52% who were dissatisfied with local government performance, 37% were rural residents, 35% were metropolitan residents, and 28% were urban residents. There was a strong relationship between dissatisfaction with local government performance and

dissatisfaction with service delivery, with rural households being the most dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of services.

The HSRC's November 2000 survey questionnaire also had an item on the importance of the municipal elections of 5 December 2000. Nearly half (49%) of the respondents indicated that these elections would ensure efficient delivery of basic local services, 14% felt that it would promote local democracy, 9% indicated that it would promote local accountability, 6% felt it would restrict the role of national and provincial government, and 22% were uncertain. Rural respondents (38%) constituted the largest proportion of those who indicated that municipal elections would ensure service delivery, followed by metropolitan (33%) and urban residents (29%). The higher proportion of rural residents believing that municipal elections would ensure service delivery corresponded with the higher levels of dissatisfaction among them.

Furthermore, the proportion believing that local elections would ensure service delivery corresponded with the total turnout at the 2000 municipal elections (49%), which were conducted within the re-demarcated municipal areas. The majority of those who were uncertain about the role of local government did not vote on 5 December 2000. One-tenth of the non-voters felt that their vote would not make any difference. The results of the HSRC's November 2000 survey suggested that the credibility of local government, which was also charged with providing local services, was in question. However, of significance was the low 2% of respondents who selected disillusionment with politics as the main reason for not voting. This suggested that active participation in politics and civic engagement by communities in service delivery were not in jeopardy.

## 5 Access to services

In a recent article entitled "Infrastructure delivery: class apartheid", Bond (2000) identifies two dominant perspectives since the mid-1990s that try to explain why service and infrastructure backlogs have increased in South Africa. The "mainstream" perspective, which generally approves of the ANC-led government, suggests that existing policies are basically fine, and that resources allocated for service and infrastructure delivery were sufficient. This perspective suggests that implementation is nonetheless flawed, because of inefficiencies in municipal delivery. Hence there is a need for more rapid private-sector provision of services. In some respects, the mainstream perspective sees communities and workers as part of the problem (as they engage in non-payment and vandalism). Mainstream analysis and public policy are based on implicit and explicit class bias, and this is largely promoted by a market-oriented ideology (Bond, 2000).

The "critical" perspective comes from the rump of the old Mass Democratic Movement, and includes key community activists, networks of social movements and trade union advocates. The critical perspective argues that virtually all current state policies are excessively neo-liberal: "... too market-oriented, stingy, insensitive to poverty, incapable of integrating gender and environmental concerns, unsympathetic to

problems associated with public health and worsening geographical segregation and even inefficient in terms of untapped economic multipliers" (Bond, 2000, p. 19).

The critical perspective points out that:

- several tens of thousands of communal taps that were installed by the ANC-led government quickly broke;
- municipal water cut-offs increased (tens of thousands of households per quarter since 1997), with only a small proportion of disconnected households being able to afford reconnection;
- municipal capital budgets shrunk and urban shack-settlement populations grew rapidly;
- fewer than 100 000 new rural sanitation connections were made since 1994 (Bond, 2000; Hemson, 2000).

This paper confirms the critical perspective that access to services have been largely class-based, with the majority of the poor and low-income households having to travel long distances to access services (Hemson, 2000). Issues raised by the critical perspective are systematically explored in this paper by means of new evidence arising from the above-mentioned three HSRC national surveys.

**Table 1: Distance to collection point for water for drinking and cooking**

| Level                    | %  |
|--------------------------|----|
| Tap in dwelling          | 51 |
| Tap in yard              | 17 |
| Tap, borehole <20m       | 10 |
| Tap, borehole 20m-200m   | 8  |
| Tap, borehole >200m      | 4  |
| Stream, dam, river <200m | 6  |
| Stream, dam, river >200m | 5  |

N=2 700 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, November 1999

**Table 2: Distance to collection point for water for drinking and cooking**

| Level                    | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                          | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| Tap in dwelling          | 0    | 1    | 4    | 12   | 22   | 19   | 20   | 24   | 100   |
| Tap in Yard              | 1    | 4    | 14   | 27   | 34   | 15   | 5    | 1    | 100   |
| Tap, borehole <20m       | 4    | 15   | 25   | 31   | 10   | 5    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Tap, borehole 20m-200m   | 1    | 22   | 34   | 33   | 8    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Tap, borehole >200m      | 2    | 20   | 38   | 32   | 7    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Stream, dam, river <200m | 11   | 39   | 33   | 16   | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Stream, dam, river >200m | 4    | 39   | 30   | 22   | 5    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 100   |

N=2 700 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, November 1999

After assessing service delivery in South Africa, several analysts concluded that access to services varied by class in South Africa, with the poor and rural households paying indirectly more than middle- and high-income households (Bond, Dor and Ruiters, 2000). A classic case was the delivery of water. According to the HSRC's November 1999 survey, water was apparently more accessible to middle- and high-income households than to those at the lower echelons of society (Table 2). For example, the majority of those who had a tap in the house or in the yard fell above the fifth living standard measure (LSM). On the other hand, those who walked up to 200 meters to fetch water from dams, rivers or boreholes fell below LSM4 (Table 2). The higher the LSM, the more accessible the water source; the lower the LSM, the less accessible the water source. Thus, although government consistently argued that the delivery of water improved for the poor, there was still a long way to go before the access gap between the wealthy and the poor sections of society was closed (Hemson, 2000). Indeed, the indirect cost of being poor was high, and even higher if you lived in rural areas. Although government's development programs were largely based in rural areas, the benefits were not spectacular, and more



was required to meet the growing and urgent needs of the rural poor, especially African women.

**Table 3: Main water source of households**

| Type              | %  |
|-------------------|----|
| Water scheme      | 71 |
| Water carrier     | 3  |
| Water vendor      | 1  |
| Communal borehole | 6  |
| Borehole in yard  | 2  |
| Rainwater tank    | 1  |
| River stream      | 10 |
| Dam or pool       | 4  |
| Other             | 2  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 4: Main water source of households**

| Type              | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Water scheme      | 2    | 4    | 8    | 17   | 19   | 20   | 16   | 16   | 100   |
| Water carrier     | 19   | 9    | 17   | 22   | 17   | 4    | 9    | 4    | 100   |
| Water vendor      | 0    | 15   | 24   | 18   | 5    | 17   | 20   | 0    | 100   |
| Communal borehole | 7    | 27   | 23   | 24   | 17   | 1    | 1    | 1    | 100   |
| Borehole in yard  | 5    | 13   | 18   | 24   | 19   | 2    | 4    | 15   | 100   |
| Rainwater tank    | 7    | 20   | 25   | 26   | 17   | 5    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| River stream      | 23   | 25   | 33   | 14   | 3    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Dam or pool       | 6    | 12   | 28   | 25   | 12   | 8    | 6    | 3    | 100   |
| Other             | 3    | 16   | 24   | 8    | 21   | 11   | 3    | 4    | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

The 1996 Constitution gave the South Africa state the responsibility to provide adequate access to water, housing and primary education. Hence the democratic government launched a program to deliver water, especially to rural areas without access to water.

The HSRC survey of September 2000 provided valuable insight into the delivery of water and other basic services. The majority of those who received water got it from water schemes, the water being provided largely by a local authority or in some cases national government (for example, the Working for Water Programme) (Table 4). Some 8% of the respondents received water from boreholes and 14% from river streams or dams. However, a closer analysis of the data suggested that the main water source corresponded with the recipient's class, race and locality. For example, the majority of those who received water from water schemes fell above LSM5, whereas those who mainly received water from river streams or boreholes mainly fell below LSM4.

The implication of these findings is that poor and low-income households in South Africa generally received services of poor quality, whereas the better off in society received services of better quality, which were also more accessible than those of their counterparts. The differential access to services raises the issue of justice in terms of a clause enshrined in the Constitution: To what extent is the new order perpetuating a system that is fundamentally unjust, unequal and exploitative?

The HSRC's September 2000 survey further demonstrated that access to water also varied by type of area. Rural areas, where poor, largely unemployed African women lived, mainly relied on communal boreholes, river streams and dams. However, communal boreholes did not always have sufficient water, causing rural communities to use other sources of water. Urban and metropolitan residents accessed water schemes more easily than their rural counterparts. The key conclusion emerging from this analysis was that the majority of poor and low-income African rural residents did not have access to water sources of good quality. This had major negative impacts on their welfare.

## **6 Quality and type of service delivery**

Annual reports of various government departments often provide impressive figures on services and infrastructure provided, but the quality of such services is overlooked. Aggregated national data suggest that there has been some improvement in the quality and type of services delivered since 1994 (Khosa, 2000a, b). Indeed, access to basic services such as water and electricity appears to have improved between 1994 and 2000. However, the interpreters of national aggregated data do not address the extent to which access to various types of services is differentiated, largely due to the mediation of class, gender, race and locality.

**Table 5: Level of household water service**

| Level                       | %  |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Piped tap water outside     | 24 |
| Piped tap water in yard     | 26 |
| Piped tap water in dwelling | 42 |
| No piped water              | 8  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 6: Level of household water service**

| Level                       | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                             | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| Piped tap water outside     | 9    | 16   | 20   | 26   | 15   | 8    | 3    | 2    | 100   |
| Piped tap water in yard     | 1    | 5    | 11   | 24   | 26   | 22   | 12   | 1    | 100   |
| Piped tap water in dwelling | 0    | 1    | 4    | 8    | 16   | 20   | 22   | 29   | 100   |
| No piped water              | 28   | 28   | 30   | 13   | 1    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

As with other services, levels of water service differed by class in the HSRC's September 2000 survey. For example, respondents above LSM4 had piped tap water in the yard or piped tap water in the dwelling (Table 6). On the other hand, the majority of those who did not have piped tap water were those falling below LSM3. This differentiation has major implications for the social development of the poor.

The continued existence of at least two broad classes in South Africa, which are also mainly divided along racial lines, raises questions about the extent to which the new state is able to fulfil its service delivery mandate. Class- and race-blind programs are unlikely to impact substantially on the delivery of services and infrastructure. This calls for effective targeting to ensure that the intended beneficiaries, namely the poor, actually benefit. Unfortunately, neo-liberal development programs with their emphasis on cost recovery tend to exclude the poor from service and infrastructure delivery.

The HSRC's September 2000 survey revealed that water services also varied by area type, with metropolitan and urban dwellings more likely than rural dwellings to have piped tap water inside. Virtually all people without piped tap water were ruralists and African. The concurrence of race, class and locality in terms of service levels in South Africa was largely informed by past economic and political systems. However, the legacy of the economic system has not crumbled and fundamental social change could take several decades before it yields results.

**Table 7: Satisfaction with the quality of services delivered**

| Service                                       | %  |
|---|----|
| Speedily delivered                            | 29 |
| Satisfied with services                       | 45 |
| Dissatisfied with water supply                | 17 |
| Dissatisfied with electricity supply          | 11 |
| Dissatisfied with telephone                   | 1  |
| Dissatisfied with police                      | 12 |
| Dissatisfied with housing                     | 4  |
| Dissatisfied with justice system              | 2  |
| Dissatisfied with education                   | 4  |
| Dissatisfied with health                      | 12 |
| Dissatisfied with rent, water and electricity | 7  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 8: Satisfaction with the quality of services delivered**

| Service                                       | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|   | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| Speedily delivered                            | 1    | 4    | 14   | 17   | 24   | 14   | 12   | 14   | 100   |
| Satisfied with services                       | 1    | 6    | 12   | 17   | 21   | 14   | 13   | 17   | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with water supply                | 1    | 22   | 23   | 30   | 14   | 6    | 2    | 1    | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with electricity supply          | 2    | 11   | 24   | 15   | 26   | 14   | 7    | 2    | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with telephone                   | 0    | 6    | 22   | 15   | 14   | 9    | 7    | 27   | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with police                      | 1    | 3    | 9    | 19   | 27   | 16   | 16   | 10   | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with housing                     | 1    | 9    | 15   | 29   | 15   | 18   | 11   | 3    | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with justice system              | 0    | 6    | 20   | 16   | 34   | 10   | 0    | 13   | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with education                   | 2    | 3    | 12   | 16   | 13   | 16   | 15   | 22   | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with health                      | 2    | 6    | 18   | 17   | 19   | 13   | 11   | 13   | 100   |
| Dissatisfied with rent, water and electricity | 3    | 14   | 20   | 29   | 20   | 6    | 5    | 3    | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

Responses to the quality of services provided varied from satisfaction to dissatisfaction and from approval to rejection (Table 8). The majority of those who were dissatisfied with service delivery were poor and African; the majority of those who were satisfied were middle- and high-income households. Recent protests against services of poor

quality largely emanated from poor communities, and at times were supported by the powerful trade union movement that largely operated under the auspices of the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

The poor, the majority of whom were African, were mostly dissatisfied with bread-and-butter issues such as water provision and escalating transport fares and food prices. The quality of education for the poor was in a state of disarray. Nothing short of a major revamp of the education system and a fundamental rethink in the provision of services and infrastructure will be able to make a visible difference in the life of the poor. The improvements largely benefited middle- and high-income households.

A critical factor in perceptions of service delivery was the number of times a particular service was disrupted in a particular area and the speed at which local authorities remedied service disruptions. According to the HSRC's November 1999 survey, at least a third of respondents experienced service disruption, with 16% indicating disruption twice per month. Only 39% of respondents did not experience service disruption.

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) often denied responsibility for service disruption, blaming recipient communities, pirate connections and rampant vandalism (Hemson, 2000). Officials blamed the poor for the culture of non-payment, the destruction of water meters and other forms of non-compliance. One senior government official commented:

Where schemes are not delivering water because communities have decided not to pay for diesel for pumps, this is their decision. We believe that, on reflection, they will reconsider. Supply interruptions may [actually] be an essential part of establishing working arrangements and do not necessarily mean that a project has failed ... . (Mike Muller, director general of Water Affairs, cited in *Sunday World*, 9 May 1999)

Of significance was the finding that the poor were more likely to experience service disruption than middle- and high-income households. At the same time, low-income households waited longer to have their services maintained or reconnected than middle- and high-income households. As race coincided with class, it was not surprising that the majority of those experiencing service disruption were African, who also constituted the largest component of those who fell below LSM4 – the poorest of the poor. The differentials in service disruption and disconnection confirm the critical perspective as expounded by Bond (2000) and Hemson (2000).

**Table 9: What type of toilet do you have?**

| Type                          | %  |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Pit latrine, with ventilation | 37 |
| Pit latrine, no ventilation   | 28 |
| Flush toilet on site          | 26 |
| Flush toilet off site         | 30 |
| Bucket toilet                 | 3  |
| None                          | 2  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 10: What type of toilet do you have?**

| Type                        | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Pit latrine, ventilated     | 7    | 7    | 16   | 20   | 30   | 18   | 1    | 2    | 100   |
| Pit latrine, not ventilated | 2    | 19   | 25   | 30   | 11   | 4    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Flush toilet on site        | 0    | 1    | 4    | 12   | 21   | 24   | 20   | 18   | 100   |
| Flush toilet off site       | 0    | 1    | 4    | 10   | 18   | 22   | 22   | 24   | 100   |
| Bucket toilet               | 0    | 15   | 15   | 30   | 31   | 10   | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| None                        | 15   | 27   | 35   | 35   | 4    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

Quality and type of toilet facilities were also important indicators of service delivery in South Africa. Nearly four in ten respondents used ventilated pit latrines (Table 10). However, 28% used non-ventilated pit latrines. A closer assessment suggested that the majority of those who used ventilated pit latrines were from middle- and high-income households – those who fell above LSM5 – while the majority of those who used non-ventilated pit latrines were largely those who fell below LSM3 – the poorest of the poor.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The health hazards associated with unhealthy sanitation are likely to impose further indirect costs on the poor in terms of lower life expectancy, long periods of hospitalisation and additional costs associated with medical treatment. It is also the poor who have limited access to health insurance. Besides, the health facilities that the poor have access to are located at some distance from their dwellings. When they need emergency treatment, they pay additional transport costs to reach health and welfare facilities. Evidence suggests that it is cheaper to provide clean water and sanitation without cost than to hospitalise patients (Bond, 2000; Hemson, 2000).

The majority of those who used non-ventilated pit latrines in the HSRC's September 2000 survey were African; so were the majority of those who used bucket toilets. In terms of type of area, the majority of non-ventilated pit latrines were located in rural areas, whereas the majority of flush toilets were located in urban and metropolitan areas. Differentials in terms of type of toilet probably also contributed to differential health conditions.<sup>4</sup>

Spending on sanitation was also only about one-tenth of what was spent on water delivery. In fact, some analyses indicated that, due to the low prioritization of sanitation by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, there were fewer than 100 000 new rural sanitation connections (Bond, 2000). There were also an estimated 18 million people in South Africa without proper sanitation. In addition, the initial R17 million budgeted for sanitation in the 2000/2001 financial year was reduced to R13 million during the course of the year, and only R6 million was used in the first nine months of the year. Furthermore, the R150 down payment for a toilet (the department subsidized the rest) was unaffordable for extremely poor rural households. Moreover, in the words of the White Paper on Water and Sanitation,

[s]anitation is not a popular topic at any level in society. It is not an attractive career, nor is it a political campaign issue. This topic is uncomfortable and taboo. It consequently lacks the priority that it should enjoy in relation to the burden it places on society. (Republic of South Africa, 1994, p. 37)

The director general of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Mike Muller, indicated that the department was "waiting for people to apply for the toilets". In contrast, the Minister of Health said, "We should not wait for people to ask. We should just go and do it. If we put up toilets, people will use them. We should move in and not wait for them to come to us" (*Pretoria News*, 6 January 2001). However, the national sanitation task team, which was launched as a critical response to the sanitation crisis in South Africa, was crippled by internal strife over which of the major departments involved – Water Affairs and Forestry, Health, and Provincial and Local Government – should be responsible for the team.<sup>5</sup>

---

4 This assumption was based on findings of academic studies and a few monitoring/evaluation exercises of Mvula on water delivery in rural areas, namely that communal taps raise the likelihood of contracting water-borne diseases, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. (See Bond, 2000, p. 18.)

5 The official response to the inadequacy of sanitation delivery was criticised strongly during the cholera outbreak in 2000. Affecting more than 15 000 people in South Africa, the epidemic highlighted the need for proper sanitation infrastructure and potable water in the affected rural areas.



**Table 11: Where is the toilet located?**

| Location           | %  |
|--------------------|----|
| Inside yard        | 56 |
| Inside house       | 34 |
| Shared with others | 4  |
| Elsewhere          | 5  |
| In the field       | 1  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 12: Where is the toilet located?**

| Location           | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Inside yard        | 7    | 11   | 17   | 24   | 21   | 14   | 14   | 6    | 100   |
| Inside house       | 0    | 1    | 2    | 6    | 12   | 19   | 26   | 34   | 100   |
| Shared with others | 7    | 17   | 15   | 23   | 14   | 15   | 7    | 1    | 100   |
| Elsewhere          | 13   | 24   | 42   | 18   | 3    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| In the field       | 21   | 21   | 49   | 6    | 2    | 0    | 0    | 0    | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

In significant ways, power and class relations played an important role in terms of who received what, where, how, under what conditions and for how long. Regarding location, 56% of toilets were in the yard, 34% were in the house, 4% were shared with others, 5% were located elsewhere, and 1% was in the field (Table 11). However, analysis of the data by LSM category brought another perspective.

Although the majority of respondents indicated that they had a toilet in their yard, this majority comprised mainly middle- and high-income households. Low-income, mainly African, respondents tended to share toilet facilities with others.

The toilets of township and informal settlement households were more likely to be in the yard or field than inside the dwelling, and less hygienic than those used by urban and metropolitan households. The toilets of rural households were also more likely to be located in the yard, in the field or elsewhere than in the dwelling. The sanitation services in rural areas, too, were more likely to be of poor quality. The findings suggest that the poor continued to be excluded from the social benefits of the post-1994 period.

## 7 Cost and affordability of services

The popular protests waged by Africans in the 1970s and 1980s were largely against the increasing cost of living and poor quality of social services and infrastructure. The ability to pay was largely related to class, race and location, with the majority of the poor, mainly Africans, in townships and rural areas being unable to afford the services. It was against this background that the ANC, before the 2000 municipal elections, promised to provide free water and electricity to the poor.

The South African Constitution makes provision for the right of access to adequate clean water for all. Since 1994 the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry constructed 253 rural water projects at a capital cost of R3.7 billion (*Pretoria News*, 9 August 2000). The projects delivered safe water to 5.7 million people. However, as the critical perspective argued, more than 8 million rural people were still without safe and clean water (Bond, 2000).

**Table 13: Cost of water**

| Location             | %  |
|----------------------|----|
| Does not pay         | 34 |
| R5 or less per month | 2  |
| R6-R10               | 4  |
| R11-R20              | 6  |
| R21-R50              | 15 |
| R51-R100             | 20 |
| R101-R200            | 12 |
| R201+                | 7  |
| Do not know          | 1  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 14: Cost of water**

| Location             | LSM<br>1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|----------------------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                      | %        | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| Does not pay         | 5        | 15   | 24   | 30   | 13   | 9    | 3    | 2    | 100   |
| R5 or less per month | 0        | 18   | 18   | 25   | 20   | 8    | 11   | 0    | 100   |
| R6-R10               | 17       | 10   | 17   | 17   | 17   | 10   | 7    | 5    | 100   |
| R11-R20              | 6        | 9    | 13   | 19   | 24   | 18   | 9    | 2    | 100   |
| R21-R50              | 0        | 3    | 9    | 15   | 23   | 25   | 17   | 8    | 100   |
| R51-R100             | 0.2      | 1    | 4    | 12   | 23   | 22   | 20   | 19   | 100   |
| R101-R200            | 0        | 0    | 1    | 5    | 18   | 21   | 29   | 27   | 100   |
| R201+                | 0        | 0    | 1    | 2    | 8    | 16   | 18   | 56   | 100   |
| Do not know          | 0        | 5    | 11   | 0    | 21   | 0    | 29   | 35   | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

Just over one in three respondents received free water, with the remainder paying between R5 and more than R200 per month (Table 13). One in four households paid more than R100 per month for water, and about seven in one hundred paid more than R200 per month.

Based on the HSRC's September 2000 survey, middle- and high-income respondents apparently paid relatively more than low-income respondents. However, the higher cost of the water of middle- and high-income respondents related to their greater consumption of managed water. In fact, many rural women chose to collect water from non-managed sources, preferring to spend the R10 per month for water on buying food for their children (Hemson, 2000; Bond, 2000). In real terms, the price of water was lower in urban than in rural areas because of the economies of scale, the established infrastructure and assured cost recovery.

In terms of water consumption, the majority of Africans used fewer liters of water per day than their white counterparts. Of the 4% of respondents who used more than 200 liters of water per day, the majority were white urban residents. In terms of payment for water, 34% of South Africans received free water, 94% of which were Africans, largely living in rural areas or informal settlements. Of the 7% of respondents who paid more than R200 per month, 54% were whites and 30% were Africans.<sup>6</sup>

Rural respondents constituted the bulk (57%) of those who received free water. However, the majority of those who paid over R200 per month were urban respondents. The majority of rural respondents used less than 100 liters of water per day, while urban respondents constituted the majority of those who used up to 200 liters per day. There appeared to be a strong relationship between water usage and cost (in Rand value).

Considering that the poor, largely rural African households were more inconvenienced than the rest, it is important to rethink the way in which the cost of water is calculated. In calculating the cost of water, non-monetary indirect costs should be taken into consideration. The HSRC survey suggested that the poor, especially rural and township households, paid more in indirect costs than middle- and high-income households did. The poor continued to walk long distances to access water sources. In addition, the water that the poor used was more likely to be unhygienic than the water that middle- and high-income households used. As such, the poor paid more for water than the rest of society (Table 14).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The first local government to provide free water was the Durban Metropolitan Council, which provided the first 6 000 liters a month free. Thereafter, the more customers used, the more they paid on a rising tariff scale. Revenue from ratepayers who consumed greater amounts of water helped to cross-subsidize the poor. Ninety-three percent of bills were paid, which demonstrated that non-payment was often a problem of affordability. Even the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry agreed that a system could work without insistence on cost recovery from all consumers (*Pretoria News*, 9 August 2000).

<sup>7</sup> This raises questions in terms of claims that the poor were the major beneficiaries of service and infrastructure delivery in the post-1994 period. Even the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry agreed to this, stating that "the cost can be more than that. Where no [water] scheme exists, private profiteers and opportunists truck-in water which can be up to R2 per 20 liters – more than 50 times the price" (*Pretoria News*, 9 August 2000).

**Table 15: What is the main reason for not paying for municipal services?**

| Level                  | %  |
|------------------------|----|
| Cannot afford          | 50 |
| Services too expensive | 14 |
| Services poor          | 6  |
| Can avoid paying       | 7  |

N=2 700 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, November 1999

**Table 16: What is the main reason for not paying for municipal services?**

| Level                  | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                        | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| Cannot afford          | 2    | 8    | 18   | 20   | 20   | 13   | 10   | 10   | 100   |
| Services too expensive | 2    | 7    | 11   | 21   | 28   | 12   | 10   | 10   | 100   |
| Services poor          | 1    | 12   | 10   | 26   | 19   | 10   | 13   | 10   | 100   |
| Can avoid paying       | 0    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 4    | 12   | 26   | 50   | 100   |

N=2 700 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, November 1999

Because of the success of the services boycotts in African townships in the 1970s and 1980s, the ANC-led government was unable to persuade a sizeable number of households in African townships to pay for services after 1994 (Table 15). There are two explanations for this culture of non-payment. One explanation relates to affordability; the other relates to the poor quality of services. Whereas the former assumes that the high cost of services makes services unaffordable ("economistic" view), the latter assumes that people directly link service quality with what they have expected. If the quality fails to comply with their expectation, they deliberately refuse to pay for services. Based on this view, the poor are not seen as helpless recipients of services; they challenge the high cost and the poor quality of services in more explicit ways, such as non-payment or campaigning for better quality services.

**Table 17: If you do not pay for water, why?**

| Reason                             | %  |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Costs too much                     | 12 |
| Government supplies water for free | 22 |
| Others do not pay                  | 7  |
| Unhappy with water supply          | 17 |
| No water meters                    | 13 |
| No water scheme                    | 2  |
| Employers pay                      | 2  |
| Other                              | 16 |
| No reason                          | 9  |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

**Table 18: If you do not pay for water, why?**

| Reason                             | LSM1 | LSM2 | LSM3 | LSM4 | LSM5 | LSM6 | LSM7 | LSM8 | Total |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
|                                    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %    | %     |
| Costs too much                     | 0    | 8    | 39   | 17   | 12   | 5    | 5    | 12   | 100   |
| Government supplies water for free | 2    | 11   | 14   | 36   | 20   | 7    | 8    | 2    | 100   |
| Others do not pay                  | 0    | 8    | 10   | 25   | 20   | 2    | 5    | 7    | 100   |
| Unhappy with water supply          | 3    | 13   | 23   | 33   | 14   | 11   | 0    | 4    | 100   |
| No water meters                    | 4    | 13   | 17   | 34   | 17   | 9    | 4    | 2    | 100   |
| No water scheme                    | 0    | 15   | 11   | 44   | 26   | 4    | 0    | 0    | 100   |
| Employers pay                      | 0    | 22   | 7    | 13   | 14   | 11   | 13   | 22   | 100   |
| Other                              | 15   | 28   | 12   | 16   | 9    | 13   | 4    | 3    | 100   |
| No reason                          | 3    | 25   | 36   | 16   | 14   | 2    | 2    | 2    | 100   |

N=2 611 (sample size)

Source: HSRC, September 2000

Poor and marginalized communities adopt different strategies to respond to service delivery. These strategies also vary over time. The HSRC's September 2000 survey suggested that the poor were more likely than other classes to take direct action by withholding payment when they were unhappy with the quality of water provided.

Reasons for non-payment of services also differed by locality. For example, urban (42%) and metropolitan respondents (54%) constituted the majority of those who felt that water was too expensive; only 7% of their rural counterparts felt so. This was not surprising, given that a substantial component of rural respondents received free water from the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (although they sometimes walked long distances, and the water was unhygienic at times).

Although government policy prioritized water and sanitation delivery to the poorest of the poor in rural areas, these intended beneficiaries were excluded by the insistence on the payment of connection fees and full cost recovery (Hemson, 2000). Moreover, if the poor paid for water and other basic services, they often sacrificed money for other essentials:

The 40% of the country's poor are getting poorer. People are making trade-offs. If they are paying for water, they do not pay for electricity or telephones. What we do not know is what else they are trading off. Child nutrition may be undermined as poor people are forced to make choices over the allocation of inadequate resources. (Schlemmer, cited in *Sunday Independent*, 14 May 2000)

A key question in the HSRC's November 2000 survey was whether respondents were willing to pay more if services were improved. The majority (53%) indicated that they would do so. An improvement in service quality may also have positive spin-offs, such as increased municipal revenue and increased satisfaction with local government.

Evidence from the survey further suggested that middle- and high-income households, the majority of which were white households in urban and metropolitan areas, were more likely than African rural and township households to receive employer subsidy. However, middle- and high-income households, consisting of some African professionals and the majority of whites, were more likely to withdraw payment if others did not pay. This may relate to aversion to transfer resources so as to equalize service delivery.

## 8 Critical appraisal

The focus on service delivery provides insight into power relations in society; how societies are organized; and how they change over time. It also becomes clear that service delivery is not a linear unproblematic process. Rather, it is a contradictory process, influenced by power relations in society. States dispense resources largely for purposes of legitimization; visibility in service delivery and "counting the beans" provide modern states with popular legitimacy. If the South African government seeks greater popular

legitimacy, it should ensure that poor and low-income rural households benefit more from infrastructure and service delivery. This may require a rethink of government's neo-liberal framework.

Several constraints can be identified in service and infrastructure delivery by government departments. A budget is a department's basic constraint, which constraint, in South Africa, arises from the fiscal discipline required by the government's GEAR policy. Another constraint is lack of government skills capacity, which has delayed service delivery in several departments. Although government projects prioritize the alleviation of rural poverty, funds have often been allocated towards urban development and hence to households that are better off than rural households.

Civil society also poses a constraint. Its most powerful and organized sectors are resident in urban and metropolitan areas and mostly defend their own interests although rural areas suffer the most under poor service delivery. Nevertheless, the 54% of respondents in the HSRC's November 2000 survey who felt that ordinary people had the ability to change the country is an encouraging sign. It is also encouraging that equal proportions of men and women felt that ordinary people had the ability to change the country.

For the communities in rural areas the provision of basic services is a lifeline. Moreover, for them service delivery signals that the state could be an ally in their struggle to make ends meet. Justice Malala, a celebrated columnist, described improvements in his village as follows:

When the ANC was elected to power in 1994, New Eersterus was one of the first villages in North West to get access to electricity. Over the past five years, roads were improved and water taps installed at the corners of most streets. In a place where women had to carry huge water containers on their heads for kilometres, the then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Kadar Asmal, had suddenly made it all flow right next to their houses. New schools were built, and pit latrines were installed in most households that wanted them. (*Sunday Times*, 17 December 2000)

However, Justice Malala later painted a bleak picture of his village after the recent floods, and concluded that five years of improvement had been completely useless. To him, the change was a mere chimera. Improvements to the main roads and streets in the villages were

... so superficial and shoddy that large parts of Eersterus are now inaccessible by car because recent floods have washed away the roads. Ugly, mostly useless electricity pylons stand over the houses, giving them the air of a besieged place. Dangerously low-hanging cables crisscross the sky, creating a pattern of snakes over the houses. The government-installed pit latrines are frightfully small and they stink to high heaven. (*Sunday Times*, 17 December 2000)

Community-based organizations, civic organizations and service recipients respond differently to service quality. Whereas some communities withhold payment, others organize campaigns to extract better deals. According to the Human Sciences Research Council's survey conducted in September 2000, up to 14% of South Africans are sympathizers of women's organizations, and up to 10% are sympathizers of civic organizations. Women's organizations and civic organizations have 4% and 2% active members respectively. Although these figures are not high, they suggest that there is potential for challenging service delivery at a local level.

Power relations are vital in shaping the nature, direction and quality of service delivery. The role of elites, undemocratic community leaders and non-elected traditional leaders in resource allocation needs to be unpacked, as these groups often prevent the poor and rural areas from receiving services. In large measure, poor African rural households fare worst as recipients of social and welfare services. With government's apparent acquiescence to give non-elected traditional leaders (800 chiefs and 10 000 headmen) more power at a local level, the future of women and about 40% of rural people is bleak.

For the private sector (local and international, big and small capital), service delivery provides additional opportunities for capital accumulation. In fact, service and infrastructure providers have become a significant class within the private sector, having grown in size due to several management and consultancy and construction contracts. Its presence is also felt strongly within the National Economic, Development and Labour Council.

Organized capital, under the banner of Business South Africa, is often vocal in demanding more channels to advocate for better economic opportunities within the sphere of service delivery. Although the small, medium and micro enterprises have a share in some service delivery, this sector of the private sector remains fragmented, with the African small business sector (under the auspices of the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce - NAFCCOC) located at the lowest echelons of capital. The bulk of services and infrastructure used to be provided by the public sector, but more recently the private sector has stepped into service and infrastructure delivery through public sector outsourcing and privatization of public sector services.

Bond, Dor and Ruiters (2000) suggest that the services provided in post-apartheid South Africa are largely of poor quality. The poor quality can be ascribed to the fact that most development projects tend to be short term, and use is made of casual labor (Everett, Shezi and Gwagwa, 2000). For example, in a government-sponsored program in a remote rural area of the Northern Province, a woman involved in brick making said:

Although the money is too little, it is better because I am able to support my children. My wish is that this project would be permanent so that I can have a permanent job. Owing to the fact that this is temporary, I cannot even celebrate this relief. (*The Star*, 14 December 2000)

For labor, especially the organized African working class, casualization of labor and the privatization of services are significant concerns in their engagement with both the state



and capital. Indeed, job insecurity, low wages and abysmal working conditions appear to have continued unabated in the post-1994 period. However, by its very nature, organized labor protects the interests of employed and unionized laborers; the interests of the rest of the labor force, who are in the majority and increasing in number, are not represented.

South African trade unions, especially COSATU, have always been critical of the government's neo-liberal macro-economic strategy (GEAR), which replaced the Reconstruction and Development Programme. However, because trade unions have greater influence in urban than in rural areas and are supported by the majority of African workers, the negative impact of GEAR has largely been felt in rural social and welfare service delivery. COSATU also believes that the state machinery is still passive and non-responsive to grassroots priorities. This is attributed to the gap that has developed between senior politicians and the people. In the words of Neva Makgetla, senior economist at COSATU,

[w]hen somebody becomes a minister, they move into a nice house in Pretoria and get a bodyguard and a driver, their circle of friends consists of ministers, diplomats and businessmen, and they never go to where the people are. Their civil servants are also too afraid to tell them the truth and tell them only what they want to hear. Their whole sense of reality changes. (Cited in *Sunday Times*, 14 January 2001)

Although acknowledged as a major problem by many ANC members, party activists find it disturbing that this scenario replicates itself at provincial and local government level, the very levels that are supposed to be closer to the people.

Realizing that the writing is on the wall, the ANC has now admitted that something is seriously wrong with its service delivery program and the machinery set in place since 1994. In the words of Smuts Gonyama, head of the presidency of the ANC,

[a]t the moment, you find that thinking in the ANC does not carry through to the government structures run by the party and often there is thinking and expectations in the ANC which are totally impractical. We need to find a way of co-ordinating the thinking and activities of the ruling party and the government. (Cited in *Sunday Times*, 14 January 2001)

## **9 Conclusion**

The coming to power of the ANC regime in 1994, after 84 years of white minority rule in South Africa, ushered in a new political and socio-economic program to empower those who were politically oppressed, economically exploited and socially disempowered. Under the democratic regime, glossy annual reports of several government departments presented an impressive array of information about government successes in infrastructure and service delivery after 1994. However, official facts and official statistics about service delivery were often mere fabrication, as they bore little resemblance to reality. Hence an alternative methodology had to be applied to disclose the extent to

which services and infrastructure were really distributed and shared. The analysis of a series of HSRC surveys conducted between 1999 and 2000 illustrated that there were winners and losers in the service delivery game crafted by the new democratic state.

Three premises can be drawn from this paper. The first is that, contrary to official government information, it is middle- and high-income households (and not poor and low-income households) who are the major beneficiaries of service and infrastructure delivery in the post-1994 period.

Second, the quality of services for the poor and low-income households is poor, while middle- and high-income households appear to obtain services of good quality. Moreover, services to the poor are often disrupted and they usually wait days and sometimes weeks before services are reconnected.

Third, LSM analyses of the HSRC survey data suggest that although township and rural residents apparently pay less for services in direct terms (in Rand value), they pay more in indirect terms. The re-demarcated non-racial municipalities will therefore have to address this disparity. If not, the parading of impressive facts will be seen for what it is – the fabrication of official service delivery figures as part of a fiction created by the democratic state to legitimize itself, happily ignoring the harsh reality of life in townships and rural areas.

Evidence in this study concurs with conclusions reached by critical scholars such as Bond (2000) and Hemson (2000). The critical perspective argues that post-apartheid laws, planning frameworks and regulations are essentially technicist and dis-empowering and will not bring about a thorough transformation in the balance of economic and political forces. In the words of Patrick Bond (2000), the potential for “progressive advocacy” is “muffled” because “government and big business representatives” are exceptionally powerful in their capacity to limit the terms of discussion.

Service delivery is too important an issue in the creation of a just society to be left to the state or private local or international capital. As the ANC-led government begins to shift responsibility for the provision and management of services to the private sector, pertinent questions arise. If the state could not provide adequate services to the poor in townships and rural areas to date, how could the private sector be expected to do this, given its profit-driven ethos? Does the 1994 election promise of the ANC to create jobs, provide clean water for all and take care of the poor have to remain a promise only?

No. Civil society still has the opportunity to engage in the delivery process. Furthermore, the HSRC surveys discussed above bear evidence of a vibrant civil society, and there is a small core of radical community activists who are committed to fighting the hegemony of neo-liberalism and have the capacity to do so – through mass protest by community-based organizations and the trade union movement. In challenging the current delivery machinery, the radical movement should, however, also introduce a development and reconstruction program that will place the marginalized people of South African society at center stage. If they do not introduce an alternative program, mass action may merely delay the implementation of the neo-liberal program. This in turn will cause the Mbeki regime, which took office in 1999, to face a hostile constituency

in 2004 when the next national election is due, as the marginalized will begrudge their exclusion from the material benefits of the post-apartheid society.

## 10 References

- Bond, P., 2000, "Infrastructure delivery: class apartheid", *Indicator SA*, 17 (3), 18-21.
- Bond, P. and Khosa, M.M., 1999, *An RDP Policy Audit*, HSRC Publishers, Pretoria.
- Bond, P., Dor, G. and Ruiters, G., 2000, "Transformation in infrastructure policy from apartheid to democracy: mandates for change, continuities in ideology, friction in delivery", in Khosa, M.M. (ed.), *Infrastructure Mandate for Change*, HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 17-48.
- Department of Housing, 1998, *Annual Report of the Department of Housing*, Pretoria.
- Department of Communication, 1998, *Annual Report of the Department of Communication*, Pretoria.
- Department of Health, 1998, *National Department of the Department of Health*, Pretoria.
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, 1998, *Annual Report of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry*.
- Everatt, D., Gwagwa, N. and Shezi, S., 2000, "Empowerment through public works into the next millennium", in Khosa, M.M. (ed.), *Empowerment through Service Delivery*, HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 13-34.
- Hemson, D., 2000, "Policy and practice in water and sanitation", *Indicator SA*, 17(4), 48-53.
- Department of Health, 1997, *Annual Report of the Department of Health*, Pretoria.
- Human Sciences Research Council, 1999, *Results of November 1999 National Survey*, Pretoria.
- Human Sciences Research Council, 2000, *Results of September 2000 National Survey*, Pretoria.
- Human Sciences Research Council, 2000, *Results of November 2000 National Survey*, Pretoria.
- Khosa M.M., 2000a, *Empowerment through Service Delivery*, HSRC Publishers, Pretoria.
- Khosa, M.M., 2000b, *Infrastructure Mandates for Change, 1994-1999*, HSRC Publishers, Pretoria.
- Mandela, N., 1999, speech at the opening of Parliament, Cape Town, 5 February.
- Manuel, T., 1998, media briefing, Cape Town, 24 February 1998.
- Republic of South Africa, 1994, *Water Supply and Sanitation Policy*, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Pretoria.
- South African Institute of Race Relations, 1998, *Annual Survey of Race Relations*, Johannesburg.