

Citizen Report Card results on service delivery

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Citizens' level of satisfaction with services in the metropolitan area of Tshwane is markedly higher than those in the rural district municipality of OR Tambo. Seventy-three percent of people in Tshwane are happy with services compared to the 25% in OR Tambo.

Residents living in these two areas indicated that they were most dissatisfied with the provision of water services and most satisfied with the provision of electricity. Seventeen percent and 40% of residents in OR Tambo were happy with the provision of water services and electricity respectively, compared to 69% and 74% in Tshwane.

This was determined through the use of Citizen Report Card, a tool being used internationally to evaluate the performance of service providers in addressing the needs of citizens. This tool also provides a scientific mechanism to compare performances between areas by collecting information through the use of household surveys. A key component of this information as simple messages to citizens. Ultimately, the Citizen Report Card involves a facilitated engagement between citizens of an area and service providers to enable a social compact to be drawn up between them ensuring that the service needs of people are effectively addressed.

What the result of the Citizen Report Card in Tshwane shows is that the highest level of dissatisfaction (59%) with water occurs within the rural areas of the Temba in the northern parts of the city (see Fig. 1). The largest number of dissatisfied residents occurs within Atteridgeville and to a slightly lesser extent in Mamelodi, Mabopane and Soshanguve. Within OR Tambo it is only the people within the urban centres, towns and development nodes that have access to the tap water that are satisfied. This leaves the remaining 60% living in the more rural areas being dissatisfied. The overall picture of these two areas is that it is within the rural or informal areas of Tshwane and the deep rural areas

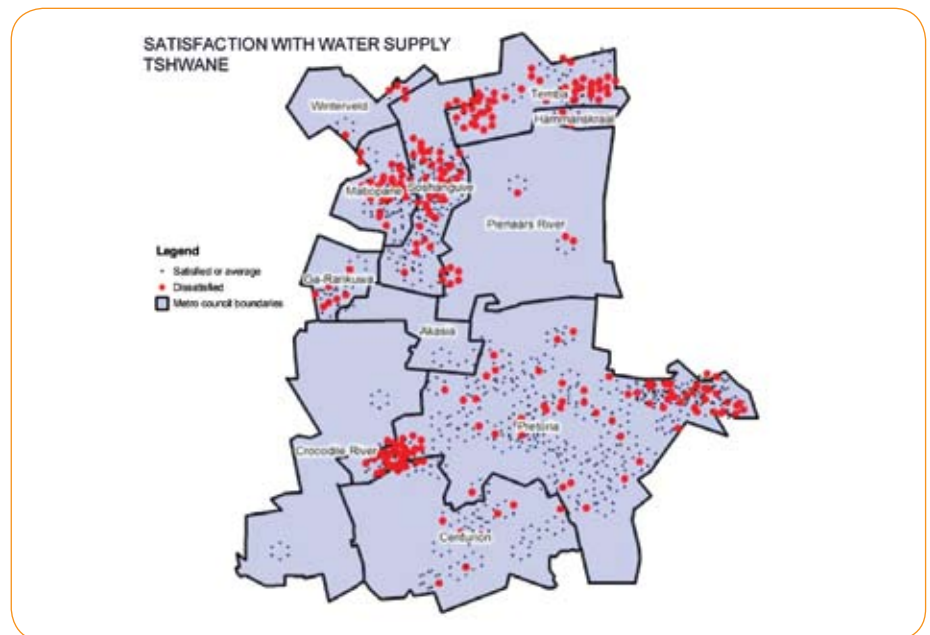


Fig. 1: Satisfaction with water supply, Tshwane.

of OR Tambo where residents tend to have limited access to services and are consequently, dissatisfied.

The situation within OR Tambo is not surprisingly worse off than that in Tshwane. However, concern must be raised about OR Tambo having 59% of its citizens still being dependent on natural resources for water, 38% having no access to sanitation at all and having to use the veld and over 44% still using wood for cooking and heating purposes. It is therefore not surprising to see in the map in Fig. 2 the high levels of dissatisfaction with sanitation distributed across OR Tambo. This combination of factors places parts of this district municipality, especially the more rural areas, at risk of waterborne diseases like diarrhoea and cholera. Furthermore, the continued use of wood fuels for energy purposes within an environment that has largely become denuded of natural vegetation,

places communities in these areas at further risk.

The Citizen Report Cards were conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Tshwane and OR Tambo in 2006 and 2007 respectively with funding from the World Bank. What they showed is that water remains the people's priority. In OR Tambo people are generally not complaining about their lack of services. This is postulated to be a consequence of either citizens not being aware of what their rights are or them having experienced a lack of action in response to past complaints. What is interesting to note is that although citizens are not complaining about their lack of services, they do understand that there are institutional structures (e.g. ward counsellors, traditional authorities and municipalities) where they should make their complaints.

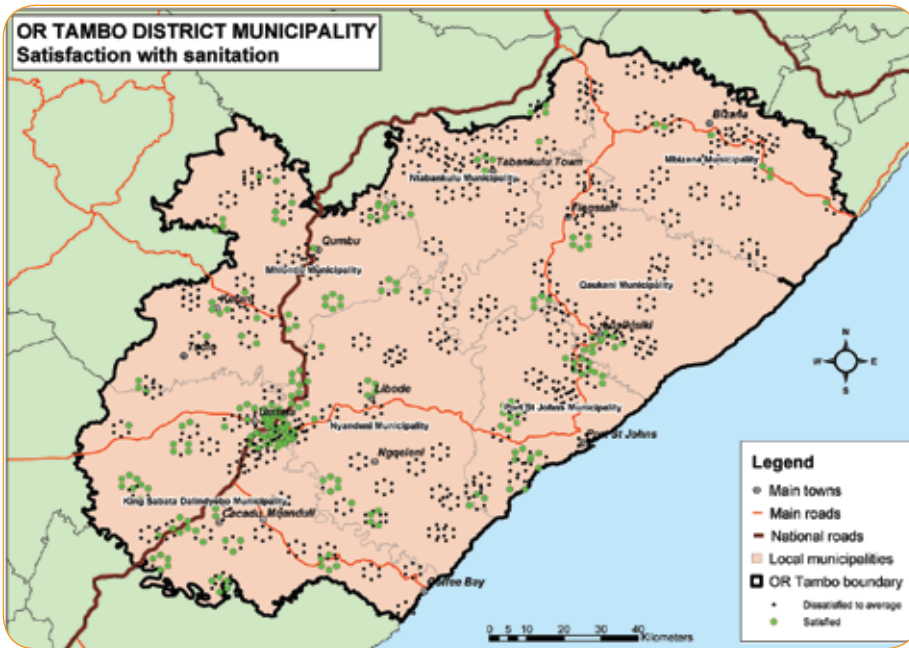


Fig. 2: Satisfaction with sanitation, OR Tambo District Municipality.

In both Tshwane and OR Tambo residents are generally unaware that they are entitled to free basic services of electricity and water. Furthermore, residents have indicated that they generally have not been involved in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process that government institutionalised to ensure that citizens form part of the decision-making process when it comes to the provision of services and infrastructure. This is in stark contrast to most participants in the Citizen Report Card emphasising that they want to be informed about the results of the study. This has led the HSRC to conclude that municipalities

need to be communicating more about what they are doing, what they have accomplished, what their priority areas are and even what bottlenecks they are facing in implementing their programmes.

To ensure the delivery of quality services requires a systematic approach and targeted engagement with citizens in need. By a systematic approach it is meant that components similar to those used in the implementation of Citizen Report Cards should be used by all tiers of government in addressing the service and infrastructure needs of the people. This includes institutionalising Citizen Report Cards within government

structures, collecting representative and accurate information from communities on their access to and satisfaction with services and ensuring effective communication through the production of simple messages and the use of citizen's preferred media of communication. In bringing about targeted engagements it is necessary to ensure that all communities within a local municipality have an equal opportunity to express their needs and participate in the decision-making processes used to allocate financial resources and providing for the service and infrastructure needs of communities.

Presently, local municipalities are using customer satisfaction surveys and IDPs as their primary mechanism of gathering information and engaging with citizens. These approaches fall short in effectively communicating with citizens, getting their participation in the planning process and ensuring that an agreement is reached in addressing the needs of people. The Citizen Report Card provides a more holistic and sustainable approach to ensuring that the needs of people are met. The key challenge now is to ensure that the different tiers of government, especially district and local municipalities use these approaches to the extent that they are institutionalised within their decision-making processes.

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