



## Causes and Effects of Poor Service Delivery in Vuwani Rural Area, Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Limpopo Province: South Africa

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### **Abstract**

In South Africa, poor service delivery has been a major problem in many municipalities since the dawn of democracy in 1994. This is the situation despite the fact that local governments are trying to sustainably provide services to the community, as enshrined in Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. This paper critically assesses the causes and effects of the lack of service delivery in the Vuwani rural area in the Collins Chabane Local Municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa. This paper adopted a desktop research method to get information from secondary data, such as the Collins Chabane Local Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), audit reports, annual reports, and other relevant documents. A qualitative method was applied to examine and understand the causes and effects of poor service delivery in rural areas of Vuwani through the lenses of the New Public Management Theory. Vuwani residents are not satisfied with the provision of services by the Collins Chabane Local Municipality for various reasons. These reasons include - a lack of public participation between the residents and the municipality, no access to clean water, and many indigents in the area. Lack of public participation emerged as the main barrier to service delivery in the Vuwani rural areas. This challenge's most visible effect is in the non-provision of water to the residents, even though the residents consider water delivery as one of the most essential services. The residents, however, still believe there are possibilities for improvements in service delivery if the Municipality adheres to its Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The researchers recommended that community members actively participate in matters affecting them, as this can help address the challenge of poor service delivery.

**keywords:** *Collins Chabane Local Municipality; Integrated Development Plan; Service Delivery; Vuwani Rural Area; Water and Sanitation*

## ***Introduction***

In South Africa, poor service delivery has been a major problem in many municipalities, partly because of corruption, political patronage, and skills deficit at the local administrative levels (Zerihun & Mashigo, 2022). Service delivery is the process in which communities are given the services they require by their local government (municipalities) (Funck & Karlsson, 2020). The non-rendering of service delivery to the public community is a significant problem that the country's leaders should remedy. The country's development will be negatively affected if any government cannot provide its citizens with basic services. The community of Vuwani is facing major challenges in service delivery as the services they receive are inadequate. This can be seen through the lack of access to clean water and employment in this rural area. This study examines the causes and effects of lack of service delivery in rural areas, focusing on Vuwani, Limpopo Province.

Lack of services, such as non-provision of water and sanitation, must be solved urgently. It tends to cause high unemployment, an unhealthy society, multiple socio-economic problems, low development and motivates high crime rates. One obvious fact that emerged from this study is that South Africa lacks qualified and experienced public servants to implement government plans, particularly at the local government level, and that, in particular, also results in poor service delivery (Public Servants Association, 2015).

## ***Problem Statement***

In South Africa, it has been noted that rural communities suffer from poor service delivery; the service provided to the rural areas is inadequate, making it hard for community members (Makale, 2015). This study investigated why rural areas are affected by a lack of service deliveries from the state while urban areas receive better services. In achieving this goal, municipalities should adhere to section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and legislative frameworks that provide a guideline and support for service delivery in local government. However, despite all legislative frameworks and policies, municipalities should always involve community members in the matters that affect them through community participation. Therefore, municipalities must strive with all means to provide sustainable municipal services, particularly in rural communities.

## ***The Significance of the Paper***

This study was conducted due to the high number of service delivery challenges in Vuwani. The findings are crucial as they have the potential to recommend strategies that can be used to address the rural communities' service delivery problems. Additionally, the study will reveal the socio-economic challenges that rural community members are facing and how the lack of services has impacted development, especially in areas such as Vuwani.

## ***Methodology***

This paper applied a qualitative method to examine and understand the causes and effects of poor service delivery in rural areas of Vuwani. The paper adopted the desktop research method to get information from secondary data, such as municipalities' Integrated Development Plan (IDP), audit reports, annual reports, and other relevant information. The main aim was to assess the causes and effects of poor service delivery in Vuwani rural areas under the Collins Chabane Local Municipality.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This paper is framed on the ideals of the New Public Management (NPM) social contract theory that states the relationship between the state and society; in this case, the theory was utilised to examine the causes and effects of poor service delivery in municipalities. The NPM theory was implemented in South Africa to transform the public sector. Subsequent to the end of the apartheid government, South Africa used the principles of NPM to amend how the state operates in relation to its various functions. This was mainly done by changing the workings of government departments and community agencies to focus on effectiveness and efficiency principles, using a performance-based approach. Christopher Hood, as cited by Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020), is regarded as the founder of the New Public Management; its implementation in the 1980s was due to the belief that a new method in the field of public management was needed in reaction to the old-style management idea. This development was part of a broader shift in doctrines of public accountability and public administration (Hood, 1995). The NPM presented an outcome-driven, administrative method for the operations of public facilities, with an emphasis on improved performance, efficiency and reducing expenses. Stroinska (2020) stated that the NPM emerged as a different way to rearrange and change local communities by cooperating with the government.

Stroinska (2020) believes that New Public Management is a significant transformation of public administration as it focuses on “de-bureaucratization, decentralisation, contracting out, privatisation and market orientation. These approaches show the present ideals of management, which articulate the state’s role in rendering public services. Indahsari and Raharja (2020) assert that New Public Management strives to provide new, well-organized tools for better service delivery, thereby improving the performance of the state. The principles of New Public Management, according to Indahsari and Raharja (2020), have a noticeable influence on administration, values and measures of performance, production panels, disaggregation of units in the public sector, opposing strategies, business-sector system of administration practices, and an accurate use of resources.

### **The Contextualisation of Local Government in Service Delivery**

Mamokhere, Musitha, and Netshidzivhani (2022) state that municipalities must provide basic service delivery to their entire local public. The local sphere of government is mandated to ensure service delivery to its local public, address poverty and foster development. According to Funck and Karlsson (2020), local government’s core aim is rendering public service delivery, and its goals are focused on its clientele when planning and managing facilities. Section 152 of the Constitution (1996), as quoted by Funck & Karlsson (2020), stipulates that local governments should ensure the involvement of communities and community organisations in their matters. This approach, it is assumed, would enhance socio-economic development and provide a clean and healthy community environment. After the end of the apartheid government, the Republic of South Africa created a new Constitution in 1996, which required local governments to play a pivotal role in transforming societies. This involves improving non-discrimination based on sex and race within public communities and increasing the socio-economic status of residents. This has been a challenge in rural areas, such as the Vhembe District, which faces high socio-economic problems due to its rural nature.

According to Khambule (2021), local government is recognised as the sphere of government closest to the residents, as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Hence, it is responsible for ensuring complete services are provided to the local communities. Masuda, Kawakubo, Okitasari, and Morita (2022) state that the three spheres of government, local, provincial and national, perform a vital role in rendering basic services. Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa sets out the objectives of Local Government to sustainably provide community needs, such as water and sanitation, electricity, and waste removal facilities.

In many South African areas, however, a shortage of service delivery has been witnessed. This is mainly witnessed in rural areas; for instance, the Collins Chabane local municipality within the Vhembe District faces poor access to public services, job opportunities, and poor infrastructure. Lack of services, such as non-provision of water and sanitation, contributes to constant protests in Vuwani; this situation has resulted in residents losing hope in the local government's ability in the service-delivery process. This has caused researchers like Magagula, Mukonza, Manyaka, and Moeti (2022) to disapprove of the municipalities' unsuccessful and inadequate service delivery. Some aspects identified as negatively affecting service delivery are - shortage of money, fraud, political involvement, lack of independence, unskilled employees, and poor management. Magagula *et al.* (2022) stress that lacking organisational independence leads to a high risk of service delivery failure.

Municipalities are created to interact with the community. In South Africa, they are divided into categories - A, B and C. Category A represents the metropolitan municipalities, B represents the local municipalities, and C represents the district municipalities. The mandate of all these municipalities is to improve public economies and provide suitable community and infrastructure services for its local people (Masuda *et al.*, 2022). Category B is the local municipality closest to the residents; hence, it should be accessible for them to consult and be in the best position to provide all the relevant services that residents want.

### **The Rural-Urban Development Strategy**

It is essential to align rural and urban improvement initiatives with service delivery. Development in South Africa has been witnessed more in urban than rural areas. This is evident in urban areas, has better infrastructure and access to services such as water and sanitation and more job opportunities, unlike in rural areas, thus highlighting the differences and inequalities between the two areas. Corbridge (2023) argues that urban areas are more industrialised due to financial resources, development and constant transformation processes, leading to urban growth through socio-economic development. These glaring discrepancies emphasise the need to prioritise access to public services in both urban and rural areas. New and better ways or strategies to promote or improve Collins Chabane's Municipality operations or performance must be implemented to limit service delivery challenges. This should be an objective of the Collins Chabane's Municipality, even though it is not easy for the Vhembe District to generate enough funds from taxes to undertake this objective, as the District comprises rural areas and most community members are unemployed and poor (Malima, Kilonzo, & Zuwarimwe, 2021).

Among the results of poverty dominating rural areas are inadequate business standards, the absence of new technology and infrastructure, and lack of development, which shows that rural areas still need to be socio-economically improved, just like urban areas. Thanh and Tuan (2022) state that nations like Vietnam have identified development as a strategy to fight poverty and produce job opportunities. This is set to be achieved by sub-sectors, like mines, industries, and buildings; in these areas, Vietnam has achieved significant growth and aims to be a well-developed state by 2035 (Thanh & Tuan, 2022). Any improvements in financial development would reduce the crowds of deprived populations (Corbridge, 2023).

Corbridge (2023) further added that the improvement in the members of a community's education supports rural improvement ideas. The issue of poverty and inequity mainly affects rural areas in less developed states; this is noted as a capitalist global phenomenon. The redistribution of wealth in urban and rural areas shows favouritism towards the former areas and is inequitable. Hence, much wealth is given to urban areas, enabling them to attain better financial development but leading to the reverse in rural areas.

## **The Causes of Poor Service Delivery in Municipalities**

Several issues, such as - poor implementation of the legal frameworks, poor leadership, poor financial management systems, incompetent human resources, and poor governance - may cause a shortage of services in local areas; these will be discussed below.

### **Poor Implementation of Legislation**

Daniella and Masilela (2020) stated that the shortage of service delivery in South Africa is mainly due to weak compliance with local laws and control arrangements. Kanyane, Mutema, and Zikhali (2022), in the case of the Vhembe District, maintain that municipalities have well-crafted agendas, rules, and legislation for effectively rendering public services; however, they still experience some challenges in implementing them. Some of the relevant legislations are - the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998; Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000; and Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003 - which direct the functions and management of local governments. Amongst political governance and administrative control, these legislations control the municipality's day-to-day operations and provide order and organisational supremacy.

### **Poor Leadership**

Leadership is crucial in providing an interrelated ethos that includes value structure and performance essential for institutional achievement. Effective leadership tends to guarantee that rules of change are effectively imposed, as instructed by transformation and change (Sibanda, Zindi, & Maramura, 2020). Institutions cannot play their roles appropriately if there is poor leadership. Inefficient leaders tend to have insufficient knowledge and skills, leading to service shortages in rural areas.

Local government leadership, including those of Collins Chabane Local Municipality, are mostly chosen through politics (often by voting). This leads to service challenges due to a talent shortage and an inability of these leaders to understand managerial standards (Daniella & Masilela, 2020). This can result in conflicts between political and managerial interfaces. The lack of skills among councillors and their inability to work together with the local government officials negatively affect the provision of services. Additionally, this situation may cause a partial separation of controls between municipalities and political bodies.

### **Poor Financial Management System**

Etim and Dramola (2020) argue that most South African municipalities lack efficient economic administration; hence, many local municipalities have no regulation and responsibility schemes. These contexts result in scams, dishonesty, and inappropriate use of municipal properties and monies. Etim and Dramola (2020) further mentioned that most rural municipalities in South Africa, including the Vhembe District municipalities, are associated with a small tax base, insufficient independence, and dishonesty, which have hindered their economic functioning. Ozga (2020) viewed the absence of leadership competence, expertise, and transparency as the result of a lack of efficiency, effectiveness, and honest economic administration within municipalities. For this reason, effective leadership is crucial to sustainably succeed in managing monetary capital and to strengthen the provision of public services and the overall performance in the communities.

### **Incompetent Human Resources**

Good employees are an essential factor within local governments, as skilled employees are essential for ensuring that service delivery to the public is rendered, according to Sibanda, Zindi and



Maramura (2020). The quality of personnel is essential within these organisations for the workers and administration to render satisfactory service delivery. Omri and Mabrouk (2020) assert that devolution blocks the capacity of workers expected to render services. The authors add that performance supervision is a good tool for employers and employees to establish goals, reach outcomes, incentivise decent performance, and offer assistance, such as mentoring and training, to overcome low performance. The Collins Chabane Local Municipality Annual Report (2021/22) revealed that the Municipality lacks human resources or workers. It was noted that there is capacity in the Municipality for about 458 positions, with only 200 filled and 258 still open. This shows a shortage of workers, and insufficient employees may find it hard to provide services in all areas of the municipal jurisdiction, leading to service shortages.

### Poor Governance and Corruption

Ozga (2020) suggests that well-functioning governance aims to maintain specific goals. This involves promoting community well-being, improving financial growth, enhancing political stability for residents, ensuring equality, and taking general responsibility for actions. It also involves monitoring state actions within the public community. Omri and Mabrouk (2020) similarly suggest that well-functioning governance must ensure that political, social, and economic goals are dedicated to achieving consensus within the community. Good governance also ensures that choices or decisions regarding capital distribution for growth are made in favour of the most vulnerable community residents.

Corruption is a major cause of poverty and development barriers (Sayeed, 2023). The author continues that good governance plays a vital role in service delivery provision and promotes transparency, teamwork, connection, understating, and accountability. Naher, Hoque, Hassan, Balabanova, Adams and Ahmed (2020) indicate that a lack of good governance, accountability, and corruption undermines the quality of basic services. Effective governance promotes the accountability of leaders for their activities and choices and is essential for the growth of the institution or organisation. Vuwani is faced with poor governance; the councillors are not effectively promoting public participation, and even the traditional leaders do not usually participate in the governance of the Municipality (Netswera & Nealer, 2020). This leads to service delivery challenges and shortages in the area, as the Municipality does not know what the public society needs. Sachs, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller and Woelm (2022) show that poverty levels across Africa stand at around 50% in rural areas compared to 12% in urban areas. Corruption is seen as a global challenge that affects service delivery (Naher et al., 2020), and communities in rural areas suffer the most from it. Corruption hinders development, which results in poor service delivery and a high poverty level (Van der Waldt, Fourie & Malan, 2024).

### Provision of Services at Collins Chabane Local Municipality

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Population                                  | 347 975 |
| Number of households                        | 91 936  |
| Water provision backlog                     | 40 000  |
| Electricity provision backlog               | 4 706   |
| Sanitation backlog                          | 40 000  |
| Number of households without refuse removal | 21 572  |
| Housing backlog                             | 23 000  |

Figure:1  
Source (own design) (Baloyi & Matloga,2024)

The above Table was taken from the Collins Chabane Local Municipality Annual Report (2021/22: 11); it shows that the Municipality comprises of a large number of residents, and many are subjected to service delivery challenges. There is a substantial number of backlogs in accessing public service delivery, mainly from insufficient capital resources in the Municipality. Collins Chabane faces

several service delivery backlogs that are making the community unhappy. However, it must be acknowledged that there are many residents, and the Municipality may be unable to fulfil all their service delivery needs.

Malima, Kilonzo, and Zuwarimwe (2021) assert that for years, the Vuwani villagers in the Collins Chabane Municipality have been fighting against the shortage of water services, although they are beneficiaries of community projects that provide boreholes to solve these challenges. The initiative started as a collaboration between community residents and the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Fast-forward Community Development Centre (FCDC). Akson Ndou, the executive director of FCDC, was very concerned about the challenges faced by the residents of Vuwani as he observed residents travelling long distances to fetch water using wheelbarrows, so they dug boreholes to alleviate the problem; each borehole could serve about five hundred residents. This was implemented as the best solution for those travelling long distances to fetch water from neighbouring villages. Kanyane, Adonis, and Rule (2021: 102) reported that in 2019, Vuwani residents did not participate in the national elections as they protested against water shortages in their area and other services, such as waste removal. The residents reported to the Vhembe District Municipality that they were tired of reporting on the same thing, which is not attended to. The residents were tired of these backlogs as they tended to affect the economic status of their area negatively; for instance, there were constant farming failures due to insufficient access to water. Electricity and water play a vital part in the development of the financial status of an area. Without water, no farming can occur, and without electricity, shops may run out of stock as their products are destroyed. High poverty and low development are visible among the residents of Vuwani.

### Main Sources of Water Supply in Collins Chabane Local Municipality

As stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996, citizens must be given enough access to water and sanitation (Mamokhere *et al.*, 2022). Within the Collins Chabane Local Municipality, the Vhembe District Municipality provides water through the Water Service Authority (WSA). The Vhembe district is responsible for providing water, sanitation, and infrastructure. The district buys raw water from the Department of Water Affairs and then purifies it for the residents in their jurisdiction (Malima *et al.*, 2021). It is the goal of the Vhembe District Municipality, together with the Collins Chabane Municipality, to give or provide bulk water to the area of their jurisdiction; however, a water backlog is experienced by a large number of residents, as indicated by their IDP (Collins Chabane Integrated Development Plan, 2022/26: 97). The Table below shows the source of water supply in Collins Chabane Local Municipality.

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Piped (tap) water inside the dwelling/houses | 4 373  |
| Piped (tap) water inside the yard            | 35 745 |
| Piped water on the community stand           | 24 900 |
| Borehole in the yard                         | 2 784  |
| Rain-water tank in the yard                  | 96     |
| Neighbours tap                               | 4 136  |
| Public/communal tap                          | 15 348 |
| Water carrier/tanker                         | 160    |
| Flowing water/stream/river                   | 78     |
| Well   | -      |
| Spring                                       | -      |
| Other  | 1 369  |
| Total  | 88 989 |

Figure:2  
Source (own design) (Baloyi & Matloga,2024)

The above Table shows how community members of the Collins Chabane Local Municipality access water (this refers to water availability in the Collins Chabane Local Municipality jurisdiction). The Table shows that it is extremely difficult for the Collins Chabane residents, including those in Vuwani, to access water; they usually access water from different sources. Residents often have to walk a long distance to collect water. This threatens local economic development as farmers face challenges in growing their crops.

### **The Consequences of Poor Service Delivery**

Lack of service delivery to the local areas has negative consequences, mainly affecting development. This can be proven by looking at the effects of lack of water and sanitation services and job opportunities on the socio-economic life of the residents. If the area does not have bulk water, no farming will occur. Hence, certain categories of jobs will not be available. Corrupt municipal officials influence tenders and contracts at the municipal level (Sibanda, Zindi & Maramura, 2020). Hence, they provide sub-standard service and award tenders to those linked to councillors and officials (Takalani & Lavhelani, 2024)

### **Lack of Water Supply and Sanitation**

Magagula, Mukonza, Manyaka and Moeti (2022) contend that when there are insufficient sanitation services, residents encounter health problems. Water shortage also negatively affects human rights, such as the right to self-respect, schooling, well-being and care. Gwiriri and Bennett (2020) suggest that to promote the provision of services in rural communities, new and better strategies should be implemented to deal with the challenges faced regarding the provision of services. Networked services like water-borne sewerage and piped water cost too much to connect and are hard to control in most rural communities (Gwiriri & Bennet, 2020). Kanyane, Mutema, and Zikhali (2022) revealed that the citizens of Vyeboom village in Vuwani, Limpopo, have been facing poor water provision for years. Residents have to walk for many kilometres to collect water from nearby villages, while others are forced to buy water from those who have boreholes. This was not meant to be the case in a democratic state, where equality is exercised. The youth of Vuwani are struggling to find job opportunities in the area, and entrepreneurs are not encouraged to fight the problem of unemployment. For instance, two individuals, Tsedzuluso Netshimbupfe and Lufuno Mbau, are entrepreneurs; they searched for jobs without any success until they decided to practice agriculture to make a living, but still, they faced challenges on the issue of access to basic services and lack of support. These problems include water scarcity and lack of funds (Kanyane *et al.*, 2021).

Organisations' provision of water depends on the nature and scale of technology they have available, and the results have the potential to inspire or deter minor- and large-scale farming activities (Gwiriri & Bennett, 2020). Adams, Stoler, and Adams (2020) reiterate that every person or citizen needs water to make a living, as it is used for drinking, cooking, and personal cleanliness. Water plays a big part in industries, farming, power and energy production, and recreational purposes. The lack of bulk water provision leads to residents being forced to fetch water by wheelbarrows and walking long distances. Some rural poor community members are forced to buy water.

### **Lack of Job Opportunities**

According to Richter, Vander Elst, and De Witte (2020), a shortage of job opportunities results in social and economic challenges in any local community. Currently, South Africa is faced with a high crime rate, and it is regarded as one of the countries that has a high number of people in prison. In this case, crime leads to an unhealthy society as investors and those who visit tend to avoid the country; hence, the country's development will be threatened. It is suggested by authors like Auclert, Malmberg, Martenet, and Rognlie (2021) that the absence of financial opportunities for community members needs



to be solved to limit the number of crimes and foster local economic development. Residents end up committing crimes as a means of trying to make a living, which leads to an unhappy community. The high number of crimes in an area will lead to migrations, and people will move to areas with low crime rates. The rural area here can lose its best people, who may have the potential to create jobs in the community; local economic development will not occur as a result. Residents usually migrate due to a lack of job opportunities, and skilled people in rural communities will be lost.

## **Status of Participation in Collins Chabane Local Municipality**

Collins Chabane Local Municipality has thirty-six (36) wards with established ward committees that have formed groups to promote public participation. The areas where these committees gather to participate are - Saselemani, Hlanganani, Vuwani, and Malamulele (Collins Chabane Integrated Development Plan, 2022/26). Since the start of the democratic government, Vuwani has been experiencing challenges with service delivery. In 2016, residents protested against the lack of services in the Vuwani area. The Municipality plans to strengthen public participation through the Integrated Development Plan; however, participation challenges are being faced (Mabunda *et al.*, 2021).

## **Council Operations**

According to Section 18 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998, all municipalities must have a Municipal Council. Section 19(2) of the Act further indicates that the municipal councils must annually review the community's needs and prioritise to meet those needs, with the community's involvement. The municipal council should be accountable for providing services within the community. Accountability is one of the pillars of good governance and a remedy for corruption (Kanyane, Mutema, & Zikhali, 2022). Netswera and Nealer (2020) state that the councillors chosen in the Vuwani Wards encounter difficulties in working effectively, for although they are expected to have a say in society regarding service provision, most of the time, communication between councillors and residents is lacking, resulting in poor service delivery.

## **Establishment of Ward Committees**

Section 73 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 is about establishing ward committees within the municipalities. The main aim is to enhance participatory democracy in local governments; however, it took much time for the Collis Chabane Local Municipality to establish ward committees in Vuwani, which is associated with a negative impact on governance matters. These committees were established three years after all other wards had been established, which has had terrible consequences for service provision (Netswera & Nealer, 2020).

## **Traditional Leaders**

Section 81 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 requires traditional leaders to participate in municipal councils. Traditional leaders have been given the role of participating in council meetings because of municipal boundary re-determination. However, it is very hard for them to participate in the council activities around the Vuwani area due to a lack of consultation (Mabunda *et al.*, 2021).

## **The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and Public Participation**

A municipality must undertake developmentally oriented planning to strive to achieve the objectives of local government as set out in Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Section 16 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 mandates all municipalities to develop a culture of municipal governance to encourage local communities to participate

in the municipality's affairs, including the preparation, implementation, and review of its IDP; this, however, is lacking in Vuwani, as programs like the “*imbizo*” and community participation do not occur (Mabunda *et al.*, 2021). Municipalities must make clear efforts through improved modes of communication to encourage public participation in key municipal processes, like consultations for the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) (Mokgopo, 2016).

## **The Provision of Service Delivery in the Vuwani Rural Area**

Owing to the effects of apartheid, South Africa is determined to transform the lives of previously disadvantaged groups (Kanyane *et al.*, 2022). The community of Vuwani demonstrated against poor service delivery by the Municipality, and this resulted in the burning of 29 schools in the community (Mokgopo, 2016). Researchers have noted that although there is water access in Vuwani, it is insufficient for both domestic and agricultural purposes. Since 2008, South Africa has witnessed many service-delivery protests by communities demanding better services (Mokgopo, 2016). There is a water shortage as the residents must use wheelbarrows to fetch water and walk long distances. Hence, many residents are unhappy concerning the provision of services in Vuwani. Even though some are employed, many residents face unemployment, which makes their lives hard as they cannot even depend on farming due to water scarcity. These challenges make it an unhappy area and have resulted in minimum development. Demarcation disputes in Vuwani have also led to poor adherence to good governance and poor service delivery (Khowa, 2022).

## **Methods of Community Participation**

South African government operates under the cooperative governance model, which seeks to bring all spheres of government together to promote people's government. Public participation was introduced at the local government to improve efficiency, transparency, and public involvement in decision-making processes (Motloutsi & Motloutsi, 2023). Therefore, the rise in public service delivery protests and unrest in South Africa demonstrates that the current community engagement mechanisms' systematic design has failed to achieve inclusion in decision-making processes despite clear guidelines on what public participation is and what it is supposed to achieve. It has been noted that the residents do cooperate with the Municipality only over certain issues. However, it is inadequate for residents to participate only in selected issues. Residents need to participate in municipality matters to promote service provision. Integrated Development Planning (IDP) promotes the participation of residents in municipalities' issues, but the residents do not attend community conferences. It has been noted that there is insufficient interaction between Collins Chabane Local Municipality and Vuwani residents.

## **Methods to Improve Poor Service Delivery**

Leaders are responsible for making policies for the residents. For this reason, leaders must be aware of and comprehend community wants. To maintain this, leaders must consult with the public to know what the community members want. In this way, they can agree with society on providing relevant services to the public (Bidwell & Schweizer, 2021). For this to happen, citizens must participate in municipal affairs so that the former are well aware of the services the Municipality will be able to provide them, and the two parties can align their needs. The community's needs are the priority of the local government, which is why the local government is the closest to the people. Service delivery failures, therefore, must be explained to residents and dealt with. The Municipality must work with the residents and comply with all rules and laws to prevent the state's scarce resources from being misused. Poor service delivery in South Africa is seen as the biggest obstacle to development, and this has been attributed to insufficient funds from the Municipality and other capital resources (Kosec & Wantchekon, 2020).

The South African Constitution (1996) states that the local sphere of government operates to render public service sustainably. Consultation or interaction between the community and the municipality promotes the provision of appropriate services because it allows the community residents to let the Municipality know what they need (Mamokhere, 2020). This helps in municipals' decision-making, as they make choices that ultimately serve their residents. The government provides municipalities with guidelines, but because residents are not fully aware of what service they want, this leads to problems between residents and the Municipality, sometimes even resulting in strikes. Municipalities have to allow for significant consultations in order to avoid such issues. For the government to provide proper services for the community residents, the latter must be told about the services that the government wants to provide. Sharing of ideas within the democratic government, like in South Africa, requires leaders to be receptive to the needs of the community. The community's basic needs are in the government's hands. Free elections must be exercised, and the state should always be open for public discussions (Bidwell & Schweizer, 2021). Public officials are mandated to ensure that the community's needs are well addressed, and the former should take community demands seriously so that the policies implemented or formulated cater to the communities they serve.

Local Government must monitor and evaluate the service provided to the community to guarantee their satisfaction. This will help evaluate if these systems perform the role of service provision. For example, looking at the provision of water by Collins Chabane's Local Municipality, it is obvious that many villages receive insufficient water; therefore, the Collins Chabane Local Municipality must monitor and evaluate the water supply to upgrade the water provision system. Khambule (2021) notes that some parts of Vuwani are well-developed, while others still need extensive attention from the government to improve. Mamokhere (2020) asserts that as written in the South African Constitution (1996), municipalities, as one of the spheres of government closest to the community, must play an essential part in providing services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and infrastructure. The South African constitution further states that local government municipalities are delegated a significant role in developing the socio-economic status of residents in their jurisdiction. Khambule (2021) also supports the idea that local governments are closest to the people; hence, they must meet their needs. Quick and Bryson (2022) reveal that discussions allow the Municipality to make choices favouring the community and promoting service delivery.

## ***Discussions***

This study explored the causes and effects of poor service delivery in Vuwani rural areas under Collins Chabane Local Municipality in Limpopo Province. Despite significant progress in local government since the dawn of democracy, South African municipalities still face many service delivery challenges. Failure by municipalities to provide basic services such as water, electricity, and proper roads led community members to engage in riots and service delivery protests. The study found that appointing unqualified and unskilled municipal officials to strategic positions contributes to failing to provide community services as mandated by section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. From the literature reviewed, Vuwani communities face poor services, and many lives in poverty. Better service provisions and developments are perceived in urban areas, while rural areas face poverty and less development. The current condition in rural Vuwani proves that rural areas face many obstacles that hinder development. The Municipality responsible for Vuwani rural areas is facing major problems in providing basic services such as water, sanitation, infrastructure, and electricity due to a high number of indigents. The results further revealed that Vuwani residents lack access to clean water and high unemployment rates, threatening local development. The ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), admits that poor service delivery is influenced by in-fighting and instability within the organisation, which leads to service delivery protests in various municipalities across South Africa (Ndaba, 2007). Mamokhere (2020) notes that poor service delivery has a negative impact on local

economic development in many municipalities. To help improve service delivery within the municipalities, this study makes the following recommendations:

- Municipal council must ensure that qualified municipal officials are appointed in all strategic positions.
- Community needs must be prioritised according to the municipalities' Integrated Development Plan (IDP) when implementing projects guided by the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP).
- Communities and community organisations should be involved in local government affairs as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.
- Residents must interact and share their ideas with their local municipality so that, in the end, they can receive the service that they want.
- There must be openness and transparency, and Municipal officials, including councillors, must be held accountable for failing to do their job.
- Training of municipal officials, together with councillors, should be considered since some high-ranking municipal officials, including heads of departments, do not have the necessary administrative and Artificial intelligence (AI) skills to deliver sustainable services to the communities.

Poor service delivery frustrates communities, resulting in regular protests and inadequate governance (Kalonda & Govender, 2021). Municipalities should be able to provide services through internal mechanisms as stated in Section 79 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

## **Conclusion**

This paper sought to determine the causes and effects of poor service delivery in the Vuwani rural areas and the impact that lack of service delivery has on rural development. The New Public Management theory guided this paper to explore the causes and effects of poor service delivery in rural communities. Several factors, such as - poor implementation of the legal framework, poor leadership, poor financial management systems, incompetent human resources, and poor governance - were identified as some of the causes of poor service delivery. Strengthening community participation is needed to improve the delivery of relevant services to rural areas of Vuwani. This paper recommends that South African municipalities adhere to all municipal regulations and frameworks to improve service delivery.

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