

Examining the Challenges faced in Service Delivery by South African Rural Communities after 28 years of Democratic Government Administration: The Case of Sekhukhune Municipal Areas-Limpopo Province



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine and discuss the challenges faced by South African rural communities in the provision of public services with specific reference to Sekhukhune District Municipal (SDM) areas in Limpopo province. It sought to find out if the South African government, especially, SDM has achieved its purpose of delivering public services to the people. The findings revealed that most South Africans and rural communities, in particular, are still facing challenges in the provision of public services, 28 years after the inception of democratic local government administration, especially in the provision of water and sanitation, healthcare services, electricity, employment, and transport and roads infrastructure. People of Sekhukhune are still fetching water from the streams, using firewood for food consumption, relieving themselves in ether pit toilets, bushes, or mountains, travelling long distances on foot and on gravel roads, and depending on the government's social grants for their survival. Despite the democratic local government administration which was incepted 28 years ago, rural people, especially in SDM areas are still experiencing some challenges regarding service delivery such as water and sanitation, electricity, healthcare services, employment and transport, and road infrastructure. This study recommends that the South African government, and local government in particular, should close the gap between the rural and the urban areas with regard to the provision of public services. The study provides data for researchers, policymakers, government officials as well as tertiary students dealing with the provision of public services.

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INTRODUCTION

It is after 28 years since the inception of the first democratic local government administration but most South African communities, especially the rural communities are still living in poverty. Since the inception of the democratic local government nearly three decades ago, local government has been given a crucial and critical role to rebuild communities, and particularly rural communities because these people were deprived of social amenities for many years. Due to the slow pace of public service delivery in most local municipalities in the country, citizens are starting to lose confidence and trust in municipalities. In

the rural areas of Limpopo, especially in SDM areas, most people are still going without public services. The people of SDM are still trapped in poverty despite having voted for the government of their choice for six terms. In Fetakgomo-Tubatse, Elias Motswaledi, Ephraim Mogale, and Makhuduthamaga local municipal areas, for instance, some families are still using wood as a source of energy and using candles to brighten their homes, fetching water from the stream, using pit toilets or bushes to relieve themselves, walking long distance to visit relatives and friends. Even though public services are still poorly delivered in SDM areas, the district is still one of the African National Congress (ANC) strongholds in Limpopo province. The ANC continues to dominate in the province and it managed to get more than 73% of votes in the May 2024 national and provincial elections.¹ The SDM communities have experienced some challenges regarding the provision of public service ever since the advent of democratic local government administration many years ago. It has been found that SDM has failed to provide its communities with public services.

This study will therefore analyse the challenges faced by SDM in the area of the availability of public services. This study will first briefly provide the demographic profile of SDM. The purpose of local government in relation to the community will also be presented. It will further analyse the delivery of public services in SDM areas. This study will finally assess the provision of public services in SDM areas after 28 years of democratic local government administration. The following questions underlie this study:

- Which public services are being poorly provided to the communities of SDM?
- What are the solutions to the problem?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Purpose of Local Government

The main purpose of local government is to provide public services to the communities.² Reddy declares that local government should provide the following:

- Democratic and accountable government for local communities
- Service to the communities in a sustainable manner
- Social and economic development
- A safe and healthy environment and
- Encouragement to the community organisation to get involved in matters concerning local government.³

Local government under the control of the South African national government should be strong, vibrant, innovative, and responsive while delivering the quality of local leadership and the public. According to the legislative document, all residents, both rural and urban, are entitled to receive good quality public services, and local government plays a significant role in achieving this through making arrangements that reflect local circumstances and empower local communities. Public services which local government can deliver to the people include water and sanitation, electricity, electricity and healthcare facilities, among others. The local government system has been established to provide quality services to the people and it must ensure that it uplifts the dignity of the poor and previously disadvantaged communities.⁴ Shongwe and Meyer argue that municipalities should be responsible for providing public services to people across various communities.⁵ Van Rooyen states that local government exists for two reasons, namely service rendering, which is a utilitarian consideration, and democracy, which is a civic consideration.⁶ According to the white paper on local government of 1998, the local government should be committed to working with citizens and communities to find a suitable

¹ Seth Thorne, "2024 South Africa Election: Final National and Provincial Results and Seat Allocations," Business Tech, June 2, 2024, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/774786/2024-south-africa-election-final-national-and-provincial-results-and-seat-allocations/>.

² Gerrit Van der Walddt, "Managing Local Government Performance: Key Considerations and Challenges," *Journal of Public Administration* 41, no. 2 (2006): 128–43.

³ Bernard Bekink, *Principles of South African Local Government Law* (Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann, 2006).

⁴ Bonginkosi Ronald Shongwe and D F Meyer, "Service Delivery Challenges within Rural Communities: The Case of the Nkomazi Local Municipal Area," *Administratio Publica* 31, no. 2 (2023): 136–59.

⁵ Shongwe and Meyer, "Service Delivery Challenges within Rural Communities: The Case of the Nkomazi Local Municipal Area."

⁶ N. Ismael, S. Bayat, and I. Meyer, *Introduction. In Local Government Management* (Half House: International Thompson, 1997).

way to meet social, economic and material needs to improve the quality of their lives.⁷ The communities should be involved in decision-making regarding service delivery. Most local municipalities in South Africa, especially rural municipalities, however, fail to deliver effective services to the people because there is no public participation. These local municipalities should decide for the people. However, the current state of local government is in contrast to the mandate to ensure that they provide services to the communities.⁸

The government, and in particular the local government system, in functioning effectively, must aim at eradicating poverty and inequality within South African communities. Both the rural and the urban communities should be developed equally. The national government should get rid of disparities between rural and urban communities. Shongwe and Meyer postulate that most South Africans have lost trust in the government’s ability to govern effectively, especially in local government.⁹ This is true with SDM areas. In SDM, most communities have lost confidence in the South African government regarding service delivery. Several local municipalities seem to be dysfunctional because public services are not being rendered fully and there is a lack of community participation regarding the provision of service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Two methods of research were used to collect, interpret and analyse data, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through both personal and telephonic interviews with local communities in various SDM areas. The secondary data was obtained through academic materials such as online journal articles/review papers, books, dissertations/theses and national and international conference papers. Other information regarding this study was obtained from various newspapers such as Sekhukhune Times, among others. Both primary and secondary data sources improved the validity and reliability of the information collected. All ethical issues were addressed before the data was collected.

Demographic Profile of SDM

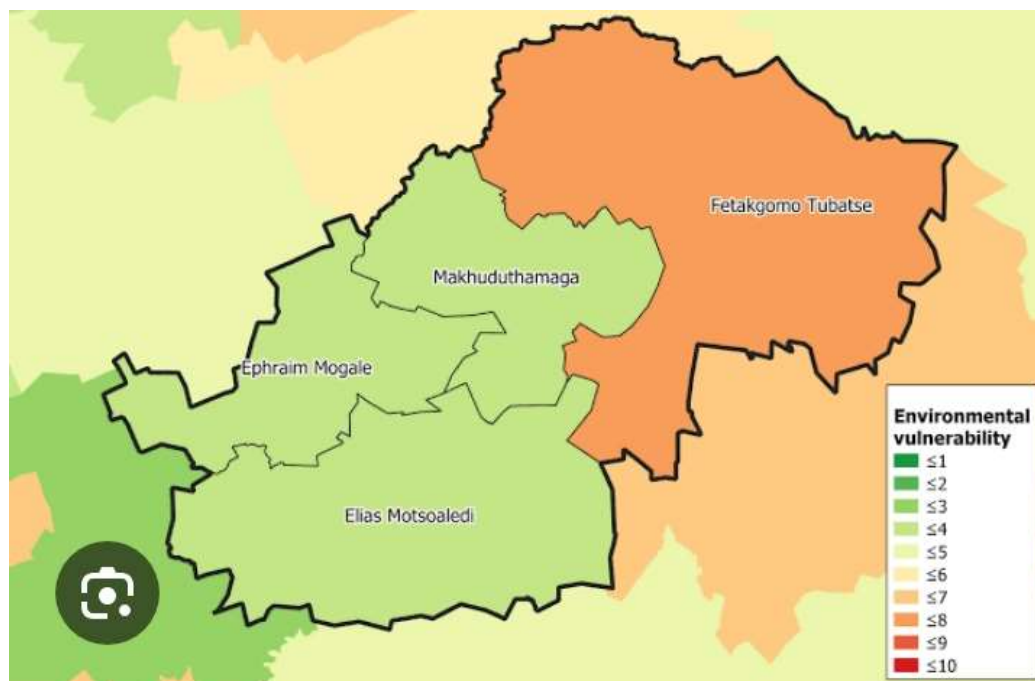


Figure 1: Sekhukhune District Municipality Map, 2020

⁷ K Asmah-Andoh, “Implementation of Developmental Local Government for Alleviating Poverty and Inequality,” *Journal of Public Administration* 44, no. si-1 (2009): 100–111; Shongwe and Meyer, “Service Delivery Challenges within Rural Communities: The Case of the Nkomazi Local Municipal Area.”

⁸ T A Koelble and A Siddle, “Local Government in South Africa: Can the Objectives of the Developmental State Be Achieved through the Current Model of Decentralised Governance” (ICLD.[online], 2016).

⁹ Shongwe and Meyer, “Service Delivery Challenges within Rural Communities: The Case of the Nkomazi Local Municipal Area.”

SDM is named after King Sekhukhune I of the Bapedi tribe who fought against the Boer and the British war in the 19th century. It is found in Limpopo province and is in the triangle between Polokwane, Groblersdal and Burgersfort.¹⁰ It lies in the southeastern part of the province, bordering on the Capricorn and Mopani Districts in the north, Mpumalanga in the south and east, and Waterberg District in the west. Sepedi is the main dominant language, although there are other ethnic groups such as Ndebele, Tsonga and Tswana. There are about 740 villages and six urban areas.¹¹ In 2022, Sekhukhune had a population of around 1336805 SDM comprised of four local municipalities, spread all over Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, namely Elias Motswaledi, Ephraim Mogale, Fetakgomo-Tubatse and Makhuduthamaga. It is mainly rural. It has a handful of platinum and chrome mines.¹² Every village in Sekhukhune is under the leadership of a chief or traditional leader. In a democratic society, chiefs are still respected as community leaders. Although there are mayors and councilors, they do not have much power because they take orders from their chiefs. Most villagers subsist by cultivating the land as well as breeding domestic animals such as cows and goats.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through both primary data sources in the form of personal and telephonic interviews with members of the community and secondary data sources through academic materials such as journal articles, books, dissertations/theses, conference papers as well as newspapers, it was revealed that the communities of SDM are still facing some challenges regarding government service delivery. The challenges are discussed below.

A. Water and Sanitation

Water is life and important for health, hygiene and sanitation. However, accessing water and sanitation is a battle South Africans face every day, and this affects those who are living in poverty. Water and sanitation are basic human rights but are luxuries to those who need them most.¹³ Water and sanitation are important for the growth and development of communities.¹⁴ Since South African local municipalities are often failing to provide clean water and sanitation, the community will neither grow nor develop. According to Mabizela and Matsiliza, water is a basic need and therefore it should be provided to all South African communities, irrespective of their geographical areas.¹⁵ The objective of the Water Service Act 108 of 1997 is to “provide the right to access the supply of basic water services and sanitation facilities necessary to secure clean water and environment that is not harmful to human health and well-being.”¹⁶ Mabizela and Matsiliza argue that the major role of the municipalities is to provide quality water and sanitation to all South Africans. “Municipalities are mandated by the constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 to provide safe and clean water to their communities, and it further stipulates that the primary responsibility for the provision of water services lies with the local government.”¹⁷ However, this is not happening in areas that fall under SDM. The Acts are not being implemented by the municipalities. The provision of water to the community in most areas is still problematic. In most villages, such as in Denilton in Elias Motswaledi Local Municipality (EMLM), communities are still sharing water with wild animals and they use this for drinking, cooking, and

¹⁰ Peter Delius, “Migrants, Comrades and Rural Revolt. Sekhukhuland 1950-1987,” *Transformation*, no. 13 (1990), 3.

¹¹ Phokele Maponya et al., “The Establishment of Vegetable and Fruit Markets and Nurseries: A Case Study in the Greater Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province, South Africa,” *Journal of Agricultural Science* 6, no. 9 (August 15, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.5539/jas.v6n9p144>.

¹² Maponya et al., “The Establishment of Vegetable and Fruit Markets and Nurseries: A Case Study in the Greater Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.”

¹³ Development Bank of Southern Africa, “Water and Sanitation: Every Drop, Every Bit Counts,” 2023.

¹⁴ Prosper Bazaanah and Raesibe A. Mothapo, “Sustainability of Drinking Water and Sanitation Delivery Systems in Rural Communities of the Lepelle Nkumpi Local Municipality, South Africa,” *Environment, Development and Sustainability* 26, no. 6 (April 11, 2023): 14223–55, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-03190-4>.

¹⁵ Hlengiwe Mabizela and Noluthando S. Matsiliza, “Uncovering the Gaps in the Provision of Services in the Rural Okhahlamba Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province,” *Africa’s Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 8, no. 1 (December 21, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v8i1.390>.

¹⁶ Mabizela and Matsiliza, “Uncovering the Gaps in the Provision of Services in the Rural Okhahlamba Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province.”

¹⁷ Mabizela and Matsiliza, “Uncovering the Gaps in the Provision of Services in the Rural Okhahlamba Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province.”

bathing.¹⁸ Fetching water from the river is too risky because these people may be exposed to various water-borne diseases. For example, cholera is one of the diseases caused by contaminated water. They may also be bitten by snakes living in water. Due to the scarcity of water, some communities buy it from individual sellers such as trucks and supermarkets and other people have boreholes in their yards.

In places where there is a provision of water, it is inadequate and occasional. Sometimes available water is often of poor quality and cannot be considered safe and this can cause sickness in the communities. In Apel, in the area of Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality (FTLM) for example, communities often go for days, even for weeks without water coming out of their pumps and these communities would end up resorting to either the river or buying from the sellers such as supermarkets and trucks and the money is not often available as many people are unemployed.¹⁹ In Ga-Masemola, in Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality (MLM), water pumps have been running dry for years now.²⁰ Even Jane Furse, also in MLM, which is regarded as the most developed area than many villages in SDM, has a challenge with water and according to reports from one of the respondents is that sometimes communities can experience weeks of dry pumps.²¹ In some areas such as in Apel, communities had connected water pipes illegally so that they could get water and unfortunately, these pipes were tempered when the local municipality was constructing an internal road and the community was no longer getting water.²² In some areas, such as Ga-Masha, also in FTLM, there is no single water pipe installed as there is no reservoir that can supply them with water.²³ In Masehleng village, in FTLM, the community was given about 20 water tanks during the pandemic lockdown but unfortunately, the municipality never supplied them with water.²⁴ In Mahwelere, MLM was allocated an R21 million water project to construct a dam, borehole and pipelines to provide the community with clean water, but unfortunately, the project never materialised.²⁵ In Tafelkop in the EMLM, villagers brought the area to a standstill, protesting against the lack of water delivery.²⁶

The outbreak of Coronavirus in South Africa at the beginning of 2020 meant that rural communities in SDM areas could not follow health regulations proposed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) such as washing hands every 20 seconds due to the scarcity of water. Almost all the villages in SDM struggle with water. In South Africa, 93% of the population has access to water supply and 76% has access to basic sanitation.²⁷ However, in rural South Africa, the population using improved water sources is lower than in urban areas.²⁸

Furthermore, regarding sanitation in rural areas, this is also problematic. Poor sanitation increases the spread of health problems. “The major problem with sanitation in South Africa was that over 12 million of them were full and inactive but every time it rained, the ground was contaminated and this led to many illnesses and deaths.”²⁹ Mabizela and Matsiliza, argue that a lack of sanitation results in the utilization of bucket systems, pit toilets and bushes.³⁰ This is true, in most areas of SDM, due to a lack of sanitation, communities are making use of pit toilets, bushes, or mountains to relieve themselves and this

¹⁸ O. Ntshingila, “Life without Water in Ga-Sekhukhune Leads to Protest,” Centre for Applied Legal studies. University of the Witwatersrand, 2021; Frank Maponya, “Sekhukhune District’s Drought Has Reached Crisis Levels,” Sowetan Live, September 21, 2019, <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-05-31-sekhukhune-districts-drought-has-reached-crisis-levels/>.

¹⁹ Magaseng P: personal interview, 03 August 2024; Makubane D, personal interview, 03 August 2024; Mahlakoana, 05 July 2021.

²⁰ Nkwana B: telephone interview, 04 August 2024.

²¹ Phaahla J: personal interview, 04 August 2024.

²² Magaseng P: personal interview, 03 August 2024.

²³ Magaseng P: personal interview, 03 August 2024.

²⁴ Thapelo Motseo, “Lack of Water Supply at Masehleng Village,” Sekhukhune Times, March 23, 2021.

²⁵ M. Seemela, “6 Years without Running Water for Sekhukhune Village, No Word R21M Project from Municipality,” Briefly News, June 21, 2023; Limpopo Chronicle, “Sekhukhune Residents Wait for Six Years as Water Project Fails to Deliver,” Limpopo Chronicle, June 21, 2022, <https://limpopochronicle.co.za%3Ese>.

²⁶ Sekhukhune Dispatch, “Protesters Shut-down Motetema and Tafelkop over Water Shortages,” February 14, 2020, <https://www.sekdispatch.co.za%3E...>

²⁷ Bazaanah and Mothapo, “Sustainability of Drinking Water and Sanitation Delivery Systems in Rural Communities of the Lepelle Nkumpi Local Municipality, South Africa.”

²⁸ Bazaanah and Mothapo, “Sustainability of Drinking Water and Sanitation Delivery Systems in Rural Communities of the Lepelle Nkumpi Local Municipality, South Africa.”

²⁹ Parliamentary Monitoring Group, “Sanitation Challenges in Rural Areas: Avanta Sustainable Solution; CSIR on Built Environment Research Impacts on Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation,” Parliamentary Monitoring Group, September 6, 2012.

³⁰ Mabizela and Matsiliza, “Uncovering the Gaps in the Provision of Services in the Rural Okhahlamba Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal Province.”

can also cause unhygienic to other people, especially those who live next to these places. The community of Ga-Malekane in FTLM has waited for the completion of the VIP toilets project which was eventually abandoned by sub-constructors and laborers because these people were not paid.³¹ According to Motseo, these VIP toilets were meant to benefit other villages such as Mdibele and Makakatela, among others.³² This means that communities resorted to the bushes or mountains to relieve themselves. Villagers in EMLM are also complaining about the lack of sanitation in the areas. The residents accused the municipality of failing to drain the over-flooded latrines.³³

Due to water problems in most rural areas, communities cannot erect their own septic tanks in their yards and only a few can do so, especially those who have money and have boreholes in their yards. These types of toilets (pits) become very smelly, especially when they are full and this can cause health hazards to other people. Furthermore, waste, trash, and garbage removal are not being removed in most areas of SDM and this can also exacerbate the problem of health hazards.³⁴

B. Electricity

Inadequate electricity is frequently said to hamper economic development and the provision of public services such as healthcare and schooling. Lack of electricity in rural areas impacts negatively on healthcare facilities and schools in that, if there is a lack of electricity healthcare facilities would be dysfunctional and this is because machines used by hospitals and clinics require electricity. Lack of electricity also affects school children as they will not be able to access online learning. More than 1.3 billion people in developing countries lack access to electricity today, about 590 million people live in Africa. Sometimes rural communities depend on wood fires and dangerous chemicals to produce light because they struggle to gain access to electricity.³⁵

Although many villages in SDM have so far been electrified, there are some places where they still experience a lack of electricity. In rural SDM, like in other rural areas of South Africa, some houses do not have electricity. In places where there is electricity, it is unstable. During rainy or windy weather, power failures are common, often lasting a day or two days. In some areas in SDM, such as part of Apel in FTLM, families are still waiting to have their electricity connected in their homes.³⁶ About 200 houses or more have not been electrified and some of these houses were built ten years ago.³⁷ In Ga-Masemola, in Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality (EMLM), some communities do not have electricity in their homes and it has also been years now.³⁸ Even the Ga-Masemola police station in EMLM has no electricity and this means that the police station cannot run effectively.³⁹ According to a respondent, some of the cases have to be registered at the neighbouring police stations. Like other villages, Zenzele villagers in the area of EMLM also do not have electricity.⁴⁰ Despite being established two decades ago, communities are still without electricity. On the other hand, the SDM argues that the villagers cannot get electricity because the area is still privately owned.

Those who do not have power at all depend on firewood for cooking and warmth, climbing mountains, or going into the bush to gather it. This presents dangers such as snake bites and wild animal attacks. Candles, paraffin stoves, and lamps are used to cook and light their homes, which presents fire hazards. There is an absence of street lights in rural areas. The only availability of lights in most villages is high mast lights. However, these lights are not enough because each village in SDM is provided with two or three high mast lights irrespective of the size of the village and this leaves communities in the dark. Inadequate street lighting can escalate crime in the area because most criminal activities are being operated in the dark.

³¹ Thapelo Motseo, "Abandoned VIP Toilets Project Leaves Ga-Malekane Residents in Limbo," *Sekhukhune Times*, July 3, 2024.

³² Motseo, "Abandoned VIP Toilets Project Leaves Ga-Malekane Residents in Limbo."

³³ M. Machaka, "Pit Latrines Flooded in Some Areas under Sekhukhune District," *Capricorn FM Radio Station*, August 1, 2022.

³⁴ Nchabeleng C: personal interview, 04 August 2024; Tunatazama-Community Monitors, "Sekhukhune Community Investigation into the Waste Dumping Crisis," November 15, 2021.

³⁵ Jörg Peters and Maximiliane Sievert, "Impacts of Rural Electrification Revisited: The African Context," *Revue d'économie Du Développement* 23, no. HS (2015): 77–98.

³⁶ Magaseng P: personal interview, 03 August 2024.

³⁷ Magaseng, P: personal interview, 03 August 2024.

³⁸ Nkwane B: telephonic interview, 04 2024.

³⁹ Nkwane B: telephonic interview, 04 August 2024; Motseo, 3 May 2024.

⁴⁰ Thapelo Motseo, "Fed-up Zenzele Residents Protest over Lack of Electricity," *Sekhukhune Times*, October 2023.

C. Healthcare Facilities

Chapter two of the South African Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right to health care service. Furthermore, section 27 (3) states that no one should be refused emergency medical treatment.⁴¹ However, most South Africans do not have equal access to healthcare, and the ongoing disparity in access exacerbates poverty and inequality in the country.⁴² However, this Act seems to be contravened as it is not being practiced by most health facilities in Limpopo and Sekhukhune District Department of Health (SDDH) in particular. Even if healthcare facilities are available to the communities, travel costs and distance often affect communities. Most people in SDM areas are unemployed and therefore they cannot be able to afford traveling transport fares to healthcare facilities and public transport is also scarce. Those who are living in poverty in society, especially those who live in remote areas of the country, have the least access to healthcare services which rarely meet the expected national standard.⁴³

In most rural areas of Limpopo province, healthcare is still a luxury. Limpopo Provincial Department of Health (LPDH) is characterised by a lack of medicine, long waiting hours, and poor infrastructure.⁴⁴ According to Mukwevho patients such as working people and schoolchildren wait for hours before they can be attended to by health officials. Patients spent an average of 5.58% waiting to be helped at the facilities.⁴⁵ This affects their working hours and their school work. In the entire SDM area, there are only six hospitals which serve approximately 740 villages, with 117 wards.⁴⁶ These hospitals include Jane Furse in MLM, St Rita also in MLM, Dilokong in FTLM, Matlala in EMLM, Mecklenburg in FTLM and Groblersdal in EMLM. These hospitals cater for an overwhelming number of people from neighbouring villages daily and are often overcrowded with long queues and lengthy waiting times. Residents and civil society in many areas in SDM complain about what they describe as the region collapsing healthcare infrastructure and systems at the expenses of people's lives.⁴⁷ Patients are enduring great difficulties in accessing the most basic needs. The Jane Furse Hospital, for example, has just over 200 beds for patients, according to the respondents. This hospital is one of the busiest in SDM and caters for communities in and outside the MLM.⁴⁸ Most hospitals in SDM have staff shortages. The Jane Furse Hospital staff are known for verbally abusing patients. Respondents mentioned that the facility also has an inadequate water supply. Water trucks are seen delivering water to this facility daily and this tells observers that there is water shortage in this facility. The borehole which was installed to supply the hospital with water is dysfunctional.⁴⁹ Jane Furse Hospital is not the only one which suffers from a lack of water supply in the district, the neighbouring St Rita's Hospital also suffers the same fate.⁵⁰ At St Rita's those who visit their relatives are forced to bring water in 5 liters.⁵¹ The water crisis has forced patients to be transferred from St Rita's to the neighbouring Jane Furse hospital so that operations can be conducted as operations cannot be performed without sufficient water.⁵² Water is either not purified or none at all in SDM. This municipality is making use of tankers for those hospitals that experience a lack of water.

According to a respondent, there is a Community Healthcare Centre (CHC) in the area of Apel in FTLM which provides health services to neighbouring villages such as Ga-Nkoana, Mohlaletsi, Mmatadi, Ga-Masha and other neighbouring villages.⁵³ According to the respondents, this facility was initially

⁴¹ Criminal Law Amendment Act et al., "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996," *Constitution 1997* (1997): 4.

⁴² Rose-Marie G Ewing, Stephen Reid, and Angela A Morris-Paxton, "Primary Healthcare Services in the Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa: Evaluating a Service-Support Project," *African Journal of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine* 12, no. 1 (2020): 1–7.

⁴³ Ewing, Reid, and Morris-Paxton, "Primary Healthcare Services in the Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa: Evaluating a Service-Support Project."

⁴⁴ Ndivhuwo Mukwevho, "Limpopo Public Health Facilities: Report Paints Grim Picture," Health-E-News, August 30, 2021, <https://health-e.org.za/2021/08/30/limpopo-public-health-facilities-report-paints-grim-picture/>.

⁴⁵ Mukwevho, "Limpopo Public Health Facilities: Report Paints Grim Picture."

⁴⁶ Maponya et al., "The Establishment of Vegetable and Fruit Markets and Nurseries: A Case Study in the Greater Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province, South Africa."

⁴⁷ T. Mahlakoana, "It Gives Us Sleepless Nights: Sekhukhune's Broken Hospitals and Water Supply," Eyewitness News, July 5, 2021.

⁴⁸ Mahlakoana, "It Gives Us Sleepless Nights: Sekhukhune's Broken Hospitals and Water Supply."

⁴⁹ Phaahla J: telephonic interview, 05 August 2024

⁵⁰ Health-e News, "Water Crisis Spills over Rural Limpopo Hospitals," August 25, 2022; Thapelo Motseo, "St Rita Hospital Goes Weeks without Sufficient Water," Sekhukhune Times, May 3, 2022.

⁵¹ Health-e News, "Water Crisis Spills over Rural Limpopo Hospitals."

⁵² Motseo, "St Rita Hospital Goes Weeks without Sufficient Water."

⁵³ Makubane, D: telephonic interview, 05 August 2024; Leseilane, PK: Telephonic interview, 05 August 2024.

planned to be a hospital, but it was not completed due to mismanagement of funds and it was eventually turned into CHC. The residents of Apel say that they waited for 24 years for the planned hospital to be built in their area. Makubane, further said that the facility is also experiencing a shortage of running water, and they sometimes experience a problem with electricity as a result this facility no longer operates 24 hours.⁵⁴ The Sekhukhune District hospitals and clinics are also short of qualified healthcare professionals, medication, and equipment.⁵⁵

The hospitals are far from most communities and it is difficult to reach them due to the following reasons:

- The majority of the villagers are unemployed
- There is a lack of transport
- Even if there is availability of transport, communities cannot afford the fares.

Clinics in most villages are also experiencing shortages of medication, equipment, and working staff, according to the respondents. Due to a shortage of medication, patients end up turning to traditional healers.

D. Employment

Sekhukhune has about 30 platinum mines, but it is one of the poorest regions in Limpopo province as well as nationally.⁵⁶ Apart from mines found around SDM, there are also shopping malls and complexes, but these cannot create employment for the majority of people in the area. In 2022, according to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for 2022, the unemployment rate in SDM stood at 63,9% for those aged between 15 and 42 and 1% for those who are between 25 and 34.⁵⁷ According to the latest census, nearly 70% of people aged between 15 and 24 remain without jobs in the Limpopo province-30 years into democratic South Africa.⁵⁸ In the Jane Furse area of MLM, some residents were taking unemployment as their biggest worry as they were preparing to cast their votes in the general elections of May 2024.⁵⁹ It is not only Jane Furse residents who are concerned about the unemployment rate, but the entire SDM residents are worried about their future without employment. Women are the ones who suffer the most from lack of employment in the district because traditionally, jobs in the mines are predominantly occupied by men. Men living near the mines are likely to benefit in various forms such as through employment, greater income, and compensation as compared to their female counterparts.⁶⁰ Mining is supposed to improve the conditions of communities where they operate by creating employment opportunities.⁶¹ However, this is the opposite, as women in the mining areas are being discriminated against, as they don't have the opportunity to be employed in the male-dominated industry. Women's unemployment is a very serious problem in South Africa because traditionally, their duty is to look after their children and if there is a shortage of money then the family will suffer.⁶² In SDM areas, unemployment among women is very high and is approximately 85%.⁶³

Those men who do not get jobs locally are forced to migrate to the industrialised cities, especially in Gauteng province, returning home once a month to see their families. Others who cannot be employed in the nearby mines and shops are forced to work far from home. For example, some people in SDM areas work in the neighbouring towns such as Burgersfort, Lebogakgomo, Polokwane, Marble Hall and Groblersdal. These people travel many kilometers to and from work daily and it becomes costly for them

⁵⁴ Makubane, D: telephonic interview, 05 August 2024.

⁵⁵ Makubane, D: telephonic interview, 05 August 2024.

⁵⁶ Julian Tsoka, "Unemployment in Sekhukhune Area," Tunatazama - Community Monitors, November 16, 2022, <https://communitymonitors.net/2022/11/unemployment-in-sekhukhune-area/>.

⁵⁷ Tsoka, "Unemployment in Sekhukhune Area."

⁵⁸ A. Ramushwana, "Ahead of Polls, Unemployment a Major Concern for Jane Furse Residents," Eyewitness News, February 3, 2024.

⁵⁹ Ramushwana, "Ahead of Polls, Unemployment a Major Concern for Jane Furse Residents."

⁶⁰ Maelane Irene Lekwadu and Maditobane Robert Lekganyane, "The Experiences and Challenges of Women Who Reside in Driekop Mining Community of the Limpopo Province," *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 58, no. 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.15270/58-3-1057>.

⁶¹ Lekwadu and Lekganyane, "The Experiences and Challenges of Women Who Reside in Driekop Mining Community of the Limpopo Province."

⁶² Kwabena A Kyei and Maboko Tumisho, "Level and Factors of Women's Employment in the Sekhukhune District in the Limpopo Province of South Africa: Some Discriminant Analysis," *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies* 7, no. 2 (2015): 131.

⁶³ Kyei and Tumisho, "Level and Factors of Women's Employment in the Sekhukhune District in the Limpopo Province of South Africa: Some Discriminant Analysis."

as their workplaces are far from home. Those who do not have employment, especially women depend on social grants, although these are still not enough to feed the entire family.

The outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 has negatively affected the level of employment in South Africa, and the entire world.⁶⁴ Sekhukhune district was severely affected by the pandemic. Those who were working in the industrialised cities were forced to return home and the unemployment rate escalated. The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted negatively the Limpopo provincial revenue collections and much budget was channeled into COVID-19-related expenditure.⁶⁵ The high unemployment rate has also contributed to escalating crime in the area. Due to unemployment in SDM, people, especially the youth are stealing from other people. Prior to the closure of the Twickenham mine in Ga-Makgopa in FTLM, crime was less.⁶⁶ However, since the closure of the mine, crime escalated.⁶⁷ There is now the stealing of electrical cables, goats, and other people's goods. Some criminal activities are being committed by foreign nationals, and Zimbabweans in particular.⁶⁸ Many crimes are being committed in the EMLM areas of Elandskraal, Motetema, Dennilton, and Rakgoadi.⁶⁹

E. Roads and Transport Infrastructure

In South Africa road infrastructure play an important role in the rural areas in the improvement of the lives of people. Adequate infrastructure is very important to the improvements of trade between countries.⁷⁰ However, the lack of road provision is considered a cause for the loss of businesses, tourism and investments.⁷¹ Rural people are supposed to use road networks for travelling from one area to the other such as travelling to school, work, clinics, and shopping complexes, among others.⁷² Fobosi also argues that the improper road networks in rural areas impede access to essential services such as healthcare facilities and schools and it prevents economic development by limiting the transportation of goods and markets.⁷³ In SDM, communities are experiencing poor roads. Most roads leading into the villages are not tarred or paved and this becomes very difficult for people and cars to travel on them. It becomes worse during rainy weather because school children will not be able to go to school as rivers and dongas will be flooded. Workers would also be affected by this situation as public transport would not run adequately on muddy roads.

There was a road project in Ga-Nkoana/Apel village in FTLM and the project was abandoned by the first constructor without finishing the work.⁷⁴ The second contractor was appointed in June 2023 by the same municipality and the project was planned to be completed in 2024 unfortunately, it was discontinued after complaints from the communities that the road was not well planned.⁷⁵ The community of Moeding in EMLM is also experiencing problems with its roads.⁷⁶ The roads in the village are full of dongas and it becomes very difficult for motorists to travel on them. The communities are saying they have been pleading with the municipality to upgrade the roads but their pleading fell on deaf

⁶⁴ Quarterly Economic Bulletin, 4 March 2021.

⁶⁵ Quarterly Economic Bulletin, 4 March 2021.

⁶⁶ L. Ledwaba, "Life Was Better before the Mine Opened: Hard Times Hit Mining Villages," News 24, May 6, 2019, <https://www.news24.com/%3Enews...>

⁶⁷ Ledwaba, "Life Was Better before the Mine Opened: Hard Times Hit Mining Villages."

⁶⁸ Limpopo Chronicle, "Sekhukhune Residents Wait for Six Years as Water Project Fails to Deliver."

⁶⁹ Limpopo Chronicle, "R20K Reward Offered to Locate Sekhukhune Notorious Criminal," Limpopo Chronicle, August 17, 2024.

⁷⁰ A. Mamabolo, "Provision of Quality Roads Infrastructure in South Africa; Rural Villages Perception, Polokwane Municipality in Limpopo Province," 2016.

⁷¹ Mamabolo, "Provision of Quality Roads Infrastructure in South Africa; Rural Villages Perception, Polokwane Municipality in Limpopo Province."

⁷² R.M. Pillay, "The Impact of Road Infrastructure on Rural Development in South Africa," *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review* 6, no. 7 (2023): 566–74.

⁷³ S. Fobosi, "Opinion/Neglected Rural Infrastructure: A Critical Oversight in South Africa. South Africa's State of The Nation Address," February 12, 2024.

⁷⁴ Thapelo Motseo, "Apel Residents Demand Functional Recreation Facilities," Sekhukhune Times, 2024, <https://sekhukhunetimes.co.za/2024/09/04/apel-residents-demand-functional-recreation-facilities/>; Magaseng, P: personal interview, 03 2024.

⁷⁵ Motseo, "Apel Residents Demand Functional Recreation Facilities."

⁷⁶ Thapelo Motseo, "Ga-Nkoana Community Outrage over Delayed Road Project," Sekhukhune Times, June 27, 2024, <https://sekhukhunetimes.co.za>.

ears.⁷⁷ Like FTLM residents, the Ga-Masemola residents in the MLM are experiencing poor roads.⁷⁸ The residents of Molebeledi, Magate, and Mamatjekeng in MLM are requesting the municipality to take their internal road.⁷⁹ Moutse and surrounding villages in EMLM are also facing the same problems faced by other municipalities regarding the poor state of roads.⁸⁰

There are only a few national tarred roads in SDM. For example, there is a tarred road from Groblersdal/Marble Hall to the surrounding areas of SDM such as in Apel and there is a road from Emalaheni/ Middelburg in Mpumalanga to Jane Furse and its surrounding areas. Most roads leading into SDM areas are gravel and rocky, and virtually impassible during rainy weather. When it rains, people cannot go to school and work as well as visiting healthcare centers.

People need public transport to go to work, schools, shops, visiting families and relatives.⁸¹ Many people in developing countries like South Africa do not own cars and as a result, they depend on public transport to move from one place to the other.⁸² However, Shortages of public transport have become a major concern in rural South Africa, particularly in SDM of Limpopo province. There is not much availability of public transport in SDM. The only means of transport in this region is through taxis and buses. In Skinoord/ Apel and surrounding areas, there are only a few busses which convey people to different towns such as Polokwane, the main city.⁸³ While there are few buses going to different towns, there are also two or three buses running locally, ferrying communities to different places such as schools, work, and healthcare centers, among others.⁸⁴ The scarcity of public transport in SDM areas is caused by a lack of good local roads.

F. Government Housing

The government house called Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) in South Africa was introduced by the ANC following the unseating of the apartheid government in 1994 and its purpose was to redress imbalances of the past.⁸⁵ However, the pace of government housing delivery in South Africa, especially in the rural areas, is too slow. Chapter Two of the South African Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing.⁸⁶ The South African Constitution further states that, with regard to housing the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures. “The right to adequate housing is clearly recognised in international human rights, including in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which provides for the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living condition.”⁸⁷ Mushwana et al., also argue that people should not only be provided with adequate housing but they should also be provided with adequate food, education healthcare and water.⁸⁸ South Africa still faces challenges in the provision of adequate houses to its citizens despite the constitution stating that everyone has the right to have a roof over their heads.⁸⁹

In SDM areas, like in most South African municipalities, most people are still without proper housing. These people are still living in either shacks or mud houses because people cannot afford to construct their own houses. In the area of Ga-Radingwana in FTLM, it was found that an RDP house

⁷⁷ Motseo, “Ga-Nkoana Community Outrage over Delayed Road Project.”

⁷⁸ Thapelo Motseo, “Masemola Police Station without Power for Three Years,” Sekhukhune Times, May 3, 2024, <https://sekhukhunetime.co.za>.

⁷⁹ Thapelo Motseo, “Moeding Villagers Disgruntle over Poor Roads,” Sekhukhune Times, April 19, 2024.

⁸⁰ Thapelo Motseo, “Concern Flare up on Poor State of Roads in Moutse,” Sekhukhune Times, August 18, 2023.

⁸¹ S. J. Mabeba and L. M. Mmila, “Shortage of Public Transport Services in the Rural Areas of Limpopo Province: Causes, Challenges and Effect on Public Administration and Development Alternatives, 07-9 October 2020,” in *Virtual Conference*, 2020.

⁸² Mabeba and Mmila, “Shortage of Public Transport Services in the Rural Areas of Limpopo Province: Causes, Challenges and Effect on Public Administration and Development Alternatives, 07-9 October 2020.”

⁸³ Mosoane, P: personal interview, 06 August 2024.

⁸⁴ Magaseng, P: personal interview, 03 August 2024.

⁸⁵ Nokulunga Mashwama, Didi Thwala, and Clinton Aigbavboa, “Challenges of Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) Houses in South Africa,” in *International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management Washington* (Washington, DC: IEOM Society International, 2018), 1695–1702, <https://ieomsociety.org/dc2018/papers/450.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Republic of South Africa (RSA), *Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa)*, 11th ed. (Juta.: Cape Town, 1996).

⁸⁷ Noah K. Marutlulle, “A Critical Analysis of Housing Inadequacy in South Africa and Its Ramifications,” *Africa’s Public Service Delivery and Performance Review* 9, no. 1 (March 24, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v9i1.372>.

⁸⁸ Mashwama, Thwala, and Aigbavboa, “Challenges of Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) Houses in South Africa.”

⁸⁹ Marutlulle, “A Critical Analysis of Housing Inadequacy in South Africa and Its Ramifications.”

remained incomplete after it was constructed seven years ago.⁹⁰ There would be the occupants of the house had been living in a mud house for about 11 years.⁹¹ According to the Democratic Alliance Party (DA), in the Sekhukhune region, about 73 houses in eight villages were either abandoned or left unfinished by the Limpopo government.⁹² In Ga-Molepane village in MLM, other families are without adequate houses. Their houses too are incomplete and some families are living in small shacks.⁹³ In Ga-Masemola in the MLM, the RDP house remained incomplete since 2017.⁹⁴ Bloempoot, in EMLM, other families are still on the waiting list for the RDPs, while in some areas, there are unoccupied RDPs and as a result, these houses are being vandalized.⁹⁵

Discussion Summary

Despite the participation of the people of SDM areas in the struggle for democracy in South Africa, most people are still living in poverty. The provision of public services in the district has not been realized as the SDM has failed in its purpose of providing its communities with service delivery. After 28 years of democratic local government administration, SDM areas are still underdeveloped. Unemployment and poverty are some of the daily challenges that face the communities. Most villagers, especially young men and women are still migrating into the industrialised cities of South Africa, especially around Tshwane and Johannesburg, seeking employment. There is still a serious service backlog ranging from immediate needs such as running water and sanitation, electricity, healthcare services, employment, better roads and transport. Public trust in local government has decreased substantially over the past years. The service delivery gap is increasing instead of being closed and communities are expecting the government to deliver on promises made by campaigning political parties. Polokwane, the main city, has continued to be developed, while SDM areas are being left behind. Even other towns in the district such as Burgersfort, Marble Hall, and Groblersdal, among other towns continue to be more developed than neighbouring SDM villages. Due to the slow pace of service delivery by the former ANC-led government, there is a doubt that people, especially those who are still living in underdeveloped places, will continue casting their votes in the future. Most South Africans are complaining about poor service delivery in their areas and some seem to have lost confidence in the local government elections because of their discontent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that the South African government, and in particular Limpopo province, concentrate on the development of SDM areas. The government should address the problem of poverty and inequality within the communities. It should see to it that better public services are provided in these areas, starting with the most basic of these, water and sanitation, and electricity. The government should ensure that better roads are constructed and there should be affordable public transport. Mobile clinics should be implemented in communities that are far from healthcare centres so that they can get the help they need. Development projects should be implemented in order to create employment, with local communities given the first priority to participate. The government should also build factories so that people can find jobs closer to home and this will also reduce rural-urban migration in the country.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined and discussed the challenges faced in service delivery by South African rural communities after 28 years of democratic government administration, focusing on Sekhukhune Municipal Areas. Through both primary and secondary data sources, it was found that most South African rural communities and Sekhukhune communities in particular are still facing challenges of public service delivery in their areas. It was found that services such as water and sanitation, electricity, health facilities, employment, roads and infrastructure, and government housing are still poorly delivered after 28 years of South African democratic local government administration. The government should also build

⁹⁰ Thapelo Motseo, "Disadvantaged Family Needs Your Support for Proper Shelter," *Sekhukhune Times*, December 15, 2022.

⁹¹ Thapelo Motseo, "Hopeless Family Needs Proper Shelter," *Sekhukhune Times*, March 28, 2022.

⁹² A. J. Matlala, "About 7K Poor Limpopo Families to Get Houses, at Last," *The Citizen*, July 3, 2019.

⁹³ Motseo, "Disadvantaged Family Needs Your Support for Proper Shelter."

⁹⁴ Motseo, "Lack of Water Supply at Masehleng Village."

⁹⁵ Motseo, "Lack of Water Supply at Masehleng Village."

factories so that people can find jobs closer to home and this will also reduce rural-urban migration in the country and lead to the development of the rural areas.

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