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**IMPLEMENTATION REPORT : FRONTLINE SERVICE DELIVERY AND CITIZEN-BASED MONITORING**



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## Introduction

This report presents lessons and insights from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation’s (DPME) frontline monitoring programmes.

The lessons and insights are distilled from monitoring visits undertaken by the Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring (FSDM) programme (including insights from the Izimbizo and Siyahlola programmes), the community surveying and focus groups discussions with citizens and officials undertaken by the Citizen-Based Monitoring programme; as well as analysis of the case management database of the Presidential Hotline, which DPME manages on behalf of the Presidency.

There are two annexures to this report with provide more detailed reporting on the Frontline Service Delivery and Citizen-Based Monitoring. Annexure 1 is the 2015/16 Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring annual report. Annexure 2 is a Citizen-Based Monitoring Implementation Report.

## Insights and lessons related to accommodation of government services

* 1. Inadequate and inappropriate buildings make delivering and receiving public services difficult and uncomfortable for both citizens and officials. Challenges related to physical infrastructure were found in the majority of facilities monitored. Problems stemming from inadequate sizing, design and construction were found at numerous schools, Home Affairs offices, health facilities, SASSA offices, police stations and drivers licence and testing centres (DLTCs) and compounded by poor maintenance, cleaning and furnishing.
  2. These problems were particularly prevalent in poor, previously disadvantaged communities where government services were frequently housed in buildings that were too small, dilapidated and poorly maintained. This compounds the impacts of the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality faced by these communities; especially the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people, who are most dependent on government facilities. Numerous facilities lacked suitable access for disabled people.
  3. Overcrowding at government facilities is a reoccurring feature in previously disadvantaged areas, with citizens having to wait in makeshift waiting areas, often without access to functional toilets.
  4. At Temba (Gauteng) SASSA office for example, Minister Radebe witnessed the cramped conditions in which officials attempted to work, unable to conform to the standard processes set by SASSA.
  5. Numerous school visits revealed overcrowded and dilapidated buildings. Inadequate and badly maintained toilets were a defining feature at schools.
  6. A lack of responsiveness and clear roles and responsibilities between the Department of Public Works and sector departments for maintenance of buildings and management of lease contracts is a persistent problem. This is further evidenced by poor performance by the Department of Public Works against targets in the MTSF Outcome 12 Sub-Outcome: *Provide reasonable functional accommodation that facilitates the attainment of departments’ service delivery objectives.*

## Findings relating to staffing

* 1. Understaffing at frontline facilities is a major concern and a common problem at many facilities, in particular health facilities and police stations. This causes long waiting times, poor service and unhygienic conditions.
  2. Health workers frequently cited staff shortages caused by unfilled vacancies for both clinical (doctors, nurses and pharmacists) and administrative staff (data capturers, filing clerks etc). Police reported problems with the allocation of human resources and equipment to police stations.
  3. During a visit to Kwaggafontein Community Health Centre (Mpumalanga), in preparation for the Presidential Imbizo, Minister Radebe discussed this challenge at length with senior health department officials from the Mpumalanga, where he emphasised the need to expedite filling vacant posts, including a manager for the community health centre.
  4. At Thlabane Community Health Centre (CHC) in Rustenburg, North West it was reported that understaffing meant that the facility closes at 18h00, even though a CHC is supposed to operate 24 hours. One doctor and two community service doctors serve approximately 14,000 patients a month, with the casualty section staffed by a single nurse.
  5. Health managers complained of the time taken to appoint staff, because recruitment was handled from the head office in the provincial capital.
  6. Dilokong Hospital in Sekhukhune, Limpopo, visited by Deputy Minister Manamela in May 2016, faced a high vacancy rate. Maternal deaths in childbirth have increased dramatically in the past three years. Waiting times at the hospital had increased from an average of 2h30min to 4h36min.
  7. Decentralisation of delegations to managers responsible for frontline facilities is a requirement of the National Development Plan, and that Cabinet has pronounced on this issue in 2013. The Minister of Public Service and Administration has issued an instruction to all departments to address this issue.
  8. Staff shortages were also found to be caused by poor scheduling of lunch hours, training, leave and meetings. This was highlighted during a visit to Modimolle Clinic by Deputy Minister Manamela.
  9. Provincial and district managers need to coordinate and reduce the demands that meetings and training have on work. A manager responsible for overseeing primary health care facilities in Phuthaditjaba, Free State reported that she had as little as two hours a day to dedicate to supporting the clinics – solving problems etc. – while the rest of her day was taken up with servicing meeting requirements imposed on her by her superiors and other parts of government needing information or wanting to introduce a new initiative.
  10. This is a frequently cited challenge by frontline managers in different sectors and talks to an overly hierarchical culture in the public service, where the system is oriented toward satisfying the needs of superiors, rather than continuous improvement in service delivery.
  11. At police stations discussions revealed challenges with allocation of personnel and equipment. Shortage of police officers and/or vehicles was cited as the cause for long waiting times to respond to complaints.
  12. Police managers claimed that the system used to allocate resources to police stations (the Fixed Establishment Guide) is not adequately responsive to operational conditions such as terrain and increases in population sizes, especially informal settlements.

## Insights and lessons related to poor coordination

* 1. Frontline monitoring looks at government services from the point of view of the citizen. Too often government departments look at services from the point of view of their budget allocations and reporting lines, rather than looking at the whole business process that is required to deliver a service or product.
  2. There are some important success stories demonstrating the power of an operations management approach has on improving services. The dramatic improvement in turn-around times for identity documents and passports at the Department of Home Affairs demonstrates the power of removing waste and inefficiencies from a business process and identifying where technology can be deployed to achieve these gains. However other attempts at bringing technology in have not delivered the results despite huge investment.
  3. Minister Radebe has engaged police officials in different police stations on the functionality of **the e-docket system**. At two police stations - Temba and KwaThema - in Gauteng he was exposed first hand to different challenges confronting this cornerstone of the Integrated Justice System. Lack of training in computer skills, problems with internet connectivity, and access to computers meant that the vision of an electronic docket system was not realised. From the visits undertaken to facilities is seems that there was insufficient attention paid to the equipment, skills and communications infrastructure needed for the system to work. The e-docket project is complicated as it involves more than one department. An evaluation of the Integrated Justice System is currently underway and this will cast light on where the successes and failures of this project lie.
  4. **Drivers Licence and Testing Centres** are frequently a source of frustration for citizens as they have to spend hours in crowded centres waiting to complete the many steps required to get a drivers or vehicle licences. The unannounced visit by Minister Radebe to Centurion DLTC produced a number of recommendations from officials on how the process could be improved. DPME is working with the Department Transport to evaluate and implement these. This work outcome will be reported on in the fourth quarter. At the KwaMhlanga DTLC the Minister, together with DPME officials unearthed several worrying issues, including non-functional testing equipment that resulted in weakened controls to prevent corruption and fraud, conflict between the local and provincial government over the running of the centre and citizens who reported having to buy forms from “agents” because they were out of stock at the centre. This situation is being monitored.
  5. A serious backlog in the processing and review of **foster care grants** continues to hamper access to this important social service. This was detected at several facilities in the North West, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal during monitoring activities, including the unnanounced monitoring visits in Rustenburg Minister Jeff Radebe on 6 May 2016. The process to approve a foster care grant involves multiple stakeholders. According to the ideal process social workers are supposed to identify cases in need of the grant and refer these to SASSA. The social worker is responsible for the administrative process and SASSA pays the grant. This administrative process requires approvals from DSD national (Form 30), the issuing of a court order, and finally registration with SASSA for payment of the grant.
  6. The grant also requires review of the grant on expiry of the court order. The processes around managing this review process are contributing to this backlog, where social workers are unable to complete the verification processes timeously before the expiry date. This means that the grant lapses putting households with foster children in difficulties. These administrative bottlenecks are resulting in deserving foster care grant beneficiaries waiting long periods before receiving their grants. Aside from the obvious financial stress to the grantees this also has a negative impact on SASSA cash flow, as when the grant is finally approved, pay must be backdated.
  7. Because both SASSA officials and Social Workers are working to meet targets to reduce backlogs these blockages mean that beneficiaries are advised to apply for child support grant, thereby removing the children from the foster care system. Foster parents are reportedly accepting this alternative in desperation.
  8. From DPME’s frontline monitoring the social work function seems to be significantly under-resourced. This is both in terms of number of social workers, the suitability of office space and access to vehicles.
  9. There also appears to be a misalignment in planning and processes between Social Workers (reporting to DSD) and SASSA at district level and also between DSD frontline offices and national (processing of Form 30s).

## Insights and lessons related to equipment and procurement systems

* 1. Properly serviced and maintained equipment, as well adequate supplies of consumables, underpins many aspects of service delivery. This depends on responsive supply chain management and procurement systems, as well as proper contract management of suppliers.
  2. Problems with maintenance and minor repairs to infrastructure and equipment are exacerbated by disempowered frontline managers. In the health sector the need to empower clinic managers to solve minor problems through providing petty cash for consumables and running repairs was raised at several facilities during citizen-based monitoring dialogues.
  3. Facility managers in Kabokweni primary health facilities spoke with frustration at high prices that were paid to get basic equipment, such as mops and cleaning chemicals, through the central suppliers, saying they could source the same equipment from local shops at a much cheaper price.
  4. At DLTCs, Home Affairs and SASSA offices long waiting times were frequently the result of computer system problems. It is essential that services that rely on IT systems have highly responsive support in place.
  5. In addition, non-functional equipment such as eye testing machines (DLTCs), blood pressure and blood sugar meters (health facilities) contribute to citizens either waiting for long or being turned away without service.
  6. Police stations across the country continue to report frustration at the long turnaround time for the maintenance and repair of vehicles.
  7. Police station commanders indicated that the system used to allocate resources (the Fixed Establishment Guide) is not responsive to operational conditions such as terrain and increases in population sizes, especially informal settlements, resulting in shortages of personnel and vehicles.
  8. Failure to properly manage service level agreements for equipment, supplies and services undermines service delivery and creates conditions for service providers to abuse state contracts. Facility managers reported not having sufficient information and authority to hold service providers to account. For example managers in Kabokweni primary health facilities requested access to the service level agreements for suppliers contracted to deliver medicines so that they could hold them to account.
  9. Greater inclusion of facility managers and sub-district managers in decision-making and oversight is urgently required, as is capacity building, oversight and professionalization of supply chain management.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the Portfolio Committee:

* 1. Takes note of the Implementation Report;
  2. Invite the Department of Public Works to present to the portfolio committee; on actions to address challenges relating to accommodation of frontline government services including: (i) state and maintenance of buildings and (ii) poor lease management;
  3. Invite DPSA to present on plans to address challenges related to delegations for frontline managers;
  4. Invite National Treasury to provide the status of its efforts in building capacity and professionalising supply chain management to respond to equipment and resourcing challenges faced at frontline facilities.

## Annexure 1 – Annual FSDM Findings Report 2015/16

## Annexure 2 – Citizen-Based Monitoring Implementation Report