
CONCLUSION

by Simon Bekker and Craig Clark

This conclusion does not attempt a summary of the papers published above. Instead, it tries to draw together some of the main points raised by some of the papers regarding service delivery in rural areas and the allied issue of the urban bias in the delivery of collective services, together with some key issues raised in the discussions around some of the papers.

Firstly, it needs to be noted that there are three zones in existence, and the nature and quality of services delivered to a community depends upon the specific zone into which a community falls. In urban areas - both black and white - local authorities shoulder the responsibility for service delivery. Service delivery in white-designated rural areas, on the other hand, depends largely upon the private initiatives of white farmers who farm the area and employ residents in black communities. The tribal authorities and the state in the independent and non-independent homelands are charged with service delivery in those areas, and often possess neither the finances nor the expertise to provide adequate services. Frequently then, rural communities have to pay for the establishment and maintenance of whatever services they may require.

Three continua may be identified as means to defining these zones. One is based upon the predominant modes of production, identifying those areas concerned with agricultural production as "rural" and those with industrial production as "urban". This continuum is particularly applicable to rural-urban linkages in white-designated areas.

A development-based continuum, with those areas experiencing less provision of employment, infrastructure and institutions being "rural", is particularly appropriate to rural-urban linkages within the homelands.

A continuum based on institutional definitions - i.e. those areas not under the jurisdiction of a local government are "rural", irrespective of whether or not they include dense settlements - is appropriate to rural-urban linkages in zones where local governments and tribal authorities operate.

The fact that the concepts "rural" and "urban" may best be defined as points on a continuum rather than as discrete and diametrically-opposed entities indicates the complex relationship between rural and urban areas. Rural areas can be seen as a "mirror-image" of urban areas: they provide a stable environment for the

nurturing of children away from the recently-unstable townships, a supplement to income and a retirement "nest egg" for the elderly; furthermore, in rural areas of white-designated South Africa, they provide a regular and predictable income, and some form of services. They remain however largely dependent upon urban areas and the fulfilment of these roles depends almost entirely on the financial support they receive from urban areas, which are a source (through both the formal and the informal sectors) of significant income.

A significant trend which emerges in service delivery is the bias towards delivery in urban areas. This is true not only of the comparative efficiency with which services are delivered but also of the allocation of state funds to the delivery of services. This urban bias can be explained in four ways.

Firstly, there is an historical explanation, which as Simkins observes earlier in this issue, can be traced back to two factors: the universal phenomenon of urbanisation as a result of the expansion of urban-industrial modes of production and the Land Acts which divide rural South Africa into the rural areas of the homelands and other rural areas in "white" South Africa. In the latter, service delivery remains the responsibility of white farmers; the delivery of services in the former has been significantly shaped by the Verwoerdian dream of independent black homelands. This policy, rather than concentrating on the promotion of urbanisation within the core areas, encouraged urban settlements within the homelands, with poor or no infrastructures and services. The rising costs of development aid to homelands, the need in the cities for skilled manpower, and the rise in militant opposition to apartheid forced a change of policy upon the state, which has subsequently attempted to address the needs of the increasing numbers of poorly serviced urban residents.

A second explanation can be sought in the influence played by employment opportunities upon patterns of migration. In concordance with Todaro's thesis, the urban areas are perceived as the location of productive opportunities and services, and so increasingly service delivery challenges are found in these areas. The complex pattern discerned by Bromberger in his paper underlines the need for careful planning of service delivery, not only within urban areas but also within areas on the fringes of existing metropolitan areas: informal settlements and other forms of peri-urban area. At present, the influx of migrants into urban areas in

search of employment biases the delivery of services towards these areas.

Spatial and geographical factors also influence the delivery of services and contribute towards the urban bias. The growth of transportation and communications networks promotes a closer interaction and interdependence between urban and rural areas, and favours certain communities which, as a result of spatial and geographical factors - i.e. situation on or near transport routes - have better access to employment and commercial opportunities. The more remote a settlement is, the greater its dependence upon urban areas for the satisfaction of its needs, and the greater its needs for service provision. Paradoxically, it is precisely such areas which have the poorest delivery of services.

Finally, institutional factors influence the delivery of services in urban and rural areas. Manona notes the lack of viability of such authorities, who are often constrained by a lack of funds as well as by traditional forms of acting (in the case of tribal authorities in rural areas) and lack of political credibility (in the case of black local authorities). As Bekker observes, moreover, RSC levies augment funds to provide bulk- and link- infrastructure in those areas where such infrastructure is most needed. Since there are more businesses to levy in metropolitan and urban areas, the result is a greater ability to provide such services in urban areas. This again reinforces the urban bias in service delivery, particularly since there exist no local authorities in white-designated rural areas to guarantee service delivery.

It is clear that it is both necessary and possible to improve the access of rural communities to services. But such changes will act as an incentive to rural residents to migrate to urban areas unless they include those services that will enable communities to become

producers rather than consumers. Without access to opportunities for employment, the delivery of welfare services alone will increase the costs of maintaining rural households, and the income necessary to cover these increased costs will have to be earned elsewhere. The long-term effect then of the delivery exclusively of welfare services to the neglect of productive services will be the further impoverishment of rural areas and their loss of their most important asset : their population.

It is obvious that the most important step to be taken by rural development planners is the introduction into rural areas of appropriate productive services. Secondly, since the state's allocation of funds to the upgrading of services in rural areas seems likely to remain inadequate, a number of strategies must be implemented. These might include Ardington's suggestion of the utilisation of small towns as rural development growth points; the identification of those regions where services may optimally be linked with the launch of productive activities; and the empowerment of rural residents in such regions, rather than the mere support of rural elites and their patterns of patronage. These strategies will correct to some degree the urban bias in state policy and practice noted above. This is not to say that the urban situation should be ignored : the rural and the urban areas of South Africa are interconnected and interdependent, and the execution of a development policy in one will influence the other. But the alternative is to maintain the present and seriously inadequate policy of service delivery which will only perpetuate and exacerbate the severe impoverishment of both rural and urban areas.

(A more detailed paper on this subject has been published by Simon Bekker and Craig Clark in **Indicator Vol 7 No 1** under the title 'Stand and Delivery : Waiting in the Service Line').

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