



# South African Government Functionality Assessment through the Eyes of Ordinary Citizens

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## **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

While there are promises of improving in areas such as creation of jobs, law enforcement, education and other fields by government representatives, it seems as if the targeted beneficiaries or citizens no longer believe in government interventions. They see the government deteriorating in general service delivery and many believe the government functionality in providing safety and better life to all citizens is compromised and in downward trajectory as this is even widely reported by South African media.

This qualitative study was intended to stipulate different works done by different government departments and agencies and use the beneficiaries accessible for participation to share their views in service delivery as received from specific agencies. In simple terms, this study focusses on understanding how ordinary citizens rate government delivery in general and how this is depicted by the media sources. In majority, the study is based on desk top data with limited observation and some face-to-face interviews. The study revealed that indeed there are levels of dissatisfaction from members of the community, and some believe the functionality of the government of South Africa is questionable. Some even compare the first ten years of the democratic South Africa ending up in 2004 to the rest and argue that things are going to worse

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situations in South Africa as they feel no longer protected and no longer gearing to the creation of better life. There are citizens who believe South Africa has become kakistocracy state as it seems unable to come with effective plans in many areas of service delivery. On the other hand, this provides media with multiple negative headlines.

*Keywords: Functionality; better life; Safety; accountability; coalition. Kakistocracy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

All citizens of South Africa should feel and be safe in their country. This is according to the Constitution of South Africa 1996. Chapter 10 of the Constitution of South Africa 1996 describe the public sector or government as the entity that needs to be accountable to its citizen. Section 195 {1} (e) demands that the public sector should respond to the needs of the people. In addition, public sector must be development oriented (Sec 195 {1} (c).

The supra mentioned supreme law indicates that the public administration must take care of its citizen in different way. For this public administration to be development oriented it needs to develop its people through quality education and create decent jobs. These people, also have to be safe and free from harm. The state is expected to protect its citizens from any type of harm.

Admittedly, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa contends that every citizen has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected. Section 12 {1} (c) adds that everyone in South Africa has to be free from all forms of violence from either private or public sources.

Understandably, all citizens therefore must be protected from violence by criminals and by government. All citizens also have the right to choose their occupation or profession freely. To add, Section 24 (a) emphasises that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing.

Everyone also has the rights to have access to adequate housing to stay in, health care and basic education. Also, people have right to receive education in their own languages [1].

All these are the right that the people know they have in South Africa. During elections the same people are even promised more to add on these basic human rights. All these suggest that there is high expectations that bulk of work to protect citizens from many fronts has to be carried by the

Public Administration. The following therefore form some basic people need from government:

- Free education.
- Safety and protection from criminals and other thugs.
- Free and decent home.
- Free health care.
- Access to economic activities such as work through jobs creation.

However, the question this paper wants to address is whether the communities see indeed government that can provide effectively or not. In line with this, the study focussed on checking how deep the citizens still believe in their government. Do they see their government winning on this war against crime, hunger and illnesses? Is there a reason for people to believe or doubt functionality of the South African government? What are the desktop data supporting how citizens see functionality of their government?

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Although there is data collected from face-to-face with randomly picked participants, most of the information came from the secondary data. The secondary data from media and other sources provided some insight on the performance of departments and its agencies. This qualitative study also focused on the quality of services provided by the South African government as viewed by ordinary citizens. Questions used for face-to-face interviews where general and allowed for participants to expand e.g. What are your views on performance of government in education, health or any other chosen field? Participants came from both urban and rural areas and they were randomly picked on streets and other areas. Although they shared their real names it was decided to keep the study confidential and therefore not release their identity.

### 3. SCOPE

This study is based on the experiences from the year 2021 to 2023 and mainly used secondary data from reports by government and by the different types of media houses. The technique was to take sampled fields of service delivery and use secondary data based on such areas of service delivery. Few randomly selected participants were interviewed in different parts of Limpopo Province, one of the 9 South African Provinces. A total of seven data collectors assisted in pickling participants in informal interaction that can be called “bumping onto someone”

### 4. FUNCTIONALITY OF GOVERNMENT AS PER THE CONSTITUTION

The Republic of South Africa is one sovereign, democratic state founded on the values of human dignity, non-racialism, supremacy of the constitution and national common voters roll, regular elections to formulate the government that ensures accountability. This is according to Chapter 1 (1) of the Constitution of South Africa [2]. The government therefore must uphold the constitution and respect to the bill of rights of its citizens as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, Chapter 2.

Accordingly, in promotion of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations, all spheres of government and other organs of state must preserve peace, national unity and foster friendly relations as indicated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa. As a result, the local government or municipalities must also provide service delivery gains and also promote safe and healthy environment [3,4].

Above all, the government is according to the Constitution (Chapter 9) create state institutions to support constitutional democracy. These include the Public Protector, The South African Human Rights Commission, Auditor-general and Electoral Commission. All these bodies are amongst others meant to investigate any conduct that is seen as contravening the Constitution of the Country and rights of the citizens. Should all these function as expected all the citizens will be made to leave life as expected [5,6].

In addition, the Constitution of South Africa (Chapter 10 section 195) emphasises that Public administration shall be governed efficient, economic and effective use of the resources, and

that people's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making. Section 195 (f) also indicate that the public administration must be accountable to its people. In general, the Constitution of South Africa in main focusses on promotion of better life to its citizens hence the general feeling that the dawn of democracy in 1994 was all for better life for all citizens staying in the country. However, as years pass by, some people began to scrutinise the capacity of the government in abiding by the Constitution of the Republic, more specially in fulfilling the Promises enshrined in the bill of rights. Also, of importance has been focussing on safety, education and health provided by the state. It is then acceptable that majority of people of South Africa regard the government as their solely hope. This is also the trends with those from neighbouring African Countries who recently are seen flocking to South Africa. They all used to see South African Government as the centre that is well holding. However, there are those who have since begun to scrutinise the stability of better life delivery by the Government of South Africa to all its citizens. The views of these disillusioned citizens is reflected in many media platforms and other documentations. Ms Maggie (Not real name) is an old lady and retired educator residing in Seshego township. She said, “There is a lot the ANC led government has done in improving living conditions of us as blacks and as women when democracy started, but for now I see government that is collapsing in the hands of corrupt leaders.” She acknowledges that government managed to bring electricity, water, houses for millions of people but all these are in recent years overshadowed by activities of corruption, crime and infrastructure collapsing [7,8].

### 5. REFLECTIONS ON CHALLENGES IN SOME SERVICE DELIVERY AREAS

This section scrutinised few service delivery areas in line with the emphasises of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa [2]. These include:

#### 5.1 Safety and Security

A total of 37% of citizens feel barely safe while 22% feel they are not safe in South Africa. This is according to Statistics South Africa report of 2022. This report adds that 32% of citizens feel somewhat safe living in the country. In addition, the Automobile Association (AA) 2023 Quarter 4

State of Security Report (sos Report) released recently confirms that citizens do not feel safe even in their houses. In general, Statistics South Africa overall reported that all respondents reported being a victim of a crime in South Africa. In average, the report indicates that 75 people are murdered every day in South Africa.

The following is a Table 1 indicating number of killings from 2019 to 2023 in South Africa:

**Table 1. Number of killings from 2019 to 2023 in South Africa**

Year	Murders	Per 100K
2019/20	21 325	37
2020/21	19 972	34
2021/22	25 181	43
2022/23	27 272	46

[Google.com/search?Q+recentcrimesinsouthAfrica+2022](https://www.google.com/search?q=recentcrimesinsouthAfrica+2022)

From child and women murders to mass shootings at taverns, rapes, kidnapping, crime in South Africa continues to send shockwaves across the country. This is according to News 24, 31 July 2023. News24 also cited current Minister of Police in South Africa, Mr Bheki Cele indicating that the levels of crime are worrisome in the country [9-12].

Some of the heart-breaking crimes that happened recently in South Africa to the dismay of the Government include the following:

A total of 21 people were killed at Enyobeni tavern tragedy in East London. These people were from 13 to 17 years suggesting that the liquor was sold even to the minors. Parents even in July 2023 were still waiting for the closure in knowing exactly what happened to their kids and see justice taking its cause. Furthermore, Media24 also reported that people of South Africa were also shocked by the shooting that happened at Mdlalose Tavern in Gauteng Province where 16 patrons were gunned down on July 2022. On investigation, 130 AK47 cartridges were picked up.

The Rosettenville shooting on February 22 left eight people dead and four police officers injured during a cash-in-transit heist. In March 23, 5 people were killed in early hours of 14 March 2023 at Khayelitsha shooting. To what shocked the tourism industry, a 67 German tourist was killed in ambush while traveling from

Drakensberg to Mdluli Safari Loge in Kruger National Park.

The other criminal challenge in South Africa is on illegal mining. Illegal mining is dangerous and costly, not to the miners only as they get to the industry unprotected but also to environment and the economy [13]. The recent death of 17 people in Boksburg gas leak disaster in informal settlement led to investigation that revealed that illegal miners had kept gas in shack houses and the gas leaked to kill people from surroundings. Illegal mining keeps spreading in different parts of South Africa. These people are said to be heavily armed that the government is failing to deal with them. In the west Rand part of Johannesburg in August 2022, 82 illegal miners plying their trade in abandoned mines around West Village in Krugersdorp were arrested for 32 counts of rape and multiple counts of robberies. A crew was doing a film in the area when around 10 men in Basotho-Blankets approached them firing in the air ordering all to sleep before they raped women and robbed all other items. In investigation it was found that there were even more illegal miners staying in the area heavily armed [14]. Most of these cases including this one still pending in courts delaying justice to prevail. Admittedly, there are many foreign nationals in South Africa who are not even documented.

As a result of continuing criminal activities, Cape Politicians called for minister Bheki Cele's axing as they believed the ministry has no crime fighting strategies. Following the release of the 2021/2022 fourth quarter crim statistics, it was realised that there is 10% increase in the commitment of serious crimes reported by the communities in Western Cape Province and other areas [15]. Some citizens even blame the police minister for turning himself into being a chaplain who only react after the killings to visit families and scenes of crimes to send condolences. This suggests that in law enforcement there are more challenges disturbing safety of the citizens of South Africa.

The Other challenge is that the number of police officers killed online of duty and in public spaces seem to be increasing in South Africa. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2023, there has been a report of 31 officers killed as compared to the 18 of the year 2022. House burglaries also are reported to make communities afraid in the houses that they no longer believe they are safe in their own homes and their own communities.

Many citizens were also alarmed when minister of transport, Sindisiwe Chikunga and her two protectors were ambushed and robbed on the N3 road near Johannesburg in November 23. This was widely covered in the media hence Mr Mangwana from Sekhukhune said, "If ministers are hijacked what about us the ordinary citizens without protectors or bodyguards?" He feels there is no safer place and safe person in South Africa.

Participant BB stays in Ivypark section of the city of Polokwane, "The housebreakings happen in average five times a month in different households and these are reported during our monthly meeting as members of Ward 22 of the municipality" Likewise, a community representative in a small area used to be known as Venda in Vhembe district of Limpopo, Mr Julius, had this to say " Here in Venda people used to sleep outside their houses when it was hot and they used to sleep with open doors. Today they experience thefts even though they keep homes locked day and night" He lamented that crime in current years proved to be rising to highest levels and police seem to be struggling to curb it.

## 2.5 Access to Quality Education

There is a major emphasis on the education of South African people to become responsible, participatory and reflective citizens that contribute to an emerging democracy. However, education in South Africa is faced with many challenges that hinder the South African people from becoming educated nation [16]. One such challenge is inequality caused by apartheid which saw the country having two separated education system for blacks and whites.

Ramdass [16] also cited the ill-discipline in many schools in the country that hinders implementation of anticipated education. This is despite the talk of emphasising schools Safety Programme. Current education, as Ramdass [16] continues, is failing to be able to create national skills through educational agencies. On the other hand, Ramdass [16] argues that funding available for education, even with donations from the United Nations and others is inadequate to address the scale of South Africa's education problems created by apartheid in the near future.

While education is generally meant to lead to possibilities of job opportunity, during April 2023, Statistics SA (State agency) revealed that there

was unemployment rate of 63.9% for those aged 15-24 years in the first quarter of 2023. (Mail and Guardian, 20 April 2023). In the same year's State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised that access to quality education for all is the most powerful tool to end poverty. In contrast, numerous challenges hinder school children in South Africa from accessing this powerful tool, quality education. (Mail and Guardian 20 April 2023). Sommer [17] continued to indicate that South Africa's education system leaves many children behind due to crumbling infrastructure, teachers shortage and lack of education progress. Only 20% of public schools are properly functional with an enormous gap between the results they achieve and the outcome of the other 80% of public schools [17]. As a rule, run-down schools with poorly maintained buildings, dysfunctional and unhygienic sanitary facilities and lack of basic equipment and learning material do not provide conducive learning environment. As reported by Aljazeera Television in 2023, there are still 3300 schools in South Africa still using pit toilets with number of learners reported to have fallen and some even died in these toilets. This is despite the department's achievement in building several state-of-art schools, people of the village of Khalavha in Thulamela Municipality are some who indicated that their school, Jack Lavhengwa Secondary has been dilapidated that they spent the past eight years or more requesting for assistance to no avail. "We will end up getting our children dying under rubbles there as it is falling apart" [18].

Former Deputy President of South Africa, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka in her annual 2023 Reading Panel revealed that only 18% of grade 4 pupils can read for meaning.

To add, the Progress in International Reading Literature Study (PIRLS) assessed literacy levels for 50 participating countries and put South Africa in the last place as its grade 4 learners could not even meet the benchmark. According to PIRLS 2023 results, 81% of grade 4 learners in South Africa cannot read for meaning even in their own home languages.

Professor M of the University of Limpopo also indicated that the Universities are getting students who are not ready for university education due to poor secondary school education and standards. "They struggle even to complete admission forms let alone taking instructions from different question"

The Fees Must Fall campaign that started in October 2015 in South Africa against student fees increase in universities was an indication that the promise of democracy for free access to education is not yielding expected fruits. Ms Mbawe and her husband earn between

R400 000 and R600 000 and their son who is attending at the University level does not qualify for the student support from government known as National Student Financial Aid as it is meant for households earning less than R350 000. She argues this is one limitation to free education.



Fig. 1. 19 people randomly gunned down in a bar, Gauteng, South Africa. Reuters, 22



Fig. 2. Netshimbupfe Secondary School. (Example of schools still found in South Africa. However, there are number of new ones built but still having huge backlog in some areas. This is Netshimbupfe Secondary School block built in 1975.) Photo by Lucas Ledwaba, 8 June 2020

## 5.2 Accountability in Governance

As reported in several media houses in South Africa and Abroad, the Zondo Commission on State Capture was established in January 2018. This followed a corruption trend that saw state resources mismanaged for the benefit in main of then President Zuma and his cronies that include the famous Guptas' family (Media24). The then Public Prosecutor Adv Thuli Madonsela triggered the establishment of the Commission in pursuant to her investigation and remedial action regarding complaints and allegations of the State Capture. The fifth and final report was provided to the President of South Africa on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022.

On the other hand, the Zondo Commission on state capture indicated that corruption in South Africa includes the improper use of public resources for private ends, including bribery and improper favouritism with lack of accountability. Currently, the state is suffering of corruption that include wasteful expenditure, state capture that is persisting camouflaged under implementation of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) despite the revelation by Zondo Commission.

All the spheres of government are often blamed for corrupt activities that negatively affects good governance in multiple ways. Young Mr Mongwe of Tzaneen town complained, "Corruption is now a system in South Africa. I had to pay R1500 to corrupt traffic official to be able to pass my drivers' license, for no one passes without putting out this money to traffic officers' pockets. It is a norm, or you go home with irrespective of how best you are in driving".

These will include ways young people access scares job opportunities, acquirement of driver's licenses and other documents illegally, bogus university qualifications and allocation of general service delivery matters such as provisioning of houses, water and proper education infrastructure. All these abnormalities have potential to influence societal observations that lead to general conclusion that the South African Government has lost control and no longer strive for public Sector that is accountable as shrined in the Constitution of South Africa 1996.

The "elephant in the room" is the eminent arrival of the coalition governance which will involve multi-political parties come the national elections in 2024 which can see the national government lead by different political parties.

Since 2016, many coalition formed in South African metropolitan councils continue to be unstable [19]. Nzo from the Public Affairs Research Institute added that these coalitions are mired by activities of the motion of confidence which destabilise working of councils towards service delivery in general.

It continuously indicates that coalition will become a reality in South African Municipalities. The 1st of November 2021 elections left 66 hung municipalities that are governed by coalitions. It is in these elections that saw four major South African councils of the city of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Nelson Mandela Bay and the city of Tswane produced "hung Councils" as no one political party was able to secure an outright majority of over 50% (Businessstech, 23).

The African National Congress (ANC) which has enjoyed electoral dominance at local, Provincial and National level since 1994 achieved less than 50% to the surprise of many including leaders of the party themselves (Mbanyela, 2021). This left the ANC with no option but to seek out coalition partners to join the opposition benches in some councils. The Democratic Alliance as second-largest political party failed to capitalize on ANC governance failures and also underperformed at the same polls and achieve less than 22% of the total vote. This placed the parties were placed by these results in a bind and as they are reluctant to form coalition with each other has led to instability (Mbanyane, 2021). The instabilities in different "hung municipalities" can be attributed to the parties not forgetting their differences and focus on service delivery. One of the most notable failing of co-governing has been seen in Johannesburg Municipality. From 2022 to 2023, this municipality has been very unstable over who has the final say over the city council with many looking at the lucrative seat of the major.

Admittedly, in short space of less than a year Johannesburg had 6 mayors. On 30 September 2022, the DA Mpho Phalatse was ousted as the mayor of Johannesburg through the vote of no confidence that was passed. This coalition was comprised of ACDP, FF Plus, COPE, IFP, Action SA and later PA. The ANC's Dada Morero took over as the new mayor. This was then challenged by the ousted Phalatse and in January 23 she came back into the helm. She however did not stay long as she was removed again through the collaboration of EFF, PA and ANC. The position was then awarded to Thapelo Amad from three seats Al-Jama-ah. It did not

take long before he was replaced by Kabelo Gwamanda as mayor. In less than a year, City of Johannesburg had the following mayors following the scrambling of coalitions:

2020- Dada Morero for less than two weeks.

2022- Mpha Phalatse for less than two months

2023- Thapelo Amad for less than a month

2023- Kabelo Gwamanda (May 2023)

On 8 May 2023, just two days of Gwamanda election as a mayor, former mayor Mpha Phalatse indicated that she is having some knowledge to support the allegations that Gwamanda is not fit for the office as he has committed some fraud through the funeral scheme (SABC News channel 404, 8 May 2023).

Ekurhuleni, Nelson Mandela Bay and Tswane are also experiencing challenges in their co-governance. As reported by Mpangalase C in Metadata 2020, residents in these metropolitans that are co-governed complain about the quality of services they get from their municipalities. Residence turn to blame the councils for spending time on internal political squabbles at the expense of planning and delivering services. Other challenges in these municipalities include the failure to promote and improve growth in the communities under which the municipalities operate.

Many people of South Africa are asking possibilities of getting stable National Government should the results of 2024 national election results leave no one political party with outright ruling power with 50 plus 1 % seats. With the abuse of the so called "Vote of no confidence" it will more be likely to keep changing both presidency and the cabinet of the country leading to lack of stability and therefore lack of focus on service delivery and growth of economic plus quality governance.

Within South African rules where the former presidents are entitled for their benefits till death, South Africa may remain with chain of former presidents who will have sworn and not stay long on power but continue to get benefits. People and political parties may also abuse this gap and use it to enrich themselves. With lack of interest by parliament to come with ruled to govern coalitions, people continue to wonder what will

happen after the coming elections. "The centre is no longer holding..." The sign many citizens are embracing with anguish. "There is no more government in South Africa these days. Government of Tatana Mandela is gone" Said Mr Mkansi in Giyani.

### 5.3 Access to Health Care

The Department of Health derives its mandate from the National Health Act of 2003 which requires that the department provides a framework for a structured and uniform health system for South Africa ([www.gov.za](http://www.gov.za)). The main aim of the department is to improve health by preventing illness and disease and promoting health lifestyle. It is therefore expected that this department has to improve the healthcare delivery system by focusing on access, equity, efficiency, quality and sustainability [20].

Accordingly, and in line with the Constitution of South Africa 1996, Chapter 2 (27), everyone in the country has the right to have access to healthcare services and no one may be refused emergency medical treatment.

South Africa has more than 400 public hospitals, 200 Private health facilities and estimated 3841 clinics and health centres. Public hospitals and clinics are open for all the people in the country who cannot afford private health care which proved to be expensive and more efficient.

As shrined in the Constitution of South Africa (1996), South Africa has to provide healthcare to all the people in the country. These include both citizens, registered and not documented migrants. Unfortunately, it is difficult to plan for the undocumented foreigners. The country on the other hand lacks proper border controls and see daily arrival of many people of foreign nations with many not documented. The easy flow into the country is amongst others encouraged by levels of corruption. These finds the public healthcare facilities over-populated which leads to overworking of stuff and shortage of medicines, beds and accommodation [21,22].

The other challenge facing the Healthcare in South Africa in unequal distribution of resources which sees people who cannot afford high prices in healthcare facilities and those who manage to go to private healthcare centres. This implies that there are some people who will never be able to get services as intended by the National Health Act of 2003.



To make it even worse, public healthcare facilities are also gulfed by management and leadership crises. This leads to the decline of quality healthcare that saw citizens loose trust to public healthcare (Maphumulo and Bengu 2019). There is also a challenge of increase disease burden experienced in public healthcare in South Africa which many argue that it comes as a result of porous borders of the country that allow for numbers of foreign nationals flocking to the country with limited control. Vanyoro [23] reported that a political storm has erupted on South Africa after video went viral showing the health minister of Limpopo Province, Dr Phophi Ramathuba addressing a Zimbabwean woman who was seeking health in South Africa. In this video, Ramathuba was reminding the patient that their government should be made to pay for healthcare services they receive in public healthcare institutions as this is costly to South African government to carry. Different views came following the video where some citizens supported Ramathuba while others argue that the doctor may be correct but said it to the wrong person and at the wrong place as she can use state resources to share her frustration with Zimbabwean government. Some people also blame the slow progress in restructuring the health system in pursuit of what government call National Health Insurance which will bring equality in access and benefits of healthcare services. However, there are many who blame corruption in procurement system of healthcare services. All these challenges are seen as the

failure of Government in the running of healthcare that makes other people arguing that healthcare services is deteriorating since the dawn of democracy in 1994.

Ms Mokededi of Modimolle informal settlements complains that public health clinics lack medication in most times. She partially attributes this to increased number of undocumented foreign citizens she argues are competing with the residence for services such as access to health facilities. Increased number of undocumented foreign citizens, mostly Zimbabweans and those from Mozambique is blamed by most community members to the porous borders of South Africa which they say is sign of lack of rule and sign of state that is falling apart.

#### 5.4 Better life through Improving Economy

According to Statistics South Africa, the rate of unemployment in South Africa has reached 33% and it is affecting even the graduates and skilled people. This percentage does not count those people who have given up in searching for work as they lost hope. It is in this regard estimated that counting all and properly can see the rise to 42%. As reported by Magome M [24], South Africa's unemployment is a "ticking time bomb" and anger of the millions jobless keep rising. In this regard, economy of the country is not doing



Fig. 3. Overcrowding in Delft Community Health Clinic, Cape Town, South Africa. Pic: Ayanda Ndamane, Cape Argus 17 August 2023

well, and people start losing trust on job opportunities created by government. At times the blame is directed to the results of Covid-19 pandemic which saw some jobs being halted. The Loadshedding also contributed in loss of many jobs. Unfortunately, people of South Africa cannot look to neighbouring countries as their economies has collapsed beyond repair. This leaves many people legible for work and economic contribution linger in streets and homes hopelessly. Government has also lost the track as in most cases it creates short-term works through the programme called Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and president stimulus package. Zenzi, a young lady of Musina town complains that she graduated in the past five years but has never managed to get employment opportunity. She also blames this to tendencies of both the municipality and government in general use of nepotism. She also believes government is collapsing all employment opportunities through the tendering system.

## **6. THE VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON FUNCTIONALITY OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

Generally, many community members are starting to lose hope on all provisioning of services by the government. They believe government has no more plans to create jobs or to provide proper services to the citizens. Many people cite example of shortage of services such as water, government support on food security programmes, deteriorating levels of education and indeed lack of jobs. Government is said amongst others to be troubled by poverty, inequality and spread of corruption mostly in government institutions. The fact that the electorates are seen as reluctant to go to vote during elections is at times attributed to poor government service delivery. The following are some of the state agencies showing declining in their mandatory duties.

### **6.1 The South African Post Office**

Millions of South Africans benefitting from government grant used to collect their grants at the South African post office many years since the dawn of democracy. The post office has been reliable in delivering letters, parcels and other activities. Although the South African Post office attribute its poor functioning to migration to other platforms such as digital technology, there are overt indication it is due to poor management. In

2021 the post office saw 668 jobs' cut to its number of employees Its liabilities reached R12.5 billion meaning it had less no money to pay its bills(Mybroadband 2022). Furthermore, Mahlaka R (2023 reported on Daily Maveric that the post office continues to retrench more workers. All these changed the way people used to rate delivery by the countries post office as many branches were also closed around the country [25,26]. An old participant in the study has the following to say," We used to get our grants at the post office but these days you can go there and they tell you there is no money. We are forced to travel to town to get our grants which is costly". Pensioner, Ms Muswubisi who is also living with disabilities as she is blind complains that the collapse of the South African Post Office is making her life difficult as she now has to go around in shops to get her government grant. Reminded that the Post office is still paying grants she said, "I do not want to go there and find there is no money of workers are on strike as this has become a norm in recent years".

### **6.2 Eskom**

Once a reliable energy supplier, people started to see collapse of the electricity provider mainly at the start of loadshedding or power cuts. There are those who believe the main cause of power cuts in South Africa results from the increase of number of households using electricity. However, there are those who believe all were caused by poor planning from the side of government. Loadshedding costs the country's economy about R1billion per day. On the other hand, citizens indicate the inconveniences that come with power cuts. A participant in Polokwane indicated how he lost a refrigerator, music and Television set due to power cut" We are losing household material time and again. For the past five month we could not even use our guizer as power outages also affect water delivery and we spend days without good water supply" Power cuts affect education, health, water supply and business activities. This contributes in impacting negatively on how citizens rate functionality of the South African Government. Other state agencies struggling in recent years include the South African Airways and South African Railway. All these agencies are seen as negatively impacting on the economy of the country hence loss of jobs. As it stands, unemployment rate is at 31.9 in South Africa in 3rd quarter of 2023. (StatsSA 2023)

Additionally, the Ports of South Africa are seen collapsing with a serious disturbance on economic activities at all the harbours. This is according to Trevor Jones, Senior Lecture in the Department of Economics at the University of Natal in Durban. There are eight ports providing commercial seaports opportunities in the South African 2954 KM coastline. These include Richard Bay, Durban, East London, Ngqura, Port Elizabeth, Mossel Bay, Cape Town and Saldanha. As reported in SABC News Channel 4040, the ships and trucks taking good from these ports often get delayed by weeks which is impacting on the economic growth of the country. On the other hand, the rail cargo of the country has collapsed in many areas to connect cities and town as part of economic contribution.

Mr Van Tonder, a businessperson from a farm in Limpopo also added that he ordered a machine for his farm from China and spent 6 months before getting the machine and this affected his products negatively.

Over R42 million guaranteed has been given by treasury to revive the ports around South Africa. "Government wastes money in bailing out its agencies year after the other and we do not see any improvement" says one public sector employee.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is clear that many of the citizens of South Africa are losing hope on performance of their government. They are more and more losing hope in the capacity of government to provide jobs, quality healthcare, quality education and proper safety of all the citizens. Despite some levels of good delivery, there are more challenges which many believe are caused amongst others by levels of corruption mainly from government institutions.

Although there are talks about the running of the imminent National Coalition government, people of South Africa has since witnessed how unsuccessful and lack of service delivery in councils run by coalition. This makes them doubt if voting in 2024 National Election will change the state of governance. In 2019 election, the ruling party ANC failed to get outright majority of 50+1% and saw mushrooming of coalition governance which indicated a lot of gaps where parties dragged each other at expense of service delivery. With poor performance of the ruling party that showed declined in past elections,

many people are seen the country that is gearing towards collapse unless if coalitions are run by law and properly for the benefit of the citizens not parties themselves. According to the Electoral Commission of South Africa in 2019 ANC only managed to get 50.5% while the two major oppositions DA and EFF got 20.7% and 10.8% respectively. Also realised was the drop in people who register for election indicating how people loose interest in matters of governance. It is also generally believed and a concern one hears from the call of political parties during their campaigns that many of potential voters decide on staying away from voting deliberately as they lose interest to vote for a government that provides nothing to their benefit. Other believes from community members:

- Government does not have strategies to prevent crime such as shootings.
- Corruption has been institutionalised in South Africa that it has come the way of life. Example given is that no parent currently can send the kid to last day of being tested for driver's license with the R1500 as there is no ways they will get it irrespective of their driving skills.
- Majority of citizens search for cash before they get into driving on South African roads to make sure they have something to give when stopped by traffic officers.
- Corruption gets deep even in education where there are cases or allegations of politicians gaining qualifications through corrupt ways. Recent one is the allegation that Premier of Free State, Mr Oscar Mabuyane was involved in this type of corruption.
- The education standard continues to depreciate and there is no sound continuous relationship between the basic and higher education. E.g. at basic education learners pass for example with 39% while no state university accept such a mark and start at 50%.
- The Healthcare system in the country is seen as have deteriorated that people start losing hope in it and get forced to attend to them due to lack of resources. Public facilities lack medicines and personnel.
- The economy of the country continues to fall to a stage where people have lost hope of it revived as government seem to have no sound plans. This is also increased by electricity challenges which started in 2007.

- The Constitution of South Africa is deemed the best by other countries, but some citizens believe is too loose and favours the criminals and the foreign nationals. It allows the criminals rights to enjoy life in what people say are hotels that are supposed to be Correctional services of jails. The constitution has gaps that allow foreign nationals to get in and out as they please while giving them powers that they argue to stay in the country against minister of home affairs and the minister loses.
- In this regard some citizens believe government has opened the border control systems and cannot control foreign nationals flocking into the country any longer, documented and those undocumented. Statistics South Africa also admitted in 2019 that it estimates there are tenth of thousands of undocumented foreign nationals in South Africa. The number continues to grow at the expense of South African government's resources.

The findings indicate that there are more reasons for citizens of South Africa getting despaired and lose hope in their government as they see government failing in many respects. Unfortunately, many citizens turn to forget all the gains and benefits from government due to change of focus to what they need and not what they already have. For example: *"A person is staying in the government subsidized house with toilets, their kids attend the no-fee paying schools, these kids benefit from free school nutrition, they benefit in free health access, the parents even get the grants together with their kids but these people who are in millions are found standing in public platforms saying government does not deliver to its people"*. The strives, efforts and strategies of government to improve and continue to improve living condition of its people is over-shadowed by the acts of corruption and the explicit collapse of infrastructure, education etc hence some citizens ask, *is the centre still holding in South Africa or everything gets apart?*

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests or non-financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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