

A PERSPECTIVE ON SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE OSHANA REGION OF NAMIBIA: LESSONS FOR GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

The sub-national level of government in Namibia experiences governance problems that result in poor service delivery. There is a need to strengthen governance to fast track the provision of basic services to improve the social welfare of the people. Good governance is considered fundamental to effective service delivery to the people. The article argues that the governance principle of public participation is especially critical for improving service delivery at the sub-national level. Also of critical importance for effective service delivery is the improvement of governance structures at the sub-national level in Namibia, especially in the Oshana region.

Service delivery can only be improved if it is brought closer to communities, through the decentralisation of powers and functions to the institutions of government that are closest to the people. However, in Namibia, basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity and health, are planned and

delivered by central government ministries. The regional government in Namibia only plays a coordination role. The role of the sub-national level in providing basic services to communities is either minimal or non-existent. It is also evident that basic services are not easily accessible at a sub-national level in Namibia. However, if given decision-making powers and adequate resources, regional government can accelerate service delivery. Sub-national levels of government are institutions that are closest to the people and can easily be accessible to communities.

This article is based on the study that examined and explained factors that influence effective service delivery in the Oshana region of Namibia. A case study approach was adopted. A qualitative research methodology was found suitable to achieve the objectives of the study. Data was collected by undertaking a literature review, face-to-face interviews and the observation method. In this regard, both structured and semi-structured questions were used to interview selected respondents.

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The findings of the study reflect that numerous factors have impacted negatively on the sub-national level of government to effectively address community needs and demands for basic services. For example, the lack of effective citizen participation, poor leadership, the lack of training, the lack of resources (human and financial), the lack of community infrastructure, unnecessary delays in policy implementation, poor communication between councillors and communities and the lack of technical knowledge by public officials to implement projects have contributed to poor and delayed service delivery at the sub-national level in Namibia, in general, and the Oshana region, in particular. Based on these findings, the article concludes that more needs to be done to improve service delivery at the sub-national level in Namibia. It recommends that a holistic approach should be followed by the Namibian government to improve governance and service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The sub-national level of government in Namibia experiences numerous problems in delivering services to communities, resulting in the community's needs and demands not being effectively addressed. The article suggests that adopting good governance principles, such as accountability, transparency, rule of law and active public participation, may improve service delivery at the sub-national level of government. It further suggests that governance structures should be improved to promote services to the marginalised communities in Namibia. This article is based on a study undertaken towards a doctoral study at the University of South Africa. A qualitative method was

adopted. The data was collected through an intense desktop study, in-depth, face-to-face interviews and the observation method. The analysis of the data revealed that, although structures are in place and basic services are delivered in Namibia, more needs to be done to ensure that all people receive basic services. This can improve people's living standards, including in rural communities in Namibia, in general, and the Oshana region, in particular. The study concludes that sub-national governments play a pivotal role in addressing the needs and demands of the people. Therefore, national government support, in terms of financial resources and capacity building, is required. It is argued that the national government of Namibia should decentralise, through devolution, all functions, including decision-making powers, and also allocate sufficient financial resources to the sub-national level of government. In this regard, governance will be strengthened and service delivery will be improved.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, GOVERNANCE AND IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

Public administration has a direct influence on good governance and subsequently improved public service performance. In the context of public service delivery, public administration, government and governance are interdependent. According to Naidoo (2005:33), governance can be viewed as the connections and interactions between different spheres of government (national, provincial and local) and the public they serve. Naidoo further argues that governance also refers to various arrangements

by the public service with actors outside the public service to improve and promote service delivery, especially in previously disadvantaged communities (Naidoo, 2005:33). Related to the term governance is government, which refers to a body of public institutions that makes and applies all enforceable decisions for a society (Naidoo, 2005:27). In this regard, Naidoo (2005:28) states that government can, thus, be referred to as a structure, consisting of public institutions in which people work, with the aim of providing certain services and products to a society. Naidoo (2005:31) explains that governance is about both the direction and roles of different role-players implementing public policy, whereas government is a mechanism used to make new decisions and to solve collective problems. This explains the relationship between governance and government – important variables required for effective public administration and inclusive service delivery. In short, government functions to serve the needs of the community, while governance provides directions to realise public service objectives.

Effective and efficient public service is an ingredient for improved service delivery. Helao (2015:97) argues that public administration and good governance are interwoven and, therefore, inseparable. For effective service delivery purposes, one cannot deal with one and omit the other. Service delivery should be considered within the context of public administration, if all-inclusive basic services and amenities are to be provided to the people. Naidoo (2005:64) sums this up by saying "public administration is clearly necessary to meet the needs and demands of society". In a democratic setting, good governance and public administration coexist.

Focusing on one and ignoring the other may result in inappropriate public service practices, skewed distribution of public resources and denying citizens their constitutional right to basic service delivery, particularly those residing at the sub-national level (Helao, 2015:98).

Naidoo (2005:70,79) notes that public administration is essentially the execution of various functions, namely policy-making, organising, staffing, determining work procedures and control, whereas good governance strengthens public institutions and makes them more responsive to the needs of society. Rondinelli (2007:1) suggests that the role of public administration in governance is a continuing topic of discussion and debate in Public Administration literature. The literature attempts to address the issue of a "best fit" in public service to ensure that public services are delivered unhindered. Helao (2015:96) argues that what constitutes good governance principles and practices, and how these can be achieved, requires further discussion in the Public Administration discourse. Basically, good governance practices require vigorous, scientific interrogation to realise effective and efficient service delivery in communities. Essentially, public institutions should develop the necessary governing structures and institutional capacity conducive to providing services and social support to citizens (Helao, 2015:80). Good governance is considered a fundamental catalyst towards equitable and improved service delivery and improved quality of life in society (Helao, 2015:102). Sebudubudu (2010:259) argues that exercising good governance practices can help any nation strive towards achieving its national development objectives, such as

sustainable development, rapid economic growth, economic empowerment and social justice. Good governance steered Botswana's development agenda and enabled the country to be classified as the least corrupt country in Africa (Sebudubudu, 2010:17). Mauritius is an example of how good governance, active public participation and accountability influence socio-economic development. StratConsult-Mauritius (2008:18) confirms that the state of governance has been effective in ensuring socio-economic development in Mauritius. Non-state actors have access to public institutions, making it easy for policy decisions and implementation. In essence, this improves service delivery to the people. Arguably so, a good relationship between public administration, governance and public service contributes to improved governance and service delivery. Dwivedi and Mishra (2007:702) maintain that effective public administration is a necessity for any government to produce the maximum outcomes to improve the people's well-being.

Against this, a fundamental question is: what is good governance and why is it essential to promoting effective service delivery? Answering this question contextualises issues raised in this article. Public Administration literature has advanced diverse definitions of the concept that explicate the relationship between public administration, good governance practices and service delivery. According to Aktan and Ozler (2008:172), good governance attempts to balance policy development and policy execution, hence, bridging the gap between policy development and policy implementation. The World Bank characterises good governance as "predictable, open and enlightened policymaking; a bureaucracy imbued with

professional ethos, an executive arm that is accountable for its actions and a strong civil society that participates in public affairs" (United Nations, 2008:37). Likewise, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) agrees that good governance consists of "a set of principles that addresses the effective functioning of state organs and their relationship with citizens" (United Nations, 2008:37). The African Good Governance Network (AGGN) (2010:8) describes good governance as an emerging principle of international law that cuts across all sectors of society; hence, government agencies in African countries may have no choice but to adhere to such principle to remain relevant to a contemporary way of governance and service delivery. Helao (2015:79) contends that from an administrative perspective, governance is viewed to be "good" when there is a sound relationship between public officials and citizens who should benefit from public services. Good relationships increase cooperation between the government and the governed. This encourages sustainable social and economic development. Thus, good governance is the whole intersecting web of human development-oriented engagements between government and citizens.

Various schools of thought view governance and good governance in different forms. The first school of thought includes the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and United Nations (UN), which all enunciate good governance in a technical sense. Governance encourages state agencies to deliver services compatible with the socio-economic development of the country (Ladi, 2008:9). Loffler (2009:216) argues that, in its 1998 Report, the World Bank

reinvented the term governance to signal "a new approach to development, assuming that economic prosperity is not possible without the rule of law and democracy". Here, emphasis was placed on the citizens' voice to strengthen democracy. However, as argued by Helao (2015:92), increased economic prosperity may not necessarily trickle down to the rural poor unless active public participation is encouraged. For example, Namibia is currently classified as a "middle income country" due to positive economic growth over the last ten years (Schwab, 2014:39). Despite this, citizens in the rural areas continue to walk long distances to access basic services (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012). Governments should strike a balance between social and economic growth to reduce poverty among rural people.

The second school of thought discussed democratic governance *vis-à-vis* citizens' participation (Solomon, 2007:4-5; Punyaratabandhu, 2004:9). According to Solomon (2007:4-5), this school regarded governance as a holistic approach that transcends government institutions. Governance is a process of steering the state and society towards achieving collective goals. From this perspective, the article emphasises that good governance is critical for effective service delivery. It is, however, important for all stakeholders to be involved in the process. Punyaratabandhu (2004:9) cites a survey conducted on governance by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 2004, in 28 countries in the five sub-regions of Africa, that reveals that various components can influence good governance practices. Among these are a political system that encourages broad input from

civil society; impartial and credible electoral administration that includes an informed and active electorate; transparency, predictability and accountability in political and public sector management; resource mobilisation and the efficient use thereof; adherence to the rule of law to protect personal and civil liberties; gender equity and ensuring public safety and security; and equal access to justice for all (Punyaratabandhu 2004:9). In addition to economic prosperity promotion, it also encourages a participatory democratic approach to governance and service delivery. This approach is used in this article to provide an overview of service delivery at the sub-national level in Namibia, and contextualises the need for adopting good governance principles and practices to improve service delivery in the Oshana region.

REFORM IN THE NAMIBIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Pieterse (2002:3) states that the function of the state is to ensure effective service delivery to allow all citizens to fulfil their basic needs. The public service in Namibia is undergoing a process of reform. The Namibian Constitution stipulates that the government "shall promote the welfare of all people" (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1990). An ongoing process of reform is necessary to improve public service delivery. As part of the process of reform, the Namibian government created sub-national levels. In the Namibian context, sub-national levels of government include regional and local government. These are complementary to national government to ensure that government functions and services are brought

closer to the people. The regional and local governments play a pivotal role in identifying and coordinating service delivery at constituency and town council level. A good relationship between national government and the sub-national level of government is needed. To ensure effective delivery of services, the decentralisation of policy was adopted. Therefore, such reform requires the adequate and prudent utilisation of state resources, improved institutional arrangements and capacity building in government departments. As Totemeyer (2010:123) argues, this ensures socio-economic justice and equal opportunity for all citizens.

Until 1989, Namibia was governed under the then apartheid laws of South Africa, which used a system of "divide and rule". Namibia was divided into homelands, which was an apartheid system that provided inequitable services to communities. Homeland governmental systems separated government functions along racial lines (Totemeyer, 2010:123). Basic services were either neglected or not provided at all in areas formerly occupied by blacks, and infrastructure was limited or non-existent at grass-roots level. Thus, at independence, there was insufficient and relatively underdeveloped infrastructure to serve and provide services to the growing population. The situation created disparities and huge service delivery backlogs in many areas of Namibia. It was even worse in "homelands" where indigenous black Namibians lived. These areas include the Owambo, Herero, Damara, Nama, Kavango and Zambezi (Du Pisani, 2010:66). As such, the majority of rural people had neither access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, proper education and health facilities, nor were these services equitably provided.

Ultimately, service delivery backlogs became a challenge to the new Namibian government in 1990.

The Namibian Constitution places an obligation on the government to establish structures to facilitate service delivery. The Constitution also enables the Namibian parliament to enact relevant legal frameworks to regulate the actions of government structures. These legal frameworks include the *Regional Councils Act* 22 of 1992, the *Local Authorities Act* 23 of 1992, the *Traditional Authorities Act* 17 of 1995 and the *Decentralisation Enabling Act* 33 of 2000 (Ministry of Regional, Local Government, Housing and Rural Development (MRLGHRD), 2000:36). Consequently, regional, local and traditional councils were established as sub-national level structures in Namibia. The rationale was to bring government functions and services closer to the people (MRLGHRD, 1998). Fundamentally, this demonstrates a robust approach taken by the government to promote service delivery. Therefore, government institutions are required to introduce good governance principles to guarantee equitable services to the people.

STATE OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN NAMIBIA

Significant progress has been made in improving service delivery since the creation of sub-national level structures in Namibia. For example, for water supply and sanitation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF) adopted the National Strategy for Rural Sanitation in 2004, the *Water Resources Management Act* 24 of 2004, and the Water Supply and Sanitation Policy in 2008. These policies provide an

appropriate framework and guidelines on how to improve the delivery of potable water and sanitation in urban and rural areas. Specifically, the Water Supply and Sanitation Policy underscores the significance of clean water and proper sanitation for people's quality of life, the management and conservation of water resources and infrastructure (MAWF, 2008:9-10). The policy spells out the responsibility of both the state and other stakeholders in promoting the effective delivery and management of water resources (MAWF, 2008:9-10). Subsequently, water provision in Namibia has improved from 43% coverage in 1991 to 80% in 2011. In contrast, 49% of the population, mainly in rural areas, do not have access to proper sanitation (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2013:9). Regarding electricity provision, at least 78% of urban areas in Namibia are electrified, but only 14% of rural areas are connected to the electricity grid (Electricity Control Board, 2013:10). The Electricity Control Board attributes these disparities to insufficient funds, the vastness of the country and the inability of the rural people in Namibia to afford the service costs.

The Namibian government made significant efforts to provide health, education and housing facilities. However, the majority of the citizens still have no proper housing (Helao, 2015:239). Available statistics projected the current housing backlog to be over 80 000 houses (Sweeney-Bindels, 2012:7; National Planning Commission, 2011:89). This backlog is divided between different income groups. For example, "in the lower income category the backlog is 45 000 houses, the middle income is about 30 000 houses, while the backlog in the high

income category is about 4 700 houses". Furthermore, "only 41% of the urban population live in formal houses" (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2013:27), while the majority live in shacks. Therefore, the government needs to do more to deliver more housing. With respect to health facilities, the availability is limited, as many people continue to walk long distances to receive medical treatment. Forty percent of rural patients travel up to 20km to reach the nearest health facility (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2013:27). Moreover, the number of people per health facility is proportionally very high, on average, with 7 083 people per health facility nationally (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2008:9). This adds strain to available resources at health facilities (Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2008:96).

The education sector is a high priority. The government apportioned a significant slice of the budget to the education portfolio. According to the Ministry of Finance (2012:29), the education sector received 23.6% of the 2012/2013 total national budget. In the 2013/2014 fiscal year, the same sector received 23.7%. During the 2014/2015 financial year, the education sector was allocated 22.7% of the total national budget (Ministry of Finance, 2013:29; 2014:30). This demonstrates the Namibian government's commitment towards developing the human resources capacity; hence, delivering on its mandate.

As was discussed earlier, after the sub-national level of government was created in Namibia, the adoption of a decentralisation policy was critical to bring government closer to the people in order to improve service delivery. The provision of water,

health, education, electricity and housing is a fundamental right of any society. Notwithstanding the significant progress in terms of providing service delivery to the Namibian society, more needs to be done to address the massive service delivery backlogs at the sub-national level of Namibia.

THE CASE OF THE OSHANA REGION IN NAMIBIA

Namibia is delineated into fourteen regions, each with political and administrative components, as stipulated in the *Regional Councils Act* and the *Local Authorities Act*, respectively. The Oshana region is one of the fourteen regions and the smallest (8 653km²) in geographical size (National Planning Commission, 2011:17). It is found in northern Namibia and has 176 674 inhabitants (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012:22). The northern part of the region is densely populated due to urban areas that are located there. To achieve effective delivery of public services, the region is sub-divided into eleven constituencies, namely Okatana, Okaku, Okatyali, Ompundja, Ondangwa Rural, Ondangwa Urban, Ongwediva, Oshakati East, Oshakati West, Uukwiyuushona and Uuvudhiya (National Planning Commission, 2011:17).

Each constituency has an elected councillor in addition to an administrative component. Administrative officials play an important role in terms of planning, coordinating and also serving as a link between regional government and line ministries to ensure effective service delivery to the people (National Planning Commission, 2011:17). Constituencies are sub-national structures located closer to rural people. The aim is to

expedite decision-making and ensure good coordination to deliver much-needed basic services to communities.

The constituency councillors are members of the Oshana Regional Council. On election to office, they elect, among themselves, the chairperson and two or three others, depending on the number of councillors in a particular region, as additional members of the council to the management committee (MRLGHRD, 1992). The committee manages the affairs of the region pertaining to planning, budget compilation, and recommending the appointment of staff to the Public Service Commission of Namibia, and oversees the implementation of the council's decisions (MRLGHRD, 1992). Unlike the governor, constituency councillors are elected by popular vote for a period of six years (MRLGHRD, 1992). During the data collection process, it was found that all constituencies have proper offices from where public officials operate (Councillor's Interview, 2013). There were a councillor and administrative officials allocated to each office to facilitate and coordinate service delivery. There was one government vehicle allocated to each constituency for use by officials in order to carry out official duties and responsibilities. This enables them to access and reach all corners of the constituency.

The literature review reveals that prior to independence the Oshana region lacked well-designed governance structures, which hindered effective public service delivery. In this context, "structures" refers to governance bodies established to plan, make decisions, coordinate and execute those decisions. Such bodies are located at regional, local and constituency level. Similar to other

regions in Namibia, the majority of inhabitants in the Oshana region, particularly blacks, were denied access to basic services (Diescho, 2010:24; Helao, 2015:194). This legacy still exists today and has driven rural people in Namibia into abject poverty. This resulted in the Namibian government developing strategies to promote the equitable distribution of resources to reduce poverty. Sinvula (2009:1) observes that the Oshana region has been neglected in terms of social and economic development. Ultimately, rural infrastructure, education, health, institutional facilities and rural roads were those services that needed swift government action immediately following independence.

The review of government reports revealed the state of service delivery in the Oshana region in Namibia. The Namibia Statistics Agency (2012:64-87) indicates that about 49.7% of the people in the Oshana region live in traditional dwellings. These dwellings are not connected to the electricity power grid. About 4.5% of rural people walk 5 to 10km to access clean water; 79% of inhabitants in the region travel between 5 and 40km to access health facilities; 27.7% of children travel between 5 and 50km to reach the nearest primary school, while 60.9% travel between 5 and 50km to reach the nearest high school. Furthermore, 83.5% travel 5 to 50km to access the post office services, while 78.6% of the population travel 5 to 50km to reach the nearest police station. Also, 46.4% of households in the Oshana region have no access to sanitation facilities (The Namibia Statistics Agency, 2013:9). Inadequate housing, education, health, clean water and electricity cause hardships in the lives of rural communities in the Oshana region. Arguably, poor governance at the

sub-national level in Namibia has contributed to ineffective service delivery in rural areas. It is against this backdrop that the Namibian government committed itself to improve the living standards of rural people. Good governance practices are fundamental in addressing these service delivery issues. Though it may not be easy to measure governance, Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2013:10) note that citizens' voice, accountability, transparency, quality of service delivery, rule of law, a good regulatory framework and less corruption in public institutions are indicators of good governance. As argued in this article, the promotion of good governance practices in the public service is a catalyst to improved service delivery, especially at the sub-national level where basic services are needed.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This is an exploratory study that utilised a qualitative research method to collect data. The Oshana region was selected as a unit of analysis. In addition to a desktop study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with all 329 respondents. Observation techniques were also used to provide descriptive notes on issues that might have been noticed, but not properly noted, during face-to-face interviews. This approach has provided a broad overview of governance and service delivery at a sub-national level in the Oshana region, in particular, and Namibia in general. A selected sample of respondents was chosen for the face-to-face interviews. The purpose of this data collection technique was to enable the researchers to analyse and contextualise the respondents' views in relation to governance and service delivery realities

in the Oshana region. Purposive and convenience non-probability sampling methods were used to select respondents. A purposive sampling was necessary to select councillors and administrative officials, as they were assumed to possess the information needed to understand governance and service delivery in the Oshana region. The convenience non-probability sampling was an appropriate method to select community members. This was necessitated by the "large" size of the research population. The community members' sample was selected based on the respondents' availability. In other words, no prior appointments were made. They were interviewed depending on their availability. This category of the sample included traditional leaders, community activists and ordinary community members. All of them were interviewed. Systematically, the qualitative research design allowed for the use of structured and semi-structured interviews, as scientific instruments of data collection.

An Analysis and Discussion of the Findings of the Case Study: Oshana Region

Data on governance and public service delivery at the sub-national level in the Oshana region, in Namibia, was analysed using a "flow model" (Bachman & Schutt, 2011). This means the analysis techniques used in this study include data documentation, organising, categorising and conceptualisation. Seventeen councillors were interviewed at regional and town council level. The information received confirmed that governance structures were in place at the sub-national level, including in the Oshana region. It demonstrated the government's commitment to improving service delivery in Namibia. The

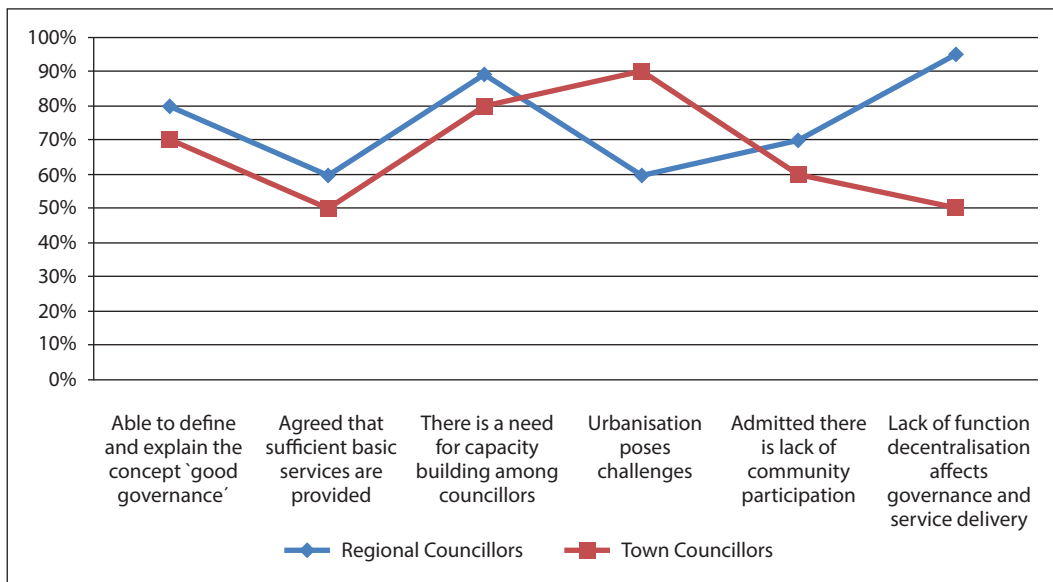
respondents stated that appropriate governance structures are in place at regional, constituency and town council level in the Oshana region, as stipulated in the *Regional Councils Act 22 of 1992* and the *Local Authorities Act 23 of 1992*, respectively. Respondents emphasised that "good governance requires a democratic, inclusive and accommodative political system that is conducive to citizens' participation in the development of the region". Moreover, it was emphasised that there was a need for councillors in the region to assume a proactive role to improve governance structures in order to facilitate effective service delivery to communities. As one councillor said: "Councillors are elected politicians, who have been appointed to advance the government's efforts and strategies on the socio-economic development of the country; hence, those in the Oshana region must also do the same." Poor leadership, a lack of understanding of the *Regional Councils Act* and a lack of training and experience in regional and local governance among councillors were cited, by respondents, as contributing factors to poor governance and ineffective service delivery in the Oshana region. One respondent lamented: "Since I was elected as a councillor, I have only attended an induction workshop on governance", adding that "attending council's meetings alone might not be sufficient for me to better understand the broader picture of governance and service delivery." Another respondent stated that "as policy and decision-makers and councillors are expected to possess a broad knowledge and understanding of development and service delivery aspects", therefore, "councillors should be equipped with the needed skills to enable them to

provide effective leadership when dealing with demands from community members" (Helao, 2015:266).

Interviews with politicians in the Oshana region revealed that 50% of the councillors are former school teachers and 30% are founding councillors of their respective constituencies. The founding councillors have been in those positions since the inception of regional governance structures in Namibia in 1994. The remaining 20% of the sample were administrators before they became councillors. This shows that although the councillors have work experience, the majority of them still need on-the-job training and guidance on regional and local governance practices. This can address their concerns about capacity building. This is important to ensure and promote effective service delivery to communities in Namibia (Helao, 2015:274).

As indicated in Figure 1 below, although public goods and services are rendered to the citizens at constituency and town level, 80% of town councillors and 90% of the regional councillors felt that more still needs to be done to improve service delivery in the Oshana region. Respondents called for more government functions and services to be brought closer to rural communities, through the decentralisation of decision-making powers. It was disclosed that basic services, such as clean water, sanitation, electricity and health, are planned and delivered by central government. Regional governments only play a coordinating role. A councillor illustrated: "A lack of functions decentralisation poses an insurmountable challenge to the Oshana Regional Council, as service delivery problems that affect rural communities take long to be resolved." For example, the councillor specified "fixing a broken water pipe, funding small community

FIGURE 1: Response by regional and town councillors



Source: Helao (2015:264)

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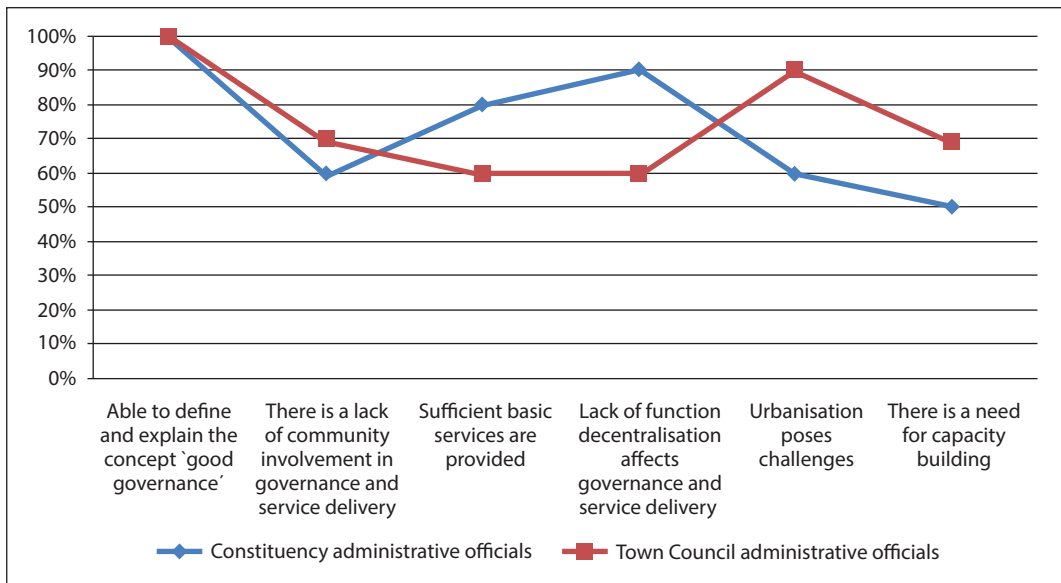
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projects, implementing youth development initiatives or even fixing a vehicle tyre could be faster if decisions and funding are made at the sub-national level" (Helao, 2015:276). Furthermore, high rural-urban migration was cited as a challenge to service delivery in the Oshana region. This article argues that decentralisation of functions and decision-making could reduce unnecessary delays experienced in service delivery. Decentralisation enables sub-national governance structures to timeously deal with the day-to-day exigencies. Essentially, institutional capacity should be created at regional and constituency level to facilitate timely decision-making, planning and execution to address community needs and demands. This validates respondents' views that, as the closest government officials to the rural people, they must be equipped to be able to effectively execute their legal mandates, as they are conversant with rural community

settings and problems. Furthermore, this article argues that improving capacity among councillors could improve service delivery in the Oshana region, in particular, and Namibia, in general. Figure 1 below provides an abridged summary of the responses by regional and town councillors in the Oshana region on issues of governance and service delivery.

Figure 2 below replicates responses by administrative officials at constituency and town council level in the region. Twenty administrative officials were interviewed. Respondents described governance practices and service delivery as "manageable, pending availability of resources and institutional capacity building" (Helao, 2015:285). They clarified that the lack of capacity creation, urbanisation and community involvement are some of the key challenges facing governance and service delivery.

FIGURE 2: Response by the administrative officials



Source: Helao (2015:285)

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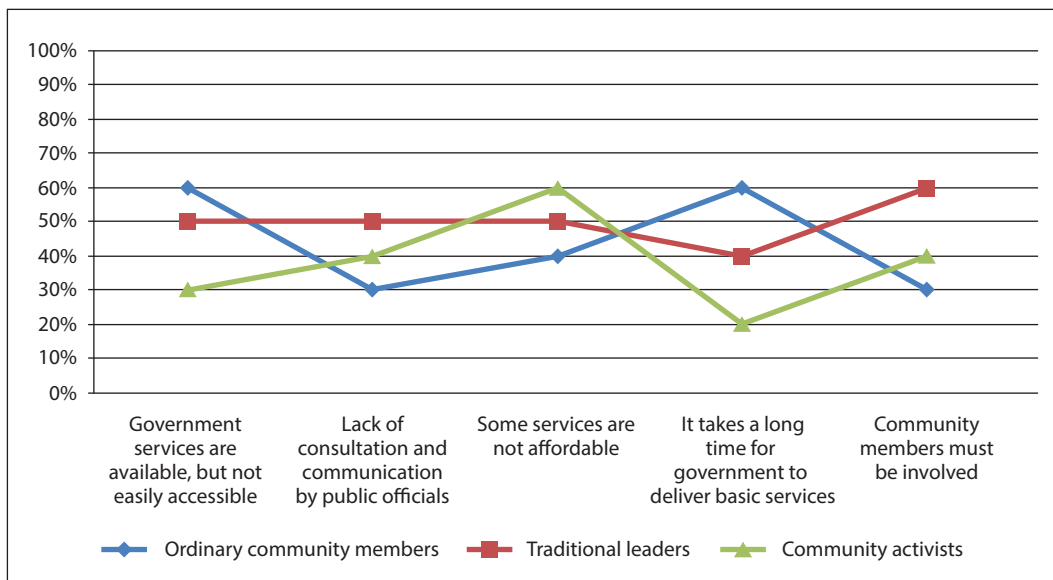
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Interviews revealed that all respondents possessed the necessary knowledge and understanding of the concept of governance and good governance. They could also explain the importance of good governance as a driving tool towards improved service delivery in the Oshana region. However, 90% of the respondents at constituency level, indicated that effective governance and service delivery are hampered by the "lack of functions of decentralisation". This could be the reason why some people in rural areas have no easy access to basic services. Besides, 90% of respondents in towns stated that urbanisation, poor institutional capacity, budgetary constraints, understaffing and training, and bureaucratic procedures negatively impact on effective service delivery.

members of the community, 20 traditional leaders and 3 community activists. Mixed views were expressed, subject to the location in the constituency or local authority where respondents live. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that governance structures are in place, but not very effective in improving service delivery in the Oshana region. For example, respondents living in town peripheries and informal settlements felt that, whereas "basic services are available, some are not accessible and affordable to many residents". Sixty percent of the respondents living in informal settlements of Oshakati and Ondangwa stated that residents are "struggling to make ends meet, because basic services are not made accessible to them by local authorities" (Helao, 2015:293). Likewise, respondents in constituencies claimed that they need sufficient water points for human and animal consumption. Furthermore, respondents

Figure 3 summarises the responses by community members in the Oshana region. The interviews involved 270 ordinary

FIGURE 3: Response by community members at constituency level



Source: Helao (2015:293)

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stated that they lack electricity, health facilities, road networks and schools in their respective communities. Therefore, 60% of respondents indicated that they "walk a long distance to access basic services". For example, where clean water is made available, the water points are located far away from some communities, resulting in them walking and driving their livestock long distances to get water. Also, 40% admitted that "basic services affordability is a problem, especially to pensioners, the unemployed and minors who head households". Sixty percent said that services are available, but not accessible to the poor (Helao, 2015:293).

Sixty percent of traditional leaders were interviewed. Fifty percent of the traditional leaders "felt service delivery is slowed down by the lack of sufficient consultation and timely sharing of information between the constituency office and traditional leaders". A traditional leader cited an example of a "drought relief food distribution and government ploughing subsidy scheme". The interviews with traditional leaders revealed that there is an important link between the regional council and the community, therefore, continued consultation with traditional leaders is essential. If communication and consultation do not take place effectively, people will be denied their right to service delivery. Interestingly, respondents acknowledged that community members have the civic duty to maintain and sustain public infrastructure provided by the government to communities. One respondent commented that "once government has provided the necessary public service delivery infrastructure, such as community water points, beneficiaries bear the moral responsibility to safeguard and conserve it to sustain

community livelihoods and the survival of their livestock" (Helao, 2015:293).

Figure 4 on the following page explains the responses from community members in the towns of Oshakati and Ondangwa. In the formal settlements, respondents identified a lack of municipal services, exorbitant tariffs and the shortage of housing as service delivery problems faced by residents. People settled in towns with the prospect of not only finding job opportunities, but to also have easy access to basic services. For example, Oshakati Town has 36 541 inhabitants (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012:39). This high and growing number of people requires the town council to proactively address service delivery issues. At Oneshila informal settlement of Oshakati, respondents claimed that the town council has done very little to address social predicaments. One respondent said: "Oneshila Township is always flooded during the rainy season, which results in residents being relocated every now and then." The study that this article is based on noted that, despite this dilemma caused by floods every rainy season, the Town Council "has failed to find a permanent solution to the problem" (Helao, 2015:305-305). Another respondent at Uupindi Township stated that the settlement "lacks recreational facilities for young people", adding that such a "situation turned youngsters to delinquent behaviour".

At the Oshoopala settlement, a respondent questioned and blamed the town council for the delay in the implementation of the Oshakati Master Plan. The Oshakati Master Plan is an initiative by the town council to redesign the town to allow for the free flowing of rain water. The plan includes

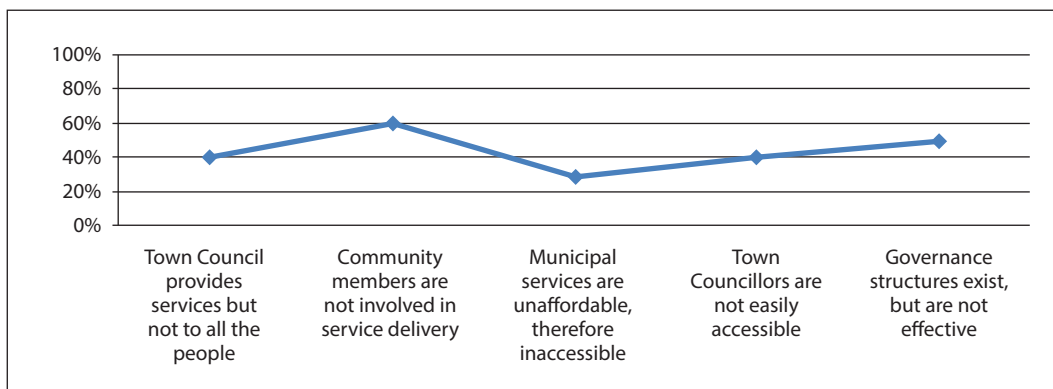
servicing land and relocating residents from flood-prone areas to high ground (Oshakati Town Council, 2008; Bureau of Architecture, 2012). Once this plan is fully implemented, it will allow effective service delivery such as a sewerage and sanitation system. Furthermore, Oshakati Town Council may acquire sufficient land to provide formal housing (Helao, 2015:306). Also, respondents agreed that it could minimise the possible flooding of houses and businesses, which poses a health hazard to residents in affected informal settlements. However, interviews with councillors and administrative officials revealed that the plan in question lacks sufficient funding to be implemented.

In Ondangwa, respondents provided similar answers as those of Oshakati. The town of Ondangwa serves as a business hub for the Oshana region. It houses the main railway station and the airport in northern Namibia. It is also the town with the second highest population in the region, with 22 822 inhabitants (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2012: 39). Despite this, as reflected in Figure 4,

respondents said service delivery is very slow, poor or non-existent, mainly in informal settlements. Likewise, the "inappropriate design of informal settlements coupled with a lack of serviced land denied residents easy access to basic services" (Helao, 2015:306). Fifty percent of the respondents in Ondangwa town stated that "governance structures are not effective, public officials are not accessible and it takes a long time for community needs to be addressed".

At the Uupopo, Okangwena and Omakuluma informal settlements, respondents bemoaned the shortage of proper sanitation, electricity, formal housing and the high rate of unemployment. Residents need open-market incubators, saying that the existing ones are located far away from informal settlements. Respondents justified this claim by saying the high rate of unemployment in Ondangwa has forced some people into being street vendors, selling daily commodities. However, at times, their mobile stores are dismantled and products are confiscated by the police (Helao, 2015:307). Respondents disclosed that the monthly, rental fee for business incubators is

FIGURE 4: Response by members of the community in Oshakati and Ondangwa



Source: Helao (2015:304)

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unaffordable for street vendors. On the question of governance structures and whether the town council's officials are accessible, respondents revealed that there exists poor communication between residents and officials. Fifty percent of the respondents admitted that governance structures are in place, but not effective due to poor communication channels. Furthermore, 40% of the respondents indicated that "service delivery is ineffective and town councillors are not easily accessible". Sixty percent of the respondents indicated that basic services are not accessible to all residents. There is a lack of sanitation, electricity and other municipal services. Thirty percent of the respondents said that municipal rates are not affordable to ordinary people. This article argues that poor communication from either side could impact negatively on governance and service delivery. If frequent meetings do not take place, residents will remain uninformed on development initiatives (Helao, 2015:308). Responses by community members in the Oshakati and Ondangwa towns are summarised in Figure 4 on the previous page.

A number of challenges have been identified at the sub-national level in Namibia. It was also revealed that such challenges have a direct influence on public service performance. The challenges include a lack of effective citizen participation, a lack of training, a lack of both human and financial resources, a lack of appropriate experience to implement policy, a lack of community infrastructure to deliver services, unnecessary delays in policy implementation, poor communication between councillors and communities and a lack of technical knowledge by public officials to implement policies and projects.

Interviews with respondents, namely councillors, administrative officials, traditional leaders and community members, indicated that the Namibian government has, since independence in 1990, done a lot to promote the livelihood of the people. However, an improvement is required in many areas of governance and service delivery. Respondents expressed their concern about issues such as a lack of decentralisation, high rural-urban migration, a lack of institutional capacity and a lack of communication and consultation between public officials and ordinary community members. The Namibian government should, therefore, find workable solutions to address these issues. It is suggested that there is a need for continued public service reform. In essence, improved public service and good governance are essential to improve the standard of living of the people of Namibia. Government departments ought to be responsive to the needs of the people. Such commitment is significant in achieving national development goals and realising Vision 2030.

CONCLUSION

The government of Namibia has national policies aimed at the improvement of service delivery at the sub-national level. However, it became evident in the research that robust interventions are required. The active involvement of all stakeholders must be promoted. The delivery of services can be influenced by a number of factors, as was found in the study that this article is based on. These include a lack of effective citizen participation, rigid bureaucratic procedures, poor leadership, a lack of training, a lack of human and financial resources, a lack of appropriate experience to implement

policy, a lack of community infrastructure to deliver services, unnecessary delays in policy implementation, poor communication between councillors and communities and a lack of technical knowledge by public officials to implement policy. Also, rigid bureaucratic procedures often make the process more cumbersome and frustratingly slow. The functions, such as water supply, sanitation, education and health, could not be effectively and timeously provided, as these functions are not fully decentralised to the sub-national level of government. The review of the literature reveals that there is an interdependent relationship between public administration, governance and service delivery. This means that the public service delivers effective services when good governance is in place.

Public service reform in Namibia has produced positive outcomes towards promoting service delivery at the sub-national level. In addition, the creation of regional and local government brought government closer to the people. Despite this, the current state of service delivery in Namibia should be revisited. This is because, as shown by the study from which this article draws, not all functions and services are accessible. Furthermore, the promotion of public participation and decentralisation is required to facilitate effective service delivery in Namibia: potable water supply, sanitation, education, health, rural electrification and road infrastructure. The numerous challenges highlighted in this article should

be addressed to improve governance to ensure that basic services become accessible to all. The findings derived from the literature and empirical evidence indicate that there is a need for improved resources, skills and competencies, as well as effective and efficient participation by all stakeholders, including civil society and ordinary people at the sub-national level. The Namibian government should actively promote public participation by involving citizens in governance structures pertaining to the provision of service delivery. It should make sufficient financial resources available at the sub-national government level to strengthen their fiscal capacities to deliver services to communities. It should introduce sound governance practices, such as establishing channels for effective communication between various stakeholders, harmonising procedures and the training of staff to effectively undertake their duties and responsibilities to improve and promote service delivery, decentralising functions and ensuring the devolution of power to sub-national level, which is critical to address community needs and demands with regard to basic services, and establishing sufficient infrastructure in rural areas to facilitate policy implementation with respect to service delivery. The regional and local government institutions should be properly capacitated with human resources, especially in areas that are essential to improve governance practices for improved service delivery. All these are considered important in the pursuit of Namibia's Vision 2030.

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