

C.B. Mapitsa & C. Churchill (eds.) Monitoring Systems in Africa. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media

MONITORING SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa & Catherine Churchill

10.52779/9781991260154/10

Chapter 10: Frontline Service Monitoring Systems as Catalysts for Improved Service Delivery in South Africa

Nedson Popphiwa and Caroline Nuga Deliwe

Introduction

The South African government introduced monitoring of frontline service delivery almost a decade ago in response to increasing dissatisfaction and alarming levels of service delivery protests (Cheruiyot, Wray, and Katumba 2015:27). The Zuma administration, which assumed office in 2009, recognised the significance of adopting an outcomes-driven approach to governance due to citizens' demand for change in their lives. A few months after his election as president, Jacob Zuma visited communities in the town of Balfour (under Dipaleseng Municipality in Mpumalanga province), where violent protests erupted over poor service delivery and community outrage regarding boundary demarcation. The visit revealed that Balfour residents were dissatisfied with the demarcation of their municipality from Gauteng to the Mpumalanga province, and they also expressed grievances about the lack of medical personnel at the local clinic. Additionally, there was no police station, a housing backlog existed, and there was a lack of proper sports and recreational facilities (The Presidency 2010). Moreover, the municipal mayor was absent from the office during the visit, citing a stomach problem. Following the surprise visit, the president established a ministerial task team to address the community's grievances and provide regular reports to the community. Zuma conducted other surprise monitoring visits during his first year in office, laying the groundwork for an institutionalised approach to monitoring frontline service delivery, which later became one of the mandates of the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME).

In this chapter, we will profile the evolution of frontline monitoring systems in the public sector. At that time, the government faced a significant challenge in improving effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and transparency. The government aimed to

invest greater focus on public sector performance to enhance service delivery for all citizens (Plangemann 2016:73). The African National Congress (ANC) led government recognised the importance of establishing a comprehensive government-wide system to transform the performance culture burdened by apartheid legacies. To achieve this, the government adopted several policies and approaches. These included introducing an outcomes approach guided by 14 government priority outcomes, implementing the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) to assess the quality of management performance in national and provincial departments, creating a similar version for municipalities, establishing a system to monitor front-line services, and developing a comprehensive national evaluation system that promotes the use of research evidence (Plangemann 2016:72).

This chapter focuses on the frontline monitoring systems of DPME, which consists of programmes designed to monitor the quality-of-service delivery to users of government services. The main emphasis is to demonstrate the usefulness of monitoring in enhancing the quality of frontline services. DPME's frontline monitoring systems include the Presidential Hotline (PH), Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring (FSDM), Citizen-based Monitoring (CBM), and Special Project/Izimbizo (SP). These systems were strategically established to complement and verify other routine monitoring systems in DPME and the government, while also addressing service delivery challenges (DPME 2019). The adoption of this service delivery monitoring approach, according to DPME (2018), marked the beginning of a process to improve government performance, support service delivery plans, and strengthen intergovernmental relations.

Given limitations in data availability, this case study will primarily focus on the frontline service delivery monitoring (FSDM) launched in 2011. The argument put forth is that while the introduction of FSDM provided public officials with evidence to enhance the quality of frontline services, its capacity to ensure the implementation of its findings was limited. As demonstrated in this chapter, participating public offices were able to enhance citizens' experience with services by monitoring and improving simple aspects such as visible signage or reduced waiting times. Nonetheless, it remains crucial for public officials to foster a culture of monitoring service provision to identify challenges and address them promptly, thereby preventing citizen unrest.

Monitoring – An Analytical Framework

The literature has varying interpretations of what monitoring entails. The word monitoring comes from the Latin word *monere*, meaning “to warn” (Kettner, Moroney and Martin 2013).

Monitoring serves as a feedback mechanism, alerting a human service administrator when a programme's implementation deviates from its original design. This enables

the administrator to take corrective measures and realign the programme with its intended design. The primary purpose of monitoring is effective programme management (Kettner, Moroney, and Martin 2013).

For programmes that have transitioned from the development stage to active operation, programme process assessments fulfil management requirements by providing information on service delivery and coverage. This includes evaluating the extent to which a programme reaches its intended target population. Additionally, such assessments may offer insights into participants' reactions and experiences with the programme (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman 2019)

In comparative terms, the monitoring and evaluation literature tends to pay less attention to monitoring than it does evaluation. Empirical studies which provide case studies of monitoring of programme implementation, or which monitor progress in government service provision to citizens, have room for development as processes for learning. Porter and Goldman (2013:6) provide a simple yet illustrative definition of monitoring:

“Monitoring is a management function focused on tracking if you are doing what you intended, whether at the programme level or for higher level national goals. Monitoring helps you to know how you are progressing compared with the plan, what is being produced, and what evaluative questions to ask. Monitoring data does not enable you to understand why something is happening. When evaluative conclusions are drawn at the apex of government from monitoring evidence alone, there are likely to be errors: claiming an effect when there is none, claiming no effect when there is one, or a lack of understanding of what is causing what.”

The latter part of the definition of monitoring is crucial as it emphasises the importance of staying within its intended scope. In less developed countries, particularly in Africa, monitoring tends to hold a more prominent position than evaluation. While there has been an increase in commissioned evaluations in Africa in recent years (some of which are catalogued in the African Evaluation Database), monitoring still takes precedence in practice, occurring on a larger scale.

This chapter does not aim to lament the dominance of monitoring in certain sectors of the public service. Instead, it seeks to reflect on the positive contributions that monitoring makes. Adjusting to the new normal has become essential for policymakers to ensure that monitoring is not negatively impacted by the need to contain the spread of COVID-19. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous initiatives have emerged that focus on continuous monitoring of dynamic programmes using mobile phones and short surveys. An example of this is the World Bank's “High-frequency monitoring of COVID-19 impacts project”, which employs phone surveys to monitor the effects of the pandemic on households and individuals in over 100 developing

countries across all regions (Fu and Sanchez-Paramo 2020). The pandemic has underscored the significance of evidence-based decision-making, and data derived from monitoring plays a crucial role in informing such decisions.

Monitoring of public services is a crucial strategy to ensure that citizens receive the necessary services from the government. In areas where absenteeism among frontline public servants, such as teachers and healthcare workers, is prevalent, monitoring becomes an essential approach. A survey conducted in Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru, and Uganda by enumerators who made unannounced visits to primary schools and health clinics revealed that absenteeism rates ranged from 19% among teachers to 35% among health workers (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan, and Rogers 2006:91). While the study focused on the presence of public servants in their workplaces, a significant proportion were physically present but not fulfilling their assigned duties. Moreover, the study indicated that absenteeism was widespread across different hierarchies, with doctors and school principals being more absent than lower-ranking workers. Additionally, men were found to be more frequently absent than women (Chaudhury et al. 2006:92). A subsequent follow-up survey reported a lower teacher absence rate, suggesting that monitoring could have an impact on reducing absenteeism (Chaudhury et al. 2006:92).

This idea of monitoring as an effective means of addressing absenteeism is supported by Muralidharan, Das, Holla, and Hopal (2017:117), who argued that “reducing teacher absences by increasing school monitoring could be over ten times more cost-effective in reducing the effective student-teacher ratio (net of teacher absence)”. Considering the situation in many developing countries, it becomes crucial to understand the underlying causes of absenteeism and other forms of poor service delivery that hinder governments’ ability to provide essential services to their citizens.

Government departments and agencies adopt a two-pronged approach to monitoring. The first approach is sector monitoring, which involves monitoring the performance of the sectors for which they are responsible in delivering services or providing regulatory oversight.²⁶ The second approach is programme monitoring, which focuses on monitoring the performance of specific programmes and policies that they are implementing. In this chapter, we will argue that shifts in incentives have played a crucial role in shaping the necessity and focus of monitoring, based

26 The purpose of the DPME’s sectoral monitoring programme is to develop the country’s long-term vision and national strategic plans and contribute towards better outcomes in government through better planning, better long-term plans, greater policy coherence, and a clear articulation of long-term aspiration. The main responsibility of the programme is to institutionalise and strengthen planning in government by facilitating the development of sectoral plans, ensuring coherence between plans, policies and service delivery across government, ensuring high-level priorities are fed through into plans across all spheres of government and engaging stakeholders on the output of the planning process to ensure buy-in. <https://pmg.org.za/tables-committee-report/4497/>

on a comparative analysis of selected cases of public policies and programmes in post-apartheid South Africa. Specifically, the chapter will analyse the monitoring of frontline service delivery, which is a collaborative programme between DPME and the nine Provincial Offices of the Premier.

Impetus: Service Delivery Challenges and the Need for a Government that Listens

In this subsection, a discussion of the main drivers of frontline services monitoring will be provided. These drivers provided an impetus for the kinds of monitoring which DPME introduced in the public sector since its inception. The discussion will begin with unpacking the levels of citizens' discontent with poor service delivery and how they triggered the response by the government.

Citizens' Discontent with Poor Service Delivery

The introduction highlighted that the Zuma administration took office in 2009 amidst widespread dissatisfaction with service delivery. The initial enthusiasm following the end of apartheid had diminished, and citizens had grown increasingly frustrated with unfulfilled promises. A study conducted by the Department of Public Service and Administration revealed a significant decline in citizen satisfaction with service delivery during the final years of Thabo Mbeki's presidency, dropping from 75% in 2006 to 58% in 2008.

In 2008 and 2009, service delivery protests had become commonplace, spreading across townships in various parts of the country. During the first half of 2009 alone, 26 public demonstrations, some of which turned violent, were recorded in seven of South Africa's nine provinces. A parliamentary study found that the primary grievance of the protesters was poor service delivery, particularly concerning water, electricity, sanitation, and waste removal.

Despite the challenges, Zuma was re-elected as the leader of the ANC in 2012 and as the president of South Africa in 2014, securing slightly reduced support with 62% of the vote (Centre for Public Impact 2016). Research conducted during that time identified three main deficiencies within the South African government that contributed to poor service delivery: a lack of accountability at the ministerial and upper managerial level, inadequate planning in some ministries with a failure to align activities with departmental plans, and ineffective coordination between ministries in formulating and implementing policies (Friedman 2014).

The primary stakeholder in the Government Performance initiative was the DPME, which played a central role in its implementation. The president himself was deeply involved and had prioritised the establishment of the DPME as one of his initial official

actions. Other government ministries were also key stakeholders, with some fully embracing the new approach and actively participating. Examples include the health and education ministries, as mentioned in the previous discussion on public impact.

The Treasury was another engaged stakeholder, as they had already contributed significantly to fostering accountability in the civil service. They had implemented a Programme Performance Information reporting system that required ministries to report data that linked financial inputs to actual outputs. The Department of Public Service and Administration also played a crucial role, emphasising the importance of performance.

Furthermore, the Public Service Commission, an independent agency, published respected reports that evaluated ministerial performance based on nine criteria outlined in South Africa's constitution (Centre for Public Impact 2016). These various stakeholders collaborated to promote and implement the Government Performance initiative.

The Policy Challenge: Weak Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

The transition to democracy in South Africa coincided with global shifts in the 1990s that prompted governments worldwide, both in developed and developing countries, to reassess their service delivery methods (UNECA 2010). This was driven, in part, by the rising costs of social and infrastructure programmes that had characterised that era. As a result, there were calls for a reinvention of government, leading to the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) approaches and practices, which placed a strong emphasis on performance management, target-setting, and the measurement of outputs and costs (Hood 1991).

The NPM approach sought to minimise government involvement in service delivery, promote professional management principles and standards in the public sector, enhance financial reporting and accountability for managers, and incorporate market-led performance management and development strategies from the business world into the public sector. The United Kingdom and the United States were early adopters of these managerial approaches, and their influence spread globally, including through the conditions attached to official development assistance provided to developing countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa (Hood 1991:4-5, Osborne and Gaebler 1992 and Power 1997).

South Africa, eager to reform and modernise its public sector, embraced these reforms as they resonated with the democratic changes introduced in the country in 1994. The country's new "fiscal" constitution placed a strong emphasis on financial management, complementing the focus on democratic and citizen-centric accountability policies in the post-1994 years (RSA 1996). Kuye and Ajam (2012) observed the unusually detailed specification of institutional arrangements for providing socioeconomic rights, including the right to basic education.

The *White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery* exemplified the policy position highlighting responsive public service delivery, and citizen-focused accountability in the context of a new vision of a working, social accountable public service:

“The Public Service is also seen as still operating within over-centralised, hierarchical, and rule-bound systems inherited from the previous dispensation, which make it difficult to hold individuals to account because: decision-making is diffused; they are focused on inputs rather than on outcomes; they do not encourage value for money; they do not reward innovation and creativity; they reward uniformity above effectiveness and responsiveness; and they encourage inward-looking, inflexible attitudes which are at odds with the vision of a public service whose highest aim is service to the people” (RSA 1997:12, s1.2.9).

Despite the adoption of financial and performance management tools and approaches in the new democracy of South Africa, there was a lack of enthusiasm for market-based reforms or a diminished role of government in public service delivery. This sentiment was particularly pronounced among the new government, which viewed itself as a crucial driver of development (Fraser-Moleketi 2006:85 and NPC 2012:409). The Minister of Public Service and Administration in South Africa from 1998 to 2008 highlighted this discrepancy in her Master’s dissertation. The ideological view of the government clashed with the more controversial aspects of new public management reform, creating tensions within the reform process.

“South Africa needed to modernise traditional administrative practices hence the influence of NPM could be felt in certain areas of South African reform, notably the micro-level...based on the philosophy of ‘putting the citizens first’ which underpinned the movement in favour of ‘citizens charters’ in Britain in particular. By contrast not surprisingly the minimalist, neo-liberal ideology of NPM clashed with the democratic and radical approaches of the ANC especially with regard to the ‘macro’ sides of reform. But such association could not detract from the potential these tools offered to result in greater efficiencies in state administration which in turn could lead to improved service delivery and freeing up more money for infra-structural development and so forth -- all key aspirations of the ANC’s transformation agenda” (Fraser-Moleketi 2006:62).

Before the establishment of the DPME, the responsibility for monitoring, including performance monitoring, was primarily held by limited entities such as the National Treasury, the Auditor General, and the Public Service Commission. According to the Constitution, the Auditor General and the Public Service Commission were mandated to independently monitor specific aspects of government and report their findings to Parliament. Additionally, three national departments possessed strong

legal powers related to regulation and, consequently, planning and monitoring: the National Treasury (in relation to departmental strategic plans, annual performance plans, and quarterly reporting), the Department of Public Service and Administration (regarding the performance of the public service), and the Department of Cooperative Governance (in terms of monitoring local government).

Before 2009, the government lacked a clear planning mandate and a national plan. The National Treasury managed the government's basic planning and monitoring system, which included five-year Strategic Plans (SPs) and Annual Performance Plans (APPs). However, the introduction of the outcomes system in 2009 posed a challenge of aligning departmental plans with the cross-cutting outcomes, as the SPs for 2009 - 2014 had already been defined. It took time to ensure proper alignment between departmental plans and the outcomes. In August 2014, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) was launched, providing an integrated framework for departments to align their 2015 - 2019 SPs/APPs. The Presidency assumed certain planning and monitoring roles, utilising the authority of its position and Cabinet decisions rather than relying on legal powers. The President also possesses constitutional powers to ensure efficient government (Goldman et al. 2012).

Indeed, efforts have been made to empower citizens and establish mechanisms for holding the government accountable. Constitutional democratic and oversight institutions, including Parliament, Chapter 9 institutions (such as the Human Rights Commission and the Public Protector), the Auditor-General, and the courts, play a crucial role in holding the government accountable for fulfilling its delivery mandate. These institutions are responsible for monitoring government actions, investigating misconduct or maladministration, and ensuring compliance with constitutional principles. Furthermore, ordinary citizens, civil society organisations, and the media also have an important role in holding the government accountable for delivering quality public services. Gumede (2017) notes that:

“Public service and elective representative accountability have plummeted. Empowering ordinary citizens, civil society, communities, and the media to monitor government delivery of public services is more cost-effective, participatory and is likely to bring more accountability in government. It also increases democratic accountability, transparency, and quality of government. It will boost the capacity of the government to fulfil its mandate to serve the citizenry and increase the quality and sustainability of public services. Public service could become more responsive and reduce corruption more effectively” (Gumede 2017).

Despite citizens having voiced their concerns over poor service delivery, they seemed to lack the capability to then monitor the services as part of CBM.

Incentives for Monitoring Service Delivery

The chapter acknowledges that monitoring has evolved over the years from being preoccupied with monitoring inputs to monitoring outputs and, more recently, monitoring outcomes. In the early years after 1994, the need to report and demonstrate government performance largely incentivised the monitoring of inputs. For example, around service delivery, massive-scale housing projects monitored the utilisation of expenditure (inputs) and the number of houses built for the poor (outputs) to report the government's performance against its set targets to stakeholders. As Plangemann (2016:72) has observed:

“The transition to democracy confirmed the vital role of the state in mediating social and economic relations in a highly unequal society. The public administration was geared towards a traditional approach, focussing on inputs and activities. There was limited inclusiveness of the policies, programmes, and projects to be designed, implemented, and monitored as well as limited diversity in the civil servants in charge of doing so. Overcoming the legacy of apartheid required providing opportunities for all citizens, by ensuring that government policies, programmes, and projects reached all intended citizens and had the intended impacts” (Plangemann 2016:72).

The move towards national development plans by the government has also incentivised monitoring to focus on outcomes. In recent years, public policies, state-funded projects, and programmes have been required to demonstrate the quality-of-service delivery and their impact on citizens' lives (outcomes). As a result, monitoring has evolved to prioritise improved service delivery quality, such as in the construction of houses, and ensuring sustainability. Plangemann (2016:76) argued that the new performance M&E system adopted by the government was intended to have a political effect and counter criticism from citizens and the international community, thereby helping to maintain and increase the government's power and popularity. However, the system was primarily designed to provide diagnostic and planning information rather than serving as an anti-corruption tool, which limited stakeholder buy-in.

The Response: Institutionalisation of Monitoring Service Delivery

Since the government that assumed power after the 2009 elections faced a number of pressures, including (i) persistent poverty and inequality; (ii) widespread service delivery protests at the municipal level; and (iii) loss of some political support in the 2009 elections, it necessitated the need for strategic direction. These pressures prompted the government to be frank about the poor quality of public services, corruption, and other governance problems, as well as to establish a political

consensus to enhance government performance, including through a greater focus on M&E. In 2009, the Presidency created the Ministry of Performance M&E, followed by the establishment of the Department of Performance M&E (DPME) in January 2010. Additionally, the Presidency formed the National Planning Commission (NPC) as an advisory body to develop a long-term 2030 plan (Goldman et al., 2012).

South Africa had already introduced the government-wide M&E framework in 2005 but the framework gained greater commitment from the government after the election in 2009. However, there were challenges pointed out in implementation:

“While a strong point in the original conceptualisation of the GWM&E system was acknowledgement that the system was to be built over time, this approach has proved difficult in practice. With different paradigms of reform and views of the state in different agencies, this approach has led to central departments creating separate reporting systems. Similar information may be requested several times from departments, leading to additional reporting burdens on departments already battling considerable constraints in terms of skills and capacity, and suffering from reporting fatigue” (Philips et al. 2014:393).

In 2011, the government took the initiative to promulgate the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), which served as the foundation for a system of evaluations aimed at facilitating learning and improving the effectiveness and impact of government actions (IIED 2019). The NEPF established the groundwork for implementing evaluations throughout the government. A credible and expedited development of the national M&E system was achieved by integrating it into national planning processes at both the national and sub-national levels. This success can be attributed to a well-structured initial process that drew lessons from other national experiences and a favourable enabling environment driven by strong political commitment (IIED 2019). The national evaluation system (NES) is closely aligned with the national planning process, and the evidence derived from it directly informs policy decision-making. Monitoring has been effectively and sustainably introduced at the country level, providing valuable insights for decision-making processes. This accomplishment is a result of its emphasis on the government’s strategic priorities and its seamless integration within the cycles of national planning and implementation (IIED 2019).

Initial evaluations were often constrained by a lack of data or a lack of good quality data. This meant that most of the initial evaluations considered efficiency and relevance, rather than effectiveness in achieving outcomes and impacts. The DPME has provided support, guidance, and training to address this challenge. Other historic reported challenges include:

- A culture of compliance, but a failure to M&E for the purposes of reflection and performance improvement.
- Duplication of reporting across departments.
- Not devising effective theories of change to underpin the M&E (IIED 2019).

The emphasis on outcomes meant that the “the new system lent greater coherence to national policy planning by requiring departments to organise their priorities and focus their efforts on outcomes that were determined by the presidency rather than on internally developed targets that often overlapped with other departments or left policy gaps.” (CPI, 2016) The DPMEs most important contribution “was the use of data in formulating and assessing policies”. However, the DPME’s approach was not binding on government departments and although, “some ministries, including those dealing in health and education, embraced the system without pressure from the presidency, [others] did not embrace the outcomes approach” (CPI, 2016).

Table 10.1: *Philips et al., M&E and planning roles of DPME. 2014*

M&E of national priorities	• Developing the MTSF/outcome plans (delivery agreements). • Monitoring (that is, tracking) progress against the delivery. • Agreements. • Evaluating to see how to improve programmes, policies, and plans. • Operation Phakisa – intensive planning, M&E, and problem-solving on priority programmes, building on the Malaysian experience.
Management performance M&E	• Assessing quality of management practices in individual departments (MPAT) at national/state level. • Assessing quality of management practices and delivery in local government (LGMIM).
M&E of frontline service delivery	• Monitoring of experience of citizens when obtaining services (joint with states) including citizen-based monitoring. • Presidential Hotline – including tracking responses and follow-up.

Government-wide M&E System	• National M&E policy frameworks. • M&E platforms across government – nationally, provincially. • Structures of M&E units/capacity development. • National Evaluation System. • Five-yearly reviews of changes in the country – for example, 20-year review. • Annual production of development indicators and the 20 years review are specific named documents. • Data quality issues.
----------------------------	---

A Description of the DPMEs Frontline Monitoring Systems

At the national level, the Framework for Strengthening Citizen-Government Partnerships for Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring was approved by Cabinet in August 2013 in response to the lack of citizens’ experience of government services reflected within the government’s monitoring systems, and the lack of a systematic use of this evidence to improve performance (DPME 2013). The framework summarises a range of citizen-based monitoring methodologies used both locally and internationally, with citizen-based monitoring pilot studies planned for 2014/15 (Cheruiyot, Wray and Katumba 2015:27).

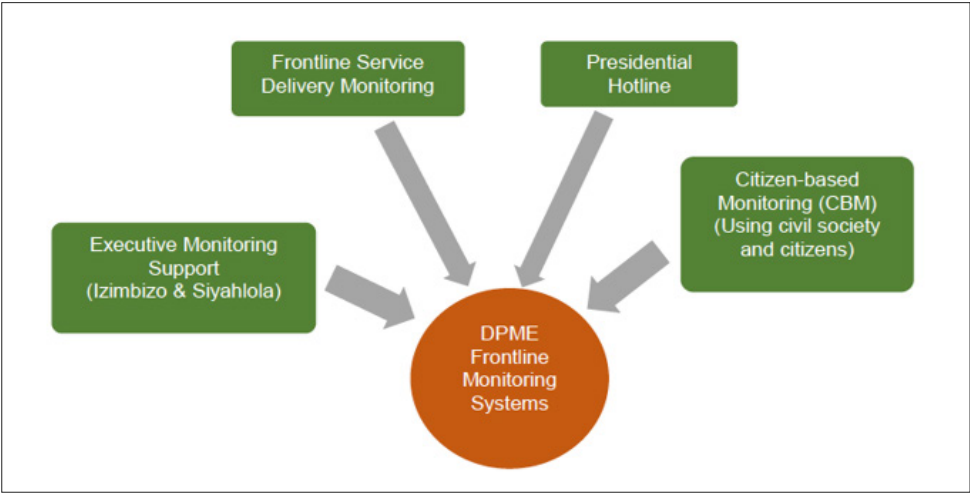


Figure 10.1: DPME, Frontline Monitoring Systems

Presidential Hotline

In September 2009, former president Jacob Zuma took the initiative to establish the Presidential Hotline (PH), which provided a platform for members of the public to voice their concerns regarding the services they received from government departments and agencies. The establishment of the hotline was a response to the external pressures stemming from service delivery protests and widespread power cuts across the country. It demonstrated the President's commitment to addressing these issues as a top priority (Diga 2017:10). Between 2009 and 2013, over 180 000 cases were logged through the hotline, and the resolution rate saw a significant increase from 39% at its inception to 94% in 2013 (Graham 2015). In 2014, the then Presidential spokesperson, Mac Maharaj, emphasised that the hotline's goal was not only to achieve high resolution rates but also to provide a quality service to citizens (Maharaj, cited by Graham 2015). A survey conducted in 2015, which included feedback from 11 000 citizens, revealed that on average, 65% of respondents rated the hotline service as 'good-to-fair,' indicating that the government was making progress in this area (Graham 2015).

The key challenges of the PH were that the toll-free facility was costly, complex cases were reported, and there were unrealistic expectations from citizens. In the bid to overcome these challenges, the PH was being redesigned for two-way engagement through technological changes, in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology and the Centre for Science Innovation and Research.²⁷

Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM)

Citizen-based monitoring (CBM) aimed to strengthen the government's capacity to engage communities and citizens in monitoring service delivery and to ensure responsiveness to community experiences, expectations, perceptions, and needs. The DPME does not implement citizen-based monitoring directly but instead facilitates and enhances the capacity of government officials and departments. It also serves as an institutional repository for CBM methodology, good practices, and approaches. As a knowledge partner, the DPME provides support to government institutions involved in the implementation of citizen-based monitoring.²⁸

The CBM programme actively supports the achievement of a Cabinet resolution (2013) that mandates all departments delivering public services to implement citizen-based monitoring. After an intensive two-year action learning process involving four service delivery departments and 34 government facilities (including police stations, health facilities, grants offices, and social welfare service points), DPME has transitioned

27 <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/28919/>

28 <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/28919/>

into a strategic support role. The aim is to promote the regular utilisation of citizen and frontline staff feedback and engagement to drive continuous improvement.

DPME's approach involves building the capacity of selected service delivery departments through hands-on support to officials. They assist in adapting and scaling DPME's three-step CBM model, which includes gathering feedback, utilising it to develop improvement commitments, and monitoring these commitments with the involvement of civil society and community structures. The objective is to develop a group of officials and civil society participants who actively contribute to the tools and knowledge required to utilise feedback and community participation, thereby fostering a capable and developmental state in collaboration with an engaged citizenry. Improving government responsiveness is the central goal.

Additionally, DPME plans to host ongoing discussions that bring together government and civil society to foster continuous dialogue on planning and monitoring matters.

Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring

Launched in 2011 by the DPME, the Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring (FSDM) programme monitors government facilities jointly with the Offices of the Premier across all nine provinces. DPME's roles and responsibilities include: (i) designing and maintaining the monitoring tools and the monitoring protocols; (ii) jointly conduct the monitoring visits with OTPs; and (iii) analyse findings and report to cabinet and national sector departments. Offices of the Premier (i) support the refinements of the monitoring tools and protocols; (ii) joint monitoring with DPME; (iii) Present findings to provincial HODs and MECs and other relevant forums; and (iv) monitor adherence to agreed improvement plans at provincial level (DPME 2014).²⁹ As stated in the 2014 FSDM Guidelines document, the FSDM Programme 'is not designed to cover all facilities in the public sector, but to demonstrate the value of on-site monitoring to selected facilities and catalyse service delivery improvement' (DPME 2014). It is argued that the FSDM programme rose as a response to a number of weaknesses in M&E in government, in which "problems are not treated as an opportunity for learning and improvement" and where "M&E is regarded as the job of the M&E unit and not all managers" (DPME 2015:8).

Improvements Monitoring and the Overall Aims of FSDM

Improvements monitoring is a key feature of FSDM. It is aimed at facilitating improvements in the performance of targeted frontline service delivery sites which have been performing poorly as observed during monitoring visits. Improvements monitoring focuses on identifying areas of weakness and to develop improvement

²⁹ DPME (2014) FSDM Guideline 4.2.8

plans with facility, district, and provincial managers. Specific FSDM improvements objectives are:

- To institute improvements urgently in severe cases identified through the FSDM monitoring visits, as a means of strengthening service delivery;
- To monitor the implementation of improvement plans as developed by the line department together with DPME and OoP; and
- To monitor the improvements in scores from the initial baseline visit scores with the scores after the implementation of improvement plans.

An intended outcome of improved monitoring is the adoption of a culture of change in government towards increasing use of evidence in policy making, planning, and monitoring to inform improvements to plans and policies (DPME 2014). It remains the prerogative of line departments to implement the corrective measures emanating from improvements monitoring, despite developing plans with the assistance of the DPME (DPME 2014).

The purpose of the FSDM initiative is to strengthen the M&E practices of field-level managers and to ensure that decision-makers in head offices actively recognise on-site monitoring as a valuable source of evidence for decision-making. The aim is for decision-makers to utilise this evidence for prompt and decisive decision-making, as well as for driving systemic changes (DPME 2015:8). For successful implementation of FSDM, sector departments need to enhance planning and monitoring at the facility-level by establishing and continuously monitoring realistic norms and standards (DPME 2018:11).

Monitoring visits are a critical component of delivering FSDM. The objectives of these monitoring visits are: (i) to demonstrate to sector departments the value of onsite monitoring as a tool to verify the impact of service delivery improvement programmes; (ii) to demonstrate the value of obtaining the views of citizens during monitoring; to highlight successes and failures at service facility-level; and (iii) to support departments to use the findings for performance improvements (DPME 2015:8).

FSDM Approach and Methodology

The FSDM programme conducts targeted improvements monitoring whereby the selected sample of facilities is monitored every year to track improvements and regression, with a methodology that attempts to combine problem-solving facilitation and monitoring of results.

i. The Approach

The Improvements Monitoring approach consists of three activities:

1. DPME informs the national department (head office) senior management that a facility has been selected for improvements monitoring because of poor scores. The intention is for senior management to create an enabling and supportive environment in which facility-level managers can address the identified challenges.
2. A meeting is held at facility-level (led by DPME and OoP) to obtain progress with agreed improvements. The intention of this meeting is to facilitate acting on findings and to facilitate problem-solving between the different roleplayers.
3. The unannounced monitoring of improvements is conducted, applying the same scoring questionnaire tool used for the first assessment. A new score card is produced for the facility which reflects a longitudinal view of the scores, for each KPA, over time. A new score card is produced for the facility which reflects a longitudinal view of the scores, for each KPA, over time.

The monitoring team conducts unannounced visits to assess the quality of service delivery in frontline service facilities. During these visits, structured questionnaires guide interviews with citizens and staff to gather relevant information. The monitor also independently observes the adherence to the same standards assessed in the questionnaires administered to staff and citizens. Once the assessment is completed, a joint improvement plan is developed in collaboration with the facilities management and key decision-makers from the relevant department. The facilities are evaluated within the local context of communities, and the involvement of key stakeholders such as school governing bodies and business councils is crucial in the development of these improvement plans. The implementation of the improvement plan is then closely monitored. Key trends and findings are identified, analysed, and reported at the sector level and other decision-making platforms to address policy barriers that hinder effective service delivery (DPME 2018:11).

ii. Types of Facilities and Generic Performance Monitored

The FSDM programme monitors various types of facilities that represent the field offices of government service delivery. These facilities include Home Affairs Offices, SASSA offices, Police Stations, Health Facilities, Drivers' License Testing Centres (DLTC), Schools, Courts, Municipal Customer Care Centres (MCCC), and NYDA. The programme focuses on monitoring specific performance areas for ensuring the quality of service delivery in accordance with the policies and regulations set by the DPSA and the relevant national sector departments. These performance areas are as follows:

- Location and Accessibility
- Visibility and Signage
- Queue Management and Waiting Times
- Dignified Treatment
- Cleanliness and Comfort
- Safety
- Opening and Closing Times
- Complaints and Compliments Management

Figure 2 illustrates this focus on monitoring generic performance areas for quality service delivery (DPME 2018:11).

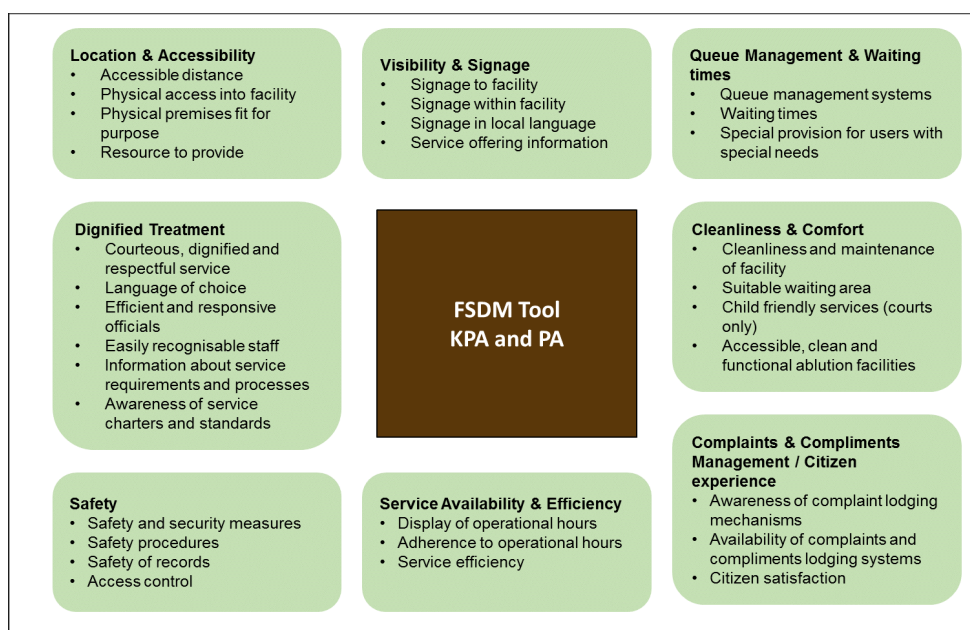


Figure 10.2: DPME, FSDM Key Performance Areas, 2016

Two types of monitoring are conducted: (i) baseline monitoring, which assesses the state of quality-of-service delivery, and (ii) improvement monitoring, which assesses year-on-year improvements. Baseline monitoring involves conducting an unannounced assessment (initial assessment) and holding a feedback meeting to present the findings to facility management. Improvement monitoring includes an

Improvements progress meeting to track progress against the improvement plans, followed by an unannounced re-scoring (re-assessment) to evaluate the changes made (DPME 2015).³⁰

iii. Data Collection Tools

In terms of data collection tools, the FSDM programme utilises a structured questionnaire to gather data at the facility. The questionnaire is employed during both the initial visit and subsequent improvement monitoring visits. The questionnaire consists of three parts.

Part A focuses on the eight quality of service performance areas, with a set of questions directed towards each area. Ratings are assigned to each Key Performance Area (KPA) based on responses from three sources: facility users, staff, and the monitor. The ratings range from 1 to 4, where 1 represents poor, 2 signifies average, 3 indicates satisfaction, and 4 denotes above expectations.

Part B of the questionnaire involves rating the priority of improvement for each KPA on a scale of 1 to 4. All stakeholders—staff, citizens, and the monitor—are asked to rate the importance of improvement. For instance, if “safety” is deemed the highest priority for improvement, it will be assigned a rating of 1, whereas a rating of 4 indicates the lowest priority.

Part C of the questionnaire records observations pertaining to sector-specific issues. For example, at Police Stations, the effectiveness of the monitoring systems for police response time to calls for assistance is assessed. This aspect of the questionnaire may require further strengthening.

Lastly, Part D of the questionnaire captures the findings by formulating a draft action plan. It outlines the identified issues, specifies the necessary actions, assigns responsibilities to relevant parties, and sets deadlines for completion.

iv. The Facility Score-Card

The monitoring team summarises and documents the findings obtained from observations and interviews conducted by monitors with citizens (users) and staff. These findings are consolidated into a comprehensive summary report. The summary report includes the following components: (i) scores for each performance area derived from the inputs of three sources: citizens, staff, and monitors; (ii) prioritisation scores assigned by the three sources to indicate the level of importance for improvement; (iii) improvement plans outlining the necessary actions to address identified issue; and (iv) photographs that serve as visual evidence to illustrate the findings.

30 DPME 2015. FSDM Annual Findings Report 2014-2015.pdf

To complete the summary report, the monitoring team convenes and discusses the findings with facility management. This discussion, known as a “feedback visit,” allows for mutual understanding and agreement on the action plan. It is important to note that the monitoring of a facility encompasses two essential activities, both of which must be completed before considering the monitoring visit concluded: the initial monitoring visit and the subsequent feedback meeting.

Performance in the first year:

- Location and Accessibility: 28 out of the 135 sites rated as poor (1), requiring intervention and 14 facilities rated as (4), being good practice.
- Visibility and Signage: 34 out of the 135 sites monitored were rated as poor (1-requiring intervention) and 8 sites demonstrated good practice.
- Queue Management and Waiting Times: 36 sites scored as needing interventions and 8 sites which demonstrated good practice.
- Cleanliness, Comfort, and Safety: below acceptable conditions found in 49 facilities, with some good practices in 9 facilities.
- Dignified Treatment: intervention required in 20 facilities, with good practice observed in 12 facilities.
- Complaints and Compliments Management: below acceptable standards found in 38 facilities and some good practices in 17 facilities.

Discussion

In discussing the impetus of frontline service delivery monitoring, there is a narrative about the former president having been a listening president. In her seminal paper on this particular subject, Duncan argues that the description of the Jacob Zuma as a listening president is one that is problematic (2010:20):

“While the Zuma administration is listening to the protestors, there is no evidence yet that they are hearing. Activists are starting to suspect that the newly created points of access to the decision-making system may be designed to deflect oppositional voices rather than to entertain their demands seriously. Responses to this suspicion have varied, leading to a contest for the formal levers of power on the one hand and increasingly militant forms of direct action on the other.”

Likewise, as noted in the quote above, the implementation of monitoring systems such as FSDM was the determinant factor on whether citizens would ever realise change.

Despite challenges, notable progress has been made in the implementation of FSDM. According to an early FSDM report, senior management and leadership have shown a discernible improvement in their focus on the frontline, as evidenced by departmental Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, and Budget speeches reflecting this shift. This indicates a growing maturity within national and provincial line departments, recognising the strategic importance of functional frontline facilities (DPME 2015).

The FSDM 2014 guidelines highlighted a tendency to revert to the previous state when monitoring efforts stalled. During FSDM visits to facilities selected for improvements monitoring, it was observed that implemented improvements were not adequately maintained or monitored, resulting in a regression to the baseline state. This lapse is attributed to the absence of frontline monitoring and a lack of accountability for the quality of service provided at the facility level. Additionally, there is a significant likelihood that the findings from FSDM monitoring visits may not be acted upon promptly and decisively to address identified obstacles.

To address these issues, the FSDM initiative is gradually shifting its focus towards monitoring the sustainability of improvements. This entails facilitating and monitoring the implementation of agreed-upon actions. By continuously monitoring facilities selected for improvements, the FSDM programme aims to ensure the long-term viability of the improvements made (DPME 2014).

Table 10.2: *Monitoring Successes and Challenges*

Monitoring system	Successes	Challenges
FDSM	FDSM has been institutionalised. Several sectors (Justice, SAPS, SASSA, Home Affairs) have developed their own frontline monitoring programmes that monitor service delivery across all facilities. Frontline monitoring has been able to demonstrate the value of collecting views of service users to measure the quality-of-service delivery. Value of on-site verification of the reported results. Culture of M&E is being instilled within facility management as we continue to engage with facilities on implementation of the improvements within their facilities.	Monitoring and evaluation systems in South Africa still evolving – limited capacity in data collection, analysis, dissemination and knowledge management. Inadequate investment on service delivery improvement initiatives (influenced by budget constraints, delegation powers, and compliance monitoring instead of decision-making). DPME is not able to resolve challenges faced by sectors. No consequence management for non-compliance. FDSM is implemented as a stand-alone programme and not adaptive to the changing environment and focuses on real issues.
CBM	Innovative use of existing community programmes / structures (CDWs, ward committees, traditional councils, community work programmes, CPFs, clinic committees etc.). Successfully leveraged on existing local and community structures and programmes, using participatory approaches. This has resulted in strong local ownership and effective use of resources. Identification of root causes through multi-stakeholder dialogues. Bringing government officials, community leaders, and members together to subject problems to a root-cause analysis has provided valuable insights into the underlying causes of service delivery problems. Developing solutions jointly through facilitated dialogue has built a shared purpose between government officials and community members.	Institutionalising the participatory problem-solving approach that underpins CBM work, which is foreign to the way government officials are accustomed to work, and there is currently limited capacity to facilitate this kind of work. Implementing and monitoring commitments made through CBM processes. Internal capacity constraints have prevented the development of effective systems for monitoring commitments made through CBM processes. The CBM initiative has struggled to effectively integrate with other programmes in DPME, to leverage on relationships and capacities.

In her study of the Gauteng Provincial Department of Home Affairs' roll out of FDSM, Mmako (2018) observed that there are gaps in actioning of FDSM findings. She thus noted:

“Participant responses suggest that there is no standardised approach in actioning the FDSM findings once they have been received from the FDSM team. There is an indication from the findings that most of the FDSM findings are dealt with at the level of the facilities, and only findings that are beyond the scope of facilities are then communicated to the next level managers; that loop continues until the findings reach the district managers, provincial manager and then the DHA national office” (Mmako 2018:106).

In Gauteng DHA, utilisation is employed by political leadership. The FDSM is a tool that has been used by the political leadership in the department to conduct their facilities monitoring. This is a significant opportunity to ensure that FDSM findings are catalysed, as political leadership has the level of authority to drive service delivery blockages (Mmako 2018:104).

Conclusion

The chapter highlights that FDSM played a crucial role as the government's initial step in demonstrating its commitment to realising effective services for citizens. The catalyst for monitoring frontline services was the ongoing civil unrest sparked by poor service delivery during former president Zuma's tenure. A significant policy obstacle was the lack of robust accountability mechanisms and insufficient incentives for accountability. In response to these challenges, the Zuma administration introduced an outcomes-focused approach to government service delivery, necessitating the introduction of various strategies. The DPME, established within the Presidency, took the lead in overseeing these reforms and conceptualising government-wide M&E approaches. Among these approaches, frontline service monitoring was introduced.

While the introduction of FDSM strategically provided public officials with evidence to enhance the quality of frontline services, its capacity to ensure the implementation of its findings remained limited. As the chapter demonstrates, participating public offices were able to improve citizens' service experiences by monitoring and enhancing simple aspects such as visible signage and reduced waiting times. Despite progress made in areas where FDSM was piloted, it is evident that systemic challenges persist at the national level, significantly constraining the influence of such approaches. An illustrative example is the issuance and renewal of driver's licences, which have become sources of frustration for citizens in recent years.

Reference List

- Centre for Public Impact. 2016. South Africa's Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/performance-monitoring-in-south-africa>
- Chaudhury, N., Hammer, J., Kremer, M., Muralidharan, K., Rogers, F.H. 2006. Missing in action: teacher and health worker absence in developing countries. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*; 20: pp. 91–116. <https://doi.org/10.1257/089533006776526058>
- Cheruiyot, K., Wray, C., Katumba, S. 2015. Spatial Statistical Analysis of Dissatisfaction with the Performance of Local Government in the Gauteng City-Region, South Africa. *South African Journal of Geomatics*, Vol. 4, No. 3, August 2015. <https://doi.org/10.4314/sajg.v4i3.4>
- DPME. 2014. FSDM Guideline 4.2.7.
- DPME. 2014. FSDM Guideline 4.2.8.
- DPME. 2015. FSDM Annual Findings Report 2014–2015.
- DPME. 2018. Frontline Monitoring and Support Operational Guidelines Framework 2018–2019.
- Duncan, J. 2010. Voice, political mobilisation and repression under Jacob Zuma: *A Decade of Dissent: Reflections on Popular Resistance in South Africa, 2000–2010*, symposium, University of Johannesburg, School of Tourism and Hospitality, 12–14 November 2010.
- Fraser-Moleketi, G., 2006. *Public Service Reform in South Africa: An Overview of Selected Case Studies from 1994–2004*, Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Friedman, J.Z. 2014. Sticking to the Numbers: Performance Monitoring in South Africa, 2009–2011.
- Fu, H. & Sanchez-Paramo, C. 2020. High-frequency monitoring of COVID-19 impacts. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/high-frequency-monitoring-covid-19-impacts>
- Goldman, I., Engela, R., Akhalwaya, I.Y., Gasa, N., Léon, B., Mohamed, H., & Phillips, S. 2012. Establishing a national M&E system in South Africa. *PREM Notes*; No. 21. *World Bank, Washington, DC*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17084>
- Graham, V. 2015. No longer 'proudly South African'? From 'Rainbow Nation' to 'Dissatisfied Customers': South Africa – 20 years on. Paper prepared for the *British Political Science Association Conference Sheffield*, 30 March–1 April 2015. <https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/conference/papers/2015/PSAVGrahampaper.pdf>
- Gumede, W. 2017. Citizen, civil society and media-based monitoring and evaluation. Policy Brief 19 <https://democracyworks.org.za/policy-brief-19-citizen-civil-society-and-media-based-monitoring-and-evaluation/>
- Hood, C., 1991. A Public Management for all Seasons?. *Public Administration*, 69(1), pp. 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x>
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). 2019. South Africa's national development monitoring and evaluation. <https://www.iied.org/south-africas-national-development-monitoring-evaluation>
- Kettner, P. M., Moroney, R. M. & Martin, L. L. 2013. *Designing and Managing Programs: An Effectiveness-Based Approach*, 4th edn, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.
- Kuye, J. & Ajam, T., 2012. The South African Developmental State Debate Leadership, Governance and a Dialogue in Public Sector Finance. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 5(2), pp. 48–67.
- Leach, L.M. 2018. *A framework for factoring citizen perceptions in local public service value systems to improve service quality*. PhD Dissertation, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Stellenbosch University.

- Mmako, D. 2018. *Understanding officials' perspectives on the effectiveness of Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring in improving service delivery in the Gauteng Department of Home Affairs*. Master of Management Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Muralidharan, K. Das, J., Holla, A., and Mohpal, A. 2017. The fiscal cost of weak governance: Evidence from teacher absence in India, *Journal of Public Economics*, Volume 145, 2017, pp. 116-135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2016.11.005>.
- National Planning Commission (NPC). 2012. *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future - Make it Work*, Pretoria: Presidency of South Africa.
- Osborne, D. & Gaebler, T., 1992. *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*. Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Plangemann, K. 2016. Strengthening performance monitoring and evaluation, in Alam, Asad, Renosi Mokate, and Kathrin A. Plangemann, editors. 2016. *Making It Happen: Selected Case Studies of Institutional Reforms in South Africa*. Directions in Development. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-0768-8.
- Porter, S., & Goldman, I. 2013. A Growing Demand for Monitoring and Evaluation in Africa. *African Evaluation Journal*, 1(1), 9 pages. doi:<https://doi.org/10.4102/aej.v1i1.25>
- Power, M., 1997. *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*. <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/theauditexplosion.pdf>
- Republic of South Africa. 1997. *The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service*. Government Gazette, vol 388, no. 18340. General Notice 1459 of 1997. Department of Public Service and Administration, Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Phillips, S., Goldman, I., Gasa, N., Akhalwaya, I. & Leon, B. 2014. A focus on M&E of results: an example from the Presidency, South Africa, *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 6:4, pp. 392-406, DOI: 10.1080/19439342.2014.966453
- The Presidency. 2010. President Zuma to report back to residents of Siyathemba Township. <https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/content/president-zuma-report-back-residents-siyathemba-township>
- UNECA. 2010. *Innovations and Best Practices in Public Sector Reforms: The Case of the Civil Service in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa*, Addis Ababa: UNECA.