

Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Local Government Poverty Alleviation Efforts in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Poverty continues to be one of the biggest development challenges in the new democratic South Africa. Recently, the country has been experiencing several violent protests in poverty stricken townships and localities. Hence, this study aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions of officers and community representatives regarding the local municipalities poverty alleviation efforts in Polokwane, Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang local municipalities in Limpopo. Techniques such as analysis of secondary data, interviews, group discussions and questionnaire were used to collect data. Results from interviews and group discussions depict that poverty alleviation is still remaining behind as there is high level of unemployment, projects are collapsed and initiatives are limited in local areas. The attitudinal analysis also depicts that despite efforts made by the local municipalities, poverty continues to be a serious challenge in the study areas. Likewise, the analysis on the degree of response revealed the key factors that affect the local poverty alleviation, inter alia: shortage of funding or staffing; lack of meaningful participation of the poor; lack of commitment from stakeholders; and having less power to make decisions over programming and spending. Therefore, it is recommended that the local municipality should focus on: increasing meaningful local participation in development process; build the institutional capacity; and promote the partnership among public, private and civil societies at the local level. Moreover, local municipalities need more autonomy over programming and resource allocation.

Keywords: Local government, poverty alleviation, South Africa, developmental local government, Local municipalities.

1. Introduction

The first socio-economic policy of democratic South Africa, the *White Paper on Reconstruction and Development (RDP) of 1994*, aimed at alleviating poverty in the country through meeting the basic needs of people, including job creation, land reform, housing, water, sanitation, energy, transport, nutrition, healthcare, the environment, social welfare and security (South Africa, 1998). Furthermore, *The White Paper on Local Government of 1998* identifies major role of local governments which is alleviating the widespread poverty through the provision of household services and infrastructures. Local governments have mandate to improve the socio-economic conditions of community through provision of household basic services and infrastructures such as water, sanitation, local roads, storm water drainage, refuse collect, electricity, and housing. They can better achieve these objectives by prioritizing services and infrastructure according to the needs of community (South Africa, 1998).

In this study, more emphasis is given to assess the perceptions and attitudes of respondents with regard to the role of local municipalities in poverty alleviation, especially in improving the access to quality basic services including water, sanitation, electricity, and refuse removal. It presents the findings of the study on the attitudes and perceptions of officers and community representatives regarding the local municipalities poverty alleviation efforts in Polokwane, Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang local municipalities in Limpopo. The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, the concept of poverty is described and previous studies are discussed in relation to poverty alleviation and government response. Section 3 presents the methodology of the study. Section 4 provides detailed analysis on the findings of the study such as: biographical details of respondents; perceptions of respondents about the municipal role in poverty alleviation; analysis of degree of response in relation to poverty alleviation; analysis of overall attitudes in relation to poverty alleviation; and the analysis of secondary data on municipal poverty alleviation with reference to service delivery. The last section, section 5 provides conclusive remarks.

2. Literature Review

Poverty may be understood in different ways but in general it is a broad and multi-dimensional concept (www.ipc-

undp.org/pub/IPC PovertyInFocus9.pdf). According to Davids *et al.*, (2011), poverty can be seen from different perspectives such as income perspective, basic needs perspective, social exclusion perspectives, and the sustainable livelihood perspective. The income perspective emphasises on the level of income and expenditure pattern as well as employment status whereas the basic needs perspective takes into account the access to quality basic services including water, sanitation, electricity, refuse removal, decent house and so on. Likewise, the social exclusion perspective focusses on reducing discrimination, marginalisation and inequality. The sustainable livelihood perspective stresses on improving livelihood strategies and building the asset bases of individuals and households such as human assets, physical assets, economic assets and social assets. The aforementioned definition of poverty indicates that poverty has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions meaning that an analysis of poverty must consider these dimensions. In this study, more emphasis is given to assess the perceptions and attitudes of respondents with regard to the role of local municipalities in poverty alleviation, especially in improving the access to quality basic services including water, sanitation, electricity, and refuse removal.

The agenda of alleviating extreme poverty has gained momentum at global, national and local levels. Globally, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) primary aims to eradicate extreme poverty at the international level. Report from United Nation revealed many countries have committed themselves to achieve this agenda of poverty reduction. As a result, extreme poverty rates have fallen in every developing region (www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/goal_1_fs.pdf). Regarding African situation, Lukhele-Olorunju (2012) pointed out that despite the challenges of policy, governance, fiscal and politics in the continent, the African governments are struggling to reduce poverty. In South Africa, the national government has recently adopted a long-term comprehensive National Development Plan (NDP 2030) which gives priority for eradicating poverty and inequality in the country. The plan contains strategies to reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa by 2030. The NDP emphasizes on the need to create jobs, expanding infrastructural investment, efficient utilization of resources, building developmental state, anti-corruption initiatives, and improving human capability through quality education and health services. It has been adopted by government, however, critics casts doubt about its implementation due to lack of state capacity and inadequate public participation (Qwabe, 2013).

Alleviating poverty at the local level is also a core objective of municipalities in South Africa (Aklilu, 2014; Ababio and Mahlatsi, 2008). Different legislative and policy structures stipulate the mandate of local government in poverty alleviation. For instance, the White Paper on Local Government (1998) emphasis that local authorities should commit themselves to work in collaboration with community and community based organizations to improve social, economic and material situations in sustainable manner and thereby to improve the living standard of local people (South Africa, 1998).

Hence, the quest for effectiveness of poverty alleviation interventions both at global and South African context has been drawing the interest of several researchers and scholars. There are a number of researches that have been done in relation to assessing the magnitude of poverty in the country.

Poverty continues to be one of the biggest development challenges in the new democratic South Africa. Khumalo (2013) in his article entitled "the dynamics of poverty and poverty alleviation in South Africa" argues that poverty remains a developmental challenge and it has racial, gender, spatial and demographic features in the country. The author indicated that most black people remain in poverty and women and young people being the worst affected groups among black Africans.

Kumar (2009) in his paper acknowledges the fact that South Africa has made significant progress since 1994 in terms of economic growth, job creation, subsidized houses, access to clean water and sanitations, expansions of electricity, health and education services. Despite the efforts exerted by government, he indicated that poverty still continue to affect people at the local level.

Mears and Blaaw (2010) conducted an assessment in relation to the levels of poverty and poverty gap in rural Limpopo. The study highlighted that the majority of rural households receive a state grant. Additionally, other services have been provided including basic water, electricity, subsidized or free housing, and health care subsidies and so on. He further indicated that despite the state grant and various services provided, the rural community as a whole remains very poor and below poverty line.

It has been indicated that South African government has been taking several measures to address the problem of poverty since 1994. However, the country has been experiencing several violent protests in poverty stricken townships and localities. Researchers have also concerns with regard to the effectiveness of government poverty alleviation strategies and interventions.

In this regard, Asmah-Andoh (2008) suggests that municipalities should exploit the opportunities provided through integrated development planning and local economic development to improve participation of the poor and marginalized groups of society by creating specific and appropriate local government institutions on which the poor and marginalized

depend. Kumar (2009) indicated that municipalities must do much more to alleviate poverty at the local level because the level of unemployment remains unacceptably high and inequality has increased in the country. Likewise, Khumalo (2013) calls for more commitment from government side towards people-led and inclusive development approach in South Africa.

The aforementioned analysis shows that poverty alleviation is an important component of the socio-economic transformation process of the new democratic South Africa. It is also evident that more emphasis has been given to find out the magnitude of poverty and government response. This study focuses on assessing the attitudes and perceptions of officers and community representatives regarding the local municipalities poverty alleviation efforts in Polokwane, Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang local municipalities in Limpopo.

3. Methodology

The study area, Limpopo Province, is one of the nine provinces officially recognised in South Africa. The Province is divided into five municipal districts and sub-divided into twenty five rural and urban local municipalities. Geographically, this Province is situated at the north eastern corner of the country. It shares the border with three countries such as Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It is also the main gateway to other countries in further field in Sub-Sahara. According to Statistics South Africa (SSA, 2012), the Limpopo Province has a total land area of 125, 754 square kilometres which forms 10.3 percent of the total land area in South Africa. The population of the Province was estimated at 5 404 868 people which accounts for 10.4 percent of the total population of the country. Regarding the socio-economic situation, the percentage of population and of the total number of households in the Province is steadily growing.

The participants of the study included about 53 IDP, LED officers and community representatives of which 15 (28.3%) were participants from urban (Polokwane) and the rest 38 (71.7%) were from rural (Lepelle-Nkumpi & Aganang). These participants were selected purposively in close collaboration with the concerned municipal officers and coordinators. Questionnaire was administered to test the perception of participants using an ordinal five-point scale which was designed to obtain more differentiated answer, for instance, strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. Additionally, follow-up interview was done with selected participants to understand their perceptions on poverty alleviation efforts by the local municipalities. The questionnaire was largely filled by the respondents as there was no apparent challenge of illiteracy. However, for a limited number of respondents (about nine) the study involved face-to-face approach and a trained translator.

The data analysis involved the following steps. First, the filled in questionnaire was edited for quality and completeness by the researcher. Secondly, the raw data were coded and captured as well as processed using IBM SPSS version 21. The data analysis technique employed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation). Finally, the finding was presented in cross comparative table format.

4. Finding

4.1 Biographical Details of Respondents

The study was undertaken by engaging a total of 53 respondents. Out of the total 53 respondents, 34 (64.2%) were male and 19 (35.8%) were female. Regarding age, the mean age of the respondents was 38 years with a standard deviation of 8.8 and it ranges from 19 up to 60 years. Out of 53 respondents, 10 (18.9%), 15 (28.3%) and 28 (52.8%) had grade 11 or less, grade 12, diploma and above, respectively. Out of 53 respondents, 44 (83.0%) and 9 (17.0%) were municipal officers/ workers and community representatives, respectively. The mean year of experience of the respondents was 5 years with a standard deviation of 12.3 and it ranges from 1 up to 9 years.

4.2 Perceptions of Respondents about the Municipal Role in Poverty Alleviation

In this study, participants were asked to describe the overall efforts by their local municipality towards poverty alleviation. The finding shows that the role of local municipalities in poverty alleviation was insufficient compared to the challenges facing local communities. Most participants commented that the local municipality is performing inadequately, for example: there is a high level of unemployment; projects have collapsed; and initiatives are limited in the local areas.

Respondents from Polokwane revealed that poverty alleviation initiatives were affected by several factors such as: a) Shortage of agricultural land for cooperatives, b) Lack of sense of ownership of the initiatives, c) Most ventures failed, d) Not employing people from the data base, e) Lack of focus on green economy and recycling, f) No proper

implementation of Acts to develop entrepreneurship and small business, and g) Insufficient linkages of initiatives with public and private institutions.

Similarly, other respondents from Lepelle-Nkumpi have also pointed out that poverty alleviation initiatives were affected due to limited partnership of various development institutions including public, private and civil agencies. These include inadequate role of private sectors in creating job opportunities as well as limited role of CBOs to help the needy and vulnerable.

However, a few participants are with the view that municipality is contributing to poverty alleviation. A respondent indicated why he feels his municipality plays significant role in poverty alleviation. He said: "The community is benefiting from successful completion of projects because these projects generate jobs and income as well as left with skills after construction of infrastructure, in most cases they are even issued with certificates e.g. Plumbing after water projects."

4.3 Analysis of Degree of Response in relation to Poverty Alleviation

Regarding local municipality's role in poverty alleviation, the following Table 1 shows the degree of response, the mean and standard deviations of the responses. The construct 'the role in poverty alleviation' consisted of five statements listed as follow:

- Statement B7- Higher level of poverty is one of the serious challenges.
- Statement B8- Having less power to make decisions over programming and spending is affecting local poverty reduction efforts.
- Statement B9- Lack of meaningful participation of the poor is affecting local poverty reduction efforts.
- Statement B10- Shortage of funding or staffing is affecting local poverty reduction efforts.
- Statement B11- Lack of commitment from other stakeholders including non-governmental agencies and business sectors is affecting local poverty reduction efforts.

Table 1: Degree of response related to poverty alleviation (n=53)

Items	Percentage%					Mean	SD
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Statement B7	7.5	5.0	5.0	20.0	62.5	4.25	1.235
Statement B8	15.0	17.5	15.0	25.0	27.5	3.33	1.439
Statement B9	5.0	15.0	7.5	35.0	37.5	3.85	1.231
Statement B10	2.5	10.0	12.5	27.5	47.5	4.08	1.118
Statement B11	7.5	15.0	10.0	32.5	35.0	3.73	1.301

Source: own survey data, 2014

According to Table 1, the highest (mean=4.25) of statement B7, which is related to 'the prevalence of higher level of poverty' strongly suggest that poverty is a serious challenge in the local municipalities, when compared to the other items. The second item with high mean is the statement B10 (mean=4.08) 'shortage of funding or staffing'. This statement also implies that shortage of fund and staffing affects the efforts towards poverty alleviation in the local municipalities. The third highest mean (3.85), i.e. statement B9 'lack of meaningful participation of the poor is affecting local poverty reduction effort' also reveals the need to promote local participation.

The above response on the degree of response in relation to poverty alleviation highlights the need to focus on poverty alleviation at the local policy implementation level. It also indicates the key challenges related to local poverty alleviation such as shortage of capacity and lack of meaningful participation. The result can be further detailed by considering items from B7- B11 as follow.

- *Statement B7- Higher level of poverty is one of the serious challenges.* The response in Table 1 indicates that only 13% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed; 5% were undecided; 20% agreed; while 63% strongly agreed with the above statement. The relatively highest proportion of strongly agreed respondents may suggest that there is a need for further strengthening of the existing strategic measures and commitment against deep rooted poverty at the local level.
- *Statement B8- Having less power to make decisions over programming and spending is affecting local poverty reduction effort.* The aforementioned response in Table 1 indicates that altogether 33% of respondents either

disagreed or strongly disagreed; 15% were undecided; while 53% either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. The result reveals that having less power to make decisions over programming and spending at municipal level may affect local poverty reduction effort. Such power refers to the autonomy over all the programmes and resources including land within the local municipality. On the other hand, the significant proportion of respondents who did not support the statement may not indicate that there is no room for improvement.

- **Statement B9- Lack of meaningful participation of the poor is affecting local poverty reduction effort.** The response in Table 1 shows that only 20% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed; 8% were undecided; 35% agreed; while 38% strongly agreed with the above statement. The large proportion of respondents who support the statement implies that lack of meaningful participation of the poor may affect local poverty reduction efforts of the municipalities.
- **Statement B10- Shortage of funding or staffing is affecting local poverty reduction effort.** According to Table 1, only 12% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed; 13% were undecided; 27% agreed; while 48% strongly agreed with the above statement. Relatively highest proportion of respondents support the statement meaning that shortage of funding or staffing may critically affect local poverty reduction effort at municipalities.
- **Statement B11- Lack of commitment from other stakeholders including non-governmental agencies and business sectors is affecting local poverty reduction efforts.** The above response in Table 1 shows that, only 23% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed; 10% were undecided; 33% agreed; while 35% strongly agreed with the above statement. The finding shows that the majority of respondents supported the statement. This means that the low level of commitment from municipal stakeholders including the private sector and NGOs/CBOs may seriously affect the local poverty reduction efforts at municipalities. That is why the NDP 2030 encourages the partnership among public, private and civil societies in addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country.

4.4 Analysis of Overall Attitudes in relation to Poverty Alleviation

The analysis and results of attitudinal assessment on the role in poverty alleviation in the local municipalities is presented below.

Table 2: The overall attitude of respondents towards poverty alleviation by categories of local municipalities (n=53)

Category of municipality	SD & DA		Undecided		SA & AG		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Urban (Polokwane)	3	5.66	2	3.77	10	18.87	15	28.30
Rural (Lepelle-Nkumpi & Aganang)	6	11.32	2	3.77	30	56.61	38	71.70
Total	9	16.99	4	7.54	40	75.47	53	100

Source, own survey, 2014; SD= Strongly Disagree; DA=Disagree; SA= Strongly Agree; AG= Agree.

The comparative analysis on overall attitudes of respondent's related to poverty alleviation indicated that the significant proportion 40 (76%) of respondents tend to support the view that despite efforts made by the local municipalities, poverty continues to be a big challenge in the study areas; while 4 (8%) of them remained undecided. The rest 9 (17%) of them tend to disagree with the above view (Table 2).

The result is similar along the categories of local municipalities. Among the 15 respondents from Urban (Polokwane), 10 (19%), 2(4%) and 3 (6%) of them have confirmed, undecided and did not support the idea, respectively. On the other hand, among the respondents who belong to Rural (Lepelle-Nkumpi & Aganang) categories, 30 (57%), 2 (4%) and 6 (11%) have confirmed, undecided and did not support the idea, respectively (Table 2).

4.5 Analysis of Secondary Data on Municipal Poverty Alleviation with reference to Service Delivery

This section presents findings regarding municipal poverty alleviation pertaining to basic service provision by the local municipalities based on the available data from CDM survey 2010, SSA census 2011, municipal IDP documents and municipal annual performance reports. The finding shows that the local municipalities are playing a significant role in terms of electrification of beneficiary households. It further shows that there was a considerable effort in improving access

to water services by the local municipalities.

However, relatively all the local municipalities under study had performed inadequately in providing sanitation and refuse removal services to the beneficiary households. The finding revealed that the provision of these services is limited in the municipalities as the backlogs stand huge compared with other services. There is no doubt that the low level of sanitation and refuse removal services will negatively impact on the quality of people's life and on physical environment.

It has been noted that the local municipalities are providing services at different paces. Accordingly, Polokwane seems relatively performing well compared with other municipalities such as Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang. This does not mean that Polokwane had met the needs of beneficiary households. Nevertheless, the provision of acceptable services and facilities is still limited in the municipality due to existing backlogs. For example, the rural settlements under Polokwane municipality are in dire need of services compared with the urban areas. There are certain factors that affected the level of service delivery.

The key factors that emerge from the document analysis include: inadequate capacity (human, financial and material); delay in implementation of the IDP projects; insufficient maintenance of aging infrastructures; increasing level of backlogs due to the growing number of new households; and lack of community capacity building in rural areas. Detailed analysis is presented below.

In terms of various policy frameworks including the Constitution of 1996, local municipalities are responsible for providing adequate and clean water to all households in their area of jurisdiction. This service is more linked to survival, physical health and quality of people's life. The local municipalities are therefore required to include their plan and budget in municipal IDPs for effective implementation of projects and programmes in relation to improve water accessibility.

Table 3 shows the proportion of households with access to municipal water services/sources. Access to municipal water services/sources include: pipe water inside dwelling; pipe water in the yard; stand pipes less and further than 200m; and municipal water tank supply.

Table 3: The proportion of households with access to municipal water services/sources

Municipality	Total households	With access		Without access	
		No.	%	No.	%
Polokwane	181 626	164 480	90.6	17 146	9.4
Lepelle-Nkumpi	68 844	52 820	76.7	16 024	23.3
Aganang	46 756	38 997	83.4	7 759	16.6

Source: CDM survey (2010)

The results indicated that the local municipalities have created accessibility of water services to the large proportion of households. The level of services varies among the categories of local municipalities. Polokwane local municipality performed well in terms of creating access and reducing water backlogs. As indicated in table 3, a considerable proportion of households (90.6%) in Polokwane local municipality have access to municipal water sources compared to other local municipalities under study. Those municipalities categorised as vulnerable such as Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang performed less than Polokwane local municipality. SSA census 2011 also reported that out of the total household size (178 001) the majority (96.1%) of households in Polokwane municipality had access to municipal water sources (SSA, 2012). Both reports of CDM survey 2010 and SSA census 2011 show that the municipality had improved access to water by households.

According to the 2011/2012 annual performance report of Polokwane, the municipality could have improved the water service if it had addressed the predicaments. These are limited staff capacity compared to increasing population and settlements as well as delays in implementation of the water projects due to poor planning, and bureaucratic procedures. In addition, the Polokwane IDP document 2013 – 2017 indicated some critical issues to be considered in water supply such as: lack of sustainable water sources for further supply of the municipal area; lack of cost recovery in some area; and limited operation and maintenance of infrastructure. These factors determine municipality's capacity to deliver adequate sanitation services to its citizens. Unlike Polokwane municipality, the other vulnerable municipalities are predominantly rural and facing great challenges in terms of huge proportion of backlog.

As part of their developmental policy mandate, the local municipalities are also legally responsible for providing electricity service to all households in their area of jurisdiction. This service is more linked to environmental degradation and quality of people's life. Therefore, municipalities are required to plan and implement IDP projects associated with the distribution of energy for urban and rural households.

Table 4 shows the proportion of households with access to electricity services. Access to electricity services refers to household's connection to the main grid. It does not include other sources of energy such as gas, paraffin and wood.

Table 4: The proportion of households with access to electricity services

Municipality	Total households	With access		Without access	
		No.	%	No.	%
Polokwane	181 626	157 735	86.8	23 891	13.2
Lepelle-Nkumpi	68 844	64 085	93.1	4 759	6.9
Aganang	46 756	43 728	93.5	3 028	6.5

Source: CDM survey (2010)

The local municipalities had promoted electrification to improve more access for energy demands. The finding shows that those municipalities categorised as vulnerable such as Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang performed better than Polokwane local municipality. The proportion of households with access to electricity in Aganang and Lepelle-Nkumpi local municipalities are 93.5% and 93.1% respectively. However, table 4 shows that 86.6% of the households in Polokwane municipality had access to electricity. SSA census 2011 also reported that out of the total household size (178 001) only (83%) of households in Polokwane municipality had access to electric services (SSA, 2012).

According to the 2011/2012 annual performance report of Polokwane, the municipality might not eliminate the electric backlogs unless the municipality catches up with the growing size of new households and deal with the delay in implementation of projects for electrifying rural households. These factors determine municipality's capacity to deliver adequate electric services to its citizens.

Provision of proper sanitation services is another functionality area of the local municipalities as mandated by various legislations and policies. It is therefore important for local municipalities to prioritise this service in their IDPs in order to promote people's dignity and health. Accordingly, this section describes the level of sanitation services in different categories of local municipalities and provides possible explanation for the variation among local municipalities. Table 5 shows the proportion of households with access to sanitation services.

Access to higher level of sanitation services refers to household's utilisation of flush toilet connected to sewage system whereas access to basic level of sanitation service denotes household's utilisation of flush toilet with septic tank and pit latrine with ventilation. On the other hand, below basic level of sanitation services such as chemical toilet, pit latrine without ventilation, bucket system and no sanitation facilities are considered as backlog.

Table 5: The proportion of households with access to sanitation services

Municipality	Number of households	service of Higher level		service of basic level		Below basic level	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Polokwane	181 626	51 184	28.2	21 143	11.6	109 299	60.2
Lepelle-Nkumpi	68 844	9 027	13.1	9 245	13.4	50 572	73.5
Aganang	46 756	364	0.8	3 352	7.2	43 040	92

Source: CDM survey (2010)

The local municipalities were performing inadequate in terms of providing healthy and dignified sanitation services to beneficiary households. The finding reveals that those municipalities considered as vulnerable such as Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang had the highest level of sanitation backlogs 73.5% and 92% respectively. The vulnerable municipalities performed dismally compared to the Polokwane local municipality. Polokwane municipality had the backlog of 60.2%. SSA census 2011 also reported that out of the total household size (178 001) the sanitation backlog stands at 46.8% (SSA, 2012). Both reports of CDM survey 2010 and SSA census 2011 highlight that the Polokwane municipality had lowest level of backlog.

According to the 2011/2012 annual performance report of Polokwane, the municipality could have improved the sanitation service if it had addressed the predicaments. These are limited staff capacity as well as delays in implementation of the sanitation related projects. The municipality has put in place appropriate measures including new appointment of technical staff and reducing roll overs of projects. These factors determine municipality's capacity to

deliver adequate sanitation services to its citizens. Unlike Polokwane municipality, the other vulnerable municipalities are predominantly rural and facing great challenges in terms of huge proportion of backlog.

Refuse removal service is a very crucial function of local municipalities as stipulated in developmental mandate of local government in South Africa. This service is more linked to healthy environment and people's quality of life in both urban and rural areas. Accordingly, this section describes the level of refuse removal services in different categories of local municipalities and provides possible explanation for the variation among local municipalities.

Table 6: The proportion of households with access to refuse removal services

Municipality	Total households	With access		Without access	
		No.	%	No.	%
Polokwane	181 626	54 913	30.2	126 713	69.8
Lepelle-Nkumpi	68 844	10 629	15.5	58 215	84.4
Aganang	46 756	540	1.1	46 216	98.9

Source: CDM survey (2010)

Table 6 shows the proportion of households with access to refuse removal services. Access to refuse removal services refers to household's access to refuse removal by local municipality or private company at least once a week or less often. On the other hand, without access to refuse disposal denotes other means of removal such as communal refuse dump, refuse burnt and no rubbish disposal.

The local municipalities were performing inadequately in terms of providing refuse removal services to beneficiary households. The finding reveals that those municipalities considered as vulnerable such as Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang had the highest level of sanitation backlogs 84.4% and 98.9% respectively. The vulnerable municipalities performed dismally compared to the Polokwane local municipality. Polokwane municipality had the backlog of 69.8%. SSA census 2011 also reported that out of the total household size (178 001) the refuse removal backlog stands at 54.1% (SSA, 2012). Both reports of CDM survey 2010 and SSA census 2011 highlight that the Polokwane municipality had lowest level of backlog.

According to Polokwane IDP document 2013 – 2017, the municipality could not further improve the refuse removal services unless it properly addresses the critical issues such as: illegal dumping on open spaces; general waste in rural areas; shortage of fleet; and shortage of technical staff. Additionally, the 2011/2012 annual performance report of Polokwane shows that refuse removal service was favouring urban areas (urban biased).

The municipality has put in place appropriate measures including constant monitoring and cleaning, awareness campaign, leasing fleet and new appointment of technical staff. The municipality should also consider expanding refuse removal services to its rural settlements. The aforementioned factors determine municipality's capacity to deliver adequate refuse removal services to its citizens. Unlike Polokwane municipality, the other vulnerable municipalities are predominantly rural and facing great challenges in terms of huge proportions of backlog.

5. Conclusion

It has been indicated that South African government has been taking several measures to address the problem of poverty since 1994. Nevertheless, the country has been experiencing several violent protests in poverty stricken townships and localities. This paper presented the findings of the study on the attitudes and perceptions of officers and community representatives regarding the local municipalities poverty alleviation efforts in Polokwane, Lepelle-Nkumpi and Aganang local municipalities in Limpopo. Results from interviews and group discussions depict that poverty alleviation is still remaining behind as there is high level of unemployment, projects are collapsed and initiatives are limited in local areas.

The attitudinal analysis also depicts that despite efforts made by the local municipalities, poverty continues to be a serious challenge in the study areas. Likewise, the analysis on the degree of response revealed the key factors that affect the local poverty alleviation interventions, inter alia: shortage of funding or staffing; lack of meaningful participation of the poor; lack of commitment from stakeholders; and having less power to make decisions over programming and spending.

The finding shows that the local municipalities are playing a significant role in terms of electrification of beneficiary households. It further shows that there was a considerable effort in improving access to water services by the local municipalities. However, relatively all the local municipalities under study had performed inadequately in providing sanitation and refuse removal services to the beneficiary households. The finding revealed that the provision of these

services is limited in the municipalities as the backlogs stand huge compared with other services. There is no doubt that the low level of sanitation and refuse removal services will negatively impact on the quality of people's life and on physical environment.

Therefore, it is recommended that the local municipality should focus on: increasing meaningful local participation in development process; build the institutional capacity; and promote the partnership among public, private and civil societies at the local level. Moreover, local municipalities need more autonomy over programming and resource allocation.

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