

# MORE IS LESS

More services are being provided to the poor and there's little to explain **service-delivery protests**

LUBABALO NGCUKANA

lubabalo.ngcukana@citypress.co.za

There's more free basic electricity and water provided to poor people than ever before, but a new Stats SA report reveals little to explain the number of service-delivery protests around the country.

Statistician-General Pali Lehohla released the results of last year's nonfinancial census of the country's municipalities on Tuesday.

It found that between 2009 and last year, the number of households receiving free basic electricity increased with 5.3 million receiving free water, 2.5 million getting free refuse removal and 2.5 million receiving free electricity.

Among other key findings, the figures showed that of the 14.8 million households in South Africa, 3.8 million had been classified as indigent and were receiving free basic services such as water, refuse removal and electricity.

Also, out of the 278 municipalities around the country, 189 had the infrastructure to provide adequate water; electricity could be provided by 186, sewerage and sanitation by 188 and solid waste management by 226.

However, the number of households using the bucket system had increased from 73 413 in 2009 to 99 102 last year.

The Eastern Cape and Free State had the highest number of households using the bucket system - 4.6% of both provinces' households.

Kevin Allan, managing director of Municipal IQ, which monitors the country's 278 municipalities, said he found it strange that there were more protests in areas where there was service delivery than in areas where there was not.

Allan cited protests in Gauteng and the Western Cape - where service delivery was successful - and a lack of protests in KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, which were largely rural provinces plagued by poverty and limited service delivery due to the lack of capacity at municipalities.

He said service-delivery protests mostly pointed to a failure by municipalities to communicate with their communities.

"It might be that services are coming to their areas, but they are not aware and become impatient and start to revolt," he said.

He added that the report showed no significant progress had been made to improve service delivery in rural municipalities such as those in KwaZulu-Natal or the Eastern Cape, where service delivery was mostly nonexistent or happening at a very slow pace.

"But what is fascinating is that this does not descend into service-delivery protests.

"You would think in an area like the Eastern Cape, where there is an increase in the number of people using the bucket system as articulated by the census, there would be more protests. But this is not the case."

In the Eastern Cape, the report showed that the number of homes using the bucket system had increased from 38 606 in 2012 to 52 732 last year.

Allan said it was Municipal IQ's observation that most service-delivery protests did not just happen out of the blue, but emanated from the "genuine frustration" of people with key delivery problems in their communities.

He attributed the "strange trends" in service-delivery protests to "relative deprivation" where people protested because they could see services being delivered in areas close to them but not in their areas.

# 52 732

The number of Eastern Cape households using the bucket system last year, while 38 606 households used them in 2012

Service d

How Stats SA's report on

## Gauteng

In Ennerdale South, Gauteng residents protested over the lack of a sewerage system. A term promised before the electricity using pit toilets

Residents of Riverlea Ext 1 streets in August protesting a lack of delivery since 1996 water and electricity, and in

**Report findings:** Out of the 10 municipalities in Gauteng, 10 are counted as providing basic services including water and sanitation, and solid-waste management. 10 provide sewerage and sa

## Western Cape

On Monday, protesters in Nyanga and Philippi, outside Cape Town, torched six Gold Arrow buses. The protests were reportedly led by taxi drivers who were objecting to the roll-out of the city's bus rapid transit system, the My CiTi buses, on the route, as well as the provincial government's decision to increase traffic fines

**Report findings:** Western Cape listed as a province where the majority of municipalities provide basic services. Out of the 30 municipalities in the province, 26 of them provide basic services



Herbert Masala