

Pipe dream for the province's poor?

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The African National Congress administration in KwaZulu-Natal has been adamant that it will distinguish itself from the former Inkatha Freedom Party government through exceptional service delivery.

At the heart of this pledge is a commitment to provide all citizens with access to safe water by 2008.

KwaZulu-Natal Premier S'bu Ndebele recently launched a Service Charter, based on a British model, to protect the rights of citizens. Access to water services by poor households received high priority.

The purpose of the charter is to provide information on delivery, and the

local government has been charged with reporting on progress in water provision through annual reviews.

But just how are these commitments being carried out in practice? There are difficulties in providing a compelling statistical review.

Statistics South Africa data does not appear timeously and does not provide a reliable breakdown in the numbers of households that access services at politically relevant levels: district and local municipalities. In addition, any review of service delivery must be based on a model that takes into account changes in household patterns. In data being analysed by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSC), the following trends are evident:

● Households continue to increase significantly above growth in a population, which is flattening out;

● Service delivery is increasing, but despite this the backlog in water services is also increasing.

Between the censuses (1996 to 2001), and despite the drive to increase water delivery, the backlog in unserved households in KwaZulu-Natal increased from 561 000 to 647 000 as a result of household growth.

On the basis of past trends continuing, the 1.7-million households in 1996 in KwaZulu-Natal would have increased to three million by 2008. This sharp increase in households (1.3-million) poses a considerable challenge to delivery and to the 2008 target to service all

households with water.

The data analysed by the HSRC shows that there were two million households with access to safe water by 2006. To reach the target in 2008 implies an increase in access for just more than one million households. This implies an increase in access of 500 000 households each year in 2006 and 2007 — the overwhelming majority by state provision.

Servicing rural areas is exorbitantly expensive because of the rugged terrain and dispersed settlement patterns. In addition to the problem of increasing costs of delivery, in poorly managed local municipalities Municipal Infrastructure Grant funding is becoming conditional on evidence that projects are sustainable.

These checks and review delivery down.

All indications are that get will not be met in KwaZulu-Natal, which have the logs, have already indicated water plans that the target met. The explanation is efficient funding. Instead, level of service that are lower being advocated in an aster service delivery provi

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