

RAPID VERIFICATION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENT DELIVERY DATA

1 Introduction

The Informal Settlements Service Delivery Rapid Verification Study is not a typical performance and expenditure review (PER). It was commissioned by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency in December 2013 in order to help assess the extent to which government could rely on data prepared and presented by various departments about the delivery of services to communities and households living in informal settlements after it was reported that the target set for service delivery had been achieved. The target had been to provide 400 000 households with upgraded services (in situ or greenfield) and security of tenure between April 2010 and February 2014. The aim of the study was to assess the reliability of the data from various departments underpinning these claims.

The PER was conducted between December 2013 and March 2014 by Rhizome Management Services. Some of its key outputs and insights are summarised here; the full report is available at: www.gtac.gov.za/programmes-and-services/public-expenditure-and-policy-analysis.

2 Method

Since the study had to verify the data presented to Cabinet in a short time frame, it did not review individual projects or programmes but rather assessed whether there was cause for concern about the accuracy of the underlying data. Such inaccuracies could stem from various sources, including:

- Unclear or ambiguous definitions, which might see incorrect data that ought not to be included in an assessment of delivery being recorded;
- Exaggerated reporting because of double counting between programmes (e.g. when two programmes both record having provided services to the same household) or between spheres of government (e.g. when provincial delivery figures include figures reported separately by local government); and
- Delivery of infrastructure but not the complementary services (e.g. water reticulation but not water, or electricity connections but not electricity).

In order to assess the prevalence of such inaccuracies, the team:

- Analysed performance data from provincial departments of human settlements;
- Interrogated the methods used in compiling and disseminating data;
- Reviewed underlying assumptions made in reports; and
- Sought to correlate data from other sources to stress-test them for anomalies.

3 Findings

The review of the data sources showed material differences in the definition of informal settlements. These led to very different estimates of the number of such settlements and the households counted as being 'in informal circumstances'.

Differences in definitions also affect the measurement of service delivery and upgrades. There were inconsistencies between different reports and databases in the standard of service delivery that qualified as an upgrade, as well as the suite of services offered in individual upgrading projects. Thus, a household in one area that received emergency services (e.g. communal toilets and standpipes) would be counted as having had its services upgraded, while in another area, only one



that received full services and a new top structure would be counted as having received an upgrade. In addition, the enforcement of reporting standards was not consistent and rigorous.

In setting its delivery standards, the Department of Human Settlements had defined a serviced site as having two or more of tenure, water or sanitation, and a house as a top structure with or without services. Based on these definitions, it concluded that 393 000 individual households had received these benefits between April 2010 and February 2014, and that government had therefore met its commitment to provide 400 000 households with upgraded services and security of tenure by the target date.

On examination of the data, however, the PER team was able to disaggregate the delivery statistics (see Table 1). It showed that in the period April 2010–February 2014:

- About 278 000 units received sanitation services.
- About 248 000 top structures were delivered.
- There were nearly 240 000 unique instances of the delivery of water.
- There were nearly 240 000 instances of the provision of tenure.

Table 1: Recalculated delivery statistics, various programmes, 2010 to 2013

	Tenure	Water	Sanitation	Top structure
Urban Settlements Development Grant		69 547	69 547	
Tenure (other)	47 807			
Enhanced People's Housing Process	20 101	2 663	20 101	17 438
Emergency		727	727	1 036
Rural			18 052	38 963
Integrated Residential Development Programme	72 490	68 560	72 490	28 493
Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme	96 845	96 845	96 845	162 543
Total	237 243	238 342	277 762	248 473

In total, 358 000 households received at least one of these forms of service delivery, with 310 000 receiving two or more.

The review demonstrated the difficulties of accurately measuring the outputs of the service delivery programme retrospectively, and underlined the need for consistent standards for quantification. Reliable and replicable processes for aggregating data must also be established in advance. Without these, policymakers cannot take reported numbers at face value, especially if they come from multiple sources.