

The Causes and Socio-political Impact of the Service Delivery Protests to the South African Citizenry: A Real Public Discourse

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KEYWORDS African National Congress. Councillors. Programmes. Violence. Public. Local Government

ABSTRACT In the recent past (2008-2013), the African National Congress (ANC) led government in South Africa has experienced an outcry from different communities around the country, concerning a lack of provision of services. These conditions to a certain extent led to the outbreak, of what became known as the service delivery protests in South Africa. The basic services which were needed included the following: access to clean water; provision of sanitation; and the redress of housing backlogs. The study investigates the theories around the origins of the service delivery protests and their socio-political impact on such communities. The study argues that the ability by the ANC government to deliver services, particularly to those residents in the poor areas, is its basic function as part of social programmes in response to people's needs. Consequently, the study contends that the purported failure to respond to such needs, contributes to service delivery protests. Furthermore, it argues that the slow pace of providing services to the poor in South Africa has created a socio-political problems. Examining the above arguments in the context of political transition, the study looks at different debates and political strategies, and the ways in which they draw on and shape socio-political discourses of power and rights. It concludes by indicating that meaningful address of service delivery protests by the ruling party require a combined strategy with those affected. It should be noted that although the issue of service delivery protest is a local government question, it has been elevated into a national issue in South Africa.