

## Decentralisation in local government planning: Is it a panacea for municipal service delivery?

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to explore whether decentralisation of power in planning and implementation at the local government is a panacea in advancing the efficiency of municipal service delivery. The debate about decentralisation in local government planning and implementation is far from unobtrusive, and it remains a pertinent issue in the recent and ongoing political transformation in South Africa. The imprecision to the notion of decentralisation is that it signals a shift and cascade the planning powers and responsibilities from the central government to local government in order to aid people at the ground the power to govern. Local government as the delivery arm of the state is a product of decentralisation, as entrenched in Chapter 3 and 7 of the Constitution of 1996. Therefore, decentralisation is bound in a turbulent environment to deliver municipal services to beneficiaries in their areas of jurisdiction. Centralised approach (top-down) for planning and implementation exclusively at the local government led to fragmented planning that rarely reflect the actual needs of communities, which ultimately lead to the proliferation of service delivery backlogs in may rural areas of South Africa. This paper argues that the culmination of decentralisation in planning and implementation enhances the delivery of services at the local government. The argument of the paper is prolonged by the realisation of the following: decentralisation increases the responsiveness of the local communities and their needs; it increases financial and administrative capacity at the local level and also leads to the greater acceptance and ownership of development programmes and projects in the communities. This paper concludes by giving salient features for effective service delivery through the decentralised local government planning.

**Keywords:** Decentralisation, Municipal Service Delivery, Integrated Development Plan (IDP), Developmental Local Government.

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