Political Trends and Issues Relating to 21st Century Municipal Electrical Service Delivery – An eThekwini Perspective

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The Past, Present and Future
Electrification in eThekwini Informal Settlements
Implications of Non-Delivery
Historically only 12% of South Africa had access to electricity, namely industries, mining and white urban areas.

1993 – this number grew to 36% (EFA – Electricity for All)

2003 – 70% success rate – over 2 500 000

Post 2003 – numbers continue to grow at slower space, deep rural and costly connections
The Bill of Rights provides for the right to have access to housing, health care, food, water, education and social security.

The Act further goes on to say “the State must take REASONABLE legislative and other measures, within its AVAILABLE RESOURCES, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.”

Observations:
1. Electricity is not regarded as a basic right.
2. The Constitution gives government an “out clause” by using the words “reasonable” and “available resources”.
Electricity is regarded by the population as being a basic right - this is further entrenched by the DoE’s issue of Free Basic Electricity (FBE), the government’s EFA campaign in the 1990s (2.5 million households connected).

Alternative energy is frowned upon as being sub-standard, dangerous, ineffective, costly, inconvenient.

The Constitution may not entrench Electricity as a basic right, however it is generally accepted as a crucial right by the population - the government needs to deliver on this mandate.

Whilst significant strides have been made through the EFA campaign, rural and informal settlements are greatly lacking in service delivery – eThekwini backlogs stand at approx. 200 000 informal dwellings and some deep rural areas.
Electrification in informal settlements was discontinued in the past owing to high cost and purely the temporary nature of the dwelling.

Often shacks crumbled around the electricity connection and informal dwellings generally sprung up anywhere.

The situation is now quite different as informal dwellings are numbered and controlled by the Housing Unit.
The Zuma administration heralded a new “hope” for the majority in SA. Service delivery was a key element of Zuma’s presidential campaign.

We can no longer delay services with the “excuse” that these will be provided when formal housing is established.

The reality is that services are required immediately and it is governments obligation to provide these services.

Housing which is a Provincial function has not been delivering – eTM has built over 100 000 low cost serviced houses and boasts the most successful housing delivery program nationally.
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Implications of Non-Delivery
Service delivery protests violent - last seen in pre1994 years

Councillors are the first to receive the backlash

Public is impatient and **CANNOT** be placated any longer

Results in theft – deaths, mostly vulnerable children, in recent years – often not reported (> R120 m losses per annum)

Government now under pressure more than ever to deliver

Relationship between Councillors and the communities they serve has become strained
ELECTRIFICATION IN ETHEKWINI INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS
THEFT
Currently embarking on pilots in Kenville & Redcliffe – over 1600 connections.

Requirements:
- Must be scheduled for formal housing > 3 years
- Land must be owned by municipality
- Access roads need to be cut and tarred/gravel
- Shacks that are in access paths to be relocated
- Community buy-in to prevent tamper
- Water and sanitation also provided
Not all sections in chosen areas can be reticulated

Despondent residents may sabotage project/encourage theft

Relocation of shacks for access may be problematic

Expectations of theft from public lighting and legal connections

Areas that cannot be electrified will not accept alternative energies

Residents expect services overnight and are not sensitive to budget constraints

Risk of issue of DoE subsidies for the same family twice, once for informal dwelling and second when relocated to formal housing
Continuous engagement with the communities - build trust and sense of ownership.

Involves communities in implementation – largely depend on them to facilitate re-location of informal dwellings in access routes etc.

Financial contribution from Munic. / DoE.

Emphasize tampering will affect reticulation & encourage community to report on theft.

Source DoE subsidies for alternate energies viz. Gas, gel, solar. Set up informal retailers in each area to provide these services.

Partner with informal dwellers.
EThekwini has approx. 74,000 qualifying customers – only approx. 64,000 collect their FBE tokens.

Possible reasons:
- Not aware of rules of FBE
- Theft
- Vending points expensive to access

Mitigation:
- Continuous public awareness
- Continuous meter sweeps & removal of services
- Introduction of Super-Vending & cell phone vending
- Issue of FBE according to social grants?
ELECTRICITY IN SOUTH AFRICA
HIGH COST OF ELECTRICITY

PRICE SHOCK

POWER SURGE?

No, PRICE SURGE!

SA CONSUMER
ELECTRICITY IN SOUTH AFRICA
HIGH COST OF ELECTRICITY

The poor needs to be protected against the 25% to 30% increases.

Mechanism to be implemented – Inclining Block-rate Tariff (IBT), FBE

Challenges :-
Most poor households rent to multiple tenants
Most poor households have extended families
Poor households are the most vulnerable to high consumption costs

Mitigation :-
Individual meters per rental space?
Special concession for extended families?
Install separate meters per family/rental unit?
Suggestions?
Encourage reduction of consumption

Reward for reduction – Inclining Block Tariff

Inform and educate – climate change & impacts – Cyclone Gumede
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

APPLIANCES AND LIGHTING CONSUME 40% OF HOUSEHOLD ENERGY!

Save 10% simply by switching off or unplugging.

For your saving achievements, email: dem@elec.durban.gov.za

I pledge to save 10% electricity by using ONLY what I need. It's that simple.

I pledge to save 10% electricity simply by changing to energy-saving light bulbs, switching off the TV when I've finished watching it, and unplugging the radio, the microwave, the printer and my cellphone whenever they're not in use.

I pledge to shut down my computer at the end of the day.

I pledge to use electricity responsibly, not only for my safety and that of others. I pledge to use electricity responsibly, not only for my safety and that of others. I pledge to use electricity responsibly, not only for my safety and that of others.

I pledge to save money and, therefore, save the planet. I'll help save the planet by saving money and, therefore, saving the planet.

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Electricity is the ONLY acceptable solution to the majority.

Recent regulation in gas pricing will influence greater use of gas as electricity prices go up.

Public remains cautious about alternative energies...

Government needs to seriously look at EFFECTIVE means of enabling energy availability to the poor.

Cheap renewable energy is a “MUST”! (Will be realised through increasing electricity prices.)

Serious research needs to be done to provide cost effective solutions.

The poor does not have the luxury to contemplate the future. NOW is what counts!
If we don’t provide adequate services this will not be a reality.
THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DELIVER...

to an INCREASINGLY AWARE constituency!
What did South Africa have before the primer stoves?

Electricity