

Strengthening Service Delivery with ICT based Monitoring and Reporting Systems: The CSIR's Municipal Services Corrective Action Request and Report System (CARRS)

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Abstract:

In the advent of the democratic dispensation, government crafted and implemented new strategies and programmes that would ensure that everyone had equal access to basic services. However, many studies show that there are still significant gaps and challenges in the delivery of some basic services to the poor. To address some of these challenges, government has in the recent years crafted the National Development Plan (NDP), supported by strategies such as the Back to Basics (B2B), which put some emphasis on creating platforms through which municipal councils could engage with citizens. In a bid to strengthen the Back to Basics strategy, the CSIR has developed the Corrective Action Request and Report System (CARRS), which is an incident management and an ICT workflow system that provides a platform through which communities can report service delivery and infrastructure

failure issues to municipal councils. The system is being piloted with a focus on water services in selected communities in eight of the priority districts. Findings of the pilot indicate a warm reception of the CARRS system by municipal councils and communities in the pilot sites, with more incidents being reported and managed, thus intuitively translating to an improvement in the delivery and quality of basic services.

Keywords: local government, service delivery, ICT, incident management system, corrective action

INTRODUCTION

In the advent of the 1994 democratic dispensation, the national government crafted and implemented a number of strategies that were aimed at ensuring that everyone received services equally. To speed up equality and the delivery of basic services to the previously disadvantaged and underserved communities, service provision was then decentralized from one sphere of government with the establishment of provincial and local governments (i.e. district and local municipalities), with the latter seen as a vehicle for service delivery. However, this approach has also been fraught with a number of daunting challenges. There are still a lot of communities that do not enjoy their rights to basic services as a result of some complex intricacies in local government. In the recent years, statistics have also shown that more and more people are getting dissatisfied with the level of service provision in many municipalities. This has manifested in demonstrations and a rising number of service delivery protests which are also becoming violent. While service delivery protests may be complex in nature, it is also interesting to note that there is a trend in a growing number of service delivery protests that are linked to or driven by service delivery failures where infrastructure (to deliver such services) already exists.

This paper uses a mixed approach by providing some insights into some of the key strategies and programmes that have been developed and implemented by government, while also identifying some gaps that still exist, and uses a case study approach that takes a look at some of the successes, lessons learnt and policy recommendations that emanated through piloting of Corrective Action Request and Report System (CARRS).

BACKGROUND

Municipal Infrastructure Maintenance

“As municipalities pursue the eradication of backlogs in basic services, concerns are emerging over the deterioration of existing infrastructure and the sustainability of the new infrastructure being built. The problem is worst at municipalities where revenues are under pressure due to either large indigent populations, poor debt collection performance, or both” (DPLG, 2006:1-2).

In 2006, government approved the National Infrastructure Maintenance Strategy (NIMS), which highlighted infrastructure maintenance as a powerful tool for economic growth and service delivery. The strategy puts emphasis on the role that all spheres of government, together with state-owned enterprises, have to play in ensuring the sustainability of state-owned infrastructure. Over time, it has become clear that the successes in infrastructure maintenance were attributed to proper planning and budgeting, crafting and implementing policies to support infrastructure maintenance, making available skilled personnel, and providing good leadership.

Although there has been some good performance with regard to infrastructure maintenance in some sectors, there have also been some worrying concerns in other sectors. While maintenance of wastewater treatment works were of great concern, other key infrastructure points such as water treatment works, water and sewer reticulation, on-site sanitation, some provincial and municipal roads, and some provincial health and education facilities did not receive satisfactory maintenance (CIDB, 2007). All these concerns actually cut across the big four services provided by most municipalities. With water being the largest of the four (StatsSA, 2015a), it is concerning that operation and maintenance thereof will become even more challenging for smaller and rural municipalities. Van Der Mescht and Van Jaarsveld (2012) argue that smaller municipalities across South Africa are facing crises and are at the verge of collapse as a result of difficulties in contending with human resource issues, huge dependence on grant funding for financial support, and critical operational deficiencies within technical departments.

The Priority Districts: An approach to tackle slow service delivery

While recognizing that some sectors performed well in terms of maintenance of state-owned infrastructure, there were significant and notable challenges in the manner in which local municipalities, especially those serving rural communities, planned for new infrastructure and conducted infrastructure maintenance (CIDB, 2007). In response, the Presidency declared some 23 districts, in 2012, to form part of government's priority (DRDLR, 2013). To foster local economic development, among other strategies, infrastructure development planning and the provision of social and economic infrastructure was seen as key towards addressing the many challenges faced by these municipalities. A framework for economic transformation,

which included, amongst other things, the identification of infrastructure needs and the creation of maintenance jobs, was then developed (DRDLR, 2015). However, the implementation of these strategies was faced with funding challenges and insufficient coordination across government spheres.

Towards a Developmental State: The National Development Plan (NDP) and the Back to Basics (B2B) Strategy

In 2013, government launched the National Development Plan (NDP), which offers long-term perspectives in terms of the roles that different sectors of society need to play in reaching developmental goals. Amongst others, the NDP identifies capacity constraints as a critical challenge that hinders a capable and developmental state of the public service and local government (NDP, 2013). To achieve a developmental state, the NDP further highlights the need for longer-term strategies.

Responding to local government challenges, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) established the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA), in line with the Back to Basics Strategy, as a programme targeted at improving municipal infrastructure provisioning and maintenance for accelerated service delivery (www.cogta.gov.za). While MISA focuses largely on infrastructure provisioning and maintenance, the Back to Basics strategy, announced in 2014, looks at how to build responsible and accountable local government. The strategy provides a step by step plan of what needs to be done in the inter-governmental sphere to improve the performance of municipalities. It places open communication at the heart of what municipalities do by insisting that they establish platforms through which communities can interact with officials. It further emphasises that the interactions should ultimately result in timeous response to challenges.

Customer Care and Service Delivery

“When communication channels between communities and local authorities are perceived to be closed or unresponsive to community need, protest action becomes an avenue of engagement” (SALGA, 2015:7).

“...where there is both incapacity and low delivery on average, protest has escalated...” (SALGA, 2015:8).

In 2012, South Africa saw a peak in service delivery protest (Municipal IQ, 2013). Chief amongst issues raised in those protests was water services delivery (Tapela, 2013). According to the Municipal IQ Hotspot Monitor report of 2013, most service delivery protests had been as a result of failures in local government institutions to deliver on promises that have been made. On the other hand, some studies show that municipalities that had strong customer relations management practices also experienced less incidents of or could better manage service delivery protests (Nicol, 2006), therefore suggesting a need for a local government customer relations management or customer care strategy.

Section 95 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 makes it a requirement for municipalities to establish customer management systems that aim to create positive relationships with their customers and through which customers can give feedback regarding the quality of services received. The Act further highlights the need for municipalities to provide accessible mechanisms for dealing with complaints from their customers, in addition to implementing corrective action. However, these provisions are only specified in Chapter 9 on “Credit Control and Debt Collection” in relation to levying of rates and other taxes by municipalities and the charging of fees for municipal services. Statistics show that most rural municipalities (e.g. mostly category B4) receive about 73% of their total budget from grants and subsidies (StatsSA, 2015b). This could inadvertently imply that municipalities largely serving indigent communities where services are not charged or rates and taxes are not collected may be exempted from having to establish customer management systems.

It is also clear that there is no distinctive policy governing all local government institutions or municipalities in establishing customer care systems irrespective of their category. Most municipalities have developed different variations of a customer care policy, which identifies the need to implement customer service charters and standards that ensure that citizens receive services adequately. In addition, whilst other municipalities have yet to achieve this, most municipalities have also developed some Customer Care Centres and Toll Free Help Lines, which customers can use to report poor service experiences. However, an analysis conducted by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in June 2013 highlighted some predicaments in the effectiveness and functionality of the customer care

service in most municipalities (SALGA, 2013). Some of the challenges identified in addition to the SALGA findings relate to poor responsiveness of call centres and customer care services, poor timeframes in resolving queries, inadequate human resources, and lack of technology or relevant technical systems (PricewaterhouseCoopers; SALGA, 2013).

Customer relations management should be built around five pillars, which are; people, processes, information, infrastructure and technology, as argued by Nicol (2006:12), and not only be seen as an “option” for municipalities collecting revenue. In principle, customer care should embrace the concept of service delivery by putting people first.

THE CSIR'S MUNICIPAL SERVICES CORRECTIVE ACTION REQUEST AND REPORT SYSTEM (CARRS)

Introduction to the IPRDP

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) initiated the Innovation Partnership for Rural Development Programme (IPRDP) as a platform to drive science, technology and innovation that would improve service delivery in local government. Under the programme, innovative technologies would be implemented to demonstrate their suitability in improving service delivery while also contributing to a body of knowledge and policies that could be used to build capacity in local government, especially that of rural municipalities. Five focus areas were identified as investment areas for the IPRDP – i.e. water, energy, ICT, sanitation and human settlements. The CSIR's Municipal Services Corrective Action Request and Report System (CARRS) initiative was conceptualized to respond to the IPRDP thematic areas that cut across the ICT and water and sanitation themes.

The CARRS project is currently being piloted in eight district municipalities, namely; Amathole in the Eastern Cape, Capricorn and Vhembe in Limpopo, Ehlanzeni in Mpumalanga, iLembe in KwaZulu-Natal, and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati, Ngaka Modiri Molema and Bojanala Platinum in the North West. These municipalities were also selected out of a list of the Priority Districts to form part of the IPRDP initiatives

for purposes of demonstrating science and technology relevance in improving service delivery.

CARRS Framework

CARRS is an ICT service system and an Incident Management System (IMS) aimed at documenting incidents such as leakages, broken pipes, loss in pressure or any total lack of water services delivery within the municipal water services portfolio. Through the system, municipalities can respond to the reported issues within reasonable time and also provide feedback to their consumers or communities.

The incident management component of the system has four distinct functionalities;

Firstly, it serves as a communication tool through a specialized two-way electronic communication platform between communities and municipalities. Communities are represented by Task Teams that have been established out of already existing community structures.

Secondly, the system serves as a receiver and processing centre for reported incidents. After verifying the validity of issues reported by communities, Task Teams capture and submit the reports on the CARRS system using internet enabled desktop computers. The reports are then automatically routed to the responsible persons within the municipality for further action. In the process, the system generates electronic notifications (i.e. email and SMS) with unique ID numbers for every report. The responsible persons are then expected to assess the nature of the incidents reported, prioritise, and prepare necessary remedial actions in response.

Thirdly, the system provides feedback to customers (through their respective Task Teams) on remedial actions undertaken and implemented by the municipality. This aspect fosters transparency at all stages of incident management.

Lastly, in addition to the latter, accountability is further fostered by introducing automatic and manual escalation procedures. Depending on their priority levels, issues that take too long without being actioned in the CARRS system are automatically escalated to senior management. Manual escalation procedures are also made available to allow escalations of issues that require non-technical intervention.

Conceptual Design Principles: A service delivery oriented approach

The underlying design principles of CARRS have largely been guided by best practice of the British Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Principles of Good Complaint Handling (2009) and the Ombudsman Western Australia's guidelines on The Principles of Effective Complaint Handling (2016). These principles have been discussed in relation to CARRS functionality, largely according to the Ombudsman Australia's guidelines.

A good complaints management system should feature some elements or principles of effective complaint handling in about three steps, namely; 1) enabling complaints, 2) responding to complaints and 3) accountability and learning.

Enabling complaints

Enabling complaints refers to arrangements that a public institution has made for its customers to report issues or complaints. The arrangements have to be customer focused, visible, and accessible.

Customer Focused – In the initial stages of the CARRS project, buy-in from participating municipalities was sourced through rigorous engagements with officials at different levels. Such engagements were fostered through initial presentations at management committee levels. Municipalities supported this by committing staff ranging from Executive Managers to Technical Services Directors, Water Services Managers, Customer Services and Call Centre Operators.

Visibility – CARRS was made visible through establishment of Task Teams in communities. Community engagement processes of municipalities, which entailed observing all active leadership and community structures, were followed in the establishment of Task Teams. While some municipalities utilized their Institutional and Social Development (ISD) functions to foster community engagements, others engaged their Customer Care divisions for the same function. In addition, the CARRS project was also made visible through the Youth Journalism media programme of the National Research Fund (NRF) and the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SASTA). Community media, which were largely in a form of local community radio interviews and local newspaper articles, were used as a platform to introduce and provide information about the CARRS project to communities.

Accessibility – The concept of establishing Task Teams within communities embraces the idea of making the CARRS system more accessible to complainants. The Task Team approach somewhat eliminates issues, such as literacy, that ordinary consumers may have otherwise faced as the system is ICT based.

Responding to complaints

Responding to complaints refers to the handling of complaints by a public institution in an objective and fair manner, and with confidentiality. The handling of complaints must have corrective actions and should end with a review of what led to a breach in delivery of a service.

Responsiveness – As the system is ICT, reports are captured into the workflow processes in real time and unique report ID numbers are generated for each report captured. The report IDs can be used to track the statuses of the reports. Escalation procedures also give the CARRS system an edge in responsiveness and less latency.

Objectivity and Fairness – The system has built-in service standards, which are effected per category of issue reported, also guided by the issue's priority level. Certain issues, such as water quality, are only captured as high priority issues and thus receive utmost attention at all times. In addition, only Task Teams can close a reported issue once a closure request has been sent by a municipal official or responsible person.

Confidentiality – Customer information is protected, and only active system users assigned to manage reported issues can have access to some personal details such as telephone contact numbers of the complainants.

Remedy – The CARRS project approach embarked on a basic assumption that municipalities mandated to provide water services (i.e. WSPs) should have Operation and Maintenance (O&M) capabilities or should have outsourced. Therefore, these municipalities should have capability to provide necessary remedial actions on reported issues.

Review – The CARRS Incident Management Framework (IMF) makes it a standards procedure to conduct “Root Cause” analyses on all issues reported. This procedure

is yet another way of ensuring that when corrective measures are implemented they address the real cause of the reported issues and not only the effects.

Accountability and learning

Accountability and learning refers to establishing clear lines of reporting for complaint handling and making available names of staff responsible for handling complaints. Learning entails creating enabling environments for future improvements of complaint handling processes.

Accountability – The CARRS incident management framework (IMF) identifies specific staff members that are actively responsible for handling reported issues at all stages of the workflow. When the reported issues progress from one stage to another, such information is made available to all active system users. In instances where responsible persons do not take action on reported issues, the system automatically escalates such issues to senior management for internal intervention.

Learning – It can be expected that as a result of the escalation procedures, municipal officials will eventually learn how to improve their efficiency in the manner in which they manage reported issues.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The main limitation that this paper should highlight is the lack of a review of existing or similar customer care systems that are geared towards improving service delivery. This is due to the fact that the CARRS initiative was a response to a specific thematic call made by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), which required a response to a specific challenge; Innovation Partnership for Rural Development Programme (IPRDP). Within the ambit of the IPRDP, there was less room for “research” as those responding to the call were expected to present technologies that had a higher readiness level or almost ready to go to the market. Thus, the innovation value chain paid particular focus on demonstration.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

CARRS Technology Adoption and Usage

It is encouraging to note that the CARRS system is progressively being adopted by the targeted municipality and that usage by both municipal officials and community-based Task Teams is also increasing. Findings thus far indicate that municipalities are slowly starting to get used to the new ways of managing incidents in a smarter way through the CARRS system and initiative.

Three municipalities have been used as case studies for the evaluation of adoption and use of the CARRS system. These are Amathole District Municipality (ADM) in the Eastern Cape, Capricorn District Municipality (ADM) in Limpopo, and Ehlanzeni District Municipality (EDM) in Mpumalanga. These municipalities, with the exception of Ehlanzeni DM, are also both Water Services Authorities (WSAs) and Providers (WSPs). Ehlanzeni DM has decentralized the WSA and WSP functions to all its local municipalities. Further engagements with regard to piloting of CARRS in Ehlanzeni were made with two local municipalities, namely; Nkomazi and Bushbuckridge. These municipalities also have, with the exception of Capricorn DM and Nkomazi LM, some sort of a paper-based customer care call centre. Capricorn DM does not have a customer call centre and is currently in a process of implementing a new call centre system. Nkomazi LM has a mobile-based call centre system that acts as a notification system only.

To support the arguments made in this paper, data was sourced from the CARRS database and was analysed by drawing frequencies and categories of issues reported. A further analysis on the responsiveness of municipalities to the reported issues was also done. The analysed dataset ranges from reports made from October 2015 to the end of September 2016. Other sources, such as planning documents, were also used to triangulate and draw some conclusions.

Amathole DM

Amathole DM is the first municipality where implementation of the pilot was done. This is a municipality that contends with serious issues of water service backlogs, with 80% of the backlogs largely being in Mbhashe and Mnquma local municipalities.

Figure 1 shows the types of incidents currently being reported while Figure 2 shows the average statuses of these incidents.

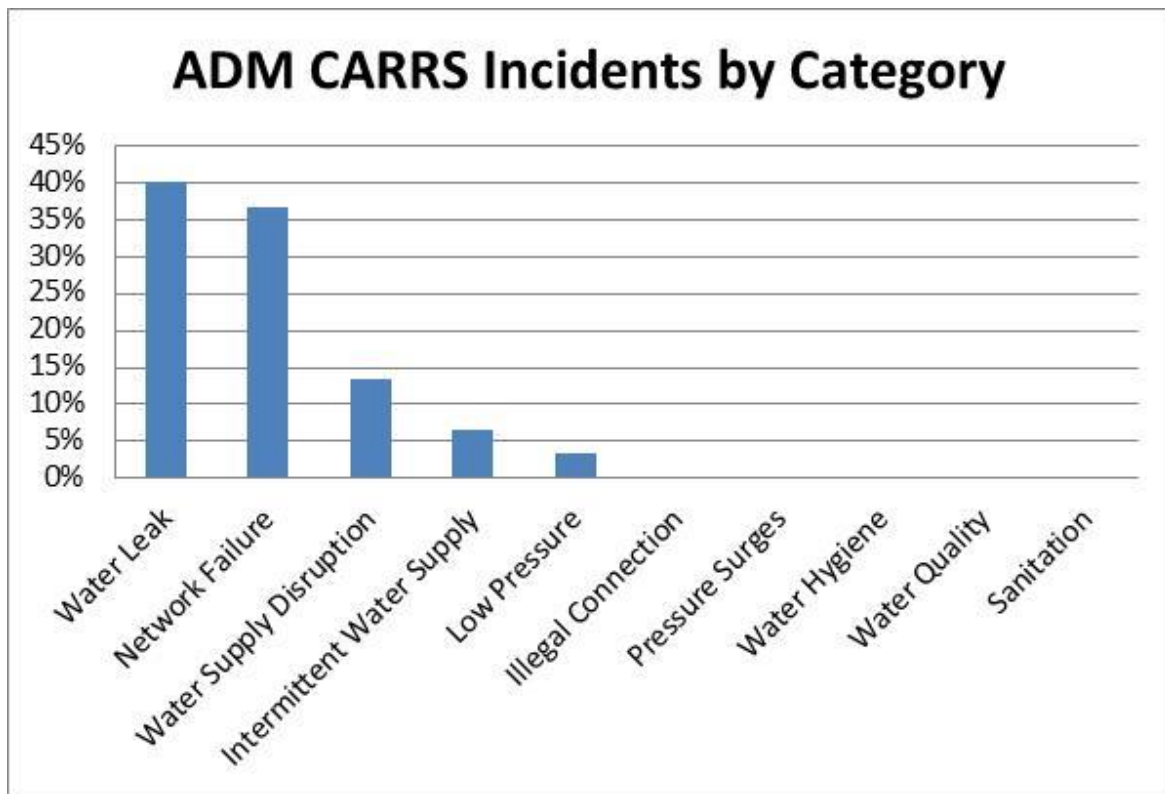


Figure 1: Amathole's CARRS Reported Incidents by Category

As depicted in Figure 1, 40% of incidents reported are related to water leaks, followed by reports on complete network failure at 36%. Other incidents such as water supply disruption, intermittent water supply and low water pressure have also been reported. It can be seen that when fully implemented, the CARRS system will support strategic programmes such as the national Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS)'s War on Leaks (WoL) programme while at the same time improving on how municipalities deliver services in a sustainable manner.

Figure 2 below summarily highlights the gap that still exists within Amathole in terms of its capacity to manage reported issues and incidents. This gap could also be attributed to the need for continuous training, further engagements and technical support to ensure that officials adopt the CARRS technology fully. Figure 2 shows that of the total incidents that have been reported by communities since the implementation of the CARRS system, only 33% have been closed. It should also be noted that the status of closed incidents do not necessarily translate to incidents

being resolved but may effectively mean that there has been a reasonable agreement reached between the municipality and the communities in terms of a solution or alternatives. However, the closed incidents status also somewhat reflects some satisfaction with regard to a proposed solution to address the reported incidents.

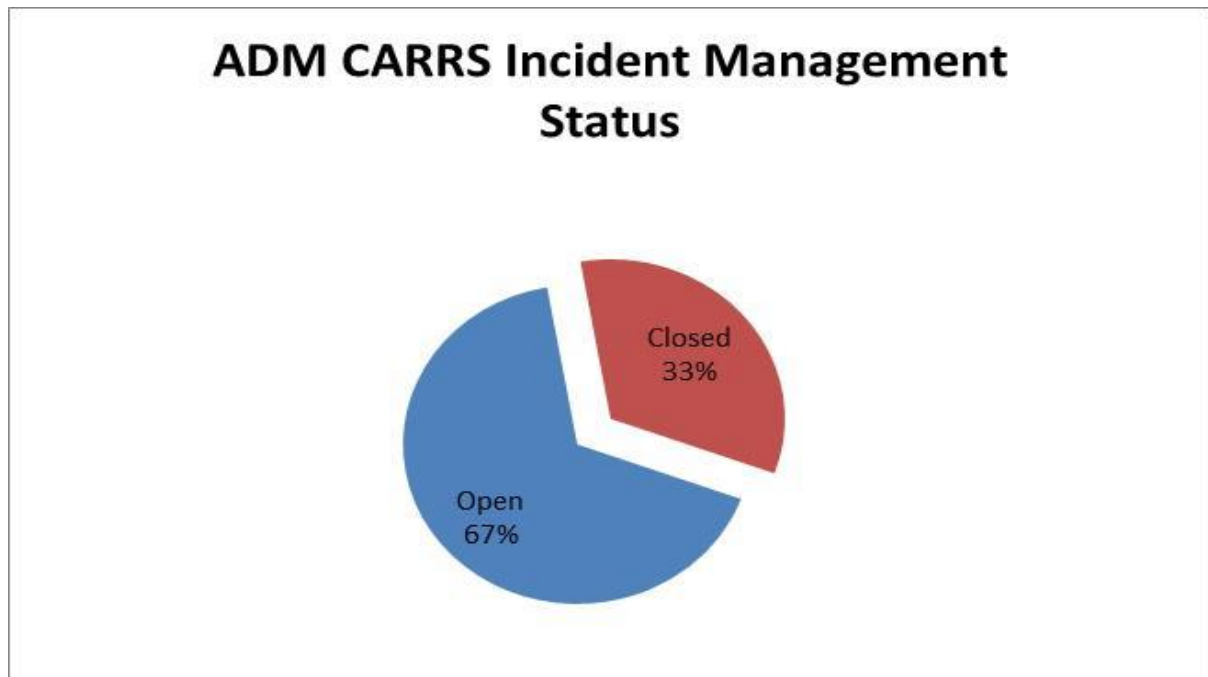


Figure 2: Amathole's CARRS Incident Management Status

As depicted in Figure 2, there is a need for continuous engagements with the municipality and the need to provide more support in addressing reported incidents.

Capricorn DM

A rapid analysis of incident management in Capricorn DM indicates that there is still a gap in how municipal officials use the CARRS system to manage incidents on the ground. All incidents that have been reported by Task Teams have not yet been closed on the CARRS system. An observation in the workflow of the reported incidents also indicates that the incidents were not assigned and allocated responsible persons to work on. On the other hand, a follow up with Task Teams regarding the reported incidents indicates that the municipality had addressed some of the incidents on the ground. This indicates that there is some level of use of the CARRS system, however, not in an effective manner. This could also reflect the need for further training reinforcements.

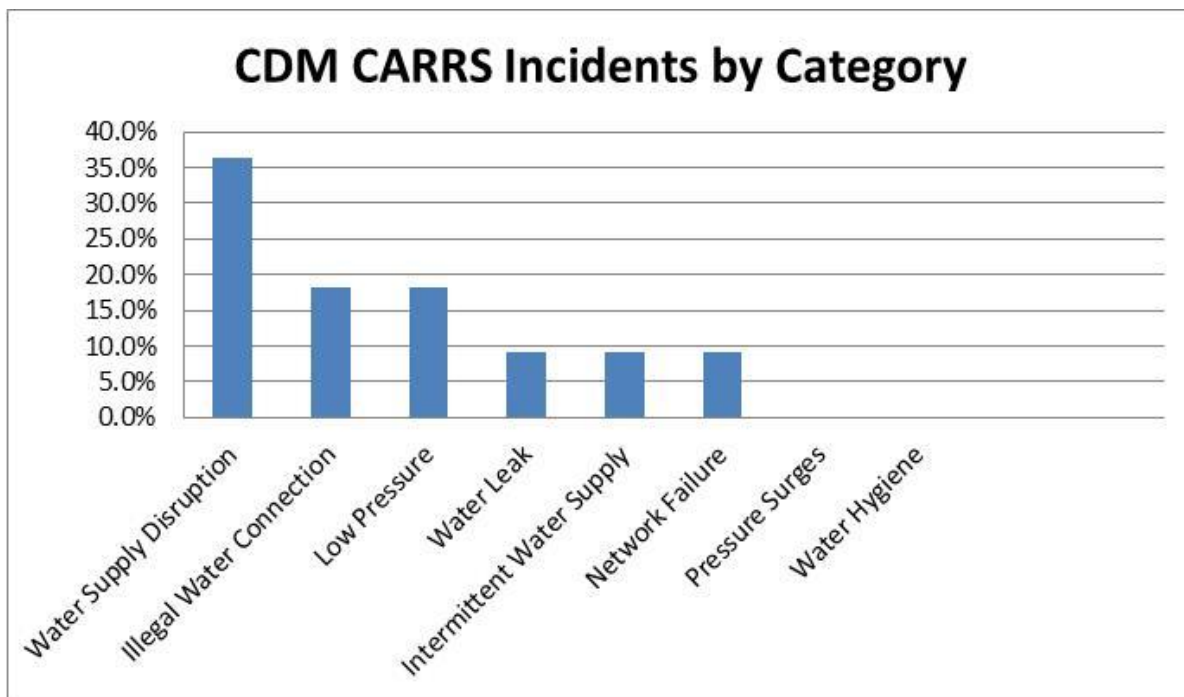


Figure 3: Capricorn's CARRS Reported Incidents by Category

Figure 3 shows the reported incidents by category. About 36% of the reported incidents are related to water supply disruptions. Other challenges such as Illegal water connections, low water pressure, water leaks, intermittent water supply, and network failure have also been reported through the CARRS system. Whilst Amathole DM had water leaks and network failures as the highest reported incidents, Capricorn DM has water supply disruptions as their biggest concerns.

Ehlanzeni DM

Ehlanzeni DM is neither a WSA nor a WSP. Both functions are carried out by all its local municipalities. At the initial engagements with Ehlanzeni DM, both Nkomazi and Bushbuckridge were chosen as priority sites for the piloting of CARRS. Analysis presented hereunder was done on the Nkomazi municipality.

As depicted by Figure 4, five different categories of incidents have been reported since the inception of the project in Nkomazi LM. Almost 42% of reported incidents are related to Low Water Pressure, followed by Water Leaks at 25%, Water Supply Disruptions at just under 17%, Intermittent Water Supply and Illegal Connections both at just above 8%. It is interesting to note that the two higher most incidents reported were on Low Water Pressure and Water Leaks. These two categories have a very intricate relationship. A change in pressure within a water distribution system often has a direct effect on the leakage behaviour of that system. It could be possible

that the Nkomazi LM have a pressure regulation process as a way to manage leaks within their distribution network.

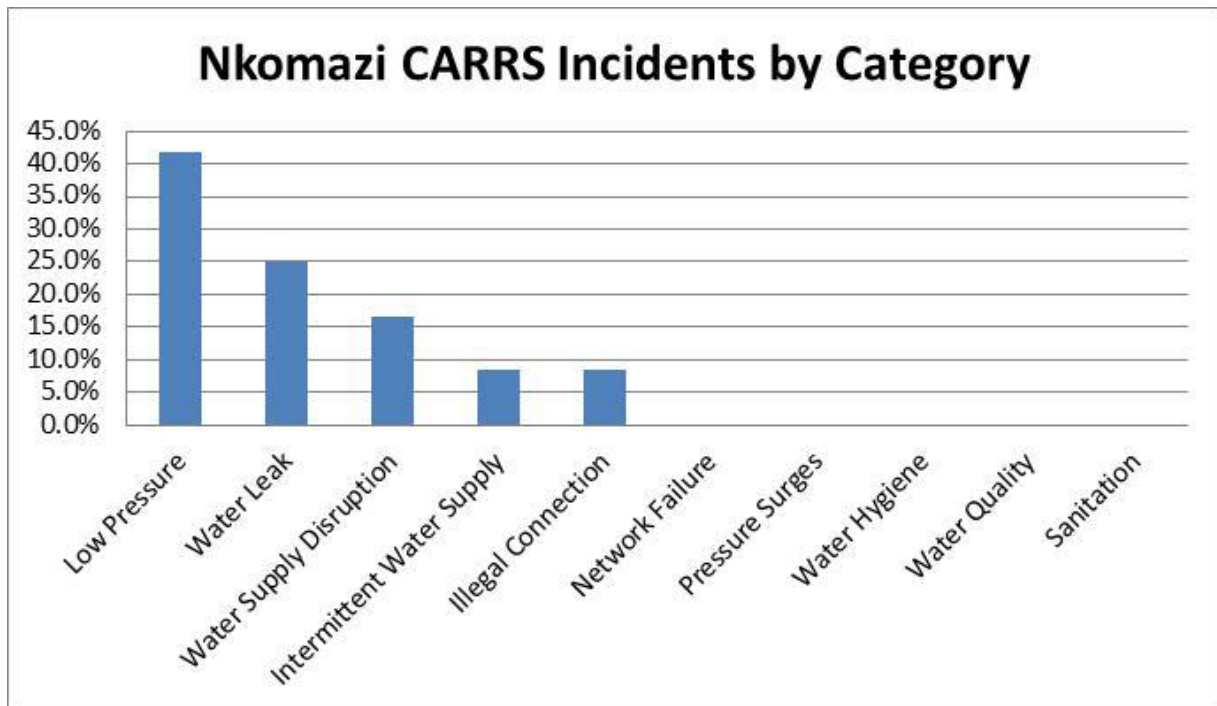


Figure 4: Nkomazi CARRS Reported Incidents by Category

Of all reported incidents in Nkomazi LM since the inception of the CARRS project, none had a closed status.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Through the implementation of the pilot project, the following challenges were experienced. These challenges have contributed to a body of knowledge with some policy implications discussed in the next subsection of this paper.

No standards for infrastructure monitoring and fault reporting systems – Although not all municipalities had systems for monitoring faults on their infrastructure, some municipalities, such as Amathole DM and Rustenburg LM, had purchased extensive ICT service systems that they used for reporting and managing workflows for repair work. A key finding is that there are no standards that govern how such systems should be designed, therefore leaving the market monopolized by vendors and service providers. CARRS offers an opportunity for introducing standardization on monitoring systems.

Resistance to change – Some municipalities that were characterized by high political turmoil also demonstrated resistant to accept CARRS as monitoring and reporting tool. The assumption that this paper makes is that although ethical issues around data management were outlined at the inception of the project, CARRS still presented some form of a threat, such as lack of full control over the management of system generated data and over who else may have access to it.

Literacy and productivity issues – Municipalities that absorbed staff from the former Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) through the DWAF Turn-Around Strategy had issues relating to qualifications and literacy of the so called “DWAF Staff”. Most of these staffs, especially those who were nearing retirement, were somewhat computer literate. This, for the CARRS project, presented a challenge. However, this presented an even bigger challenge for municipalities migrating from paper-based to ICT systems.

Commitment to serve and the “Over Committed-ness Syndrome” – Whilst some municipal officials demonstrated commitment to serve and were dedicated to CARRS, there were also officials that were committed to many other activities such as serving on too many committees and structures. This presented a challenge as most of such officials had critical roles to play on the CARRS system and their roles were subsequently compromised as a result of their unavailability.

Lack of critical information – During planning and at the inception phase there were critical documents that could not be retrieved from some municipalities, such as as-built drawings of water distribution networks. Municipalities did not have proper archiving systems and, in worst cases, had lost important documents over time. Some documents were retrieved from service providers that were appointed to do some work for municipalities, therefore demonstrating poor control over ownership of data and information generated out of publicly funded programmes.

High staff turnover – This has been experienced largely in smaller and rural municipalities where there are strong elements of frequent ‘acting’ in senior positions. This factor often results in loss of “institutional memory” and subsequent poor service delivery as a result of appointment of inexperienced staff in key positions.

Policy Recommendations

In light of the preliminary findings and lessons learnt through interactions with municipalities from implementing the pilot project, the following policy recommendations are made;

- There is a need to develop an enforceable policy and a Customer Care Strategy specific to local government and public service institutions. Revise the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 to include a dedicated chapter on Local Government Customer Care. Currently, the Act, under Chapter 9, only makes it a requirement for municipalities to establish customer management systems only as mechanisms for supporting credit control and debt collection measures. The Customer Care Strategy needs to be binding even for small rural municipalities that are largely dependent on equitable share and other government grants.
- In addition to the above, there is a need to develop and implement an Accountability System that is customizable to different levels of municipal structures and systems, ranging from municipal managers to senior managers, directors, and general staff, programmes run from within the institutions and projects implemented in communities, and the Performance Management Systems used municipalities. The Accountability System should be aimed at eliminating the tendency of “getting away with it as it is not punishable”, which has led to a plight in the quality of delivery of services in most municipalities.
- Develop a skills focused Inter-Local Government Relations Strategy. The manner in which local government institutions currently utilize the Inter-Governmental Relations (IGR) strategy, especially rural municipalities, is largely through cooperation on cross-border infrastructure and service delivery programmes. There are less practices of capacity building and skills transfer initiatives between and amongst local government institutions. The benefit of the latter would be in terms of relevance, experiences and successes shared, as opposed to power over authority.
- Improve the local government employee incentive scheme and staff retention mechanisms with sustainable incentive systems. The public service and local government are sectors in their own right and are challenging environments

that should not be taken lightly. Working in these sectors should therefore be rewarded by establishing a “local government service” point system that can be paralleled to other point systems such as the Continued Development Points (CDP) system that is commonly used in sectors such as Engineering.

- Establish an electronic and a centrally managed local government sector-based information and knowledge management system. The aim is to curb challenges in the poor management and loss of local government documents and information, which is often as a result of premature staff resignations. In addition, document management ISO standards should be implemented and made enforceable for all municipalities.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite considerable progress made since 1994, it is clear that more still needs to be done especially in the local government sphere. This paper outlines ongoing work, successes achieved and policy recommendations as informed by piloting of the CSIR’s CARRS project. The CARRS intervention offers a ‘back to basics’ approach that supports service delivery strides made by national and local governments. While CARRS is gradually being adopted by municipalities in the pilot sites, there is need to change the current traditional culture and understanding of customer care within local government and encourage local government institutions to adopt more apt approaches that are centred around accountability and service delivery. An important conclusion that is drawn is that service delivery should not only be seen as rolling out of new infrastructure but should also be accompanied by related services such as monitoring, operation and maintenance, and customer care programmes.

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