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What Can the Afrobarometer Tell Us About Service Delivery in Africa?

Introduction

While the delivery of services of such as security, education, water and sanitation and telecommunication are seen in most places around the world as essential responsibilities of the state, the typical African – especially in rural areas – is unlikely to enjoy many of these amenities. Moreover, given the expense of regular, large scale household surveys, the typical policy-maker looking for evidence with which to guide the extension or provision of these services may be equally hard pressed. To the extent that policy makers and planners charged with the delivery of government services base their decisions on evidence, the Afrobarometer can offer a range of useful data with which to understand not only the basic parameters of service delivery (at least with respect to service infrastructure), but also the larger political “atmospherics” of what people need and want with regard to service delivery and whether they are satisfied with what they get.

In this paper, I will provide a brief outline of 5 clusters of questions asked by the current or previous Afrobarometer surveys that relate in some way to service delivery (also providing the exact question number where the item may be located in the Afrobarometer questionnaire), and summarize the main findings of each. I will then conclude with a brief review of available evidence of the social-economic and political consequences of service delivery.

The Broad Parameters of Service Delivery

Access to Potential Services?

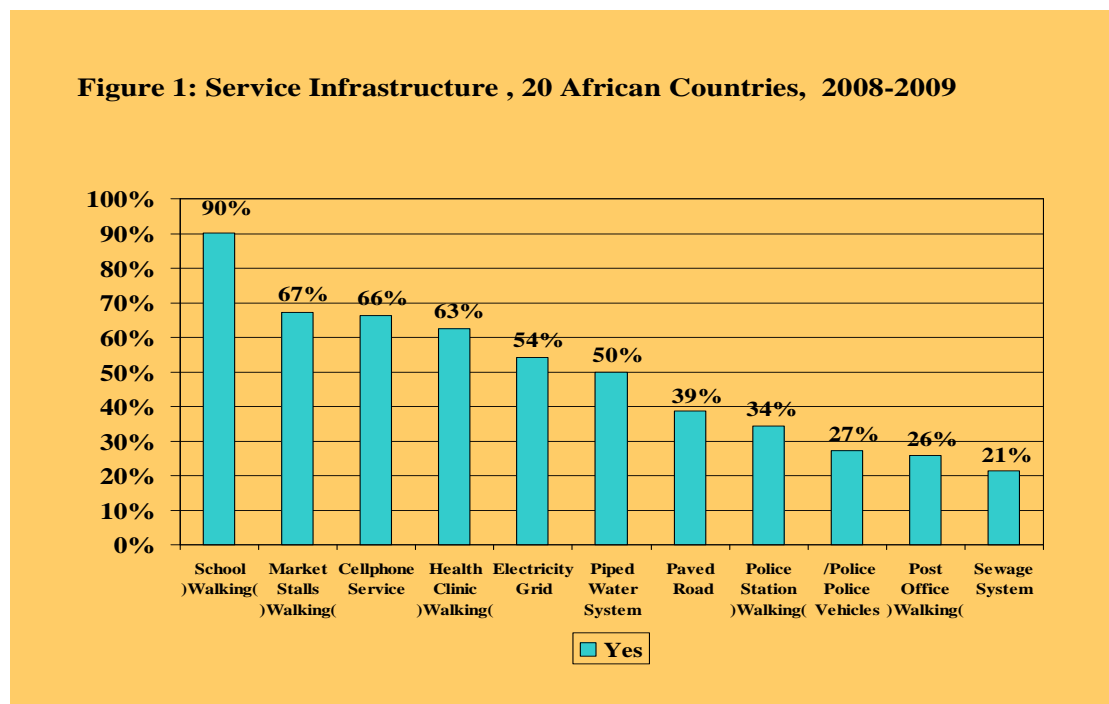
The first area of service delivery to which Afrobarometer can provide policy-makers with useful evidence is a series of measures of characteristics of each census enumerator area (EA) (an EA is the smallest administrative unit used by national censuses, usually a few hundred households each) that has been sampled from the list of all EAs in each country. These characteristics are jointly observed by a team of four fieldworkers and the field supervisor and then once established are entered into each questionnaire administered in that EA. In each EA, the fieldwork team determined whether there was a(n):

- Electricity grid accessible to most houses (EA_SVC_A.)
- Piped water system accessible to most houses (EA_SVC_B.)
- Sewage system accessible to most houses (EA_SVC_C)
- Cell phone service (EA_SVC_D)
- Post office within easy walking distance (EA_FAC_A)
- School within easy walking distance (EA_FAC_B)
- Police station within easy walking distance (EA_FAC_C)
- Presence of police vehicles observed (EA_SEC_A)

- Health clinic within easy walking distance (EA_FAC_D)
- Market stalls selling groceries and/or clothing within easy walking distance (EA_FAC_E)
- Road at the start point within the EA paved / tarred / concrete (EA_ROAD_A)

The results suggest that African governments together with donors and international agencies, and sometimes with private businesses, have been able to build local community schools within easy walking distance of nine out every ten adult respondents across the 20 countries included in Round 4 of the Afrobarometer. Around two thirds of Africans live close to market stalls where they can buy groceries or clothes, or a health clinic, and live in areas with cellphone service. Around half live in EAs with electricity and piped water systems. But only about one-third live close to a paved road or police station. And around one-quarter live in areas where our interviewers witnessed police or police vehicles, or which have a post office or sewerage system.

Figure 1: Service Infrastructure , 20 African Countries, 2008-2009



In many respects, however, these total figures obscure more than they reveal. First of all, they obscure extreme cross-national differences. For example, while 95 percent of Batswana live in EAs with piped water systems, just 4 percent of Burinkabe do so. And where 90 percent of Cabo Verdeans live in EAs with electrical grids, just 8 percent of Liberians do. While these are the most extreme, substantial cross-national difference exist on almost all of these measures (local schools show the smallest variation with results in the 80 to 98 percent range for all countries except Liberia and Senegal).

Second, both the Afrobarometer-wide results, as well as the cross-national results, obscure very substantial urban-rural differences *within* most countries. The largest differences exist with respect to the construction of piped water and electrical grids, and are displayed in Figures 2 and 3 respectively. However there are also substantial urban-rural differences with respect to the existence of local police stations, health clinics and paved roads. And while sewage systems are not widespread even in urban areas, few countries have managed to build them in rural areas (with the exception of South Africa, Ghana and Nigeria where they exist in about 20 percent of rural EAs). Rural-urban differences are less visible with regard to cell phone service (seven countries have urban coverage of 100 percent and an additional seven are between 87 and 99 percent: of these 14, coverage extends to at least 50 percent of rural EAs, and over 80 percent in six). It may be worthwhile to investigate how private companies and

telecommunications parastatals have been able to spread these services to such large proportions of so many otherwise underdeveloped countries so quickly (e.g. is it simply easier to accomplish, does it result from different business models, or is it due to the presence of private sector competition?)

Figure 2: Piped Water System in Enumerator Area

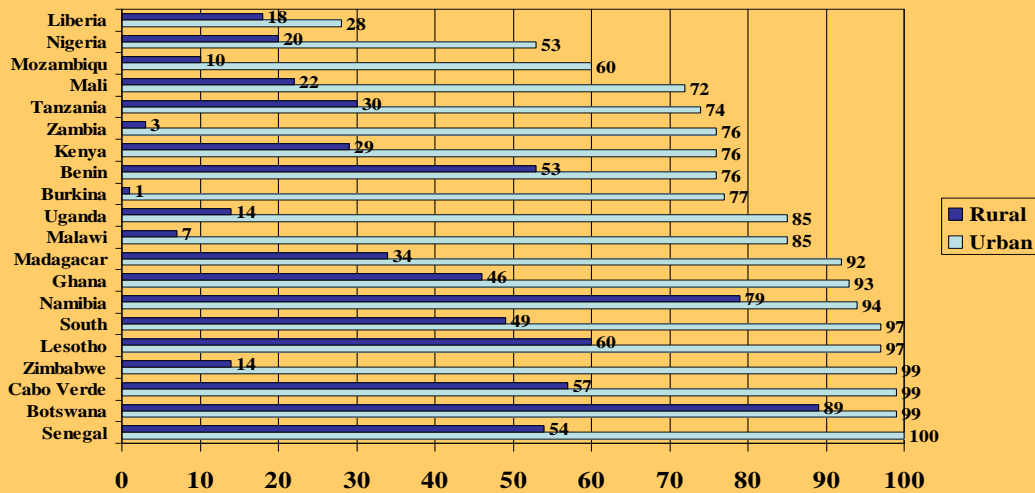
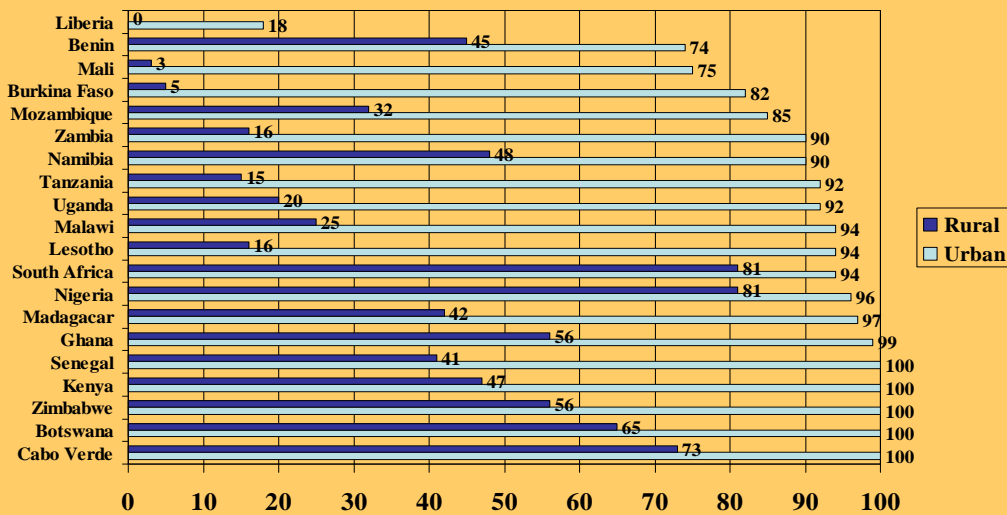


Figure 3: Electricity Grids in Enumerator Area



Guided by the results to a statistical procedure called factor analysis (which analyzes underlying patterns across a group of variables to identify the patterns that are similar and dissimilar), we find that service infrastructure falls into three different patterns, which I label “*Development Infrastructure*” (electricity

grid, piped water system, sewage system, paved roads and cellphone service), *Community Infrastructure* (school, post office, health clinic, and market stalls), and *Security Infrastructure* (police station, and observed police or police vehicles), Table 1 displays the average scores for each country on a scale of 1 (if all EAs had all services) to 0 if no EA had any of the services). In terms of Development Infrastructure, which we will subsequently see is the most important of the three, Cabo Verde, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia rank at the top, with Mali, Lesotho, Liberia and Burkina Faso at the bottom.

Table 1: Three Indicators of Service Infrastructure, 2008-2009

	Development Infrastructure (Electricity, Piped Water, Sewage, Paved Road, Cell phone Service)	Community Infrastructure (School, Post Office, Health Clinic, Market Stalls / Shops)	Security Infrastructure (Police Station, Police or Police Vehicles)
Cabo Verde	.792	.429	.357
South Africa	.762	.554	.562
Botswana	.689	.636	.447
Namibia	.619	.486	.420
Nigeria	.609	.524	.455
Ghana	.605	.485	.296
Zimbabwe	.510	.597	.413
Kenya	.460	.495	.343
Benin	.468	.570	.246
Senegal	.443	.366	.118
Tanzania	.442	.468	.202
Zambia	.426	.408	.223
Mozambique	.395	.550	.433
Malawi	.367	.444	.180
Uganda	.353	.401	.229
Madagascar	.345	.720	.574
Mali	.269	.435	.089
Lesotho	.275	.509	.287
Liberia	.205	.300	.211
Burkina Faso	.185	.450	.086
Total	.461	.491	.309

If we now know something more about the status of service infrastructure in Africa, we turn to a range of other measures of the economic and political “atmospherics” surrounding service delivery: who pays (or is supposed to pay) for it? how easy are services to obtain? and which services to people prioritize over others and how well do they think they are working?

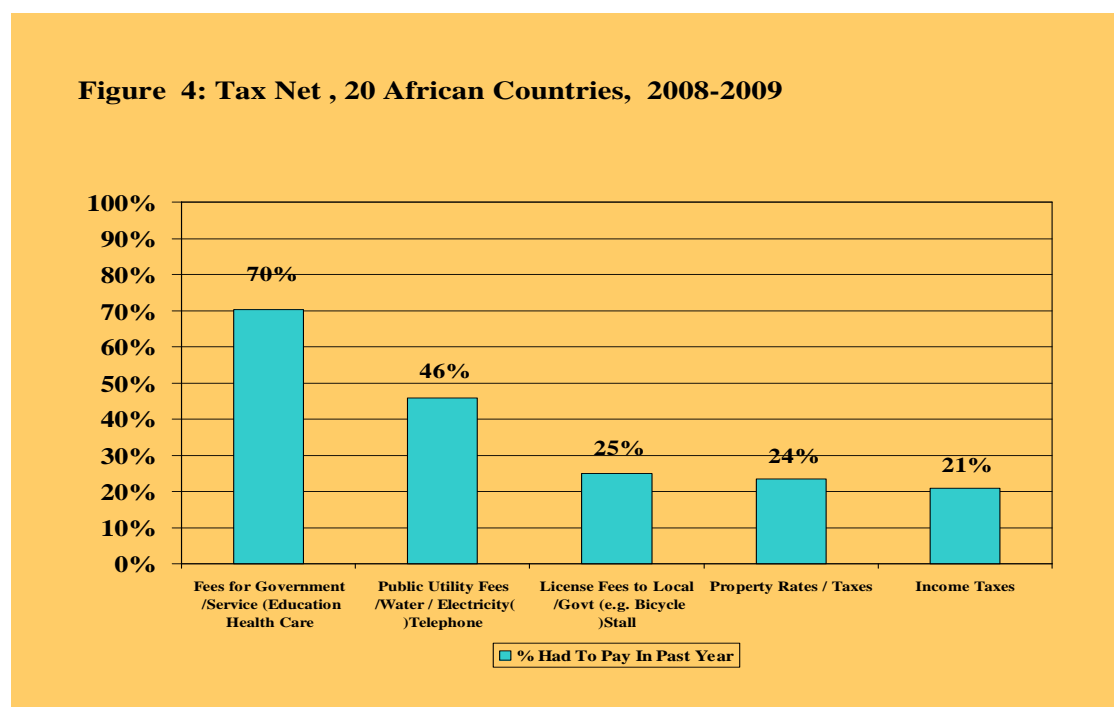
Paying for Services

One of the main dimensions of economic reform in Africa over the past twenty years has been the introduction of user fees for certain essential services as well as efforts to broaden the tax base so that national governments could better marshal the financial resources to sustain and expand service delivery. In order to provide an initial estimate of the proportions of Africans who think, or who are aware that they are supposed to pay these fees, Afrobarometer asked questions which measured the following issue in Round 4:

- Had to pay fees for government service such as education or health care in past year (q64a)
- Had to pay license fees to local government in past year (q64b)
- Had to pay property taxes / rates in past year (q64c)
- Had to pay public utility fee (e.g. water, electricity, telephone) in past year (q64d)
- Had to pay income tax in past year (q64e)

As displayed in Table 4, a large majority of Africans (70 percent) said that they “had to make” payments for a government service such as schooling or a visit to a health clinic in the previous year, and just under one half (46 percent) said they “had to make” payment for a public utility like water, electricity or a landline telephone. The figures drop sharply to between one-in-four and one-in-five for local government license fee (25 percent), property taxes (24 percent) or income taxes (21 percent). There are the same types of cross national differences, as well as urban-differences on these questions as we saw with regard to the provision of infrastructure (not shown).

Figure 4: Tax Net , 20 African Countries, 2008-2009



The Ease of Obtaining Services

Another key part of the story of service delivery, of course, is how well the various infrastructures provided are actually administered. Are various facilities well supplied? Do officials provide efficient and courteous service? Or are citizens “shaken down” for bribes or other favours? Round 3 of the Afrobarometer, conducted in 18 countries in 2005-2006, asked respondents about the following issues:

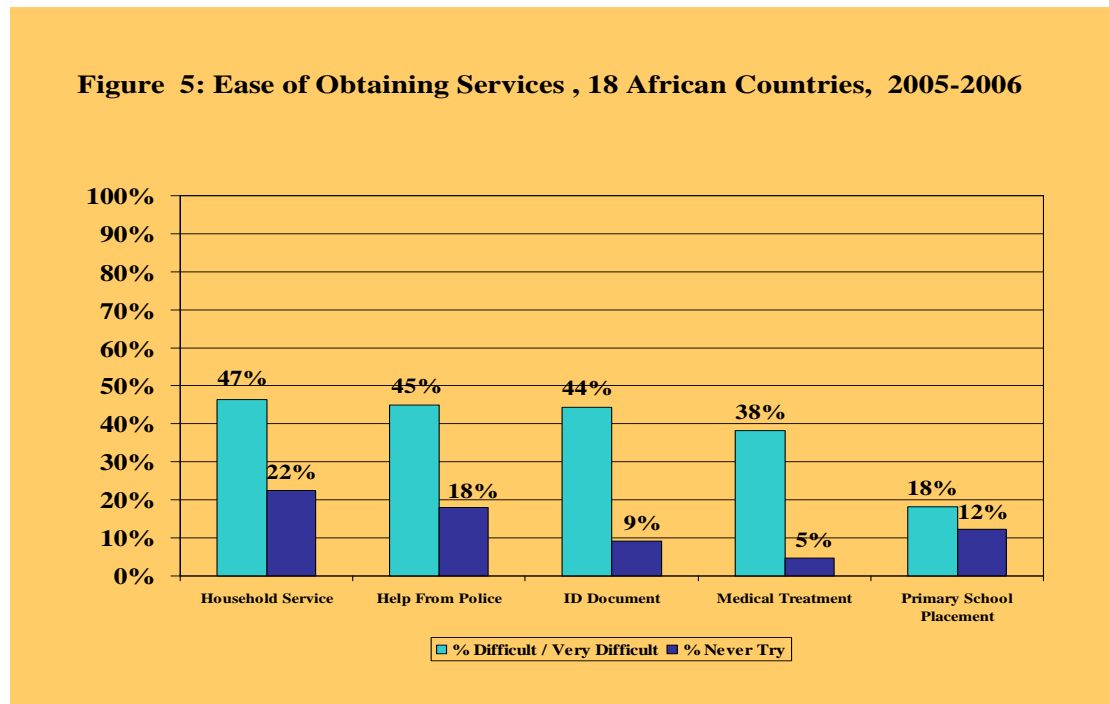
- Ease of obtaining an identify document (R3 q71a)
- Ease of obtaining household services (R3 q71b)
- East of getting help from police (R3 q71c)
- Ease of obtaining primary school placement for child (R3 q71d)
- Ease of obtaining medical treatment (R3 q71e)
- Problems encountered at child’s school (R3 q73a-73g)
- Problems encountered at health clinic (R3 q74a-74g)

Round 4 also continued a set of questions asked in all previous Afrobarometer surveys about whether respondents:

- Had to pay bribe to get document or permit (q51a)
- Had to pay bribe to get water or sanitation services in past year (q51b)
- Had to pay bribe to avoid problem with police (q51c)

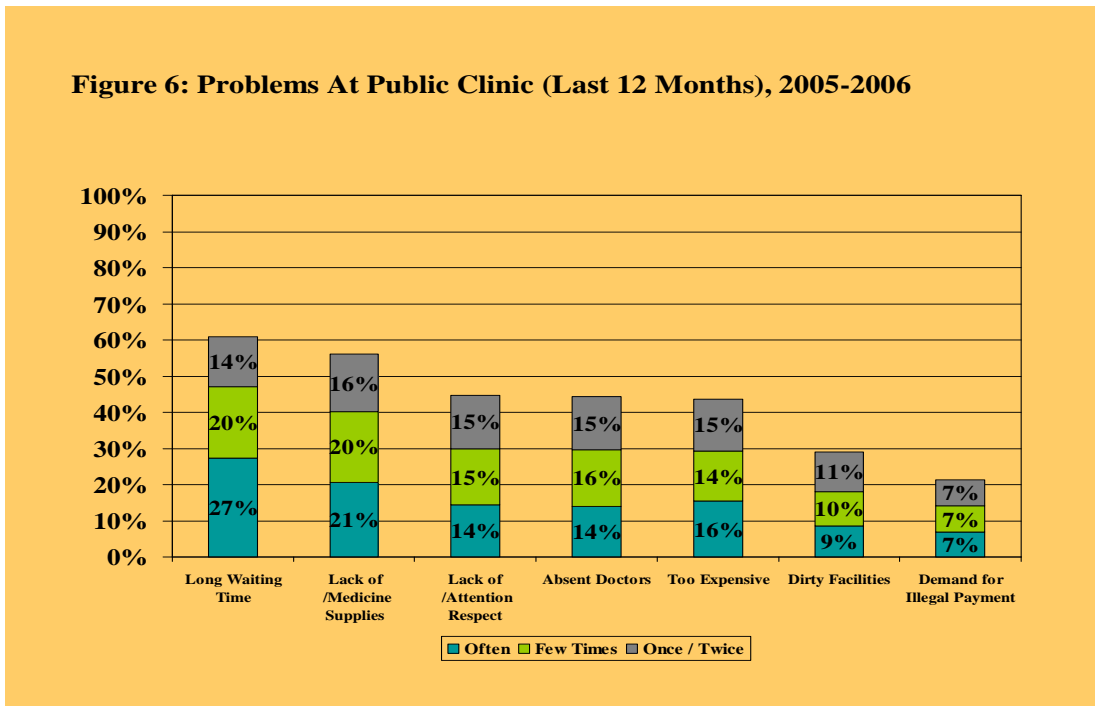
The plurality of respondents told interviewers in 2005-2006 that it was either “difficult” / “very difficult” to obtain a household service from a government office (47 percent), get help from the police (45 percent) or get an identity document (44 percent), or that they “never try” to get these things. However, there was a more favorable balance of positive reports of getting medical treatment or placement in school for a child. While there continue to be massive cross-national difference in the customer skills of public servants (for example, difficulties obtaining ID documents were experienced by 18 percent of Cabo Verdeans compared to 77 percent of Basotho; 13 percent of Batswana encountered problems at health clinics compared to 57 percent of Zimbabweans), the urban-rural differences are not nearly as large as on other issues, with no statistically significant differences in many countries.

Figure 5: Ease of Obtaining Services , 18 African Countries, 2005-2006



In order to get a better sense of the types of problems encountered, two sets of questions focused in on experiences with local schools, and at public clinics in the previous 12 months. With respect to clinics, Afrobarometer found that while many respondents found the fees too expensive (45 percent), user fees fell well down the list of experienced problems. The most frequently encountered problem was a long queue (61 percent), followed by a lack of medicine or supplies (57 percent), lack of courtesy (44 percent) and absent doctors (45 percent). Thirty percent said they encountered dirty facilities. And if bureaucratic inefficiency and intransigence weren't enough, 21 percent said they faced demands for illegal payments. More recent questions from Round 4 found that 14 percent had to pay a bribe to get an identity document, 11 percent in order to avoid a problem with the police, and 8 percent to get water or sanitation services.

Figure 6: Problems At Public Clinic (Last 12 Months), 2005-2006



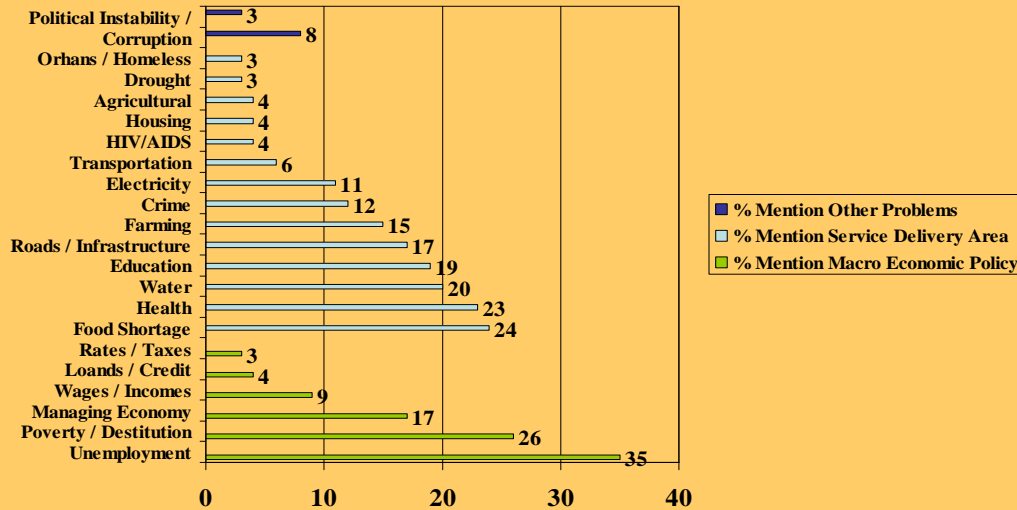
Service Delivery As A Public Priority

While it is understandable that government service planners assume that the things they provide are in great demand from citizens, this is not always the case. To get at public priorities, Afrobarometer asks respondents to list the three:

- Most important problems facing country that government should address (q56pt1-pt3)

As we see in Figure 7, while many Africans see the direct provision of one or another specific public good as a top priority for government action (which can be provided as a “service” by a specific government department or agency), a large proportion also think that government should first concentrate its mind on affecting broader national goals (like very simply “managing the economy” – which to most people probably means growth, or fixing “unemployment”) through macro-economic policy-making.

Figure 7: The Public Agenda



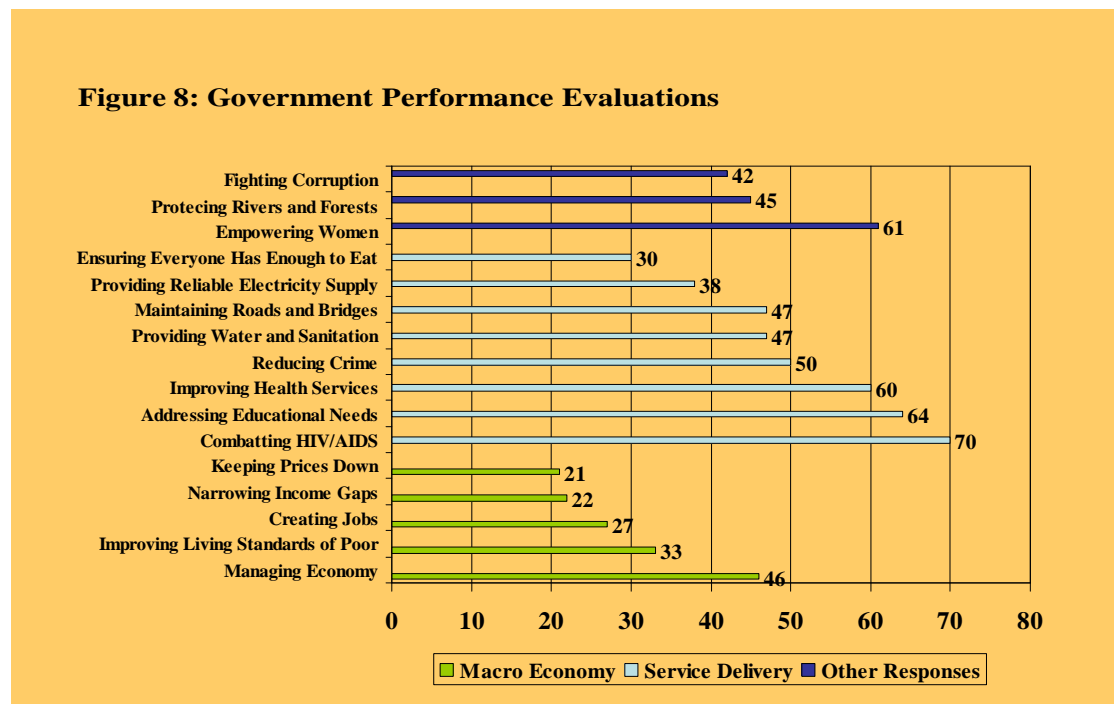
How Well Are Services Working?

A final piece of the puzzle provided by Afrobarometer surveys are measures of citizen evaluations of the job they think their government is actually doing providing various services. I divide the various performance areas contained in this battery of questions into whether they ask about sector specific performance areas which involve the delivery of a particular service, broader goals that are best addressed by multiple parts of government and macro economic policy, or other issues.

- Macro Economic Management
 - How well government has managed economy (q51a)
 - How well government has improved living standards of poor (q51b)
 - How well government has created jobs (q51c)
 - How well government has kept prices stable (q51d)
 - How well government has narrowed gap between rich and poor (q51e)
- Service Delivery
 - How well government has improved basic health services (q51g)
 - How well government has addressed educational needs (q51h)
 - How well government has provided water and sanitation services (q51i)
 - How well government has ensured everyone has enough to eat (q51j)
 - How well government has combated HIV/AIDS (q51l)
 - How well government has maintained roads and bridges (q51m)
 - How well government has maintained stable supply of electricity (q51n)
- Political Management (Crime and Corruption)
 - How well government has reduced crime (q51f)
 - How well government has fought corruption (q51k)

For all the challenges we have thus far observed with regard to service infrastructure and service provision, it is perhaps surprising that Africans give higher, and in many cases much higher ratings to government performance in various areas of service delivery, than they do to macro-economic management. At most, 46 percent award their government with positive marks in the area of “managing the economy,” whereas just one third approve of its job “improving living standards of the poor,” and

between one quarter and one fifth for job creation, narrowing inequality, and controlling inflation. On the other hand, seven in ten say their government is doing a good job “combating HIV/AIDS,” and six in ten are satisfied with its performance in the areas of health services and education. And approximately one half of all citizens approve of government delivery in the areas of crime, water and sanitation, and roads and bridges.

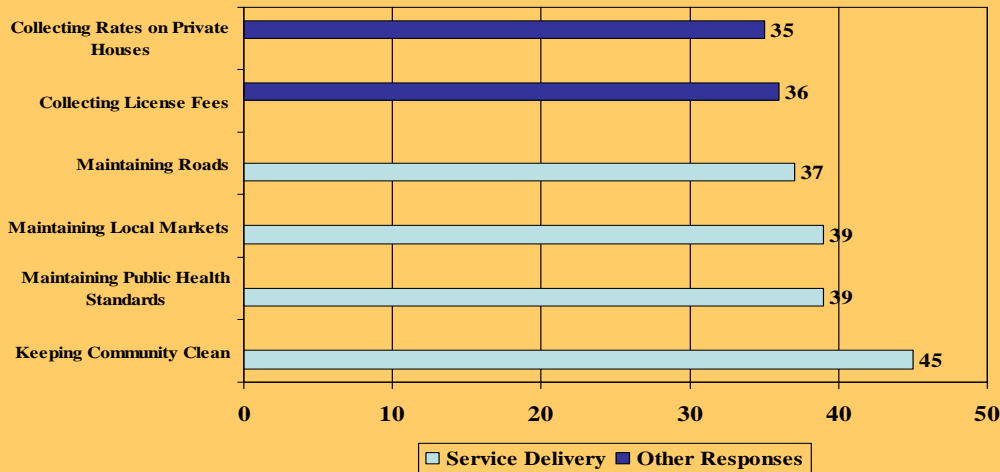


In addition, services are also tapped in a battery of questions specifically asking about the performance of local government.

- How well local government has maintained local roads (q59a)
- How well local government has maintained local marketplaces (q59b)
- How well local government has maintained public health standards (q59c)
- How well local government has kept community clean (q59d)
- How well local government has collected licence fees (q59e)
- How well local government has collected rates (q59f)

What is most interesting to note in the responses to these questions is that people are sharply more critical of local government performance than for national government, even when they involve what are largely the same dimensions of performance such as roads, public health, or sanitation.

Figure 9: Local Government Performance Evaluations



The Consequences of Service Delivery

Probably the most important question that policy makers want to know is whether the services they have been able to create and maintain have had any kinds of tangible impact. In this last section, we briefly turn to review various uses of Afrobarometer data to gauge the overall social, economic and political impact of service provision.

Does Service Infrastructure Reduce insecurity?

Because the Afrobarometer also asks respondents how often they fear crime in their home, and whether they were the victim of a crime in the past year (either theft or assault), we can test the linkages with the presence of local police services. In fact, we virtually *no* relationship between whether a respondent lives in an EA with a police station, or police presence, and whether or not they fear crime in their homes, or whether they have actually experienced crime (in the past year). This is true for all Africans in general, but also within almost all countries. The only exceptions is South Africa, where police presence does actually reduce the level of victimization (though this is most probably due to the legacy of apartheid where most police stations are still located in historically white, and much safer city or suburban centers). In Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zambia, the presence of a police station actually appears to *reduce* security. But in both sets of exceptions, the effect is rather small.

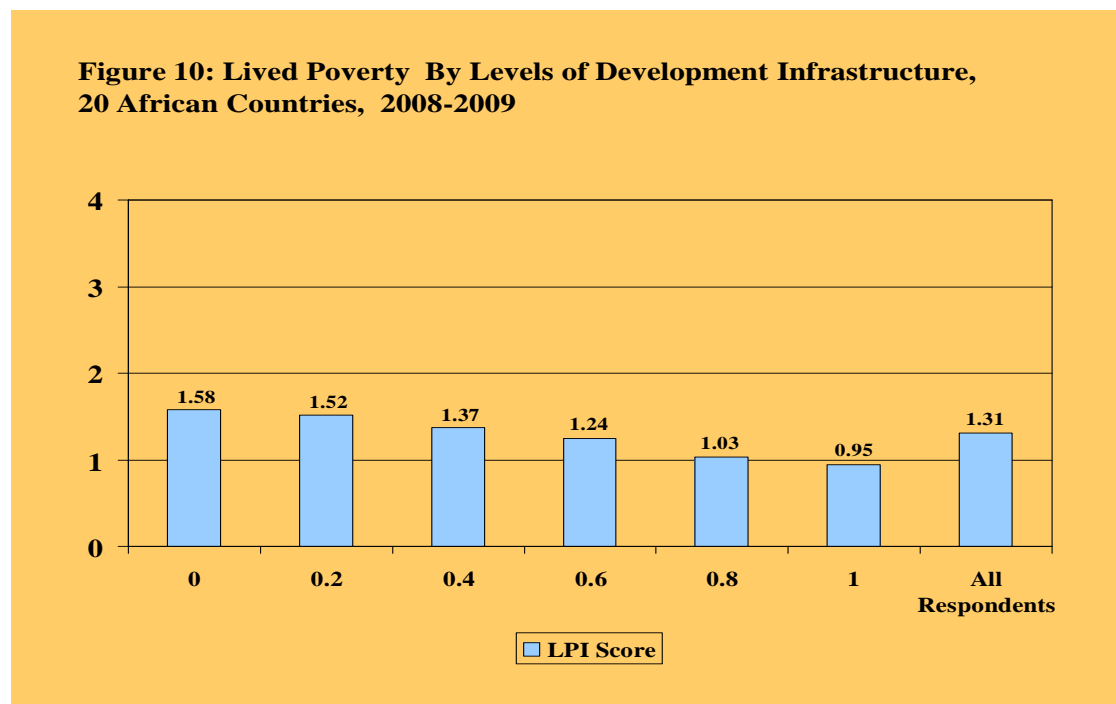
Does It reduce poverty?

The typical approach to measuring poverty involves extensive questioning of an informant about the income, expenditures, consumption and assets of the entire household, as well as its access to a range of social services. But this is not practical in surveys like Afrobarometer where the focus is on asking individual citizens about their political opinions, values and behaviours leaves limited questionnaire space for demographic measurement. Thus we adopted and developed a small experiential battery of items first asked in the New Russia Barometer (Rose 1998) which we now call the Lived Poverty Index (Mattes 2008) that focusses efficiently and directly on the central, core aspect of poverty, namely the rate at which people actually go without the basic necessities of life. It thus measures a portion of the central core of the concept of poverty that is not well captured by existing measures, and thus offers an important complement to official statistics on poverty and development. It can also be done more frequently in surveys that use smaller samples such as Afrobarometer (because of the large sample sizes desired by

economist to estimate poverty and other issues such as unemployment with a high degree of precision, large scale income and expenditure household surveys are relatively rare in Africa).

The root of the Afrobarometer battery of questions reads: “Over the past year, how often, if ever have you or your family gone without _____?” The interviewer then repeats the question for each of the following basic necessities: “Enough food to eat?” “Enough clean water for home use?” “Medicines or medical treatment?” “Enough fuel to cook your food?” and “A cash income?” However, while people may be the best judges of their own well-being and quality of life, survey researchers need to avoid forcing respondents to report their recalled experiences at an inappropriately fine level of precision. Thus, rather than asking people to provide us some ratio level answer, such as the number of days out of 365, or the number of weeks out of 52, we simply provide an ordinal level response scale with the options: “Never” (0), “Just Once or Twice” (1), “Several Times” (2), “Many Times” (3) or “Always” (4)? Nonetheless, when averaged together, these responses combine to form a valid and reliable index of “lived poverty.”

To what degree is lived poverty affected by service delivery, or at least the presence of service infrastructure? We find that service infrastructure, particularly what we earlier called Development Infrastructure (Electricity Grid, Piped Water System, Sewerage System, Cell Phone Service) makes an important contribution to people’s lives across all countries. Respondents living in EAs with no development infrastructure have a mean LPI score of 1.58 (on a scale of 0 to 4), while those living in fully serviced areas have an average poverty score of 0.95. Even though poverty is substantially higher in rural area, the impact of Development Infrastructure is about the same in both rural *and* in urban areas.



Does It Increase Health?

In Round 3, Afrobarometer asked respondents how frequently in the previous month they had felt (1) so worried or anxious or worn out or exhausted, or (2) physically ill, that they had to reduce the amount of work they did in the home or at a formal job. The average response to these two items forms a valid and reliable construct of ill health. We find that Development Infrastructure (the cellphone service question was not asked in Round 3) again has a significant, though far smaller effect, reducing ill health from .91 (on a scale of 0 to 4) in a non serviced EA to .77 in a fully serviced area. Again, the size of this impact is

almost exactly the same in both rural and urban areas. The presence of a health clinic, however, makes an extremely small contribution to reducing ill health.

Does It Make People More Satisfied Politically?

Controlling for urban-rural differences, all three types of service infrastructure make people more positive about current government performance in the area of service delivery. However, once we move away from evaluations of service delivery, we find few meaningful differences. For example, people in well serviced areas are no less (or more) likely to perceive higher levels of government corruption. They are no more (or less) likely to express trust in government or law enforcement institutions, or see the state as legitimate, or say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Finally, there is no evidence that it makes people more or less likely to contact their leaders, or take part in political protest.

But while there are few meaningful direct linkages of service delivery and political opinions, there may still be quite important indirect linkages. While a fully fledged causal model is beyond the scope of this brief paper, it is important to note that previous research has found that lived poverty (which we have shown *does* depend on the existence of development infrastructure) shapes a range of political preferences (controlling for the simultaneous impact of other relevant variables). Higher levels of lived poverty increase respondents' sense of relative deprivation and decrease their approval of government management of the economy, their support for private provision of development services, and their support for economic reform (see Mattes 2008).

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