



Custodian of Good Governance

**OPSC Access/Redress Presentation to the
Portfolio Committee on Public
Administration**

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

**PRESENTATION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE
AND ADMINISTRATION
ON
BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES OF ACCESS AND REDRESS**

Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996: s196 (4)(b)&(c)) empowers the Commission to "investigate, monitor & evaluate" and "propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance" in the public service. The White Paper on Transforming Public service Delivery (1997: s11) also requires the DPSA to "work in conjunction with the PSC to ensure that departments' progress in implementing *Batho Pele* is systematically monitored"

The studies on Access and Redress were conducted at the same time. The workshops on the questionnaire and approach of the study were also combined. The distribution and collection of the questionnaire were also done at the same time using the same departmental contact persons. However, the analysis and report writing were done separately.

Other studies conducted by the PSC on *Batho Pele Principles* include:

- PSC (1999) –covering all principles & not in-depth analysis. It was felt that there was a need for in-depth analysis looking at each principle
- PSC (2000) Report on the Implementation & Promotion of *Batho Pele*
- PSC (2003) Citizen Satisfaction Survey: Overview Report (Piloting of the tool in four Depts Education, Housing, Health & Social Development)
- PSC (2004) Citizen Satisfaction Survey: Criminal Justice Sector
- PSC (2004) Evaluation of Service Standards (Batho Pele Principle) in the Public service

Aims of the studies

The aims of the two studies were to evaluate the performance and compliance of national and provincial government departments in implementing procedures intended to improve Access and Redress, as required by the Batho Pele White Paper.

This meant assessing the degree to which departments comply with the requirements of the White Paper; benchmarking and determining good practice, and making recommendations.

Methodology

This was a census based study in that all national and provincial government departments were included in the study except the following;

- (i) NIA
- (ii) SAMDI
- (iii) The Presidency
- (iv) SANDF
- (v) SASS

Initially the study was to use a structured questionnaire in face-to-face interviews with HODs. However, the difficulty in securing appointments with HODs led to an adoption of a self-administered questionnaire approach.

Departments were asked to designate an official to act as contact person during the lifecycle of the project especially to oversee the collation of documents and the completion of questionnaires. Identified departmental contact persons were invited to national and provincial workshops where the questionnaire and the approach to data collection were discussed. Thereafter, departments were given three months to complete the questionnaires and provide supporting documentation.

Challenges during data collection

Challenges that were experienced included some departments challenging their own participation in the study citing, amongst other, not being responsible for delivering services directly to the citizens (e.g. Treasury, Public Works). Other challenges were the change of departmental contact persons and tight project timeframes.

A. BATHO PELE PRINCIPLE OF ACCESS

According to the White Paper on *Batho Pele* the definition of access is "**All citizens should have access to the services to which they are entitled**".

Access therefore needs to consider:

- (i) The legacy of apartheid discrimination
- (ii) Physical location of the service point
- (iii) The ability of citizens to get into buildings especially the disabled' and
- (iv) The ability of citizens to find their way around government buildings.

Respondents

Of the responses, 48 questionnaires had been attended to by General Managers/ HoDs/ Chief Directors/ or Executive Managers, one by an Assistant Commissioner, 36 by either a Director/ Senior Manager or Chief Operations Officer and 11 by Deputy Director/ Assistant Managers and Deputy Managers. So the bulk of the questionnaires were filled by officials senior enough to know about programmes of the departments they represented.

Departments were asked whether they felt that their services were accessible or not. Of the 76% that said their services were accessible, only 16% were able to qualify their accessibility. 6% reported that their services were not accessible while 2% of the respondents felt there was room for improvement.

Measures to improve access to services are in place in 90% of national and 86% of provincial departments. The following are responses by departments indicating the number and type of measure:

Measure	% National	% Provincial
ICT & the media	85	77
Websites	90	71
Partnerships with external service providers	80	70
Regional offices	75	66
Indigenous languages	80	61
Help desks	65	61
Flexible hours of work	80	48

Call centres/ toll-free lines	70	44
Use of service runs	55	42
MPCCs	65	33

As a result of implementing these measures, 70% of national departments reported an improvement while all provincial departments said there was some level of improvement.

Communication

Departments were asked whether they have communications policies and strategies in place. Ninety percent of national and 71% of provincial departments reported having communication policies & strategies.

Departments reported that the means through which they advertise their services are:

Means through which services are advertised	% National	% Provincial
Radio	90	82
Newspaper	95	81
Leaflets	85	80
Newsletters	80	68
Electronic media	85	67
Television	90	41
None	5	4
Other	50	13

Factors reported as influencing the choice of a strategy and marketing decision were:

Factors influencing communication strategy	%National	%Provincial
Geographic reach	50	48
Socio-economic	15	30
Budget/ financial constraints	20	18
Needs of community	15	13

Language	-	10
Nature of campaign	20	8
Strategic objectives of the department	15	3
No specific/ not applicable	55	18

When responding to the question on the kind of tools departments use to communicate with internal and external clients, it was reported that internally pamphlets/ posters and leaflets are used in 35% of national and 42% of provincial departments. Intranet/ websites were reportedly used in 35% of national and 13% of provincial departments while meetings and workshops were found to be in use in 30% of national and 42% of provincial departments. E-mail is used in 10% of national and 22% of provincial departments while the internal newsletters were found to be in use in 10% of national and 14% of provincial departments.

In communicating with external stakeholders, *izimbizo* community meetings were reported to be in use in 30% and 32% of national and provincial departments respectively. In 25% of national departments website/ intranet were used as a communication strategy compared to 11% in the provincial departments. There was also a use of electronic media in 20% of national departments compared to 35% in provincial department. Fifteen percent of national departments reported to also posters/ pamphlets/ leaflets compared to 28% of provincial departments. There was also a use of road shows as a communication strategy and 10% of national departments used these shows compared to 5% of provincial departments. Ten percent of national departments reported to use their annual reports as also a communication strategy to tell community about the services they render and this use of annual report was the case in only 5 % of provincial departments. Five percent of national departments use newspapers compared to 20% of the provincial departments. Only 11% of the provincial departments reported to use consultative meetings as a communication strategy and no national department reported to be using consultative meeting at all.

It was reported that access standards have been developed in 50% of the departments nationally and 46% provincially. However, it is only in 30% nationally and 47% provincially where the set standards have been met. Ten percent of national and 28% provincial departments have partially met their targets.

Reasons advanced for not meeting set standards were:

- Inadequate resources and infrastructure;
- Some departments reported that they are still to implement them in other directorates, and
- They have not been translated into local languages.

	%National	% Provincial
Upgrading of buildings	20	18
Improvement of services	20	15
Extending geographical reach	15	15
Improved communication	15	14
Development of strategic & operational plans	10	13
In process of developing targets	5	6
Improving wayfinding	-	6
Improved access for disadvantaged groups	15	6
Extension of working hours of operation	-	4
No response/ not applicable	5	9

The difficulties experienced when setting access targets were reported as:

- Lack of resources;
- Inadequate stakeholder participation;
- Inadequate buildings/ infrastructure;
- Lack of know-how/ understanding by staff;
- Improper planning;
- Combination of a number of factors; and
- Not indicated/ applicable.

The barriers to improving access were found to be:

- Budgetary/ and or resource constraints;
- Lack of skills/ capacity/ or understanding;
- Inadequate stakeholder participation; and
- Combination of all or some of the above factors.

Departments said measures that can improve access are:

- Capacity building through, among other, the filling vacant posts;
- Consultation with stakeholders;
- Request for budget or an increase in finances;
- Public education and interaction;
- Establishment of *Batho Pele* units within departments; and
- Refurbishment/ erection of new buildings that comply with access requirements.

Access for **people with disabilities** as a strategy was reported to exist in 60% of national and 63% of provincial departments. Twenty five percent of national and 27% of provincial departments were reported to be without any strategy at all.

Model for good practice in implementing access

The following was established to be an emergent good practice model in implementing the *Batho Pele* principle of access:

Step 1: Setting access standards and targets

This entails planning what the standards and targets are supposed to be. Setting those standards in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Step 2: Implementation

Departments need to consider using implementation agents, to ensure that signage is visible to everyone looking for information. There is a need to measure success or failure for improvements to be effected. Doing this in consultation with all relevant stakeholders is also critical.

Step 3: Monitor and evaluate

Progress of implementation is to be monitored and evaluated. Once more consulting relevant stakeholders is also important in this phase of implementation.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, it was established that measures to improve access that are not backed by clear communication policy and strategy have a slim chance of success. The following were some of the suggested remedies to improve the implementation of access:

- (i) improve skills,
- (ii) fill vacant posts,
- (iii) consult with stakeholders: and
- (iv) solicit funding.

While consultation levels are high they still need to be improved for access to be effectively implemented. In terms of physical access, rural communities, the youth, women and people with disabilities are all to be considered. The most neglected groups are the pensioners and the functionally illiterate.

Less than half of departments indicated having a monitoring and evaluation system. The DPSA has developed a template for monitoring compliance with *Batho Pele* which departments must take advantage of and use.

B. BATHO PELE PRINCIPLE OF REDRESS

The *Batho Pele* White Paper states redress principle ensures that where "promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a explanation and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response". This *Batho Pele* requirement is also supported by the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) which guarantees a right of review or appeal and the right to request reasons for an administrative action or inaction.

Ninety percent of national and 83% of provincial departments have some form of complaint handling mechanism. Of these, 71% of national and 55% provincial departments had complaints mechanisms linked to legislation or government policies other than *Batho Pele* e.g. PAJA, and or line department specific legislation like the Patients' Rights Charter, SA Schools Act.

It was reported that complaints handling systems were developed in 24% of national and 17% of provincial departments in partnership with internal stakeholders. In 5% of national and 4% of provincial stakeholders complaints handling systems were developed in collaboration with external stakeholders. Instances where both internal and external stakeholders took part in the development of complaints handling systems were 48% in national departments and 41% in provincial departments.

Training officials on complaints handling mechanisms

It was reported that training on Redress has taken place in 59% of the national and 54% of provincial departments. Less front line staff were trained by the national as compared to the provincial (25%) and 41% nationally. Provinces also trained their top management in 8% of their departments.

Redress and people with special needs

Forty nine percent of the national departments dealt with the needs of the physically disabled, 34% sight impaired, 35% hearing impaired, 47% functionally illiterate, and 58% non-English speakers. 38% of provincial departments attended to the needs of the physically disabled (38%), 33% sight impaired, 14% hearing impaired, 29% functionally illiterate, and 43% non-English speakers. Provinces seem to concentrate more on non-English speakers and the physically disabled while nationally it is the disabled that receive priority followed by the sight impaired.

The structure for dealing with redress in departments

The location of the structure or component dealing with complaints differed with 43% of national and 19% of provincial departments reporting to have centrally-

situated structures, while 48% of national and 70% of provincial reported that their structures were locally situated. The structures, units or individuals dealing with complaints existed in 52% of national and 45% of provincial departments, and 38% national and 53% of provincial reported that they do not have such a structure or person.

***Batho Pele* and the performance agreements**

Batho Pele is supposed to be part of performance agreements, especially of Senior Managers. However, it was established that this is only happening in only 14% of national and 29% of provincial departments. The other challenge existing is that redress standards do not exist in 67% of national and 54% of provincial departments.

Budget for *Batho Pele*

Mostly, the *Batho Pele* budget is integrated with other departmental, items for an example, in 62% of national and 67% of provincial departments. *Batho Pele* budget is when a particular department has a budget specifically meant to address and promote the *Batho Pele* Principles. This budget can be separated from other departmental activities. Furthermore, it was discovered to be a *Batho Pele* specific budget exists only in 24% of national and 27% of provincial departments.

Procedure and method for lodging complaints

Seventy six percent of national and 78% provincially departments indicated that they inform their clients of the procedure to be followed when lodging complaints about services. Methods for recording complaints and record keeping were found to exist in 67% of the national and 63% of the provincial departments.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation systems available in departments were reported to be redress specific in 29% of the cases in national, and 18% provincially. Fourteen percent of national departments and 28% of provincial departments reported to be using their department wide monitoring and evaluation system.

Self rating by departments on the implementation of redress

When departments were asked to rate themselves on implementing the *Batho Pele* Redress principle nationally, 5% considered themselves to be excellent, 33% good, 24% adequate, 29% poor and 10% very poor. Provincially the rating was 2% excellent, 24% good, 45% adequate, 14% poor, and 7% very poor.

Good practice model for redress

A good practice model that came out of this study included the following steps (i) develop a complaints procedure, (ii) train staff on handling complaints, (iii) Ensure accessibility to all (iv) record and analyse information, and (v) implement service improvement.

Conclusions and recommendations

Three broad areas that were found to be requiring further attention were:

1. The need to formalize complaint handling systems
2. The implementation of the monitoring and evaluation systems
3. The review of these systems on a regular basis