

How non-delivery of basic services affects SMMEs and ordinary people's livelihoods

 By [Miranda Lusiba](#)

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For the past two weeks, I've been watching and listening to both ordinary South Africans and some small business owners in the news talking about the impact of loadshedding on their livelihoods. Non-delivery of basic services such as electricity, water, housing and even unmaintained roads has a negative impact on everyone, most especially SMMEs.



Source: www.pexels.com

The electricity issue is even worse for those who own SMMEs that produce products that are dependent on electricity, this is also the same case for our children who are trying to study for exams at this time of the year with no electricity at their homes in the evenings. A lot of these entrepreneurs and kids from the townships have limited resources so a generator is not even an option because they just can't afford it.

In the case of SMMEs, because most cannot afford a generator, or the diesel required to run it – they end up missing client deadlines on delivery of goods or services. Any entrepreneur knows how bad non-delivery is to the reputation of any company; it gives the impression that you are just not a reliable business.

As much as I've worked in corporates where I was a client to agencies that serviced us; I was also on the other side where I worked as a consultant to clients in big organisations. It's a well-known fact and something that I stressed to my agency team at all times that clients that are paying for products or services are looking for solutions; not problems or excuses of why work couldn't be done.



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As much as big organisations who give us small businesses contracts understand the country's issues when it comes to electricity – they pay you with the expectation that you will make a plan to deliver and how you will do that - is not necessarily their problem. As much as they may sympathise with the current situation when it comes to the delivery of

basic services – they also have commitments to deliver on in their own organisations. They are paying us after all.

In the case of students trying to study either for matric or other grades, I've been told that some of these kids have had to sleep at their schools to be able to study where electricity and other services might be a bit more stable than at their homes. Some apparently sleep at their schools because of interruptions at home; some if not most of the township learners live in tiny houses or shacks with not much privacy or quiet places for them when they want to study. This, unfortunately, speaks to either non or slow delivery of decent housing for some of these families and a sad reality that most ordinary people in my hometown and other places in South Africa must live with.

When I try to place myself in the shoes of these learners, I also understand how disturbing it is to try to focus and concentrate on what you are studying when there's electricity interruptions or noise around you. This is the case for me too as a writer – it is very difficult for me to keep my momentum going when I'm writing either a story or a document especially when my laptop battery decides to die because of lack of electricity. It is not easy to keep that flow going in your head when you are interrupted right in the middle of a set rhythm.



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On the issues of unmaintained roads for SMMEs, the financial impact is huge. It is a costly exercise to maintain or replace tyres every time one hits a pothole. This is even worse for SMMEs that focus mainly on the delivery businesses - those whose cars or bikes are always on the road. I can just imagine the extent of the maintenance required on a monthly basis which most probably eats away on the little profits of that particular SMME.

The impact on the business is also negative when there's no water – especially for businesses that work from premises where clients visit or meet. It is unhygienic and a bad impression for anyone to visit premises when there's no water especially potential or existing clients.

I would like to plead with our government especially the incoming local government structures after these coalition talks to consider the issues that I've raised here and the impact that either slow or non-delivery of services has on us small business owners as well as the livelihoods of other ordinary people. I'm asking this sphere of government in particular because this is mainly where the responsibility of delivering basic services to our people lies.

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