

Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery (DGSD)



HSRC
Human Sciences
Research Council



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Unleashing knowledge that propels us forward

Who we are

DGSD seeks to enhance the contribution of the HSRC as a strategic knowledge partner and resource for addressing key national, regional and international questions of democratisation, social justice, governance and the rule of law, service delivery, human development, local government reform, state capacity, and crime and corruption.

What we do

Generally, DGSD conducts scientific research aimed at understanding and explaining the dominant trends in democracy, governance and service delivery. Research conducted is intended to promote effective and efficient democratic processes of governance and the delivery of quality services to the majority, particularly rural African inhabitants, who have historically been deprived of basic essential services such as water and sanitation, housing, electricity and health facilities. DGSD's research is also intended to support the inclusion of marginalised communities in mainstream decision-making processes.

In formulating a set of strategies to help mitigate the governance and service delivery problems in South Africa, DGSD works to fulfil the following:

Our research

- To conduct scientific research into the nature of and key trends in South Africa's system of democracy, governance and service delivery
- To undertake action-oriented research to diagnose and address the democratic, governance and service delivery challenges facing the country
- To undertake research in which various approaches to strengthening and improving democratic practices, governance standards and service delivery are assessed and modelled through pilot interventions
- To provide practical solutions and alternatives to the continuing challenges of deepening democracy, ensuring strong institutions of governance, maintaining the rule of law, ensuring equal access of sustainable

basic services, improving state capacity and entrenching a culture of performance in the civil service.

The thematic research thrusts of the programme are as follows:

Democracy and Development:

This thematic thrust focuses on the constitutional imperative that all South Africans should have access to and participate in a vibrant democracy that ensures a better life for all.

This unit focuses on how democratic governance can best enable and empower all South Africans to freely and effectively pursue the realisation of their own individual and collective potential. This area looks in depth at issues of social justice; inequality; citizenship, culture, national identity and social cohesion; and women and gender in a democratic South Africa.

The sub-theme of crime, safety and justice focuses on access to justice; understanding the scale, causes and impact of crime and violence; and examines issues of citizenship, participatory democracy and political violence.

In conducting research on inequality, poverty and social justice, DGSD researchers seek to interrogate, define, measure and address (in)equality in South Africa, Africa and globally within the context of democratic politics and transitional and distributive justice.

Governance:

The governance thrust focuses on the intersections between national, provincial and local government, and addresses issues related to good governance, cooperative governance and the relationship between modern and traditional institutions of governance.

Sub-themes include ethics and accountability, as well as investigations into and development of anticorruption strategies. Researchers in this area also have expertise in assessing the impact of government policy and the monitoring and evaluation of institutions of governance.



Service Delivery:

DSGD undertakes evidence-based research to analyse and measure access to public services and to monitor and evaluate the role of the state and other stakeholders in service delivery. Capacity at national, provincial and local government level is assessed in order to contribute to the measurement of performance at all levels of government and the development of strategies for capacity enhancement.

Included under this thrust is research into the effectiveness of partnerships involving the public sector, private sector, civil society and communities; the monitoring of service delivery; assessing the fulfilment of socio-economic rights; and the prevention of fraud and corruption within the public service.

How we make a difference

DSGD's research output and findings are widely distributed and disseminated through peer reviewed publications, research reports, policy briefs and monographs. Additionally, public reach is extended through stakeholder engagement processes and through widespread use of both print and electronic media. Seminars, workshops, conferences, round-table discussions, public dialogues and debates are also organized with clients, partners and other important stakeholders to enhance constructive and critical debate and ensure uptake of important policy relevant recommendations.

Currently the programme is conducting research on a number of cross-cutting areas, including access to justice, in the form of access to socio-economic rights; social cohesion, inequality and violence; support for cities in the areas of citizen engagement, anti-corruption strategies and social and environmental management; developing a regulatory framework for the Royal Bafokeng Nation; unsung heroes of the liberation struggle; and legal and policy issues related to migration. The programme also focuses on BRICS and issues of global and political government.

DGSD Flagships

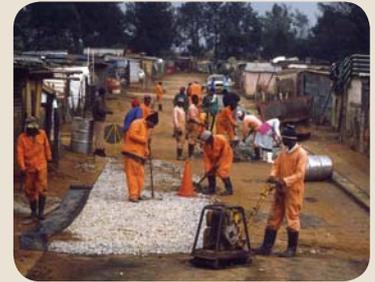
Social Attitudes Survey of South Africa (SASAS)

SASAS (see www.hsrc.ac.za/sasas) is a nationally representative, repeated cross-sectional survey that has been conducted annually by the HSRC since 2003. Designed as a time series, SASAS is increasingly providing a unique, long-term account of the speed and direction of change in underlying public values and the social fabric of modern South Africa. SASAS thus represents a notable tool for monitoring evolving social, economic and political values among South Africans, but it also demonstrates promising utility as an anticipatory, or predictive, mechanism that can inform decision- and policy-making processes. The series celebrated the successful completion of its 10th annual round in late 2012.

State of the Nation

Between 2003 and 2008 the HSRC published its annual flagship publication *State of the Nation*. Taking the South African national agenda as its organising framework, SoN provides an in-depth and independent analysis of the year under review. The publication stimulates contemporary debates on key issues in a significant way and received wide critical acclaim as a reference source that shapes public policies, political actions and individual and collective decisions. For each volume senior scholars are invited as volume editors and contributors of chapters in the areas of politics, economics, society, health and environment, and South Africa in a global context. In view of its historical high demand and the need for vibrant national and continental debates, the HSRC has decided to re-launch this authoritative annual publication from 2013. The 2012-13 volume addressed the issues of poverty and inequality, while the 2014 volume deals with 20 years of freedom and democracy.

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The HSRC is a non-partisan organisation that provides critical information to different role players, whether in policy development, media analysis, advocacy or in debates so that they can make informed decisions. The HSRC generates scientific knowledge through its research and analytical work in the social and human sciences. It aims to be an instrument for providing independent information, free from political, religious and/or racial bias.

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Social science that makes a difference