

South Africa: Impumelelo Innovations Award Trust

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In 2000, after South Africa held its first local government election, the arduous process of restructuring the country's services began. The incorporation of black areas into white areas took its toll on service delivery, given that the white areas had excellent access to public resources while the black areas were poorly managed and under-funded. The Constitution empowers local governments to provide for potable water, sewage and waste management, local and environmental health, and economic and social development, and expenditures of the nation's 283 municipalities now account for 21% of total government expenditure.

In recent years, local government has been criticized for inefficiency, poor infrastructure, corruption, and weak financial management. This poor performance has been compounded by South Africa's proportional representation electoral system, which holds parties responsible for service delivery rather than elected officials. Citizen participation remains arbitrary at best, and quality control is a major source of grievance among local communities.

Impumelelo seeks to encourage innovation and improvement in service delivery through a rigorous evaluation of applicants, assessing degrees of citizen participation, political competition, institutionalized budgeting, partnerships with other government authorities, anti-corruption measures, and capacity for long-term maintenance and replication.

Impumelelo's case studies are used as training materials to reinforce the importance of efficient and effective service delivery. Education is a cornerstone of Impumelelo's work: the program has held workshops in the public works, housing, sanitation, waste management, environment and conservation, HIV/AIDS, and criminal justice with an average attendance between 55 and 90 participants.



Rhoda Kadalie is the Executive Director of the Impumelelo Innovations Award Trust. Prior to joining Impumelelo, she was a Human Rights Commissioner for the Western Cape and Northern Cape. Ms. Kadalie is also an academic and the founder of the Gender Equity Unit at the University of the Western Cape. She has traveled extensively, presenting lectures and papers on human rights and gender politics in South Africa at conferences across the world. In 1999, Ms. Kadalie was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Liberal Arts from the University of Uppsala, Sweden.