

PUBLIC MONITORING OF SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA: WHAT DATA NEEDS TO BE PRODUCED AND PUBLISHED?

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INTRODUCTION

If the general public is able to monitor the delivery of services, it can help hold the government to account and, ultimately, improve the quality of the services being delivered. But to effectively monitor services the public needs access to information.

This note explores what information needs to be published by government to enable the public to monitor the delivery of school infrastructure. It assesses how much of this information is already being produced by the government, and how much of what is produced is published. Finally, it assesses the comprehensiveness and accuracy of published information and how regularly it is updated.

We found that for the case of school infrastructure, government produces for its own internal use most of the information that the public needs to monitor service delivery. The next step would be for government to publish this information and to make it freely available.

WHAT BUDGET AND SERVICE DELIVERY INFORMATION DOES THE PUBLIC NEED?

If parents wanted to monitor the delivery of infrastructure for their child's school, they would need information on the specific school that their child attends. Information on spending or service delivery covering the province or the country as a whole, such as what is often published in government budget documents, will not suffice:

data needs to be sufficiently disaggregated so parents are able to understand what is meant to happen at their specific school.

To understand and assess the delivery of infrastructure for a particular school, the public needs six types of information to be published and disaggregated to school level:

1. **Government’s assessment of needs:** To assess whether services have been delivered as intended, the public first needs to know what the government thinks the infrastructure needs are for an individual school. Without this information, it is impossible to know whether poor infrastructure is the result of poor service delivery or an inaccurate assessment of a school’s needs.
2. **What government committed to deliver:** Unless the public knows in detail what is supposed to be delivered, they cannot evaluate whether the result aligns with what the government paid for. Information on the scope of delivery for school infrastructure should include the type of structures and buildings (classrooms, toilets, staffrooms, etc.) the government has committed to build, and detailed specifications of how these structures should be constructed (measurements, number of windows, kinds of toilets, etc.).
3. **Budget allocation:** The public needs to know how much money has been allocated for infrastructure at the school for the relevant year. Where there is more than one source of funding for infrastructure, information on all funding sources is required. In the case of school infrastructure, funding sources include the grant for the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI), the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG), and Equitable Share allocations.¹
4. **Implementing agent:** The public needs to know who is responsible for the doing actual work at the school. If the job is not being done satisfactorily, information on the contractor and implementing agent is important so the public can report them to the relevant government department and know whether they are repeat offenders.
5. **Actual spending:** The public needs to know how much of the money that was allocated for work at the school was actually transferred to the implementing agent and contractor. Without this information it is not possible to know whether delays are the fault of the implementing agent or contractor or were caused by delayed payments by the relevant provincial or national education department. This information should be provided on at least a quarterly basis, otherwise the public will not be able to monitor service delivery continuously throughout the year.
6. **Reported delivery:** What government *thinks* was delivered, i.e. what the contractor and implementing agent reported as having been delivered. Without this information, the public will not be able to monitor whether the contractor/implementing agent has misled government.

If all of the above information is available, the public can effectively monitor the delivery of school infrastructure.

HOW MUCH OF THIS INFORMATION IS PRODUCED AND PUBLISHED?

Tables 1 and 2 show what information is available on two of the funding streams for school infrastructure (ASIDI and EIG), broken down by the categories of information described above. The tables indicate whether government produces the information in a document or database and, if so, states the name of the relevant source. They also indicate whether the information is published; produced but not published; or produced and published, but not regularly, comprehensively and/or accurately.

¹ The acronyms and sources of funding are explained below.

The tables show that education departments and treasuries at the provincial and national level produce all six of the categories of information listed above. However, most of this information is not made available to the public. The documents and data that are available to the public are frequently inaccurate or incomplete and are not published on a regular basis. In the case of tender documents, the information is only available for a fee. In sum, this parlous state of budget and service delivery transparency makes it all but impossible for the public, or indeed for other oversight institutions such as parliament, to monitor the financing and delivery of school infrastructure.

TABLE 1: SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDED BY ASIDI²

Types of Information	Source of Information	Publication status
Government's assessment of needs	National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS)	Produced and published but not regularly, accurately, or completely.
What government committed to deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Facilities Management System (EFMS) • Project Bid Specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced but not published. • Produced but not published for free.
Budget allocation	EFMS	Produced but not published.
Implementing agent	EFMS	Produced but not published.
Actual spending	EFMS	Produced but not published.
Reported delivery	EFMS	Produced but not published.

TABLE 2: SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDED BY EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

Types of Information	Source of Information	Publication status
Government's assessment of food security needs	NEIMS/Norms and Standards Implementation Plans	Produced and published but not regularly, accurately, or completely.
What government committed to deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Reporting Model (IRM) • Project Bid Specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced but not published. • Produced but not published for free.
Budget allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix to provincial budget documents • IRM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced and published but not regularly, accurately, or completely. • Produced, but not published.
Implementing agent	IRM	Produced but not published.
Actual spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix to provincial budget documents • IRM (quarterly) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produced and published but not accurately or completely. • Produced but not published.
Reported delivery	IRM	Produced but not published.

THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY INITIATIVE

The objective of the ASIDI is to replace all schools constructed from inappropriate material (e.g. mud and asbestos) and eradicate infrastructure backlogs in schools in terms of access to water, sanitation, and electricity. ASIDI is funded by the Schools Infrastructure Backlog Grant which is managed by the national Department of Basic Education.

The ASIDI Master List is available on the website of the national Department of Basic Education (DBE) and lists all the schools identified for support through ASIDI.³ The name and location (district and province) of the school can also be found on the Master List. While the Master List is produced and published, it is not updated regularly (the current list is dated October 6, 2014).

Implementing agents (such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa and Independent Development Trust) manage the planning and implementation of school infrastructure. This is funded through both ASIDI and the EIG. Each school is allocated an implementing agent which contracts and manages the professional service providers (such as consultants) and contractors for the school infrastructure projects.

The Education Facilities Management System (EFMS) is used to monitor infrastructure projects funded through ASIDI. For each project (school), the name of the implementing agent, the name of the contractor, the planned infrastructure (scope of the work), the allocated budget, progress with expenditure, and whether the project has been completed are all captured on the EFMS. This information is therefore produced. However, it is not published and can only be accessed by the DBE, implementing agents, and principal agents such as architectural firms or quantity surveyors.

The National Education Infrastructure Management System (NEIMS) is a database maintained by DBE that aims to host comprehensive data on school infrastructure⁴. NEIMS provides information on physical facilities, basic services, learning material and equipment. The most recent NEIMS report is dated 2009.

THE EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

The Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG) is a conditional grant from the DBE to the provinces. It is intended to fund the construction, maintenance, and refurbishment of school infrastructure

For all provincial EIG-funded education infrastructure projects, the name of the school and the name of the municipality where it is located are shown in an appendix to each provincial government's budget documents. The budget allocated to each project for each of the three years of the applicable Medium Term Expenditure Framework period is also shown in this appendix. This information is, however, often incomplete and inaccurate.

Each month the provincial education departments are required to report the progress on their infrastructure projects to the relevant provincial treasury and the transferring department (DBE). The provincial Infrastructure Reporting Model (IRM) is used for capturing all this information.

³ The ASIDI Master List is available at <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=DZ1z15SUJ%2f8%3d&tabid=613&mid=2033> Accessed on 5 September 2015.

⁴ The NEIMS is available at <http://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=p8%2F3b6jxko0%3D&tabid=358&mid=1263> Accessed on 5 September 2015.

For each school infrastructure project, the names of the implementing agent and contractor, the planned infrastructure, the allocated budget, the expenditure for previous years, as well as whether the work has been completed are all recorded in the IRM. IRM reports are produced monthly but not published.