

Media Statement

For immediate release

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SALGA introduces Municipal Barometer to evaluate effectiveness of different government programs and policies to address imbalances

<http://www.municipalbarometer.co.za>

The Municipal Barometer is web-based portal established to collect, re-package and disseminate local level data for municipalities. It was developed to provide easy access to municipal level data for both specialist and non-specialist audiences. End-users and members of the media will be able to benchmark, correlate, analyse and present quality graphics and tables using a few clicks from SALGA's website where the barometer is located. Data can either be presented on screen or exported to popular file formats such as word documents and excel spread sheets. The members of the media are advised to make use of the municipal barometer to better understand the local government environment.

The need for local level data in South Africa has increased tremendously in the 22 years since a democratically elected government was put in place. Drivers for the increasing demand include: (1) the need to address the imbalances inherited during the apartheid era; (2) the need to properly evaluate the effectiveness of different government programs and policies in addressing these imbalances; and (3) the need to track general life circumstances for the population of South Africa.

However, more often than not, there have been discontent amongst planners at lower levels at municipal level that there is lack of adequate data to support informed decision making, proper programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. While different government departments and private research organizations collect some of these data, there has been no concerted effort to bring them together in one portal where they are made readily available and accessible to whoever may want to use them whenever they want to.

SALGA has filled this gap through the Municipal Barometer web portal and, as indicated above, has pre-determined a list of over 200 indicators are compiled regularly and disaggregated to the lowest possible geographical level necessary for development planning and service delivery (e.g. ward). These indicators are grouped into 9 broad areas covering: (1) demographics; (2) economic growth and development; (3) access to basic services; (4) access to social services; (5) environmental issues; (6) municipal finance; (7) governance and accountability; (8) municipal planning; and (9) municipal capacity. Altogether, these indicators provide the necessary tools for holistic evidence-based policy development, planning and program implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The primary objectives of the Municipal Barometer are as follows to: (1) improve municipal governance and performance by equipping municipal officers with the necessary information they need for planning, implementing and monitoring projects; (2) provide time series data for selected municipal indicators (3) provide municipalities and their stakeholders easy access to wide ranging local level data; (4) to build the capacity of municipalities to locate, access, interpret and utilize data for planning, budgeting and governance processes and (5) provide benchmarks and facilitate peer learning (7) inform SALGA dialogues on issues affecting municipalities.

The tool can be used as a lobby and advocacy instrument. Councillors can use the information during council meetings to plan and direct services to under developed areas within their jurisdictions as well as to engage other stakeholders across the spheres of government on issues that need attention. Sector departments can use the information from Municipal Barometer to direct services where they are most needed.

In addition, the tool further promotes transparency and accountability between municipalities and communities. Communities as well as civil society organisation can easily download the information and have a healthy and informed discussions when they engage with their municipalities or local representatives.

SALGA will be publishing, on a regular basis, a series of issues on the Municipal Barometer findings. The Municipal Barometer is accessible via www.municipalbarometer.co.za.

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