

# When Service Delivery Runs Dry: Gift of the Givers and Water Provision in the Makana Municipality

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## Abstract

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can play a role in public service delivery in contexts where the state is unable to provide services reliably. This article details an attempt by an NGO to deliver services in collaboration with local government: the case of the NGO Gift of the Givers and its role in water provision during the 2019 water crisis in the Makana Municipality, South Africa. We highlight some problems that arose with this partnership, leading us to suggest caution regarding the possibility of NGOs effectively providing water-related services. We conclude that NGOs may be well suited to providing short-term relief but are less well-equipped for the provision of longer-term water services. We also highlight some of the ways in which politics and public relations concerns can interfere with NGOs' ability to deliver services like water. Finally, the article underlines the importance of clarity and transparency in collaborations between NGOs and the state.

**Keywords:** service delivery; NGOs; water; Gift of the Givers; public-private partnership

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## Introduction

This paper assesses the viability of non-governmental service provision as a solution to South Africa's service delivery deficits. In a context where the state is unable to reliably provide public goods, we ask what role non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can play in addressing such deficits. The paper focuses specifically on the case of the NGO, Gift of the Givers, and its role in water provision in the Makana Municipality of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. In 2019, Gift of the Givers began to play a prominent role in supplying water to the citizens of Makana Municipality. Its arrival was met with enthusiasm, and various commentators expressed hope that the NGO could help resolve the municipality's water issues (Evans 2019; MacLennan 2019). However, within a few months, the Gift of the Givers announced that it was leaving the city after dissatisfaction with a decision, apparently by the Department of Water and Sanitation, to pay private contractors for work the Gift of the Givers claimed to have done (Nowicki 2019a; SABC News 2019). Our study explores what happened and what this experience tells us about the viability of NGO involvement in service delivery in general and water provision in particular.

The paper begins with an overview of the literature on the role of NGOs in the provision of public goods. This is followed by an introduction to the Makana Municipality context and the NGO Gift of the Givers. The third section of the paper reports on our findings related to the Gift of the Givers, highlighting the reasons for the breakdown in the relationship between the municipality and the NGO and pointing to some challenges relating to NGO involvement in service delivery.

## The Role of NGOs in Service Delivery: A Review of the Literature

The non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector has been increasing worldwide since the early 1990s and continues to grow in terms of activism and provision of services (Lloyd 2005; Rajabi et al. 2021; Werker and Ahmed 2008). The NGO sector includes a diverse range of organisations, but the term NGO is usually used to refer to private, non-profit organisations with a focus on service delivery, social welfare, and policy influence. In the Global South, NGOs have taken on significant roles in the delivery of services that are typically provided by governments in wealthier countries, such as education and health care.

Over the last few decades, there has been increasing interest in the role that non-state actors, such as NGOs, can play in service delivery, often in partnership with governments. Service delivery is the provision of basic needs and services such as electricity, water and sanitation, land, housing, and infrastructure (Reddy 2016,1). These services are typically provided by local government, but the responsibility for service delivery also lies with provincial and national governments. In South Africa, there has been much debate and dissatisfaction in relation to the topic of service delivery

(Reddy 2016,1). This dissatisfaction is evidenced by South Africa's regular "service-delivery protests" (Alexander 2010; Booysen 2007).

NGOs' participation in service delivery can take many forms and involve collaboration with local, regional, and national governments, as well as other non-state actors such as private-sector infrastructure providers, international aid organisations, and self-help groups. In some contexts, NGOs replace the government in terms of service delivery, while in other contexts, they play a supportive role to governments (Rajabi et al. 2021; Werker and Ahmed 2008).

Some authors argue that NGOs and governments can have constructive, mutually beneficial relationships. For example, in the context of responding to disasters, Coston (1998) and Hosseinpourtehrani et al. (2022) argue that NGOs and governments should not be seen as being in direct conflict or rivalry with one another. Instead, the increasing complexity of disasters and the government's inability to manage them alone can allow for interdependency. According to Nelson-Núñez (2018), Brass (2016), and Henderson (2002), despite the various challenges faced by NGOs, they can be effective service delivery providers and advocates of social and political change and are critical actors in meeting the needs of individuals in developing areas.

One prominent way in which NGOs can get involved in service delivery is through public-private partnerships (PPP). PPPs allow for public services to be delivered through a partnership between private and public actors in which both actors play a role in the development of products and services and share risks, costs and resources (Broadbent and Laughlin 2003; Van Ham and Koppenjan 2001). Some of the existing debates surrounding PPPs relate to how they rose to prominence as a result of international pressure in favour of decentralisation and privatisation (Miraftab 2004; Bond 2000; George 1997). The rise of neoliberalism, with its emphasis on limited government intervention, the free market and individual responsibility, facilitated the popularity of PPPs (Bayliss 2003; Cavill 2009; Mathekganye 2020; Miraftab 2004; Narsiah 2008; Robertson et al. 2012). However, while PPPs can be linked to neoliberal arguments in favour of minimising the role of the state, PPPs are also favoured by those who believe that non-governmental organisations, small-scale enterprises and community organisations have a valuable and potentially empowering role to play in communities. The participation of NGOs in the provision of public services is often seen as more valuable than provision by for-profit actors because NGOs are thought to be motivated by a desire to assist the disadvantaged rather than to make a profit (Besley and Ghatak 2017, 358).

Partnerships between governments and NGOs operate differently from partnerships between governments and businesses. NGOs that rely on government funding may engage in PPPs to acquire such funding and place a significant emphasis on ensuring a good relationship with their government funders in the hope of continued funding and do so for the benefit of the communities in which they work (Gazley and Brudney 2007;

Ginsburg 2012). Such partnerships can take numerous forms, and there may be multiple reasons for collaborating, such as service delivery, poverty alleviation, human rights promotion, and environmental issues. Some concerns have been raised about power relations and trust within such partnerships (Batley 2006). Many states feel ambivalent towards NGOs and seek to control them, causing a power dynamic which minimises the role of NGOs in decision-making processes (Riddell and Robinson 1995; Baruah 2007; Brass 2016). The ways in which collaboration can take place in the NGO-government dynamic differ quite significantly between the Global North and the Global South. NGOs in some Global South countries may have greater control and autonomy, making the partnership more reliant on NGO leadership (Besley and Ghatak 2017; Bano 2019). However, in wealthier countries, governments are more likely to be the dominant partners in the partnership.

According to Mcloughlin (2011, 245), the collaboration of NGOs and government is vital at all levels of government, but the connections that are developed at the various levels of government differ from each other (Mcloughlin 2011, 245). When looking at the collaboration of NGOs and governments at a local level, such as in our study, the nature of the collaboration can have evident effects on outcomes related to service delivery (Nelson-Núñez and Cartwright 2018). Careful collaboration between local governments and NGOs is necessary for minimising duplication of efforts and creating capacity (Nelson-Núñez and Cartwright 2018).

As demonstrated in the above literature review, there is considerable scholarly interest in the question of whether and how NGOs can play a role in service delivery. Scholarly discussions of NGO involvement in service delivery include accounts of successful NGO and government collaborations; however, the focus is mainly on the health and education sector, with little focus on water and sanitation (Batley 2006; Batley and Rose 2011; Lewis et al. 2016; Wanna 2010). Our study contributes to this literature by exploring how one NGO, the Gift of the Givers, got involved in the delivery of water in the Makana Municipality in the Eastern Cape. This study highlights some of the challenges that arise when NGOs step into a service-delivery role, with a particular focus on the provision of water.

## Background: The Makana Municipality and the Gift of the Givers

The focus region of the research is the Makana Municipality, specifically the town of Makhanda, which is the largest town within the municipality. Makhanda is situated in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Makhanda is a small city of about 65 square kilometres, with the entire Makana Municipality having a population of 97,815 people (StatsSA 2022). Chapter 7 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, section 152 (1) states that the objective of local government is to secure the sustainable provision of services to communities. According to the Constitution, local government consists of municipalities that must attempt to attain such objectives within their monetary and administrative capacity. However, the Makana Municipality has been

accused of failing to provide consistent and adequate services to the residents of Makhanda, specifically the provision of water, due to a lack of maintenance of water treatment plants and an ongoing drought that led to low water capacity in the dams (MacLennan 2019; Palm 2019). A complicating factor is that Makhanda's water system is divided into two because of apartheid spatial planning (Hallowes and Munnik 2019). Reliable water provision has been a problem on both sides, with dire consequences for the town. Hoefnagels et al. (2022) describe Makhanda as a "city under threat" due to a dysfunctional local municipality that has presided over the deterioration of infrastructure and the inconsistent provision of services. While Makhanda has its particular issues in relation to water provision, it should be noted that similar challenges are faced by other South African municipalities.

In 2019, during a drought, the situation came to a head, and the water crisis in Makhanda began to gain more attention (Nowicki 2019b; Pather 2019). This study will focus on the specific period between February 2019 and May 2019, during which the Gift of the Givers intervened in response to this crisis. Gift of the Givers is a disaster relief NGO founded in 1992 in South Africa by Dr Imtiaz Sooliman. The NGO works in South Africa and throughout the rest of the African continent. On the 12th of February 2019, Gift of the Givers arrived in Makhanda in the Eastern Cape to help alleviate the water crisis. At the time, residents were going without water for up to two weeks and, when they did receive water, they complained that the quality of the water was poor (Nowicki 2019a). The Gift of the Givers assessed the water crisis and concluded it to be far worse than initially assumed. The organisation began distributing bottled water, installing community water tanks and drilling boreholes. According to a media report, this was all done through a verbal agreement with the municipality (Du Plessis 2019). While the Gift of the Givers' arrival was greeted with much attention, mostly positive, within a few months, the organisation had withdrawn from the town (Evans 2019). Gift of the Givers reportedly decided to withdraw its project after an incident occurred on 27 April 2019, when the organisation was asked to remove its trucks by the Department of Water and Sanitation, as they stated there is no water crisis in Makhanda (Singh 2019). The organisation only fully withdrew from Makhanda on 15 May 2019, when Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, the founder of the organisation, announced that the organisation would be leaving the town and taking their water trucks, filtration systems, and water tanks that they had brought to Makhanda (MacLennan and Cleary, 2019). According to various reports, Gift of the Givers was unhappy about not being compensated for work that it had done and withdrew from Makhanda only three months after its arrival (Du Plessis 2019; Hallowes and Munnik, 2019).

## Research Goals and Methodology

This incident serves as an example of a failed attempt at collaboration between an NGO and a municipality in the provision of water. Using this case, our study explores whether and how NGOs can be involved in successful service delivery provision. The overall objective of the study is to understand to what extent NGOs can be effectively involved

in addressing service delivery deficits in South Africa. More specifically, we set out to determine to what extent Gift of the Givers was able to help ameliorate water-related service-delivery deficits through a partnership with the Makana Municipality.

In order to answer our research questions, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders, including community leaders, local water experts, and a representative of Gift of the Givers. We also set out to interview a representative from the Makana Municipality. However, after numerous attempts to secure such an interview, we excluded any official response from the municipality as no interview was granted. However, we have included official statements from the municipality where possible (see Makana Municipality 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). This study adheres to Rhodes University's ethical guidelines for academic research, and ethical clearance was obtained from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee (approval number 2023-7290-7695).

## Results and Discussion

NGOs are a prominent presence in South Africa and play a key role in many sectors. Our study explores whether and how NGOs can get involved in delivering services in the context of service delivery failure. The Gift of the Givers is one of South Africa's most prominent NGOs. In an interview with the organisation's strategic partnerships director, Badrealam Kazi (interview 2023), he emphasised the importance of NGOs, saying:

NGOs play a massive part in the landscape of delivering essential services, whether it be in the health space, the food security space, [or] education. NGOs are essentially indispensable and with the new dispensation coming into South Africa almost thirty years ago, the gaps in our society [were] obvious to see ... South Africa was a country at that time that needed NGOs in all stratas of societies in the entire landscape to serve communities [which] all of a sudden expected the rainbow nation to deliver on its promise and the only way that facilitation could happen was through people with know-how.

Kazi further stated that today, the South African government still cannot cope with the gap between rich and poor, and so he believes that NGOs will be needed in the long term to assist in creating a more equitable society (Badrealam Kazi, interview, 2023). His comments emphasise the central role that NGOs have come to play in South Africa. But what are some of the complexities that arise with NGO involvement, particularly in something as vital and complicated as the provision of water? This is what we sought to find out.

The residents of the Makana Municipality are not unfamiliar with water scarcity, and water availability has been a major issue within the Makana region due to frequent droughts over the years. The most recent drought was in 2019, during which time the district of which Makana forms part was designated as a local state of disaster in

accordance with the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (Ngqakamba 2019). However, the drought was not the only reason for water scarcity in Makhanda at this time; it was also due to poor infrastructure and a lack of maintenance by the Makana Municipality (Pather 2019).

After several media reports had drawn attention to the water situation in Makhanda, Gift of the Givers arrived in Makhanda on 12 February 2019, with several trucks carrying bottled water (Cleary 2019). The organisation handed out five-litre bottles of water to residents who had gathered outside the City Hall upon their arrival (Cleary 2019; Kota interview, 2023). For the next few days, Gift of the Givers continued to distribute clean, potable water to local and rural communities (MacLennan and Cleary 2019). Gift of the Givers' geologist Gideon Groenewald presented the Makana Municipality with potential relief options for the drought, one of which included drilling boreholes, which was presented as a medium- to long-term solution (Somdyala 2019). Reportedly, the municipality agreed to the drilling of boreholes, which would commence once the drilling rig arrived in Makhanda (Cleary, 2019). According to a statement given by Gift of the Givers, it would cost the organisation approximately R23 million to commence the proposed rescue plan to resolve the water issues, and it informed the municipality that this plan would require government funding as such costs exceeded what the NGO had available (MacLennan and Cleary 2019; SABC News 2019). Gift of the Givers was apparently assured that when the municipality received the funding they were allocated due to Makana being designated a disaster area, they would reimburse Gift of the Givers for some of its costs (MacLennan and Cleary 2019; SABC News 2019).

The Makana Municipality (2019b) reported on 20 February that the Gift of the Givers team, led by Dr Gideon Groenewald, had begun drilling boreholes. Gift of the Givers installed 15 boreholes and several JoJo tanks (which collect and store water) and provided ample amounts of bottled water (MacLennan and Cleary 2019; Kazi 2023; Machanick 2023). While this was a very energetic start to their involvement, problems soon began to arise.

### **Short-term Disaster Assistance Versus Long-term Service Provision**

Stakeholders interviewed for this research raised some concerns about Gift of the Givers' interventions. One concern relates to the difference between short-term and long-term interventions. During an interview conducted with Makana Residents Association (MRA) former chair, Philip Machanick, he said:

[Gift of the Givers] brought a few truckloads of bottled water, which is a short-term fix. They drilled a number of boreholes, but [whether] those actually got put to use is still a bit of a mystery to me because this, to some extent, relied on other players getting their act together, like the municipality and the university (Philip Machanick, interview, 2023).

He commented further that the kind of work that the NGO was typically involved with may have meant that it was not well-equipped to assist in the case of the water crisis in the Makana Municipality. According to Machanick:

Gift of the Givers [is] primarily a disaster relief organisation, and so they come in when things need a rapid response, and that is what they did. They also didn't get as much cooperation from the government as they could have thought. [There were] some disputes over who was going to pay for certain things and so on, you know, so you know they as an organisation moved on to other things. They go to war zones, you know, if there's a major flood or any kind of other disaster, they put a lot of work into assisting farmers in drought areas, for example, so they don't stay focused in one area for a long time, it's not what they do.

Another interviewee, Dr Jane Tanner from Rhodes University Institute for Water Research (IWR), described the Gift of the Givers' presence in Makhanda as a whirlwind (Tanner, interview 2023). She stated that the organisation came in and rushed to install boreholes and put in water treatment works and then left the town very quickly. This caused concerns about the sustainability and longevity of their work. She pointed out that their initiatives were not taken up in the long term (Tanner, interview 2023). NGOs' timeframes are often shorter than those of governments. This is especially the case with disaster relief organisations such as Gift of the Givers, which typically only provide short-term relief, whereas water provision is a long-term project.

### **Capacity and Effectiveness**

A related concern raised by some of those interviewed for this study is that some of the interventions put in place by the Gift of the Givers were not as effective as was initially hoped. According to community leaders interviewed for this study, many of the boreholes that were drilled by Gift of the Givers were not put into use either due to the incorrect placement of the boreholes or an over-reliance on the municipality to maintain the boreholes during a time when the municipality was unable to manage existing infrastructure.

Gift of the Givers drilled one of the boreholes at a local secondary school. It was hoped that this borehole would provide the school and its surroundings with water. However, according to Dr Jane Tanner from the IWR, while the borehole produced high volumes of water, it was of very poor quality because the borehole had been drilled in an area where the water is not suitable for human consumption without treatment (Tanner, interview 2023). Nevertheless, the surrounding community welcomed the drilling of the borehole as the residents had access to water that they had not previously had (Tanner, interview 2023). According to Gift of the Givers' strategic partnerships director, Kazi (interview, 2024), the purpose of the boreholes was not principally to provide potable water but to assist and serve other uses, such as for maintaining gardens and ecosystems, as well as for use by micro businesses for various purposes.



As discussed earlier, NGOs often step in to provide services where the local government is unable or unwilling to do so effectively (Rajabi et al. 2021; Werker and Ahmed 2008). But, as our study suggests, some of the services expected from local government are not very easily taken over by NGOs. In the case of the Makana water crisis of 2019, it seems that some factors that led to the crisis were a prolonged drought, a lack of funding, and municipal instability or incapacity (Badrealam Kazi, interview 2023; Hoefnagels et al. 2022). But can an NGO step in effectively in such a situation? In response to questions about non-governmental service provision, MRA former chair Machanick expressed some reservations:

Unless you can fix all of those problems which you know relates to all the parts of the system – the raw water supply, the treatment, the way it gets fed throughout the system, controlling usage if there's a demand higher than the supply and so on – you're going to have endless problems and it's not something that NGOs can easily fix other than by putting pressure on government to get their act together because they [NGOs] can't run the water plants.

Another interviewee, ward councillor Geoff Embling (interview 2023), gave a similar argument, saying that there is only so much that an NGO can do, and that collaboration between the NGO and the municipality in providing services is vital. Both NGOs and the state need to be accountable for the various responsibilities and roles they need to play within the collaboration (McLoughlin 2011, 247). According to Embling:

[NGOs] only do little bits and pieces, so the whole place is still falling apart, and NGOs can't do the most important things: water, first of all, delivering water, [the] most important thing (Geoff Embling, interview, 2023).

Various authors allude to the inequalities and dissatisfaction with South African local municipalities regarding water, specifically within rural communities (Pamla and Thondhlana 2022; Ohwo 2019; Morinville 2012). Commentators suggest that in some contexts, local government actors are not able to guarantee reliable access to water (Adams et al. 2020; Morinville 2012; Mathekganye 2020). In such contexts, citizens might look to NGOs to step in and provide such services, but as shown above, NGOs may also lack such capacity.

## **Politics and Public Relations**

Another set of concerns raised by those who witnessed the Gift of the Givers' intervention relates to the way in which NGOs may give priority to intervening in ways that enhance their national or international standing rather than focusing on practical and less visible forms of intervention. Community activist Ayanda Kota (interview, 2023) suggested that Gift of the Givers prioritised their media appearance rather than focusing on the needs of the community. He also claimed that while water was given out in various key points in the township, most of the bottled water was distributed in publicly visible places such as the Makana City Hall (Kota, interview 2023). According to Kota, he and many municipal officials were shocked when they heard that Gift of the

Givers was demanding to be paid in the media. Indeed, Makana Municipality (2019c) issued a statement stating that they were surprised by the demand for payment. They stated that at the time of the Gift of the Givers' intervention, they were still "awaiting clarity from the National Department of Water and Sanitation around the status of our appeal for drought relief" and were therefore unsure about the nature of such relief and how it could be used. According to the municipality, they "played open cards with Gift of the Givers and all parties went into the project with their eyes wide open – the priority was providing relief to the residents of Makana" (Makana Municipality 2019c).

The Gift of the Givers' intervention happened at an extremely fast pace with a large amount of very positive media coverage, but arguably with insufficient consultation with various stakeholders and with a lack of clarity about what the NGO was doing for free and what would require compensation.

### **Challenges Related to Partnership and Collaboration**

As touched on above, the assistance given by NGOs, and particularly disaster relief organisations, is often short-term and unsustainable. One way in which it could be more sustainable is through formal public-private partnerships (PPP). There are many ways in which PPPs can function; however, it is generally advised that there should be an explicit agreement on the role each partner must play in the partnership, which should be outlined in a contract with a reporting structure stipulating who must report to whom (Broadbent and Laughlin 2003; Van Ham and Koppenjan 2001). The collaboration between Gift of the Givers and the municipality did not involve a clear contract in place, but rather a verbal agreement. This was partly due to the sense of urgency to address a crisis, but the lack of a formal partnership agreement began to cause issues almost immediately. According to Kazi, the lack of a formal agreement was also due to the political instability of the municipality at the time and the frequent change in municipal managers (Badrealam Kazi, interview 2023).

Kazi's account of how the Gift of the Givers came to Makhanda is as follows:

Gift of the Givers came in at the request of people in Makhanda at the time. There were individuals and institutions in Makhanda at the time who said you guys [Gift of the Givers] have some sort of track record, you guys ... were involved in drought activities elsewhere and maybe the same expertise could resolve what was a disaster. The situation then slowly started resolving itself around our intervention, so then we got all the major players to take a part and of course there was lots of media attention and from there, certain other things that ought to be done in the first place all those things started being put in place (Badrealam Kazi 2023).

According to Kazi, there was a great demand from the community for the Gift of the Givers' help in alleviating the water crisis in Makhanda. However, tensions soon arose between Gift of the Givers and the Makana Municipality regarding payment for the work done by Gift of the Givers. The fact that there was no written agreement

exacerbated the tensions and made them difficult to resolve (Badrealam Kazi, interview 2023; Maclellan and Cleary 2019).

On Wednesday, 15 May 2019, Gift of the Givers released an official statement indicating that it had been notified about a new company that had been commissioned to assist with the water crisis and that Gift of the Givers had not been reimbursed for any of the expenses that it had been promised (Maclellan and Cleary 2019; Singh 2019). According to media reports, Dr Sooliman gave a statement saying the Department of Water and Sanitation would pay an estimated ten million rand in taxpayers' money to other companies for work that had already been done by Gift of the Givers (Singh 2019; Maclellan and Cleary 2019). This angered the Gift of the Givers as the organisation felt as though other companies were getting paid for the work that y it did, while it would not get paid at all.

Moppo Mene, the Makana municipal manager at the time, stated that there seemed to be a misunderstanding and that he was shocked at Gift of the Givers' withdrawal (Maclellan and Cleary 2019; see also Makana Municipality 2019c). He said he hoped to clarify any misunderstandings with the organisation. Mene further clarified that the municipality had not appointed any other contractors but that Gibb Consulting, an engineering company, had been sourced to conduct an underground water study (Singh 2019; Maclellan and Cleary 2019). Mene stated that the municipality had to ensure the Municipal Finance Management Act was upheld in allocating funding to any partners (Makana Municipality 2019c).

Community members were left unsure about the reasons for the breakdown in the relationship between Gift of the Givers and the municipality. Local activist Kota reported that the community of Makhandia did not fully understand the nature of the tension between Gift of the Givers and the Municipality. He said that the organisation came in and helped the community and then started claiming that it was owed substantial amounts of money, which was confusing to him (Ayanda Kota, interview, 2023). These comments reveal the disappointment that many stakeholders felt when the partnership broke down and emphasise the importance of clear and transparent agreements being made before NGOs partner with government actors.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

While the arrival of Gift of the Givers in Makhandia was met with enthusiasm, ultimately, its involvement in providing water services was unsuccessful. One reason for this lack of success has to do with the nature of the NGO itself. As noted above, the Gift of the Givers is a disaster relief organisation, so it responds quickly and effectively to emergencies but may be less well-suited to longer-term interventions. However, this may not be the case with all NGOs. A second issue that undermined the success of its intervention had to do with capacity and effectiveness. The management of water infrastructure is not a task that easily lends itself to NGO intervention. A third issue

relates to politics and public relations. NGOs may, at times, prioritise actions that improve their visibility and credibility with national and international audiences, but this can undermine their ability to do the quieter and more complex work that is needed to provide effective service delivery. Finally, our study suggests that partnerships between NGOs and government actors require explicit and clear agreements. Without such agreements, it is easy for misunderstandings or misrepresentations to occur, as appears to have been the case in the partnership between Gift of the Givers and the Makana Municipality. Tension arose between Gift of the Givers, the Makana Municipality, and the Department of Water and Sanitation as there was no formal contract in place, and so the roles that needed to be played by each actor were blurred, and there was no payment plan in writing.

In conclusion, the study suggests caution regarding the viability of looking to NGOs to address South Africa's service delivery deficits. Where NGOs and municipalities do collaborate to provide services, our study suggests that such collaboration should take the form of a structured and transparent public-private partnership, which would lead to more reliable and consistent cooperation between government and NGOs as opposed to informal collaborations between these two parties.

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