**Promoting Credible Elections and
Democratic Governance in Africa**

**DEMOCRATIC LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN
SOUTH AFRICA: A CRITICAL
REVIEW**

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Introduction

Since the historic 1994 national elections, South Africa has held three successful local government elections, the most recent of these being held in 2006. In the run-up to these elections however, the country witnessed a plethora of protests. Chief among the factors that triggered these protests included the poor state of service delivery and the incorporation of various municipalities into new provinces. These incidents afforded opposition parties with an opportunity to make inroads and capitalise on the ostensibly disenchanted electorate.

This paper discusses and provides historical and contemporary challenges confronting local government in South Africa against the backdrop of the 2006 elections. Following this introductory discussion, the next section outlines local government structures. This is followed by a sketchy historical expose of local government elections. We then introduce the complex relationship between traditional leadership and local government structures prior to discussing service delivery at local government level. Thereafter, an examination of party manifestos during the 2006 elections is undertaken. The challenges for new local authorities are then elaborated followed by highlights concerning gender issues in local government. Last, but not least the paper concludes the discussion by

summing up the main argument and offering some recommendations for the improved effectiveness and efficiency of local government authorities.

Local Government Structures in Perspective

Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people. It is concerned with people's basic needs such as water, sanitation and transport. Throughout the world it is generally accepted that for local government to be efficient and transparent there is a need for strong political leadership[1]. Increased accountability ensures that the actions of the council reflect the aspirations of the community, increases the legitimacy of the council and deepens local democracy[2]. However, it is a known fact that the post-apartheid government of South Africa had the enormous task of having to deal with the inequalities of the past. The new government, amongst other things had to eradicate policies designed to segregate and economically exclude the majority. At the local government level, South Africa consists of three types of municipalities. These are Category A Municipalities- Metropolitan Councils, Category B Municipalities- Local Councils and Category C Municipalities- Districts Councils.

In a nutshell, Category A is a metropolitan area that consists of a large urban conurbation with extensive business and industrial activity. The country has six metropolitan councils under Category A namely: Johannesburg, Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), Ekurhuleni (formerly East Rand), Ethekwini, Nelson Mandela (formerly Port Elizabeth) and City of

Cape Town. On the other hand there are Local Councils that fall under Category B. Local councils fall outside the jurisdiction of metropolitan councils, but within the area of jurisdiction of the third category of municipalities, namely the Category C District Councils[3]. Following these introductory remarks, the next section provides a historical background to local government elections in South Africa.

History of the Local Government Elections in South Africa

The first ever all-race inclusive local government elections took place in 1995/96. These elections came a year after the country had started its transition process through the historic national elections of 1994. The socio-economic and political injustices of the previous regime meant that the new structures of local government lacked sufficient capacity and thus became fragile. Nonetheless, local authorities had to be elected and turn into reality the aspirations of the national government. As was the case with the national elections of 1994, the local government elections took place under conditions conducive to best electoral practice.

The 2000 local elections also signalled the steady consolidation of democracy at the local level. However, what is remarkable about the 2000 elections is the PR electoral gap that exited between the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC) and its closest competitors. Table 1 (below) clearly depicts this fact.

Compared to the 1995/96 local government elections, the ANC increased its dominance from 58

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[1] The Encyclopaedia of Democracy; Vol III, 1984
[2] http://www.dplg.gov.za/documents

[3] Handbook on Legislation and Regulations for South Africa's Local Government Election 2006

percent to 59.4 percent in 2000. Then known as the Democratic Party, the DA captured 21.5 percent in the first local government elections. However, in the 2000 local government elections, the newly formed DA (an amalgamation of the Democratic Party, the New National Party; and the Federal Alliance) took 22.1 percent of the votes, including small but significant gains among black voters, to emerge as the major opposition bloc[4]. Both the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO) performed dismally in both elections (see table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of the 1995/96 & 2000 Local Government Election Results

% of PR Vote		
Political Party	**1995/96 Results**	**2000 Results**
ANC	58	59.4
DA	21.5	22.1
IFP	8.7	9.1
UDM	-	2.6
PAC	1.2	1.3
ACDP	0.8	1.2
UCDP	-	1
MF	0.4	0.3
AZAPO	-	0.3
VF/FF	2.7	0.1

Source: **http://www.eisa.org.za/WEP/southafrica.htm**

Having drawn lessons from the 1995/96 local elections, an effort to make local government more manageable and accessible was made by government. It came as no surprise when the Municipal Demarcation Board was established on 1 February 1999 under the chairmanship of Dr. Michael Sutcliffe, the Municipal Manger of the eThekwini Municipality. The Municipal Demarcation Board drastically reduced the number of municipalities in all nine provinces between the two elections. The board took cognisance institutional and financial capacities of

provinces. The *South Africa Survey 2001/2002* asserts that the restructuring of municipalities was influenced by two broad objectives. The first was to create more financially viable municipalities and secondly to make local government the focal point of delivery of essential basic services

Table 2 illustrates the provincial breakdown of the number of these municipalities.

Table 2: Provincial Breakdown of Municipalities in the 1995/96 & 2000 Local Government Elections

Province	1995/96	2000
Eastern Cape	182	45
Free State	100	25
Gauteng	51	15
Kwazulu-Natal	75	61
Mpumalanga	81	29
North-West	53	32
Northern Cape	112	31
Northern Province	53	32
Western Cape	136	30
Total	834	300

Source: http://www.demarcation.org.za

Table 2 clearly illustrates the drastic reduction of municipalities in the period between 1995/1996 and 2000. In the 1995/1996 local government elections, the number of municipalities stood at a phenomenal 834 while in 2000, the number dropped sharply to 300 municipalities. As a result of the delimitation of wards, only 3751 ward councillors were elected in 2000 as opposed to the 5952 in 1995/96[5]. This effectively meant that the number of councillors between 1995/95 and 2000 decreased from 11 386 to 8952 respectively. While the number of municipalities decreased in the period highlighted above, on the other hand there were other complex issues with which the government had to grapple including the tenuous relationship between traditional institutions and

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[4] *South African Survey* 2001/2002

[5] http://www.demarcation.org.za

local authorities. It is to this issue that the next section turns.

Traditional Leadership and Local Government

Traditional leaders play a crucial role in local governance. Their influence spreads across six of the nine South African provinces. There are about 10 000 traditional chieftains in South Africa who exercise a substantial influence and material patronage over communal tribal land[6] Depending on the particular provinces, chieftaincy or kingship is commonly practiced in Kwazulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, the North-West and Limpopo. However, there has been a degree of tension between the national government and the traditional leadership institution on various issues. Chief among these, and the one that has had a direct impact on local government elections, is the issue of new municipal boundaries. There have been cases where these new municipal boundaries cut across traditional tribal land. This had led to accusations that traditional leaders are never consulted on issues specifically relating to the well-being of their communities. Traditional authorities had always exercised local government powers prior to 1994. The creation of local municipalities in areas traditionally ruled by chiefs therefore, would amount to removing their powers, and affect their role in allocating land[7].

However, this confusion on the role of traditional leadership in local governance was noted as early as 1997 through the publication of the *Green Paper on Local Government.* This happened in aftermath of consultations

between national government and the House of Traditional Leaders[8]. Some of the critical issues which have emerged during consultation, and which require further consideration, are as folows:

- There is often confusion and misunderstanding regarding the role and functions of elected councillors and traditional leaders, particularly with respect to the delivery of services.
- Some traditional authorities and municipalities lack infrastructure, capacity and funding. This places severe constraints on rural development initiatives.
- There is often a lack of effective day to day communication between municipal councils and traditional authorities. Mechanisms must be created and maintained to enable traditional leadership and municipalities to act jointly on issues of common concern, and for communication between the two to be enhanced[9].

Miscommunication between relevant stakeholders, including local government structures and tradition authorities has in the past created severe problems for local communities. Chief among these problems is the issue of service delivery. However, the problem of service delivery cannot be placed on miscommunication alone but on various factors such as corruption dearth of resources.

Service Delivery at Local Government Level

Ten years after the first democratic elections at the local level, satisfactory delivery of basic needs is yet to be fully achieved. Inevitably, this has been one of the root causal factors for

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[6] Venter, A. 2000. "Traditional African Leaders" in *Government and Politics in the New South Africa*.
[7] http://www.afrol.com

[8] *Government Green Paper on Local Government*, 1997
[9] Ibid

sporadic protests that have engulfed most of the country's provinces. Issues that emerged in most provinces include allegations that local authorities were pre-occupied with self-aggrandisement, government plans to incorporate certain municipalities into new provinces and the poor state of service delivery. Among the broad range of services provided by local government authorities included are the following:

- Local government shall be assigned such powers and functions as may be necessary to provide services for the maintenance and promotion of the well-being of all persons within its area of jurisdiction; and
- A local government shall, to the extent determined in any applicable law, make provision for access by all persons residing within its area of jurisdiction to water, sanitation, transportation facilities, electricity, primary health services, education, housing and security within a safe and healthy environment, provided that such services and amenities can be rendered in a sustainable manner and are financially and physically practicable[10].

Such issues became explicitly clear in the run-up to the 2006 local government elections. What is unfortunate, however, was the nature of protest in certain areas which culminated in sporadic incidents of violence.

Service delivery remains a key major challenge for the post-apartheid government. Subsection 152 (1) of the Constitution clearly stipulates the objectives of local government as follows:

- To provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;

- To ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- To promote social and economic development;
- To promote a safe and healthy environment; and
- To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government[11].

In the past ten years, there have been some remarkable strides made by the state. The government currently provides social grants to over nine million beneficiaries countrywide costing some R50-billion per annum. It has already provided water to the 10-millionth recipient, with 75% of the country receiving 6 000 litres of free basic water monthly[12]. However, all is not well with people at the grass root level. South Africa witnessed a plethora of protests on issues of service delivery in different parts of the country especially towards the end of 2004 and during the course of 2005. In 2006 alone there have been about 6000 service delivery protests across the country[13].

One of the major issues that sparked the sporadic incidents of violent protests is that of housing. Most of these occur in poverty-stricken communities. Even at his previous State of the Nation address, President Thabo Mbeki admitted that government needed to speed up the provision of decent housing with sanitation. Spontaneous protests occurred in Western Cape's various neighbourhoods such as Langa, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Happy Valley. Some of the protests were

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[10] South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

[11] Subsection 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
[12] http://www.southafrica.info
[13] Schlemmer, L & Smith, J. 2002. "Social Development" in *South Africa Survey* 2001/2002

reported to be a result of growing anger from"backyarders", residents who live in shacks in the backyards of their family or friends, while others were against the squalid conditions in the shantytowns[14]. It is reported that thereafter similar protests twere experienced in other surrounding areas as well[15].

The Gauteng's local government structures had to grapple with its own administrative problems. On 5 July 2004, approximately 3000 protesters marched on the streets of Diepsloot, a town to the northwest of Johannesburg, demanding that councillors be sacked for the substandard services delivered[16]. Although there were various protests over service delivery in some parts of Gauteng, notably in Soshanguve, the centre of attraction was the Merafong municipality. This is the municipality where Khutsong is located. The bone of contention in the matter was government's decision through the Demarcation Board to incorporate Merafong from Gauteng to North-West Province. This did not augur well with people of Khutsong who considered the latter province is being economically sound than the former. This, they believe will have dire consequences in terms of their basic service delivery needs.

Similar protests occurred in other parts of the country like Kwazulu-Natal. In 2005 some 5000 eThekwini residents held demonstrations. As was the case in the afore-mentioned provinces, residents demanded improved levels of service delivery. The march comprised of homeless people, informal settlers and municipal flat dwellers from across Durban[17]. In North-West Province, municipalities struggling with the provision of adequate service delivery were identified and placed under a national initiative entitled Project Consolidate[18].project Consolidate is the government initiative whose aim is to make local government work better for their communities. Briefly, the objectives of Project Consolidate are to provide:

- Training programmes designed to skill municipal employees to utilise recently acquired service delivery equipment;
- Human resources practitioners have been made available to assist with the tasks such as developing organisational structures that are responsive to the institutional and delivery challenges faced by a municipality;
- Assessing the skills and competencies of current staff compliments; and
- Legal skills to assist municipalities in terms labour related disputes which hamper delivery[19].

Northern Cape has also experienced protests on service delivery, although not to the extent experienced in other provinces. There is general resentment by the people of this province against the local authorities who are motivated more by self-enrichment than anything else. Corruption is rife and municipal officials are reported to be living exorbitant lifestyles while service delivery is neglected. The resignation of the suspended municipal manager of the Phokwane Municipality in Hartswater in January 2006, was a result of the alleged granting of vehicle loans to the value of R2 million to municipal officials without first

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[14] Williams, J. 2006. South Africa: *Election Update,* No.1
[15] ibid
[16] *South Africa Survey* 2001/2002
[17] Mottair, S. 2006. *South Africa, Local Government: Election Update*, No.1

[18] Chikulo, B & Mbao, M, 2006. *South Africa, Local Government*, *Election Update* No.2
[19] Speech by Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry Hon. BP. Sonjica at launch of Project Consolidate in the Free State

obtaining approval from the Council[20]. Such cases are very common in most municipalities throughout South Africa.

On the basis of the above examples, obviously service delivery is one of the biggest post-apartheid challenges facing the government. The issue is of such paramount importance that in the run-up to the 2006 local government elections, service delivery was a key focus in manifestos of all parties contesting the elections. The challenges posed above clearly illustrate the task that lies ahead. To offer new and fresh ideas on how to best drive local government, political parties produced manifestos.

The paper now focuses on these challenges together with issues addressed in the political party manifestos.

Party Manifestos During the 2006 Election

Political parties convey messages of party aims and objectives through their manifestos to potential voters. Through manifestos, parties then highlight critical aspects of governance that need to be prioritised. As is the norm with each election, political parties in South Africa created manifestos that clearly outlined and detailed the plan for the future. The paper now aims to interrogate the issues contained in the manifestos of the main political parties in the run-up to the March 2006 local government elections. It will become evident that most, if not all these manifestos agree on the various principles of local governance that include efficient service delivery, poverty eradication, unemployment and crime. The paper will exclusively

focus on the manifestos of the ANC, DA, UDM, IFP, ACDP and the ID.

ANC

The aim of the ANC in the 2006 local government election was to retain, if not increase its electoral dominance in South Africa at the local government level. Coupled with vicious electioneering, the ANC articulated their aims for local government in their manifesto. As is the norm, the ANC remarked in their opening manifesto message that the party has long been involved in the struggle for liberation. From the onset, the message of the ANC manifesto is clear: the struggle still continues for a "better life for all". Aptly entitled "A Plan to Make Local Government Work Better for You", the manifesto reflects on the successes of the ANC since in power. Amongst these are:

- More people than ever have access to clean water and have electricity in their homes;
- The economy is growing and is creating more jobs, enabling poverty reduction;
- Roads have been tarred and street lit for the first time;
- Local services such as waste removal have improved;
- Sporting and recreational facilities have been built;
- More South Africans have gained access to housing, land and education, and services in clinics are improving; and
- The government promotes the interests of children, persons with disability, youth, women and older people better than before[21].

The ANC used the above mentioned practical examples to their advantage. A picture of a struggle that was still continuing was successfully painted.

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[20] Harsant, A & Bauer, C. 2006. *South Africa: Election Update*.

[21] ANC 2006 Manifesto; "A Plan to Make Local Government Work Better For You".

The manifesto dealt with varying yet critical issues that included: poverty, the economy, skills development, health, service delivery and fairer distribution of land. On the other hand, it also highlighted the challenges facing the party. According to the manifesto, the party has identified a number of municipalities that need intensive hand-on support. In an effort to woo voters, the 2006 ANC Manifestos outlined its objectives as follows:

Accelerate service delivery so that:
- No community will still be using the bucket system for sanitation by 2007
- All communities will have access to clean water and decent sanitation by 2010
- All houses will have access to electricity by 2012; and
- There is universal provision of free basic services.
- Improve services at hospitals and clinics, schools, police stations and other government centres in our communities;
- Assist those who want to set up small businesses with skills, credit and other forms of support; and
- Implement large projects that will help create more work opportunities[22].

DA
The DA has proved to be a formidable opposition party in South Africa and it steadily increases its electoral position in each election. In its 2006 local government election manifesto, the DA takes a provocative stance that "the ANC has plunged local government into crisis[23]". Amongst the issues that it has with the ANC is "maladministration and corruption" in municipalities controlled by the latter.

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[22] Ibid
[23] 2006 DA Local Government Election Manifesto

Similarly to other parties, the DA's manifesto focuses on issues of service delivery, crime, health and poverty. For the 2006 elections, the DA promised to:
- Build well-run municipalities that provide quality services;
- Promote open and transparent local government that involves all citizens in the democratic decision-making process;
- Maximise the role of community policing forums and neighbourhood watch groups;
- Improve rural safety;
- Implement a housing plan that provides for community care facilities, emergency housing, shelters, transitional housing developments and community housing;
- Establish well co-ordinated municipal call centres in metropolitan areas and secondary cities to direct queries and deal with municipal emergencies;
- Pay special attention to the needs AIDS orphans, pensioners and the disabled;
- Employ competent financial management staff and implement effective financial management procedures;
- Ensure good management by strengthening independent accountability procedures and pressing for the creation of a municipal ombudsman or Public Protector for local government matters where the national Public protector is unable to perform this function; and
- Implement a twelve point plan that sets out guidelines for awarding tenders and contracts[24].

ACDP
The ACDP purports to stand for Christian and family values. For the 2006 local government elections, the

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[24] Ibid

ACDP's election manifesto promised to:

- Urgently resolve the housing backlog by employing those on the waiting list to help building their houses, in so doing restoring their dignity as new homeowners for which they have worked hard;
- Empower ward committees and sub-councils with authority to take financial decisions and deliver services to local communities;
- Prioritise expenditure on the building of new roads, major road networks and interchanges and the maintenance and upgrading of old roads that have been severely neglected in our democracy;
- Introduce an integrated approach, with full pre-trial services, as well as more courts, police stations, experienced police, prosecutors and court personnel, in order to address the serious problems facing the criminal justice system; and
- Investigate and implement necessary measures in order that all our people have sustainable access to their basic water needs[25].

UDM
The UDM also stated in its election manifesto its intention to focus on the following:
- Local job creation and poverty alleviation;
- Community-led development;
- Access to electricity;
- Adequate housing;
- Urban/Rural needs;
- Coordination with provincial and national services;
- Anti-corruption strategies;
- Accountability; and
- Health[26].

ID
In its 2006 election manifesto, the ID identified previous challenges and offered solution to remedy the problems at the local government level. The ID stated that its priority is job creation. The ID promised:
- Job creation through public works;
- Poverty eradication;
- Provision of basic services;
- Support for the age;
- Efficiently deal with HIV/AIDS;
- Human Security;
- Deal with crime,
- Anti-corruption;
- Education; and
- Land.

IFP
Under the leadership of Dr. Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the IFP's election manifesto pledged the following:
- To free local government of corruption;
- To serve the needs of the community;
- To ensure open, inclusive and participatory governance;
- To prioritise development in the area being represented and in the community generally;
- To promote job creation;
- To ensure the delivery of services;
- To promote poverty relief; and
- To establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure that IFP councillors abide by their pledge[27].

As evidenced by the above manifestos, it is clear that all of these political parties are in agreement on the challenges that face local government. It is clear that parties concur that unemployment, poverty, the provision of basic services, health, education, housing, corruption and security remain the core of local government.

Coupled with vicious electioneering, parties aimed to further drive forward the message contained in their

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[25] 2006 ACDP Election Manifesto
[26] 2006 UDM Election Manifesto

[27] 2006 IFP Election Manifesto

manifestos. The paper now turns its attention on the role that these manifesto played in affecting the votes.

The 2006 Elections and Challenges Facing New Authorities

The 2006 local government elections are now water under the bridge. As in previous national and local government elections, the IEC proclaimed the local government elections as being free and fair. Newly elected local authorities throughout South Africa have a gargantuan task ahead. It is blatantly evident that for the local governance to function there is a need for realistic legislative mechanisms that will take into consideration the capacity of local structures.

Table 3: 2006 Local Government Elections Results

Party	PR Votes	% of Votes
ANC	6 469 420	65.67
DA	1 608 154	16.32
IFP	744 486	7.56
ID	217 761	2.21
UDM	129 047	1.31
ACDP	128 990	1.31
PAC	109 816	1.11
FF+	93 921	0.95
UCDP	62 459	0.63
NADECO	35 899	0.36
MF	42 530	0.43

Source: http://www.elections.org.za/WEP/sou2006results1.htm

Despite spontaneous protest marches over service delivery, the ANC emerged victorious in the 2006 local government elections. The party convincingly increased it electoral tally from 59.4 percent in the 2000 elections to 65.67 percent in 2006. The electoral gap between the ruling party and the DA still remains huge; the latter obtained a total of 16.32 percent of the vote. The IFP could only manage a paltry 7.56 percent of the vote compared to the slightly higher percentage of 9.1 in the 2000 local government elections. In its first

elections as a party, NADECO – a breakaway movement from the IFP garnered 0.36 percent.

Through the commitment and cooperation of both the elected local authorities and local communities, local government can be a success. Here the issue of accessibility is crucial. As intimated earlier in the paper, one of the reasons people of Khutsong were and still are up in arms over the government's decision to incorporate their municipality to North West is that they argue that offices of their respective local authorities will not be easily accessible.

Corruption is not the only challenge facing effective public service delivery, but the frequency of corruption scandals at the local level (which could run into hundreds of millions of Rands annually), indicates that South Africa may be facing a serious problem[28]. Self-enrichment by local authorities, be it mayors or councillors, severely affects the objectives of the national government. In 2005, the Mangaung municipality in Free State was rocked by scandals. It was reported that municipal officials including the mayor defrauded the municipality of at least R100-million. The officials faced charges of corruption, theft, fraud and contravening several acts, including the Local Government, Municipal Systems, Municipal Finance Management, Income Tax, Value Added Tax, Company and Prevention of Organised Crime acts[29]. It remains to be seen whether or not President Thabo Mbeki's newly devised plan envisaged to tackle corruption at the local government level will bear any fruit. Entitled "A Local Government Anti-Corruption Strategy", the plan according to President Mbeki is to

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[28] http://www.iss.org.za/media
[29] http://www.iol.co.za

focus on "prevention, detection and investigation".

Perhaps as part of the problem to the issue of local governance, there is a general complacency on the part of local communities to be fully involved in the process. Active participation and awareness on local government issues can help monitor the performance of elected local authorities. This is clearly emphasised through the following Acts:

- Promotion of Access to Information Act (No 2 of 2000)- which gives people the right to have access to any information which the government has if they need it to protect their rights;
- Protection of Disclosure Act (No 26 of 2000)- which protects people who speak out against government corruption, dishonesty or bad administration; and
- Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (No 3 of 2000) - which states that all decisions of administrative bodies have to be lawful, procedurally fair and reasonable. People have a right to be given reasons for decisions taken by government officials.
- Municipal Systems Act of 2000- which amongst other things assures members of local community of their right to contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality; and submit written or oral recommendations, presentations and complaints to the municipal council or to another political structure or a political office bearer or the administration of the municipality.

Public participation in local government is further amplified by the *Green Paper on Local Government* (1997) which clearly asserts that democratic participation in government enhances effective government by:

- Building human capital and strengthening democratic cultures in communities
- Enhancing official responsiveness by enabling public interests to be clearly expressed by communities themselves
- Promoting government legitimacy by ensuring transparency
- Creating conditions for smooth policy implementation by facilitating an understanding of policy objectives and constraints, and incorporating citizen preferences and concerns into the design of policy programmes
- Channeling independent energy, ideas and sometimes resources into civic projects, and
- Improving citizens' knowledge of the governing processes and its constraints, and so fostering an understanding of the need for prioritization.

Finally, there are two problems that have negative repercussions on local government. The first barrier is the issue of political rivalry that continues to affect service delivery. Currently there is a power struggle between the ANC - which by virtue of the 2004 elections outcome has control over the Western Cape province and DA that has won the City of Cape Town after the 2006 local government elections. This will ultimately have dire consequences in terms of service delivery. At the moment, the public mud-slinging between the ANC's MEC for Housing and Local Government in the Western Cape and the DA's mayor is affecting objectives of the national government to provide low income houses.

The second barrier that has had a detrimental effect on local government is that of boundary demarcations. There have been violent protests surrounding government's decision to incorporate Khutsong from Gauteng to

North-West and Matatiele from Kwazulu-Natal to the Eastern Cape. In Matatiele, local communities fumed over government decision that was taken in late 2005. Realizing that the decision was a reality, they sought relief from the Constitutional Court to stop the 2006 elections, which failed, although the court reserved judgment on the constitutionality of the incorporation of the area into the Eastern Cape until the end of March 2006[30]. Unlike Khutsong, the municipality of Matatiele has ultimately won the Constitutional Court ruling which proclaimed that the planned incorporation was indeed illegal.

Gender and Local Government

Gender parity in South Africa is considered by the government as a crucial ingredient for democracy. This is intensified by South Africa's wish to adhere to the SADC Declaration on Gender which clearly emphasizes that there should be at least 30 percent representation of women in government by 2005.

At the local government level however, the representation of women still remains a challenge. Various reasons for this shortfall have been identified as the root cause of this problem. The argument that the country's electoral model is not considered conducive for adequate representation of women is one of the major reasons. . The fact that political parties themselves do not have quotas for the involvement of women remains an additional problem. (See Table 4 for gender data).

For the first time in the history of local government elections, the ANC introduced a 50-50 quota in 2006.

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[30] Hoeane, T. 2006: *South Africa - Election Update*

Although this did not go down well with some elements within the party, the policy has since increased the representation of women at the local government level. It became a bone of contention with some members of the ANC, the male counterparts in particular, were suspicious that this quota policy would result in the loss of their positions. Table 4 below clearly depicts the steady increase of women representation in terms of the PR list system and wards or constituency seats.

Table 4: National Representation of Women at the Local Government Level: PR List and Ward Councillors

Year	PR List	Ward Councillors
1995/96	28%	11%
2000	38%	17%
2006	43%	37%

Source: http://www.eisa.org.za

Table 4 illustrates the steady yet commendable increase in the national representation of women at the local government level. It is imperative to note that this improvement can largely be attributed to the ANC which has made gender parity one of its paramount objectives. The table also illustrates that the PR List is more favorable to women as opposed to constituency seats. It was interesting to observe that in the run-up to the 2006 local government elections, other parties started prioritizing gender parity during their electioneering.

As mentioned earlier, the ANC publicly made mention that 2006 was *the* year for change. Try as it did, the ANC could only garner its targeted 50 percent of women councillors in Gauteng, North-West and Northern Cape. The Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal which has 39, 7% and 35% respectively, were the worst performing provinces. Various reasons

have been cited as contributing to the cause of this shortfall. Some provinces did not manage to achieve a consistent distribution of women candidates across all municipalities[31]. In the same vein it should be noted that with each local government election, there is a vast improvement in terms of general representation of women at the local government level. Nationally, women constitute over 40% of councillors; of the 78 councillors; 7% are ANC women[32]. Even though there were 96 political parties contesting in the 2006 local government elections, only the ANC prioritized gender equality. One of the reasons that have been cited as causal fact in this scenario is the fact that the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 does not oblige political parties to ensure that half of all party candidates on their lists are women.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has discussed the complex dynamics of local government by outlining the various categories of this sphere of governance. Evidently, a lot still needs to be done to make local government work for the communities. Service delivery, which is the core of the problem, needs to be prioritized by local authorities. The participation of local communities in local government is also of paramount importance in terms of monitoring the performance of elected local authorities. Finally the paper highlighted the negative effects of political rivalry and internal power squabbles among parties, which, in turn, has had adverse effects on service delivery. We propose the following recommendations for improvement of the effectiveness of local government authorities:

- For Project Consolidate and other local government programmes to flourish, there is an urgent need to employ competent local authorities;
- Local communities should be made aware that local government is theirs and therefore they should be encouraged to participate in the decision making processes;
- Corruption should be addressed as a matter of urgency;
- There is a need for a cordial relationship between traditional leadership and local authorities; and
- The issue of gender parity in local government cannot be attributed to the electoral model alone, but there is a common need for political will from parties to address this deficit.

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