



Analysis of the 2006 Local Government Election in KwaZulu-Natal

Forum Date	25 April 2006
Venue	Holiday Inn- Elangeni
Guest Speaker	Ms Sanusha Naidu (HSRC)

Introduction

Political fora are an integral part of our core activities aimed at creating a platform for dialogue and debate between leaders, experts, academic and civil society. These debates seek to advocate accountability and public participation among other things.

The Democracy Development Programme (DDP) has held a political forum on the 25 April 2006, following South Africa's successful second local government elections on 1 March 2006. The forum was attended by over 65 participants representing various NGO's, civil society organizations, youth organizations, active political parties, academic institutions, government departments, embassies and consulates

The principal focus of this political forum was to engage critically with the outcome of the municipal election in KZN. The sole purpose was to analytically discuss issues pertinent to political development in the province.

Themes

The forum topic was entitled “*The Analysis and Implication of the 2006 Local Government election in KZN*”. Some of the issues that were central to the discussion inter alia included:

- What made these elections so different as compared to all previous municipal elections?
- The ruling party has won an overwhelming victory and therefore dominates the province- what does this mean for multi-partism?
- What does the election outcome mean for democracy? Are we heading towards a one party state? What would this mean for KZN?
- What does this mean for service delivery in KZN? Poor communities are longing for basic service delivery. The widespread riots and protests staged across the Province demonstrated the extent of the lack of service delivery.
- Does the victory of the ruling party covertly imply a gradual demise of smaller parties?
- What is the role of opposition parties? Is there a future for them given the fact that the ruling party has won an overwhelming majority in KZN?
- The IFP has lost significant municipalities in the Province- what are the implications in terms of governance?
- What are the implication of the election outcome in respect to accountability and good governance in KZN?
- The change in the political climate throughout the Province was necessitated by an array of factors such as the rise of independent candidates, proliferation of smaller parties such as NADECO and the rampant floor crossing- what are the implications of these?
- How do we keep councillors and all our accountable as civil society? Promoting accountability is an important part of protecting and advancing the public interest.

Statistical Analysis of Election Outcome in KZN

Overall percentages for KZN

	1995/6	2000	2006
KZN	45.5%	46%	52%

Table 1: Comparison of three democratic local government elections

Comparing the three elections we see that turnout improved in the province of KwaZulu-Natal from 45.5 to 52%. The remarkable improvement in voter turnout indicates that the people of this province are very much interested in municipal elections. The rampant riots and protests staged across the province against the perceived failure of certain municipalities to render basic services is a further indication that people of KZN regard municipal elections as an important opportunity to re-shape and re-direct the operation and functioning of municipalities. The improved voter turnout should, however, not be misconstrued to mean that people are happy about the state of delivery in KZN, thus elected representative should always borne in mind that behind the improvement there is rather dissatisfaction and disillusionment over the lack of delivery.

Municipal Elections For KZN		
%		
POLITICAL PARTIES	2000	2006
ANC	33.02%	48%
IFP	47.76%	36%
DA	13.42	9%

Table 2: provincial Results of Major Political Parties in KZN

The ANC has won an overwhelming victor in KZN, gaining control of 19 of KZN's 51 councils. The ANC received 48% of the proportional representation votes, a strong

improvement from the 33.02% the party received in 2000. The ANC has won a majority of seats in 32 of the province 61 municipalities. It is estimated that the ANC has occupied 748 out of a total of 1 835 seats in the province, with the IFP getting 713 seats. The ANC also won control of the key economic areas in the province including the metro of eThekweni, Richards Bay (North Coast), Ugu region (South Coast), and Umgungubdlovu (midlands). It has been indicated that the ANC provincially gained six wards from IFP in the industrial and port city which has been under the control of the IFP for the past five years. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) polled 36% of the votes, down from 46% five years ago. The IFP gained control of 23 councils in this election. However this is down on the 36 councils won by the IFP in 2000. The IFP saw its support decline across the province's economic hubs. In 2002 the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) secured 47.76% of the KZN vote, up from 43.8% in the 1996 election. The DA trails in third place - having polled 9% of the vote as compared to the 13.42 polls gained from the 2000 municipal election. The DA has seen a 6% decrease in support throughout the province. It has been claimed that the DA has failed to make inroads in the townships

Issues Raised

It emerged from the discussion that KZN comes a long way. KZN used to be a province characterized by endless political conflicts and unrests, outbreak of violence that were bred largely by political intolerance, now find itself reaping some of the fruits of democracy. Although the change signifies a maturing of democracy in the province and of the democratic process, it has not attained absolute political maturity. Pockets of violence between IFP and ANC strongholds are still evident.

It became evident from the discussion that the election outcome suggested some significant changes in the political landscape throughout the province. The election saw opposition parties take a back seat to a rampant ANC which celebrated wins in the economic hubs of KwaZulu Natal- eThekwini, Richards Bay (North coast), Ugu region (South Coast) and Umgungundlovu (Midlands). The election is said to have brought about a new era in the province with the IFP losing control over the important economic areas that used to be under its command. Smaller parties were hardest hit, whilst the ANC increased its presence in the province. The dominance of the ruling party does not necessarily mean that the province is heading toward a one party state

but rather a dominant party within a multi-party system- said Sanusha Naidu during her presentation at the forum. Nor does it mean that opposition parties will evaporate. She categorically stated that the presence of the opposition parties is good news for the province and for South Africa in general, in a nutshell, we need opposition parties in South Africa in order to enrich and sustain our democracy. But also that opposition parties have not been able to capture any significant electoral space from the ANC. For her, this is cause for concern about the viability of opposition in South Africa and particularly for the consolidation of democracy in the country.

During her presentation, Sanusha went further to catalogue recommendations for opposition parties including smaller parties as to what they should do in order to galvanise support and remain vibrant in the political landscape of the province. The IFP need to diversify its electorate and go beyond its rural based supporters. The DA need to work very hard to gain support especially in rural areas. The MF need to solicit support beyond the Indian community most especially in Ugu even though the party had managed to win a seat in the Ugu district on the South Coast. Sanusha believes that in order for smaller parties to grow they should detach themselves from being race based parties, and should go beyond race lines to garner support and membership across the racial lines. If her recommendations are taken serious smaller parties would see themselves cheating death and becoming vigorous opposition. The ruling party was not exempted, as she advised that the ANC should not become complacent about its victory in the province. Instead the ANC needs to demonstrate to the electorate that the confidence that they (electorate) had bestowed on them through the electoral process means that the party would work tirelessly to address issues pertaining to service delivery and to combat corruption. It is imperative that the ruling party speed up the delivery of clean water, electricity, housing and other public sector amenities in order to ascertain a decent standard of living and a better life for the people. In essence the victory of the ANC should not be mistaken to mean that people are content with the manner in which delivery is taking place in the province and nationally. It is critical that parties learn to live up to their promises- warned Sanusha.

It emerged that the electorate has an important role to play in strengthening the future of our democracy. Ordinary South Africans should learn to exercise their democratic and constitutional rights during national and local government elections to elect leaders that are visionary and service delivery driven at the helm of the

government affairs. People should understand the importance of their votes, each vote counts, no vote is worthless. South Africans should participate actively during all democratic elections and go to the polls. People should vote to deepen our democracy and freedom.

It became apparent during the discussion that voter education is an important element in developing an environment within which free and fair elections may take place. Civil society organizations should thus take upon themselves the responsibility to provide the citizens with information about election processes and why voting is important. Voter education should indeed become an integral part of larger civic education programmes which ought to be undertaken to educate the citizens. In essence civic society organizations need to do a lot more to provide factual information for voters in a neutral way so they can participate knowledgeably and thereby increase voter turnout. Also that the role of the civil society is to encourage greater public participation as well as to shine the torch in dark places and ask awkward questions which will help to create a viable democracy in the country.

Sanusha also indicated that the floor crossing legislation does not do much to strengthen our democracy. Instead it is much like a poisoned chalice that undermines the integrity of a democracy.