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## **A WORD FROM THE GGLN SECRETARIAT...**

Dear colleagues,

The GGLN Secretariat is pleased to bring you this edition of the *GGLN News*, a bi-monthly newsletter of the Good Governance Learning Network. We trust you are equally excited about receiving this newsletter and we hope, as in the past, that much debate and discussion will be generated amongst network members and beyond, as a consequence. For the first time, our readership of *GGLN News* extends to a much wider audience outside of the GGLN. To old friends of the network as well as to new ones, welcome to the *GGLN News* and we look forward engaging with you on issues addressed by this newsletter and forthcoming ones.

The recent past has seen the sphere of local government challenged in many respects. With some efforts to rectify acute and growing gaps in service delivery, to address weaknesses in the municipal administration, and to respond to service delivery protests, much still needs to change in local government policy and practice. The issue of the *GGLN News* goes some way to address these issues. Of course, our key focus is on member organisations. We bring your attention to the DDP Annual Conference to be held in October this year, as well as some funding news from, and a submission on the Division of Revenue Bill 2010 by, BESG, an article on HIV/AIDS by Isandla Institute, and we welcome the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition as a full member of the network. Finally, organisations of the GGLN can consult the 'members' page' for information on calls for proposals as well as upcoming GGLN events.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the *GGLN News* as much as we enjoyed bringing it to you. Please feel free to contact me at [ggln@isandla.org.za](mailto:ggln@isandla.org.za).

Meera Ramjee, GGLN Coordinator

## **OPINION**

### **COMMUNITY PROTESTS AND ELECTORAL OUTCOMES**

The increasing frequency with which community protests are occurring in townships and informal settlements across South Africa suggests that these acts constitute a political phenomenon that demands explanation and analysis. 2009 and the first half of 2010 have seen a marked surge in the number of protests that have occurred across the country; the number of protests per month that have occurred in this time span is more than twice the figures for the years preceding it. As part of its Local Government Project, the Community Law Centre at the University of Western Cape is currently engaged in research that analyzes the protests in greater detail. In particular, the project examines relationship between protests in poverty-stricken South African communities and electoral outcomes. The project aims to understand what effect, if any, the discontent manifested by protestors affects voting patterns. That this relationship warrants attention seems especially true when considering the frequency with which protestors have made electoral threats, claiming that they will refuse to vote in upcoming elections if their grievances are not addressed. Central to the larger task of analyzing the electoral impact of the protests is a detailed analysis of the protests themselves. The frustrations the protests represent, the causes of the unrest and documented trends in the frequency and type of protests that have occurred help shed light on the electoral impact

The most intuitive understanding of the protests is that they are an indication of a loss in confidence in local government. After all, nearly all of the documented protests that have taken place in townships and informal settlements from 2007-2010 have been connected in some way to the failure of the government to adequately deliver services. Residents engaged in protests frequently cite the insufficient provision of housing, education, sanitation and basic infrastructure as the source of their grievances and routinely hand memorandums to provincial representatives and municipal managers documenting these concerns. The protests, then, appear to be a political act, a response to the conditions in which members of these communities find themselves living, and a consequence of their disenchantment with other ways of redressing their grievances.

Nevertheless, to suggest that the protests are purely a product of the inadequacy of service delivery risks simplifying the issue. For instance, recent protests in the Merafong municipality were technically incited, according to the protestors themselves, by the insufficiency of service delivery. However, the protests took place against the backdrop of Khutsong's re-demarcation into the North West Province from Gauteng, compelling the minister of provincial and local government to question the communities' statements that the protests were motivated by the failure of service delivery rather than the demarcation of municipal boundaries. Hence, though service delivery in many of the communities in which protests occur are woefully inadequate, the notion that that every protest is rooted in a failure of service delivery is questionable.

In addition, the fact that the homes and businesses of foreigners are frequently targeted in violent protests indicates that protests that ostensibly are motivated by a desire to improve conditions in poverty-stricken communities may in fact be influenced by less benign motivations. Of course, the two sentiments may overlap; the hostility towards foreigners manifested in a number of community protests may be compelling largely because of the poor conditions in which the protestors find themselves living. Nevertheless, the existence of such acts targeting foreigners indicates that service delivery may not underlie every expression of discontent manifested by protestors.

Finally, members of the ANC have in some instances blamed people within its own ranks for some of the violent protests in townships and informal settlements. It has suggested that individuals who failed to secure nominations during the previous round of local government elections were inciting violence in the province, going around and using genuine grievances of the masses to mobilise lawlessness." Similarly, many community protests have been organized in a top-down fashion by political organizations such as the South African Communist Party, which might view the concerns of local residents partially as an opportunity to advance particular political objectives. Hence, even to the extent that the protestors may be motivated by the inadequacy of service delivery, the occurrence of some of the protests may be a product of factors other than the legitimate grievances of residents in these communities.

In an effort to prevent outbursts of violence, local governments are similarly engaged in attempts to determine the meaning to impute to protests occurring in townships and informal settlements across South Africa. While acknowledging that many of the protests are rooted in a failure of service delivery, local governments additionally acknowledge the prospect of other parties using these grievances to achieve other objectives. Thus, in an effort to help assure citizens of government's awareness of their concerns, local governments have taken to strengthening communication networks with communities to encourage dialogue rather than protest. For instance, in the aftermath of service delivery protests in townships throughout the province, the North West government has established a steering committee to engage with communities and deal with their concerns more effectively. Local governments are hoping that more effective communication will provide residents with an outlet for their grievances and simultaneously prevent the concerns of residents to be utilized for alternative ends.

*Hirsh Jain, Harvard Law School.  
Intern with the Local Government Project, Community Law Centre  
June 24, 2010*

## BESG IN THE MEDIA

### FRENCH FUND LOCAL NGO MONEY TO BE USED FOR THE BENEFIT OF POOR COMMUNITIES

The French Embassy Civil Society Development Fund has donated over R700,000 to a local NGO, the Built Environment Support Group (BESG), in order to fund their Deepening Democracy Project. The funds will be used to empower poor communities within the uMgungundlovu District on matters related to local governance. BESG Executive Director, Cameron Brisbane, said that the support from the French Embassy for the Deepening Democracy Project will enhance public participation in local governance within the district.

“BESG will utilise the funds from the French Embassy to implement capacity development programmes with various community based organisations (CBOs) focusing on leadership, human rights and local government legislation. The aim is for CBOs to understand the role of local government, its structures and how they relate to decision making processes”, said Brisbane.

The focus of the project is to ensure that communities understand the processes of municipal integrated development planning (IDP) and budgeting in order to engage more constructively with local government on issues of development.

“This project capacitates communities to be better able to ask the important questions related to financing and implementing development in their communities. This project aims to enable civil society to hold local government accountable and ensure the adequate provision of service delivery”, he said.



*Cameron Brisbane Executive Director Besg, Umgungundlovu District Municipality Mayor Yusef Bhanyee, French Ambassador to South Africa Jacques Lapouge, Unkhambathini Municipality Mayor Thobekile Maphumulo, Umgungundlovu District Municipality Mayor Edward Dladla and Umgungundlovu District Municipal Manager Sibusiso Khawwayo.*

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA POST 1994: QUO VADIS?

The Democracy Development Programme is hosting its 6th Annual Conference on the 14-15 October 2010 at the Southern Sun, Elangeni in Durban.

The conference will look critically at the performance of Provincial Government in terms of fulfilling its constitutional responsibility as well as in terms of its record of governance since 1994.

**The conference will focus on the following thematic areas:**

- Provincial Governance and Development: Review of the African and South African Experience
  - Provincial Policymaking and Public Participation
  - Role and Impact of National Council of Provinces
  - Intergovernmental Relations in a Provincial Context
  - Provincial Economic Development and Planning
- Public Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation at Provincial Level

**Some of the National speakers include:** Ms N Dube (MEC: COGTA - KZN); Mr Y Carrim (Deputy Minister: COGTA); Prof J Ayee (UKZN); Prof. Isaac N. Obasi (University of Abuja, Nigeria); Mrs H Zille (Premier: Western Cape); Prof SR Shabalala (Consultant); Mr I Baccus (DDP Researcher, UKZN Research Fellow); Mr MJ Mahlangu (Chairperson: NCOP); Ms S Hughes (COGTA); Mr R Baatjies (SALGA); Mr S Mkhize (Dept Eco Dev & Tourism-KZN); Dr P Sithole (UKZN); Dr Thabo Rapoo (Centre for Policy Studies); Ms M Mabidilala(COGTA), Mrs R Moonilal (Office of the Premier-KZN); Dr J Govender (NMMU)

For further details on the conference please visit the DDP website [www.ddp.org.za](http://www.ddp.org.za).

## 'REVOLUTIONARY' HIV/AIDS CAMPAIGN NOT ENOUGH TO STEM THE EPIDEMIC

The new HIV testing campaign, recently introduced by Health Minister, Aaron Motsoaledi, has breathed new vigour into South Africa's HIV/AIDS response. But does expanding counselling and testing to 15 million South Africans do enough to stop new infections and provide enough support to people who are already infected? And does this campaign address the actual drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic?

The campaign aims to reach 15 million South Africans by 2011. This is the largest testing and counselling campaign ever seen in South Africa and the provision of ARVs to people with a CD4 count of 350 (instead of 200) is especially welcomed. But while this renewed commitment by the National Government to dealing with the epidemic is promising and long overdue, it is unlikely to be enough to prevent new infections. A critical component of government's strategy has to be about addressing the socio-economic drivers of the epidemic and looking beyond the predominant focus on behaviour change.

In South Africa HIV prevalence is highest amongst people who live in poor, marginalised and informal communities in urban centres. Here the average prevalence rate between people aged 15-49 is double that of formal urban settlements. The infection rate is also growing four times faster in urban informal settlements. Though not exclusively affecting residents in these communities, HIV/AIDS preys on existing social fault lines. Research conducted by Isandla Institute suggests that poverty, gender inequality, unemployment, poor shelter conditions and violence all play a significant role in decisions that people make, including those about sex. Women especially are vulnerable and often have very little control or choice about where and how sex takes place. The same goes for young children. These factors also affect how individuals, households and communities cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS. For example, if a breadwinner is ill with AIDS related infections and unable to work, the loss of income has implications for food security and may lead to increased impoverishment. If a person's living conditions and direct context are related to the decisions that they are able to make, should there not be more of an emphasis on increasing the range of options available to them? While it is important to know one's status, how much difference does this make to a young mother who cannot find employment and is forced to rely on a male breadwinner who dictates sexual relations? How much difference does knowledge of one's status make to an HIV positive person who lives in informal shelter with no income and very little or no access to economic opportunities? It is unlikely to make a difference if we do not tackle gender issues, if lesbian women are subjected to corrective rape on a regular basis and if young girl children continue to be the victims of abuse.

And how are we to change the behaviour of people, especially young people, in the absence of recreational facilities, parks, community facilities, libraries and other alternatives for young people especially in informal settlements? It means that it cannot be up to the health and education departments alone to address the epidemic. We have to bring the departments of human settlements, social development, roads and transport and economic development on board. If we are to address HIV/AIDS in South Africa, we have to address the broader developmental challenges that increase vulnerability to the epidemic. City governments in particular need to recognise that they cannot plan for the future without recognising the links between HIV/AIDS, underdevelopment and informality.

So while the renewed vigour and commitment from the Health Department is critical we are unlikely to deal effectively with this epidemic unless we tackle poverty, underdevelopment and inequality. An integrated response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic is critical. Launching an effective response to HIV/AIDS is as much about the building of sustainable, integrated and economically healthy communities as it is about awareness raising, testing and treatment. Unless we start to address access to social and communal spaces, access to employment (be it in formal or informal industries) and the strengthening of capabilities and community resilience, we are unlikely to make a significant impact on the number of new infections.

*Stacey-Leigh Joseph, HIV/AIDS Policy Researcher, Isandla Institute  
This article was first published in Cape Times 10 May 2010.*

**Update on previous news featured in the GGLN News...**

In the July 2009 issue of *GGLN News*, **BESG** presented an article that described the unethical conduct of Dumisani Vilakasi, the Municipal Manager of uMngeni Municipality. The Municipal Manager had been implicated in blatant corruption whilst being paid a salary of R1.3 million a year. It has, however, come to light that Vilakasi has in fact recently been dismissed from his position as a consequence of these allegations, after being on suspension with full pay since October 2009. For more details, please visit [http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global%5B\\_id%5D=41524](http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=41524)

## BESG SUBMISSION: THE DIVISION OF REVENUE BILL, 2010

The Built Environment Support Group (BESG) made a submission on the Division of Revenue Bill (DORB) 2010/11. BESG has been involved with the implementation of local government indigent policy which has become a priority in a number of municipalities affected by service delivery protests. This submission is based on BESG experience associated with the funding of basic services to the poor through the local government equitable share grant. This submission raises concerns about the local government equitable share formula and the transparency and accountability of the utilization of the local government equitable share grant. BESG would like to point out a number of concerns with regards to the local government equitable share formula and its utilisation taking into account the constitutional mandate of municipalities and the DORA 2009/10 specifications with regards to equitable share.

The equitable share formula is problematic and needs to be reviewed. Firstly, municipalities are being provided with equitable share for services they do not provide. For example, a local municipality that only provides the service of refuse collection, in theory, should not benefit from water, sanitation, electricity or municipal health service components of the basic service component of the equitable share formula. Secondly, the institutional support component of the equitable share formula is supposed to assist with operational, administrative and governance costs. In practice, this component is inadequate for the optimal functioning of revenue poor municipalities. Further, census data from 2001 is utilised for equitable share calculations which does not provide a true statistical reflection of households in 2010.

The unconditional nature of the equitable share grant has created municipal budgeting devoid of transparency and accountability regarding utilisation of the grant. For example, targets for expenditure on basic services to the poor have been found by BESG to be, in best cases, at a maximum level of 33%. This is a concern as expenditure on basic services to the poor according to DORA should be at 92%. In addition, many municipal budgets do not specify how local government equitable share allocations are spent.

It is the view of BESG that DORB 2010/11, as a means to create transparency and accountability of our intergovernmental fiscal system, needs to review the formula for local government equitable share to ensure that municipalities are enabled to provide the necessary services to the poor in a transparent but fair manner whilst ensuring that municipalities are held accountable for their utilisation of their equitable share.

Please contact Daniel Bailey ([daniel@besg.co.za](mailto:daniel@besg.co.za)) at BESG for the full submission.

### **SPOTLIGHT ON . . .** **EASTERN CAPE NGO COALITION**

The Eastern Cape NGO Coalition (ECNGOC) was established in 1995 as a collective of non-governmental, faith- and community-based organisations committed to changing conditions for the worst affected in South Africa. The ECNGOC is recognised as the most representative structure of the development sector in the Eastern Cape Province. It plays a significant advocacy role in many consultative stakeholder forums and government-led development structures and processes. ECNGOC believes that development in the Eastern Cape Province is progressing far too slowly. The relationship between government and community is not functioning as well as it should, and the ideal of “walking together” is leaving too many stragglers in its wake. It is up to Civil Society Organisations to prove their resourcefulness by rallying people – citizens and government alike – to work together and become more focused and active as participants in their own development. The Provincial office, based in East London, develops and implements a range of projects under the programme focus areas of Socio-economic Transformation, Leadership Development, and Learning and Information-sharing. A key purpose of these programmes is to enhance members’ ability to understand and influence development policy and practice. ECNGOC is an ardent supporter of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) methodologies and, as well as overseeing a number of ABCD projects in the Eastern Cape, runs training courses on this development approach. Through the ABCD, the ECNGOC links issues of local governance through the Civil Support Society Programme (CSSP) which was launched in 2007 with civil society working groups in 2 districts. The CSSP working groups conduct research and advocates through engaging with local governance processes.

Visit [www.ecngoc.co.za](http://www.ecngoc.co.za) for more information or contact Duduzile Radebe at [dudu@ecngoc.co.za](mailto:dudu@ecngoc.co.za).

## FROM THE GGLN . . .

### GGLN COMMENTARY ON THE MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS AMENDMENT BILL 2010 TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE

On 14 June 2010, the GGLN submitted a response on the proposed amendments to the Municipal Systems Act to the Department of Cooperative Governance. Member organisations were asked to critically engage with the GGLN Secretariat's initial input on the Bill, and a final submission was made incorporating wide-ranging, thoughtful and provocative insight, and we thank those members for their valuable input. Below, we bring you key excerpts from the full review submitted.

We would like to begin our commentary with an acknowledgement that the proposed amendments, to a large extent, shift municipal structures, and by implication, local government along a positive and constructive trajectory. It is our contention that the Department of Cooperative Governance is cognisant of some of the inhibitors to effective and efficient service delivery in South Africa, and the proactive measures suggested in the Bill are indicative of this. At the same time, we would like to caution that there are limitations to the extent to which legislative provisions can address matters related to political culture.

The fundamental shift is towards the greater professionalisation of municipalities. At the same time, the Bill addresses an ambiguity that prevails at present which relates to party office bearers holding positions in the municipal administration. By calling for a separation of political office from the institutional role of a municipality, the undue influence of political officials or political parties over the administrative function of a municipality is curtailed. This is an important step towards introducing fairness and impartiality into the institutional space of a municipality. The GGLN supports these proactive and practical measures taken to introduce a greater degree of professionalisation into local government. We would, however, like to raise five general concerns with respect to the proposed amendments, and suggest that these areas are deserving of further attention.

Firstly, to a large extent, the suggestions in the Bill are not retrospective, i.e. they apply only to new appointments henceforth. Cases in point include clauses 54A (12) and 56 (7) which suggest that even if the appointment of municipal managers and acting municipal managers as well as managers directly accountable to the municipal manager were made where they do not satisfy skills, expertise, competencies and qualifications needs, the appointments as they currently stand are secure. Perhaps a more worrying 'silence' is a position on current appointments where a municipal manager or a manager directly accountable to a municipal manager holds political office in a political party. As a result, the current status quo remains largely unaltered. In a similar vein, the Bill calls for performance agreements of municipal managers or managers directly accountable to the municipal manager to be ratified within 60 days of appointment (as opposed to a reasonable time). While this is seen as a positive step towards creating a more effective municipality in the future, the Bill is not explicit about contracts that have not been finalised to date. The question is what recourse is there available *at present* to address these tendencies.

Secondly, in relation to the separation of political office from the administrative sphere of a municipality, we would like to suggest that the amendments should also apply to those appointed below a section 56 manager and not only to a municipal manager or a manager directly accountable to the municipal manager as it currently stands. Lower ranking officials holding relatively senior positions in a political party can exercise an equal or *potentially greater* political influence over other officials within the municipal administration.

Thirdly, the proposed amendments fall short in one respect which could potentially further professionalise a municipality. Appointments of managers who are not directly accountable to the Municipal Manager are then ratified by the Municipal Council. The implication is that the Council is influential in the decision-making process regarding municipal appointments. The position of the GGLN is that the balance of power, in this instance, should not lie in the political domain if the overall agenda is to try and professionalise the municipal structure.

Fourthly, there seems to be an extension of the Minister's powers and authority in some respects beyond what is required or preferred. In particular, this relates to regulating training and competency and skills development of staff members of the municipality. Apart from this falling under the ambit of Salga, it is not clear why this should fall within the Minister's role. Furthermore, there is some conflation in the procedures outlined in section 54A which refers to the appointment of municipal managers and acting municipal managers. The GGLN holds that firstly, the appointment procedures need to be clarified, secondly, the Minister is potentially involved in administrative matters where in fact the MEC should be regarded as the first point of reference to settle such issues, and, thirdly, the approach tends towards one of inconsistency in terms of lines of authority and role demarcation with respect to the MEC and Minister.

Fifthly, in a related issue, while there are limits to the extent to which legislation can influence behaviour and political culture, equally there are limits to the extent to which legislation can guide municipal practice without potentially encroaching on the powers, functions and authority of local government.

The GGLN would like to raise a final matter, which even though falls outside the realm of the suggested amendments, it is an issue that the GGLN holds a strong position on and regards this as an area that the Department of Cooperative Governance should pay attention to. While the proposed amendments are positive measures towards professionalising local government, there is a need to be reminded that municipalities need to be accountable to the municipalities they serve, as articulated in the Municipal Systems Act. This calls for a need to instill a public service ethos amongst municipal representatives that places community interests at the heart of municipal decision-making and creates a context where senior municipal employees are made to feel accountable to the municipalities that they serve.

We hope that the above is taken in the spirit of constructive engagement and we look forward to further opportunities to engage on the Municipal Systems Act with the Department of Cooperative Governance.

14 June 2010.

*Do you have any comments on this submission? Let us know and we'll share your views in the forthcoming issue of GGLN News.*

## **INVITATION**

### **LAUNCH OF 2<sup>ND</sup> STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE REPORT ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVE ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**28 July 2010**

**The GGLN Secretariat and the GGLN Reference Group is pleased to invite you to the launch of the 2009/2010 State of Local Governance report entitled, *Ethical Leadership and Political Culture in Local Government: A Civil Society Perspective on Local Governance in South Africa* in Cape Town, 28 July 2010 from 15h00 to 17h00 (venue TBC).**

The theme of the report, for which the process began in July last year, was driven to a large extent by recurring (and, at the time, intensified) community-based protests and pending local government policy reform. The focus on leadership seemed fitting in this context and member organisations of the GGLN eagerly came together and contributed with rigour to the State of Local Governance report.

The report which is regarded as the network's flagship initiative has been well received in the public space and holds a high degree of prestige. With insights into the complexities within the sphere of local government, it is envisaged that the report would be of benefit to key decision-makers, practitioners and policy-makers in local government as well as community organisations and NGO's working in this field. The report is also intended to be used to build awareness of, and mobilise support within civil society and appropriate government institutions for the key advocacy positions of the GGLN.

We hope that you will accept this invitation and join us at this exciting event. Attendance to the launch event is limited. Please contact the GGLN Secretariat for a registration form, should you wish to attend the event.

## FROM THE REFERENCE GROUP, 2 JUNE 2010

Late 2009 saw the establishment of a new Reference Group - which consists of Mirjam van Donk (Chairperson of the GGLN Reference Group and of Isandla Institute), Daniel Bailey (Built Environment Support Group), Annette Christmas (Community Law Centre), Rama Naidu (Democracy Development Programme), Nontando Ngamlana (Afesis-corplan), and Gaynor Paradza (Centre for Policy Studies). The group had its first meeting on 2 June and an exciting GGLN agenda was initiated for the year ahead.

Discussions throughout the day had a common thread running through it; this being that GGLN activities, whether led by the Secretariat or by individual member organisations, must encourage, as far as possible, shared learning amongst member organisations. The group felt that opportunities to build a strong knowledge base and a strong collective voice *must* be effectively harnessed given the GGLN's ideal placement to advocate the position of the network on the many changes and challenges afforded by the current local government context.

In light of the above, the Reference Group invites all member organisations to take up the calls to apply for different types of GGLN grants, all which serve as the basis to create this culture of shared-learning.

## CALLING *FULL* MEMBERS OF THE GGLN TO APPLY FOR GGLN GRANTS

TYPE OF GRANT OFFERED	PURPOSE OF GRANT	CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATION
Local Learning Exchanges	Encourage and facilitate cross-learning and capacity building amongst member organisations. Learning exchanges may include exchanges with other GGLN member organisations or a municipality	Applications may be submitted at any point in the grant year
Regional Learning Events	Facilitate knowledge sharing and peer-learning amongst GGLN members. Events may include workshops, conferences, seminars, roundtables and training courses	9 July 2010
Research Grants	Support the generation and documentation of knowledge that supports the objectives of the network Research activities eligible for support include action research, surveys, and case studies	23 July 2010

Only staff members of organisations that are full members of the GGLN may apply for funding for these grants. Further details on the above grants may be accessed on [www.ggln.org.za/activities](http://www.ggln.org.za/activities). Alternatively, please contact the GGLN Secretariat for further information on funding conditions on any of the above grants, as well as for grant applications forms. Only applications from fully paid up members of the GGLN for the grant year April 2010 to March 2011 will be considered.

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS THE 2010/2011 STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 'CITIZEN VOICE AND DISSATISFACTION'

The purpose of the State of Local Governance (SoLG) research project is to produce a regular civil society-based assessment of the key challenges, debates and areas of progress with regard to governance and development at the local level in South Africa. The theme for the third SoLG report is 'Citizen Voices and Dissatisfaction'.

The *Citizen Voices and Dissatisfaction* theme provides us with a useful analytical lens through which to view a changing context and current challenges in local government.

The years 2009 to 2011 are challenging years for local government in South Africa. Service delivery protests have brought wide-spread attention not only to the acute gaps in delivery on basic services, but the growing incidence, and in some cases the repetition even, of issues that underpin the protests have also highlighted other critical weaknesses in local government, least of which include a poorly capacitated administrative system and a fledgling political system. Parliament has responded to the crisis in service delivery by setting up the Ad Hoc Committee on Co-ordinated Oversight on Service Delivery. Similarly, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, early in 2009, initiated the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) to address this challenging context. The space of local government potentially changes further in March/April 2011, which sees the third Local Government election take place in South Africa.

The GGLN is inviting applications from members to make contributions in the areas below. Papers could fall within or across any of the following broad thematic areas related to the broad theme of the report:

- ✚ What is the role/duty of local government with respect to socio-economic rights?
- ✚ What are the existing mechanisms and legislative provisions for public participation?
- ✚ How has Local Government responded to community dissent and dissatisfaction?
- ✚ To what extent do local turnaround strategies facilitate or recognise citizen voices?
- ✚ Can representative democracy effectively harness citizen voice and diffuse dissatisfaction?
- ✚ Do the main electoral issues for the 2011 Local Government elections speak to the needs, aspirations and frustrations expressed by citizens?
- ✚ Do political parties project themselves as the legitimate conduit for citizen voice and do party manifestos reflect an understanding of citizens' needs, aspirations and frustrations?
- ✚ Is the move towards a single election good for local democracy?
- ✚ What kind of innovation - in both policy and practice - should be proposed to embrace citizen voice and recognise 'invented spaces'?
- ✚ Is 'citizen voice' inherently democratic and/or inclusive?
- ✚ How do we avoid further expressions of communal violence and xenophobia?
- ✚ Is there a mindset that the state will provide on behalf of communities as opposed to promoting/instilling/practicing active citizenship?

Two main types of contributions will be considered; i) case studies (1200 words) and ii) research papers that consult literature and /or empirical analysis (4000 words).

Members who are interested in applying for funding are requested to submit an abstract to the GGLN Reference Group. Your proposal should include a motivation for how the proposed research topic will complement existing knowledge contained in the report, or fill in any gaps.

**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS IS 23 JULY 2010.**

For more information on funding conditions, please contact the GGLN Secretariat or go to [www.ggln.org.za/activities](http://www.ggln.org.za/activities).

If you would like to make a contribution to the next issue of *GGLN News*, due for dissemination 28 August 2010, kindly contact the GGLN Secretariat.

<b>GGLN Full Members</b>	
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