

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The theme of this year's publication, *Developmental Local Government: Dream Deferred?* centres around three milestones – the 20-year anniversary of the White Paper on Local Government, the 15-year anniversary of the Good Governance Learning Network and the 10th *State of Local Governance* publication.

TWENTY-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE WHITE PAPER ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The White Paper on Local Government (1998) is a landmark policy approach/framework aimed at rectifying apartheid municipal functions focused on creating and perpetuating separation and inequity at the local level. The White Paper alludes to the development and implementation of a well-functioning, innovative and independent local government system. This journey commenced after the first democratic local government elections in 2000. Over the past 18 years, however, while there have been significant accomplishments, systemic challenges such as poor governance, including poor civic engagement, have over time emerged and remained. The 20-year anniversary of the White Paper therefore represents a critical juncture for engagement with local government issues understood from a multitude of perspectives. Using the White Paper as a point of departure, the *State of Local Governance* (SoLG) 2018 fittingly aims to take stock of the past and current achievements and shortcomings of local government as well as those of civil society in the local governance space. It is further forward looking, signalling what can and needs to be done across both of these sectors.

FIFTEEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE GOOD GOVERNANCE LEARNING NETWORK

The Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN) was established in 2003 in response to the need for strengthened and more coherent peer networking, learning and collaboration among civil society organisations (CSOs) working to strengthen local governance in South Africa. The GGLN further emerged in response to continuing institutional and sector changes and challenges experienced by CSOs working in local governance in South Africa. The networking and learning work of the GGLN has over the years specifically responded to the continued challenges in the local governance space, speaking to the role of civil society in local governance and touching on many areas of local government policy and practice. SoLG 2018 provides a warranted reflection on the work of the GGLN over the past 15 years.

THE 10TH STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE PUBLICATION

The *State of Local Governance* 2018 builds on the previous nine publications. Previous SoLG's, like SoLG 2018, enabled GGLN members to speak to a range of local governance challenges but also to their role in working to address these challenges. Contributors to SoLG 2018 had a wide range of themes and topics related to the role of civil society in local governance which they could focus their papers on. Interestingly though, 'civic participation' - including its importance, the lack thereof, structures, processes, the need and mechanisms for improvement - has

DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT: DREAM DEFERRED?

emerged as a central theme running through all the contributions. As in previous years, SoLG 2018 is constituted by research papers, case studies and In Profile submissions (short summaries based on project methods/practice/insights). Given the theme of this year's publication, and that this is an anniversary year, however, SoLG 2018 offers even more.

SoLG 2018 begins with an opinion piece by Jaap de Visser of the Dullah Omar Institute. Jaap reiterates the current local government challenge, which was recently pushed more firmly into the consciousness of South Africans with the release of the latest municipal audit results, and provides five suggestions to remedy the current local government challenge. The piece serves as a fitting introduction to this year's publication.

The opinion piece is followed by four papers focused broadly on citizen participation in relation to participation structures and possible improvement mechanisms.

The first paper takes the form of an In Profile contribution from the Development Action Group. Authored by Ryan Fester, the paper reflects on the specific challenges civic organisations face when aiming to effectively engage in participatory processes, and, given these challenges, the strategies and tactics they have resorted to in an effort to hold government accountable. It also briefly proposes a new model of participation for civic organisations.

DAG's In Profile is followed by a research paper authored by Nontando Ngamlana and Sikhander Coopoo from Afesis-corplan. The paper illustrates a research project undertaken by Afesis-corplan to assess the effectiveness of the functions of ward committees, outside of the primary function of facilitating inclusive participation in local governance decision-making. The paper is based on the premise that the mandate of ward committees extends beyond that of its primary role, and that while committee performance in facilitating inclusive participation may be falling short, committees may be performing well in other functional areas. Using Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality as a case study, the paper specifically investigates the extent to which ward committees contribute to the attainment of the developmental goals of local government.

Planact's Frederick Kusambiza-Kiingi then offers a case study using the experiences of Planact gained through the implementation of its participatory budgeting and municipal accountability tools. Using these experiences, the paper attempts to establish whether the current low level of citizen participation in local governance can be attributed to a disjuncture between the principles and policies of the White Paper on Local Government (1998). The paper further discusses the benefits of and challenges to citizen participation in local governance processes, and concludes with recommendations to improve citizen participation.

Subsequent to Planact's contribution is Isandla Institute's research paper, authored by Jens Horber. The paper draws on the work of The Integrity, Transparency, Accountability and Technology (InTAcT) Project that forms part of the Cities Support Programme of National Treasury, and which is supported by the Isandla Institute and Strategies for Change. It builds on a discussion of the contextual factors that often present complex participation, accountability and integrity challenges to good governance at the local level, with specific reference to land and infrastructure development decision-making. It also reflects on how accountable and participatory local government can be strengthened via innovative tools and mechanisms, specifically community-based monitoring and planning concordats, and how these can be supported by local government, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

The following three papers focus on citizen engagement specifically within the informal settlement context.

The first of the three papers is presented by the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI). Authored by Maanda Makwarela and Tiffany Ebrahim, it takes the form of a research paper. The paper is based on research conducted as part of SERI's Informal Settlement Action Research series titled, 'Informal Settlements in South Africa: Norms, Practices and Agency'. It uses the experiences of two informal settlements to examine how local communities engage with formal community engagement channels. The paper introduces the experiences of citizens engaging in local democratic spaces in informal settlements followed by a discussion around the interaction between formal and informal engagement structures and mechanisms. It also assesses how residents engage with the state to assert their rights by examining the complexities of interactions and how politics is articulated in various arenas.

The subsequent case study by Social Justice Coalition's Dalli Weyers and Khadija Bawa aims to bring the shortcomings of government to the fore with regard to water and sanitation provision in informal settlements. The paper reflects on these shortcomings using SJC's water and sanitation campaign work over past 10 years with a specific emphasis on its Safe and Clean Campaign and Janitorial Service. It provides insight on the history and emergence of the SJC and these campaigns; on local government's response to these campaigns; and how these campaigns have evolved over time.

SJC's contribution is followed by a case study from the Community Organisation Resource Centre. Authored by Kwanda Lande and Yolande Hendler, the paper investigates the dynamics contributing to the destruction and disruption of two WaSH facilities in the Langrug informal settlement. It engages with the perceived breach of trust between public officials, non-profit organisations and community members. The paper commences by mapping the journey of the Langrug Upgrading Partnership, including its shortcomings. It then delves into the community dynamics that contributed to the challenges experienced including issues related to community ownership as well as power imbalances between community actors. The Paper finally focuses on trust building (mechanisms) in Langrug as well as the need to re-assess community representation.

The papers focused on the informal settlement context are followed by two In Profile contributions each reflecting on a specific citizen engagement tool and context.

The first is a paper by Luke Jordan and Mbalenle Nkosi from Grassroot. The paper discusses the potential and shortfalls of technology as an enabler of meaningful citizen participation in local government decision-making. It analyses the limits of technology in the local government context, and through a reflection on the work of Grassroot, considers the impact that alternative approaches may have, and possible means to replicate or broaden that impact.

The second contribution is from the Trust for Community Outreach and Education, authored by Boyce Tom. The paper provides insights on experiences of land access struggles by small-scale farmers in Theewaterskloof Local Municipality in the Overberg district of the Western Cape Province. It reflects on the years of organisational support provided to local small-scale farmers towards securing land-based livelihood strategies.

SoLG 2018 concludes with a review of the work of the GGLN over the past 15 years, authored by Monique Damons from the GGLN Secretariat. The paper outlines the GGLN journey since 2003, highlighting in particular the value it has added to the work of its members. It indicates that, despite challenges experienced, the GGLN is a worthwhile and important endeavour in the current South African local governance and CSO contexts.