

# Party manifestos

## FOR THE THIRD LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS, 18 MAY 2011

**With the local government elections set for 18 May, political parties are preparing their party policies and manifestos in a bid to woo voters. A survey of the party manifestos and statements ahead of the elections reveals five main themes: local economic development; improving access to municipal service delivery; community safety; community participation and involvement; and curbing corruption and strengthening local governance**

This article analyses the manifestos of the seven major political parties – those already launched at the time of writing, namely the African National Congress (ANC), United Democratic Movement (UDM), Democratic Alliance (DA) and Congress of the People (COPE), and those of parties that, although they had not launched their manifestos, were willing to send us draft manifestos, namely the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and African People's Convention (APC).

### Local economic development

Most political parties have taken local economic development as one of their focal areas and deliverables in the upcoming elections. The manifesto of the ANC, for example, looks at local economic development through the lens of job creation. The ANC promises to invest in local infrastructure and labour-intensive projects that lead to employment and hence higher job creation at the local level. It also promises to place job creation and sustainable livelihoods at the centre of its local economic programmes and to ensure that there is equal access to employment and skills development for women and youth. To this end, the ANC promises to establish a jobs fund of R9 billion over the next three years to finance new job-creation initiatives. Over and above a massive investment in local infrastructure and labour-intensive projects, the ANC promises to

create a single small-enterprise fund to support small enterprises, cooperatives and the informal-sector economy with non-financial and financial means. It further promises to support rural smallholder farmers with seeds, tractors and storage facilities; setting up rural co-operatives, and access to water infrastructure. The ANC also pledges to empower metros and large cities to build 400 000 more decent housing units and upgrade 45 informal settlements.

The DA seeks to address the issue of local economic development by, firstly, creating an environment for growth and jobs and, secondly, delivering essential services to all persons without discrimination. In creating an environment for growth and jobs, the DA aims to enhance transparency in local governments, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness. It also aims to focus on planning and regulating for growth, building infrastructure, enhancing the accessibility of government, fighting crime, building human settlements, the sustainable use of resources and entering into strategic partnerships. The essential services targeted by the DA as part of local economic development are providing subsidised or free services to the poor, providing clean water and electricity, managing sewerage and refuse removal, offering primary health care and facilitating social development.

The UDM promises to ensure, where it has control and influence, that councils become more active in stimulating and promoting economic growth and development. The UDM promises that its councils will form partnerships with communities to stimulate the local economy. It also promises to create a local business environment that supports businesses owned by young and women entrepreneurs, as well as those owned by people with disabilities. It also promises to establish 'sustainable development councils' (SDCs) to replace ward committees. The SDCs, says the UDM, will include representatives of the relevant national departments that will lead to the stimulation of local development.

AZAPO promises that rural economic development will be the touchstone of all the work done by AZAPO councillors in rural municipalities. AZAPO sees the provision of support to small-scale farmers – in the form of tractors to plough their fields, seeds, veterinary services and low-cost transportation of their goods to markets – as the best strategy for developing rural economies.

AZAPO further promises to build municipal roads linked to regional and national roads to ensure the efficient connection of rural areas to economic hubs in the country. It singles out corruption as the key impediment to local economic development and promises to root out corruption at the local level.

COPE promises to undertake research on poverty and unemployment levels in every ward it wins to inform future actions on local economic development. COPE further promises to promote development activities within municipal areas, with the formation of investment and trading companies that will sell shares and use the proceeds as capital to undertake projects in a specific area.

The APC views local economic development as the most important tool to address the hardship associated with abject poverty, skills shortages and the high rate of unemployment. The APC promises to use local economic development as a means of developing skills, creating job opportunities and growing the local economy, with the emphasis placed on developing local skills by providing training, establishing permanent support structures and providing mentoring to enhance sustainability.

The IFP is silent on local economic development.

## Improving access to municipal service delivery

Improving quality and efficiency in local service delivery is also a talking point among political parties as the local government elections draw nearer.

As mentioned above, the DA sees the delivery of essential services as a key to local economic development. Thus it puts an emphasis on enhancing access to essential services by all persons. The ANC cites the improvement of municipal roads and infrastructure and municipal health services, and the establishment of community library services, with an emphasis on rural areas, as crucial to the improvement of service delivery.

AZAPO also maintains that municipal roads connecting rural and urban areas are crucial to local economic development and service delivery, and are thus priorities for service delivery. Of the six manifestos reviewed in this study, only the ANC's and AZAPO's cite improved infrastructure, especially in the rural areas, as vital to improved service delivery.

COPE promises to appoint qualified professionals who can improve productivity and guarantee service delivery, not political hangers-on. It identifies electricity, because of its escalating cost, as one of the core concerns. It proposes to assist in the installation of solar geysers by negotiating with suppliers and arranging for special bank loans with repayment terms of up to 60 months.

The ANC states that part of the budget for socio-economic development will be used to expand electricity services in the rural areas. COPE seeks to provide alternative means of generating energy for domestic use. The UDM promises that every household will have access to electricity in all UDM-controlled municipalities.

The DA hopes to tackle the electricity issue through the installation of prepayment meters to control consumption, while at the same time providing free electricity to indigent persons. The DA also seeks to lobby the government to allow private producers to sell energy to the national grid. Like the other political parties, the DA is interested in exploring renewable sources of energy and envisages the installation of solar heating systems for low-cost housing units.

Water services also feature prominently in the manifestos. COPE notes the general water shortage in the country and its importance for industrial and commercial use. It then promises to place considerable emphasis on water security. The ANC wants to invest in bulk water distribution and the rehabilitation of water projects such as windmills in rural areas, mainly targeting rural farmers. The UDM promises that every household in UDM-controlled municipalities will have access to water and sanitation.

AZAPO raises concerns around the quality and availability of water, and calls for the abolition of the privatisation of water in order to improve the service. AZAPO also advocates free water for poor households, no imposition of prepayment water metering and public education on the proper use of water, including the importance of its preservation, as a means of improving the service.

The DA intends to provide 6 000 litres of water per month free to every household, to carry out maintenance on the water infrastructure, to control excessive consumption and to minimise wastage through leaks. The DA also aims at alternative sources of water. These include recycling and plans for drought-hit areas. The DA argues that this will ensure that shortages are avoided. In general, party manifestos that mention water services share an emphasis on rural areas and poor households.

Some manifestos deal with the issue of billing. The UDM promises to improve the billing system for services delivered and make it more accurate. The UDM intends to conduct an audit of the municipal billing departments to find out the exact revenue raised, which will help in streamlining the billing process.

The APC has a different approach to the billing problem. It intends to introduce a flat rate in place of the current inaccurate billing systems until an accurate billing system is introduced. The other manifestos covered in this survey are silent on the matter. The APC further promises to see to it that all capital budgets are fully spent, thus ensuring quality services are timeously delivered.

Similarly, the IFP put emphasis on spending. It promises to stop wastage, mismanagement and corruption and, instead, to prioritise spending on infrastructure and basic services. It further undertakes to block any bonuses for managers that are not earned through real performance.

## Community safety

The issue of community safety also emerges as one of the major concerns that political parties seek to address. The APC proposes a

community safety plan to combat insecurity at the local level by involving all stakeholders, such as the local business community, faith-based organisations, civil society organisations and even individuals. To achieve this, says the APC, local governments will play a direct and active role in initiatives such as neighbourhood watches, community patrols and partnerships with state security agencies.

The DA lists a number of ways to enhance community safety. These include increased municipal policing in areas that have rampant crime, zero tolerance of crimes such as drunken driving and of speedsters, ensuring efficient and competent municipal police services, building effective partnerships with different sectors of the community and expanding ongoing anti-crime programmes.

Similarly, the UDM promises to tackle crime at the local level by building the capacity of community safety associations. It makes specific reference to the importance of security departments of the metropolitan areas in dealing with crime and rooting out corruption.

The ANC intends to increase the visibility of SAPS through the patrolling of highways and the establishment of more police stations. The ANC, like other parties, seeks to strengthen community initiatives to enhance security. The APC calls for cooperation by all stakeholders in addressing community safety issues, especially where economic deprivation and substance abuse are the causes of insecurity.

An overview of the manifestos reveals that the strengthening of community-based structures for security reasons seems to be a major focus for the political parties whose manifestos have been sampled in this survey.

## Community participation and involvement

Effective local participation in local government matters is also a focus of the political party manifestos. All parties recognise local government as the locus of participation in government. The ANC promises to ensure enhanced accountability of councillors to the local communities that they serve. The ANC intends to strengthen ward committees with resources and an enhanced mandate, and seeks to ensure that 90% of ward committees are fully functional and better resourced within the next five years.

The UDM hopes to increase consultation with communities and specifically states that councillors will come from the localities that they represent and will reside there with the local residents.

The proposal of AZAPO seems the most radical. The party calls for the abolition of provincial governments and the replacement of provinces with purely administrative structures in order to enhance local participatory democracy, which is stifled by provincial government structures. AZAPO and COPE both call for the direct election of mayors so that municipalities are more accountable and responsive to local communities.

The APC calls for consultation with communities in matters of eviction in order to preserve their dignity. The DA promises to ensure that its councillors will maintain regular contact with the people as part of an annual job performance and evaluation plan.

## Curbing corruption and strengthening local governance

All parties also recognise the need to strengthen local governance in South Africa. However, the approaches and priorities differ from party to party. AZAPO, for example, promises to strengthen local government by instituting mechanisms for the recall of councillors who are accused of corruption. The party also intends to streamline the tendering process to make it more open and accountable. COPE calls for the formation of an independent service commissioners' office where complaints against local governments can be lodged and prompt investigations launched.

The ANC admits much still needs to be done to root out corruption, even though a lot has been achieved. It promises that tendering processes will be made more transparent, and undertakes to deal with shoddy contractual work by using special investigations units.

AZAPO also intends to ensure transparency in the hiring of municipal staff. The party specifically promises to ensure that councillors do not handle interviews and that appointment processes are more open.

The DA also identifies corruption as a key impediment to efficient service delivery and local economic development. The DA promises an open and transparent tender procedure, and undertakes to establish teams to follow up on issues identified by the Auditor-General. It further promises to require its councillors to declare their assets. The DA says it will open council and subcouncil meetings to the public, except on confidential matters that the party has specified as legal and staffing matters. DA councillors will also be required to sign a councillors' charter for performance.

## Cross-cutting issues

Of the political parties sampled, very few specifically identify gender as a key theme in the elections. The ANC notes that 45% of its councillors are women and that it aims to achieve 50% female representation after the elections. The APC, the only other party that specifically addresses gender issues, hopes to create an environment where the role of women is recognised in leadership.

## Analysis

The manifestos provide some insight into what the parties want their councillors to focus on once elected. The question is whether

these manifestos really help voters make an informed choice in their localities. In this election, as in the past few, local issues are overshadowed by big national issues. Political parties use rhetoric and general statements that may not mean much to communities facing harsh realities on the ground.

In addition, quite a number of issues raised in the manifestos and party statements do not relate specifically to local government. For example, the ANC's proposal to create employment through a jobs fund sounds very similar to the national government initiative introduced in the 2011/12 budget vote speech by the Minister of Finance. The question is: how does this relate to the agendas of municipalities? The same applies to the promised support for rural farmers in the form of seeds, tractors, storage facilities and veterinary services mentioned by the ANC and AZAPO. While we would not detract from the need for such assistance, it is not clear what the role of municipalities (as compared to that of provincial departments of agriculture) will be in implementing these programmes. Also, the ANC's aim to increase the visibility of the SAPS is not an issue under the direct control of municipalities.

What can be gleaned from the manifestos is a difference between the two major contenders in their approach to development. The ANC emphasises state-led developmental initiatives while the DA underscores the relationship between effective service delivery and development.

It is also worth noting that the sustainable use of energy is embraced by almost all parties as an imperative for the newly elected local governments. Furthermore, all parties consider corruption and the responsiveness of councillors as critical themes in the upcoming term.

COPE repeats its call for directly elected councillors. AZAPO wants a recall of councillors and the abolition of provinces. However, none of the big parties proposes any major institutional changes as part of its campaign.

It is regrettable that, of the bigger parties, only the ANC commits itself to a gender target.



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