



In his 2006 State of the Nation Address on 3 February, President Thabo Mbeki focused on the troubles and goals of local government. While he noted that three-quarters of South Africans approve of the government's service delivery efforts, only 45% believe that local government is performing well. The President then set out his plans to rescue municipalities.

Photo: Thomas Kinyagu, UWC

The President delivering his 2006 State of the Nation Address to the Joint Sitting of Parliament on 3 February.

State of the municipalities

More money, more skills

The two principle funding drivers are the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) and the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). These financial drivers will accelerate infrastructure investment in underdeveloped urban and rural areas to improve service delivery of roads, water, housing and more. The EPWP, in particular, is important to create jobs through labour-intensive projects, with municipalities as key players.

The President also highlighted the lack of qualified managers, professional and technical personnel as a major problem in municipalities. Project Consolidate is the government's response to enlarge local government capacity for service delivery. To this end, 3,000 Community Development Workers will have been deployed by March 2006.

All the development goals demand cooperative government guided by the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act. Thus the three spheres will work together on "a realistic IDP, a credible LED programme, and the material and human resources, as well as the... systems to implement" them for district and metro municipalities.

Forward again

The President spoke at length on the government's promise of housing, water and other basic services. Local government, as the main service deliverer, must improve on the record of its first five years. New councillors now have the entire government behind them and powerful tools in the MIG, EPWP and Project Consolidate to implement the promises of basic rights for all.