



Liaison, Dialogue and Research

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Policy Brief

28 October 2021, Zoom Platform

SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government

By Athenkosi Thoba, SALO

SALO PUBLIC MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

THURSDAY 28 OCTOBER 18:00-20:00

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:



**COUNCILLOR MARK
KLEINSCHMIDT**
(DA CANDIDATE
WARD 60)



BUSISIWE NXUMALO
DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE
ANC GABY SHAPIRO BRANCH
(ANC CANDIDATE WARDS 58
AND 59)



DR TRUST MATSILELE
ACADEMIC,
RESEARCHER AND
JOURNALIST



**MODERATOR:
LWAZI SOMYA**
SALO



Introduction

The road to South Africa's 2021 local government elections was a turbulent one given the challenges brought on by the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and the socioeconomic state of the country. Given the importance of local government in advancing programmes relating to service delivery and development to marginalised communities, all political parties had to consider the key messages that they were to give through their manifestos. The post-1994 local government has always envisioned the provision of 'developmental local government'. The 1998 White Paper on Local Government¹ defined the new mandate for local government as one that is "*committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives*".² The new approach to local government would be characterised by four features:

1. Maximising economic growth and social development: local government is instructed to exercise its powers and functions in a way that has a maximum impact on communities' economic growth and social development.
2. Integrating and coordinating: local government integrates and coordinates developmental activities of other state and non-state agents in the municipal area.
3. Democratic development and public participation: local government becomes the vehicle through which citizens work to achieve their vision of the kind of place in which they wish to live.
4. Leading and learning: municipalities must build social capital, stimulate the finding of local solutions for increased sustainability, and stimulate local political leadership.³

Since the advent of democracy, South Africa's local government elections have been a far more intensely contested space than its national elections. Local elections have an increased propensity for violence given the tight contestation of the space and candidates having a lot more to lose. As indicated in terms of the critical role of local government, issues around service delivery and the treatment of poor and vulnerable groups have always topped the agenda for political parties and candidates. The 2021 local elections were no different, but candidates and political parties had to endure difficulties to campaign amid a global pandemic. With most municipalities facing significant financial troubles and on the brink of collapse, these elections presented an opportunity for ordinary citizens to voice their concerns on the ballot papers.

¹ Department of Constitutional Development. 1998. *White Paper on Local Government*. Pretoria: Department of Constitutional Development. Available: https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/whitepaper-on-loca-gov.pdf [15 July 2022]

² *ibid*

³ De Visser, J. 2009. Developmental Local Government in South Africa: Institutional Fault Lines. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*. Issue 2.

Given the high levels of youth unemployment, youth exclusion, and gender-based violence, local government is by far the most important government election. The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) held a roundtable discussion on the 2021 local government elections that were scheduled for 1st November 2021. Citizens were going to the polls to vote for a Ward councillor that will represent their community in the municipal council. The local government election meant that citizens would be directly affected by their municipal council's political and governing decisions.⁴ The roundtable discussion put together different political parties that were contesting the elections in different wards in the Western Cape.

Context / Importance of the Problem

These local elections came at a time when much of the discourse in local politics focuses on the role that local government should play in addressing the broader issues of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Equally, there was an outcry regarding the growing issues of gender-based violence (GBV), hate crimes and an alarming increase in crime generally. Therefore, while critical in their own right, it is impossible to reduce the 2021 local elections to how the different parties sought to articulate their mandates. Indeed, during the run-up to the 1st of November 2021, Dirk Kotze, Professor in Political Science at the University of South Africa, argued that *“it would also be incorrect to assume that the parties’ presentation of the essence of the election is the same as that of the public”*.⁵ He pointed out that, *“the main parties – the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – portrayed the election in different terms, which is in itself important to analyse”*.⁶

What was important during this roundtable discussion was to gauge these candidates and their political parties on four important aspects that were critical to look out for in these elections, namely:

- What are the key messages of their different political parties?
- What strategies will they employ to address issues of service delivery facing ordinary people?
- What are the key issues facing society that they will be mostly focusing on?
- What can they do to attract young people to vote as it seems that they have lost the appetite to vote during local elections?

There were three speakers at this workshop: Mx Busisiwe Nxumalo (Deputy Chairperson of the Gaby Shapiro ANC Branch and Ward 58 and 59 Candidate); Mr

⁴ Jansen, Z. 2021. *The role and purpose of local government and why it is important to vote in the upcoming elections*. IOL. 14 October. Available: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/the-role-and-purpose-of-local-government-and-why-it-is-important-to-vote-in-the-upcoming-elections-07902ece-08ee-4856-8e52-b745379ac52b> [15 July 2022]

⁵ Kotze, D. 2021. *South African local government elections: why a great deal hangs on the outcome*. The Conversation. 29 October. Available: <https://theconversation.com/south-african-local-government-elections-why-a-great-deal-hangs-on-the-outcome-170886> [15 July, 2022]

⁶ *ibid*

Mark Kleinschmidt (DA Candidate for Ward 60) and Mr Trust Matsilele (Researcher and Journalist).

Reflection of Presentations

Busisiwe Nxumalo, Deputy Chairperson of the Gaby Shapiro ANC Branch

The ANC Candidate for Ward 59 and 59 is also a Western Cape ANC-PTC member and a PWC member. Busisiwe Nxumalo also served on the National Political Education subcommittee of the Young Women's desk, the NYTT, and as an ambassador for Robben Island. Indicating their experience in government work, they pointed out that they have worked as a researcher at the Western Cape provincial legislature, and currently works as the chief of the majority party in the ANC caucus.

It is always important for a candidate to have a basic understanding of how local government works. Given the situation currently facing many local municipalities, experience in working within the legislative structures indicates that a candidate will not have to go through training but will immediately get on with the critical job of service delivery. The key message from the ANC in Ward 58 and 59 was *"a vision with action can change the city"*. The aim was to bring about the City of Cape Town's three important key areas, namely: effective leadership, honest service, and restoration of dignity.

Critical to this pledge is to make sure that the LGBTQIA+ community, women, and students are prioritised as beneficiaries in the city's policies, plans and programs, and that resources reach all people on an equal basis. They live and work in these wards, and as such Nxumalo promised during this discussion to ensure that there is an increase in safety and security, particularly for students as the wards that they were contesting are very student dominated.

Another important promise from the ANC candidate for Wards 58 and 59 was the prioritisation of responsive service delivery to ensure a quick resolution to the service requests logged by residents and to facilitate easy access for residents to actively participate in the development of the city's policies and plans. There was an emphasis on the importance of voting for young people. The youth needs to be at the forefront of taking charge of its future. Young people cannot build the country without participating in shaping its future. Nxumalo stated that *"as we embark on many hashtags of social movements, and how these ideas and ambitions of that hashtag will only become true if we're at the forefront of putting policies in place to make it happen"*.⁷ The youth must challenge the status quo and use its voice to raise concerns directly through the city council. The local government elections present such an opportunity as local government is one of the spheres of government that is closer to the communities.

An important statement was made relating to marginalised groups who are often left disempowered, voiceless, and isolated by society. The candidate indicated the

⁷ Busisiwe Nxumalo. 2021. "SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government", SALO, 28 October 2021.

importance of these groups as they also equally form part of society. The LGBTQIA+ community are often categorised as gender minorities, and in most cases are overlooked in conversations. Nxumalo pledged to do more to advance and advocate for an inclusive local government in these ward areas. They stated that there is a “*need to work towards having a city and a council that works for all people, and not just a few*”.⁸

The ANC is one of the only political parties that is fully inclusive in both its policies and structures. For example, during the January 8th celebrations in 2020, the ANC Women’s League launched the LGBTQ+ desk.⁹ As a historic step in a democratic South Africa, the launch of the LGBTQ+ desk was aimed at accommodating the largely marginalised and forsaken community, the party said.¹⁰ The LGBTQIA+ as a gender minority now has a voice within the political space of the ANC. The candidate stated that there is a lot of work within the LGBTQIA+ community that has been done by the ANC Gaby Shapiro Branch working alongside other strategic partners. This work has been aimed at making sure that there were amendments done to the Prevention of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill currently with Parliament. Within this ANC branch, there have also been campaigns aimed at creating public awareness and ensuring that the rights of those marginalised are recognised accordingly.

Mark Kleinschmidt, DA Candidate - Ward 60

Mr Kleinschmidt spoke on the importance of implementing youth development programs in local municipalities to uplift young people. As the incumbent councillor for Ward 60, he works very closely with his fellow multiparty councillors in the sub-council. In his current position, Mr Kleinschmidt stated that he works with 36 Early Childhood Development facilities (ECDs) to ensure that children remain in school. Through education development programs, learners need to be reminded that Grade 12 is not the highest form of education that the youth must aspire to. There is tertiary education after Grade 12, and it is very important.

Having previously served on Trevor Manuel’s Bursary Fund in Mitchells Plain, the DA candidate said his ward works tirelessly to ensure that no young person will be deprived of an education. It emerged that as a candidate, his heart and efforts are closely related to education initiatives and youth development. Ward 60 invests a lot of value in young people and what they bring to the table. Making an example of using young people in areas such as social media, the DA candidate said representatives in government can learn a lot from the youth in this area. Young people are active, and they want to participate.

Currently, politics has become a bad word. Therefore, it is important that local government representatives “*transform that vision so that in the ward that I serve, my young people must go out and vote, because you hold the future. But obviously,*

⁸ Busisiwe Nxumalo. 2021. “SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government”, SALO, 28 October 2021.

⁹ Power987. 2020. *ANCWL launches LGBTQ+ desk*. 13 January. Available: <https://www.power987.co.za/news/ancwl-launches-lgbtqi-desk/> [20 July 2022]

¹⁰ *ibid*

education plays a huge role in it".¹¹ It is important to plough time and resources into young people for them to become future leaders of our society. It is also critical to indicate that it emerged from the message of the DA candidate that local government representatives are patient with young people. Ultimately, the key message from the DA candidate for Ward 60 was that *"the road to education is always under construction"*.

The more local communities empower their youth in terms of education, the more the youth would start to see participation in elections and local government as critical in addressing societal issues currently faced by communities. Mr Kleinschmidt referred to how the DA has recently attracted young people to its leadership structures. He indicated that people will *"find younger people are coming to the fore. Mmusi Maimane, for example, when he was with the DA, a young man 34/35, [also now we can] see Geordin Lewis as well"*.¹² This shows the importance of young leadership in the opposition party and its seriousness to youth development through education.

Dr Trust Matsilele, Researcher and Journalist

The first important thing is to note that the lower participation of youth in electoral politics in South Africa is not an outlier, it is common across the world. For instance, in 2016 almost half of the youth voters in the United States stayed away from the ballot. The same trend could be observed in the UK, with around 47% observed in the UK. *"The 2019 General Election saw a turnout of around 47% amongst voters aged 18-24, a decrease of 7% when compared to 2017"*.¹³ In five years before the 2010 elections in the UK, there was around 36% youth participation in the votes.

*"In South Africa, I think we had around half of [the] 6 million [who] were eligible to vote in the 2019 election [who] participated in that election. I think that begs the question, why do we have fewer young people participating in local politics?"*¹⁴

Most countries are experiencing conditions where there is fewer youth being actively engaged in electoral politics. In terms of the post-2021 local elections, research conducted by Carin Runciman, Martin Bekker and Carol Mbeche of the Centre for Social Change at the University of Johannesburg found that *"non-voters were more likely to be young (under 35), and students – 59% of whom abstained from the 2021 local government election within the five municipalities"*.¹⁵

¹¹ Power987. 2020. *ANCWL launches LGBTQ+ desk*. 13 January. Available: <https://www.power987.co.za/news/ancwl-launches-lgbtqi-desk/> [20 July 2022]

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Mashford, S. 2020. *Youth turnout – How does the UK compare to other European nations?* 89 Initiative. 28 September. Available: <https://89initiative.com/youth-turnout-uk-europe/> [17 July 2022]

¹⁴ Trust Matsilele. 2021. "SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government", *SALO*, 28 October 2021.

¹⁵ Runciman, C & Bekker, M. 2021. *Here are five factors that drove low voter turnout in South Africa's 2021 elections*. The Conversation. 8 December. Available: <https://theconversation.com/here-are-five-factors-that-drove-low-voter-turnout-in-south-africas-2021-elections-173338> [17 July 2022]

The studies that have been done so far on voter turnout in South Africa indicate the fact that corruption is at the centre of why young people are disengaged in electoral politics.¹⁶ The studies conducted show that young people do not trust that voting necessarily brings a change in the direction of the country, which is a critique not just of the ruling party, but also the alternative political formations.

*“If they were seen as viable options, I’m sure the youth would give them a shot and see if they can bring their political fortunes and bring the changes which they will be looking for”.*¹⁷

During the time this roundtable took place, around 50% of young people were unemployed and almost 10 to 15% of graduates remain unemployed. After 25 years of democracy, young people continue to face many challenges in South Africa and have lost confidence in government. Young people do not feel any confidence in the electoral process because they have lived to see that even under the present ANC-led government, their prospects of getting jobs, being employed, or rising on the social ladder, are slim.¹⁸

The Issue of Migrants’ Vote in Local Government Elections

The ANC candidate for Wards 58 & 59 indicated that there should not be any reason why migrants should not vote in local government elections. It is important to note that migrants also form part of the communities and constituencies that will conduct elections and must be represented. He argued that migrants have the right to have their voices heard and their issues attended to like other people in communities.

It is also clear from policy discussion circles that migrants form part of the marginalised groups in communities as they are often overlooked and voiceless. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa guarantees everyone within the borders of the country access to fundamental rights. It only makes sense for migrants to vote because they are also affected by the decisions of government and local municipalities. Nxumalo stated that *“we should also remember that South Africa is part of SADC and many other UN treaties that we also have humanitarian responsibilities and treaties that we should pledge ourselves to”*.¹⁹

The candidate for the DA, Mr Kleinschmidt had different views from those of the ANC candidate. According to Mr Kleinschmidt, the Independent Electoral Commission rules are clear, you need to be a South African to cast a vote. The IEC has *“determined that we have the documents in the form of an ID document and a temporary document, either the card or the barcoded”*.²⁰ Everyone must accept those requirements as designated by the IEC. He indicated though that he embraces every single person who comes into South Africa.

Dr Matsilele observed that indeed the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand also follow the same trajectory of allowing migrants to vote at a local government election

¹⁶ Trust Matsilele. 2021. “SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government”, SALO, 28 October 2021.

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid

¹⁹ Busisiwe Nxumalo. 2021. “SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government”, SALO, 28 October 2021.

²⁰ Mark Kleinschmidt. 2021. “SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government”, SALO, 28 October 2021.

level. The United States, on the other hand, allows some local districts to make those decisions about whether they allow migrants or not. This is not common practice in Africa currently, no country in Africa allows the migrant communities to vote in their local government elections. Dr Matsilele argued that at times people expect too much from South Africa when the country is also a very young democracy. South Africa's democracy is still maturing to get to where these countries are where they can allow migrant communities to participate. The key now is certainly making sure that everyone within these borders is known, documented, and is there legitimately.

Expecting South Africa to allow migrants to vote now is probably premature, if it happens, South Africa would have leapfrogged several other African countries. Such countries may have just started a conversation around this matter. So far, much of the research on migrants' votes has been conducted from a diaspora perspective. This is because the rate of diaspora enfranchisement is particularly remarkable in Africa.²¹ According to Wellman, "*before 1990, not a single country in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) had adopted external voting; today, 32 out of 48 SSA countries officially extend the franchise abroad*".²² The rapid rise suggests emigrant enfranchisement is an emerging norm associated with democratisation and its expansion in the continent. This includes the need to bring the diaspora closer to home. Hence so far, there has not been a focus on how foreign nationals could cast votes in another country.

South Africa is arguably one of the most advanced democracies on the continent regarding refugee laws. For example, many African countries still do not allow refugees to open bank accounts, as highlighted by the DA candidate. Most migrants and refugees in other African countries still live in refugee camps, including in countries such as Zimbabwe. South Africa has advanced migrant policies, especially in giving rise to migrants, they can open businesses and they can participate in other aspects of social and economic life.

Questions and Comments from the Participants

- The audience wanted to know the kind of experience and knowledge each candidate would bring to the table should they be elected.
- Wards 58 & 59 have discontent for the DA, with people saying they are not going to vote or will vote for another party. Participants asked the candidates for their responses to these kinds of sentiments.
- How will the candidates deal with the matters of service delivery that are affecting wards 58 and 59?
- How are the candidates planning to bring young people to the table for public engagement?

²¹ Wellman, E. 2021. Emigrant Inclusion in Home Country Elections: Theory and Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. *American Political Science Review*. 115(1): 82-96.

²² *ibid*

- There was a concern that young people hardly hear about activities aimed at engaging them and providing them with possibilities of contributing to their communities.
- The emerging sentiment was that the youth is striving for conditions where their local communities are succeeding in dealing with challenges faced by ordinary people on the ground.

Responses from Panelists

The candidates pointed out that in all aspects that fall under local government, the key is to provide proper service delivery to the people councillors represent. Currently, the City of Cape Town has a service request hotline where you can call or SMS and get assistance as soon as possible. A councillor of a ward must know about these offhand. Ward councillors need to develop a partnership with their residents to find easy ways to resolve challenges facing communities. Often, ward committees are comprised of ten community-based organisations that work together with local government to improve service delivery.

There are also community members who continue to participate in ward initiatives through neighbourhood watch membership. These initiatives help communities reduce crime and provide security and protection. Membership often includes men and women, young and old. This provides more support and resources to local government initiatives. In such instances, councillors must assist with equipment for patrols to ensure they are safe. Furthermore, the councillors have to ensure that neighbourhood watches work closely with SAPS, as these teams are essentially eyes and ears on the ground. Safety and security are very key in both these wards (58 and 59).

As one of the very student-oriented wards, it is critical that the councillor engages all stakeholders in the community on these matters. The queer community and women, by engaging in the budget, policies and programs would ensure that their issues are prioritised efficiently. It is the role of the elected councillor to work with the community through a comprehensive social compact and take the responsibility to make sure that all the voices are heard at a council level.

Given the focus on youth, the queer community, and women, the ANC candidate for Wards 58 & 59 pointed to the need to prioritise these groups as beneficiaries in the city's policies and programs. This is to ensure responsive service delivery and ensure a quick service request logged by residents through the CCTV service requests. The core experience that the candidate for Ward 58 & 59 would bring to the council table focused on honest service, restoration of dignity, and effective leadership. Through liaison between the residents and the council, the candidate would ensure that their voices are heard. It is also a good incentive to have an understanding of the work of the provincial legislature to operate community issues with knowledge regarding the links between local government and the provincial legislature.

Youth participation in community issues must be encouraged through the continuous engagement of the public and the residents' forums. These are the key drivers in terms

of getting the youth to participate. Since moving into the digital age, it has become critical that most issues are addressed using digital platforms to engage young people.

The DA candidate pointed to the key areas that the party focuses on, freedom, fairness, opportunity and diversity. Those are the cornerstones of the DA mandate when it comes to local government. From these cornerstones, the party focuses on protecting and promoting women and their right to participate in governance. The DA argued that it “*continues to respect women as equals, grants them the dignity that they deserve, they are the mothers of the nation*”.²³

Recommendations

- Ordinary people must understand the importance of local government elections as something that is reflected in the Constitution.
- The Constitution sets out the mandate for local government in Schedules 4 and 5 under Part B, the mandate includes, refuse collection, public roads, electricity, water and sanitation services.
- The cornerstone of local government is service delivery and ward candidates must base their promises to residents on that aspect as a top priority
- Local municipalities must put in place multi-sectoral plans focusing on community development, how to curb crime, making public places safer and many other issues.
- Ward councillors must do their work in consultation with the community. The ward councillor must also be aware of what policies and plans are in place by the national and provincial government and how he or she can access funds, skills training and resources to build up the community over the five-year plan.
- Community members could approach the ward councillor for assistance in identifying avenues where there are programmes that could promote local economic development and open up job opportunities
- Once ward councillors are elected to municipal councils, integrated development plans will be drafted and adopted.
- It is just as important for community members to familiarise themselves with aspirant ward party councillors and the manifestos of political parties vying for their vote and make informed decisions about who will be heading up their ward and representing them in the municipal councils.²⁴

²³ Mark Kleinschmidt. 2021. “SALO Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Local Government”, SALO, 28 October 2021.

²⁴ Jansen, Z. 2021. *The role and purpose of local government and why it is important to vote in the upcoming elections*. IOL. 14 October. Available: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/opinion/the-role-and-purpose-of-local-government-and-why-it-is-important-to-vote-in-the-upcoming-elections-07902ece-08ee-4856-8e52-b745379ac52b> [15 July 2022]

Conclusion

The run-up to the 2021 local government elections in South Africa saw many voters going to the polls to choose from 60,000 candidates and more than 300 political parties to elect councillors for 257 municipalities. As a norm, these elections are critical in terms of trying to get a sense of how political parties are viewed at a national level. Furthermore, local governments have substantive autonomy over services citizens care about, as such the elections present an important opportunity for ordinary people to choose their next local representatives wisely.

In terms of atmosphere, the elections came months after the deadly riots that rocked South Africa in July 2021 when supporters of former president Jacob Zuma rebelled against his conviction for contempt of court when he failed to attend a corruption inquiry. The elections on November 1st 2021 were critical in terms of strengthening local democracy and served as a mechanism to encourage municipal governments to improve their performance. The past few years have seen major concerns from the Auditor General's reports and the general feeling among ordinary people that municipalities are failing to provide services to communities.

Based on released data from Afrobarometer collected in May-June 2021, close to 45% of South Africans claimed that they do "not at all" trust their local government council, and more than 60% disapprove or strongly disapprove of the performance of their elected local government councillor.²⁵ Trust has declined over the last six years while disapproval rates remain stubbornly high. It is worth noting therefore that, the local government elections served as a warning sign from South Africans that on the local issues that most affect their everyday lives, they would continue to demand and expect better from their politicians.²⁶

The analysis and recommendations included in this report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

²⁵ Resnick, D. 2021. *South Africa's municipal elections: A referendum on political parties and local democracy*. Brookings. 28 October. Available: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/10/28/south-africas-municipal-elections-a-referendum-on-political-parties-and-local-democracy/> [17 July 2022]

²⁶ *ibid*

About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and

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