

editorial

It is about three weeks to South Africa's third democratic election. All eyes are focused on political parties as they position themselves in order to win votes during polling day. Campaigning is increasingly reaching its political crescendo as parties begin to jostle for state power. Although the spotlight is certainly on political parties as the key actors in the electoral contest, we are also interested in how the other players are squaring up to the challenge. One of these is the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

The IEC is a statutory body tasked with the overall management and administration of elections guided, mainly, by the Electoral Act and related regulations. The assessment of this fifth edition of the *Election Update* is that from all indications, the IEC has prepared itself fairly well. This is attributable mainly to three factors, among others: namely (a) the IEC has become firmly institutionalised as one of the key democratic institutions in South Africa since 1994; (b) with the experience of the turbulent transitional election of 1994 and a relatively less volatile second election of 1999, the IEC has increased its professionalism and efficiency quite considerably; and (c) the IEC is also fairly insulated from undue influences by powerful political actors and, as such, has jealously guarded its independence and thus enhancing its credibility, acceptability and legitimacy before the eyes of all contestants.

During much of the pre-election phase, as we get closer and closer to April 14, the IEC has managed the following with utmost diligence:

- Registration of voters including prisoners;
- Party registration;
- Submission of party lists and payment of party deposits;
- Signing of electoral Code of Conduct;
- Voter information and education;
- Acquisition of election materials;
- Preparations for election monitoring and observation; and
- Conflict management.

In this issue, we provide our readers with national trends of election preparedness as well as provincial highlights. We have also introduced a section on debate and viewpoints that will remain permanent throughout the production of the *Update* in order to facilitate more analytical debate on any pertinent issue relating to the 2004 election which may not necessarily relate to any specific province as such. Contributions to this segment of the *Update* are most welcome.

In our previous issues, we mentioned, in passing, that we intend to disseminate the information in various editions of the *Update* to rural communities. We are happy to announce to both our contributors and our readers that we have now begun disseminating the information through Community Radio Stations in all the provinces. We

have a team of media experts that is assisting us in undertaking and accomplishing this complex task. At the institutional level, we are coordinating this activity closely with the Institute for Advanced Journalism (IAJ) and the National Community Radios Forum (NCRF). We have successfully completed workshops in all the provinces involving community radio stations on how best to disseminate the information contained in the *Election Updates* to the citizens throughout the entire election process.

Khabele Matlosa

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NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

THE IEC'S STATE OF PREPAREDNESS

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Introduction

The general election in 2004 is the sixth major election administered by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC): the two national/provincial elections in 1994 and 1999, the municipal elections in 1995 and 2000 and the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) municipal elections in 1996. Hence, a valuable reservoir of experience has been developed over the time which makes the preparations each time more efficient.

The legislative and regulatory framework for conducting elections have also been finalised over time. The Electoral Act, 1998, and the Electoral Commissions Act, 1996, form the foundation of the national and provincial elections. Two aspects in this framework appear to be recurring issues, namely the status of prisoners as voters, and participation by South African citizens outside the country. In respect of both issues, compromises characterise the arrangement for this election but a consensual agreement on

these matters is still in the offing.

Election Timetable

The IEC's preparations for the elections are statutorily directed by the Election Timetable. Immediately after announcement of the election date on February 11, the IEC gazetted the following timetable:

16 February 2004

The Chief Electoral Officer gives notice of the details of mobile voting stations.

20 February –

The Chief Electoral Officer publishes and certifies the voters' roll.

29 February

The registered political parties who wish to participate in elections nominate and submit their lists of candidates.

3 March

The Chief Electoral Officer notifies the parties whose lists of candidates do not comply with the nomination requirements.

8 March

The non-complying parties have until this day to amend their lists in order to comply with the requirements.

11 March

The Chief Electoral Officer gives notice of the opportunity to inspect all the candidates' lists and accompanying documents on 12 and 15 March.

15 March

The last day for objections to candidates on the party lists.

18 March - The IEC decides on the objections to candidates, and notify the objector and the party nominating the candidate, of its decision.

23 March

The objector and the nominating party can appeal against the IEC's decision.

26 March

The Electoral Court must consider the appeals and take a decision.

29 March

The Chief Electoral Officer must give effect to the decisions of the IEC or Electoral Court, and must compile a list of the participating registered political parties and a final list of their candidates.

5 April

The Chief Electoral Officer must issue to each candidate a certificate stating that the person is a candidate.

7 April

Voters outside the boundaries of South Africa can apply for, and cast a special vote at the foreign diplomatic missions.

8 April

Special categories of voters inside the country can apply to their municipal electoral officer to cast a special vote

14 April - Election day.

We can now concentrate on how the IEC at national level has conducted its preparations for the elections. The IEC has also decentralised provincial structures in each province responsible for local preparations, but these are not included here.

Voter Registration and Voters' Roll

One of the fundamental values of the Constitution, 1996, is that a national common voters' roll must be the register of all voters. For the purpose of the 2004 elections, the IEC arranged two voter registration weekends: on 8-9 November 2003 and on 24-25 January 2004. (Voter registration is

discussed in *Election Update* No. 1 and therefore only relevant aspects are highlighted here.)

The registration drive has been relatively successful. On 31 March 2003 the voters' roll consisted of 18 106 859 voters. After the registration process, it now stands at 20 674 296. Taking the natural demographic losses (such as deaths) into account, it is an increase of about 2.5 million on 1999.

A demographic analysis of the 20.6 million voters shows that 54.8% of these are female and 45.2% are male. About 64.5% of them live in urban areas and 35.4% in rural areas. About 17% are in the age group 18-25 years and 44.4% in the age group 18-35 years. Therefore, it implies that for the ages 25-35 years, it would be 27.4%.

During the weekend of 24-25 January 2004, about 1.3 million persons registered for the first time. The age group distribution for first-time registrations are the following:

Age Group	Per Cent
18-25 years	58.8%
26-39	21.9
40- 49	8.4
50-59	4.7
60+	3.7

In order to provide an indication of the IEC's scope of activities in such a registration process, the following information about

the January 24-25 weekend might suffice:

First-time registrations

1 334 593 (42.4%)

Re-registrations in the Same voting district

347 202 (11.0%)

Re-registration in another voting district

468 085 (46.6%)

Total

3 149 880

These 3.1 million registration activities can be broken down into the following age and gender statistics: (Percentages are calculated as a proportion of the 3.1 million registration activities)

Age	18-25	26-39	40-49	50-59	60+
%	31.3	36.2	15.8	8.7	6.8
%Re-register same district	2.1	4.1	2.3	1.4	1.2
Re-register another district	4.4	22.8	9.9	5.3	4.1
First-time register	24.9	9.3	3.6	2.0	1.5
Male	15.1	16.9	7.4	4.1	2.8
Female	16.2	19.3	8.4	4.6	4.0

The indicators demonstrate a higher incidence of activities in the form of **re-registrations** in another voting district, than first-time registrations. Most active, is the group 25-35 years. As expected, first-time registrations is highest in the age group 18-25 years and then gradually declines. Therefore, the ostensible apathy amongst young persons is not fully supported by these statistics.

Almost two-thirds of all registrations are in urban areas.

A particular aspect of voter registration that complicated the IEC's task, is in respect of convicted prisoners. In dispute was the Electoral Laws Amendment Act 34 of 2003 depriving convicted prisoners serving sentences of imprisonment without the option of a fine, of the right to vote during the period of their imprisonment. On 23 December 2003 the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Re-integration of Offenders (NICRO) and two convicted prisoners asked the Cape High Court for an order declaring the amendment unconstitutional

The case, *Minister of Home Affairs v National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Re-integration of Offenders (NICRO) and Others* (four other respondents), was decided by the Constitutional Court on 3 March 2004 follows on a previous judgement in *August and Another v Electoral Commission and Others* 1999 (3) SA 1 (CC) in respect of the 1999 general elections. The Home Affairs affidavit justified the exclusions on the fact that 'these prisoners have been deprived of their liberty by a court after a fair trial'. In the judgement logistical considerations were not the determining factor, because two categories of inmates

retained their voting rights: awaiting-trial prisoners, and prisoners who failed to pay fines imposed on them. The IEC has arrangements in place to register them at all the prisons and to provide mobile voting stations for them. Therefore, the Commission indicated in the court hearing that it is logistically possible to accommodate all prisoners.

The Court therefore ruled that the legislative sections in contention are unconstitutional and order the IEC and the Minister of Correctional Services to ensure that all prisoners who are entitled to vote are offered a reasonable opportunity to register and vote. On or before 10 March 2004 the IEC must serve on the Minister, NICRO and the two prisoners (as original applicants) an affidavit setting out how it will comply with the court order. The Court further ordered that not later than 9 April 2004 the IEC must give notice to prisons and prisoners that registration of voters will take place; must also visit the prisons and register the voters; must prepare and distribute a supplementary voters' roll; and must receive and properly consider any objection and appeal related to registrations.

On the day of the judgement the IEC issued a press release in which it

committed itself to the Constitutional Court ruling.

Logistical Preparations & Electoral Infrastructure

Voting Stations.

Since the first voters' registration on the national common voters' roll in 1998/99, the IEC has implemented four projects to improve on the incorrect recording of voting stations' locations on the IEC maps, and of registrations at incorrect voting stations. One of the projects has been a revision of voting district delimitations. District boundaries have been adjusted in accordance with current population settlement patterns and improved map information. The result is an increase in the number of voting districts and stations. For the 1999 general election, about 15 000 were used. In the 2000 municipal elections, 14 992 were used. For the 2004 general elections, the country is divided into 17 041 voting districts. It represents an increase of 13.7% on 2000. In provincial terms, they are distributed as follows:

PROVINCE	VOTING STATIONS (2004)	INCREASE ON 2000
Eastern Cape	4 362	1 275
Free State	1 068	7
Gauteng	2 085	106
KZN	3 497	159
Mpumalanga	1 115	92
North West	1 197	177
Northern Cape	411	13
Limpopo	1 970	174
Western Cape	1 336	46
Total	17 041	2 049

The most striking feature of these figures is the disproportionate allocation of voting stations to the Eastern Cape: 25.6% of the total number of voting stations and 62.2% of all the new voting stations are established in this province.

Regarding the preparedness of the voting stations, it is noticeable that 65% of them are situated in schools. During 2002/3, a national survey was conducted by the IEC to determine the state of their infrastructure. It transpired that 39.1% of them have no electricity, 20.8% have no toilets and 27.3% have no water. It is therefore the IEC's responsibility to arrange for these services during the election.

Elections and IEC Staff

In respect of IEC officials and voting station staff, the Commission estimates that

215 604 voting station officials will be needed. At the time of writing 189 400 have already been employed - 64.5% of them are women. All the officials must be registered voters. About 65% of the ordinary voting officials are unemployed persons or students. Presiding officers will total 16 915 at the time of the election, while there will be 17 043 deputy presiding officers - almost 34 000 in total.

The personnel situation in the IEC is less favourable than the temporary staff used for the election. The IEC's staff situation provides a barometer for its capacity to manage elections. On 31 March 2003 the situation was as follows:

Province	APPROVED POSTS	FILLED POSTS
Head-office	153	84 (54.9% of approved)
Eastern Cape	13	13
Free State	9	8
Gauteng	10	10
KZN	14	12
Mpumalanga	9	9
Northern Cape	9	8
Limpopo	10	10
North West	9	9
Western Cape	10	9
Total	245	172

The IEC in the provinces are very well staffed in terms of approved posts. A cause of concern is the head-office where only 54.9% of the

approved posts have been filled. As a ratio of the temporary elected staff, the IEC's staff only constitute 0.079%. It means that not enough continuity and accumulated electoral management experience exist. In this respect, the IEC Chairperson, Dr Brigalia Bam, noted on 19 February 2004 in a speech that the IEC has established a training fund for electoral officials, in particular for presiding officers, similar to the approach in Australia.

Procurement of Materials and Services

Each election demands a mammoth effort in terms of providing election materials and services. Numerous elections have failed or were not free and fair, because the logistical electoral infrastructure to provide for and distribute election material and services on time and in the required quantities has been at fault. The IEC's experience of the 1994 election made it acutely aware of the pitfalls in this respect.

As a result, the IEC implemented a Logistics Information System (LIS) to increase efficiency in dealing with material requirements and consumption, and to reduce costs. By means of the LIS, stock levels of election materials are determined at each point in the delivery chain. The Bill of Materials (BOM) is an

essential component of LIS. It is a critical planning mechanism used for determining the electoral materials of each voting station. The required material of each voting station is determined in advance to allow for bulk procurement of election materials and equipment.

In July/August 2002, the IEC introduced a process of eProcurement, known as 'Vota Quotes'. It is an electronic procurement initiative to provide more (small and medium-size) business opportunities and to improve the transparency of procurements. Supplies of goods and services have to be registered on-line with the IEC. By 31 March 2003 3 180 suppliers have been already registered for this purpose. The procedure is based on the principle of 'reverse auction' and approved suppliers are required to place electronic quotations in the system. This procurement system objective is to make it open and transparent: suppliers can compete openly for the available business and all the submitted bids can be viewed by all the approved suppliers. Secondly, it can eliminate most of the bureaucratic paperwork and human intervention, thereby reducing the potential for irregular manipulations and corruption. Thirdly, it can reduce costs for both the IEC and the suppliers, and lastly, it strives to ensure that the

fair level of competition possible is achieved as everyone is electronically notified of all the relevant auctions.

The IEC is also responsible for the stockpiling and distribution of all the election materials. It maintains a network of warehouses at national, provincial and local levels. Two types of election materials are distributed through two different delivery channels. The one deals with general election materials and the second with security materials, like the invisible ink to mark voters, ballot paper stamps, ballot box seals, security tape, etc. The latter type of materials is handled in a closed environment in the sense that packages of election materials are packed and prepared for each voting station. It is opened only by the Presiding Officer in the presence of party agents.

Financial Management and Information Technology

In the past, both financial and IT management have been outsourced by the IEC. Since the appointment of Pansy Tlakula as the IEC's Chief Electoral Officer and chief executive in February 2002, she has set goals to restructure the two departments by replacing external service providers with their own employees. This process has been completed. With this

approach the IEC is in the process of enhancing its own technical capacity in election management.

IEC's Involvement in the Election Campaign

Over and above its statutory obligations regarding election campaigning, such as the party liaison committees, conflict resolution and enforcing the Electoral Code of Conduct, the IEC is also involved in a number of other initiatives. A significant one is the agreement signed on 12 March 2004 between the Commission and farming organisations.

Farm workers in rural areas are often prevented from participating in the various aspects of an election, because farmers do not want to allow party representatives on their farms, or do not wish that their workers support parties other than their own, given their traditional suspicions of the ANC, PAC and others.

This agreement is the culmination of a dialogue process, including a national workshop held in September 2003 between the IEC, agricultural organisations and farm workers' groups. According to the agreement, the agricultural organisations commit themselves to cooperate with the IEC in the following respects:

- to allow IEC agents reasonable access to

farming areas for them to perform their tasks, including voter education

- to allow voters on farms to attend political rallies at public places
- to allow the IEC and its agents reasonable access to use designated areas as voting stations
- to allow voting farm workers time off to vote
- visits to farms will be conducted in accordance with a protocol of access to farms.

The IEC is responsible for accrediting election observers. It is quite popular for international institutions to send delegates as observers. They have to follow the procedure of accreditation via the Department of Foreign Affairs. For this election, the IEC expects observers from the Commonwealth, European Union, IFES, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the African Union. Domestic observers form a second category. Expectation is that the number of observers will increase. Closing date for application for IEC accreditation was 5 March. The successful applicants have been notified and at the end of March they will undergo a brief training session. Dr Brigalia Bam emphasises the importance of these observers, and encourages them to deploy some of their resources in KZN as a visible deterrent for political violence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the IEC at its head-office appears to be on track with its preparations. The Election Timetable has been adhered to, though the Constitutional Court ruling on prisoners created additional requirements and placed a new burden on them. Most importantly at this stage, is to ensure that all the voting station officials are employed and trained for their tasks; the election materials are ready for distribution; and that the election campaign continues without any serious incidents. Lessons learnt from the previous elections provide an important institutional memory and capacity to ensure that efficiency will prevail on election day.

THE UNWILLING VOTERS AND THE 2004 ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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On 14 April 2004, 21 political parties will be contesting in the third presidential and provincial elections South Africa. These are the third elections since the inception of non-racial and democracy in South Africa in 1994. To this end, various political parties have started to lure the voters by presenting their various election manifestos in which they outline their envisaged programmes and plans to consolidate democracy and advance the socio-economic development in the country. In general, the contesting parties have identified almost similar issues in their campaigns. Leading common factors in the parties' manifestos are crime, micro-economic development, poverty alleviation and HIV AIDS. While the registered parties are working hard to win the hearts and minds of the voters, there exists a faction within the South African political landscape that do not perceive the logic behind participating in the forthcoming elections. This article explores the level of the non-participatory mood in the forthcoming elections

in South Africa. This will be executed by outlining some of the reasons for non-participation; explaining the constitutional implication thereof; giving early warnings to "exaggerated" non-participation and lastly, conclusion.

According to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) there are 20, 674, 926 eligible citizens who have registered to vote in the forthcoming election. This figure comes out of a total of 27, 000, 000 estimated to represent eligible voters. The difference from the above figures suggests that there are close to seven million eligible voters who will not be participating in the forthcoming elections. This number is made by, among others, the prisoners who do not want to register for the elections because they are currently using names different from those in their identity document, and fear that if registered they would be prosecuted for some of their previous crimes. The situation exists, despite the Supreme Court ruling to give all eligible prisoners a chance to cast their vote. Other unwilling voters include those who perceive the government as having done nothing or little to better their lives. This includes the landless, the unemployed and many others who have been physically witnessing raw treatment from the

government's service delivery endeavours. In most cases, the decision not to vote is taken individually, with a possibility of being changed as the election date comes closer.

The Eastern Cape-based Landless People's Movement (LPM) and the Herstigte National Party (HNP) represent the organised section of the population that is determined to abstain from the forthcoming elections. On 03 March 2004 some 300 members of the LPM marched to the Premier's Office in Bisho, the capital of the Eastern Cape Province, demanding land for the landless people in the province. They threatened that if their demands are not met they will forcefully take over farms on the 14 April – the day scheduled for elections. This has since compelled the government to promise to use its security resources against the LPM and other individuals and organisation intending to disrupt the elections.

The HNP on the other hand, claims to represent the Afrikaners whose intention is to restore Afrikaner domination in South Africa. This faction is organised around the principles of Afrikaner racial superiority as the God-chosen to implant and uphold western civilisation in South Africa. They mainly associated themselves with the

principles represented by their forefathers' historical encounters and their movement into the interior of South Africa as carried through the Great Trek. This faction perceives the electoral process, brought by the political transformation dating from 1994, as a vehicle to dismantle their aspirations. To this end, the faction has distributed posters, especially in Pretoria, urging those Afrikaners who subscribe to their cause, not to vote.

The activities of the LPM and HNP compel one to interrogate some of the constitutional and legal aspects associated to elections and constitutional rights of South Africans. These include everyone's right freedom of opinion, expression and to campaign for a political party or cause, as reflected in the Bill of Rights. Looking at the activities of the HNP, it appears that they (for now) still operate within the confines of the Electoral Code and the Constitution, unless they start to compel individuals to join their cause or physically interfere with the election process. The envisaged land grab by the LPM, on the other hand, will serve as an act of intimidation to those willing voters living in and around the targeted land and will thus affect the electoral process.

In summation, the number of unwilling voters [those not

registered and those influenced not to vote] in the forthcoming presidential and provincial elections has a potential to increase. This depends mainly on the success of voter mobilisation by various political parties and how the political parties, the government and IEC will provide a conducive voting environment free from intimidation, violence and other crimes associated with elections.

DEBATES AND VIEWPOINTS

Ten Years of Democracy and the Dominant Party System in South Africa

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Introduction

It is fascinating to observe that South Africa, a country that three decades ago was engulfed in a protracted violent conflict with little prospects for an amicable political settlement, has made such tremendous headway in terms of both political transition and institutionalisation of democratic governance since 1994. The political transition and institutionalisation of democratic governance has had a profound bearing on both the democracy project

broadly speaking and specifically, the party systems and party organisation in the country, as elsewhere in the SADC region. It is only fair to note that today, more parties take part in the political activities of SADC countries and are thus able to contest state power through regular elections. This observation is validated by the party political competition for state power that will take place in five (5) general elections to be held: South Africa (April 2004) Malawi (May 2004), Botswana (November 2004), Namibia (November 2004), Mozambique (December 2004).

All these developments suggest, either for better or for worse, that liberal democracy is increasingly becoming firmly institutionalised in Southern Africa. Be that as it may, however, what is striking about the form of liberal democracy underway in the region, is that almost all the regional states today are characterised by what in political science is termed a 'dominant party system'¹. This article presents a brief critical review of South Africa's ten years of democracy and specifically teases out the country's emergent dominant party system. We further explore the implications of the nature of party system for electoral

contest as South Africa gears itself up for the April poll and its aftermath.

Political Transition and Party System

There is a fairly lively debate today on the extent to which democratic governance in South/Southern Africa is consolidating, and the extent to which the process is ephemeral and thus likely to experience reverse waves. Part of this interesting democracy discourse rotates around the value or lack thereof, of the dominant party system to a working and vibrant democracy. There is no gainsaying that South Africa's successful democratic transition and the current democratic governance in this country is marked, in the main, by a strong dominant party system. If we recognise this reality, then the key question is whether this situation in any fundamental way denudes the country's liberal democracy. According to Patrick Laurence, dominant party systems tends to diminish the inherent value of liberal democracy and in his own words "too much power concentrated far too long in the hands of one party is inimical to democracy. Irrespective of whatever past benefits the party may have contributed to the nation. Power does not sanctify the holder of it, as Lord Action observed during the reign of Queen Victoria. On the contrary, 'power

tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."² In this article, we provide an argument suggesting that the above observation may be overstated in South Africa's complex political setting and conclude that there is no scientific evidence suggesting in fact, that a dominant party system is inherently undemocratic or authoritarian as such and South Africa no exception to this rule. We begin the discussion with a brief, if succinct, conceptualisation of the notion of the dominant party system within the South African context.

There are basically four (4) types of party systems the world-over, namely (a) the one-party system which provides for a governance system in which only one party is in existence either *de jure* or *de facto* and actively drives the political system and is solely in control of state power; (b) a two-party system or *duopoly* wherein two main parties dominant and drives the political system and alternate over the control of state power through electoral contest; (c) multi-party system in which more than two parties exist and are politically active in directing the governance realm and in so doing alternate among themselves the control over state power; and (d) the dominant party system in which despite the multiparty situation, only

¹ Giliomee and Simkins, 1999

² Laurence, 2004,3.

one party is so dominant that it directs the political system and is firmly in control of state power over a fairly long duration of time that even opposition parties make little, if any, dent on the political hegemony of a dominant ruling party.³ By all indications, therefore, the political hegemony of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa suggests that the country's governance realm is marked, to all intents and purposes, by a dominant party system. Some of the key features of a one-party system, such as the one prevailing in South Africa include:

- Continuous electoral victories of a dominant party over time by huge margins and, as such, reducing oppositional contest to second fiddle;
- Political hegemony of the ruling party over state institutions including control of the largest share of the legislature and local government authorities; and
- Sole determination and direction of development policy trajectories by the ruling party with little challenge or credible policy alternatives from opposition parties over time.

Axiomatically, all the three conditions prevail in South Africa. In this sketchy discussion, we will illustrate

how the dominant party system has evolved and is being crystallised in various ways. We do this in light of, and indeed in the context of, the upcoming election of 14 April 2004. Let us refresh our minds with some highlights of the previous election outcomes. It is to this that the next section turns.

Elections and the Dominant Party System

During the epochal 1994 election, the ANC struck a landslide victory obtaining 62.65% of the total valid votes estimated at 19 533 498. This essentially qualified the party to occupy a total of 252 of 400 national parliamentary seats. The National Party (the current New National Party – NNP) came second with 20.39% of the votes and only 82 parliamentary seats. It came to pass that the ANC would reproduce its political hegemony during the second democratic election of 1999 by snatching 66.35% of the total valid votes and 266 parliamentary seats, while the second best party namely the Democratic Party (the current Democratic Alliance – DA) ran home with a paltry 8.56% of the votes and occupying a mere 38 parliamentary seats.

These data suggests beyond any shadow of a doubt that the ruling ANC enjoys an unfettered political hegemony through huge electoral victories. These in

turn, ensure its overwhelming control of the Parliament and other key institutions of the state as well as a relatively unchallenged policy trajectory in terms of determination of the future and destination of South Africa's democracy and development. Needless to say, various market research institutions such as the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and the SABC/Markinor have made scientifically based predictions that the ANC is most likely to further stamp its political hegemony through the forthcoming 2004 election which it is tipped to win yet again and maintain its lead in the electoral contest as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Predicted Results of the 2004 South African Elections (Five selected Parties)

Party	HSRC Poll	SABC/Markinor Poll	1999 Result % of Votes
ANC	67%	64%	66.35
DA	10.5%	11%	9.56
NNP	8.7%	4%	6.87
IFP	7.1%	4%	8.58
UDM	1.7%	2%	3.42

The forthcoming election results may validate or invalidate predictions of the market research opinion polls illustrated above; evidence suggests that these predictions are most likely to be validated by the actual outcome. As Adam Habib and Sanusha Naidu recently observed "SA's third democratic election is less

³ Matlosa, 2004; Karume, 2004

four weeks way. Yet the outcome seems a foregone conclusion, with the ANC already crowned the victor. As in 1999, this election appears to be more of a contest between the smaller parties vying for the position of official opposition.”⁴. Patrick Laurence corroborates this prediction thus “the apparent inevitability of another resounding ANC victory after its triumphs in 1994 and 1999 does not, however, deprive the forthcoming election of all interest, still less divest it of all importance”⁵. The bottom line for the forthcoming electoral contest, however, is not merely confined to winners and losers *per se*, but rather whether the election aftermath will sustain the dominant party system or lay the political foundations for a two-dominant party system. Whereas only time will tell and the proceedings of April 14 are yet to play themselves out, the reality is that the ANC has entrenched its dominance over the South African polity and this trend is likely to mark South African politics for years, even decades, to come.

The dominant party system that prevails in South Africa, pretty similar to the one that has prevailed in Botswana’s widely celebrated and stable liberal democracy since the

1960s. This does not in any fundamental way, denude the country’s democratic governance or suggest that the country’s democracy is not consolidating. It is one thing for a ruling party to ensure and reproduce its dominance through the ballot or via authoritarian means as was the situation during the heyday of apartheid, it is quite another for a ruling party to ensure and sustain its political hegemony through the ballot as has been the case since 1994. In any case, the dominant party system in South Africa, unlike some other African states, has institutionalised various mechanisms, including the proportional representation electoral model, to ensure broad representation in the legislature and wider inclusivity of the political system.

Some scholars⁶ have proffered a fairly persuasive idea that a dominant party system amounts to “presiding over an eroding liberal democracy in the direction of mere majoritarianism and electoralism”. Despite the recognition that the country has not yet descended to majoritarianism, South Africa’s political dispensation is currently burdened with a situation in which one party dominates its politics making the prospects for alternation

seem more and more remote. As the ANC is assured to win once again, what then are the implications of their dominance for South Africa’s political system?

Is the Racial Divide an Issue?

The most obvious question revolves around the possible impact that ANC dominance will have on the political participation of those social identities that are ostensibly excluded from the political majority and that seem to be reproduced and sustained by the ANC’s hegemony. The issue here is not so much that there is a deliberate process of exclusion driven by the ANC but that some political forces feel relatively meaningless because they are positioned outside the sphere of this dominance.⁷ As a result, these political forces harbour a perception that the balance of power under the current political dispensation is determined not so much by party performance but by racial demography or what other analysts prefer to term ‘racial census’⁸ Over the years these feelings have become entrenched amongst the racial minorities, and the last elections confirmed their fears as the results revealed an overwhelming decline in their participation. As the electoral motivations of

⁴Habib and Naidu: 2004, p30

⁵ Laurence:2004, p.30

⁶ (Giliomee and Simkins, 1999

⁷ Schlemmer 1999

⁸ See ElectionSynopsis, 1 (2), 2004; Financial Mail, 12 March 2004

these minorities continue being persistently undermined, their participation in the forthcoming election is likely to be less forthcoming.

Recent opinion survey data also suggest that the potential for electoral indifference among the minorities in the forthcoming elections is quite substantial. Particular reference is made to the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), an extensive nation-wide survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), that was released late 2003. When voting intentions were analysed by race, nearly 7% among the white respondents indicated that they would not vote and 50% did not declare a party preference. Similarly the political alienation index revealed that at least 12% of white respondents and 8.1% and 18% of the DA and NNP voters respectively from a sample of 7501 respondents of voting age drawn from a random selection across the country feel politically alienated, in that whether they vote or not it makes no difference.

Over and above these predictions, there are other indications that many whites many not bother to vote at all in these elections. The reason for this, as already stated, stems largely from their perceived exclusion from the democratic polity, which has made them

demoralised, disillusioned and cynical. Turning again to the HSRC survey, among the 7.8% who said they would not vote at least 43% of these are not interested and 12% are disillusioned. As a result of their dissatisfaction with the current dominant party system and thus their lack of power on this system, these minority groups have come to focus their disappointment not only on the ANC but also on the opposition parties in which they had put their trust. Opposition parties to them, have failed to compete effectively and influence the ANC's hegemonic position. This is why many surveys conducted to date (SABC/Makinor (2004), HSRC (2003), the Helen Suzman/Markdata poll (2003) indicate substantial losses of support to most of these parties. Habib and Naidu opine that "a significant proportion of the electorate is uncomfortable with all political parties and in particular the formal opposition"⁹ (2004:30).

The Behaviour and Perceptions of Parties

Opposition parties too, fear that the ANC's political hegemony is slowly threatening their very existence. With political competition consistently structured around historical and racial affiliations that seem to favour the ANC, opposition parties feel that in

each electoral contest their political autonomy seems to diminish whilst that of the ANC's deepens. These elections and the on-going campaigns reveal that opposition parties are aware of their quandary. Using data sources such as regional opinion surveys and case studies that focus on the behaviour of opposition parties during these campaigns, they reveal that opposition parties this time around have aggressively positioned themselves not with the intention of consolidating their support bases but rather to cut into ANC's power. For these elections, the opposition has tenaciously employed a myriad of campaign strategies and styles with the intention not so much of retrenching, but at least intimidating the ANC's dominance. It is precisely within this context that a recent issue of the Helen Suzman Foundation publication poses the question whether the emerging political landscape in South Africa is likely to be marked by (a) consensual politics, (b) co-optive politics or (c) adversarial politics¹⁰.

In this election, many of the opposition parties' campaign features and characteristics, in particular the Democratic Alliance, differ substantially from those of 1999. In the 1999 campaign, "opposition

¹⁰ *Focus*, 1(2), 2004).

⁹ Habib and Naidu: 2004, p.30.

parties highlighted issues that were tangential to the primary concerns of most voters, employed styles attractive to only small numbers of voters, and few large opposition parties targeted their messages to the African majority.”¹¹ In 1999, opposition political leaders saw no hope of winning supporters away from the ANC or even other parties. For this reason, the opposition continued to rely on their existing constituencies and thus the 1999 elections saw a continuation of racially exclusive political parties. The Democratic Party’s 1999 “fight back” campaign strategy was the most adversarial and racially selective of them all. This was unfortunate as some analysts would argue that openings did exist in voting blocs into which the opposition could have skilfully made inroads.¹² Anecdotal evidence suggests the DA is capitalising on this opportunity during the 2004 pre-election campaign. There are claims that it has growing support among Africans particularly in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal where African voters see the DA as a viable counterweight to the ANC’s dominance.¹³ In the meantime however, the DA continues to campaign against the ANC’s dominance, in particular

¹¹ Lanegran 2001

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Welsh 2003

among its white supporters by using the ANC’s hegemony as a warning of worse to come for the minorities. Interestingly however, the DA’s campaign strategy causes it to drift the more and more into political conservatism and in the process, the party’s historical liberalism seems to be waning. The question is whether or not this strategy will win it a substantial political base especially among the black majority voters. Carol Paton concurs with us on this point by aptly observing that “modelled more as a European conservative party than a liberal democratic one in its philosophy, and, as a noisy and populist one in its political style, the DA bears little resemblance to its predecessors.”¹⁴

Another noteworthy feature of the DA’s campaign style as a strategy against the ANC’s dominance, is to claim that it is the most effective opposition party - one that can transform the political landscape into a two-party system. The DA, at every opportunity, trumpets its desire to produce a two-party system enabling it to act as a real alternative to the dominant ANC. It sees these elections as a turning point for South Africa’s democracy that will either turn into a *bona fide* multi-party democracy or a *de facto* one-party state. In a

¹⁴ Paton 2004

recent thought-provoking democracy seminar organised by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) in Auckland Park, the guest speaker, Dr Chris Landsberg, director of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) and a renowned political analyst, made a profoundly revealing remark. He stated that the Democratic Alliance (DA)’s campaign strategy suggests that its leader, Tony Leon, longs to turn the dominant party system around towards a two-party system in which the DA would become the main opposition and an alternate government to the ANC. This observation hits the nail on the head and is corroborated by Carol Paton in the recent issue of the *Financial Mail*. She also poignantly observes that “in this election, the DA aims to become the biggest party among minorities, including coloureds in the Western Cape, who in 1999 divided their loyalties between the ANC and the NNP, and among the Indians in Kwazulu-Natal who voted the Minority Front”.¹⁵ From this premise, Paton concludes that “to the DA ... SA is on its way to a two-party dominant system. For the moment, at any rate, that may be overstating the case”

Conclusion

The general election, scheduled for 14 April 2004,

¹⁵ *Ibid*

will constitute the apex of the country's celebrations for its relatively stable and evolving democracy. These will culminate in the inauguration of the President on 27 April. Both the election and the celebrations mark the successful political transition of the country to a majority democratic rule following decades of authoritarian apartheid rule. Whereas the political transition has, undoubtedly been successful, challenges for democratic consolidation still confront the country as it enters its second decade of democracy. Although some analysts tend to perceive the dominant party system in South Africa as the Achilles Heel of its democratic governance, we argue, on the contrary, that there is absolutely nothing inherently undemocratic about a dominant party system as such. A dominant party syndrome comes about, not so much due to coercive politics that is the hallmark of the apartheid authoritarianism era, but as a result of the competitive politics of consensus and regular elections and thus, in and of itself, a dominant party system may not be scientifically equated to authoritarian mode of governance. Given the entrenchment of this system, it may as well be that a dominant party system will be with us for quite a while despite overtures by some opposition parties for a two-party dominant system. Be

that as it may, let history be the judge whether or not the 2004 elections will further entrench the dominant party syndrome or build the foundations of a possible two-party dominant system. Although we recognise that these issues will feature prominently in the forthcoming election, we take cognisance of the reality that, what other scholars term "identity" will influence voting behaviour and the election outcome.¹⁶. It is also evident that opposition parties realise the political hegemony of the ANC and, that the best they can do under the circumstances, is not so much to capture state power from the ruling party but rather to cut it down to size as one of the parties (the DA) has so consistently campaigned.

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Newsflash!

POLICE CONFIDENT OF PEACEFUL POLL

Despite rising political tensions between ANC and IFP supporters in parts of KwaZulu-Natal, police say they will be able to cope with any eventuality in the forthcoming election.

"We are confident that the election will go ahead without any hassles. Compared with 1994 and 1999 we have come far," Director Bala Naidoo, the police spokesman in KwaZulu-Natal, said yesterday [29 March 2004]. "Every single police officer in KwaZulu-Natal will be deployed for the election. On election day we will ensure there is maximum deployment at polling stations and on their outer perimeters. We will also be conducting high-visibility patrols. Reinforcements have come in, mostly from Pretoria, to help stabilise crime for us and they will assist us during the election."

Excerpted from This Day 30 March 2004

¹⁶ Friedman, 2004

PROVINCIAL ROUNDUP

GAUTENG

The Preparedness of the IEC for the 2004 General Elections in Gauteng

Sydney Letsholo
Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

Introduction

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) plans to field 215 604 staff to work at voting stations around South Africa on the election day, 14 April 2004¹⁷. As the date slowly approaches, the IEC in Gauteng is engaged in the final touches so as to make the event run smoothly. Recently, the IEC identified polling stations in the province. It goes without saying that this will require the dedication and commitment from the IEC staff. Furthermore, to make this day a success, the IEC needs to be prepared in terms of providing the province's polling stations with ballot boxes and other election material. In an effort to paint a picture as to what is coming the IEC's way, perhaps one should briefly mention the political parties that will be contesting nationally and in the

Gauteng Province. The following parties will contest the elections nationally and in all nine provinces are the Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Independent Democrats (ID), Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), African National Congress (ANC), New National Party (NNP), Vryheidsfront Plus, United Democratic Movement (UDM), United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP); and Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). According to the IEC, parties that will be contesting provincially *only* are the Pro-Death Penalty Party, the Economic Freedom Movement and the Black People's Convention. Furthermore, the IEC asserts that the following parties have registered nationally and for Gauteng only, these are the Christian Democratic Party, the Nasionale Aksie, the Socialist Party of Azania and the Peace and Justice Congress..

Preparations

Preparations for 14 April 2004 are well underway. According to the IEC, there are 2098 polling stations in the province. The Commission has mentioned that there will be a minimum of one ballot box per polling

station. However, the number of ballot boxes will vary according to the size of each particular polling station. The number of trained people for the 2004 general election total 20986 Presiding Officers, 2241 Deputy Presiding Officers. Furthermore the IEC has recruited and trained 2052 Deputy Presiding Officers for the province's prisons. Again, besides ballot boxes, the IEC has made the following materials available: VEC forms pad, stationary packs, Voters' roll, the Electoral Staff System Training (ESST) training material booklets, Z-Cards (training series for voting officers), Elections Guide, cardboard materials, table makers, demarcation tapes, stationery packs, storage boxes and ID stickers.

Preparations are also taking place for the special votes scheduled for 12 and 13 April 2004. According to a press release by the IEC's Communication Department, the special vote applies to people who experience physical infirmity, disabled people, pregnant women, people who are absent on government service abroad, people who will serve as election officials, security service officials who will be performing election duties; and South Africans

¹⁷ <http://www.iol.co.za>

temporarily abroad. These are people who will not be able to cast their votes on 14 April. The press release further asserts that people who qualify for the special votes are South African citizens, eighteen years and older, who have registered with the Electoral Commission and whose names appear on the voters' roll. On either day, here is how the voting process will take place:

- People will be checked to see whether their names appear on the voters' roll
- Voter's finger will be inked
- Voter will be issued with a ballot paper
- Voter will have his/her identity document stamped to prove that they have voted
- Voter will be given two ballot papers, one for provincial and one for national
- Voter will secretly cast his/her vote inside a booth
- Voter will place his/her vote in the ballot box
- Finally, the voter will leave the voting station.

It is imperative to mention, however, that all these preparations would be futile if those manning the elections are not well trained for this momentous exercise.

The Challenges

Making sure that voters comply with the stipulations of the Electoral Act is one

challenge with which the IEC officials will have trouble. However, in the case where there is voter intimidation, law enforcement agencies including the South African Police Service (SAPS), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) will be at hand voting stations to calm the situation. Another challenge that normally faces IEC officials is dealing with voters who want to cast their votes in the wrong voting station. However, the IEC in Gauteng firmly believes that none of these challenges will be beyond their control.

Conclusion

The IEC in the province seems ready for voting on the 12, 13 and 14 April 2004. It is only a matter of time when the IEC, through the recruiting and training of its officials, will be judged according to its performance. However, it is worth mentioning that the cooperation by the voters with the IEC will definitely make life a little easier for the latter. South African citizens in Gauteng province are ready for the general elections, and the IEC has declared that it is all systems go.

JOHANNESBURG ONE MONTH BEFORE POLLING DAY

The Wits Politics Research Group

On 16 March 2004, the Wits Politics Research Group conducted a survey to assess public voting predispositions and attitudes to politicians. Respondents were canvassed at random for their views in Braamfontein, the area adjacent to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, a commercial precinct on the edge of the inner city accommodating apartment buildings, offices and two somewhat run-down shopping streets. Two hundred and one (201) people were interviewed, 158 black, 20 white, 14 Indian and 8 coloured, evenly split between men and women. The group therefore reflected roughly the country's racial demography, though occupationally it was less representative: 63 students, 27 unemployed people, 34 manual workers and 77 people in white collar occupations.

Respondents were asked first what for them, was the most important issue in the election. As is evident from Table 1, predictably unemployment was the overriding preoccupation, equally so amongst blacks,

whites and Indians. The most significant variations between people from different backgrounds concerned crime with only 25 per cent of black respondents according this issue priority status compared with 40 per cent of whites. If responses are grouped under occupational categories (Table 2) crime has an obvious salience to white collar workers and appears to be a less significant concern with other groups. (See Table 1 below)

HIV/Aids, is an issue, in contrast to crime and unemployment, that parties have tended to neglect in this election campaign and it emerged as the third ranking issue, especially among blacks (though not among whites). The comparatively low ranking of “delivery” and “housing”: the government’s “failures” with respect to improving social facilities have animated press commentaries but shortcomings in this area of government performance do not seem to be influencing urban voters. (See Table 2 below)

Are South Africans going to vote in high numbers? As Table 3 shows, in our sample 133 respondents (66 per cent) told the fieldworkers they were intending to vote and another 11 per cent were not sure. If this group is more widely representative these statistics do not suggest

a very different level of turnout from 1999 (when 68 per cent of the voting age population went to the polls). Moreover, this sample over-represented youth, given the 34 per cent share within it of students and young people generally seem less inclined to participate than their elders. Half the respondents were aged between 17 and 26 and of this group 27 per cent said they were not going to vote. The most reluctant groups of voters appear to be amongst whites. Indians and coloureds, with 50 per cent overall saying they would not vote or that they were uncertain whether they would vote. In contrast, 70 per cent of black voters said they would vote – though the black group in this survey is socially comparatively privileged given the preponderance within it of students and white collar workers. (See Table 3 below)

Overall, 33 per cent had not yet decided which party they would support. This is interesting: it suggests that in towns, at least, about a third of voters are open to persuasion. “Swing” voters appeared to be quite evenly distributed across racial groups. 25 per cent thought they might split their votes and support different parties in the provincial and national ballots, again a propensity fairly evenly distributed across the groups in the sample. As Table 5 suggests, only half the respondents

said they would vote for the same party as they did in the last election with the rest uncertain or predisposed to vote differently. 57 per cent (73) of black voters in this group will remain loyal to the party they supported in 1999 whereas among the other groups only 28 per cent (10) will vote in the same way as 1999. In general, surveys have discovered urban and minority voters to represent the more volatile sections of the electorate. This investigation offers confirmation of such a trend. Even so the number of black respondents in this survey who intend to switch their support from 1999 (38), 17 per cent of the total, is interesting. In previous elections black voters who have been disenchanted with the ANC, have tended to stay at home rather than vote for their former party’s opponents. The finding suggests that in areas comparable to Braamfontein, opposition parties may have a real prospect of taking significant numbers of votes from the ANC. (See Table 5 below)

This is partly confirmed in Table 6 in which 12 of the black respondents (10 per cent of the black party supporters indicated their identification with the DA .with respect to their occupational background all of these were students or white collar workers. Overall, 70 per cent felt close to a political party,

striking evidence of the degree to which South Africans still identify with political parties. Judged from this survey, the Democrats are going to draw most Indian, Coloured and White votes, though people from these groups were more likely to refuse to declare any party affiliation. Patricia de Lille may be disappointed that she had no student supporters amongst the respondents on Braamfontein that day. Azapo showed up quite well in this survey: the area is one in which its placards are conspicuous. 40 of the ANC supporters were students and another 38 were white collar workers. (See Table 6 below)

Finally, the fieldworkers asked their respondents to rate the performance of individual politicians. Respondents could choose to say whether they thought a political leader was doing very poorly, poorly, fairly well, well or very well. A numerical value was assigned to each opinion, from -2 (very poorly) to +2 (very well). When these values were all allocated, politician ratings were as follows:

Thabo Mbeki	54
Bantu Holomisa	-119
Tony Leon	-30
M Buthelezi	-142
Patricia de Lille	-43
M V. Schalkwyk	-149

Of course, to a degree, these rankings reflect very strong

party identification and a tendency among party supporters to be dismissive about politicians from competing parties to their own. In this context, de Lille's position is strikingly positive – the ninety or so people who rated her performance from fair (47) to very good (16) was many times the total of her party supporters. In this poll Thabo Mbeki only does moderately well, keeping in mind the preponderance of ANC supporters in the sample. Only 13 residents were prepared to concede that Marthinus Van Schalkwyk was performing more than fairly, though 50 accorded him a fair rating. The strongest correlations between party support and leadership approval were among ANC identifiers: of those ANC supporters who intend to vote (77 out of 101 of the respondents in the sample) Mbeki collected 69 points – an indication of mostly positive evaluations of performance. Among ANC supporters, Tony Leon achieved second place to Thabo Mbeki, with Chief Buthelezi in last place. Amongst DA supporters, Patricia de Lille obtains second place with Thabo Mbeki obtaining an emphatic bottom of the table status. DA optimists might read this data to conclude that the ANC may be more vulnerable to losing support to its main rival than the DA is to losing support to the ANC. However the statistics

also suggest that DA supporters are not so much animated by admiration for their party leader but motivated rather by antipathy to President Mbeki. Such readings should be treated as very tentative, though, they do not take into account the issues of party loyalty and voter fluidity.

This was a limited exercise: it offers a straw poll of the political predispositions of South African townspeople one month before polling day. It suggests that despite their differences in background, South African voters generally share a sense of priorities over issues – and not all of these are being addressed by the politicians. If the respondents in this survey are more widely representative, turnout on 14 April will not be very different from 1999. Party loyalties remain quite firm though the proportion of uncertain voters one month before polling day is quite striking. And among urban South Africans, to judge from this survey, on the whole parties seem to evoke more positive sentiments than the people who lead them.

The Wits Politics Research Group: Graham Eysselein, Jose Felix, Baka Ikonga, Debbie Love, Selby Matloga, Mikewa Ogada, Yolande Radebe, and Matthew Wilhelm-Solomon

Election update 2004 south africa number 5

Table 1: What is the most important issue for you in this election?

	Blacks	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	Total
Unemployment	96	9	7	2	114
HIV/Aids	23	1	1	1	26
Housing	8	0	0	0	8
Crime	23	8	3	4	38
Delivery	7	1	0	0	8
Other	2	0	2	0	4
Spoiled	0	1	1	1	3
Total	159	20	14	8	201

Table 2: What is the most important issue for you in this election?

	Students	Unemployed	Manual Worker	White Collar	Total
Unemployment	42	15	20	37	114
HIV/Aids	12	7	3	4	26
Housing	1	1	0	6	8
Crime	7	4	7	20	38
Delivery	5	2	1	0	8
Other	1	1	0	2	4
Spoiled	1	0	0	2	3
Total	69	307	31	72	201

Table 3: Are you going to vote?

	Blacks	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	Total
Yes	112	13	5	3	133
No	32	7	4	3	46
Don't know	15		5	2	22
Total	159	20	14	8	201

Table 4: Might you vote for different parties for national government and for provincial government?

	Blacks	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	Total
Yes	38	5	3	2	48
No	69	7	7	3	86
Haven't decided won't vote	52	8	4	3	67
Total	159	20	14	8	201

Table 5: Will you probably vote for the same party as you did in 1999?

	Blacks	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	Total
Yes	73	5	4	1	83
No	33	6	5	0	44
Don't Know	21	3	1	4	29
Total	127	14	10	5	156

Table 6: Do you feel close to one of the following parties?

	Blacks	Whites	Indians	Coloureds	Total
ACDP	0	1	0	0	1
ANC	96	1	3	2	102
Azapo	3	0	0	0	3
DA	12	6	6	2	27
FF+	0	0	0	0	0
IFP	3	0	0	0	3
I. Dem.	0	1	0	1	2
NNP	1	0	0	0	1
PAC	1	0	0	0	1
UDM	5	0	0	0	5
Won't answer	37	11	5	3	56
Total	158	14	8	200	

NORTHWEST

NORTH WEST READY, OR NOT?

Michael O'Donovan
Independent Political
Consultant

It is inevitable that, with time, the high voter participation rates observed in past general elections will decline and then plateau at some unknown level. In an on-going attempt to ensure that high participation rates are encouraged the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) constantly seeks to encourage participation by increasing awareness, streamlining procedures and improving access to facilities. One recent such intervention has been a marked increase in the number of voting stations. By increasing the number of voting stations the IEC reduces the distance travelled and time spent by the average voter in voting - thereby reducing one factor that discourages high participation rates.

The costs of voting in terms of time and effort have had a particularly pronounced effect in rural provinces, like the North West, which show low participation rates among rural communities and among the rural poor in particular. This has resulted in a gap in the participation rate between the rural poor

and other communities. A gap of similar magnitude is evident between other categories currently of interest such as that between the youth and older voters. No such gap exists between male and female voters. By improving the rural poor's access to electoral infrastructure, the IEC seeks to reduce one gap that sets this sector of society apart.

In the North West Province the IEC has attempted to address this gap through voter education and through the involvement of traditional structures in their campaigns. Traditional leaders usually act as gatekeepers to their communities and antipathy or apathy on their part can adversely affect participation rates. In the run up to this election, the IEC has been enhancing its access to rural communities by engaging traditional leaders prior to accessing the electorate. The engagement has largely been conducted through extensive meetings and *lekgotla* involving IEC officials of sufficient seniority. Running parallel to this initiative has been a similar effort in commercial farming areas. Both initiatives have been positively met and have resulted in the IEC and political parties being ensured access to the rural areas - and thus to the rural poor. The agreements between traditional leaders,

organised agriculture and the IEC represents a distinct improvement over the situation five years ago when the co-operation of these "gatekeepers" was not as aggressively pursued.

It is tempting to conclude that the participation gap between the rural poor and others will, at least to some extent, be addressed. However the extent to which this occurs depends largely on how effective these interventions were prior to the registration drive. The ability of political parties and voter educators to gain assured access to the rural poor will have no impact if the rural poor had not registered earlier. Unfortunately registration figures released earlier by the IEC indicated that there had been a notable decline in registration rates in the North West. This suggests that, despite their efforts the IEC may not arrest the envisaged decline in participation rates in the North West province.

Mirroring this pessimism is the fact that the marked increase in the number of voting stations across the country will have a minimal impact on the North West. The number of voting stations in that province is set to increase by less than one percent from 1 021 to 1 026. Consequently very few voters in the region will experience improved access

to voting stations – this is particularly problematic in an area with a large rural population in which the “participation gap” was already pronounced. At least that gap was attributable to difficulties in accessing voting stations.

On the one hand the IEC seems well prepared for the elections in the North West. Little has changed since the 1999 election and the procedures then used were up to the task. Consequently the IEC has to do little more than repeat its performance of that year – albeit with staff that have now

accumulated significant experience in the running of elections. The IEC has similarly surpassed the 1999 benchmark in terms of gaining access to rural communities and improving access to voter education. Whether or not this will impact on voter participation rates remains another question altogether. However, even if participation rates continue to drop, it is entirely plausible that the reason will lie less in the IEC's preparedness than in the campaigns. Participation among registered voters will certainly not be encouraged

by the idea that the election outcome is a foregone conclusion or that the ANC still declines to identify its preferred choice for Premier. In the most available public opinion poll, Markinor indicates that the ANC will gain almost 80 percent of votes cast. While the poll misrepresents what is likely to happen on election day, it does further the idea that there is little point in using your vote to bring about change in the North West – regardless of what political party you support.

Kwazulu-natal

ELECTION READINESS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Shauna Mottiar
*Independent Political
Analyst*

Introduction

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in KwaZulu-Natal is to all intents and purposes prepared to facilitate an election in the province next month. They have a total of 3555 voting districts and 3,819,864 registered voters out of which 2,176,061 are female and 1,643,803 male. According to IEC records, 105,268 of registered voters are between the ages of 18 and 19 and 543,575 between the ages of 20 and 25. The

age group 26 to 35 counts as the largest category of registered voters at 1,061,241. Of the 3,819,864 registered voters 1,848,196 are rural and 1,971,668 urban. The province has 16 registered political parties contesting the election.¹⁸

Notwithstanding its overlying readiness for the upcoming election in the KwaZulu-Natal, the IEC is faced with two challenges. The first is pertaining to the containment of violence in the province and the second

has to do with the levels of voter education.

Managing Political Tension

IEC chairperson Brigalia Bam stated to the press that “people are growing weary of violence and do not wish to sacrifice their lives in order for others to take a seat in parliament.”¹⁹ She was referring to incidents of violence during political rallies in KwaZulu-Natal. These incidents have left several people wounded or killed. The IEC noting ‘grave concern’ over what it termed “rising tensions” between members of the

¹⁸ Statistics courtesy of Joseph Fataar, Communications Officer, IEC, KwaZulu-Natal

¹⁹ *The Mercury*, March 1 2004

African National Congress (ANC) and members of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KwaZulu-Natal decided to post independent observers at political rallies in the province who would help the commission speed up disciplinary action against guilty parties. The IEC has set up a mediation panel that consists of twenty members drawn mostly from the legal profession but also substantially from churches and religious groups around the province. The panel is tasked with overseeing and investigating any conflicts or complaints which may arise. The IEC has also scheduled over 50 prayer meetings around the province to encourage stakeholders to adhere to peaceful election campaigning and voting. Stakeholders have also been invited to sign a Code of Conduct for elections.

Despite IEC precautions it has still received official complaints from the ANC regarding what it termed 'IFP obstruction' of its election campaign. The formal complaint lodged by the ANC included affidavits outlining ANC canvassing disruptions by IFP supporters especially in the Gauteng province but within IFP strongholds such as Zonkessizwe, Vlakfontien, Lawley, and hostels in Davyton, Jabulani, Jeppe, and Soweto. According to ANC officials "IFP supporters were hell bent on obstructing free political

activity, instigating violence and creating 'no go' areas within Gauteng".²⁰ Deputy President Jacob Zuma had his campaign interrupted when he was barred from entering a hostel in Denver Johannesburg by residents who informed him that he was not welcome as their Induna (leader) had not been informed about his visit. The ANC contends that it is not enough for the IFP leadership to claim that they support free and fair elections – by virtue of their having signed a Code of Conduct they are obliged to educate their supporters on the ground about free electioneering. The IFP officially condemned the obstruction of ANC campaigners stating that it would conduct a thorough investigation and that if supporters of the IFP were involved in violating the principles of free and fair elections they were failing to adhere to the standards of the IFP. The ANC have also complained that their election posters in various 'elite white Democratic Alliance (DA) suburbs' of Hillcrest and Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal have been destroyed or defaced.

Promoting Voter Education

In terms of voter education in KwaZulu-Natal, officials within the IEC have

expressed concern that not enough has been done through voter education to create a non threatening environment for elections to take place. The IEC has two strategies in place for voter education in KwaZulu-Natal. The first strategy involves education between elections in the form of a programme run in some 100 schools educating children about their role in a democracy and their right to vote.

The second strategy, planned for the actual election period, involves recruiting field workers from each of the provinces 51 municipalities to run workshops in their communities (churches, schools etc) providing information about ballot papers, voting stations etc – according to Dr Nomsa Masuku of the IEC these workshops only took place during the voter registration period and were not extensive enough. She argues that the workshops were not taken seriously.²¹ Masuku adds that the IEC in KwaZulu-Natal has failed to maintain a dialogue with civil society. Indeed a contract between the IEC in the province and a forum of NGO's in KwaZulu-Natal for voter education was only entered into formally last week despite the various NGO's having attempted to engage with the IEC at an earlier stage.

²⁰ *Mail & Guardian*, March 17 2004

²¹ Telephonic Interview March 18 2004

The contract envisages the provision of voter education to rural women, youth, farming communities and informal settlements for the period March to mid April by a forum of NGO's headed by the Democracy Development Programme (DDP). The project is aiming to hold consultative meetings with various local stakeholders such as local councils, traditional authorities, local women's groups and local independent electoral commission officers. It is envisaged that this will be a way to identify facilitators from within the communities as well as a way to widen access to the communities. The initial consultations will be followed by a series of activities such as work shops, seminars, talk shows, political debates and drama presentations dealing with various electoral subjects such as the role of women in democracy and balloting education. These activities will also be used as a platform from which to disseminate election and voting information in the form of leaflets and flyers. The project is targeting 25 municipalities in the province.²²

Scenarios on the Election Outcome

²² Acknowledgements to Njabulo Maseko, Programme Coordinator, Democracy Development Programme

As the 2004 election approaches predictions are rife about who will take control of KwaZulu-Natal. A Markinor survey released this week predicts that the ANC will take 48.7% of the provincial vote, the IFP 24.9% and the DA 6.3% giving the IFP/DA coalition 31.2% of the vote. The Minority Front (MF) was not part of the survey but is predicted to be crucial with regards to the control of the province. The MF has in recent years had a good relationship with the ANC provincially and locally and has gone on record to say that it will work with the majority party in KwaZulu-Natal. Party reaction to the survey has been varied. The ANC stated that while it noted the results of the survey, the only voter opinions that matter to it are the ones expressed on ballot papers on election day. The DA argued that its own research indicates that Markinor over counted the ANC's support among black voters and under counted the DA's.²³ The IFP's response has been more cautious "we are hoping that voters are not fed up with us and that the majority will continue to support us".²⁴

²³ Harper, P, "Poll tips ANC to run KwaZulu-Natal", *Sunday Tribune*, March 21 2004

²⁴ Michaels, J, "Buthelezi's Moment of Truth", *Sunday Tribune*, March 21 2004

A Competent and Wise Head Atop an Average Body the IEC in KZN

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According to the major political parties, the IEC in KZN is doing a good job, even better than in 1999, although there is still room for improvement. This is a view which, firstly, is remarkable for the degree of consensus it reflects amongst our usually disagreeable parties, and secondly, is supported by the available facts.

The consensus is as follows: on the positive side the IEC is doing a better technical job than in 1999. In addition to keeping to its time frame, the organisation is able to deploy more resources in 2004 and, hopefully, in a more effective manner.

For example in 1999 there were roughly 3200 polling stations. In 2004 there will be an additional 400, bringing the total to 3610. Further, these extra polling stations are located mostly in rural areas which the IEC has struggled to service before. Another example of improved technical performance are the registration figures. Whilst they are still not closed, registrations are already 11% higher in 2004 than in 1999,

with 3,819,864 registered in KZN this time compared to 3,443,978 in the last election.

The second area of good performance identified by all political parties was the IEC's non-partisan and transparent management. Here commission chair Mowethu Mosery was repeatedly singled out for praise because of his independent and fair manner. In addition most parties felt that the Party Liaison Committee was a good idea although some felt it could be better implemented. Given the history of tension in KZN, the IEC needs to be a referee above reproach and it seems to be fulfilling that role admirably at the higher levels.

On the negative side, parties felt that there was still significant room for improvement both technically and politically. Technically, two concerns were repeated. The first was the level of service provided by the IEC in many rural areas. Parties generally felt it needed to be improved, indeed Mowethu Mosery himself identified this out as the biggest challenge facing the IEC's effective delivery of an election. Key issues included the lack of access to rural areas due to poor roads, the lack of appropriate structures in which to house elections, the lack of electricity, phones, water and so on.

Clearly such problems are to be expected and it would be unrealistic to hold the IEC responsible for the general lack of development in many areas of KZN. Thus, while parties did single this out, there was also a recognition that it would not be fair to push this criticism too far.

In light of this, it is the second technical problem which deserves more attention and that is the mismatch between capacity and quality of staff in the IEC. At the higher levels the IEC has quality staff but too few of them, whereas at the lower levels it has more capacity but less capable people. Thus, the ANC complained that the senior staff were always too busy with managing IEC business to deal with daily issues that emerged. An example cited was of a senior IEC official who, when finally contacted by a top ANC provincial leader said, 'you're lucky to find me, I'm always in meetings'. The source complained that when the official did delegate she handed issues to someone too junior to take decisions. It seems that the ANC source wanted the IEC to free up its senior people from technical aspects to manage the daily politics of the election more.

Conversely, most parties complained of the sometimes poor training of more junior officials in the IEC. For example, complaints were made about the competence

of some low-level officials in working the technology used during registration. Others cited local officials who forgot to book halls for registration and the like. It was also at the local level that the issue of partiality emerged as a key concern for the DA. They felt that many local IEC officials were partial to the parties, and that the municipalities in Durban (and to a lesser extent Pietermaritzburg) had deployed people to assist the IEC on the basis of party loyalty.

While it is no consolation, this human resources weakness is widely felt in our government and civil service, indeed in the private sector as well. Generally in South Africa a thin layer of competence sits atop a wealth of mediocrity. In this light, the IEC's weakness is both more understandable and less grievous than would otherwise be the case. According to Mosery the IEC is fighting this problem by trying to employ staff with experience in previous elections. According to him 90% of all Presiding Officers and their deputies have done the job before.

Perhaps the most substantial criticism of the politics of the IEC, and this was a view shared by the DA and the ANC, is that it tends to prioritise peace over justice in relation to election conflicts. Thus the ANC source complained that the

Code of Conduct in KZN is pretty meaningless without some means of enforcing it. At the moment, a complaint must be taken to the police and so becomes delayed in the justice system. The point is that violations of the Code affect election campaigns and voting in the short-term and the current justice system is too slow to act as a sanction on such behaviour. The ANC source felt that a special court was required to give teeth to the code of conduct.

Similar sentiments were expressed by DA sources. In the words of the source 'the IEC always want to mediate' when the issue at stake is a simple issue of redress for pulling down posters or the like. According to the source 'there is nothing to mediate, these kinds of problems will not go away with mediation'. In short, the IEC is accused of always containing rather than resolving disputes.

But is this such a bad thing in the context of KZN politics? In 1994 the South African government did not have the capacity to ensure a truly free and fair election in KZN. This was widely recognised, and most saw the inclusion of formerly warring parties in a new, less violent, form of political competition as worth the price. An imperfect election was better than a civil war.

Since 1994 the state has improved security

management, although as argued in a previous issue, perhaps not to the extent required. This source of constraint on violence and intimidation is reinforced by the scrutiny of a free press and non-governmental organisations. By engaging in violence and intimidation parties run the risk of losing voters and the support of funders. At the same time, political parties like the IFP and ANC have learned that they can compete for power effectively in democratic ways.

At some point then, we will be in a position where the institutions of the state and the attitudes of political parties are such that election conflicts can be justly resolved without undermining the election as a whole. Have we reached that point yet? The IEC seems to think not – at least not quite yet. Thus Mowethu Mosery commented that he could not really feel satisfied with the IEC's management of election 2004 until voting day was over and the ever present threat of political tensions had passed.

My sense is that the IEC's approach is the correct one. It is prudent to treat democratic consolidation as a gradual process and also as not irreversible. It is always possible to back-slide into intimidation, violence and corruption, as countless countries illustrate. One of the great successes of South

African governance since 1994 has been to keep the ship of liberal democracy moving in the right direction in KZN, and the IEC's approach is consistent with this larger view.

In the context of the legacy of past conflicts and the closeness of the race for power in KZN 2004, the pursuit of justice rather than peace now is riskier than the other way around. Furthermore, given the extent of the injustices at present, this is not a risk worth taking. All it stands to achieve is to set back the longer-term process of democratic consolidation. If things go well in 2004, as it looks like they will, then by 2009 justice can return fully to the centre-stage of election management.

In a sense the IEC in KZN faces a dilemma similar to that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Just as Tutu oversaw the sacrifice of justice in the name of truth, the IEC, for one last time, should oversee the sacrifice of (some) justice for peace.

FREE STATE

Election Readiness – 100%

Dr KC Makhetha
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Introduction

When one talks about election readiness, an observation is triggered in one's mind that many South Africans are still not aware of the massive preparations that have to be done before an election can take place and even after the announcement of the election outcome. Hence the frequently asked question, what is the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) doing between elections? This question makes it necessary for one to clearly state some of the duties of the IEC, so as to clarify the matter and contribute to the development of an informed society.

The vision of the IEC is as follows: “to strengthen constitutional democracy through the delivery of free and fair elections in which every voter is able to record his or her informed choice”. To achieve this vision, a lot of planning and preparations have to take place.

Section 5(i) of the Electoral Act, Act 51 of 1996, stipulates the following as

the powers and functions of the IEC:

- managing any election – national, provincial, local and by-elections;
- compiling and maintaining the national voters' roll;
- promoting conditions conducive to free and fair elections;
- establishing and maintaining party liaison committees;
- reviewing electoral legislation;
- undertaking and promoting research;
- promoting voter education;
- declaring results within seven days of an election; and
- promoting knowledge of sound democratic electoral processes.

The IEC has a challenging role to perform. It is challenging because election readiness is not dependent on one person or group, but a broad spectrum of stakeholders, at different stages of the process. To state a few, delimitation, voter registration, party registration and submission of party lists, and deposits, accreditation of organisations providing voter education and observers. Processes continue up to election day and through to the announcement of the election outcome and acceptance thereof.

Thereafter, evaluation and report writing processes become the next challenges.

For this purpose, focus will be on voting stations and staffing, registration and voters' roll, election timetable, voter education, party liaison committees, conflict management panels and observers.

Voting Stations and Staffing

The IEC wishes to set up a stable network of voting stations. As stated by IEC: “This will allow voters to use a venue where they know registration and voting will consistently take place.” Therefore, the IEC has to try as far as possible, to use the same venues that were used for the June 1999 elections for registration and voting. The basic principles are that:

- there should be one (1) voting station per voting district;
- the same venue should be used for both registration and voting;
- permanent structures should be used as venues as far as possible; and
- alternative voting stations should be identified in a voting district, to serve as an alternative in case the ‘first choice’ venue is not available.

Should the venue used in the June 1999 elections and 2000 municipal elections not be available, the following criteria must be followed to evaluate the sustainability of a new venue. The venue centrality in relation to the Voting District; accessibility; safety and security; size (the venue should be roughly 100 square metres to accommodate 25 officials and related administrative material); availability of water, toilets, electricity and a telephone.

The Free State has complied with the requirements. There are 1063 voting stations and extra work had to be done to ensure that these permanent venues are accessible even to the physically disabled voters.

Voting stations also have to be managed by trained staff members. By the time they started voter registration in 2003, electoral staff numbering 3186 officers had already received thorough training. The provincial office of the IEC is confident that the processes at voting stations will go smoothly, freely and fairly. So far, political parties are campaigning peacefully in the Free State.

Registration and Voters' Roll

Elections require the existence of some list or record of those entitled to vote, this in turn requires that

certain statutory qualifications be met.

Maintaining the voters' roll has proved to be challenging. The redrawing of municipal boundaries and the resultant re-delimitation of some voting districts, have required some reworking of the roll. Another challenge came when the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the prisoners. After the roll had been closed and the election date proclaimed, prisoners had to be afforded a chance to register as voters in the upcoming April 14 election. According to the CEO, Advocate Pansy Tlakula, the IEC was ready to deal with this and it would not affect other processes that much. This registration was successfully completed in the Free State, and it probably means that means that extra voting stations to accommodate the additional voters will be necessary.

Election Timetable

Each time elections are scheduled, the date set out in the election calendar, for each phase of the process, must allow adequate time for the various stages. These include effective campaigning and public information efforts, voters to inform themselves and for the necessary arrangements to be made. The election calendar should be published as part of the civic information activities, in the interests of transparency and

of securing public understanding and confidence in the process. According to the Election Timetable of 2004, the IEC in the Free State is on schedule. The office gave assurance that all programs are running as scheduled and the office is ready for the tasks ahead!

Voter Education

Voter education is important to equip voters with all the information necessary to make a choice; an informed choice. "A well-organised, non-partisan voter information programme and unhindered distribution of political propaganda are therefore critical elements of genuine elections". To retain high participation, a comprehensive media and voter education strategy has to be embarked upon in partnership with civil society organisations. Special focus has been placed on women, rural communities and first time voters.

Providers of voter education should apply for accreditation with the IEC.

Party Liaison Committees

Liaison with political parties in the planning and preparation stages, as well as during the election period, is considered essential. Under section 5 of the Electoral Act, the IEC is to establish and maintain liaison and co-operation with political parties. It has done so by

setting up party liaison committees throughout the nine provinces. The Provincial Electoral Officer (PEO) in the Free State, Chris Mepha, provided confident confirmation that this system of party liaison committees is working extremely well in the province. This strategy has actually enhanced the relationship, the level of trust and co-operation between political parties and the IEC. There is openness and accessibility of support services.

Conflict Management Panels

To provide for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, conflict management panels were established in collaboration with the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) in each of the nine provinces. These panels are there to facilitate, mediate and settle disputes where they can. Examples of disputes would be removal of posters, intimidation and harassment. The panel responsible for the Free State was trained at the end of January and is now in action.

Observers

The legitimacy of an electoral process is enhanced by, neutral national monitors and international observers. All organisations that wish to

observe the April 2004 election, had to apply for accreditation. Upon meeting the required criteria, the organisations will be issued with an accreditation certificate. The Department of Political Science at the University of the Free State is among those organisations who have applied for observer status in the Free State. This is actually how it should be. Academic institutions should play a role in society and also be there to give objective analysis of the whole process.

The process would not be complete without the IEC staff. The Free State provincial office is buzzing with activity and the staff members are highly motivated by the progress they have made up to date. One can sense their election readiness in the tone of their voices over the phone and by their preparedness to give a service. A lot of work has been covered and deadlines listed on the Election Timetable have been met. The team holds meetings regularly to plan, to assess progress through feedback provided and come up with best strategies to handle situations. The team is rich with experience, hence the ability to remain calm all the time. Those highly experienced, serve as resources for the newly appointed and that makes

this team very strong. One can say that there is hope for continuity.

The Free State provincial office has already set up the nerve centre, which will serve as the central point for the elections. The PEO stated that the IEC building was in the process of being partitioned, to accommodate the media, political analysts and political party representatives. This venue will be used for updates on what will be happening on the ground, while the other IEC staff will be capturing data on computers as received from different Voting Districts.

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SO FAR, SO GOOD!! IEC LOOKS READY FOR ELECTIONS IN THE FREE STATE

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Introduction

The Electoral Commission's Act stipulates that the functions of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) include the general management of the elections, ensuring that both free and fair elections take place as well as voter education, demarcation of wards and co-operating with political parties. The purpose of this report is to assess the progress made by the IEC in the Free State for the 2004 elections in terms of the above-mentioned factors.

Election Timetable Progress Thus Far

In order to ascertain the readiness of the IEC for the 2004 general elections, it is important to review the progress already made in this regard. This will be done by looking at major milestones achieved in terms of the IEC Free State election timetable to date.¹ Some of these milestones include the following:

- 16 February: notice given that a list containing the addresses of all voting stations, as

well as the route of mobile stations will be available;

- 20 February: publication of the voters roll to be used in the election;
- 27 February: cut off date for submission of a list of candidates for elections;
- Parties that had not fully complied with nomination prescriptions were notified of that on 3 March and had to rectify their nominations on 8 March;
- 12 March: Lists of candidates had to be available for inspection and objections had to be lodged by 15 March;
- Objectors and registered parties had to be informed of the IEC's decision regarding the objection by 18 March and parties could appeal against the IEC's decision by 23 March;
- The findings of appeals are considered and decided by the Electoral Court and had to be communicated to the parties and the chief electoral officer by 26 March;
- 29 March sees the final compilation of a list of the registered parties entitled to contest the elections and the candidates for each of these parties.

Voting in Prisons

A major challenge that faced the IEC fairly late in its election management process

was the directive from the Constitutional Court that particular categories of prisoners would be allowed to vote. As a result of this decision, the IEC had to register thousands of prisoners across the country. There are more than 70000 prisoners who are serving time in prison without the choice of a fine, and these prisoners could now be placed on a separate voters roll during the second voter registration opportunity. To date 27170 prisoners have been registered for the upcoming election. The IEC in the Free State also rose to the challenge and started its registration process in the province's prisons. A high registration number was expected, but on 16 March the chairperson of the IEC in the Free State, Mr. Chris Mepha, reported that only 12% (2 157) of prisoners in the Free State and 17% (1 056) of prisoners in the Northern Cape had registered for the 2004 elections. He stated that the biggest reason for non-registration seemed to be the fact that prisoners did not have their ID books with them and families were not able to travel long distances to bring them their ID books². Registration of prisoners has been concluded and the Department of Correctional Services has made it clear that no political campaigning would be allowed in prisons. Due to

¹ Election Timetable, 2004

² Fourie, 2004, p.4

security reasons no banners, placards and video materials would be allowed inside prison premises, but political parties would be allowed to supply the Department with brochures explaining their election manifestos. This would be circulated among prisoners. NGO's would also be allowed to conduct voter education among registered prisoners before the date of the election³

Hurdles Still to Overcome

There are 1681 people who are currently abroad and who have indicated that they wish to apply for special votes for the 2004 election. These applications had to be submitted before the 26 February 2004. These would include people who are overseas on vacation, involved in business activities, studies or participating in international sports. Altogether 1405 people who are overseas will be eligible to vote on the 7 April 2004 at South African embassies, or consulates⁴ Although the election management process in the Free State has been progressing extremely well until now, a few hurdles are still to be crossed. One of these is the processing of the applications for special votes across the province. Registered voters who, on Election Day, will be in hospital in a different town

³ Smith, 2004, p.9.

⁴ Pretorius, 2004, p.2.

or city can also apply for a social vote. Physically infirmed, disabled or pregnant persons can apply to their municipal electoral officers for the casting of special votes until 8 April. The provincial IEC would visit such voters on 12 and 13 April at the place indicated on their application. Election officials and members of the security forces should also apply and should vote at their designated polling station in their voting district on 12 and 13 April⁵

The final certification of candidates for the election has to take place by 5 April.

General Readiness of the IEC

In order to facilitate and manage all election-related processes, the staff component of the IEC has grown tremendously from its nine permanent members. Twenty municipal electoral officers (MEOs) have been deployed at the 20 local municipalities in the province, of which only three are municipal managers. The rest of their numbers are made up of other managerial staff members of the respective municipalities. At local level approximately 46 election project co-ordinators are responsible for matters such as voter education and the recruitment of electoral staff.

⁵ (IOL, 2004:1)

The distribution of material across the province is managed by 243 area managers working in the 291 wards that make up the Free State. On voting day 12 155 people will be in the employment of the IEC, ensuring that the election process runs smoothly⁶ (

Training of the entire staff has already been concluded and the IEC is satisfied that their abilities adhere to all legislated and IEC standards. Training facilitators were provided by UNISA and took place at area level.

All materials utilised during the election are procured at a national level and transported to the provinces. The IEC in the province uses a warehouse to distribute all its materials to local municipal level, where the local managers are responsible for the safekeeping of all materials. Materials are distributed as soon as it arrives from national distributors in order to ensure timely deployment. No problems have thus far been encountered with the distribution of materials. Logistical items such as tables and chairs are procured from local suppliers, with the SANDF being the main contributor of tents and shelters for temporary voting stations.⁷

The IEC is in the process of setting up an operations centre where all political

⁶Rabanye, 2004

⁷*Ibid*

parties, guests and the media will be able to follow the proceedings on Election Day. Regular information updates will be provided at this venue, which will be situated at the IEC head office in Bloemfontein. The IEC is also satisfied that all electoral structures such as the Political Liaison Committees (PLC's) are functioning well. On the 12 March 2004, the national IEC signed an agreement with farming organisations, regarding access to voters in farming areas. The Free State IEC has also closely co-operated with the Free State Agricultural Sector, including it on consultative structures such as the PLC and its security structures⁸

The IEC in the Free State is satisfied with its readiness for the election and is not experiencing any major crises at the moment. So far, so good!

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⁸ *Ibid*; IEC, 2004

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NEWS FLASH!

TINY PARTY IN BID TO HAVE POLL DELAYED

Growing resentment by smaller political parties about the discrepancy in funding they receive and what is given to more established parties has sparked a legal battle for the elections to be delayed.

Cape Town based party, the Peace and Justice Commission which has one member in Parliament, has applied for an urgent interdict from the Electoral Court in Bloemfontein for the postponement of the April 14 election until the end of June. The party also wants a reduction in the deposits required by the IEC from political parties competing in the elections.

The party's national leader, human rights lawyer Rashad Khan, said yesterday [31 March 2004] that the current system prevented parties being able to compete on an equal basis in the elections, and they were asking that "the playing field be levelled." "The African National Congress received R34 m from the IEC over 12 months, and our party received R72 000," said Khan. "It is a joke, and smaller parties which do not have representation in Parliament receive even less. How do you compete equally and fairly?"

By Chantelle Benjamin and excerpted from the Business Day, 1 April 2004

WESTERN CAPE

THE IEC PREPARES

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was created as a temporary body to manage the 1994 elections. It became permanently institutionalised with the inauguration of a new constitution in 1996. The IEC forms part of what is commonly referred to as Chapter 9 institutions that are concerned with the oversight of democratic practices in South Africa. The need for an independent electoral body is universally recognised and has become especially important in the context of Africa where fraudulent practices had bedevilled the legitimacy of elections. The IEC in South Africa is specifically tasked to:

- Divide the country into voting districts
- Make the logistical arrangements for the elections
- Register voters
- Run the elections
- Count, verify and announce the results.

To assess whether the IEC in the Western Cape is prepared to conduct the forthcoming elections requires an audit of the logistics it has put in place to have a smooth, efficient, 'free and fair' election process on 14 April, 2004. This exercise can only be speculative for one can only truly assess the extent

of preparation after the election. We do not know what unexpected events may arise for which the IEC may, or may not be, prepared. We can, however, determine the strengths and shortcomings of what the IEC has in place and identify some of the challenges that it may face via our knowledge and experiences of past elections.

The steps of demarcating voting districts, registering voters and putting in place the mechanisms to run an election have already been implemented by the IEC. There will be 1348 voting districts with 4 staff per voting station and the logistics are in place. The logistics entail training personnel for their assigned roles, ensuring that the necessary equipment is available at all stations, delineating a credible process of voting and releasing the results.

The IEC, as a whole, since its running of the first national democratic elections has matured into a well-functioning credible electoral body. Many of the problems associated with the first election, long queues, far flung voting stations, ill-trained personnel, capacity problems, and the like were ironed out in the 1999 elections. The IEC engages in extensive training of its electoral officers, voter education in between elections, and has the

hindsight to predict and plan for eventualities that may happen. For example, the IEC in the Western Cape now has seven reserve teams that can be used whenever capacity problems emerge. These reserve teams were deemed necessary because previous elections have taught them that staff become tired and are then more likely to make mistakes.

The IEC's use of technology has given it a marked sophistication. It has an up to date web-site detailing everything with respect to legislation, procedures, political parties contesting the elections and previous national, provincial and municipal results. Voters can also SMS the IEC for information with regard to the location where they have to cast their vote. In the 1999 elections, the IEC introduced a computerised system for capturing the results and releasing them almost instantaneously. This system will again be used. All the votes cast at the voting stations are taken in sealed envelopes to the offices of the Municipal Electoral Officers (MEO) who then capture the results and verify them. The verifying procedure is "blind," by which is meant that the first entry of the results is wiped out and then re-entered. Political parties send their representatives to the MEOs

offices where they keep a check on counting and tabulation of votes. There is also an independent auditor in attendance, which lends credibility to the whole process.

The IEC in the Western Cape will set up an operations centre on the 3rd floor of the Customs House, the building in which they are located. Accredited political party representatives, the media and the IEC team will be housed at this centre. Here they will be able to gain access to the results as they come in. Results come in via three ways, computer, fax and phone and they will only be released once the results of all three mediums match each other to reduce the confusion that emerged with some of the results in the previous elections. The IEC will be training representatives of political parties and the media on the software to be used for capturing the results. Voting stations will close at 9 pm and results will be released from 10.30 pm. The IEC estimates that all the results will be in by 6am the next morning. This is impressive and shows the advantage of the use of technology. Releasing results in this short a space of time reduces the risk of tampering with the figures.

The Reverend Courtney Sampson, who heads the IEC in the Western Cape, indicated that the IEC “is as

ready as we can be.” However, he cautioned, that when one has to work with a complement of 17000 people, “any one of them can make a mistake.” So the risk is always there. The greatest problems facing the IEC in the Western Cape appear to be the lack of infrastructure in informal settlements, the possibility of violence and the belated granting of the voting right to prisoners. The lack of suitable venues in informal settlements has forced the IEC into a position where it will have to erect 40 tents that will become make – shift voting stations. Voting in informal settlements generally presents a number of challenges. For example, a settlement may exist today but be destroyed by fire by the time that the election takes place. This in turn has implications for predicting the size of the voting district and can lead to problems of people becoming disenfranchised because they no longer have access to their ID books. By their very nature informal settlements consist of people who are there only temporarily. In the time lapse between registration and voting, people could have relocated and this, too, would have implications for both the voters roll in that district and the ability of these people to exercise their vote.

As previously discussed, the high levels of crime and the intensity of the elections in the Western Cape produces

the spectre of the possibility of violence. 5000 police will be deployed to keep law and order and chaperone the person carrying the votes from the voting station to the office of the Municipal Electoral Officer. The IEC has also set up a panel of 30 conflict specialists who will be on call to attempt to defuse any conflicts that may emerge. In addition, there is the Electoral Code of Conduct Observer Commission which will work closely with the IEC to ensure that ‘free and fair’ procedures are maintained. The IEC has already conducted a briefing session on the operations centre and political parties can begin to occupy their cubicles from 1 April.

The late court decision to allow prisoners to vote has also presented a challenge. Prisoners cannot go to the allocated voting districts and therefore special arrangements have had to be made at the prisons for them. Although the prisoners will not have the same amount of time to cast their votes as ‘other’ citizens, for a brief period their place of captivity will become a space for the exercise of a democratic practice under the most ‘unfree and unfair’ conditions. Safety however, is the primary concern!

The challenge posed by the highly contested nature of the elections is primarily one directed at the presiding officers. It is known that

both party supporters and party representatives can, in varied ways, place pressure on those tasked with the responsibility of manning the stations. Presiding officers therefore have to be well trained and be people with relatively strong

personalities. Monitors and observers will also have to be vigilant within this upcoming election.

In conclusion, the IEC in the Western Cape has already proven itself competent to conduct elections. The

problems highlighted here are more those that emerge because of the distortions of our society rather than weaknesses within the institution *per se*.

EASTERN CAPE

PREPAREDNESS IN THE EASTERN CAPE

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Introduction

The success of any election depends amongst others, on the extent to which the institution charged with its administration is successful in managing the process. The measure of success is the efficiency level of the institution. This is especially so in countries undergoing democratic transition as in South Africa, where the spotlight is usually on these bodies. This article discusses this question with regard to the provincial office of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

Its approach is twofold: it first discusses internal factors that are germane to the IEC's operations and then focuses on external factors that may impinge on the organisation's ability to run a successful campaign in the province.

Internal Factors

In assessing the IEC's preparedness provincially, this section focuses on the registration process, its staff compliment and ancillary factors.

The Registration Process

The registration of voters is one of the contentious areas in many electoral processes. The focus in this regard is around the capacity and efficiency of the IEC in undertaking this process. The Eastern Cape IEC office has largely been successful in this regard, providing a national mirror image of the performance of the organisation.

With regard to complaints received by the organisation over carrying out its mandate efficiently, there have been very few complaints. There have been no major complaints that the provincial office has not been diligent in carrying out its duties or has suffered from serious organisational problems. As in other provinces, it registered

voters normally through its electoral office and also instituted two registration drives, one towards the end of 2003 and the other in January 2004.

By the end of February, the total number of voters registered provincially was 80 per cent of the estimated eligible voters, which is 6 per cent above the national average.

This figure excludes the number of eligible prisoners, as this information was still being collated at the time of writing. This has been necessitated by their late registration due to the dispute that arose around whether all prisoners should be allowed the vote. However, initial reports indicate that the process has gone very well in the province, with the IEC having been able to register 23 000 prisoners in a three-day exercise in the middle of March.

A total of 38 prisons were visited during this period, with only one prison having reported problems. These

were around the availability of identity documents at this prison, as most prisoners did not have them.

Technically, this was not the fault of the IEC. The provincial Home Affairs office was alerted to this problem and the IEC is to visit the prison after the process has been completed.

Thus by all accounts, the registration process has gone down well in the province and the provincial office has proved itself in this regard.

Staff Complement

By the end of the third week of March, the provincial office of the IEC had not yet released figures in terms of the number of officials that will be on duty on the day of the election. However, the national office has already announced that there would be 215 604 staff members working nationally on election day. This roughly works out at a ratio of 1:92 polling worker to voters nationally, which is a reasonable ratio. It should be noted that registration figures are never the same as the turnout, which means that fewer voters will turn up, reducing the ratio and lessening the burden on electoral officers.

Although the provincial office did not have the total figures of the staff complement to be assigned to the province it is however, still possible to make a rough

estimation of the official to voter ratio, to have a picture of how or not the provincial office will cope. Given that there are around 3 million registered voters provincially, and crudely assuming that the 215 604 national staff will be equally shared by the provinces, this works out at 24 000 officers to be on duty in each province.

Projecting this on to the Eastern Cape, this will work out at a ratio of 1:125. This is not very far above the national average of 1:92 and considering that the turnout on election day will also be lower, the ratio will come down.

Thus, in terms of two critical issues with regard to the IEC preparedness in the province, registration and staff complement, it is safe to surmise that the IEC is adequately prepared and ready to successfully manage the electoral process.

Other Factors

These are factors that are central to the operations of the IEC. They serve to underline the optimism that the process will be successful in the province. These include the IEC style of conflict resolution, the experience that has been gained by the organisation and is being applied to the process and the revamping of infrastructure.

One crucial function of the IEC is to resolve conflicts

that may arise with regard to the process. In most countries, such organisations focus on arbitration while the IEC follows a consensus building approach. This means that instead of looking mainly at apportioning blame in a dispute, which usually inflames emotions, the IEC has sought to find compromise and understanding in dealing with complaints.

The strengthening of professionalism within the IEC since 1994 and its ability to handle electoral conflict is yet another advantageous factor. It has been noted however, that the number of complaints received by the IEC in direct criticism of its handling of the process in 1999 were far lower than the number it had registered in 1994. This attests to the use of its experience to streamline its functions properly.

The last point to mention in this regard is the infrastructure which the IEC has put into place to manage the process much more professionally. For example, in terms of counting procedures, which is another highly contestable point, the IEC has made great strides. It is installing digital technology at each polling station that will make it possible to count votes locally instead of sending them to the central counting station in Pretoria. This has delayed the process in the past.

Thus, the central counting station in Pretoria will receive already counted votes and will tally them up for national averages, rather than going through the process itself.

External Threats to the Process

One of the most serious threats to the electoral process that might affect the operations of the IEC provincially is related to political violence, in and around the election.

However, current indications show that the level of political violence in the Eastern Cape is negligible. This should be seen within the context of the national electoral process, where the likelihood of political violence is lessened in provinces such as the Eastern Cape where there is no serious political contestation and heated campaigning.

Conversely, this can be compared to provinces like the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal where the ANC is facing serious challenges from the DA/IFP alliance. In some cases several serious threats of political violence have already been reported, especially in KwaZulu Natal.

The only serious case of potential political violence was recorded during the weekend of the 20-21 March when ANC and UDM supporters confronted each other in the former Transkei.

The security forces however, were able to restore order even in this isolated incident.

Thus, past empirical evidence indicates that the levels of serious political violence in the Eastern Cape, as in most other provinces of the country, will be low.

A potential problem has been posed by the Landless Peoples movement (LPM), which has threatened to disrupt the election if its demands for faster land distribution are not met by April 14. However, it is possible that the threat will be diminished because the political support of the LPM provincially is at a very low ebb; its march to Bisho the capital in mid-March, drew only a few hundred protestors.

The other factor that militates against any serious disturbance to the electoral process is the mature attitude of political parties that are contesting the election provincially. All thirteen of these parties have signed a code of conduct to observe electoral laws around the election.

This fact in itself, although not a guarantee, will go a long way in ensuring that the work of the IEC is carried out in a peaceful manner, enhancing the chances of holding of a successful election.

There have admittedly been various reports of inter-party

spats, but these have been few, far between and not serious. They have largely been reported in the cities of East London and Port Elizabeth. Most of them are confined to complaints around the destruction of electoral materials, such as campaign posters. The parties that have registered concern in this regard include the ANC, the UDM, NNP and DA. Most significantly, these acts have not led to the parties blaming their rivals. This diminishes the possibility of stoking emotions in the electorate.

Conclusion

Thus, the prospects of the Eastern Cape provincial election being successful just as in 1994 and 1999 are good. The threats are obviated by both the ability of the IEC to run a successful election and the influence of ancillary factors, such as the role of political parties.

NORTHERN CAPE

It's all systems go in the Northern Cape

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Introduction

It should be remembered that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) is a permanent body created by the constitution to promote and safeguard democracy in South Africa. Even though, this institution is independent, it is funded by the government and accountable to Parliament. Its role is to make sure that the election is free and fair. It came into existence during the constitutional negotiations where it was believed that an institution independent of government had to manage the election, since the apartheid state was very politicised and had lost credibility. It was also necessary to prevent any future government from interfering with the electoral process, so as to give itself unfair advantage over other political parties. The Commission will be running its third national and provincial election and it is very important to assess its preparedness for the coming election. The role of the IEC is also to ensure that every citizen eligible to vote is able to express his/her political right unhindered, by

eliminating possible constraints.

The IEC in the province believes that it is ready for the election on April 14 and that has been the case for some time. They argue that their mandate specifies that they should be ready for the election within six weeks from the date that they were declared.

The Logistics

This province, South Africa's largest but least populated has a few logistical challenges. For example, some voting stations are 66 kilometres from the nearest houses. Therefore, running the election in this province appears to be the most expensive *per capita*, with Gauteng being the least demanding province with a high population concentration and small land area. But the Northern Cape IEC has put in place some contingency measures to overcome these difficulties. They have put in place some innovative strategies.

The provincial IEC has made sure that the Party Liaison Committees (PLCs) are put into maximum use. Most of the problems are dealt with within these structures. One of the issues decided in the PLCs is the location of voting stations. Political parties get involved in the process of deciding where

these should be located. In these meetings a decision is reached in the form of a consensus and not voting so as to level the playing field. If the provincial representatives do not reach a decision, the issue is then brought to the attention of national party bosses. To overcome some of the problems the province has set up approximately 80 mobile voting stations out of 412. In a province such as the Northern Cape this innovation overcomes some of the constraints mentioned.

The other problem that the IEC in the province has been able to overcome is that concerning the cross-border municipalities. The IEC electoral employees in the affected areas have been trained to deal with those problems. There are areas where the Northern Cape has to run the elections on behalf of the North West province. The IEC staff has been trained to identify those individuals so as to give them the necessary provincial ballot papers.

The Registration of Prisoners and the Prison Vote

The other development that nearly threw the IEC preparations into a quagmire was the ruling by the Constitutional Court that it was unconstitutional to prevent certain categories of

prisoners from voting. It appears, however, that the previous elections have prepared the IEC for some of these difficulties. The Commission reported that it experienced fewer hiccups during the registration of prisoners in various provinces on the registration days 10, 11, and 12 March 2004. A number of prisoners responded to the call to register. The compilation of the list was completed on March 24. The IEC made the list of registered available for scrutiny at its national, provincial, and municipal offices on March 29.

The Constitutional Court reversed judgement that only a specific category of prisoners was eligible to vote. Under the Electoral Laws Amendment Act, only those prisoners that were given an option to pay a fine were allowed to vote on 14 April 2004. The court argued that the law violated two constitutional rights of prisoners, these are, the right to vote and the right to equality. The application had been brought by the SA Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders (Nicro) and the South African Prisoner's Organisation for Human Rights. A number of prisoners were said to be not registering because they did not have bar-coded ID's. According to Maupi Monyengane, Correctional Services spokesperson, the

problem had been exacerbated by the limited time given to prisoners to acquire identity documents. This situation led to "not a lot of people registering" at the start of the allocated three-day registration period. The prison authorities argued that many prisoners have IDs, but had left them at home. Monyengane said that between 70 000 and 80 000 additional prisoners were eligible to vote following a Constitutional Court ruling that all prisoner category must be allowed to cast ballots. The IEC registered prisoners until Friday, 12 March 2004. According to the IEC the prisoners' data was loaded onto the IEC's databanks over the weekend of 13 and 14 March 2004. But approximately 37 000 prisoners registered to vote out of a prison population of 180 000.

In the Northern Cape with a prison population of 6 500 prisoners, only 1 056 registered. But the final number will have to be verified to check whether all the registered prisoners are eligible to vote. There are a number of factors that could be attributed to the lower turnout of voters during the registration process. On the one hand, some of the prisoners fear that applying for temporary identity documents (IDs) will mean fingerprints will have to be taken and that might link them to crimes for which they have not been found

guilty. Other prisoners were not using their real names. On the other hand, some of these prisoners as mentioned above might not have the bar-coded identity documents (IDs), while some prisoners might have left their IDs at home. Also the shorter time period offered to register prisoners made it difficult for the prisoners to acquire temporary IDs.

A number of political parties criticised the decision by the Constitutional Court, while others said they would respect the Court's decision. Most parties said they would not be canvassing in jail. The Court's decision has put a number of political parties in a moral dilemma as they need the votes but they also do not want to be seen to be promoting crime or soliciting votes from prisoners.

The Election in Farm Areas

The Electoral Commission of South Africa signed an agreement with the farmers unions in Pretoria on 12 March 2004 to secure the right of farm workers to vote and promote the safety of their employers during the election. This memorandum of understanding was signed by representatives of organised agriculture, farm workers unions and the independent Electoral Commission (IEC). It binds the farmers to allowing the IEC officials reasonable access to their property and

provide for workers to attend political rallies. The farmers also undertook to give their workers time off to vote.

The accord did not only deal with the problems faced by the IEC and farm workers but also sought to allay safety and security concerns of farmers, by making prior arrangements, a prerequisite for farm visits by election staff and political party representatives. The long-standing problems between the IEC, farmers, and farm workers regarding participation in the electoral process have been finally resolved. With a new strategy of active participation adopted by the IEC towards farmers, it appears that most of their differences were based on misunderstandings, of practical problems on the ground faced by farmers.

This issue is very relevant for the Northern Cape where a significant number of the population is employed on the farms. There have been problems in the past where some farm workers have not been able to access the necessary information before they could cast their votes or where some were expected to vote on the day of the election. The farmers unions had justified the barring of political parties from canvassing in their areas by stating that it was important for their safety. The other problem they had cited was that it interrupts their

workers from fulfilling their obligations.

Conclusion

It appears that the 433 591 or so registered voters in the province will have fewer constraints than in the previous elections come election day. They will be able to express their democratic right as citizens. Most of the successes could be attributed to the proactive approach followed by the local IEC. The IEC, as with the provincial government in the province puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of the direct contact with citizens. This is not just in theory but in practice as well. The vastness of the province has taken away the advantage the province might have in dealing with a smaller population. The role of provincial officials must be lauded and the success could not be attributed only to the population size.

The provincial IEC has deployed about 250 fieldworkers to conduct voter education, while also informing the voters that the electoral act has been amended to allow people who will not be in their voting districts on the day of the election to vote. Those voters who will be outside the province on the day of the election but who will still be interested in voting will only be given the national ballot paper. Therefore, the

IEC believes that it is more than ready for the elections.

This province has experienced relatively peaceful political campaigning with fewer complaints that have been brought before the IEC. The prevailing environment will ensure that those who want to express their democratic rights do so under normal conditions. The IEC believes that the previous elections have prepared it very well.

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MPUMALANGA

MPUMALANGA'S ELECTORAL PREPAREDNESS

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Planning and Staff Recruitment

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in Mpumalanga appears to be satisfied with a job well done in the province. It formally launched its electoral programme for Mpumalanga on 4 February 2004, with a pledge to ensuring problem-free and fair elections in the province. The launch was attended by a string of prominent role players including representatives of the political parties contesting the provincial elections, all the municipal election officers (MEOs) and traditional leaders. All these key stakeholders committed themselves to free and fair elections, including the signing of the electoral Code of Conduct by the contesting parties. The IEC therefore declared that it is 'all systems go' for the forthcoming elections and also promised conditions suitable for smooth elections throughout the province.

With a registered voting population of 1,442.472m, the IEC in Mpumalanga achieved an increase of 12.89% over the 1999

figures of registered voters. The increase is seen as evidence of success in the voter education efforts in the province, particularly in the rural areas where enthusiastic responses were widely reported in the media during the two voter registration periods in November last year and January this year. More importantly though, the IEC appears relatively pleased with the way the planning for the forthcoming elections has panned out in the province. For instance, it indicates that the recruitment of all the necessary support staff has been successfully completed. All the presiding and deputy presiding officers have been appointed for each of the 1128 voting stations. Each voting station will have 16 officers in attendance, the majority of whom have been recruited from the ranks of the unemployed. The IEC insists that only literate people over the age of 18, at least with matriculation certificates and registered to vote are employed as electoral officers. In total therefore, there are 17157 electoral staff members employed to serve all the voting stations throughout the province.

The province is predominantly rural, with about 58% of its population based in the rural areas. This means that the majority of the voting stations,

approximately 70.0%, are located in the rural areas. The higher concentration of voting stations in the rural areas is extremely important given the difficulties of access and the generally inadequate transportation facilities in these areas. The preparations therefore ensured that voting stations are within easy reach for many community members in rural villages. In the previous general elections voting stations were fewer and far apart. In some cases this meant that the IEC had to make arrangements for some categories of voters to be transported to their voting stations. This time such arrangements will not be made as the IEC believes that communities are adequately served with accessible voting stations.

Different types of venues are used as voting stations in the province. These include churches, tribal offices and community halls. Also, about 250 schools throughout the province, mainly in the poor rural areas of the province, are to be utilised for this purpose. The principals of these schools and their deputies are to serve as presiding and deputy presiding officers. There are obvious benefits in school principals and their deputies serving as presiding officers. For a start, the school principals usually have the keys to the school

premises and therefore have easy access, which is necessary to ensure easy access to the voting stations. Therefore opening up the premises for voting and locking up afterwards would not be a problem. Also, given that the school principals are usually responsible for the safety of their schools, they can be relied upon by the IEC to ensure that the premises and facilities of the schools are kept secure during the period when the schools are serving as voting stations.

Besides the recruitment process, the IEC had to ensure that all the electoral officers, presiding officers and area managers were provided with the necessary skills and knowledge for the election process. This was done through a series of training workshops conducted by the IEC, focusing mainly on the electoral laws of the country and the electoral Code of Conduct. This, the IEC believes, has prepared its staff and officers for the daunting task of running an effective election process in the province.

The Role of Different Stakeholders

The IEC's approach in its preparations for the forthcoming general elections in the province was clearly built around a series of cooperative partnerships with a wide range of

stakeholders. For instance, a Provincial Steering Committee was set up to oversee the election process in the province. The Steering Committee is chaired by the IEC and includes participation by provincial MECs, heads of departments and the provincial Director-General. The IEC's Media Liaison Officer in the province, Mxolisi Maziya, indicated that the participation of provincial MECs in the Provincial Steering Committee is critical especially in that they are able to make funds available where necessary to ensure that the preparations for the forthcoming elections, and the necessary infrastructure and logistical plans are not hindered by lack of resources. Clearly, the involvement of the highest echelons of the provincial government, both the political and administrative, serves a key strategic purpose for the IEC in particular. It is not clear though whether or not the political parties are represented in the Provincial Steering Committee. If not, chances are that the opposition parties in the province may soon raise question regarding the impartiality of this important committee. This is because by virtue of being the ruling party, the ANC would be indirectly represented through its provincial MECs and therefore influencing the making of key strategic decisions affecting the

allocation of resources for the election process in the province.

The local government sphere is also involved as a key role player. For instance, all the municipal managers and deputy managers from the 20 local authorities in the province will be serving as the IEC's Municipal Election Officers (MEOs). In addition, the municipal ward managers will be serving as IEC area managers. This clearly shows that municipalities will occupy a central role as a key role player in the forthcoming elections. However, placing municipalities at the centre of the election processes in Mpumalanga may appear to be an act of faith on the part of the IEC. This is because the majority of the municipalities in the province are known to be institutionally weak, lacking adequate resources as well as sufficient institutional capacity to be relied on to run an effective and efficient election process in the province. In some cases, the running of the affairs of municipalities in the province is characterised by severe chaos and corruption, which has often prevented proper delivery of services to citizens.

The IEC is nonetheless optimistic about the central role of municipalities in the forthcoming provincial elections. Its optimism seems to derive from the logistical

and other back up support pledged by some of the key provincial departments in the preparations for the elections. For instance, during the voter education campaign that started in June 2003, the provincial Department of Education was involved, together with the IEC, in a number of activities. This included the issuing and distribution of letters to all the schools throughout the province, encouraging the youth to register for the forthcoming elections. The Department of Housing in the province is currently helping in the preparations by providing toilets in those schools serving as voting stations. This will be an important spin-off from this process in that these toilets will be permanent structures that will remain part of these schools after the elections.

The Department of Local Government is tasked with ensuring that water taps and other water supply facilities are installed in those schools that do not have these facilities. The Department of Public Services is also repairing and resurfacing all the damaged roads leading to the voting stations, thus improving access especially for residents in the rural parts of the province. The department of social services is also erecting shelters in all the voting stations to ensure that voters are protected against the elements. Finally, in those schools where

electricity has not yet been installed, ESKOM has pledged to install it, giving itself a deadline to complete the work by the end of March.

All these improvements are important spin-offs from the preparations for the forthcoming elections and will obviously benefit the schools in the rural areas where such services and facilities are still sorely needed.

Registration of Prisoners in Mpumalanga

As part of the preparations for the forthcoming elections, the IEC in Mpumalanga seems to have taken in its stride the Constitutional Court ruling, on 3 March 2004, that all prisoners sentenced without the option of a fine should be allowed to vote. However, the IEC was not entirely satisfied with the responses and therefore the number of prisoners who registered. The province has a total prisoner population of 9696 and out of this total, only 1814 (18.7%) had registered. The low response rate was attributed to a number of factors. For instance, many of the prisoners were not happy with the idea of registering, fearing that if finger prints are taken, this could be used link them to other crimes for which they have not been convicted. The IEC in Mpumalanga also says that some prisoners

never had identity documents while others had been disowned or rejected by their relatives who were not prepared to sign for them as required under the law

In general though, the IEC in the provinces is wrapping up the final preparations and readying itself for the general elections on 14 April.

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CHRONOLOGY 3

- 10 Mar. 2004** Timelines for the registration of prisoners for the period 4- 29 March are issued by the Electoral Commission of South Africa, who today files an affidavit with the Registrar of the Court, the Minister of Correctional Services, NICRO and the two prisoners setting out the manner in which it will comply with the ruling by the Constitutional Court.
- 12 Mar. 2004** The Communication Department of the Electoral Commission issues a media release indicating that, in terms of the Election Timetable, candidates' lists will be available for inspection on 12 and 15 March 2004 at IEC national, provincial and municipal offices, and are also available on the IEC website.
A person wishing to object must do so by serving the objection on the party nominating the candidate and deliver the objection to the IEC in Pretoria.
- 12 Mar. 2004** The Inkatha Freedom Party makes its Candidates List public.
- 13 Mar. 2004** The Electoral Commission of South Africa today signs an agreement with farming organisations concerning access by IEC officials and party representatives to voters in farming areas. The signing ceremony is the culmination of a consultative process (that included a national workshop in September 2003) between the IEC and farmers' and farm workers' organisations. The Protocol for Farm Access has the support of AGRI SA provincial offices.
- 14 Mar. 2004** Lists of Candidates for the April 14 election are available for inspection, during office hours, at national, provincial and municipal offices of the IEC.
- 14 Mar. 2004** IEC reports that voter registration in prisons has gone well, although some problems are reported concerning the lack of proper documentation and "voter apathy".
- 16 Mar. 2004** Cellular communications firm MTN donates R6.2 million towards election and campaigning costs of all political parties currently represented in Parliament. The MTN Group states that the donation will be divided "according to MTN's designation of parties as major, multi-member or single-member parliamentary parties".
- 16 Mar. 2004** As part of their fundraising campaign Nelson Mandela and F W de Klerk persuade Tokyo Sexwale, CEO of Mvelaphanda Holdings to donate money to the NNP and ANC, co-operation for the sake of the democratic process.

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