

KEY ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THE DEMARCATION PROCESS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SALGA

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Rationalising the municipal governance system

The demarcation process has created a rationalised system of municipal governance: 6 metropolitan municipalities, 47 district municipalities, with the latter having some 232 local municipalities. These municipalities vary enormously in terms of their economic, financial, social and administrative bases. The metropolitan municipalities are global cities, with key (and very complex) international, national and local relationships. The district municipalities vary from those with a single highly resourced and dominant local municipality (such as Vaal, East London, Pietermaritzburg, Bloemfontein-Botshabelo) to those where there has never previously been any form of local government within the area (such as Northern KwaZulu-Natal). The local municipalities fall roughly into three groups:

1. The aspirant metropolitan areas and secondary cities - these are dominant sub-provincial centres of economic and commercial growth;
2. The mixed urban/rural amalgamations - these bring together communities which are functionally linked but have never regarded themselves in this integrated way; and
3. The social welfare areas which are areas where colonialism and apartheid destroyed the fabric of local life and where health, welfare and educational needs are in the short term the major activity areas - these are also the areas targeted by the President's Rural Integrated Strategy and are also the areas most affected by the recent floods.

Each of these has a set of specific challenges for SALGA. This newly

rationalised system means that as SALGA enters the new millennium it must find ways in which it provides a central focus for our major policy and development challenges, whilst also addressing (and allowing for) the diversity of municipal interests to find expression.

Finalising outer boundaries

While demarcation is an ongoing process, there still remains quite a lot of work to ensure the boundaries are properly aligned. In addition, given that many communities, particularly in rural areas, did not have enough time and resources to properly engage with the demarcation process, there will be a need to continually adjust boundaries to improve their functionality and make municipalities more effective. There are some who from the very beginning have geared themselves up to challenge the demarcations through the courts. While some of these elements are steeped in believing in the past racist and colonialist heritage, many are simply anxious about the future.

Ensuring a strong and locally vibrant relationship between traditional leaders / authorities and elected municipalities remains a challenge not only in the short term in contributing to the White Paper on Traditional Leaders and Institutions, but also in the longer term of ensuring an African-centred Renaissance of local governance. In each of these areas, SALGA must continue playing a role encouraging 'Jaw Talk' and not 'War Talk' or 'Law Talk'.

Finalising wards

Within a municipality wards must be approximately equal in terms of the numbers of registered voters. This requirement of representative democracy that there be proportionality in the system, does not always mean that the requirements for a participatory democracy are met. Wards will be the most vital instrument of bringing

together these two fundamental aspects of a democratic society. But unfortunately, in many parts of the country the wards that have been devised in order to ensure proportionality, are not the best to ensure participation. SALGA needs to actively work with the Municipal Demarcation Board, the Department of Provincial and Local Government, the Independent Electoral Commission and Statistics SA in the post-election period to work out ways in which the wards may better be defined.

The establishment process

The next few months will witness an enormous amount of local work to create section 12 notices which will bring into existence the new municipal governments. The Section 14(5) Committees with both a political and technical component will assist in this process. A key challenge for SALGA is to ensure that the establishment process is done in such a way that it accomplishes the legal requirements for establishing new municipalities, and does not become a vehicle to advance sectional interests.

Areas of challenge for SALGA and local government stakeholders

- **Dealing with anxieties:** One of the biggest difficulties facing the process of transforming municipal governance is to address the many anxieties (some well-founded and others less so) which exist among councillors, officials, the private sector and the like. Some of these anxieties are heightened through gatekeepers trying to control access to information and through holding councils to ransom. These anxieties must become a challenge to transform for SALGA to take up and ensure that it transforms that energy into a positive force for finding ways in which transformation can be completed. Transformation will take decades, but each decade begins now!
- **Developing capacity:** Probably

the greatest challenge facing the transformation process is to ensure that a more equitable spread of capacity (human resources, financial resources and technical resources) is found throughout our country and that that capacity is continually built upon. Learning for life must become a key component for all stakeholders of municipal governance.

SALGA must play a leading role in ensuring that we stop more studies of capacity, and start implementing specific, targeted capacity-building initiatives.

• **Dealing with the diversity of municipalities:** A specific challenge, requiring maturity particularly from the SALGA leadership as a whole will arise from the diversity of municipal forms created through the demarcation process. SALGA's central organising principles will have to find ways in which the specific needs of these different municipalities can be realised.

• **Planning, planning, planning:** The key PPP which presently faces us is to ask ourselves every day:

- what are our plans in each municipality for the day after the November elections;
- what are our plans for each municipality for the next year of operations; and
- what are our plans over the next ten years to ensure we have built financially viable municipalities, with effective and efficient leadership and which have delivered a better life to all South Africans.

This can only be done through continually planning, monitoring and engaging around the question of transformation.