



## [Illegal electricity connections in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, can we blame communities? by Qhamani Neza Tshazi](#)

Municipal planning processes continue to limit informal settlement dwellers from accessing electricity legally, writes Programme Officer, Qhamani Tshazi.

To view the [article click here.](#)

#UpgradeInformalSettlementsNow



## [Annual Report 2018](#)

Afesis-corplan is proud to present it's Annual Report for 2018.



[Click here to view the PDF.](#)

---

TO VOTE  
OR  
NOT TO VOTE



## [To vote or not to vote](#)

Share This Story, Choose Your Platform!

# Don't vote

**By Ebrahim Fakir and Ivor Sarakinsky**

The primary question facing South African voters in 2019 is not who to vote for, but whether to vote at all.

The 2019 election season has begun in earnest. Parties have been vigorously campaigning, with many a pundit making the obvious but important point that voter turnout will be key to determining the outcome.

Some have even gone as far as recommending a vote for President Cyril Ramaphosa to strengthen his hand in cleaning up the ANC and the government. Others suggest that, despite Ramaphosa's best intentions, a large majority for the ANC will see them squander power, yet again, and that strengthening the opposition may be better for more effective

government.

Whatever permutation is opted for is dependent on voter turnout. We think there is more important reason why turnout and participation matters: voter participation and turnout (or lack thereof) sends a strong signal to the political class. Without being democratic nay-sayers, we suggest withholding the vote has become the weapon of last resort in voters' arsenal against those striving for political office.

Democratic theory suggests there is an axiomatic relationship between high rates of voter participation and turnout and high levels of representation, accountability, oversight and governmental responsiveness.

***So uncaring has the government  
become that it appealed court  
rulings compelling it to replace  
pit latrines with toilets for  
school children***

Twenty five years of post-apartheid popular national government, in fact, proves otherwise. Ranging from the arms deal to Bosasa, with the Guptas in between, and an economic, education, health and welfare crisis, the political class has shown itself to be unresponsive and blinkered. They have circumvented accountability and transparency while subordinating citizens' interests to that of an encumbered political establishment.

This deafness manifests through the failure to address crime, service delivery, economic growth, employment creation, and socio-economic injustices. In fact, so uncaring has the government become that it appealed court rulings compelling it to replace pit latrines with toilets for school children.

### **1. Appreciative of democracy**

It is trite but no less true to say South Africans remain invested in democratic processes. They are also keenly appreciative of democracy as a set of social practices and as a form of

government. Participation in elections is one such indicator.

Since 1994, we have witnessed what are, by international comparison, high levels (though declining) of voter participation. Since the inaugural 1994 elections attracted an 86% turnout, voter turnout as a proportion of registered voters has remained relatively high, peaking in 1999 at 89%. From then on there was a steady decline, with the 2004 voter turnout dropping to 76%, increasing slightly in 2009 to 77% and declining to 73% in 2014.

Notwithstanding relatively high turnouts, it is clear that as confidence and trust in politicians and public institutions progressively declined, so too has voter participation.

Invested as South Africans are in the democratic process, they continue to participate politically, even though they have turned out less at elections, trying every manner of means to extract accountability and oversight from government — ranging from protests (we have on average 300 a year); engaging in “lawfare”; signing and proposing petitions; attending public participation processes; making policy submissions and going to hearings, through to marching in demonstrations that sometimes turn violent.

Yet the level of governmental responsiveness remains low and atrophied. Even when the judiciary has ruled against public institutions and individual office bearers for negligence, exceeding the bounds of their authority, acting irregularly or dishonestly, no consequences have followed.

In some instances, individuals and institutions continue with their flawed bureaucratic routines without any reform in processes and procedures — a perusal of Constitutional Court judgments and the Auditor-General’s reports over the past 25 years makes for depressing reading but proves the point beyond reasonable doubt. Perversely, individuals have been rewarded with continued public office or allowed to resign while maintaining their lucrative benefits.

In other words, they are rewarded for malfeasance and benefit from impunity. No ordinary citizen would be afforded this luxury.

## **2. Accountability vs turnout**

It is therefore clear that high voter turnouts haven't worked for accountability. High levels of participation have failed to change the course of the government and bureaucratic leviathan. This is not restricted to the ANC. The DA in Cape Town and the Western Cape have repeatedly shown that with both an increasing majority and an increased rate of voter participation, there has been an exponential increase in internal wrangling and power struggles for positions, coupled with a non-responsive posture to citizens' needs. The De Lille saga and the housing crisis, with a discounted price on public land to property developers who might also be DA donors, illustrates the point.

***South Africans now seem to be stacking the list in terms of worst to least bad in ascending order. This is an indictment of all political parties which ... are uniformly poor***

The EFF remains untested in this regard, but their performance in parliament and in the councils in which they voted minority governments into power, doesn't place them in a much better stead. Their lack of a coherent policy framework, extreme flip-flopping from issue to issue, inchoate and rhetorical demands and mimicry of colonial behaviour, crude racial stereotyping and institutional destabilisation, not to mention internal fragmentation, doesn't bode well either.

Of course, there is the option of voting for other smaller parties, but these demonstrably show a lack of policy distinction, organisational depth, institutionalisation or any connection to a definable constituency (except for niche special interest parties such as the FF+ or the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP)).

Voters in 2019 are therefore faced with Hobson's choice, confronted with the prospect of selecting the least worse, rather than the best, party. This widely articulated view goes against the ordinary rationality of electoral decision-making. Usually, voters rank parties in descending order from best to worst and vote for the one that best represents their interests. South Africans now seem to be stacking the list in terms of worst to least bad in ascending order. This is an indictment of all political parties which, we have argued elsewhere, are uniformly poor.

This calculus is dangerous for democracy. The winner of an election receives a legitimate mandate from the citizenry to govern and exercise power and authority, despite the motivation of citizens. Voting thus ensures that all political parties are insulated from the varying degrees of contempt that underpins the voter's eventual choice.

### **3. Winning takes all**

All political parties strive for is a majority. They don't care about the reasons behind individual voters' choice. Once they have climbed over the first hurdle of this procedural dimension of democracy it becomes business as usual for them, and voters' and citizens' concerns are secondary. This has been the case in SA for some time.

In such instances, withholding the vote from a craven set of parties that have incepted a governance credibility crisis makes perfect sense. That large numbers of traditional ANC voters stayed away in the 2016 local elections, leading to the loss of metropolitan local governments, has made the Gauteng ANC nervous about the prospect of losing the 2019 provincial election.

This demonstrates that, apart from being a rational response to recidivist government, it is also a highly effective threat to get a better and more considered response from an otherwise moribund political class. A stay-away might be the most effective way to resuscitate accountability and disincentivise impunity.

***There is nothing like the threat of a legitimization crisis to spur political action from otherwise complacent politicians***

In instances where none of the democratic voice pressures have extracted accountability, responsiveness and meaningful service delivery, what else can citizens do but withhold the vote?

Withholding the vote on a mass scale remains the most powerful mechanism to shake the slumbering and complacent political class to its core. It is the only means available to citizens to encourage the insular political establishment to respond to it, and accept that citizens are the principals, and public servants and politicians the agents of citizens.

The 2019 election is an opportune moment in which to correct the distortion of this relationship. There is nothing like the threat of a legitimization crisis to spur political action from otherwise complacent politicians.

In proposing the rationality of a “don’t vote” position, we need to dispense with the canard that not voting dilutes other rights, especially the right to demand governmental performance and responsiveness. All rights are constitutionally guaranteed, separate and exist independently of the franchise and its exercise. Not exercising one right does not negate others. Not voting does not negate or nullify the right to expect high-quality service delivery, accountability or responsiveness from public servants and politicians.

- *Fakir is director of programmes at the Auwal Socio-Economic Research Institute, and Sarakinsky is an associate professor at the Wits School of Governance.*

# Vote

**By Zwanga Mukhuthu**

Ebrahim Fakir and Ivor Sarakinsky (2019) in their 'don't vote' article have argued why we should all consider abstaining from voting in the 8 May 2019 national and provincial elections to shake or teach the current political establishment a lesson. The two co-writers argue, so complacent and uncaring is our elected representatives they have lost touch with reality. The writers say this manifests in a high crime rate, poor service delivery, slow economic growth, unemployment, corruption, and socio-economic injustice. They also proceed to say the Democratic Alliance and the Economic Freedom Fighters do not have what it takes to live up to the aspirations of millions of South Africans looking at what has happened in the Western Cape and the red beret's behaviour in Parliament.

Fakir and Sarakinsky's argument leaves the reader with the impression that simply because the ANC which has been in government for the last 25 years, has failed to address society's problems no other party in South Africa deserves our votes and to a larger extent to govern. The "don't vote" argument does not go further to say exactly what would happen if we all heeded that call. I will try to the best of my ability to pick up where the two writers left off.

There will be a government in South Africa after the May 8 general elections even if we don't vote, because the friends, relatives and supporters of contesting candidates would have casted their ballots. Using Fakir and Sarakinsky's argument, let's say there are 10 registered voters and out of the 10, three vote for the same party, one votes for a different party and a vote of the fifth person is spoiled while the remaining five withhold their vote - we will end up with a situation where the three



are making decisions for the seven until the next elections. This is already happening in South Africa when one looks at voter turnout data. They few are deciding for the many.

For instance voter turnout for the 2014 general election was 73.48% (IEC, 2014) lower than the turnout from the 2009 general election where voter turnout was 77.30% (IEC, 2009). These percentages of counted votes published by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) are figures of registered people who voted for the political parties, and not the total number of eligible South Africans who could have registered to vote but then abstained.

***Voter turnout for the 2014 general election was 73.48% lower than the turnout from the 2009 general election where voter turnout was 77.30%.***

Voter turnout trends in the last 10 years [2004 to - 2014 general elections] already suggest a large number of registered voters will not vote on May 8. For example in the Eastern Cape, there were more than 2.8 million people on the voter's roll in the 2004 provincial and national elections but only 2.3 million people actually turned out to vote on April 14, 2004. In 2009 the number of people on the voter's roll had marginally increased to 3 million but only 2.2 million people voted on April 22, 2009. In 2014 3.2 million people were registered to vote in the Eastern Cape but only 2.2 million of those voted on May 7, 2014. These figures clearly put voter turnout at 81.1% in 2004 and 70.32% in 2014.

A political election provides citizens with the opportunity to vote and decide what happens to the future of their country. And since democracy is "rule by the people", it is the responsibility of every citizen to vote.

'Why vote?' is one of key questions some people, especially the youth, are grappling with. What will the vote change and what will it influence? The power of the vote as a policy-influencing and mandate-giving moment is not

unpacked in many of the IEC educational campaigns and this is where NGOs like Afesis-corporplan and others, whose work is aimed at deepening democracy, comes in.

It is my view that there has never been as pressing a time as now, to link the vote to the socio-economic struggles of our society and to use every vote as a mandate-giving moment. Citizens can also, in numbers, use their vote as a recall mechanism if those in power fail to address the pressing needs of communities.

With all the socio-economic challenges confronting them, all citizens eligible to vote cannot afford to be bystanders in the country's democratic processes and expect targeted policy that addresses their needs to emerge thereafter. They have to play a meaningful part in shaping the country's future and its policies. And voting is only one step in that process.

Elections give legitimate status and power to elected leaders. Once this power has been delegated to those elected, the role of citizens thereafter is to make sure this power is not abused. We should never give up our right to hold government accountable and should never delegate such a responsibility to the few, i.e. political party supporters.

The low numbers of people that are turning out to vote year in and year out indicates that there is a need for more deliberate and targeted voter education, one that will particularly target citizens that are abstaining from voting.

In response to that question youth ask - *why must we vote?* - I say:

***“You need to vote because every election matters, you as an individual matter, the choices you make matter, in your hand lies power and that power is in your vote and your choice will have a very direct and concrete effect on your daily life.”***

High voter turnout sends out a message about

the sort of government citizens need and expect. Our elected representatives must work together and also strive to deliver better healthcare, education, early childhood development, fair taxation, sustainable employment, small business opportunities, better infrastructure and a more affordable public transport system.

The multiparty governments that we have seen following the 2016 local government elections gave South Africans a glimpse of the possibilities that awaits us if elected representatives put their differences aside and work for the people that voted them into power. The in-sourcing of 1600 security officers to the City of Johannesburg municipality bears reference. According to media reports, previously the City outsourced its security through service providers paying an average of R14000 per security guard, while the guards themselves received as little as R4000 as a basic salary. Under the in-sourcing system the guards received the life changing R14000 salary a month with additional benefits such as medical aid, pension fund membership, subsidised education and housing.

In many countries including South Africa, people fought for the right to vote. Today voting is a simple and painless process and with the availability of many voting stations, you are guaranteed to spend little time on the queue. Go vote, but your actions must not end there; you also need to follow your vote by holding those you voted for accountable to you through various legislated means until the next election. This can be in a way of attending ward committee meetings in your area, participating in Integrated Development Planning public participation meetings, submitting petitions to your municipality, making Promotion of Access to Information requests, and organising marches, to name just a few.

If you don't vote, others will make the decisions for you because only the minority would have voted for leaders in government.

- **Zwanga Mukhuthu** is a programme officer responsible for communications

*and advocacy at Afesis-corplan, an NGO contributing to community-driven development and good local governance in the Eastern Cape. He is a youth, and writes in his personal capacity.*

## References

1. SA Labour News, 2018. City of Joburg Insources 1600 Security Guards. Available <http://www.salabournews.co.za/45052-city-of-johannesburg-insources-1-600-security-guards> [30 April 2019]
2. Independent Electoral Commission: National and provincial result. Available <https://www.elections.org.za/content/Elections/National-and-provincial-elections-results/> [30 April 2019]



## [Renewed Commitment to Upgrading of Informal Settlements](#)



Ronald Eglin

Government is renewing its commitment to the upgrading of informal settlements. In his [budget vote speech on 20 February 2019](#), the Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni stated that

*“(f)unding totalling R14.7 billion over the two outer years [202/21 and 2021/22] has been reprioritised to two new conditional grants for informal settlements upgrading which will enable these households [living in informal settlements] to have access to basic amenities.”*

In preparation for introducing these two new conditional grants (according to the [Division of Revenue Bill 2019](#)), government will, in the 2019/20 period be introducing two new ‘windows’ within the Human Settlement Development Grant (HSDG) and the within the Urban Settlement Development Grant (USDG) where funds from these grants will be ring fenced for the upgrading of informal settlements. The HSDG is administered by provincial Departments of Human Settlements, while the USDG is a grant that is allocated by Treasury directly to metropolitan municipalities for metros to administer. These windows set a minimum amount each province, working with municipalities (for the HSDG), and each metropolitan municipality (for the USDG) must spend on informal settlement upgrading, and requires these provinces, municipalities and metros to work in partnership with communities. (Division of Revenue Bill 2019, page 90 for HSDG and page 106 for USDG). Depending on the success of these two ‘windows’, two new Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grants will be introduced in subsequent years, ‘skimming’ funds off the HSDG and USDG allocations up to a total of R14.7 billion for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 period.

The upgrading of informal settlements has been a priority of government for a number of years now – since the introduction of the Breaking New Ground policy in 2004 ([A Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements](#)) – but in many instances government appears to be claiming many projects as upgrading of informal settlements projects, but on closer inspection these projects could better be described as conventional RDP housing projects making use of the Integrated Residential Development Programme grant. These projects may benefit some people living in informal settlements in that they move these people from their informal shack into a new RDP house. However, these projects do not actually follow the phases for upgrading as described in the [Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme \(UISP\)](#) of the 2009 housing code.

## **A ‘true’ UISP project involves a four phase process**

## PHASE 1

Phase 1 involves motivating and applying for UISP funding.

## PHASE 2

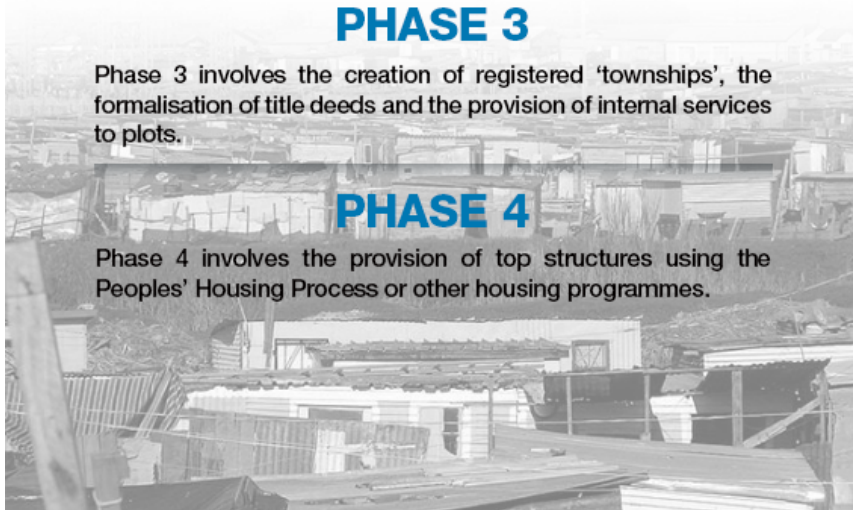
Phase 2 involves the provision of basic services, conducting the necessary geotech and environmental impact studies, socio economic surveys and the acquisition of the land.

## PHASE 3

Phase 3 involves the creation of registered 'townships', the formalisation of title deeds and the provision of internal services to plots.

## PHASE 4

Phase 4 involves the provision of top structures using the Peoples' Housing Process or other housing programmes.



The new Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant, that is being tested in the 2019/20 financial year and will be formally introduced in 2020/21, seems to be an attempt by government (through Treasury) to ensure that in future government counts true upgrading of informal settlements projects within its statistics for upgrading and does not claim conventional RDP housing projects as upgrading.

It needs to also be remembered that government in its [2014 - 2019 medium term strategic framework for human settlements](#), set itself a target to provide 750 000 households by 2019, through the Informal Settlements Upgrading Programme, with access to basic services and security of tenure. This new informal settlement upgrading grant introduced in the 2019 budget vote speech will go a long way to helping government achieve any new target it sets itself for the next 2019 - 2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework period.



# Only 20 percent of Eastern Cape’s “First Time Voters” registered to vote

Share This Story, Choose Your Platform!



**By Zwanga Mukhuthu**

For the 2019 national and provincial elections, the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) had by this week, registered more than 3.3-million voters in the Eastern Cape (IEC-EC, 2019). This figure constitutes all citizens aged 18 and older as per the electoral Act.

As per the Census 2011, there are close to 4-million eligible voters from a population of 6.5-million in the province.

To date, the number of youth (or the so-called ‘first time voters’) aged 18 and 19 registered to vote in this year’s general elections in the Eastern Cape stands at 63 000 (IEC-EC, January 2019), while the number of elderly residents aged 80 years and older on the same voters roll is approximately 119 000. This is 63 000 out of a provincial youth population of about 309 970 youth (18 and 19 year olds). In essence, only 20% of eligible first-time youth voters in the province are registered to vote in the upcoming general election.

While it was largely reported that the results of the 2016 local government election indicated that South Africa voters were generally more informed about democratic processes and the roles and of political parties in service delivery; even then, youth voter turn-out was worryingly low.

With a quick glance at the statistic above, one can conclude that elderly people in the province (80 years and older) see more value in participating in a democratic process such as an election, than its youth. This begs the question:

***If the province’s pensioners understand that one of the pillars of a democracy is citizen participation in government, why is it that this message is not filtering through to its youth?***

A reflection on the manner in which civic and democracy education is being done, particularly that which is meant at building youth agency is needed. This conversation should also reflect on the resourcing of these initiatives and the extent to which they target and reach young people across the province.

This is critical, because a democratically conscious youth that expresses great levels of civic agency is bound to grow into democratically conscious and responsible citizens. This is necessary because successful democracies depend on the effective participation of the citizenry in democratic processes. This is not only the citizens' right but also its duty.

While facilitating voter education is one of the mandates of the IEC which it does facilitate well, there are however great limitations with the IEC education. It only focuses, for example, on **who is eligible to vote, how to vote, where to vote, where and when to register and what the ballot paper looks like**. There is not civic or democracy education, it is not dealing with the '**why must you vote**' question.



This is the key question young people are grappling with - why vote? What will the vote change and what will it influence? The power of the vote as a policy -influencing and mandate-giving moment is not unpacked in many of the IEC educational campaigns and this is where NGOs like Afesis-corplan and others, whose work is aimed at deepening democracy, must come in.

It is my view that there has never been as pressing a time as now, to link the vote to the socio-economic struggles of young people and to use every vote as a mandate-giving moment. Youth can also, in numbers, use their vote as a recall mechanism if those in power fail to address the pressing needs of this group.

With all the socio-economic challenges confronting it as a group, the youth cannot afford to be bystanders in the country's democratic processes and expect targeted policy to emerge thereafter. They have to play a meaningful part in shaping the country's future and its policies. And voting is only one step in that process.

Elections give legitimate status and power to elected leaders. Once this power has been delegated to those elected, the role of the youth thereafter is to make sure this power is not abused. The youth should never give up their right to hold government accountable and should never delegate such a responsibility to others, i.e. the pensioners.

The low numbers of registered youth voters in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere in the country indicates that there is a need for more deliberate and targeted voter education, one that will particularly target youth voters.

***In response to that question youth ask - why must we vote? - I say:***

You need to vote because every election matters, you as an individual matter, the choices you make matter, in your hand lies power and that power is in your vote and your choice will have a very



direct and concrete effect on your daily life.

Voting is a simple and painless process and with the availability of many voting stations, you are guaranteed to spend little time on the queue. Youths wishing to register to vote in the upcoming general elections are still welcome to do so but time is running out fast. Go register to vote, but your actions must not end there; you also need to follow your vote by holding those you voted for accountable to you through various legislated means until the next election.

***For more information on #FollowYourVote2019 click [here](#).***

**Zwanga Mukhuthu** is a programme officer responsible for communications and advocacy at Afesis-corplan, an NGO contributing to community-driven development and good local governance in the Eastern Cape. He is a youth, and writes in his personal capacity.