



[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.

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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.

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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 legitimisation 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 legitimisation 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.*

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Renewed Commitment
to Upgrading of
Informal Settlements



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.



[Annual Report 2017](#)

Afesis-corporation is proud to present our Annual Report for 2017. Find out about all the exciting projects we are working on and the progress, successes, lowlights and lessons we are learning as an organisation.

[Annual report 2017](#)



[The narrative that continues to associate state capture with Zuma is a lazy one](#)



By Nontando Ngamlana

There has been great public interest in the phenomenon dubbed 'state capture' since the revelation of the Gupta influence on ministerial and other senior institutional leadership appointments. Rightly so because the collusion of business and public representatives in ways that advance their personal and business interests over public good cripples the state from effectively delivering on its

transformative socio-economic mandate. However, the spotlight shone on the negative impact of the Gupta-Zuma relationship took attention away from the capture of institutions in the other spheres of government. The VBS saga facilitated a moment in which the country was forced to confront the extent of looting of state resources across all government.

[Click here for the full article.](#)



Glenmore Sports Field Refurbishment

[IN CASE YOU MISSED IT]: Here's our Executive Director, Nontando Ngamlana's widely publicised media statement on the refurbishment of the Glenmore Sports Field by the Ngqushwa Local Municipality.

Click to open.

[Refurbishment of Glenmore Sports Field by the Ngqushwa Local Municipality Press statement](#)

For background and more information about Glenmore, view the following articles on our website:

[Accounting for Basic Services \(ABS\): Participatory Budgeting](#)

[Afesis in Action March 2017: Participatory Budgeting](#)

[Glenmore residents start petition to get their sports field rectified](#)

[Glenmore residents march to the Ngqushwa local municipality](#)



State of Local Governance 2018 publication launch

The theme of the 2018 State of Local Governance (SoLG) publication, Development Local Government: Dream Deferred? centres around three milestones – the 20 year anniversary of the White Paper on Local Government, the 15-year anniversary of the Good Governance Learning network and the 10th State of Local Governance (SoLG) publication.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of South Africa’s vision for local government. The White Paper on Local Government is regarded as a landmark policy, the purpose of which was to create a new vision for local government thereby rectifying apartheid inequities. Within this broad developmental vision, local government is tasked with an ambitious developmental objective of helping to create a better life for all.

The State of Local Governance 2018 builds on the previous nine publications, and was launched on the 27th August 2018 in Cape Town.

[To read the full publication click here.](#)

Afesis-corplan presented its research paper titled, ‘Do Ward Committees Assist Municipalities to Achieve Developmental Goals? A Case Study of Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality’ authored by Nontando Ngamlana and Sikhander Coopoo. The paper illustrates a research project undertaken by Afesis-corplan to assess the effectiveness of the functions of ward committees, outside of the primary function of facilitating inclusive participation in local governance decision making. Using Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality as a case study, the paper specifically investigates the extent to which ward committees contribute to the attainment of the development goals of local government.

The launch was opened by Andries Nel (Deputy Director, COGTA).

[View Andries Nel’s speech here.](#)



Accounting for Basic Services: Policy Briefs

In order to improve accountability and to ensure that communities’ democratic rights go beyond a simple vote towards active political participation and engagement, efforts need to be made to capacitate and enable citizens to do so. In 2016-2018, Afesis-corplan, the Built Environment Support

Group (BESG), the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) Southern Africa Office, Isandla Institute and PlanAct have jointly implemented a project entitled “Accounting for basic services: Tackling the inadequate use of resources by municipalities and building a rights-based approach to service delivery” - referred to as the ABS Project. The project has been supported by the EU Delegation to South Africa.

The ABS Project has developed a number of policy briefs, focusing on key issues that have been identified during the course of the project. The purpose of these briefs is to highlight the issue identified (e.g. inadequate access to basic services), outline the policy and institutional context (including the legal framework, municipal policies, intergovernmental relations, roles and responsibilities), identify challenges, gaps and opportunities, and make recommendations for policy and practice/uptake of policy.

Policy brief 1: Local Government Responsibility to provide Basic Services to Indigent Households

[Full version](#)

[Summary version](#)

The Constitution highlights the right of all citizens to have access to basic levels of services. This principle is underpinned by the National Indigent Policy, which says that municipalities must provide free basic services (FBS) to indigent people in a sustainable manner. The Indigent Policy’s aim is therefore to alleviate poverty in disadvantaged communities by providing free basic water (at least 6 kilolitres per month), free basic electricity (at least 50 kWh per month), and subsidised sewerage and sanitation as well as solid waste management (up to R50 per month or 100% subsidy to indigent households).

Policy brief 2: The Reality of Insecure Environments

[Full version](#)

[Summary version](#)

Rapid urbanisation has contributed to the growth of informal housing on a large scale. The accelerated migration of people from mainly rural areas into urban areas has caused informal settlements to grow beyond the coping capacity of municipal infrastructure, which has resulted in the deterioration of living conditions and the surrounding environment.

Policy brief 3:

Full version

Summary version



[Glenmore residents march to the Ngqushwa local municipality](#)

Afesis-corplan was in Peddie on June 27 where residents of Glenmore marched to the Ngqushwa local municipality to demand that municipal officials respond to a petition they handed over in April.

The petition relates to the Glenmore community sports field which the municipality spent more than R2-million refurbishing. However the sports field remains in a shambles.



The community marched to the municipality in April to handover a petition requesting that the municipality rectify the poor workmanship done to the sports field.

Residents gave the municipality 30 days to respond to the petition however the municipality did not respond.

This resulted in community members embarking on another peaceful march on June 27.

Until this date the Glenmore sports facility remains inaccessible to members of the community wishing to use it.

Afesis-corplan has been involved in attempts to get the Ngqushwa Municipality to share information on the project and rectify the sports field.

This was done as part of Afesis-corplan's Accounting for Basic Services Project which it is facilitating in Ngqushwa and Buffalo City Municipalities.



At the gate marchers we met by bouncers who then locked the gate. A few minutes later acting municipal manager at the Ngqushwa local municipality Mkhusele Mxekezo emerged from his offices to address the marchers. He said the petition in question was still being processed by the municipal's petition committee but could not give a date as to when it will be attended to.

See videos of the march on our [YouTube channel](#).

Or view them all below:



[Afesis-corplan welcomes delegates to the 2018 BCMM BRICS Summit](#)

Afesis-corplan are exhibiting for the duration of the 2018 Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality BRICS summit at the International Convention Centre from today, 28 June until Saturday, 30 June 2018.



