



Deepening Participatory Local Governance

The murkiness of today's politics demands that citizens establish organs through which they will exercise power. Ward committees were conceptualized as organs for people's power, but it has been proven beyond doubt that this mechanism failed to shift power in local governance in a manner that allows citizens to participate meaningfully in governance. Afesis-corplan argues that the ward committee as a mechanism can no longer be rehabilitated and that an alternative is necessary. Since the ward committee system has been written into the legislative framework that regulates local government, it goes without saying therefore that there are changes in law necessary in the reform of mechanisms for citizen participation in local governance.

Afesis-corplan together with its civil society partners are working on an initiative aimed at exploring effective ways for citizens to engage meaningfully in local governance. This emanates from years of working in the local governance sector where gaps with the present participatory mechanisms have been noted. Efforts to strengthen these gaps over time bore little fruit leading the organizations to conclude that the present mechanisms for citizens to engage in local governance needed to be relooked at. Afesis-corplan and its partners argue that there is a need to rethink the design and structure, as well as functions of legislated mechanisms for citizen participation in all spheres of government but with an emphasis on local government. With this in mind, the work that these organizations are embarking on will lead to recommendations for policy and practice.

OBJECTIVES

The project has the following objectives:

1. To support and facilitate the involvement of civil society in the review of legislative mechanisms for citizen participation in local governance.
2. To contribute towards systemic change in the manner in which local government facilitates, supports and resource citizen participation on the one hand; and the manner in which citizens take up opportunities to participate on the other.
3. To pilot innovative and alternative spaces for co-creation between citizens and local government.

These objectives will be achieved by:

1. Facilitating the establishment of and the coordination of a Advisory Group that will strategically guide the civil society activities aimed at influencing the government-driven policy-review process.
2. Lifting the veil of secrecy in the policy-review process through targeted conferences, roundtables, published articles, communication and advocacy.
3. Partnering with GGLN member organizations to pilot alternative mechanisms to the ward

committee system.

4. Facilitating the space for learning, reflection and document lessons learnt during the implementation of this programme.

KEY PROJECTS

ADVISORY GROUP

RESEARCH

Working Paper Series

- Towards Strengthening Public Participation And Civic Engagement In South Africa
- Constitutional & Legislative Framework Regulating Participatory Local Governance In South Africa
- War Rooms In The Eastern Cape
- Advocating for Change
- Participatory and Representative Democracy

Commissioned Research

- Analysis of municipal and civil society responses to contested citizen spaces and experiences, **July 2017**
- Comparative Analysis of Transparency and Public Participation Mechanisms: *making a case against institutionalized arrangements*, **September 2017**

ADVOCACY & AWARENESS

- [**Daily Dispatch 4 June 2018 Opinion piece: Ward councillors trampled on our democracy**](#)
- [**Daily Dispatch 25 April 2018 Opinion piece: No fix for wards in current format**](#)

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION