



GOOD
GOVERNANCE
SURVEYS (GGS)

A REFLECTION OF SEVEN YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION

THE RAITH
FOUNDATION

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

 FORD FOUNDATION

Afesis-corplan


Promoting active citizenship and good governance

Prepared by
Nontando Ngamlana and Malachia Mathoho
December 2013



“ Learning organisations are organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.

Peter Senge (1990:3)

I. Introduction

Afesis-corplan is a development, non-government organisation (NGO) based in East London, South Africa. Established in 1992, the organisation has contributed to community-driven development, sustainable settlement development and good local governance for more than 20 years. The organisation's work contributes to a wider effort by its development partners in government, business and the civil society (in particular the Good Governance Learning network) to deepen participatory democracy and good governance.

Afesis-corplan views itself as a learning organisation, and draws from its work to contribute to a national effort to improve theory and practice. This reflective paper on the Good Governance Survey (GGS) program is drawn from continuous organisational reflection and a conscious intention to learn and improve.

2. Background to the GGS

The GGS is a perception-based tool that provides a useful self-assessment tool for municipalities to assess how they are faring in attaining good governance. It is also aimed at contributing significantly to citizens' understanding of local governance. The tool was developed by Afesis-corplan between 2004 and 2005 and implemented with the support of the organisation's donors (in particular GTZ¹, Ford Foundation and the RAITH Foundation) in the Eastern Cape Province and Mpumalanga. Municipalities in which the GGS was implemented in are:

Table I: Municipalities in which the GGS was implemented		
Province	District Municipalities	Local Municipalities
Eastern Cape	Cacadu (2007/08)	Baviaans, Camdeboo, Ikhwezi, Makana, Ndlambe
	Cacadu (2011/12)	Baviaans, Camdeboo, Ikhwezi
	Amathole (2011/12)	Great Kei, Nkonkobe, Amahlathi, Mbhashe
Mpumalanga	Nkangala (2006/07)	Delmas, Dr SJ Moroka, Emalahleni, Emakhazeni
	Ehlanzeni (2007/08)	Bushbuckridge, Mbombela, Nkomazi, Thaba Chweu, Umjindi
	Sedibeng (2010)	Emfuleni, Midvaal, Lesedi

Lessons captured in this paper reflect those learnt in implementing the GGS in all the municipalities listed above over a period of seven years.

3. Good Governance: A brief conceptual Framework

The official concept of good local governance is presented in various pieces of legislation ranging from Chapter 7 of the Constitution to the 1998 Municipal Structures Act and the 2000 Municipal Systems Act. A second perspective on good governance is that generally referred to in business circles as corporate governance. Good corporate governance places a lot of emphasis on transparency, accountability and ethics as well as focussing on efficiency, productivity and profit maximisation.

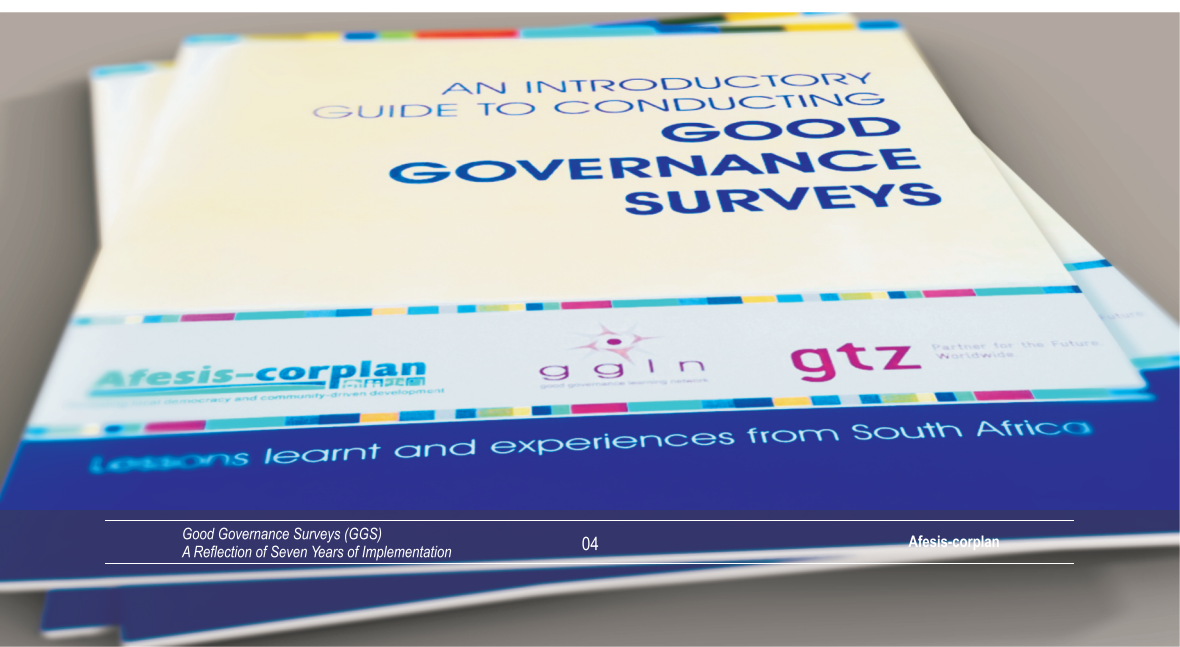
A third perspective, and one from which Afesis-corplan draws its definition of good governance, is that of the World Bank, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism, which anchor around eight key elements or indicators: decision-making; public participation; community consultation; transparency; disclosure; eradicating corruption; service delivery; and systems and structures.

These are the eight key elements that the GGS interrogates.

4. The Methodology

The GGS is one of a few instruments for appraising local government performance in good governance. Its uniqueness lies in its ability to offer a non-technical and civil society inclusive approach to municipal performance monitoring that is able to compare both quantified and perception-based data. The GGS methodology is three-pronged and consists of:

- A **survey** of councillors, officials, ward committee members; members of civil society and the general public;
- A **focus group** with selected individuals from each respondent group, to verify and obtain additional input on the survey findings; and
- A **factual verification** exercise consisting of a checklist of policies, systems and structures existing in the municipality.



5. Lessons Learnt

The lessons learnt are drawn from the implementation of the GGS in the municipalities mentioned above. These lessons were drawn through a series of staff reflection sessions, field reports, and monitoring visits. A random sample of municipal officials in some of the districts where the GGS was implemented were also interviewed to verify facts. The lessons are grouped as follows and a recommendation is made after the presentation of each lesson:

- i. Project ownership
- ii. Political will
- iii. Municipal commitment
- iv. Municipal capacity
- v. Afesis-corplan facilitation

i. Project Ownership

A GGS is a relatively new instrument and is not yet widely known within the local governance space. Therefore, implementation is usually as a result of a request made for a partnership by Afesis-corplan with that particular municipality on various projects including the GGS. In only two instances was a GGS implemented as a result of a pro-active request by the municipality to have the assessment done: generally, Afesis-corplan makes the first move. In most instances,

Involvement of civil society and other stakeholders in the GGS is crucial

Afesis-corplan also foots the bill for a GGS (through support from its donors). The idea had been that once municipalities saw the value of undertaking a GGS as opposed to other less holistic studies (i.e. customer satisfaction surveys, public participation surveys, etc), they would then pay to have it done. Cacadu District is a

typical example of this in that, while the first surveys were paid for by Afesis-corplan through support from GTZ and the Ford Foundation, the follow-up GGS in 2012 was paid for by the municipality.

When a GGS is completed and a final report adopted by council, it then becomes an official municipal document. Experience has been that municipalities refuse to avail the GGS reports to their stakeholders (in particular civil society structures and other sector interest groups). Because the GGS is not paid for by public funds, it has been a struggle to get the municipalities to make it public. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by Afesis-corplan and the municipality prohibits Afesis-corplan from distributing the report which is generally the property of the municipality and not necessarily 'a public document.'² Involvement of civil society and other stakeholders in the GGS is crucial to engender collective ownership of good governance challenges in the municipality. In that way, there is a higher chance of a collective effort towards addressing them.

Example

In the Cacadu (2011/12) GGS, Afesis-corplan agreed with the three municipalities to involve civil society in a far greater depth in the GGS process than before. Upon the adoption of the report by council a copy was sent to all these stakeholders and they were invited each to prepare a presentation on what they thought needed to be done to address the gaps. The stakeholders were also to articulate what they would bring to the table (their own contribution both in resources and service) to addressing the gaps identified in the report. A multi-stakeholder forum was established to drive the GGS implementation process. This process was possible in Cacadu because there was overarching support by the district and political will both at district and local level to involve civil society and the business community in efforts aimed at improving good local governance in the area.

Recommendation:

We recommend that organisations that want to support municipalities to conduct the GGS have a conversation with the municipal leadership beforehand — on how they would involve stake holders in the GGS process, in particular, in addressing the gaps that will be identified by the report. If at all possible, such organisations must write in clauses in the signed agreement between themselves and the municipality that will ensure that upon the availability of a final GGS report there are efforts by the municipality to draw its stakeholders on board to assist in addressing the gaps.

ii. Political Will

When Afesis-corplan started implementing the GGS, particularly in the Amathole District Municipality, it was dealing directly with local municipalities. It realised later that things moved quicker with the district's involvement as overall coordinator. It then revised its approach and anchored the GGS project at District Municipality level with the district playing a facilitative role. The organisation realised further that where there was political will and openness to a self-assessment at both district and local level, the GGS process went smoothly and efficiently, whereas where there was none, it was difficult to move ahead.

Where there is no political will, the entire GGS process becomes a struggle and at the end the municipality would either not accept the research findings or even after accepting the findings refuse to address the challenges.

The organisation uses a couple of processes to secure buy-in and ensure that political will is there before implementing a GGS. These processes include presentations to the key leading structures of a

municipality such as the TROICA (Mayor, Speaker and Municipal Manager), Mayoral Committee, Portfolio Committees, Speaker's Forums, etc. A presentation of the project is also made at a seating of a full council where approval for the project is usually obtained. A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is then signed between Afesis-corplan and the partner municipality outlining the details of the partnership, roles and responsibilities and what is expected of each partner. A project plan would be submitted with key dates and deliverables to assist in project monitoring.

Where there are extreme difficulties in moving past the steps outlined above, the organisation assesses the level of political will in the municipality and if this is found to be lacking, the GGS is not implemented. Usually, the district municipality is informed of the problems impeding progress in the project, and with its intervention, things usually move much quicker. Afesis-corplan has in the past mistakenly taken this quick movement at municipal level after the district intervention as evidence of a political will. Where there is no political will, the entire GGS process becomes a struggle and at the end, the municipality would either not accept the research findings or even after accepting the findings refuse to address the challenges. Afesis-corplan experienced this in a number of municipalities.

Example:

Nkonkobe Local Municipality is one of the municipalities in which a GGS was implemented in 2011/12. The municipality had requested in a District Speaker's Forum meeting to be amongst the four local municipalities in the Amathole District in which the GGS would be implemented. The project was approved by council and went ahead, albeit with a myriad of hiccups soliciting the district's involvement from time to time. A draft report was submitted and presented to the municipality and comments were received which were incorporated into a final report that was adopted by council. In a meeting between Afesis-corplan and the

office of the Municipality's Speaker to discuss intervention strategies to address gaps identified in the report, the Mayor disputed the findings of the report and questioned the research methodology, process and timing of the release of the findings (considering that the national election was then less than 12 months away). This was the same Mayor who had been present at all meetings where the project was presented, GGS process outlined, draft reports presented and final report approved. This indicated clearly that for this particular municipality, there probably was never support and political will to undertake a self-assessment exercise in the first instance. It also affirmed that the assumption that political leaders are serious and committed to the attainment of good local governance is not necessarily true. Afesis-corplan since withdrew from working or investing resources in this municipality on any other project.

Recommendation:

Ensuring that there is buy-in and support for the project at a senior political leadership level (or any other influential level) at the municipality is critical for successful implementation of a GGS. The success of any research exercise rests in implementation of strategies to address the gaps and challenges identified. If after a GGS is undertaken a municipality fails to address the challenges identified due to a lack of a political will, the supporting organisation would have failed.

iii. Municipal Commitment

The MoAs signed with municipalities articulate commitment by both the municipality and the supporting organisation. A key challenge with the GGS has been with municipalities going back on commitments made, especially as it relates to implementing strategies aimed at addressing gaps identified. In the past, Afesis-corplan left it to municipalities to develop these strategies on their own, but found that only a few did. In the 2011/12 Amathole District GGS, Afesis-corplan agreed with the

municipalities beforehand to support them in developing implementation strategies to address the key gaps identified in the reports. Only the District Municipality upon receipt of a consolidated GGS report of the four municipalities developed a district wide, citizen education project to address one of the gaps identified in the report.

Two of the four municipalities were quick to organise meetings and to develop these strategies only never to implement them. Tension arose in one municipality about which department would and should lead the process with both the office of the Mayor and the Public Participation Unit refusing to collaborate and pulling toward different ends. The other municipality claimed not to have resources at the time and would consider picking some of the strategies up in the IDP review process. Then there were two municipalities in which the political infighting in council took focus and attention away from the development of intervention strategies as this was just not a priority at the time and that much Afesis-corplan was told.

Recommendation:

If a GGS process ends at the submission of a report to a municipality, it is incomplete. Municipalities tend to forget things the minute the supporting organisation walks out the door. Two models seem possible so far:

- 1) Organising a multi-stakeholder forum to partner with the municipality in addressing the challenges addressed in the report and a platform through which all the stakeholders (including the municipality) can hold each other to account for how they are doing.
- 2) Assisting the key officials drawn from various departments within the municipality to develop intervention strategies and to present these for approval by a relevant portfolio committee (or decision-making structure) in the municipality. This requires a clear identification of champions and a clear articulation of institutional mechanisms and arrangements through which the strategies will be

implemented and monitored to avoid conflict. It is also crucial that these strategies with clear goals and monitoring mechanisms are integrated with existing efforts and programs within the municipality.

iv. Municipal capacity

The intention of the GGS is to transfer skills and to build the municipalities' capacity to undertake the surveys on their own. To this end a comprehensive handbook (how-to manual) was developed to assist municipal researchers and officials to undertake a GGS on their own. Afesis-corplan also built within its GGS steps a training session at the end for municipal officials aimed at drawing lessons and reflecting on the GGS undertaken and training extensively on how future GGS exercises could be done. A key challenge in this regard has been the lack of research capacity within the municipalities to lead this process and where such capacity exists, a high staff turnover is experienced. In a few municipalities where there had been researchers who took a keen interest in the GGS, by the time a final report was adopted by council, most had resigned due to external factors.

One of the things a supporting organisation can do is encourage on the spot-learning and reflection with those officials who are keen to learn how to conduct a GGS.

A GGS is research intensive. It takes people with a keen interest in research to want to participate in such an exercise. It is usually a struggle to find officials interested and willing to undergo GGS training even though it is offered for free.

Recommendation:

A supporting organisation has to think out of the box of ways to encourage municipalities to invest in building

their own capacity to undertake such exercises on their own. There are NGOs and institutions of higher learning which could potentially lend a helping hand but municipalities should be encouraged to position themselves to do their own self-assessment as part of their monitoring efforts. One of the things a supporting organisation can do is to build in continuous training, mini-workshops and skills transfer sessions throughout the GGS process to encourage 'on the spot-learning and reflection' with those officials who are keen to learn how to conduct a GGS. Secondly, they could use their SETA accreditation (if they are training accredited) to draw more interest from the participants. While the training manuals are not accredited themselves (and an accreditation process is underway), at least the trainers could pride themselves for being accredited.

v. Afesis-corplan Facilitation

There are a number of key lessons drawn from Afesis-corplan's facilitation of the GGS program. These range from approach to resource mobilisation, assumptions and capacity.

• Assumptions

Afesis-corplan moved from a noble assumption that municipalities are willing and interested in attaining good local governance and that the leadership does not just want to lead for the sake of being in power, but wants to make a great positive impact in the development of their areas. As mentioned before, good governance encompasses such things as transparency, a willingness to engage, the facilitation of effective spaces for citizen engagement, as well as efficiency, etc. The assumption has been that municipalities want to know how they are faring in these areas so as to improve and that in improving in these areas lies a great chance of customer satisfaction.

This assumption has been proven wrong over time as municipalities have shown very little interest to undertake a holistic GGS, especially in comparison to

their interest in conducting customer satisfaction surveys. On numerous occasions when presenting the GGS to municipalities, Afesis-corplan is requested to do a customer satisfaction survey instead, or quick service delivery survey. The struggle over the past seven years has also been to get municipalities to willingly implement strategies aimed at addressing gaps identified through the GGS. This again points to a lack of an interest towards the attainment of good governance.

Recommendation:

There is a need for an advocacy effort aimed at promoting good local governance. This cannot be an Afesis-corplan-only initiative, but needs to be a nationwide drive. Afesis-corplan can only hope that its efforts contribute to that nationwide awakening to the challenges and gaps in local governance. There is also a need to balance the nationwide call for clean-audits with similar loud and visible calls for good governance. This requires political will from both national government and the leadership of the governing party.

• Approach

Afesis-corplan's approach in the past seven years has been that of pro-actively knocking at municipalities doors requesting to partner them around the GGS. It has also, through support from the GTZ/GIZ, advocated for the recognition and support of the tool by both government and academia (and still continues to do so). The organisation believes that it is time now for municipalities to pro-actively draw from the handbook and the toolkit that has been developed and to conduct their own GGS, obviously with the support of research entities. This will happen when municipalities understand the benefits attaining from good governance as opposed to fragmented efforts aimed at improving one or two elements of good governance (not that this is less important but it not a holistic response).

The organisation has also taken a decision to implement a GGS now in municipalities or districts where there is



an intention to foot the bill or part pay for the surveys. In this way, it hopes that the municipalities would want to implement implementation strategies to address the gaps arising from the study they themselves would have commissioned. The Cacadu district experience has proven that this approach has a far greater success rate than any of the other previously taken by the organisation.

Recommendation:

Afesis-corplan, with its partners, needs to continue to make a case for the attainment of good local governance and to market tools that municipalities could draw from in efforts to achieve it, including the GGS.

Organisations wanting to support municipalities to undertake a GGS should think out of the box about how to sustain their involvement and support to municipalities.

• Resource Mobilisation

A GGS is resource intensive. While Afesis-corplan accepts that continuing to fund municipalities to undertake a GGS is not the most sustainable and effective model, it still however wants to support municipalities who undertake one even if from an advisory capacity. In this way, the organisation (and its partners who want to draw on the tool) can continue to draw lessons and to revise and refine the tool, informing practice. It is yet to be seen whether municipalities would want to pay for this kind of support and how best organisations can fundraise to continue to have a presence in this space.

Recommendation:

Organisations wanting to support municipalities to undertake a GGS should think out of the box about how to sustain their involvement and support to municipalities. There probably will be no rule of thumb, or one-size-fits-all scenario but creativity and proactiveness by individual organisations.

• Capacity

As mentioned above, a GGS is highly technical and research intensive. The sample size has been as big as 4 500 respondents in certain municipalities, and one has to cover all wards (rural wards are extremely vast and wide) as well as different race groups, income groups, etc. After the data is collected, it has to be cleaned and captured. Afesis-corplan had partnered with institutions of higher learning to do this in a partnership where the university cleans and captures the data for the GGS use, and could afterwards use it for their own research, bringing the cost for their service down relatively. Organisations can make such and other creative (and ethical) arrangements that would enable them to deliver on their results in an efficient manner and not compromise the quality of their work.

Recommendation:

An organisation has to understand the capacity that an involvement in the GGS would call for before they attempt to get involved.

6. Conclusion

Afesis-corplan believes very strongly that there is a greater need now more than ever, for efforts aimed at promoting good local governance. Attempts such as clean audit campaigns and turnaround strategies have not borne significant results. The outgoing Auditor-General lamented that municipalities are far from reaching the target of clean audit campaigns by the agreed timeframes. Clean audits in the first instance were only aimed at ensuring that municipalities had effective and efficient administration. This is well and good, but is only one indicator of good governance efficiency and regulatory compliance. Good governance on the other hand is broader, is holistic and targets a number of goals including efficiency.

In the face of national unrest at local government level

manifesting in violent service delivery protests and cries by the National Development Plan that South Africa needs to strive for a developmentally capable government, there is a need for collective, integrated and holistic approaches to addressing local government challenges. What better way than to promote good local governance, with all its eight key elements holistically. It is with this conviction that Afesis-corplan believes there is a need for a national drive towards GGS, and this paper seeks to inform and contribute to that national conversation.

Endnotes

1 The then German Agency for Technical Cooperation now known as the GIZ.

2 The legislated definition of a public document is that which is derived through and paid for with public funding.



Afesis-corplan

Promoting active citizenship and good governance

9 Wynne Street, Southernwood
PO Box 11214, East London, 5213
Tel: +27(0)43 743 33830, Fax: +27(0)43 743 2200
info@afesis.org.za, www.afesis.org.za
 www.facebook.com/pages/afesis-corplan
Association incorporated in terms of Section 21
Reg No. 1999/006881/08



www.raith.org.za

