Chapter 4
Participatory Local Government

The previous chapter discussed the myriad of legislation from which the design of the local government system in South Africa has emerged in the final stage of local government transition. Local government has been transformed to develop into an important sphere where democracy would take root, and where redistribution and socio-economic transformation would be undertaken. The transformed metropolitan government sought to attain a range of objectives: ensuring non-racial government and broadening mass political participation, empowering the disadvantaged citizens, promoting social and economic development, ensuring maximum involvement of the citizens in governance, and ensuring greater accountability and responsiveness.

However, 'localness' or proximity of the authorities to the 'grassroots' cannot in itself guarantee redistribution of developmental benefits, empower the disadvantaged, or ensure greater responsiveness to their needs. International experience in local government suggests that the promotion of political, administrative, and financial empowerment of local government is meaningless without certain 'participatory mechanisms' being instituted at the municipal level. Merely increasing the scope and role of local governments would not enable local government to achieve the developmental and democratic task it is expected to achieve. For any real developmental and democratic change, it is imperative for the community to actively participate in governance. This chapter assesses some of the participatory mechanisms instituted to establish local government as an important realm of change.

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1 Cecil Ambert, "Participatory Processes for Municipal Planning in Post-Apartheid South Africa", Paper Presented at the Urban Futures Conference at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 10th -14th July 2000
The chapter attempts to assess the involvement of local communities with the establishment of a decentralized local government system in 'New' South Africa. It notes the legislative measures undertaken in the realm of local government to establish a democratic and participatory system of government. It assesses the extent to which local government reforms have been able to establish mechanisms and processes that would ensure mutual appreciation of the different points of view and interests, the extent to which the local government sphere provides for a system that would be based on tolerance and respect for the rights of others, and a system that would ensure a democratic resolution of conflicts. It investigates the measures that have been undertaken to establish the local government system to act as an important arena for political education in post-apartheid South Africa. It also notes the avenues opened for political and social interaction through local election processes, local groups and committees involvement, interest group activities, debates and discussions forums involving issues that are of direct concern to the local communities.

Secondly, this chapter is also an exercise to ascertain the extent to which the establishment of a participatory local government is in line with its increased developmental portfolio. Local government has been transformed and capacitated to play a 'developmental role'. The chapter probes into the legislative measures undertaken to ensure greater participation and responsiveness of local governments in delivering services, providing a range of infrastructural facilities and undertaking developmental activities. It focuses on the innovative measures undertaken at the local level to incorporate public inputs into developmental planning.

1. Participatory Local Government in the Initial Stages of Transformation

The involvement of people in local governance was emphasized right in the initial stages of the transition. 'Participation' is not a latest concept being discussed in the post-apartheid policy discourse. It has been a part of the ANC government policy since it was first elected to power in 1994. People's participation in South Africa has been considered central to the efforts made to develop democracy and undertake development since 1994. Participation aimed at transforming the local
institutions in the apartheid era that functioned without a public feedback culture.  

In a new democracy, participatory processes were especially given importance due to the ‘educative’ function that it plays by assisting in the development of democratic skills. A highly elaborate electoral system was designed especially to deal with the sheer democratic inexperience of the majority of South Africans. Some of the measures have been discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Beyond institutionalising electoral participation, the commitment to work along with the people is reflected throughout the text of the 1996 Constitution. The interpretation of ‘cooperative government’ in the Constitution not only refers to inter-governmental relations, but also as a way by which the government relates to the citizens.

At the local level, policy statements of the Durban Metropolitan Area Council for instance consciously use the term co-operative governance, rather than co-operative government, in recognition of the need to include all role players within the DMA. Following this principle, Durban witnessed the inclusion of interest groups and associations apart from the political representatives in municipal-community partnerships involving service delivery. Along with the NGOs, the municipal government has taken steps to coordinate with business and labor. A Joint Steering Committee was established in 1995 to address policy co-ordination with regard to such involvement. The ANC government therefore reflected a political will to introduce and strengthen political participation to open the lines of communications between the local councils and the people.

However, despite being given much attention in the RDP literature, ‘participatory processes’ could not be incorporated in planning. The jargons on ‘participation’ interpreted under the RDP, has been much criticized for treating people as passive

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4 This would apply for all local authorities including the ones that were earlier functioning as white local authorities.
receivers. The kind of participation initiated in the legislative and planning processes (especially under the RDP) since 1990, was initiated with the basic aim of 'forging compliance' and giving legitimacy to the local structures. Such a perspective encouraged the tendency to view participation as a process to legitimize the decisions already formulated outside the communities. Such an approach was not geared to tap the skills, perceptions, knowledge, and respond to the aspirations of the people. The participatory strategy under the RDP reflected the ANC's obsession with "delivery" at the expense of introducing means through which the needs of the people could be ascertained. 9

The ANC government has faced continued criticism on its failure to develop community participation and 'put the people first' under the RDP. During the run up for the local elections (2000), it was claimed that the party in power undertook reconstruction and ‘delivery’ in a manner that failed to involve communities in the process. “The moment the election is over, so too is the partnership, as voters sit back and wait for "delivery" which is broadly what the government has been offering citizens...”. Gladwin Ndlela, the IFP candidate for Mayor declared his party’s perspective on creating a participative democracy as 'not for the people but with the people'.

The creation of the local RDP offices that had no experience and coordination with the community, attempted to overlap the civic and community structures. 11 RDP strategy did not "deliver" in partnership with citizens. People did not get to know what was being "delivered" to them. 12 Further, many local substructures of Metropolitan cities such as Durban were restricted to undertake participatory processes due to small budgets. This resulted in problems related to a lack of logistical support to participants. For instance, getting the people of the informal settlements to participate was often made difficult.

The case of the Community Development Forum (CDFs) is relevant in this context. Community involvement in developmental activities during the initial stages of local transformation involved voluntary organizations under the Community Development Forums. The CDFs emerged in the late 80s and early 90s and were the prime structures through which the citizens participated during the transition period. These forums were the main vehicles for participation by historically disadvantaged communities in local government. They basically comprised of the civic organizations that were mobilized into them. These community-based forums focus on development issues in a specified geographical area and were directly involved in area-wide briefings and meetings. In Durban they emerged as one of the important structures of civil society, with special focus on development issues. The Inanda Development Forum is an appropriate example of how local government and a development forum have worked together and enhanced the local government’s implementation program. The Transitional Central Local Council (Durban Central) invested in the Inanda Development Forum, through financial support, technical support, and human resource development. However, this was one of the few exceptions of such cooperation in Durban (other examples were North Local Council and North and South Central).

Despite their potential for being an important medium of participation at the local level, the development forums were recognized only in principle and were not made a part of the institutional transformation, in Durban. Local councils could not successfully incorporate various levels of participation into their planning processes to ensure wide representation. Thus, many of these Development Forums declined due to the lack of infrastructure and financial support. The forums continued well into the transition period in the absence of any other community development administration. They were later replaced by the legitimate representative structures.

2. Recent Initiatives Towards a Participatory Local Government
Participatory processes have been vigorously pursued in the latter half of the local government transformation. The emphasis on greater participation of the people in

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local government affairs came with broadening of the developmental role of local government and the enlarged scope for decentralized decision-making. Local authorities now undertake a wide range of developmental activities, are encouraged to generate a greater part of their revenue and more funds are being directly devolved from the center to the local bodies. The enlarged portfolio of local government generated the need to open channels to encourage public involvement in governance. As local governments move beyond their traditional role as infrastructure and service providers and venture as a facilitator in community development, it becomes imperative to directly involve the community and civil society structures.  

The need to introduce participatory mechanisms in planning and development has also become more crucial with greater centralization of municipal power. As has been observed in the last chapter, the establishment of ‘centralized metro structures’ or Unicities aimed to address certain redistributive and strategic objectives. However, these structural and administrative changes in the case of metropolitan municipalities like Durban, threatened to further increase the gap between the people and the government. This created a need to undertake a proactive policy to establish greater communication between the citizens and the municipality.

Community participation became an important agenda for the ANC government dealing with what has been described as the ‘crisis in local government’. Research conducted by some non-governmental organizations such as the Helen Suzman Foundation revealed the grim picture of the poor repute of local government. Polls conducted by the foundation in 1996 pointed out that only a small percentage (36%) of the population of all races across South Africa were satisfied with their local councils. A similar survey conducted by IDASA in July 1997 that municipalities scored a low score of 36% with regard to responsiveness to citizens with level of trust on local governments at 31%. Participation has become an


important policy issue with the ANC government that faced much criticism in the last local elections for its failure to undertake service-delivery and ensure greater accountability. For instance, the Democratic Alliance main plank was its attack on ANC style of delivery that it insisted resulted in a ‘better life only for the ANC comrades and their families.’

Under these circumstances, instituting participatory processes (under the Municipal Systems Act, 2000) was a crucial political move of the ANC government. It is based on the realization that people better appreciate the problems of development and planning if they are a part of it. People’s expectations about the extent to which the local council can deliver are based on informed and calculated assessments when they are informed and consulted in the governance of their communities. The high expectations of a certain section of people or the pessimism among others in a decline in standards are based more on impressions due to the lack of citizen involvement. Participation also creates collective responsibility among local communities. Participation in planning is aimed to encourage responsibility in collective decision-making.

It is expected that a participatory democracy would not just lead to ‘development’ it would also lead to ‘desired development’. It is based on the realization that people are more aware of their socio-economic realities and their needs. A participatory democratic set-up not only creates room for decentralized planning, it makes it more reflective of the needs of the people. It creates processes that ensure not how best development can be achieved but to what extent does development reflect the wishes of the community.

There has therefore been a generation of greater political will to steer government policy towards a democratic and participatory local government. This probably opened the South African leadership to the international experiments in

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16 DA manifesto, 2000 elections (info@da.org.za)
participatory local government and opened the South African local government experiment to the emerging participation discourse. This discourse defines participation as a process that goes beyond the direct involvement of the people with public authorities, to directly influencing policies and resources that they hitherto did not have any control over. South Africa policy makers have thus attempted to replicate the international effort to establish mechanisms to ensure greater political participation, and encourage greater involvement of people in planning. Experiments in the Greater London Council during the 1980s, the Indian state of Kerala and some Brazilian cities are being taken as prominent examples of a decentralized government working in partnership with the people to undertake development and to strengthen and deepen democracy.

The involvement of stakeholders and putting responsibility of development on the people could help bridge the gap between the providers and the receivers. When participation is a tool in developmental planning, it could make authorities more responsive to popular demands and improve the flow of information from the local to the higher level. Participation is perceived not only to help local governments in the task of fulfilling their mandates but also enable the people to determine the allocation of resources corresponding to their own needs. Thorough knowledge of local needs leads to a strategic deployment of limited resources for maximum benefit. These processes are encouraged with the purpose of empowering people to direct developmental efforts to where it is most needed. Moreover, the involvement of as many stakeholders can makes local government more effective and accountable.

3. Legislating Participatory Processes

While the new legislation pertaining to local government increased the realm and scope of the newly established municipalities, they also encouraged these

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institutions to become closer to the people. Recent legislation on local government put municipalities at the center of electoral, political, and developmental participation. Measures to entrench participation in local government have been introduced in the White Paper, the Municipal Structures Act, and the Municipal Systems Act.

The mechanisms that would involve people directly in the affairs of their local councils were given due consideration in the White Paper on local government published in March 1998. The emphasis was on establishing mechanisms that would involve the citizens politically, in planning, monitoring, and implementing developmental activities. The paper called for active participation by citizens at four levels: as voters, via stakeholder association, as consumers, and as partners in development through community-based institutions.

With regard to political participation, the White Paper emphasized 'building local democracy as the central role of local government'. It suggested that civic education programs, ward level activities, electoral campaigning, and the electoral participation would ensure participation of citizens as voters. Participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality is to take place through:

(a) Political structures for participation

(b) Mechanisms, processes and procedures for participation in municipal governance

(c) Other appropriate mechanisms, processes, and procedures established by the municipality, through councilors; and generally applying the provisions for participation.”

Some of these mechanisms and procedures have been elaborated in the context of the Durban Unicity Council ahead in the chapter under ‘political participation’.

In its endeavor to encourage greater participation in development and policy process at the municipal level, the White Paper suggested that local government structures must “develop strategies and mechanisms to continuously engage with

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23 Ibid.
citizens, business and community groups". 24 It described ‘developmental local
government’ as “local government committed to working with citizens and groups
within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic, and
material needs and improve the quality of their lives.” 25 One of the important
measures to undertake participation in development was through the IDP process.
It requires the municipalities to understand the various dynamics operating within
their area, develop a concrete vision for their area, and devise strategies for
realizing and financing that vision. The process encouraged stakeholder
involvement in council activities. The mechanisms that would involve people
directly in the affairs of their local councils were given due consideration in the
White Paper on local government.

Implementation of the IDP process has been elaborated in the Municipal Systems
Act. The Municipal Systems Act sketched out a framework on how participation
was to be made functional in local governance. This was by far the most
deliberate attempt made to formalize participatory processes. Municipal Systems
Act devoted a separate chapter to community participation- Chapter 4, section 16
(1) of the Act states, “A municipality must develop its culture of municipal
governance that complements formal representative government with a system of
participatory governance....” There has been an emphasis on a more structured
participation with the legislation of the Municipal Systems Act. Participatory
processes under the Act aimed not merely structuring government but altering the
ways of governing and undertaking development at the local level.

Mechanisms involving greater inputs from the communities were instituted with
the following purpose: a) Increase people’s awareness of local issues and local
problems, b) Increased participation and a corresponding increase in the
accountability of the political representatives, c) Peoples involvement in planning
on local development projects leading to some reflection of any qualitative
difference in local development plans and its implementation.

24 Ibid. Section B, paragraph 3.3.
25 Ibid. Section B, p.17.
The preamble of the Municipal Systems Act declares, “a fundamental aspect of the new local government system is the active engagement of communities in the affairs of municipalities of which they are an integral part, and in particular in planning, service delivery and performance management.” Such a policy orientation reflects a need to involve stakeholders in development planning, to give development planning more legitimacy, to encourage self-reliance as the government is incapable to reach the needs of the people right down to the grassroots.

The Act also connected accountability mechanisms outside the realm of electoral participation. Community participation according to the Act involved the right of citizens to be informed of the activities of the council, petition and complain, be notified of the affairs of the municipality, and be consulted on issues and policy.

4. Political Participation

In South Africa, the mechanisms for participation have been institutionalized most clearly in the electoral system. Political participation is the foremost area where the citizens have formally involved themselves in governance in post apartheid South Africa. It is essentially managed through the citizens electing their local representatives to the local government council in regular local elections. The citizens may also involve themselves indirectly through their representatives in formulating policies and picking up issues that directly or indirectly affect them. Political representation opens possibilities for of all sections of the population to have a voice in the political decision-making.

Political participation can be ensured through the following:

- Undertaking regular elections.
- An electoral system that can ensure maximum representation of all sections of the electorate.
- Ensuring a greater degree of participation in the political process beyond the electoral process.

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The elections so far have been conducted regularly in 1995-96 and year 2000. The first elections were however postponed due to violent clashes all across Natal between the supporters of the ANC and the IFP.

a) The Electoral System

The issue of representation of all sections of the electorate has been an intensely debated issue. So much so that at the systems devised have proved to be rather complicated. The 1995/96 elections followed the system of a parallel electoral system. They were based on the system that combined Westminster and the proportional representation system. Accordingly, the citizens could vote for a ward candidate that made 60% of the seats on the local council and also vote for a party of their choice (vote for the whole list that the party puts forward to the voters). The PR candidates were awarded seats from the top of the list according to the number of seats won by the party. The PR seats in the local council thus formed 40% of the total seats. The 60% ward seats imply the emphasis laid on community representation as against party representation. As has been stated in the previous chapter, the measure were a result of the pressure of the minority communities who hoped to be better represented in the municipal council.

During the time the parallel system was applicable Durban was divided into 6 local councils and 164 wards. Out of a total of 273 seats in the Council, 164 were ward seats and 136 PR seats. Since then, there were major alterations made in the electoral system. According to the Structures Act, the mixed system would take into account the total number of votes cast for the parties i.e. both the PR list and the votes cast for each party in all the wards. The main idea behind the introduction of a mixed system was to address the distortions caused by the winner-takes all ward system. The number of ward councilors in the metropolitan council has been reduced to 50%. Thus, out of the 200 seats in the Durban

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27 In the 2000 elections, a mixed electoral system was used.
28 Local Government Information Series, Elections, Department of Constitutional Development, 1999
Metropolitan Council, 100 seats would be taken by the ward councilors and 100 by the PR councilor.  

In the mixed system, the 100 PR seats in the Durban council would be calculated by the seats formula: total votes (PR and ward) divided by total number of seats, plus one. The system has often been regarded as complicated but the complicated calculations lead to more than a fair share of representation for the minority. The ANC has been bitter about winning maximum number of seats but not getting adequate representation in the council due to the nature of calculating council seats. In a number of cases, the percentage of seats in a local council obtained by the party did not correspond with the actual wards it had won. In the Durban, the ANC won 61% of the wards, but after calculations were done by the formula provided for in the legislation, the party only received 47% of the seats on the council. The party takes credit for sacrificing its interest in favor of the ‘minority’ but is now contemplating an amendment in the system.

The local government electoral system also facilitates individual representation. Municipal local governments, by electing representatives through a system of ward candidates allow for independent candidates to participate in government at the local level. It is only at the local level where independent candidates can stand for elections at the ward level. However, in the case of Durban, there is a strong tendency towards representation made on political party basis. In the last local elections (December 2000), only one independent candidate won a ward seat and consequently a seat in the Municipal Council. In fact, instead of independent representation, there has been a flood of new political parties joining the fray. For instance, the Ethekwini Ecopeace, Peoples Organization, Congress of Azania,

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31 Mail and Guardian, “ANC Grumpy Over ‘unfair’ Legislation”, 10 January 2001. The article quoted KwaZulu-Natal ANC representative S’bu Ndebele who told reporters in Durban the party was particularly concerned over the formula used to calculate the seat allocation for parties on local councils.
33 Interview with councilor Logie Naidoo. Durban, 18th April 2002. “No where in the world has the ruling party brought about a change in the legislation that has an adverse effect on its performance.”
34 Sundra Naidoo, Ward 90, (Durban Airport Area).
Durban Metro Unicity Area Wards

December 2000

b) **Level of Electoral Participation in Durban**

Electoral participation includes both voting and election campaigning. While the research work has not been able to assess the level of participation in electoral campaigning, an effort is made in the following paragraphs to reflect on levels of electoral participation on the basis of the electoral turnout in the local elections (2000) in Durban. The level of voter turnout in itself reflects on the belief in the functioning of the local government system. The level of electoral participation in this exercise is essentially undertaken to assess of the effectiveness of the electoral process. Turnout figures in the local elections throw some light on the enthusiasm of the people to participate to elect their representatives. Electoral turnout figure in the December 2000 election in Durban as in the rest of the country have been average. The electoral turnout in the Durban region was about 41.84%. This was not an improvement compared to the 1996 local elections that registered a 'low' electoral turnout of 44% despite an atmosphere of violence in KwaZulu-Natal.35

To reach a general assessment of the electoral participation trends in Durban, a survey of the electoral turnout among the different groups in the wards could also give an insight into the trust of the different sections in the electoral process. In this study, participation has been assessed on the basis of the following:

- **Electoral participation on racial basis:** An assessment of the figures is based on taking the electoral turnout of the wards where a particular racial group forms a large section of the electorate.
  - **White Areas:** The Whites form 12% of the population of Durban.36 Much of the White dominated areas such as Gillitts/Kloof (Ward 10), Cowies Hill/Pinetown (Ward 18), Umbilo/Glenwood (Ward 33), Red Hill/Umhlanga Rocks, Durban North (Ward 36), Queensburg (Ward 63), Yellowstone (Ward 64) registered high (above average) turnouts. Electoral

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turnout in Ward 10, Kloof was a high 62.31. The electoral participation suggests that the white community felt the need to elect their representatives both Ward and PR, as they would be the sole spokesperson for them in the Council dominated by the majority. 37

- The Indian Areas: The Indians form 23% of the total population of Durban. 38 They dominate residential areas of Klaarwater/Savannah Park (Ward 17), Premary Ridge/Resmont (Ward 23), Sydenham/Clare Hills (Ward 25), Effingham Heights (Ward 34), Newlands (Ward 37), Phoenix/Greenbury (Ward 48), Sunford/Eastbury (Ward 49), Forest Haven/Woodview (Ward 50), Sastri Park/Ottawa (Ward 51), Whetstone/Brookdale (Ward 52), Mobeni/Jacobs (Ward 68), Bayview/Mobeni Heights (Ward 69), Shallercross/Chatsworth (Ward 71), Welbedacht (Ward 72), Rose Heights/Witteklip (Ward 73) and Isipingo (Ward 89). These wards reflected a below than average turnout (with the exception of Isipingo). In Isipingo where the Indians comprise of 76.2% of the population registered a high turnout of 64%. 39 This level of electoral turnout could be a result of the disillusionment among the ‘Indian’ population of Durban. Interview with the Councilors representing some of the Indian areas felt that the Indian community felt let down by the reforms under the ANC government. 40

- Colored Areas: The coloreds in Durban form just 3% of the population and are generally scattered among White, African and Indian areas. There participation reflects a mixed pattern. Ward 67 (Wentworth/Brighton beach) with 57% Colored population registered a high turnout of 52.43%. While, Ward 11 (Newlands/Kamashu) that has a Colored population of 43% population, registered a low voter turnout. 41

- African Areas: The African form 61% of Durban’s population. This large majority therefore reflected diverse trends. Ward 7, (Cliffdale and Illanga) areas whose status earlier fell into tribal boundaries on the outskirts of Durban registered a high voter turnout of 42.44%. Figures indicate a low

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Interviews with Cllr. George Mari (Ward 52), Yassin Saib (Ward 50) conducted on 15th and 16th March 2002.
enthusiasm among the majority African communities. Many of the wards with a high concentration of African population (as high as 98-99%), reflected a below average turnout. A major reason attributed to this has been public apathy due to ignorance of political processes, ignorance to the rights and the obligations and illiteracy. 42

Electoral Participation based on HDI: This distinction reflects patterns that help analyse electoral participation in African dominated wards. The Human Development Index of the wards is also corresponded to the level of service delivery in the respected wards. Service delivery here refers to the data of the five basic facilities—percentage of formal dwellings, electricity, sanitation, piped water to dwelling, and telephone at home, collected by the Demarcation Board. 43

- The highly underdeveloped wards such as Ward 14 (Dassenhoek/Sithundu Hills), Ward 30 (Catomanor), Ward 38, (Thandolesizwe/Linlelani), Ward 54 (Nhlungwane/Newtown), Ward 56 (Amatikwe/Phola mission), Parts of Umlazi constituting Ward 75,76,81,82,83, 84,85,86,87, and 88,) reflect a very low turnout. (Ward 32) Albert Park has a voter turnout as low as 25.96.
- This starkly contrasts with the surrounding affluent areas of Glenwood, Mayville, and Musgrave (ward 28,31,33) that registered high turnouts.
- The African areas that are relatively developed than other African townships such as Ward 20 (Ekhyabuleni/Kwadabeka), Ward 29 (Wiggins/Bonela), Ward 40, 46 (Kwamashu), Ward 62 (Hambanti/Fairbreeze), Ward 75 Lamontville/Barcelona show an above average turnout compared to the other ‘previously disadvantaged areas.’

Electoral Participation based on Party preference:

- The DA won 29 wards in Durban. All the wards dominated by the white population elected DA councilors and registered high voter turnouts. The

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43 www.demarcation.org.za/Munic_Profiles/metros.wardstat/Durban.html
DA also got support in much of the wards where Indian population is predominant. But in the Indian areas, the turnout was average.

- The IFP won 7 wards in Durban. Voting in most of the IFP wards reflects a higher than average turnout. Ward 38(Thandolesizwe/Lindelani) had a turnout of 41.98, Ward 40(KwaMashu) registered 41.98, Ward 89(Isipingo) as high as 64.43 and Ward 100, (Sjiwini/Ehlanzini) registered a voter turnout 47.33%.
- The electoral participation in the Indian dominated MF wards Ward 71 and 73 reflected an average turnout.
- The ANC won 61 ward seats in Durban. The peripheral areas of Durban represented by ANC registered high voting average. Most of the wards in the outer periphery of Durban (1, 2, 4, 5, 60, 61, 62, 99, 98, 96, 91) that have been recently incorporated in Durban, had an above average voter turnout. In the other wards the turnouts ranged from 31.17 in Ward 82 (Umlazi N, R, and W sections) to a high of 45.10 in Ward 93(Umbogontwini)

5. Participation Beyond the Electoral Process

Relatively well-run elections and stable elected representative institutions are a crucial aspect of a democratic system. Installing the formalities of a representative democracy, and extending the franchise to people of all races is one of the ways to open channels through which the will of the people is reflected. The other channels come under what has been described within the parameters of ‘good governance’. Since elections and formal processes cannot be sustained, (in other words, people could come out and vote, and then get back to an inert state.) some procedures and mechanisms are needed to ensure participation beyond the electoral process. Participation beyond the electoral process incorporates:

1. ‘Political participation’ also includes demonstrating, campaigning, lobbying decision makers etc. These are more or less informal processes but are an important aspect of political participation.

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44 Ibid.
2. Public or community participation. It reflects the 'depth' of participation that includes direct contacting and pressuring by the individual citizens or participation through civic and other community associations.

Citizens relate with the local government in various ways: as consumer of services, as specialized participatory structures such as ward committees, as members of an interest or stakeholder group such as ratepayers association, political parties, women groups etc. and also through traditional authorities headed by traditional leaders. This involvement is either institutionalized or is informal. In either of the cases, it must result in opening channels through which the will of the people influences decision-making.

Participation beyond the electoral process enables a wide representation of a range of interests and aims to make local government more accessible to the people. In South Africa, public participation has also been emphasized by the minority parties to open other avenues for participation other than the electoral system. According to the IFP party policy, participation did not imply decision-making by elected public representative but the representatives were to involve the people in deciding what was best for them.

Local government reforms in South Africa have incorporated certain participatory processes that directly and indirectly involve the local community in governance. The ANC government placed a high premium on public participation by including it as a special section in the Municipal Systems Act. The Act requires municipalities to involve communities in planning, setting performance indicators and targets, monitoring and measurement and review of performance. It will enable communities to determine their own needs, to allocate resources and to hold municipalities accountable. The Act requires municipalities to consider forging partnerships with communities as one of the options in a menu of service delivery strategies. This is an absolute revolution that seeks to place communities at the center to make sure that the "government takes grassroots people into its confidence" and "listens as people respond".

46 IFP manifesto, 2000 elections.
5.1 The Ward Councilor System- The system has a vital role to play in ensuring greater political and community participation. It has been established to ensure a constant communication between the representatives and the electorate. An ongoing interaction between the councilors and their constituencies can ensure their active participation in decisions on policy, budgets, implementation, and monitoring. The following factors may ensure the success of the ward councilor system:

a) Enabling councilor-constituent interaction: Schedule 1 of the Municipal Systems Act that regulates the code of conduct of councilors, states that councilors are one of the mediums for participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality. The councilors in their capacity can receive petitions and complaints lodged by members of the local community. They are directed to report back to their constituents 'at least quarterly' and hold consultative sessions with them. They would also be one of the agencies to notify their constituents and receive public comments.

b) Approachability of the councilor: The Freedom Front (FF) in its manifesto supported the view that the elected official must reside in the area from which they are elected. Although the rule has not been legislated, the ward councilors are mostly residents of the wards that they are elected from. Many of those interviewed informed that they had been active in community and political activities including ratepayers association, and the 'civics'.

c) Frequency of meeting called by the councilor: Interviews with the ward councilors revealed that they called a ward meeting ‘at least once a month’. The attendance in these ward meetings varied from ward to ward. This may assist in a more direct communication with the people. Many of the part time ward councilors who were interviewed claimed to be

48 Interviews with Councillor Yassin Saib (DA), Councillor George Mari, (DA) 12 April 2002.
spending most of their time engaged in formal and informal meetings that they considered their job as full time. 49

The ward-councilor interaction has been successfully put into practice in Durban. It is working as an important arena for continued communication between the community and the metro council. This kind of approachability is desirable especially in the case of a large metropolitan council like Durban. The interviews with some of the councilors revealed that such a process had put them under constant pressure to educate themselves on issues surrounding local government be able to answer to a range queries and questions. 50

Councilors require training in development facilitation and may need an organizational development exercise in their wards to establish a division of roles between the councilor and CBOs in the ward. There have been initiatives to make interaction more constructive. The Durban Transformation office in Durban has conducted many workshops and programs to train the new councilors. However, many other local municipalities have insufficient staff to manage and motivate the processes required.

Further, ward-councilor meetings can be meaningless in the case of low participation levels. Interview with councilors revealed that this is more in the case of Indian and White wards. The councilors representing the predominantly Indian and White areas complained of citizens not actively participating and attending wards meetings. 51 This is in spite of frequent advertisements and convenient and central locations selected to conduct meetings. On the other hand, many of the councilors representing African townships reported to have such high attendance in their respective ward meetings that they have to move to bigger areas to hold them. 52

50 Ibid.
51 Interview with Councilor Yassin Saib (DA) Ward 50.
52 Interview with Councilor Khuzwayo, Ward 100 on 17th April 2002, Councilor Sithole, Ward 81 on 11 April 2002, Councilor Hlasthwayo, Ward 2 on 11 April 2002,
5.2 Formal Meetings

Public meetings are one of the effective ways of incorporating public opinion into local governance. This has been done by organizing a system of public hearings on issues concerning local administration and also by opening official council meetings to the public. These meetings however, act only as a mode of communication and information and do not guarantee active public role in decision-making. There is a chance of such meetings simply turning into mere formalities that are organized for the public to endorse policy decisions already taken. The councilors representing the predominantly Indian and White areas complained of citizens not actively participating and attending wards meetings. This is in spite of frequent advertisements and convenient and central locations selected to conduct meetings. On the other hand, many of the councilors representing African townships reported to have such high attendance in their respective ward meetings that they have to move to bigger areas to hold them.

5.3 Ward Committees

These are essentially people's committees that encourage a structured interaction between councilors and their communities. Ward committees could be a formal group of ten volunteers representing a range of community interests. This would ensure that the representatives spent more of their time listening to and working with people. A process of establishing ward committees has not been formally adopted in Durban but the option has been kept open.

5.4 Informal Public Meetings

This includes informal interaction with the local authorities such as meetings with the ward councilor etc. Suggestions, requests, and complaints could be communicated to the ward councilor through a more informal process. Research reveals extremely low rates at which South Africans make contact with government leaders or with other influential community leaders to give them their
view or opinion about something. Just 6% said they had contacted a government or party official in the past year to give them their view. 53

5.5 Demonstration and Campaigning

This includes ad hoc groups that come together to influence decision-making. At the local level, it could a range from issues such as location of a school, route of a highway to greater environmental threats to the area. The municipal authorities could involve the citizens to major social problems (AIDS, public safety, drugs etc.), improve the quality of city life (environment, traffic, hygiene and cleanliness etc.) These efforts require active citizen participation and their success would also depend greatly on the response by the people. Many civic issues, such as community safety and protection, governance and protection of schools, and participation in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns have been undertaken by neighborhood community associations.

5.6 Public Inputs Given Through Advisory Bodies

The Municipal Systems Act lays down the option of advisory bodies. “A municipal council may establish one or more advisory committees consisting of persons who are not councilors to advise the council on any matter within the council’s competence. When appointing the members of such a committee, gender representation must be taken into account.”

5.7 Participation Through Non-Governmental and Community Groups

Residents seldom take interest in municipal matters purely as individuals, and are more likely to become involved through groups especially involved in these matters. 54 Civil society structures include NGOs, Labor unions, business and professional organizations, racial, ethnic and religious bodies, educational and welfare societies, neighborhood and community organizations (these are restricted to a small territory, but can be very effective in its interaction with the local/ward authorities), environmental organizations and other reform groups and many other

53 Robert Mattes, “Democracy Without the People”, Mail and Guardian, 10 October 2000
54 Urban Sector Network, Response to the Municipal Systems Bill.
ad hoc groups and associations. These organizations do not have the power to issue official decisions, they do not have the authority to either legislate or promulgate decisions. In spite of the fact that these organizations vary considerably in their size and function, they are clubbed together for the strong influence they wield in their own way on the governmental authorities.

These organizations could prove to be important agencies that would:

1. Play a role in educating the citizens to involve themselves in participatory processes, they could play an advocacy role, mobilize public opinion on various issues of local concern and even help in the formulation of development priorities.

2. They could themselves act as an important medium through which the people participate and bridge the gap between the local community and the government.

3. They could be influential organizations that would keep the government in check from corruption and bring injustice to public notice.

4. They can even ensure responsiveness through building pressure and participating in interactive sessions with the authorities. These groups provide an alternative way to participate in local governance even if electoral participation and other formal mechanism in a democratic set up fail to represent all interests. This could be especially the case when the ‘elites’ continue to dominate the political process.

In South Africa, there seemed to be no opposition to the principle that people must participate actively in governance. However, political parties debated the ways of creating a culture of mass-participation outside the electoral process. Almost all the leading parties agreed on community participation in shaping the IDP process. The ANC in its election manifesto for the local elections 2000 put community participation at the center stage by jargons like ‘together speeding up change’ and the ‘people shall govern’. However, the party manifesto reflects a greater commitment to directly involving local communities. The direct participation plans of the ANC were contradicted in the party manifestoes of parties like the
DA, the FF, IFP, and the PAC. 55 The policy stand of these parties supported community involvement through NGOs and CBOs. The DA policy considered the role of the civic bodies and associations as ‘crucial’ in training, skills development, monitoring projects, offering special expertise, and in linking and communicating with communities.

South Africa has the advantage of starting with a well-developed urban movement. New South Africa inherited a civic movement that organized communities in the form of street committees, zonal structures, area structures, regional structures, provincial and national structures. This movement was distinct especially because these were organized not merely as popular protests and rebellions but provided alternative leadership in the unpopular and ineffective local institutions in the racially segregated areas. The transitional negotiations reflected the need for the government to constantly engage stakeholders and the ‘community’. This engagement was a distinctive part of the reconciliation and transition period as has been observed in the previous chapters.

However, much of the participatory processes that were developed in the resistance movement against apartheid have remained under utilized and existing organizational networks remained largely ignored. It was alleged that civil society in the new democratic setting lacks the capacity to participate effectively in many public debates. These civic structures were more tuned to opposing the government and mobilizing people in its struggle against apartheid and therefore not geared to perform their democratic task of monitoring legislation and framing responses to it. Moreover, the civic organizations have been criticized of losing touch with its grassroots and therefore unable to champion the concerns of the disadvantaged communities in the policy debate. 56 The ‘crisis’ in self-governing civic structures’ throws light on the teething problems faced by such organizations looking for a new role and adapting itself to working in a new political setting. 57

The consolidation of representative structures, to an important degree came at the expense of nurturing more direct forms of democratic participation. The installation of representative democracy has included, for the first time, all of Durban’s citizens in the democratic process, thereby enabling the previously excluded majority its first opportunity to participate in decisions about development in the city. This could have taken the steam off the civic movements that had developed to challenge the illegitimate apartheid structures.

In many cases, the civic associations were disestablished and replaced by ward committees under the chairmanship of councillors. There are many instances of councilors drawn from civics in South Africa. Many members of the civics who were well experienced in local affairs switched over to the political arena with the establishment of a legitimate non-racial government. This created fears of a “demobilization of mass urban movements” or a ‘crisis’ in the self-governing civic structures with the achievement of representative democracy. There are also fears of increased politicization of civic movements. It cannot be completely denied that Sanco, an umbrella organization that represents the civic movement in the country is not a politically neutral organization and directly or indirectly maintains its historic affiliations with the ANC. Most of the civic movements continue to owe allegiance to the parties that are represented in the national level politics. "Sanco was supposed to be an independent watchdog of civil society. But it can't afford to criticize government, because its leaders are politicians as well.... Sanco can't speak on behalf of civil society because it take orders from the ANC government..."Black" or "non-racial" civil society, whose strength is meant to be one of our greatest democratic assets since it is said to offer people at the grassroots means of holding government to account, is largely silent...most of

58 Urban Strategy Department, "An Investigation into Approaches to the Implementation of Area Based Development and Management in Durban", Urban Strategy Department, Durban, July 2001.
60 Interviews with the Councilors reflect that they were directly or indirectly associated with civics and ratepayers associations before 1990.
civil society supports the current government and is happy to leave to it the task of representing majority interests."

While some of the representatives were confused in the understanding of the role that community-based organizations should play, other elected councillors perceived the presence independent civic organization and their direct involvement as redundant and even threatening. Many political party branches especially that of the ANC have taken up civic issues at local level, earlier organized by the civics to build up its support base and, inculcate the party's "tradition and culture" at local government level. ANC backed civic groups performing community activities in cooperation with the local citizens in an effort to phase out Sanco. The ANC branches have taken up civic issues at local level in a bid to build up its support base and, more importantly, stem populist tendencies and inculcate the party's "tradition and culture" at local government level. There are many reasons that could be attributed to such a stance taken by the ANC government. ANC has been vary of the civic movement due to the efforts by Cosatu and the Communist Party to strengthen Sanco so that it can help them campaign against the government's privatization policies.

The government policy has been cautious of the civic movement also due to the strength of the "White" civil society that is more organized to oppose government policies. While the civic movement represented by Sanco has been by and large supportive of government policies, White ratepayers and community associations seem to dominate policy debates and are better organized to oppose the government. "Local communities and their representative organizations are often led and dominated by relatively vocal and ambitious people who try to align participatory imperatives with their strategic agendas to lead and control local development processes, especially resources".

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64 Ibid.
But having said that the role of the CBOs and NGO’s can prove to be indispensable in undertaking and even supplementing programs and implementing plans. Participation of the community and the various stakeholders in the developmental activities of the municipality has become a legislative imperative. Under the Municipal Systems Act (2000), “local community” is taken as body of persons comprising residents, ratepayers, and civic organization and NGO and private sector or labor organization.

6. Participation in Development

‘Developmental participation’ has been undertaken as part of the community participation process that is being considered as the guiding principle for Municipalities undertaking their new developmental role. This is also being referred to as a process of ‘democratizing development’ under which the democratic aspirations of the local communities is being reconciled with local service delivery and planning.

The process seeks to reorient the ‘old legalistic and non-developmental’ processes of planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation to needs of the local communities and be more ‘customer focused’. Accordingly, participatory development strategies have attempted to involve individual citizens in assessing their needs and setting developmental priorities for every municipality.

Participatory processes institutionalized in the local government legislation also recognize the need to bridge the sharp decline of civic organizations and development participation at the local level, especially the weakening, and even collapse of Community Development Forums. The process has also involved a revival and integration of the civic groups and community developmental forums, including the community based association and other stakeholders in the metro planning process.

6.1 Development Participation Under the Integrated Development Program

Participation under the IDP has been used as a main tool in planning processes. Various measures of participation in development at the local government level have now been institutionalized under the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is aimed at making local government more people-centered and developmental according to the White paper and the Municipal Systems Act. The IDP is being seen as an important ‘tool’ for restructuring municipal planning to include all stakeholders and create collective responsibility. It represents the first steps towards building of partnerships between local government and sectors within the community, and more importantly the acceptance of collective responsibility for planning.

As opposed to the RDP, the IDP hopes to encourage participatory processes to enable the public to contribute to the policy debates. Public participation is being activated in both planning and the implementation process and initiatives have been taken to engage people in consultation at various stages of planning and development.

It is important to take note of the fact that the IDP did not inevitably involve participatory mechanisms. In the initial stages, the IDP process was criticized for not being implemented on ground and remaining limited to a few service delivery options such as partnership with CBOs and NGOs. The role status and methods of participation in municipal planning are only recently being sharpened in the South African case. Research conducted in the area pointed out the issues that needed to be addressed before community participation could be made a part of planning process. For instance it was pointed out that the participatory aspects of the planning process was limited to a couple of mass meetings, generally advertised in English medium papers, where findings of the technical processes are reported and individuals present probed about their vision for the future development of their areas. The planning process excluded majority of the citizens from strategy formulation process and budgetary allocation process. Overall, little

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attention was given to the need to relate the technical aspects of municipal planning to issues, which community members experience. Much of the planning was said to have been so technical in nature that it appeared unconnected to local needs and contexts. 68 The priorities were therefore decided by the planners and representative were more of their intuitive interpretation of the needs of the people.

With the result, local councils did not refer to the IDP strategies when compiling their priority lists for the budgeting processes. Many Local Councils did not have the flexibility to design their processes and structures to promote community participation. Mechanisms and operational details were needed for community participation becomes more robust and effective. Research also pointed out that the facilitation of development required a change in attitude and appropriate training of most councilors need. Workshops with the councilors were to be conducted to train them in the ways and means of involving communities.

The process remained limited to paper as the municipal or local councils merely interpreted participation as a process of communicating with the people or at the end of the planning process, merely asking for comment on draft policy documentation. Since then, there have been deliberate attempts to legally obligate the municipalities to evaluate local IDPs to ensure that adequate consultation/participation takes place.

The Municipal Systems Act, 2000, Chapter 5 Section 29 on Integrated Development Plan stipulates that in drafting its IDP the municipality must allow for-

a) the local community to be consulted on its developmental needs and priorities
b) the local community to participate in the drafting of the integrated development plan and
c) organs of the state, including traditional authorities and other role players to be identified and consulted on drafting of the IDP.

The Municipal Structures Act 1998, section 19 (2) stipulates that the municipal council must annually review:

a) The needs of the community 
b) Its priorities to meet those needs 
c) Its process of involving the community 
d) Its organizational and delivery mechanisms for meeting the needs of the community and 
e) Its overall performance in achieving these objectives

Further, Section 19 (3) of the Act requires the municipality to develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organizations in performing its functions and exercising its powers.

The Durban Municipality’s Long Term Development Framework (LTDF) produced in May 2001 that was a strategic plan of the Unicity to document key challenges and vision for Durban reflects this people-centered approach to development. The LTDF involved a process that involved the administration, the elected and the electorate to work as partners to identify specific development and delivery targets. This differs significantly from a decision making process where the elected representatives did not have an institutionalized system to receive inputs and feedbacks from the electorate and merely instructed the administration for technical intervention. The LTDF mobilized many stakeholders of the city including the EXCO and the Metropolitan council, the Municipal Manager, the senior management, Unions, Businesses, and the Local Communities. These ‘external’ and ‘internal’ stakeholders conducted separate workshops before interacting with each other. For instance, over 60 workshops in each community in Durban were undertaken that involved individual community organizations religious, women and youth organizations.

This aimed at creating greater interdependence among these stakeholders in identifying key developmental challenges and solutions and the broad direction of the plan. This has made stakeholder participation central to the decision making process. Community participation ranges from playing an important role in the
drafting of the IDP process to informing the council of issues such as maintenance backlogs, the existence of poorly serviced areas, problems experienced with service delivery, etc. In the Durban Metropolitan Municipality, the process sought to enhance the climate for community involvement through:

- Identifying and involving all role players and stakeholders in the process.
- Establishment of lines of communication with between the council and the citizens
- Accessibility at each stage of the decision-making process through needs assessment.
- Community monitoring of the process through report back meetings.

6.2 Identifying Stakeholders

The IDP offers a chance for the involvement of all stakeholders including the traditional authorities in formulating development needs and priorities. In Durban, the traditional leaders or the Amakhosi among others are taken as important stakeholders in the process. Certain community based organizations and Community Based Forums have been identified as stakeholders and were involved in drawing up the IDP for the metro. The CBO have been made a part of the ongoing effort to maximize community participation in development issues. Civic Organizations could be involved in providing infrastructures and facilities that fall under municipal competence such as sports and cultural centers. The involvement of the civic associations and the NGOs is crucial in generating a more informed opinion on the capability of the council to deliver. The currently debated plans have attempted to directly involve community-based structures like the CDFs in the planning and development process. Development Forums accordingly would facilitate and co-ordinate development through partnerships with other stakeholders.69

The government in Durban has taken initiatives to build the capacity of the CBOs to ensure participation. Adequate training and increased capacity of the CBOs has been given due consideration to involve them in the entire planning process.

69 Building An Understanding on Community-based Development, Bheki Nene, Urban Strategy Department, Durban Metro Council.
identifying and prioritizing needs of the communities and areas that they represent, analysis, visions, strategies, actions, monitoring and evaluation.

6.3 Developing a Communication Strategy

A two-way communication between the community and the council is aimed to keep the citizens well informed and developing a culture of public consultation. A Communication plan is being considered crucial for the success of the planning process under the IDP. This has led to the introduction of innovative communication mechanisms that incorporates mass meetings, road shows, street theaters, poster campaign media events, to educate the communities on the mechanisms and procedures undertaken to ensure citizen participation. Further, local councilors have been in constant communication and the people kept abreast with the local policy-making. This would help create awareness among people by issuing of consultation documents and inviting public comment (these methods are considered traditional in the practice of local democracy, but are relatively new the South African system.) This is a marked departure from the arbitrariness of the apartheid government where there was no proper consultation with the people.

6.4 Needs Assessment

The municipalities are obliged to create mechanisms to enable the communities to evaluate and prioritize the various development needs. For this purpose, the Durban Municipality linked the needs assessment program as part of its plan to draft the local IDP. The program treated the people's representative- the councilors as the drivers of the process. The ward councilors along with the PR councilors (deployed in the wards) 70 hosted needs assessment workshops in their respective wards. This gave the community an opportunity to explain what they perceived as their needs in the area. Not more than two representatives of the CBFs and other stakeholders that were identified attended these workshops along with individual public participation. These stakeholders included religious

70 PR councilors are deployed a particular ward, in most cases be have the ward representation of a different party.
organizations, sporting organizations, civics, development forums, school governing bodies, women’s groups, business organizations, ratepayers associations etc. These workshops were held mostly during weekends in central locations of the wards to ensure maximum participation. Information regarding the IDP planning process and community participation was published all over the city as billboards, leaflets, pamphlets in all the locally spoken languages.

Public participation initiated in this process no doubt lengthened the time and resources spent on planning, but needs assessment goes a long way in addressing the effort and resources where they are most needed. It helped establish strong links with between the councilors and their ward citizens. The councilors reported that the process gave them an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the needs of the ward citizens and also helped develop better understanding of the ward residents on the local government operations and processes.

Interviews with the ward councilors during the ongoing process of the workshops reflected an “overwhelming response” in many wards in the townships and some of the Indian areas. However, moderate response was registered in many of the wards in the white areas. The white community and the coloreds do not participate due to general negative perceptions towards the local authorities and a general feeling of exclusion.

Despite this, the municipal council has been able to draw up a needs based report and ward wise needs profile. A set of developmental challenges enumerated through an elaborate participatory process reflects that ‘meeting basic needs’ and

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74 Interview with Councilor John Alan Green (DA) and Councilor Evelyn Ellis (DA) on 19 April 2002.
‘poverty alleviation’ figures as important priority for the people of Durban along with the need for ‘speedier economic growth’ and ‘job creation’.  

6.5 People’s Budget

A compilation of the findings of the various needs assessment workshops gave the council certain development targets against which its performance can be measured and helped it draw what has been referred to as the ‘People’s budget’. For long, the participatory activities did not correlate to the way local budgets were drawn. The people’s budget aimed to alter a highly technical planning process. The issues brought up during an interaction with the community are to be translated in strategy formulation. The people’s budget attempts to link the budget with the goals and plans set in the IDP. It tries to bridge the lack of correlation between participatory activities and the local government budgetary process.

The budget is to be published as a simplified “people’s budget” showing how the IDP priorities and strategies link to budget allocations. The budgets of other service providers should be incorporated in order to present a fully integrated picture of delivery. Ward councilors should be required by their job descriptions to convene public meetings to explain the budget and its links to the IDP and other provincial and national budgets. They are required to be accountable to their constituencies as to how they have exercised their mandates. Councilors are also required to use appropriate materials (simplified and in the mother tongue) while arranging and setting up of community meetings.

6.6 Report Backs and Feedback Mechanisms

These form part of the councils’ communication strategy. Interviews with the councilors of the Durban Metro suggest that they conducted report back meetings in their respective wards at least once a month. Municipalities have set up some

kind of public grievance cells to redress grievances to assist a public feedback on aspects of service delivery. Since citizens relate to the local authorities also as consumer of services provided to them, local authorities are required to be consumer-sensitive and develop mechanisms of consumer feedback and consultation. These include consumer orientation programs, complaints and suggestion schemes, customer surveys etc.

7. Concluding Points

Electoral participatory processes have been established to proportionately represent the minority and the previously disadvantaged majority. Electoral participation trends reflect that a culture of formal means of participation in a representative local government among the underdeveloped and poor communities (especially among the Africans) is still at a nascent stage. On the other hand, levels of non-electoral participation as described by local political leaders and representatives reflect that initiatives to mobilize the ‘previously disadvantaged’ community has received more encouraging results.

Participatory processes beyond the elections have been elaborated to hitherto provide an opportunity to the majority to influence the decision-making process. The local government reform seeks to transform the role of the municipality to provide an environment for citizens to participate and enable them to satisfy their needs. Initiatives taken towards ‘democratizing development’ and other organizational mechanisms could prove crucial in strengthening the lines of communication between the council, the administration and the citizens. These initiatives hope to reinstall citizen involvement in politics and local affairs that is said to have reduced from the ‘glamorized and nostalgic memories of the days of the United Democratic Front’.

While a variety of participatory mechanisms instituted to encourage community participation provide the means for the majority to voice their needs, it also provides the minority to voice their apprehensions. However, low levels of participation reported in White and some Indian dominated wards in meetings and needs assessment workshops reflects that barring some sections of the ‘political
minority' such as IFP dominated wards, the participatory processes have not been well received. The system has nevertheless enhanced the climate for community involvement and provides for a local governance where 'all voices need to be heard', and decision taken are more responsive to those voices.