

### Editorial

It has come to pass that South Africa has undergone the third test of a democratic election. For those who believe in the frequency of successful election as a key test for democratic consolidation, South Africa has passed the examination. For those who, in contrast, believe in the regime turn-over or regime alternance as a primary test, sorry for the disappointment The ruling African National Congress (ANC) seems poised to further stamp its hegemony on the country's political destiny based on the all-pervasive dominant party system that we discussed at length in one of the previous issues of this *Update*.

Now that the election has come and gone; as has the pomp and ceremony following the election itself, it is time to take a deep breath and ponder seriously not only over the meaning of the election outcome for the various political actors. It is indeed all very well and good to take stock of the nuts and bolts of the electoral process and its outcome, but we are further challenged to do more. Since the first issue of this *Update*, we, at EISA, have been preoccupied with that kind of understanding of the electoral process in this country and are currently in similar initiatives in the other four countries holding elections this year, Malawi (May), Botswana (October), Namibia

(November) and Mozambique (December).

But we endeavour to do more than just interrogate the electoral process and its outcome. We engage with the electoral processes also, in order to discover the interface between such a process and the larger democratic governance in each of the SADC states. In other words, it is important that we study elections not as an end, in and of themselves, but rather as a means to an end; that end being the nurturing and consolidation of democratic governance in each one of the SADC states and equally importantly throughout the region as a whole.

It is thus against this backdrop that we assess the election that took place on 14 April 2004 in South Africa. What is abundantly clear to us is that the technical and logistical processes around the election were undoubtedly sound. Various institutions including political parties and the voters deserve a special credit for the smooth and generally conflict-free election. However, the largest share of credit for this goes to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) under the able leadership of Dr. Brigalia Bam (chairperson of the Commission) and Advocate Pansy Tlakula (Chief Electoral Officer). Both, together with the other commissioners and the entire IEC staff, undertook this enormous task with a common sense of purpose and sterling

commitment to achieving one single goal: a legitimate, credible and acceptable election.

Khabele Matlosa

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## NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

### ELECTION PHASE 2004

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#### Introduction

The Election Regulations published on 7 January and 16 February 2004 in the *Government Gazette* provide detailed prescriptions of how the election phase had to be conducted in compliance with the Electoral Act. It deals with voting districts and voting stations, special votes, voting on election day, mobile voting stations, counting of votes, and the role of party agents and candidates on the day of voting.

In this discussion we shall focus on the voting stations in the different provinces, the IEC's management of the voting stations, voting in prisons, the counting process and updating of results at the central Results Operation Centre, objections and complaints to the election processes and practices, and the impact of boycott actions on the election.

#### Voting Stations

A total of 16 966 voting stations were used for the 2004 national and provincial elections. For each of them a presiding officer and a

deputy presiding officer with a staff ranging from six to 36 had to be appointed. Most of them were employed by the IEC for the day of the election but are not professional and permanent IEC employees.

The voting stations were spread across the provinces in the following proportions (compared with the population size of the registered voters and the percentage poll in the election):

Province	Voting Stations	Votes Cast	% Poll
Eastern Cape	4 115	2 310 226	79.31
KZN	3 556	2 807 885	72.84
Gauteng	2 098	3 553 098	74.23
Limpopo	2 000	1 686 757	74.80
Western Cape	1 348	1 621 835	71.27
North West	1 246	1 353 963	75.55
Mpumalanga	1 128	1 157 963	78.30
Free State	1 063	1 042 120	77.76
Northern Cape	412	3 29 707	74.70
Total	16 966	15 863 554	100.00

One would expect that the smaller the number of registered voters per voting station, the higher the percentage poll could be because the closer the voters will be to the voting station. In some instances, lower numbers of voters per voting station can also be an indication of thinly populated areas. Northern Cape is the best indicator of this assumption. On the lists of density of voters per station, it is only in the third lowest place after Eastern

Cape and the Free State. At the same time it had the third lowest percentage poll, while the Free State had the third highest percentage poll. In all respects, the Eastern Cape is in a class of its own: the most voting stations, the lowest density of voter per station and the highest percentage poll. Superficially, an inverse correlation appears to exist between the number of voting stations per province and their percentage poll, except for the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Western Cape. More thorough analysis of voting behaviour is necessary to identify the main reasons for the percentage polls.

Management of voting stations involves a number of key issues, most importantly that the election material is delivered on time and that the voting stations are opened on 7h00. On April 14 the IEC was generally satisfied with the voting process but they acknowledged minor problems, especially in KZN.

Most of the problems concerned late arrival of voting station officials, voting material and late opening of polling stations. Late morning only about 78% of the stations in KZN were open, while nationally 98% were open.

The IEC's call centre fulfilled an important function both during the period of registration and on election day. During the registration weekend in January 2004 the total number of calls on the Saturday was 60 701 and, on the Sunday, 59 950. In the first two hours on election call the call centre received about 20 000 calls, mainly inquiries about where to vote.

Official closing time of the voting stations is stipulated by law to be at 21h00. It allows, however, for stations to remain open in order to process all the voters who have been within the perimeter of the voting station at closing time. As a result many voting stations remained open for much longer. Explanations for this phenomenon are diverse and can include: unreliable national census information in some areas as the basis of GIS-based demarcation of voting stations, voters delayed their voting until late in the day, or the effect of Section 24A voting.

By 22h45 the first results started to come in, mainly from the Eastern Cape. The IEC also redeployed staff to polling stations where there were still large numbers of voters. In Gauteng, a power failure at nine voting stations in Soweto and three in Roodepoort delayed voting. In the Free State 36% of voting stations were still

open at 21h00, some of them experiencing problems with lighting. In Limpopo province seventeen percent of the stations were still open. In the North West about 39% were still open. Three stations were still open in the Northern Cape and ten in the Western Cape. In Mpumalanga about 30% of them were still open, while in KZN most of the stations were still open. The Eastern Cape was the only province where all the stations closed on time.

KZN poses a major headache for the IEC. The most common explanation is that it is the second largest voting population and due to its geography (especially the remoteness of some stations) voting will always be slow. Compared with the Eastern Cape, the second argument is not a sufficient explanation. Both provinces include vastly remote areas, but in the Eastern Cape all the stations closed on time, and the province had the highest percentage poll. One of the explanations for it is that the province had the lowest ratio of voters per station. KZN has the fourth lowest ratio but the second lowest voter turnout.

### Voting in Prisons

As a consequence of the Constitutional Court judgment on 3 March 2004, in the case Minister of Home Affairs v National Institute for Crime Prevention and the

Re-integration of Offenders (NICRO) and others ( CCT 03/04), all prisoners who would have qualified as voters were they not imprisoned, were given the opportunity to register as voters, and to vote in prison. As a result, a total of 47 170 of them registered throughout the country. They constituted about 0.23% of the registered electorate. From a logistical point of view, it did not pose a serious problem for the IEC, except that they were dealing with relatively small numbers per mobile voting station. For example, in Gauteng a total of 6 532 registered in the following prisons:

Zonderwater	1 063
Modder B -	550
Leeuwkop	674
Baviaanspoort	595
Pretoria prisons	2 282
Krugersdorp	336
Johannesburg	586
Boksburg	446

A total of 33 133 of them voted on the 14th, amounting to a voter turnout of 70.24%, lower than the lowest provincial average and about six percent lower than the national average.

Voting proceeded smoothly in the prisons. Voting hours were negotiated between the IEC and the Department of Correctional Services to be between 7h00 and 15h00 to suit prison procedures. The only problem encountered

was that unregistered prisoners insisted on voting but had to be denied such right.

### Counting of Votes

For this election, the counting of votes (or the IEC's term 'result capturing process') deviated slightly from previous years. This time it was more decentralised to the voting stations or to a place other than the voting station. In most instances the presiding officer of a voting station also served as the counting officer.

#### Vote Counting Procedure

All the ballots must be verified. It means that the number of ballot papers issued for both the national and provincial elections must be compared with the number of ballot papers counted. Thereafter the counting per voted party commences. All of the ballot papers must be scrutinised to ascertain whether any of them must be rejected (as a spoiled ballot). Those are filed separately. The remaining ballot papers are sorted according to the party voted for. They are sorted in stacks of ten votes each and ten of them are bundled together (i.e. 100). After the final counting, the totals are recorded and the results determined. Thereafter the presiding officer completes the result slip. It is sent in a sealed envelope to the Municipal Electoral Officer

who double captures the result on the electronic system. An independent auditor at each MEO office verifies the result slip against the result on the electronic system. If they match, the auditor enters the auditor code and submits the results. The auditor's report is signed and faxed to the Provincial IEC office (PEO). All the results are consolidated at the central Results Operations Centre in Pretoria and finally the IEC completes the final seat allocation for the legislatures.

This amended process was meant to increase the pace of capturing the results. Twelve hours after the official closing time of the voting stations, the state of counting was the following:

#### Status of Voting

In the **Northern Cape**, **Western Cape** and **Mpumalanga** it had been completed. The percentages of voting stations already counted in the other provinces were the following:

Eastern Cape	94.87%
Free State	84.77%
Gauteng -	82.52%
KZN -	82.20%
Limpopo -	99.08%
North West	85.75%
<b>National total</b>	<b>90.70%</b>

These percentages might be misleading, because of the functioning of the computer network capturing the results

in Pretoria. In the past, provinces sent their results to the central Results Operations Centre and, in some instances, this created bottlenecks at critical points in the results capturing process. For this election, the process was turned around: the network requested results randomly from the provinces in order to avoid bottlenecks. It meant that available results could be waiting for quite a while to be collected by the Pretoria end of the network. Many PEOs (including those of the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and the Free State) complained in radio interviews that they had to wait for their results to be collected.

A feature of the election was the sophisticated presentation of the results in electronic form, both on the IEC's system and in combination with the South African Broadcasting Corporation's own intranet system. SABC's reporters and commentators could use a vast database of the incoming results and compare them with the results of previous elections in 1994 and 1999, and with the 1996 and 2001 national census statistics. The IEC's system was also available to the individual political parties with their own workstations at the IEC's Results Operations Centre.

#### Objection Provision

The Electoral Regulations provide for a number of categories of objections and

appeals to various aspects of the counting process, including the sorting of ballot papers, the counting of votes and determination of provisional results, and objections material to the determination of the final results. The IEC received a number of complaints, most notably from the IFP.

The overall impression of the counting process is positive. The Chief Electoral Officer, Pansy Tlakula noted on 17 April when the IEC finally declared the results: "Although we are a developing nation, we have come of age as far as election management is concerned. The advancement in technology in our country coupled with the level of skill in the organization has improved our efficiency considerably. Whereas in 1999 we announced the results on the sixth day of the elections, this time around we captured, audited and are announcing results three days after the elections".

### **Objections and Complaints**

In sections 87-94 of the Electoral Act and in the Electoral Code of Conduct, a number of actions are deemed to be prohibited conduct. Parties and IEC officials (in particular the CEO) have the right to institute civil proceedings to enforce compliance with these stipulations. Parties can also lodge complaints with the PEO of the province in

which an alleged infringement occurred, or if they are dissatisfied with the PEO's response, take it to the Electoral Commission. Finally, they can appeal against the Commission to the Electoral Court.

According to section 31 of the Election Regulations, the party's objection must be 'material to the determination of the final results'. The Commission can take any one of the following actions:

- investigate the factual basis of the objection
- afford other interested parties an opportunity to make written or oral submissions
- call for written or oral submissions from other persons or parties
- call upon the objecting party to submit further information or arguments in writing or orally
- conduct a hearing on the objection.

The IFP appears to be the party most aggrieved with aspects of the election: it lodged 42 provincial objections in KZN (25 of them on election day) and four national objections. The following are a few examples of objections:

- On election day, the IFP lodged an objection based on a BBC World Service reporter, Martin Plaut's claim that he had seen people believed to be ANC officials placing

zip-zip stickers into the identity books of voters at the SJ Smith hostel, south of Durban. It meant that they could vote in terms of section 24A. The police seized registration receipts and handed them to the IEC. The PEO of KZN found that the 107 seized registration receipts were valid because they were dated before closure of the voters roll on 11 February 2004. The voters to whom the receipts they related appeared on the voters roll and therefore they legally qualified to vote. Still outstanding was the reason why the receipts were not issued to the applicants on the dates of their registration.

- The ANC lodged a complaint about an IFP agent who had 'been caught with a stack of IDs' at Bhekulwandle School voting station, on the South Coast.
- The IFP claimed that its deputy national chairperson, Musa Zondi, witnessed irregularities committed by the ANC in KZN. According to his statement, the ANC was serving cold drinks in the voting station while wearing ANC t-shirts and playing pro-ANC music outside.
- The DA was accused by the ANC of contravening the law because some of its

members had DA logo stickers in their identity books. The ANC convened a press conference to confirm that it was investigating it. National Police Commissioner Jackie Selebi and Home Affairs Director General Barry Gilder attended.

- The ANC laid charges against the Independent Democrats in Cape Town's Caledon Square police station. It charged the ID of *crimen injuria* and intimidation. An ID member allegedly called ANC supporters 'kaffirs and pigs' outside the Schotches Kloof Civic Centre. The provincial ANC also lodged an objection with the IEC.
- The most serious objection came from the IFP. They claimed that 367 731 voters cast their ballots in KZN in voting districts where they were not registered - in other words, in accordance with section 24A. A vast number of them were located in Kokstad, Matatiele and Port Shepstone - all close to the Eastern Cape. The IFP alleges that they were bussed in by the ANC to secure an ANC victory in KZN. On 20 April, the IFP decided to take the matter to the Electoral Court in Bloemfontein, because they contended that the IEC ignored proper procedures in

order to declare the election free and fair by 17 April. The outcome was still unknown at the time of writing this article.

### Conclusion

The overall impression is that election management has come of age in South Africa. A number of policy matters still need some attention. Most important is clarity on who qualifies as a voter, especially regarding persons outside the country and prisoners. Secondly, the use of zip-zip stickers is not yet a fool-proof system and cannot, under all circumstances, be verified. A system to make the common voters' roll accessible in all parts of the country appears to be an important requirement. Election management in KZN still poses serious problems and has to be ironed out in the years to come.

### NEWS FLASH!

#### **SPOILT-VOTE PARTY WOULD HAVE WON THREE SEATS**

The elections results score board resembled a bad batting line-up in a cricket match, with the number of spoilt ballots outnumbering those of the country's 11 smallest parties. By 3pm yesterday [15 April 2004] there were almost 130 000 spoilt votes in the national election, which was considerable more than the 87 868 polled by the 11 smallest parties combined.

Using the rule of thumb that 40 000 votes secure a political party seat in the National Assembly and with almost half of the results in the national election captured and audited yesterday afternoon, "spoilt ballots" would have secured almost three seats - three times as many as some of the parties that forked out R150 000 to contest the national poll.

**By Kevin O'Grady and excerpted from *Business Day*, 16 April 2004**

## THE 2004 ELECTION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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The April 2004 elections reinforced two defining trends in South Africa's ten-year-old democracy: the African National Congress (ANC) extended its wide electoral lead over other political parties, and the institutional foundations of democratic contestation and constitutional government continued to strengthen. The ANC's dominance was reflected in its national vote share, approaching 70 percent, and in its success in taking the premierships of all nine provinces.

Meanwhile, the election was vigorously contested, and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) reinforced its reputation for impartial and effective administration – a reputation strong enough that the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the European Union saw no need to send observer missions. In fact, the largest observer to come was from the Southern African Development Community, and it was interested mainly in learning the lessons of South Africa's success. The

simultaneous consolidation of the ANC's electoral dominance and institutionalisation of democratic contestation and constitutional government signal the emergence of a dominant-party democracy in South Africa. In analysing such systems, it is important to distinguish between *contestation*, understood as the existence of opportunities for parties to freely and openly take part in elections on a procedurally 'level playing field', and *competitiveness*, understood in terms of the closeness of election outcomes.

Dominant-party democracies are characterised by high levels of contestation but little meaningful competition. In many other first-generation democracies in postcolonial Africa, dominant parties used the lack of political competitiveness to justify dismantling the institutional foundations of democratic contestation and constitutional government. In contrast, South Africa's experience over the past is a reminder that declining competitiveness need not undermine the institutions of contestation.

My account of the April 2004 election proceeds in two main sections. The first focuses on electoral politics, giving an overview of the parties' campaigns and patterns of voter support. The second turns to electoral

administration, also considering the IEC's efforts related to voter participation. A brief conclusion discusses implications of the 2004 election for democratic governance in South Africa.

### Parties and Voters

For the most part, the April 2004 elections extended trends in party established between 1994 and 1999. (See Table 1 below for a summary of the national results.) The ANC sustained the steady if slow expansion of its national support. The reversal of fortune between the Democratic Alliance (DA) (formerly, the Democratic Party) and the New National Party (NNP) (formerly, the National Party) was pushed nearly to its logical limit – with the DA consolidating its position as the official opposition, and the NNP left teetering on the brink of irrelevance. The non-ANC contingent in the National Assembly remains highly fragmented into many small parties, with Patricia de Lille's Independent Democrats (ID) as the most notable newcomer among them.

The ANC titled its 2004 election manifesto a 'people's contract to create work and fight poverty'. It essentially lists ANC accomplishments during its first decade in government, with the promise of more and better to come.

**Table 1 – National Election Results, April 2004**

Party	Votes	%	Seats
ANC	10 878 251	69.7	279
DA	1 931 201	12.4	50
IFP	1 088 664	7.0	28
UDM	355 717	2.3	9
ID	269 765	1.7	7
NNP	257 824	1.7	7
ACDP	250 272	1.6	6
FF+	139 465	0.9	4
UCDP	117 792	0.8	3
PAC	113 512	0.7	3
MF	55 267	0.4	2
AZAP	41 776	0.3	2
O			
Other parties	113 161	0.7	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15 612 667</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>400</b>

Note: Registered voters, 20 674 926; total votes 15 863 554 (76.7 percent of registered); spoilt votes 250 887 (1.6 percent of total votes). Party vote percentages are percentages of valid votes. Numbers of seats are for parliament's National Assembly.

The most eye-catching new initiative is an expanded public works programme, to provide one million new jobs. More broadly, though, the manifesto presents economic growth as the key to long-term job creation and the financially sustainable extension of basic services to the poor. The fight against HIV and AIDS' features prominently in the section devoted to public health; despite the government's erratic record on the issue. However, the recent 'rollout' of a comprehensive treatment programme (including antiretroviral drugs) by the ANC-led Gauteng government should have helped the party's credibility. Meanwhile, on the campaign trail, the ANC cleverly countered criticisms of President Thabo Mbeki's aloofness by having him pop up in diverse settings throughout the country, to

interact with surprised South Africans going about their daily routines (while the television cameras rolled).

The ANC's 69.7 percent vote share confirmed its electoral dominance – extending a nearly linear trend from its 62.7 percent in 1994 and 66.4 percent in 1999. The party's vote total also increased, by about 300,000 votes compared with five years earlier. With an overwhelming lead over its rivals, the ANC has used the target of a two-thirds electoral majority – achieved for the first time in 2004 -- to motivate its campaign workers. Opposition parties have, in turn, mobilised supporters to block the ANC from achieving the target, which would allow unilateral amendment of much of the constitution (though not founding provisions that entrench nonracialism and multiparty democracy). That the ANC finally topped two-thirds in 2004 was mainly symbolic, though. Since legislation permitted parliamentary 'floor-crossing' for two-weeks in 2003, the ANC has held more than two-thirds majority in the National Assembly (275 of 400 seats). The recent elections merely expanded the ANC delegation by four more seats, to 279.

A detailed analysis of the provincial races is beyond this article's scope, but perhaps the most important

substantive effect of the ANC's 2004 electoral gains is that they have given the party all nine provincial premierships. The system of provincial government was shaped by the political imperatives of the constitutional negotiations of the mid-1990s. At the time, it gave the two main players other than the ANC strong prospects of controlling at least one province each – the National Party in the Western Cape, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in KwaZulu-Natal. In the 1994 and 1999 elections, these two parties were able to retain their provincial strongholds, with the ANC taking the other seven provinces outright. However, the (N)NP and the IFP have been the two biggest losers electorally during the past decade – the (N)NP dropping from 20.4 percent nationally in 1994, to 6.9 percent in 1999, to 1.7 percent in 2004; and the IFP dropping from 10.5 percent in 1994, to 8.6 percent in 1999, to 6.4 percent in 2004. The ANC's success in taking over leadership of the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal owes less to any extraordinary recent breakthrough than to their rivals' steady, longer-term decline

One of the most striking developments in electoral politics since 1994 has been the reversal of fortunes between the rising DA and falling (N)NP – a pattern



pushed nearly to its logical limit in the recent election. Much of the reversal reflects a direct migration of former (N)NP supporters to the DA (and its predecessor, the Democratic Party (DP)). After the 1994 election, with the NP cooperating in the Government of National Unity (GNU), the DP (led by Tony Leon) retooled its approach to British-style liberal opposition – shifting its target from the apartheid government to the GNU. Sensing vulnerability, F. W. de Klerk pulled the NP out of the GNU in mid-1996. The party attempted a makeover as the ‘New’ National Party and contested the 1999 election behind new leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk. A close reading of survey data suggests that NNP supporters were jumping to the DP in large numbers during the months immediately preceding the election, apparently responding to the DP’s ratcheting up its stridently oppositionist ‘fight back’ campaign. The DP emerged as the official opposition – its vote share rising to 9.6 percent from 1.7 percent in 1994, while the (N)NP fell from 20.4 to 6.9 percent.

Following the rivals’ short lived coexistence as the Democratic Alliance (DA), the NNP pulled out in late 2001 to enter a cooperation agreement with the ANC. The agreement swung the Western Cape and Cape Town governments from the

DA to the ANC-NNP coalition, pitting the DA and the NNP against each other again in 2004. For the NNP, the main concern was to win back its former supporters from the DA, or at least to prevent further losses. In its manifesto, the party presented itself to voters as ‘your key to government’ because of its link to the ANC, while taking a swipe at the DA as ‘sterile opposition without substance that cannot really change a thing about your future’. Oddly, the NNP also sought to score political points by noting that it was the party that released Nelson Mandela in 1990 – not mentioning, of course, Mandela’s previous 27 years of imprisonment.

Meanwhile, the DA campaigned on the slogan ‘South Africa deserves better’ – softening its 1999 message in the hope of beginning to attract disillusioned ANC supporters. That the DA’s target audience had shifted from the former NNP bloc was confirmed when the party launched its manifesto in Soweto. Leader Tony Leon regularly campaigned in townships, his refrain corresponding with the manifesto’s criticisms of the ANC-led government’s ‘failure to deliver the better life it promised in 1994’. In the end, the party’s vote share grew from 9.6 percent in 1999 to 12.4 percent in 2004. Yet this fell short of

the party’s expectations. Moreover, nearly all of the increase seems attributable to the NNP’s continuing collapse, to only 1.7 percent nationally. (The Freedom Front Plus also seems to have benefited from ex-NNP support.) If the DA is to diversify its demographics sufficiently to pose a real challenge to the ANC, most of the work remains to be done.

The most important new party to emerge in 2004 was Patricia de Lille’s Independent Democrats (ID). De Lille’s profile rose steadily as a Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) Member of Parliament, making her name by championing inquiries into corruption allegations against high-ranking ANC officials. During the floor-crossing window in 2003, she defected from the PAC to become the ID’s inaugural member. Her emphasis on public accountability and her related criticisms of government corruption and inefficiency, overlap with the DA’s agenda. Yet de Lille – with her PAC background providing ‘liberation’ credentials – claims to be able to offer patriotic opposition that will not be taken (or mistaken) as a defence of minority privilege. The ID received 1.7 percent of the vote, probably competing most directly with the DA for votes. (De Lille’s departure made no dent in the PAC’s modest support base.) The

NNP having faded from the national scene, the most compelling struggle among opposition parties during the next five years will probably be between the DA and the ID. Coincidentally, the ID begins that struggle with seven National Assembly seats – the same number as the DP had in 1994.

A final group of parties whose fate merits brief mention are those linked to former homeland governments – the IFP of former KwaZulu, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) of former Transkei, and the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP) of former Bophuthatswana. Despite other differences, these parties rely on support from poor rural dwellers (and recent migrants to periurban areas), with ties to the ‘traditional authority’ of chiefs. Though IFP support slipped between 1994 and 1999, the UDM and UCDP (which did not contest the 1994 elections) emerged to take a combined total of more than 4 percent of the 1999 national vote. This might have reflected an ANC vulnerability – owing either to delays in the government’s rural development initiatives, or to difficulties in establishing local party structures in some former homeland areas. However, the former homeland parties have generally had tough times since 1999. IFP support has continued to decline, and its

loss of the KwaZulu-Natal government will not help its future prospects. Meanwhile, the UDM was the party hardest hit by 2003 ‘floor crossing’ – losing ten of its fourteen National Assembly seats. In the 2004 elections, it won half of those back, but is still in a weaker position than in 1999. UCDP support has not declined, but also shows no signs of growing. Overall, the recent elections do not paint a particularly rosy picture for the ‘former homeland parties’.

#### **The IEC and Voting**

The procedural rigour of South Africa’s electoral administration has improved greatly over the past decade. The IEC was first convened in December 1993 and given less than five months to organise the country’s first nonracial election. Besides political and security threats, the Commission faced daunting logistical challenges rooted in the apartheid legacy of fragmented and uneven local administrative infrastructure. No attempt was made to register voters, and anyone with official identification who turned up at a polling station was allowed to participate. A total of 19.7 ballots were cast, but political parties lodged plausible objections about the validity of about 1.5 million of them. Through intensive consultation with

the parties, the IEC ultimately announced results accepted as ‘substantially free and fair’ by all participants. Preparations for the 1999 elections focused on tightening administrative procedures – most importantly by compiling the country’s first common voters’ roll. Concerns that the registration process might discourage participation were allayed when a voters’ roll was announced with 18.2 million names on it, and allayed further when nearly 90 percent of registered voters went to the polls in June 1999.

An unfortunate consequence of the 1999 experience is a tendency among many observers to treat registration and voting rates as direct indicators of the IEC’s performance. It is more useful to distinguish between the ‘supply’ and ‘demand’ sides of voter participation – ‘supply’ referring to the opportunities to participate provided by electoral authorities, and ‘demand’ referring to the strength of voters’ motivation to exploit those opportunities. Participation reflects the combined effects of supply and demand, but electoral authorities’ responsibility lies primarily on the supply side. Recognising this, the IEC has since 1999 devoted extra effort to reducing the unusually steep obstacles to the participation of specific segments of the population.

One such segment consists of youthful would-be first-time voters, who, in order to register, must often apply for an identity document first. Another consists of the rural poor, who have to travel longer distances to access electoral facilities yet desperately lack resources. Practical measures to reduce these obstacles have included the establishment of more registration and voting stations in rural areas, and improved coordination with the Department of Home Affairs regarding applications for identity documents.

**Table 2 Voter Participation by Province April 2004**

Province	Valid Ballots	Spoilt Ballots	Total Ballots	Reg. voters	Total Reg. %.
Eastern Cape	2 231 543	28 360	2 259 903	2 849 486	79.3
Free State	1 011 606	15 795	1 027 401	1 321 195	77.8
Gauteng	3 408 308	43 917	3 452 225	4 650 594	74.2
KZN	2 741 265	41 300	2 782 565	3 819 864	72.8
Limpopo	1 614 514	21 947	1 636 461	2 187 912	74.
Mpumalanga	1 111 692	17 792	1 129 484	1 442 472	78.3
North West	1 298 563	23 224	1 321 787	1 749 529	75.6
Northern Cape	318 702	5 192	323 894	433 591	74.7
Western Cape	1 566 949	15 554	1 582 503	2 220 283	71.3
Out-of-province	--	--	347 331	--	--
	<b>15 612 667</b>	<b>250 887</b>	<b>15 863 554</b>	<b>20 674 926</b>	<b>76.7</b>

The provincial breakdown of voter participation is summarised in Table 2. Interpreting turnout by province is complicated by the fact that voters may, by special arrangement, cast their national ballots outside

the province where they are registered – though ‘out-of-province’ voters forfeit their provincial ballots. The provincial figures in Table 2 are based on provincial ballot counts, with an adjustment for out-of-province ballots linking these figures to the national election results in the bottom row. The total of about 15.9 national ballots represents 76.7 percent of registered voters. Curiously, the two provinces with the lowest turnout are the Western Cape with 71.3 percent and KwaZulu-Natal with 72.8 percent. Though the determinants of voter participation are complex (as noted earlier), this pattern at least superficially contradicts the expectation that electoral competition is a main source of voter motivation. In a country where elections have tended to be lopsided, the willingness of voters to go to the polls even when the outcomes are not likely to be competitive is crucial to maintaining healthy participation levels.

Voter participation in 2004 generally reflects favourably on the IEC’s efforts, though areas for improvement remain. New registrations since 1999 expanded the voters’ roll to 20.6 million, which on paper means that the IEC is keeping pace with population growth. The 15.9 million ballots cast in 2004 represents only a slight absolute decline from 16.2 million in 1999. However,

turnout as a percentage of registered voters fell noticeably, from 89 percent in 1999 to 77 percent in 2004 (with a similar trend in turnout as a percentage of voting-age population likely). Declining turnout by registered voters probably reflects some complacency on the voters’ side, though it probably also reflects the ‘carrying over’ of outdated entries on the voters’ roll from the 1999 registration process. The IEC has asked voters to report changes of address so that they will be registered in the correct voting district, but there is no guarantee that voters still reside where they are registered. The persistence of entries with outdated residential details tends to inflate registration figures, thereby depressing turnout expressed as a percentage of the (apparently) registered electorate. The increasing proportion of voters who voted outside the province where they are registered -- from 0.6 percent in 1999 to 2.2 percent in 2004 - may be a sign of residential mobility not reflected in the voters’ roll (though the 2004 election’s proximity to the Easter weekend may also have encouraged out-of-province voting).

### Prospects for Democratic Governance

The 2004 elections have confirmed the basic features of dominant-party democracy in South Africa –

with the ANC extending its wide electoral lead over other political parties, while at the same time the institutional foundations of democratic contestation and constitutional government continue to strengthen. Viewed in cross-national African perspective, the kinds of democratic institutions taking root in South Africa are empirically associated with patterns of governance conducive to economic development. This compatibility of democracy and development is a key premise of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The 2004 elections are a reminder that, in the region, South Africa's capacity for leadership depends as much on the example it sets as on the political muscle it can flex.

At the same time, any democracy in which a single party is overwhelmingly dominant has structural vulnerabilities.

Institutionalised limits on government authority must always be 'self-enforcing' – that is, governments must find it to be in their own interests to abide by them. All else being equal, a government enjoying the support of a very large majority faces stronger temptations to transgress formal limits on its authority. The 2004 elections provide reassurance that South Africa's dominant party continues to regard

constitutional democracy as a central pillar of its project of post-apartheid governance – and not, as many of its postcolonial African predecessors did, as an encumbrance to be dismantled at the first opportunity. Looking to the future, the political scientist Samuel Huntington has proposed a 'two-turnover test' for democratic consolidation. The logic behind the test is that democracies are only consolidated when governments can routinely be removed by electoral means, and the only reasonably reliable indicator that they can be removed is that they have been removed. From the 2004 election results, most South Africans seem not to be in any special hurry to find out.

## **ELECTORAL INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

Johannesburg April 16, 2004

### **INTERIM STATEMENT BY THE EISA ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION**

### **SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS 12-14 APRIL 2004.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) deployed a Regional Observer Mission to observe the South African elections which were held on 12-14 April 2004. This is the mission's assessment of the elections. The assessment covers the entire election period from the pre-polling up to voting and including counting as well as the results transmission process.

### **1.1 Mission Composition**

The mission was composed of 40 representatives of electoral commissions, civil society organisations and government ministries from ten SADC countries namely Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Mr. Abel Leshele Thoahlane, the Chairperson of the Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission and also Chairperson of the EISA Board of Directors led the mission. The Deputy Mission Leader was Mr Denis Kadima, Executive Director of EISA.

Members of the mission arrived in South Africa on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2004 and observed events until the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2004. They will depart from South Africa on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2004.

## **1.2 The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa-EISA**

EISA is a regional organisation which seeks to strengthen and promote electoral processes, good governance and democratic values through research, capacity building and advocacy. The head office is located in Johannesburg.

## **1.3 Deployment**

The mission was deployed to six provinces namely Eastern Cape (Umtata and East London), Gauteng (East Rand, Alexandra and Soweto) KwaZulu Natal (Ulundi, Eskort and Port Shepstone), Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Western Cape. In total, over the three days of voting, members of the mission visited 152 voting stations and observed voting in rural and urban areas.

## **1.4 Method of Work**

In assessing the election, the EISA observer mission conducted various activities covering the pre-election, election and post election phases. These activities included

### *Election Update*

Due to financial constraints, it was not possible to undertake long-term observation for the mission. EISA developed an innovative method of information gathering and

sharing that would ensure that members of the mission were kept abreast of all the events which took place in the period leading up to the voting. Election Update, a newsletter containing information gathered by local experts has been published fortnightly.

### *Stakeholder Meetings and Political Party Rallies*

In the period leading up to and including the polling period, members of the mission held meetings with various electoral stakeholders including representatives of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), civil society organisations, the media and political parties. Meetings were held at the national and provincial levels. Meetings were also held at municipal level with representatives of the IEC. Informally the team also met other domestic and international observers.

The stakeholder meetings provided the mission members with different viewpoints on the electoral process. Our teams also attended political party rallies.

### *Observation of Voting and Counting*

The members of the mission were deployed in the field from 9 April and observed voting on 12-14 April and the counting of ballots on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2004.

## **1.5 Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region**

This assessment of the South African 2004 Election is based on the Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region-PEMMO. PEMMO is a set of guidelines against which an election can be measured to assess whether it is credible and legitimate and if the outcome reflects the will of those who cast their ballots. It was developed by the Election Commissions Forum of SADC Countries (ECF), which comprises all the electoral management bodies (EMBs) in the SADC region, in partnership with the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) It is based on region-wide consultations with electoral stakeholders in particular EMBs and civil society organisations (CSOs) for whom election observation is a core activity.

These principles cover the whole election period including before, during and after the poll. They provide a standard against which an election can be measured. Furthermore they are useful in the post-election period for review and reflection with a view to reforming aspects of the election where shortcomings have been identified.

For the observer PEMMO is also a source of guidelines for how to conduct oneself as an observer during the electoral process.

## **2. FINDINGS OF THE MISSION**

The EISA Election Observer Mission, using the PEMMO as a guideline, came to the following findings.

### **1. Constitutional and Legal Framework**

That the constitutional and legal framework in South Africa guarantees fundamental freedoms and human rights. In addition, the Electoral Law provides for mechanisms to address conflict in the electoral process.

This framework contributed to creating an environment conducive to successful elections.

### **2. Electoral System**

One of the dominant characteristics of the political system in South Africa has been the adoption of the proportional representation electoral system. The inclusive nature of this system, which does not provide for a formal minimum threshold, guarantees the participation and representation of minority and disadvantaged groups including women.

### **3. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)**

The IEC has been established as a statutory body and enjoys a high degree of independence vis-à-vis all electoral stakeholders. The process of appointment of the IEC is transparent and inclusive and thus promotes the impartiality of the commission. The clarity of the IEC's mandate and the provision of adequate resources have enabled the Commission to discharge its duties efficiently and effectively.

It is worth highlighting that the existence of Party Liaison Committees at national, provincial and municipal levels has contributed substantially to the involvement of parties at each stage of the electoral process thus contributing to the legitimacy of the process and the prevention of conflict.

### **4. Voting Stations and Election Materials**

By increasing the number of polling stations, which were well located, adequately staffed and provided with sufficient materials, the IEC gave voters easy access to the poll. Our observers noted that the movement of voters

through the polling station was on the whole quick and smooth. In some instances, voters moved through the station in two minutes. The transformation of these stations into counting stations after the end of polling, increases the transparency of the process as there are no fears of tampering with the ballots whilst they are in transit to central counting centres.

### **5. Results Centre**

The establishment of Results Centres throughout the country improved the transparency of the tabulation of the results and contributed to the acceptance of the results by all parties.

### **6. Prevention of Conflict**

The provision by the IEC of conflict management training for electoral staff and conflict mediators coupled with the presence of the security forces, contributed to the conduct of peaceful election. We commend the deployment of extra police forces in KwaZulu-Natal where conflict had been expected. We also note and commend the tolerance shown by voters and party supporters.

## 7. Participation of Women in the Electoral Process

Our teams noted that women were involved in the electoral process at all levels. This points to an electoral system that does not discriminate against women in a significant way.

## 8. Challenges

This electoral process faced a couple of challenges, which the IEC should take note of for future elections. These challenges were largely related to the inconsistent application of voting and counting procedures.

We observed the inconsistent application of voting and counting procedures. These include the following:

- The position of ballot booths had the potential of compromising the secrecy of the ballot in some places.
- The use of ballot papers which were not very distinct from each other led to confusion.
- Some voting stations used one ballot box for both the national and provincial ballot papers whilst others used a ballot box for each of the two different ballot papers.

- The lighting in some voting stations was inadequate.
- In a number of counting stations, there was no reconciliation of the ballot papers before counting.
- The role of party agents was not clear as in some cases, they were observed playing the roles of the election officials
- Stakeholders also noted that the date of the elections over the Easter holiday had the potential to affect voter participation.
- There was insufficient number of domestic observers.

These challenges did not however have an overbearing negative impact on the outcome of the elections.

## 3. CONCLUSION

Basing itself on the guidelines enshrined in the ECF/EISA Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation in the SADC Region (PEMMO), the EISA Election Observer Mission concludes that the elections in South Africa were conducted in a peaceful, orderly, efficient and transparent manner.

The mission is therefore satisfied that the outcome of

the election is a true reflection of the will of the people of South Africa. We therefore congratulate the IEC, the political parties, civil society and last but not least the people of South Africa. We hope that this environment will be conducive to further development and to meeting the challenges ahead

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## PROVINCIAL ROUNDUP

### GAUTENG

#### GAUTENG GOES TO THE POLLS

*Sydney Letsholo*  
*Electoral Institute of*  
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##### Introduction

On 14 April 2004, voters came out in their thousands to cast their vote at the different polling station across the province. The voting process proceeded smoothly as was expected, with no major problems reported. The same centres used for voter registration were again used as voting stations. The province had a total of 2098 polling stations. Major leaders of political parties-- President Thabo Mbeki, the leader of the main opposition party and the UDM leader, General Bantu Holomisa to mention just a few - voted in the province. Despite the fact there always a possibility of unforeseen problems emerging in the process, the IEC was confident that there was no problem that would be beyond its control. This informs us of provincial IEC's level of preparedness. The Gauteng IEC has a much better infrastructure than some of the other provinces in the country to ensure the smooth running of the elections. This was a plus to the provincial IEC and

helped to enhance its performance.

##### Voting and Counting

On Election Day voters turned up in substantial numbers well before the polling stations opened in most parts of the province. Polling stations opened on time and closed only when the last voter in the queue had cast his/her vote. This means that some polling stations closed after the required time of 9 pm to allow late voters to cast their votes. The massive voter turnout in the province is a culmination of hard work by the IEC, Non-Governmental Organisations, media and various other stakeholders through voter education initiatives. Commenting on the turnout, former South African President, Nelson Mandela said: "There could have been no more appropriate way for South African to celebrate the first decade of democracy than by going to the polls in the 2004 elections"

The legislation requires that the counting process begins soon after a polling station closes and this is exactly what happened in the province. Counting went smoothly in the presence of party monitors and observers. In the words of an

IEC official, everything "went perfectly."

##### Election Results

Gauteng hosted the nerve centre of the IEC where the results of all polling stations were captured by the most sophisticated technology. The result centre was based in Pretoria and was visited by most political party leaders anxious to know how they performed in the elections.

Compared to Kwazulu-Natal, all parties in the Gauteng province had no qualms about the outcome of the elections. As expected, the African National Congress (ANC) comfortably asserted its authority. The ANC obtained a massive 68,4 %, while the Democratic Alliance (DA), its arch-rival and second highest voted for party, obtained 20,78%. While these parties continue to improve their following in each election, it is rather disturbing to note the poor performance of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). Both parties obtained 0,85% and 0,25% respectively. However, these parties did not only perform dismally in Gauteng. The New National



Party (NNP), which many political analysts predicted would cease to exist after the elections, managed to obtain 0, 76%. The *Sowetan* of 21 May 2004 states that the DA cleaned up traditional NNP areas such as Centurion and Alberton on Joburg's East Rand. The performance of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) proved once and for all that the party is indeed a provincial organisation. With the massive following mainly in KwaZulu-Natal, the IFP managed to obtain 2, 5% in Gauteng. In his speech to the new Provincial Legislature, Shilowa, who kept his position after President Mbeki reshuffled his cabinet, commended the voters for the overwhelming support they gave to the ANC:

*We are humbled by this overwhelming support. I wish to thank all the people of our province for their continued confidence in the ANC". Unlike in Kwazulu-Natal, where the election outcome was not welcomed by one political party, parties in the Gauteng had no qualms about the election process and the result of the election.*

### Conclusion

The Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission Dr. Brigalia Bam, declared the April 14, 2004 elections as free and fair at banquet sponsored by Coca Cola in Pretoria on the evening of 16 April. Despite the commendable work done by the IEC, it is rather disturbing to note that not everyone was happy with the

Commission. Some dissatisfied IEC officials, who were temporarily employed during the general election, marched to the Johannesburg offices of the IEC to complain about payment. This scenario did not matter much to the political parties in the province.<sup>1</sup> According to media reports, the problem was amicably resolved.

### NEWS FLASH!

#### PLAUDITS FROM AFRICAN OBSERVERS FOR SA'S POLL ORGANISERS

Observers of SA's third elections have congratulated the IEC for running the elections successfully and welcomed the prevalent peaceful atmosphere. SADC observers who were deployed in all nine provinces acknowledged that there were problems, but that these were merely technical. The SADC's preliminary assessment praised the IEC.

Mauritian MP Veda Baloomoot, the SADC Observer Team chairman, said SA set a challenge for five other countries in the region that were holding elections this year. "We have no doubt that the elections were run well and that the IEC has taught us a lot by ensuring that complaints by parties are tackled immediately and wherever possible resolved," Baloomoot said.

IEC chairwoman Brigalia Bam has described the absence of international observers from bodies such as the European Union as a 'vote of confidence' in SA's electoral process. It was also an indication that the world's trust and confidence in "the integrity of the country's democratic institutions" was growing

By Hopewell Radebe and excerpted from *Business Day*, 16 April 2004

<sup>1</sup> *Sowetan*, (23/04/04),

## NORTH WEST PROVINCE

### REVIEW OF THE VOTING PROCESS IN THE NORTH WEST

*Michael O'Donovan*  
*Independent Political Analyst*

South Africa's third democratic amply demonstrated the increasing familiarity of officials and the electorate with voting procedures. This familiarity has resulted in elections being conducted efficiently and with minimal controversy regarding procedural issues. The ease with which voting now takes place is evident in a reduction in the average amount of time electors take to cast their ballot. For example, according to an exit poll conducted on behalf of the IEC, over 80 percent of voters spent 30 minutes or less queuing to votes. In 1999, voters spent substantially more time queuing – only 53 percent of people spent 30 minutes or less in queuing. The reduction in the time taken to cast a ballot did not result however, in a significant increase in spoiled ballots suggesting that electors are at ease with the new tempo.

The reduced queuing time is partly attributable to virtually every polling station opening on time, fully equipped and with the

correct material including the requisite ballots and an adequate complement of staff. In previous elections, opening late had a massive effect on the time taken to cast a vote as voters (especially those in rural areas) tend to queue early. In the North West province, only 36 percent of voters spent less than 30 minutes queuing in 1999. Better organisation virtually eliminated such problems this time.

In the North West Province, the total number of polling stations was increased by only five, to a total of 1 026. This marginal increase did not have a noticeable impact on queuing times. The reduction in queuing times is also not attributable to a change in the number of registered voters. In both 1999 and 2004, 1.3 million voters cast their ballots in the province. The increased tempo with which voting took place is attributable primarily to election officials being further up the learning curve in terms of managing polling stations and to a simplification of voting procedures. Many local and provincial election officials have been involved in all the national and local elections that have taken place under the auspices of the IEC. This continuity ensures that they are ever-better able to manage the resources allocated to them. Similarly

fewer and fewer electors require explanations regarding procedures or are in need of assistance from party agents or election officials. In this, as in previous elections, approximately one-and-a-half percent of ballots were spoiled. By this measure, electors were happy with the new tempo as it did not appear to result in an increase in the number of accidentally spoiled ballots.

Further easing the election process was the adoption of simplified procedures. In earlier elections several procedures - mostly "high technology" ones - had proved unworkable or cumbersome in more remote areas. By adopting procedures less reliant on technology and, in particular, on electricity, the voting process has been significantly improved.

Simplifications included abandoning the use of the "zip-zip" machines. These zip-zip machines scanned registration bar codes in an attempt to obtain real time verification of the voters' eligibility to vote. However the technology proved insufficiently reliable – particularly in those areas far from the electricity grid. The technology frequently became an impediment to the smooth functioning of the poll and was often abandoned by election

officials at station level. Another simplified process was the abandonment of the use of invisible ink to mark the hands of those who had voted. In several of the previous elections voters' thumbs were marked with invisible ink. This ink could only be seen under a ultra-violet lamp and every polling station thus required a UV light to vet those electors who had already voted. Again the technology required access to reliable electricity supply or the ready availability of batteries. These requirements were often not met thereby increasing the opportunity for unethical electors to vote more than once. This year, the use of invisible ink was abandoned in favour of felt-tipped pens with indelible (albeit unsightly) ink.

An added boon to election management was the near universal coverage of voting stations by at least one of the cellular phone service providers. This ensured that the IEC no longer had to rely on sophisticated (and power-dependent) satellite uplinks

to get results to the "command centre" in Pretoria. Cellphones have dramatically improved the level of communication required for the rapid reporting of results at station level.

The coupling of tried-and-tested methods to increasing familiarity of processes by electors, party representatives and election officials resulted in few, if any, questions raised on the secrecy of the ballot. However the security of ballot boxes seems to be of greater concern. In KwaZulu-Natal there were allegations that ballot boxes went missing. There was at least one incident in which abandoned ballot boxes were discovered. In the North West province, the DA lodged a complaint against an IEC official found in possession of used ballots. Ballots cast are required to be secured in ballot boxes until counting starts. The fact that officials had used ballots in their position suggests that the ballot boxes had not been secured. Political parties

(initial) muted responses to these reports testifies to their confidence in the system as a whole. Although the election ran smoothly there were inevitably problems. The main mechanism by which electors could get the problems sorted out by someone other than the election officials was to report it to the IEC complaint hotline. Unfortunately this hotline malfunctioned from early in the day. Electors phoning to report problems or lodge complaints were met with a recorded message that interminably asked them to key in the appropriate digit. The upshot of this is that the number and quality of complaints can not be used as an indicator of election quality. This notwithstanding, the general consensus is that the election was very well run. This invariably bodes well for the quality of the electoral process.

## LIMPOPO

### FAIR PLAY IN LIMPOPO THE VOTING PROCESS

*Kholofelo Mashabela*  
*University of the North*

Election 2004 got off to a healthy start in Limpopo

province as all presiding officers and their staff were awake early to ensure that their stations were open on time. According to Limpopo Provincial Electoral Officer, Rev Zwo Nevhutalu, none of the polling stations in the province opened late. In the same breath, he said that

several stations operated well beyond the 21hoo closing time because voters were still queuing at official closing time. This was due to the arrangement that the IEC had, that voters who had not cast their votes, but were at polling at closing time, would be allowed to queue

until they had cast their votes.

Although Nevhutalu could not readily state the actual number of voting stations that operated beyond the 21h00 closing time, the official IEC web-site gave the figure as 17% of all voting stations in the province. The last station to finish counting votes did so at 05h00 on Thursday, 15 April. The station was in the Greater Letaba municipality.

Nevhutalu confirmed that there were problems experienced at the polling stations in the province. These included shortage of ballot papers at some polling stations, but this was remedied as soon as it was anticipated. Others, as reported in Limpopo based newspapers, involved late supplies of ballot papers reaching the stations as IEC cars got bogged down in the mud in some areas due to heavy rainfall. This situation was rectified as soon as materials were transferred to 4X4 vehicles.

Limpopo based newspapers and radio stations also reported several incidents at polling stations. These included an alleged UDM member at a Giyani polling station drawing a gun at members of a rival party; two people, wearing ANC T-shirts at Laerskool Pietersburg-Noord (in Polokwane), who allegedly threatened to burn down the

houses of two voters if they did not vote for the ruling party; and two people wearing ANC t-shirts at the Mohlakaneng voting station in Seshego, who were forced out of a queue for wearing party t-shirts at a voting station.

Another incident, reported by SABC radio news in the province, involved members of the ANC who used loudhailers to urge voters on at a Senwabarwana polling station. Three parties, the UDM, ACDP and DA later laid charges with the police.

Nevhutalu said that although criminal charges had been brought against individual culprits, the IEC had not taken action against parties because of the difficulties associated with reading party agendas into the reported incidents.

Ballot papers were delivered on time to the IEC and would be warehoused for six months as required by the Electoral Act. There had accordingly been no complaints about tampering with the polling boxes from any parties, according to the PEO. No other complaints had been received by any of the parties taking part in the elections.

According to Nevhutalu, poor literacy levels were also responsible for the unacceptably high number of spoiled ballots in the province. The last count, which was

also not the final one, had shown that there were more than 21 000 spoiled ballots. According to Nevhutalu, voter education alone was not sufficient to solve the problem. This had to be coupled with democracy education, which would assist in raising literacy levels amongst the electorate.

Except for the factors over which one did not have control, the Limpopo PEO felt that the elections had gone very well.

## **Kwazulu-natal Still I waters run deep the settling in of liberal -democracy in KZN**

*Dr Laurence Piper  
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campus*

Election 2004 has been the best yet in KwaZulu-Natal, but this fact has been lost in the post-election politicking. Exacerbated by the predictability of other outcomes, the KZN election has unleashed a frenzy of media speculation and party positioning around provincial coalitions, Premierships, and perhaps even Deputy-Presidencies. However fascinating all this is, the deeper significance of 2004 lies in a less riveting direction: the comparatively quiet and efficient running of the election. What these still waters suggest is that liberal-democracy is steadily settling into KZN.

Democratic consolidation is typically understood as including the growth of democratic culture, where law and democratic institutions become the respected mechanisms via which to settle disputes. Analysis of the election campaign in previous editions has suggested that this is largely the way that parties and ordinary people behaved in election 2004. However, it is also the way

that parties, ordinary people and our institutions behaved over the days of the election and counting as well. Moreover, the election phase (voting, counting and official results) was the best organised yet.

Some might view my conclusions as overly optimistic for two reasons. First, KwaZulu-Natal was the slowest of all provinces in releasing the election results, suggesting relatively inferior levels of administration. Second, all the major parties made allegations about electoral fraud, particularly the IFP which, at the time of going to press, launched a legal challenge to the IEC's declaration that the election was free and fair. Let me deal with each of these criticisms in turn.

### **The Significance of Speed**

The 2004 election ended officially on Saturday 17 April when the IEC declared the polls free and fair, three days into the election phase and three days sooner than in 1999. KZN was the final province to report all its Voting Districts. Political parties offered various reasons for this. The ANC saw the delay as the result of the intense rivalry between itself and the IFP. According to ANC provincial leader Bheki Cele, the IEC was being extra cautious to ensure an accurate outcome.

'Like a referee in a game they didn't want one side to break the cup afterwards'.

The DA, on the other hand, attributed the slowness of results to the poor calibre of many presiding officers who submitted incomplete, inaccurate and sometimes even blank results slips. According to the DA's Penny Tainton, these results slips could not get past the IEC new auditing process, thus slowing the capturing of results.

However, according to IEC provincial head, Mowethu Mosery, neither of these reasons was the key one, rather the problem was more to do with the number and distribution of votes in KZN. Counting of votes was done quickly – it was finished by about 3am on the morning of the 15 April – but the delay was in getting the votes and results to the municipal offices, especially in Durban, which took until 10:00am on the morning of 15 April. Thus the actual capturing of the results on the system only began by midday.

According to Mosery, the reason for the transport delays related to the huge distances that many boxes and results had to be transported far in excess to those in Gauteng for example, and often across difficult terrain on poor roads. In this respect, KZN was similar to the Eastern

Cape and Mosery points out that the Eastern Cape and KZN released results at pretty much the same speed.

In addition, however, Mosery did acknowledge that there were some problems with the completion of the results sheets but he did not see this as being as significant, as claimed by Penny Tainton. He argued that the main results totals for the 18 political parties were generally correct but that the KPMG auditors were very tough on the portion of the form that dealt with special votes, section 24(a) votes, the number of ballots received and cancelled ballots.

On balance then it does not seem that the slowness of results in KZN had much to do with party rivalry but more with administrative difficulties. Further, while the DA saw these as a result of the poor quality of lower level IEC staff, the IEC attributed delays more to the realities of geography and infrastructure.

While this suggests that there is some room for improvement in the operation of the IEC in KZN, particularly in the training of Presiding Officers and other staff, in comparison with 1999 and 1994 much progress has been made. Not only were the results captured and released in half the time of 1999, but there

were 400 more voting stations in 2004 than in 1999, many in more remote parts of the province. All in all, this suggests good progress in the IEC's administration of the election phase.

More troubling perhaps are the allegations around electoral fraud.

### **The Significance of Fraud**

Three types of irregularities raised party ire during the election phase in KZN: special votes, section 24(a) votes and bussing.

On Wednesday, 14 April the ANC complained about the 2 000 special votes cast in Nongoma (68 590 registered voters) whereas the whole of the Metro (1 377 798 registered voters) had just 8000 special votes. In addition many of the forms allegedly had been signed by the same hand. The ANC claimed that 75% of the forms were fraudulent. The view of the DA and IFP was that this was simply a case of the IFP doing the work to register their old people. Despite much protest from the ANC and 4 hours of meetings the votes were accepted. Given the insignificance of 1 500 votes to the overall result the decision seems a sensible one.

On Sunday 18 April, the IFP announced publicly that it was contesting the IEC's

declaration of the election as free and fair on two grounds. First, the IFP complained that 367 731 votes were cast by people who, as Musa Zondi put it on SAFM, 'were not on the voter's roll'. Second, the party complained that the IEC had not responded to the IFP's 42 complaints of violence and intimidation before announcing the poll as free and fair.

In response to the second of the IFP's allegations, Mowethu Mosery conceded that the IFP 'may have a case about me not having responded to queries in writing', but added that he did not think it was an expectation to respond in writing. In respect of the section 24(a) votes, Mosery declined to comment except to say that the IFP did not raise these as an issue over the days of voting and counting.

Interestingly the DA shared concerns about the 367 731 votes, saying that the ANC bussed people into polls at Ashburton, Kloof, Hillcrest and Waterfall. (The figure of 12 buses in Kloof was repeatedly mentioned.) Allegedly these ANC voters then all voted under the section 24(a) amendment on the vec 4 forms. The DA interpreted this bussing as an attempt to create long queues thus frustrating DA supporters. However, concern was also expressed that bussing, when added to

the section 24(a) vote which allows people to vote outside their registered district, plus the registration stickers illegally found in various presiding officers hands, could allow some people to vote twice.

How seriously should we take these criticisms? Notably the DA did not lodge an official complaint with the IEC about bussing, probably as it is not illegal. Further, my view is that likely number of corrupt Section 24(a) votes would be too small to make a significant difference to the election outcome. To be sure, 367 731 votes amount to 13% of the votes cast in KZN. However, it would be unreasonable to assume firstly, that all of them were illegal, and secondly, that they would all benefit the ANC.

As regards the legality of the votes, it would be a long-winded but simple enough task to check that all those who voted under the section 24(a) are registered using their ID numbers that were recorded on the vec 4 forms. Further, it would be theoretically possible to check whether voters had voted twice if they had voted in the voting district in which they were registered and then on a vec 4 form. One would also be able to check where these votes were cast giving a sense of whether one was dealing with holiday makers or

something more sinister. However, one could not know for whom these people voted as the votes went into the same ballot boxes as the ballots of voters registered in the district.

My sense is that this kind of investigation would show insignificant levels of abuse as the whole scheme relies on the co-operation of local polling officials who ought to have marked and checked thumbs. Indeed, even if it is the case that there were 30 busloads of 'double' voters that amounts to another 3000 votes for the ANC which is not enough to make any real difference to the results.

In sum, the allegations around significant levels of fraud are implausible. Such allegations are better seen in the light of post-election disappointment and perhaps jockeying for position. This is especially the case with the IFP's allegations and court case – the timing of which coincides with negotiations around power-sharing in KZN and nationally. Indeed, had the IFP applied these standards to the 1994 election, it would have litigated itself out of power.

We stand on the cusp of a new era in KZN politics, not so much because the ANC will lead the provincial government for the first time, but rather because of the peaceful and orderly way their victory came about.

## IFP LOSES KZN

*Shauna Mottiar*  
*Independent Political Analyst*

The race for KwaZulu-Natal is over; official election results indicate that the former Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) stronghold is now African National Congress (ANC) territory. KwaZulu-Natal has 5.5 million eligible voters 3.8 million of whom were registered to vote<sup>2</sup> the total number of votes cast however was 2 805 627, 42 648 of which were spoilt. The ANC gained 1 311 023 of these votes giving it 47.45% of the vote and 38 seats while the IFP gained 963 711 votes, 34.88% of the vote and 30 seats. The Democratic Alliance (DA) came in with 276 416 votes 10% of the vote and 7 seats while the Minority Front (MF) came in with 51 339 votes, 1.86% of the vote and 2 seats. Other contenders in the province were the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) with 2 seats and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) with 1 seat.<sup>3</sup>

To all intents and purposes it seems as though the election in KwaZulu-Natal was successful. The province was geared up for the election with the deployment of some 20 000 South African

<sup>2</sup> *Mercury* April 16 2004

<sup>3</sup> *Sunday Tribune* April 18 2004

National Defence Force (SANDF) members to voting booths and service stations. About 4000 administrative personnel were also deployed.<sup>4</sup> There were however some reports of intimidation and possible vote rigging. About 30 ANC party agents had to be evacuated by security forces in Ulundi after they were threatened by people wielding traditional weapons and fire arms. The IFP has also laid a charge of corruption against the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) because an IEC officer in Inanda was found in possession of registration stickers on Wednesday. The IFP also complained that in some voting stations in Umlazi, voters were given two provincial ballot papers instead of one.<sup>5</sup> The ANC lodged an official objection to special votes cast in Nongoma claiming that an abnormally large amount of special votes were received for Nongoma and of a sample viewed by the ANC 74% appeared fraudulent in that large groups of forms were signed by the same applicant and did not reflect all the necessary details needed for special voting. The ANC has requested that those votes be omitted from the official count.<sup>6</sup> Another worrisome report was that two men in Mtwalume were

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<sup>4</sup> *Mercury* April 13 2004

<sup>5</sup> *Independent On Saturday* April 17 2004

<sup>6</sup> *Witness* April 16 2004

found in possession of identity documents.<sup>7</sup>

The ANC's victory in KwaZulu-Natal effectively means that it will now be placing its own Premier in the province and there is speculation that the position will be filled either by Jacob Zuma or by S'bu Ndebele. In the case of Zuma, the premiership would be a demotion for him and there is still concern over his alleged involvement in the corruption charges. Ndebele on the other hand has been tipped to fill a national position in government. Aside from the issue of premiership, the ANC has begun lobbying for support from the smaller parties namely the MF and the ACDP. The MF has indicated that it will support the winner in the province while the ACDP stressed that it will support reconciliation to ensure an end to political violence.

The IFP's loss in KwaZulu-Natal on the other hand, renders its future uncertain. Its dismissal at the polls has effectively dented its profile and its playing down the issue of traditional leaders to avoid disagreeing publicly with the DA may have affected its support base in this quarter. Analysts suggest that Mangosuthu Buthelezi might decide to trade the province with an ANC Premier in exchange for the

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<sup>7</sup> *Mercury* April 16 2004

IFP's continued role in the national government. The ANC, meanwhile, is said to be keen to include Buthelezi into the cabinet in his personal capacity thus effectively disrupting the IFP alliance with the DA.

Predictions by political analysts that the IFP and the DA would form an opposition coalition in KwaZulu-Natal to keep the ANC out of power have fallen away as IFP and DA support combined came in lower than support for the ANC. The prospect of the IFP being included in the ANC government nationally is once again being considered by analysts despite Buthelezi claiming that the relationship between the ANC and IFP is "in pieces".<sup>8</sup> This is largely due to ANC's Smuts Ngonyama commenting that "our arms are open to the ANC to form a coalition".<sup>9</sup> – apart from views that the ANC would partner with the IFP in the province out of political necessity it is advocated that the ANC recognises that exclusion would promote rebellion while inclusion would mean compliance. Some analysts say however, that the IFP would only enter into a coalition with the ANC if it is offered premiership of the province. Other predictions are that if a coalition between the ANC and the IFP is not formed,

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<sup>8</sup> *Mail & Guardian* April 16 2004

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*



the IFP may reject the provincial election results in order to give it a negotiating tool. Failing this, it seems that Buthelezi will move to the opposition benches at both national and provincial levels.

Explanations as to why the IFP lost KwaZulu-Natal to the ANC have begun to emerge. It was noted that registration figures in traditionally IFP rural supporting areas were surprisingly high – despite massive urbanisation in the province, urban voters outnumber rural voters only slightly, 1.9 million and 1.8 million respectively. This has been put down to the fact that there is urban apathy and that it is easier to organise people in villages. Political analyst Adam Habib argues however, that two factors were against the IFP in this election: firstly many people had migrated from the tribal authority areas into the metropole in search of employment and secondly, the ANC had made significant inroads into IFP strongholds.<sup>10</sup>

The IFP's coalition partner, the DA did not fare particularly well in the KwaZulu-Natal provincial election either. It lost about 50 000 votes at provincial level owing to its pursuit of Ulundi as the province's capital. According to IEC figures, 276 416 voters from

KZN cast their national ballots for the DA but only 228 843 cast their ballots for the DA in the provincial poll. A Capital Coalition backed by the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business and more than 50 leading businesses in the Midlands had placed adverts in papers and distributed pamphlets calling on people to keep Pietermaritzburg as the capital of the province by voting for the ANC at provincial level. The DA's choice of a capital for KwaZulu-Natal cost it as well as its coalition partner the IFP, up to two provincial seats.

A fair amount of attention had been focused on the Indian electorate in KwaZulu-Natal with both the ANC and the DA attempting to consolidate support bases within Indian communities. Official figures show however that there was an extremely low turnout of Indian voters with a large number of voters in Phoenix and Chatsworth staying away from the polls. Presiding officers in the areas noted that only about 50% of voters registered to vote in the three largest polling stations in Chatsworth actually voted. A similar trend prevailed in Phoenix. According to MF sources only 40% of eligible Indian voters registered to vote this year.<sup>11</sup>

## NEWS FLASH!

### **KWAZULU-NATAL: BETWEEN TRAUMA AND TRIUMPH**

While inter-party talks on a future government in KwaZulu-Natal take place, the untold story is how the ground shifted from electoral competition and pre-election alliances to a seemingly inevitable new season of cooperation between the ANC and the IFP. The first two days of KwaZulu-Natal's election drama last week brought sobering realisations to the ANC and IFP in their continuing battle for the control of the province. The story of Friday 16 as it unfolded at the IEC Centre in Pretoria – and as it continues in its negotiations – highlights the limitations brought by tenuous majorities, the necessity of cooperation in conditions of potential volatility, and smaller parties' kingmaker power. It is increasingly certain that government in the next five years for KZN will entail a renewed settlement between the ANC and IFP. The two giants in the province realised that the fierce election battle had not severed the symbiotic governance cord between them.

The ANC gained a total of 38 of the 80 seats in the provincial legislature, a hair's breadth ahead of the IFP and DA coalition for changes 37 seats. The ACDP and the MF got 2 seats each and the UDM one. As this result became clearer in the course of the morning of April 16, it brought home a powerful message to the two protagonists: there could be neither a single party nor a single-plus-minor party governance in the province.

By mid-Friday, leaders signalled their willingness to talk. President Mbeki's call on political parties to join in governance was probably also designed to test the waters with the IFP. Musa Zondi's statement that the IFP was prepared to consider cooperation seemed to set the ball rolling. The April 16 turning point happened in two respects. First the results indicated that the lack of an outright victor would not be resolved with pre-election alliances. Second, the ANC realised that even if it managed to scrape together an absolute majority in KZN, it would amount to a tenuous arrangement.

**Written by Susan Booysen and excerpted from *This Day* 20 April 2004**

<sup>10</sup> *This Day* April 14 2004

<sup>11</sup> *Daily News*, April 15 2004

## Free State

### ELECTIONS AT LAST!!

#### A REVIEW OF ELECTION DAY IN THE FREE STATE WITH REFERENCE TO POLLING STATIONS, BALLOTS, ELECTION MATERIALS AND COUNTING.

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#### Introduction

South Africa's third democratic election held on 14 April 2004, coincided with the euphoria of ten years of democratic rule. As in 1994 and 1999, hundreds of thousands of Free Staters again exercised their democratic rights and streamed to the polls. Only time would tell whether political rhetoric and the results of numerous polls held before the election would hold true.

This contribution looks at the following aspects of the 2004 elections i.e., polling stations, ballots, election materials and counting, mainly on the basis of information gathered by members of the Department of Political Science at the University of the Free State acting as IEC accredited observers on election day. The observation programme

centred on polling stations within the Mangaung municipal area, so as not to overlap with other civil society organisations observing this election.

#### Election Day

For some people Election Day in the Free State started at 3 am when they got up early to ensure that they would get the chance to exercise their democratic right, while for others it meant leaving the polling stations after midnight. This was a clear indication of the commitment to democracy held by many in the Free State province. Members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) observer mission commented at the IEC headquarters that they were extremely impressed with the dedication to the democratic process shown by the people of the Free State. SADC observer, Shirley Segoko of Botswana was quoted in *This Day* saying that although being in awe of the commitment to democracy she was distressed by the incredibly long queues of people standing in the sun waiting to cast their votes. She said, "It is not good for people to stand for such a long time. Some queues we saw had 3000 or 4000 people in them, and we saw some with 7000". Segoko also

commented on the amount of young party agents, the youth casting their votes and complemented the IEC on a job well done. Local observers also reported incidents where people fainted in the long queues. The IEC was very helpful in this regard, especially with the elderly helping them to and from the voting station and giving them preference in this regard. Could these long queues be the reason for a decline in the number of votes cast in the Free State? Gert Coetzee<sup>12</sup> from Volksblad, indicated that there were only 78% of registered voters who cast their votes during this election, a sharp decline when compared to 91% in the 1999 election and 84,5% in 1994.

On the whole the elections in the Free State were peaceful and orderly and people were in good spirits.

#### Polling Stations

Voters in the Free State were able to cast their votes at any of 1 063 polling stations across the province. This included two mobile polling stations that were used in the Tswelopele municipal area (FS183) and one in the Setsoto municipal area (FS 191). Due to their accessibility, more than 50%

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<sup>12</sup> 2004: 1

of all polling stations in the Free State were situated at schools across the province. Polling stations at schools were distributed as follows: 106 in the Northern Free State, 116 in Lejweleputswa, 148 in Thaba Mafutsayane, 161 in Motheo and 14 in Xhariep. Another favourite position for polling stations was church and community halls, with temporary stations mainly housed in tents belonging to the SANDF<sup>13</sup>.

A typical polling station was manned by the following IEC staff members, with the size of the staff component dependent on the size of the ward and the number of registered voters:

- a presiding officer and his/her deputy presiding officer ensured the smooth management of a polling station;
- a queue walker was responsible for directing the traffic in the various queues leading to the polling station;
- a door controller controlled access to the polling station;
- a voters roll checker ensured that voters' names appear on the voters roll;
- an inker was responsible for inking the thumbs of those who have voted;
- a paper issuer issued ballots to the prospective voters;

- a voting-booth controller controlled access to voting booths;
- a ballot box controller ensured that ballots actually landed in the ballot boxes; and
- a statistical officer was responsible for the forwarding of all statistical information to the relevant MEO and the PEO.

All of the polling stations monitored by the writers had the above component of IEC staff or some combination of it.

Some of the IEC officials were dismissed the day before the elections and replaced. *This Day*<sup>14</sup> reported an incident in Qwa Qwa where the municipal electoral officer suffered a panic attack and was hospitalised. Two IEC officials, Jabulani Tshabalala and Theo Lepasa, had to drive a long distance to QwaQwa from the head office in Bloemfontein to attend to the matter. Local observers on the whole, reported that they were impressed with the IEC's polling stations and the staff in charge of these stations.

Accredited party agents and independent observers were allowed to keep an eye on proceedings and were requested to make suggestions for improvements on the current

operation of polling stations. In most cases IEC staff and party agents worked well together, but there were a few reported incidences where differences were reported. In one case, two party agents of the NNP and DA left a polling station in Heuwelsig, a northern suburb in Bloemfontein, after being threatened with arrest by the presiding officer at the station for "intruding in her tasks" and showing people away from the polling station. The NNP reported the case to the IEC and the DA later laid a formal charge.<sup>15</sup> The Freedom Front and the DA have also lodged complaints with the IEC regarding problems in voting stations. The DA allegedly found a voting box filled with ballot papers and loose ballot papers hidden under a bush in a field near a voting station in Bloemfontein's northern suburbs<sup>16</sup>.

The vigorous policing of the no-campaign zone around polling stations led to the arrest of Mr. Darryl Worth, DA MPL, after he had driven into such an area with a DA logo on the side of the car. According to a DA spokes person Mr Worth turned his car around and was subsequently surrounded by five police vehicles and 17 officers. Mr. Worth and three DA officials were arrested and spent more than four

<sup>13</sup> Rabanye, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> 2004:4

<sup>15</sup> Pretorius, 2004:2

<sup>16</sup> Coetzee, 2004:1

hours in jail before being released on bail. The DA leadership in the province accused ANC party agents of pressuring SAPS members into arresting the DA members after they had acknowledged their mistake and tried to drive away. The ANC has denied this charge<sup>17</sup>.

Local observers praised the IEC's performance in the Free State and noted only a few problems which included the following:

- inadequate lighting
- tents used were too small
- some tents had a single opening used as an entrance as well as an exit
- long queues resulted in people fainting or turning away
- registration stamps, the voters roll and stolen ID's created numerous conflict situations as voters were turned away.

### Ballots

Local observers reported that on the whole, the IEC staff managed voting stations effectively and efficiently. There were, however, some reports of people casting their votes and not leaving the polling stations immediately resulting in cases where there were more than one person behind a given polling-booth at a given

<sup>17</sup> Coetzee, 2004: 1 and DA media statement

time. A suggestion was also made by observers to position polling booths more effectively to ensure better lighting and more privacy.

### Election Materials

In most parts of the Free State observers, party agents and voters were satisfied with the availability and handling of election materials. There were, however, a few complaints lodged by political parties stationed at polling station in Bloemfontein's northern suburbs. Visual footage of chaos at some polling stations also appeared on the front page of the *Volksblad* on the 16 April. Dirk Kok<sup>18</sup> reported that election material from various voting stations in Qwa Qwa, such as unused ballot papers, ballot boxes and other election material, lay unguarded in a heap in a office of the Maluti a Phofung municipality in QwaQwa. The DA, IFP, Dikwantkwetla-party and the PAC have laid a charge with the IEC in this regard.

### Counting

Due to the dedication of voters to the democratic process some of the polling stations in the Free State only closed after midnight. This resulted in the counting of the ballot papers starting very late. Local observers reported an inconsistency with the number of ballot

<sup>18</sup> Kok, 2004:1

boxes used at various polling stations. Some polling stations used one box for provincial, national and special votes while others used two boxes, i.e. one for provincial votes and one for national votes. Local observers suggested that it would have helped to hasten the counting process if separate ballot boxes for national and provincial elections were made available. Observers also reported that some party agents left the polling station before the verified votes were balanced, noted on the appropriate form and sealed in the untamperable cellophane envelope.

Most observers noted that the voting process proceeded in an orderly, calm manner with voters waiting patiently to cast their ballots. Isolated incidents were reported and promptly dealt with by the IEC. Mr Chris Mepha and the IEC staff in the Free State should be complimented on a job well done.

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## **Election phase – 2004**

***Dr KC Makhetha***  
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The election day, April 14, 2004 came and went. The day was imbued with peace and harmony in the Free State. The night before elections was extremely quiet and the voters waited anxiously for the big day.

The voters came in their numbers, to elect a government of their choice. They stood patiently in excessively long queues, with a clear knowledge for whom they were going to vote. The voters in the Free State experienced no intimidation or any kind of threats; the day was generally smooth.

Voting stations in the Free State, 1036 of them, opened on time. The South African Police Service (SAPS) also started early, around 05h00, to make sure that the venues used for voting were properly secured, especially the voting materials. Presiding officers, as well as voting officials and party agents, were ready for the job ahead of them.

### **Voting**

The process of voting accommodated all registered voters. Where necessary, means had to be devised to ensure that all voters were

assisted. Voters who needed assistance had to be provided with such assistance. For example, physical disability – it is clearly stipulated within the Electoral Act of 1998 that if a voter needs assistance because he or she is physically disabled, the presiding officer can allow someone, who is not an election officer, to assist. The presiding officer can only allow this if the voter has requested assistance from that person and if the presiding officer is satisfied that the person giving assistance is at least 18 years old and not an agent or candidate.

In the case of illiteracy, that is, if a voter is unable to read and requests for assistance, the presiding officer or voting officer must assist that person in the presence of an observer (if available), and two agents (if available). The presiding officer or voting officer must try to maintain the secrecy of the voter as far as possible.

All the people who needed assistance at the voting stations, received help. In some cases all party agents wanted to be involved, blocking and disturbing the voting process and the general management of the voting station. At times the officers assisting voters would talk so loudly that the issue of secrecy was compromised. One real concern was with regard to special votes. Many voters

who were granted special votes, were supposed to vote on 12 and 13 April 2004. Some were even promised transport when others were given assurance, by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) that they could vote from home. The voting stations were open from 12 April, but very few people voted due to lack of information. Most of these elderly people went to vote on the April 14, with other voters. On this day as well, there were still those elderly people who were waiting patiently at home, for the IEC to come. When voting stations closed at the end of voting, these people had not yet been assisted. Those fortunate enough to have access to telephones, managed to call the IEC offices and eventually received assistance.

It is very important to take all registered voters seriously as every vote counts dearly. One vote can make a huge impact and all voters want to be part of decision-making and voting was one special chance to do so.

### **Voting Materials**

Voting materials were closely secured and the materials arrived well on time at the voting stations. Voters were able to differentiate between the provincial and the national list, as well as the ballot boxes into which these ballot papers had to go. There were

enough ballot papers and where necessary, more ballot papers were provided.

The only other concern at some voting stations, particularly in the Motheo district, was the layout, which was not up to standard. The layout at some voting stations caused confusion, creating unnecessary work for voting staff to keep giving directions to voters. The voting booths were also too close together, at some instances, blocking movement of voters. In any case, people made the best of the situation. With all these hiccups, the election process went on smoothly and the general atmosphere at the voting stations was appreciated. All that the people wanted was to vote for their party of choice.

### **Voter Turnout**

The day progressed as planned. Towards closing of voting stations, voters started flocking to voting stations, causing the voting stations to close later than 21h00. In fact, the PEO of the Free State, Mr Mepha, had to announce at a Media Conference that about 76 voting stations (36% of voting stations), would close at midnight. These stations were mostly in the Motheo district. Voter turnout was impressive, roughly 78.88% of the total registered voters in the province. That is a great success and that also

confirms that there was no visible voter apathy. Men and women voted. The youth made a mark in these elections and all voters were excited to be part of decision-making; electing a government that will serve their interests and create opportunities for all. Voters have great respect for this election day. For the first time, ordinary people started to recognise they had the freedom and the responsibility to ensure that democracy thrives.

### **Counting**

When voting was completed, the boxes had to be sealed in the presence of party agents and observers. Soon afterwards, counting started.

The Electoral Act of 1998, stipulates clearly the time and place of counting of votes. The Act stipulates that the votes must be counted at the voting station at which the votes were cast, except when the voting station is a mobile voting station, or in the interest of ensuring a free and fair election, the Commission determines that those votes be counted at another venue.

At most voting stations counting continued smoothly with the exception of Bonamelo voting station at the Maluti-a-Phofung municipality, Eastern Free State. As reported, the presiding officer experienced a nervous breakdown and the

process of counting came to a halt. An IEC staff member had to travel over 200km, in the middle of the night, to ensure that counting continued.

Such situations are never planned but one would expect better contingency measures in future. Cost effectiveness and more empowerment to the officers based at voting stations are important factors to consider.

In spite of all these delays, counting continued and the presence of the auditors to verify the results was satisfying and heightened the levels of credibility, transparency and fairness. Counting was completed in no time and disputes were dealt with thoroughly and to the satisfaction of all the parties involved.

As the counting was completed earlier than expected, there was no need to keep voters in the dark. The people decided who should govern for the next 5 years, and knowing how complex and unpredictable voters can be, that somehow shook the Free State. After the quota was calculated and determined, seats were allocated accordingly, according to the party list system of Proportional Representation. The ANC, as predicted, won the election in the province by an overwhelming majority of 81%. The real shock was to

realise the losses sustained by the NNP. Only .82% of the voters voted for the NNP and the party, which benefited from NNP's loss is the DA. The DA was voted for by 8.47% of the voters in the Free State, an improvement from 5.33 in 1999. The party is definitely growing.

Every stage of the election process went fairly smoothly but there is still a lot to learn and improve upon. The level of political maturity has increased over the years and people were able to express themselves freely without intimidation. Many people still require education on elections and the general politics of South Africa. More training is also needed for presiding officers, voting officers as well as party agents, on how to manage the voting stations and how to handle crises and also how to appreciate the presence of observers and accommodate them in the process.

In general, the people in the Free State are satisfied with the way elections were managed on 14 April 2004. The IEC has done its bit to strengthen democratic principles. It is now a chance for the newly elected provincial and national governments to take the process further, with the support and involvement of the people of South Africa. It is time to get back to work!

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## Western Cape

### CONDUCTING CREDIBLE ELECTIONS WESTERN CAPE

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The most difficult phase in any election is the pre-election period in which voting and counting procedures are designed and tested. However, it is only in the actual process of voting when one can establish whether those logistics were sufficient to run an efficient and credible election. Notwithstanding the outcry of foul play by the IFP, the majority of people feel that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) has delivered, not only a free and fair election, but done so with the greatest admiration from political parties and citizens alike. The maturation of the IEC was overwhelmingly displayed in the 2004 national and provincial elections: both its ability to set up the infrastructure needed for people to go and vote and in capturing and releasing the vote virtually within 24 hours in most areas.

The final results were released on 17 April, three days after the elections and in half the number of days as the previous elections. The Western Cape was no exception.

At 6.30 am on Wednesday 14 April, I walked into the IEC (Western Cape) results centre at Customs House. The place was already buzzing with security guards, IEC officials and the media. Only the 20 booths set aside for representatives of political parties were empty. They were lining up at polling stations ready to cast their vote for themselves. All IEC staff were woken up at 5 am to give them enough time to get to the various voting stations and to open the doors for voters at 7 am. The majority of the 1348 voting stations opened on time and by 7.30 am all were open. I sat glued to the television watching another historic day unfold in the life of South Africa's democracy. SABC 2 beamed in images of voters from Mitchell's Plain, Pinelands, and George. In the previous week there was speculation of a low voter turnout. When the first images came in, people had been lining up to cast their vote since early hours of the morning. By 7 am, long queues were already evident. This was despite the extra polling stations that were allocated for this election. The voters were going to prove the pessimists wrong: they were coming out *en masse*. Although, voter turnout was lower than in 1999, 71% as opposed to 85%, the numbers were still high and the drop in turnout can be

explained more by the "normalisation" of South Africa's democracy rather than by voter apathy.

Although the 16 000 electoral staff in the Western Cape were well trained, they still need to develop a better system to manage long queues. Voting went slowly in places such as Langa and Guguletu, but only 10 polling stations remained opened after 9 pm.

The secrecy of the ballot was not questioned in this province. In Mitchell's Plain the makeshift booths had to be repositioned, but this was an error of layout rather than any serious breach of secrecy. The voting process consisted of a check of the voter's identity document; a check of whether the name was on the voters roll; inking of the finger; receiving two ballot papers, one for provincial and one for national elections; stamping the ballot papers; voting by making a mark on the ballot papers next to the party of choice and then placing it in the ballot box. At some voting stations there were two ballot boxes, at others only one. One can therefore note that care was given to verify the legitimacy of the voter. This prudence comes at the cost of efficiency and can only work well in smaller voting districts: in larger ones it will inevitably cause bottlenecks.



It is obvious that electoral officials can still make mistakes. For example, it has come to light that a 17-year-old was able to vote in the province even though she had informed the officials that she was underage. Courtney Sampson indicated that this was an isolated incident rather than an indication of the possibility of fraud within the province. Here it seems that the confusion set in because citizens are able to register at the age of sixteen but only vote at the age of eighteen. Some weeks ago, Sampson had intimated that if you have 16 000 officials anyone of them can make a mistake. His prognosis seems to have materialised in this case, but the incident does not impact on the legitimacy of the elections in the province.

Several other problems that emerged were those related to people whose names did not appear on the voters' roll, or who were listed as deceased, or when people had no bar-coded stickers in their ID books. These are familiar problems with which the IEC has been able to deal effectively. The IEC also had to face the added pressure of people being allowed to vote for national government outside of their voting districts as well as seeing to it that prisoners exercised their right to a franchise.

There were no incidents of violence reported and

thankfully, the conflict resolution panel had little work to do that day. Complaints from various political parties have been received by the IEC but these are all minor. They consist of allegations that party supporters were swearing or shouting at members of other parties. The DA lodged a formal complaint against the NNP claiming that it contravened the rules by using a loud speaker on a bus in Atlantis. The auditing of the results was conducted at the municipal offices. Results from the rural areas came in far quicker than those of the Cape Metropolitan Area. There were apparently problems with electricity switching off during the counting at some municipal offices. Incidents like these highlight the ironies in a place like South Africa where we utilise the latest technology but its ability to function requires the basics of access to a reliable supply of electricity. The IEC's use of technology during this election was clearly noticeable and contributed to the efficiency, for the most part, of the system. Voters could dial a cell phone number to find out where they had to go and vote. The IEC's computer system was synchronized in such a way that the results were released to the press virtually instantaneously as they arrived in Pretoria. People remained informed throughout the vote counting

as the media continuously released the results. This transparency gave added legitimacy to the elections.

What stands out in these elections is the co-ordination between various institutions and sectors of society, to make the elections a success. Businesses were willing to give their workers a day off so that they could go and vote, the police were prominent at all voting stations, the immigration department set up mobile offices to process temporary identification for people, political parties by and large conformed with the electoral Code of Conduct, the media gave full coverage IN keeping the public informed and keeping a watchful eye for transgression, and the citizens of South Africa conducted themselves in a manner befitting the democratic status of the country. All these factors facilitated the work of the IEC. This election was also marked by the trust placed in the country by international organisations, who, for the first time felt South Africa mature enough to conduct and verify its own elections. Their trust was not misplaced. The mechanics of elections appear to have been near perfected in South Africa. It is now time to commence a re-examination of the electoral system itself. There have been many debates on the need to move away from the party list system to a more

constituency based system in order to increase the accountability of the elected officials. There should be a public discussion on this

issue. The electorate has shown itself quite capable of following democratic procedures. Government, in turn, should follow through

with the trust that the citizens are able to make the judgement as to which candidates would best represent their interests.

## NORTHERN CAPE

### Election Material and Counting

#### How did the IEC Perform in the Northern Cape?

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#### Introduction

The Northern Cape had one of the most successful elections in the country, if not the best. This is partly due to the proactive role played by the provincial IEC personnel.

As stated in the previous issues, this is one of the most neglected of all provinces. It rarely gets into the national newspaper headlines. However an argument can be made that this success was achieved chiefly because this province has few voters compared to the other provinces. Such an argument however, ignores the fact that the same province has its own unique challenges that make it a daunting task to run an election. It had to make huge logistical efforts to harvest relatively few votes scattered across the province. For example, in rural areas there are roughly

two people for every square kilometre.

#### Structural Constraints

This province had to deal with the prospect of planning for approximately 433 591 registered voters, whereas in 1999 there were 374 000 registered voters. We should remember that this is, despite the fact that this province has experienced a population decline (see Census 2001). This is the only province that experienced this negative trend. It is difficult to compare the 1999 and 2004 elections with the first democratic election of 1994 since there was no voter's roll that year. The 1994 election had fewer constraints for those voters who had wanted to vote: one only needed to be a South African citizen and possess a SA identity document. While in 1994, a person had to be on a voter's roll in order to vote and people could only vote where they had registered to vote.

The IEC tried to resolve this dilemma in the 2004 election but there were still some confusion at some voting stations. IEC officials interviewed maintained that the voter education was not

extensive enough and the rule was only introduced late. But the point still stands that if these rules had not been relaxed we might have seen fewer voters turning up to vote than those who actually voted.

The other constraint to potential voters was the timing of the election itself. This election took place in the middle of a holiday month, which meant that a number of potential voters might have been away on holidays. The turnout in 1999 was more than 90 percent of the registered voters, while this year's election had a turnout of approximately 75 percent. It should be remembered this occurred even though the IEC had relaxed the rules concerning where people could vote. There was one high profile case in the province where some employees were fired for not going to work on 14 April, which had been declared a public holiday by the government. These workers were reinstated after the intervention by the Kimberly labour centre inspectors. This is but one of the constraints that some voters, especially poor voters encountered while trying to

exercise their democratic right to vote.

### **Voting Material**

As mentioned earlier, the elections in this province were run relatively smoothly, the hiccups were few and far between. Only one voting station requested extra ballot papers for the provincial vote; the provincial IEC said that it did not even use them. The mobile voting stations also operated smoothly, the only concern was that some voters had to spend a lot of time waiting for them to arrive at their destinations. The provincial IEC said that if there is anything that needs to be resolved, it is that of the mobile voting stations. They felt that it disadvantage certain voters as voting becomes a very long process. This might require the changing of voting districts to suit the needs of voters.

Despite all these difficulties mentioned above, the Northern Cape was the first province to finish counting. The only delay was in the more resourced and denser part of the province, that is, around Kimberly, the capital city of the province. The voting in some stations in Kimberly ended in the early hours of Thursday, 15 April. The counting of votes in the same stations was completed at about 10am. One reason given for this delay was that of fatigue since the electoral staff had spent the whole

night counting leading to some inaccuracies causing the need for a recount each time the numbers did not balance, a problem however, that was not unique to this province.

There was also some degree of satisfaction with the special vote. There were no specific complaints that were mentioned and the provincial IEC believe that this could be attributed to the good training given to the Presiding Officers. For example, Elkin Topkin, an IEC official in Northern Cape, believed that this vote is more confidential than the vote cast at voting stations. There have been complaints in other provinces regarding the abuse of the special vote by certain officials but these incidents were minimal and the IEC did not receive such complaints in this province.

The number of spoilt ballots is also worrying factor. This could be attributed partly to the lack of voter education. It appears that the IEC believes that most voters know what they are doing since this was the country's third democratic election. A sound voter education campaign should become part and parcel of any election, if one has to consider that there are always new voters in an election. These new voters are not only those who have just turned 18 years (the official voting age) but those who had decided not to vote in previous elections for a

variety of reasons. The levels of illiteracy in the country are also very high and according to the 2001 Census, in the Northern Cape 18,2 percent of its population has no education at all. This is just above the national average of 17,9 per cent. This and other factors make voter education a necessity if the country is serious about dealing with structural impediments to voting. The number of spoilt ballots is a worrying factor, although this cannot solely be attributed to illiteracy and lack of voter education. There is likely to be other contributing factors such as the protest vote – people who deliberately spoil their ballots.

### **Conclusion**

The Northern Province experienced few problems and those that came up were dealt with swiftly which could be attributed to the proactive approach followed by the provincial IEC. The election material was sent to respective districts on time. It appears that the IEC learnt a lot from the previous elections. No political parties in the province felt that the ruling party was advantaged at their expense. There are however, areas that still need attention, especially voter education. The fact that there is less media focus on the province has not led to complacency on the part of the IEC providing one of the reasons why the province

was the first to complete the counting of votes. Many people would argue the small population could explain their efficiency but this advantage is at the same time downplayed by the unique logistical problems with which this province has to contend.

## EASTERN CAPE

### The Electoral Process in the Eastern Cape

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#### Introduction

This article discusses the electoral process focusing on campaign issues in the pre-election period and the conduct of the event. It engages the challenges, problems and successes emphasising the role of the key participants, political parties, and the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

It is divided into two sections: the pre-election phase and the period of the voting process itself.

#### Pre-Election Phase

Like in most other provinces of the country, the pre-election phase in the Eastern Cape went down well in terms of preparations by the IEC, the conduct of political parties and Election Day itself. The IEC, as the body charged with the

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organisation and management of the event was largely successful in carrying out its mandate. The most visible manner in which it did so was in terms of the most crucial element of the process: the registration of voters.

The process was undertaken in two forms. The first was the general registration that towards the end of 2003 that included two specific elections drives in December and in January. The second phase of the process was one that was unplanned for: the registration of prisoners.

The first phase involved the normal registration of voters at municipal offices and the two specific publicity drives to encourage more voters to register and participate in the process. The success of this first phase can be assessed by considering the number of voters registered and the pace at which the process progressed. By the middle of January most of the municipal districts in the province had registered respectable registration percentages ranging, on

average, between 50 to 90 percent, with only two districts registering less than 40 percent. At this point, a total of 2.76 million voters had registered out of a total of 3.6 million translating into a healthy 72 percent.

The total registration figure for the province was 2.8 million out of an estimated 3.6 million voters working out at 78 percent. This was slightly higher than the national average of 74 percent.

Prisoner registration was the other facet of this process. This had largely been unplanned as initially certain categories of prisoners were allowed to vote, but after a successful court order, all eligible prisoners were allowed to register and this led to more work for the IEC. However, the provincial IEC undertook its mandate competently in the two days allocated for the process.

In the period, it managed to visit over 90 per cent of the prisons, registering a total of 3.8 thousand prisoners out of a total of 23031 eligible

prisoners. The low registration figure of 17 percent was ascribed to the reluctance of prisoners to register rather than problems encountered by the IEC or its shortcomings. Among the reasons advanced for prisoner's reluctance to vote was that they did not want to be finger printed lest they be linked to unsolved crimes they had been involved in but not charged for.

In terms of preparations for the election, the IEC used 4116 polling stations and deployed a staff component of 42 thousand officials. Of these, 8000 were senior officials consisting of presiding officers and their assistants. Thus, each polling station was on average manned by 10 officials.

Also significantly the voting stations were increased by the addition of a further 1200 new voting stations than in the 1999 election. The IEC was also ably assisted in the process of preparing for the election by the provincial government that set up a task team to assist the commission in undertaking its task. This commission was made up of six MECs, officials from the IEC and some mayors. The task group was charged mainly with providing logistical support in providing infrastructure and services.

These included the improvement of access roads to rural area, the provision of

electricity and water facilities, upgrading of voting stations and the erection of temporary voting stations like tents, where permanent structures were not available.

The other important function of the IEC was to deal with special voting, which was set-aside for the infirm, aged and women in their latter stages of pregnancy. These voters were allowed to make representations to the IEC so that they could be accommodated in terms of voting earlier or to be visited at their homes if they were incapacitated. There were about 200 thousand such requests in the Eastern Cape. There were 23 200 people who had to be visited at home to cast their votes and on the first day of special voting, the IEC reported that it had visited a quarter of these voters.

The security forces also played a critical role in the electoral process. In addition to their normal crime prevention activities, they heightened their security visibility around polling station, concentrating especially on issues like crowd management in case of trouble. In addition, over 2000 reservists were deployed in the different arms of the security forces: police, intelligence and army. The provincial Home Affairs office also assisted the IEC commendably in the management of the election,

especially regarding the provision of bar coded identity documents, which are legally required of each voter.

In order to meet the backlog of applicants who had not yet received their documents, or had lost them and needed replacement documents, the provincial office, in line with a national directive, remained open over the Easter Weekend. With regard to problems experience in this period, it can be noted that they were generally of a minor nature that did not cause any serious disruption. For example, the most serious case involved an IEC presiding officer who was arrested on charges of assault after pistol-whipping a voter who was removing party posters at a polling booth in the Willowdale district of the former Transkei.

The IEC had to expel a presiding officer who flouted electoral regulations by allowing six ineligible voters to vote during the special voting process. Other cases were relatively of an inconsequential nature where voting officials misunderstood or misinterpreted voting regulations and admitted as such. They were cautioned by the IEC and allowed to continue with their duties. The IEC also received complaints from Port Elizabeth that some political parties were allegedly urging

people to vote during the special voting period although they were not eligible. Apparently, voters were being scared by talk that the traffic on election day would be so heavy that they would not be able to vote. It is alleged that these parties aimed to gain from this by influencing such voters to vote for them.

### **Voting Day**

Following the successful registration period and special voting, the actual voting generally went well as in other parts of the country. Over 90 per cent of polling stations were reported to have opened in time in the Eastern Cape.

There were no reports of violence connected to the election. In this regard, the potential threat of disturbances, which had been issued by the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM) to invade white owned farms and discourage people from voting, did not materialise.

The only sad incident occurred when an elderly man died in a queue in Macleantown ostensibly due to a heart attack. A serious threat was also noted in Umtata in the former Transkei as there was a

massive electricity failure on the eve of the elections, leading to fears that this would disrupt the election. This was especially so given that the largest voting station in the province with over 6000 voters - Umtata city hall - is situated in this area. However, this also came to pass without an incident because the IEC indicated that it had spare generators to deal with the problem.

Polling stations were opened at seven in the morning and closed at nine in the evening where it was expected that counting would immediately commence. Voting could continue where there were still people within the precincts of a polling booth if they had arrived before the cut off time. However, there was a snag in terms of counting immediately as there were objections of irregularities raised by the PAC. However, with the benefit of hindsight, this was to have been expected given the clear message by the party in preceding weeks that it viewed the fairness of the election with some dose of skepticism. Thus vote counting started three hours late.

In another case reported in Umtata, there were counting delays as there was a dispute

over a voter who wanted to use an ID book that had no photograph, making it difficult to determine his identity. These were relatively minor incidents and they were competently handled by the IEC. The more serious issues arose after the announcement of the results when the major parties - ANC and UDM - traded accusations over electoral fraud, intimidation and bussing in of supporters.

These can also however be dismissed as being inconsequential, given that eventually all parties endorsed the election. The parties did not only tear into each other but also accused the IEC of incompetence. There was also the mystery of the discovery of an empty and sealed IEC box after the election discarded near Dordrecht, that was later handed to the IEC.

### **Conclusion**

Thus despite minor problems the process of elections in the province was successful. The elections were endorsed by civil society and political parties, themselves attesting to the success of the IEC in managing the process

## Mpumalanga

### **The Election Phase In Mpumalanga Polling Stations, Ballot Boxes And Other Logistics**

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The elections in the Mpumalanga province went smoothly thanks to sterling logistical work by the IEC in the province. With the total number of voting stations increased to 1128, and a total of 17157 electoral officers deployed to these polling stations, the province was determined to overcome some of the widely reported logistical problems experienced in during the 1999 general elections.

Many schools, churches and local community halls throughout the province were turned into polling stations. The IEC in the province was confident that all the stations were well prepared and ready for voting day on Wednesday 14 April. Particular attention was paid by the IEC to the infrastructure.

As a predominantly rural province, Mpumalanga had to deal with some of the most severe infrastructural deficiencies that had the potential to undermine the conduct of free and fair elections. In some of the

rural schools that served as polling stations, poor infrastructure such as lack of electricity, telephones, poor roads, lack of water supply, lack of toilets facilities and poor safety and security provisions posed debilitating problems and these had to be rectified. Therefore, a number of provincial government departments in Mpumalanga played a critical role in ensuring that the necessary infrastructure is in place throughout the province on polling day.

During the period immediately before the elections, the IEC in the province had indicated that the logistical planning and the distribution of supplies had already been completed on schedule. For instance, the logistical provisions for the election were divided into two categories: general items and security items. The 'general items' refer to facilities such as ballot boxes, stationery items, fax machines, telephones, polling booths, generators for providing electricity where necessary and other materials needed for the election.

The 'security items' included ballot papers, stamps, ink, seals for ballot boxes and security tapes. Also, this entailed the securing of buildings to serve as warehouses for storing electoral materials;

cooperation from the security forces and intelligence services in the province to ensure not only the safety of the ballot boxes and ballot papers, but also for ensuring the security of the polling stations and therefore guaranteeing the secrecy of voting on polling day. It appears that the IEC in the province had ensured that all these had been done well before polling day. This was an important improvement in the operations of the IEC compared to the 1999 elections where numerous logistical problems were experienced. In addition, the IEC also ensured that independent election observers and monitors as well as political party agents were provided with the necessary training before being dispatched to the different polling stations throughout the province.

The IEC adhered to a strict schedule in the distribution of the electoral material and other supplies. The materials and other facilities that were categorised as 'general items, were dispatched from the central warehouse in Pretoria to the several provincial warehouses. In the case of the Mpumalanga province, there are three district municipalities that served an important administrative role for the IEC: the Gert Sibande, Ehlanzeni and Nkangala

district municipalities. The provincial warehouses are located within these three districts. Well before election week, the IEC indicated that the electoral materials and other supplies had already been dispatched to these three large provincial warehouses for storage.

However, within each of these large district municipalities are individual smaller municipalities from which the numerous voting districts were demarcated. These are headed by municipal electoral officers (MEOs) whose role is, among others, to ensure the smooth distribution of these electoral materials on schedule. Other warehouses were located in smaller municipalities under the control of MEOs. From the provincial warehouses, the electoral materials were dispatched to the MEO warehouses, before being dispatched finally to the individual voting stations a day before polling day. Clearly, a high degree of organisation and advanced logistical planning and coordination was involved here, suggesting that the IEC had not only learned from previous election experiences, but also that it was determined to overcome the problems experienced in the past.

Technically, such a layered approach to logistical planning and organisation by

the IEC posed a potential danger of over-centralisation and over-coordination.

On the other hand, however, the prospects of overly localised logistical planning processes also posed a danger of local infrastructural problems delaying the process of dispatching electoral materials on time to the respective warehouses. In other words, there was a real danger of things being held up had the logistical planning processes and distribution of supplies been left entirely to the local provincial authorities, especially in the Mpumalanga province where institutional capacity among many local municipalities is usually considered to be below par. However, it appears that the IEC's centralised and highly coordinated logistical operations directed from national head office worked effectively and efficiently in Mpumalanga.

All the logistical control processes were mounted from the Pretoria head office, implying that the danger of some provinces performing below expectations was eliminated. For instance, the IEC monitored progress in the different provinces through a system of 'milestones.' This involved the setting of targets to be achieved and the drawing of a national schedule of activities to be

followed by each provincial office of the IEC at specified times. This enabled the IEC to oversee progress from the centre.

Obviously, it would appear that all the efforts and hard work that went into the planning and operations by the IEC, and the materials and other provisions for the elections in the Mpumalanga province ensured that smooth elections took place. Unlike in the 1999 general elections in the province where various practical problems were experienced, leading to the armed forces being called in to assist at voting stations, this time around things went relatively easily.

All voting stations in Mpumalanga opened on time at 9h:00am. Long queues were reported throughout the province on polling day and in some areas such as Ermelo, voters arrived as early as 2h:00 in the morning. Mpumalanga had a 78% voter turnout, placing the province above the national figure of 76.73% and also among the provinces with relatively good rates of voter enthusiasm. Such positive and clearly enthusiastic voter response suggested that not only did the voter awareness messages by the IEC achieve their effect, but also that the campaigning by the various political parties in the province to encouraged many voters, especially the



youth, to get out to vote on polling day had a positive impact.

Even vote counting proceeded swiftly in all voting stations throughout the province. In fact, Mpumalanga was one of the three first provinces to complete vote counting earlier than the rest. The others were Northern Cape and Western Cape. While the early completion of vote counting partly reflects the smaller registered voter population in the Mpumalanga, compared to some of the more populous provinces, it also partly reflects to some extent, the level of preparedness of the IEC in the province. None of the political parties that contested the election in the province lodged any serious complaints regarding the validity or fairness of the poll or even the vote counting process, implying that the electoral process in general was perceived as legitimate, free and fair by all the political parties involved and therefore that the results were acceptable. This is clearly an important milestone in the direction of consolidating South Africa's democracy not only at national level but also at sub-national level.

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