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good governance learning network

GGLN NEWS
the newsletter for members of the good governance learning network

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Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the GGLN newsletter for 2013!

In this edition we provide you with an update of some of the critical developments and events in the local governance sector over the past few months with an emphasis on the role of the network.

In the Current Affairs section we provide a brief overview of the agenda of the recent NCOP Local Government Week which happened in August. The GGLN Secretariat was invited to attend ad also present at the event which is huge privilege!

SERI in conjunction with the Community Law Centre recently released a research paper which sheds some new light on critical issues in the housing sector. This particular paper created quite a stir in the sector and was featured in a few media outlets.

The Secretariat is happy to announce the first of a regular feature which will profile our new associate and full members a formal introduction to the network. This time around we learn more about our newest full member Khanya-aicdd. A big thank you to the Khanya-aicdd team for the information!

Finally, we announce our latest grantees for the 2013-14 period! Congratulations to all successful applicants!

Please see the next edition of the newsletter which will feature some of the exciting research output produced by our 2012-13 grantees.

Happy reading!
GGLN Secretariat

A full list of GGLN members can be found at our website:
http://www.ggln.org.za/ggln-members

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GGLN News:Current Affairs

The National Council of Provinces, in partnership with the South African Local Government Association, hosted the second annual Local Government Week at the Old Assembly Chamber at Parliament on 6-7 August this year. The GGLN was invited to make an input as a civil society voice.

In recognition of the fact that local government is the key site of delivery and development and is central to the entire transformative project of the democratic South Africa, the NCOP, in partnership with SALGA, deemed it necessary to ensure a platform to promote the advancement and investment in developmental local government. Hence the birth of the Local Government Week initiative, the first of which was held in 2012.

The theme of the 2013 NCOP Local Government week was *Developmental Local Government in a Capable State: Celebrating Achievements and Exploring Opportunities.*

As the Chairperson of the NCOP, Hon MJ Mahlangu, stated in the opening of the session,

"Among the key guiding principles of this theme is to try to locate and define the future vision for local government within the context of the National Development Plan".

The newly appointed Minister of COGTA, Lechesa Tsenoli, delivered the keynote address and used the platform to emphasize the valuable role of women in local governance matters.

"You can't talk about a developmental state unless you address the challenges of the majority of this population i.e. women..." *Minister Lechesa Tsenoli – COGTA*

The Minister called on all stakeholders to support a development agenda that adequately responds to the needs of women. In terms of a system-driven approach the Minister emphasized the need for reliable data that reflects the context and capacities in various municipalities.

The programme of the two-day session allowed for discussion on some of the more critical challenges in the local government sector as follows:

- A review of the vertical division of municipal revenue
- The latest census results from the Statistician-General
- Separation of power and functions at local government level – a differentiated model
- An overview of the State of City Finances Report
- The auditor-general's latest quarterly results for municipalities
- The role of Cities in managing spatial development
- The role of Local Government in stimulating rural development

For more information on these presentations, please contact the GGLN Coordinator via email.

GGLN News:Current Affairs

The GGLN as the voice of civil society at the 2013 NCOP & SALGA Local Government Week

Undoubtedly one of the highlights for the GGLN in 2013 is an invitation by the National Council of Provinces and the South African Local Government Association to make a presentation on the theme of the latest State of Local Governance Publication i.e *Active Citizenship Matters* at the recent *Local Government Week* event.

Mirjam van Donk, chairperson of the GGLN Reference Group, addressed the MPs including the Minister of COGTA on "Voices from below: Building an Active Citizenry at Local Level" and by so doing laid the foundation for a thought-provoking discussion which followed the presentations for that session.

The GGLN presentation aimed to underline the role of active citizenship in the context of the National Development Plan.

In an impassioned message to the special audience, van Donk emphasized that despite South Africa's active and vocal citizenry one of the unintended outcomes of government interventions has been the reduction of incentives to stimulate meaningful public participation.

She called on the state to actively pursue citizen engagement by:

- Actively seeking opportunities for learning, experience, opportunity and advancement

- Working with others in the community to advance development, resolve problems and raise the voice of the marginalized

- Holding government, the community and business leaders accountable for their actions

- Furthermore, the presentation shared the key learnings captured in *Active Citizenship Matters* specifically elaborating on the notion of citizenship as becoming i.e. that it is a process which is organic and broader than a vertical relationship between the state and the average citizen.

The part of the discussion that triggered a few comments and questions from MPs is the concept of state-led development versus civic engagement. It became apparent that finding the balance between the role of the state and that of the community as well as an approach to facilitate the development process remains a sensitive matter. Thus local government structures, being at the coalface of service delivery, have to lead the way and demonstrate best practice models to get this balance right. Success in this regard would go a long way in encouraging senior officials to buy into a development approach that allows for greater balance between the state and the grassroots communities   in terms of influence.

The participation of the GGLN provided a wonderful opportunity to network and share more information about the work of individual member organisations which also generated a great deal of interest from various MPs.

What does the National Development Plan mean for municipalities?

"If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions."

– Albert Einstein

The relevance of the National Development for the local government system certainly does prompt many questions; however, the overarching question can be defined as: how do we make the NDP a practical reality within the space of our municipalities?

This is one of the key issues tabled for discussion at the second NCOP Local Government Week aptly themed, "*Developmental Local Government in a Capable State: Celebrating Achievements and Exploring Opportunities*."

According to a discussion document tabled at session three of the Local Government Week the following themes are relevant in considering the role of the NDP in the municipality context:

1. **Planning in the intergovernmental system**
2. **The stability of the political-administrative interface**
3. **Making the public service and local government careers of choice**
4. **The development of technical and professional skills at local municipality level**
5. **An improvement in inter-governmental relationships across all spheres of government**
6. **A plan to strengthen local government**

However, the planning process, both at intergovernmental level as well as at the community /local government level, is at the heart of the issue. According to SALGA, it is imperative that the five year planning cycles at government level, i.e. the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), are applied as incremental stages towards the broader goals of the NDP.

Yet, even more crucial is the relationship between the MTSF and the IDP planning process. The document emphasizes the need for the vision, local development challenges and the role of local government in development to be considered critically in terms of integration and alignment of the various government plans. Timing as well as roles and functions with regard to planning at the various levels of government are key success factors in ensuring a harmonious process.

Beyond efficient and effective inter-governmental planning the culture within which the actual process and execution of plans happen are equally crucial. While the Municipal Systems Act has been amended to make provision for the demarcation between the administrative and political authorities in the municipality it remains a challenge to implement policy and legislation at local government level.

Eventually it comes down to the individuals steering the various processes and whether local government has the right skill-sets at the right level. One of the challenges of the local government system is the high level of vacant management positions, for example. Even more critical, however, is the motivation of individuals in leadership positions at local government level. It is imperative that management in this context of government, at the coalface of service delivery, has a developmental mindset and an uncompromised commitment to community development.

At the heart of this challenge lies the ability to facilitate the inclusion of the community to allow for a participatory process.

Meaningful public participation must be an inherent part of developmental local government.

Auditor-General of South Africa announces Municipal Audit outcomes for the 2011-12 period

Results announced August 2013	
Number of SA municipalities	278
Number of clean audits	9 (includes zero metros)
Total irregular expenditure	R9.82bn
Total wasteful expenditure	R568m
Past three years	
Clean audits	5%
Number of improved auditees	41
Number of regressed auditees	51

The results of the municipal audit for the 2011-12 financial period reveal crucial information about the management of resources at municipality level. However, what does it NOT tell us:

- How effectively do municipalities employ funds regarded as regular spend?
- How efficient and inclusive is the planning process for the deployment of resources?
- Does a clean audit equate to effective service delivery?
- What is the role of the community in processes designed to ensure accountability?

In October a representative from the Auditor-General of SA's office will address members on these and other matters related to the most recent municipal audit outcomes at a special members' seminar.

Please see a special report on this session in the next edition of the GGLN newsletter.

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GGLN News: Updates from the sector

One of the most valuable outputs of the network is the research material produced by individual member organisations.

In this section we share an excerpt from a recent paper by the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa and the Community Law Centre which challenges some of the perceptions regarding the housing issue in South Africa.

'Jumping the Queue', Waiting Lists and other Myths:
Perceptions and Practice around Housing Demand and Allocation in South Africa

Since 1994 the South African government, through its National Housing Subsidy Scheme (NHSS), has embarked on the large-scale provision of state-subsidised housing to low-income households across the country. Over 2 million state-subsidised houses have been built since 1994, predominantly in typical RDP or BNG housing projects.

The delivery of these houses has been, and continues to be, an important political drawcard in South Africa, forming part of the post-apartheid project to redress the socio-economic injustices of apartheid. Indeed, the 'eradication of the housing backlog' is as much a political target, as a broader developmental goal.

However despite gains since 1994, there is still a substantial 'housing backlog,' which has become one of the reasons for the mushrooming of local so-called 'service delivery' protests across the country in recent years. Housing delivery has become highly politicised and subject to politicking and protest, particularly in the context of medium-to-large state-subsidised housing projects undertaken by national, provincial and local government.

The dominant discourse around housing delivery is that there is a 'waiting list system' which constitutes a housing 'queue', and that people must patiently wait until their name comes up in terms of a 'first come first served' process. Any perversion of this system is referred to as 'queue-jumping', and this term is consistently evoked by politicians and government officials.

Anti-Land Invasion Units have been set up in various municipalities, which operate on this premise and use the language of 'the queue' to justify evicting people from land, houses or buildings they occupy. There is an assumption, often unarticulated, amongst the public that the system in place operates in a rational way.

One reason for this continued myth is that the rhetoric of the NHSS and the modality of the project-linked subsidy programme and RDP housing projects are extremely pervasive. The language used to describe processes put in place to deal with a specific type of housing programme has 'colonised' all other housing programmes, even though there are numerous entry points for allocation into the state's systems of housing delivery besides typical RDP housing projects, including informal settlement upgrading through the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), emergency housing, social housing and Community Residential Units (CRU). It also appears that a very high percentage of people who receive state-subsidised houses engage in informal transfers, either renting or selling their houses for cash, and move back to shacks in backyards or informal settlements to be close to economic and social opportunities.

Housing allocation in South Africa appears to be fundamentally about access to resources and power, and has little to do with individual housing needs The failures of and politicking around housing provision are exacerbated by the fact that the South African housing delivery programme is widely perceived as corrupt. Research shows that these perceptions relate not only to the amount of real corruption that has been exposed over the years, but also to the "clumsiness, opacity, confusion and capriciousness that exists within the housing programme." Although maladministration, fraud and corruption exist and appear to be widespread, it also appears that much of the anger and confusion – which often culminates in protest - arises from a lack of information and explanation of some very technical and banal processes and systems. There is further tension around the fact that, while a particular mode of delivering and allocating houses is entrenched in government and public discourse, over the past years there have been statements made by the Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale, about the government's shift away from delivering subsidised houses (indeed, the delivery of state-subsidised houses has decreased substantially over recent years).

While there are numerous national, provincial and local government policies, systems, tools, databases and processes in place to determine 'housing demand' and ostensibly assist with the allocation of state-subsidised houses to qualifying beneficiaries, this terrain is very opaque and is dominated by myths, misinformation and confusion, which has led to protests, 'illegal' occupation of newly built or unfinished RDP houses, and court cases.

Politicians and officials responsible for housing policy in South Africa, at all levels of the state, have sought to create the impression that housing allocation is a rational process, which prioritises those in the greatest need, and those who have been waiting for a subsidised house the longest. The ideologically (and emotionally) charged concept of 'the waiting list' is emblematic of this.

The reality is that there is no waiting list, whether one conceives of 'the waiting list' as a mechanism which simply allocates housing to those who have waited the longest, or as a slightly more complicated device meant to take special needs and/or geographical location into account. Instead there are a range of highly differentiated, and sometimes contradictory, policies and systems in place to respond to housing need. These range from housing demand databases and the National Housing Needs Register (NHNR) which attempt to respond flexibly to the rapidly changing nature of housing need; lottery systems, which allocate housing to qualifying beneficiaries by chance, in a manner that has nothing to do with need or the length of time spent on the list; and other, highly localised, idiosyncratic and often community-based methods of allocating housing developed to adapt to local situations.

Beyond this there are new housing policies which appear to contradict the logic of a waiting list altogether. There is the emergency housing programme which concentrates on addressing exigent housing crises emerging from eviction or natural disaster. There is also the UISP which takes as its major qualification criterion residence in a set geographical area. Neither of these polices depend on the length of time someone has been on a waiting list. They do not even require beneficiaries to have registered themselves for housing before the beginning of a project. While the informal settlement and emergency housing programmes cater for people irrespective of how long they have been registered for a housing subsidy (or whether they are in fact registered at all), they can at least be said to be targeted towards those in the most acute housing need. But there is also partially state-subsidised rental housing delivered in terms of the social housing, and public rental housing in terms of the CRU programme (although rollout of this programme has been extremely slow, with very few units developed country-wide). Social housing projects do not even claim to prioritise the poorest of the poor, and depend on beneficiaries demonstrating stable employment and income.

Ultimately, even on the official version, there simply is no housing waiting list in the sense that it is widely understood by the public, as well as by many politicians and government officials. There is a range of projects and programmes aimed at responding to the complex nature of housing demand. The way in which people are 'chosen' for these projects is clouded. The process is often shrouded in secrecy, bureaucratic complexity, and some corruption. This lack of transparency frustrates intended beneficiaries (whether they are currently registered or not). It creates the impression that there is more corruption than there likely is, and leads to public protest, often in the form of unlawful occupation of publicly funded and constructed houses.

On top of all of this, there are various unofficial, and often illegal, mechanisms at play. In the first place, there is a great deal of corruption in the allocation of housing, with thousands of public servants managing to get themselves allocated state-subsidised houses which are presumably intended for people in greater need. Secondly, people who would otherwise qualify for state-subsidised housing often take occupation of houses without them being 'officially' allocated. This category includes overtly political 'invasions' of housing, as well as less formal processes which might involve payment of a bribe, or might just reflect administrative error. Thirdly because of the way the Housing Subsidy System (HSS) functions, it may be that there are people recorded as having qualified for and been allocated a house, who have not been given one. Fourth, even after a house has been allocated, it may be sold or informally transferred by poor beneficiaries in need of ready cash and/or wanting to live closer to economic opportunities elsewhere in the country, or within an urban area.

What is needed in response to all of this is an acceptance that housing allocation is not a simple queue-bound process, and that the housing waiting list and 'the queue' are myths. For too long, this kind of language - invoked by government officials, politicians and courts - has been used as a means to shut down any other avenues being pursued by people to gain access to land and housing.
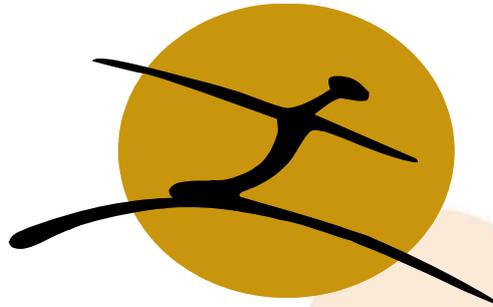
There are in fact multiple entry points into the state system, ranging from being evicted or displaced from one's home by a natural disaster, through applying for and being given a house in a greenfield housing project, through to having one's informal settlement upgraded and, finally, being accepted into a social housing scheme. Public officials, in their words and deeds, need to abandon the language of 'the list' and 'the queue.' These terms should be eradicated from public discourse on housing in favour of a more nuanced way of characterising the rational, appropriate and humane responses to the broad range of housing needs in South Africa, which are not currently catered for by the market.

This is an excerpt from the Executive Summary of the paper **'Jumping the Queue', Waiting Lists and other Myths: Perceptions and Practice around Housing Demand and Allocation in South Africa** *by the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa and the Community Law Centre*

For a copy of the full research paper, including recommendations for the way forward, contact the GGLN Coordinator on ggln@isandla.org.za

The GGLN Secretariat is pleased to announce a regular feature to formally introduce new full and associate members. In this edition we profile Khanya-AICDD a full member of the network as of April 2013.

Founder of Khanya-aicdd

The organization was founded by Ian Goldman

Inspiration for birth of organization

The formation of the organization was inspired by a group of people who had carried out pioneering work on change management in the rural sector in the Free State province in South Africa. The organization has since grown to incorporate community based planning which enables and empowers people in communities to drive local development; sustainable livelihoods approach which is an integrated development method that brings various approaches together to achieve sustainable development and sustainable local economies which is an approach focused on creating sustainable local economic development with the participation of all stakeholders especially local communities and entrepreneurs. The organization was created to transform processes in Africa that addresses poverty in a significant way and to increase impact on people's lives.

Change Khanya wishes to see in the world

Khanya wishes to see a world in which poor people are managing development to improve their livelihoods. The organization is committed to a transformation process which fundamentally addresses socio-economic inequalities and the needs of the poor by seeking sustainable African solutions to African problems, while learning from best practice elsewhere. The change we strive to see will be achieved through participatory planning methodologies that our organization has adopted such as community based planning (CBP) and sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA). CBP has been designed to promote community action and make municipal planning (e.g. Integrated Development Plan in South Africa) more people-centred. The process enables and empowers people in communities to drive local development. The process involves systematic analysis by the local people who then plan development interventions and how to take these forward followed by monitoring, evaluation and learning. SLA forms the central building block in Khanya-aicdd's work on community driven development. It is an integrated development method, which brings various approaches together to achieve sustainable development. It involves an assessment of assets, opportunities and vulnerabilities and policies, institutions and processes.

Geographic Scope of work

The organization carries out work in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana, Uganda, Lesotho and Kenya.

Black Sash announces new National Director

The Black Sash has announced the appointment of a new National Director in the form of Ms. Lynette Maart. We hereby officially welcome her to the GGLN family and wish her well as she embarks on her new journey.

Herewith the introduction by the Black Sash team:

"Lynette is known to several of the trustees and has worked with some of them. She comes to us with a breadth of experience of the local, provincial and national NGO and heritage sectors. Her work as an organizational development practitioner has included international work and a broad experience of organizations in the South African land sector which contributes to her overall commitment to addressing the imbalances – including gender challenges – of resource distribution in our country."

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The GGLN Secretariat is pleased to announce the successful grant applicants for the network's 2013-14 grant period:

Learning Event Grants:

Afesis-Corplan	A seminar/roundtable event on Youth, Democracy and Social Media
The Black Sash	A one day workshop – To empower the communities from Saldanha and Graafwater to take their CMAP learnings further
BESG & PlanAct: Joint Application	**BESG**: Citizen Monitoring IDP projects versus their immediate Development Needs in Umgungundlovu District **Planact**: Strengthening community participation in informal settlements upgrading. A case study of Spring Valley informal settlement

Research Grants:

BESG	A desktop study: Strengthening Integrated Development Planning (IDP) deliberative processes through community based planning
Black Sash	A test of community resilience – lessons and insights in addressing and advocating for water, health and sanitation challenges in a rural Western Cape community/or communities.

Special Learning Exchange Grant:

Democracy Development Programme	A national meeting focused on: "The Politics of Public Participation: towards deepening our knowledge and understanding of citizen mobilization – a South African perspective"