

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 “The State of Local Governance” Publication draws attention to the need for responsible and responsive local governance to realise the legal and developmental mandate for local government, and to transform relationships within municipalities (i.e. between all actors and structures, including municipal Councils and administrations and local communities). The papers in this publication share experiences of the manifestations of a lack of responsibility and responsiveness in local governance and provide evidence for what this means for local communities. In contrast, the papers motivate for meaningful citizen engagement in planning, implementation, monitoring and oversight of local development as a precondition for accountability and responsiveness to be institutionalised. A recurring theme in the publication is the need to instil a public service ethos, which is often seen to go hand in hand with value-driven leadership.

In the introductory paper, the GGLN Secretariat presents guiding concepts of responsible and responsive local governance and draws on a GGLN members’ meeting to enrich our understanding of what this means and how it manifests itself in practice. This discussion sets the basis for a conceptual framework of a system of governance to emerge – one that is based on the following four dimensions: values and principles; systems, procedures and practices; capability; and, leadership. The paper applies this model to a local municipality to examine the extent to which institutional mechanisms foster responsibility and responsiveness throughout the municipality. The paper argues that responsible and responsive local governance can only become a reality when core values such as accountability and integrity drive the functioning of the municipality and determine what capability the organisation needs to live out these values. Furthermore, it requires leadership that proactively pursues and safeguards these values in all aspects of municipal functioning and in personal actions. It concludes that embedding responsibility and responsiveness in local governance is, in many respects at least, akin to a change management process.

The experience of and response to the xenophobic attacks in Durban earlier this year are recorded by the Democracy Development Program (DDP). This paper describes the DDP’s response as part of a broader discussion on the civic reaction to the attacks. Comparing this to the municipality’s response to the xenophobic violence, DDP argues that the City’s response was short-sighted and inadequate, largely due to a poor relationship between the City and civil society organisations. As a result, the response was fragmented, uncoordinated, delayed and lacking in impact. DDP calls on local government to support and build active citizenship as a means to strengthen state responsibility for and its response to thorny social issues.

Afesis-corplan highlights the great potential for the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process to enable more responsive planning to take root. Furthermore, the paper argues that systematic citizen engagement with local planning processes can deepen responsible implementation. When citizen engagement in development planning is weak or absent, development processes are undermined. The paper suggests tools and processes, which embody responsive planning and responsible implementation, and demonstrates that there is room for these tools and processes to be applied in strengthening the IDP process.

The *In Profile* by the Built Environment Support Group (BESG) focuses on multi-stakeholder partnerships to foster shared responsibility and proactive responses to local development challenges and opportunities. It narrates a particular experience of such a partnership as an innovative model to bring forth sustainable development.

The Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) presents the struggles of four informal settlement communities in Johannesburg and the tactics these communities employ to negotiate for development and informal settlement upgrading. These communities compete with many interests on the urban development agenda and communities realise the power of protest, as a means of holding the state accountable for development, at strategic political moments. However, when poor urban communities use protest action as a last resort in their arsenal of tactics, their actions are often criminalised by the state. SERI calls for the state to recognise community-initiated modes of engagement with the state as being legitimate and for dissent and contestation to be understood as expressions of communities' willingness to hold the state to account.

The Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) explores the extent to which informal settlement upgrading is informed by community knowledge and engagement. The paper argues that the shift to this new approach is motivated by a renewed political commitment to upgrading informal settlements as a means to address historical injustices as well as a failed historical housing programme. Central to the renewed approach is a commitment to capacitate and empower communities through the upgrading process, with a proportion of the budget set aside for this purpose. Reviewing informal settlement upgrading projects, the paper concludes that housing projects are often disguised as informal settlement upgrading projects and that these initiatives lack community participation, capacity building and empowerment.

Isandla Institute examines community-based monitoring as an emerging opportunity and participation tool that citizens can use to enhance accountability and responsiveness in local government. The type of community-based monitoring that the authors advocate for is embedded in citizen agency, where communities are the main agents of change. The paper explores two examples of community-based monitoring: one of a grassroots movement and the other initiated by the state. The paper argues that both communities and the state need to be well capacitated for community monitoring processes to be effective and for citizens to make use of the tool as a means to demand accountability and action from the state.

The *In Profile* by the Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (PCRD) advocates for the potential of audit committees and municipal public accounts committees to enhance financial oversight and accountability. These committees can advance responsible local governance through improved financial reporting and accountability to citizens, and overcome the incidence and challenges of widespread fraud, waste and irregular spending in municipalities across South Africa. An engaged citizenry is critical to the success of such innovative systems.

The Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE) presents the challenges of a dual system of governance in rural areas. By focusing on rural communities in the Eastern Cape, the conflation of roles between traditional authorities and municipalities is shown to culminate in a series of contestations, which generate confusion about the point of call for service failure. This duality also results in challenges to the legitimacy of leaders and an inability of leadership to collaborate, which in turn severely hinders rural development. These outcomes of a dual system of rural local governance further limit the scope for communities to demand their rights to services, and to ensure government is accountable and responsive to their needs. The paper calls for a reassessment and realignment of traditional jurisdiction and ward boundaries to allow for responsible and responsive governance to emerge in rural areas.

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The *In Profile* by DDP describes how citizen empowerment enables citizen-driven development. The case study of the KwaMakhutha Community Foundation shows that enabled communities build alliances with key stakeholders, identify and establish responsibilities with mutual parties, develop and hold leadership to account, and harness community commitment to its development projects. These processes inculcate a culture of active citizenry among community members and set the stage for a system of responsibility and responsiveness to develop from within the organisation.

The conclusion revisits the four dimensions of the governance system, namely: values and principles; policies, procedures, systems and practices; capability; and, leadership. It argues that concomitant changes in each dimension are important to shift towards the realisation of responsible and responsive local governance. At the heart of these changes is the need for a public service ethos, that becomes manifest in the conduct and practices of the municipality and its representatives. The 2016 municipal elections present all stakeholders with both an opportunity and a responsibility to help bring about responsible and responsive local governance.