

Democracy and Governance

Democracy and Governance (D&G) explores contributions to and constraints upon democratisation throughout South Africa and the African continent. It evaluates the policies and impact of government, and of business and civil society with regard to their capacity to reduce inequality and poverty. It also focuses on research regarding the empowering of communities to promote local, national and regional development.

D&G has a complement of 13 specialist researchers in several of the HSRC's centres.

Current and recently completed projects

Empowerment through economic transformation offers a critical assessment of empowerment, recognising its dilution and even its co-optation by opponents of redistribution. It argues for an empowerment nurtured by democracy, governance and economic justice. It shows that whatever the limitations of the new democracy, there is evidence that more people than ever before trust government and identify with the South African nation.

Undertaken in collaboration with other research programmes and external consultants, the intention of Gauteng's housing policy and programmes was to contribute to better implementation. A series of reports centred around the formulating of indicators which could be used to assess the results of past policy; the implications of urban apartheid in terms of the housing indicators; the review of whether the Gauteng housing policy has given effect to the housing code and national housing policy announced in 1994; and proposals for enhancing the effectiveness of the programme and building capacity within the Department of Housing.

A publication, *The state of the people: Citizens, civil society and governance in South Africa, 1994-2000*, charts the growth of public satisfaction since the democratic transition. Although fewer people are involved in party politics, participation in civil society is said to have increased.

However, Public participation in democratic governance in South Africa suggests that South Africans are failing to take full advantage of the opportunities that are provided by newly-established institutional channels for participation. This result came about through analyses of case studies of public participation in the National Economic Development and Labour Council, legislatures in the formulation of the budget, legislative processes generally, and in the integrated development planning process of local government.

In a related initiative, the North West provincial government commissioned a study to determine levels of public participation in its legislative processes. Quantitative and qualitative surveys revealed considerable apathy and highlighted the need to promote and market opportunities for public participation.

Shifting African identities, was the second of three volumes that looked beyond South Africa. Situating its subject in the ferment of South Africa having rejoined Africa, the collection analyses identities in Africa as they are refracted through language, ethnicity and religion; the enduring effects of Western colonialism; and the shifting boundaries of conflict throughout the continent.

Another publication, *Lesotho 2000*, provided a survey of public perceptions of politics in Lesotho. Although recording surprisingly high levels of trust in public institutions given the disturbances

in that country in 1998, the study recorded a high level of political apathy. Public opinion surveys were also conducted in South Africa, Zambia and Swaziland, analyses of which will be published in due course.



A further project, undertaken in partnership with Tsimeni Consulting, provided an evaluation of the Skills development programme for members of parliament and provincial legislatures. It was funded by the European Union Parliamentary Support programme.

Major work is also being conducted in the sphere of local government, with particular focus on the assessment of the implications of integrated development plans for municipal administration and budgeting. Individual staff members have been seconded to such bodies as the *South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET)*, the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the United Nations programme for Local Government Capacity Building, facilitating close collaboration with each of these organisations.

Recording liberation history: Underlying any serious understanding of the present state of democracy is an exploration of the historical process that paved the way to South Africa's transition. D&G is a major participant in the leading initiative to record liberation history being undertaken by SADET. It also offers research assistance to former President Nelson Mandela as he writes memoirs of his time as head of state and government.

Future developments

Envisaged projects for the forthcoming year include work on commonage development in the Free State and Northern Cape; farm worker development in the Free State; inter-governmental relations; the impact of Lesotho's new mixed member proportional electoral system; Mr Nelson Mandela's role in conflict resolution in Burundi; the state of the nation; indigenous knowledge systems; local government; and monitoring and evaluation.

In pursuit of research excellence and the stimulation of public debate, D&G continues to contribute to national and international conferences, offer speakers, hold seminars and publish widely.

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