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Focus groups report 2008

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by

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Human Sciences Research Council

All correspondence should be directed to: Dr Mbithi wa Kivilu

Tel: 012 302 2541, Fax: 012 302 2525, JmKivilu@hsrc.ac.za

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUTS
5799

Pretoria Office
134 Pretorius Street, Pretoria, 0002, South Africa. Private Bag X41, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa.
Tel: +27 12 302 2532 Fax: +27 12 302 2535

Cape Town Office
Plein Park Building, 69-83 Plein Street, Cape Town, 8001, South Africa.
Private Bag X9182, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa. Tel: +27 21 466 7804 Fax: +27 21 461 1255

Durban Office
750 Francois Road, Intuthuko Junction, Cato Manor, Durban, 4001, South Africa.
Private Bag X07, Dalbridge, 4014, South Africa. Tel: +27 31 242 5400 Fax: +27 31 242 5401

www.hsrc.ac.za

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Mr Ronnie Mmotlane
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study background and methodology

The report presents findings of 18 focus group discussions (FGDs) held with selected traditional leaders, community leaders, local government officials, people with disabilities, youth, old people and senior citizens from the selected provinces (KZN, GT, FS, NW, LP & WC). To ensure impartial feedback, two group discussions from each category were conducted within different provinces. Multiple groups are normally needed to determine overall patterns and trends. Furthermore, to ensure full participation from all participants, each group was restricted to between eight and ten individuals. The group discussions lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours. FGDs were meant to give different groups an opportunity to raise issues of concern and to share lessons learned from previous elections. Specifically, focus groups were conducted during the pre-election phase to test people's understanding of the role of the IEC in the country's democratisation process as well as their opinions on the state of political culture with respect to voting behaviour in South Africa.

General economic assessment

Participants from various groups commonly agreed that the most visible changes took place during the first five years of democracy. Participants cited both positive and negative changes that have taken place in their own lives and in their communities. Notably, the extent of the change was however, contested amongst most of the groups. Even though views were in most cases unique to specific groups, there were significant similarities. Lack of service delivery was a recurring theme through all groups and was seen as the main reason for people's lack of interest in voting. Participants perceived that some pockets of society were still without access to basic services such as proper housing, water and sanitation. Participants in rural groups (traditional and community leaders) complained about bad roads which were an impediment to those who want to vote during rains. Blind participants in the disabled group echoed this comment and further argued that gravel roads and trenches are a serious hazard for them when walking.

The high rate of unemployment was similarly mentioned in most of the groups as an area of government failure. Diverse arguments emerged from coloured, African and white participants, but all perceived their race group to be discriminated against in terms of access

to various opportunities. Elderly participants in Western Cape were very bitter about the current Black Empowerment policies. They perceived these policies to be exclusionary and disempowering to coloured youth, who they claimed were not being employed anywhere. This was echoed amongst the white male and female youth, who felt that this policy might force them to emigrate. However, the African male youth felt that the benefit of the policy had not yet reached people at their level. They maintained that they had not witnessed any benefits accrue on people like themselves because wealth was still concentrated amongst whites. They also complained that many political and community leaders were concerned more with self-enriching than serving the people. Local government leaders maintained that even though there were employment generation initiatives, they were plagued by the corrupt practices of people like councillors. Nepotism and corruption were cited as being common amongst local government officials.

There were comments in most of the groups insinuating that the "rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer", with benefits only accessible to the privileged. Further they observed that benefits and resources were not equally distributed as ordinary citizens tended to be forgotten by those in power after being elected. Local government leaders further noted that at times service delivery was linked to an area's political affiliation. Parties tended to prioritise the needs of their political strongholds at the expense of other areas.

Other areas where negative changes had been experienced were rising food prices and the legal system, which was said to protect the rights of criminals rather than those of the public. The education system was a contested topic, some arguing that it has improved, and others believing that it was worsening because it places too much weight on children's rights and produces learners who are ungovernable. The high rate of pregnancy amongst youth was attributed to lack of discipline in schools. Some government initiatives were seen to be having unintended negative effects. For instance the Child Support Grant was seen by some as 'encouraging teenagers to fall pregnant'. Other participants argued that people should be educated rather than issued with hand-outs such as RDP houses, in order to overcome the dependency culture.

On a positive note, participants acknowledged improved access to health care services, greater freedom of speech and greater recognition and awareness of people with special needs. These were seen as positive changes and the outcome of voting. Views on women

empowerment policies were seen differently by males and females. Whereas females commended them, males thought they were disempowering to them.

Identification documents for election purposes

Almost all participants were in possession of green-bar-coded identity documents. Youth participants particularly reported that securing identity documents was very easy as they applied for them through their schools. Most of the focus group participants did not report experiencing any problems in securing their identity documents. Some, however, knew of people in their communities who had struggled to get identity documents. Complaints in this regard largely centred on long queues at Home Affairs offices; the inefficiency and unprofessional manner of officials; an absence of clear signage, and the length of time taken to process identity documents. Some participants argued that the Department of Home Affairs was only effective during the period leading up to elections, and there were suggestions that ID campaigns should rather be a continuous and ongoing process.

Some participants in the local government officials and traditional leaders groups were very suspicious of Home Affairs and argued that it was sometimes biased in the processing of identity documents. The perception was that it gives preferential treatment to residents of areas that were strongholds of their preferred political party. Furthermore, traditional leaders reported that some identity documents disappeared from district Home Affairs offices and that this was more frequent during elections.

Alternatives to the use of identity documents during registration and voting were suggested. These included birth certificates which already bore a person's identity number, passports and drivers' licenses. Most participants however cautioned against use of the latter, arguing that they were prone to forgery.

Participation of other groups in voting and elections

Participants across all groups understood the distinction between national, provincial and municipal elections, though some participants in the youth group admitted that they sometimes get confused over the distinction. Others said that their community members did not fully understand the distinction, and appealed for further voter education campaigns. There was consensus amongst participants that voting was important. When asked about

benefits of voting, white adult males expressed the concern that they were a minority and that therefore their votes would not make a difference. Community leaders felt that there were some benefits even though their extent was contentious. There were also substantial pockets of participants from various groups who argued that voting only benefited a privileged few thus neglecting the masses.

Extent to which people are interested in politics

Participants from the groups of the elderly, and from the traditional and community leaders, indicated that people were still interested in voting, though the level of enthusiasm had significantly declined. Reasons for the declining interest in voting included: lack of service delivery; lack of trust in politicians; lack of change or improvement in people's lives, and the selfish behaviour of some leaders. However, there were still some participants from various groups who saw voting as an opportunity to change current deficiencies in the political system for the better.

Views about participation in voting and politics

Participants from various groups indicated roles they were currently playing in their respective communities. Traditional leaders indicated that they went house to house teaching people in their communities about the importance of participation in elections. They however felt that they were not recognized and acknowledged by the national government. In similar vein, local government leaders felt that their role was undermined by government officials who never consulted them. Some felt that government officials at times offerred support and preferential treatment only to councillors of their own parties.

Suggestions that might help the IEC encourage people to vote

Traditional leaders proposed that a day should be allocated for people with special needs. Some suggestions included: IEC officials visiting house to house to register those who for reasons of illness could not go to the voting stations. This opinion was also strongly expressed by participants in the group of people with disabilities. Another suggestion was that there should be voting stations exclusively reserved for voters with disabilities. Educating communities about the importance of voting also came up in almost all group discussions. Community leaders were concerned that the IEC should manage the intensity of political intolerance as it might discourage some people from voting.

Increasing the number of voting stations was also suggested as another way that might encourage people to vote. This might also eliminate the need for transport which was highlighted in almost all groups as a barrier. Participants in the group of people with disabilities suggested that there should be Braille versions of all election material including ballot papers.

Participants in the local government leaders group proposed that the IEC should extend its role to include monitoring and evaluation after the elections in order to ensure that all parties fulfilled promises they make during their campaigns.

Views about people who do not vote

There was wide agreement across different groups that everyone should vote. Some, especially community leaders, argued that it was the only way to effect change in the country. For some, especially local government and traditional leaders, voting was seen to be important as it was linked to the financial allocations of different provinces.

Participation of special groups in voting and politics

Participants in the adult, traditional leaders and local government leaders groups believed that no special attention was paid to the requirements of those with special needs. There were complaints that most voting stations even lack facilities for the disabled such as ramps. It was suggested that the IEC should consider having mobile voting stations, especially in remote areas. Another suggestion was that the IEC should publicize information related to special votes so that people could make use of such facilities.

There was general acknowledgement that youth were no longer interested in voting. Different reasons were given: lack of employment; the perception that government did not care about their needs; coloured youth feeling discriminated against by affirmative action; government's failure to deliver on its promises and perceived absence of benefits after voting.

Voter education

Almost all participants across all groups indicated that they had never participated in a voter education programme, with the exception of participants in the group of people with disabilities.

They emphasized the importance of continued voter education to prevent people from forgetting about the importance of the process. Notably, some participants suggested that the IEC could use voter education as a platform to teach communities about its mandate and neutrality during elections. This idea was in most cases sparked by the argument that there were those who saw the IEC as an extension of the ANC.

Recent voting experience

Most participants shared what they believed were their positive experiences; overall they rated previous elections better than the first, 1994 national elections. Traditional leaders complained about late opening of some voting stations. Most participants perceived that the last elections were free and fair, and acknowledged that people were able to vote for their preferred political parties. Some participants in the local government leaders' group however felt that the IEC was not always impartial.

As far as voting irregularities were concerned, participants amongst the traditional leaders reported that they had heard about boxes said to have gone missing. They believed that everything went well inside the voting stations, but suspected some foul play when ballot papers were being transported to regional offices. Their suggestion was that all votes should be counted in the different voting stations and only results should be communicated to the regional offices.

Participation in groups and political demonstrations

Participants from the various groups acknowledged the importance of joining community groups. They mostly cited social reasons for joining groups: sharing experiences and information motivate one another; developing a sense of community; and increasing security in communities. Participants in conservative and rural communities such as the traditional and community leaders said that they join groups like self-help associations and community organisations in order to obtain economic support. This view was also prevalent amongst

participants in the group of people with disabilities. The groups of white people said that white people traditionally preferred not to meet in groups or participate in rallies. White participants felt excluded from national holiday celebrations and said that they did not have much to celebrate.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings of the 18 focus group discussions (FGDs) held with selected traditional leaders, community leaders, local government officials, people with disabilities, youth, old people and senior citizens from the selected provinces. Focus groups we conducted between November and December 2008. One aim of the FGDs was to give the different groups an opportunity to raise issues of concern and to share lessons learned from previous elections. Specifically, focus groups were conducted during the pre-election phase to test people's understanding of the role of the IEC in the country's democratisation process as well as their opinions on the state of political culture with respect to voting behaviour in South Africa. Moreover, focus groups are a good method of generating new ideas and suggestions which may be of assistance to the IEC in achieving an improved electoral process.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Focus groups are group discussions exploring a specific set of issues. A group is referred to as a focus group because it involves a collective activity such as debating a set of questions. Unlike interviews, where the interviewer asks a respondent a question and expects a response, the focus group researcher poses a question or statement to the entire group and encourages the participants to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange experiences on the issues under discussion, and comment on each others' experiences and opinions.

Focus groups are therefore a socially orientated research procedure. As people are social beings who like to interact with one another, the focus group provides an ideal environment in which they can state their opinions, listen to what others think about their opinions and listen to the expressed opinions of other participants. Participants often change their opinions after listening and reflecting on what others say. This is not possible in the one-to-one interview situation of survey research.

A total of 18 FGDs were conducted with eight different target audiences from various parts of the country. To ensure that all participated fully, each group was restricted to between eight and ten individuals. The group discussions lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours. To ensure impartial feedback, two group discussions from each category were

conducted within different provinces. Multiple groups are needed to determine overall patterns and trends.

Focus groups were constituted as follows:

Table 1: Focus group discussions

Group	Province	Age	Gender	Population Group	Language
Youth	GP	15-20	Male	Black	English
Youth	GP	15-20	Male	Black	English
Youth	GP	21-29	Female	White	Afrikaans
Youth	GP	21-29	Female	White	Afrikaans
Elderly	WC		Female	Coloured	Afrikaans
Elderly	WC		Male	Coloured	English
Local Government Leaders	KZN		Mixed	Indian, Black, White	English
Local Government Leaders	KZN		Mixed	Indian, Black, White	English
Traditional Leaders	KZN		Male	Black	isiZulu
Traditional Leaders	KZN		Mixed	Black	isiZulu
Community leaders	LP	30-70	Mixed	Black	Setswana
Community Leaders	LP	30-70	Mixed	Black	Setswana
People with disabilities	NW		Mixed	Black	Setswana
People with disabilities	NW		Mixed	Black	Setswana
Adults	FS	36-59	Female	White	English
Adults	FS	36-59	Male	White	English

The FGDs provided the ideal opportunity to explore with community members, including the youth, why young people are reluctant to participate in politics. Engaging with community leaders may also enlighten us about the effectiveness of voter education campaigns. These are just two examples of issues that were explored during FGDs. A focus group discussion guideline was developed to guide each group in its discussions. The groups were facilitated by moderators and all discussions were tape recorded, with the exception of one where the tape recorder was not functioning.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Traditional Leaders: KwaZulu-Natal

3.1.1. Introduction

Two focus groups with traditional leaders comprising ten participants each were conducted in KwaZulu-Natal. Each focus group was made up of participants aged between 43 and 68

years. Both groups were predominantly male, with only one female traditional leader participating.

3.1.2. General economic assessment

Most respondents in the traditional leader groups perceived the economic situation in South Africa as worsening. Some explicitly stated that the country is moving in a totally wrong direction, meaning that it is not progressing according to their expectations. One of the comments was that *"instead of going forward, the country is moving backwards"*. Various participants said that *"conditions are worse than during the apartheid system"*. When the moderator probed further to understand why they were negative about the economic status of the country, various comments relating to their local experiences emerged. They shared a common feeling that they were discriminated against and excluded from the current political system, with no acknowledgement by the national government.

The participants then made general assessments based on their local experiences about how their quality of life has changed. One participant said *"look at our fields, they are dead. We used to plough for ourselves back then. The youth could also get jobs, but look at these days; jobs are really hard to come by"*. They were concerned that they are not getting any support from the government in terms of the infrastructure and funding that would enable communities to improve their agricultural projects. A further anecdote went *"We live off the elderly: their grants - who themselves do not get much. To make matters worse, it's very difficult to even plough because fields do not have fences. We do not have tools"*. Another participant added referring to carts, *"the tool reportedly costs around R1900.00 for a two wheeled. It's clearly impossible to afford that given their source of income of R940.00. We have the land but we do not have the resources to use it. Government is failing to support us get all the necessary resources"*. Several other participants agreed, citing their experiences of government's lack of support and of deficiencies in service delivery.

Another participant recalled *"three years ago they came and ploughed the land and promised us a place to store our produce in and to find us a market to sell to, which they failed to do. We had to fend for ourselves and tried selling our produce but we could only find a buyer willing to pay R30.00 per bag which actually costs around R335.00. The remainder got*

rotten on the fields, so the government failed us. There are high levels of poverty so the economy cannot be doing well".

One traditional leader said he had not seen any benefits from voting yet and as a result felt that it is difficult as things stand to convince communities to vote. "*The government has done absolutely nothing for us*", he lamented. "*We do not gain anything from voting*", another added. There was general agreement that voter apathy is rooted in lack of service delivery. Having presented these very negative perceptions, one of the traditional leaders said *"I'd like to let you know that we will still vote although we have not seen any change in the country".*

3.1.3. Identity document and registration issues

Traditional leaders from the two groups indicated that they possessed identity documents and assured the moderator that they would definitely register on 8 and 9 of October 2008. They however were concerned that some people in their communities were still without identity documents even though they had applied. This was captured in such statements as, *"we have a problem though because our people do not have IDs and that is a big problem", "Nongoma has a problem", "But the problem is with Home Affairs because they can't seem to manage", "even those who have applied wait a life time to get their IDs back".* This seemed to be a general concern as most traditional leaders indicated that they were experiencing the same problem in their various villages. In expressing their frustration with the Department of Home Affairs' inefficiency, one of the traditional leaders said, talking of identity documents with errors," *sometimes they come back with wrong surnames and if you try to fix it, it will never come back".*

Participants were suspicious about the disappearing identity documents in the Department of Home Affairs. They claimed that this becomes more pronounced approaching national and provincial elections. A participant added that *"if you lose your ID you lose your right to vote*". One of the participants recalled that during the 2004 elections someone broke into the Nongoma District Home Affairs offices and stole all identity documents.

Participants in the traditional leader groups reported that they tried continuously to ensure that everyone aged 18 and above has an identity document, not just for voting but because of its intrinsic importance. They mentioned various ways in which they assist their communities

to secure identity documents despite problems with the Department of Home Affairs. *"My house is now a store room for IDs"* one of the participants mentioned. He transports people from his village to town where they apply for identity documents. He then follows up with the district Department of Home Affairs and once they are ready, he also collects them on his peoples' behalf to deliver to their homes. He also collects all deficient identity documents to be corrected by Home Affairs.

Given all the challenges, focus group participants suggested various alternative documents that could be used for identification during registration and elections. They suggested birth certificates for those who have applied but have not received identity documents. One participant suggested that special letters from head office should be granted to people who are waiting for identity documents to enable them to register and vote. They emphasised that many people would like to vote, but that the challenge was that those without identity documents would be excluded from the process.

Another participant said some of his community members are not registered, firstly, because applications for identity documents take too long to be processed; secondly, in most cases they contain incorrect information such as wrongly spelt surnames; thirdly, though the government promised to send mobile Home Affairs offices to rural villages this never happened. They highlighted lack of access to the services of the Department of Home Affairs as a serious barrier to obtaining identity documents.

Another participant said that some of his people applied for identity documents in February and had not yet, in November, received them: *"Sometimes I suspect that this is done intentionally just so that my people do not vote. I ask that the government must not discriminate against us just because certain areas are strong bases of certain political parties: it is an individual's right to choose which political party s/he supports. The ruling party should not discriminate the same way the apartheid government did. Everyone must be afforded their right to vote. So they should stop this thing of choosing areas to give IDs to".*

Traditional leaders also complained about the volume of documentation and information required for a person to apply for an identity document. They argued that in some cases people who were born out of wedlock have difficulties locating their parents and getting them to agree to help them obtain an ID. They all perceived these problems to be rooted in the

inefficiencies of the Department of Home Affairs. They said that as much as their local Home Affairs office in Nongoma is not that effective, the big problem lies with the national department in Pretoria. In most cases local officials indicate that applications have been made, and that they are awaiting feedback from Pretoria.

Most participants were opposed to the use of green bar-coded ID books for registering as voters and to permit voting during the elections. Partly this was based on their thinking that it restricts people from voting just because they do not have identity documents. There were also concerns that some people still have the old identity documents. There was consensus that people are not just holding on to the old identity documents without reason, but rather fear that if they surrender them and apply for new ones they will never get them.

Traditional leader respondents were further asked how they encourage people from their communities to register and participate during elections. The first response of one group was *"oh, you mean us working without getting paid?"*. It is notable that participants from both groups felt that they were working very hard to ensure that as many people as possible from their communities vote, but that their hard work is neither recognised nor compensated. When the same question was posed to the other group, one participant said to the moderator, *"let me ask a question: since you have been sent to the traditional leaders to see what they are doing to encourage people to vote, what are traditional leaders getting in return?"* One participant further explained that recently he caught people tearing up one party's campaigning posters. He said he had to discipline them, thus putting his life in danger: *"What ... do I get for my troubles?"* he lamented.

They all agreed that they usually encourage people to vote by telling them that it is for their own good as citizens of South Africa. One said *"I tell people to vote so that the government will know how many people are living in poverty out here"*. They all acknowledged however that people are not as enthusiastic about voting as they were during the 1994 elections.

3.1.3. Participation in voting and politics.

When asked whether they were able to distinguish between the national, provincial and municipal elections, they all responded positively and indicated that their communities also understand the different types of election. They explained that national elections involve

choosing the president of the country, compared to provincial elections where premiers are elected. They were also aware that councilors are elected during municipal elections. Notably, they were not interested in explaining the differences between the elected government and the dominant political party. They also explained that they are much closer to the provincial government.

To the question of whether communities are still interested in voting, both positive and negative responses emerged from the groups. Some traditional leaders said that people do not a see a need to vote as they have not witnessed any change in their lives and have not benefited in any way whatsoever. Another participant said *"a bag of maize meal costs R300 and in my own household we need two bags for a month. So why vote, because the government is not helping us? I am feeding three young males, just because they cannot get jobs"*.

Participants kept emphasising that they have lost trust in the government and as a result it is becoming very difficult for them to continue to encourage people when even they cannot point to positive results. In general, most respondents were dissatisfied about service delivery in their own communities and argued that the quality of life has worsened. All participants said the numbers of people going to vote had decreased, though *"mine* [my people] *said they will vote even though they are not seeing any changes"*. They were particularly concerned about the youth becoming less interested in voting. However, all traditional leaders said they continue to encourage them to vote. One leader said *"I do not care which party they vote for, I just want them to vote"*. Thus it would seem that traditional leaders encourage their communities to vote, and even try to get identity documents for those who do not currently possess them.

They believed that communities are still interested in politics. However they complain of lack of change. One of the leaders said *"yes they are motivated but have a lot of questions"*. Another traditional leader said *"yes people are still motivated even though not as much as before because of lack of service delivery. For instance the Maye area has nine districts and only has two high schools, leaving our children to travel long distances. They get raped and murdered because of this"*. A number of deficiencies in terms of service delivery were mentioned. *"We have the worst roads; we only have transport on sunny days"*. One of the

leaders said people from his village are not motivated to vote at all. He indicated that they even told him that they will not be voting during the forthcoming elections.

What suggestions do you have to help the IEC to encourage people to vote?

Several participants agreed that a special day should be set aside when people with disabilities, the elderly and the sick can vote. Since this does not solve the problem of those not able to travel to the voting stations, there were further suggestions that IEC officials go from house to house registering people.

Educating communities was also seen as one way in which people could be encouraged to vote. This was captured in such sentiments as *"they should send people to educate the communities"*. They felt that though people know about the importance of voting, giving them more information could convince them to actually do so. They also insisted that the IEC should employ local youth for such tasks, thus offering them employment opportunities. There were complaints that the IEC often deploys young people from other areas to work in their villages. *"We do not want that"*, said one of the participants. They asked that the moderator tell the IEC to employ local people during the next elections. They further promised to assist where possible, but only if they were compensated by the IEC so that they did not feel they had been working for no pay.

3.1.5. Views about participation in voting and politics.

Traditional leaders perceived themselves to be playing a very important role in politics, especially during the election period. They expressed their frustration that the national government does not seem to recognise this. They perceived their role as being even more important than that of the police. A participant stated *"for instance if there is a fight in the village, we are the first contact who get called to the scene before the police"*. They felt that local government is better because it acknowledges their important role: *"Government is very far from the people - we are the closest, and we are the people"*.

They said they work very hard during the planning of elections by teaching communities about the importance of voting, and going house to house encouraging them to register so that they can vote. A participant said *"I am the one who informs people about election news and*

venues and I represent people at meetings, so yes, I play a very important role". Others added comments such as the following: *"We represent people at meetings, and we even look after all the political parties' posters", "We do a lot but government does not recognise us; if they did, they would pay us". "I don't know whether it's our job to encourage people to vote because there is no one else doing it. So I just wonder why we do not get paid for it".*

3.1.6. Traditional leaders' attitudes towards voting

When asked about their attitudes towards voting and whether they are still motivated to do so, they all agreed that they were motivated and would vote in the next national and provincial elections. Several participants from the different groups admitted that the level of enthusiasm for voting has declined. This was captured in such statements as the following: *"My motivation was high in 1994, but now it is very low but I will vote"; "through it all I have to vote".* Only one traditional leader from both groups indicated that he will not be voting in the next elections solely because he has been intimidated by some of the community members. He explained that he was appointed as a presiding officer of the IEC during the 1994 elections and some community members suspected him of being an ANC member (in a predominantly IFP area). Consequently he decided not to vote because, he said, he *"fears for his life".* Most of the traditional leaders were however very positive and highlighted many reasons why it is important to vote. One said it is important to vote so "*we can change the government that is not working for us".*

Suggestions as to how the IEC can encourage traditional leaders to vote and thus encourage others to vote

On the question on how traditional leaders can be encouraged to vote, the main argument was that they should be compensated. They felt that traditional leaders should be included in the IEC programmes, and consequently paid for their services. *"They must allow traditional leaders to lead the people, and pay them",* one said, *"I think the IEC needs to work closely with traditional leaders because they are close to the community",* according to another.

Opinions on people who decide not to vote

They stated that only if the government and the IEC visit communities to encourage people to vote, would everybody vote.

Suggestions on how you think the IEC might encourage people from your communities to vote

They argued that the IEC has a lot still to do to encourage people from various communities to vote. Some felt that the IEC should *"come and listen to the communities"*. Their first point of contact should be traditional leaders, so that they can communicate plans to the people on the ground: *"They should acknowledge us as traditional leaders"*. One participant however warned that the *"IEC should not only remember the community when the elections are around the corner"*. *"I agree with my brothers, they should not only remember us close to the elections"*, *"They should visit us regularly over the period of five years"*, other participants added.

Increasing the number of voting stations by erecting them close to the people was also seen as another means of encouraging people to vote. This was also seen as a way of curbing the transport problems that they are currently experiencing.

3.1.7. Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

There was serious concern for disabled people. As one participant commented *"as we are registering to vote, what happens to the disabled, who is going to help them register? They have a right to vote"*. All participants felt that the disabled and elderly were not well taken care of during registration and voting days. There were suggestions that mobile voting stations should drive around giving them the opportunity to vote. One of the participants, concerned that even if they did organise mobile voting stations, there are some people who cannot walk to the stations, interrupted, saying that *"therefore, they need to visit those with special needs house by house to allow them to vote"*.

The following are some of the comments of participants sharing their frustrations about assistance to those with special needs during elections: *"You can't tell me pushing old people in wheel-barrows is caring for them"*; *"And worst, when they get there no one cares to put*

them in front and let them vote first"; "I agree, they do not really care for the old people"; "We end up paying from our own pockets to transport these people and we do not get paid".

One of the traditional leaders mentioned that he had just had a meeting with his village recently to deliberate on how to deal with those with special needs during the voting period. They made it clear that most of such people *"end up not voting when they really wanted to vote".*

Is the IEC addressing the gender issue during elections?

All participants thought that though the IEC is doing a good job in ensuring that both males and females have equal opportunities during elections, there is room for further improvement. Some were concerned that there are still not enough women political activists or leaders in the country. They also felt that all race groups were taking part equally during the elections.

Voting age - 18 and older

There was general consensus in one group that 15 would be the appropriate age for beginning to vote, because currently the majority of youngsters are excluded while old people are included. For the second group, 16 was seen by a few as an appropriate age for a person to start participating in national and provincial elections.

Youth and voting

The traditional leaders said that even though they vote, they are not as motivated to do so as they were during the 1994 elections. One leader indicated that *"you can never be too sure about youth"* indicating that sometimes they try to convince them to vote, but that they sometimes change their minds at the last minute and do not do so.

3.1.8. Voter education

All participants, with one exception, indicated that they had never been involved in any voter education programmes. When the moderator probed further to find out whether they would like to be involved, some mentioned that traditional leaders are already going around

different areas teaching people about where and how to vote, and about its importance. However it is clear that this was not an official undertaking and they indicated that it was done as part of their traditional leadership roles.

Some mentioned that they had heard of the voter education programmes even though they had never attended or been invited to attend one. The respondent who used to be a presiding officer was the only one who indicated that he had participated in such training, in this case because it was part of his responsibilities. He further mentioned that the local people are not usually keen to attend voter education. He advised that it helps to request the traditional leaders to convene voter education meetings on behalf of IEC officials.

All communities reportedly have sufficient information about voting. Traditional leaders maintained that it would be a good idea to train people since a majority is already discouraged about voting. They indicated that all the information in the possession of the public is a result of training given by the traditional leaders themselves. They indicated that no one has been sent from the IEC to train them; they just share with the public whatever they have read in the newspapers or heard from the media in general. When asked about their sources of information related to voting, they mentioned media and councilors as the main sources.

3.1.9. Most recent voting experience

Since they all voted in the previous elections, with the exception of one, the traditional leaders were in a good position to comment on their experiences about the preparation leading to the actual voting and about what happened in the voting stations.

They mentioned that the IEC needs to organise transport for the elderly and should provide facilities to support their needs. They argued that they should be given special preference; they should not be made to wait in the queue, and they should be transported back to their homes after voting. They felt that the government should also deploy more people to assist the disabled and those with special needs because otherwise it ends up becoming their task as traditional leaders.

There were also complaints about voting stations opening late: *"The election officers are rarely on time to start the operation. People wake up early only to find that voting stations are still closed"*.

There was also a specific request that registration days be increased as they felt that a weekend is not enough: *"I have a problem with the registration dates, on the 8th and 9th we have funerals and people can't register on these dates. What am I to do?- because on Saturday there is a burial that I have to attend, same on Sunday morning"*.

IEC officials

The IEC officials were described as very helpful during the voting process, but they felt they could have done more in caring for the disabled, the elderly and the ailing. There were complaints about late opening of voting stations: *"They should bring health officials and must learn to be on time"*. They also suggested that since the sick and old are weak, the IEC should consider sending First Aid workers to all voting stations, especially in remote rural areas.

Several participants were not impressed that the IEC employs young people from other cities instead of employing local youth. They had a strong perception that *"foreign assistants"* do not understand their culture well. One participant explained, "*Some of them do not have proper knowledge about the locals. We have royal people who cannot wait in the line with everyone else*".

Another major dissatisfaction was that they say that traditional leaders work very hard during elections but do not get any form of monetary compensation or acknowledgement from the IEC. In highlighting tasks that they carry, they mentioned the following: *"We even go out to tell people where and how to vote"*, and *"We even teach people the importance of voting"*.

Insufficient number of voting stations

Most traditional leaders complained that very few voting stations are provided in their areas and that this is a real challenge for people with disabilities, the sick, and the elderly (this point was made when the moderator asked them the specific question on people with special

needs). Sentiments such as the following capture this point: *"We do not even have enough voting stations, they are too far and that makes it difficult for the elderly to vote"; "Yes it is true, many people do not vote because they do not have IDs, because the voting stations are too far"; "We have a problem with transporting all the people".*

They suggested that the number of voting stations in the KwaNongoma region should be increased, especially because the villages are far from each other. That would also enhance efficiency at the voting stations as lines would move faster. There were strong indications that some people really want to vote, but the issue of transport and bad roads becomes a problem: *"We have gravel roads which make it impossible to drive in rainy weather which is another problem in transportation of ill people and there is really no guarantee that it would be sunny on the day of the elections"*, argued one of the participants.

Were elections free and fair?

They all felt that in general, elections were indeed free and fair. One of the participants said *"I would say so because we voted for whoever we wanted to vote for without any interruptions".*

When asked about irregularities, many had not heard of any. They were however concerned that they had heard through the media that *"there are some boxes that were lost in the floods"*, or, *"sometimes we hear of boxes getting lost"*. They all concurred that the problem of irregularities starts when ballot papers are transported from the local voting stations. They believed that everything goes according to procedure inside the voting stations, but that thereafter votes tend to go missing. Consequently, they suggested that ballot papers should be counted before they leave each voting station. They argued that *"votes should be counted at the station and results communicated to the head office before they are transported".*

3.1.10. Participation in group and political demonstrations

Most participants from both groups indicated that they take part in rallies held during special holidays, such as Women's Day. They also all indicated that there are Non-Governmental Organisations in their areas. In some villages, women have come together to start gardening projects.

3.1.11. Closing comments

"My last words are 'please pay us'".

"That is correct, pay us please".

"The government should not ignore us; they should recognise us for all our hard labour".

"Provide us with transport for the old, sick and disabled".

"I request that we be given more days to register".

"Do not forget to tell them to pay us".

3.2. Community Leaders: Limpopo

3.2.1. Background:

Two focus groups each with ten participants were conducted in Limpopo with community leaders. The focus groups comprised participants aged 35 years and above. Both groups were mixed in terms of gender.

3.2.2. General economic assessment

Several participants in the community leader focus groups maintained that dramatic improvements in peoples' lives had taken place during the first few years of democracy. However, development seemed to have slowed down in recent years. Some participants mentioned positive changes, whilst some had negative perceptions. Most respondents cited lack of service delivery as a major challenge in their communities.

Several negative changes were mentioned in the two groups. Firstly, *the legal system was said to protect the rights of criminals.* Participants felt that the rights of criminals are more protected as compared to those of ordinary innocent citizens. As a participant put it, *"we are threatened by criminals as they get tender care from the government"*. They felt that the level of crime has soared as a result. Secondly, some mentioned *the weakening education system.* Schools were particularly criticised for spoiling children instead of helping them to be better people. One participant stated that *"the government is lenient to students and this destroys and spoils them"*. They also felt that *"when it comes to discipline, we are no longer taking*

the right measures as the government protects learners more than educators". "Children's rights are a major problem", one participant lamented. Given the above, they argued that very little is done for the educators, for instance devising programmes for them to improve their qualifications. Some of this criticism seems to have stemmed from criticisms of social grants, particularly of the child grant that they felt made students fail to see the importance of education through having grants upon which to rely: *"From outside as parents and educators we feel that our kids have been misled by the so called grants."*

There were further attacks on the social grant system. As one participant argued, *"in the past, the government did not allow you to get grants or old age pensions. Now grants are given to people who never even contributed to the pension scheme at all".* Some participants felt that a rule should be imposed that people who bear children before 18 years of age do not qualify for a child grant. Their perception was that this rule might reduce the rate of pregnancy amongst the youth.

A third challenge mentioned was *lack of service delivery.* Several participants felt that some communities are still in need of access to basic services such as water and electricity. There were also complaints about local roads not being of acceptable standard. In describing this, one participant said *"in the community roads are a nightmare. We are still driving on gravel roads as compared to other communities. We don't have bridges. If it's a rainy day you have no place to go".*

There were critiques of some current government initiatives. They believe that even though they are meant to assist people, they should still be taught to be self reliant. They commented on the provision of RDP houses that they *"are built for the right purposes but they are given out without any education... When services are offered they should be accompanied by education as to why these things are happening."*

There were also general comments implying that government has not done enough to curb youth unemployment in rural areas and has not adequately dealt with poverty alleviation. Some felt that black people are having it hard given recent increases in the price of food and everything else. There were also comments that the government *"only remembers the communities close to the elections". "We are sick and tired that the government treats us with respect when they are preparing for the elections"* another participant added.

The few positive changes mentioned included *"freedom of speech"*. One participant maintained that he was happy because *"today we can raise our voices and express our own feelings"*. Another participant applauded changes in the family realm, such as women being able to make decisions and to occupy high ranking jobs as do men.

Notably, in one of the groups, the recognition and increased awareness of the needs of people with special needs was cited as a significant and important shift. This was based on the observation that in the past the existence and needs of disabled people were often ignored.

The improved local health system was also mentioned. Accessibility of emergency services was highlighted as one of the positive new developments in their areas. One of the participants however disagreed, arguing that they still have only one clinic in their area servicing communities from different villages, and that it does not have enough staff. Consequently, if you want to be assisted, *"you have to wake up early in the morning and you come back very late"*.

One participant said he had not witnessed any benefits of voting. He stated that *"towards elections, many political parties are formed but there are no drastic changes"*. There was wide agreement that communities still lack information about voting and it was proposed that the IEC intensify voter education programmes in their villages.

Do you think community members are benefiting from participating in elections? How do you benefit?

Participants agreed widely that community members do benefit from elections, with the exception of one participant who was negative from the outset about such benefits. Free education at primary school and free access to health facilities were again mentioned as community benefits. One participant who is a teacher acknowledged that there are now a number of bursaries available to those who want to improve their qualifications. Some felt however that there have not been any changes effecting people in their areas: *"There are lots of problems as people go to vote for the sake of it"*, he added. Some felt that changes in their communities occur very slowly when compared to other communities.

3.2.3. Identity documents and registration issues

Some participants maintained that service delivery in Home Affairs offices in terms of timely processing of identity documents is efficient only during the period leading to elections and slacks off again when they are over. Some of the comments were *"they speed up things because elections are nearby"*; *"When it is during the year you pay for all the costs: Home Affairs goes to the people when elections are nearby."*

There was a participant who held that it is usually impossible to get identity documents if the community lacks active non-governmental organisations or similar bodies to assist in this regard. However, there was one participant who acknowledged the presence of mobile offices in his village.

All participants commented on the importance of having an identity document and acknowledged it has more uses than just enabling a person to vote. *"If you don't have an ID you won't be able to get a job. It is also a passport for you to make a difference through your vote"*, one participant explained. A suggestion was made that an identity document should incorporate all other important documents like licenses.

How involved are you in ensuring that people in your community get IDs to register and participate in elections?

Participants mentioned various ways in which people in the community obtain identity documents so that they can register and participate in elections. The educator mentioned that they usually invite the Department of Home Affairs to schools so that matriculants and others of an appropriate age can apply for identity documents. Several respondents felt that this role is appropriate for educators as they deal with youth who are getting identity documents for the first time.

There was general dissatisfaction with services of the Department of Home Affairs. One participant said *"parents are sent from pillar to post when trying to obtain IDs for their kids"*. Another participant said that in previous years the Department of Home Affairs had been proactive during the time leading to elections, but that this was not the case this year as

he had not seen any of their posters. There was general agreement that Home Affairs should send mobile offices to assist people in their various communities.

What other alternative documents would you recommend?

Participants in the community leader group maintained that as a way of encouraging and facilitating everybody to vote, alternative documents should be permitted for the identification of voters. They suggested birth certificates since they bear one's identity number, or passports since they contain one's picture. One participant proposed that for those who have applied for but not received their identity documents, affidavits signed by a community leader such as a church leader, ward councillor principal of the school which a learner is attending, should be acceptable.

3.2.4.. General views about participation in voting and politics

Participants understood the difference between national, provincial and municipal elections. In trying to explain the difference, one participant said *"nationally and provincially you elect a party, whereas for the municipal election you elect an individual"*. They acknowledged that they had learnt the difference from the previous elections. They were concerned that such understanding has not yet spread to the wider community. Some felt that the community at large sometimes gets confused about when to vote for municipal councilors. The teacher participant highlighted that schoolchildren always struggle with the definitions of different elections. There was a general feeling that there is a need for further voter education.

Youth was mentioned as one of the key groups that lack information on voting, and again voter education could help. In expressing this frustration, one participant explained *"our leaders of tomorrow do not show keen interest, by this I'm referring to youth. You'll hear them saying, 'I won't vote because political parties are fighting'. Senior citizens are the ones showing keener interest than any other citizens"*.

They maintained that senior citizens participate more than youth during elections. In general, there are more people interested in participating in national elections, but people become de-motivated when the municipal elections finally arrive. The youth are reportedly not interested because of the scarcity of jobs: *"'they'll always say what is the reason for voting*

because whether you vote or not there are no jobs for us", explained one of the participants. Another participant however cautioned against this generalisation and argued that *"when working at the voting stations, during the day it will only be pensioners, and youth will show up late in the evening. It is not easy to identify as to whether they show interest or not"*.

3.2.5. Views about participation in voting and politics

Participants maintained that the IEC should involve them during the planning of elections. This was captured in statements such as: *"the problem lies with IEC. As community leaders we are sometimes not directly involved in elections and the overall responsibility lies with the IEC."* They expressed willingness to assist. However, some felt that they were not empowered enough to help during elections.

When asked to suggest ways in which the IEC could encourage more people to participate in voting, most felt that the IEC should firstly address the question of intense political intolerance: *"political parties are fighting and this demoralises the spirit of elections. We as ordinary people are easily affected by this and a lot of confusion is created amongst people. Those leaders use a bad tone when there are crises. There are many ways to raise your concerns without being rude"*, argued one participant. They were concerned that people will be scared of taking part in elections for this reason. The teacher-participant believed that the Department of Education also has a pivotal role to play in educating ordinary people about elections.

Participants were further asked whether they think community leaders are playing a prominent role in politics. Some participants believed that councilors are only active when they want something, and are otherwise very quiet. There was a suggestion that official contracts should be entered into with them before they take office. There was a feeling that some councilors were under-qualified for such positions, and that they lacked information about politics.

Upon being asked to state their perceptions of the role played by the IEC in ensuring that people in the communities vote, one participant stated that the *"IEC is not a full-time organization ... they are only visible during the time of elections"*. This point stimulated wide agreement from other participants, who agreed that the IEC is only active in the period

leading to elections. They recommended that the IEC should try to be visible even when it is not time for elections. One participant suggested that this could be done through continuous voter education.

What role do you think you can play in ensuring that people in your community participate in the national and provincial elections?

Participants maintained that as community leaders they are already playing an important role in different ways in encouraging their communities to participate in the upcoming national and provincial elections. They acknowledged that they should behave appropriately since most people look up to them. One participant expressed his disappointment with *"well known emeritus arch-bishop....what he has said is out of order. We were awaiting a condemnation from the IEC but they decided to remain quiet"*.

Participants indicated the different roles they play in their communities. Some are involved in door-to-door campaigns educating the communities about voting and some indicated that they are encouraging the public to get appropriate documentation so that they can vote.

There was a concern specific to communities in Limpopo that IEC offices are only based in Polokwane. A participant thought that the province is too large to have only one office. *"They should decentralise their services"*, she argued. There was further dissatisfaction about the IEC only being visible during elections. The participant explained that *"people don't know much about the IEC: they see it when it is time for elections. People also don't know about elections. The IEC should take the initiative to educate people about the elections"*. Most respondents felt that voter education would add value and would encourage communities to vote. Statements such as the following captured this: *"the IEC must come down to people and it should be there even after the elections"; "the IEC must use different strategies to attract people to the elections"*.

What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

Participants upheld the importance of voting and indicated that they continue to emphasise this, especially to the discouraged youth. One participant commented that *"I meet many people with that discouraged behaviour ... and I tell them ...Go out and make your mark*

because it will bring changes in your life". Another participant added, *"lack of voters' education is killing our people. We need to encourage them to vote".*

3.2.6. Participation of other groups in voting and politics

Participants in one group believed that people with special needs are not usually cared for when planning for elections. There were suggestions that transport needs to be organised for such groups. In conveying this point another participant added, *"it is very embarrassing to see physically disabled people coming to the voting station in a wheel-barrow".* One participant further stated that it is better inside the voting stations because at least people with special needs such as pregnant women are given special preference. The comment was made that *"the IEC should employ enough staff to run its day to day activities".*

However, participants in the second group felt that the needs of disabled and elderly people were well taken care of during the elections. They stated that people with special needs even have their own queues during registration and voting. This suggests that things were done differently in the various voting stations.

All participants believed that IEC is addressing the gender issue by making sure that both males and females have equal opportunities to participate in elections. Similarly, they felt that the various race groups are well represented during elections.

People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18. What do you think should be the appropriate age?

There was a suggestion that 16 years is the appropriate voting age. A participant explained that when the *"IEC was legislated before 1994, life expectancy was longer than compared to now. However, the youth brigade in South Africa starts registering youth at the age of 14, and Home Affairs starts at 16. If you think of it the other way round you'll agree with me when I say someone who is 16 can enter into legal contract without the consent of the parents".*

Do you think the youth in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer.

All participants believed that youth is not interested in voting. They argued that this attitude is rooted in their belief that the government does not care about them as most of them are unemployed.

3.2.7 Voter education

Most participants indicated that they had not been exposed to the voter education programme, with one exception. Some argued that community members have all necessary information about voting as information is *"everywhere in the media"*; whilst others maintained that voter education is very important to ensure that all understand the importance of using the ballot. Participants said community members usually know when and where to register. They were however not sure whether all people know how to actually fill in the ballot paper, (thus reducing the number of spoiled ballot papers). One participant said *"they still ask who is eligible to register and most don't know where to do so"*, indicating that voting education is vital. Preference was expressed for receiving information by word of mouth and verbal advertisement, rather than through billboards.

The participant who said she was involved in a voter participation programme stated she had attended a voter education workshop in 1994. She said they had been *"taught how to deal with voters and prepare the voting stations"*. She further emphasised the importance of continued voter education as *"the people are forgetful"*.

3.2.8. Most recent voting experience

All participants indicated having voted in all of previous elections. None of them cited voting irregularities. They maintained that all elections in the past have been "free and fair". One participant commented that *"In South Africa everything is fine unlike other African states"*. They only mentioned that there were some political party representatives who at times canvassed next to the voting stations, but nothing threatening. There were concerns that the upcoming elections will constitute a major challenge as political parties have already started campaigning for votes. It was the belief of a participant in one of the groups that the IEC will

have a difficult time ensuring that voters feel safe and secure in voting stations because of the current political contestations.

IEC officials at the voting stations were commended by the group for their wonderful job during elections. *"They were very much helpful...they work very long hours without any complaints"*, one of the participants explained. All participants were also satisfied with conditions at the voting stations. They were content with their level of cleanliness, easy access, availability of facilities and with the provision for people with special needs.

One participant who had worked at a voting station said the only challenge he once encountered was that people who accompany those with special needs refused to wait outside when the disabled person was being assisted to cast his or her vote in secrecy.

3.2.9. Participation in groups and political demonstrations

Participants said they are members of various community groups. They also participate in different rallies, government *izimbizo* and celebrations of some national holidays. They had various explanations: *"I think it is important because that's where you get lots of information"; "That's where you interact with people from different walks of life"* or *"It promotes social networking"*. There was however a concern that some of the demonstrations taking place on special days or national holidays are viewed as *"days of the working class or civil servants"*.

3.2.10. Other experiences / anything to share concerning voting or the IEC

It was suggested that the IEC should visit the local radio station as part of the voter education programme.

3.3. Elderly people: Western Cape

3.3.1. Introduction and Background

Both focus groups were conducted at Belhar Senior Secondary School in the Tygerberg District Municipality. Belhar is predominantly a coloured area and is located near the

University of the Western Cape. It has a rich history of protest politics that date back to the apartheid period.

The participants were recruited from amongst elderly men living in Belhar and the surrounding areas. For example, some of the participants lived in Bellville and others in Delft, Ravensmead, and Parow. The first group consisted of ten coloured men, all over the age of 60 years. Four of the participants were older than 70 and the rest were between 60 and 69 years. The second group consisted of ten coloured women all over the age of 60 years with six of the participants younger than 65 years old and the eldest participant 70 years old.

3.3.2. General economic assessment

The majority of participants maintained that very few positive changes have taken place since 1994. A consistent comment was that most positive changes took place during the first five years of democracy. Participants shared the view that their economic situation is deteriorating because Government has failed to deliver on some of its 1994 promises.

Amongst the positive changes mentioned amongst the group of elderly women, was improved access to health facilities. They appreciated free access to the health facilities, one participant explaining, *"Government at least did something there, other times, under the previous government, we had to pay"*. Positive responses also came from those who indicated that they were not paying rates. They also took the opportunity to advise those who said they are still paying on how to apply *"you must take your AllPay card and have forms certified at the police station to qualify"*. They commented that when application forms are complete and submitted on time, the process goes smoothly and rapidly.

Nonetheless, the general perception was that Government has failed to deliver on some of the promises made during the 1994 elections. The discussion largely centred on their experiences in trying to access "pensions" or "old age grants" and their dissatisfaction about the R980 given. It is for such reasons that they believed that their economic situation is deteriorating.

The elderly men registered unhappiness with the policy that men and women retire and are legible for social grants at different ages, that is 60 and 65. They felt that the current system is giving special preference to women. One male participant took it further and argued that

this weakens males in the family setting: *"women are taking over ... honestly ... the women are taking over. Many times the man is at home and the woman is working ... and that is a bitter pill to swallow"*, he explained.

Both male and female participants commented on the rising prices of all goods. Affordability seemed to be the issue as they maintained that no special attention is being paid to the needs of the elderly amidst this financial crisis. It came across very clearly in both groups that the old age grant was insufficient to live on. They perceived it as unfair that pensioners pay the same price for goods as other people. They believed that they should be getting discounts on some products, such as bread: *"if the price of bread increases the pensioner should pay half price"* one participant suggested. They argued that such special arrangements should be made for the elderly group taking into account that they receive very little pension money.

A female participant cautioned against children who stay with the elderly to live off their pension money: *"sometimes the children just want to take advantage of us. The children stay with us, they don't want to pay, we must pay light, we must do a lot with our pension, that is why we don't see where our money is going .... some of the kids are exploiting us"*. She further advised that pensioners should not be wasteful or extravagant but *"be cautious with our money and not worry with accounts ... and be very grateful for the pension money"*. Most participants expressed gratitude for the pension money.

Several participants, men and women, expressed concern that young people are struggling to find employment. For some, this was an indication that they have not benefited at all from the post-1994 government. One participant commented that *"our youth of today sitting on street corners, they want to tik* [referring to a drug] *and commit crime. There is no work, we always hear of job creation ... there is none"*. The unruly behaviour of youth was also partly attributed to the abolition of the death penalty and of corporal punishment.

3.3.3. Identification documents for election purposes

All participants from both groups indicated that they have green bar-coded identity documents. While participants from the male group said they did not encounter problems with applying for identity documents, female participants felt that applying for an identity document is a tedious process, saying that the applicant has to wait for three months to

receive the document finally. One woman explained that applying for an identity document is *"a whole day story...sometimes one gets turned away when it's closing time"*. Another participant added that *"queues are very long"* and that eventually an applicant is often told that she is in the wrong queue meaning that she has to start at the end of another queue. Several participants commented on unpleasant service received from officials of the Department of Home Affairs. One participant explained *"now you stand in the queue and when you get to almost third in the line ... when they know it's nearly time for them to go home they come to you to find out what is your problem. Why are you standing here? No you must be at the other counter"*. There was consensus in both groups that there is generally no Home Affairs official to guide or assist people. They were also not pleased that they are expected to stand in a queue instead of being provided with chairs. They further complained about lack of signage in Home Affairs offices.

One participant was unhappy that she found an African assistant who was proficient in neither English nor Afrikaans. The general feeling was that employees in that particular area, Ravensmead, should be fluent in these languages to facilitate communication.

3.3.4. Identity documents and registration issues

None of the participants from either group indicated having experienced problems when registering to vote. Recalling the last elections, most of the women reported that their names were already on the voters' roll, and that queues were bearable. One participant shared with the group the information that they could check their registration status through sending an SMS to a number given on the Morning Live broadcast: *"I did it, but it took a bit longer then three minutes that was promised ... but within a half hour they SMSd me to say so and so you are registered in so and so"*, she explained.

The men were aware of registration dates (8 and 9 November) even though they were still not sure about where they would be registering. Participants wanted to know why they must register again. One participant from the group explained that *"some of our people might have passed away ... so they need to see if that person is still there ... to see if he is still alive so that he can vote: that is why every year people must register"*. During the discussion it also became clear that they were aware that a person needs to register if he or she has moved home: *"yes because you moved ... different ward"*.

There was one very sceptical woman who indicated that she always registers but does not vote. She explained that not voting is her way of expressing her dissatisfaction with the political system. One man wondered what happens to a person who registers, but does not vote: *"if you don't vote it goes to the ruling party, the ANC"*, another participant responded. Three people thought this was not true, whilst the rest of the group thought that it might be true. This perception on its own highlights the need for further voter education.

3.3.5. Participation in voting and politics

Several participants said that though they had lost interest in politics, they still encourage the youth to vote. However, they said it is difficult for them to motivate the youth if they themselves are not motivated. There was a general feeling amongst participants in both groups that the youth has not benefited from the current government. It was acknowledged that the youth can opt for another party if dissatisfied with the performance of the party they originally supported since there is a variety of political parties from which to choose: *"remember your vote can make a difference"* a participant added.

Several participants felt that coloured youth have been discriminated against, and have not been well treated like African children. Participants speaking as parents continuously expressed their frustration about their children not getting employed. *"We coloured population ... we are not counted in this country, because we are always last in the queue. We must fight for our little space"* commented one participant. In general they perceived coloured youth as not enjoying the same privileges and opportunities as African youth. For this reason some criticised current Black Economic Empowerment policies.

One participant was very bitter about current Black Economic Empowerment policies. She explained *"now we are suffering ... and Africans are getting more privileges ... our children are not getting the jobs, their race are getting all the jobs, they get accepted at tertiary institutions and our children are not accepted ... all that ... and they get higher positions ... and everywhere you look they are behind the counter, banks, etc ... your child might be higher educated, with a varsity degree, but they are not successful, whilst the other might only have matric, but gets the higher position ... some get sponsored for free education"*.

One of the men informed the rest of the group who were very negative about being treated badly as coloureds that in reality Africans are in a much worse position. He explained that most Africans are still without houses and live in appalling conditions: *"Just take a drive through Khayalitsha. We are scared to go there, but just take a drive and go see there. You must be careful where you walk, because the man comes out of his khaya* [house/shack] *and then he flings that dirty water out. ... you must dodge that dirty water"*, he added, *"you can't believe that there are people living there. It stinks ... it is terrible, but the people are trying to survive"*.

The role of the IEC

There was consensus that the IEC should employ assistants to guide people and show them how to vote. They used floor assistants from SARS or banks as examples, arguing that this helps to ensure that people are in the correct queue. Some however acknowledged that the placards inside the voting stations simplify voting procedures. One participant did not support the idea of placards as he was concerned that some elderly people do not have clear eyesight, and he reiterated that additional assistants are required.

Three suggestions were put forward in the two groups. Firstly, at each voting station there should be a special queue for the elderly. They commented that there is always a special queue for the disabled and wondered why there is not one for them. Secondly, transport should be organised for them to the voting stations and back. Several participants from both groups insinuated that in previous elections, the IEC organised transport for them. Thirdly, it was suggested that the elderly should be allowed to vote from their own homes. When this was suggested in one of the groups, the moderator asked whether they were aware of the *"special votes"*. None of them were.

3.3.6. Views about participation in voting and politics

Most participants believed that 18 should be the voting age. One male participant argued that it should be earlier, at 16, *"because coloured people die much earlier ... the younger the better ... they must be sixteen"*.

The men were very bitter that South African policies tend to empower women so much. They explained that sometimes men have no choice but to withdraw: *"We are in a servant role ... We told the women - you win: we are the servants"; "we don't want to admit it, but it is like that"*, some of them explained.

Women however felt that men are still breadwinners and as a result tend to shove women around when they get home, claiming that they are tired. A participant explained that *"I think here in the Cape the majority of people are Muslim and the women who sit in church aren't Christians they are Muslim women ... they don't want to go to the masjiet* [Muslim prayers]".

Attitudes towards voting

Some participants maintained that they have lost interest in voting and feel that the country is regressing. Further, they indicated their distrust of politicians, arguing that they never keep their promises. The consensus was that once politicians are appointed, they tend to forget about the people who voted for them: *"the government just make promises, but they don't deliver ... vote for us and we'll supply you with this and that ... it never happens, thus people don't trust them, they don't want to vote"*, a participant explained.

Further concerns about the youth not wanting to vote were registered: *"Instead they worry about drugs (including drinking and smoking), idolise the stars and want to get rich quickly like the stars ... we'll have to change the youth's mindset"*. There were hints that maybe *"the youth is confused with the dominant parties' breakaway and are now not sure which party to vote for"*.

Someone asked whether it is because of unemployment that they have lost interest. They felt that coloured people are not benefiting from affirmative action. Participants mentioned that during election campaigns, party officials make promises which they fail to deliver. This is seen to be frustrating young people, hence their lack of interest in voting. Explanations were that *"the African people got houses first...and their kids get more jobs than our children"; "our kids are frustrated because they can't come in* [can't get a job] *... not that you are looking down on people, but it is not fair that only one group gets the jobs ... that is why our*

kids say no they don't want to vote ... and people can say what they want about me at this table, but wherever you come there are only Africans".

3.3.7. Participation in groups and political demonstrations

One participant said he sings at church. Most participants fell into the category of family man or woman, at home or driving grandchildren up and down and not belonging to any clubs, social, sport or political.

3.3.8. Most recent voting experience

Participants from both groups shared their positive experiences of previous elections. They all commended the fact that queues were very short: *"You went in to do your thing ... there was no line"* said one participant. A woman said that *"the IEC was very organised during the last elections, results were shown on the monitors as soon as they came in"*. To indicate the IEC's high level of accuracy in counting the votes, one participant shared with the group her experience of working for the IEC: *"We made a mistake whilst counting the ballot papers and we had to recount again the same evening"*. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the IEC's neutrality, one person commenting that the way results were presented indicated that the IEC *"was neutral, not choosing any party"*. They all agreed that all previous elections were free and fair.

All participants experienced good service on the day of the previous election at the different polling stations they visited. All mentioned pleasant experiences at the voting stations, and were happy with the venues: *"The place where I voted the last time they were very helpful and respectful"; "well organised and quick"*.

Views on the IEC

There were suggestions that records should be kept at polling stations of all those who could not come for reasons such as illness. Then *"take the forms to them ... I believe there is money to accommodate special voters"*. Participants believed that there is always money kept aside for transport and other purposes during the election period and explained that some ward councilors, who are expected to go the extra mile in providing for people with special needs

in their wards, do not do their job and use this money. They further suggested that the same principle should be applied to the sick and elderly as to people in jail: *"they should send people out, because they can send people to jails in order for prisoners to vote ... why can't they go to people in wheelchairs and in hospitals?"*, one participant asked.

3.3.9. Voter Education

Some participants were not sure about whose responsibility is it to conduct voter education. Confusing voter education with political party campaigns, one participant said it is done by representatives from different parties as they go door-to-door. No participant was involved in the voter education programme, except for one who was involved before 1994.

It was proposed that the IEC should make use of media (TV, radio, newspapers), flyers and posters when educating people about voting. A comment that kept recurring was that the IEC should physically go out to the people. One participant recalled that IEC representatives even used to visit factories during lunch breaks to teach workers about the voters' rights, and to demonstrate what happens at the polling station on Election Day.

Some participants indicated that they have received voter education messages through door-to-door dropping off of advertisements, whilst some mentioned that the IEC had come around with megaphones. They commented that the megaphone announcements are often not audible. Some participants were not sure whether the advertisements they had seen were from the IEC or census material from Statistics South Africa.

They suggested that the IEC should advertise more on radio and television as *"the elderly watch a lot of television and listen to the radio ... best time is 11 in the morning"*; *"Between 8 and 12 in the morning. They listen to RSG from 8 and after 12 it is Nicky van den Berg"*.

Community involvement and how can you assist IEC?

When asked about how they can assist during the elections, some said they could work as marshals showing people where to go. There was a concern that though elderly people want to be involved, the organisers sometimes already have their preferred people. Another

participant mentioned that she had assisted during some elections but was not called again to assist in the following year.

One participant asked about the IEC's recruitment strategy, through advertisements in the media, or other means. Another participant responded that she had a friend who was in charge of the IEC in her area and he had asked her to help, suggesting that personal contacts play a role in job allocation. Another commented that even if you do apply, you find that people have already been earmarked for certain jobs. There was then general agreement amongst participants that IEC organisers *"must be flexible and fair so that everybody gets a fair chance"*.

Work with the IEC is not difficult, but the way vacancies are advertised and people appointed are concerns, and unfair according to this group. They all feel that they can make a contribution and assist the IEC. Participants felt that the IEC could make it fair by sending out advertisements and selecting candidates on the basis of CVs submitted; one person called for *"better communication to make vacancies and the process more transparent. Where are they advertising it?"* All participants felt that old people are more reliable and trustworthy than young people, who are perceived to be not as strict as senior citizens.

3.3.10. Recommendations for IEC

"The IEC must make sure that there are no people that will harass you by saying for which party you should vote for or you will see what will happen to you".

"I think we have a responsibility to encourage the youth to vote, because your vote can make a difference ... just one vote can influence a result this way or that way".

"The IEC should play a bigger role in the rural areas as well ... they not aware of their rights ... They live from day to day and are under the influence of their boss who intimidates them who to vote or not to vote for".

3.4. Local Government Leaders: KwaZulu-Natal

3.4.1. Introduction and Background

All twenty participants in the two groups were councilors from the different municipalities bordering Durban Metro.

3.4.2. General economic assessment

There was consensus amongst all participants that citizens have a duty to vote during the national and provincial elections. Some felt that voting is a duty for all residents because the provincial allocation of resources is determined by the number of people who vote in a particular province. As it is, most participants from both groups felt that there has been minimal positive improvement in their personal lives or in their respective areas. Comments were made about people who are still without proper housing, access to basic services (water and sanitation were mentioned) and employment opportunities. The feeling was that are still pockets of neglected communities, whilst development is taking place at an unprecedented pace in other areas. The recurring theme was that the "rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer".

They further said that those living in suburbs have experienced positive change whilst residents in other kinds of area like informal settlements are continuously neglected, and do not have access to basic services. Participants mentioned that political leaders make promises to people during elections, which they fail to fulfill. With reference to child-headed households, it was said that small children are expected *"to take care of themselves, clothe themselves; put food on the table and take themselves to school"*. They complained that people are well serviced on the day of elections, being provided with transport and food, but are forgotten afterwards. Conversely, residents of formal urban areas were seen to be linked to those in high places and were enjoying all the benefits of "democracy".

In general, some participants felt that after local government officials such as councilors have been appointed, they tend to forget people's needs. For example, one participant said *"here in the Ethekwini municipality we received good certificates because we have got good credit*

ratings and we are clean with the auditor general but the people on the ground don't feel it". This direct attack on councilors was however contested as other councilors argued that their apparent inadequacies are due to not getting enough support from the national government. There were further complaints that councilors fail to serve the people who elected them, but instead serve their own needs in office. There were persistent comments on the unethical and corrupt behavior of some councilors, especially when it comes to tendering processes. On the defensive, councilors explained that government officials tend to exclude them when making strategic plans and decisions, while expecting them to ensure that initiatives and projects are implemented at ground level. One councilor further complained that five years in office is not enough to make dramatic changes or improvements in municipalities.

Most participants from both groups argued that sometimes the level of service delivery to an area is linked to residents' political affiliation. One participant said, *"People on the ground are being blackmailed. If you are going to get any service whatsoever you have to belong to a certain party, you have to have a membership card. If you need a job you have to have a membership card, if you need a house you have to have a membership card".* This means the councilor tends to favour people of his party and to neglect others. Further comments were made pertaining to the unethical and corrupt behaviour of some councilors. This is most pronounced when it comes to awarding of tenders. Recalling their previous experiences, some mentioned that large sums of money were paid to some service providers, but that since then, no service has been provided to the public.

Several participants felt that most government programmes promote a "dependency syndrome" as they do not encourage people to be self reliant. This was captured in statements such as the following, *"although there is some development it doesn't promote independence. People are given things to depend on the government, not to depend on themselves".* Another participant said, *"the concept of self-help and self-reliance is really moving away and we will end up having a nation of beggars - people who are always waiting on the government to provide food parcels or be it whatever grants and all that".* One councilor used the example of informal traders on the streets that are often chased away by the police to illustrate just how the system does not promote self reliance. The participant felt that these people should be left alone because they are trying to empower themselves economically.

Participants felt that there are now more opportunities, for instance if one wants to start a business or other venture. Some were however concerned that even so, the poor are still not benefiting much, as the rich are continuously being further enriched. One participant commented on the Government's new Zibambele project, aimed at empowering people in the field of road construction. She explained that the Government has injected large sums into the project, but that unfortunately the money is not going where it was initially intended. The road workers are reportedly from rural areas far from Durban and they spend a large part of their salaries on transport to and from work, whilst the tender winner also takes a large part. The general concern was that opportunities exist, but are not targeted at the needy or ordinary people on the ground. Another shared a common concern, *"going around Durban these days you will see there is a billion tender out to change all the pipes, people are involved in those projects, what they are going to get is not even close to two million out of billions which are being invested in those projects. For them it's to enrich that somebody who is doing that piping system and he is getting a lot of money and they are getting nothing"*. One participant suggested that there should be a grant for the unemployed as much as for the aged and for children.

3.4.3. Identity documents and registration issues

All participants said they knew many people in their areas who do not have identity documents. One participant knew an area with more than 2000 people without identity documents. He was sceptical that their documents would be processed in time for them to participate in the upcoming elections. The suggestion was made in both groups that IEC officials should have a *"one-on-one"* meeting with the Department of Home Affairs, otherwise it would be a real *"stumbling block in the success of these elections"*. They maintained that door-to-door campaigns to encourage people to vote are fruitless if people do not possess identity documents. They echoed the suggestion that that the IEC should intervene to facilitate quick processing of identity documents.

It was also suggested that the IEC should work closely with other departments such as the Department of Home Affairs. Participants from one group felt that municipalities should not be involved in identity document campaigns as they are aware of the political preferences of some areas and might not be sufficiently neutral. This should rather be done by the IEC as an independent body. Some were concerned that Home Affairs sends out mixed messages to the

public as they portray themselves as a neutral department, but are perceived to be working closely with politicians at times. There were further concerns that Home Affairs gives preferential treatment to people who support a specific party. Consequently, the identity documents of some are said to take a very long time to be processed.

The Department of Home Affairs was expected to go around communities assisting those who are without identity documents. However the general feeling was that it is no use discussing the issue with the Department which was described as being in a *"shambles"*. Participants argued that Home Affairs officials knew about the upcoming elections and should have prepared in advance so as to reduce the backlog of identity book applications.

Participants were asked whether they are helping their communities to get identity documents, even if most attempts were in vain. They all responded positively and variously indicated what they were doing to help their communities. One councilor participant mentioned that councilors are expected to mobilise people in their wards to get identity documents; however that has not been possible because of lack of support from national government and lack of cooperation from the Department of Home Affairs. Some participants who are councilors argued that it is impossible for them to assist in fast-tracking the processing of identity documents *"given that a visit to Home Affairs is never less than three hours"*.

On a positive note, several participants indicated that they always try to help the youth, sometimes following up with Home Affairs on their behalf, though they rarely get assistance. One participant felt that getting an identity document is the individual's responsibility. He explained that *"people who collect the disability grant he/she will make sure that they get an ID"*.

Some argued that ID campaigns should be included in the school programme because the ID has many other uses in addition to voting. There were also comments that identity document campaigns should be continuous, and not only implemented before elections. *"The IEC and Home Affairs are supposed to run the ID campaign right through the five years not toward the elections"*, commented one of the participants. Some felt that instead of just choosing any area to launch an identity document campaign, it would be wise to first research different

areas so that Home Affairs could target those with the highest proportion of people without identity documents.

Participants also expressed concern about old people who are still without identity documents. A member of one group said that older people who want to get identity documents now have to apply through the committee which eventually decides whether or not to issue an identity document: *"They say that is the new way, they say that if you are above 18 years and you haven't got an ID book you have to go to the committee, no we can't have our people just follow this instruction if they have not been registered they say that you have to open a file, the committee just set up"*. Consequently participants saw this as very discouraging to some applicants, who would probably then decide to live without identity documents. Unfortunately participants did not explain whether the committee is formed by representatives from Home Affairs to external to Home Affairs.

Participants from both groups felt that none of their initiatives were supported by the Department of Home Affairs. One participant shared her experience: *"Even if you try to organise people on the ground, Home Affairs are nowhere to be found and they always come up with excuses"*. There was however one participant with positive feedback who shared the following with the group *"I did organise Home Affairs last year in my area. Home Affairs representatives came in a big truck, I had also put out posters to notify the public. There was a big crowd and suddenly politicians came and a councilor from another party claimed that I had no right to organise since I am not a ward councilor and he is. There were still people in the queues waiting to be assisted and unfortunately had to miss out on that opportunity. It is so sad when people bring in politics where it's not necessary. Those people from Home Affairs were terrified because he came with some thugs. Someone in his group had a gun and threatened some of the Home Affairs officials. Sometimes I sympathize with people from Home Affairs because they come to our areas wanting to help and unaware of local politics. "*

Registering to vote

Some felt that the IEC should also look into innovative ways of simplifying the registration process. As one person put it *"what surprises me is that the IEC haven't started to look at a more efficient system of registration"*.

A participant from one of the groups said he knew of people who registered more than once, sometimes in different voting stations using bogus identity books. A participant mentioned that during the previous national elections, a person from Mlazi was in possession of two scanners which were apparently being used at midnight, as well as a number of identity documents. The participant was concerned that this person was never prosecuted as the municipality claimed that the person was in their employment and that they - the municipality - were working with the IEC.

Concerns regarding the use of cell phones to check one's registration status were expressed. Participants felt that this method is indeed convenient for some; however it might not be user-friendly to groups such as senior citizens. Consequently, they argued that the IEC should come up with other ways of checking that will be *"friendlier"* to all groups in the population.

Difference between national, provincial and municipal elections

Participants from both groups were aware of the difference between the different types of election. However they indicated that most people in their communities would not be able to distinguish between different elections. One participant captured this succinctly when she said: *"The majority of our people do not understand; only those who had a chance to go to school can differentiate between the three. Sometimes other people are interested in local government because they think that is the one that touches their lives ... Even in local government elections they would tell you that 'I am going to vote for my president' and then you have to correct them. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of voter education"*.

Several participants registered their concern about lack of consultation when policies are passed at national level. They stated that they are the first point of contact with communities and that they are sometimes confronted about lack of service delivery. This was captured in such statements as: *"they say: but we voted for you, what you are doing about it?"* Councilors argued that although local government is larger than the national and provincial spheres of governments in the sense that it affects all aspects of day-to-day life, all spheres of government work in silos. They further explained that communities are not in contact with parliamentarians, which results in local councilors being expected to answer to local communities. Their main concern was that councilors should also be invited to be part of policy and legislation making.

3.4.4. Participation in voting and politics

Participants from both groups unanimously maintained that the level of enthusiasm for voting has declined amongst people in their communities. One participant commented that *"if people were enthusiastic we wouldn't be spending days convincing them to vote and having to pick them up to the voting stations to vote even if they live 100m from them"*. They therefore argued that political parties, the IEC and government should work together to encourage people to vote, rather than all of them spending money in different initiatives and projects to educate people about voting.

Participants felt that people do not vote because some of their needs have not been met, and consequently they have lost hope. Some key issues mentioned were crime, bad roads, unaffordable school fees and lack of access to health services. Highlighting government's failure to provide for the people, one participant said that *"NGOs, CBOs and councilors must now feed the people, be the schools for the people. We have become a social welfare group"*.

They further stated young people are the most discouraged of all as they are struggling to find employment. Consequently, as reported by participants, they asked, *"should we continue voting because we are sitting at home with nowhere to work? We have been sitting at our homes for years now, some of us have been to school, some have diplomas, degrees and certificates etc. but we are still sitting at home"*. Group members argued that it is often very difficult to motivate such people. One participant registered his frustration about the youth fund that he feels is only accessible to the youth supporting the dominant party. Other participants said, *"the biggest problem is that the vote has become meaningless in the short time of 14 years"*; *"People are using money for unnecessary things which are secondary in terms of priority and so on"*; *"A lot of people are sort of confused on what is the purpose of a vote"*; *"The general attitude outside is very ugly, angry and very frustrated"*. Some participants held strongly that floor crossing is a main reason why so many people have become despondent.

When asked about suggestions as to how the IEC can encourage people to vote, the dominant argument in one of the groups was that the IEC should follow up with the political parties to see to it that they deliver on all promises made during its campaign. A participant said *"I*

think that monitoring the elections is tiresome: I think that you need to interrogate the manifesto of political parties".

Some councilors observed that people in the middle and upper social classes are not interested in voting. Participants thought the reason is that they already have necessities like houses and access to all services and therefore feel that elections will not bring any further benefits to their lives.

Participants from both groups argued that voter education campaigns should continue throughout the five years, not stop after elections. There were further suggestions that voter education information should be made widely available *"so that even kids talk about it when playing".*

A suggestion was made that the IEC should consider working closely with the traditional authorities during its campaigns leading to, and in preparation for, elections. They felt that traditional leaders should be invited to drive the registration campaigns, especially as they are in touch with the local communities. One participant mentioned that sometimes traditional authorities do get invitations to meetings in Durban to discuss elections; however he felt they are never given the opportunity to share their needs or experiences.

Another suggestion was that voting should not be restricted to a few specific days only, and that it should take place on a number of days. Further it was argued that voting stations should be erected in spots that are already frequently visited by the public, like clinics, and pension payout points. They felt that at least people would be familiar with the routes and public transport to those venues.

What are your views on the people who don't want to vote?

Participants from both groups felt that all people should vote. Participants in one group mentioned that people should be helped to realise that financial allocations to different municipalities are based on the number of registered voters. He explained: *"Municipalities cannot generate income. The grant budget that would go to a certain municipality would only cover the people who are registered ... and the government is trying to say this money is going to cover your area. Then you have a problem with a municipality that has got 10 000*

voters but the population is 50 000 then how do you manage? ... you would find people that are campaigning day and night only to find that the very same people that are complaining are those that are not voting". Another participant suggested that *"we should give them an ultimatum that if you don't vote for party A then you vote for party B... staying at home means that you are giving more power to the party you do not like".*

Participants from one of the groups mentioned that people from the Jehovah's Witnesses religious denomination do not vote because their faith forbids it. Another participant said that some people say that *" we do not vote because we are planning on emigrating, we are sick and tired of this country".*

There were suggestions that people no longer want to vote because they oppose some official policies. *"People do not want to vote as they do so they will tell you about the satanic and diabolic laws that have been created like a woman falling in love and marrying another woman, a man falling in love with another man and marrying another man"* added a participant.

3.4.5. Views about participation in voting and politics

The general feeling from all participants was that they have very limited delegated authority. This is evidenced by the fact that when a tender is advertised by the municipality, it is the party officials that have a final say during the selection of the service provider. Councillors felt that national government departments often undermine them and they never consult when there are projects to be carried out. Another participant said there is preferential treatment based on whether you subscribe to the ruling party or not. She said *"let's say the grass has overgrown, you will call more than four times if you are from IFP. If you want to speed things up, just get an ANC councillor to make that call".*

There were suggestions that to keep the IEC neutral and independent, it needs to be a multiparty organization, with all political parties and organisations being given a chance to be part of it. Some argued that though the organisation is indeed neutral, the employees of the IEC are not neutral as they also vote for their preferred political parties.

3.4.6. Participation of other groups in voting and politics

Participants from both groups argued that the needs of the elderly and those with special needs are not taken into account during election planning. In conveying this point, participants from one group agreed that many voting stations do not have ramps for those using wheel-chairs. Even where voting stations did have ramps, participants felt that they were not well constructed. One participant said *"I have been to so many voting stations which are poorly selected - steps up to the premises or no ramps at all where the volunteers have to lift people off the wheelchairs"*. Another participant added *"they put a ramp which is not a ramp... it is suicide. It is at 45 degrees and there are regulations that say that it should be 35 and 40 degrees maximum. Anybody who tries to go down there in a wheelchair will end up in the ground"*.

From the other group, one participant mentioned that she once worked at an old age home during elections. She felt that the elderly people were being manipulated by the officials who were supposed to assist them to vote for their preferred political parties. This highlights the importance of targeted voter education for special groups in society.

One participant said she had seen IEC officials driving around with scanners visiting the houses of those who are eligible for special votes. The concern was however that such information is not disseminated to the public; consequently many tend to miss this opportunity. The suggestion was that the IEC should at least put up posters to alert communities, firstly that it is possible to have a special vote, and secondly of the dates when IEC officials would be visiting different areas. Another concern was that this service is not widely accessed by people in rural areas whilst they are the ones who need it the most.

Participants suggested that the IEC should rethink the opening times of voting stations. They stated that voting stations often open late and as a result people continue voting even after dark. One person added that *"we don't have proper lighting facilities"*..

They felt that the IEC should try to make sure that queues move faster in the voting stations. That could be done through increasing the number of voting stations. *"No voting station should be more than taking your car for a drive or even walking further than your normal walking from your home to a shopping centre because you are so used to walking from your*

home to a shopping centre and the voting station should be within that walking distance", one participant proposed. Others explained that with the high price of petrol, some people might be discouraged if they have to drive a long distance to the voting station. Similarly, such distance would be a serious inconvenience for those without private transport.

Participants argued that more personnel should be deployed at voting stations, so that people with special needs could be given all the support they require. They commented that it is not only the disabled who require assistance: those who are illiterate also need the close attention of IEC officials at the voting stations.

One participant wanted to know which body has an influence on decisions about the spacing of voting stations. The response from other participants was that decisions on ward demarcation were left to the political parties which obviously manipulated them to their advantage.

Participants felt that transport should be organised for those with special needs during registration and voting. Some suggested that IEC offices should not only be in cities, but should also be erected in remote places.

A participant asked "*can we make sure that this is another election where the voting stations are free of political influences because in my area KwaMashu if you say that you are from Lindelani they chase you away because they know what political party you belong in".*

How well represented are people from different groups in terms of different racial groups, in terms of gender. Is the IEC making an effort to ensure that those people are represented and to make sure that they are represented in voting?

On the positive side, participants said the IEC is doing a good job in ensuring that all groups in terms of gender and race are well represented during elections. However there were concerns that too much attention is focused on encouraging the youth to vote, thereby neglecting groups like the disabled and women.

Appropriate age to start voting

All participants felt 18 years is the appropriate age at which to start voting.

Suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage people in your community to vote

One participant suggested that the IEC should ensure that there is First Aid equipment in all voting stations. She explained that sometimes you get pregnant people who might be in need of urgent medical assistance at the voting stations. Another participant who is with the Durban Metro Council told the group that during the last elections an official from the municipality was issuing forms asking people to indicate what they need at their voting stations in terms of personnel and equipment. The participant stated that the forms were never collected and suggested that the IEC should play this role instead of delegating it to municipalities.

Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the IEC's recruitment and selection methods. They questioned why it is always school principals and teachers at the schools which are voting stations who get jobs, for instance as presiding officers. They felt that underprivileged local people should also be given such opportunities. Some added that even when the IEC has some project at the Thekwini municipality it is always municipal workers who get jobs instead of unbiased unemployed people being employed.

Youth and voting

Diverse views on the issue emerged from the two groups. In the first group participants argued that youth abstain from voting because they do not benefit thereafter. In the other group, participants argued that youth still go out in numbers to vote, even though they do not attend campaigns and rallies. One participant from this group said that people attending tertiary institutions feel that the government does not support them. This is because the Government is seen to be supportive of those *"who are falling pregnant"* through the child grants.

3.4.7. Voter education

The consensus was that continued voter education is required. A number of reasons were given. Some felt that it is easy to forget things if you are not continuously reminded. They argued that ordinary people know about necessary documentation, voting dates and venues, but need more detailed information about reasons for and implications of voting or not voting. *"It is no use teaching people how to put a cross when voting if you do not explain to them why they have to vote"*, argued one participant. Another stated that some people need to be educated about the importance of voting, in order for them to understand its actual meaning. He explained that *"people don't see any connection between them putting a cross in the paper and what is going to happen in the country"*.

Another recurring comment was that after elections, people never see their councillors until the next election when they are campaigning for votes. There were also concerns that in some areas people do not even know their councillors. It was reported that in some schools, teachers/educators have taken it upon themselves to teach children about voting, feeling that it makes sense for young children to learn about voting before they start to participate in the process. Some other participants suggested there should be an official school subject dealing with democracy. The feeling was that there are even old people who do not understand what being in a democratic country means: for many people democracy means *"being able to buy a house where you want, to be able to buy a car"*.

Several participants argued that in voter education more emphasis should be placed on the difference between national and provincial elections. They feared that people get confused about why they need two ballot papers and end up making mistakes. A comment was made that a high percentage of spoilt ballot papers are found in rural areas indicating that voters might not have been assisted or taught well. One participant commended the IEC on how it educated voters during the 1994 elections: *"I had a ballot paper published in the newspapers so I knew how the ballot paper looked like and I was told that there would be faces not logos so when I went to vote I had a very good idea what I am going to do. Now, the IEC is not telling people what they are going to do, how the ballot is going to look like and so forth"*.

There were reports that some people do not believe that a person's vote is his secret. They are scared to vote as they worry that they might be traced, for instance if they have voted for a party that is less popular in an area. This highlights the need for voter education.

There were comments insinuating that the public is not aware that the IEC is an independent body that manages elections: *"The general view is that the IEC is just another political organisation ... a large portion of the community actually believe that the ANC and the IEC is all one and the same thing"*. This also shows lack of information about the IEC's role and mandate.

What role have you been playing in terms of voter education as councillors?

Several participants indicated that before they were councillors they worked as school principals and as a result are well versed in training. One participant said as councillors they have tried to sensitise those conducting voter education or distributing voting material to the fact that not everyone understands English and Afrikaans and that the training need to be offered also in other African languages.

3.4.8. Voting irregularities

Several participants shared experiences of voting irregularities. One participant said he found a party agent wearing his full *"party regalia"*. He explained that they complained to the presiding officer who eventually had to call the IEC head office which confirmed that it is acceptable for voters, but not party agents, to wear their party outfits. Another participant said there was an old blind gentleman with no walking stick, who had an assistant with him. The blind man wanted his assistant to accompany and assist him to vote, but the presiding officer refused, claiming that he himself would help him. The councillor indicated that they had had to call the presiding officer to order because it is permitted for a blind person be helped by his assistant of choice.

Do you think that the elections are free and fair?

One participant felt that this is a very difficult question to answer. Some participants felt that the IEC is not impartial in the sense that it tends to favour the ruling party. One participant

recalled her experience from the previous elections when one of the voters' stickers on the ID had a date that fell outside the registration dates. It was reported that this person was allowed to register after permission was granted from the IEC head offices. They therefore suggested that it would be better if officials in the voting stations are made up of representatives from different political parties to ensure impartiality.

Participants from both groups were concerned that the IEC employs SADTU members as election officials. They believe that the organization is biased. One participant argued that "*SADTU is known to be an affiliate and to be an ally of the COSATU and they are in alliance with the SACP, they are in alliance with ANC. The majority of the teachers are engaged; that majority will always come from that section. We have evidence to the effect that there has been a lot of unfairness it was in the papers published teachers went on strike and SADTU came out openly said if you continue withholding and dunking our salaries we will let the public know what we did to some political parties in order to make you win. It was published in the newspapers that is why I am saying that when Dr. Balo came down with a team to speak to our party we had to actually show her the newspapers to say look at this, it was written on this day, this is a kind of allegation and because of those threats there was a tendency to back-pedal because they were saying we are going to expose you and we are also going to expose some of the things that we have been doing in order to make you win. I am talking about the things that were published*". Thus, participants in one group suggested that the IEC should take on and utilise its own full time employees.

Another participant argued that for the elections to be deemed free and fair, all ballot papers should be counted at the voting stations at which they were marked and that results should be electronically forwarded to the national offices.

3.4.9. Role of IEC

Several participants believed that the role of IEC should be expanded to ensure that all political parties deliver on their promises to the people. They felt that the IEC should do more than monitoring elections to ensure that they are free and fair. They proposed that all political parties should be forced to submit their manifestos to the IEC so that it can continuously monitor them after they have been elected. One participant argued that voter education is not enough if it is not coupled with continuous monitoring of the performance of the elected

officials. Furthermore, they thought the IEC should monitor the performance of different government departments like the Department of Health and Department of Education to ensure that they are functioning well and servicing communities and give them an incentive to continue voting.

3.4.10. Closing comments

"Just one point: this concerns the objection forms. More often than not the objection forms are completed by the presiding officer and then handed over to the presiding officer, whether those objection forms reach the desired person is questionable because if the presiding officer should decide not to forward them how are we going to object on that?"

"I think that this is going to be our 3rd national and provincial elections, so if the IEC fails to ensure that elections are free and fair, more and more people will lose interest to vote. ...so the IEC should play its part...

"The transport of the ballot paper from the VB station to the central point: I have some reservations in that the SAPS takes them and goes because the SAPS has an interest in this present situation that we have in SA - they are part and parcel of the ruling party and whether there can be an alternative arrangement that can be made for this to be transported because we heard the last time what happened. Also I want to say thank you for the invitation we think that it has been productive and if one quarter would be put on to the provision of what is there already that would be a big step in the right direction".

"Some party agents lodged some complaints with the IEC but I think we never heard the response from the IEC: the IEC has to consider that".

"I think that the IEC has a lot of homework to do amongst themselves firstly it needs to change its image. If you ask anybody even myself as a politician I will tell you that IEC equals ANC. So they need to change that sort of image ... members of the IEC are mainly the senior members of the ANC, it has been done blatantly and openly and if you talk to the DA as I am an IFP, the DA will tell you that they have no faith upfront because they have been affiliated to the ANC".

"I am saying to you that the elections would only be free if there is a strong stance from the IEC side to say that 'no more SADTU to be part of the elections' because they are still allowed and we must deal with it".

3.5. People with disabilities: North West

3.5.1 Introduction

The focus group discussion was conducted with two groups: one group comprised people with physical disabilities and the second group comprised blind or partially blind participants. The focus group discussions were conducted at Itsoseng Hand Craft Centre in Itsoseng Township near Lichtenburg in North West province. All participants in the first group were black Africans, being five male and five female participants with physical disabilities. The second group, of the blind, also black Africans, had three male and four female participants. Five of the physically disabled and six of the blind were aged 50 years and older.

Among the people with physical disabilities, three were married, one was a widower, one divorced and four had never married. Among the blind and partially blind, one was married, one a widower, one divorced and three had never married.

Participants were asked to indicate their highest education level attained. Among those with physical disabilities, three had some primary schooling, four completed primary school, and two had some secondary education while one had some tertiary or post matriculation education. Among the blind and partially blind, one had no schooling, two had some primary schooling, one completed primary school while three had some secondary education.

Thirteen out of 17 participants (76%) spoke Setswana at home. Four of those with physical disabilities were employed part-time, four were unemployed but looking for work and one was a pensioner. Among the blind one was unemployed but not looking for work, four were unemployed and looking for work, while two were pensioners. None of the blind participants was employed.

The group with physical disabilities had mixed feelings about elections and how they have benefited from of them. They were all concerned about the stigma of disability, inaccessible

buildings and government offices, and long queues at banks, clinics and other public places. With regard to participation in the elections they complained about problems they encounter especially during rainy days. They complained about unemployment and lack of training and that even if they do have some skills they do not seem to be considered at the handicraft centre.

Among the blind participants the major concern was about being able to select the party of their choice without being assisted. They complained about the way they are assisted to cast their votes during the election because the electoral officers help them vote rather than people they trust, such as their guides. Sadly, they are not sure whether the people they want to vote for are the ones that get chosen on their behalf at the end of the day. They would love to see a lot of people trained in Braille and later the voters roll also to be translated into Braille so that they can vote themselves with confidence.

3.5.2 General Economic assessment

Views by participants with physical disabilities differed from those of the blind on whether there have been positive changes in the lives of people with disabilities in South Africa. Most participants with physical disabilities felt that voting has brought minimal changes - if any - to them personally. They felt strongly that there were no visible changes because they continue to experience problems such as lack of housing, unemployment, and poor health services. One participant with physical disabilities summarised it in the following words: *"I do not think that voting has helped me, unemployment for people with disability is still high"*. The problem of unemployment was well articulated by one participant as follows: *"Opportunities that come up for jobs are usually far away from where we stay, for example an opportunity might come from Rustenburg and you need transport and accommodation and at the end of the day such is not provided so you end up not going. Something must be done to help us in that regard. It is not like we do not want to go but we need help and it is not coming, now voting becomes useless"*.

On the other hand the blind felt that there were positive changes especially in the provision of social services such electricity, water, housing, health and education. One blind participant who is participating in government-sponsored Braille training had this to say: *"I used to only*

hear about Braille but now I am on training and although it is difficult I am at least positive that I will learn as it is now accessible to all of us".

A partially blind participant talked about the accessibility of health services provided free by the government. The quality of health services in the area was commendable because doctors and nurses try their level best to assist the blind. These sentiments were well captured by one partially blind and one completely blind participant in the following words: *"My eyes were operated and I am looking forward to seeing again as there is already a positive sign on one eye, I did not pay for the operations so I guess voting really helped"; "A nurse from the local clinic brings my high blood pressure medication to my house every month so I do not miss on treatment and I find that very important and wish all sick people can be helped that way".*

Another issue of concern to both the physically disabled and the blind was access to buildings and transport services. Participants with wheel chairs or other modes of movement considered themselves lucky unlike many other people with physical disabilities in their communities. One participant talked emotionally about the plight of other people with disability by saying: *"There are still people who are lying in bed at home, they cannot move around because they need wheel chairs to move. They probably would have also loved to be here but they couldn't because of that. The government should help such people with wheel chairs so that they can also access places easily".* Blind participants complained about bad roads with stones and ditches which hurt them when walking.

Discrimination against and stigmatisation of people with disabilities in the community and at disability centres meant to cater for their needs were raised both by people with physical disabilities and the blind. The most comprehensive response in this regard was by one participant with a physical disability: *"People managing the disability centres are physically healthy people who do not really have an idea of what we as disabled people go through so when they deal with us they treat us unfairly, and there are still some people who actually hate disabled people: we are called names and it hurts".*

Discrimination against people with disabilities was said to be common in public transport especially taxis. One physically disabled participant summarised as follows: *"The taxi industry is also only catering for people who are well, when you are at the side of the road*

and try to stop a taxi, they will just pass you if you are on a wheel chair and some will hurl insults at you saying: who do you expect to lift you in and do you have money to pay for an extra seat for that wheel chair? - that hurts a lot as the people inside also laugh at you when they hear him say all that". The pension payout points were considered a nightmare and so were banks. There was consensus that people with disabilities should not have to stand in queues for hours. The participants strongly felt that the plight of the disabled in their area has not been taken into account and they sometimes believe that they just vote for the sake of voting because election promises are empty.

However, some positive sentiments were expressed by participants. The blind were relatively more positive than their physically disabled counterparts. One physically disabled participant had this to say: *"The only change I see is that we are now being consulted and we form part of the discussions. We have been asked to apply for houses and I personally believe there is a positive change as I am waiting for the results of my application, only then will I say it was not empty promises".* The blind however talked about positive changes in a wide range of social services including provision of electricity and water, housing, health and education opportunities available to all without discrimination. One blind participant summarised it in the following words: *"Young children at school are now taught to read and write and they will have equal opportunity I hope with those that can see as they will also be educated. There is no longer discrimination against the blind".* Training in Braille was specifically mentioned as a great service to the blind. There was optimism for still better things to come from the government.

Both groups felt that people with disabilities were being catered for during elections. This is captured succinctly by one of the participants when he said: *"We are well catered for at the elections, we are usually asked to skip the queues so I do not think it is all that bad".*

3.5.3 Identity documents and registration issues

There seemed to be no concerns or problems with regard to obtaining identity documents. All the members of the two groups indicated that they had voted before and they all had such documents. Most participants obtained them to apply for pensions and disability grants but complained about the difficulties they experience in accessing Department of Home Affairs'

offices: *"I have my ID because I needed my pension and I believe we all have although going to Home Affairs for a disabled person is not good as not all places are accessible for you on wheelchair, or crutches, but we do manage!".*

The blind who know Braille complained that completing documents was difficult and they had to rely on their guide or the officials at the Home Affairs Department to do it for them. They recommended that there should be Braille versions for every government document to enable them complete documents themselves.

All participants were registered as voters. They however felt that people who stay at home because of their disabilities do not have the opportunity to register and vote. Therefore they recommended a door-to-door voter education campaign. The majority felt that the door-to-door campaign should include voter registration and arranging voting on election-day so that everyone gets a chance to add his or her voice. One participant with physical disability succinctly expressed his opinion as follows: *"We are fortunate because we have wheel chairs. What about those that are just lying in bed? - they also need to hear what we hear and they also need to register to vote, so electoral officials should go to their houses".*

3.5.4 Participation in voting and politics

Voting was considered important by all participants because it gave them a voice in national affairs. They felt that by selecting their own representatives they could have access to housing and employment. One physically disabled participant expressed it as follows: *"Voting is important so that the government can know that I am here with disability and that I need help. Then they can give us houses and jobs, because if my party goes to parliament they will represent my needs as I tell them".* Another said, *"voting is important so that I can also make my voice heard although I am not sure now if that really happens".*

The blind were very interested in participating in elections and gave their reasons as follows: *"Voting helps you to add your voice because you vote for the person you believe will help you"; "voting is important because I used to earn a very small amount of money and since I voted and the new government came into place, I am at par with the rest of the blind people, there is now fairness, and I have a house and was helped when I almost lost it"; "we get free*

treatment from clinics and yes we do earn far better pension than we used to and our life is better because of that".

However they do not like politics in general because they feel that the things politicians promise during elections never happen. According to the physically disabled participants politicians are interested in enriching themselves, their friends and their family members. In comparison, people with disabilities get a raw deal when it comes to accessing services and job opportunities.

The IEC was accused, especially by the physically disabled, of not giving adequate opportunities to people with disabilities when recruiting election officials. One of the participants put it this way: *"Politics are okay but they suck sometimes because you vote people in and once they are in all they care about is their friends and family and you the disabled are forgotten. People with disability are the forgotten few; there is no one in our ward who was ever appointed to be an electoral officer for instance, why?"*

Although they would like to participate in politics the majority of people with physical disabilities felt neglected by the authorities because they do not have the means to get to the polling stations. One participant expressed it as follows: *"There are people with disability who would love to vote and take part in politics but due to lack of wheel chairs they cannot move"*. Others complained that even after making their own arrangements for transport to the polling stations they are not assisted in casting their votes and sometimes do not vote at all and return home very disappointed. This was well captured in the words of one of the participants: *"Voting stations are not accessible to all; they do not have ramps and rails. This makes it very difficult, and during elections sometimes you cannot enter especially when it is raining and no one cares to help you cast your vote and you end up going back home without voting and maybe you have hired a car to take you to the voting station so you lose money for nothing".*

There is willingness among members of both groups of people to participate in politics and elect their representatives but they are frustrated by lack of understanding and support from those who are involved in organising elections. The main concern is politicians who come to them during election time but forget about them once elected.

3.5.5 Views about participation in voting and politics

There are high expectations among both the blind and the physically disabled when they participate in elections or politics in general. Some of these expectations include having one's voice heard, skill development, employment and access to social services. There was consensus that their problems were beginning to get the attention of the authorities. They attributed this to their being able to assemble and discuss their problems freely and to present their grievances to the authorities. This was articulated by two of the physically disabled participants as follows: *"Voting has given me a voice, there is now freedom of expression, we can say our plight and we feel we are being heard"; "we no longer wait for social workers to come talk to us, we can congregate and put our problems down and send them and we believe we will receive feedback"*. Similar sentiments were expressed by the blind as captured in the following statements: *"Yes, we are fortunate that we are only blind but we can speak and hear so it is easy for us to take part in politics. It is only during elections that we feel we can be easily cheated as our guides are usually under age and are left outside and we get helped by people we really do not know"; "blind people are no longer the forgotten few; we hear about meetings and we attend. Even if we cannot see who we are talking to, we are able to speak and be heard"*.

Participants with physical disabilities expressed their appreciation of the IEC's effort to include some of them in the local electoral committee: *"In past elections, disability was not catered for but now there is a person with disability in each ward. If all wards can have a disabled person in the electoral committee that will help a lot"*.

Do you have suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage people with disabilities to vote?

In addition to voter education being conducted at central points, participants with physical disabilities felt that a door-to-door approach should be adopted for people with disabilities who cannot leave their houses. The blind expressed their appreciation to the IEC for including a blind person among the people who addressed them during a voter education campaign. Some participants from both groups suggested that the IEC should send electoral officials to enable people with disabilities to vote in their homes. The reasons given were that many people with disabilities fail to register as voters or cast their vote on election day

because they cannot get to the venues and very little effort was made to facilitate their participation.

Both groups suggested that time and thought should be dedicated specifically to them and to the elderly before elections, even with polling stations dedicated specifically to these groups. One participant with physical disability said that: *"There should be dedicated stations for disabled person closer to them, not only at the centre as not all can access the centre but maybe at a house"*. This was echoed by a blind participant: *"There should be a pre-election time for the elderly, the blind and other disabled"*.

Blind participants raised issues pertinent to elections and to how they felt the IEC could help them participate more in future elections. They suggested that election materials including ballot papers should be available in Braille. This was seen as critical in ensuring that the blind could easily access information on voting and be independent from the election officials in choosing their preferred political party or candidate at the polling station: *"Our guides are our beneficiaries, if we can trust them with our bank pin numbers we can trust them with our votes, so they should be allowed to vote for us no matter their age as it is us voting not them: they are just doing what we tell them to"*.

Participants with physical disabilities expressed their disappointment with the dismally few opportunities for people with disabilities to act as electoral officers during voter registration and on polling day. Maybe, they felt, if they saw their own people thus employed this would encourage them to participate. This was captured well in the following words: *"We want to see disabled people serving as electoral officers and voter educators as well; this will encourage us to vote"*. Similar views were expressed by the blind who saw the inclusion of the blind as voter educators as a motivation for them to participate in elections.

A concern was also raised about people with other forms of disability such as the deaf who need some one who knows sign language to assist them. This was expressed as follows: *"IEC should bring interpreters to assist people who are deaf at the polling stations; sometimes you can just see that there is miscommunication between the officers and the deaf"*.

The information dissemination strategy used by the IEC did not escape criticism by those with physical disabilities and suggestions were made for other channels to reach people with

disabilities. One participant summarised it as follows: *"The dissemination of information is not good; announcements about election meetings do not reach all the people on time. Most of the time the announcements are done at the handicraft centre and not all disabled people come to the centre. The IEC should also send information to the clinics, chiefs, churches and NGOs in the area - then a lot of people will get the announcements on time and it will reach a lot of people"*

3.5.6 Voter education

There was consensus that the needs of people with disabilities were taken into consideration during the last voter registration exercise. People with disabilities got information about registration from their ward representatives and were helped at the registration venue. One participant expressed his views on the matter as follows: *"We heard from our friend who goes to the centre and we also went to register. When we got there we were helped and often times we get helped first and then we go home"*. No one experienced any problems during the registration. This contradicts to some extent the earlier complaints about limited accessibility and the lack of assistance provided to those with physical disabilities.

The blind raised a concern about the way voter education was conducted and suggested that the officials should spend more time talking to them and responding to their questions instead of asking for their IDs to check if they were registered and then moving on: *"Voter education is not properly done, they do come to the house but they do not educate us they just take the ID document, check your name and leave"*.

Do you think people with disabilities need to go through a programme where they are taught about things such as registering to vote and what to do when they get to the voting stations?

There was consensus in both groups that people with disabilities need as much information about voting as people with no disabilities, but they expressed their disappointment with the responsible IEC officials for not taking action even after they were repeatedly informed about these concerns. A physically disabled participant put it this way: *"It is important as we mentioned earlier but we are not sure if these people ever listen to what we tell them, after all they are not disabled so maybe they also, like the rest of the community we live in, do not care"*.

3.5.7 Most recent voting experience

There were some interesting experiences recounted by the participants relating to the efforts they have made to either register or vote and to their disappointment at not being able to do so. One physically disabled participant captured it well in his experiences at a polling station: *"I asked someone to take me to the polling station as I did not have a wheel chair then. When we got there it was raining and the whole area was muddy so I could not crawl. I sat in the car with the hope that the guy I went with will come with someone to come and help me vote. No one came, he came alone and I told him we could go as it was still raining and I did not want to delay him. I was disappointed as that meant I could not vote although I took pains to register".*

The blind again raised their concerns about being assisted by IEC officials to cast their vote: *"I always just go to the voting station and when I get there I am taken to the front and my guide is told to wait outside as he is young. Then an officer asks who I want to vote for and then tells me he has made a cross for me".*

3.5.8 Participation in groups and political demonstrations

They all agreed that it was important for them to belong to groups such as self help associations and sports and community organisations because there they can share experiences and motivate one another. One participant gave an example of a women's group that she belonged to that made carpets to sell in the local community: *"In our area we have come together as women and we make carpets and we plan to sell them but it is only the three of us and we are friends that is why it was easy".*

The physically disabled however cited money as the limiting factor. They said they would form such groups if they were assisted financially. This was expressed as follows by one of the participants: *"Even if we want to, that involves money and we are struggling as we are already so we cannot afford to start such self help organisations but yes I agree that we should do that".* The blind participants cited various initiatives that they have taken to uplift their living standards. These ranged from skills training in weaving, and sewing for the

partially blind, to actual job creation. These initiatives were seen as important in demonstrating to people with disabilities what they can do for themselves instead of focusing on their disabilities. There were also reports of social groups such as a soccer club for the blind that help them to socialise.

3.5.9 Participation in groups and political demonstrations

Although the majority agreed they would like to attend public meetings, difficulties with transport were cited as the main barrier to attending election rallies and other gatherings. Even when transport is provided little effort was made to help people with disabilities to get into the vehicles. One participant with a physical disability expressed it as follows: *"Transport is usually provided but because you are on a wheel chair and it is not specifically for people like you, the healthy ones will jump and fill it up while you are sitting there waiting for someone to help you climb and even if you were to get in, you will not have space to park your wheelchair, so we end up just staying at home"*. Thus to avoid getting disappointed many of the people with physical disabilities just stay at home: *"I once tried but when I got there I could not see a thing, could not get food as there was no designated area for us the disabled, and I regretted why I went there. Since then I do not go anywhere"*.

The blind on the other hand would attend political meetings if held in their communities but they fear for their lives in case a stampede was to occur. The blind were more positive in response to the various issues as compared to the physically disabled. The former and to some extent the latter acknowledged that there have been positive changes in the country.

There was conflicting information on a number of issues but one can clearly say that the IEC is perceived to have made efforts in addressing the needs of the people with disabilities during registration and voting. However, there was a feeling that there is still a lot that needs to be done. A door-to-door approach was suggested as a more viable method of reaching the disabled. This would to some extent reduce the problems experienced with public transport.

Accessibility of venues such as polling stations was considered critical if people with physical disabilities are to participate more in elections. Training in Braille and having election documents in Braille was considered critical for blind people.

There is a general feeling that people with disabilities are discriminated against when it comes to training opportunities and employment. They would like to see some of their own as election officials or as voter educators.

3.6. Youth: Gauteng

3.6.1 Background

A total of four youth focus groups were conducted, all in Gauteng.

Group 1: Young Afrikaner males, of whom all indicated that they were studying at university, with the exception of two who were working. Participants were aged between 19 and 29.

Group 2: White females who all of whom said they were doing tertiary studies. Two participants were working part time. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24.

Group 3: Black African males. This focus group was conducted in Benoni.

Group 4: Black African females. This focus group was conducted in Soweto.

3.6.2 General economic assessment

Participants in all youth groups unanimously maintained that there have been minimal changes in their lives as compared to five years ago. Participants in the black female group were the most positive about changes in the country compared to the other groups. Participants in this group argued that even though the government has not delivered on some of its promises, like universal access to basic services, a lot of positive things have happened. They commended the women empowerment initiatives. Some mentioned that in the past a woman with matriculation could only be a domestic servant. Conversely, after 1994, a lot of opportunities were made available to the youth. This came in the form of scholarships, loans and other educational support. One participant stated, *"if it wasn't for voting, I don't think I would be studying*", illustrating how she felt voting had impacted positively on her life.

This was in direct contrast with what emerged in the black African male group. Participants in that group felt that as young men, they have not benefited from voting at all. They felt neglected in empowerment policies and argued that it is only the young women who benefit

through child grants. They were adamant that there were still too few opportunities available to young black African men. Statements such as this capture this attitude: *"When we complete matric, there is a dead end. I don't think voting has helped us"*. In support of this another participant said *"we were promised that if we vote our lives will improve but there has not been such. In South Africa we have a black president but blacks still go nowhere, still no jobs for them whilst whites are driving fancy cars"*.

Both the black men and women observed that even though there are opportunities available for the youth, lack of information and lack of access to information technology facilities are constraints to the full utilisation of such opportunities. For some, nepotism is seen as a major hindrance to equal access to available opportunities.

Participants in the black female group were concerned that the youth is not proactive enough to improve their lives. A participant said that *"we as youth don't take initiative; we always expect government to come to us, at the end of the day we find lot of youth become premature mothers who makes babies rather than taking those opportunities and making use of them"*. Sharing this sentiment another participant said *"I strongly agree that there are many opportunities out there created by the government. My community is still sitting and waiting for people to do something for them"*. They said that moreover information is readily available through various media channels on career guidance, education and job opportunities.

The men, black and whites, were concerned with the rising prices of food and other necessities. They commented on the high unemployment amongst the youth and argued that this is one reason they are discouraged from voting. One participant from the black African group summed it by stating that *"life is generally difficult nowadays"*. The white male group argued that it is only those in the middle and upper class who are benefiting from the current economic system, whilst the unemployed and those in the working class are neglected.

Participants from amongst the white men and women were concerned about the high crime rate in the country. Some participants felt that the current economic situation has impacted on their lives negatively as it exacerbates the crime, especially theft, that enables other people to survive. They argued that their lifestyles have worsened over the past five years. Some hinted

that a number of people they know are planning to emigrate because of the crime situation in South Africa.

Importance of voting

All participants felt that it is important for everyone to vote, especially if they want change. "*Elections cannot really be of value if most people in the country do not vote*", warned one participant. Another participant hoped that in the future South Africa could have a multiracial party, where people could choose a party on the basis of its effectiveness rather than its race.

3.6.3 Identity documents and registration issues

Most participants were in possession of green bar-coded identity documents. Some will be voting for the first time and were unsure about the documentation necessary for registration and voting.

Most participants from three groups did not experience any problems in securing the green coded identity documents (the black African women were an exception in this instance). They said that the application process was easily completed through their schools whilst preparing for the matriculation examination. Very few participants indicated having struggled to get an identity document. Amongst the participants who encountered problems were those who complained that it took a long time, whilst another said his finger prints were lost and he had to reapply. A female participant from the white group complained that Home Affairs offices were neither safe nor clean: *"I would not go there alone"* she declared.

Almost all participants amongst the black African women said that getting their identity documents was not easy. One participant indicated that her identity document had the wrong gender which took a long time to rectify. She explained, *"mine was saying I'm a male, they needed lots of things to change that, they needed an affidavit and confirmation from the doctor that I was a female. I did all that; they said I will get it after three months but it was after five months"*. One participant explained that registering to study at a tertiary institution was a challenge because he had applied for an identity document and it was not forthcoming. Another participant explained *"I applied for ID and I struggled to get it but when I got it my name was wrongly spelt. I was forced to use the wrong name. I went later to change it in*

Pretoria and it came back with a totally wrong name. I must start afresh to correct it and correcting those IDs consumes lot of time and money for the mistake that they did".

Alternative form of identity document

Various suggestions were made from the different groups about how voters could be identified at voting stations. Some suggested a driver's licence, or passport. There was some disagreement amongst participants as some argued that it is very easy to forge a driver's licences and passports.

3.6.4 Participation in voting and politics

The groups consisted both of respondents who had voted in the past and of those who will be registering for the first time. Participants who had registered during the previous elections unanimously agreed that the process went extremely fast, and that queues were very short. Some participants amongst the white men were not sure of the registration date. Conversely, participants from all other groups were well informed about the registration dates and even the venues.

What other reasons do you have for not registering apart from age?

Participants gave various reasons. Some felt that registering requires too much effort. They mentioned that registration takes place during examination time and that some will be busy studying. One commented that *"time is a problem: you don't know how long it will take, and your days are full up, there is no time to stand in line to register, people are very busy. They should speed up a system to register"*. A suggestion was put forward that the IEC should make it possible to register on-line or by means of an SMS.

While most participants undertook to register to vote, there were a few who seemed despondent. A participant from the black African male group argued that he would not be registering because *"nothing has changed. No employment, no bursaries to further our education. I think government must fund education rather than promoting children to make babies and giving them grants"*. Some of the participants in the white male group shared a similar sentiment as they variously explained why they are not interested in voting: *"People*

feel a sense of hopelessness ... Many young people feel it will not help to vote"; "I do not feel that it will make a difference".

Uniquely, the white male group expressed the concern that South African political parties are *"racially driven"*. They felt that the political parties do not win elections because they are the best, but just because they are well supported through racial affiliation. One participant expressed delight at the ANC split, arguing that they may not get a two-thirds majority vote, and that that would mean change for the country.

3.6.5 Views about participation in voting and politics

Some participants perceived that the top political leaders are only satisfying their own needs and not listening to the needs of people on the ground, thus discouraging their interest in politics: *"The people who are in power just do what they want. They do not listen to the people, and see how they can benefit them. It is such a mess at the top, I don't want to be part of it"*. One participant from amongst the black women stated that *"if someone doesn't know anything about something you develop an IDC* [I don't care] *attitude. We thought only old people should vote"*. This could be linked to lack of information and a need for voter education. This was echoed by participants from the black African male group who agreed that *"we grew up knowing that only old people are voting"*. Participants from the white female group generally agreed that the current political parties do not represent their interests anymore. One participant elaborated: *"I am not saying they should put twenty year olds in parliament, but we need someone to speak for the younger generation because old people have old ideas from the previous generation"*. A similar sentiment was echoed by one of the black men: *"the President should be young and he will be able to reach out to the youth, these old people think for themselves only"*.

Role of IEC

Several participants stated strongly that the IEC is indeed an independent body that is neutral in order to ensure that elections are free and fair. Some commented on the smooth election process: *"Things do generally proceed smoothly, you never hear of violence, of someone being killed when people vote"*. One of the participants however argued otherwise and maintained the IEC is sometimes biased towards particular parties. He explained that

"Everyone in the IEC is politically aligned, they support a political party, and it can be seen that they are biased to that party, or will turn a blind eye if the party does something wrong".

Does the IEC addresses the needs of the young male voters?

The white male participants felt that in recent elections it is only the ANC that is campaigning and other parties do not encourage people to vote for them at all. They compared the situation to the past where they used to be informed about different parties, there was the *"NP, AWB, ANC, and a Zulu party, but now we have no idea what exists".* Participants felt that whites are not well represented in politics, and thought that this is because white Afrikaans parties do not campaign vigorously. They confirmed that if only the ANC can deliver on its promises, they would vote for it.

One participant said they live in hostels and no one takes the time to inform them about what is happening in politics. They argued that the internet could be used to teach them about current politics. They complained that though there were gatherings in Sandton and Jabulani, they were not invited. Participants further insinuated that the locations of some political gatherings are not attractive to the white population. *"Most people do not go to places such as Jabulani ... white Afrikaans people do not go there, the white people never gather en masse, they will get attacked, when we are all together",* one participant commented. However, they felt that if that if the youth could stand together and vote irrespective of colour, they could affect politics.

When asked whether the IEC addresses the needs of the younger generation, participants from the African male group maintained that they do not feel that the IEC cares much about them. They felt that political parties are pretending to care for them, only because they are after their votes. Participants from the white female group felt that they are already a minority and the chances of their preferred party winning are very small.

What should the IEC do to inform and encourage you to vote? How can you encourage others to vote?

When asked about what could be done to encourage them to vote, some suggested giving out free food parcels, and information through the newspapers and on the internet. Some felt that

they still lack some information. For instance one said he knew when to register, but he was not exactly sure where he could register. In general they argued that there is not enough information made available to help them know about registering and voting: *"we need more specific information"*. There were indirect suggestions amongst the white participants that they are marginalised when compared to Africans. One participant said *"they go to Garankuwa, take people by the hand, show them how, and when to register"*. *"What worries me is that people know more of what is going on in America than our country. Why is that the situation?"* commented one of the participants.

What advice will you give to IEC to encourage people to vote?

They suggested that the IEC should hire local people to visit different households encouraging people to vote: *"There should be local people who encourage people to vote rather than people from far away"*, a participant emphasised.

Difference between national, provincial and municipal elections

Very few participants understood the distinction between the three tiers of elections. In the white male group some participants frankly admitted that sometimes they get confused. One said *"I never understood the difference between the provincial and municipal election"*. Male participants in the black African group seemed to understand the difference. One participant explained that the *"local government is for municipality, provincial is like the one in Gauteng, and national is the president who governs the whole nation"*.

Feeling about people who do not vote

The youth expressed mixed feelings regarding people who decide not to vote. There were those across all groups who argued that one needs to vote in order to effect change. Consequently, they stated that people who do not vote should never complain: as one participant put it: *"People who do not vote should not voice their opinion"*. This sentiment was repeated in all groups. There were however some radical participants in the black African male group who maintained that *"people should resist and not vote to get the government to listen to their needs"*.

Do you think elderly people and the disabled are well taken care of at voting stations?

On this question there were both positive and negative observations across the different groups from the young people who had voted. Some participants, mainly from the white male group, maintained that people with special needs are given preferential treatment during elections. They reported them as being provided with chairs so that they do not stand in queues. The black African men were however not convinced, arguing strongly that these groups are not cared for during elections. This was captured in such comments as: *"no ways, you'll find old people exposed to the sun, waiting in long queues, they are not given special treatment"; "the only thing they want from them is their vote".*

All participants felt that men and women are treated equally during voting.

Do you think eighteen is the right age to vote?

Participants from different groups had contradictory opinions on the appropriate age to vote. There were a few who saw sixteen as an appropriate age. One argued that at that stage a person is able to *"make important decisions regarding his studies, for example what you are going to study, what will be life choices, so why can you not vote?"*

Some felt that eighteen is a good age because at that stage a person is mature enough to understand his or her choices and how politics works. There were some who argued that eighteen is still a bit young, rather than twenty-one. A few agreed that *"It is better to have an older age of 21 where all youth are likely to be more mature".* Another participant added that *"if you are younger you are likely to be influenced by others. However, when you are older, you will be more likely to have developed your own independent opinions".* However, most were content with 18.

3.6.6 Voter education

Very few participants had attended the voter education programme, most having only registered for the first time. One participant who had attended had the following to say about her experience: *"what they did was to teach us about the process of voting, though things like this need practical illustration not just slides. I was not impressed by the presentation. The*

other thing is that they should appoint young people to teach rather than old women who remind me of my primary teacher and my mum, at the end I thought - well, voting is for old people".

3.6.7 Recent voting experience

Were you all aware you needed a green bar-coded ID book to vote?

Participants were all aware that a greed bar-coded identity book is required for one to register to vote. One participant questioned why one is required to register in the first place and why one could not register on the day of the elections. Only two participants indicated having voted in the past .When asked about the experience of voting, one of the two said the party for which he voted did not win so he was a bit disappointed.

Those who had voted said the voting process went very quickly, and took about fifteen minutes compared to the 1994 elections where most voting stations experienced extremely long queues.

Were the elections fair and free?

All participants who had voted in the previous elections felt that the elections were free and fair. One white male participant commented that the fact that each individual was voting in his corner in private and that the vote was indeed a secret, meant that elections were really free and fair.

3.6.8 Participation in groups and political demonstrations

Participants' preferences for groups differed along racial lines. Participants from the white groups mentioned being members of church and Afrikaans cultural groups. Some said on national public holidays they prefer to watch television rather than take part in rallies. On the other side, black African participants indicated that they participate in rallies, while complaining that sometimes organisers do not provide transport.

3.7. Adults (aged 36-59 years): Free State

3.7.1 General economic assessment

Most of the participants in the adults' focus groups generally believed there have been positive economic changes. The magnitude of the benefits or changes is what is debatable. Black male adults believe there is more equal opportunity, especially those who have access to power and influence. This was registered in the statement that *"only those in powerful jobs and those who can get even more benefits - only the selected few will have a positive change."* White adult males perceive the electoral process as one that offers them the opportunity to create change, with the caveat that their particular population is in the minority. This is revealed in statements such as *"men vote for the hope of change, but they feel that their vote is not enough against the majority of another political party"*. This is compounded by the belief that they have not benefited economically owing to policies such as affirmative action, which have made them regress: hence their determination to participate in the electoral process so as to influence their lives for the better. This scenario is said to have increased their entrepreneurial propensities, as seen in statements such as, *"affirmative action has forced more entrepreneurs in the business sector to work for themselves"*. Adult black women see socio-economic constraints to their development such as difficulty in getting jobs, lack of experience and promotions and social problems such as AIDS. Adult white women see that more opportunities and promotions have become accessible to them, but that there is still room for improvement.

Do you think adults are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?

Views diverged along gender lines. The adult male consensus was that any benefit was individual; however, black adult men felt the benefit was discriminatory: *"only a few get the benefits. The community doesn't always get benefits"*. White adult men were more appreciative of the power of the vote, expressing the view that benefits would accrue irrespective of the gender of the voter. This was strengthened by a general response that *"all votes have the same impact. Doesn't matter who votes"*. Amongst adult women, the consensus was that women have not benefited from participating in the electoral process. Black adult women feel disillusioned, but are still motivated to vote in the hope that the

situation will change, as seen in the statement that *"we vote for the hope that things will change"*. White adult women believe there is gender equality, but perceive that if they vote in a woman leader, there is a high probability that women would be major beneficiaries: as one woman put it, *"everything is equal between men and women, except if you vote for a woman, then women might get a better chance to more benefit"*.

How do you feel about elections in general? Should it be left up to men only?

White adult women expressed a motivation to vote, and called on their fellow-women to turn out in large numbers to elect leaders of their choice. As one person said, *"women should also vote, and vote together to vote for the person they want to be there and to rule"*.

Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last five years?

The general position was that a significant proportion had maintained their status quo. The black adult men felt that any improvements in their lives were due to their personal drive and hard work, signified by a statement from the group that *"if there was a positive change, it came from ourselves and through our hard work"*. White adult women took a holistic view including financial and family reasons: "*even though women got better jobs and promotions, most of the women felt that their quality of life had not changed that much and not particularly in a positive way. If it got better, it is mostly because of financial reasons, or their lives with their children. Most feel that their lives changed for the negative.*"

3.7.2 Identification documents for election purposes

All had the required documents and had registered to participate in the elections.

What were the main challenges that you and men in your community experienced in obtaining green-bar-coded ID books?

The adult men and white adult women experienced no problem in securing their bar-coded ID books. They felt that this process should be ongoing and not limited to campaigns before or after actual elections. The adult white women appreciated that the process was now easier for

the youth, as they could acquire identity documents through their schools. However, the white male and black female adults lamented the length of time taken to process the documents, inaccurate data entry on the documents, and a general lack of follow through by government departments. The black adult women condemned the process as corrupt: as one said, *"you only get fast service if you know someone there."*

Registering to vote

All participants indicated that they had registered to vote. Some of the white adult women who had moved from the areas in which they had previously voted, were aware of the need for re-registration in their new areas.

What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?

There was group consensus that a driver's license should be acceptable as a recognised document in the electoral process. White adult men and black adult women suggested that passports should also be acceptable. White adult men favoured the use of finger print technology in the process. White adult women suggested that proof of a bank account should also be used for identification purposes.

For those who of you who have not registered to vote, what are your reasons for not registering?

All respondents had registered to vote. White adult men emphasised that those who had not registered had moved from their previous home after the last general election and would register at the registration offices in their new home.

3.7.3 Participation in voting and politics

The consensus was that voting is very important. Black adult men emphasised its importance as being a right and an opportunity to create change. They were determined to vote *"because it is my right to vote and I want to make a change"*. The white adult men highlighted the leadership role of men in society, typified by the statement that *"the way we grew up made us more of a leader in our household and we need to take charge. We are still some of the most*

disciplined generation there are". Black adult women said they were becoming disillusioned by the voting process due to the calibre of leaders they were voting in, who never improve the lives of the electorate. This spirit is captured in the statement that *"we do not always think it is useful to go and vote, because there are only empty promises given to us".* White adult women were more appreciative of the process as an opportunity to express their role and rights in society as well as emphasizing its importance across gender boundaries. As one woman said, *"it is important to vote, but not just for women, for men as well. Women do have more opportunities now to vote, so it is important for them to vote. It is a woman's right and privilege to vote".*

Do you think that people benefit from participating in elections? How do they benefit?

The general feeling was that people in the community do not benefit. The black adult men perceived that the process benefits only a privileged few. White adult men felt that universal suffrage and their minority status guaranteed that they would not benefit as individuals and as a community, evidenced by the comment: *"one man, one vote. We are not enough to make a difference".* Women particularly believe that they do not benefit from participating in the electoral process, and motivate themselves to participate in the process for their children's future, hoping that they at least will benefit. Black adult women felt that *"if women do get benefits, it is not in our Free State province".* White adult women also thought that the process had the capability of empowering them to put women felt that *"they get the same benefits as men. Women do not get extra benefits. Women vote to get a better future for their children, and to get more women in power positions".*

Would you say people are generally interested in politics and elections? Please explain.

The consensus was that people are generally interested in politics and elections. What differed among the groups was the magnitude of interest, especially among women as they get more empowered. Black adult men perceived declining interest attributable to changes in society: *"men used to be breadwinners, but not much any more. Things changed too much and not always for the good".* The white adult male view was that *"men are the traditional leaders in their homes, so they are more interested".* Black adult women felt that only well-to-do women had the time to engage in the process as they hired people to help them in their households: *"privileged women that have money and nannies and so forth might be*

interested, but not the general women". White adult women felt that with women empowerment they were in better positions to make a difference in society especially in ensuring a better future for their children. As one said, *"more now than a couple of years ago, women are more equal to men and women are starting to make a difference, so they are more interested in politics. Women want to vote to make a difference and to have a better future for their children"*.

Do you think that the IEC addresses the needs of people during voting?

There were differing feelings as to whether the IEC meets the needs of people during voting. Black adult men felt that the electoral body preferred employing women to men owing to the increased needs of women in society, one man for instance saying that this was *"because the IEC would rather employ women and not men. Men do not have that many needs in any way when it comes to voting"*. Black adult women, of whom one said *"they only look at older people and not so much at women in general"*, felt the electoral body caters more for the elderly. Both white adult women and men felt that gender needs in terms of voting do not differ greatly, and that there is no need for special attention to women.

Whose responsibility should it be to ensure that people participate in elections?

Consensus emerged among white and black men and white women that the ultimate responsibility for participating in the electoral process lies with the individual voter. A white woman captured the perspective thus: *"everyone must take the responsibility on themselves. It does not matter who it is"*. A black adult man hoped for increased civic education for voters on their rights and on the electoral process from the IEC: *"the IEC can help us and encourage people more and teach them how to vote"*. Black women also felt it was the role of the IEC to create interest in the electoral process through civic education.

What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

There was consensus that the right to vote was individual. However, if a person chooses not to vote this should preclude them from criticising government policies and operations. As one white woman put it, voters who do not vote are *"draadsitters"*. Most believed that all voters should vote. Only the black women saw no problem in abstaining if they did not get any

value from voting due to the leaders' actions. They said, however, that they participated as a matter of conscience.

3.7.4 Views about participation in voting and politics

The consensus was that ordinary people are playing a prominent role in South African politics. White men supported this by stating that this was to be expected given the traditional role of men as leaders in society, saying that *"men are the traditional leaders"*. Women on the other hand acknowledged the increasing number of their sex holding powerful government positions.

In your view, do you think that people should be playing a more prominent role in politics and voting? Please explain.

The common thread was that people should continue playing a role in South African politics and the electoral process. Black men felt that *"women can be accommodated, but should not be given too much power"*, while white men were of the view that they should be setting high standards *"especially by being the example at home to go and vote, etc."* Women said that given their nature as care-givers and influencers in many facets of life, it was necessary for them to play an active role in the process. This was captured by the black women who said that *"women have a bigger sense of protection and looking after somebody else. Women have the heart"*.

What do you think about the participation of people in elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?

There was acceptance among the black men and women that they were losing their motivation to vote owing to the evolving political environment in the country. The reason for this among black men was that they perceived that their power was waning. Black women on the other hand felt disenfranchised from the voting process owing to the poor delivery record of their elected leaders: *"women are not interested to go and vote because of all the empty promises. They have a negative attitude towards voting"*. However, the white men and

women were optimistic that the trend is changing due to the current political developments and empowerment. One white woman captured this with the statement that women *"have a positive attitude towards voting. Women are motivated to vote, because they are empowered"*.

What role does the IEC play in ensuring that people in your age group participate in elections?

Though responses were divergent, the consensus was that the role of the IEC in this respect was not evident or was miniscule. Black adult men did not see any effort by the IEC to increase civic education on the electoral process. White men however said a little effort was being made in advertising, and recommended that the IEC should *"have even more advertisements and show what they do and who they are"*. Black women suggested that the IEC engage in civic education on their role and employ the unemployed in the process. White women felt that the role of the IEC was vague and that it does not actively play a role in empowering women in the electoral process.

What role do you think you can play in ensuring that people of your age group participate in the forthcoming elections?

The consensus was that individually each voter can make a contribution by encouraging others to vote through political discussions. As one of the white men put it, *"get more involved and get talking. Share your fears"*.

How would you distinguish between the national, provincial and municipal elections?

There was agreement that there are distinctions between the national, provincial and municipal elections. However, people differed in their explanations of the distinctions, which were not very clearly expressed. Black women defined the structures on the basis of their position in the political system while white women distinguished municipal and provincial elections on this basis and also on that of geographical size.

Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage people of your generation to vote?

There was agreement on the need for the IEC to improve marketing of the role they play in society and in civic education on the electoral process. There were divergent views on how the IEC could disseminate civic education. Black men felt that increased advertising and marketing of the electoral process by the IEC may increase civic awareness and voter turnout, whereas white men called for the provision of pamphlets, brochures at polling stations and more efficient management of the electoral process to reduce impediments such as long queues. Black women respondents called for more advertisements, especially in townships, whereas white women respondents called for increased publicity for the IEC.

3.7.5 Participation of other groups in voting and politics

The consensus was that the IEC does cater for the needs of special groups of voters. There was a call for more to be done for these special groups in the electoral process. The white adult male group stated that *"in our culture we usually help older people"*. The white women agreed that they were catered for, but these services could be made *"more accessible for disabled people"*.

Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?

There was broad agreement that the IEC has addressed the gender issue in the electoral process, under girding universal suffrage and equal opportunity in voting, as captured in the simple statement that *"everybody has the same chance to vote"*. White men felt that as the vote of each voter was equal, the electoral body did not need to ensure gender equity in the electoral process. Black men, claiming *"more women are employed by the IEC"*, focused on the IEC as an employer and felt there was no gender equity in the opportunities presented to them through the electoral process as regards employment.

How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians or people with disability?

Responses on this were ambiguous, implying that this factor was not well highlighted in the electoral process. White men felt that special interest groups were well represented in the electoral process, *"but we do not always feel that they are there for the right reasons. It might be for 'showing' only. If they can do the job, no problem"*. Black women felt that not all groups are equally represented. White women were not sure, but inferred that geography could affect the process: *"depends on where the voting station is - that would play a role in which group are better represented"*.

People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?

Participants felt that people should be eligible to vote somewhere between 18 and 21 years. Black men felt that 18 was acceptable and did not see a need for any revision. White men however, felt the age should be 21 or closer to 21, or the system in some European countries of having weighted votes structured on some variable might be considered: *"older than 18. More towards 21. They might consider weighted votes, like some European countries do"*. White women felt the age of 21 was ideal as people of this age would not be easily swayed by peer pressure and would be surer of themselves: *"at the age of 18 children are still children and they can get influenced too easily. They cannot decide for themselves. At an older age, like 21, they can decide better for themselves"*.

Do you think people with disabilities in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer.

Generally, it was agreed that people with disabilities were interested in voting. White men felt that their propensity to vote was higher than average: *"they might even vote more than able bodied people. The country puts more value on disabled people"*. Black women respondents felt they should be treated with respect. White women, saying that *"to vote can make a better future for themselves and they want to do their bit for their country. It is a place where they can make a difference"*, felt that focusing on the disabled makes the electoral process all inclusive and creates a sense of ownership for a wider section of the electorate.

3.7.6 Voter education

Nobody besides the black female respondents had participated in a voter education programme. White men did not see a need to participate as they perceived themselves as knowledgeable about the electoral process and politically aware, saying *"our generation does not need it"*. When asked who offered the programme, the black women respondents said they were trained by the IEC in 1994 and 1999. Though their experience was good, one participant complained that *"sometimes people thought we were from a political party and they were trying to give us trouble"*. When asked whether their needs were taken into consideration, the black women felt that not all their needs were catered for in the civic education process.

Overall, the view was that people should go through the programme, with white women saying, *"not just women, men as well"*. White men on the other hand did not see a need for this education for their age group, though certainly for the younger age groups.

Do you think people of your generation have information on how to register as a voter?

White men felt that those of their generation who did not have information about voter registration could easily acquire it. However, black women respondents perceived that it was also dependent on geography and urbanisation, saying that *"it depends where they stay. Those in the urban areas get it easier that those in the townships"*. White women felt that the younger generation may not have the information.

3.7.7 Most recent voting experience

All had participated in previous elections signifying their motivation to participate in the electoral process. The white women however lamented the long queues. There was general agreement that their past experiences of electoral officials at polling stations were cordial and satisfactory. Black women respondents felt that if they knew you, you would be given preferential treatment. White women questioned their physical appearance, attitude and professionalism: *"their appearance was not always up to standard and was not professional at all... Their attitude as well"*.

There was agreement that the facilities and selection of polling stations were good and conducive to the electoral process. The white men added that this was because polling stations in their areas were at schools. However, the black women felt that more ablution facilities and water were needed: *"toilets were a problem as well as water"*.

Do you think the elections were free and fair?

The consensus was that elections were free and fair. However, black men had some reservations about transparency, responding *"but not as completely as in 1994. There was some interference"*. *Further,* the consensus was that there were no anomalies in the voting process.

Have you ever been involved with the planning, including preparation in the voting stations, and dealing with problems during the day of voting?

All groups except the white women mentioned direct and indirect participatory roles. Some of the white men had been engaged as monitors in the armed forces. Black women had also participated as monitors, and white women indicated that they *"would like to be involved"*.

3.7.8 Participation in groups and political demonstrations

There was consensus on the need for involvement in community groups. Perceived benefits were getting to know people, sharing information, developing a sense of community and increasing community security. However, there were concerns based on perceptions of racial groups among the men. Black men, saying *"you learn from other people and meet new people"*, saw community groups as an opportunity to be politically aware and meet new people. White men expressed reservations as captured in the statement, "*something like a 'Buurtwag' might work, but these days the communities are diverse and it might not always be easy to get the different cultures to work together. Time also plays a big part, and we would rather spend it with our families. It might be a security risk as well"*.

There was a clash of views about participation in public events. Black men participated in meetings at various levels. White men said that they do not participate. They said that they are *"not involved at all. We are getting no gain out of participating in any of it"*. The black

women respondents used to be involved but no longer feel strongly about the causes being advocated. The white women respondents generally did not participate, but if they were to do so, the cause of the march would be the driving force. Black male roles at these political engagements varied from being participating members to chairpersons.

3.7.9. Comments

Different views were expressed. Black men were most concerned that the IEC's employment practices should be equitable and rotational. White men wished the IEC to concentrate on ensuring free and fair elections and to stick to that mandate. White women felt that the IEC should market itself more to the common populace.

4. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Background

This chapter presents the overall views of participants from the seven target groups, i.e. traditional leaders, community leaders, the elderly (senior citizens), local government officials, people with disabilities, youth, and adults from 36 to 59 years old.

4.1. General Economic Assessment

Participants from the different groups cited both positive and negative economic changes that have taken place. A common perception was that positive changes were most visible during the first five years after the 1994 elections. Although a diversity of views were expressed, most participants from all groups felt that the economic situation is getting worse in South Africa.

Most of the scepticism expressed was rooted in continuing lack of access to services in some communities. This was seen to be an indication of government's failure to deliver on some of its promises to the people. Participants across all focus groups pointed out that some communities are still without access to water, sanitation and proper housing. Furthermore, the traditional leaders and community leaders commonly agreed that the most neglected are those

in informal and rural areas. Traditional leaders and community leaders were most concerned about bad roads and lack of well constructed bridges which are also a restricting factor when elections fall during the rainy seasons. The blind participants particularly cited bad roads with stones and trenches as a serious hazard when they are walking on the streets.

Traditionally leaders decried the lack of infrastructural support from government. They argued that government is not supporting their agricultural projects; consequently communities in rural areas are failing to sustain themselves. They pointed out that unemployment is rife and government grants are not able to sustain all families. Traditional leaders complained about the legal system which they believe tends to protect the rights of criminals instead of protecting the communities. The soaring levels of crime were also noted in the white female and male youth groups, as well as in the elderly group from the Western Cape. These participants interpreted crime as an outcome of lack of employment amongst the youth and as a survival strategy for the underprivileged. Crime is resulting in some South Africans resorting to emigration, in the view of the white male and female youth groups. Such sentiments were also shared by a few local government officials in Durban.

Another recurring theme in most of the groups was that benefits are not equally shared amongst all people, but are accessible only to the privileged and those connected to political networks. This sentiment was quite strong amongst the white male youth group. They clearly stated that it is only those who are in the middle and upper classes of society that are enjoying positive economic benefits. This was echoed in the black male group of older people in Free State, who argued that access to benefits is discriminatory and restricted to a privileged few. Furthermore, local government officials observed that sometimes the level of service delivery of an area is linked to the residents' political affiliation. They argued that communities that support the dominant party in a municipality get better services than other communities. Alleging unethical and corrupt behaviour in some councillors, some participants felt they are biased towards their own when it comes to the awarding of tenders.

Unemployment was mentioned in almost all groups as an area where government has failed. The elderly group in Western Cape were concerned that the current employment policies tend to exclude their children as they empower black Africans only. They felt discriminated against and complained that recently they have found black Africans employed everywhere. Views on unemployment varied along racial lines. The young white male and female groups

felt that government policies often force them to leave the country to seek employment abroad. On the contrary, the African young men felt that they had not benefited from voting since they had still not witnessed any exclusive benefits. The argument expressed by the African young women was that even though affirmative policies have been passed, a large percentage of wealth is still concentrated amongst whites. The disabled participants also felt that voting has brought minimal change in this regard. They argued that unemployment amongst the disabled is still high and they seldom come across advertisements for jobs that are geographically accessible to them: they are always based in faraway cities. Furthermore, the local government leaders maintained that even though the government is introducing employment generating projects like the Zibambele project in Durban, needy people still do not benefit because of corruption. They stated that this project is meant to empower those in the road construction business. However a large proportion of the tender amount is taken by the company owner, with workers, usually from rural areas, get meagre salaries.

Notably, participants in the African female youth group acknowledged that many empowerment opportunities have opened for the youth. They strongly argued that despite corrupt activities such as nepotism, the youth needs to be proactive and make use of all available opportunities instead of waiting for government handouts.

Positive responses also came from the elderly women who indicated that they were no longer paying rates.

The perception was common amongst local government officials (Councillors) and traditional leaders that they are often marginalised during the national government strategic planning workshops. Traditional leaders complained about lack of acknowledgment and consultation by the national government, when compared to local government. In the same vein, councillors argued that though they are the ones at the bottom of the government hierarchy and in direct contact with the communities, national government does very little to encourage them to participate in decision making. They maintained that they are frequently directly questioned by the public about lack of service delivery, but sometimes cannot respond because most of the projects are literally imposed without any consultation.

The education system was also seen to be weakening. Participants, especially the community leaders and traditional leaders, believed that the government's child's rights policy results in

learners being unmanageable. Some felt that child support grants make students lose sight of the traditional significance of education in eventually leading to secure employment. Grants for children emerged as a highly contested issue: young African men linked them to their feeling that they never benefited from voting. Only those who had borne children had benefited through child grants. Other arguments from the youth groups pertained to the government not supporting tertiary education students through bursaries. Those who drop out to have children are seen to have been rewarded. Some participants felt that a rule should be imposed saying that people who bear children before 18 years of age do not qualify for a child grant. They believed that this might reduce the rate of youth pregnancy.

Some participants perceived some of the government initiatives to be causing dependency. The provision of RDP houses was not favoured by some, particularly traditional leaders, who argued that people should be educated first before being given handouts. Participants from the local government leaders group felt strongly that the government is fully responsible for this dependency as it does not encourage and support self-reliance initiatives. For example they chase away informal traders who are trying to empower themselves economically.

Participants in the elderly group and the youth groups, both male and female, registered their concern about the rising prices of food and other necessities. The elderly people felt that no special attention is paid to the needs of the elderly and that the pension money is not enough. They stated that pensioners should get discounts on some of the staple items such as bread instead of being charged the same as everybody else.

Participants from most of the groups applauded the government's attempts to improve the health system in the country. Improved access to health services were highlighted amongst the positive changes, even though the system is still plagued by shortages of staff and equipment. Improved access to the health system was mentioned by the traditional leaders, the elderly and the disabled. The elderly and the disabled appreciated the free access and stated that this is a positive outcome of voting. In the same vein, they acknowledged that there have been a number of health programmes to deal with HIV, but felt that more could be done.

Interestingly, policies on women empowerment were contested. Intuitively, females amongst the white and black youth, and those amongst the local government leaders perceived these

policies to have had a positive impact in the family realm and in the workplace since women could not previously occupy high ranking positions. The elderly male participants were however discontented with these policies, arguing that were discriminated against, with more preference being given to women. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the retirement policy that allows women to retire at 60, whilst men can only retire at 65.

Freedom of speech was recognised as a positive change by traditional leaders, who also acknowledged that recently there has been more recognition and awareness of the needs of people with special needs. In the past the existence and needs of the disabled were treated as non-existent amongst communities. Participants from the disabled group however felt that there is still room for improvement. They maintained that there are still buildings that are inaccessible to them. Public transport does not cater for this group at all, especially those in wheelchairs. Discrimination against and stigmatisation of people with disabilities still continues, indicating further need for public education.

To sum up, the general perception was that government has failed to deliver on some of the promises made during the 1994 elections. Participants maintained that there has not been much change in their lives, implying that voting not been of much benefit to them. There were comments insinuating that there are still communities that lack access to basic services and most of the participants felt that the government has not done enough to curb unemployment of youth or to deal with poverty alleviation.

4.2. Identification documents for election purposes

Almost all participants amongst the traditional leaders, community leaders, local government officials, and disabled groups were in possession of green bar-coded identity documents. Some participants in the youth groups did not possess identity documents and indicated that they are still in the process of applying for them. Most participants in the youth groups explained that it was very easy for them to obtain identity documents as they acquired them through their schools.

Participants from the different groups emphasised the importance of having an identity document as it is not solely used for voting but has various other uses. Nevertheless, securing

an identity document is reportedly a tedious process as respondents cited their own and their community's experiences.

Nevertheless, the majority of participants did not experience any problems in securing their identity documents. However most participants in the female elderly group and a few from other groups knew people who had struggled to get identity documents and they argued that applying for an identity document is a very frustrating task Comments were made regarding long queues inside the offices of the Department of Home Affairs; lack of cleanliness; inefficiency of the Department including inaccurate entry of information; the unprofessional manner of the Home Affairs officials; an absence of signage inside their offices; and the time it takes to process applications. Participants in the community leaders group maintained that service delivery at the Department of Home Affairs is only efficient during election periods. Participants in the elderly group suggested that the identity documents campaign should be continuous rather than being conducted only before elections.

Complicated documentation and the information required to secure an identity document were seen to be problematic. For instance it was reported that people born out of wedlock often struggle to locate their parents. Even though all participants in the disabled groups possessed identity documents they mentioned that it is never easy to access the Department of Home Affairs offices and that completing forms in Braille is also difficult. Consequently, they proposed that all government forms should have a Braille version.

Participants in the local government and traditional leaders groups reported that they knew of some community members who did not have identity documents, and would therefore not be able to vote. Furthermore, these participants were pessimistic that these identity documents would be ready in time to use during registration to vote. They reported that they had sent their applications to Home Affairs months ago, but have not received the documents yet. Participants suspected some foul play as they argued that identity documents have a tendency to disappear in the district office of Department of Home Affairs when elections are impending. Participants in the local government leaders group also shared this sentiment. They explained that Home Affairs seemed to be biased at times as it gives preferential treatment to residents of some areas when processing identity documents. Some felt that it prioritises identity documents of some areas, and neglects communities which do not support

the party supported by the Home Affairs officials. This was reported as a serious concern as they argued that if one loses one's identity document, one also loses the right to vote.

Role played to assist other community members secure Identity Documents

Community leaders, traditional leaders and local government officials variously reported how they try to assist those who are struggling to secure identity documents. Most traditional leaders encourage and transport all people of 18 and above to town to apply. They later follow up with the Department of Home Affairs on their behalf. They also collect all identity documents with deficiencies to be rectified and send these to Home Affairs. Community leaders indicated that they often invite Home Affairs mobile offices to their areas to make the process simpler for communities. The general expectation of the local government officials was that Home Affairs should have been more proactive in sending its mobile offices to remote communities during periods before elections. Further, they argued that Home Affairs should always prepare in advance to avoid backlogs, especially during the time of elections.

Alternative Documents

Various alternative documents were suggested. There were suggestions that birth certificates should be acceptable, especially from those who have applied for, but not yet received an identity document. The reason is that the birth certificate already bears one's identity number. The use of passports was also proposed. Some suggested that affidavits signed by a community leader or by the principal of a school where the learner is registered should also be acceptable in the absence of identity documents. Drivers' licenses were contested as some felt that they are prone to being forged.

Registering to vote

Most of the focus groups were conducted before the actual registration dates. Participants thus reported on their intention to register or not register. Participants in the groups of the elderly and of traditional leaders felt that it is becoming difficult for them to convince other people to vote whilst they have not witnessed any benefits of voting themselves. Nonetheless, participants in the groups of traditional leaders, local government leaders, and community leaders responded positively and argued that they are still doing their best to encourage

people to register so that they can vote. Participants in the local government leaders group however warned that it is futile to conduct door-to-door campaigns to convince people to vote when people do not have identity documents.

When speaking of the previous elections, most participants across all groups who had voted indicated that the previous national elections were organised even better than the 1994 elections. They explained that queues at the voting stations were much more bearable. Some were very impressed by the possibility of checking ones' registration status by SMS. Some were sceptical about this method and argued that the IEC should look for other ways of simplifying the registration process. It was argued that the SMS method would exclude those like senior citizens who are not technologically competent.

Some of the local government leaders knew of people who had registered more than once in different voting stations, sometimes using bogus identity documents. They were unhappy that the suspects were never prosecuted even when the issue was reported to the IEC.

There was one notable participant in the elderly group who indicated that she always registers but never votes. She explained that this is her way of spiting the system to display her dissatisfaction. There were a few youth participants, both black and white, who admitted that they would not be registering. A participant from the black male youth group said he will not be registering since he will not benefit in any way, especially in terms of employment opportunities. The white male youth who shared this sentiment portrayed a sense of hopelessness that his vote would make any difference. Some of the youth participants argued that registering requires too much effort and that it will take place during examination time when they are studying. The youth suggested that the IEC should make it possible to register by SMS or on the internet.

4.3. Participation of special groups in voting and politics

Community leaders, traditional leaders, old people and traditional leaders all understood the distinction between the national, provincial and municipal elections. Some of the youth admitted that they get confused about this at times. They argued that it was because of the lack of information about voting in South Africa. There was a concern that some community members do not fully understand the distinction between the different types of elections.

Some had learnt of the distinction during the previous elections. There was wide agreement about the need for voter education in this regard.

The significance of voting for different groups

There was general consensus amongst participants across all groups that voting is important, and that therefore everybody needs to vote. The common sentiment was that they should vote if they want to effect change in the government.

Views on benefits of voting

Community leaders argued that the wider community benefits from voting, although the extent of the benefits was contested. Free education and free access to health facilities were cited as major benefits to communities. Participants in several groups thought that the process only benefits a privileged few, whilst the masses are neglected. This sentiment was succinctly noted amongst the group of disabled participants when it was argued that politicians tend to enrich themselves, their friends and family members. The black adult females were also disillusioned by the voting process owing to the calibre of leaders available for election, who they perceived to be pursuers of their own interests. Notably, white adult and young white males were concerned that since the group from which they come is a minority, their votes are not sufficient to make a difference.

Extent to which people are interested in voting and politics

The elders, traditional leaders and community leader participants maintained that people are still interested in voting, even though the level of enthusiasm has declined because of the lack of service delivery and failure by the government to fulfill some promises. One of the traditional leaders however indicated that people in his village argue that they will not be voting in the next elections owing to the lack of improvement and "change" in their areas. Community leaders observed that their communities have lost trust in politicians who have continuously failed to deliver on their election promises. The concern was expressed that once the elected politicians are in power, they tend to forget about the masses who voted for them.

The black adult males argued that declining interest in elections results from social changes such as the challenge to the patriarchal role of men through woman empowerment policies. This sentiment was shared by the elderly males who were very bitter about these policies and argued that they give females more power, thus making males look weak and rendering them passive. The white adult males on the contrary felt that these policies clarified the traditional role of men in households as leaders, hence their interest in voting.

The elderly were concerned that coloured youth has been discriminated against, since affirmative policies tend to favour black African children. This resulted in their low interest in voting. However, they still felt that people who are dissatisfied with the performance of the current government need to vote in order to effect change and they commended the multiparty nature of South African politics. This was seen as an advantage as it offers the public opportunities to vote for other parties. The white male youth however were concerned that South African political parties are racially driven, hence their lack of interest in politics. They argued that political parties are elected not because they are the best, but because they are well supported through racial affiliations.

The local government leaders observed that people in the middle and upper classes are no longer interested in voting. This group is seen as having all the basic necessities and as not expecting more from voting. This contrasts with ordinary people who vote hoping for a better life. Participants in the disabled group noted that their lack of interest in politics is because politicians make promises that they never keep.

4.4. Views about participation in voting and politics

Is your group playing a prominent role in politics?

Participants in various groups indicated the roles they are currently playing in their respective societies. Traditional leaders perceived themselves to be playing a very important role in politics, especially during the election period. They expressed concern that the national government does not recognise them. During election periods they teach communities about the importance of elections by going house to house to ensure that people have the necessary documents to register. One of the traditional leader participants said they even guard political party posters used for campaigning because sometimes they are torn by rivals. They were

however concerned that they often put their lives in danger (for instance when reprimanding people) doing duties for which they are not paid. In a similar vein, local government officials insisted that the IEC should consider working closely with traditional leaders during its campaigns and in preparation for the elections. Participants in the disabled groups also lamented that they would like to play a prominent role but feel left out because of lack of support from the authorities.

The local government leaders maintained that they have very limited delegated authority. They argued that as much as they would like to influence politics, it is difficult as they are undermined by government officials who impose projects and programmes without prior consultation. Some argued that their role is hindered by provincial government officials as they offer support and preferential treatment to councilors of their own parties only.

On the other hand critiques of councilors came from the local government leaders and community leaders group. Participants felt that councilors are only visible during elections and that afterwards they disappear from the public eye. This was cited as one of the reasons why they were not performing. Some councilors were seen to be under-qualified for such positions because they lacked substantive knowledge about politics.

What role does the IEC play to ensure that people participate in elections?

Community leaders argued that they were not empowered enough to be able to assist during elections. They proposed that the IEC should invite them to participate during the planning of the elections. Nevertheless they are involved in door-to-door campaigns, educating and encouraging communities to participate during elections. When asked about their views on the role played by the IEC in ensuring that communities vote in the elections, community leaders complained that the IEC does not appear to be a full time organisation as it is only busy during elections.

Participants in the group of elderly men and women thought that the role of the IEC is not evident. Black adult men specifically had not noticed any effort by the IEC to increase civic education about electoral processes. The white men however noted some attempts by the IEC in media advertising and disseminating information about voting, but argued that there is still room for improvement.

What role do you think you can play to ensure that other people participate in elections?

Participants thought that community leaders should behave appropriately at all times so that communities can look up to them. Some criticised Archbishop Tutu's statement that he would not vote and argued that community leaders should not display such behaviour. Participants from the groups of old people agreed that every voter can make a contribution by engaging with and encouraging other community members to vote.

Suggestions that might help the IEC encourage people to vote

Traditional leaders proposed that a special day should be set aside for people with special needs, such as the disabled, sick and elderly. Further suggestions were that IEC officials should visit houses to register those who can not make it to the voting stations for health or other reasons. This sentiment was shared by participants in the disabled groups, who proposed that there should be a special voting day for the disabled and elderly, or polling stations exclusively serving these groups. In this context, some participants were aware of the possibilities of "special votes".

Educating communities was seen as a good way of encouraging people to vote. Most participants expected that if communities know enough about the importance of voting, they will definitely be encouraged to vote. The community leaders strongly argued that the IEC should manage the intensity of political intolerance as they feared it might discourage people from voting as it touches on issues of safety.

Participants in the elderly, adult and traditional leaders groups insisted that the IEC should employ local youth as IEC representatives during the registration and election period as a means of employment creation. Traditional leaders were particularly against the employment of people from other areas to serve them as they felt that people from other areas do not understand the culture and conduct of other people's areas. The elderly group similarly questioned the IEC's recruitment strategy, arguing that the IEC should advertise the available positions so that all people can apply instead of employing through personal contacts. The disabled participants felt that they are not given adequate opportunities during the recruitment of IEC agents.

Participants in the group of old people saw a need for the IEC to improve their communications about the role they play in society and about their civic education on the electoral process. Some participants called for provision of pamphlets and brochures in the voting stations. Traditional leaders further suggested that the IEC should visit different communities to encourage them to vote and to show that they are not forgotten. Most participants complained that the IEC was visible only during and around elections, arguing that it should not only remember the masses during election. Further suggestions were that the IEC should visit communities to hear about their needs with the first point of contact being the traditional leaders. Community leaders said that the IEC should decentralise and have satellite offices especially in rural areas to facilitate easy access for people with queries.

Increasing the number of voting stations was also seen by many as one of the ways the public could be encouraged to vote. This would obviously reduce transport problems. Making arrangements to transport the elderly, sick and disabled were mentioned by all the groups. Participants in the disabled groups maintained that sometimes they fail to cast their votes because they cannot get to the venues and that very little effort is made to facilitate participation.

Participants in the disabled groups further suggested that there should be Braille versions of all election material including ballot papers. This was indeed a source of contestation in some of the voting stations as sometimes IEC officials do not allow guides or assistants of the blind, but demand to assist them themselves. The disabled groups felt that with Braille versions of the documentation, they would be much more independent from election officials in choosing their preferred political party.

Participants in the local government leaders group proposed that the role of the IEC should be revisited so that it includes that of monitoring and evaluation after elections. They felt that the IEC should demand that all parties submit their party manifestos during elections so that the IEC can follow up afterwards to ensure that they fulfill their promises to the communities.

Views about people who do not vote

Community leaders argued that all people should vote, since it is the only powerful way to effect change in the country. Further, participants in the traditional and local government

leaders groups mentioned that it is important to vote since the financial allocations to different municipalities are based on the number of voters from specific areas. Participants in the youth groups agreed that people who decide not to vote, should also not complain. There was however one participant from the black African youth group who maintained that people should indeed abstain from voting as a way of getting government to listen to their needs.

An important comment was made by one participant in the local government leaders group that people who are members of Jehovah's Witness religious congregations do not vote. It was reported that their religious belief forbids voting. Other participants in the group were not impressed by this finding, arguing that does not mean that they do not have needs which can be addressed through voting.

4.5. Participation of other groups in voting and elections

Do you think that needs of special groups are catered for during planning of elections?

There were divergent views on whether the needs of special groups like the disabled, the elderly and the ailing are taken into consideration during elections. There was total agreement amongst participants in the groups of adult people in Free State, traditional leaders and local government leaders groups that no special attention is paid to the needs of these special groups. Participants in the two community leaders groups were divided on the issue, with one group indicating that in their area these special groups are well taken care of during elections, and the other arguing the contrary. One of the participants in the negative group argued that she had been to a number of voting stations which did not have ramps, and at the few which did, the ramps were very poorly constructed, reportedly sloping at between 35 and 40 degrees, necessitating assistance from IEC officials and fellow voters to get the wheel chairs up the ramps. In the same vein, participants in the adult group felt that other voters help the elderly and those with special needs because it is part of African culture to do so. Interestingly, there was wide agreement amongst the disabled participants that their needs, except for transport, were well addressed during elections.

Suggestions were put forward that the IEC should consider having mobile voting stations, especially in remote areas, so that people can register and vote. The disabled participants suggested dedicated voting stations for the disabled. Positively, participants in one of the

local government leaders groups recalled seeing IEC officials driving with scanners to allow special votes for the bedridden or elderly. They said that people in communities that are not aware of such arrangements lose the opportunity to vote. Further suggestions included displaying posters in order to inform all people about such arrangements, and to take such initiatives to the rural areas.

Traditional leaders argued that it becomes their task to organise transport for people with special needs in order to get them to the voting stations. Some stated that they even pay from their own pockets to ensure that these people get to the voting stations, recalling that during previous elections, they had to use wheel-barrows to take people to voting stations. This was echoed amongst community participants who explained that it a very embarrassing experience to witness someone being pushed on a wheelbarrow to a voting station. Consequently, they felt that the IEC should pay more special attention to the needs of these groups.

Participants also decried the lack of attention paid to these groups inside voting stations. Some disabled participants said that other forms of disability should also be taken into consideration. For instance, the IEC should consider sending interpreters to voting stations for those who are deaf.

Do you think the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections?

All participants thought that though the IEC is trying to afford both males and females equal opportunities, there is still room for improvement. Some traditional leaders argued that there are still very few female political activists in South Africa. The black adult male group felt that there was no gender equity in opportunities presented to them during elections, claiming that the IEC tends to employ more women. White adult males said that there is no need to engender the electoral process as all votes are equal in magnitude.

How well represented are various groups in the elections - for instance are there more women compared to men, more whites compared to Indians or people with disabilities?

Most felt that all race groups were equally involved during elections. Participants in the local government leaders group however warned that too much attention has recently been focused on encouraging youth to vote, thus neglecting other groups such as women and the disabled.

What do you think should be the appropriate age to start voting?

Community and traditional leaders considered someone aged between 15 and 16 ready to vote. Some participants in the youth groups argued that 16 is appropriate because a 16 years old is mature enough to have been able to choose his field of study. Some said 18 and others, 21. The white adult male group felt that 21 is most appropriate as people who had reached that age would not be easily swayed by peer pressure. Similarly, the white women felt that at 21 one is better able to make informed decisions.

Youth and voting

Participants across all focus groups observed that the youth are no longer interested in voting. Diverse reasons were provided in different groups. These included the lack of employment opportunities; the perception that the government does not care about their needs; apathy amongst coloured youth who feel discriminated against by affirmative action; the government's failure to deliver on its promises, and a perceived absence of benefits after voting.

One participant in these groups also warned that the youth is unpredictable. They might say during voter education that they will not vote, but change their minds at the last minute. Similarly, a participant from the community leaders group cautioned against simplistic generalisation and argued that you might not find youth voting during the daytime, but that they would turn out in large numbers on the election evening. One local government leader commented that some of the youth still vote; they just prefer not to attend rallies and demonstrations.

Community leaders insisted that the youth lacks information about voting, hence their lack of interest. This group noted that senior citizens seem to be participating in elections more than the youth. This was seen as a negative trend because youth are the leaders of tomorrow.

4.6. Voter education

Have you ever participated in a voter education programme?

Almost all participants across all groups stated that they had never participated in a voter education programme, with the exception of the disabled group. The only participant who indicated having participated in voter education from the community leaders group, emphasised the importance of continued voter education programmes. The argument was that people are very forgetful and need continuous reminding about elections. This clearly links to the previous arguments that programmes such as ID, registration and electoral education campaigns should not be restricted to the period just before the elections.

The elderly were not sure about whose role is it to conduct voter education. They tended to confuse voter education and political party campaigns. Some of the participants in these groups have had voter education campaign material dropped in their houses. Some said they had heard through megaphone announcements. They did not favour that method because the announcements are not always audible. Traditional leaders indicated that they conduct voter training themselves, despite having not been formally trained by the IEC. The traditional leaders felt that they should be compensated for such activities.

Participants across most groups indicated that ordinary people were aware of the dates of and venues for registration. The local government leaders indicated that they had cautioned the IEC that voter education material should be made available in different languages as not everybody understands English. Participants in this group emphasised the importance of voter education, one mentioning that there are community members who still do not believe that one's vote is truly secret, which results in their abstention from voting.

Participants also felt that the IEC should use voter education as a platform to teach people about its mandate and its neutrality during elections. Some people are reportedly not aware that the IEC is an independent body monitoring the elections. There are people who see it as a political party or as part of the ANC.

Participants in the disabled group who had attended voter training commended the IEC for including a blind person amongst those who addressed them during the voter education

campaign. They saw the inclusion of this person as motivation for them to participate in elections. There was however one blind participant who was discontented about the conduct of an IEC voter education official. The participant said the official simply verified identity documents and registered the voters, not taking any time to answer questions.

Another participant from the youth group was not satisfied with the way the voter education was conducted. The participant expected a practical and interactive session rather than the slide presentation that was made. Participants in the black adult female group were the only ones who felt that their generation is knowledgeable enough about the electoral process not to need to attend voter education sessions.

4.7 Recent voting experiences

Most had participated in the previous elections, and were able to comment on their experiences. Most participants had positive experiences of the previous elections, indicating that they had been well organised when compared to the 1994 elections.

Traditional leaders complained about the late opening of voting stations. The concern was that some people who stay far from the voting stations wake up early in the morning hoping to be served on time. Traditional leaders further made a special request that the registration dates be extended. They were concerned that the dates fall over a weekend, which is when people attend funerals and weddings.

They further requested that transport be organised for those with special needs. This request was repeated in all group discussions. One of the disabled participants stated that he had to request someone to take him to the voting station as he does not have a wheelchair. However as it was raining, the disabled potential voter waited in vain in the car, hoping that an IEC official would come to assist him.

IEC officials were described as very helpful on the day of voting. Participants however perceived that more could have been done to care for those with special needs. Black adult female participants questioned the physical appearance, attitude and professionalism of IEC officials. There were suggestions that the IEC should also deploy First Aid workers at all voting station since there are always old and ailing people. Participants also indicated that the

voting stations were in good condition, which was conducive to the electoral process. Some participants felt that more ablution facilities and water were needed.

Traditional leaders argued that they work very hard helping out during the elections, but they do not get any kind of reward from the IEC. Some complained of too few voting stations in their areas, specifically in the Nongoma region. People want to vote, but bad roads and lack of transport are major impediments.

Were elections free and fair?

Community leaders, the elderly and traditional leaders thought that elections were free and fair, and almost all acknowledged that voters were free to vote for whichever party they preferred. Participants in the elderly group commended the IEC on its accuracy when counting the ballots. However, one participant was convinced that the previous elections were not as transparent as the 1994 elections, suspecting some interference.

Community leaders acknowledged the neutrality of the IEC. Conversely, some participants in the local government officials group felt that the IEC is not impartial, as it often favors the ruling party. They therefore proposed that the IEC should be made up of representatives from different parties to ensure its neutrality. There were also concerns that during the elections, the IEC has a tendency to employ SADTU officials, seen by some participants as being biased. A suggestion in this regard was that the IEC have its own full time employees who would be seen as neutral.

Voting irregularities

Traditional leaders were concerned that they have heard about boxes that were reported to have gone missing. They all concurred that the problem of irregularities happens when ballot papers are being transported from the local voting stations. They believed that everything goes according to plan inside the voting stations, but suspect some foul play when ballot boxes are being transported. The traditional leaders and local government leaders suggested that ballot papers should be counted before being taken from voting stations and that the results sent to the head office.

Participants in the community leaders group did not report any irregularities and also felt that elections were free and fair. They only commented on political party agents who were canvassing outside the voting stations. Participants in the elderly group saw this kind of behaviour as very threatening. They thought there should be a clear policy on who assists people with special needs, either the person accompanying the disabled person or an IEC official. This is very important in view of the comment by one of the blind participants, who said he is usually assisted by an IEC official who votes on his behalf.

One participant said that the IEC will have a difficult time ensuring that voters feel safe and secure at voting stations during the upcoming elections. They were concerned about confrontations that are already taking place between political parties.

One participant in the local government leaders focus groups argued that he once saw a party agent wearing his full party regalia in a voting station. This is reportedly not allowed in a voting station.

4.8 Participation in groups and political demonstrations

Most participants across all the different groups agreed that it was important for them to belong to community groups. Participants mostly cited social reasons for joining groups: sharing experiences and information to motivate one another; developing a sense of community, and increasing security in communities. Participants in conservative and rural communities such as the traditional leaders and community leaders said that they join groups such as self-help associations and community organisations to obtain economic support. This view was also prevalent amongst participants in the disabled groups. Preferences for types of group varied by race. The white groups said that white people traditionally prefer not to meet in groups or participate in rallies. The white youth and white adult men said that time constraints and security issues limited their participation. The white male youth group said they were members of church groups and Afrikaans cultural groups. White participants felt excluded from national holiday celebrations and argued that they do not have much to celebrate. Consequently, they prefer watching television on such holidays. On the other hand, black participants were fond of participating in rallies.

The disabled participants cited money as a factor limiting their participation in community groups and indicated that they would form such groups if they were assisted financially. The blind participants cited various initiatives that they had taken to uplift their living standards. These ranged from training in weaving skills, and sewing for the partially blind, to actual job creation. They also mentioned a soccer club for the blind that helps them socialise. Although the majority agreed they would like to attend public meetings, transport was cited as the main barrier to attending election rallies and other gatherings. Even when transport is provided little effort was made to help people with disabilities to get into the vehicles. The blind on the other hand would attend political meetings if they were held in their communities but fear for their lives in the event of a stampede. Transport also emerged as a barrier in the black youth male group, one of the participants expressing his interest in attending rallies, but only if the organisers arranged transport.

5. CONCLUSIONS

General economic assessment

Participants argued that most of positive changes occurred only during the first five years of democracy. Amongst positive changes cited, were the improved access to healthcare facilities, greater freedom of speech and awareness about people with special needs. Views on Women empowerment policies varied along gender lines, whilst females commended them, males felt these policies as challenging their patriarchal role.

On the negative side, some participants were of a view that their lives were getting worse because the Government was failing to deliver on some of its key promises such as improved service delivery. Most of the participants were concerned that some communities still lack access basic services such as proper housing, water and sanitation. Further they observed that benefits and resources were not equally distributed as ordinary citizens tended to be forgotten by those in power after being elected. At times service delivery was linked to an area's political affiliation and that political parties in power tended to prioritise the needs of their political strongholds at the expense of other areas.

These negative issues were frequently cited as disheartening factors to people wishing to participate in voting.

people were able to vote for their preferred political parties. There were however few

quickly from them, or to regard the opinions expressed as authoritative. The recommendations below are based on as inclusive a reading of the evidence as possible. Nonetheless, the nature of this research exercise, the intention of which was to give intense 'ethnographic' insights into voter attitudes, and the problems of basing recommendations on such an exercise, must be taken into account.

This report firstly explores the attitudes of selected groups in South African society to the social, economic and political environment, and secondly, examines citizens' attitudes to the IEC and the manner in which it organises elections and educates citizens in exercising the franchise. The recommendations are confined to the latter aspect of the report.

There was widespread unease at the perceived inefficiencies and, it was alleged by a number, questionable practices of some officials in the Department of Home Affairs. The relevance of this to the election process is the close relationship between the issuing of identity documents and entitlement to vote. The recommendation to the IEC is therefore that

- All possible measures should be taken to support the Department of Home Affairs, whose responsibility it is, to develop transparent and rapid methods of issuing identity documents. In addition,
- To reduce last-minute overload, this should be done not only in the immediate pre-election phase, but continuously, and
- The range of documents that might be used to demonstrate eligibility for voting might be broadened. The possibility might be considered, for example, of using birth certificates with identity numbers, or passports, though probably not driving licences which seem prone to forgery.

It seems clear from the evidence that most citizens understand the basic structures of political life, and notably the distinction between national, provincial and local government and elections. However, not all do, in particular the young. As this is not a static picture, but rather new cohorts of voters appear constantly,

- There should be no relaxation in efforts to educate citizens, especially young citizens, about the basic elements in the country's political system.

Similarly, though there is widespread recognition of the importance, perhaps even the obligation, to vote, there seems also to be a decline in levels of enthusiasm and commitment. It therefore remains important for the IEC to maintain and intensify its efforts to explain the importance of voting for every South African citizen.

Various specific suggestions were made as to how citizens might be encouraged to vote. A recurring suggestion was that the IEC should monitor performance in government and attempt to hold parties to pre-election promises: this however would politicise the IEC and is emphatically not recommended. However, the following recommendations, many for those with special needs, might be considered:

In general, increasing the number of voting stations, while, as appropriate

- Providing exclusive voting stations for those with special needs.
- Seeking out and where necessary registering those that are bedridden and enabling them to vote at home.
- Organising official transport to voting stations for those with special needs.
- Providing special facilities for the disabled, such as ballot papers in Braille for the blind, and ramps into polling stations for the physically disabled.
- In general, increasing the number of voting stations.

It appears that in spite of the efforts of the IEC, with the exception of the disabled, voter education campaigns reach a relatively small number of South Africans. The conclusion would seem to be that

- There should be a reappraisal of the voter education campaign, with the intention of addressing it to those that appear to require it the most, and directing resources in a targeted manner to the groups.
- One factor to be emphasised in voter education campaigns is the role of the IEC itself, and in particular its neutrality.

The IEC has a high level of trust amongst the South African population. Nevertheless, there are some areas where this is less so, probably because of historical factors rather than because of any sins of commission or omission by the organisation. It is nevertheless vital that all possible measures should be taken to ensure trust in the electoral process in every part of the

Republic, and it is recommended that the practice of counting votes at individual voting stations should be continued so that the counting of ballots should not only be fair, but be seen to be fair by local communities.

7. Appendix: Focus group schedules

IEC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TRADITIONAL LEADERS

Facilitator: Welcome and introductions

Good (afternoon/evening), I'm _____ from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and we are conducting a series of focus groups around the country. The main aim of the focus groups is to examine public opinion with regard to the upcoming national and provincial elections. In particular, the study investigates whether the Electoral Commission (IEC) caters adequately for the needs of special groups when it comes to voting. This focus group deals directly with issues related to traditional leaders involvement in the elections.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this discussion. In addition, we would like to assure you that the information you will give to us is required for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential by the IEC. Furthermore, the information provided will not be used against you in any way whatsoever. Finally, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

The discussion will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Facilitator: Requests participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Participants: Introductions by each participant.

Facilitator explains general discussion rules and issues:

1. The role of the moderator (facilitator) and rapporteur

2. Explain why we use the digital voice recorder and ask for their consent to record the discussion.
3. Explain the importance of only one person talking at a time in a clear voice.

4. Put together the ground rules with the group members after explaining how the FGD should proceed.

Participant characteristics:

In order for us to know the people who participated in this FGD we would like you to complete the short questionnaire that we will hand out to you (Appendix A).

Theme 1: General economic assessment

The first issues we will discuss involve your views about the quality of life for the members of your community that you are working with particularly with regard to how voting would affect their quality of life.

- Do you think there are positive economic changes in the lives of people in this community in the past five years? What has changed and what has not changed?
- Do you think the community members are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last five years?

Theme 2: Identification documents and registration issues

Let us talk about the importance of identification documents in national and provincial elections. As you may know people should have green bar-coded ID books in order to register as voters and to be able to vote during elections.

- Have you obtained ID documents and registered to participate in the National and Provincial elections
- What were the main challenges that you and your community members experienced in
    - Obtaining green-bar coded ID books,
    - Registering to vote,
    - What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?
- For those who of you who have not registered to vote, what are your reasons for not registering?
- How involved are you in ensuring that people in your community get IDs to register and participate in elections?

Theme 3: Participation in voting and politics.

- How would you distinguish between the local, national and municipality elections?
    - Do you think that people in your community understand these different types of elections?
- What are your views about the level of participation of people in your community in elections in the past?
    - Were they keen to participate in voting?

- What kind of attitudes do they have towards voting – Are they motivated to vote?
- What about their intention to participate in the upcoming national and provincial elections?

- Would you say that people in your community participate more actively in elections than people from other communities?
- What role does the IEC play in ensuring that people participate in elections? Explain how
- Do you have any suggestion that may help the IEC to encourage people in your community to vote?
- What role do you think you should play in getting people to participate in elections?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote

Theme 4: Views about participation in voting and politics.

- Do you think traditional leaders are playing a prominent role in politics in South Africa?
- What do you think about the participation of traditional leaders in national and provincial elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?
- What role does the IEC play in ensuring that people in your community participate in national and provincial elections?
- What role do you think you can play in ensuring that people in your community participate in the upcoming national and provincial elections?
- How would you distinguish between the national, provincial and municipality elections?
- Do you think that traditional leaders understand these differences?
- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage traditional leaders to vote?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

Theme 5: Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

- Do you think the needs of special groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? e.g. Do facilities in voting stations cater for groups such as the disabled and the elderly?
- Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?

- How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians?
- People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?
- Do you think the youth in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer?

Theme 6: Voter education

- Have you ever participated in any voter education programme?
    - Explain how you were involved and who offered the programme?
    - What were your experiences?
- Do you think people in your community have sufficient information about the following issues:
    - How to go about registering to vote,
    - The importance of having a green bar-coded ID book to be able to register and vote
    - What to do when they get to the voting station on the Election Day?
- Where did you get this information from?
- How involved are you as a community leader in ensuring that people get information about the whole process of voting?
- How involved are you with the planning including preparation of the voting stations, dealing with problems on the day of voting
- Do you think the needs of groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? How?

Theme 7: Most recent voting experience

- Have you participated in previous elections (whether it was national / provincial or local / municipal)? What were your experiences?
- Do you think the elections were free and fair in terms of the following:
    - Were there any voting irregularities such as intimidation, interference by party officials or lack of secrecy of voting?
- How helpful were the IEC officials during registration and on the election day?
- How were the facilities at the IEC voting stations in terms of access, cleanliness, availability of facilities, providing for the disabled, or the elderly?
- Have you ever been involved with the planning including preparation of the voting stations, dealing with problems on the day of voting?

Theme 8: Participations in groups and political demonstrations

- Let us talk about your involvement in various groups in your community. Do you think that it is important for people in your community to belong to groups such as ward committee, community development or self-help association, sports or social club?
- How involved are you with things such as election campaign rallies, meetings of political parties, community meetings, functions held on National public holidays e.g. Freedom Day, Women's Day, public marches, government izimbizo's and voter education workshop, etc.
- What role do you play during these events?

Are there any other experiences/ anything that you would like to share concerning voting or the IEC

END

IEC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Facilitator: Welcome and introductions

Good (afternoon/evening), I'm _____ from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and we are conducting a series of focus groups around the country. The main aim of the focus groups is to examine public opinion with regard to the upcoming national and provincial elections. In particular, the study investigates whether the Electoral Commission (IEC) caters adequately for the needs of special groups when it comes to voting. This focus group deals directly with issues related to local government officials involvement in the elections.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this discussion. In addition, we would like to assure you that the information you will give to us is required for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential by the IEC. Furthermore, the information provided will not be used against you in any way whatsoever. Finally, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

The discussion will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Facilitator: Requests participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Participants: Introductions by each participant.

Facilitator explains general discussion rules and issues:

1. The role of the moderator (facilitator) and rapporteur

2. Explain why we use the digital voice recorder and ask for their consent to record the discussion.
3. Explain the importance of only one person talking at a time in a clear voice.

4. Put together the ground rules with the group members after explaining how the FGD should proceed.

Participant characteristics:

In order for us to know the people who participated in this FGD we would like you to complete the short questionnaire that we will hand out to you (Appendix A).

Theme 1: General economic assessment

The first issues we will discuss involve your views about the quality of life for the people in this area particularly with regard to how voting would affect their quality of life.

- Do you think there are positive economic changes in the lives of people in this area in the past 5 years? What has changed and what has not changed?
- Do you think people in your area are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last 5 years

Theme 2: Identification documents and registration issues

Let us talk about the importance of identification documents in national and provincial elections. As you may know people should have green bar-coded ID books in order to register as voters and to be able to vote during elections.

- How involved are you in ensuring that people in your area get IDs to register and participate in elections?
- What challenges do people in your area experience in obtaining green-bar coded ID books? What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?

Theme 3: General views about participation in voting and politics.

- How would you distinguish between the national, provincial and municipality elections?
    - Do you think that people in your area understand these different types of elections?
- What are your views about the level of participation of people in your area in national and provincial elections in the past?
    - Were they keen to participate in voting?
    - What kind of attitudes do they have towards voting – Are they motivated to vote?
    - What about their intention to participate in the upcoming national and provincial elections?
- Would you say that people in your area participate more actively in elections than people from other communities?
- Do you have any suggestion that may help the IEC to encourage people in your area to vote?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote

Theme 4: Views about participation in voting and politics.

- Do you think local government officials are playing a prominent role in politics in South Africa?
- What do you think about the participation of local government officials in national and provincial elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?
- What role does the IEC play in ensuring that people in your area participate in national and provincial elections?
- What role do you think you can play in ensuring that people in your area participate in the upcoming national and provincial elections?

Theme 5: Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

- Do you think the needs of special groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? e.g. Do facilities in voting stations cater for groups such as the disabled and the elderly?
- Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?
- How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians?
- People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?
- Do you think the youth in your area are interested in voting? Explain your answer?

Theme 6: Voter education

- Have you ever participated in any voter education programme?
    - Explain how you were involved and who offered the programme?
    - What were your experiences?
- Do you think people in your area have sufficient information about the following issues:
    - How to go about registering to vote,
    - The importance of having a green bar-coded ID book to be able to register and vote
    - What to do when they get to the voting station on the Election Day?
- Where did you get this information from?How involved are you as a local government official in ensuring that people get information about the whole process of voting?

- How involved are you with the planning including preparation of the voting stations, dealing with problems on the day of voting
- Do you think the needs of groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? How?

Theme 7: Most recent voting experience

- Have you participated in previous elections (whether it was national / provincial or local / municipal)? What were your experiences?
- Do you think the elections were free and fair in terms of the following:
    - Were there any voting irregularities such as intimidation, interference by party officials or lack of secrecy of voting?
- How helpful were the IEC officials during registration and on the election day?
- How were the facilities at the IEC voting stations in terms of access, cleanliness, availability of facilities, providing for the disabled, and elderly?
- Have you ever been involved with the planning including preparation in the voting stations, dealing with problems during the day of voting?

Theme 8: Participations in groups and political demonstrations

- Let us talk about your involvement in various groups in your area. Do you think that it is important for people in your area to belong to groups such as ward committee, community development or self-help association, sports or social club?
- How involved are you with things such as election campaign rallies, meetings of political parties, community meetings, functions held on National public holidays e.g. Freedom Day, Women's Day, public marches, government izimbizo's and voter education workshop, etc. What role do you play during these events?

Are there any other experiences/ anything that you would like to share concerning voting or the IEC

END

IEC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
COMMUNITY LEADERS

Facilitator: Welcome and introductions

Good (afternoon/evening), I'm _____ from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and we are conducting a series of focus groups around the country. The main aim of the focus groups is to examine public opinion with regard to the upcoming national and provincial elections. In particular, the study investigates whether the Electoral Commission (IEC) caters adequately for the needs of special groups when it comes to voting. This focus group deals directly with issues related to community leaders involvement in the elections.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this discussion. In addition, we would like to assure you that the information you will give to us is required for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential by the IEC. Furthermore, the information provided will not be used against you in any way whatsoever. Finally, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

The discussion will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Facilitator: Requests participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Participants: Introductions by each participant.

Facilitator explains general discussion rules and issues:

1. The role of the moderator (facilitator) and rapporteur

2. Explain why we use the digital voice recorder and ask for their consent to record the discussion.
3. Explain the importance of only one person talking at a time in a clear voice.

4. Put together the ground rules with the group members after explaining how the FGD should proceed.

Participant characteristics:

In order for us to know the people who participated in this FGD we would like you to complete the short questionnaire that we will hand out to you (Appendix A).

Theme 1: General economic assessment

The first issues we will discuss involve your views about the quality of life for the communities that you are working with particularly with regard to how voting would affect their quality of life.

- Do you think there are positive economic changes in the lives of people in this community in the past five years? What has changed and what has not changed?
- Do you think community members are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last five years

Theme 2: Identification documents and registration issues

Let us talk about the importance of identification documents in national and provincial elections. As you may know people should have green bar-coded ID books in order to register as voters and to be able to vote during elections.

- How involved are you in ensuring that people in your community get IDs to register and participate in elections?
- What challenges do people in your community experience in obtaining green-bar coded ID books? What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?

Theme 3: General views about participation in voting and politics.

- How would you distinguish between the national, provincial and municipality elections?
    - Do you think that people in your community understand these different types of elections?
- What are your views about the level of participation of people in your community in elections in the past?
    - Were they keen to participate in voting?
    - What kind of attitudes do they have towards voting – Are they motivated to vote?
    - What about their intention to participate in the upcoming national and provincial elections?
- Would you say that people in your community participate more actively in elections than people from other communities?

Theme 4: Views about participation in voting and politics.

- Do you think community leaders are playing a prominent role in politics in South Africa?
- What do you think about the participation of community leaders in elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?
- What role does the IEC play in ensuring that people in your community participate in elections?
- What role do you think you can play in ensuring that people in your community participate in the national and provincial elections?
- How would you distinguish between the local, national and municipality elections?
- Do you think that people in your community understand these differences?
- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage more people to participate in voting?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote

Theme 5: Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

- Do you think the needs of special groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? e.g. Do facilities in voting stations cater for groups such as the disabled and the elderly?
- Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?
- How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians?
- People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?
- Do you think the youth in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer?

Theme 6: Voter education

- Have you ever participated in any voter education programme?
    - Explain how you were involved and who offered the programme?
    - What were your experiences?

- Do you think people in your community have sufficient information about the following issues:
    - How to go about registering to vote,
    - The importance of having a green bar-coded ID book to be able to register and vote
    - What to do when they get to the voting station on the Election Day?
- Where did you get this information from?
- How involved are you as a community leader in ensuring that people get information about the whole process of voting?
- How involved are you with the planning including preparation of the voting stations, dealing with problems on the day of voting
- Do you think the needs of groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? How?

Theme 7: Most recent voting experience

- Have you participated in previous elections (whether it was national / provincial or local / municipal)? What were your experiences?
- Do you think the elections were free and fair in terms of the following:
    - Were there any voting irregularities such as intimidation, interference by party officials or lack of secrecy of voting?
- How helpful were the IEC officials during registration and on the election day?
- How were the facilities at the IEC voting stations in terms of access, cleanliness, availability of facilities, providing for the disabled, or the elderly?
- Have you ever been involved with the planning including preparation of the voting stations, dealing with problems on the day of voting?

Theme 8: Participations in groups and political demonstrations

- Let us talk about your involvement in various groups in your community. Do you think that it is important for people in your community to belong to groups such as ward committee, community development or self-help association, sports or social club?
- How involved are you with things such as election campaign rallies, meetings of political parties, community meetings, functions held on National public holidays e.g. Freedom Day, Women's Day, public marches, government izimbizo's and voter education workshop, etc.
- What role do you play during these events?

Are there any other experiences/ anything that you would like to share concerning voting or the IEC

END

IEC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
FEMALE ADULTS (36 – 69 year olds)

Facilitator: Welcome and introductions

Good (afternoon/evening), I'm _____ from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and we are conducting a series of focus groups around the country. The main aim of the focus groups is to examine public opinion with regard to the upcoming national and provincial elections. In particular, the study investigates whether the Electoral Commission (IEC) caters adequately for the needs of special groups when it comes to voting. This focus group deals directly with issues related to female adults involvement in the elections.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this discussion. In addition, we would like to assure you that the information you will give to us is required for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential by the IEC. Furthermore, the information provided will not be used against you in any way whatsoever. Finally, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

The discussion will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Facilitator: Requests participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Participants: Introductions by each participant.

Facilitator explains general discussion rules and issues:

1. The role of the moderator (facilitator) and rapporteur

2. Explain why we use the digital voice recorder and ask for their consent to record the discussion.
3. Explain the importance of only one person talking at a time in a clear voice.

4. Put together the ground rules with the group members after explaining how the FGD should proceed.

Participant characteristics:

In order for us to know the people who participated in this FGD we would like you to complete the short questionnaire that we will hand out to you (Appendix A).

Theme 1: General economic assessment

The first issues we will discuss involve your views about the quality of life for the female members of the community particularly with regard to how voting would affect their quality of life.

- Do you think there are positive economic changes in the lives of women in this community in the past five years? What has changed and what has not changed?
- Do you think women are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last five years

Theme 2: Identification documents for election purposes

Let us talk about the importance of identification documents in national and provincial elections. As you may know people should have green bar-coded ID books in order to register as voters and to be able to vote during elections.

- Have you obtained ID documents and registered to participate in elections?
- What were the main challenges that you and women in your community experienced in
    - Obtaining green-bar coded ID books,
    - Registering to vote,
    - What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?
- For those who of you who have not registered to vote, what are your reasons for not registering?

Theme 3: Participation of women in voting and politics

- How important do you think voting is for you personally and for women in general?
- Do you think that women benefit from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Would you say women are generally interested in politics and elections? Please explain.
- In your view, do you think that women should be playing a more prominent role in politics and voting? Please explain.
- Do you think that the IEC addresses the needs of women during voting?
- Whose responsibility should it be to ensure that women participate in elections?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?
- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage women to vote?

Theme 4: Views about participation in voting and politics.

- Do you think women are playing a prominent role in politics in South Africa?
- What do you think about the participation of women in elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?
- What role does the IEC play in ensuring that women in your age group participate in elections?
- What role do you think you can play in ensuring that women of your age group participate in the forth coming elections?
- How would you distinguish between the national, provincial and municipality elections?
- Do you think that women in your age group understand these differences?
- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage women of your generation to vote?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

Theme 5: Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

- Do you think the needs of special groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? e.g. Do facilities in voting stations cater for groups such as the disabled and the elderly?
- Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?
- How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians or people with disability?
- People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?
- Do you think women with disabilities in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer?

Theme 6: Voter education

- Have you ever participated in any voter education programme?
    - Were your needs taken into consideration?
- Explain how you were involved
- Who was offering the programme? What were your experiences?

- Do you think women need to go through a programme where they are taught about the following issues:
    - How to go about registering to vote
    - The importance of having a green bar-coded ID book to be able to vote
    - What to do when they get to the voting station on the Election Day?
    - How to get access to the voting station?
- Do you think women of your generation have information on how to register as a voter?

Theme 7: Most recent voting experience

- Have you participated in previous elections (whether it was national / provincial or local / municipal)? What were your experiences?
- The last time you voted – how were you treated by officials at the voting station? Please share your experience.
- Do you think the elections were free and fair?
    - Were there any voting irregularities such as intimidation, interference by political parties or lack of secrecy when voting? Please explain.
- How would you describe the state of voting stations in terms of the following-accessibility, cleanliness and availability of facilities?
- Have you ever been involved with the planning including preparation in the voting stations, and dealing with problems during the day of voting?

Theme 8: Participations in groups and political demonstrations

- Let us talk about your involvement in various groups in your community. Do you think that it is important for people in your community to belong to groups such as ward committee, community development or self-help association, sports or social club?
- How involved are you with things such as election campaign rallies, meetings of political parties, community meetings, functions held on National public holidays e.g. Freedom Day, Women's Day, public marches, government izimbizo's and voter education workshop, etc.
- What role do you play during these events?

Are there any other experiences/ anything that you would like to share concerning voting or the IEC END

IEC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (DISABILITIES)

Facilitator: Welcome and introductions

Good (afternoon/evening), I'm _____ from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and we are conducting a series of focus groups around the country. The main aim of the focus groups is to examine public opinion with regard to the upcoming national and provincial elections. In particular, the study investigates whether the Electoral Commission (IEC) caters adequately for the needs of special groups when it comes to voting. This focus group deals directly with issues related to involvement in the elections of people with special needs.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this discussion. In addition, we would like to assure you that the information you will give to us is required for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential by the IEC. Furthermore, the information provided will not be used against you in any way whatsoever. Finally, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

The discussion will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Facilitator: Requests participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Participants: Introductions by each participant.

Facilitator explains general discussion rules and issues:

1. The role of the moderator (facilitator) and rapporteur

2. Explain why we use the digital voice recorder and ask for their consent to record the discussion.
3. Explain the importance of only one person talking at a time in a clear voice.

4. Put together the ground rules with the group members after explaining how the FGD should proceed.

Participant characteristics:

In order for us to know the people who participated in this FGD we would like you to complete the short questionnaire that we will hand out to you (Appendix A).

Theme 1: General economic assessment

The first issues we will discuss involve your views about the quality of life of people with disabilities particularly with regard to how voting would affect their quality of life.

- Do you think there are positive economic changes in the lives of the people with disabilities in South African in the past five years; For example, did the economic or health situation of people with disabilities improve over the last five years? What has changed and what has not changed?
- Do you think people with disabilities are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last five years?

Theme 2: Identification documents and voter registration issues.

Let us talk about the importance of identification documents in national and provincial elections. As you may know people should have green bar-coded ID books in order to register as voters and to be able to vote during elections.

- Have you obtained ID documents and registered to participate in elections?
- What were the main challenges that you experienced in
    - Obtaining green-bar coded ID books?
    - Registering to vote
    - What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?
- For those who have not registered to vote, what are your reasons for not registering?

Theme 3: Participation of people with disabilities in voting and politics

- How important do you think voting is for you personally and for people with disabilities?
- Do you think that people with disabilities benefit from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Would you say people with disabilities are generally interested in politics and elections? Please explain.
- In your view, do you think that people with disabilities should be playing a more prominent role in politics and voting? Please explain.
- Do you think that the IEC addresses the needs of people with disabilities during voting (e.g. ramp and elevators, Braille ballot for the blind, hearing aids, etc)?
- Whose responsibility should it be to ensure that people with disabilities participate in elections?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage people with disabilities to vote?

Theme 4: Views about participation in voting and politics.

- Do you think people with disabilities are playing a prominent role in politics in South Africa?
- What do you think about the participation of people with disabilities in elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?
- What role do you think the IEC should play in ensuring that people with disabilities participate in elections?
- What role do you think you can play in ensuring that people with disabilities can participate in the forth coming national and provincial elections?
- How would you distinguish between the local, national and municipality elections?
- Do you think that people with disabilities understand these differences?
- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage people with disabilities to vote?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

Theme 5: Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

- Do you think the needs of special groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? e.g. Do facilities in voting stations cater for groups such as the disabled and the elderly?
- Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?
- How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians, or people with disability?
- People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?
- Do you think people with disabilities in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer?

Theme 6: Voter education

- Have you ever participated in any voter education programme?
    - Were your needs taken into consideration?
- Explain how you were involved
- Who was offering the programme? What were your experiences?
- Do you think people with disabilities need to go through a programme where they are taught about the following issues:
    - How to go about registering to vote
    - The importance of having a green bar-coded ID book to be able to vote
    - What to do when they get to the voting station on the Election Day?
    - How to get access to the voting station (e.g. those in wheel chairs and those who are blind)
- Do you think people with disabilities have information on how to register as a voter?

Theme 7: Most recent voting experience

- Have you participated in previous elections (whether it was national / provincial or local / municipal)? What were your experiences?
- The last time you voted – how were you treated by officials at the voting station? Please share your experience.
- Do you think the elections were free and fair?
- Were there any voting irregularities such as intimidation, interference by political parties or lack of secrecy when voting? Please explain.
- How would you describe the state of voting stations in terms of the following-accessibility, cleanliness and availability of facilities?

Theme 8: Participation in groups and political demonstrations

Let us talk about group membership.

- Do you think that it is important for people with disabilities to belong to groups such as community development organisations or self-help associations; sports or social clubs; youth or students' associations? Why?
- How involved are you or other people with disabilities in activities such as election campaign rallies, political party meetings, community meetings, public marches, government

izimbizo's, voter education workshops, public holiday celebrations e.g. Freedom Day, Women's Day; etc.? What role do you play during these events?

Are there any other experiences/ anything that you would like to share concerning voting or the IEC

END

IEC FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
ELDERLY PEOPLE

Facilitator: Welcome and introductions

Good (afternoon/evening), I'm _____ from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and we are conducting a series of focus groups around the country. The main aim of the focus groups is to examine public opinion with regard to the upcoming national and provincial elections. In particular, the study investigates whether the Electoral Commission (IEC) caters adequately for the needs of special groups when it comes to voting. This focus group deals directly with issues related to elderly people's involvement in the elections.

We would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in this discussion. In addition, we would like to assure you that the information you will give to us is required for research purposes only, and will be kept confidential by the IEC. Furthermore, the information provided will not be used against you in any way whatsoever. Finally, your participation in the study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without any penalty.

The discussion will last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Facilitator: Requests participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Participants: Introductions by each participant.

Facilitator explains general discussion rules and issues:

1. The role of the moderator (facilitator) and rapporteur

2. Explain why we use the digital voice recorder and ask for their consent to record the discussion.
3. Explain the importance of only one person talking at a time in a clear voice.

4. Put together the ground rules with the group members after explaining how the FGD should proceed.

Participant characteristics:

In order for us to know the people who participated in this FGD we would like you to complete the short questionnaire that we will hand out to you (Appendix A).

Theme 1: General economic assessment

The first issues we will discuss involve your views about the quality of life for the female members of the community particularly with regard to how voting would affect their quality of life.

- Do you think there are positive economic changes in the lives of the elderly people in this community in the past five years? What has changed and what has not changed?
- Do you think the elderly people are benefiting from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Talking about yourself, how has your quality of life changed in the last five years

Theme 2: Identification documents for election purposes

Let us talk about the importance of identification documents in national and provincial elections. As you may know people should have green bar-coded ID books in order to register as voters and to be able to vote during elections.

- Have you obtained ID documents and registered to participate in elections?
- What were the main challenges that you and the elderly people in your community experienced in
    - Obtaining green-bar coded ID books,
    - Registering to vote,
    - What other alternative identification documents would you recommend?
- For those who of you who have not registered to vote, what are your reasons for not registering?

Theme 3: Participation of the elderly people in voting and politics

- How important do you think voting is for you personally and for the elderly people in general?
- Do you think that the elderly people benefit from participating in elections? How do they benefit?
- Would you say the elderly people are generally interested in politics and elections? Please explain.
- Do you think that the IEC addresses the needs of the elderly people during voting?
- Whose responsibility should it be to ensure that the elderly people participate in elections?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

Theme 4: Views about participation in voting and politics.

- Do you think the elderly people are playing a prominent role in politics in South Africa?
- In your view, do you think that the elderly people should be playing a more prominent role in politics and voting? Please explain?
- What do you think about the participation of the elderly people in elections generally – are they very keen? What are their attitudes towards voting? Are they motivated to vote?
- What role does the IEC play in ensuring that the elderly people in your age group participate in elections?
- What role do you think you can play in ensuring that the elderly people of your age group participate in the forth coming elections?
- How would you distinguish between the national, provincial and municipality elections?
- Do you think that the elderly people in your age group understand these differences?
- Do you have any suggestions that may help the IEC to encourage the elderly people of your generation to vote?
- What are your views about people who prefer not to vote?

Theme 5: Participation of other groups in voting and politics.

- Do you think the needs of special groups including the elderly and disabled are considered in planning for the elections? e.g. Do facilities in voting stations cater for groups such as the disabled and the elderly?
- Do you think that the IEC is addressing the issue of gender by making sure that both males and females have the same opportunities to participate in elections? How?
- How well-represented are various groups in the elections – e.g. are there more women compared to men, more whites involved compared to Indians or people with disability?
- People are eligible to participate in elections from the age of 18 – What do you think should be the appropriate age?
- Do you think the elderly people who may have some disabilities in your community are interested in voting? Explain your answer?

Theme 6: Voter education

- Have you ever participated in any voter education programme?
    - Were your needs taken into consideration?

- Explain how you were involved
- Who was offering the programme? What were your experiences?
- Do you think the elderly people need to go through a programme where they are taught about the following issues:
    - How to go about registering to vote
    - The importance of having a green bar-coded ID book to be able to vote
    - What to do when they get to the voting station on the Election Day?
    - How to get access to the voting station?
- Do you think people of your generation have information on how to register as a voter?

Theme 7: Most recent voting experience

- Have you participated in previous elections (whether it was national / provincial or local / municipal)? What were your experiences?
- The last time you voted – how were you treated by officials at the voting station? Please share your experience.
- Do you think the elections were free and fair?
    - Were there any voting irregularities such as intimidation, interference by political parties or lack of secrecy when voting? Please explain.
- How would you describe the state of voting stations in terms of the following-accessibility, cleanliness and availability of facilities?
- Have you ever been involved with the planning including preparation in the voting stations, and dealing with problems during the day of voting?

Theme 8: Participations in groups and political demonstrations

- Let us talk about your involvement in various groups in your community. Do you think that it is important for people in your community to belong to groups such as ward committee, community development or self-help association, sports or social club?
- How involved are you with things such as election campaign rallies, meetings of political parties, community meetings, functions held on National public holidays e.g. Freedom Day, Women's Day, public marches, government izimbizo's and voter education workshop, etc.
- What role do you play during these events?

Are there any other experiences/ anything that you would like to share concerning voting or the IEC END