

VOTER EDUCATION RESOURCES



◆ WHAT CAN BUSINESS DO TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY?

IDASA has produced a 12-minute audio cassette on the essential messages of voter education and suggestions as to what business can do to help prepare South Africans for their first democratic election.

COST: R25

*AVAILABLE FROM: The Media Department,
Idasa, 1 Penzance Rd, Mowbray 7700;
Tel (021) 47-3127*

OR

*The Training Centre for Democracy,
39 Honey Street, Berea, Johannesburg
2195; Tel (011) 484-3694.*

◆ VOTING SONGS

Election messages in Rap and Mabaqanga for South Africans of all ages. The artists are Mahlatini & the Mahotella Queens, and the Young Rap Project. The two songs, *Plant the Seed of Democracy* and *Use Your Voice*, form part of voter education radio programmes produced by Idasa's new audio unit.

Tolerance from Bish Bloemfont

**Are party election agents ready for 27 April? A new study
analyses the achievements of a series of
workshops run by Idasa**

THE African National Congress boots the Democratic Party out of Orange Farm, the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging closes down an ANC meeting in Middelburg, the Inkatha Freedom Party refuses to allow an ANC march on Ulundi – and everywhere the cry goes up, yet again, for political tolerance.

It has become almost fashionable – and not without good reason – to talk gloomily about political tolerance and the prospect of strife-ridden elections. Quite rightly, the responsibility for political tolerance has been laid at the feet of the political parties and, their leaders in particular.

Negotiations at the World Trade Centre went a long way towards showing the extent to which cut and thrust among political opponents is possible without bloodshed. But that experience has not filtered down through organisational ranks to any significant extent.

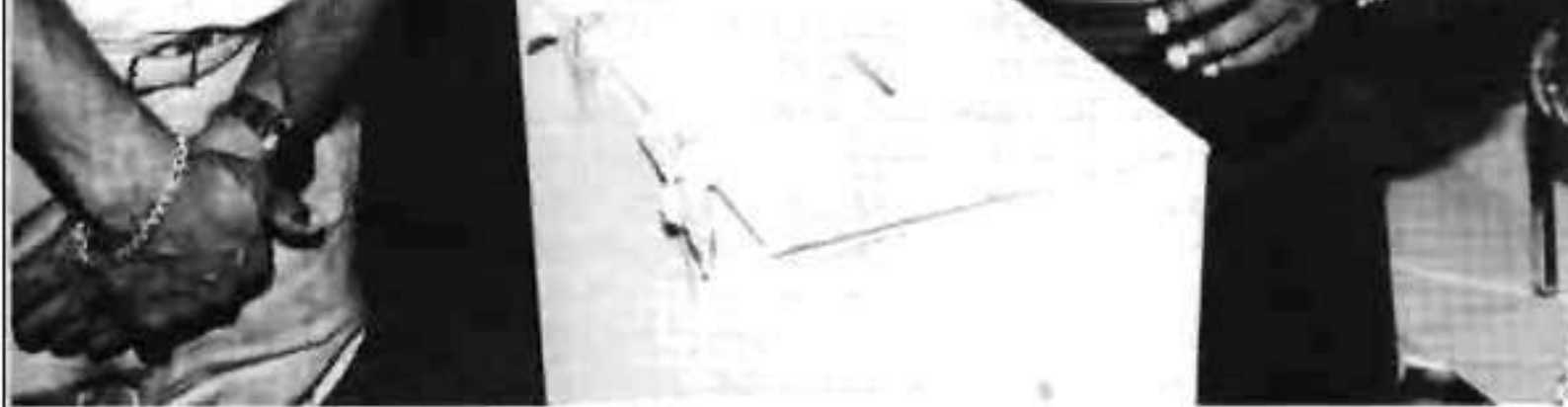
Vast amounts of time and money have been spent on issues such as voter education, but scant attention has been paid to building

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HELP AT THE POLLS: A party agent assists a blind voter in a simulation exercise.

know what type of problems to expect on voting day, how to solve them and how to work together will be contributing to free and fair elections."

A total of 21 party agent training workshops for more than 1 500 party agents were held regionally during October and November.

The programme has raised some interesting issues which impact on the possibility of holding an effective election:

- Most revealing is the poor communication between the parties' national and regional/local operations. Those with a strong federal system have been particularly hampered. For instance, local representatives will arrive at a workshop with little idea of what the programme is about, although their party has been involved in shaping it.

- During the workshop session called "countdown to elections", participants' alarm is evident when they realise what their parties must get done before election day. Parties which have never been part of an election machine are at a huge disadvantage.

- Capacity within parties is problematic. With party activists on the ground being

pulled in every direction, there may not be enough people to have strong teams of party agents in place. Each party will need between 1 000 and 10 000 party agents on election day, so their inability at times to field the required eight to 10 participants at each workshop raises doubts about parties' capacity on a larger scale.

- Another concern is second-generation trainers. Each workshop aims to train participants as party agents and to equip them to train at least 100 other people. But those without prior training skills may find this difficult, despite a comprehensive trainer's manual.

- An interesting dynamic that bedevils any democratic process is the seemingly unbridgeable gap between a group of people who have gone through a process (such as multi-party negotiations) and those who have not. This is evident in the workshop programme, with the result that everyone gets on board only by the end of the programme.

There is only so much that can be done

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