

IDASA IN ACTION



DIARY

Highlights of forthcoming events organised by Idasa offices

Port Elizabeth

A series of truth and reconciliation public information workshops will be held throughout the Eastern Cape.

The first will be held in Port Elizabeth on 25 October at the Humewood Hotel. Other workshops will take place in Port Alfred on 26 October (Victoria Hotel) and in East London on 27 October (King David Hotel).

The speakers will be Daniel Nina, Janet Cherry and Mohammed Navsa. The workshops are a joint effort by Idasa, Lawyers for Human Rights, Human Rights Trust and the Institute for Multi-Party

Democracy.

Booking is essential because of space limitations. For further information contact Ansiet Kimsley at (041) 553 301.

- On 3 November a workshop on the RDP will be held at the Humewood Hotel. It will place special emphasis on the unemployed in relation to the RDP.

Speakers have been invited from local and provincial government and academic institutions.

- A seminar on traditional tribal African law versus democracy will be held at the Humewood Hotel on the 29 and 30 November. For further information contact Sandy Wren at (041) 553 301.

Western Cape

Idasa's Western Cape office continues its work in local government in the rural areas. Workshops addressing the transition to local government will be held throughout October and November in Riversdal, Macassar and Albertina.

- A workshop with youth will be held in Ceres on 3 December.

Durban

Idasa's Durban office will coordinate a group of youth on a study tour of Denmark from 28 October to 13 November.

The group has been invited by the Danish Youth Council to study democracy and see how the council operates with a view to forming a youth council in South Africa.

- A "bridging the gap" camp will be held from 18 to 20 October. High school pupils have been invited to attend the camp to discuss their role in peace and reconciliation.

- Representatives from civil society structures are invited to attend a workshop on 27 and 28 October to discuss their role in relation to

the RDP. Interested persons may contact Shelagh Gastrow at (031) 304 8893.

- On 16 October, Idasa staff will facilitate training around local government issues for Cosatu officials in Empageni.

- Report-back meetings on local government negotiations are held on 9, 15 and 16 October in the South Coast, greater Pinetown and greater Durban areas.

Bloemfontein

A public meeting on the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be held at the University of the Orange Free State on 27 October.

Speakers at the meeting will include Paul van Zyl of the Centre for the Study on Violence and Reconciliation and journalist Jacques Pauw.

- Police officials and representatives from towns in the Free State are invited to attend a conference on community policing on 11 November.

- The idea of establishing a provincial Pan South African Language Board will be discussed at a meeting on 3 November at the University of the Orange Free State.

Students brush up on skills

SOME 80 Free State student leaders attended a leadership skills workshop at Allemanskraal in September.

Delegates to the weekend workshop were members of students' representative councils from tertiary institutions in the province.

The programme focused on the definition of democracy and democratic leadership skills. A highlight of the workshop was the simulation of formal meetings. Skills for managing meetings, including facilitation and communication techniques, were imparted.

It was exciting to witness the keen interest of the group in the issues discussed. It was clear that there is a great need for this kind of training.

*Queenette Watari
Training Centre for Democracy*

Go-getting PE is sought after

IN a coup for Port Elizabeth's Transitional Local Council (TLC), the city has been approached by a European firm representing London boroughs interested in twinning with the city.

The Eastern Cape city's sought after status can be attributed to its success as the first major city to establish a TLC.

The concept of twinning entails linking up with a borough facing similar challenges. While beginning with Port Elizabeth, the project may be extended to other regions and may include twinning of provincial governments.

The exercise is aimed at importing and exporting knowledge and skills in local government, health and social welfare, housing, community policing, direct business and trade links as well as small busi-

ness development.

The process will be facilitated by the Idasa office in Port Elizabeth and Euroconsultants in London whose representative, Anwar Rizvi, receives calls daily from boroughs interested in twinning with Port Elizabeth. The one whose structures best correspond with those of Port Elizabeth will be selected for the twinning.

A commitment from business, labour and civil society will be essential for the success of the project.

The European firm is committed to a bottom-up approach to development and will ensure that partners are like minded.

Euroconsultants and other interested partners will visit Port Elizabeth in November to conduct a comprehensive investigation into

the twinning proposal.

This visit will be returned in December when a local delegation visits London to attend a seminar on local government development in South Africa, arranged by the Local Government International Bureau.

Local activities targeted for the twinning are the Pakamisa Small Business Development Project, Small Farming Project and the CDB Regeneration Project.

It is anticipated that the proposed twinning arrangement will be a far more creative process than past exercises of its kind. Exchanges for city councillors are one of many potentially valuable exercises that will form part of the twinning programme.

*Sandy Wren
Senior Co-ordinator, Port Elizabeth*

IDASA *IN ACTION*

Rural local government transition: A guide for perplexed citizens

IF you thought the national and provincial elections were complicated, think again! Transition at local government level is even more bewildering. This has become obvious in Idasa's work with 12 rural negotiating forums and two urban negotiating forums in the Western Cape. (I do not want to even attempt to say what is happening in the Cape Metropolitan Negotiating Forum.)

Stated simply, the transition at local level is governed by the Local Government Transition Act and is envisaged as taking place in two phases:

- the pre-interim phase, which began when the Act became law last year and ends with the holding of the first democratic local government elections;

- the interim phase, which starts immediately after the first local government elections and ends when the next local government elections are held in terms of the final Constitution.

Within each phase a number of steps have to be followed. The first step in the pre-interim phase is the setting up of local government negotiating forums. Two sides are represented in these forums:

- a statutory side, consisting of existing municipalities and local authorities and political parties and organisations who traditionally have been part of (previous) government structures; and

- a non-statutory side, consisting of civics and other non-governmental organisations and political parties who traditionally have been excluded from (previous) government structures.

But even this apparently simple division into statutory and non-statutory sides is not always easy. In some rural negotiating forums, for instance, you find parties which have been part of government but who claim non-statutory status!

Many rural towns have accomplished this first step of establishing a negotiating forum. In others, non-statutory bodies are still struggling to be accepted as legitimate negotiating partners by their statutory counterparts. This reluctance to accord recognition has been

interpreted by some as a deliberate attempt by the statutory players to slow down the transition in their town and to hold on to power.

Among the issues that negotiating forums have to decide on are the boundaries of their local government area, what model of transitional local government to adopt, and how the membership of transitional local councils will be made up.

The second step in the pre-interim phase is for negotiating forums in each town to appoint or become transitional local councils (TLCs). Statutory and non-statutory sides each have the right to 50 percent of the seats on the TLC. The TLCs will take over the work and functions of the previous local authorities.

If negotiating forums decide against adopting the TLC model, they can consider becoming a local government co-ordinating committee (LGCC). Such a decision means that existing local government structures remain in place, with the LGCC playing a co-ordinating role, with minimal powers and duties.

If negotiating forums cannot come to a decision on the type of local government model they want for their town or area, the provincial government, acting in consultation with a committee made up of equal numbers of statutory and non-statutory local government stakeholders, is empowered to either impose a model, or request the forums concerned to renegotiate their options. The provincial

government, again in consultation with the committee, must also approve and appoint the council members nominated by each negotiating forum.

A number of towns have already nominated TLCs and are waiting for approval from provincial level. The TLCs have two main tasks: stabilising community services and preparing for local government elections.

Such elections are the third step in the transition process and are expected to take place between October and December of 1995. The electoral system will be a blend of the ward system (60 percent of councillors) and proportional representation (40 percent of councillors).

An August draft of local government election regulations is available and gives some idea of what to expect. (A later draft has been prepared but I have not seen it yet.)

Immediately after the elections we will enter the interim phase of local government transition, which will last for three to five years. Elected non-racial local governments will be in place and the process of negotiating a final local government dispensation will begin. In 1999 or later we will have another local government election based on the final Constitution.

The above explanation of the local government transition process might seem simplistic but the process is far from easy for participants involved in the negotiations on the

ground. I have attended some negotiating forum meetings, helping to facilitate people through some deadlocks, and I found the process very complicated and frustrating.

Helping communities to see that local government will be of, for, and by them, is a long process. However, it has been encouraging to see the involvement of the broader community in negotiations in towns such as Riversdale and Citrusdal.

Idasa's Western Cape office is very involved with this process of local government transition and we believe that the challenge is to take local democracy beyond local government, to empowering communities in democratic and life skills. We have started local democracy programmes in rural towns and communities and are finding people excited by the ideas and vision behind these programmes.

This is particularly so in the case of those who have been excluded from local government and who have not been valued or affirmed as citizens with contributions to make to their communities. I think it is the idea of sharing responsibility and power that is beginning to foster a new kind of community in rural towns. The realisation of our interdependence on one another will eventually effect the transformation we need locally.

*Charles Erasmus
Regional Co-ordinator, Western Cape*

Helping hand for communities

MANY people involved in community organisations are struggling to cope with the challenges facing them in this time of local government transition. They are expected to involve themselves in the process in two ways: by participating in negotiating forums, and by nominating people for appointment to transitional local councils.

But many community leaders do not feel empowered to take part in this process and are concerned about how to report back

to the communities they serve.

Assisting a process of empowerment for community organisations was therefore the aim of a recent weekend workshop in which leaders from civic organisations in the southern suburbs of Cape Town participated. The workshop focused on how to plan and run workshops in a way that encouraged maximum participation and learning by participants.

The workshop explored creative techniques such as games and exercises and many of the partici-

pants were surprised to find that they were enjoying themselves thoroughly. There was also a focus on developing facilitation and presentation skills, and a final component was information about local government and the local government transition.

All the participants afterwards declared themselves better equipped to run workshops in their communities on local level issues.

*Michelle Booth
Office Co-ordinator, Western Cape*