

Date Printed: 04/23/2009

JTS Box Number: IFES_72
Tab Number: 27
Document Title: Preparing our churches for the elections
Document Date: n.d.
Document Country: South Africa
Document Language: English
IFES ID: CE01774



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PREPARING OUR CHURCHES FOR THE ELECTIONS



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Questions people are asking

This is a compilation of questions asked at four Information Days on the Elections held on 2,3,4,5 November 1993 in Ladysmith, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Empangeni. You might like to prepare for these questions when planning to run a voter education workshop for your church or group.

Many of these questions are addressed in a video of the Information Days as well as an audio cassette. The video is available at R50 and the audio cassette at R8. Contact Diakonia, P O Box 1879, Durban, 4000. Phone (031) 305-6001, Fax (031) 305-2486.

About the Political Parties

How will we know who to vote for?

What are the policies of each party?

How can we find out some of the hidden agendas of various political parties?

About procedures for voting

What are the practical details of how to vote?

Will the vote be secret?

– How can the vote be secret if we have to produce identity documents?

– How can we convince people that their vote will be secret despite fears about “mind-readers” and witch-doctors who will “know”?

How can we clarify misunderstandings about how the ballot paper should be marked?

Will electioneering be allowed on the election day(s)?

Should church buildings be used as voting stations?

About threats to elections

Will the elections actually take place?

Will the elections happen on 28 April or will they be delayed?

How will we cope with a possible escalation of violence in the build-up to elections, during or after the elections?

What can we do about intimidation, misinformation, “no-go areas”?

How can we deal with fears about voters being physically attacked while queuing to vote?

Will the elections be free and fair?

What will we do if some people boycott the elections?

Is the country really ready for elections?

About voter education

How can we help people to be tolerant of different expressions of opinion?

How will we reach out to the rural areas/farm workers/illiterate people/people in informal settlements/areas where there is much violence?

What can we do to encourage those who think they “know it all” about how to vote and who don’t realise that these elections will be very different?

How do we educate people from parties which aren’t participating?

How do we give education to the masses outside the church?

How will we empower women to vote?

How will we ensure that farm workers are allowed to vote and fully prepared for voting?

How much time can we spend on voter education in the light of other church priorities?

How can we avoid being seen as one-sided in our education?

How can we maintain the integrity of education for democracy field-workers so that they really will be non-partisan?

How will we convince people who think that Christians should not be involved in elections because this is "interfering in politics?"

How will we respond to people who feel it's easier and safer not to vote?

How can we help people to accept that in an election campaign there will inevitably be criticism and even denigration of leaders (i.e. these are part of the political process)?

How will we help people to understand proportional representation?

About the potential losers

Is there anything the church can do to help the losers/potential losers?

How can we teach people about the valuable role of the "loyal opposition"?

How can we deal with chiefs and traditional leaders in a way that will overcome some of their fears and threatenedness?

What will happen after the elections?

How will the election results be dealt with in Natal?

What is the future of Natal/KwaZulu?

What will happen to the TBVC states if they refuse to become part of South Africa?

What will happen to civil servants and whites after election day?

Will the elections deliver the goods in terms of expectations?

How can we structure our society so that it will be democratic at all levels?

How can we ensure that we have regular elections after April 27th 1994?

About the media

How far can we trust the media in the build-up to the elections?

Will the media help people prepare for elections? How?

Should the church play a role in monitoring the media? How?

About monitoring and observing

How can we be involved in monitoring/observing the elections?

What is the difference between *monitoring* and *observing*?

Who will *monitor*?

Who will *observe*?

How can we ensure that the activities of Home Affairs are monitored?

When will recruitment and training for observing and monitoring begin?

About Identity Documents

Why is it necessary for voters to have any identification?

What can be done about people who don't have IDs? Will they be able to vote?

How can the church help people to get IDs?

What are we doing to ensure that people in the informal settlements/hostels are able to get IDs as well as other marginalised groups such as farm workers?

Questions for political parties

Preparing for elections

In the course of voter education some have expressed their confusion at the different messages they are receiving from all sides and have asked for clearer guidance. Some people even ask Church leaders "Who should we vote for?" Unfortunately some local leaders attempt to give simple answers to that question. But this is not enough. There is no democracy without hard work. We need to try to understand who and what we are voting for and why. The following list of questions may help individuals and groups in this process. We can use them to challenge political parties, to scrutinise their policy manifestos and to question individual candidates and leaders. The answers given will help us discern which party is likely to contribute most to national unity, to political and economic progress and to social justice.

You might like to use these questions for church-sponsored meetings at which political parties are asked to outline their policies. (See No. 4, "Ideas for Action", page 8 of this leaflet.)

A. POLITICAL PARTY

1. What is your position on democracy? And on majority rule?
2. What criteria did you use in selecting the candidates on your party list?
3. What will you do if your party loses the election?
4. Do you want a unitary or federal state in South Africa? Why?
5. How do you intend to restructure the police and security forces so that they will enjoy credibility among all the people?
6. How do you intend to counteract violence?
7. How will you deal with militant opposition groups?

B. ECONOMIC POLICY

8. What is your economic policy?
9. Will you adopt a totally free market system in which the government will not interfere at all?
10. Do you intend to take over key economic resources i.e. to nationalise them?
11. If you don't intend to nationalise the economy or to have a totally free market system, what form of state intervention in the economy do you plan? What will be the implications of this?
12. What is your policy on multi-national corporations operating in South Africa?
13. Do you intend to raise loans from the World Bank? How do you intend to use and repay them?
14. What is your policy on taxation re V.A.T., P.A.Y.E., company tax; tax on wealth and inheritance?
15. How do you intend to tackle the problem of unemployment?

C. SOCIAL POLICY

16. What is your policy on land redistribution and how do you intend to finance it?
17. What is your position on promoting black workers through affirmative action?
18. What is your policy on education and especially how do you intend to deal with the backlog in black education resulting from apartheid? How do you intend to finance your reforms?
19. What is your policy on church schools?
20. How do you intend to deal with the seven million homeless people in the country? How do you intend to finance housing?
21. How do you intend to provide primary health services for all and how do you intend to finance this programme?
22. How do you intend to help those who were neglected under apartheid especially the rural poor, the alienated youth and the marginalised generally and how do you intend to finance this help?

D. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

23. What is your policy on a Bill of Human Rights and especially on womens' rights and advancement, and family and cultural values in such a bill?

24. What is your position on abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment?
25. Will you allow free activity for non-political organisations and how will you support non-government organisations?
26. What are your plans for reconciliation, especially on how race relations could be improved? How will you finance such programmes?

E. FINALLY

27. Do you think your policies are in line with Christian values? Explain.

CONCLUSION

Asking these and similar questions will help us in preparing for elections. They will help us learn that democracy works when we play our part as responsible citizens. If we are alert and well-informed, corrupt leaders cannot use us as puppets. We are free to vote for a more just South Africa. Indeed we must vote. The alternative to voting is continuing violence. Violence is a spiral which feeds and grows on itself. It will not bring solutions. Violence will turn our country into a devastated wasteland.

The 1994 elections may be our last chance to reject war and violence and to choose instead justice, peace and reconciliation. For this we must prepare well and we must vote well.

Extract from SACBC leaflet "Preparing for Elections".

Resources

VIDEOS

- **'Information Days on the Elections'** produced by Diakonia. Input by Sheena Duncan, Paul Graham and John Lamola, at an Information Day held in Durban on 3rd November 1993
Available from Diakonia.
- **'Making Democracy Work'** produced by Community Law Centre (CLC), December 1993
A companion to CLC manual of the same name, incorporating democracy, voting procedures, civil society and other issues.
Available in English, Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho, from the Community Law Centre and ECT Resource Centre.
- **'Let's Vote'** produced by South African Chamber of Business (SACOB) November 1993
An introduction and motivation to the concept of voting, including a tour of the parliamentary buildings.
Available from the Institute for Multi-Party Democracy and ECT Resource Centre.
- **'The Road to Democracy'** produced by Centre for Development Studies (CDS) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), 1993
A companion to the CDS training manual.
Available in English and Zulu from the ECT Resource Centre.
- **'Democracy'** produced by IDASA 1991
Discussion on issues of democracy filmed at an IDASA workshop.
Available from IDASA and the ECT Resource Centre.
- **'Free and Fair Elections'** produced by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Washington.
An overview of election procedures in several countries.
Available from the ECT Resource Centre.

BIBLE STUDIES

- **'Christians & Democracy'**, a series of 12 Angolan bible studies, adapted for use in South Africa.
Available early 1994 in separate English and Zulu editions, from Churches' Campaign, PO Box 1879, Durban 4000.
Tel (031) 3056001, Fax (031) 3052486
- **'The Good Society'**, a series of bible studies on Christianity and democracy, published 1989, revised 1993.
Available early 1994 from Diakonia, PO Box 1879, Durban 4000. Tel (031) 3056001, Fax (031) 3052486

BOOKLETS

- **'You and the Vote'** published by the Black Sash
A teaching booklet, available in English, Zulu, Afrikaans, Xhosa and other languages, from the Black Sash

NEWSPAPERS

- **'Um-Voti'** published by IDASA and UmAfrika
A monthly supplement to UmAfrika newspaper, available in Zulu, from IDASA and the ECT Resource Centre.
- **'Voting Times'** published by Project Vote of Centre for Development Studies (CDS)
An eight-page newspaper, available in Zulu and English, from the ECT Resource Centre

TRAINING MATERIALS

- **'You can Vote'** produced by IDASA Training Centre for Democracy, June 1993
A training kit consisting of 10 large posters (two copies each) and a training manual. This kit is especially for people living in rural areas, for women and for those who struggle to read. But it can be used by other people too.
Available from IDASA Training Centre for Democracy
- **'Voter Education Manual'** and poster, produced by Voter Education and Elections Training Unit (VEETU), Education Resource and Information Project (ERIP), 1993
This manual is aimed at activists and volunteers who will be involved in voter education in communities that have not voted before. Available from CCLS-VEETU
- **'Voter Education: Manual for Trainers'** with poster, produced by Project Vote of Centre for Development Studies (CDS) 1993
This manual is for voter education trainers and/or community educators for use in the run-up to national elections in South Africa. Available from CDS

- **'Making Democracy Work'** produced by Community Law Centre, December 1993

This manual covers issues of democracy, civil society, rights and responsibilities, as well as voter education. Available in English, Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho from CLC

DRAMA

- **'How do we vote?' – 'Kuvotwa Kanjani?'** a play in two acts published by New Readers Project, Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Durban, 1992

This play will help people to talk about voting so that everybody can understand and accept what democracy is about. Available in Zulu and English from Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban 4001, Tel (031) 260-2399

ORGANIZATIONS

The organizations listed either have voter education programmes with trainers available, have speakers available to address meetings on various aspects of democracy, constitutional issues and voting procedures, or can recommend such speakers.

- **Diakonia**, P.O. Box 1879, Durban 4000. Tel (031) 3056001, Fax (031) 3052486
Contacts: Ntomb'futhi Zondo, Sue Britton, Nomabelu Mvambo-Dandala, Liz Mkame, Paddy Kearney.
- **Durban & District Council of Churches**, Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrew's Street, Durban 4001
Tel ((031)) 3013944, Fax ((031)) 3065401
Contacts: Dudu Ngcobo, Busisiwe Mbatha
- **PACSA**, PO Box 2338, Pietermaritzburg 3200. Tel: (0331) 420052, Fax (0331) 421303
Contact: Peter Kerchhoff
- **Practical Ministries**, P.O. Box 196, Port Shepstone 4240. Tel (0391) 826203, Fax (0391) 22895
Contact: Debbie Mathew, Danny Chetty
- **Christian Relief & Development**, 367 Kingsway, Amanzimtoti 4125. Tel (031) 9037743, Fax (031) 9037751
- **Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA)**,
– Johannesburg: Training Centre for Democracy, 39 Honey Street, Berea 2195,
Tel (011) 4843694, Fax (011) 4842610
– Durban: 1219 Sangro House, 417 Smith Street, Durban 4001,
Tel (031) 3048893, Fax (031) 3048891
Contact: Simon Ntombela
- **Institute for Multi-Party Democracy**, P.O. Box 2811, Durban 4000. Tel (031) 3043863, Fax (031) 3073875
Contacts: Eric Apelgren, Mdu Ndlovu
- **Democracy Development Programme**, Tel (031) 3060341, Fax (031) 3060355
Contact: Dr Rama Naidu
- **Lawyers for Human Rights**, 1105 Salmon Grove Chambers, 407 Smith Street, Durban 4001, Tel (031) 3077200,
Fax (031) 3055143
Contact: Mawethu Mosery
- **Streetlaw**, Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban. Tel (031) 812358, Fax (031) 811765
Contact: Louise Olivier
- **Community Law Centre**, 7th floor, Berea Centre, 249 Berea Road, Durban 4001. Tel (031) 2027190, Fax (031) 210140
Contacts: Andrew Preens, Janine Hicks, Lucy Voss
- **Black Sash**,
– Durban: Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrew's Street, Durban 4001, Tel (031) 301 9215
Contact: Seema Ramburuth, Di Oliver
– Pietermaritzburg: 174 Berg Street, Pietermaritzburg 3201. Tel (0331) 426368
- **Development Contact Network**, 50 Umbilo Road, Durban 4001. Tel (031) 3055452, Fax (031) 3059721
Contact: Chantelle Wyley
- **Centre for Community and Labour Studies - VEETU**, P.O. Box 48749, Qualbert 4078. Tel (031) 3014333, Fax (031) 3014341
- **Centre for Development Studies**, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535.
Tel (021) 9592151, Fax (021) 9592317
- **Ecumenical Centre Trust Resource Centre**, Ecumenical Centre, 20 St Andrew's Street, Durban 4001. Tel (031) 3018614,
Fax (031) 3016611

Ideas for action

A compilation of suggestions from the four Information Days on the Elections held on 2,3,4,5 November 1993 in Ladysmith, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Empangeni.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preparations for the elections are a matter of extreme urgency and should enjoy the highest priority from the church over the next five months. Perhaps other urgent issues could be set aside until after the elections.

2. WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

- We should try to reach out to other churches which don't seem to be involved.
- We should also look beyond the churches.
- We should make sure that our efforts reach out beyond the cities.
- In reaching out to the rural areas a special effort should be made to communicate with traditional leaders.
- We should make sure that illiterate people are reached and we should use appropriate methods for this purpose (e.g. cassettes and radio in waiting rooms of clinics and hospitals).
- Make sure that women and youth are fully involved.

3. WHAT STRATEGIES WILL WE USE?

- Incorporate training/education in existing church programmes/groups (this is particularly important for busy people and also because the time is too limited to establish new or special groups).
- Train trainers so that our efforts can be greatly multiplied.
- Draw on all the resources available (see resource list in this document on pgs. 6 and 7)
- Make use of newsletters/pew leaflets/church notice-boards/church newspapers/posters/sermons/intercessory prayers etc.
- Devise simulation games e.g. parish elections could provide a useful experience of voting.
- Sermons can become more educational if there is time for a buzz group afterwards or an opportunity to comment and ask questions.
- Use bible studies in existing faith-sharing or other groups.
- Use video and audio cassettes of the four Information Days organised by the Natal Church Leaders' Group (2 - 5 November 1993) (See resource list for details).
- House meetings can be used to gather neighbours.
- Develop informal networks and support groups like Ministers' Fraternals especially in difficult areas so that those involved in voter education aren't isolated.
- Information can be put up in public places e.g. libraries, community centres, schools, shops, bus-stops etc.
- Recruit and train observers.
Church leaders, clergy, and religious sisters should give the lead by volunteering to be observers.
- Clear your diary for a few days before, during and after the elections so you can be fully available.

4. WHAT SHOULD BE THE CONTENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES?

- There's a great need for simple information (for example, about why the church and Christians should be involved in the elections, about the process of voting, about party policies).
- Help people to understand the difference between voter education and political campaigning .
- Organise a church or parish meeting at which representatives of several political parties can be quizzed by church people about their policies (see "Questions for Political Parties" on pgs. 4,5).

5. WHAT OCCASIONS TO USE

- Include a special prayer for free, fair and peaceful elections at all services (and link with a symbolic action e.g. lighting a candle, or peace greeting).
- Have a special Sunday/s where information can be given to people during or after the services.
- Make Lent a special time of preparation for free and fair elections (e.g. by prayer, fasting, special bible studies, special liturgies, workshops on democracy and voter preparation).
- Make sure your church participates fully in the Day of Prayer for Free and Fair Elections (Sunday 24 April) called for by church leaders.

6. OTHER SUGGESTIONS?

- Make your church facilities available for use as voting stations.
- Make sure voter education materials are also available in Zulu.