

**REPORT ON POLITICAL DIALOGUES  
CONDUCTED BETWEEN THE PERIOD:  
FEBRUARY UNTIL MAY 2014**



**Democracy Development Program - NPC**

**DDP**

**16 May 2014**

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## **REPORT ON POLITICAL DIALOGUES CONDUCTED BETWEEN THE PERIOD: FEBRUARY UNTIL MAY 2014**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Dialogues acts as an interactive educational communication process that demands from the receiver to apply the principle of self-examination, but it also helps individuals clarify their personal thinking and values within the context of a community. Furthermore, a dialogue also aids communities to discover shared meaning, to think coherently, and to perhaps to act in a concert in ways that serves the common good of the group. Still, since dialogues don't have the predetermined aim to transmit prearranged agendas to the receiver, but merely create a neutral platform, their results in shared understanding without judgment is about building relationships, learning together and experiencing personal and community values.

Political dialogues, consequently, are dialogues aimed at creating a platform for discourse and debate between leaders, experts, academic, civil society and the general public regarding political issues. Political dialogues also provides the change to enhance citizen engagement with their elected political leaders in their localities and to enhance political tolerance. For political parties the objective of a political dialogue is to create a platform for engagement between the political society and the civil society, political dialogues provides political parties an opportunity to present their manifestos regarding the issues that were raised and to give communities an opportunity to ask questions from party representatives so that when they vote they can make informed decisions.

### **2 DIALOGUES CONDUCTED**

From the period 26 February 2014 until 23 April 2014 four political dialogues were conducted in and around the greater Durban area. Seven hundred and twenty people attended the dialogues over the period of reporting. The four dialogues held were:

- Political debate entitled *A conversation about the State of the South African Economy* – held on 26 February 2014 at Elangeni Hotel, in Durban. **154 people attended.**
- Political debate entitled *Conversation about Social Cohesion and Nation Building* – held on 12 March 2014 at Elangeni Hotel, in Durban. **210 people attended.**

- KwaMathutha dialogue entitled *The KwaMakhutha Political Parties Community Dialogue* – held on 16 April 2014 in KwaMathutha. **186 people attended.**
- The Democracy Development Program - NPC (DDP) Political debate/Freedom Day Conversation, entitled *Long walk to freedom* – held on 23 April 2014 at Elangeni Hotel, in Durban. **170 people attended.**

The last dialogue which was held on 23 April 2014 was a combination of two parallel processes, namely a political debate and the second part was a conversation that focused on the theme of the meaning of Freedom Day.



A conversation about the State of the South African Economy.



The panellists that took part in the Conversation about Social Cohesion and Nation Building.



The panellists at the KwaMakhutha Political Parties Community Dialogue, flanked by Paul Kariuki DDP's Programme Manager on the left, and on the right Sthembiso Madlala, the Project Coordinator, with a representative from DDP's partner the KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre.



Some of the panellists that took part in the Political debate/Freedom Day Conversation, entitled Long walk to freedom.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of each of the four different dialogues will be discussed separately in this section.

### **3.1 A conversation about the state of the South African economy**

#### **3.1.1 Stake holders involved**

At this debate DDP's civil society partners, the KwaZulu-Natal Democracy Election Forum, were involved. Academic institutions, community organisations, political parties, and the media, for example Ikhwezi FM, attended the debate. The political parties represented in the panel were: African National Congress (ANC), The Congress of the People (COPE), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the Democratic Alliance (DA)

#### **3.1.2 The planning process, including time spent and allocation of responsibilities**

All the DDP staff members were involved in the planning process, from the administrative staff, to the Director. Half a day planning meeting, two weeks prior to the hosting of the events, and follow-up meetings to report and for updates were held. The planning meetings are meant to allocate tasks, monitor progress made, ameliorate deviations wherever any, and to provide support to whoever felt under pressure. As such a collective decision making and ownership of the process, the event and the outcomes by all staff members was reached, which had tangible outcomes of this planning approach are the increasing sense of community, accountability and shared responsibilities. Furthermore, it was agreed that the external programme director would be Alex Mthiyane from Igagasi FM and the moderator would be Sthembiso Madlala from DDP.

Verbal and a written commitment from all political parties were obtained. This was obtained by convening the political parties to a debriefing, of about four hours, whereby issues relating to the process of the planned dialogue was conversed and agreed upon. The issues included: impending topics for the debate and the rules of engagement and behaviour. All parties signed a letter of commitment. This agreement stated that party representatives would receive the questions for the debate in advance in order to enable them to prepare responses, and that those parties would be allowed to display their party materials at the venue. This planning meeting was attended by eight political parties and they all committed themselves to an open, transparent and interactive process. After the meeting, political parties signed the commitment form and handed it over to the coordinator.

### **3.1.3 The information resource pack**

A research information pack, based on that topic, was developed in order to ensure that participants continue to engage with the topic and learn more even after the debate.

## **3.2. Conversation about social cohesion and nation building**

### **3.2.1 Stakeholders involved**

The political parties represented in the panel were: the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the Minority Front (MF), Azanian Peoples Organization (AZAPO), AGANG SA, National Freedom Party (NFP), African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), and the United Democratic Movement (UDM).

### **3.2.2 Planning process, including the challenges and allocation of key responsibilities**

One, three hour pre-planning meeting was held, with follow-up meetings by one of the DDP team member with the different political parties. That was since, to secure the panellists from political parties it was learned that they are by nature very disorganised and operate in on ad-hoc basis. Another challenge was that in many political parties you do not know whom to communicate with, because there are also internal divisions and cliques within the political parties. However comparatively speaking coordinating smaller parties for the event, was much better than the previous political forum, although there were a few parties that did not adhere to the deadlines that were set for them. The impact of the pre-planning meeting with political parties at the beginning of the year was again felt in the manner in which parties behaved themselves and engaged on issues.

A draft invite was constructed and then circulated to all team members for their input, and thereafter the final invite were sent to the parties first. A second invite was designed for the public and was more catchy and attractive to convince a quality audience to attend.

It was agreed that the external programme director would be Alex Mthiyane, from Igagasi FM, and the moderator would be Sthembiso Madlala as they produced some outstanding results and kept the debate energetic and captivated in the last debate.

Political parties this time arrived early and were briefed beforehand about the programme and what to expect. Furthermore they were also told about the ground-rules such as time

allocation and as to how the overall process would unfold. There was great improvement in terms of time management in this event, compared to the previous debate. This could be attributed to the timer that was introduced to the audience and the fact that the moderator was using it effectively but not threateningly. Also the manner in which the political parties respected time showed great maturity on their side, and this is highly commendable. Parties were also given questions in advance to respond to and forward them to the DDP so that we could distribute them during the political forum. Sadly only one political party responded to our questions, namely AZAPO.

### **3.2.3 The information resource pack**

The information resource pack proved again to be a very useful tool both for informing the debate and empowering participants with the relevant information on the topic. The information pack had the following contents: a definition of social cohesion and nation building, social cohesion dynamics, components of social cohesion, Chapter 15 of the National Development Plan on Social Cohesion, excerpts from the National Cohesion Summit held in Kliptown in 2012, copy of the speech delivered by president Zuma at the Social Cohesion Summit, Sandile Memela's article "Nelson Mandela a symbol of Social Cohesion beyond black and white, and a summary of the Bill of Responsibilities".

## **3.3 KwaMakhutha Political Parties Community Dialogue KwaMathutha Dialogue**

### **3.3.1 Stakeholders involved**

Political parties, youth, NGOs, Faith Base Organisations, Community Care Givers, Community Youth Ambassadors, Sobonakha Makhanya Tribal Authority, a traditional healer, CPF, Schools, the South African Police Service (SAPS), Costal KZN FET College attended the debate. The KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre was DDP's partner for the event.

### **3.3.2 Planning process including seating arrangement**

One pre-planning meeting of two hours were held at the DDP offices and one meeting in KwaMakhutha at the offices of the KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre for two hours long. At the meetings, the structure and questions for the dialogue was worked out, and logistics for the event was arranged. In addition, a four hour meeting was held as a follow-up.

There were eight people set per table. The purposes would be that after the panel discussion, the groups at the table would have a short discussion and wording questions that were directed towards the panel.

### **3.4 The DDP Political debate/Freedom Day Conversation, Long walk to freedom**

#### **3.4.1 Stakeholders involved**

The political parties that were represent were: the African National Congress (ANC), the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the Democratic Alliance (DA), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the National Freedom Party (NFP), and the youth sector was represented by Khanyisa Booï, the civil society sector was represented by Jenny Boyce and Bishop Mike Vorster which represented the religious sector.

#### **3.4.2 The planning process**

An in-depth and reflective planning sessions by the DDP staff of five hours long , were conducted whereby an event would be planned that reflect on the path traversed while at the same time looking ahead on what the civil and political societies could collaboratively contribute to make South Africa a better place to live. In addition, two staff members travelled to Johannesburg. One went twice and the other went once for pre-planning meetings.

The DDP staff conducted thorough collective planning sessions for every event in order to ensure the sharing of ideas and collective ownerships of the whole process including the event itself. During the planning sessions tasks are also allocated and logistics dealt with. This event needed more planning because it was combination of two parallel processes that is a political debate and the Freedom Day Conversations.

The process of developing the invites was a participatory process, whereby the draft is circulated to all members for their input. Thereafter the invite is circulated to the targeted audience.

Prior to the event the panellists and potential attendees were provided with a set of questions to respond to, besides the spontaneous questions that were asked by the moderator.

The dialogue was divided into two sessions, the first session which was the debate which was handled by Mr. Sthembiso Madlala and the second half of the event by Dr Naidu, which was a conversation about Mandela, his principles and the journey that we've travelled as a country, the transformation challenges we had and those we continue to experience as we journey towards the desired future.

#### **4.3.3 The room setting**

The key of the event was to enhance conversation; as such the room was set in such a way that it was conducive to dialogue and critical engagement. There were no tables and the chairs were grouped in fives in order to allow close interactions amongst group members. The panellist sitting was not the usual elevated stage, but they were on the same floor level as the audience, and after their presentations they were allowed to join their own groups in the audience.

## **4 FINDINGS**

The findings of each of the four different dialogues will be discussed separately in this section.

### **4.1 A conversation about the state of the South African economy**

Although parties were given questions in advance to respond to and submit to the DDP, so that copies could be made and be distributed to the audience it was only the ANC that did adhere to this task. The ANC representatives handled the debate in a professional and informative manner. Also the fact that they send their most senior MEC, Mr Mabuyakhulu, was just another sign of how seriously they view this debate. In addition, the IFP, also send their senior person, the provincial secretary, who is also the mayor of KwaHlabisa.

There were parties who prevaricated and failed to respond to the questions even when the moderator tried to pin them down. This could be attributed to either lack of preparations and lack of knowledge of their manifestos. Another finding was that some political parties underestimated the informative and high profile nature of the debate; hence they were caught off guard and exposed, if not embarrassed.

The audience were from diverse social backgrounds and different political persuasions. This diversity offered the room a high level of vibrancy and tensions. Deducing from the audiences' questions it emerged that ordinary people were losing confidence on politicians as many of them put it "You people are repeating one and the same thing...promises and promises". Whereas there was a concern also that the opposition parties were not providing anything new or alternatives except to attack the ruling party. Based on the discussion and responses it emerged that there are some very crucial and urgent issues that need to be addressed in South Africa.

This debate challenged political parties to seek new ways to solve the economic challenges facing the country. Members of the audience and civil society were taken to task to be more vigilant and more active in their engagement with the political society and were assured that they have the power and the numbers to turn things around. Ultimately the conversation was about entrenching the culture of open engagement and tolerance, thus contributing to the vibrant culture of human rights and entrenchment of democratic values and principles.

#### **4.2 Conversation about social cohesion and nation building**

Most of the parties were ill prepared for this event; some came to the event to present their own manifestos and agendas that were not at all related, to the topic. Additionally, political parties struggled to adhere to the topic and respond to the questions accordingly. One important observation that might determine the future of this country was that the ruling party thus far has no credible potential opposition, as long as opposition parties cannot even find common ground a national issue, such as nation building and social cohesion. This does not augur well for the future of democracy in South Africa.

Nevertheless, as in the case of the previous political debate some political parties were stalling and were unsuccessful to answer the questions even when the moderator tried to pin them down. This could be attributed to either lack of groundwork or lack of understanding of their manifestos. Another fact could also be there were some political parties who misjudged the informative and prominence nature of the debate, hence they were caught by surprise and exposed if not humiliated.

The audience was made up of people from diverse social backgrounds and different political persuasions. This diversity offered the room a high level of vibrancy and tensions. Deducing from the audiences questions it emerged that ordinary people were losing confidence on politicians as many of them put it “You people are repeating one and the same thing...promises and promises”. Whereas there was a concern also that the opposition parties were not providing anything new or alternatives except to attack the ruling party. Based on the discussion and responses it emerged that there are some very crucial and urgent issues that need to be addressed in South Africa.

The highlight of this political forum was our use of Twitter which our interns and staff set up prior to the event. This proved to be a very useful and innovative tool, in the sense that it shows that DPP was exploring and exploiting new avenues for facilitating participation as it got lots of people involved. Furthermore, before the end of the night there were more than 20 new followers on DDP’s Twitter and Facebook accounts. The traditional method of using cards for the audience to write their comments and questions also proved to be very useful during this event.



The use of tweeting created a new added dimension to the event

#### **4.3 KwaMakhutha Political Parties Community Dialogue KwaMathutha Dialogue**

The main issues that the community of KwaMakhutha faces is poor service delivery especially that of provision of accessible water. As much as the community appreciated what has been achieved in the past 20 years, they felt that this is a violation of their human rights that they have fought so hard for because some of their family members were victims of the apartheid regime and KwaMakhutha was deeply affected during that period.

An observation was that political parties were unqualified in terms of information, local economic developmental issues and about KwaMakhutha's political history. There was a question about expanding KwaMakhutha clinic which they did not even answer and deliberate avoiding answering. Furthermore, issues of skills development were partially looked at, though there is no one who came with alternative. Plus, although corruption has been a centre of the debate, in terms of services delivery and it look like there are no clearer remedies of the situation from the political parties.

The creation of a platform, such as this debate, where citizens could voice out their concerns and really find out what the role of KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre and DDP is and how the Political Parties to best utilize the KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre and DDP as an avenue for accessing information about government services and about the community.

#### **4.4 The DDP political debate/Freedom Day Conversation, Long walk to freedom**

What was highlighted was the corruption, and lack of services which has characterised and defined the incumbent government. In addition, there were mixed feelings and emotions regarding the freedom journey traversed. Whereas other people felt that the current government has performed poorly in the fields of education, service delivery and health, others commended the incumbent for honouring the precepts of the constitution and for recognising the chapter nine institutions and the independence of the judiciary, although others felt that the ruling party was not fully committed to this course.

This dialogue, however, did identify the challenges that South Africa was dealing with but also provided proposed solutions from the people themselves. Moreover, this dialogue allowed people the time to express their views and share their thoughts with people from different backgrounds. In fact, there were a high level of participation and engagement from the panel and the audience during the event, and politicians for a change did not try to score political points, but were focused and responded to questions in a very mature and insightful manner.

The political parties also took the event seriously by sending their senior representatives which made the debate more informative. Then again having representatives from the civil society added great value to the debate as well.

From a logistic and programme point of view, the sitting arrangement created a very conducive atmosphere for interaction and sharing. In addition, skilled and experienced anchors of the programme allowed for the seamless combination of the two processes (i.e. the debate in part one and the conversation in part two of the event) into one process was perhaps the most important highlight of this event.

Furthermore, media and social media used during the event also added value. That was that the video clips which captured the South African story in a very cogent and captivating manner and the use of Twitter made the conversation more interactive and interesting.



The second part of the event turned into a conversation, led by Dr Naidu.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations of each of the four different dialogues will be discussed separately in this section.

### **5.1 A conversation about the state of the South African Economy**

It was recommended to create a space for tweeting, to enhance participation to a wider audience. In addition, it was stated that parties were given questions in advance to respond to and submit to the DDP, so that we could make copies to be distributed to the audience.

### **5.2 Conversation about social cohesion and nation building**

There was a problem with keeping political parties from talking over their time limit and to get the representatives to actually answer questions. Moreover, there was a problem to bring in actual swing voters, rather than a fan base to the event. Plus, there was an issue

of getting equal access to social media to all parties (ACDP dominated the Twitter feed). An observation was that the political parties were more tolerant of each other's views, and the debate was even more enlightening, than the previous debate. In addition, this debate was a highly participatory, engaging and sometimes heated debate, which also exposed the political parties that they were more interested in their narrow political enclaves than the bigger vision of the country. The civil society also learned that the time was ripe for them to seize power and be the masters of their fate. The selection of the topic was brilliant because merit again challenged politicians and the audience to think out of the box and look at the bigger picture.

Based on the reflection session takes place, just a day after the event it was indicated that in future in addition to questions from the floor and cards, we should also create space for twitting, which was done exceptionally well in the next political debate.

### **5.3 KwaMakhutha Political Parties Community Dialogue KwaMathutha Dialogue**

The recommendations from the KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre, was that critical observation at the tables seating's which we feel that it was depriving youth in terms of active participation and learning. The questions from the students were answered by older people in an undermining style. A recommendation would be that in future debate there should be a mix youth and older people in the groups, in order create a space where students are able to learn and be treated with respect.

Although some thought that the time allocated was not enough, but realistically not all the issues could be addressed and there had to be a time limit.

Important stakeholders, such as the ward councillors, did not attend the dialogue which is a setback to the development of KwaMakhutha service delivery and holistic development. Also, some of the participants, such as religious leaders, whom were invited in their respective offices, came in their political t-shirts and acted as party representatives.



School children from different schools within the area attended the debate.

#### **5.4 The DDP Political debate/Freedom Day Conversation, Long walk to freedom**

The venue was overcrowded due to people who turned up without confirming, and some people came with political agendas. There were also participants who arrived late and demanded to be accommodated inside the venue. Still, it was recommended that these people should be allowed into the space, as guests and had the right to hear and be heard.

Strides have been made in the democratisation process, however a lot still needed to be done to improve the quality of the lives of ordinary South African.

### **6 CONCLUSION**

DDP's objective of creating a platform for engagement and had the opportunity to use dialogue methodology to empower citizens and held the political representatives accountable. Thereby DDP is using the dialogue method, as in the case of these four dialogues that were conducted between February until May were geared to deepen democracy through the creation of an engaged and critical civil society. For example, the Conversation about the state of South African economy, allowed for a participatory and engaging debate which challenged political parties to seek new ways to solve the economic challenges facing the country.

Besides that these platforms allowed citizens to voice their concerns and the dialogues also allowed the audience to learn more about DDP and their partners' activities and to associate DDP as a source of information. As one audience member commented: "The DDP is a great initiative that could lead to nation building".

However, these dialogues would not be possible without a strong team that have prepared well for each event and executed it in a professional manner. There should also be mentioned that we are eternally grateful to our funder Konrad Adeneur Foundation (KAS), for continuous support and for allowing us an opportunity to be innovative and explorative in our quest to have a greater and more lasting impact in the socio-political milieu of the country. The fruits of these actions can be summed up by one of the audience members that took part in the *Long walk to freedom* dialogue, “I have learnt to listen, respect and make comments based on what I heard from others”.