

The cause and solutions of the recent spate of service delivery protests came under the spotlight at a recent Mail&Guardian Critical Thinking forum run in conjunction with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Head of the Centre for Development and Enterprise, Ann Bernstein said that the service delivery protests were a result of a toxic mix of issues.

She commented that on the one hand people engaged in the struggle for democracy in order to have a vote, but that they are not necessarily getting a representative for the local community from that voting process. The importance of the vote is that it should elect a local person to represent the local community and this is not happening.

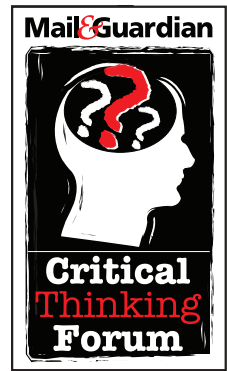
She added that part of the problem was that we have seen a failure of government to deliver what was expected by communities. This is as much a reaction to development as it is a reaction to a failure to develop, she said.

Yunus Carrim, deputy minister of co-operative governance and traditional affairs, commented that the primary reason for the service delivery protests is the failure of councillors. He added that while it is possible that what could be achieved was somewhat romanticised this is not the primary reason for the service protests. "These are more about fraud and corruption than they are about service delivery," he said.

This view was reinforced by community leader, Phanuel Manana who commented that even when there funds available to deliver services they are not properly managed. He said that the those employed to manage the municipality were not properly managing the activities of the council and that far too many people were employing friends and family members rather than finding people who wanted to deliver services to the community.

Carrim commented that part of the plan by government to address the issues causing these protests was to increase the amount of authority and responsibility that ward councils had. This would also entail taking the individual ward councillors out of these councils and giving the councils responsibility for projects. He added

# The service delivery conundrum



a few months after the ANC had been re-elected by a massive majority in national elections.

Judge Denis Davies, who was moderating the discussion asked the panel if these services delivery protests indicated a failure of democracy. While Bernstein felt that democracy had failed, this viewpoint was not echoed by either Manana or Cassim. Manana felt that the problem lay with the people that were put into positions of authority and Cassim commented that the fact that people were able to protest against issues they felt strongly about was proof that democracy was still alive and well.

He conceded that the real failure was by the institutions that had been set up by the state and that the process was already underway to rectify these problems.

Other issues that were raised were the continuing difficulties that high unemployment brought to communities, the issue of a lack of participation by local communities in official structures and the antagonistic attitude of the media towards those protesting against the lack of service delivery.

that government was looking at the possibility of paying ward committee members some form of stipend to compensate them for the work they do.

Dumisani Mthalane, national general secretary of SANCO concurred with Carrim that the ward councillor should not be

the chair of the ward committee as it restricted the potential of the committee to act as a voice for the community.

Bernstein pondered why communities did not use their votes as a mechanism for expressing their dissatisfaction, as the latest spate of service deliver protests occurred just

