How do political parties address the problems of HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence in their local government election manifests?

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SEVEN PARTY MANIFESTOS

Compiled by the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre

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**THE ISSUES**

HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence have a profound impact on South African society as a whole and on women in particular. Local government can play a preventative role in these issues through improved HIV/AIDS awareness and better community safety i.e. improving public spaces, community policing forums etc. However, for those who become victims, local government should also play a role in helping them cope with these problems and their consequences through improved access to services such as HIV/AIDS testing, counselling and treatment, as well as improved support and shelter services at municipal level to victims of gender-based violence. In addition, local government also needs to tackle the challenge of long-term housing for women once they leave shelters.

A key document which should have been consulted during the manifesto creation process is the Gender Policy Framework for Local Government. The two issues of HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence are highlighted in the Gender Policy Framework for Local Government which lists key areas for possible intervention. The framework recognises that women are particularly affected by HIV/AIDS and suggests monitoring of prevention, treatment and support at the municipal level. In terms of gender-based violence, it highlights seven key areas for action on the part of local government: prevention; Women’s Safety; public awareness campaigns; response; support; coordination; children, socially excluded vulnerable groups; and safety and security. These are all important areas where local government can play a role and should be touched on in the manifestos.

Thus, in the analysis of the party manifestos, issues such as community safety, housing for abused women and improved health care provision (especially in relation to HIV/AIDS) were looked for.

**THE MANIFESTOS**

The following party manifestos were examined to see whether they include issues relating to HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

- African National Congress (ANC)
- Democratic Alliance (DA)
- Congress of the People (COPE)
- Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)
- United Democratic Movement (UDM)
- Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO)
- National Freedom Party (NFP)
ANC:

- Establish rural youth brigades for activities in literacy, environmental protection, HIV and AIDS education, as part of the Rural Youth Service Corps Programme. The programme will engage up to one million young people over the next few years, combined with measures to expose young people to work experience through internships in private and public sectors.
- Establish primary health care teams in municipalities to work in programmes addressing social abuse, HIV and AIDS, and broaden the scope of reproductive rights through provision of contraception and sanitary towels to the indigent in municipalities.
- Establish support for safe houses and shelters in each community that will provide temporary but potentially life-saving support for abused people, particularly women and children.
- Increasing the visibility of SAPS personnel members at police station level, including focused patrolling in cities and highways.
- Mobilising communities against crime by promoting the formation of street committees and village committees as part of community efforts to combat crime, and through partnership with the private sector, community groups and municipalities.
- Extending the distribution of police stations.

DA:

- Focus on key burdens of disease including infectious diseases like HIV and TB, and lifestyle diseases like hypertension and heart disease.
- Develop a strategy with community leaders, service providers and welfare organisations to raise HIV/Aids awareness in the community, prevent infection and provide care for those already infected.
- Facilitate access to Aids Counselling and Testing Centres.
- Provide free anti-retroviral medication to HIV-positive pregnant mothers and rape survivors at municipal health care facilities.
- Ensure that condoms are freely and routinely available in municipal buildings.
- Create partnerships with local businesses and communities to establish neighbourhood watches, crime patrols and other community policing strategies, including rent-a-cop programmes with externally contracted municipal policing staff.
- Ensure municipal policing services are efficient, effective and responsive through training, training and more training to improve the quality of policing staff.
- Expand the number of municipal police in areas where crime rates are particularly high.
- Expand the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme that has been proven to bring down crime through regeneration and urban development.

COPE:

- promote the interests of children, persons with disability, youth, women and older people in every ward by ensuring that ward committees have sub committees to cater for each of the above group;
- maximise the role of community policing forums and neighbourhood watch groups;
- destroy crime dens, clean up areas and light up the streets;
• promote the emergence of an integrated and cohesive community and invest such a community with knowledge, responsibilities and resources to play a role in combating crime in its locality;
• seek support to centralise crime reporting and crime data capturing; and
• organise a monthly forum to analyse crime statistics and incidences.

**IFP:**

Nothing.

**UDM:**

• A UDM council will ensure that communities have access to testing, counselling and treatment for HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses.
• We will ensure that every council in which the UDM serves or governs will enhance their role in community safety. Your UDM councillor will advocate for local community safety organisations to be capacitated.
• A UDM council will engage the South African Police Services to bring satellite police stations closer to communities.

**AZAPO:**

• AZAPO recognizes the provision of municipal health care services as a first line of defense against diseases and illness. Therefore, AZAPO-led councils will make sure that municipal health care services are improved through the appointment of qualified environmental health workers and municipal clinics will be staffed by qualified nursing staff. Funding of municipal health care service will receive priority in AZAPO-led councils.
• AZAPO-led municipalities that can afford to will apply to set up municipality police services. Communities will be engaged in the fight against crime. Community formations and initiatives fighting crime will be given support and training.
• AZAPO-led municipalities will encourage greater cooperation between South African Police Service, Municipal Police Services and communities with the aim to prevent crime.

**NFP:**

• Ensure that the South African Police Services, the Metro police services, the community police forums and the relevant municipal organizations work together to reduce crime and implement the numerous by-laws.
Concluding remarks:

- The ANC, DA and UDM provided measures aimed at addressing with HIV/AIDS. COPE and AZAPO did not mention HIV/AIDS specifically but rather dealt with health broadly. There was no mention of health services by the NFP.
- The ANC and the DA both aim to raise public awareness around HIV/AIDS. The ANC aims to do this amongst the youth whereas the DA is targeting the public in general through work with community leaders, service providers and welfare organisations.
- The DA and the UDM aim to facilitate access to testing, counselling and treatment for HIV/AIDS.
- The DA is the only party which mentions the need for improved access to anti-retrovirals for rape survivors.
- None of the parties touch on the prevention of gender-based violence specifically but refer to crime in general.
- All parties, with the exception of the IFP, aim to improve crime fighting measures by working with the community and targeting crime-infested areas. These steps could help in preventing gender-based violence.
- The DA is the only party which has a clear violence prevention programme although not directed specifically at preventing gender-based violence.
- Importantly, the ANC mentions the need for more support to safe houses and shelters which are used predominantly by women and children affected by gender-based violence.
- Although most parties mentioned improved access to housing, this was discussed broadly and there was no mention of the specific needs of women who exit shelters.

Overall, these manifestos offer little that promotes gender equality or addresses problems disproportionately affecting women. When this silence is coupled with limited female political representivity, it bodes poorly for improving the lives of women at local government level.