



mdb
municipal demarcation board

SEMINAR REPORT:

**Advancing Local Democracy and Promoting Democratic and
Accountable Government: The need for Inclusive Ward
Delimitation**

14 March 2019

HSRC Office, Pretoria



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Objectives of the seminar	1
1.2 Problem Statement	2
2. SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS	2
3. DISCUSSION	3
4. REFLECTIONS (KEY EMERGING ISSUES FROM DISCUSSIONS)	7
5. SEMINAR OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MDB	8

1. BACKGROUND

The report details the outcomes from the seminar conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in partnership with the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB).

The seminar took place at the Human Sciences Research Council's Office, Pretoria on 05 March 2018. "*Advancing Local Democracy/Promoting Democratic and Accountable Government*" was the seminar theme around which all the key issues deliberated upon evolved.

The discussions were embedded on the seminar topic entitled "*The need for Inclusive (total population and not just registered voters) Ward Delimitation*". Ward delimitation is a topical issue that requires constant interrogation so as to afford every citizen a voice and representation of their choice. It remains one of the most contested processes in different fields of engagements in this country since the dawn of democracy. Of concern is the fact that ward delimitation in South Africa is vital beyond satisfaction of registered voters and placement of voting stations even though they are primarily meant for electoral purposes. Ward delimitation has a partial impact on municipal service delivery and socio-economic development, which calls for an inclusive process that caters for the total population.

The seminar was attended by representatives from the Municipal Demarcation Board (9), Human Science Research Council (4), Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) (1), (1) individual from the media house, that is, Pretoria News; Centre for Emerging Researchers (1); (**Appendix A**).

1.1 Objectives of the seminar

The research seminar was utilised as a platform to obtain inputs on advancing local democracy and promoting democratic and accountable government through inclusive ward delimitation. Thus, the objectives of the seminar were:

- To critique the use of registered voters in all processes before the ward delimitation process, including determination of the formula for determining the number of councillors.
- To explore the feasibility of using total population numbers in ward delimitation processes to explore whether local socio, historical and political dynamics can be one of the factors to be considered in demarcation.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem statement for the seminar was that using registered voters for ward delimitation might be inadequate since the decisions taken affect everyone who is serviced under that particular ward. Wards were formerly meant for election purposes, which meant focusing on the registered voters, however, wards have turned out to be used for reasons beyond elections. This calls for a possible inclusion of the total population within a ward to allow for total representation.

2. SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

The seminar took place in one day, from 12h30 - 14h00 and had only one session chaired by Programme Director: Aluwani Ramagadza, Chief Operating Officer of the MDB.



Mr A Ramagadza caught in action busy chairing a seminar session

The session had two major presentations, with the first presented by Mr Paul Berkowitz the Economist, Consultant and Researcher specialising in Geospatial Data Analysis, EDGIS on “*The need for Inclusive Ward Delimitation*” – registered voters versus population census” and the second by Mr James Aphane the Head of GIS at the IEC on “*Merits and demerits of using registered voters for ward delimitation versus population census – what impacts would be if population census is used for ward delimitation as opposes to registered voters*”. The presentations were followed by plenary discussion, and concluded with questions and discussions from the participants to consolidate the key aspects of the seminar topic as outlined in the introduction. More information on the advert of the seminar can be seen from the Seminar Poster/Programme as **Appendix B**.

The seminar proceedings were opened by the Programme Director who also highlighted the significance of ward delimitation as one of the processes central to the core functions of the MDB; and this was followed by the first presentation of the seminar.

3. DISCUSSION

(i) “*The need for Inclusive Ward Delimitation*”.

The first presentation by Mr Paul Berkowitz was structured in such a way that it intended to provide answers to the following questions below:



Paul Berkowitz (on a red tie) presenting on the “the need for inclusive ward delimitation” to audience.

a) What is the difference between a ward’s population and its registered voters?

There are vast numerical differences between numbers of registered voters and the total population giving a falsified image of ward sizes. If used for service delivery and socio-economic development purposes, these numbers might cause serious problems. Segments of population that are not legible for voter registration comprise of people below the age of 18, non-South African citizens and the politically passive. The last category includes people who don’t have a formal address and people who move often. Over and above the aforementioned categories, there is an illegible cohort made up of undocumented immigrants, migrant labourers, people living in informal settlements, and other vulnerable segments of society.

b) Why argue for more inclusive ward boundaries?

The argument for more inclusive delimitations rests on one fundamental fact and two questions. The fact is that it is the government’s job to serve everyone, not just the

people who voted for it as per the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Accepting this fact precedes answering questions on:

- How to define a constituency, and
- How to account for the differences between those who are allowed to vote for a government and those who are served by that government?

In responding to the above-stated questions, the presenter stated that a constituency has to be defined as broadly as the preamble to the constitution, which stipulates that, 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it'. However, the system seems to restrict access to government services to just documented and politically active individuals. Apart from this universal concession, South Africa's democracy is one of the most inclusive and progressive in the world. This is highlighted by upholding human rights such as allowing prisoners to vote. The presenter emphasised that through the IEC, South Africa has expended considerable resources to reregister voters with more complete, more formal voting addresses.

c) How would a more inclusive demarcation process help government fulfil its role?

Central to the benefits of more inclusive demarcation process would be Service delivery and developmental needs, which can be outlined as follows:

- Better planning for basic service delivery.
- Better allocation of resources (equitable share and conditional grants).
- Provinces in particular would benefit. The largest share of Gauteng's budget goes to healthcare, where the need is acute, given the large in-migration of people to the province

It can be argued that there is growing evidence of an undercount of undocumented immigrants, and of a potential mismatch between the developmental needs of a province or municipality and the resources available to those setups. With two months to go before South Africa's 2019 national / provincial elections, the seminar presented an opportune time to discuss the links between governance and the voting systems.

d) How effective would a more inclusive delimitation be?

The efficacy of a more inclusive delimitation process is dependent on tackling the social approach to foreigners and other groups that are marginalised. Institutional approaches should not be separated from the country's social approach. Available evidence suggests that there is an undercount of undocumented immigrants in the census. This may be related to social tensions and misconceptions or census workers may be reluctant to record immigrants and/or immigrants may be reluctant to volunteer their information to government services for fear or persecution. It can also be argued that there is both a desire to be better, to put the ideals of the constitution into practice, and a harsh reality where the country is impeded by limited resources to restructure systems and processes. Refer to **Appendix C** for the full presentation.

(ii) “Merits and demerits of using registered voters for ward delimitation versus population census – what impacts would be if population census is used for ward delimitation as opposes to registered voters”

The second presentation second by Mr James Aphone gave the IEC perspective on the seminar topic. Refer to **Appendix D** for the full presentation.

IEC mandate has less to do with whether to use registered voters or all individuals within a ward. The institutional mandate is centred on the free and fairness of the election processes to fulfil the principles of democracy concept. From the IEC perspective, the use of registered voters would dramatically increase the number of seats hence the number of wards due to demographic detail per square kilometre. Land size (polygons) remain the same while the number of wards increases, this may cause about 98.51% of voters to re-register so as to be aligned to their correct wards.

Financial implications would entail a costly processes of nation-wide voter registration to keep the voters' roll up to date and this process may not have the desired outcome as voters may be upset and decide stay away. The process might also lead to political instability as parties and independents might express dissatisfaction on poor voter re-registration which may result in large disenfranchisement. Over and above, in inaccurate voters' roll may lead to litigation and loss of credibility in elections.

4. REFLECTIONS (KEY EMERGING ISSUES FROM DISCUSSIONS)



Prof B. Kanyane, HSRC (2nd from right), Mr M. Sigidi (CEO of MDB) and Dr A. Naidoo (just retired from StatsSA) amongst the delegates participating in discussion

The following were the key emerging issues from the seminar deliberations:

- A certain percentage of people elect their political leader, not necessarily the total population. This is due to the fact that the country inherited an apartheid spatial plan which is representative in nature.
- The threshold that constitutes a ward must be increased with the inclusion of the total population in ward delimitation to avoid an increase in the number of wards. In essence the formula of determining a ward will have to change.
- Provision of services is often attested to the entire municipality than the ward, for instance, services have to be rendered no matter how the population is structured.
- The GIS technology is to be used together with multi-layers of information (big data) showing population movements and densities.

- It is justifiable to argue for an inclusive process where everyone gets to participate democratically.
- The voters' role is made of a very small percentage of population and even the so called registered individuals are not guaranteed to cast their vote.
- Society fragmentation must be avoided at all costs.
- One of the questions asked was *“Can ward delimitation be de-linked from election processes, so that the total population can be rather used instead of registered voters?”* It was proposed that perhaps wards must not be seen as areas of political influence.
- Inclusivity has to be definable from a principle perspective.
- Another question that emerged was *“Does the current delimitation system allow for inclusivity and does it foster democracy?”*
- The suggestion regarding the term “ward” was that ward must be defined as a geographic space and not a group of people, then the math should be on how many individuals should be housed under a single ward. As such, the norms might have to be changed in order to redefine wards. However, land mass does not change and so are the sizes of polygons, hence what needs to be done is to determine the number of individuals in a single ward that can host them.

5. SEMINAR OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MDB

The following recommendations were made:

- The focus should not be about changing the system, but on how to achieve inclusivity in ward delimitation.
- It was recommended that discussions on the current demarcations and ward delimitation process should continue with the aim to find the relevant system to cater for the changing times and national interests.
- There is a need to identify the positives and negatives about the current ward delimitation system, but the participants should not stop looking for alternatives.
- It is also critical to bring all technical issues that would also include political status on issues about ward delimitation.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Attendance register of the participants

Appendix B: Seminar Poster/Programme

Appendix C: Presentation by Mr Paul Berkowitz “The need for inclusive ward delimitation”.

Appendix D: Presentation by Mr James Aphone “WARD DELIMITATION: Impact of using population census as opposed to registered voters”.