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1. Introduction

Municipalities in South Africa have in most cases been plunged into chaos. Service delivery is inadequate, infrastructure is decaying and a large number of municipalities, in reality, are bankrupt.

The FF Plus is participating in this election with the theme, “The future is in your hands – fight for your rights”. Every voter must realise that the future lies in his/her hands. This manifesto contains background with regards to municipal issues and problems, the causes of these problems and offers an 8-point plan to address these issues.

The following sums up the sombre situation at local government level:

- There is a shortage of officials with the necessary skills and qualifications. Nearly 42% of officials in finance departments of municipalities are not properly qualified and 13% of municipal managers do not have the necessary skills and qualifications. There are also a tremendous number of important positions which are vacant. About 19% of senior management posts in municipalities are vacant.
- There is an excessive number of positions vacant - 42 998 – in the water management directorates of municipalities. Municipalities currently suffering from water shortages, are the municipalities with the most vacant posts in this directorate.
- The shortage of financial managers at municipalities is alarming. According to the Auditor General, the financial wellbeing of 92% of municipalities is alarming and one quarter of municipalities are considered to be bankrupt. Irregular expenditure amounts to more than R14 billion and fruitless and wasteful expenditure totals R1,3 billion.
- Municipalities’ debt to Eskom in total amounts to more than R9,6 billion and debt to water boards more than

R4.3 billion. The total outstanding creditors of municipalities are R26,3 billion. Payments owed to creditors which are more than 90 days overdue, are increasing annually. This is indicative of the fact that municipalities do not have liquidity and are experiencing a total shortage of cash flows.

- There are local municipalities who regularly fail to pay the salaries of their officials. Worse still, is the fact that third-party deductions on salaries such as pension fund contributions, medical fund contributions and tax deductions are in many cases not paid to third parties. These funds are illegally used for operational activities because of a cash flow problem. Municipalities owe the SARS more than R305 million in PAYE deductions which have not been paid, and owe R343 million to pension funds.
- The state's outstanding debt to municipalities (debtors) amounts to R6,1 billion. That means that schools, hospitals and other state buildings' municipal accounts in many cases are not being paid.
- The total outstanding debt to municipalities (debtors) amounts to R108,6 billion. Of the total outstanding debt, only R22,9 billion (21%) are viewed as collectable, as nearly 80% of debts are older than 90 days. This situation continues despite the fact that municipalities annually write off millions of rand's debts as uncollectable.
- Consultants are used by the majority of municipalities as a result of the shortage of internal capacity. Billions of rand are spent on consultants while the managing and monitoring of consultants are seriously lacking, according to the Auditor General. Consultants therefore render sub-standard work, exploit municipalities and aren't held accountable.
- There are no consequences for violations of officials. Officials are fired by one municipality or another sphere of government or entity for a transgression or incompetence, only to be appointed to a senior position at another municipality. An example of this is the recently appointed municipal manager of the Vhembe district municipality who was fired from her position as chief financial officer of the Gauteng Gambling Board after she was found guilty of misconduct and severe incompetence.
- Infrastructure is not being maintained and upgraded. It leads to, amongst others, massive water losses as a result of water leakages which, according to calculations, amount to 50% of all water purchased by municipalities. Annually, these water losses cost municipalities more than R11 billion.
- There is a great shortage of engineers at local government level.

2. Core issues and causes

2.1 Financial shortages

South Africa is currently experiencing an economic crisis with an inadequate growth rate and poor credit ratings. This crisis leads to declining state revenues while the needs and therefore expenses are increasing. Municipalities' fair share of national revenues are, therefore, also declining in relation to the need for infrastructure development and service delivery.

As municipalities' own sources of revenue (tariffs and taxes) also decline and debts are not sufficiently recovered, municipalities are experiencing a serious financial crisis. A vicious cycle is established where municipalities render inadequate services and tariffs increase which leads to less development and growth of the private sector. This leads to an impoverished population and unemployment which further reduces the income of municipalities. The blame for this financial crisis cannot be placed on the global economy and global recession only. The cause is rather the long-term mismanagement, corruption, self-enrichment, waste and wrong priorities. There is a total shortage of fiscal discipline on local government level – exorbitant salaries are being paid and luxuries for mayors, municipal managers and others are the order of the day. Underspending of conditional allocations for infrastructure development had for years been the order of the day.

As a result of the enormous unemployment crisis and the overwhelming poverty in South Africa, there is intense pressure on municipalities as a result of residents who cannot pay for their water, sanitation, refuse removal and electricity supplies. Municipalities have however failed to fully update poverty registers. This resulted in many residents who had to be considered as poor in terms of their income, and who should therefore have received

free basic services, were not included in these registers. These residents were wrongly viewed as paying clients who received accounts. This led to an extremely high number of outstanding and uncollectable debtors. On the other hand, some residents were included in the register who did not qualify to be included in the register in terms of their income levels. The result of this financial situation is municipalities which cannot pay creditors, such as Eskom, cannot effectively render services and infrastructure that cannot be maintained.

In many instances, the chief financial officers and other senior financial officials were not appointed on merit and they do not have the required abilities, experience and skills. Affirmative action appointments have led to a shift in emphasis away from merit to other basis, such as skin colour, political affiliation and political factions. These appointments and cadre deployments have led to serious financial mismanagement.

The large number of irregular, fruitless, wasteful and unauthorised expenditure as a result of mismanagement largely contributes to the financial crisis. Tenders are awarded willy-nilly without value for money being received.

Municipalities see the exorbitant increase in property tax and tariffs as the solution to financial shortages.

Municipal property taxes and tariffs are annually increased at levels above inflation. It has the opposite effect as these increases lead to greater impoverishment of residents and more non-payers are created, which is to the detriment of the municipality. Small to medium enterprises close their doors as a result of the unaffordable increases which leads to unemployment and further impoverishment of the municipality as a whole.

2.2 Poor service delivery

Service delivery on local government level is collapsing. Most municipalities cannot provide sufficient services to the whole service area of the relevant municipality. Refuse removal, sanitation, water and electricity provision and correct municipal accounts are inadequate.

Municipalities' service fees are unrealistic. Towns in municipal areas are in some instances as far away as 160km from each other. The function of service delivery has been wrongly centralised. This results in government being far removed from the communities and service delivery cannot be properly undertaken.

There is also a shortage of dedicated competent municipal officials. Affirmative action appointments have led to low morale, poor dedication and incompetence.

Municipal trade unions are given too many powers to set unreasonable demands and regularly organise strikes. The regular strikes of municipal workers further contribute to poor service delivery.

2.3 Decaying infrastructure

Water shortages, potholes and sewage flowing in streets are becoming a daily occurrence in South African municipalities.

South Africa is a water scarce country currently suffering a severe drought. These natural phenomena are however not solely responsible for the water shortages.

Infrastructure, such as pipes, dams, water purification plants and water pumps which are not maintained, contributes to the core problem in this regard. An enormous amount of water is lost as a result of water leakages and faulty infrastructure. Skills pertaining to water management is absent.

As a result of financial shortages, there are little funds available for the sustainable maintenance and development of municipal roads. The available funds, are generally misappropriated due to a shortage of expertise. Roads which are built, deteriorates within a couple of years due to the lack of regular maintenance.

Tenders for infrastructure projects are awarded to companies which in many instances exploit government and provide sub-standard work. These companies' work is not monitored for value for money. In other instances, companies are not paid results in incomplete infrastructure projects.

There is a general shortage of engineers at municipal level, which leads to poor planning, monitoring and implementation of infrastructure projects. It is largely due to affirmative action that has been applied in such a way that posts are only filled when a candidate from the preferential race group applies for the position, otherwise the position is left vacant.

The current government's solution for the shortage of engineers is to import engineers from Cuba. This costs hundreds of millions of rand annually to pay salaries, accommodation, return flights to Cuba and other benefits. These engineers are however not allowed to work in South Africa and sign off on plans or installations, as their qualifications do not allow them to register with the Engineering Council of South Africa. The only reason for importing Cuban engineers, is the ANC's historical loyalty toward Cuba.

3. FF Plus Policy views and solutions

3.1 A fair dispensation for everyone

The FF Plus is committed to a fair dispensation for everyone. This applies not only to the majority, but also to minority groups. That is why the party condemns measures which institute post-apartheid discrimination against people based on their race, such as affirmative action and black economic empowerment.

The FF Plus is convinced that one of the root causes of poor service delivery is the unbridled implementation of affirmative action through which experienced managers and professional people were forced out of their positions and replaced by ANC cadres. In addition, people with limited or no capabilities to serve the public properly, as required in terms of municipal legislation, have taken control of essential and basic services which are now virtually collapsing across the country.

- Affirmative action cannot continue for ever. The FF Plus will therefore work to appoint to and keep competent and qualified officials based on their merit in their posts. The chaos at municipalities with regards to service delivery and management can only be resolved by appointing the most knowledgeable people available.

Nepotism as well as other forms of favouritism must be eradicated.

- The FF Plus demands that a moratorium is placed on affirmative action for scarce skills and where a post has been vacant for longer than 90 days.

- The tender process of municipalities must be reviewed to ensure multiparty representation on tender committees and with this bring about transparency.

- Only contractors and consultants who possess the expertise and have a proven record to do the work, will have to be appointed.

- Historical loyalties will not play a role in appointments.

- South African engineers have to be appointed, regardless of their skin colour and the importation of Cuban engineers must be stopped immediately.

- The FF Plus will oppose racial discrimination.

3.2 Local Government must be local

The FF Plus will promote a dispensation which makes sustainable and independent communities possible. Such local communities must, as building blocks of a broader community, be enabled to see to their own welfare. The principle of government as close as possible to the community itself, must be promoted. The international trend is that decisions taken and services rendered are done as close as possible to the community affected by it.

Switzerland is a good example of the success of this. Switzerland has approximately 8 million residents and a surface area of 41 285 km² which are serviced by 2740 municipal councils. South Africa, with 54 million residents and a surface area of 1 219 090 km² has 213 municipalities. The number of municipalities in South Africa has declined by 51 municipalities in the past five years.

That is why the current system of mega cities and local municipalities consisting of various towns, should be changed to bring local government back to local communities. Consequently, taxes paid from these communities should also be ploughed back into the relevant community.

It should be welcomed when communities themselves take steps to, for example, promote their own safety. This should be encouraged.

- The FF Plus will campaign for the devolution and decentralisation of power.
- The FF Plus is committed to reasonable and fair law enforcement at local level to ensure safety.

3.3 Diversity

The FF Plus sees diversity as an asset for South Africa. Diversity should therefore be acknowledged and cherished on all levels of government. This includes respect for all communities' symbols and historical names. The FF Plus's continual political struggles about the unnecessary changing of place and street names, proves this.

- The FF Plus will strive for the maintenance of homes for the aged and the development of the Afrikaner and other minority communities' cultural treasures such as museums and monuments.
- It is important that community libraries represent communities' values.
- The FF Plus increasingly focuses on providing housing for poor Afrikaners and other minorities who are being excluded by the ANC's racial program.
- The FF Plus is committed to the principle of multilingualism, as entrenched in the Constitution, and will intervene, in particular, for Afrikaans.

3.4 Fair taxes and tariffs

The payment of taxes and service fees is necessary for the maintenance of city councils. The principle of basic services for everybody, to give the poor access to services as well, is important and is acknowledged. It is however not fair to over-tax payers of service fees, who had developed a regular and conscientious rates and service payment culture, only to subsidise non-payers. The culture of non-payment must be addressed, as there are many non-payers who can afford payments.

Regarding rates and tariffs on local government level, the FF Plus is campaigning for the following:

- For the ploughing back a minimum amount of taxes into the area where the taxes had been levied. Currently taxes are not being dealt with in a systematic and properly allocated manner.
- For a uniform tax system and a uniform tariff system for the same category of consumers. This entails equal payment for equal services and thoroughly addressing the culture of non-payment in some communities. It will allow for easier implementation of the principle of free basic services for everyone, to also offer the poor access to services.
- For quality service delivery and effective government. This means, amongst others, that big salaries being paid to officials who are not capable of rendering services, must be stopped.
- Against the Property Tax Act, according to which property tax is levied on the value of the land and improvements on it, in contrast to the previous Act which merely took the value of the land into consideration. The Act has resulted in drastic increases in property taxes, to such an extent that a lot of people, of whom many are old, have lost their property. That is why the FF Plus considers this Act to be immoral and will oppose the application of the Act to its full extent in every local government. The powers of this Act must be applied limitedly so that land owners and tax payers are not punished for their property rights.

- Against the unfair taxation of agricultural land, where farmers receive minimal services from municipalities, but have to pay taxes.
- For organised town development with consideration of property values of existing residential areas. It is consequently unfair to force the market value of more expensive residential areas down with a policy of spatial development planning which plans low cost housing in established communities.
- Against unfair annual tariff and tax increases above inflation. Through this measure more non-payers are created and restricts the economic growth of municipalities.

3.5 Job creation and economic growth

Unemployment is a big problem in South Africa. High unemployment leads to an increase in urbanisation, more poor people who receive free services and complete impoverishment of municipalities.

- The FF Plus believes that no government can sustainably create employment. Government projects aimed at creating jobs, like the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) only create temporary jobs.
- Municipalities' focus should not be to create work itself, but rather to create a favourable environment for the private sector to expand and create job opportunities.
- Municipalities must create a favourable environment for economic growth through good service delivery, infrastructure development and maintenance and fair taxes and tariffs.
- Functioning municipalities will stimulate the economic well-being of communities, create job opportunities through the private sector and reduce the number of poor people.
- The FF Plus believes that free trade zones must be created by municipalities where free market principles are applied without black economic employment, affirmative action and restrictive labour legislation.

3.6 Moral values

The FF Plus will promote moral values in accordance with the Christian value system.

3.7 Cooperation with other parties and multiparty governments

The FF Plus will after the election, without sacrificing its independent identity or principles, cooperate with other parties and organisations if the party is convinced that such cooperation will promote the objectives of the community, the FF Plus and this manifesto, particularly to remove the ANC's control of municipal governments.

Research and polls indicate that in many municipalities in the forthcoming election there will not be a single party that will secure 51% of the vote. This will increasingly be the case in future municipal elections.

Multiparty or coalition governments make it possible for many smaller parties to play an important role in certain metro municipalities and councils after the election. Parties such as the DA and the FF Plus will need each other after this election in all of these coalitions to govern together with other opposition parties and in so doing, defeat the ANC and keep the EFF out. From there our slogan: "Together we are stronger".

The advantage of multiparty governments is that it minimalizes abuse of power and represents the values and the thinking of the larger community, including that of minority groups.

- The FF Plus will participate in a coalition government to oppose the current government policies and legislation that lead to the decline of municipalities.
- The FF Plus will fight within a coalition government for the rights of its voters and will oppose racial discrimination and unfair affirmative action appointments.

3.8 Opposition and watchdog role

Where the FF Plus obtains opposition representation in municipal councils, the party will operate as follows to carefully fulfil its opposition and watchdog role:

- FF Plus candidates, as part of the bigger FF Plus team, have the necessary skills to utilise their expertise and experience where they are elected as councillors to the advantage of the municipality and community.
- FF Plus councillors will play an important role in oversight committees of municipal councils and will apply collective expertise in a dynamic manner to ensure effective oversight and through this bring about more accountable management of municipalities.
- FF Plus councillors will offer effective opposition to irregularities, corruption, maladministration and incorrect priorities.
- Corruption, poor service delivery, nepotism, incompetence and maladministration will be revealed by the FF Plus and complaints will be laid with oversight institutions such as the Public Protector, the SAPS and the Hawks, to force municipalities to be accountable.
- FF Plus councillors will serve as facilitators to resolve voter's municipal problems.
- FF Plus councillors will work closely with civic organisations, neighbourhood watches, chambers of commerce and others to serve the community effectively.

4. Summary of the 8-point plan

The FF Plus's concrete 8-point plan for the improvement of municipal management and service delivery can be summarised as follows:

1. Stop the appointment of officials who are not appointed on merit and appoint the best person for the job – regardless of skin colour, stop racial discrimination and focus on a better future for everyone. Place an immediate moratorium on affirmative action with regards to scarce skills and positions which have been vacant for more than 90 days.
2. Decentralise local governments and devolve power as close as possible to the community through sub-councils and smaller municipalities.
3. Cherish and respect diversity and stop unnecessary changing of place and street names. Promote multilingualism in council meetings.
4. Levy fair taxes and tariffs and stop unfair increases.
5. Create a favourable environment for the private sector to stimulate economic growth and create sustainable job opportunities – in particular by establishing free trade zones.
6. Promote good moral values.
7. Act as the balance of power within a multiparty government and fight for the rights of FF Plus voters within such governments.
8. Act as effective watchdog with regards to maladministration, corruption, incompetence, etc. and fulfil a dynamic structured opposition role.

Fight for your rights – Vote FF Plus!