



INDEPENDENT MEDIATION SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA

ELECTIONS AND BALLOTING PROJECT:

Exercising our democratic right



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IMSSA's Elections and Balloting Project offers a much needed social service by:-

- **Conducting elections and ballots**
- **Voter education**
- **Electoral staff training**
- **Civic education**

in a society where:

the majority of our citizens were disenfranchised until recently; and

illiteracy levels are high and a working knowledge of democracy is low.



Background

The **Elections and Balloting Project**, launched in 1985, pioneered democratic balloting and election processes in South Africa.

Beginning on the shop floor and going on to conduct one of the biggest voter education campaigns for the historic 1994 national elections, the Project has developed a unique body of knowledge and expertise about the process of balloting and elections in South Africa.

IMSSA accredited trainers ran a voter education programme for some 400 000 voters in the lead up to the 1994 national elections. Since its inception, the Project has conducted over 260 elections and ballots.

Balloteers and Trainers

The **Elections and Balloting Project** has a multi-lingual panel of trained **balloteers**, **electoral staff** and **trainers**, some of them drawn from the ranks of IMSSA's professionally accredited mediators.

A panel of **300 accredited trainers** conduct:

- voter education;
- civic education programmes;
- electoral staff training.

Balloteers, electoral staff and trainers are governed by the provisions of the **Election and Balloting Project's professional code of conduct**.



They are available to train **anywhere in the Republic of South Africa.**

The balloteers, electoral staff and trainers are committed to providing participants a positive experience of elections and balloting, so that these are seen to be free, fair and independent mechanisms through which to **exercise a democratic choice.**

Services

On the shop floor

Verification Exercises

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts auditing exercises to verify union membership in companies at the request of the unions and companies. This is a standard procedure when unions, claiming majority membership, seek recognition from employers.

Trade Union Elections

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts elections of trade union office bearers, including elections for shop stewards at mines, factories and plants.

Pension and Provident Fund Board Elections

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts ballots at the request of employers and unions to provide workers the opportunity to elect representatives to the Boards of Pension and Provident Funds.



Representation Ballots

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts ballots in circumstances where more than one union contests for union membership to determine the representivity of each union. This service is provided at the request of unions and employers.

Strike Ballots

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts strike ballots at plant, enterprise and industry level.

Developing Capacity

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts training workshops for its own panel. Workshops are also conducted for trade unionists to develop their capacity to organise elections and to educate their constituencies on electoral procedures.

In the community

Community Elections and Referenda

The **Elections and Balloting Project** conducts elections for the executive committees of various community associations throughout the country. It has also conducted referenda in communities several thousand strong to test opinions on issues of community concern.

Developing Capacity

The **Elections and Balloting Project** offers a training course to train electoral staff to conduct local, provincial and national elections.

A further training course has been designed to familiarise communities with electoral procedure.



Voter Education

The **Elections and Balloting Project** has extensive experience in voter education. The Project ran a massive voter education training programme, both direct voter education and in-house training, between June 1993 and April 1994. The programme reached some 400 000 people directly, and through those trained as trainers, reached over five million more.

The emphasis on quality was maintained throughout, despite the enormous scale of the operation. This experience has now been used to develop further mass-based training programmes such as the **Local Government Voter Education Programme** and the **Civic Education Programme**.

Local Government Voter Education Training

A local government voter education training programme is offered to companies, trade unions and communities to familiarise people with the processes and logistics of the elections to be held in October 1995.

The two hour course includes:

- why it is important to vote in the elections;
- why these elections are different from the national elections;
- what process will be used in the local government elections;
- how many ballot forms there will be and what they represent.



The **Elections and Balloting Project** will again employ the train the trainer strategy and the direct voter education training to the electorate.

The **Elections and Balloting Project** will facilitate workshops in companies, trade unions and communities. Existing in-house trainers will be provided with local government content training.

Civic Education Programme

The programme is offered either as **seven one-hour modules** which cover the following topics:

- What is democracy (two parts);
- The Bill of Rights;
- Elections;
- Powers and structures of government;
- Protecting democracy (parts one and two);

or

a **single once-off programme** of one and a half days

Civil society can be empowered through our civic education programme to make fundamental changes in their view of themselves and of what society can provide. This can be obtained by access to information about how society functions and how we as civil society can participate in building a new democratic dispensation.



This exciting new programme is seen as an on-going contribution to building a democratic culture in South Africa.

Civic education has a major role to play in creating the conditions for the RDP to succeed.

The programme is offered to companies, trade unions, communities and community groups, schools, political organisations, government departments and NGO's.

The **Elections and Balloting Project's** panel of expert trainers are able to conduct training in any of the seven official languages. Teaching is based on widely acclaimed adult education principles which emphasise participation by all trainees.

Colourful posters, the Bill of Rights read onto audio tape and card games are used to supplement easy learning, especially for illiterate or functionally literate members of our society.

Gender issues are included in all of the course modules.

If you wish to design a course consisting of some of the modules mentioned above please call the Project and one of our consultants will be happy to assist you.



Clients

The services of the Elections and Balloting Project have been used by:

- Major trade unions;
- Major companies;
- Civic organisations;
- Non-governmental organisations;
- Community-based organisations;
- A range of political parties;
- The Independent Electoral Commission.

Resources

- A multi-lingual panel of balloteers, educational trainers and electoral staff.
- Innovative educational technology.



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