

ORGANISE OUR COMMUNITIES FOR STRUGGLE!!

Time to build a country-wide socialist civic federation

The number of service delivery protests waged by working class communities has never been higher. Every year sees record numbers. Communities everywhere are organising themselves. Independent civics, crisis committees and community forums are mushrooming. These often ad-hoc structures are taking matters into their own hands because the political parties represented at municipal and local level have failed to address the burning questions of poverty, service delivery and unemployment.

First and foremost this shows a complete lack of confidence in ANC administrations, and the community movements linked to them, such as SANCO. Reflecting this, many independent community structures overcame enormous financial and bureaucratic hurdles to contest the 2016 local government elections under their own banner. This also confirms that none of the other political parties on offer have won the confidence of communities either. Whilst some of these initiatives will have originated with opportunists, overwhelmingly it shows that communities recognise the struggle for service delivery and community development as political.

But most of these structures and initiatives remain isolated. Service delivery protests are uncoordinated. Even electorally many structures directly competed with each for votes. There is no national leadership to what is already a mass movement. It is clear that there is enormous potential to fight for improvements in living standards if the determination and commitment to struggle that already exists in communities is given discipline and organisation.

To take forward the struggle of our communities we are calling for all genuine structures and activists in our communities to agree to the goal of creating a country-wide socialist civic federation. Through such a country-wide structure communities can raise a united programme of demands. A country-wide civic movement could lead national campaigns for house building and job creation. It could coordinate service delivery protests turning them into a mighty national movement fighting for the development of our communities. Instead of isolated local protests that government can easily ignore, hundreds of communities can protest on the same day, on the same issue, making the same demands. Where communities need to struggle on a specific local issue, the entire federation can be mobilised in support.

Especially in the early stages of the campaign to create a new movement it will be important to emphasise the federal nature of the initiative. Communities are rightly proud of the structures they have created. Independence and the ability to run their own affairs democratically will correctly be guarded fiercely. Where communities are already organised, their structures should participate in the initiative to build a new federation. Neighbouring community structures should begin to establish local socialist civic federations which can in turn begin to link-up at municipal, provincial and eventually national level.

The following principles should form the basis of political agreement between community structures.

- Build democratic, accountable mass community organisations in every community
- For accountability and complete transparency in our community organisations. Leaders to be accountable and recallable. Mass community meetings to decide on all major issues
- Link-up all community organisations in a country-wide socialist civic federation beginning at local, municipal and provincial level
- Organise disciplined community struggles and begin to coordinate those struggles
- Build up to a community general strike and national service delivery day of action including a national march, reaching out to other sections of the working class for support – the trade unions, the youth etc.
- Nothing for communities, without communities. Scrutinise the work of local councillors and local councils. Delegates from community structures to observe all council meetings and report back; organise lobbies and protests outside meetings where this is refused
- Oppose tenders, outsourcing and privatisation in public works; demand that councils open the books on all tenders to inspections by representative of community structures.
- Organise mass electoral challenges to corrupt and ineffective councillors

Ekurhuleni: Community organises

Residents of the informal settlement in Tsietsi, in the south of Palmridge in Ekurhuleni have organised themselves into the Palmridge Community Forum (Palcof) and have been struggling for the municipality to provide housing, water and sanitation. WASP members participate in the leadership of Palcof.

As part of the struggle for service delivery, the community decided to

register Palcof with the Independent Electoral Commission and contest the 3 August local government elections. WASP mobilised to assist with campaigning.

Although they did not win a seat the community is determined to build Palcof and continue the struggle, linking up with other community structures.

