

Dilapidated municipalities the fruit of government's greed and corruption

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"What we plant in the soil of contemplation, we shall reap in the harvest of action." These words by German Theologian, Meister Eckhart, could not have been more applicable on the current state of municipalities.

Since the dawn of democracy 26 years ago, we are finally reaping the harvest of the ANC Government's seeds of corruption that was planted in the soil of greed and dysfunction.

Almost every municipality in this country is on its knees, failing in its legislative and administrative capacity, all due to nepotism, cadre deployment and an utter disregard for the laws of this land.

Delivering services is not part of their terms of reference but strategic well-orchestrated plans to loot municipalities are the business of the day. Slowly but surely, they emptied the vaults to an extent where pre-paid electricity resulted in Eskom debt escalating to billions of Rand, shortages of water, collapsing sanitation services and the non-existence of refuse removal became the norm of service delivery.

This dilapidated state of municipalities allows for only one conclusion: for 26 years, the Provincial and National Departments of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Treasury have abandoned their jobs and responsibilities because they allowed politics to blind their oversight role.

This failure to ensure that municipalities adhere to the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and other regulations that promote good financial practices, contributed to the current state of financial distress of most municipalities.

What baffles all logical reasoning is the fact that the symptoms of financially diseased municipalities were plain to see. The media patiently carried the visible decay and destruction of infrastructure, the financial mismanagement of councils and the consecutive poor audit outcomes of an anticipated collapse for all these years.

Despite all evidence, Provincial and National Governments did not comply to their Constitutional Section 154 mandates of oversight. Instead, they created an environment nurturing unaccountability without consequences and within this environment allowed fraud and corrupt administrations to develop. Even the Constitutional preventive measures of Section 139(1)(b) were misused to settle political scores instead of governing towards respectfully upholding the Constitution and the Laws in compliance with their mandates.

The proposed solution to place these municipalities under Section 139(5) of the Constitution, which requires the Provincial Governments to impose a recovery plan to secure the municipalities' ability to meet their obligations of service delivery to communities, but can also lead to dissolution, is nothing other than a strategy to appease a certain faction of the ANC.

The DA is of the view that, if several Section 139(1)(b) and (c) in some instances, brought about a further institutional regression instead of turning around the poor financial state of municipalities, a similar intervention under a difference Act, will not suffice.

The ANC created the chaos of mismanagement and unaccountability without consequences which gave all respective Ministers, Premiers, MECs, HODs, Mayors, Speakers, Municipal Managers and Chief Financial Officers free rein. Without enforcing discipline, controls and action required to develop municipalities into financially sound entities, a total failure to serve communities is the inevitable result.

What is the way forward then? All these municipalities are bankrupt, and cities, towns, townships, and villages are destroyed to a level of devastation: No basic essential services can be delivered. Their obligation to uphold the Constitution, does not exist.

Rather than recycling the same methods that never produced improved governance in municipalities, root causes should be identified and addressed with the necessary discipline and unbending compliance to the MFMA.

We have perfect legislation. In the chaos of collapse, the NCOP's inherent role as a House of Parliament to protect the integrity of the 3 spheres of government and effective government now has to intensify their focus on the reasons of mismanagement and collapse by addressing the needs and challenges of collapsing municipalities finding solutions to re-instate accountability ensuring discipline and controls to ensure implementation of government objectives.

The NCOP cannot just cover ground in their oversights. We must focus and evidently contribute to the quality of lives and livelihoods of South Africans. Because as long as we sow the wind, we will continue to harvest whirlwinds of disaster.