

Ward delimitation in progress

IN 2004 THE MUNICIPAL DEMARCATION BOARD (the Board) began to re-delimit the ward boundaries that were used for the local government elections of December 2000. This is being done to prepare for the 2005/06 general local government election.

In terms of the current local government legislation and the Constitution, the Board must, after consultation with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and for each general local government elections, re-delimit wards for all metropolitan and local municipalities that must have wards. Local municipalities with fewer than seven councillors have no wards.

Background

Some of the factors that have necessitated the need to change the ward boundaries that have been used since December 2000 are as follows:

- the number of councillors has increased in a number of provinces, from 3 754 in 2000 to 3 875 in 2004;
- additional voters have been registered in the various wards; and
- during the past four years some voters have moved from one ward to another.

key point

- **The ward delimitation process remains very interactive and requires participation by, and co-operation from, all stakeholders.**

To ensure that each ward in a municipality has approximately the same number of registered voters (with an allowed deviation of up to 15% between wards), it has therefore become necessary to re-delimit ward boundaries for each general local government election.

Phases, timeframes and process

The ward delimitation process was scheduled to take place in four broad phases (see Table 1).

Table 1: Timeframe and process

Phases	Timeframe	Process
Phase 1	20 Feb 2004	Finalise outer boundaries of municipalities for the division of the voters' roll into municipal segments – Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB)/IEC
	20 Feb 2004	Divide the national common voters roll into municipal segments – IEC
	22 April 2004	Publish formula for the number of councillors – National Minister for Provincial and Local Government
	May-Oct 2004	Publish number of councillors – Provincial MECs for local government
Phase 2	June - Dec 2004	Public consultation process including public hearings – MDB
Phase 3	Jan – Apr 2005	Gazette wards for objections, finalise ward boundaries and hand over to IEC for electoral process – MDB
Phase 4	Apr – Dec 2005	Electoral process – IEC

The first two phases were concluded successfully during 2004, despite major delays caused by the national and provincial elections, and the publication of the number of councillors.

The highlight of the second phase was a series of public hearings around the country, engaging all stakeholders on the draft ward boundaries and obtaining valuable inputs from them.

The Board also gained substantial insight into various issues that are of concern to communities and these have subsequently been fully communicated to the relevant authorities for further attention. Some of the critical questions that emerged from the public hearings include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Should voting districts continue to be used as building blocks for delimiting wards?
- Should the review of ward boundaries not be a continuous process to satisfy changing local dynamics?
- Does the existing legal framework enhance transformation and the stabilisation of municipalities?
- Should the number of councillors/wards not be fixed in line with Parliament and provincial legislatures?

During this phase the Board has tried to ensure that:

- ward boundaries are contiguous;
- existing ward boundaries are retained as far as possible;
- communities are able to identify ward boundaries on the ground using roads, fences, rivers etc; and
- obvious groupings of villages, suburbs and traditional areas are not split.

The third phase is to be finalised between January and April 2005 (see Table 2).

Conclusion

The ward delimitation process remains very interactive and requires participation by, and co-operation from, all stakeholders. In this regard, the Board continues to interact closely with stakeholders such as the IEC, the Department of Provincial and Local Government, the provincial departments of local government, councillors and the general public.

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