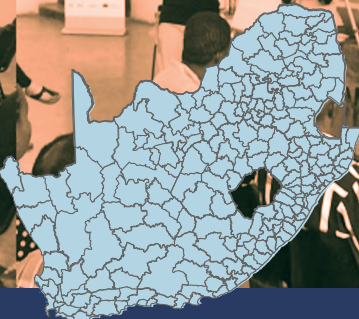


Your voice. Your community. Your power.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAMPHLET SERIES



Ward Committees



This pamphlet provides information on local government in South Africa. Municipalities are very important and provide the services that allow us to live dignified and healthy lives.



Ward committees are created as a space for the people to govern in municipalities. Ward committees should be aware of the issues, plans and organised groups in the community and encourage participation in matters affecting the ward. **They are an important bridge for councillors to have access to communities, and for communities to be able to voice their concerns or recommendations on a regular basis and receive feedback on issues.** Ward committees should stand for the interests of the community and are not guided by any political party.

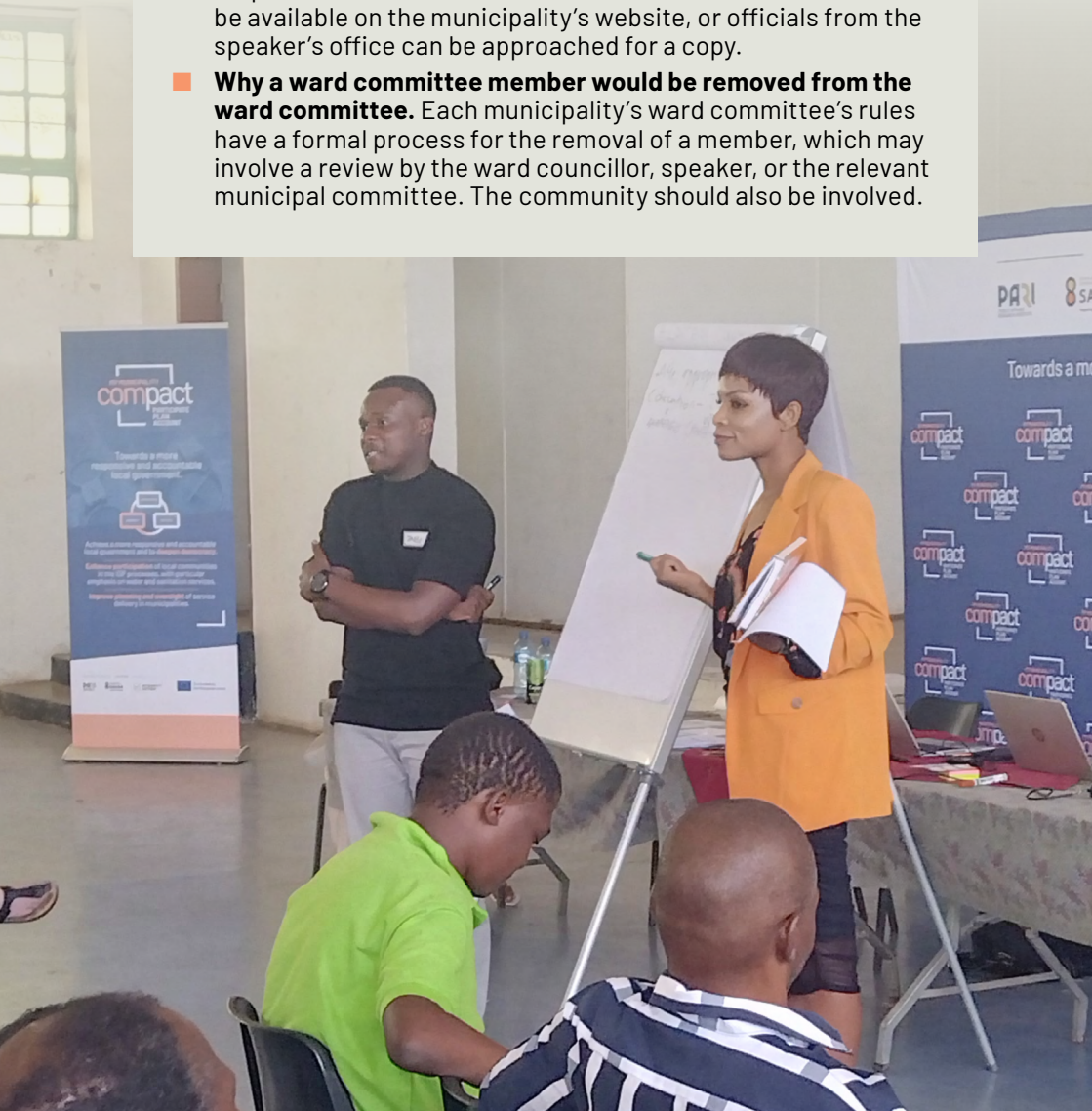
How ward committees work

Some common features of ward committees across municipalities are:

- The ward committee should be made up of **up to 10 members** who serve as volunteers to advise the ward councillor.
- Members may represent **certain sectors and/or different geographical areas** within the ward.
- The **ward councillor serves as the chair of the ward committee** and must call regular meetings.
- Ward committees represent **different community interests**; they help gather input and monitor progress on ward priorities within the municipality.
- Ward committees are the **cornerstone of public participation** in municipalities, especially around the integrated development plan (IDP) process.
- Ward committee members are **reimbursed for 'out of pocket' expenses** (stipend) such as travel and airtime/data costs.
- The **council has the power to dismiss a ward committee** if it performs poorly. The community should be consulted if this action is to be taken.
- The **speaker must ensure that ward committees perform their roles** effectively.

Each municipal council has the power to decide the following:

- **How ward committee members are elected.** The council can choose if ward committee members are elected by a secret ballot (where the voter's vote is private) or by raising of hands. The rules made by council must ensure that members include women and disadvantaged groups.
- **How ward committees should work.** For example, how many times they should meet. Some municipal councils have a Ward Committee Policy and rules that state the ward councillor's responsibilities as chair of the ward committee. These should be available on the municipality's website, or officials from the speaker's office can be approached for a copy.
- **Why a ward committee member would be removed from the ward committee.** Each municipality's ward committee's rules have a formal process for the removal of a member, which may involve a review by the ward councillor, speaker, or the relevant municipal committee. The community should also be involved.



Supporting ward committees

Ward councillors and the speaker's office should encourage and support ward committees through:

- **Tools and resources:** Ward committees need support to do their jobs well. This includes ensuring that they have 'tools of the trade' needed to work.
- **Training and capacity-building:** Ward committee members should have continuous training and capacity-building to improve their knowledge and skills. Induction training for ward committee members at the beginning of their term is very important, as well as refresher courses throughout the five years.
- **Reporting:** Ward councillors and the speaker's office should ensure that the monthly ward committee reports are acted on in the municipality and that the communities' issues are addressed. Ward committee reports should be a standard item on the agenda of committee and council meetings. This should be in the performance contract of the municipal manager.
- **Meetings:** Ward councillors must hold regular ward committee meetings, at least once a month (open for the public to attend). There should also be regular ward public meetings to report on municipal performance (at least once a quarter).
- **Access to information:** Councillors must ensure that ward committees have access to the information required for them to monitor and ensure the municipality delivers services to the community.
- **Monitoring projects:** Ward committee members can help in monitoring various projects that occur in their ward, and ensure communication and updates between the municipality and the community.
- **Stipends:** Adequate stipends must be paid in full and on time each month to ward committees.



Ward committee meetings should be open to the public.
Citizens should insist that ward committees discuss issues important to the community!

Checklist for functional ward committees

	YES	NO
Establishment: Ward committees have been established in all wards.		
Representation: Ward committees are representative in terms of the diversity of each ward (geographical and sector).		
Induction training: The municipality provides useful induction training for new ward committee members.		
Roles and responsibilities: Ward committees are active structures that support community-based planning and consider the needs and interests of the community. Ward plans are developed in consultation with the community and key stakeholders.		
Stipend: Ward committee members are paid their stipend in full and on time each month.		
Resourcing and support: Ward committee members are provided with the necessary resources and support to undertake their work in communities, including means of identification (for visibility in communities).		
Ward meetings: Monthly ward meetings with the ward councillor and ward committee members are held.		
Public ward meetings: Public meetings are held in wards on a regular basis (at least once a quarter), as well as street and block meetings where appropriate.		
Role of chairperson: There is a good working relationship between the ward councillor and ward committee members.		
Reporting: Monthly ward committee reports are properly processed through the speaker's office and placed on committee and council agendas for discussion and actioning.		
Training and capacity-building: The municipality provides ongoing training and capacity-building for ward committee members during their term of office (refresher training).		

WHAT TO DO WHEN WARD COMMITTEES DO NOT PERFORM

If your community has tried to engage with a ward councillor and ward committee, but there is no response, there are a few things you can do.

1. Submit a complaint or start a petition

- A complaint can be submitted to the speaker's office about the conduct of the ward committee and its members. A complaint is stronger if it shows how they haven't followed the rules, so writing down the problems could be useful.
- A petition can be filed with the municipal council asking it to take action.
- The municipality could decide from there to dismiss a ward committee member or dissolve the ward committee, based on their rules.

2. Ensure that future ward committees are more responsive

How ward committees are elected affects how they act in the future, and it is important that the municipality creates ward committee election rules that serve communities better. For example, a secret ballot could allow more freedom in choosing who people want.

3. Talk about who to nominate as a ward committee member

Communities should discuss and choose the right people in the ward who could be nominated to be ward committee members in future elections.



Unfortunately, many ward committees are dysfunctional, operate as part of the ward councillor's political party or have been 'captured' by individuals interested in self-enrichment. Some are simply ineffective and unaware of their responsibilities, requiring training and support from the municipality. Let's change this!

PLEDGE BY WARD COMMITTEE MEMBERS

All members of the ward committee must upon election sign the pledge set out below, in order to show their commitment towards the ward committee they have been elected to. This must be taken in a form of an oath by each member of a ward committee. The pledge reads as follows:

I solemnly declare:

I from ward pledge to advance and act in the best interest of Ward No.....community,..... municipality.

I confirm that I am residing within the jurisdiction of Municipality, dedicated resident and registered voter of Ward No: community.

I further declare that I have read and understand the code of conduct for ward committee members as informed by the provision of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998, the National Framework: Criteria for the Determining of Out of Pocket Expenses for Ward Committee Members, 2009 and all relevant frameworks as well as the Standing Orders of Municipality. I have carefully studied this code of conduct unimpeded and freely, and I cannot claim ignorance of it. I fully agree that I shall be bound by the Code of Conduct in the execution of my duties and functions as a loyal and disciplined member of a Ward Committee. I further acknowledge that my remuneration for out of pocket expenses (if applicable in my municipality) is subject to me fulfilling my obligations as set out above.

Signed.....at..... thisday of year.....

Witness 1:

Name:..... Sign: Date:.....

Witness 2:

Name:..... Sign: Date:.....

Municipal Council Elected Representatives

Name of Ward Councillor :

Sign:..... Date:.....

SALGA has published a Code of Conduct for Ward Committee Members. Although it is not legally binding, it sets out the principles a ward committee must follow. It also provides a pledge which ward committee members can sign.



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