

The SLIPPERY SLOPE since 1994; the DISGRACE continues



1. Development of local economies and job creation

Since the advent of democracy, the country's unemployment rate has been on the steady increase; with it reaching almost 35% in August 2021. Those discouraged from seeking work has increased 1.2 percentage points to 44.4%. This paints a dire picture.

The ruling party's annual promises on job creation have been a damp squib. In fact, their much-vaunted interventions have had exactly the opposite effect as our economy sheds jobs quicker than they can create them.

The United Democratic Movement (UDM) believes the power to change the status quo lies within voters' hands.

By voting in this local government election, voters can affect change in our municipalities as this is the level of government closest to the people and the impacts are directly felt on their daily lives, and their dignity and prosperity.

1.1. Entrepreneurship, SMMEs and creating environments for commerce and business

In any municipality governed by the UDM, we shall create a climate that is conducive for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) to flourish. The red tape that hinders the stimulation of local economies, especially entrepreneurship, will be cut. Entrepreneurs that provide services in UDM-controlled municipalities will be paid within thirty days of the submission of their invoices.

UDM councillors will remain true representatives and servants of the people. They will ensure that all government departments work coherently to promote equity in the growth of all economic sectors in the municipality.

In particular, UDM councillors will endeavour to involve those groups most excluded from economic activity, i.e., our women, youth and people living with disabilities.

1.2. Boosting smaller municipalities' economies

As part of the UDM's suite of solutions, the party pledges to rehabilitate the industries that had been shut down in small towns, thus creating job opportunities closer to home. This initiative will revitalise many local economies and combat the exodus of people to the cities.

1.3. Rural development

UDM councils will prioritise the development of rural areas by allocating a sufficient budget; especially taking into consideration that their needs vastly differ from urban areas.

UDM councils will in rural communities inculcate a culture of agri-activities to mitigate the effects of food insecurity by providing the necessary equipment, such as implements, fertiliser, seed, etc. They will also establish markets for producers to sell their products and produce.

2. Clean, effective and ethical governance, and accountability

2.1. Changing institutional culture and the separation of power

UDM councils will promote clean and ethical governance in carrying out their mandates to bring INTEGRITY, DIGNITY and PROSPERITY to their work and concomitantly, to society.

The separation of power will be clearly defined; officials will do their work without interference and councillors will solely focus on oversight.

Municipal officials and employees will be appointed based on merit, as opposed to by cadre deployment and/or nepotism, or by virtue of party membership.

All UDM councils will build inhouse capacity within municipalities, thus in-sourcing as many services as possible to eradicate prevalent tender corruption and to stop the overreliance on exorbitantly expensive consultants.

2.2. Councillors' interaction with, and accountability to, the people

The UDM believes in a consultative approach and that community involvement is key to local development and local job creation. UDM councils will never impose or force any projects upon the communities they serve.

Our councillors will therefore ensure that communities have opportunities to give input on the developments needed in their areas. Contrary to what is currently happening, community interaction in the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) will not be mere talk shows under UDM-administrations. prioritisation. All stakeholders will on a regular basis be given feedback on developments on projects taking place in their midst.

2.3. Strict adherence to the Municipal Finance Management Act

The UDM will ensure that the Municipal Finance Management Act is strictly adhered to, especially where irregular and fruitless expenditure and supply chain management are concerned. It is imperative that the collected rates and taxes are used for the benefit of, and ploughed back into, the communities that pay them.

UDM councils will ensure that budgets are indeed spent according to plans as approved by councils and will closely monitor progress so that any deviations are caught in time and that interventions can be made timeously.

3. Health services and hygiene

The UDM is aware that the primary health care within the borders of our municipalities leaves much to be desired.

Clinics are poorly stocked with medication; they are short-staffed and do not have the required medical equipment. The UDM will make it a priority to rectify this situation.

Also, clinics' hours of operation do not favour patients who quite often need assistance after hours and who must travel long distances to reach medical facilities. The UDM will therefore canvass that clinics stay open longer and where there are no nearby state hospitals, and where feasible, that clinics should operate a 24-hour day.

UDM councils will also ensure that our people have access to testing, treatment, vaccination and counselling for all chronic illnesses and conditions.

4. Essential services, rates and billing

Where the UDM governs there will be no discrimination against certain communities, or favouring of others, because of perceived political affiliations as is currently the case. People, irrespective of their background or beliefs, will be treated equally and given the necessary opportunities to live in dignity and to prosper.

4.1. Water and sanitation

Since access to water and sanitation are constitutional rights for every citizen, UDM councils will make it a point that all our people have access to clean, drinkable running water. In particular, and as a core service, community centres such as schools and clinics shall have access to these essential services.

4.2. Electricity

The governing party's continuous failure to provide sustained electricity has resulted in enormous problems for our national and local economies, as well as our people's households.

UDM councils will promote reliable access to power by allowing independent electricity providers to supply services to municipalities thus circumventing Eskom's flawed monopoly. The UDM believes healthy competition will bring about better performance from all electricity suppliers and will drive down prices.

4.3. Appropriate valuation of municipal property rates

UDM councils will promote fair valuation of properties to make it affordable for a greater section of the population to become property owners.

Not only will this have a positive effect on our people's dignity, it can also afford them the opportunity to use their properties to secure collateral to start their own small enterprises.

4.4. Fair and accurate billing for services

UDM councils will commit to fair, accurate and timeous billing for services rendered. The running water pipe systems and taps will be properly maintained and speedily fixed to avert the loss of precious water through breaks and leakages and to ensure an uninterrupted water supply.

4.5. Basic services for the elderly and the poor

UDM councils will ensure that the elderly and poorest of the poor at least receive a basic minimum of services without being charged. UDM councils will scrap any Apartheid-era arrears that serve as a justification for the culture of non-payment.

5. Access to proper housing

The UDM believes that having shelter brings dignity to our people and we shall initiate housing projects with the national and provincial governments and identifying land for housing developments.

We will ensure that such built-projects are of good quality and are able to stand the test of time. Poorly built houses that pose a danger to occupants will necessarily have to be re-built. We will improve the standard of living of informal settlers by providing essential services with our eye firmly on finding long-term housing solutions. UDM councils also commit to make land available, with serviced sites, for those who can build houses for themselves.

6. Maintenance of infrastructure and expansion

UDM councils will repair, build, and maintain infrastructure, such as government-owned buildings and other immovable and movable properties. In addition, we will repair and maintain existing municipal road networks, as part of providing economic stimulus, and also expand when and where required as advised by proper town planners and qualified engineers.

7. Safety and security

The UDM realises that the municipalities have a duty to keep you safe and secure. We will achieve this by agitating for local safety and security agencies to be properly capacitated and be brought closer to the people and cultivating healthy relationships between the police, community policing forums and communities to prevent vigilantism. We shall pressurise the South African Police Services and metro police services to place greater emphasis on combatting gender-based violence and femicide.

We will agitate to ensure that police stations are well-staffed and equipped, with the necessary tools to protect and serve the community at any time of day and having police visibility stepped up through patrolling.

In municipalities where the UDM governs, parks will have dedicated security personnel throughout the day and will be well-lit at night as part of a crime prevention strategy.

8. Living in a clean South Africa

UDM councils will ensure our communal areas are always kept clean as part of hygiene, beautification, and green living initiatives. We will conduct awareness campaigns and form partnerships with communities to change mindsets around littering and suitable garbage disposal.

The collection of refuse and rubble will be done on a regular basis and bylaws will be properly enforced. The sewerage and stormwater drainage systems will be properly maintained to avert floods during rainy seasons. Vacant municipal sites, wetlands and streams will have dedicated teams tasked to clean them and remove alien vegetation.

UDM councils commit to providing recycle centres for informal recyclable material collectors to assist in their activities and to prevent unregulated, pop-up recycle sites.

9. Community involvement in local government

9.1. Abolishing the ward-committee system

The current ward committee system is an unmitigated disaster as these committees have become politicised and have lost their primary focus of tackling and solving community problems.

UDM councils will promote the institution of Sustainable Development Councils that shall be representative of stakeholders from all walks of life and persuasions.

9.2. Meaningful role of traditional leadership and maintaining relationships

The UDM believes that traditional leaders must also be stakeholders in community development and should be given the opportunity to play a meaningful role in projects earmarked for areas that fall within their sway.