

NEWS JOURNAL

MAY 2024



LATEST NEWS AND PROJECT WORK FROM OUR PARTNER COMMUNITIES

OVERVIEW



As we celebrate our 40th anniversary in 2025, it's remarkable to reflect on how Planact has evolved over the years. While our early days were centred on the noble ideals of 'freedom and liberation', our current focus has also includes nurturing and enhancing the urban spatial economy.

This transition signifies our commitment to adapt and respond to the changing needs and dynamics of our society. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our journey of urban development, innovation, and inclusive growth, guided by our core values of sustainability, equity, and community empowerment. Cheers to 40 years of meaningful impact, and to many more years of positive change ahead!

In this edition, we showcase impactful projects that are making a difference in people's lives. The social employment fund project has successfully provided jobs to 1000 individuals within their communities, demonstrating its positive influence.

Additionally, our Asivikelane project celebrated its fourth anniversary in March 2024. The campaign has evolved to revolve around multi-stakeholder platforms known as HUBs, concentrating on addressing specific service delivery challenges in each municipality.

PLANACT ACCREDITED TO OBSERVE NATIONAL ELECTIONS



Above: File picture taken during the local government elections in 2021.

On 29 May 2024, South Africa will elect a new National Assembly and new provincial legislatures for each of the country's nine provinces.

The resilience of South Africa's multilevel government system will be tested as the result of this election will also affect intergovernmental relations at the local government level.

Voting serves to support the democratic process and reflect the will of the people, but is not a guarantee of good governance.

Regular elections are one of the important pillars of South Africa's democracy. The upcoming elections thus align with Planact's implementation of systems change interventions that prioritise citizens as pivotal contributors to fortifying and enhancing South Africa's democracy.

The elections provide the opportunity for the continued strengthening of open responsive and accountable institutions and processes and an invaluable opportunity for citizens to have a say in how they will be governed.

Planact is an accredited election observer. A certificate of accreditation to observe the upcoming Provincial and National election was granted on 5 February 2024 by the Independent Election Commission.

The one-year accreditation certificate was granted on condition that the Code for Accredited Observers is adhered to. The accreditation was done in terms of section 86 of the Electoral Act, 1998.

A total of 48 individuals, comprising both Planact's staff members and residents from partner communities, were accredited to observe the provincial and national elections at their local voting districts.

Planact focuses on educating marginalised citizens about the significance of elections in a democratic society. As part of its programme activities to promote civic education, the work also aims to empower citizens to actively engage in pre and post-election activities, as well as to participate in the voting process. Public participation and civic education underpin this project.

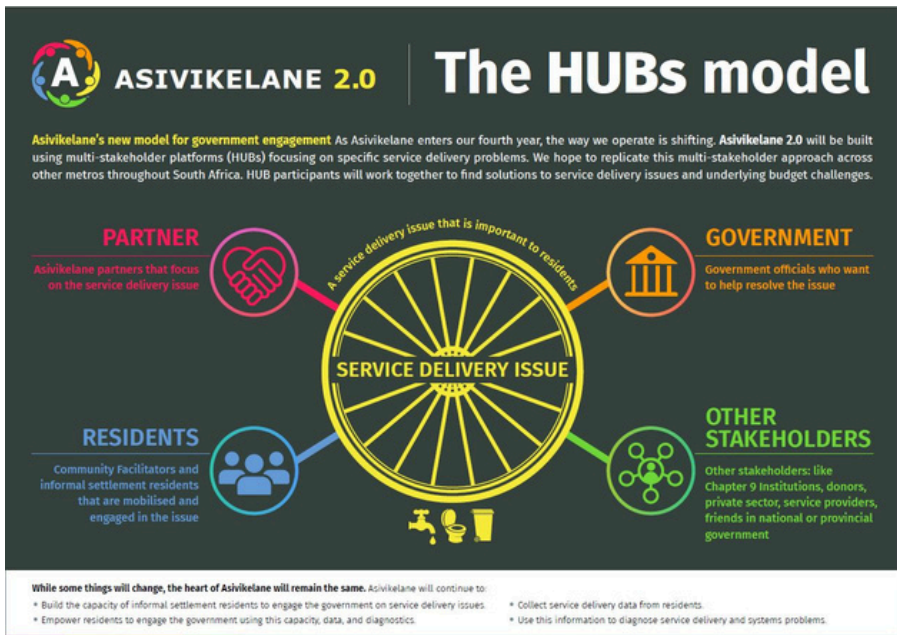
Planact is not affiliated with any political party and does not engage in election campaigns. With a 39-year track record, the organisation has successfully encouraged active participation of marginalised communities in local governance processes.

ASIVIKELANE HUBS

This year marks the fourth year since the launch of Asivikelane!

The campaign was born as South Africa entered a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 crisis in March 2020.

Asivikelane 2.0 uses multi-stakeholder platforms – also called HUBS – which focus on specific service delivery problems. Hub participants collaborate to find solutions to specific service delivery issues and underlying budget challenges.



Read more on the Asivikelane campaign here - <https://asivikelane.org/>

In Gauteng Province, Planact has partnered with Asivikelane partners such as 1 to 1 Agency of Engagement and the Tshwane Leadership Foundation to work with the City of Tshwane and Johannesburg on waste management and sanitation, respectively.

Read more about our Gauteng HUBS on page 5 and 6

CITY OF TSHWANE

SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS FOR INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS



Above: Stakeholders at the Waste Management Hub meeting held at the City of Tshwane Council Chambers comprising of City officials, Asivikelane community facilitators and Planact team members.

Asivikelane's new service delivery Hubs are designed to find solutions to water, sanitation and solid waste problems in informal settlements.

In partnership with the City of Tshwane, 1to1 – Agency of Engagement, Tshwane Leadership Foundation and C40 Cities, Planact's goal is to improve community well-being by implementing better waste management practices to reduce waste dumping and burning.

A series of workshops and engagements have been held to identify actions to be taken through pilot projects in informal settlements in each of the City's seven regions over the upcoming months towards the implementation of the communication new strategy. One of the latest engagements was in Zithobeni Heights, in Bronkhorstspuit. Engagements are underway between the Ward Councillor and community leaders to start with preparations for formulating a waste collection strategy for the community of Zithobeni Heights.

The Tshwane Waste Hub aims to determine the necessary adjustments to be made to the draft waste management strategy for informal settlements by the City of Tshwane.



Above: European Union site visit in Kameeldrift with Tshwane Waste Hub partners and City of Tshwane Waste Management Department officials.

Hub meetings are attended by Asivikelane community facilitators, regional directors, Divisional Head from the City of Tshwane Waste Department, C40 Cities representatives, Sustainability Unit members from the Mayor's office, and partners such as 1 to 1 - Agency of Engagement and Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The Hubs bring together informal settlement residents, government officials and other stakeholders such as chapter 9 institutions, infrastructure donors, private sector, service providers, and friends in national or provincial government.

CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

ERADICATING VENTILATED IMPROVED PIT TOILETS



Above: Asivikelane Sanitation Hub stakeholders in the City of Johannesburg comprising of Asivikelane community facilitators, Johannesburg Asivikelane partners and officials from the Environmental and Infrastructure Services Department, Joburg Water and the Human Settlements department.

Asivikelane's Sanitation Hubs aim to address water, sanitation challenges in informal settlements.

In partnership with Johannesburg Water, an entity of the City of Johannesburg, and other Asivikelane partners, Planact's goal is to eradicate Ventilated Improved Pit Toilets that are dangerous and unusable while repairing and maintaining those that are still functional and can be fixed.

While Ventilated Improved Pit Toilets in Johannesburg are considered a step up in temporary sanitation compared to chemical toilets, residents find them hazardous due to poor maintenance and the lack of replacements for ageing units.

Through Asivikelane campaign, we have frequently provided evidence of VIP deterioration, prompting a call for focused attention from all stakeholders involved.

Joburg Water and its stakeholders has been actively engaging Planact, 1to1 – Agency of Engagement, Tshwane Leadership Foundation to include community engagement in finding innovative solutions to improving sanitation in Johannesburg's informal settlement residents.

The City of Johannesburg Sanitation Policy (2021) shared by the Environmental and Infrastructure Department presents a number of opportunities for Community engagement and participation in policy implementation.



Above: A picture of a ventilated improved pit latrine (VIP) in Thembelihle, south of Johannesburg.

SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

AN EXTENSION OF PLANACT'S WORK IN PARTNER COMMUNITIES



Above: *Asivikelane Community Facilitators who graduated with their Higher Certificates in Community Development and Leadership from the University of Johannesburg.*

Over the last years, Planact has supported community facilitators in boosting their influence on community development through academic growth. These facilitators act as an extension of Planact in communities, especially in the Asivikelane campaign projects.

Planact, 1 to 1 Agency of Engagement and Asivikelane are proud to facilitate the academic empowerment of women leaders with the hope that solutions towards poverty, inequality and social justice issues affecting partner communities will be found.

Congratulations are in order for the five Asivikelane Community Facilitators who graduated with their Higher Certificate in Community Development and Leadership from the University of Johannesburg in March 2024.

The academic journey for the five women started in November 2022 when they seized this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study towards a certificate programme designed to enable them to address poverty, inequality and social justice through asset-based participatory community-led methods and processes.

This academic achievement would not have been possible without the generous support from the International Budget Partnership South Africa.

EMALAHLENI PARTNER COMMUNITIES ATTEND MPAC



Above: Planact team members with representatives of the Emalahleni Cluster and the Chairperson of the MPAC (in blue dress) in Emalahleni Municipality.

On March 20, 2024, Planact and its partner cluster of communities in Emalahleni, including MASCOM (Masakhane, Spring Valley, Coronation, Mgewana), attended the Municipal Public Account Committee (MPAC) meeting, in Emalahleni Local Municipality. They observed the proceedings from the public gallery.

The meeting assembled MPAC members, along with senior managers overseeing municipal departments, including the Municipal Manager (MM) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The committee's objective was to investigate the executive and administrative sectors of the municipality.

Regrettably, many Members of the Mayoral Committees who were expected to guide the departmental officials were absent. This absence raised a significant concern as it was their chance to spearhead the accountability process on behalf of their respective departments as political leaders.

MPAC councillors focused on scrutinising the matters outlined in the 2022/2023 municipal draft annual report. The committee left no stone unturned as they probed every aspect of the report concerning performance issues of financial matters.

A notable issue was the expenses for the services of a researcher, which had increased from R2,259,579 in 2022 to R 5,402,243 in 2023.

This matter was a source of concern and rightly questioned.

The purpose of the research was for water quality testing. MPAC expressed concerns about this expenditure, especially given the poor quality of tap water in the Emalahleni municipality. They raised several other important questions to seek clarification on the matter.

Investigations also focused on verifying municipal expenditure and value for money. It aimed to confirm that the contents of the report accurately reflected the outcomes achieved. MPAC members conduct site visits to verify the conditions and existence of community infrastructure, especially where concerns are raised. One specific incident involved a reported transformer that raised numerous questions that could not be resolved.

The MPAC discussions were enriched by the presence of representatives from the Mpumalanga Auditor General's office, the Mpumalanga Department of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and the National Treasury. The fact that the meeting was accessible to the public, offered an avenue for citizens to contribute submissions to the annual report. This process serves as a fundamental internal mechanism for ensuring accountability concerning performance and expenditure matters.

Planact and MASCOM are working to enhance accountability processes on service delivery in Emalahleni municipality, particularly benefiting vulnerable communities. Planact will be urging communities within its area of operation to submit proposals to actively participate in the MPAC process moving forward.

In addition to the activities undertaken, Planact is in the process of finalising a road map that will guide its intervention in getting the MPAC more responsive in fulfilling its legislated objective to serving the people living in South Africa. The road map will outline the relevant institutions critical in ensuring satisfactory and sustained performance of the MPAC structure, their role, abilities and challenges in supporting the MPAC.

More information about the work on MPAC will be provided in Planact's future News Journals.

BACKYARD RENTAL HOUSING

RESHAPING TOWNSHIP ECONOMY

As South Africa's economic hub, Gauteng is confronted with a notable housing challenge. Small-scale rentals have arisen in townships as a promising solution that provides economic and social advantages.

Planact's new partnership with the Development Action Group aims to enhance the backyard rental market by addressing regulatory hurdles, ensuring financial accessibility, and contributing towards well managed rental options that offer affordable, dignified and secure housing solutions.

Small-scale rental housing is a grassroots movement that is reshaping living conditions in townships.

Planact has joined forces with the Development Action Group (DAG), a partner NGO based in Cape Town, to seize small-scale rental opportunities in the City of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni.

This initiative is not only enhancing housing accessibility but also generating employment opportunities, fostering skill development, and enabling livelihoods through empowering emerging entrepreneurs.

The increase in backyard and small-scale developments in both cities has prompted Planact to embark on providing training opportunities for new and established contractors and developers across Gauteng.

The programme's objective is to deliver technical assistance and guidance to clients.

Planact will work with various stakeholders to support the initiative. These stakeholders include finance and educational institutions, relevant municipal officials, and built environment professionals.

For several years, DAG has successfully implemented the programme in the Western Cape. Partnering with Planact offers the opportunity to expand the programme to the Gauteng region.



Above: Site visit by the DAG and Planact team to one of the sites worked on by a DAG-trained contractor.



Above: Planact engaging with contractors who are undergoing training through DAG

SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVES

Through the Social Employment Fund (SEF) Project, Planact offers community members the chance to generate income while contributing valuable services to their community. These services support locally-driven initiatives aimed at meeting community needs.

Social employment recognises the potential of unemployed community members as valuable assets for community development.

This approach fosters local participation, empowerment, and creativity, and reinforces community-based support systems.

Planact has significantly expanded its impact in its partner communities by generating 1000 job opportunities across diverse themes like community safety, food security, digital mapping, gender-based violence prevention, recycling, maintenance, place-making, health, community wellness, and environmental conservation, specifically focusing on Wetland Preservation.



Above: Social Employment Fund participants alongside Planact team members with their harvest from the food gardening project.



Above: Social Employment Fund participants working under the recycling theme.

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

- Participants will apply for jobs using the skills and experience acquired during the SEF project.
- The skills and experience will make a valuable contribution to their prospects for employability.
- On completion of the project, programmes will continue especially through the prospect of establishing cooperatives and seeking financial support from private companies.
- Food security localities are working on fully commercialising their fresh produce operations.

IMPACT:

Living Conditions

- Since the participants started maintaining their environment and infrastructure, their settlements are more habitable, and safe, and the levels of cleanliness and hygiene have improved.

Livelihoods

- Participant's livelihoods have improved and they can cover their basic needs and support and sustain themselves and their children.
- 90% of the participants were unemployed before the project but were volunteering in some community projects.
- 100% of participants have indicated that this opportunity has improved their lives.
- Some participants were self-employed, doing domestic work.
- In Wattville, the food security cooperatives have come together to expand their gardens to produce more vegetables which they sell to local community members.
- In Bertrams, One participant who works under the Community Wellness theme has been hired to work at an Old Age home on a part time basis since the project started.

We recently celebrated #WorkersDay2024

This year, we are celebrating the 1000 Social Employment Fund participants who have joined the workforce. They are making a huge impact in their respective communities and we can't wait to share that success with you.

We are sending a special thank you to the Industrial Development Corporation support sustainable livelihood initiatives in our partner communities.

WATCH a snippet of gratitude from some of our participants.



WATCH on YouTube: Planact South Africa

VOLUNTEERS COLLECT DATA TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL HEATING IN TSHWANE

by: Jabulile Matha, Groundup (published 8 March 2024)



Above: One of 16 local citizen scientists collects data from Mamelodi in Pretoria.

Source: GroundUp

About 16 local citizen scientists, led by members of Planact, have mapped the temperatures in several parts of Pretoria.

A Greenpeace report from August 2023 notes that mean annual temperatures in South Africa have increased by twice the global average (0.7°C) since 1990, making it the warmest year on record.

This week, 16 volunteer citizen scientists, led by members of the environmental NGO Planact, went to several communities in the City of Tshwane to do heat mapping. Areas included Pretoria city centre, Arcadia, Waterkloof, Silverton, Equestria, Mamelodi, Laudium and Pretoria West.

The plan is to use the data from each site to help the City develop an effective plan to mitigate the effects of extreme heat in the future.

Planact's Programme Manager, Tazmin Hudson, said they had trained citizen scientists to use the temperature monitoring sensor equipment. "They were guided on the equipment to monitor air temperature, including the heat sensors as well as camera adaptors for FLIR (infrared) thermal imaging."

Hudson told GroundUp that the data will help the city "understand the heat dynamics to develop early warning systems, the implementation of urban greening, roofing programmes as well as the implementation of new by-laws".

"Until the data has been properly analysed, it is difficult to say which areas are hottest. It can be expected that Mamelodi and Mamelodi East will be at the top of the list, but parts of east Pretoria and west Pretoria will have pockets of high temperatures. It is for this reason that a 200km radius was designed," she said.

Hudson said they expect the data analysis to take about three weeks, thereafter the map will be developed. One of the goals of heat mapping is to see where interventions like shade cover, tree planting, cool roofs and paving painting can provide a cooler environment.

Read more at:

<https://groundup.org.za/article/volunteers-collect-data-on-why-more-communities-need-green-spaces-to-mitigate-affects-of-climate-change/>

CITIZEN SCIENCE IN ACTION

MITIGATING URBAN HEAT ISLANDS

OPINION

by: Tamzin Hudson

2023 was the warmest year on record and the warmest by far according to scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI).

South Africa's temperature records bear this out and show an upward trend - 'overall, we see the persistent rise of temperatures, with the period of 2013-2018 period unprecedentedly warm'.

A Greenpeace report from August 2023 notes that mean annual temperatures in South Africa have increased by twice the global average (0.7°C). Climate projections for the country point to an increase in mean, maximum and minimum temperatures; and increases in very hot days – above 35 °C and in the frequency of heat wave events.

Warming in cities has severe impacts on human health and well-being, affecting the natural and physical environment compounding water and food shortages with significant economic implications.

As climate change intensifies, cities across the world are seeking to deepen their understanding of the effects of this change and how best to plan for a future characterised by heightened risks and vulnerabilities. The IPCC Third Assessment Report (TAR) describes vulnerability as a system's susceptibility to or ability to cope with the adverse effects of climate change, including its variability and extremes and its ability to respond and adapt.

In this Citizens Science initiative, a temperature monitoring sensor will be employed and attached to a vehicle to collect geospatially referenced heat data for a day at three different times - morning, early afternoon, and evening across an area of just over 200 kilometres.

Read more at: <https://planact.org.za/citizen-science-in-action-in-mitigation-of-city-warming/>



Above: Heat mapping in Garsfontein/ Lynwood area in Pretoria.

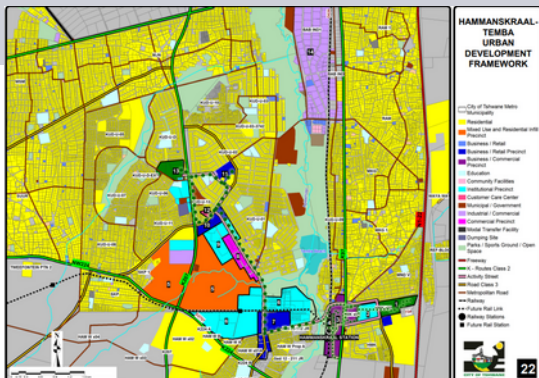


Above: A group picture with the citizen scientists alongside Planact team members.



Above: Citizen scientists securing the temperature monitoring sensor to vehicle.

HAMMANSKRAAL SAFETY PLAN



Hammanskraal- Temba Urban Development Framework (CSP, 2021)

Planact, in partnership with Mbumba Development Services, has been appointed by the South African Cities Network and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to conduct a safety plan in Hammanskraal. The project is titled Designing and Applying Precinct-based Safety Interventions. Hammanskraal CBD in the City of Tshwane (CoT) municipality is the site for the project.

The project aims to recommend to the CoT, a series of spatialised and holistic violence prevention interventions that can be implemented in the City's precinct plan, to make Hammanskraal safer for all.

The key outcome of this project is for the City's safety and area-based management interventions to be informed by the best available evidence in a collaborative approach. The primary objective is to make the CBD safer.

Planact has successfully held stakeholder engagement sessions with various groups from the Hammanskraal community. Approximately 15 groups participated in focus group sessions or interviews.

The goal was to gather information on the community's experiences, challenges, and suggestions, and to collaboratively establish safety measures tailored to the Hammanskraal context.

A report summarising the engagements was presented at a larger stakeholder meeting for validation.

The next project steps involve creating a safety plan that aligns with other CoT plans and government initiatives, followed by implementing and testing a key aspect of the plan. If all progresses as planned, the Hammanskraal CBD will soon become a safer place.



Above: Group picture of members from the Temba Taxi Association alongside Planact team.



Above: Safety plan stakeholder group engaging in a hotspot mapping exercise.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

21 MARCH



Human Rights Day in South Africa is a significant day that celebrates the importance of upholding and protecting the rights and freedoms of all individuals.

The 21st of March serves as a reminder of the country's tumultuous past and the ongoing journey towards equality and justice for all. One key aspect of promoting human rights is through community development initiatives.

At Planact, we believe that by investing in community development, through strengthened community voices, supporting responsive living environments and sustainable livelihood initiatives, we can help empower individuals and create a more just and equitable society.

Together, as a united community, we can work towards a future where everyone's rights are respected, and every voice is heard.



HUMAN SETTLEMENTS POLICY REVIEW REQUIRES GREAT CARE AND COLLABORATION



File picture taken by Planact showing a street in Sikonplaa informal settlement, one of our partner communities.

SA's human settlements policy is undergoing its first major review since 2004. Land and housing dynamics in the country have shifted significantly in the past two decades. The publishing of a draft White Paper on Human Settlements on 18 December last year is therefore a welcome development, writes Nick Budlender and Fezeka Ludidi.

This opinion piece was written on behalf of the following group of civil society organisations: Afesis, Built Environment Support Group, Centre for Affordable Housing Finance, Community Organisation Resource Centre, Development Action Group, Federation of the Urban Poor, Informal Settlements Network Isandla Institute, Legal Resources Centre, Ndifuna Ukwazi, People's Environmental Planning, Planact, Project Preparation Trust and uTshani Fund.

Planact supported the joint appeal from various organisations, encouraging the Minister to create a Human Settlements Forum. This forum has the opportunity to influence the White Paper by actively involving and tackling policy deficiencies highlighted in the current version, as proposed in the article.

Read here - <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2024-03-14-nick-budlender-and-fezeka-ludidi-human-settlements-policy-review-requires-great-care-and-collaboration/>

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