

Good Hood Stories

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Local solid waste project making for cleaner communities and better lives in Durban

[Durban]

A collaboration between communities, the eThekweni Municipality, and the NGO, Project Preparation Trust (PPT), has found a new and effective way to manage the solid waste problem in 12 informal settlements across Durban.

This new community-driven initiative has introduced an effective solid waste management system that, despite the varied contexts and challenges of settlements situated along rivers, on hilly terrain, or near commercial and industrial areas, has significantly enhanced residents' quality of life.

"Before the project started, this place was filthy... people were throwing waste wherever they felt like. But, when we came in, we engaged with the community. We said, let's form a partnership whereby we will try and sort out our own mess," says Nana Ndlovu, Project Manager at PPT, speaking about the Quarry Road Informal Settlement, one of the communities he has been intensively involved in.

For Ndlovu and PPT, community engagement needed to be at the forefront of this new model, and a partnership was forged to address the issue head-on, empowering residents to take charge of their surroundings.

This 24-month solid waste pilot project falls under the National Treasury's Community Development Programme (CDP) and is one of four areas under

the CDP, which also focuses on funding for fire prevention and response, incremental tenure and planning arrangements, as well as owner-driven housing improvements and related re-blocking initiatives. All these areas of intervention are aimed at enhancing living conditions in informal settlements through community-led projects.

Overcoming the solid waste challenges in KwaZulu-Natal has been an uphill battle, due to the varied topography exacerbated by the impacts of floods in recent years that left a trail of devastation in their wake. The floods damaged homes and washed away essential infrastructure like footbridges and roads, disrupting the daily lives of residents and especially children who were unable to access schools.

The complexity of private land ownership further complicates the implementation of viable solutions—with informal settlement communities often wedged into sites between formal residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. These challenges pose a considerable barrier to relocation efforts and renders many traditional or standard approaches to solid waste management impractical and ineffective.

PPT adopted an evidence-based approach to understand the challenges, through socio-economic surveys, structural counts, and various other studies, to craft contextual solutions.

"When we came in we said let's form a partnership, whereby we'll try and sort out our own mess. If we don't clear the waste that exists within settlements, we will undermine the services. The main goal is to actually leverage support to the community, to build the community so that they can engage with the municipality on various issues," Says Ndlovu.

Grounded by research and initial community engagement, the new model for solid waste management includes:

- introducing 37 containment facilities in total—where waste can be collected and held in black bags—constructed by the community utilising cost-effective materials like treated poles and welded mesh.
- of the 37, 25 are mini-containment facilities positioned nearer to homes, ensuring convenient waste disposal for households.
- 12 larger containment facilities along roadside locations, facilitating easy access for municipal waste collection trucks and providing opportunities for waste separation e.g glass.

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The global action plan: a decade of action to accelerate informal settlement transformation



Kayla Hanna Brown
Project Manager: Inclusive Cities
South African Cities Network

The Good Hood Stories celebrate creative and collaborative city-making practices taking place across South African neighbourhoods. It is our intention to shift the focus from the negative aspects of our urban environments, to instead focus on the extraordinary work that is being done by ordinary South Africans every day. We highlight cases of innovation and partnership (often in the face of extreme complexity) that cities can be proud of and share these lessons to further inspire more good practice. The Good Hood Stories does this using creative and visual methods and through utilising a story-telling approach, to showcase projects that demonstrate

collaborative, creative and multi-sector partnerships that improve our urban environments.

Through the filming of the Good Hood Stories, we have the privilege of traveling the country, visiting the project sites and meeting the exceptional project champions driving the work. Previous seasons of the Good Hood Stories have featured inspiring projects, such as the Langa Bicycle Hub in Cape Town, the Bellhaven Harm Reduction Centre in Durban, the Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) in Tshwane, and the Masakhe Ladies’ Stokvel in Cape Town, among many others.

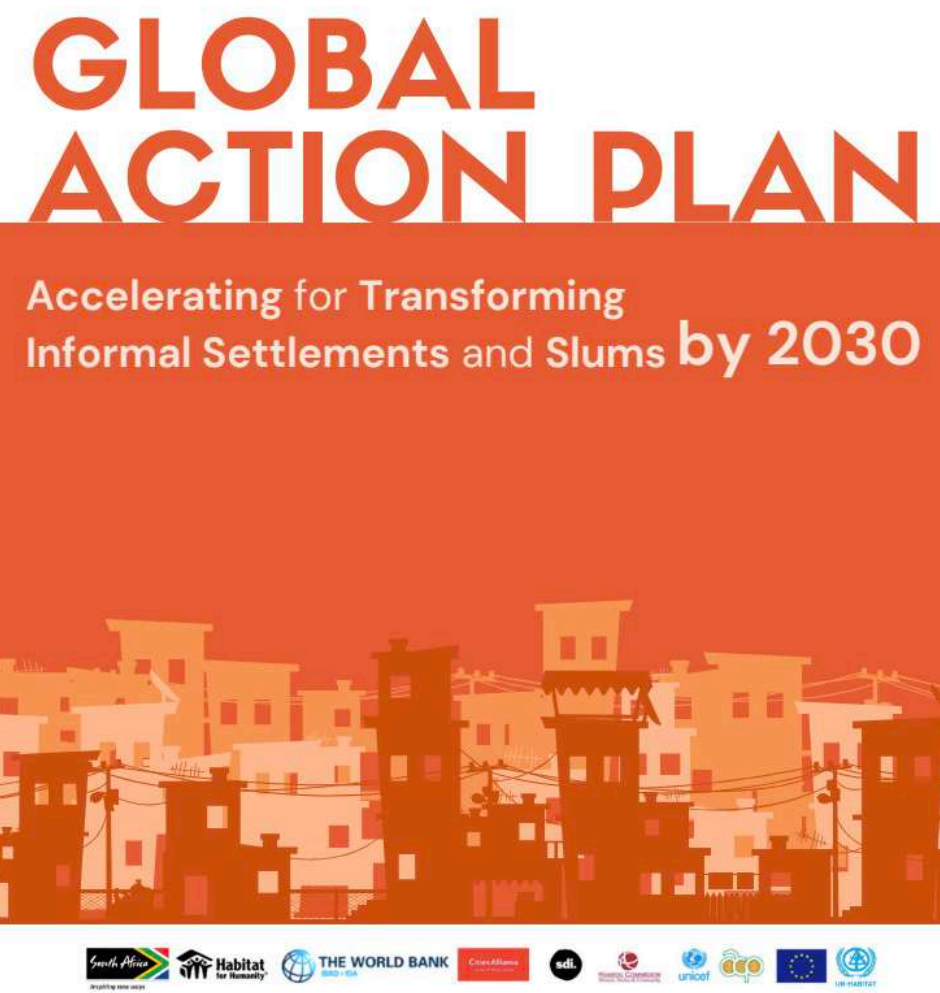
We are now excited to bring you the third season of the Good Hood Stories, which has been created in partnership with the Department of Human Settlements and with a thematic focus on the transformation of informal settlements. This theme aligns to a historic and ambitious new global agenda, the “Global Action Plan: Accelerating for Transforming Informal Settlements and Slums by 2030”, which is guiding the sustainable urban development of informal settlements. The Global Action Plan is designed as a contribution towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) through a focus on informal settlements and slums.

The Global Action Plan arises from the acknowledgement that despite considerable efforts made to transform informal settlements, the real challenge in addressing this issue lies ahead, and is going to take deliberate efforts, partnership and innovation to tackle. We hope that through the Good Hood Stories, we elevate this important global agenda and demonstrate the real-life cases of the “decade of action” which the Global Action Plan promotes.

We have selected two exceptional projects to showcase through the Good Hood Stories, which demonstrate two critical aspects of informal settlement transformation: the delivery of sanitation services and solid waste management. Project Preparations Trust’s partnership with the City of eThekweni on solid waste management and Asivikelani’s gender-responsive service delivery in Knysna, Western Cape, both feature a highly collaborative community-led approach to informal settlement upgrading, which is championed through partnerships between different urban sectors.

According to the Global Action Plan, without taking any action, the number of slum dwellers worldwide is expected to triple in the coming decades. The situation requires urgent attention and immediate action. Ultimately the Global Action Plan and the New Urban agenda will be implemented through projects like the Project Preparations Trust’s and Asivikelani’s sensitive and contextually intelligent approaches to community-led informal settlement transformation.



In conversation with PPT’s project champion: Nana Ndlovu

[Durban]

Can you tell us about your journey and what led you to work with Project Preparation Trust?

NN: I’ve been involved with community projects for nearly two decades. My passion has always been to help build stronger, more resilient communities. Working with Project Preparation Trust was a natural fit, allowing me to apply my skills and experience where they can make the most difference, particularly in challenging environments like Quarry Road Settlement.

Over the years, what have been some of the most significant challenges you’ve faced in your projects?

NN: One of the biggest challenges is often convincing communities and stakeholders of the long-term benefits of their involvement. There’s also the ongoing challenge of securing sufficient funding to sustain these initiatives and

ensure they can grow to meet the community’s needs.

How has your approach to community engagement evolved throughout your career?

NN: My approach has become more inclusive and participatory. I’ve learned that the most effective solutions are co-created. My role is to facilitate dialogue and help bridge the gap between different stakeholders, ensuring that everyone’s voice is heard and valued.

In the Quarry Road waste management project, what strategies have you found most effective in mobilising community support and participation?

NN: Transparency and consistent communication have been key. Showing up, being present, and regularly interacting with the community helps build trust. It’s about demonstrating commitment and the tangible benefits

of their involvement, which encourages more active participation and ownership of the project.

Can you share a personal highlight or a particularly rewarding experience from your work?

NN: Seeing the tangible impact of our work on the ground is incredibly rewarding. For instance, transforming once polluted areas into clean, usable spaces that the community takes pride in maintaining. It’s these visible changes that make the effort worthwhile.

What lessons have you learned that you would pass on to someone starting out in community development and project management?

NN: Always listen more than you speak. Understand the community’s needs from their perspective, not just your own. Patience and persistence are crucial, as change does not happen overnight. It’s about small, steady steps to-

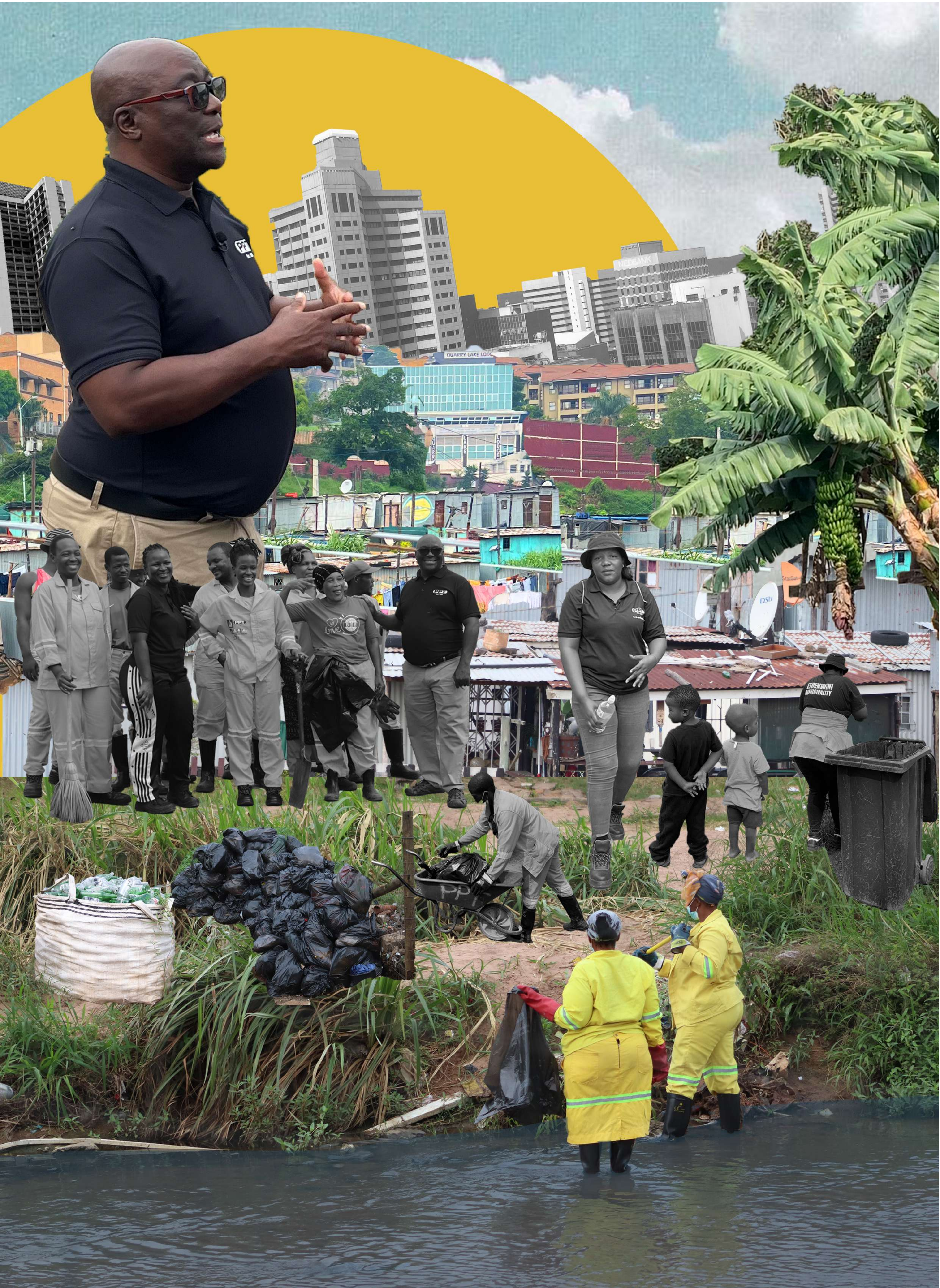
wards improvement.

Looking to the future, what are your professional goals, and how do you hope to impact the field of urban development?

NN: I aim to continue developing sustainable, scalable models that can be adapted to various settings across South Africa and beyond. The goal is to leave a legacy of improved infrastructure and enhanced community welfare that can inspire similar transformations globally.



Nana Ndlovu
Project Manager
Project Preparation Trust



Collage by Our Future Cities

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Workers collecting waste at the containment facility in Quarry Road Settlement in Durban.

[Durban]

CEO of PPT, Mark Misselhorn, reflecting on the CDP’s core approach, underscores the importance of partnership with communities: “People understand that it is their environment, their own mess; if we are not partnering, there will be no sense of ownership. Now they feel it’s their own.” This sentiment encapsulates the programme’s mission—to transform not only the physical landscape, but also the communal mindset towards shared spaces and resources.

For the PPT team, this represents one of the biggest differences between this project and other solid waste projects. PPT’s approach is to involve the community in the implementation and management of the project. 68 workers were appointed and receive stipends for their contributions, creating a site-specific workforce, working to improve their own surroundings.

Central to the success of this initiative has been the introduction of Community Development Coordinators (CDCs), who play a pivotal role as the champions of the project on a day-to-day basis. The roles of the CDCs encompass a range of tasks such as ongoing engagement with the community, addressing issues, educating residents, ensuring the proper functioning of containment facilities and reporting back to PPT.

Upon visiting three different informal settlements, Quarry Road, Havelock, and Bhambayi, the impact of this project on these communities is visible and at times surprising.

Nestled between two bustling roads, a golf course, and bordered by a river, Quarry Road Informal Settlement, though small, grapples with a constant influx of waste from both residents and the surrounding areas. Its largest containment facility is well positioned near the busy Quarry Road allowing municipal waste trucks to drive down a slope to collect and then transport the waste to the city’s landfills.

As a result of the initiative, the river which runs through it, and paths within the community, once cluttered with refuse, are now cleared and more accessible. With the riverbank now more welcoming, children can be seen enjoying the spaces and playing ball games along the “beach,” - a newly cleared sand bank. Clear pathways between homes have become thoroughfares for residents, including children who are able to walk and cycle through them easily.

In Havelock, situated tightly in the centre of the residential suburb of Greenwood Park, remnants of recent floods linger, evidenced by washed-out bridges now replaced by temporary timber structures. Residents have embraced the physical transformation brought about by the waste management initiative and have adopted a newfound sense of responsibility towards waste. “They (residents)



Piles of collected glass from the Quarry Road Settlement, ready to be transported to a recycling plant.

take care of their waste most of the time,” remarks a CDC. “Now, we don’t have to teach them how to take waste to the containment area. They just love what we’re doing as well.”

In the sprawling neighbourhood of Bhambayi, home to approximately 4,000 residents and situated close to the busy Phoenix industrial area and Bridge City development, efforts have been focused on combating waste pollution along greywater streams that meander between homes, aiming to curb environmental degradation and public health risks.

Today, residents have united in a concerted effort to reduce waste and advocate for the repair of pipe systems. Their proactive engagement underscores a palpable sense of ownership and commitment to their community’s well-being. “If we can get more funders to fund this project, I’ll be happy because I don’t want this project to stop because it’s helping us,” says Zimasa Mrwetyana, CDC and resident of Bhambayi.

As PPT’s Solid Waste Management initiative in Durban progresses, it continues to leave a tangible impact on public spaces and community well-being. Although some challenges persist, lessons learned from initiatives like this underscore the importance of early engagement, creativity, and empowering residents to drive lasting change. With continued support and investment, there is the promise of this initiative serving as a blueprint for sustainable upgrading of informal settlements nationwide and ensuring better lives for its residents.

The remarkable legacy of KZN's Project Preparation Trust

[Durban]

Project Preparation Trust (PPT) of KwaZulu-Natal is an independent non-profit organisation established in 1993 to support transformation and change in South Africa and to assist in addressing a range of deeply entrenched development challenges. From its inception, PPT's vision has been clear: a society where all citizens have equitable access to basic services and economic opportunities. It has a particular focus on the poorest of the poor and those in special need, such as people living in marginalised rural communities or urban informal settlements, and vulnerable children.

PPT works closely with communities, government, funders and other civil society organisations in preparing and implementing projects and in developing improved policies and approaches based on real-world experience. "There must be a local organisation or CSO as an intermediary support role between community and government," says Mark Misselhorn, CEO of PPT.

Key areas include the incremental upgrading of informal settlements, early childhood development (ECD), the informal economy and micro-enterprise and special needs housing. PPT also has extensive experience in low income housing, municipal infrastructure, land reform and participatory planning.

This NGO works at scale and supports systemic change. Since its establishment, it has successfully prepared projects resulting in R2.06 billion in capital funding being awarded for 221,735 households in 210 development projects. This includes numerous informal settlement upgrades and R67 million for 41 NPO-operated special needs housing projects benefiting 1,033 vulnerable people, such as victims of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities and vulnerable children.

PPT has supported 310 micro and informal enterprises in the creation of 1,486 new jobs and undertaken field surveys of 1,114 ECD Centres with 41,329 children in under-serviced communities, providing new data. This has helped inform more inclusive ECD policies with an increased focus on supporting under-resourced, unregistered and informal ECD operators to secure conditional registration and infrastructure improvements.

PPT has played a prominent role in pioneering and establishing new approaches to the upgrading of informal settlements which are more incremental, flexible and participative. The NGO played a lead role in developing eThekweni's ground-breaking Incremental Upgrading Strategy (2022) and the KZN Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy (2011).

"Having a relationship of trust is important, we've worked with these community development coordinators since 2018, that's a long time. And I think that makes a big difference."

Mark Misselhorn
CEO
Project Preparation Trust

The Kenville Urban Restructuring Pilot Project (2012) serves as a prime example of this methodology, illustrating how careful project planning can lead to significant changes. With thorough preparation, the initiative has introduced innovative solutions like integrated urban planning, pedestrian-focused layouts, and housing designs tailored to community needs. These efforts highlight the effectiveness of strategic planning and cooperative efforts in promoting sustainable urban development.

Another notable initiative is the iQhaza Lethu Upgrading Programme, in partnership with eThekweni Municipality and the European Union. This initiative spans over a period of 3.5 years and is all about making small, incremental improvements to informal settlements through partnerships within the municipality. The goal is to improve the city's upgrading efforts by building skills, forming connections, and finding ways to make changes that can be applied city-wide. As a continuation of this initiative, the Community Development Programme piloted in January 2023 with a focus on solid waste management, fire prevention, planning and coordination.

PPT continues to be involved in numerous grassroots projects working closely with vulnerable communities to establish new and better approaches which are replicable and scalable, relating amongst other things to incremental planning and tenure solutions, community-based maintenance, regulatory flexibility, basic services provision and essential social services such as ECD and special needs housing.

0.85 - 2.47 kg

WASTE COLLECTED per DAY
per HOUSEHOLD

37

NEW WASTE CONTAINMENT
FACILITIES

7

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COORDINATORS

60

WORKERS COLLECTING SOLID
WASTE



A community member working at a containment facility.

Knysna's gender-responsive approach to service delivery is transforming its informal settlements

[Knysna]

In Knysna and its surrounding towns, a positive story is unfolding, where an initiative led by the NGOs Asivikelane (meaning “let us protect” in isiZulu) and the Development Action Group (DAG) has been championing a gender-responsive approach to service delivery in several informal settlements. This story is about more than improving access to infrastructure, it is a story of gender empowerment and community partnering.

Knysna's hilly landscapes, dunes and water bodies exacerbate the struggles of those residing in informal settlements. According to Asivikelane, 35% of the community grapples with inadequate, poorly maintained and often unsafe sanitation facilities, relying on chemical toilets intended as temporary solutions which have now become permanent, due to the cost and complexities of underground infrastructure.

“A gender responsive approach to service delivery means that we take into account issues that impact women and children and vulnerable citizens very specifically,” shares Crystal West, Programme Manager at DAG.

For many, the risk of violent crimes such as assault and robbery looms large, further complicating the already fraught experience of accessing basic sanitation facilities. Communal toilets, often clustered and situated in inaccessible locations without adequate surveillance, have become hotspots for criminal activity. The absence of proper public lighting exacerbates the problem, leaving individuals, and especially women, vulnerable.

“Women were very clear about the fact that they felt unsafe. 76% of women said that using the toilet at night was a scary experience, and that they didn't utilise toilets at night... compared to 24%... that fear using it during the day,” adds West.

In the Knysna context, this gender-responsive approach transcends the mere placement of chemical toilets but is also about instilling safety and dignity, with gender-segregated facilities, improved maintenance, lockable toilets and better lighting. It aims to improve the physical environment and to reshape societal norms, ensuring women and girls can access sanitation without fear.

Despite challenges, the powerful partnership of Asivikelane and DAG and their approach in Knysna has set this

project apart. Their ethos lies in the involvement of the community in every aspect, which was crucial to getting this initiative off the ground. “The most important part was the engagement with the community so that we could successfully implement the project,” says West.

Asivikelane's community engagement in Knysna has been extensive, going beyond sanitation only to cover water and solid waste too. In their review of 2023, they hosted 68 community engagements, 77 with government, and trained 1246 female and 822 male residents to support their budget training and advocacy efforts.

Integral to the project's ongoing impact has been the introduction of Community Facilitators (CF's) who are the eyes and ears on the ground. They form a necessary link between the NGOs, Ward Councillors, the residents and the municipality. Many of the CFs were already active volunteers finding ways to improve their communities, and now play a key role in documenting, communicating and ensuring maintenance of the toilets while forming an ongoing, feedback channel between all involved.

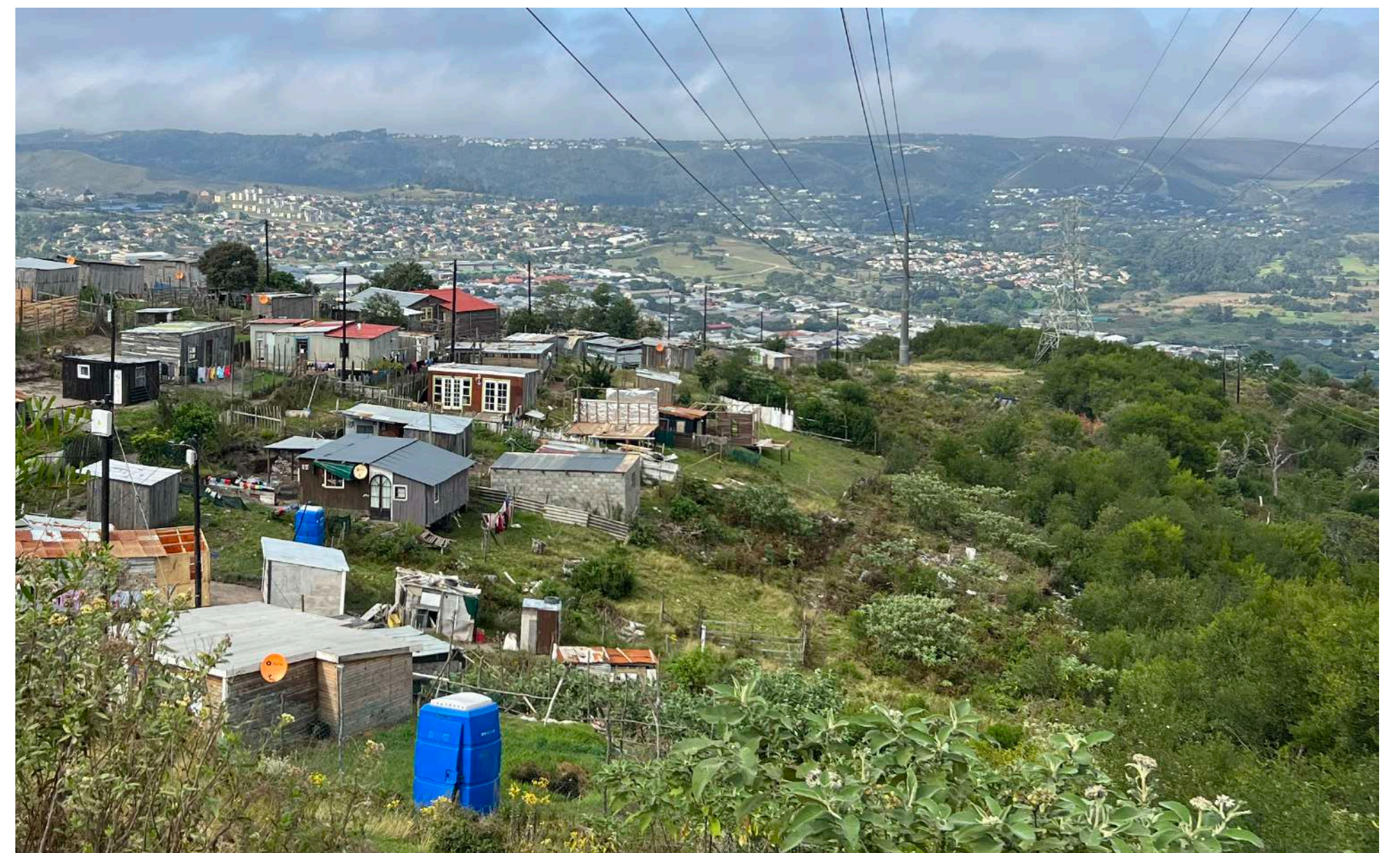
“My heart beats for my community. That's why I became involved in our communities. Because the struggle is here, and I always like to help... To get things done is actually a privilege for me, because I know that it helps our fellow residents,” shares Vemesia Galant, a CF from Sedgefield, a small town 24 km from Knysna.

To make it easier for CF's to collect data and report on their communities, an app called “Kobo” was introduced, which has become pivotal in advocating for residents' needs and resolving issues quickly. “We use data collection as a tool with the objective of amplifying women's voices in terms of service delivery issues,” explains West. This data-driven approach has enabled Asivikelane to highlight and address the specific needs of the community, leading to significant improvements in service delivery and urban planning. “This also became a tool for the municipalities to see where their challenges were within informal settlements.”

In each community the initiative has developed a contextual response which acknowledges the specific conditions, cultures and natural environment.



Martie Tittie, Community Facilitator from Rheenendal, showing the gender separated toilets.



The view across White Location and Knysna.

In White Location, the initiative has navigated the hilly terrain, with gender-specific toilets marked “male and female” placed strategically along formal and informal footpaths. The approach differs in Rheenendal, with bright pink toilets easily identifiable and clearly segregated for use by women, while in Sedgefield the toilets are placed to improve access which might be made difficult by the sand from the surrounding dunes.

The project is a testament to the power of dialogue and cooperation to build trust and collaboration between communities and local government. “We had the same people who were burning tyres 18 months later, sitting around the table with the municipal manager and all the directors, sharing with him all of the action research that they undertook to substantiate all the tasks, and it was phenomenal,” West reflects.

In a study conducted in September 2023, Asivikelane Western Cape unveiled encouraging advancements in Knysna's access to essential sanitation

facilities. The latest data indicates that 86% of Knysna residents now enjoy access to either chemical or flush toilets, marking a notable improvement from the previous month's figures.

Asivikelane's initiative demonstrates a paradigm of sustainable urban development that sees communities leading the changes to their communities and ultimately improving their wellbeing and living conditions.

For West, the changes in the short term should support the longer term ambitions too, “The long-term objective is that every family has their own services in terms of toilets, and do not have to share, but for now we just ensure that there are as many toilets as possible for the community to share.”

This story of Asivikelane and DAG's work in Knysna illustrates the profound impact of targeted, community-informed, and gender-sensitive initiatives and has potential for replication as across South Africa's cities.

The need for community-led innovations to transform informal settlements across South Africa



RASHIQ FATAAR

CEO

Our Future Cities

In reflecting on our recent visits to Durban and greater Knysna, it is clear that community-led innovation is not merely a theoretical ideal but a tangible reality, enhancing the lived experiences of residents in South Africa’s informal settlements. Contrary to the bleak narratives often highlighted in the media, we observed that committed residents, robust community partnerships, a supportive municipality, and persistent effort are catalysing meaningful, albeit imperfect, progress.

Supported by the Department of Human Settlements and the South African Cities Network, our journey spanned six diverse communities, each unique in its geographical and social fabric. These communities, ranging from riverside settlements to industrial peripheries, highlight the multifaceted challenges and opportunities inherent in providing basic services within informal contexts.

In Durban, the collaborative efforts of the NGO, Project Preparation Trust (PPT), the municipality, and local communities have redefined solid waste management across twelve informal settlements. This initiative, which has “unblocked” and facilitated access to various services, exemplifies the power of integrating local knowledge with structured support.

In communities such as Quarry Road, Havelock, and Bhambayi, the tangible benefits of this initiative are evident. Cost-effective construction of waste containment facilities and the engagement of local workers have not only improved living conditions but also restored communal spaces for children’s play and social interaction. This transformation extends beyond waste management; it signifies a reclamation of dignity and communal joy.

In Knysna and its surroundings, the partnership between Asivikelane and the Development Action Group (DAG) showcases a gender-responsive approach to service delivery. Addressing multifaceted challenges, including those posed by the region’s topography and socio-economic conditions, this initiative has achieved significant progress through persistent community engagement and innovative solutions. Gender-segregated, lockable toilets, improved lighting, and strategically placed facilities have markedly enhanced safety and practicality, particularly for women and children.

These projects illuminate several key insights crucial for the widespread adoption of community-led innovation in informal settlements:

1. Strong Local Partnerships: The success of these initiatives is anchored in robust, evolving partnerships with local communities. Empowering residents to take ownership fosters sustainability and responsibility. As Mark Misselhorn of PPT emphasises, “People understand that it is their environment, their own mess; without partnership, there is no sense of ownership.”
2. Contextual Solutions: Tailoring solutions to the specific conditions, cultures, and environments of each community ensures relevance and effectiveness. Crystal West from DAG notes, “A gender-responsive approach to service delivery means addressing issues that impact women,

children, and vulnerable citizens specifically.”

3. Data-Driven Decision Making: Effective innovation is grounded in evidence. Utilising tools like the Kobo app for real-time data collection, as seen in Knysna, enables responsive action and long-term planning. “We use data collection to amplify women’s voices regarding service delivery issues,” explains West.

4. Community Facilitators as Eyes and Ears: Community Facilitators (CFs) are crucial for fostering community engagement and ensuring that projects take into account local needs and feedback. Their role bridges gaps between residents, NGOs, and municipal authorities, fostering continuous dialogue and cooperation. Vemesia Galant, a CF from Sedgfield, articulates this: “My heart beats for my community. That’s why I became involved in our communities.”

5. Holistic Approaches: Addressing issues in isolation is insufficient. A holistic approach that considers various aspects of community life—from sanitation and waste management to safety and public health—ensures comprehensive improvements. Ndlovu from PPT observes, “We focused on waste collection to improve services and, ultimately, living conditions in informal settlements.”

6. Empowerment Through Engagement: Genuine empowerment

arises from involving communities at every stage—from planning to implementation. This builds trust and ensures that solutions are embraced and sustained. As one community member remarked, “Being part of the decision-making process makes us feel responsible and more committed to maintaining the changes.”

7. Creative Funding Mechanisms: Sustainable innovation requires diverse funding solutions. Leveraging government grants and private sector partnerships provides the financial backbone necessary to support and scale these initiatives. A local leader in Bhambayi echoes this sentiment: “With the right backing, we can make real changes.”

The stories from eThekweni and Knysna are not isolated successes but blueprints for broader application. They demonstrate that with the right mix of community involvement, innovative thinking, and strategic support, we can create thriving, resilient informal settlements. These projects reveal that the path to sustainable urban development lies in the hearts and hands of the communities themselves.

At Our Future Cities, we are dedicated to championing these principles, advocating for policies that support community-led initiatives, and continually learning from the ground up. Together, we can transform community-led innovation from a possibility into a prevailing reality in urban areas across our country.



The Project Preparation Trust team photographed together with SACN and OFC team members.

Q&A with Crystal West

[Knysna]

Share with us your journey into the field of development and human settlements?

CW: I've been involved in development for 30 years, with the last 23 specifically in human settlements. My passion has always been to see people lead their own development, which has guided my focus towards empowering communities, particularly in informal settlements, to spearhead their upgrading projects.

What are some unique challenges you've encountered in service delivery within Knysna, and how have these shaped your approach to development?

CW: The most significant challenge is the financial constraint our municipality faces, which impacts everything from infrastructure investment to basic service provision like sanitation and water supply. The terrain here [Knysna] complicates installations further, driving up costs and necessitating innovative solutions that are both cost-effective and community-approved.

How do community facilitators help you do your work?

CW: So it's really important that our community facilitators have a good relationship with the ward

councillor. Your ward councillor is your advocate, is your champion in council. So if anything needs to be approved at that level, your ward councillor needs to understand that and also support it.

With your extensive experience, how do you incorporate gender-responsive strategies into service delivery?

CW: My approach is comprehensive and community-focused. We use gender-responsive strategies to ensure services like sanitation facilities are accessible and safe for women and children. This includes installing well-lit and securely locked toilets, and situating them in locations that minimise safety risks for women and maximise convenience for all users.

Reflecting on your professional journey, what drives your commitment to community-driven development?

CW: I believe that sustainable change in development can only be achieved when the community leads it. This belief has shaped my approach to working in informal settlements where the community's direct involvement ensures that the solutions are tailored to their actual needs and are more likely to be maintained long-term.



Crystal West

Programme Manager

Development Action Group

Looking forward, what are your hopes for the future of service delivery in South African communities?

CW: I envision a future where collaborative and participatory approaches to problem-solving are the norm. I hope to see more inclusive practices where communities are not just consulted but are active decision-makers in the development processes that affect their lives. My dream is for every community, especially the most marginalised, to have the agency to influence and improve their living conditions sustainably.



The Asivikelane community facilitators in White Location settlement in Knysna.



Crystal West engaging with the Asivikelane team on site in Knysna.

How Asivikelane is reshaping service delivery in South Africa

[Knysna]

In South Africa, many communities, particularly those living in informal settlements, face significant challenges in accessing basic services such as water, sanitation, and waste removal. Amidst these challenges, a remarkable initiative is using community-generated data to help residents advocate for their rights.

Launched during the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020, the International Budget Partnership South Africa (IBP South Africa) and its civil society partners introduced the Asivikelane Initiative, which means “Let’s protect one another” in Zulu. This initiative serves as a crucial link between municipal governments and marginalised communities, amplifying the voices and lived realities of residents in informal settlements across the country’s urban centres.

With over 3,000 informal settlements housing more than 10 million people, the task is substantial. Asivikelane collaborates with partner organisations in ten municipalities, including Buffalo City, Cape Town, Ekurhuleni, Knysna, and Stellenbosch. These organisations work with residents to highlight their needs and concerns, having impacted over 5,880,000 residents by the end of 2023.

Asivikelane focuses on empowering residents of informal settlements to hold municipal officials accountable for service deficiencies. By fostering collaboration between residents and local authorities, the campaign aims to develop sustainable solutions that enhance the quality of life and support inclusive upgrading initiatives.

What distinguishes Asivikelane is its commitment to maintaining constant, responsive communication with residents. Each month, residents receive surveys via SMS, WhatsApp, or telephone interviews, to get their feedback on their ability to access essential services. They are encouraged to share detailed accounts of their daily challenges and provide visual evidence of their experiences. The surveys focus on access to water, sanitation, and refuse removal.

The introduction of community facilitators has significantly improved the interaction between residents and municipal officials. These facilitators actively en-

gage with informal settlement residents, collecting their responses to Asivikelane’s inquiries. Using a traffic light rating system, municipalities are categorised based on the accessibility of essential services. These findings are then shared with relevant government departments, providing crucial insights to identify areas of need and prioritise resource allocation, thereby helping to address service deficiencies in South Africa’s urban centres.

Participants of the Asivikelane Western Cape initiative in Stellenbosch took a significant step by submitting a written proposal to the municipality for inclusion in the 2023/24 budget. However, progress has been slow, with only 3% of residents reporting noticeable improvements in services the following month. This highlights the urgent need for consistent engagement between residents and municipal authorities to tackle persistent service delivery challenges effectively. A substantial majority of residents, 72%, advocate for regular interaction with the municipality, preferring monthly community meetings as a forum for fostering dialogue and addressing grievances. This data underscores the community’s desire for increased transparency, accountability, and collaboration in local governance.

Beyond water and sanitation, Asivikelane is also focusing on healthcare facilities. Since 2021, Asivikelane Health has collaborated with clinic staff and residents, with 84% of residents attesting to the positive changes made by Asivikelane Health. This success is largely due to the collective efforts of residents and nurses addressing various challenges, notably improving the efficacy of clinic committees. This approach highlights the power of community engagement and the tangible outcomes achievable through concerted action in healthcare delivery.

Asivikelane continues to expand its reach, with a growing network of participating residents. By amplifying the voices of those in informal settlements it aims to foster inclusive governance and drive meaningful change. As the initiative grows, it has the potential to not only improve the lives of those in informal settlements, but also serve as a model for community-led development initiatives across South Africa and worldwide.

192
SERVICE DELIVERY
IMPROVEMENTS

68
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

1,246
FEMALE RESIDENTS TRAINED

822
MALE RESIDENTS TRAINED



A resident of White Location with the Asivikelane team.

Project team

Thank you to the teams of:

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Develpoement Action Group
Project Preparation Trust
eThekwini Municipality
Knysna Municipality

The communities of:

Quarry Road
Havelock
Bhambayi
White Location
Rheneendal
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