QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

South African CitiesNetwork

APRIL - JUNE
2023-2024

Vol. 4

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Editor's Note

Dear Stakeholder, Welcome to our Quarterly Newsletter

Luncedo Njezula
Editor

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> "We are pleased to announce the appointment of our new CEO, Nosipho Hlatshwayo."

Reflecting on the past quarter, we are excited to share some significant updates and achievements.

Firstly, we are pleased to announce the appointment of our new CEO, Nosipho Hlatshwayo. With her extensive urban planning and development background, Nosipho brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this role. Her strong track record of collaboration and stakeholder engagement makes her the ideal leader to guide the SACN into its next phase of growth and impact.

In this edition, we highlight the remarkable work done by the Urban Safety Reference Group (USRG) along with its partners, the GIZ Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme and Global Affairs Canada (GAC)in their Innovation Competition, which has empowered youth organisations to contribute meaningfully to the National Strategic Plan on GBVF (NSP).

We also celebrate the achievements of the South African Cities Network Innovation Programme team at the World Data Summit in Amsterdam, where they shared valuable insights on the integration of data analytics in urban management and governance.

We are delighted to share the successful hosting of the 64th Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Quarterly Reference Group meeting, a platform for sharing best practices and exploring innovative solutions to enhance public employment initiatives.

We are excited to announce the imminent release of two research papers: "Demystifying Informal Economies in South African Cities" and "Urban Resilience Toolkit". These publications aim to drive positive change in our urban environments.

In our Sustainable and Resilient Cities section, we look into the transformative potential of Green Infrastructure (GI) and its role in climate adaptation. We also share our participation in the environmental awareness quarter and the UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

Our Well Governed Cities section shares insights from our recent Municipal Structures Amendment Bill webinar. The webinar aimed to gather comments on the proposed changes to the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 for submission to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA).

In June, we successfully hosted the second Communication Action Lab in Johannesburg. This event brought together senior and junior communications practitioners from various cities, providing a unique platform for knowledge sharing and skill acquisition. We also launched the Storytelling and Urban Governance Paper, conceptualised from feedback from the previous Communication Action Lab in May 2023.

Lastly, we congratulate Councillor Cyril Xaba on his election as the Mayor of eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality.

We hope you find this edition informative and inspiring. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to your feedback.

Best Regards,

Luncedo Njezula

South African CitiesNetwork

Inclusive Cities

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Innovation Competition on Youth-led GBV Prevention in Urban Spaces

On 26 June 2024, the Urban Safety Reference Group (USRG), along with its partners the GIZ Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme and Global Affairs Canada (GAC), held a showcase to culminate a 9-month Innovation Competition for youth organisations working to end Gender-based Violence (GBV).

Designed and implemented by Story Thinking Academy and Beginning in October 2023, the Innovation Competition on Youth-led GBV Prevention in Urban Spaces took six youth-led community organisations on a journey of learning to grow their organisational capacity to design, think, package and prepare projects as well as implement and track envisioned outcomes and impact. Most importantly, the objective of the experience was to enhance GBV-prevention features in their existing intervention. Participants received intensive mentoring on GBV and gender transformative concepts critical to designing impactful interventions. There was a particular focus on the National Strategic Plan on GBVF (NSP), its key pillars, and the importance of aligning projects with them. This supports the meaningful contribution of youth to the NSP, working in collaboration with their cities and other institutions; moreover, the SACN's sustained focus on youth to bring expression to IUDF Lever 7 on 'active and empowered communities'.

Participating organisations, which were identified through an open call, were:

- **Battle4Mindset (City of Tshwane)**
- **eKasi Bioscope (eThekwini Municipality)**
- **Exotically Divine Pulse (City of Johannesburg)**
- **Mordecai Ndlovu Foundation (Sedibeng District Municipality/Emfuleni Local Municipality)**
- **Native Eye Creatives (Mbombela Municipality)**
- **Nokwanda Patocka Foundation (Buffalo City Municipality)**

The organisations showed significant progress in integrating learnings into their activities, as shown when they each hosted workshops and activations to demonstrate proof-of-concept in the weeks leading to the closing showcase. Part of the process also involved connecting them to relevant city departments for continued learning and the opportunity to tap into future city processes.

The closing showcase, hosted at the Pretoria National Botanical Gardens, brought together a selection of actors in the government, Gender/GBV prevention, funding, tech, arts and other sectors to expose the work of the six organisations and to make connections for their continued work.

Inclusive Cities

Battle 4 Mindset and Musawenkosi Tshuma Senior International Assistance Officer from the Canadian High Commission.

eKasi Bioscope and Nosipho Hlatshwayo, SACN CEO.

Native Exotically Divine Pulse and Thomas Hellmann, Programme Manager: Violence and Crime Prevention Programme, GIZ.

Mordecai Ndlovu Foundation and Nosipho Hlatshwayo, SACN CEO.

Native Eye Creatives and Thomas Hellmann, Programme Manager: Violence and Crime Prevention Programme, GIZ.

Nokwanda Patocka Foundation and Musawenkosi Tshuma Senior International Assistance Officer from the Canadian High Commission.

Innovative Cities

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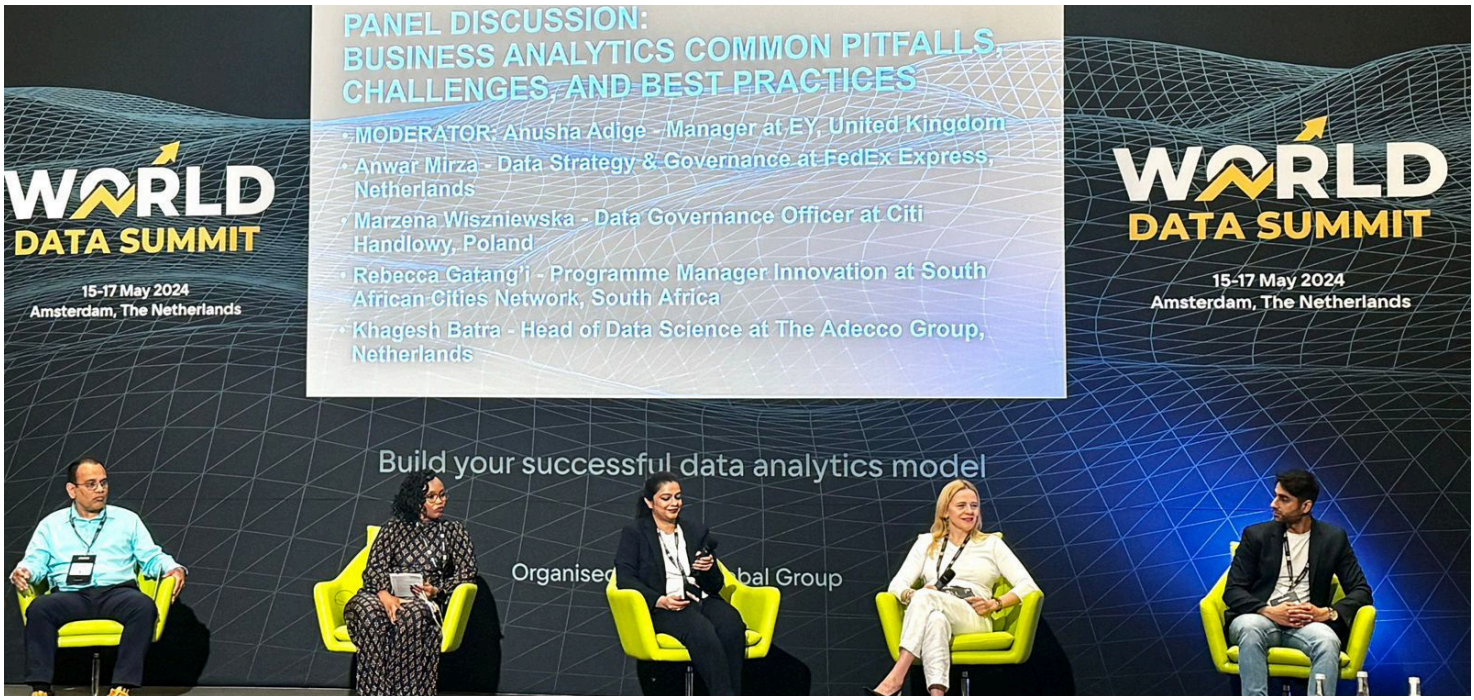
SACN at the World Data Summit 2024, 15-17 May 2024

The South African Cities Network's Innovation Programme Team, Rebecca Gatang'i, Programme Manager for Innovative Cities and Majaha Dlamini, Urban Data Manager, as well as Acting CEO Nosipho Hlatshwayo, attended the World Data Summit in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on the 15th - 17th of May 2024.

The World Data Summit served as a dynamic platform for professionals across the data management and analytics sector. The summit focused on vital areas such as data governance, privacy, machine learning applications, and the role of open-source technologies in data management.

The SACN's participation at the World Data Summit 2024 was highly significant. Rebecca participated in a panel discussion and focused on applying analytics within the context of local government, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities that arise in this setting. Nosipho and Majaha contributed to various discussions and shared insights from a South African perspective.

SACN's involvement at the summit provided valuable insights into integrating data analytics in urban management and governance, reinforcing the importance of data-driven decision-making in enhancing urban life. The participation contributed to the global dialogue on best practices in data analytics and reinforced SACN's role as a leader in promoting innovative, adaptable urban policies in South Africa.



Innovative Cities

Key Highlights of SACN's Participation:

- **Addressing Local Government Challenges:** SACN highlighted the specific hurdles that local governments face when implementing analytics, the complexities of aligning new technologies with existing governance structures and the continuous need for adaptation to technological advances. SACN further unpacked how analytics have directly influenced policy-making operational decisions, offering concrete illustrations of analytics in action and guiding other government practitioners in effectively using analytics to enhance operational effectiveness and improve citizen services.

- A major theme of the input was the concept of **"Build-to-Adapt"** which emphasises the need for structures and policies that are flexible and adaptable rather than merely durable. This concept was illustrated through the story of the Choluteca Bridge in Honduras, which, despite remaining intact after a hurricane, became useless because the roads around it were washed away. This analogy powerfully encapsulated the need for adaptive strategies in government planning and analytics.

- **Knowledge Sharing:** SACN's pivotal role in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and collaborative solutions was highlighted, underscored by how such forums and discussions at international summits help foster a community prepared to innovate and adapt to changing environments.

Through the various sessions and platforms at the summit, SACN's participation afforded the institution;

1. An opportunity for SACN to market itself on the world platform.
2. Draw attention to the work and products of SACN.
3. Proactive interaction with potential partners seeking partnership opportunities
4. Contribute to the discussions through shared learning, add a South African perspective to the conversations, and gain knowledge that can be shared with and/or applied to our stakeholders.

This engagement at the World Data Summit thus helped highlight the potential of analytics to transform local government operations and policymaking, making a compelling case for the broader adoption of these technologies in public administration. The lessons and strategies the organisation shares will likely influence and inspire many other cities and governments aiming to harness the power of data for the public good.

Productive Cities

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Successful Hosting of the 64th EPWP Quarterly Reference Group

We successfully hosted the 64th Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Quarterly Reference Group meeting in June. This pivotal gathering brought together city practitioners responsible for implementing public employment programmes across South African cities. The event provided a platform for sharing best practices, discussing challenges, and exploring innovative solutions to enhance the effectiveness and impact of public employment initiatives. The collaborative spirit and insightful discussions during the meeting reaffirmed our collective commitment to promoting employment opportunities and improving urban livelihoods.

As we look ahead, we are thrilled to announce the imminent release of two research papers:

Demystifying Informal Economies in South African Cities

This concise report aims to illuminate the complexities of the informal sector in urban settings. By proposing a framework for understanding informal economies at the city level, identifying readily available research and data, and presenting case studies from the Global South, this publication provides insights for policymakers and practitioners. Our goal is to enhance the integration of informal economies into formal value chains, stimulate value addition, and support the upward mobility of those participating in these sectors.

Urban Resilience Toolkit

In an era of increasing urban challenges, the Urban Resilience Toolkit offers practical strategies and tools for cities to build and enhance their resilience. This toolkit addresses various aspects of urban resilience, including climate adaptation, infrastructure robustness, and community preparedness. By equipping city officials and stakeholders with this resource, we aim to strengthen the capacity of South African cities to withstand and recover from adverse events, ensuring sustainable and resilient urban growth.

Looking Forward

As we embark on the financial year, we encourage all our stakeholders to engage with these upcoming publications and leverage the insights and recommendations to drive positive change in their respective urban environments.

Sustainable and Resilient Cities

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Beyond Parks and Trees: Green Infrastructure for Urban Planning in Cities

As we conclude the environmental awareness quarter – marked by Earth Day (22 April), International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May), and World Environment Day (5 June) – the urgency of environmental action resonates more than ever. The UN's Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) further underscores the critical role of nature, urging the protection and revival of ecosystems globally. This call to action prompts cities worldwide to embrace innovative solutions and integrate nature into their urban development plans.

Green infrastructure is gaining prominence as a solution and a powerful tool for climate adaptation. In South Africa, the SACN has championed mainstream green infrastructure in spatial planning and infrastructure provision. Our 2016 publication, "Planning for Green Infrastructure: Options for South African Cities," serves as a valuable resource for implementing these strategies.

Green infrastructure (GI) is about more than parks and trees. It is a comprehensive network of natural and man-made spaces woven into the urban fabric. This includes everything from wetlands and bioswales to green roofs, permeable pavements, and strategically planted trees. These elements work together to create a city that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also healthier, more resilient, and more sustainable.

Unpacking the benefits of Green Infrastructure:

Improved Health and Well-being: Studies have shown that access to green spaces can significantly reduce stress, improve mental health, and boost physical activity levels. Parks and gardens provide opportunities for residents to relax, socialise and engage in outdoor activities, fostering a healthier and happier community.

Enhanced Social Cohesion: Green spaces act as natural gathering points, fostering a sense of community and encouraging interaction between residents. Parks and green open spaces become vibrant hubs where people can connect, play and build relationships. This fosters social cohesion and creates a more inclusive urban environment.

Boosted Biodiversity: GI provides essential habitat and corridors for wildlife, allowing a diverse range of plants and animals to thrive within the city. This enriches the urban ecosystem and promotes natural pest control and pollination, contributing to a healthier and more balanced environment.

Climate Change Adaptation: Green infrastructure plays a crucial role in helping cities adapt to the challenges of climate change. Parks and green spaces absorb rainwater, mitigate flooding and provide cooling during heat waves. Trees and vegetation also act as natural carbon sinks, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

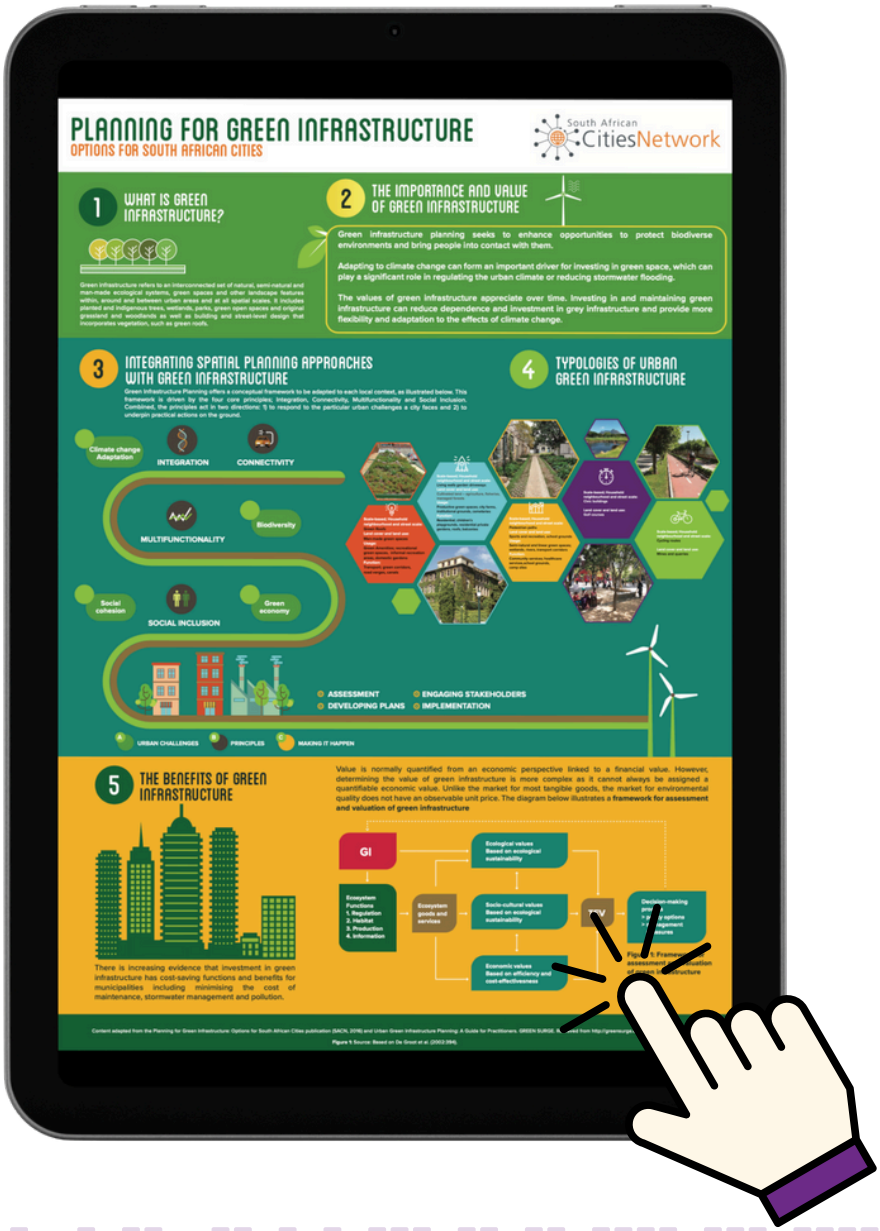
Economic Opportunities: Studies have shown that cities with a strong focus on green infrastructure experience several economic benefits. GI can attract businesses and residents seeking a more desirable living environment, increasing property values and economic growth. Additionally, green infrastructure can reduce building maintenance costs and promote energy efficiency, further contributing to the city's economic well-being.

Sustainable and Resilient Cities

Building on this crucial publication, SACN has released a captivating poster that translates the publication's key messages into a visually engaging call to action. This informative poster empowers cities to unlock the transformative potential of Green Infrastructure (GI) – a strategic approach to integrating nature into urban planning and development.

We have also developed a series of informative short videos that highlight some of the initiatives underway in cities like eThekwini, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, and Tshwane. These are available on our YouTube channel; click here.

Click below to read more on Planning For Green Infrastructure



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Municipal Structures Amendment Bill Webinar

25 JUNE 2024 | 12:30-15:30

The South African Cities Network (SACN), in partnership with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) and the Dullah Omar Institute, convened a remote webinar on 25 June for city officials and the wider public to gather comments on the Municipal Structures Amendment Bill for submission to the department.

When Minister Nkadimeng announced the publication of the Bill in the Government Gazette on 21 May for public comments, she said the increased number of municipalities affected by hung councils (from 24 in the year 2000 to 81 municipalities after the 2021 local government elections) signalled the need to reduce coalition instability in municipal councils which is affecting governance and service delivery.

The webinar began with presentations from an eminent panel consisting of:

- Dr Kevin Naidoo, Deputy Director General: Policy, Governance and Administration, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs: an overview of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Amendment Bill
- Prof Jaap de Visser, SARChI Chair in Multilevel Government, Law and Development, Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape: an academic perspective on the Local Government: Municipal Structures Amendment Bill.
- Mpho Tladi, Specialist in Strategy and Research, City of Johannesburg: the city's coalition government experience.
- Beryl Khanyile, Gauteng Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs: general observations on the municipal governance status quo and implications thereof for city administrations.

After the presentations from the panel, the remainder of the webinar was devoted to a discussion on the four measures proposed in the Bill:

1. Conversion to the collective executive system
2. Transparent voting and the tabling of motions of no confidence every two years
3. Parties and interests may enter binding coalition agreements
4. The introduction of a 1% electoral threshold

The discussion was facilitated by Johandri Wright, a postdoctoral fellow at the Dullah Omar Institute, and Danga Mughogho, SACN Programme Manager Well Governed Cities, who solicited input from the participants on four main areas:

1. Do you think the Bill will work as intended?
2. Do you think the Bill will reduce coalition instability in municipalities?
3. Do you envisage any practical difficulties in implementing the Bill?
4. Do you have any recommendations for improvements to the Bill?

The webinar was very well attended, and an online survey was also created to allow people who could not attend to submit their input, which will be submitted to CoGTA in July.

eThekwini Municipality elects Cllr. Cyril Xaba

We would like to congratulate Councillor Cyril Xaba on his election as the Mayor of eThekwini Municipality.

eThekwini Municipality Mayoral Committee - Click Here

Team News & Events

SACN Board Appoints CEO

The South African Cities Network (SACN) is pleased to announce that Nosipho Hlatshwayo has been appointed as the new CEO of the SACN from 1 July 2024. She has been the Acting CEO since November 2023. With her urban planning and development background, Nosipho brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this role. Her strong track record of collaboration and stakeholder engagement makes her an ideal candidate to lead the SACN into its next phase of growth and impact.

As CEO, Nosipho will oversee the organisation's strategic direction, build relationships with key stakeholders and partners, and drive initiatives that contribute to the sustainable development of South African cities. She will work closely with the SACN Council and Board of Directors to promote knowledge sharing, collaboration, and innovation among South African municipalities.

Team News & Events

Communication Action Lab 11-12 June 2024

The City Communicators' Reference Group convened the second Communication Action Lab in Johannesburg on the 11 & 12 June 2024. Senior and Junior Communications Practitioners from our participating cities attended the event: the City of Johannesburg, the City of Ekurhuleni, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality, Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, eThekwin Municipality and Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. We also had the City of Cape Town and members from KwaDukuza Local Municipality, iLembe Local Municipality and the National Department of Home Affairs in attendance.

The Communication Action Lab provides a unique opportunity for city communications practitioners to share their ideas and learn and acquire critical skills. The event included learning, expert speakers, master classes and interactive sessions for participants. We also launched the Storytelling and Urban Governance Paper, conceptualised from feedback from the previous Communication Action Lab in May 2023.

Sithembiso Soyaya,
Nelson Mandela Bay Municipalty

Priah Dass,
eThekwini Municipalty

Oarabile Motabogi,
City of Tshwane

Priya Reddy,
City of Cape Town

Rebecca Gatang'i,
SA Cities Network

Ayanda Ngcebetsha,
Microsoft Africa

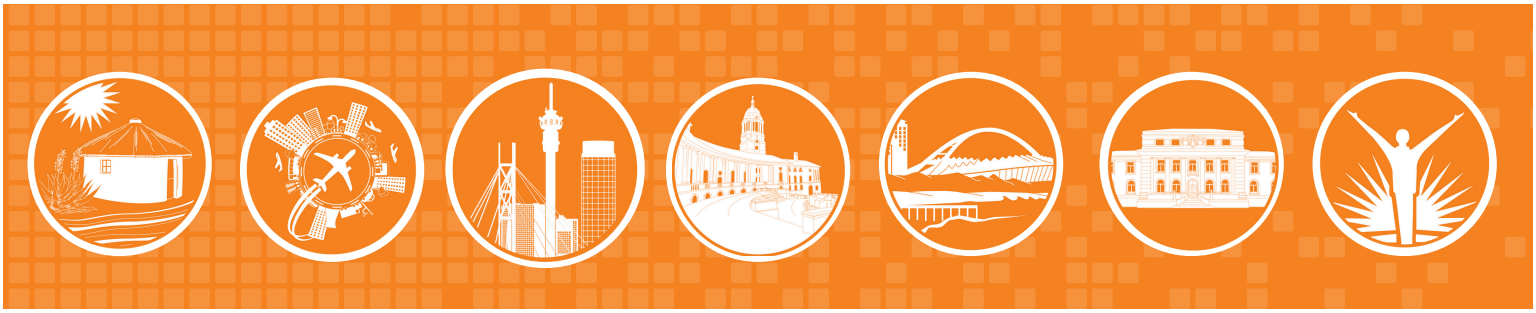
Stuart Rothgiesser,
ROTH Communications

Professor Themba Maseko
WITS School of Governance

Motalatale Modiba,
Gauteng Department of Health

Elaine Cheung
South African-German Energy (SAGEN) Programme

As our loyal readers of our Quarterly Newsletter, we would love your feedback!
Please click here.



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