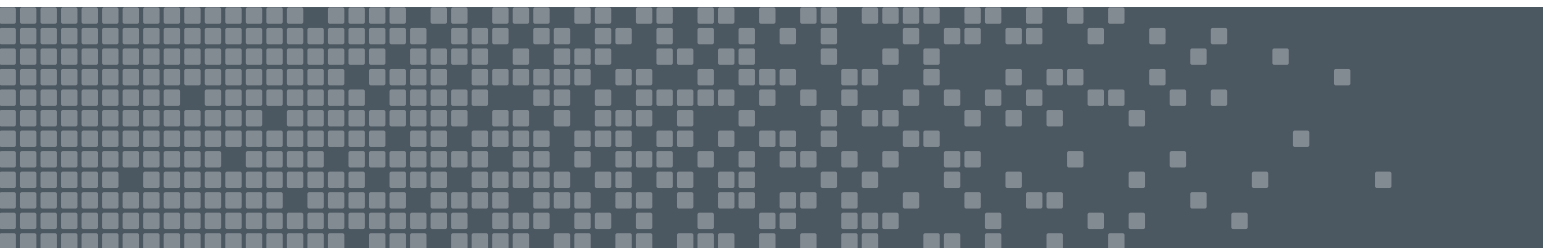


QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



APR - JUNE

Vol. 4

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Building a Network for South Africa's Cities

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#ACityTellsAStory

Editor's Note

Dear Stakeholder, Welcome to our Quarterly Newsletter



Nosipho Hlatshwayo
CEO

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“Our new Strategy for 2026-2031 marks an important evolution in SACN's work, with a strengthened focus on supporting both metropolitan municipalities and Intermediate City Municipalities (ICMs).”



As we publish this final newsletter for the 2025/26 financial year, we also mark the conclusion of the South African Cities Network's 2021-2026 Strategy. Over the past five years, this strategy has guided our work to support South Africa's cities through research, collaboration and practical solutions that have strengthened urban governance and development.

This edition highlights several important milestones across our programme areas. We celebrate the completion of the State of Crime and Safety in South African Cities Report 2025, which provides valuable evidence on crime trends and social risk factors across the country's metropolitan municipalities. We also share progress on the development of the State of South African Cities Report 2026, SACN's flagship publication, which will help shape the future of South Africa's urban agenda.

Our work this quarter also reflects our commitment to building stronger institutions and more resilient cities. This includes advancing research on Public Employment Programme exit strategies and facilitating two workshops on Air Quality Management Capacity Building Programmes for the City of Tshwane, with a focus on political oversight. By hosting the first in-person meeting of the African Metropolitan Governance and Infrastructure Network (AGaIN) and facilitating PDIA workshops with the Cities of Johannesburg and Tshwane, we continue to support municipalities in addressing complex urban challenges.

The quarter also included our SACN Council and Annual General Meeting, as well as our Partners' Dinner, where we provided a progress update on the upcoming State of Cities Report. We also shared our new strategic direction, reaffirming the value of collaboration in advancing South Africa's cities.

As we close one strategic cycle, we are equally excited to begin another. Our new Strategy for 2026-2031 marks an important evolution in SACN's work, with a strengthened focus on supporting both metropolitan municipalities and Intermediate City Municipalities (ICMs). This expanded focus recognises the increasingly important role that ICMs play in driving inclusive economic growth, improving service delivery and strengthening regional development across South Africa. Through deeper collaboration, innovative research, knowledge sharing and practical support, we remain committed to helping cities navigate complexity and build resilient, inclusive and prosperous urban futures.

None of these achievements would be possible without the continued commitment of our member cities, government partners, development agencies, research institutions and many collaborators who share our vision for better cities. We thank you for your ongoing support and partnership and look forward to embarking on this new strategic journey together.

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter and invite you to continue engaging with the work of the South African Cities Network as we enter an exciting new chapter.

Best Regards,

Nosipho Hlatshwayo



State of Crime and Safety in SA Cities Report 2025



SACN is proud to announce the completion of the State of Crime and Safety in SA Cities Report 2025, a critical piece of research that offers an evidence-based analysis of crime trends and social risk factors in the country's nine largest metropolitan areas.

This report is the core output of the Urban Safety Reference Group (USRG) and represents a decade of sustained work to provide city-level data essential for informed policy, budgeting, and safety interventions. The SACN remains the only organisation in South Africa that overlays national crime statistics with structural risk factors to provide this unique, city-level perspective on urban safety. The completion of this report is a significant milestone for the USRG and our shared commitment to building safer, more inclusive cities. This data is not just statistics; it is a tool for mayors, city managers, and community leaders to understand the specific challenges in their jurisdictions and to design targeted interventions.

The report analyses 21 indicators across the nine SACN member cities, providing a comprehensive overview of contact crimes like murder, robbery, and assault. The analysis highlights the complex nature of safety in the urban environment, with high levels of violent crime concentrated in specific areas, driven by factors such as inequality, unemployment, and social exclusion.

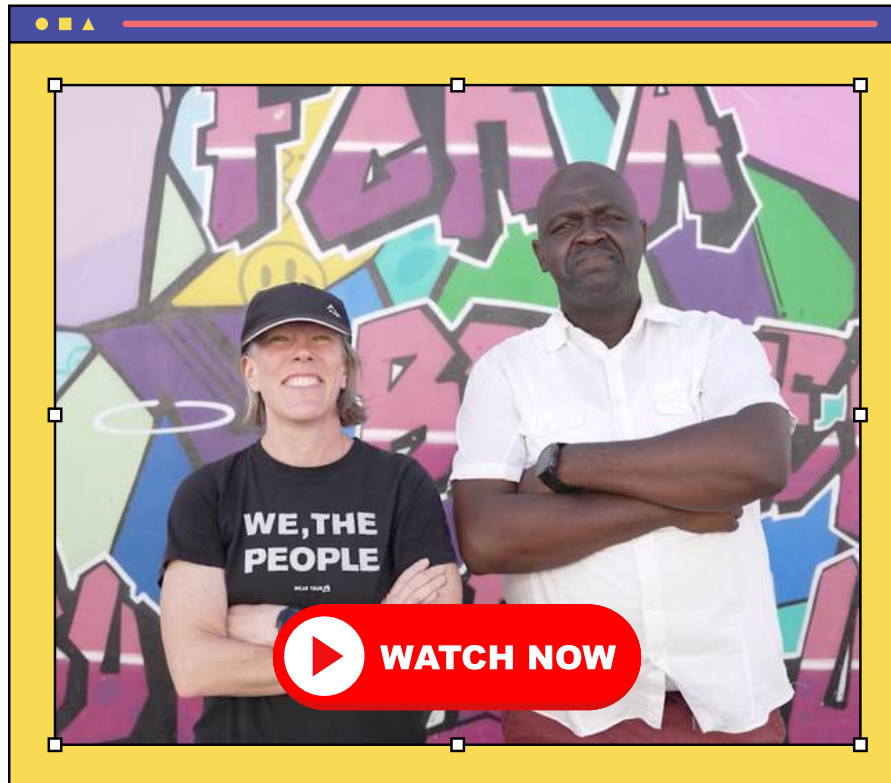
This year's report arrives at a pivotal moment. For the first time in over a decade, the data reveals a decrease in interpersonal violence, with murder rates dropping by 11.7% between 2023/24 and 2024/25. This is a significant development, even as the report confirms that South African cities remain the epicentre of the country's crime challenge, accounting for 53% of all recorded murders. The murder rate in our cities remains seven times higher than the international average.

This year's report also features spatialized crime data, providing interactive maps to show the geographic distribution of key crime types in each city. These maps will be hosted on the SACN's Spatial Crime Data (SCODA) platform, offering a visual and accessible tool for urban safety practitioners.

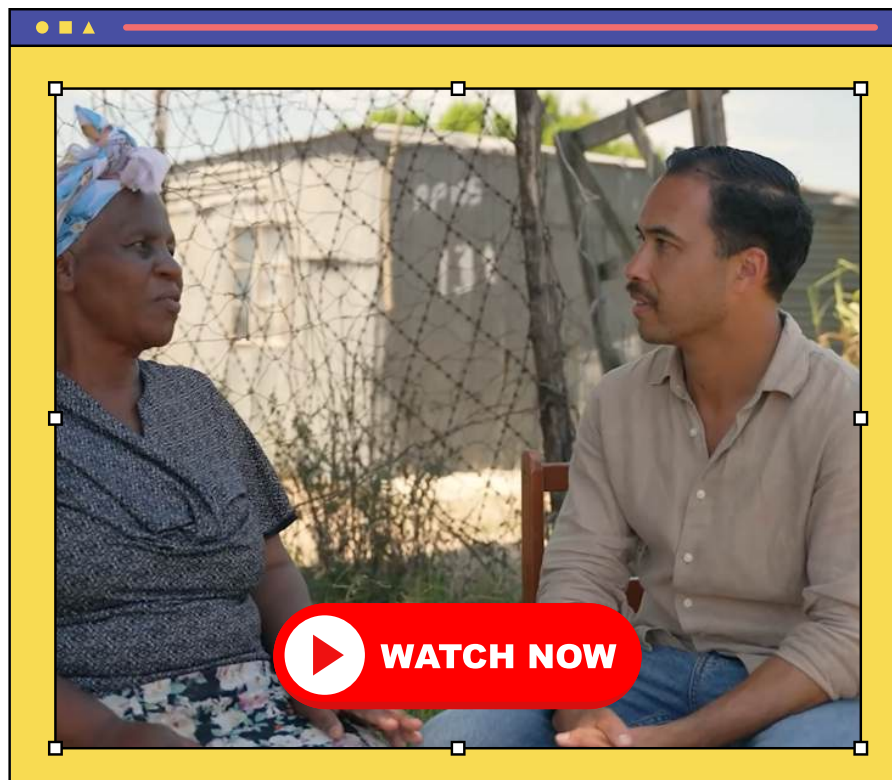
A key achievement in delivering this report was the partnership with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) for data analysis.



Good Hood Stories Season 4 is now available!



Placemaking for Safer Communities



Informal Settlement Reblocking



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Towards Transformed, Future-Focused Cities: A Progress Update on SoCR VI

The development of the State of South African Cities Report VI (SoCR VI) continues to make steady progress, with key milestones achieved during the quarter. As SACN's flagship publication, this edition is being developed around the theme **"Transformed Future-Focused Cities"**, adopting both a **retrospective and prospective lens**. The report will reflect on how South Africa's cities have evolved over the past three decades of democracy while looking ahead to the emerging trends, opportunities and uncertainties that will shape their future. This dual perspective will provide a deeper understanding of the country's urban trajectory and help identify the actions needed to build more resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities.

During this reporting period, significant progress has been made in refining the report's conceptual framework, research methodology and chapter structure, while strengthening the governance and implementation arrangements that will guide its development. The project has now moved into the research and content development phase, with contributors and partners collaborating to produce evidence-based analysis and future scenarios to inform urban policy, planning, and decision-making. As the project advances, SoCR VI remains on track to deliver a forward-looking publication that will shape the national urban agenda and support South Africa's cities in navigating an increasingly complex and rapidly changing future.

The next edition of the SoCR will be released in April 2027.





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South Africa's Public Employment Programme Exit Strategies



Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) represent South Africa's efforts to combat mass unemployment and poverty and enhance social protection. But a persistent challenge lies in ensuring that participants transition from temporary employment to sustainable livelihoods upon exiting these programmes. The South African Cities Network has undertaken comprehensive research to understand the critical success factors for effective exit strategies in PEPs, gathering diverse perspectives from cities, programme managers, government officials, beneficiaries, and independent experts. This edition delves into SACN's findings and draws connections to emerging developments in the South African PEP landscape.

Although they represent the largest mode of support for the most vulnerable and a crucial part of South Africa's social protection system, PEPs are not reaching enough people given the high rate of unemployment. Therefore, it is important to identify the critical success factors that will enable participants to exit PEPs and transition into sustainable economic activities, i.e., long-term employment, education, and entrepreneurship. The following high-level points were drawn from SACN's consultation with stakeholders.

- PEPs need to be viewed as mechanisms that actively enable full economic participation and social mobility, rather than merely poverty-alleviation or social-protection tools. Transitions are more successful when the work is oriented toward solving actual social problems, i.e., solving a concrete problem that creates a natural pipeline for employment.
- Participants benefit from a grounding period. This duration allows individuals to build a sufficient work ethic, skills, exposure, and networks. Currently, many PEP opportunities last three to six months, which is an insufficient period for long-term stability.
- The successful implementation of complex PEPs requires integrated planning and monitoring across different departments, but blockages occur when departments struggle to collaborate and leverage each other's resources.
- Putting in place reliable tracking mechanisms is crucial to measure the actual impact of PEPs in terms of the social value of work to the participants, communities and the economy.

The South African PEP landscape is continually evolving, with PEP initiatives increasingly recognising the need for robust exit strategies and pathways to long-term economic inclusion. Therefore, clear pathways need to be embedded in their design, from programme planning and participation to sustainable economic activity and livelihoods. Emerging PEP initiatives are demonstrating the tangible impact of these principles, showcasing that with strategic design and comprehensive support, public employment can indeed lead to long-term economic inclusion.



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Inside Tshwane's Air Quality Capacity Building Workshops

In April and May 2026, SACN ran its Air Quality Management Capacity Building Programme for the City of Tshwane, focusing on political oversight. Councillors who attended the workshops spanned portfolios such as environment, housing, community safety, social development and civilian oversight. The objective of the programme is to build a shared understanding of a problem that rarely gets the attention it deserves in local government: the air Tshwane's residents breathe.

Air quality management is solely seen as the responsibility of Environmental departments in many South African municipal governments. It is, however, an environmental function whose drivers and outcomes are shared by almost every other city portfolio. This is the premise of the workshop design: the people who need to understand it are not environmental officials, but councillors and portfolio committee members responsible for budgets, oversight, and service delivery to the community.

Sources of Air pollution in Tshwane are many. Household fuel burning in informal settlements, industrial emissions, vehicle emissions concentrated in the CBD, and illegal waste dumping and open burning at community level are all active and overlapping sources. Geographically, the pattern points squarely at environmental, economic, and spatial injustices, where informal settlements and peri-urban communities such as these absorb a disproportionate share of the pollution burden from both household practices and nearby industrial activity. Coordination is the city's weakest link. This was the single most emerging concern from the discussions during the workshops.

Enforcement tells a similar story. The legal authority to act already exists, but the workshops surfaced a gap between existing by-laws and implementing them. Staffing shortages compound the problem. Tshwane typically run air quality functions with only three designated officers. Attendees, a cohort of political representatives, however, made commitments such as embedding air quality into every project, launching clean-up campaigns, and opening up communications between departments for improved coordination.

The programme continues to run capacity-building workshops for the city, with the next phase focusing on City officials and Community-Based Organisations with the City of Tshwane.





African Metropolitan Governance and Infrastructure Network (AGaIN)

The first in-person meeting of the African Metropolitan Governance and Infrastructure Network (AGaIN) took place from 23-25 June. AGaIN is a collaborative initiative coordinated by the South African Cities Network (SACN) and the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO) in partnership with the Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB).

Delegates to the meeting came from 13 cities and eight countries, encompassing four continental regions (Eastern, Western and Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa).

Over the three days of deliberations, the participants reaffirmed the African Agenda advocacy document that was presented at the World Metropolitan Summit in Barcelona in October 2025, further developed the research and advocacy agenda for the network and agreed on governance structures for the network moving forward.



Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)

This quarter, PDIA workshops have been held with the City of Tshwane and the City of Joburg.

On 8 April, a team of five members was nominated by Dr Abel Malaka, the Group Head, Environment and Agriculture. Team members came from the following departments: Environment, Building Control, Revenue and Waste. The objective of the workshop was to apply the PDIA methodology to the problem of backyard waste collection, where the city finds it cannot keep up with the waste generated by stands with unauthorised backyard rental shacks.

The participants had never worked together before and had to share their departmental perspectives on waste management and backyard dwellings in the PDIA process. For example, during the meeting, Building Control realised the impact their regulatory decisions have on Waste/Environment, because the zoning of a property has immediate implications for waste generation and, hence, collection.

The output of the workshop was a fishbone diagram that mapped the causes and sub-causes of the problem, each of which offers a potential entry point to engage with an element of the problem. The city intends to incorporate learnings from the workshop in developing the backyard waste policy.

On 27 May, we held a PDIA workshop in the City of Joburg with the Special Projects Management Office (SPMO) in the Office of the COO. The team of six people was seized with the problem of strengthening the linkages between citizens' lived experiences and the city's infrastructure planning and budgeting processes. They developed a fishbone diagram and sequenced the interventions they had identified to tackle the problem.

Team News & Events

SACN Council and Annual General Meeting

The South African Cities Network (SACN) held its Council and Annual General Meeting on 22 April 2026, chaired by SACN Council Chairperson, Cllr Xola Pakati.

The meeting was attended by the Minister of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Hon. Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa; the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) President, Cllr Bheke Stofile; the eThekweni Municipality Mayor, Cyril Xaba; and representatives from our participating cities.



SACN Council Chairperson, Cllr Xola Pakati



SACN CEO, Ms Nosipho Hlatshwayo



Minister of CoGTA, Hon. Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa



SALGA President, Cllr Bheke Stofile



Team News & Events

SACN Hosts Partners' Dinner

On 4 June 2026, the South African Cities Network (SACN) hosted a dinner for our various partners. This engagement is intended to provide our partners with an overview of the organisation's new five-year strategy (July 2026-June 2027), in which we shared our strategic priorities and areas of focus for the upcoming period, with the intention of strengthening and continuing our partnership in advancing the development of cities.

In addition, an update on the progress of the sixth edition of the State of South African Cities Report (SoCR VI) was provided, highlighting the value this iteration will bring to cities and stakeholders alike.





As our loyal readers of our
Quarterly Newsletter, we would
love your feedback!
Please [click here](#).



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