A social audit report on the provision of water by trucks in Spring Valley, eMalahleni has been released. The report presents the main findings of a social audit that was conducted in Spring Valley informal settlement during the month of February 2016.

Planact undertook the social audit following the resident’s dissatisfaction with water service delivery within the settlement. The Social Audit aimed at holding the municipality accountable for water provision in the informal settlement and ensuring that residents exercise their constitutional rights.

Some of the social audit findings are as follows:

• Emalahleni Municipality appointed a service provider to deliver water by trucks to the community since March 2013.

• The service provider is paid R3,000 per/day for the delivery of water in all service areas and this costs the municipality between R400,000 and R500,000 a month, thus makes it a very expensive exercise.

• There are 9 water stations with JOJO tanks in Spring Valley and nine more stations that still need Jojo tanks and those without tanks get water from the trucks straight to their buckets or containers.

Following the call for informal settlement upgrading, Planact embarked on empowering communities to participate in the upgrading process of their informal settlements. It is through this programme that Planact was introduced to the eMalahleni Municipality, and in particular the Spring Valley Informal Settlement.

The audit was conducted with the support of International Budget Partnership and other partners namely; Social Justice Coalition (SJC) and Ndifun’ukwazi (NU).

For more information on Social Audits please contact shumani@planact.org.za

All stakeholders invited.
Contact mike@planact.org.za or 011 403 6291 for more info.
Planact contributes to Open Government Partnership (OGP)

Planact, represented by the Executive Director, **Fred Kusambiza-Kiingi** joined a network of reformers to endorse an open letter with a list of demands to the special envoy on Open Government Partnership (OGP) Africa Regional Meeting held in Cape Town, earlier this month.

The OGP is an international voluntary effort to improve governance performance and encourage civic participation provides a platform for reformers committed to making their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. A statement of improved engagement between government and civil society was developed and it is out this that civil society is going to hold a meeting with government to clarify.

Under the theme: “Open Government for Sustainable Development in Africa,” the partnership is an innovative way for governments and civil society to work together as partners towards a clear, shared objective: better government through openness. For Planact, the evolution and identity of developmental work, over the past 30 years, has been successful through strong engagements with the local government structures in various project communities.

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**THEMBELIHLE SINKHOLE - A TICKING TIME BOMB**

A dolomite sinkhole, which opened up about 2 months ago in the Thembelihle Informal Settlement, south of Johannesburg is not only widening and deepening but it is now moving closer to households.

Although no fatalities have been noted, the sinkhole poses as a serious danger, particularly to children in the area. Some residents, however, are suspicious over this geological formation pointing to traditional beliefs –“MaMlambo” as a possible cause.

During Planact’s regular site visit early this month, residents said that the Disaster Management team had come and put a barricade tap around the hole but have expressed concern this does not address the problem especially when erratic rains come before winter. The residents of Thembelihle have reportedly dubbed this formation as an “apartheid dolomite”. Planact is making efforts to contact relevant Departments to assist with urgent measures to address the problem.
ATTN: Wattville residents, in Ekurhuleni Municipality, have come together to form a unique housing cooperative society to offer consumer education and financial literacy, through educational workshops for its members. The cooperative intends to identify vacant, unused or underutilised property to develop for social housing.

The co-operative named, Aerotropolis Housing Co-operative Society (AHCOS), is the integrated housing and economic empowerment service delivery support facilitator for low income households to improve their housing and living conditions.

Under the community economic development programme, Planact engages community groups to identify and engage in sustainable local economic opportunities and the Wattville community has grabbed this chance as a reserve fund and trust fund for its members.

The ground-breaking Court ruling handed down on the 5th of April 2016, according to the Socio-Economic Rights Institute’s (SERI) press statement (5 April 2016), has long term implications on Planact’s informal settlements upgrading projects, particularly Spring Valley Informal Settlement in the eMalahleni Local Municipality.

The ruling on the Slovo Park Informal settlement clearly stipulates that the upgrading of informal settlements is a constitutional responsibility of municipalities. Therefore, this is a victory that should be celebrated not only in Slovo Park, but in all informal settlements.

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GOOD GOVERNANCE
settlements that have been struggling to be upgraded in-situ.

Planact, in partnership with the community of Spring Valley, developed in-situ upgrading plans which include settlement layout plans, public transport networks, social amenities and economic activities for the settlement. Therefore, this ruling makes it imperative for municipalities to actively participate in the upgrading of informal settlements in partnerships with all stakeholders.

The success of the Slovo Park ruling will empower communities to work in partnership with their municipalities in the upgrading of informal settlements. As such, the ruling will enable Planact and the community of Spring Valley to submit the Spring Valley development plan as an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) during the IDP submission process, among other things.

Read more here > http://www.planact.org.za/ground-breaking-ruling-to-benefit-spring-valley/

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Impending elections and their destabilising effects on community development

Planact’s work within the local government sphere has brought a very valuable lesson that elections are so important to an extent that community development takes a back seat as elections draw nearer. The significance of these elections is so big that many councillors literally work for re-election into their positions, as opposed to working for community development.

Local government representation through ward councillors and committees is very important for Planact’s work in community development, and as such anticipating the negative effect of the upcoming elections is crucial. Planact’s forecast is that in the last months leading to the dates of the elections, our work in communities will be severely disrupted. Political campaigning, politicisation of service delivery and political turf wars will become the order of the day, and in effect pushing organisations like Planact to the margins. There is also the possibility that political establishments could use Planact as a political tool by claiming that they brought the partnerships between the community and Planact.

This has been an important lesson for Planact as we have got to understand that the bulk of the important community work should be done during the “safe and stable” times that are not near local government elections.

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