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NEWS JOURNAL

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PLANACT'S 40-YEAR LEGACY



In 2025, Planact celebrates 40 years after its establishment in 1985. Since then, Planact still holds a special place in the history of community development and democratisation in South Africa. The 40-year legacy and the evolution of its work remain rooted in empowering disadvantaged communities. Recurrent themes over the past four decades continue to be centred on advancing the right to the city, urban development and informal settlement upgrading as well as local economic development.

Planact works in solidarity with marginalised communities who experience exploitation and isolation recognising the vital role they play in promoting interventions that advance their human rights and development through transparent and accountable governance processes. Through workshops, community gatherings, and open dialogues, Planact empowers individuals to connect and collaborate in the pursuit of social justice and urban equity. By bridging the gap between marginalised communities and decision-makers, Planact aims to build more resilient and compassionate urban space for all.

The 40-year legacy of Planact has propelled numerous former employees into significant positions within government and the development sector, both nationally and internationally. Throughout its history, Planact has attracted development practitioners from around the world, especially those inspired by South Africa's path to democracy. Everyone associated with Planact shares valuable perspectives on its impact and the evolution of its identity amidst the numerous changes and challenges faced by the country, particularly within the civil society sector, over the past four decades.

MONITORING INDOOR HEAT WITH RESIDENTS AND THE INTERNET OF THINGS (MICE RIOT)

By Wetu Memela



Community Mass Meeting in Choba



Heat Sensor Testing in Wattville

The adverse effects of climate change are being felt all over the world and the changing weather patterns are disrupting the daily lives of billions all over the world. In South Africa the intensifying summer heat makes life unbearable for people living in vulnerable communities.

Planact, in partnership with the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO), is embarking on action research surrounding the effects of extreme heat in different low-cost dwellings in the City of Ekurhuleni and the City of Tshwane. The aim of the project is to create awareness, and the use of data collected as evidence to advocate for more sustainable building materials to be used in future social and community housing projects to achieve more resilient settlements.

Working with our community partners in Watville in the City of Ekurhuleni and Choba in the City of Tshwane, Planact is placing 150 sensors in homes to measure indoor temperature extremes over 12 months. The community participants will also be involved in workshops, dialogues and other community events aimed at increasing climate change awareness and citizen science campaigns.

Planact's MICE-RIoT project is one of many Data-Driven Governance pilot projects currently being implanted across Africa with the support of The Belgian Development Agency (Enabel). These innovations seek to improve state efficiency with policy and programs being informed by large-scale and inclusive data gathering. All projects are being implemented with the intention of being replicated on a larger scale.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN MHLUZI TOWNSHIP: STEVE TSHWETE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) ✓

May 29 at 9:16 AM · 🌐

📍 Youth Engagement in Mhluzi Township: Steve Tshwete Local Municipality

The IEC Mpumalanga, in partnership with PLANACT, hosted a youth-focused engagement session in Mhluzi Township under the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality.

This initiative is part of our ongoing efforts to empower young people and simplify the electoral process, ensuring they are equipped to become active, informed citizens in their communities from an early age. 🗳️🌐

#YouthVoteMatters #IECInAction #RegisterToVote



Pictures courtesy of www.facebook.com/IECSouthAfrica

ADDRESSING EMALAHLENI'S WATER WOES

By Tamzin Hudson



Among the many informal settlements where Planact works are the fifteen settlements in Emalahleni Local Municipality (ELM) in Mpumalanga, where communities have long been concerned about water availability and their water quality.

In response, Planact undertook a social audit focusing on these twin sets of issues, determined to obtain a comprehensive picture of water provision. Social audits give expression to accountable and transparent governance processes where citizens are at the heart of the audit's success.

Planact's social audit, focused on water, undertakes a two-fold examination with a study of government documents, including tenders and compares them to the lived and on-the-ground experiences of communities. Integral to this is the monitoring of government service delivery and expenditure.

In ELM, water trucking is the norm as there is no water supply to communities in this area. The goal of the social audit is to assess the water quality from the water source, typically reservoirs, boreholes, municipal water supplies, or storage tanks that is carried via tankers to households and community tanks and storage vessels and its effectiveness in achieving the humanitarian response, which is access to uncontaminated water and to assist in developing recommendations for improved water trucking implementation.

A survey tool was designed, and extensive surveying was conducted to obtain a community profile, determine household numbers and persons and their experiences with water provision.

Regarding water availability, 400 out of 800 (50%) say water is delivered once a week. 100 respondents were unsure of water deliveries, and 100 said it was less than once a week.

Responses indicated concerns with the overall water quality, with 319 of those surveyed affirming that the water is not clear, 240 were unsure, and only 226 suggested it was drinkable. There is a distinct problem with water quality in Emalahleni.

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

PLANACT'S PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE CONTRACTOR AND DEVELOPER ACADEMY PROJECT

Planact and the Development Action Group (DAG) have partnered to deliver Contractor and Developer Academy (CDA) activities in Gauteng. The objective of the partnership is to support the emerging contractors and small-scale developers in Gauteng to deliver affordable rental housing on at scale and for contractors to participate meaningfully in the construction economy and operate sustainable businesses.

PARTNERSHIP WITH TSHWANE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY COMMUNITY ADVICE CENTRE

This collaboration has extended its objectives to include compliance and eligibility of contractors if they are to participate effectively in the property and construction market. This objective resulted in the partnership with the Tshwane University of Technology Community Advice Centre. There are several areas for potential collaboration under this partnership such as a joint skills training programme for the community and owners of student accommodation as well as research.

On the 15th of March 2025, the Planact, DAG and TUT Community Advice Centre hosted a successful one-day information sharing session for contractors and service providers in the property and construction sector in Tshwane to build the competence of sector actors to be positioned to deliver affordable rental accommodation.

Key discussions centred around challenges around land release and a growing RDP housing backlog, compounded by limited knowledge of land ownership, funds, and zoning regulations.

Many small-scale rental housing investments fail to comply with municipal regulations, and DAG and Planact aim to assist micro-developers to ensure compliance to avoid urban management issues and unrest. Emerging contractors often struggle to read building plans, highlighting a need for training and capacity building. This is the gap that Planact intends to bridge in Gauteng by providing relevant trainings and workshops.



PARTNERSHIP WITH NATIONAL HOME BUILDERS REGISTRATION COUNCIL

In March and April 2025, the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) conducted information sessions for a group of 20 participants. The training programme was aimed at enhancing their knowledge on the building industry's good practices and compliance standards. The NHBRC is a statutory body is a statutory body with a mandate to ensure that housing consumers in South Africa are protected against poor quality construction work and to promote high standards within the housing industry.



All the participants successfully passed their assessments and are now registered with the NHBRC, demonstrating their commitment to maintaining high standards in the building and construction industry.

The NHBRC training covered topics such as:

- Building Regulations and Compliance
- Quality Assurance in Construction
- Home Builders Registration Process
- Consumer Rights and Protection

With all participants now registered with the NHBRC, they are well positioned to contribute to raising standards in the housing sector and ensuring that consumers are protected through adherence to best practices.

PARTNERSHIP WITH ENSAFRICA

Planact approached Africa's largest law firm called ENSAfrica, to enhance emerging contractor's understanding of the legalities involved in construction, especially in drafting contracts that comply with legal standards and industry regulations. Given ENSAfrica's reputation as a leader in legal services, Planact believed there is a significant opportunity for collaboration between our organizations. The collaboration forms part of the ENS enterprise development outreach pro bono programme geared to provide practitioners with training as part of their socio-economic upliftment mandate. Certificates of attendance after the finalisation of the series will be provided.

Emerging contractors are equipped with legal tools through the joint training sessions. They are now able to ensure that their contracts meet the legal requirements, thereby mitigating risks and fostering more successful business operations.

Online Sessions for small to medium enterprises ("SME's" the construction industry

Topics to be covered

- ✓ Construction Law IOI
- ✓ Breach and termination of contractual obligations
- ✓ Employment Law | The basic conditions of employment
- ✓ Employment Law | Employment contracts
- ✓ COIDA SERIES | Part 1
- ✓ COIDA SERIES | Part 2
- ✓ COIDA SERIES | Part 3
- ✓ Tender application process
- ✓ Project Management and finance

Dates

- 24 February 2025
- 07 April 2025
- 24 April 2025
- 08 May 2025
- 19 May 2025
- 24 June 2025
- 03 July 2025
- 14 July 2025
- 31 July 2025

ASIVIKELANE HUBS

2025 marks Asivikelane's fifth year in operation and because of its extensive consultation and collaboration with government actors, the campaign has contributed to improved access to safe drinking water, dignified sanitation, and regular refuse removal through targeted service delivery interventions, nationwide. Asivikelane focuses on identifying specific delivery problems that block improvements and finds ways to address and resolve these issues. This approach is holistic and links community experiences, budget analysis and government engagement to address both immediate and systemic issues. By concentrating on specific issues, such as repairs and maintenance, we've achieved tangible improvements, including changes to procurement processes and tender specifications.

SERVICE DELIVERY IMPROVEMENTS

In the past months, Planact has recorded service delivery improvements in our partner community such as Tshepisoong West, Tjovitjo and Rabie Ridge where waste was collected, water delivered through Jojo tanks, chemical toilets drained and cleaned by the service provider and both VIPs and Chemical toilets drained, respectively.

COMMUNITY FACILITATORS

Our Community Facilitators continue to engage directly with their respective local governments on issues such as requesting meetings with Ward Councillors and their committees, requesting waste collection, logging calls for repairing infrastructure, and disludging chemical toilets.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Planact organised a community visit to Viggie Land and Patsing to connect with local leaders about the significance of collaborating with Joburg Water on the installation of new toilets in the area. It's crucial for the community to learn and use their experience from the sanitation facilities already established in other neighbourhoods when engaging with government entities.

Another community visit took place in Rabie Ridge to discuss World Water Day plans with community leaders and volunteers. Leaders reported that they consistently monitor water and sanitation issues within the community; however, a significant challenge is that some residents resist stopping the practice of washing clothes at communal taps. This highlights the urgent need for comprehensive education and awareness initiatives. As a result, Planact created educational posters which were posted near communal taps to sensitise the community about wasting water.



GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENTS

The Head of Water services and policy development – EISD in the City of Johannesburg, Ms Nomvula Mofokeng shared a draft policy on informal settlements from housing for comments and submission. Asivikelane is reviewing the document and making several proposals which include emphasis on meaningful participation of communities in their own development: provision of services accessible to disabled persons and not only provision but also maintenance of services to be included in the policy, among other things.



DEVELOPING A WASTE STRATEGY WITH THE CITY OF TSHWANE

Over the past 6 months, Asivikelane and its partners in Gauteng have developed a waste management strategy for the City of Tshwane, and have engaged with informal settlement residents, city officials, waste managers, and private waste companies to create an inclusive and comprehensive strategy. In October, we presented the final strategy to the municipality, and it was formally adopted in November 2024. The strategy will be piloted in 7 informal settlements for 6 months before being rolled out to all 210 informal settlements in Tshwane.



FUNCTIONAL DEMOCRACY REQUIRE ACTIVE CITIZENRY

By Siphwe Segodi



Citizens often make the unfortunate mistake of placing more emphasis on government elections as the primary, and perhaps for some, the only democratic space for public participation. This is akin to giving a blank check to those who are charged with running government for the next five years, at least. Stepping away from participation after elections weakens democratic governance, and its positive spinoffs.

In 2018, Planact collaborated with ten informal settlement communities in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality to conduct a social audit on community chemical toilets. The project established more rigorous specifications and influenced subsequent tender applications, bringing about a system change and thereby improving the procurement process.

A strong recommendation made in the social audit report was the call for enhanced municipal monitoring of the services provided at community level by private contractors. While some of the measures aimed at systematic monitoring were put in place by the municipality in 2019 following the introduction of the new specifications in the contract, they have not been sustained.

Following the conclusion of the social audit, the 10 communities from Ekurhuleni decided to continue working together to improve conditions in their communities. There are currently 23 communities working together under one umbrella as a cluster – the Ekurhuleni Informal Settlements Movement. In their recent meeting on 27 February 2025, there was an acknowledgment that over-reliance on the municipality without sustained community engagement, has resulted in the erosion of the gains which emanated from the social audit.

The cluster recognised the importance of their role in actively participating in government processes to ensure transparency and accountability. They have affirmed their willingness to conduct another social audit, if necessary, to make an objective assessment of the current level of the services. Most importantly, there was realisation that they need to develop a strong monitoring mechanism to track progress and ensure that the gains are sustainable, and put their own monitoring mechanisms in place going forward.

PLANACT SHOWCASES DIGITAL ADDRESS INNOVATION AT NATIONAL HUMAN SETTLEMENTS COMMITTEE



In May 2025, Planact was honoured to present its flagship Digital Address Project to the National Working Committee on Human Settlements. This high-level committee includes representatives from municipalities and provincial governments across South Africa under the Human Settlements departments.

Planact's innovative project aims to improve visibility, service delivery, and restore dignity to residents of informal settlements through the installation of Google's Plus Code digital addresses. By providing precise, location-based codes, the initiative bridges the gap between unrecognized settlements and essential services.

The presentation was well received, notably by the chairperson of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) working group, who proposed exploring a formal partnership to scale the implementation nationally.

As part of the presentation, municipal officials joined Planact for a site visit to Thembelihle, one of the pilot areas for the project. There, they witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of Plus Code addresses. Residents shared stories of now being able to receive online deliveries and, crucially, access emergency services—such as ambulances—that can now locate them with accuracy and speed.

Planact is excited about the opportunity to collaborate with SALGA and other stakeholders to expand this impactful project to more informal settlements, supporting communities' right to the city and equitable access to services.

SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT FUND

Planact is proud to be one of the 37 Strategic Implementing Partners and 1500 community-based organisations, which has created over 117,000 jobs in 2024 – 2025 through the support of the Social Employment Fund, managed by the Industrial Development Corporation.

Planact's sustainable livelihoods initiative programme aims to link marginalised communities to local economic opportunities and processes within government development programmes in efforts to promote equitable resource and opportunity distribution.

As this round of the programme comes to an end, we have recorded notable impact in communities:

SEF participant demographics



652 participants are female



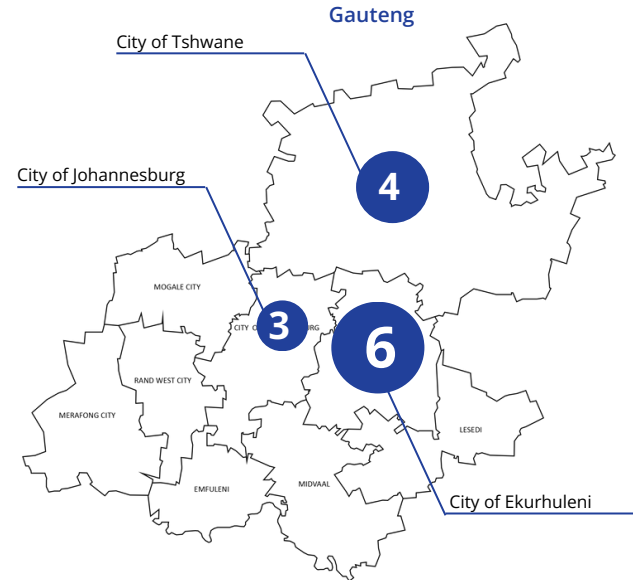
339 participants are male

Did you know?

519 participants paid* are under the age of 35

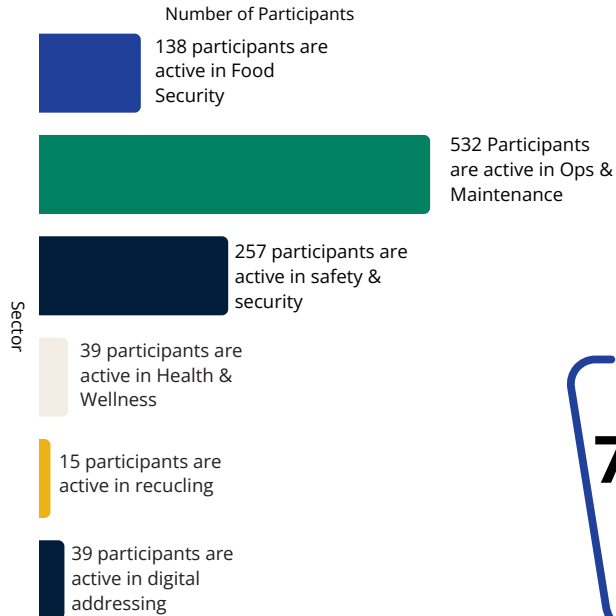
*participants paid March 2025

Number of Planact communities active in the SEF project in Gauteng



Planact is currently partnered with **13** communities in Gauteng.

Planact has SEF participants currently engaged in 6 project areas across three municipalities in Gauteng



Planact appreciates in-kind contributions from the following partners:

- State facilities (Public schools, clinics, and Library).
- Spiritual chords training facility and farm.
- Rand-water donations (Supplies and equipment).
- PikitiUp.
- Joburg City Parks
- Victoria Yards
- Nation's Shield Security Solutions.
- Gordonia Rehabilitation Centre.
- Gerald Fitzpatrick House.

DID YOU KNOW?

72% of the terminated participants are currently permanently employed.

Social Employment Fund project **impact** videos



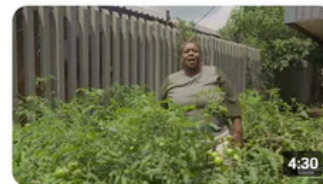
'I am deaf and I cannot speak' |
Winnie Mandela, Tembisa



Cleaner Streets, Safer Community |
Wattville, Ekurhuleni



Urban farming for food security |
Bertrams, Johannesburg



Food Security & Social Employment:
Growing Hope in Wattville | Benoni



How Social Employment
Transforms Health & Wellness |...



Smart mapping for Social Impact |
Digital Addresses Changing Lives i...



Ripple effects of social employment
in Skoonplaas



First Aid Training for Social
Employment Participants



SCAN HERE

REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS WHITE PAPER

By Sinalo Sojanga

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS ISSUES

The White Paper on Human Settlements (2024) underscores a growing housing backlog in South Africa, with over 3.4 million individuals registered in the housing needs register. This figure is projected to increase, placing further strain on basic service delivery and contributing to the continued expansion of informal settlements. In addition, the Centre for Affordable Housing Finance in Africa (CAHF) has reported a decline in the percentage of households with access to solid waste removal services—highlighting ongoing service delivery challenges.

REFLECTIONS

In response to these persistent issues in housing and human settlements, Planact developed a reflective analysis of the 2024 White Paper. This reflection emphasised the crucial role of policy in addressing human settlement challenges and stressed that effective policies must be context-sensitive, adaptable, and scalable. The analysis observed that while the White Paper recognises key challenges, it lacks a clearly defined strategic direction and fails to provide a comprehensive roadmap for systemic reform in the human settlements sector.

Furthermore, the reflection pointed to inconsistencies and ambiguities within the policy's proposals. Although the policy acknowledges the spatial disconnect between residential areas and economic opportunities, it falls short of presenting a coherent, actionable framework to bridge this gap. The proposed solutions were found to lack clear guiding principles and an integrated approach, which undermines their potential effectiveness.

Crucially, the reflection highlighted that the policy does not adequately identify or interrogate the root causes of current policy shortcomings—particularly in relation to informal settlements. Instead, it reiterates existing solutions without addressing the underlying factors contributing to delays in upgrading processes. Planact emphasised the need for the policy to move beyond repetition and to critically assess the barriers impeding progress.

Lastly, through its engagement with the policy, Planact reaffirmed the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement and meaningful participation during the policy formulation process. Such engagement is essential to ensure that policies are not only technically sound but also responsive to the lived realities of communities across South Africa.

PLANACT STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH FEMINIST AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

Recently, Planact participated in the in-person convergence on habitat-related human rights and the social production of habitat co-organised by Habitat International Coalition (HIC) and Abahlali baseMjondolo, in Durban. During the three-day exchange, Planact shared key practices and insights about the cluster of community agency methodology and basic service delivery experiences in Gauteng.

The objective of the exchange was to strengthen cross-regional solidarity, and common priorities for joint action among diverse social movements around habitat-related rights and feminist approaches. Ultimately, the exchange aimed to develop a draft declaration of political advocacy objectives.

In addition to supporting national mobilisation and advocacy efforts, the declaration serves as a contribution toward policy recommendations of the C20 - the civil society engagement branch of the G20 South Africa (November 2025).

Moreover, the run-up to the World Social Forum (WSF) in Benin 2026 serves as an opportunity to mobilise more social movements around centering habitat-related human rights and feminist approaches in national, regional, and global agendas, and formally launch the declaration.

The declaration will also offer a basis from which movements can contribute to broader national and global policy processes and reviews, such as the 10-year review of the New Urban Agenda, in 2026.

Habitat International Coalition (HIC) is an independent, nonprofit alliance with hundreds of organisations and individuals. The coalition has been working in housing and human settlements for more than 30 years. It comprises social movements, community-based organizations, support groups and academics. Planact has been a member of HIC for nearly 20 years.



Pictures courtesy of Matthew Jordaan

EST 1985
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OF IMPACT

✉ info@planact.org.za

☎ +27 11 403 6291
+27 71 938 0577

📍 Maths Centre Building, 28 Juta Street, Braamfontein,
Johannesburg, 2017

🌐 www.planact.org.za



Engage with us

@planact



Compiled and Designed by:
Chelsea Ndlovu-Nachamba
Kiara Britton
Sinalo Sojanga