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FROM THE GROUND UP: CITY OF TSHWANE ADOPTS COMMUNITY-LED WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



Above: All stakeholders consisting of Asivikelane Community Facilitators; the Ward Councillor; C40, Madame Water, Planact and IBPSA colleagues who worked on drafting the Waste Management strategy in the City of Tshwane.

On 31 July 2025, the City of Tshwane council took a vital step towards inclusive urban governance by adopting a community-led Waste Management Strategy for informal settlements and hostels, pending the establishment of a clear financial framework for its implementation.

Crafted through the tireless work of Asivikelane Community Facilitators and volunteers, the strategy amplifies the voice of informal settlement residents from seven of Tshwane's 185 informal settlements, where people continue to struggle with irregular waste collection, illegal dumping, unsafe infrastructure, and a lack of basic services.

“For the first time, we feel the municipality is working with us, not without us, to solve waste challenges.” said Petunia Mabuza, a Asivikelane Community Facilitator from Phomolong, in Mamelodi East. “This strategy is about dignity, safety, and being heard. We helped to make history, and we are already seeing its impact in our community.”

The success of this strategy shows that participatory governance works when communities, civil society organisations, and the municipality share responsibility and work together.

“This milestone shows what is possible when communities lead and government listens,” said Shumani Luruli, Programme Coordinator at Planact. “For residents of informal settlements, it is proof that grassroots participation can drive real change.

During council proceedings, Councillor Kgaugetlo Phiri acknowledged the extensive efforts and collaboration with communities and credible partners, such as Asivikelane, that went into developing the strategy and applauded the City of Tshwane's efforts to engage communities and credible partners like Asivikelane to co-design solutions.

“This involves shifting from a mere waste collection approach to a proactive, integrated strategy emphasising waste reduction, resource recovery, community participation and environmental education,” he explained.

Asivikelane and its partners are working with the City of Tshwane to turn this strategy into action backed by clear plans, enforceable standards, and accountability against corruption.

TRACKING THE HEAT - 150 HEAT SENSORS INSTALLED TO TURN DATA INTO CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

We are pleased to report that a total of 150 heat sensors has been installed in Choba (Tshwane) and Wattville (Ekurhuleni) to track indoor temperatures in low-cost dwellings.

The heat sensors in Choba and Wattville are revealing how extreme temperatures impact vulnerable homes, providing crucial data to push for safer, more responsive housing.

These two areas were chosen to reflect different housing types, allowing the sensors to provide clear data to advocate for stronger, climate-ready housing materials. Choba, with less vegetation, experiences higher temperatures and greater fluctuations, while Wattville offers insights into both formal and informal housing conditions. The sensors have recorded temperature differences of up to six degrees between the two areas.



Above: Choba Sensor Installation team capturing the roof picture for a building characteristic to provide a visual aid to the material and quality of the dwellings roof.



Left: Wattville Sensor Installation Team recording the households building dimensions to understand the households building characteristics.

Residents, are central to this project as the providers of key data, asked important questions during the sensor installation stage: What exactly does the sensor measure? Does it emit heat? And most importantly, how can they play an active role in tackling climate change?

Planact is preparing communities to engage with the data through a series of upcoming workshops. These sessions will empower residents to develop community-led solutions to address rising heat levels in informal settlements.

In partnership with the Flemish Institute for Technological Research, VITO from Flanders, Belgium, this project is funded by the European Union through the Data Governance in Africa Initiative implemented by the Belgian Agency for international cooperation (Enabel).

IN-DEPTH RESEARCH STUDY ON THE SMALL-SCALE RENTAL SECTOR IN GAUTENG

Planact commissioned Kuhle Solutions and Development Services to conduct an in-depth research study aimed at understanding the current dynamics of the construction sector and identifying actionable strategies for sustainable growth.

The research was designed to generate evidence-based insights to inform effective stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy to support the formalisation and scaling of small-scale rental housing in Gauteng. According to the report, the small-scale rental sector comprises approximately 24% of the total housing market in South Africa, and it is important for its potential contribution to addressing some of the key macro challenges such as:

- Unemployment in SA and the challenges of job creation
- Entrepreneurship in South Africa
- Urbanisation and housing delivery
- Supporting township economies

Some barriers to entry in the small-scale rental market are identified as follows:

- Access to and cost of finance.
- Registration of ownership
- Planning approval and compliance with building regulations
- Information: Developers have little access to information about construction techniques, municipal regulations and financing options.
- Unreliability of building contractors.
- Municipal infrastructure capacity.
- Cost of bulk service contributions and service connections.

The report identifies key areas where organisations such as Planact could intervene to build the capacity of micro-developers in areas such as policy advocacy, compliance, finance and technical support.



Left: Practical training for participants at the Ekurhuleni Artisans and Skills Training College.
Right: Small-scale Rental Research Roundtable at Planact's offices



THE FULL REPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE ON PLANACT'S WEBSITE

PLANACT'S SUBMISSION ON THE REVIEW OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER



Planact, working with communities from Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, and Tshwane in the Gauteng Province, has submitted a written submission capturing residents' views and experiences of local government. The submission follows an extensive workshop with residents across the three metropolitan municipalities and reflects community perspectives on governance challenges.

Some of the recommendations include:

- Establishing **formal coalition governance agreements** to ensure stability and prevent political infighting.
- **Professionalising local administration** through merit-based appointments rather than patronage.
- Developing a **robust financial recovery strategy** to address municipal debt and mismanagement.
- Reforming **procurement processes** with transparency and community oversight to curb corruption.
- Prioritising **infrastructure investment** and reliable **emergency service plans**.
- Unlocking **innovations in service delivery and financing models** to expand access.
- Expanding **digital and participatory platforms** so residents can shape decisions affecting their daily lives.
- Advancing **spatial transformation** for more inclusive, just, and equitable urban development.

The submission positions community perspectives not merely as consultation, but as lived experiences and a democratic necessity which insist that local government must function with integrity and inclusivity if it is to serve the public interest.



[READ THE FULL SUBMISSION ON PLANACT'S WEBSITE](#)

PLANACT HIGHLIGHTS WATER JUSTICE AT WATER GAME CHANGERS DAY



Above: Delegates that attended the Water Game Changers Day symposium held at the Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria.

Two members of Planact’s team participated in this year’s Water Game Changers Day, a one-day event hosted by the University of Pretoria to promote water-related innovations and education.

On the first panel, Shumani Luruli, Planact’s Programme Coordinator, spoke on the lived realities in informal settlements drawing on insights from the Asivikelane initiative. Her presentation highlighted critical rights linked to water: the right to water and sanitation, the right to nature, and the gendered dimensions of water access.

On the second panel, Tamzin Hudson, Planact’s Programme Manager, addressed the theme of water and the circular economy. The discussion focused on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and the interconnections between the environment, the economy, and society.

Hudson emphasised the importance of sustainable and regenerative uses of water within both economic and social systems, noting that: “The Game Changers Day was an opportunity to explore the importance of water as a foundational issue that requires new approaches to safeguard it. Let nature become an agent.”

For Planact, water justice is central to advancing social and environmental equity. The organisation continues to stress that access to safe, sustainable, and inclusive water systems is not only a human right but also a prerequisite for dignity, health, and climate resilience in South Africa’s most vulnerable communities.



Planact is proud to form part of the Reference Group on Draft Human Settlements Strategy 2040 of the City of Johannesburg, represented by Mike Makwela.

The reference group focuses on five key areas of enhancement such:

- Spatial Targeting and Land Assembly Integration
- Informal Settlements Upgrading
- Institutional Reform and Capacity
- Climate Resilience & Infrastructure
- Benchmarking, Partnership programmes and collaborations

The draft 2040 human settlement strategy envisions a diversified provision of sustainable human settlements for citizens of Johannesburg.

Its mission is to ensure that the City of Johannesburg is a high-performing beneficiary-centric organisation that works to improve the quality of life and creates neighbourhoods that love to work, live and do business in.

The strategy recognises that there are several issues shaping housing in Johannesburg. These are identified as monthly income, cost of construction, limited stat budget, population increase, increase demand for housing, large informal settlement populations and increased growth of small scale or backyard rentals, among others.

For Planact, this offers a key opportunity to shape policy advocacy for integrated human settlements and to deepen its role in social facilitation within communities.

MUNICIPAL BUDGET SUBMISSIONS BY JOHANNESBURG, EMALAHLENI AND EKURHULENI CLUSTERS

For communities to truly shape their future, they need to directly influence how public funds are allocated. Planact champions this principle by advancing participatory budgeting as a powerful tool for accountability and inclusion.

Policy submissions are one of the ways to strengthen community-based social movements to achieve better municipal accountability and transparency. In the last months, three of Planact's clusters of community agencies in the Cities of Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni as well as Emalahleni Local Municipality responded to invitations to submit comments to draft midyear municipal budgets. The objective of the Clusters is to realise improved and meaningful community participation in decision-making and project implementation processes at the municipal level, to enhance the delivery of basic services and development in these communities.

Below are summaries of the three written submissions:

Johannesburg Informal Settlements Movement's Written Submission On The City Of Johannesburg Draft 2025/26 Integrated Development Plan And Draft Medium-Term Budget

The Johannesburg Informal Settlements Movement (JISM) made a written submission addressing the City of Johannesburg's Draft 2025/26 Integrated Development Plan and Medium-Term Budget. The submission focused on the need for improved basic services and the upgrading of informal settlements.

The Movement wants the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) to:

- **Improve community participation:** Ensure meaningful community involvement in decision-making and project implementation processes at the municipal level.
- **Enhance service delivery:** Focus on improving access to basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, waste management, and housing in informal settlements.
- **Assess informal settlement upgrading backlog:** Increase efforts to upgrade informal settlements to Phase 3 and find innovative ways to eradicate informal settlements by 2030.

- **Prioritize informal settlements:** Provide clarity on which informal settlements are on the CoJ's priority list for upgrading.
- **Increase budget allocations:** Allocate more funds to projects like the Southern Farms Mega Mixed Development and ensure sufficient resources for housing developments and informal settlement upgrades.
- **Redirect wasteful expenditure:** Reallocate funds from non-essential items like branding and signage to address illegal dumping and support recycling initiatives.
- **Expand wastewater treatment capacity:** Extend the Olifantsvlei Wastewater Treatment plant to meet growing demand and connect informal settlements to conventional sanitation facilities.

The JISM is a coalition of informal settlement communities located in the City of Johannesburg (CoJ). They include Tjovitjo, Lawley, Thembelihle, Mountain View, Rabie Ridge, Patsing, Klipriviersoog, Freedom Park and Protea South.



[READ THE FULL SUBMISSION HERE](#)

Emalahleni Informal Settlements Cluster (MASCOC) made a submission to provide representations regarding the Emalahleni Local Municipality (ELM) 2025/2026 Draft Budget.

The ELM 2025/2026 draft budget impacts informal settlement communities in the following ways:

- Sanitation Services: The draft budget does not explicitly allocate funds to extend sanitation services to informal settlements, despite previous efforts in Ward 32. This omission raises concerns about the continuation and maintenance of sanitation services for these communities.
- Water Provision: MASCOC recommends redirecting the budget for water transportation (via tankers) to construct boreholes powered by electricity or solar energy, which would provide a more sustainable solution for water access in informal settlements.
- Human Settlements: The budget lacks plans for upgrading informal settlements and excludes the Informal Settlements Upgrading Grant, which could help align with national goals to eradicate informal settlements.
- Road Infrastructure: Poor road conditions in informal settlements, especially during the rainy season, are not addressed in the budget. MASCOC suggests allocating funds to improve mobility and access.
- Electrification: The budget does not include provisions for electrifying informal settlements, which MASCOC recommends the municipality address through relevant grants.
- Refuse Services: Despite an increase in the refuse budget, informal settlements remain neglected in terms of waste management services, violating constitutional environmental rights.
- Projected Budget Decrease: The projected decrease in the capital budget for 2026/2027 raises concerns about the municipality's ability to meet the growing needs of informal settlement communities.

 [READ THE FULL SUBMISSION HERE](#)

The Ekurhuleni Informal Settlements Movement (EISM) responded to the invitation from the City of Ekurhuleni for public comments and raised the following the specific budget concerns:

- Implementation of Alternative Sanitation in Informal Settlements: EISM appreciates the R200,000,000 budget allocation for this project but seeks clarity on the specific communities and type of technology to be used. They recommend including detailed references in future budget documents for citywide projects.
- Electrification of Informal Settlements: EISM welcomes the R157,719,500 allocation but requests more information on which informal settlements and wards will benefit. They suggest providing detailed references to alleviate community concerns.
- Installation of Solar Highmast Lights: EISM supports the R2,500,000 allocation but seeks clarity on whether informal settlements are included in the plan and which ones will benefit.
- Supply of Bulk Containers: EISM is skeptical about the R14,000,000 allocation due to past issues with poor implementation and lack of community consultation. They recommend scrapping this project and redirecting funds to sanitation, electrification, or solar lighting projects.
- Maintenance and Repairs: EISM calls for sufficient funding for infrastructure maintenance and repairs to ensure quality service delivery and prevent costlier repairs in the future.
- Free Basic Water: EISM notes that the current 6 kilolitres per household per month is insufficient and calls for an increase to align with international benchmarks. They also recommend revising indigent household registers for better targeting and exploring sustainable water solutions like rainwater harvesting.
- Human Settlement Projects: EISM finds the R451,433,348 capital budget for housing in 2025/26 inadequate to address the housing backlog and meet the National Development Plan's objectives.

 [READ THE FULL SUBMISSION HERE](#)

ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE: SEASONAL JOY IN RUSTENBURG INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

By Siphwe Segodi

Planact is in the process of developing a cluster of informal settlement communities in Rustenburg Local Municipality to amplify the voices of these communities.

In a meeting where the cluster was formally established in August 2024, the five cluster communities in the area identified their burning service delivery issues. Out of a long list including basic services such as water, sanitation, electrification and solid waste management, the cluster put the issue of roads high on the list of priorities. This prioritisation was confusing at first to the outsider.

However, the reality is that roads in RLM's informal settlements are among the worst that one has ever come across. They are worse during the rainy season, where nothing moves! Mobility, by either foot or vehicle becomes a challenge. Children miss school days, workers struggle to get to work, and other important services comes to a halt, including emergency services!

In 2009, the national Department of Human Settlements introduced the National Housing Code, which reaffirmed government's commitment to the upgrading of informal settlement programme. The section on Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme in the Housing Code provides guidance to municipalities on how to address the challenges faced by informal settlement communities. It proposes that informal settlements must be categorised as either qualifying for in situ upgrading, meaning development where they are currently situated, or relocation as a last resort.

The latter means that if only it is impossible to develop them where they are situated, alternative land must be sourced where they can be resettled. However, noting that achieving development for all the communities at the same time was impossible, the policy suggests that government should provide basic services in the meantime.

The services may be either temporary/interim or permanent, depending on the above-mentioned categorisation of the community.

Based on this understanding, Planact and the RLM cluster approached the RLM Roads Unit for intervention concerning the roads conditions in informal settlements. Fortunately, the responsible officials clearly understood their role and responded positively to the proposal for the intervention. In May 2025, Planact, cluster representatives and municipal officials conducted a site inspection to begin a process of developing a plan to address the situation.

The roads department also approached Sibanye Stillwater mining company to donate one of the by-products that they usually discard; this was meant to help in ensuring that the road intervention endures. In the middle of June 2025, the final preparation for implementation were made. Unfortunately, the intervention was delayed due to a number of factors. The concerned parties, Planact and the cluster, remain committed and we are working to address the obstacles. Should this intervention see the light of day, the affected communities will begin to enjoy some of the fruits of our democracy throughout all the seasons. Their joy will no longer be seasonal!



Site Inspections with the Rustenburg Community Representatives and the Rustenburg Local Municipality Officials on the inspection of dilapidated roads in informal settlements.

MPUMALANGA CLUSTER ENGAGEMENTS – STEVE TSHWETE AND EMALAHLENI CLUSTERS

By Kiara Britton and Siphwe Segodi

In August, Planact held two separate meetings with our Clusters based in Mpumalanga. Planact hosted a cluster meeting with the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality (STLM) Cluster, and the MASCOM Coordinating Team in Emalahleni Local Municipality with the intention to follow up on the cluster work, assess the state of the cluster, and provide updates from engagements held with councillors or municipal departments that are relevant to the clusters' priority issues.

The STLM cluster comprises five communities represented by their cluster representatives who attend the meetings to express the difficulties faced by their communities. The STLM Cluster meeting took place in the Uitkyk community on 7 August 2025. The cluster discussed their reflections on the IEC Youth Engagement Event held in partnership with the Mpumalanga IEC Outreach unit in May this year. The cluster also expressed their intentions to maintain the focus and commitment to continue addressing the challenges they experience in their communities through the cluster's priority issues.

The STLM cluster priority issues are:

- Electricity
- Waste
- Water
- Sanitation
- Housing

The cluster also expressed their desire for capacitation sessions on their priority issues. To map out the correct manner to approach and understand policy, engage with ward councillors and ward committees to assist the cluster with gaining traction to access services in their communities. This will also assist the cluster with directing their intentions to gain more clarity on the progress of Informal Settlement Upgrading in their wards.



Above: Steve Tshwete Cluster Representative meeting had representatives from two of our 5 STLM communities Uitkyk and Polmaise.

The second day of cluster engagements was hosted in Masakane community, Emalahleni Local Municipality, with the MASCOM Coordinating Team (CT). The intention of the meeting was to provide an update on and an opportunity to discuss the water testing for the Potable Water Social Audit held in September 2024 involving MASCOM communities and the opinions from the CT on the public hearing that is to follow the completion of water testing. As water quantity and quality is an ongoing issue in Emalahleni, representatives present at the meeting provided insights into the current issues with the quantity of water delivered to communities.

Apart from Masakhane, conditions in the communities appear unchanged. Some residents noted that the service providers responsible for water delivery are not consistently adhering to the schedule's supply timelines. These discussions were consistent with the information collected during the five-day door-to-door Potable Water Data Collection Campaign in 2024.

This prompted discussions about the possibility of a monitoring tool focused on water, as the CT noted that their engagement with resolving water quantity and quality issues does not stop with the Social Audit.

The intention of the tool is to create a consistent method for cluster representatives to monitor service provision in their communities based on the tender specifications outlined in the municipal tender document . This process of monitoring will provide consistent information gathered by those on the ground and opportunities to present this information to the municipality to hold accountability – to correct the situation.

The two-day visit to Mpumalanga was insightful opportunity to touch base with the communities in Mpumalanga and to find out where the cluster is and what further support, they need to advocate for services in their communities.



Above: Four Coordinating Team MASCOM Members with six representatives from other communities attending the MASCOM engagement in Emalahleni.

Planact is in the process of reviewing its work concerning the Municipal Public Account Committee (MPAC). This comes after almost three years of efforts to explore avenues for public participation in the structure. Generally, this exercise has proven that MPAC is one of the local government's accountability mechanisms with highly restricted access for the public.

MPAC is charged with a very important responsibility. Primarily, its role is to play oversight regarding municipalities' expenditure, particularly as it relates to Irregular, Unauthorised, Fruitless and Wasteful expenditures. The recent revelation of R23.6 billion in unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality underscores the importance of MPAC's work.

However, this work is generally carried out far from the public's eye. It is undisputable that the nature of MPAC's function require some level of confidentiality given the fact that the structure often deals with sensitive information. It is noted that if not handled with the necessary care, the committee may compromise not only its work, but also the reputation of individual officials hauled before it to account on fund were used.

For instance, if members of the public are present where MPAC is dealing with a serious allegation concerning one or more of the undesirable expenditures mentioned above, this may result in the matter going public before it is thoroughly exhausted, and before a conclusion is reached within relevant structure in the municipality. Some members of the public may commit an error of miscommunicating the information. This may result in unimaginable dire consequence, such as ill-informed public uproar. Thus, it undoubtedly makes perfect sense that MPAC's operations need some level of secrecy.

However, what is unacceptable under a democratic set up is what generally appears to be a blanket ban on public involvement on MPAC's work. This is worrisome! In all the municipalities where Planact and representatives from its partner communities engaged MPAC, we found that the only avenue open to the public was what is called public hearings. These are annual, once of meetings where the public is invited as observers.

In our experience, the only exception was in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality. In the latter municipality, the MPAC chairperson was unambiguous that the meetings were open to the public, except where it is reasonable to exclude the public. The chairperson expressed concerns that the public do not attend the MPAC sittings and did not understand why. The chairperson advised Planact to encourage representatives from its partner communities and, and the broader community to attend.

Indeed, Planact and its partner communities took advantage of this opportunity. In our view, the STLM MPAC chairperson's posture demonstrates that it was possible to accommodate the public in MPAC meeting beyond the public hearing, despite the nature of its work. This is in line with the constitutional requirements on transparency. Should MPAC be closed or open to the public?

Gauteng City Region Heat Action Plan and Early Warning System

Planact is currently part of the Gauteng City Region Heat Action Plan (HAP) and Early Warning System (HEWS) Working Group led by the World Bank's City Resilience Program, with collaboration from the National Treasury's City Support Programme, the Global Facility for Disaster and Recovery, and support from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs.

Objectives

The objective of the working group is to develop a comprehensive HAP and HEWS for the Gauteng City Region, integrating short and long-term interventions to address heat-related risks. This includes fostering collaboration among municipal departments, civil society, and technical experts to ensure preparedness, response, adaptation, and recovery measures for extreme heat events. Heat Action plans combine assessments and actions as a response mechanism to heat-related impacts.

Technical Working Groups

The World Bank is convening a series of five technical Working Group workshops to design and shape Gauteng's HAP and EWS. Three have already taken place in total. The first workshop held was on inter-agency response protocols and defining institutional roles and actions before, during, and after heat events. In group exercises, robust matrices were developed by four separate teams, outlining responses according to heat seasons, and the lead and support agencies.

The pre-heat season is characterised by heat mapping and data collection, Standard Operating Procedure development, Joint Operations Centre activation, training, awareness raising, centralised communication strategies, mobilising resources and policy and regulatory adjustments, among other actions. During the heat season, various responses are triggered by a range of agencies and actors, one of which is the activation of medical and public health services. These include extending clinic and emergency service hours, training healthcare workers to identify and treat heat-related illnesses, stocking essential medications, and establishing mobile medical units in areas with vulnerable populations. Public awareness and effective communication messaging are vital at this stage, along with physical interventions, such as shading and cooling options, and a reliable water supply. Emergency response teams are directed to high-risk zones, and flexible school hours are implemented. Monitoring and evaluation, as well as learning, are strong aspects of the post-heat phase, as well as the effectiveness of response mechanisms such as the JOC.

The second technical Working Group session on Public Awareness and Community Outreach focused on designing clear, practical, and medically informed public health advisory messages and awareness campaigns. The aim is to drive behaviour change among vulnerable groups and those living in high-risk settings through targeted messaging, seasonal campaigns, and a coordinated communication strategy. Special outreach approaches for groups most at risk (elderly, children, outdoor workers, people in informal settlements, those with chronic illnesses) are also required by a range of actors.



✉ 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