

PublicSector

MANAGER

Dr Edward Nkadimeng

blazes trail in science
and innovation

Public Service Month

building a professional
public service for
quality service delivery

Support domestic tourism

travel local this
Tourism Month





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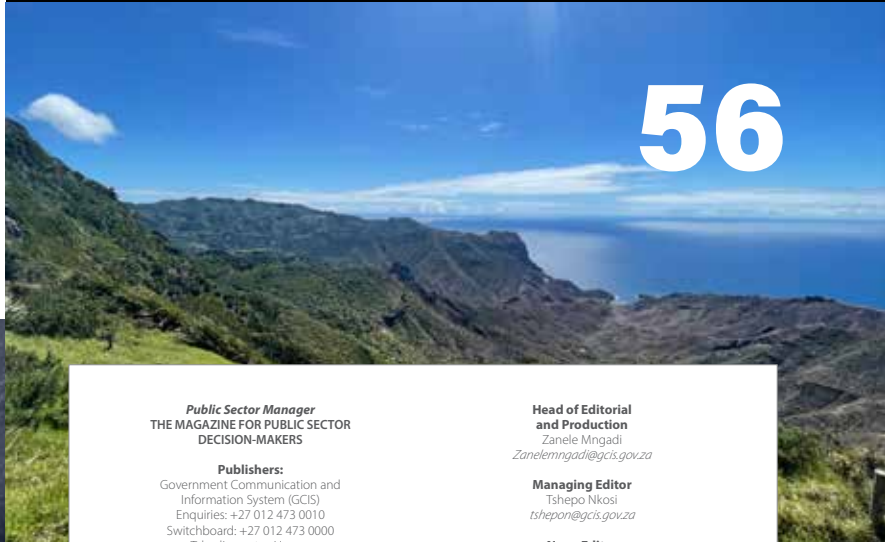
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Publishers:

Government Communication and
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Enquiries: +27 012 473 0010
Switchboard: +27 012 473 0000
Tshedimosetso House:
1035 Francis Baard Street
(corner Festival Street), Hatfield, Pretoria,
Private Bag X745, Pretoria,
South Africa, 0001
www.gcis.gov.za

Acting Director-General Nomonde Mnu kwa

Acting Deputy Director-General: Corporate Services

Terry Vandayar

Deputy Director-General: Intergovernmental Coordination & Stakeholder Management

Michael Currin

Deputy Director-General: Content Processing & Dissemination

Regomoditswe Mavimbela

Head of Editorial and Production

Zanele Mngadi
Zanelemngadi@gcis.gov.za

Managing Editor

Tshepo Nkosi
tshepon@gcis.gov.za

News Editor

Miriam Mokoena
miriam@gcis.gov.za

GCIS Photographic Unit

Elmond Jiyane
Ntswe Mokoena
Siyabulela Duda
Kopano Tlape
Busisiwe Malungwane

Production Assistants

Jauhara Khan | Sebastion Palmer

Graphic Designers

Tendai Goneshe | Benny Kubjana



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Department:
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Public Service Month: recommitting to serve the people of South Africa



September marks Public Service Month – a service delivery improvement mechanism that annually reflects on the work of the Public Service and celebrates the unwavering

commitment of public servants throughout the country.

This year's commemorations reflect on the work of the Public Service, in line with the values and principles for public

administration as enshrined in Section 195 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* and the aspirations of the National Development Plan 2030.

The programme is implemented through the Batho Pele Principles by taking the Public Service to the people and assessing whether the service delivery machinery supports the

implementation of the transformation agenda.

The theme for the 2023 Integrated Public Service Month is; “Building a professional Public Service for inclusive quality service delivery” – a recognition of the essential role played by the public sector towards the country's ability to realise its strategic development plans to build a capable and developmental state.

As we celebrate Public Service Month, let us keep in mind the fact that being a public servant is not just a job but a privilege that tasks us to serve and provide a better life, that is evident in the lived realities of all South Africans.

From providing quality education to students, better healthcare to patients, clean and safe water to communities, improved roads and infrastructure, as well as reliable information and electricity to our people – it is time to roll up our sleeves and right the challenges our country faces, and recommit ourselves to serving our people better.

A perfect example of how commitment and dedication can yield great results is the successful hosting of the 2023 BRICS Summit, which has been described as one of the

most transformational summits in the history of the gathering. This was thanks to the dedication of the team behind the scenes, which flew the South African flag high. These are the public servants we are celebrating this month.

Government continues to put in place measures aimed at strengthening how we serve our nation. These include the National Framework towards the Implementation of Professionalisation of the Public Service, which aims to ensure that only qualified and compe-

“As public officials we collectively bear the brunt and wrongdoings of any one public servant”.

tent individuals are appointed into positions of authority, in pursuit of a transformed, developmental and more professional, ethical and capable public sector.

We are currently working under tough economic times, with incentives like performance bonuses having been suspended and working with limited resources. I urge you as decision-makers in the public sector to come up with creative ways of engaging and

motivating employees. You can prepare younger employees for senior positions by mentoring them, ensuring skills retention and succession planning. Mentoring programmes can increase employee productivity, develop skills, ensure career development, promote succession planning and skills transfers, strengthen teamwork, assist in performance management and accelerate competence among employees.

As public officials we collectively bear the brunt and

wrongdoings of any one public servant. I, therefore, urge each of you, to serve with pride and transparency in your line of work and steer away from abusing your role as a public servant.

Recent media reports have raised concern on the number of government employees who are alleged to have been on long absences from work due to prolonged suspensions and long-term sick leave.

Several interventions have

been put in place to address these challenges. As part of Public Service Month, the Department of Public Works and Administration (DPWA) will host an employee health and wellness Indaba to reflect on the post-COVID-19 health wellness of public servants.

The DPWA has also partnered with the Public Service Commission to establish the reported trends on sick leave use and likely abuse, and to establish whether sick leave and the Policy and Procedure on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement are applied correctly.

This is aimed at ensuring that our position as a caring employer is demonstrated in both policy and action.

In addition, the Public Administration Ethics, Integrity, and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit at the DPWA supports departments in managing disciplinary processes and precautionary suspensions.

This Public Service Month, let us reflect on the year past, heed the lessons learnt and ensure that we leave no one behind. Let us continue to live by the Public Service Pledge that we all committed to – offering a high standard of professional ethics and integrity in the Public Service.

Celebrating our diversity through heritage



Nomonde Mnukwa,
Acting GCIS
Director-General.

September bodes as one of our country's most vibrant and vital commemorations. It is a time envisaged by the motto of our Coat of Arms; *"!ke e: /xarra //ke"*, encouraging us to unite in our diversity.

At this time, we come together as a nation in celebration of our rich cultural diversity, paying tribute to the colourful thread that once divided, but today unites us all as proud South Africans. This tallies well with the theme for this year's Heritage Month; "Celebrating our cultural diversity in a democratic South Africa."

The 2023 celebrations focus on South Africa's rich and diverse culture and its immense contri-

bution to our social, economic, health, and scientific well-being, especially for rural, township, and peri-urban communities and as an active participant in the global arena.

It is a time where we as a country reflect on our past, honouring those who paved the way before us, fostering greater social cohesion, healing, nation-building and creating our shared identity. From the beautiful woven traditional fabrics, to paying homage to our ancestral lineage, indulging in dishes and sharing indigenous knowledge passed down from generations before us, surrounded by friends and family under the magnificent African landscape – this is what we gratefully call our heritage.

Let us take this opportunity, which comes at the beginning of the beautiful Spring season to learn, taste, travel, dance, sing, explore, contribute to, and appreciate all that our beautiful nation has to offer. It is no coincidence that we celebrate heritage and tourism during the same month. This serves as the opportune time to honour our country's rich tapestry by taking a Sho't Left and experiencing all that our

national endowment has to offer. From the prestigious heritage sites, to our magnificently preserved wildlife, beaches along the sunny coast, to our inland countryside gems – it is your country, own it.

Government recognises domestic tourism as one of the areas that can contribute to the development of the economy while also strengthening the tourism sector.

Our economy relies heavily on domestic tourism, not only to boost our hospitality and tourism sector, but to create employment opportunities, as well as showcase and support local entrepreneurs and businesses.

More and more South Africans are finding ways to travel and explore affordably within our borders as domestic tourism has seen a remarkable upward trend, with a 30.8% increase in overnight trips, and a 16.2% in day trips during the first quarter of 2023, as compared to 2022. Just scroll through TikTok and you will stumble across countless videos of fellow South Africans exploring and sharing their stunning Sho't Left experiences, showcasing that each trip we take locally

has a positive ripple effect on our economy.

Our heritage is one of unity, resilience and strength and our people's steadfast spirit to celebrate our country also led to our domestic expenditure rise by 19.7% from 2022. According to Statistics South Africa, the travel and tourism sector contributed to nearly 3.2% to South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP), surpassing agriculture, utilities and construction in 2021.

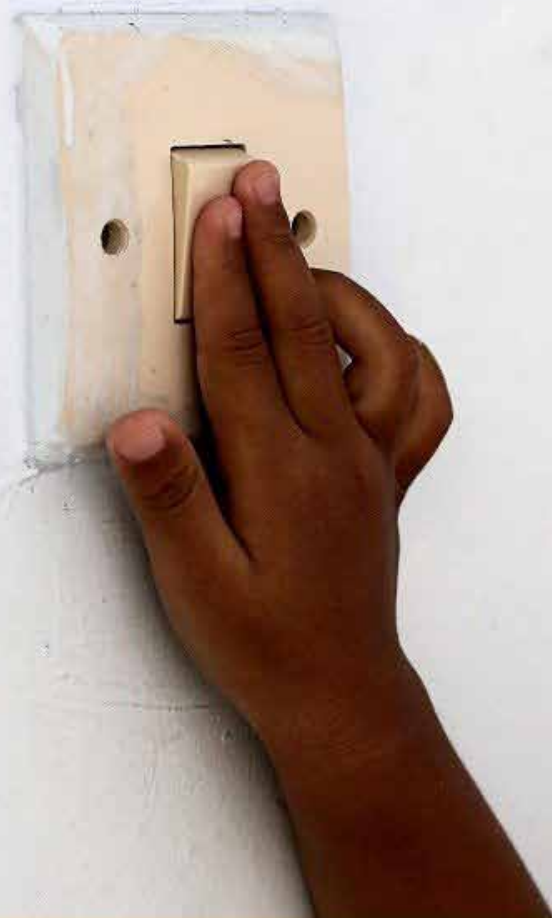
According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the sector's contribution to the GDP was forecasted to increase to more than 7.4% (R554.6 billion) by 2023, also leading to the creation of more than 800 000 jobs over the next decade reaching more than 1.9 million jobs by 2032.

As we explore our beautiful nation, we also contribute to its livelihood and continue to strengthen our heritage.

To further boost domestic travel, the Sho't Left Travel Week Sale occurs annually every first week of September and offers incredible travel deals and packages to allow South Africans to travel locally. ○

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Tracking EPWP progress

While the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) has provided job opportunities for close to two decades, work is underway to ensure that its footprint reaches more people.

By March 2023, the programme had steadily created over 14 million work opportunities since its inception in April 2004.

"The EPWP has been a good programme from its inception 19 years ago. The main focus of the programme is to alleviate poverty by providing job opportunities.

"This is important because it is not just a job opportunity, it is an opportunity that must provide a skill to participants," said Public Works and Infrastructure Deputy Minister Bernice Swarts.

The EPWP is a medium-to-long-term government-funded

programme that promotes the use of labour-intensive methods to create work opportunities for poor and unemployed South Africans.

In addition to gaining skills and earning an income, the work opportunities also allow participants to gain valuable work experience that make them employable.

Through its various five-year phases, which have been improved upon over the years, the programme has granted work opportunities to many across the length and breadth of the country.

In an interview with Public Sector Manager magazine at her office in central Pretoria, Swarts said various research reports and mid-term review reports of the different phases of the EPWP show that the income participants earn from the

programme is having a positive impact in terms of poverty alleviation.

The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) is the custodian of the programme, which is being implemented by over 300 public bodies across the three spheres of government.

Training for the future

The programme has morphed with each subsequent phase it has undergone and the current five-year Phase IV comes to an end in 2024. The current phase has created 3.9 million work opportunities against the five million target.

Swarts revealed that in the current phase, the EPWP has been strengthening its partnerships with the private sector in getting placements for youth

that have been trained in artisan programmes to gain work experience.

This includes the placement and absorption of young people by contractors on projects implemented by the DPWI.

Some young people trained in the mechanical engineering field have been absorbed by mining and car repair companies as part of the partnership.

Participants in the programme obtain various skills such as painting, brick laying and carpentry, home community-based care skills and fire-fighting among others. Training is funded through the National Skills Fund and budgets of projects in different public bodies.

Changing lives

The EPWP also contributes to household incomes, with over R12 billion having been transferred to participants as wages in 2022/23.

"The final figure, according to our records, was R13.2 billion being paid in wages," she added.

While creating a livelihoods for participants, the EPWP also contributes towards service delivery. Projects include road maintenance, construction of schools and clinics, environmental greening, cleaning and removing alien vegetation.

Participation

In order to increase the participation of vulnerable groups in



society, the current phase of the programme has put demographic targets in place. For women participation this is set at 60% while the targets for the youth has been pegged at 55%.

According to the Deputy Minister the targets relating to women are being met while that of young people are yet to be met.

“For the 2022/23 financial year, the achievement for women was at 69% while that of youth was at 40%. Interventions are being put in place through better targeting during recruitment and having youth-focused programmes to improve the achievement of targets for youth,” explained the Deputy Minister.

She attributed this to the fact that some young people view

wearing orange overalls as “not cool” while others believe that they cannot take part in the EPWP because of the qualifications they hold.

“[This] is a wrong mindset because if you have a degree in administration and have been at home for five years, surely you must be able [to come to a point where you] say ‘let me deviate and participate in a programme that is going to give me a skill,’” she said.

The programme also caters for people living with disability by making provision for them to form their own companies. The Deputy Minister noted that more needs to be done to accommodate people living with disabilities.

“We need to bring in people with disabilities and we can

bring them in as project managers on site to oversee the work that is being done.”

Policy

In 2022, the DPWI developed the EPWP Policy, which has been approved by Cabinet for public consultation and is expected to be finalised by March 2024.

On what the future holds for the programme that continues to evolve, Swarts says the DPWI and its stakeholders are developing proposals for the next phase of the programme, which is scheduled to start in April 2024, if approved by Cabinet.

Expanding the reach of the programme, improving training and skills development, and improving on exit strategies for participants are some the differ-

ent proposals being considered for the phase.

“[The] EPWP must and will be the backbone of creating employment in the country. After 19 years [and] as we prepare for the 20 years celebrations, which we are doing as DPWI at the end of this November, we are going to start showcasing and celebrating the EPWP.

“It must just not be about celebrating, it must be about us bringing all participants and stakeholders on board.”

The Deputy Minister is confident that those who complete the programme are capable of becoming entrepreneurs who can contribute to the country's economic development. ○

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KZN shores up economic defences

The resilience of the KwaZulu-Natal government's financial rigour was in the past three years pushed to the precipice.

First came the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, a contagion that put unprecedented strain on the healthcare sector and led to loss of lives. The second crisis was civil unrest in July 2021, that involved widespread looting and the burning down of key infrastructure such as shopping malls. Just as the province was recovering from this dark period, severe floods hit in April 2022, damaging critical infrastructure and killing many.

These three disasters were a terrible setback for the largely rural province of 11.5 million people and the scars continue to show. The provincial government, through its Treasury, had to step in to provide relief for

affected communities and businesses.

One of the leaders in spearheading the province's economic recovery is KwaZulu-Natal Treasury Head of Department, Carol Coetzee. In July 2023, *Public Sector Manager* (PSM) magazine spoke to her at the conclusion of a year-long leadership coaching course she attended with other senior managers.

Conducted by professional services firm, PwC, the programme sought to improve the individual and collective performance and productivity of senior managers, as well as help to



implement sound performance management processes.

Coetzee, a qualified Chartered Accountant and experienced public servant, lauded the programme. "When I started this journey, I had only been on the job for two months. It was a great opportunity for me to get to know my team at a different level and cement being one team," she said.

Having a common purpose, she noted, was one of the biggest takeaways from the programme. "What I

learned, particularly when we had the joint team sessions with the whole executive, was that I have a highly competent team – committed and dedicated," she commented.

"The challenge was that there was no common purpose. There was emotional fatigue and so coaching was an opportunity for us to talk about our backgrounds and where we came from."

She said it was important

for public servants to understand and complement each other. "How we think; what our personality types are – that is essential to making us work as a team," she said.

Dark days recalled

While KwaZulu-Natal's economic turnaround strategy is slowly bearing fruit, Coetzee cannot help cast her mind back to the three disasters that befell the province and what they taught her department.

The availability of resources,

to affected communities and businesses.

The province learnt quite a few lessons in disaster management and it was a bumpy ride at first. "We had to reprioritise our resources. You will remember the big debacle with the R1 billion we kept requesting from National Treasury. But there were a lot of lessons in terms of improving our coordination, understanding the roles and responsibilities of all the departments, particularly when facing a disaster."

Internal auditors did value-for-money assessments, particularly on infrastructure projects, to see if we were getting the value we needed.

she recounted, was the biggest challenge during these tumultuous times. The province shelled out R2.929 billion on COVID-19-related expenditure, while the damage from the riots and floods was estimated at R50 billion and R25 billion, respectively. In all these three crises, government unveiled a series of relief funds and expenditure programmes aimed at resuscitating infrastructure and providing aid

During and after the natural and human disasters, the province expeditiously adopted vital mechanisms that ensured prompt government response to limit the impact on affected citizens.

"We did pre-audit assessments. So before any orders were made, we assessed those and we reduced the amount of irregular expenditure. We had a lot of emergency procurement.

Internal auditors did value-for-money assessments, particularly on infrastructure projects, to see if we were getting the value we needed," Coetzee said.

On an ad-hoc basis, the department had to repeatedly rely on its infrastructure team to assist with conditional assessments to quantify the damage sustained and process applications. "It was about making sure that there was a clear plan, with clear responsibilities, and making sure that there was monitoring of what needed to take place. We also had to deal with transgressors decisively," she reiterated.

Learning the hard way

The period, she said, was a mass of uncertainty, adding that departments were not sure who was responsible for what. However, after a series of disaster management workshops, these issues were clarified.

A prime example of this was when the provincial government had to apply for funding. "We now have a more solid framework for the next time there's a disaster. We will know what is required from us. We learned really quickly. There are two different processes – there is the emergency process and then



there is the normal disaster management centre process. Even from the funding perspective, we learnt a lot around that."

She tipped her hat to a supportive political system that decisively dealt with issues. "At first political support was disjointed between the municipalities because we have political issues in the province. That was frustrating at times because when you are trying to consolidate the information and compile a report. Some political parties don't want to come onboard". The (provincial political) leadership was very decisive and intervened when needed," she said.

One of the biggest challenges that the province had to grapple with, she said, was adequately housing affected families. Inroads in this regard – finding suitable land and getting the necessary regulatory approvals – were hampered by unavoidable circumstances.

"There are some things you just cannot do quickly. We need to build up a reserve as a province so that we can access our own funds quickly," she said.

There's a glimmer of hope in the province. The provincial government now has an economic council with representation from government, the private sector civil society, and

labour unions. "They then put together a plan focusing on key sectors of KwaZulu-Natal economy in terms of what the turnaround strategy should be and directed our resources to those areas. That obviously talks to the National Development Plan, our respective clusters in government then talk to those (issues)," she said.

A trust deficit

This dark period also brought to the fore the public's simmering distrust of government, a turn of events Coetzee lamented. This deficit in trust became apparent when government made a call for donations.

"The response was poor. The

public was happier to give money to NGOs [non-governmental organisations], that would then support government [efforts and interventions]. That tells us that the public has concerns around what and how their money would be used for. That means the public does not have much confidence in government."

Coetzee said this reality needed urgent government attention. "It is something that government really needs to work on in order to build confidence around governance issues," she stressed. ○

SEPTEMBER

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY AWARENESS MONTH



This month we shine a light on this group of genetic disorders that over time weaken the muscles.

We want to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals living with muscular dystrophy and emphasise the importance of support, understanding, and inclusion. We recognise the courage, resilience, and determination shown by those affected and their families.



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Young physicist blazes trail in science and innovation

Dr Edward Nkadameng, is employed as a researcher at National Research Foundation's (NRF) iThemba LABS as part of the Technology Innovation Platform for the delivery of prototype South African electronics for the upgrade at CERN, the largest particle physics research facility in the world.

He has been instrumental in the development and optimisation of the project's Low Voltage Power Supply (LVPS) system. These are complex electronics systems that are required to operate under harsh radiation

conditions for at least 15 years.

"Our goal is to deliver South African-manufactured electronics for this critical upgrade at CERN, contributing to the advancement of particle physics research for the ATLAS experi-

ment. My work focuses on the development of test benches and the analysis of data to ensure the durability, reliability, and performance of the LVPS system," he explained..

Nkadameng's work focuses on the development of test benches and the analysis of data to determine the properties and performance of the LVPS system. He and his team collaborate and contribute to the advancement of particle physics research for the ATLAS experiment. Through collaboration with international associates, his team has been able to leverage expertise and resources to enhance South Africa's capabilities in cutting-edge technology and innovation.

His ground-

breaking work is already earning him some acknowledgement. In June 2023, the *Mail & Guardian* recognised Nkadameng as a leading innovator in Technology and Innovation in its 200 Young South Africans initiative.

The recognition by the *Mail & Guardian* was "an incredibly humbling experience". It serves as validation for the hard work, dedication, and impact that my research and innovation efforts have had in advancing technology and driving societal progress. This recognition not only motivates me to continue pushing boundaries but also inspires other young Africans to pursue their dreams and make a meaningful contribution to their fields," he added.

Despite the accolades, Nkadi-



meng continues to work hard. His biggest aspirations revolve around fostering innovation, driving technological advancement, and making a positive impact on society. "I aim to continue bridging the gap between academia and industry, applying cutting-edge research to real world problems. One of my primary aspirations is to serve as a role model and inspire young black South Africans, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, to pursue careers in science and academia,"

"I want to show them that it is possible to break barriers and succeed in fields traditionally dominated by certain groups. By increasing representation and diversity, we can foster a more inclusive and equitable scientific community. I also aspire to make significant contributions to the field of particle physics through rigorous research and innovative discoveries," said Nkadimeng.

Fascination with science

Nkadimeng has come a long way from his early days growing up in Emalahleni. His interest in science deepened during his undergraduate studies at the University of the Free State, where he completed a Bachelor of Science (BSc) Degree in Physics and Chemistry in 2016. Driven by his fascination with understanding the fundamental

principles of the universe, he decided to further his studies in the field of experimental particle physics.

Nkadimeng went on to complete his BSc (Honours) Degree in Physics at the University of the Free State in 2018, followed by his BSc (Honours) at Wits University and a PhD in Experi-

"Nkadimeng's work focuses on the development of test benches and the analysis of data to determine the properties and performance of the LVPS system."

mental Particle Physics at the same institution in 2022.

Throughout his academic journey, he has actively engaged in diverse projects, including machine learning, firmware development for electronic boards, and radiation test campaigns for CERN electronics.

Speaking to the *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Nkadimeng said these experiences broadened his skillset and allowed him to apply his knowledge to a wide range of scientific challenges.

His journey showcases the transformative power of education, resilience in the face of challenges, and a deep pas-

sion for scientific exploration.

"While a career in science was not initially part of my plan, my early fascination with computers and technology fuelled my passion for problem-solving and innovation. As I grew older, I realised that a career in physics would provide me with the opportunity to explore my interests

and contribute to pushing the boundaries of knowledge and technology," he said.

STEAM for economic growth

Nkadimeng said while the country had made progress in promoting science, technology, engineering, Art and mathematics (STEM) more could still be done. "Increasing investment in research and development, both through government funding and private-sector partnerships, is critical. It is also essential to improve access to technology and digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas," he added. "This includes

expanding broadband coverage and providing more affordable devices to improve digital literacy and skills. Additionally, fostering a thriving tech start-up ecosystem and prioritising sustainable and socially responsible innovation is crucial for promoting STEM and driving long-term economic growth."

One of his proudest career moments was being appointed to co-convene the official ATLAS Tile Calorimeter Phase II lower voltage (LV) and LV DCS working groups. The role, spanning from 2020 to 2023, allowed him to lead a team of experts in the development and implementation of critical components for the upgrade of the ATLAS experiment at CERN. "Being entrusted with such a significant responsibility in a prestigious international collaboration is a testament to the expertise and leadership I have demonstrated in my field," he says.

His other achievement was achieving a pass for the ATLAS Final Design Review by introducing the latest design of Electronics. "This accomplishment showcased my expertise and contribution to the field of experimental particle physics. It demonstrated the effectiveness of my research and innovation efforts, contributing to the development of cutting-edge technologies for scientific research," he added. ○

WoF doing its bit to extinguish soaring employment levels

Boisterous chants have become synonymous with the country's international airports whenever Working on Fire (WoF) teams depart or arrive from firefighting missions.

The charged atmosphere almost manifests as latent heat from the latest rounds of inferno-ravaged missions successfully doused.

Western Cape and Free State WoF General Manager Antoinette Jini is an integral part of the senior management team that ensures that missions are executed without a glitch.

"My job entails strategic leadership in managing roles and operational responsibilities, including health and safety, finances, human resource management, and contractual aspects of WoF in the two provinces, in accordance with company policies and procedures," she told *Public Sector Manager* magazine.

In July 2023, she was among a group of 15 WoF managers



who led 200 Mzanzi 1 Hotshots firefighters deployed to put out wildfires in Alberta, Canada.

This was not Jini's first rodeo. "I have been to Canada before, I was in Alberta in 2019, and in 2021 I was in Manitoba, another province. This time around I was back in Alberta.

"We were highly motivated. We knew that we were going to lift high the South African flag in terms of how we were going to perform our duties and make sure that we work professionally," she recounted.

While fighting fires alongside Canadian and international fire-

fighters, the Mzanzi 1 Hotshots team had the opportunity to observe and learn from Canada's methodologies, strategies and best practices in wildfire management.

Jini expounded that Canada's firefighting techniques were markedly unique to those employed in South Africa.

"They do not do direct attacks on fires as we do in South Africa. In terms of their firefighting approach, they have helipad pins. Here at home we are the direct attackers of the fires. But because of the intensity of the fires, we do not attack the fires

directly in Canada," Jini elaborated.

Growing through ranks

The seasoned public servant first joined the programme in 2012 as a firewire project manager in Piet Retief in Mpumalanga. Two years later, she was promoted to regional manager in the same province.

In 2018, she was tasked with being the Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager, where she oversaw 26 bases. In 2020, Jini became the fourth female general manager in the programme.

"On deployment, I am an agency representative. I am the agent between the incident management team in Canada and my managing director in South Africa. As a representative, I sit in the meetings of the incident management team where the camps are," she explained.

In 2019, she was deployed with 64 firefighters and a team of

coordinators responsible for the crews.

"I am the link between the strike team leaders and management of WoF back in the country, to update them on the situation in Canada.

"I have to ensure that objectives, which are given by incident commanders, are delivered everyday.. I sit in these meetings because they (management) have to give feedback on how these teams have to perform. I am the first person to receive that information. I also do site visits and assess the quality of the work they do," she added.

During this period, she is also responsible for the safety and well-being of the crews while abroad.

International Cooperation

At the beginning of 2019, South Africa and Canada signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that allowed for an exchange of fire management resources between the two countries.

"[Even] Prior to the MoU, firefighting crew from the WoF programme were already being deployed to Canada," explained Jini.

She brims with pride when she ponders on the impact of the programme on, not just the missions the teams embark on, but also on the participating

firefighting recruits.

"This programme has allowed participants to fulfill their dreams. Remember, education-wise, they are not highly qualified. What they do with their income is unbelievable, they invest in their children, their families and themselves.

"Some of them buy houses and even improve their educa-

"Some of them buy houses and even improve their education. It makes a world of difference to the young men and women. You should hear the testimonies when they speak on their journeys."

tion. It makes a world of difference to the young men and women. You should hear the testimonies when they speak on their journeys," she said.

She added that the participants also get to apply and work in bigger organisations because of the skills they gain at WoF.

In a statement, the WoF programme commended the Mzansi 1 Hotshots for not only showcasing their remarkable firefighting abilities but also exemplifying "professionalism,



selflessness and the core values of the WoF programme, including accountability, teamwork, excellence and adaptability".

Njini views being part of the WoF as a great opportunity as she is always expected to execute the values of the department and lead by example.

"I have to lead by example, especially for the young women who look up to me, as a leader. It is a great opportunity that I am very passionate about".

Established in September 2003, WoF is an Expanded

Public Works Programme of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment aimed at providing work opportunities to the youth. Participants are recruited from marginalised communities and trained in fire awareness and education, fire prevention and fire suppression skills. They are also trained in first aid, carpentry, cooking, health and safety, and communications. To date, the programme has recruited over 5 000 participants. ○

Progress on economic reforms will revive growth and jobs

We recently released a progress report on the economic reforms we are implementing through Operation Vulindlela, our reforms initiative in The Presidency and National Treasury, working with the relevant government departments.

Since Operation Vulindlela was established, we have built significant momentum in economic reforms to create growth and jobs.

Through these reforms we are steadily laying the foundation for a revival of economic growth. By restructuring our network industries like energy, telecommunications, ports and rail, we are opening the space for investment and a renewal of our nation's infrastructure.

This new report highlights a



number of key milestones that have been reached during the past quarter.

The first of our reform mile-

stones was the digital migration process we have implemented by switching off analogue transmission for all frequen-

cies above 694 MHz on 31 July 2023. This marks a significant step in migration from analogue to digital signal. This means that radio frequencies that were being used for television broadcasting can now be used for mobile telecommunications, which will make network communications more accessible and increase the speed and reduce the cost of data. The implementation of this reform will bring new investment in the telecommunications sector.

Work is underway to implement necessary reforms in our logistics sector to address the challenges that have held back the growth of South African exports. The lack of investment and the increased cost of doing business have added to the many challenges that we need to address.

A key milestone was reached with the selection of an international terminal operator to partner with Transnet at the Durban Pier 2 container terminal. This terminal handles close to half of South Africa's port traffic.

This partnership will increase investment for upgrading equipment and expanding terminal capacity. A key aspect of this partnership is that port



infrastructure will remain state-owned and all jobs will be protected.

In August, two critical pieces of legislation were tabled in Parliament that will advance economic reform.

The Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill will support the restructuring of Eskom into three separate companies owned and controlled by Eskom Holdings, including an independent grid operator. Through this Bill we will introduce competition in electricity generation, enabling a number of independent generators, alongside Eskom, to produce electricity to meet our country's demand. This reform will fundamentally transform, modernise and improve South

Africa's energy sector to ensure energy security into the future.

Meanwhile, the reforms we have implemented through the Energy Action Plan have unlocked new investment in renewable energy sources, both to end load shedding and to use our unique wind and solar resources to power economic growth.

One of key reforms we have prioritised is in the water sector. We have introduced the South African National Water Resources Infrastructure Bill to establish a dedicated national water agency to design, plan and finance water resource infrastructure.

This agency will enable significantly greater investment in bulk water infrastructure to

guarantee water security in the years and decades to come, while creating jobs and unlocking new agricultural potential.

We are implementing a range of other reforms to unlock economic growth, from creating an enabling regulatory environment for hemp and cannabis production to eradicating the backlog of title deeds for subsidised housing.

Despite difficult global conditions, investors continue to see value in the South African economy and the benefit of the reform agenda we are pursuing.

We are pleased that the BRICS Business Forum, which was held from 22 to 24 August, was attended by 1 500 investors and business people from

all five member countries. We were able to showcase the potential of South Africa and the African continent as the next frontiers of productivity and growth.

Many of the participants remarked on the enormous potential of our economic reform agenda to drive growth in the green economy, the digital economy and other key sectors.

In all of the work that we do, our ultimate goal is the same: to build an inclusive, fast-growing and dynamic economy and thereby create a better life for all South Africans. ○

From the desk of The President was published on 28 August 2023.

Modern gardening set to boost food security



Many South African households are increasingly turning to hydroponic gardening to stave off the threat to food security brought about by climate change.

Hydroponic gardening is the art of cultivating plants using water instead of soil. This type of gardening saves water and space than the traditional method. More importantly, hydroponic gardening is a practical solution to the growing threat of climate change.

Thulisile Mapaile, who works with Conservation South Africa (CSA) and manages Eat Fresh Aquaponics, a farm that specialises in hydroponics and aqua farming in Mpumalanga, advises households to start their own gardens in line with government's call for solutions to climate change.

Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Minister, Barbara Creecy recently addressed this challenge at the Annual Garden Route Environmental Management and Climate Change Indaba.

"Climate change is no longer a distant reality and all of you know that drought, severe wild fires and, more recently, flooding are part of our lived experience," Minister Creecy said.

The Sixth International Panel on Climate Change Report indicates that the world has already warmed on average by 1.1 degrees above pre-industrial times, and in Southern Africa,



temperatures are increasing at twice the global average. Global warming is associated with extreme weather events that harm economies and livelihoods, as well as endanger the security of essential resources such as water, food and energy.

“South Africa is a mega biodiverse country. We will experience climate change impact differently in different parts of the country. This means we need tailor-made climate resilience plans which will be different for each local area,” stated Minister Creecy.

Opting for hydroponics gardening

Hydroponic gardens are resilient to climate change because they can be done indoors and outdoors with minimal costs and space.

Most plants suitable for this type of gardening include leafy vegetables and herbs such as spinach, lettuce; herbs like basil, coriander, peppers; cucumber, onions and fruit like tomatoes and strawberries.

One of the simplest forms of hydroponics method involves planting a crop on water only. The water must be fresh and

mixed with manure or compost; this helps the plant to be rich in nutrients. It can be done on a simple two-litre plastic container. All you do is add water, manure or compost, and place the crop inside the container. The plant grows from the water to be an edible vegetable or fruit.

The water stays in the container for a long time, and new plants can be grown in the same water. Another advantage is that there are no weeds in this style of planting. Furthermore, the plants are not subjected to large amounts of water absorption and consumption that soil farming requires. Another positive is that hydroponic gardening is suitable for different living environments. For instance, they can be placed on the balcony, rooftop or backyard.

How to get started

Many hardware and gardening stores have a wide range of af-

fordable choices for hydroponic equipment.

“People can assess places where they stay and avoid placing the plant in harsh weather conditions. They can also find different hydroponics gardening styles on YouTube. It is not difficult at all. I also learnt a lot on the job and I am very curious about the future of our country when it comes to saving food and water. We should fend for ourselves and not rely only on in-store bought food,” expressed Mapaille.

With government’s drive to promote hydroponics, aquaculture and many other modern forms of farming, Mapaille was recently invited to speak about her work at a seminar in China and has been to many outreach and educational programmes.

“Government is working with organisations and individuals that are working towards developing the nation’s food security, said Mapaille.

She urged more South Africans to acquire knowledge on hydroponic farming, adding that she had benefited from free training offered by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. ○

*For more information contact
Thulisile Mapaille on
t.mapaille@conservation.org*

Preserving the rich heritage of the Khomani San

Traversing landscapes of space and time, the Kalahari is known for its rich cultural and tourism offerings of the Kalahari Red Dune Route.

The route passes through small communities such as Mier, Ashkam, Noenieput and Andreisvale, still home to the world's oldest ancient tribe, the Khomani. The sound of the Khomani reverberates through centuries, echoing the stories of its people.

Pulsating through the Kalahari, the gift of these ancient people can now be shared with all, following the launch of the R3.5 million Twee Rivieren (Khomani) Interpretative Centre and Narrative Development Project.

"I am delighted and deeply honoured to launch the Twee Rivieren Interpretative Centre [and Narrative Development] Project in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as it pays homage to the unique culture of the

Khomani San.

"Through this centre, the Department of Tourism has enabled the local community to proudly share the narrative of their captivating culture with thousands of tourists who visit the park annually," said Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille during the launch.

According to SANParks, the centre provides a unique stop for tourists at Twee Rivieren Rest Camp, allowing modern design to meet ancient wisdom.

An exhibition installation found at the centre provides visitors with a demonstration of the cultural and natural heritage of the park, ensuring an immersive experience. It includes the collection of narratives and storylines of the local Khomani communities within the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

The Khomani Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site is an

important landscape as it forms part of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park with neighbouring Botswana and Namibia.

Preserving heritage

The significance of the park can be attributed to its compelling history and a very rich cultural heritage with the original inhabitants, the Khomani, living close by and able to contribute in the interpretation of the park.

Despite its rich cultural heritage, there was previously no interpretation centre to assist visitors to gain a full understanding and appreciation of the cultural landscape.

Apart from the rich cultural heritage, the site has two important biomes with diverse fauna, and this attracts visitors from all over the world.

"The outcomes of this initiative are to improve the overall visitor experience of tourists to the Red

Dune Kalahari Region, facilitate educational trips of school groups and provide entrepreneurial opportunities for the local communities," explained the Minister.

The project scope of work included the conversion of an old existing building into the Interpretative centre, situated in the middle of the Twee Rivieren Rest Camp and is the only access point for visitors from South Africa. This was completed in March 2023.

Also included in this, is a Market Tree (Selling Point) where San crafters can sell their products.

"This R3.5 million project is funded by the Department of Tourism, and SANParks has been appointed as the implementing agency. It is situated in a rural node within the Northern Cape, one of the regions identified by government for

socio-economic development. The department has supported a number of projects within the region, all with socio-economic beneficiation on the San communities," the Minister explained.

Cultural tourism

She encouraged Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park tourists to visit the centre and also take a guided hike with a Khomani tourist guide to learn about the wisdom, customs and folklore of the ancient tribe, to ensure a complete experience of the Kalahari.

SANParks Chief Executive Officer Hapiloe Sello said the organisation is proud to be the custodian of the project that will assist in showcasing the rich culture of the Khomani and Mier communities.

"This is also the reason why [the] Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park was incepted as one of the world heritage sites in South Africa," she said.

She commended the depart-

ment for its interest and support in preserving this important heritage for the future.

"This centre is a remarkable achievement, which could not have materialised had it not been for the collective input of the Khomani, experts in history and anthropology, and SANParks in the research and development of the narrative.

"It is a showcase of how parks and communities can work together for the greater good. This centre is about the people, by the people and for the people," Sello added.

Job creation

To further give expression to the project, the Department of Tourism has trained 10 tourist guides from the Khomani and Mier communities. They completed training as both nature and culture site guides for the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and its surrounding areas.

The training also allowed the communities to directly benefit

from the interpretation centre and tourism activities in the area. The interpretation centre will also ensure that tourist guides have access to information that is comprehensive, factually correct and objective.

One of the beneficiaries of the training, Roseline Van Neel, from Mier who could not further her studies due to financial challenges expressed gratitude for the opportunity created by the project.

"I have been unemployed for a long time. I am excited for having an opportunity to work as a tour guide because I love tour-

ism and I think it is an important industry that creates jobs for many people, in both rural and urban communities. Tourism also strengthens the local economy," she said.

She added that working at the park will also help her and fellow residents preserve their rich history and culture because there is a lot of cultural and heritage sites that tourists can enjoy in the Kalahari.

For more information on the country's national parks, visit www.sanparks.org or call SANparks on 012 428 9111 for bookings. ○



Beyond duty:

enhancing service delivery in South Africa



As the Minister of Public Service and administration unveils the official launch of Public Service Month, one cannot help but reflect on the indomitable spirit of our nation's public servants. Across the cities, towns and rural heartlands of South Africa, an array of activities will be unfurled throughout this

month. From workshops and dialogues to recognition ceremonies, Public Service Month is more than a mere celebration; it is a reaffirmation of our commitment to a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

This year's Public Service Month comes with a special focus and direction. The event

is celebrated under the guiding theme: "building a professional public service for quality service delivery". This is not just a slogan, but a clarion call to action and an embodiment of our goals. The theme underscores our unyielding commitment to refining, enhancing, and professionalising our public service

delivery mechanisms. Our approach this year is an integrated one, deliberately crafted to touch and activate every segment of society. There is a clear understanding that for holistic development, no stone should be left unturned, no voice should go unheard. Through this approach, we aim to not just serve but to engage, not just to deliver but to connect, ensuring that our services resonate with the diverse needs and aspirations of our society.

It is recognised that public service is the backbone of any thriving democracy. Our public servants play a monumental role in ensuring that the machinery of our state runs seamlessly. Their dedication, often unnoticed, powers our schools, hospitals and community centres. It is this profound dedication to service that we salute during Public Service Month. This com-

mitment not only guarantees a brighter future for every South African but also advances our national development goals.

It needs to be admitted though, that dedication to service alone is not the sole trait we require from our public servants. With the public's trust placed firmly upon their shoulders, these cadres are required to uphold the highest of ethical standards.

In recent years, instances of corruption and maladministration have eroded this trust.

Public Service Month stands as a beacon, reminding our public servants of their moral duty, stressing transparency and accountability in all service delivery endeavours.

Professionalism, a cornerstone of efficient public service, is yet another attribute the Public Service Month activities will highlight. Citizens deserve a system that is responsive, efficient, and reliable. To meet the evolving demands of our society, it is crucial that our public servants remain at the cutting edge, embracing innovation and modern methodologies. This month should act as a catalyst, spurring our public servants to strive for excellence in every endeavour.

Reflecting on diversity

This pursuit of excellence must be coupled with unity and col-



laboration. South Africa, with its rich tapestry of cultures and backgrounds, demands a public service that reflects its diversity. It is this unity, this synergy of myriad voices, that ensures comprehensive service delivery. The integrated Public Service Month activities aim to foster such unity, breaking silos and encouraging cross-departmental cooperation.

Yet, as we champion our public servants, it is crucial to remember that the goal remains citizen-centred service. Public servants are, in essence, the bridge between government's vision and its realisation on the ground. Public servants, must, therefore, be attuned to the pulse of the community, ensuring that services provided are both relevant and timely. Listening and engaging with citizens should not be an annual endeavour but a daily

practice, ingrained in an ethical orientation.

In this rapidly changing world, continuous learning and adaptability are non-negotiable. Our public servants should be at the forefront of knowledge and skills relevant to their domains. Public Service Month should not just be a celebration but also a platform for knowledge exchange and skill enhancement.

Moreover, South Africa's journey from its troubled past to its promising present has been marked by inclusivity and representation. Our public service, as the representative arm of government, should mirror this inclusivity. By ensuring that all voices, regardless of gender, race or socio-economic background, are heard and represented. We forge a service that is truly for and of the people.

Trust, the bedrock of any

relationship, is of paramount importance in the bond between the public and its servants. It is, through consistent delivery, transparency and effective communication that this trust is nurtured. The onus lies on our public servants to not just maintain but enhance this trust.

As Minister Noxolo Kiviet flags off the Public Service Month, it is a clarion call to every South African – public servants and citizens alike, to not only celebrate, but more importantly to introspect, innovate and instil a renewed sense of purpose in our public service machinery.

As we partake in the multitude of activities planned for the month of September, let us remember that at the heart of it all is our shared dream: a prosperous South Africa powered by a dedicated, ethical and professional public service. ○



BRICS partnership is a catalyst for global growth

President Cyril Ramaphosa says the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) partnership is a catalyst for global growth and development that responds to the needs of all nations.

"It is the right of Africa and the entire Global South to fully reap the benefits of global trade and investment. Without trade and investment our economies cannot thrive and our peoples' material conditions cannot improve,"

Ramaphosa said.

Ramaphosa was speaking at the BRICS Africa Outreach and BRICS Plus Dialogue, held on the last day of the 15th BRICS Summit in August 2023.

"As the African continent we are determined that the continent's substantial resources are harnessed for the benefit and development of Africa's people. The African Continental Free Trade Area, once fully operational, will unlock the benefits of the



continental market and generate substantial opportunities for African and other countries," he said.

To make use of these opportunities, he said Africa is looking to the BRICS partnership to unlock infrastructure and development

financing, noting this was part of the founding vision of the New Development Bank.

He said the bank is playing a leading role in efforts to increase the resilience of the Global South, and to bring fairness to global trading and financial systems by strengthening the use of BRICS currencies.

"We have to reform global economic, financial and political governance, including the multi-lateral trading system, so that we create a conducive environment for fair trade."

While many countries of the Global South are seeing significant progress in industrialisation, technological development, innovation and the digital economy, they are not fully reaping the inherent economic benefits.

"By working together, by sharing skills and capabilities, by mobilising resources, we will be able to give renewed impetus to global growth and sustainable development. We need to move beyond expressions of solidarity towards inclusion and mutually-beneficial economic cooperation," President Ramaphosa said.

Call for special attention to Global South concerns

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi commended President Ramaphosa for hosting a success summit, noting that the event has given them the opportunity to share



views with countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Modi said that in discussions during the summit, members emphasised the priorities and concerns of countries in the Global South.

"We believe that calling special attention to these issues by BRICS, is a need of these current times... and we welcome all the new member countries. This will make global institutions and forums more representative and inclusive, a step towards such efforts of ours.

"When we use the term Global South, it is not just a new diplomatic term. In our shared history, we have together faced colonialism, [and] it was in this land of Africa that Mahatma Gandhi developed a powerful concept of non-violence and peaceful resistance, tested here and then used in India's struggle for freedom. His thinking and ideas inspired great leaders like Nelson Mandela," Modi said.

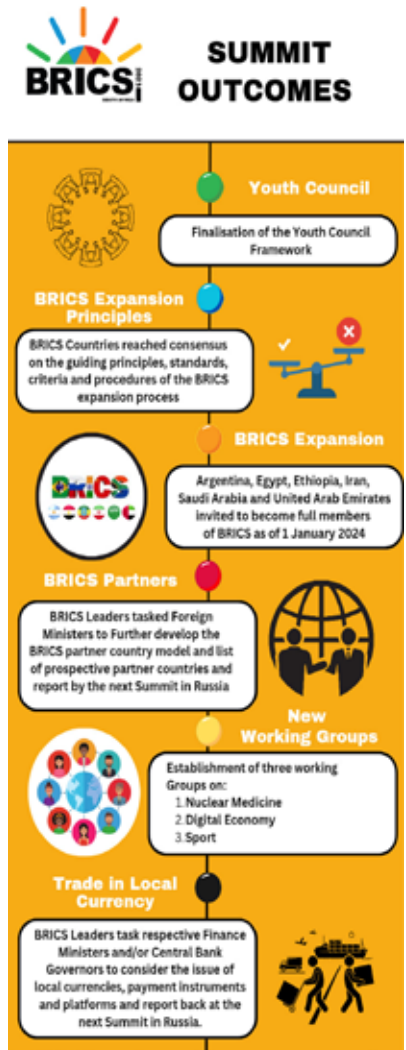
Brazilian President Lula da Silva said he was very impressed with the maturity of the BRICS Summit, and the results they managed to reach.

"The GDP [gross domestic product] of the BRICS is growing up to 37% of the GDP in terms of the purchasing power and 46% in terms of the world population," da Silva said.

He also commended the team from the Foreign Affairs Ministers for the extraordinary work they did to conduct the Declaration of Johannesburg, which was signed on 24 August, adding that BRICS will continue to be open to new members and also approve criteria procedures for future members.

Rebuilding of a new multi-polar world order

Russian President Vladimir Putin also commended South Africa for the efforts made during their joint work.



Putin said BRICS stand for rebuilding of a new multi-polar world order, one that is "truly balanced and takes interest in as many nations as possible."

He said Russia will always remain a reliable food supplier and continue to support countries that are most in need.

"We will promote the overcoming of all ways of inequality that exists in the world, and BRICS will continue to be the driving force of the new international order," Putin said. - [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)

Domestic tourism: the bedrock of South Africa's tourism



South Africa commemorates Tourism Month in September. This coincides with World Tourism Day on 27 September. Tourism Month aims to create awareness, promote domestic tourism and cultivate a culture of travel among South Africans. It is also an opportunity to showcase the country's diverse tourism offerings and foster a sense of national pride and ap-

preciation for the beauty and richness of South Africa.

Speaking at the national launch of Tourism Month in August 2023, Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille highlighted the importance of domestic tourism.

"Domestic tourism is the bedrock of our industry. It serves as the heartbeat that sustains our hospitality sector supporting local businesses, and generating

employment opportunities for our people. When we choose to explore our own land, we not only discover the breathtaking landscapes and connect through the vibrant cultures that define us, but we also contribute significantly to our nation's economic prosperity.

"The impact of domestic tourism on our economy cannot be underestimated. As South

Africans, each journey we embark upon within our country's borders has a ripple effect on various industries. It sustains our hotels, lodges, restaurants, and countless small businesses that rely on our patronage," said Minister De Lille.

The global theme as set by the United Nations World Tourism Organization is; "Tourism and Green Investments". It



emphasises the significant role of tourism in fostering inclusive economic growth and development. By generating employment opportunities, stimulating local economies, and promoting social inclusion, tourism becomes a powerful catalyst for positive change.

Green Tourism Incentive

In line with the theme, the launch of Tourism Month took place at the Thaba Legae Guest Lodge in Rustenburg – one of the beneficiaries of the Department of Tourism's Green Tourism Incentive Programme. (GTIP)

The lodge's solar photovoltaic installation was co-funded by the Department of Tourism to help the establishment operate despite energy constraints and offer an uninterrupted visitor experience.

The GTIP was developed and informed by escalating electricity prices, the intensifying pressure on the national energy grid and associated load-shedding conditions, as well as water scarcity and drought conditions, which negatively impact the tourism sector. The programme aims to encourage private sector tourism enterprises to move towards the installation of solutions for the sustainable management and usage of electricity and water resources.

A total of 130 applications for GTIP funding have been approved at a total grant value of R76.1million. This funding was disbursed to tourism establishments all over the country with the department co-funding their water and energy efficiency measures.

"We are committed to doing our part in tourism to help the

sector adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change so that it not only grows, but thrives. sustainability and responsible tourism have, over the last few years, been a great focal point in tourism, both here in South Africa and globally. Our country has great tourism products that espouse responsible tourism and, this month, we not only take this opportunity to showcase those but we also want to encourage South Africans to advance responsible practices not only when they travel but in their everyday lives too. We all need to embrace sustainability," added the Minister.

MEC for Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism in North West, Virginia Tlhapi, also attended the launch.

"As the North West province, we stand proud to be part of



this auspicious occasion. The timing of the Tourism Month national media launch and the subsequent hosting of the World Tourism Day on the 27th of September 2023 could not have been more opportune because it comes at a time when we have gone into overdrive in terms of recalibrating tourism sector.

"We believe this occasion will go a long way in demonstrating that the tourism ecosystem is functioning once again, while no effort is being spared in re-engineering the tourism economy of the province for the benefit of our people. Our province being a multi layered destination, we also



hope to use the Tourism Month programme with its concomitant activities as a precursor to the Harties centenary celebrations, which is one of our iconic tourist destinations in the province,” said the MEC.

As the official host province for the month, North West will also host the World Tourism Day celebrations. The entire country will also enjoy the festivities of Tourism Month with nationwide events.

Exciting travel deals

Research by South African Tourism indicates that South Africans want to travel and explore their country but cite affordability as a challenge for them. As Tourism

Month aims to increase awareness of the accessible, affordable, and world-class attractions available within the country, including hidden gems and lesser-known tourism products and services, South Africans keen to explore the sights and sounds of their country will have a great opportunity to get their hands on exciting local travel deals.

South African Tourism’s (SA Tourism) annual Sho’t Left Travel Week will see a host of trade partners, airlines, hotel groups and tour operators offering generous discounts between 4 and 10 September.

“In response to what South Africans have told us and in ensuring that we make our country

accessible, the Sho’t Left Travel Week campaign offers South Africans access to discounted deals, in a bigger way so they can explore and experience the length and breadth of South Africa’s tourism offering. It seeks to dismantle current perceptions, unlock access to the country and is further underpinned by the general call to all South Africans: It is your country. Enjoy it!” said SA Tourism Acting Chief Executive Officer Nomasonto Ndlovu.

Domestic tourism has seen a remarkable resurgence, with a 30.8% increase in domestic overnight trips during the first four months of 2023, compared to the same period of 2022. Although the average length of

stay has decreased by 71% to 2.6 nights, domestic tourists are taking more frequent trips. Day trips have also experienced a significant boost, with a 16.2% increase in the number of trips taken from January to April 2023, compared to the same period in 2022. Domestic expenditure rose by 19.7% compared to 2022, showcasing the impact of the adventurous South African tourist.

“As we focus on investments on people, the planet and prosperity, let us also acknowledge the significant role of domestic tourism in achieving these goals. Exploring the wonders of our country builds bridges between cultures and strengthens the fabric of our nation. Let us embrace the spirit of adventure and explore the richness of our own land. Let us be stewards of our natural treasures and ambassadors for our nation’s warmth and hospitality. Investing in a more sustainable and inclusive tourism industry creates a legacy of prosperity and environmental stewardship for future generations,” concluded the Minister. ○



September

Heart

AWARENESS MONTH



Heart disease is largely preventable through simple lifestyle changes.

Let's take charge of our hearts and inspire others to do the same!

Here are some tips to keep your heart happy and healthy:

- 1 Get Active:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day.
- 2 Eat heart-friendly:** Fill your plate with fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean proteins. Limit unhealthy fats, salt, and sugary treats.
- 3 Kick those bad habits:** Quit smoking and reduce alcohol consumption.
- 4 Manage stress** through mindfulness, relaxation techniques, or hobbies that bring you joy.
- 5 Monitor** your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels.



Just Walk into
any vax site.

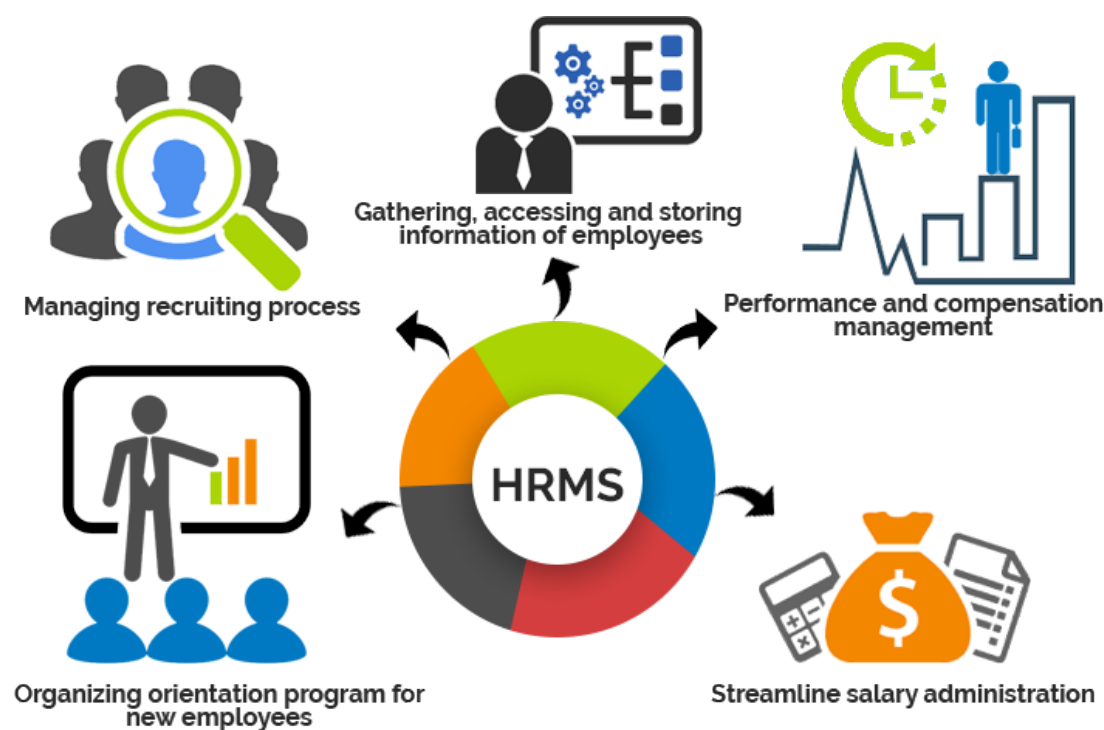


Choose to mask.



From 5 years
and up.

A mapping framework for jobs, occupations and qualifications in the Public Service



At the conclusion of the Service Compliance and Human Resource Convention organised by the Department of Public Service and Administration in February 2023, the then Acting Public Service Minister Thulas Nxesi pointed out

that the management of human resources in the Public Service needs to adapt to the agile, changing environment to realise the objectives of the National Development Plan and government priorities.

The effective management of

human resource development (HRD) and human resource management (HRM) is not only key to building skills but also to the planning of skills needed so as to build a state that has the capabilities to deliver services to the citizens of this country.

Within the Public Service there are many systems, policies and tools which are geared towards skills planning and anticipation.

Recent research conducted by the University of Witwatersrand's Centre for Researching Education and Labour (Wits REAL) on behalf of the Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority (PSETA) found that it was crucial to understand the various classifications systems and to bring them together in a coherent manner, resulting in the development of a mapping framework.

One could well ask, why the need to develop yet another approach, framework or guideline for skills planning when there is already a plethora in place – some of which are being used and considered to be effective? The research sought to understand what the PSETA could do to assist the Public Service in skills planning and within that context, further understand occupations better within the existing labour market context.

In essence, the research sought to assist the authority in navigating and better understanding the nexus between work, jobs and occupations in order to adequately support interventions in the Public Ser-

vice by developing a framework that could assist in the process of mapping jobs to occupations and qualifications.

The framework would provide a holistic way of mapping jobs, occupations and qualifications using the existing classification systems as well as a broad range of information relevant to an occupation, including policy-based and government-stipulated requirements and specific labour market and contextual information. A deeper and holistic understanding of an occupation can facilitate more focused considerations of the skills needs and appropriate interventions if required.

The research process focused on understanding the links conceptually and empirically. The research report, titled; *Jobs, qualifications and occupations in the Public Service sector*, explains that "conceptually, by understanding the key features of occupations because the process of classifying jobs to occupations and qualifications is not a technical one; and can only be done within a framework that takes into account the internal and external factors that shape an occupation. Empirically, by developing a user-friendly mapping framework and using it to map a number of occupations and from that draw out some broader lessons

about linking jobs to occupations and qualifications."

The research team also consolidated a range of different research activities to answer two broad questions: What are the links between jobs, occupations, and qualifications? and how to align work tasks of a job, the core knowledge and qualification of an occupation, and the contextual needs of specific government departments. They believed that it could assist the departments and the PSETA to identify more nuanced skills needs and interventions.

As part of this process, six objectives were selected to unpack the what and how, including:

- to briefly understand the

meaning of jobs, occupations and qualifications;

- to understand mapping processes, and tools, when mapping jobs, occupations and qualifications (henceforth mapping process) for skills planning in the Public Service sector;
- to develop a mapping framework that will include the different factors and sources of information that a department needs to consider in when mapping process;
- to map five occupations of the ten priority occupations identified by the PSETA;
- to identify challenges in the mapping process; and

- to make broad recommendations in line with challenges on how to best approach the mapping process.

Results

What emerged from the study was the realisation that skills planning is difficult because of the mandates of various government departments in a large public service. The research pointed to contradictory goals in mapping skills planning activities. This is due to the Public Service having context-specific needs, including Education, Health and Social Services departments across different geographic and socio-economic conditions. As a result, public sector occupations



require nuances in how they define job requirements. The nuances are found in describing jobs or occupations, their requirements for training (such as qualifications or targeted professional programmes) and experience that moves away from standardised definitions and mapping processes for skills, jobs, occupations and qualifications.

What also emerges very strongly is that the mapping process proves to be quite a challenge as different departments use different job titles which makes it hard to make comparisons during such processes. This then requires a careful analysis of the task description. A further factor impacting on the mapping process is the changing nature of work which creates difficulties when mapping as these changes are not fully reflected in the occupational classification systems used by the Public Service – the Occupational Classification System and the Organising Framework for Oc-

cupations.

Mapping framework

In view of what emerged during the various research processes, the research team, with inputs from the PSETA, developed a framework which is used to understand how to align occupations and qualifications. Giving consideration to the main what and how questions, the framework has been conceptualised as a five-step process of mapping occupations. Hence, when considering what skills and resources are needed, public servants need to be able to answer the following:

- What are the key entry requirements for the job?
- What are the core knowledge and competencies needed?
- What occupational progression is there for labour in the occupation?
- What are the labour market conditions for the occupation?
- Which stakeholders need

to be consulted and how?

The framework provides a methodology to strengthen skills planning. Whilst the mapping framework will effectively assist the Public Service to plan around skills, the information obtained through this process will in turn assist the PSETA to decide on how to respond decisively to the skills needs. In view of the huge challenges and demands facing the sector, the framework provides an opportunity for careful and systematic thinking through of demand so that supply can respond appropriately.

This will include being more aware of the different classification systems, their intentions and uses, understanding qualification systems, being in tune with labour market conditions and the involvement of relevant stakeholders. This mapping framework requires public servants to have a more holistic approach to mapping jobs, occupations and qualifications.

The use of the mapping framework could impact policy

formulation, implementation and ultimately not only the Public Services's understanding of demand-side dynamics but also, and not unrelated, the quality and efficacy of its education and training supply-side interventions. ○



Centre For Researching
Education and Labour

The Wits Real has produced several research reports to support more effective skills planning by surfacing skills demand and supply challenges, and how the Public Service can respond more efficiently. As part of the centre's partnership with the PSETA's deliverables, it has produced a podcast series aimed at showcasing the findings of key areas of research, and reflecting and engaging with some of the key challenges confronting the Public Service. The podcasts can be found on the REAL YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@witsrealcentre4813/videos>

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BRICS building a 'pluriversal' world



BRICS is emerging as a key bloc building toward a 'pluriversal' world. 'Pluriverse,' a term believed to be coined by the Colombian American anthropologist Arturo Escobar in a 2018 book on design theory,

refers to a world that is more multipolar, more inclusive, just, equitable, a world that respects the potential and contributions of all countries to human progress.

A 'pluriversal' world embraces knowledge from all sources and

cultures, and harnesses them to build a more humane community with a shared future. Such a world is the antithesis of the idea of unipolarity, espoused and practiced by the major powers of the Global

North.

The convergence of historical and contemporary geopolitical events has helped the BRICS member states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) gravitate toward the global

centre stage, with some other countries of the Global South following a similar path. But the statements and speeches of BRICS leaders suggest the grouping is not anti-Global North and has no intention to "decouple" from it.

Nonetheless, BRICS has an agenda: to make the global governance system more inclusive and egalitarian, improve the global financial institutions and help build a multipolar order that more accurately represents the objectives and ambitions of the developing countries.

The BRICS members are playing an increasingly important role in global development cooperation, and have strengthened their financial instruments while establishing distinct forms of South-South economic cooperation.

BRICS has increased its engagement with the Global South, African countries in particular, based on its core values of solidarity, inclusivity and a shared future.

As a result, the Global South believes BRICS will use its considerable economic weight to spread the benefits of economic development and help reduce their overreliance on former colonial powers.

Development that helps improve lives and livelihoods of the majority of the people



in the world dominated the agenda of the 15th BRICS Summit that was held in Johannesburg, from 22 to 24 August 2023. The discussions covered topics such as trade, development financing, infrastructure development, skills development, global peace, climate change, research and development, innovation, and scientific advancement.

The success of this agenda has the potential to alter the global economy, and lift millions of people around the world out of poverty, which the Chinese leadership has succeeded in doing within the country. Brazil, India, Russia and South Africa, too, have implemented poverty

alleviation policies which have helped lift millions of people out of poverty and build a strong middle class.

Climate change

Besides, in their pursuit of sustainable development, the BRICS members are moving toward low-carbon, climate-resilient development, and contributing their fair share to global emissions reduction, with China having the most advanced adaptation and mitigation plans among the five BRICS members. At the same time, they ensure that global decisions made to reduce emissions do not harm the Global South's development

prospects.

By doing so, the BRICS countries stress the primacy of multilateralism in the global climate agenda and highlight the importance of adhering to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities outlined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

It is because of these factors that, despite BRICS facing geopolitical and economic hurdles since its formation in 2009, trade and investment among its members has significantly increased, with China being the bloc's main economic driver. For instance, in 2022,



Developing Africa

South Africa, as BRICS chair, believes that no country can develop in isolation. The country's leadership has been consistent in this regard, taking advantage of every available opportunity such as at the G20 Summit to further the development of the entire African continent.

Other BRICS countries also recognize this fact, and that is why they are working toward inclusive development. In fact, the BRICS leaders need to be commended for keeping the grouping intact for 15 years, because despite the tectonic political shifts in the world, they have maintained the momentum of development. These leaders have not only managed the contradictions among the BRICS members well and handled geopolitical issues with aplomb, but also respect one another's vision for the organisation.

Developing on the firm foundation of multilateralism, BRICS looks set to be front and centre of the global quest to build a 'pluriversal' world. ○

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intra-BRICS trade reached \$162 billion, in spite of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, soaring inflation and other economic shocks.

According to the World Bank, BRICS represents 42% of the global population, and accounts for 31% of global gross domestic product (in purchasing power parity terms), more than the 30% of G7. No wonder BRICS is now considered one of the most important economic groupings in the world, and all signs show it will keep expanding.

BRICS currency

Also, the BRICS members have been working on creating a

common BRICS currency, so as to lessen their dependency on the US dollar and the euro.

But such endeavours will not be without challenges, such as obstacles created by existing global financial institutions. To overcome the challenges, the BRICS members have to make policies after serious deliberations and strategic manoeuvring.

The BRICS countries also need to accelerate technology transfer and transformation, because technology is one of the main factors driving development. The transfer of technology while protecting intellectual property rights can help more profitably apply

research results to businesses, which can already be seen in the joint training programs with South Africa, which began after it assumed the BRICS chair in February 2023.

As some analysts and commentators have said, this year will likely see BRICS's biggest impact on the global economic and geopolitical landscape. A part of that impact will be the grouping's improved relationship with Africa as is evident from the theme of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg: "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism".



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Professionalisation of the Public Service

equals improved service delivery

Professionalisation of the Public Service is essential to ensure proper management of public funds, which in turn will have a positive impact on service delivery.

This is according to Natasha Soopal, the Executive for Ethics Standards and Public Sector at the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA).

SAICA is South Africa's pre-eminent accountancy body and is widely recognised as one of the world's leading accounting institutes.

It provides a wide range of support services to more than 50 000 members and associates who are chartered accountants, as well as associate general accountants and accounting technicians. Some of its members work in the public sector.

The institute also promotes

ethical culture in the Public Service to encourage professionals in government to work freely without intimidation and make decisions guided by principles rather than personal gain.

"Professionalism in the Public Service means conducting oneself with responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence. It means communicating effectively and appropriately and always finding a way to be productive," explained Soopal.

She believes that professionalisation can also support government's consequence management, continuous professional development and training provided by professional bodies.

"An ethical environment sets the stage for professionals to demonstrate their commitment to public service, gaining the trust and confidence of the community they serve," Soopal

said.

She said SAICA ensures that its members in the public sector, including associate general accountants, chief financial officers, middle management, and accounting technicians play part in the professionalisation of the Public Service.

"Some of our members in municipalities are driving the professionalisation initiatives and



we provide them with support and guidance to improve their teams. We have member structures comprising national public sector committee and regional public sector committees, which oversee the implementation of the initiatives," she said.

SAICA also provides training courses to empower its members and their teams, especially on financial management, audit readiness and compliance standards through workshops.

A need to professionalise local government

Although SAICA is not a public entity, Soopal said it works with all spheres of government, adding that they recently noticed that there was more work needed to be done in local government.

In order to create an ethical environment that supports professionals in local government, SAICA recommends several key steps that should be followed, including leadership commitment, supportive policies and procedures, and ethical guidelines and training.

With local government audit outcomes continuing to be negative due to poor financial planning, inadequate financial controls, skills and capacity, governance and accountability,

Soopal urges government to fast track professionalisation of local government finance departments.

In her presentation at the 2021/22 Local Government Audit Outcome to the Standing Committee of the Auditor-General, Auditor-General Tsakani Maluleka noted that "local government has been characterised by dysfunctional municipalities, financial mismanagement, council and administrative instability, and crumbling municipal infrastructure.

"This leads to deteriorating standards of living and service delivery failures, resulting in service delivery protests. I firmly believe that service delivery improvements will be enabled by capable, accountable and citizen-centric municipal leadership delivering on their mandates to improve the lives of ordinary South Africans."

She identified that there was a lack of proper management of available funds, which exerted pressure on local government's finance thereby reducing its service delivery potential.

This is evidenced by local government incurring fruitless and wasteful expenditure amounting to R4.74 billion as well as incurring an estimated financial loss of R5.19 billion through non-compliance and fraud as identified through the material

irregularities process.

Maluleke further noted that despite the salary cost of finance units amounting to R10.75 billion, municipalities still required the assistance of consultants to support them with financial reporting due to lack of skills and vacancies.

She said payments to consultants amounted to R1.6 billion (R1.36 billion in 2020/21) which is 13% of the total financial reporting cost of R12.36 billion.

Furthermore, Maluleke noted that Chief Executive Officers (CFOs) vacant positions were at 22% whilst CFOs spent an average of 49 months in their positions. The vacancies and instability in leadership within municipalities and finance units also contribute to the challenges in local government.

Professional workforce

In response to this, Soopal said local government can address these challenges by ensuring a professional and ethical workforce.

"By cultivating a highly skilled workforce, local governments can improve audit outcomes, financial management practices, and service delivery," she said.

"While professionalisation is crucial, an ethical environment is equally vital. It nurtures and sustains professionalism,

ensuring that finance professionals act in the best interests of the public," she added.

She also called on those who consult in the public sector to exercise professional competence and due care to ensure that they provide value and contribute to improved public finance management.

Soopal said the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) is SAICA's key stakeholder in the public sector because it also identifies potential risks in the sector that SAICA needs to address or advocate for improvement, such as skills.

In recent months, Soopal facilitated the SAICA-AGSA 2021/22 Local Government Audit Outcomes Session to allow members to engage and interact with the AGSA and other stakeholders.

The work that SAICA does to help improve the Public Service does not come without challenges. Key to this is bureaucracy and red tape.

"Dealing with government officials can often involve navigating complex bureaucratic processes and encountering lengthy delays. To address this challenge, patience, persistence, and maintaining accurate records of all interactions can also be beneficial. We also believe in building relationships in order to mitigate challenges," she said. ○

Go beyond Excellence: utilise M&E

If Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is done right, it can be a potent catalyst for change. If we can measure what we build, we can evaluate what we are doing right or wrong and take decisions to build better. M&E is fast becoming a necessity to ensure that institutions and individuals across the world operate effectively and efficiently.

The drive for M&E is motivated by the desire to overcome challenges that confront the world, and government's establishment of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in 2009, is an example of a country intent on demonstrating the accountability that our constitution binds us to.



For many years, the government communication system functioned without a centralised performance M&E system that helps us track our performance. This situation was far from ideal as individual departments relied on their in-house methods of monitoring and accountability. These fragmented systems operated in silos and lacked the ability to share challenges or successes.

The introduction of M&E brought about a sea change, and ushered in an era of heightened accountability. It inculcated a culture of performance excellence, and provided a concrete way to measure campaigns and communication impact.

M&E is not just a nice to have; it has become a key component in the realisation of strategic priorities such as those in the 2019 – 2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework and ultimately the National Development

Plan. Therefore, performance measurement of any priority or programme calls for scientific and reliable methodologies that will help determine what works and what needs further refining.

Towards the end of 2019, Cabinet called for a dashboard that reports on communication performance within the public sector, and the Government Communication and Information System carefully conceptualised the Government Communication Excellence Tool (G-CET) to measure communication efforts, outcomes and impact.

Since its inception, the G-CET has seen improvements in key performance areas such as the existence and implementation of communication strategies, and regular reporting has begun to show encouraging trends and upticks in performance.

Between 2020 and 2022,

there were over 140 000 communication outputs that reached almost all of South Africa's adult population on COVID-19 alone. These outputs were achieved through a limited but comprehensive list of communication indicators in the G-CET. While M&E sets the planning and reporting framework, Media Content Monitoring and Analysis provides the outcomes of how various government-related issues were covered by the media, and research highlights perceptions of government services.

As an M&E tool, the G-CET serves as a spotlight that allows different programmes and functions to shine. The idea is to deliberately set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators to monitor every area of interest, thereby allowing government to uplift and replicate success while taking corrective action on areas of

underperformance.

The use of a communications measuring tool will bolster the nation's fight against predetermined socio-economic issues. M&E is certainly a dependable means to fortify service delivery and communication excellence. Once fully entrenched across the entirely public service, the G-CET stands at the door of becoming a global trend-setter in communication M&E. ○



***Nemananzhe is a Government Communication Monitoring and Evaluation Deputy Director at the GCIS. You can contact him on 078 659 4703,**

Mentoring young boys to fight against GBVF

Growing up without a father has motivated Kabelo Chabalala from Pankop in

Pretoria to nurture young boys and their masculinity to ensure that they become non-toxic members of society as they grow older.

Chabalala believes that this can contribute to combating the scourge of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF).

Chabalala established the Young Men Movement (YMM) in 2016, to mentor young boys who need guidance while navigating through life, especially without their fathers' support.

"I want to help boys, especially those who are in the villages and [some of

whom] are fatherless, like myself. Often, boys and men tend to blame the absence of their fathers for their misbehavior, including being rebellious, abusive in relationships and not adhering to basic morals. YMM exists to help stop that," explained Chabalala.

His own experience of growing up without a father made him understand the challenges that many young boys face, including peer pressure, lack of guidance and support.

The organisation's objectives include teaching boys that they are not entitled to a girl's body, and that they should not force anyone to do things that they are not willing to do.

"Boys who understand healthy

masculinity have healthy relations and engagements with girls and women in their lives. If we leave a boy child out in our efforts to end the scourge of GBVF, they potentially become perpetrators when they grow up," said Chabalala.

The idea to start the organisation dawned on him while he was studying towards a Diploma in Journalism at the Tshwane University of Technology.

The YMM started with just four boys from Pankop during its first session, but the number grew to approximately 40 boys per year over the years as it recruited more boys from neighbouring villages, including Mmametlhake, Phake and Nokaneng.

More than 600 boys have directly benefitted from the organisation since its inception. It consists of boys of school-going age with the youngest being nine years old. Once the boys finish matric, they exit the group to make space for new members.





During the organisation's bi-weekly sessions, members discuss various topics, including the challenges that they face in life, masculinity, GBVF, their future plans, and career and life goals. The sessions are held in a car garage at Chabalala's home.

"I also bring them books to read, especially those written by women because I want them to learn how emotions and feelings are expressed. Many boys struggle to express their emotions and lack emotional intelligence," he explained.

Positive results

Chabalala added that the boys

have also improved their overall performance in school and some of them are members of the representative council of learners in their schools.

Additionally, YMM has a yearly calendar that incorporates national and international themes, and hosts recreational activities and trips around Gauteng to ensure that the boys do not get bored by just sitting in sessions and talking.

"We have travelled to soccer stadiums, among other places, and often, the trips were first time experiences for many boys. These exposes them to the world of possibilities and helps

to shape their dreams," said Chabalala.

"I do not do all the work by myself. I have a team of friends and family who support my work, and they are experts in different fields, including clinical psychology, social work and motivational speaking," he said.

Although the organisation has never received any funding, Chabalala and his team always buy food and snacks for the sessions. Having conversations with the boys also helped Chabalala deal with his childhood traumas.

"I started to forgive my father for being absent in my life when I started interacting with the boys.

Unfortunately he passed on in 2017," he said.

Chabalala is also the author of *A Journey from boyhood to manhood*, a masculinity memoir that he published in 2022 to tell a story about how growing up fatherless awakened the great and bold man that he has become. ○

**For more information
about YMM or to order the
book, you can reach
Chabalala on
0723716266, or on
Instagram: @Kb_the_village_boy
Facebook: Kabelo Chabalala
Twitter: @KabeloJay**

TIKZN doing its bit to attract investment



For Trade & Investment KwaZulu-Natal's (TIKZN) Innocent Hlongwana, there is nothing as rewarding as seeing a small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME) reach its full potential.

Speaking to *Public Sector Manager* magazine, Hlongwana who is the entity's general manager for investment promotion said that they help small businesses grow using various ways, including pairing those in need of funding with sponsors.

"We also assist local business-people who have projects, we are able to develop their projects to a stage at which they can get funding. Sometimes you find that people have projects but they do not have an investor – we play the role of match-making," explained Hlongwana.

Hlongwana joined the organisation in 2011. His unit is responsible for securing foreign direct investment for KwaZulu-Natal, to support employment creation and promote the growth of the provincial economy.

The entity's sec-

tor reach ranges from agriculture and agro-processing to mining, among others.

"We have a lot of projects in the Oceans Economy, and in manufacturing and mining. We also try to disperse investment to rural areas where there is a need for investment," he stressed.

TIKZN is executing its mandate of promoting the province as the investment destination of choice with immaculate precision.

This much is evident in various projects it has, over the years, seen go from ideas on paper to successful implementation and conclusion.

TIKZN, an entity of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, is an inward investment promotion agency, established to promote the province as an investment destination and to facilitate trade by assisting local companies access international markets.

The entity is also responsible for driving export trade, through the identification of new markets for trade, the facilitation of export deals, and the development of export capacity

within the province. It ensures the retention of businesses and provides support for companies seeking to expand their operations.

In April 2023, the entity revealed that due to global economic downturns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and adverse events that shook investor confidence in the province, fulfilling the mandate of promoting the province as a premier investment destination had proven challenging.

Investment pledges

The agency has played a critical role in facilitating investment pledges made at the 2023 instalment of the South Africa Investment Conference (SAIC) – an ambitious plan to attract R1.2 trillion investment into the country over five years launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018.

Tri-Medi Canna, a medical cannabis initiative in the province is one of the companies that pledged to invest in the country's economy. It announced plans to develop and operate a world-class R121 million hemp processing facility. The investment was expected to generate 1 200 jobs in the uMgungundlovu District.

Other investments made in the province include the construction of the R800 million Seren-

ity Hills Eco Estate in Margate, which was expected to offer significant economic boost to the Ugu District. The development will comprise over 25 amenities, 600 housing units, a hotel and create 1 000 jobs. The other project was the R500 million Renishaw Coastal Precinct in Scottburgh.

eThekweni district also received investment pledges in the renewable energy, manufacturing and agriculture sectors from ARTsolar, Defy, and RCL Foods/Rainbow Chickens, amounting to R108 million, R288 million, and R620 million, respectively.

At the time, the TIKZN announced that the province was poised to benefit from collective investments of nearly R1.4 billion in the province's special economic zones, specifically the Dube TradePort and Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone.

"These projects, for example, are going to have a huge impact in terms of job creation. We have also seen that they are producing quite a number of SMMEs," Hlongwana said.

Quizzed on the importance of the projects and what these mean for the investment outlook for the province, he explained: "It is very important for us as the promoters of investment to showcase this success.

"It builds the confidence of investors who have an appetite to invest here because they can see examples of projects that have been implemented successfully and [that] there was partnership support in terms of government agencies, government departments and municipalities," he said.

The partnerships, he added, were critical to ensuring that red tape and other blockages were reduced.

"These partnerships also make sure that investors work with communities to create job opportunities and participate in procurement opportunities for SMMEs," he emphasised.

Red tape

The SAIC has made it a lot easier for KwaZulu-Natal to be "taken a bit more seriously" as an investment destination, he said.

The entity, he said, had to be pragmatic in its interventions.

"There is now an understanding that there are issues that you cannot run away from if you have to do things like conducting an environmental assessment. We will advise and make sure that we fast-track those processes so that they do not take longer than they should.

While there is need to reduce and cut red tape, it was critical

that this was done in compliance with rules and regulations.

"There is a need for government departments and agencies like us to fully understand and have a knowledge of what is required of us. Our role as TIKZN is to support them, unblock red tape and link them with the municipalities," he said.

In its 2021/22 annual report, the agency revealed that it had successfully committed new investment projects valued at R8.331 billion during the preceding 12 months.

These investments, it said, had the prospect of creating more than 3 182 employment opportunities. In addition, the organisation assisted a range of export-ready and registered companies during the course of the financial year.

Over that period, TIKZN's rand value increase in the turnover of the province's existing and developed exporters' assistance amounted to more than R102.35 million.

In accordance with the KwaZulu-Natal Economic Recovery Plan, the organisation facilitated R611.3 million in company expansion projects and provided strategic support interventions to 130 companies in distress, resulting in no fewer than 6 323 new and retained jobs from existing businesses. ○

South African wine industry boosts the economy



ProudlySA CEO Eustace Mashimbye (centre) with officials from his organisation.

The South African wine industry has made an undeniable mark in the international market through wine production and the wines are revered around the world.

This was said by Proudly South African (Proudly SA) Chief Executive Officer Eustace Mashimbye during his address at the second Local Wine Expo held in Johannesburg recently.

The expo provided a platform for 30 local winemakers to showcase their exceptional products to the media, retail

buyers and discerning consumers.

It was also aimed at creating an environment where up-and-coming wine brands could gain exposure and forge connections with key stakeholders, including wine enthusiasts.

Furthermore, the expo emphasised the significance of fostering innovation in the industry and its profound impact on job creation.

"There are currently 542 wineries in the country that produce about 824 million litres

of wine per year. The wineries also harvest 1.2 million tonnes of grapes every year, and 50% of these wines are exported," explained Mashimbye.

He added that there are about 2 778 farmers who cultivate about 92 000 hectares of land, and the wine industry contributes R55 billion to the country's gross domestic product.

Mashimbye noted that in 2019, the industry directly and indirectly employed 269 000 people in the country. He urged citizens to buy local wine brands to

retain the jobs that the industry has created.

He also called on consumers representing the hospitality industry, franchises, wholesales and retails to prioritise locally produced wines when purchasing stock for their establishments.

"When the demand of their products increases, they will be able to grow their business and create more job opportunities for locals. Statistics show that South Africa accounts for half the tonnage of wine that Africa

produces, making it Africa's largest wine producer and eighth-biggest wine producer in the world," he said.

Women empowerment

About 70% of the wines at the expo were women-owned brands, and at least half of the traders sold out their stock by the end of the expo.

Mahimbye expressed disappointment at the fact that South Africa's unemployment rate is still above 30% and among the highest in the world.

"It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the unemployment rate goes down because women and youth are mostly affected by this. As South Africans, we must support locally produced wines in order for more women and youth to be employed," he added.

With the majority of the wine brands that were exhibited at the expo being women-owned, Mashimbye believes that if they are supported, women will be able to employ more women.

"This representation highlights the remarkable strides made by women in an industry historically dominated by men and provides an empowering platform to foster inclusivity and equality," he said.

By providing a space for these emerging wine brands to con-

nect with retail buyers, the expo plays a vital role in facilitating distribution partnerships and expanding market reach.

Mashimbye said Proudly SA wants to make sure that anyone who makes a purchasing decision chooses a locally made product.

"Among the benefits of buying locally produced goods and services is that unemployed youth will also be able to acquire much-needed skills in various sectors as they get employment opportunities. Localisation also contributes to economic growth of the country," he said.

Proudly SA Board Chairperson Howard Gabriels said the organisation's campaign is primarily driving consumers in the country to buy local brands and products.

"It is important to build relations with other organisations. When we work together we are able to be effective and succeed. Because if your brand succeeds in selling more wine, we know there are thousands of families that will be able to live and survive," he said.

Proudly SA Chief Marketing Officer Happy maKhumalo Ngidi described the expo as an amazing access to market opportunities for locally produced wines.

"It is good to have a product, but it defeats the purpose if you



do not have a market to sell that product because you will probably have to shut the business down and that could lead to more job losses and unemployment in the country," she said.

Moreover, she said by providing a platform for the winemakers, the campaign not only showcased the unique flavours and diversity of the country but also created opportunities for economic growth and job creation.

"We believe in the power of buying and supporting local brands for job creation, and we are delighted by the distance this expo has carried us towards reaching our goal," she added.

One of Proudly SA's core offerings to member companies is access to market opportunities. Local wine brands dominating the retail space will preserve the value chain, help keep and create jobs that South Africa desperately needs. ○

Wear your South African Story this Heritage Month

One of the ways to tell South African stories in a contemporary setting is through fashion, and local designers and brands are coming to the party by redefining the country's heritage. This is according to the founder and creative director of Ezokhetho, Mpumelelo Dhlamini. Instead of being confined by celebrating our heritage on Heritage Day or Month, Dhlamini reckons that we can now wear our stories and heritage with pride daily – both at work or for leisure.

"Local brands such as Ezokhetho, Imprint, Thebe Magugu, Munkus, Sindiso Khumalo and Mantsho, among others, have made this possible. We see some growth in pride when it comes to celebrating and acknowledging who we are," added Dhlamini.

In this edition, Dhlamini shares tips on how women can wear their South African

story in celebration of Heritage Month.

A nice statement kimono or two is a must, especially for brunch, a cute sip and paint or a casual date.

Dhlamini refers to pink as the new black.

"This season we are seeing pink in many shades because of Barbie. We are also seeing a "whiff" of the 1990s coming through, especially with denim."



Clothing items

In the spirit of Heritage Month, here are some beautiful pieces of South African brands redefining heritage that Dhlamini recommends:

1. Seven Colours Coat Dress: Ezokhetho – **R8 900**.
2. Nqina Asymmetric Maxi: Ezokhetho: – **R9 660** (excluding gloves) .
3. The Queen Dress: www.imprintza.com – **R6 500** (online).
4. EmaSwati Dress: www.thebemagugu.com – **R8 500** (online).
5. ilanga knitted dress: www.munkus.co.za – **R10 000** (online).
6. River Kimono: www.mantsho.com – **R17 000** (online).

* Prices correct at the time of publishing.





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Fragrances

With regards to fragrances, Dhlamini advises that you go for something that has notes that eases you into the spring season, like Jo Malone's Wood Sage and Sea Salt.

"If you are looking for something a little sweet but elegant, I would recommend the Salvatore Ferragamo: Signorina Eleganza – a fragrance I am currently using, or go for a classic Dolce & Gabbana: The One."

12 Dolce & Gabbana: The One

13. Jo Malone: Wood Sage & Sea Salt

14. Signorina salvatore ferragamo eleganza.



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* Prices correct at the time of publishing.



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"Dhlamini is the Founder and Creative Director of Ezokhetho, an African clothing brand that has inoculated the combination of light-hearted African pop style that is steeped in a new kind of elegance. It is located at Victoria Yards in Johannesburg. Its items are also available at various retailers including Africa

Rise, House of Nala, Koop Studios, FIASA, Virgule and online www.ezokhetho.com

You can follow Ezokhetho on Twitter: @ezokhetho, Facebook: @ezokhethoofficial, Instagram: @ezokhetho, Tiktok: @ezokhetho / (personal: @leledhlamini (Instagram, twitter & tiktok)).



Tripe and samp: a delicacy to enjoy this Heritage Month



While life keeps evolving and people change ways of living, one of the ways that South Africans use to preserve their heritage and culture is through preparing traditional meals.

Depending on the occasion and based on preference, some use original recipes while others add a twist to enhance flavours.

This Heritage Month, Sinoyolo Sifo, famously known as Sifo The Cooking Husband to his social media followers, shares a recipe for ulusu or mogodu (tripe) and creamy samp.

Beef tripe

Ingredients:

- 2 kg beef tripe, cleaned and cut into cubes.
- 1 beef stock cube.
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) garlic salt.
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) medium curry powder.

- Salt and pepper to taste.

Method:

- In a large deep pot, add beef tripe and enough water to cover the tripe.
- Add beef stock cube, garlic salt and curry powder.
- Cover with a lid and cook over medium heat for two hours, or until tripe is soft and tender, stirring every 30 minutes. (Add more water as and when needed).
- Remove lid and cook uncovered for at least 30

minutes, allowing liquid to reduce until a thick sauce forms.

- Season with salt and pepper.

Tip:

When cleaning the tripe, avoid over washing it as this tends to dilute its natural flavour. Tripe contains fat, which becomes oil when cooked. This can cause the meat to burn before it has actually cooked, so add

small amounts of water throughout the cooking process to allow

the meat to cook properly and prevent it from sticking to the pot or burning.

Creamy samp

Ingredients:

- 2 cups (500 ml) uncooked samp.
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) butter.
- 1 cup (250 ml) fresh cream.
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) Holsum solid vegetable oil.
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) Aromat.
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) powdered milk.
- 10g fresh Italian parsley, chopped.
- 2 cups (500 ml) grated cheddar cheese.
- Salt and pepper to taste.

Method:

- Add the samp to a large pot and rinse by submerging in water and stirring with your hands. Discard the water

once it turns cloudy. Repeat until the water runs clear, then drain.

- Place the pot over medium heat. Add enough water to cover the samp and cook for two to three hours, or until soft, stirring occasionally.
- Once the samp is cooked, add the butter, cream, Holsum solid vegetable oil, Aromat, powdered milk, parsley and cheese, and mix well. Simmer for two to three minutes, or until the cheese is completely melted.
- Season with salt and pepper.

Tip:

Serve warm and enjoy.

*This recipe can be used to serve six to eight people and can be enjoyed with any type of beverage, including traditional beverages. ○



Sifo is a pharmacist by profession, but is a self-taught cook, award-winning cookbook author and a social media food content creator with more than 140 000 followers on Instagram. His goal is to break the gender stereotypes that surround male figures in the kitchen and encourage more men to cook.

His cookbook Sifo The Cooking Husband

was published in 2022 and has already won two titles, including Best Cookbook at the Book Beyond Awards, and Best family cookbook in South Africa at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in 2022.

He has appeared on various television shows, worked with many local celebrity chefs and food influencers, and was a

guest presenter at the 2022 Woolworths Eat Out Awards.

You can follow and contact Sifo on Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok: @sifo_the_cooking_husband

Email: sifothecookinghusband@gmail.com

Website: www.sifothecookinghusband.co.za



Visit St Helena for an *adventure-filled holiday*

In December 2022, I made an eight-day visit to St Helena which encompasses Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha.

There is currently only one flight to St Helena once a week from one city in the world – Johannesburg – on a Saturday morning returning the same day. It is a six-hour flight out and takes four hours and 45 minutes to fly back. The flight takes two hours to Walvis Bay to fill up and allow for any emergency re-routing or overflights.

The stark beauty of the Namibian desert is awe-striking as one lands, tops up and waits about 45 minutes before setting out over the Atlantic for about another three hours to St Helena. This is a tempting look at a visit

to Namibia which is itself one of the most spectacular countries to visit on earth.

Once a month the flight continues to Ascension Island and back – a two-hour journey in each direction. Passing through the clouds, the island suddenly appears, rising dramatically and vertically, making the volcanic island very difficult to access.

It is exciting to arrive on the island. A mixture of dry desert and sub-tropical vegetation. The biodiversity has been compromised from the first settling of the island by the Portuguese in 1502 who brought fruit trees and vegetables. The Dutch controlled it very briefly and the British arrived in 1659. Later they brought New Zealand flax, which

was used in the postal industry. It has largely overwhelmed the vegetation.

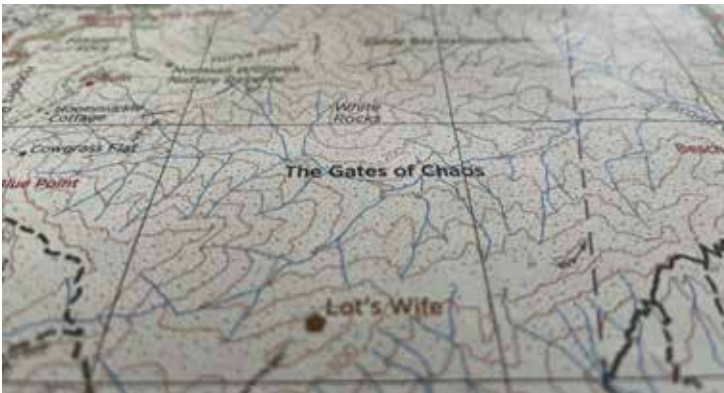
The island is about 16 by 8 km and has extremely winding roads. One approaches Jamestown, which settles in a deep gully on the north side; with its charming Georgian architecture and the main street. Christmas was approaching and preparations were underway at the Consulate Hotel run by the inimitable Hazel Wilmot, who hails from Botswana.

The island is fairly mountainous, being a volcanic formation, and there are 21 post box walks on the island, ranging from easy to quite difficult. They are very well catalogued and you can choose the difficulty

range you would like to attempt. Even though the island is small, one does need a vehicle to get around. Petrol is R50/ litre but fortunately you will not travel too far.

On our first Sunday morning, Jamestown was deserted as we waited for our 'tour guide' for the day, Edward Thorpe, to take us on one of his renowned Sunday walks, this time to Lemon Valley. He is part of the Thorpe family that runs much of the retail on the island and they have been there for generations. The locals are referred to as Saints and there are about 4 200 people on the island.

Jacob's Ladder was closed for renovation. It is a staircase that climbs 699 steps straight up the



west side of the town. So we drove the steep and windy western slope through Half TreeHollow and parked at Rosemary Plan. The descent is quite steep, and I was concerned about the return trip. You can arrange a boat trip but the climb out is tough.

Places to visit

Another walk is that of Lot's Wife's Ponds. One needs to drive the southern portion, in and out of the windy roads and eventually park in the Sandy Bay district. It is a strenuous walk, passing the Gates of Chaos; especially in the sun, so plan your day.

Along the way you will see masked Boobies, habituated birds that nest on the open rock and Babies Toes that look and feel just like their namesakes.

Every day we pored over maps, available from the post office. In the evening there was pouring of wine, and eventually our plans led us next to Napoleon's grave. He was brought by the English in 1815 and he died in 1821. Nevertheless, his sarcophagus setting is a very beautiful one.

Back in town the library is well stocked and there are two video

libraries, the upshot of a weak Internet connection. We used the opportunity to explore the archive, and we found Daniel Lappin who died in 1861 from *delirium tremens*.

At 818 metres, Diana's Peak, this is the highest point on the island. Whether you visit on an atmospheric misty day or an inspiring clear day which allows views over almost the entire island, you will visit more than once.

The small but potent Museum of St Helena, at the base of Jacob's ladder, packs information from the last 500 years.

Our last walk was the south west walk, starting with a drive along the central spine. Parking the car and then walking the last couple of kilometres to catch the last pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, capturing the island seen from different angles.

A final swing past Longwood House on our way to the airport, Napoleon's house and then back to the dramatic runway that had brought us a week earlier. I am planning a return visit. ○

About Hugh Fraser: follow the travelling architect and travel content producer at 58. seconds on LinkedIn.

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