

# PublicSector

M A N A G E R



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Restoring workers' dignity through opportunity & protection

## Boosting agriculture

NAMC drives competitiveness and inclusive growth

## Saving young lives

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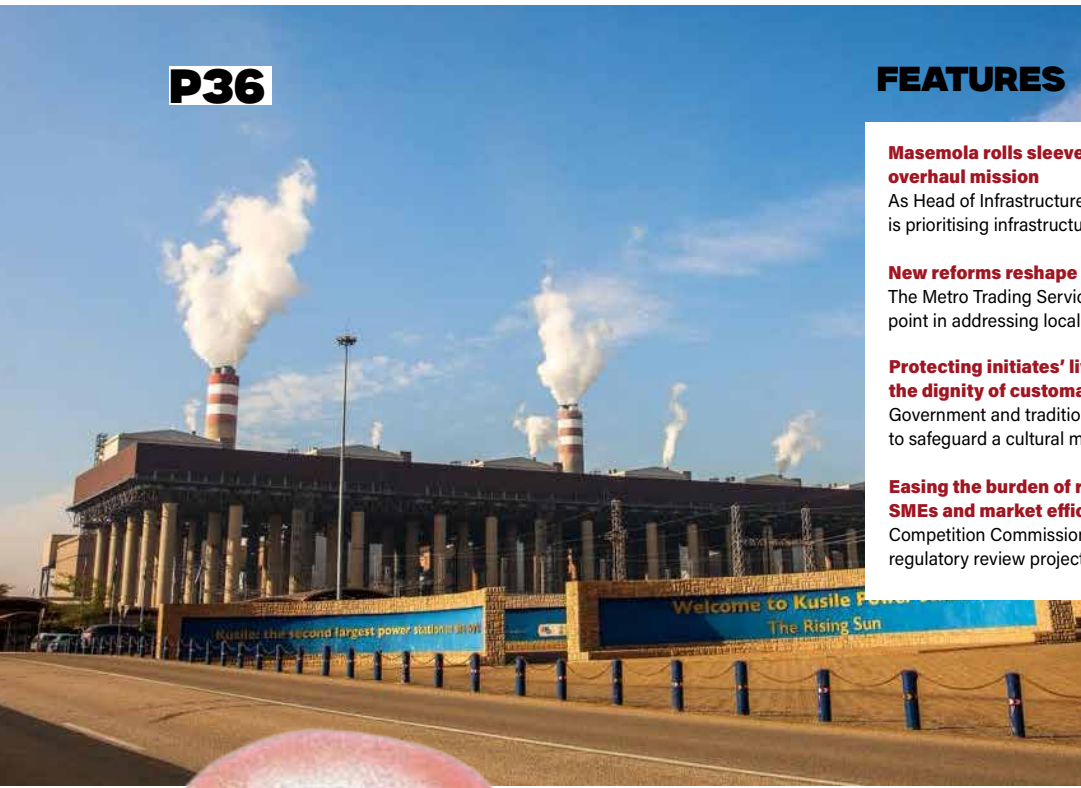
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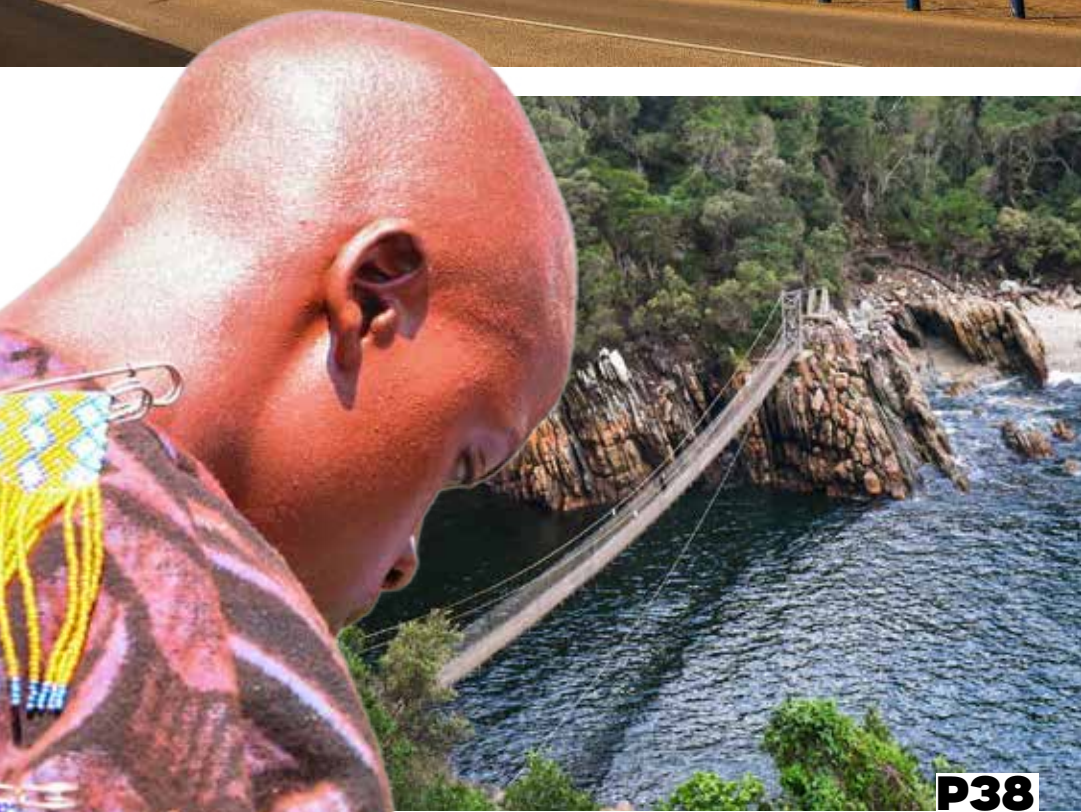
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# Restoring dignity through opportunity and protection

**M**ay Day is a profound reminder of the hard-fought battles for labour rights, and the collective power of social dialogue. From the factory floors and deep-level mines to the bustling tech hubs and vast agricultural lands, the hands of our workers continue to build the foundation of our democracy and power up the engines of our economy.

May Day serves as an annual pledge to ensure that the Decent Work agenda is not just a policy framework, but a lived reality for every citizen.

This Worker's Month, South Africa stands in solidarity with the global community to pay tribute to the unwavering resilience, dedication, and sacrifice of the South African workforce.

From 1994, South Africa's public service merged into a single, non-racial system to serve all citizens equally and fairly. This journey of transformation enshrined in our Constitution with new values, would not have been possible without the sacrifice of those public service workers who joined the millions of South Africans in the struggle against an unjust segregated apartheid system.

The Department of Employment and Labour remains deeply committed to its dual mandate: protecting the vulnerable and facilitating the entry of the unemployed into the mainstream economy.

We recognise that the greatest threat to the dignity of our people, in particular

the youth, is the scourge of unemployment. To this end, our labour activation programmes (LAP) have transitioned from mere concepts into powerful catalysts for change.

Hence, we have declared 2026; "the Year of Putting Young South Africans to Work, in Honour of the 1976 Youth and Commemoration of the Youth Uprising Golden Jubilee".

By strategically deploying billions



Minister of Employment and Labour Nomakhosazana Meth.



Employees at R and L Apparel in Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. The company is a beneficiary of the DTIC's Clothing Textile Footwear Leather Growth Programme.

of rands into various sectors, we are not simply spending public funds; we are investing in human capital.

These interventions are designed to bridge the gap between existing skills and the evolving demands of the modern market. Whether it is through training-to-placement schemes or supporting budding entrepreneurs, our goal is to ensure that no South African is left behind in the shifting economic landscape.

Furthermore, we continue to strengthen the social security safety net through the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) as well as the Compensation Fund.

These institutions are the silent guardians of our workforce, providing essential relief and support when workers face

unforeseen circumstances. We are aggressively modernising these services to ensure that they are accessible, efficient, and responsive to the needs of those they serve, who are most often vulnerable workers and beneficiaries.

We remain vigilant in our enforcement of the National Minimum Wage and occupational health and safety standards. A worker who is safe and fairly compensated is a productive worker, and a productive workforce is the only path to a prosperous South Africa. However, growth cannot exist without justice.

As the Ministry of Employment and Labour, we have tabled before Parliament Bills aimed at the protection of the rights of the labour force; the Employ-

ment Services Amendment Bill (ESAB) and the National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP), while the Labour Law Amendment Bills are currently undergoing public consultation.

### Employment Services Amendment Bill

The ESAB aims to modernise the regulation of the labour market. The primary focus is on the regulation of the employment of foreign nationals and enhancing job opportunities for South African citizens.

The Bill amends the Employment Services Act of 2014, to address rising unemployment and the high representation of foreign nationals in specific, lower skilled sectors, and has since been approved by Cabinet

and taken to Parliament for further processing.

### National Labour Migration Policy

The NLMP and ESAB are intrinsically linked with the NLMP, providing the policy framework for managing foreign labour and ESAB provides policy legal force.

Together, they aim to regulate the employment of foreign nationals in our country through quotas and sector restrictions. Cabinet has also approved the NLMP.

### Labour Laws Amendment Bill

The department has published the Labour Laws Amendment Bill, 2025 together with the Labour Relations amendment Bill, 2025 and related notices,

marking an important step in strengthening protections for workers across the country. The proposed changes modernise key labour laws and introduce practical measures aimed at improving job security, promoting fairness, and extending fundamental rights to vulnerable and previously excluded categories of workers.

The Bills also aim to improve enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that employees receive the full benefits of the law.

In summary, the amendments introduce a more equitable parental leave system by replacing the fragmented maternity and parental leave framework with a shared parental leave model.

A single or sole employed parent is entitled to four months' parental leave, while two employed parents share four months and ten days, subject to agreed arrangements or equal sharing in the absence of an agreement, with priority given to the birthing mother.

### Protecting the most vulnerable

Most vulnerable are workers often in retail, security or hospitality – frequently vulnerable to irregular hours, no guaranteed income and last-minute cancellations.



Road repairs in Ivory Park, Johannesburg.

Photo: City of Joburg/Facebook

As the department of Employment and Labour, we remain committed to advancing a fair, modern and inclusive labour market that protects the dignity and rights of the labour force.

The announcement of the 10 000 inspectors by President Cyril Ramaphosa at this year's State of the Nation Address is a significant jobs boost aimed at significantly strengthening our capacity to enforce compliance with labour legislation, protect vulnerable workers and ensure fair labour practices across all sectors of the economy.

The 10 000 inspectors, together with the Project 20 000 inspector interns will support stability and fairness in the labour market.

As we commemorate Workers' Month, let us renew our social compact. I call upon organised labour, the private sector, and civil society to join hands with government.

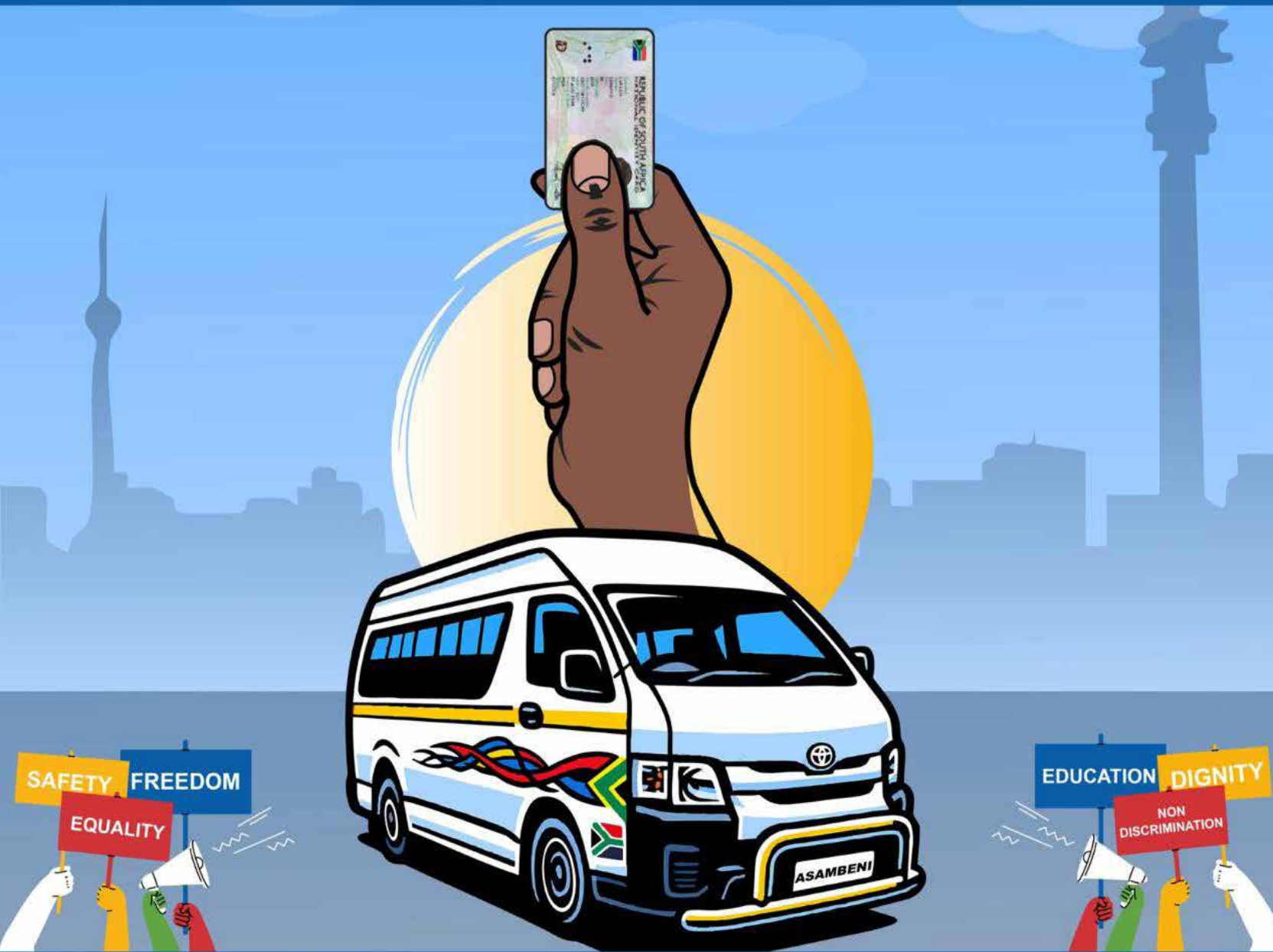
In the words of South Africa's first democratically elected President, our beloved Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela on the occasion of his Inauguration in 1994; "We know it well that none

of us acting alone can achieve success. We must, therefore, act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world".

Let us, therefore, continue to transform our labour market into an inclusive space of opportunity, innovation and mutual respect.

To the workers of South Africa: your labour is the architect of our future. We salute your contribution to this great nation. ❖

# FREEDOM IS A RIGHT VOTING IS POWER



# Advancing the African

Agenda and constitutional values through unity, cooperation and development



**T**his month, we join the rest of the continent in commemorating Africa Month – a time to reflect on our shared history, celebrate our achievements and renew our commitment to Africa’s progress.

It culminates in Africa Day on 25 May, marking the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963,

now the African Union (AU). The founding of the OAU was a defining moment in Africa’s history, signalling a shared commitment to independence, cooperation and development.

South Africa remains firmly committed to this vision. Our work is guided by the AU’s Agenda 2063 – the continent’s blueprint for becoming a global powerhouse. We support key

flagship programmes such as Silencing the Guns, which aims to end wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence, and genocide. We also support the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which is opening new opportunities for trade and economic cooperation, while also strengthening Africa’s voice in global trade negotiations.

Equally, as South Africa marks

Nomonde Mnukwa,  
GCIS Acting Director-General.

30 years of constitutional democracy, Africa Month in 2026 provides a fitting moment to reflect on the values that underpin our Constitution and the broader African contribution to their realisation. Adopted in 1996, South Africa's Constitution is rooted in principles of human dignity, equality, freedom, solidarity and social justice – values forged not in isolation, but through deep historical ties with the African continent.

Throughout the struggle against colonialism and apartheid, African countries and institutions played a decisive role in supporting South Africa's liberation and transition to democracy. This legacy of pan-African solidarity continues to shape our constitutional democracy and informs South Africa's commitment to advancing peace, development and cooperation across the continent. As we commemorate Africa Month this year, we do so conscious that our constitutional journey is inseparable from Africa's collective quest for unity, self-determination and inclusive development.

On strides of ensuring a prosperous Africa, we are seeing steady progress in advancing the AfCFTA. South Africa is actively contributing to its implementation, including the finalisation of trade rules across key sectors and the develop-

ment of protocols that broaden participation; particularly for women and young people. More recently, the introduction of new tariff schedules and duty-free trade measures from January 2026, has begun to unlock meaningful market access opportunities for businesses across the continent.

We continue to work closely with neighbouring countries on initiatives that deliver tangible benefits. A recent example is

the progress made on Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. In April 2026, President Cyril Ramaphosa joined the leadership of Lesotho to launch the Senqu Bridge – an important milestone that will support the next phase of the project and strengthen long-term water security for both countries.

This aligns with the AU's declaration of 2026 as the year

of "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063". The theme elevates water and sanitation as critical continental priorities, recognising their role as key drivers of economic transformation, climate resilience, public health, food security and regional stability.

This project shows what is possible when African countries work together. By pooling

resources and sharing expertise, we can pursue development that delivers mutual benefit.

South Africa has also used global platforms to advance African priorities. The country's G20 Presidency, under the theme "Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability," reflected the understanding that addressing global challenges requires collective action. In his address at

the launch of the Presidency in December 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised that South Africa would use its tenure, the first G20 Presidency on African soil, "to bring the development priorities of the African Continent and the Global South more firmly onto the agenda of the G20".

The theme reinforced an important message: no country can act in isolation and that the voices and interests of devel-

oping regions must be more effectively represented in global decision-making processes.

It is the same principle that guided South Africa's advocacy during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it worked through the AU and various global initiatives to call for equitable access to vaccines, stressing that all countries must have urgent access to ensure global health security.

**This project shows what is possible when African countries work together. By pooling resources and sharing expertise, we can pursue development that delivers mutual benefit.**



In his Freedom Day message on 27 April 2026, the President also highlighted the importance of maintaining strong relationships across the continent, reminding the nation of the vital role played by other African countries in South Africa's struggle against apartheid:

"As a nation that defeated colonialism and apartheid through international solidarity, we carry a responsibility to advance constitutional values beyond our borders"

In his weekly newsletter message featured in this edition, the President commented on the United Nations General Assembly resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans and the racialised enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime

against humanity. He called for reparations to "be aligned with our continent's developmental objectives and assist African countries to tackle debt challenges, poverty alleviation, inequality and unemployment"

These remarks speak directly to the spirit of Africa Month, reminding us that the progress South Africa seeks cannot be separated from the progress of the African continent.

Through its participation in structures such as the Southern African Development Community, South Africa continues to work closely with regional partners to deepen integration, promote peace and security, and advance infrastructure and industrial development across the region.

For public servants, Africa Month serves as an important reminder of the broader context within which we operate. The work we do contributes not only to national development, but also to the achievement of shared continental goals.

Africa Month reinforces the understanding that building a capable state, a growing economy and an inclusive society is directly linked to the broader goal of building a better Africa.

As we celebrate Africa Month during the 30th anniversary year of our Constitution, we are reminded that South Africa's democratic project is deeply intertwined with the destiny of the African continent. The constitutional values we uphold at home – non-racialism, human rights,

accountability and social justice – find expression in our commitment to African unity, multilateralism and sustainable development beyond our borders.

Africa Month, therefore, calls on all public servants to situate their work within this broader historical and constitutional context. By advancing a capable developmental state, strengthening regional cooperation and contributing to the goals of Agenda 2063, we honour both the spirit of our Constitution, and the enduring support Africa has extended to South Africa's freedom and progress. In doing so, we reaffirm a shared responsibility to build not only a better South Africa, but a better and more prosperous Africa for future generations. ❖

# SAFE CUSTOMARY INITIATION

## MABAYE BEPHILA, BABUYE BEPHILA

### MINISTER HLABISA CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF INITIATES

**URGENT CONCERN:** The 2025/26 Summer Initiation Season has begun, but four deaths have already been recorded in the Eastern Cape.



**Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa**

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs



#### **Minister's Warning:**

Illegal initiation schools must shut down immediately.

Government will not tolerate unsafe practices; 21 arrests have already been made in the Eastern Cape.



#### **Call to Action:**

Parents, caregivers, and communities must actively protect initiates.

Oversight committees (National and Provincial) must intensify monitoring and coordination.



#### **Government's Stance:**

"One life lost is one too many."

Every initiate must return home alive and prepared for manhood.



#### **Next Steps:**

Unannounced inspections in high-risk areas.

Multi-sectoral collaboration (municipalities, Health, Social Development, Education, SAPS, NGOs).

### Minister's Commitment:

Will visit affected provinces and municipalities to support interventions.

This is a strong and urgent appeal for community vigilance, compliance with the Customary Initiation Act, and decisive action to prevent further tragedies.

 @NationalCOGTA

*Theme: "Every Municipality must work"*



Cooperative Governance  
Traditional Affairs



# PSC welcomes sharpened legislation

Photo: PSC Facebook page



PSC Chairperson,  
Commissioner  
Somadoda Fikeni

**Writer:** Sihle Manda  
**Photos:** Supplied

The Public Service Commission Amendment Bill is poised to become one of the most consequential reforms in South Africa's public administration landscape.

Should it see light of day, the legislation will significantly expand the authority of the Public Service Commission (PSC), strengthening oversight across national, provincial and local government, as well as state-owned entities.

In a recent interview with the *Public Sector Manager* magazine, PSC Chairperson, Commissioner Somadoda Fikeni, was at pains to emphasise the importance of the long-in-the-making document. The Bill is currently before National Council of Provinces after Parliament's nod in March 2025.

The Bill was conceived in June 2023, when it was first published for public comment. This is the furthest the

Bill has gone, with previous attempts aborted.

For Fikeni, the document represents one of the most significant milestones in the evolution of public administration since the democratic era. More importantly, he believes it provides practical tools to address long-standing governance weaknesses.

At the heart of it is the proposed expansion of the PSC's mandate beyond national and provincial government to include local government and state-owned entities. These are government structures that have in recent years faced significant governance challenges.

Fikeni explained that the current interpretation of the legislation limited the commission's reach.

"Most of the time those institutions were outside the gaze of the PSC, for one simple reason – the notion of public service was interpreted narrowly to mean national and provincial government," he said.

## **A single public administration**

The Bill changes that fundamentally.

"The Bill immediately gives

us powers to go to local government, and it gives us powers which we were exercising provincially and nationally. It gives us powers to go to Eskom, to Transnet and every other state-owned entity.

“The harmonising and standardising of standards and norms for public administration, and creating a single public administration will be greatly assisted in that sense,” he said.

## Stronger enforcement powers

Another key shift introduced by the Amendment Bill is the strengthening of the PSC’s authority to enforce its recommendations.

Historically, departments were notorious for ignoring PSC findings, weakening accountability mechanisms.

“The new Bill says you will no longer ignore those directives from the PSC and the findings. You would have to challenge them in court rather than just ignore them”.

He compared the reform to similar legislative strengthening seen in other oversight institutions.

“You saw the same thing with the Public Protector when the case law started giving it more teeth. You have seen the same



Photo:

**The Public Service Commission Amendment Bill will include local government and state-owned entities.**

thing with the Auditor-General (AG). Now the PSC is coming to that space”.

## Independent investigation

Fikeni added that the PSC occupies a unique oversight position because it can initiate investigations independently.

“we can do our own accord investigation without anyone reporting, and we can recommend policy changes. We can partner with the department or with an institution to change certain things”.

Currently, the commission’s secretariat operates as a gov-

ernment department under the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) – an arrangement that at times presented governance complexities.

This reform, he noted, removes an institutional contradiction.

“In that way, we will not have this awkwardness of overseeing the DPSA, and at the same time having our department reporting to the Minister. They will be completely outside”.

## A professional public service

The Bill complements broader

reforms aimed at professionalising the Public Service, particularly the implementation of the National Framework towards the Professionalisation of the Public Service approved by Cabinet in October 2022.

Fikeni stressed that professionalisation begins with merit-based recruitment and expert-led selection processes.

“Professionalisation of the Public Service will ensure that a panel of experts is created by the PSC,” he said. “If you are appointing a director-general (DG) or head of department, you will no longer just have a Minister calling another Minister and

then one other DG to sit around the table”.

Instead, expert panels aligned to specific sectors will guide recruitment.

“If it is science and technology, if it is communication and digital technologies, we go to the relevant professional bodies or highly respected experts in that field to say, ‘you will be part of this panel’”.

Such reforms are intended to restore integrity in leadership appointments, he said.

“One of the reasons that we saw a decline in our public service over time was that people were being appointed for loyalty rather than for competence,” he said.

### Lifestyle audits

Alongside structural reforms, the PSC is prioritising anti-corruption interventions such as lifestyle audits, particularly those in high-risk functions.

He explained that ethics officers in departments must be trained to detect unexplained wealth and suspicious financial behaviour.

“All of a sudden, a person who is earning R15 000 just rolls in in a Maserati or another type of car... the lifestyle audit ought to target those”.

Initially, the audits will focus on sensitive roles such as procurement and human resources (HR).



The Department of Employment and Labour at a public outreach event in Pretoria.

“We are proposing to target the sensitive areas for now as we roll it in supply chain, project managers, HR and people who are in the value chain most exposed in procurement”.

These measures will be strengthened through collaboration with oversight bodies such as revenue authorities and forensic agencies.

“If entities are overwhelmed, we are beginning to say, let us coordinate with the AG, with SARS and other departments so that we can have an early warning system”.

### Innovative technology

Technology also features prominently in the PSC’s reform strategy. The commission is advocating for an integrated

digital system that records biometric information for all public servants.

Such a system would address long-standing problems such as ghost workers and disciplinary evasion.

“You do not get expelled in province A and reappear in province B. whenever you put your finger, your face or your iris into the system, it will bring in all those files”.

The Amendment Bill identifies municipalities as a primary focus area for the PSC due to local government being at the coalface of service delivery.

“That is where most criminal cases, corruption cases and service delivery issues are concentrated”.

SOEs will also receive targeted oversight, he added.

“If we get that one right, especially in the current geopolitical situation, our logistics and harbours will be in good space”.

### Restoring confidence

While the Amendment Bill holds promise for positive change in the public sector, its success will ultimately hinge on effective implementation.

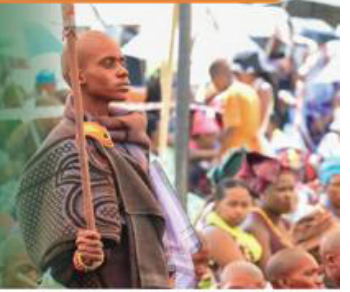
“The problem in South Africa is that we come up with good policies, but struggle with implementation,” Fikeni cautioned.

Nevertheless, he remains optimistic that the new legislative framework will strengthen accountability and restore confidence in public institutions. ❖

# SAFE CUSTOMARY INITIATION

## MABAYE BEPHILA, BABUYE BEPHILA

Customary initiation deaths and amputations in South Africa are caused by a combination of systemic, social, and operational factors. While customary initiation is a respected cultural rite of passage, unsafe practices and weak enforcement of laws continue to put initiates at risk.



Below are the key factors leading to initiation-related deaths and amputations:



### 1. Illegal Initiation Schools

- **Unregistered and hidden locations** make it difficult for authorities to monitor and intervene.
- Often **operated without medical support**, proper facilities, or oversight.
- **Unqualified or self-appointed traditional surgeons and caregivers** conduct procedures in unsanitary and dangerous conditions.
- **Criminal activity**, including kidnapping of initiates, has been reported in some illegal schools.



### 2. Lack of Medical Intervention

- Many deaths are due to **untreated infections, dehydration, and excessive bleeding**.
- **Delayed or no access to health care**, especially in remote or illegal schools, worsens complications.
- **Resistance to medical involvement** from some traditionalists can prevent timely care.



### 3. Inadequate Monitoring and Regulation

- **Weak enforcement** of the Customary Initiation Act in some provinces.
- **Limited capacity** of Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committees (PICCs) to inspect and oversee all schools.
- **Corruption or collusion** may sometimes prevent action against illegal operations.



### 4. Inexperienced or Unqualified Practitioners

- Some initiation schools are run by **individuals who lack training or certification**.
- Procedures may be **performed incorrectly**, resulting in severe injuries or death.
- **Underage or untrained boys** sometimes take on roles of caregivers or even surgeons, especially in illegal schools.



### 5. Poor Living Conditions

- **Lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and food** in many initiation sites.
- Exposure to the elements without proper shelter or clothing, particularly in harsh winter conditions.



### 6. Lack of Community Awareness

- Some families are **not fully informed** about the legal requirements for initiation schools.
- **Parents may unknowingly send their children to illegal or unsafe schools**, often lured by lower costs or false promises.



### 7. Negligence and Abuse

- **Physical abuse**, including excessive beatings or punishments.
- **Neglect**, such as not recognizing early signs of medical distress or refusing to seek help.
- In some cases, **initiation becomes criminalized**, with reports of sexual assault or exploitation.

# Ellenson's leadership drives transformation and clean governance



Photo: Moses Kotane Research Institute

Dr Thandeka Ellenson.

**W**hen Dr Thandeka Ellenson was named Top Leader in Public Sector 2025 at the Standard Bank Top Women Awards, the moment marked more than a personal triumph.

The moment, she conceded in a recent interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, symbolised years of

steady transformation, institutional reform and purposeful leadership.

For the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI) – an entity of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs – the honour is deeply personal, but also profoundly collective.

“This recognition is both humbling and affirming. It represents not only a personal milestone but also the collective effort of the teams and institutions I have had the privilege to lead and serve,” she said.

With a career spanning over two decades in both the public and private sectors, her leadership journey has been moored in ethical governance and meaningful development outcomes.

“My journey in the

public sector has always been driven by a commitment to ethical leadership, service excellence, and meaningful impact,” she explained. “

This award reflects years of dedication to strengthening institutions, advancing inclusive development and ensuring that public resources are utilised to improve the lives of our people.”

As the Executive Authority of the MKRI, Ellenson has spearheaded a strategic shift towards positioning the organisation as a credible research and innovation authority capable of informing policy and driving economic development. The institute has evolved significantly, transitioning into a Schedule 3C public entity in May 2024.

This transition, she explains, has been one of the defining leadership challenges of her tenure, with the shift requiring operational restructuring, new compliance systems and



Photo: Moses Kotane Research Institute

Learners make use of facilities at the Mpopana Innovation & Digital Hub in Bruntville Library, Mooi River.

strengthened oversight mechanisms.

### Adaptive leadership

“The transition required resilience, clarity of purpose and strong stakeholder engagement,” she explained. “One key lesson was the importance of adaptive leadership – being able to navigate uncertainty while keeping the organisation focused on its mandate”.

The transition also underscored the importance of people-centred change management. “Organisational transformation must be people-centred, ensuring that staff are supported and aligned with the vision,” she added.

Her time serving as Acting Head at the KwaZulu-Natal De-

partment of Economic Development sharpened her leadership perspective, with the stint having exposed her to the complexity of policy implementation and inter-governmental coordination.

“Serving at a departmental level provided valuable insight into the broader machinery of government,” she explained. “It strengthened my strategic outlook and reinforced the importance of agility, collaboration and evidence-based decision-making”.

### Evidence-based policy

For Ellenson, research is not an academic exercise but a tool for meaningful change. She strongly advocates for policy decisions rooted on credible data and

rigorous analysis.

“Research-driven policymaking ensures that decisions are informed by credible data, rigorous analysis and real-world insights,” she says. “In a complex socio-economic environment, assumptions can be costly. Evidence allows government to identify what works, allocate resources effectively and design interventions that are targeted and impactful”.

The MKRI's research outputs have supported provincial strategy development and long-term planning. This work contributes directly to aligning development initiatives with economic priorities and service delivery objectives.

The institute's role as a research and innovation hub

extends beyond producing reports. It serves as a catalyst for knowledge generation, skills development and innovation-led growth across KwaZulu-Natal.

### Leaving no one behind

Among the Institute's most visible achievements has been the establishment of digital centres aimed at expanding technological access in underserved communities. These centres provide infrastructure, training and support that enable individuals to participate in the digital economy.

“They open pathways to education, entrepreneurship and employment, thereby reducing inequality and fostering inclusive growth” added Ellenson.

The impact has been measurable. Over several years, the institute exceeded its targets by establishing more digital centres than initially planned, enabling rural communities to access information and communication technologies that were previously unavailable.

The digital innovation extends beyond infrastructure. The institute has also supported innovation project – from smart agriculture technologies to environmentally sustainable products, contributing to job creation and entrepreneurship development.

Photo: Moses Kotane Research Institute



MKRI Umlazi Digital Centre .



Dr.Thandeka Ellenson was awarded the Standard Bank Top Woman Leader in the Public Sector Award 2025.

### Partnerships as catalysts for progress

Ellenson attributes much of the institute's success to strategic collaboration, adding that partnerships with academia, government and industry play a central role in ensuring that research outputs are relevant and actionable.

Maintaining strong governance systems has been a defining feature of Ellenson's

leadership. The institute has consistently achieved clean audit outcomes, reflecting disciplined financial management and a commitment to transparent reporting.

"We have prioritised financial discipline, robust internal controls, and a culture of accountability at all levels of the organisation," she says.

Looking ahead, Ellenson envisions the MKRI becoming a leading centre of excellence not

only in South Africa but across Africa.

While awards often celebrate individual excellence, Ellenson views her recognition as a reflection of collective progress and shared purpose.

"Leadership is not about individual achievement but about empowering others to succeed and ensuring that institutions serve the people effectively". ❖

# SAFE CUSTOMARY INITIATION

## MABAYE BEPHILA, BABUYE BEPHILA



**Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa**

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

 @NationalCOGTA

*Theme: "Every Municipality must work"*



# Constitutional democracy yields tangible results for young academic

**T**his year marks 30 years since the signing of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996 – a landmark document that ignited hope for

millions who had been deeply marginalised under apartheid. In ushering in democracy, it sought to redress past injustices by enshrining fundamental rights,

including access to education, and by introducing restorative measures aimed at building a more equitable society.

In this issue, *Public Sector Manager (PSM)* speaks with young academic, Dr Thapelo Mokoatsi, in a wide-ranging interview. His journey reflects the transformative power of South Africa's constitutional guarantees, which he credits with opening doors for himself and many others from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to participate meaningfully in shaping the country's development trajectory.

A respected South African historian and journalist, Mokoatsi holds a PhD in History

from Rhodes University. He is a history lecturer teaching second- and third-year students at the University of the Free State (UFS). He also co-supervises Honours and Master's students at the institution.

Reflecting on the Constitution, Mokoatsi tells *PSM* that its 30-year milestone symbolises a wealth of opportunities now within reach. For him, the anniversary is not only a moment of reflection, but a reminder of the possibilities created by a democratic framework that continues to shape lives and futures.

"I can now contribute to the development of my country in a meaningful way, unlike during apartheid where black people were not allowed to study and express themselves through their skills and knowledge. I

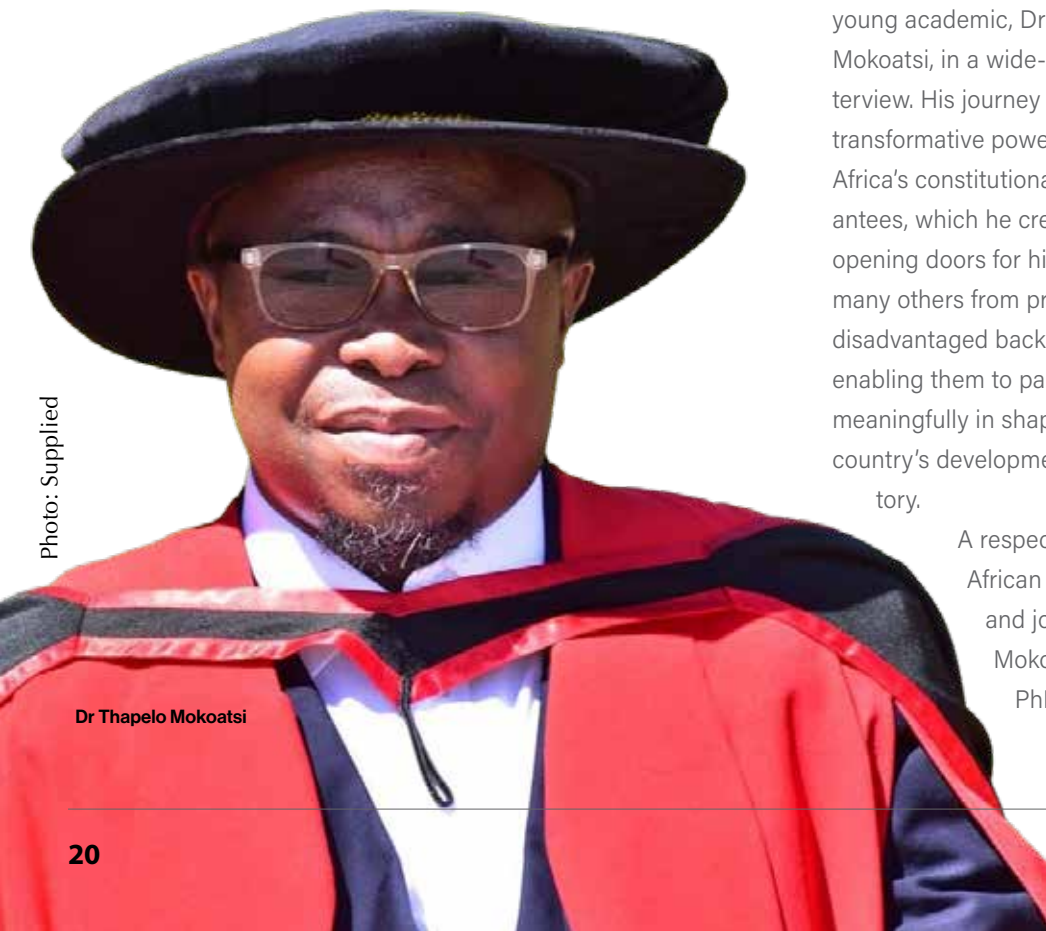


Photo: Supplied

Dr Thapelo Mokoatsi

Photo: Unknown photographer/Wikimedia



Saul Msane (back right) with (L-R) Walter Rubusana, Thomas Mapikela, John Dube, and Sol Plaatje, members of the South African Native National Congress in 1914.

can travel the world, teach and advance my scholarship in the best universities in the world," he said.

### Fruits of democracy

Mokoatsi believes South Africa has made significant strides in ensuring that the current generation can meaningfully enjoy the freedoms secured through democracy. His own academic journey bears this out, having

benefited directly from student funding programmes introduced by the democratic government.

His undergraduate studies were supported by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, while his PhD was funded through a bursary from the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS).

In 2013, Mokoatsi was recognised as the Best Honours

Student by the Centre for Africa Studies at the UFS. His academic promise was further affirmed in the early stages of his doctoral journey when he was named a finalist in the *Mail & Guardian Top 200 Young South Africans* in 2017, under the Film and Media category.

Beyond academia, his work as a writer has also gained national visibility. His article on Queen Labotsibeni, titled *Pioneers:*

*Swazi Queen Labotsibeni*, was published in the *Mail & Guardian's* 2021 World Press Freedom Day supplement – highlighting his contribution to telling important historical narratives for a broader audience.

### Opening opportunities

"This achievement earned me a postdoctoral research fellowship at Johannesburg Institute

for Advanced Study (JIAS) in 2022. I was overwhelmed and in disbelief that I got this important recognition. I later found out that my scholarship from the NIHSS had nominated me for it," he reminisces.

His PhD focused on the biographical studies of *Saul Msane (1856-1919), one of the African National Congress founders. His thesis is titled: Saul Msane: Friend or Foe of the People? the life of late nineteenth to early twentieth century South African Politician and Journalist.*

He was recognised for his body of work, which includes over 60 articles published by *The Journalist* covering late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries South African pioneer journalists who were born between the 1800s and 1900s.

Having acquired his qualifications from junior degree to Master of Arts at the UFS, Mokoatsi had a full circle moment when he was appointed in his current position in 2025. This was also his first permanent job after his three-year postdoctoral research fellowship at the JIAS.

His areas of specialisation as a lecturer focus on biographical studies, the history of the Black Press, African political history and social history.

He is committed to extending his academic work beyond the ivory tower, bringing scholarship

**“I was overwhelmed and in disbelief that I got this important recognition. I later found out that my scholarship from the NIHSS had nominated me for it,” he reminisces.”**

into conversation with broader communities through engaged, public-facing research.

He is also co-editor of *Towards Women Intellectual and Liberation Struggle Histories in South Africa* – a volume that reflects on the history and legacy of new African ideology within South Africa's modern evolution, using a set of thematic areas to offer a broader perspective on its development.

### **Africa Month**

As the continent marks Africa Month in May, commemorating the 1963 founding of the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), Mokoatsi says South Africa plays a significant role in driving economic growth across the continent. He adds that the country has also been a key player in fostering unity among African states.

He highlights that many South African companies – including Shoprite, Checkers, Usave, Standard Bank, Ned-



bank, MultiChoice, MTN and Vodacom – operate across the Southern African Development Community (SADC)..

He further explains that, given South Africa's population of about 60 million, regional and continental economic policies that benefit all member states enable South African companies to secure a significant share of the broader

African market. He further notes that resources such as gold and other minerals from Zimbabwe are refined in South Africa, contributing to job creation not only locally but across the region.

South Africa currently serves as Interim Chair of the SADC and is set to assume the official chairship of the regional body in August 2026.❖

# SAFE CUSTOMARY INITIATION

## MABAYE BEPHILA, BABUYE BEPHILA

### MINISTER HLABISA CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF INITIATES

**URGENT CONCERN:** The 2025/26 Summer Initiation Season has begun, but four deaths have already been recorded in the Eastern Cape.



**Mr Velenkosini Hlabisa**

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs



#### **Minister's Warning:**

Illegal initiation schools must shut down immediately.

Government will not tolerate unsafe practices; 21 arrests have already been made in the Eastern Cape.



#### **Government's Stance:**

"One life lost is one too many."

Every initiate must return home alive and prepared for manhood.



#### **Call to Action:**

Parents, caregivers, and communities must actively protect initiates.

Oversight committees (National and Provincial) must intensify monitoring and coordination.



#### **Next Steps:**

Unannounced inspections in high-risk areas.

Multi-sectoral collaboration (municipalities, Health, Social Development, Education, SAPS, NGOs).

## Minister's Commitment:

Will visit affected provinces and municipalities to support interventions.

This is a strong and urgent appeal for community vigilance, compliance with the Customary Initiation Act, and decisive action to prevent further tragedies.

 @NationalCOGTA

**Theme: "Every Municipality must work"**

# Leading with evidence: Dr Simphiwe

## Ngqangweni on strengthening agricultural markets



Photo: NAMC

Dr Simphiwe Ngqangweni

South Africa's agricultural sector sits at the intersection of food security, economic growth and global trade – an industry shaped as much by policy and markets as by climate and innovation.

At the centre of efforts to strengthen its competitiveness and inclusivity is the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC), an institution tasked with expanding market access and guiding evidence-based decision-making.

Leading this mandate is Dr Simphiwe Ngqangweni, an agricultural economist whose blend of academic rigour and public sector experience has positioned him as a key voice in shaping the future of South

African agriculture.

Ngqangweni believes that for South Africa's agricultural sector to unlock faster and more inclusive economic growth, collaboration is no longer optional but is essential. Farmers, policymakers and private sector players must work together to build resilience in an industry that feeds the nation and underpins rural livelihoods.

In a recent interview with *Public Sector Manager* magazine, he emphasised that cooperation lies at the heart of the sector's endurance.

Despite persistent pressures, from climate shocks and natural disasters to outbreaks of diseases such as foot-and-mouth, agricultural stakeholders



Citrus packing at Mahela Packhouse and JP Packers in Ohrigstad, Limpopo. South Africa is one of the top citrus producers in the world.

have continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience and commitment.

He notes that it is this shared determination, forged through collaboration, that has enabled the sector not only to withstand adversity, but to continue growing against the odds.

“We have been able to continuously overcome these challenges. We must also ensure that growth is inclusive of new emerging participants, especially black people due to our country’s history,” he said.

## A rich career background

An accomplished agricultural economist, Ngqangweni brings a rare blend of academic insight and policy expertise to his role at the helm of the NAMC. He holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Pretoria, where he also lectured for seven years – an experience that continues to inform his data-driven and evidence-based approach to leadership.

His professional journey has been closely intertwined with

the NAMC, where he has played a formative role in strengthening the institution’s research and economic analysis capacity. Having first joined the council as a Senior Researcher and later serving as Senior Manager responsible for the Markets and Economic Research Centre, Ngqangweni returned to the organisation with a breadth of experience gained in senior government roles at the then Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Today, as Chief Executive

Officer, he draws on this depth of institutional knowledge and strategic insight to advance the NAMC’s mandate – positioning it as a key partner in shaping policy, improving market access, and driving inclusive growth across South Africa’s agricultural sector.

## Heading the NAMC

Following a brief period as Acting CEO, Ngqangweni was formally appointed as CEO of the NAMC in June 2020. Alongside his executive leadership, he remains a respected academic voice, with extensive publications across agricultural and food policy, rural markets, land reform, and agricultural economic development.

In his current role, Ngqangweni operates under the strategic direction of the NAMC Board, providing overall leadership to ensure the organisation delivers on its mandate.

His responsibilities encompass steering the council’s strategic vision, overseeing its financial and human resources and cultivating strong stakeholder relationships. Through these partnerships and networks, he works to position the NAMC as a trusted convenor and catalyst within the agricultural sector.

The council’s work is guided by four core strategic objec-



Photo: Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Rural Development/Facebook

The first official shipment of South African table grapes to the Philippines presents significant opportunities for South African producers.

tives: expanding market access for all participants; improving the efficiency of agricultural product marketing; optimising export earnings; and enhancing the long-term viability of South Africa’s agricultural sector.

Central to this mandate is the regulation and oversight of statutory measures, including levies paid across the agricultural value chain by registered industry participants – from producers and distributors to input suppliers. These levies enable the NAMC to deliver essential services, support informed decision-making and finance ongoing research and innovation initiatives aimed at ensuring the sector’s competitiveness and sustainability into the future.

“The levies also help the Council with collection of

information regarding how prices are being set, to ensure transparency across the sector. This also speaks to promoting the efficiency of the marketing of agricultural products,” he explained.

### **Increasing market access**

Operating within the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act of 1996, the NAMC works to expand equitable access to markets across the agricultural value chain – an approach that also strengthens export earnings.

Ngqangweni notes that through these efforts, the council supports about 120 smallholder farmers each year by linking them to formal market opportunities, including major retailers.



“Over the past five years, we have been able to link over 1000 small-holder farmers to markets, working with a limited budget,” he said.

The council also serves as a key advisory body to the Minister of Agriculture, a role supported by the analytical expertise of its researchers within the Markets and Economic Research Centre. Through rigorous research and market analysis – both locally and internationally – the team identifies growth opportunities and provides evidence-based insights that inform policy decisions on agricultural markets.

South Africa recently experienced shortage of eggs, following the outbreak of avian influenza. During this period, the NAMC played a critical advisory role, recommending the intro-

duction of a temporary customs duty rebate facility to allow imports to enter the country. This intervention helped stabilise supply, alleviate pressure on the domestic market, and shield consumers from sharp increases in egg prices.

“We did this in conjunction with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the Department of Agriculture, until the egg market was able to recover while the country was putting measures in place to fight the avian flu,” he said.

Ngqangweni added that the NAMC had recently advised the Minister of Agriculture to recognise approximately nine indigenous medicinal crops for inclusion under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act of 1996..

He said this recognition could

enable the sector to inject an additional R12 billion into the economy annually, provided the necessary support is put in place to commercialise the production of these crops.

## SA export portfolio

Approximately 42% of South Africa’s agricultural exports are destined for markets in the rest of Africa, making it the sector’s largest trading region. This is followed by the European Union and the United Kingdom, which together account for about 31% of exports. The Middle East and Asia represent the next major destinations, receiving roughly 20%, while about 6% of agricultural exports are shipped to the Americas. Key export products include citrus fruits, table grapes, nuts and wine.

“Incidentally, our

agricultural economy depends much on exports, which drive growth in the sector. In 2025, our exports reached a record value of about US\$15 billion, which is about R270 billion,” he said.

Compared to its counterparts in the continent, the South African agricultural sector has grown significantly over time. Ngqangweni attributes this progress to ongoing technological advancement that has strengthened productivity and enhanced the sector’s global competitiveness.

He pointed out that South Africa remains the only African country ranked among the world’s top 40 agricultural exporters. ❖

**Smallholder farmers are linked to formal market opportunities through the NAMC.**

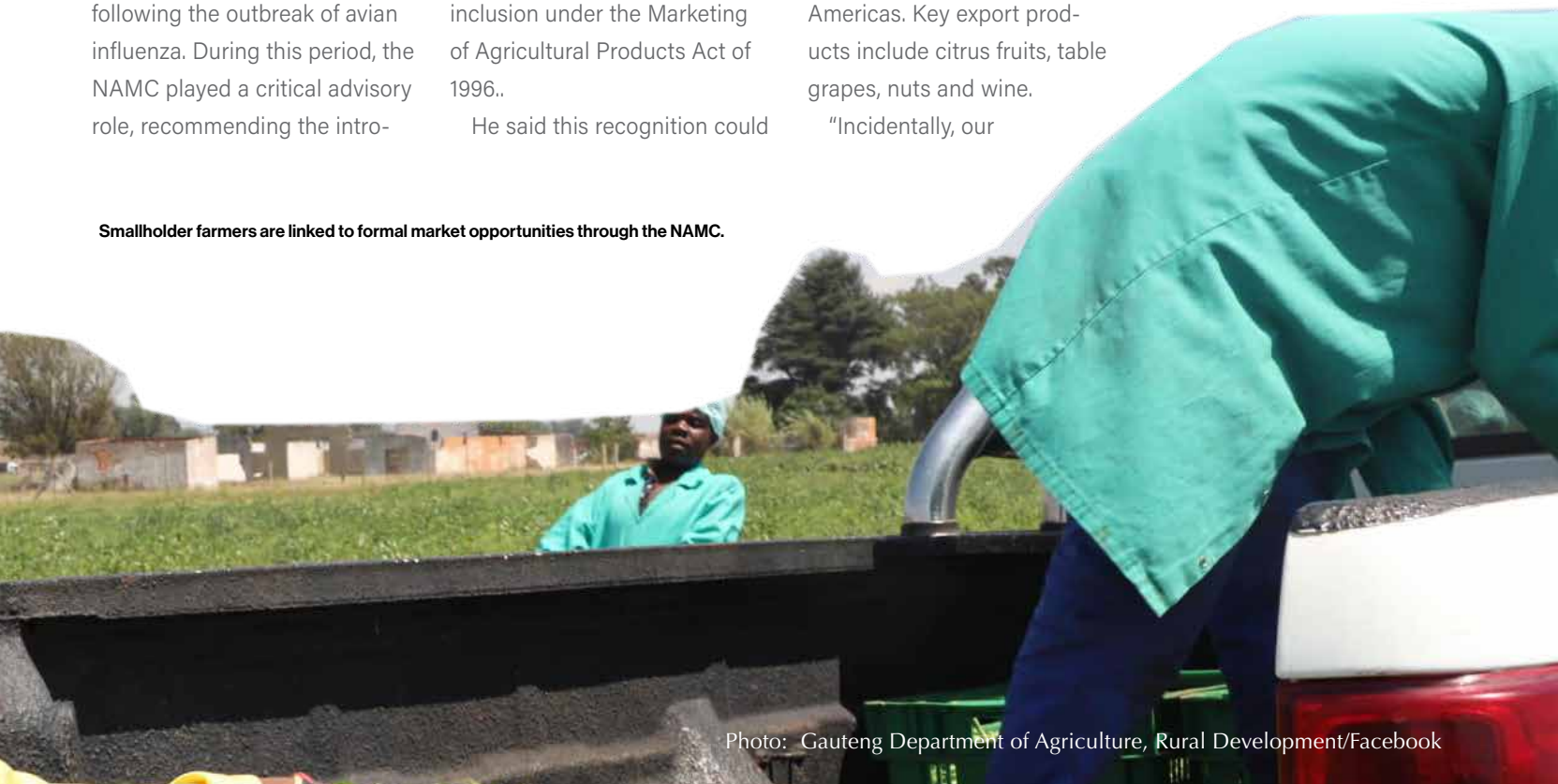


Photo: Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Rural Development/Facebook

# Reparations

## must help to address Africa's colonial legacy

**E**very May, we observe Africa Month to commemorate the founding of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963. Celebrating and affirming our identity as Africans is as integral to our national character as the ideals that anchor our democracy.

We are one people. Despite Africa's many languages and cultures, we take pride in a common identity, in our shared values and in a belonging that transcends geographical boundaries.

Even as we celebrate our continent's vibrancy and dynamism, we are mindful of the legacy of Africa's colonial past and how it continues to shape our continent's fortunes. While most African countries achieved independence many decades ago, the effects of the colonial era are still evident in much of the inequality, economic exclusion, political instability and conflicts that persist in parts of Africa.

The most extreme form of dehumanisation was the trans-continental slave trade perpetrated by European empires and slave-trading networks across the Sahara and North Africa.

For more than a hundred years, millions of African men, women and children were hunted down, captured and traded as if they were not people, but possessions.

The reality is that much of the wealth of former colonial powers today is the result of the deprivation of Africa's people. Not only were millions of Africans enslaved, but colonial powers grew wealthy from the vast tracts of African land they forcibly occupied and the valuable resources they extracted.

Across Africa, our people were taken, both dead and alive, as human specimens to be displayed and studied in faraway capitals. African historical artefacts were looted and taken to European museums.

The colonial powers have largely avoided a deeper reckoning with the consequences of these acts. Some have apologised for specific atrocities, but in the main they have fallen short of full unqualified apologies for colonialism.

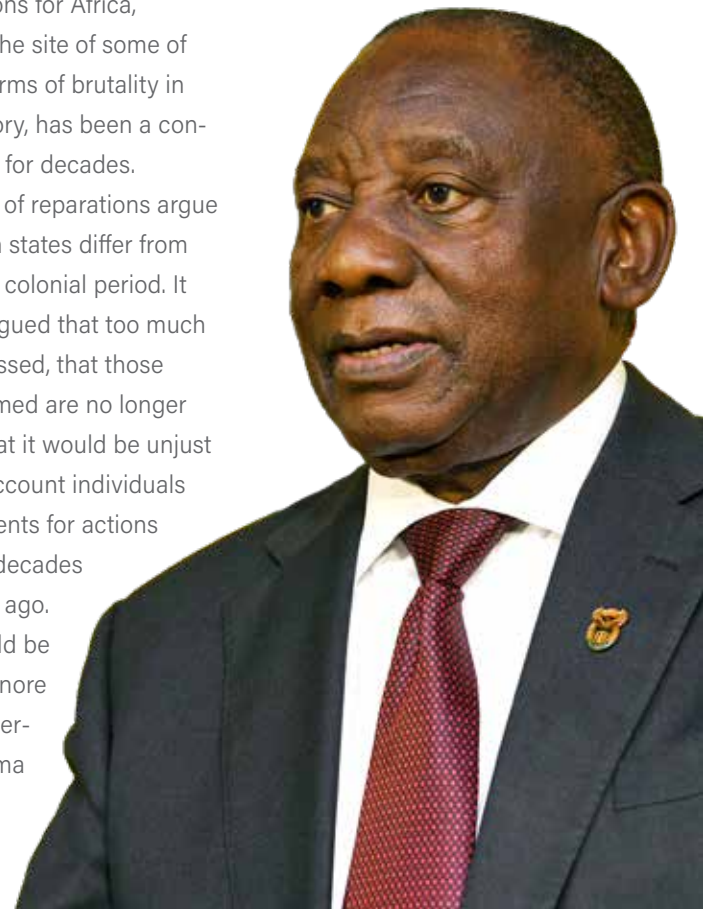
Reparations for Africa, which was the site of some of the worst forms of brutality in human history, has been a contested issue for decades.

Opponents of reparations argue that modern states differ from those of the colonial period. It has been argued that too much time has passed, that those directly harmed are no longer alive and that it would be unjust to hold to account individuals or governments for actions committed decades or centuries ago.

This would be to wilfully ignore the intergenerational trauma wrought by

slavery that continues to hold back the development of entire societies in Africa.

As the Guyanese political activist and academic Walter Rodney writes in his seminal 1972 work 'How Europe underdeveloped Africa', "when one





tries to measure the effect of European slave trading on the African continent, it is essential to realise that one is measuring the effect of social violence rather than trade in any normal sense of the word”.

This issue has now been given renewed momentum. In March this year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans and the racialised enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime

against humanity.

The resolution is anchored in acknowledgement of harm, reparatory justice and restitution. It calls for looted cultural property to be returned and for compensation and other forms of reparation to be considered.

The former colonial powers derived financial benefit from the display of our looted historical and cultural artefacts in their museums and institutions.

Enslaved labour from Africa built farms, industries and infra-

structure to enrich colonial powers, as the countries from which the slaves were taken remain underdeveloped even today.

The colonial enterprise was not merely about the deprivation of human rights. It was motivated by profit. As Walter Rodney writes, “it was economics that determined that Europe should invest in Africa and control the continent’s raw materials and labour”.

Whatever form reparations ultimately take, they should be aligned with our continent’s developmental objectives and assist African countries to tackle debt challenges, poverty alleviation, inequality and unemployment.

Just as the exploitation of Africa and the enslavement of millions of her people made the former colonial powers wealthy, redress must take the form of sustained, direct, material investment in Africa’s development.

This should include increased foreign direct investment and

market access for the African countries affected by slavery.

It should include skills and technology transfer. And it should include the return of historical artefacts to their countries of origin.

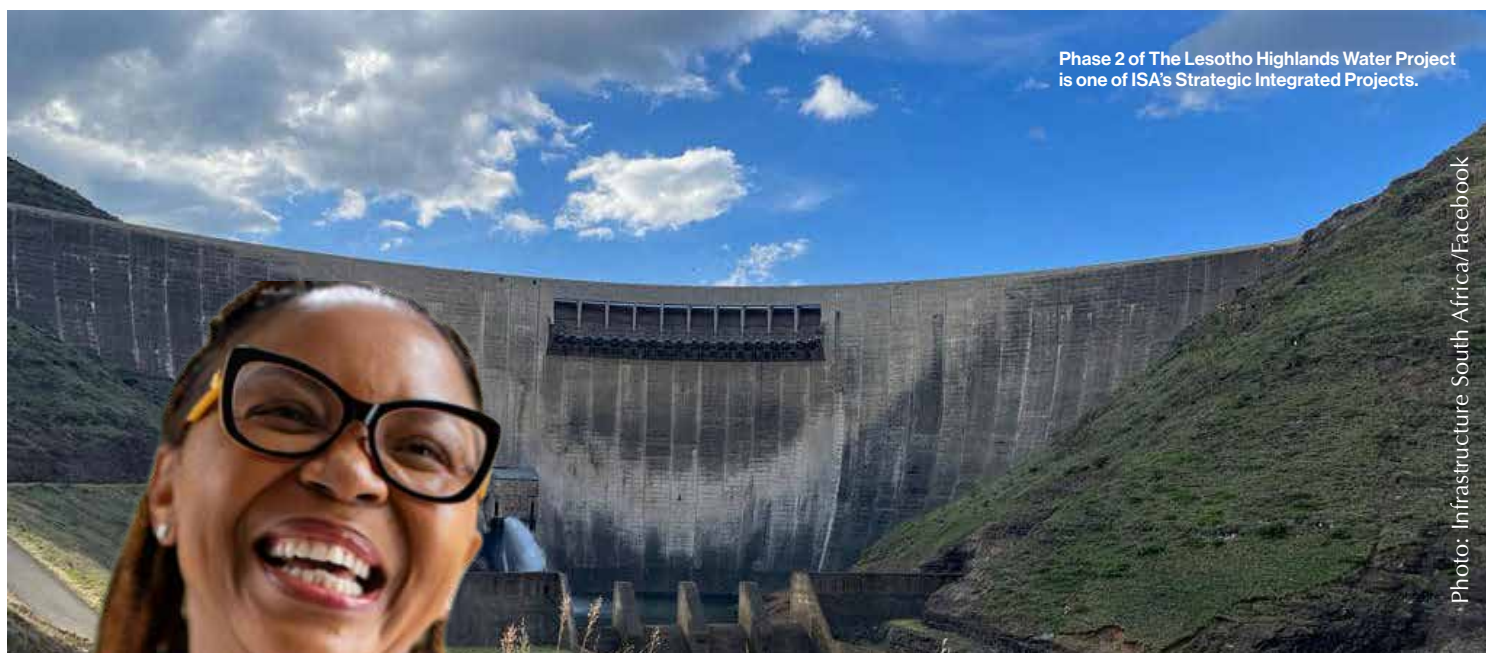
South Africa supports a unified, collaborative approach to the issue of reparations for Africa. This must include concrete measures to redress the lingering effects of the slave trade and colonialism that are forward looking.

Just as truth and reconciliation has been an integral part of our own journey towards nationhood, so too must the former colonial powers confront the historical injustice of colonialism with honesty and integrity. Beyond that, they must make a clear commitment to tangible measures of redress that support Africa’s growth and development.

**\*This message was first published on 4 May 2026**

**Whatever form reparations ultimately take, they should be aligned with our continent’s developmental objectives and assist African countries to tackle debt challenges, poverty alleviation, inequality and unemployment. Just as the exploitation of Africa and the enslavement of millions of her people made the former colonial powers wealthy, redress must take the form of sustained, direct, material investment in Africa’s development.**

# Masemola rolls sleeves to ramp up SA's infrastructure overhaul mission



**M**ameetse Masemola, the freshly minted Head of Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) – the country's central agency tasked with accelerating infrastructure investment – had little to no time to bask in the glory of the recent feather in her cap.

Eager to embrace the daunting task ahead, the decorated bureaucrat rolled her sleeves and got her hands dirty.

During an interview with the

*Public Sector Manager* magazine, her warm embrace is at odds with the imposing task ahead.

In January 2026, Masemola began her tenure after acting in the role since 2023. In this role, she spearheads the country's infrastructure strategy and oversees the National Infrastructure Plan 2050. Her role focuses on developing a pipeline of strategic infrastructure projects, strengthening policy frameworks,

Mameetse Masemola

and coordinating efforts between government, state-owned entities and the private sector to drive economic growth and development.

Before assuming the role, Masemola served as Deputy Director-General for Infrastructure Investment Planning and Oversight at ISA and held senior roles in information and communications technology (ICT), and trade sector development, including as Government Convener for the Trade and Industry Chamber at the National Economic Development and Labour Council.

## Infrastructure investment

Masemola says her appointment secures business continu-

ity while keeping ISA aligned with its strategic objectives, as government steps up efforts to fast-track infrastructure investment and stimulate economic growth.

Her approach to the role has been shaped by advice she received earlier in her career.

“Earlier in my career, I was appointed as an acting deputy director at the Department of Trade and Industry,” (now Department of Trade, Industry and Competition), she recalls.

“My mentor then advised me not to pay attention to the word ‘acting’ in the role, but rather I fulfil the functions and responsibilities of that role to my best. The acting was really preparing me to be in a role where I can provide leadership and steward-

ship over the organisation”.

Now at the helm of ISA, Masemola is responsible for steering a key institution established to coordinate and accelerate infrastructure development across the country – a task she says lies at the heart of South Africa’s economic ambitions.

## A balancing act

Established in September 2020, ISA has a set mandate in the Infrastructure Development Act of 2014.

“When we were established... we needed to put together a national infrastructure plan for the country... that is essentially the north star when it comes to issues of planning, of prioritisation and of identification of what we call strategic integrated projects”.

The goal is to align infrastructure investment with the country’s long-term development agenda, including the National Development Plan’s [NDP] target that gross fixed capital formation should reach 30% of GDP [gross domestic product].

“Two thirds of that 30% must emanate from private sector investments in infrastructure, and one third must be from government,” she explains.

Achieving this balance, she says, requires careful planning and a clear prioritisation framework.

## Prioritising development frameworks

In this regard, ISA prioritises projects based on national de-



Photo: Infrastructure South Africa/Facebook



Photo: Infrastructure South Africa/Facebook

Construction projects at Sefako Makgatho University was approved by the ISA.

velopment frameworks, including the NDP, the Infrastructure Plan 2050 and the National Spatial Development Framework.

These frameworks help guide decisions on which projects should move forward, she said.

“At the top level, we have got four priority sectors – water and sanitation, energy and electricity,

freight transport and logistics, as well as ICT and digital communications infrastructure,” Masemola says.

“These are the network industries. Every community, every business, every household requires these four basic services in order for us to participate in the economy”.

Beyond these core sectors, ISA also looks at social infrastructure.

“...In addition to these four basic services, we also look at social infrastructure – things like human settlements, school infrastructure, as well as health infrastructure,” she says.

Projects from both the public

and private sectors can be registered with ISA, after which the organisation applies a rigorous evaluation process.

“We look at which projects can transfer fiscal risk away from the public sector to the private sector, which contribute more to localisation and which contribute more to job creation.”

The approach, she says, ensures that decisions are based on data rather than sentiment.

“We take away emotion from identifying things as priority... it is very important that we apply a level of objectivity in the identification of the pipeline”.

### Reducing red tapes

A central part of ISA’s work involves helping projects overcome regulatory hurdles that often delay implementation.

Masemola describes this as “regulatory unblocking”.

“Any project, no matter where it will be located, will require multiple authorisations from a government perspective,” she explains. “Whether it is a permit, a licence or an exemption”.

Renewable energy projects, for example, require dozens of approvals before construction can begin.

“Every renewable energy project requires at least 53 permits and licences,” she says. “Whether it is access to servitudes, a letter of no objec-

tion from the Department of Transport, the Department of Defence, licences required from the Air Traffic and Navigation Services, from municipalities and so on.

“These projects will not reach financial close unless those authorisations are in place,” she adds.

“We help them to obtain those permits and licences in the shortest period of time so they reach financial close and then they go to procurement and then they construct the solar panels or the wind farms.”

## Project preparation

Another major challenge in infrastructure development, she said, is ensuring that projects are properly prepared before they are presented to potential investors.

“Research tells us that 80% of major government projects fail to get to financial close and completion because of poor planning and preparation,” Masemola says.

ISA, therefore, focuses heavily on project preparation.

“We are mandated to work upstream of the value chain,” she explains. “There is project development, the financing component, the contracting phase and then the implementation phase. We prepare and package projects such that they



are viable and can get funding and financing”.

Some of these projects form part of ISA’s project preparation pipeline.

“These are projects that are currently not funded but are strategic and of economic importance,” she explains. “ISA must work to do your prefeasibility studies, quantify certain things, including financial and economic models to get these projects to where we can present them to financing institutions”.

## Private sector investment

Masemola says attracting private sector investment remains critical to meeting South Africa’s infrastructure needs.

“The Minister of Finance has been very clear that too few of the projects in government’s pipeline are public-private partnerships and too few use blended finance,” she adds.

To address this, reforms have been introduced to streamline the framework for public-private partnerships (PPPs).

“One of the things that were identified was a lack of capacity in the PPP unit to consider all of these submissions that are being received,” she explains.

The revised framework now allows for unsolicited bids and gives accounting officers greater flexibility to initiate smaller PPP projects without going through lengthy central approvals.

“From where we are sitting, we believe that the current PPP framework will enable us to ramp up the number of PPPs in the current administration and beyond,” she says.

## The results

Masemola believes the infrastructure push is beginning to yield results.

“The Quarterly Labour Force Survey from Statistics South

Africa in the last two quarters has shown that the construction sector is the number one sector contributing to new jobs in the economy,” she says.

She attributes this to a combination of policy reforms and institutional efforts aimed at improving the investment environment.

“If you look at the enabling environment that has been put in place – structural reforms championed by Operation Vulindlela, the work undertaken by National Treasury, and the efforts of ISA and the Infrastructure Fund – all of that heavy lifting is beginning to bear fruit now,” Masemola says.

Ultimately, Masemola sees ISA’s role as ensuring that infrastructure investment translates into economic development across the country. ❖

# New reforms reshape the performance of Metros

Photo: GClS



Kusile Power Station.

**T**he recent official launch of the Metro Trading Services Reform (MTSR) programme by National Treasury is a quantum leap towards addressing some of the longstanding governance deficiencies that have impacted local government.

It heralded a turning point in government's efforts to break the cycle of historical systematic failures in the provision of basic municipal services. Service-delivery shortcomings, including intermittent power outages, unattended water leaks or water

shortages and uncollected refuse, have plagued many communities.

The eight metropolitan municipalities – Tshwane, Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, eThekweni, Buffalo City, Mangaung and Nelson Mandela Bay – are considered the driving force behind South Africa's future economic growth and prosperity. They collectively account for more than two-thirds of the country's economic activity.

The MTSR, a national government initiative that has been

endorsed by Cabinet, is designed to restore and maintain the provision of electricity, water, sanitation and waste services in metros by incentivising institutional and financial reforms.

Various government departments, including the Department of Cooperative Governance, the Department of Water and Sanitation, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, the Department of Electricity and Energy, and the metropolitan municipalities, together with the South African

Local Government Association, have collaborated with National Treasury to design the reforms.

The programme serves as one of government's priorities intended to support economic development and improve social outcomes during the current administration.

The reforms have also been incorporated into the second phase of Operation Vulindlela, which was approved by Cabinet in early 2025 to further accelerate structural reforms and address the constraints on South



Photo: National Treasury

**The Metro Trading Services Reform programme aims to improve services in municipalities.**

## Payment of incentive grant

The incentive grant payments will depend on the municipalities achieving their Council-approved performance targets of effectively managing the provision of each trading service, including sustainable improvement in the financial and technical performance of the service.

The municipalities must demonstrate political support for the turnaround in the performance and service outcomes of their trading services through Council-approved trading service improvement strategies, institutional roadmaps, and business and investment plans for each trading service.

This is a prerequisite to be eligible to participate in the reform.

To access the incentive, metros then have to meet the performance targets in the Performance Improvement Action Plans they have developed for each of the trading services. These plans need to be approved by Council and integrated into the municipal plans and budget.

The trading services must be managed as a business unit or through a corporate structure, with sound governance.

### The three key reforms

- Municipalities must implement a business-like approach to service man-

agement, which includes delegated management authority and accountability for performance as well as financial transparency.

- Effective management capability must be established.
- A financial turnaround in the business's performance is essential to increase investment in asset operations, maintenance, and renewal, as well as expansion of infrastructure networks to achieve improved outcomes.

In his State of the Nation Address in February 2026, President Cyril Ramaphosa stated that government was implementing targeted interventions to improve governance in metros to enhance the delivery of basic services, including water, electricity and waste removal.

He announced the introduction of a new R54 billion incentive for metros to upgrade their water, sanitation and electricity services. The President stated that a comprehensive overhaul was underway to address underlying causes of dysfunction in numerous municipalities.

In addition to the review of the revised draft White Paper on Local Government to outline a modern and fit-for-purpose local government system, the

Africa's economic growth.

By implementing a performance-based incentive grant for the implementation of the reform programme, National Treasury sought to incentivise the eight metropolitan municipalities to enhance their ability to provide the three municipal trading services – electricity, water and

wastewater and solid waste management.

The purpose of the incentive is to encourage the metropolitan municipalities to create the requisite conditions for the efficient operation of the trading services, to support livelihoods, investment and job creation in the metros.

Photo: Freepik



President also announced the review of the funding model for municipalities, saying many of them lack a viable and sustainable revenue base.

Delivering his Budget Speech in February 2026, Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana said, “municipalities must return to the foundational principle of fiscal integrity”.

He then announced the allocation of R27.7 billion over the medium term to the performance-linked reform for metro trading services in electricity, water, sanitation and solid waste.

Minister Godongwana explained that this was intended to rectify the practice of municipalities collecting revenue from basic services while diverting the funds to unrelated functions.

He cautioned that the continuation of this trend could lead to the eventual collapse of critical infrastructure systems, deteriorating services and the accumulation of maintenance backlogs.

### Building a stable, capable and predictable local governance system

Speaking at the White Paper on Local Government Executive Dialogue with the National Business Initiative in Centurion recently, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Velenkosini Hlabisa, said: “Local government is the sphere closest to the people and the primary platform for economic growth and social development.”

He also stated that “South

Africa requires a stable, capable and predictable local governance system that works consistently.”

The revised draft White Paper, which is currently under review to replace the 1998 version, focuses on four key pillars to deal with water, electricity and solid waste issues: Universal Access, Sustainability, Integrated Planning and Intergovernmental Coordination.

### How will communities benefit?

The MTSR will not only improve the financial performance of municipalities, but it will also promote the sustainability of services provided to communities.

The anticipated outcome of the reforms is an increase in investment in infrastructure, and improved operations and maintenance of the three trading services.

The improved reliability and quality of these services will inevitably benefit both households and businesses, as well as create a climate for increased investment that leads to the prevalence of job opportunities.

### How can metros get involved?

The programme is currently available only to the eight

metropolitan municipalities and their participation must meet entry conditions that involve establishing an accountability framework with the following elements:

- A single point of management accountability with delegated management authority;
- The provision of the service through an organisational structure that has all the required functions in one business for effective service delivery;
- An agreed service compact between the municipality and the trading service;
- Full financial transparency;
- A funded practical business and investment plan showing a path to financial viability and performance improvement; and

Additional capacity, including both capacity to manage organisational change and to ensure increased execution of capital budget, required under the reform.

Meanwhile, the MTSR is anticipated to elevate the provision of water, electricity and solid waste services to satisfactory and sustainable levels in the eight metros. ♦

# SAFE CUSTOMARY INITIATION

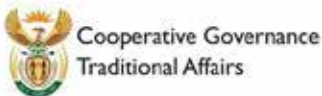
## MABAYE BEPHILA, BABUYE BEPHILA



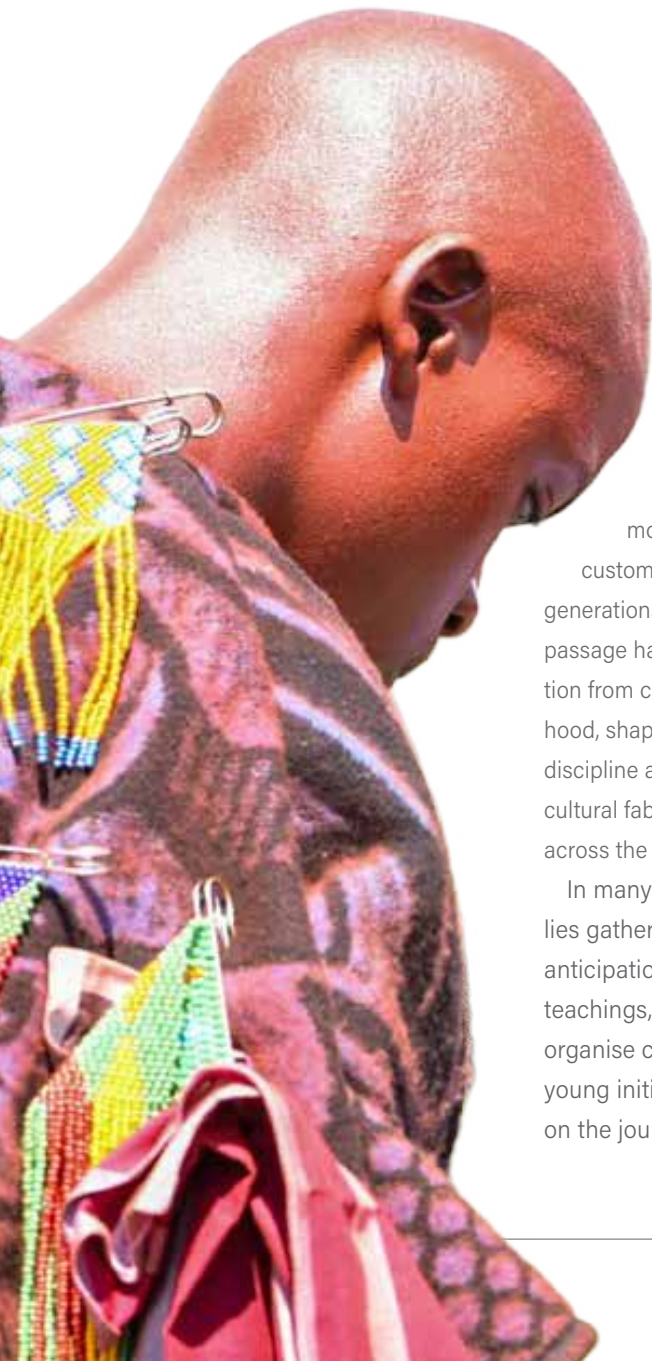
No child may enter without a complete medical check-up.

 @NationalCOGTA

Theme: "Every Municipality must work"



# Protecting initiates' lives and restoring the dignity of customary initiation



**E**ach year, as the winter and summer initiation seasons approach across South Africa, thousands of young people prepare for one of the most significant moments of their lives:

customary initiation. For generations, this sacred rite of passage has marked the transition from childhood to adulthood, shaping identity, instilling discipline and reinforcing the cultural fabric of communities across the country.

In many homes, families gather with pride and anticipation. Elders prepare teachings, communities organise ceremonies and young initiates step forward on the journey to adulthood.

Traditionally, customary initiation has been a time of celebration, reflection and transformation. It is a cultural milestone deeply rooted in African heritage, where elders guide young people and pass on values that shape character, responsibility and respect.

## Restoring safety and dignity

However, alongside this proud tradition, troubling realities have emerged over the years. Each initiation season brings reports of injuries, dehydration, infections and, in some cases, deaths. These tragedies cast a shadow over what should be a joyful and meaningful time for families welcoming their children back home from initiation schools.

Many of these incidents

are linked to illegal initiation schools operating without proper oversight, untrained traditional surgeons and caregivers, poor health and sanitation conditions, and the growing commercialisation of what was once a sacred cultural practice.

In such environments, initiates are placed at risk, far removed from the careful guidance and protection that traditionally defined initiation. However, registered schools also experience challenges which traumatises initiates and their families.

These challenges have prompted necessary conversations across communities, traditional leadership and government. The burning question is how has this proud age-old, respected cultural practice become as-



Initiates from the Matatiele community in the Eastern Cape at their homecoming ceremony.

sociated with such preventable tragedies? What must be done to restore its dignity and safety?

Government has implemented various interventions to ensure that legal initiation schools comply with applicable regulations, illegal initiation schools are prevented from operating and authorities are empowered to respond promptly to emerging risks.

### A whole of society approach

The introduction of the Customary Initiation Act (CIA) of 2021, marked an important step in strengthening oversight and accountability. Among others, the far-reaching legislation seeks to regulate initiation schools, improve safety standards and ensure that those responsible for negligence are held ac-

countable. However, legislation and government alone cannot preserve tradition or protect young lives.

As the primary people responsible for their children's safety, health and emotional well-being, parents and guardians are an integral part of a successful customary initiation process; the sacred rite of passage.

The CIA of 2021 recognises the active role of parents, which includes verifying that initiation schools are properly registered, ensuring that traditional surgeons are trained and recognised, staying informed about the conditions at initiation schools and engaging traditional leaders when concerns arise.

Parental involvement does not weaken tradition; rather, it strengthens it by ensuring that cultural practices continue in a

safe and responsible manner.

### Saving lives

The establishment of provincial initiation coordinating committees, heightened awareness campaigns and the deployment of monitoring teams working in collaboration with various stakeholders, can ensure safe initiation and help save lives.

It is also imperative to strengthen the registration and monitoring of initiation schools, support the training of traditional surgeons and caregivers, and improve coordination between government departments, traditional leadership structures and health authorities.

The mandatory pre-initiation medical screenings required under the CIA of 2021, seek to prevent deaths and injuries. They are necessary in identify-

ing underlying health issues such as dehydration and chronic medical conditions before initiates embark on the initiation process. Pre-screening initiates often is a life-saving action by acting as a crucial barrier between life and death.

Protecting initiates is a shared responsibility. Communities and families must remain vigilant and informed. They must report illegal initiation schools to authorities. This challenge requires an all of government and society approach, hence the need for communities, traditional leaders, health professionals, faith leaders and organisations to work together.

Customary initiation symbolises identity, unity and continuity, therefore, the goal is to restore its dignity.

Communities must collaborate with government to strengthen efforts to restore the dignity of customary initiation. By so doing, we can ensure that it remains a proud, safe and transformative journey into adulthood for generations to come.

No family should experience a loss of life because of a botched initiation process. As CoGTA, we are saying, "One life lost is one too many", hence the clarion call that "Mabaye Bephila, Bebuye Baphila". ❖

# Easing the burden of regulation for SMEs and market efficiencies

**T**he Kearney 2026 Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index highlights the efficiency of legal and regulatory processes as the second most important factor driving investment intentions in emerging markets.

Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) found that South Africa has one of the most restrictive business environments when compared to its peers, particularly in respect of burdensome government regulations, (including licensing and permitting), weak pro-

curement practices, and limited competition in markets.

The combination of these factors, the IMF argued, can pose risks to business confidence and investment, innovation and increase compliance costs.

More concerning is that this disproportionately impacts small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with negative implications for growth and employment creation.

## Reducing red tape

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa

highlighted the need to reduce red tape and improve the ease of doing business – an issue consistently raised in the Competition Commission's market inquiries and by business stakeholders calling for a more streamlined and modern regulatory system that enables SMEs to enter and expand in markets, as well improving South Africa's international competitiveness.

Regulations have an important role to play in society and are often necessitated by public policy objectives such as the protection





# REGULATORY REVIEW



## WHAT THE REVIEW LOOKS AT



Licences & permits  
(start/expand)



Outdated /  
too-strict rules



Highly concentrated  
markets



Practices that squeeze  
out SMEs



Fair access for  
historically disadvantaged

Findings will guide fixes to problem regulations.

*a competitive, dynamic, deconcentrated and inclusive economy*

of consumers, health and safety, financial stability, addressing market failures and advancing various developmental imperatives.

However, where such regulations are unduly restrictive or poorly implemented, they can create a burdensome regulatory environment for business, delay entry and constrain SME growth, thus reducing competition, innovation, investment and ultimately jobs.

### Regulatory review

It is within this context that the Competition Commission has launched a regulatory review project aimed at assessing regulations that may act as barriers to competition and the entry or expansion of firms, particularly SMEs in South Africa.

This review project will contribute to the national efforts to support inclusive growth, improve the ease of doing business and strengthen the competitiveness of the economy.

The regulatory review project will identify and assess regulations (including sector policies and licensing frameworks) that may restrict firm entry or expansion and consider whether they are still necessary to achieve their stated purpose or are overly restrictive in design or application and can be modified to



**Siyabulela Makunga, Spokesperson for the Competition Commission of South Africa.**

As such, the review will also consider whether such regulations adequately address market concentration, the effects of vertical integration on non-integrated firms, potential exclusionary practices, and meaningful participation by historically disadvantaged persons. The insights drawn from the review will inform recommendations for regulatory reforms to modify or remove regulatory barriers to competition and market participation.

By way of illustration, stakeholders previously raised concerns about lengthy approval times and low notification thresholds for mergers in South Africa. The Commission's assessment of, and response to, the concerns raised was to propose increases to the merger thresholds and commit to reduced turnaround times for merger approvals.

On merger thresholds, the Commission's assessment showed that 30% of mergers previously notified would no longer require notification and 23% of large mergers would be notified as intermediate, which must be investigated within 60 days, thus significantly easing the regulatory burden on businesses.

Notably, the purpose of merger control would not be undermined as the Commission's analysis showed that the mergers that would no longer be notified did not raise substantial competition and public interest risks in any event.

On turnaround times, the Commission committed, in its annual performance plan with the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, to finalise non-complex mergers within 19 business days, while highly complex large mergers will be finalised

within 105 days (as opposed to the previous target of 120 business days).

## Have your say

The participation of business (large and small) and other stakeholders, including regulatory bodies, will be crucial in identifying regulations that pose barriers to competition and providing evidence demonstrating actual experiences of how regulations inhibit the ease of doing business in the economy.

It will be important for the development of evidence-based regulatory reforms necessary for the growth of the economy. It is for this reason that the Commission is calling on businesses, and government departments and agencies to make submissions that identify regulatory barriers and motivate for the modification or removal of regulations across the economy. Submissions can be made to [regulation@compcom.co.za](mailto:regulation@compcom.co.za) by 5 June 2026.

The Commission will review these submissions and make an assessment of whether the regulations do indeed pose a barrier and can be modified or removed completely without compromising the objective of the regulation.

The Commission will then publish a report on its recommendations to government for regulatory reforms and advocate for implementation. To ensure there is some urgency in addressing regulatory barriers, the Commission will adopt a phased approach whereby the first report will focus on easily adopted regulatory reforms whilst subsequent reports will tackle those that require legislative and policy changes.

still achieve the purpose without posing as a barrier to competition.

The Commission's *2026 Concentration Tracker Report* shows that there remains persistent high levels of concentration across sectors in South Africa. It has been argued that regulatory barriers or licensing practices may maintain concentration levels and work against efforts to reduce concentration in the economy.

# SAFE CUSTOMARY INITIATION

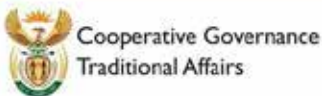
## MABAYE BEPHILA, BABUYE BEPHILA



Report illegal schools –  
silence costs lives.

 @NationalCOGTA

Theme: *"Every Municipality must work"*



# Telling African stories through ready-to-wear fashion



**A**s the continent commemorates Africa Month this May, *Public Sector Manager* magazine features the work of Dorcas Mutombo – a Congolese-born fashion designer and creative director based in Cape Town.

Her label, Emelia D, is a ready-to-wear brand grounded in storytelling, craftsmanship and intentional design. Each piece reflects Mutombo's multidisciplinary creative background, where fashion becomes both narrative and art form.

"As a Congolese living in South Africa, the celebration of Africa Month holds a deeply personal meaning. It represents not only where I come from, but also the journey of growth and belonging I have experienced on this continent. Living here has given me the opportunity to meet and connect with people from across Africa, and through them, I have learned so much about our diverse cultures, shared histories and the beauty within our differences," she said.

Mutombo's designs reflect her deep pride in the continent, drawing on its cultural richness, strength and beauty, while her creative approach is continually inspired by African heritage across fashion, art and storytelling.



1. Orange dress (made of wool mohair): R6 000
2. Green dress (cotton satin with hand-made flowers): R4 800
3. Green shirt with beads: R3 500
4. Satin Floral jacket: R30 000
5. White sunflower dress (cotton satin): R2 000

## About the designer

Mutombo refined her craft at the Elizabeth Galloway Academy of Fashion in Stellenbosch, where she completed an Advanced Diploma in Fashion Design, building a strong foundation in garment construction, textiles and conceptual design.

She launched her label, Emelia D, in 2019 during her second year of study, later relaunching the brand in 2022, with a renewed creative vision. Beyond fashion design, Mutombo is also a qualified photographer and contributes behind the scenes as an assistant stylist.

Her rising influence in the industry was cemented when she was named the winner of the South African Fashion Week Scouting Menswear Competition on 25 April 2026.



Scan the QR code for more information.  
[www.emeliad.com](http://www.emeliad.com) You can also WhatsApp her on 061 114 1183 or follow her on Instagram and TikTok @emelia\_dorcas Emelia D

\* Prices correct at the time of publishing.

# Leyfort's Boerewors

## Stew with Royco Pasta Bolognaise

**Boerewors, South Africa's beloved** coarsely ground sausage, is most often associated with the sizzle of a grill or the gentle char of open flame. But its versatility extends far beyond the braai. Traditionally made with roughly 90% meat and a carefully balanced fat content for richness and flavour, boerewors brings depth and comfort to a wide range of dishes.



EACH 100 g SERVING CONTAINS			
Energy	Sugar	Fat	Saturated Fat
238 kJ	8.1 g	0.5 g	0.1 g
3%	9%	<1%	1%

OF AN ADULT'S GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNT

In celebration of Africa Month, Chef Kholofelo Leyfort Mogane shares a hearty twist on the classic: Boerewors Stew with Royco Pasta Bolognaise. The dish transforms familiar pantry flavours into something deeply savoury and satisfying.

Quick to prepare yet full of character, the recipe comes together in just 10 minutes, with a further 30 minutes of cooking time, and serves up to five people – ideal for an easy weeknight meal with a celebratory touch.

### Ingredients:

- ⦿ 1 kg spicy boerewors
- ⦿ 15 ml (1 tablespoon) turmeric
- ⦿ 15 ml (1 tablespoon) black pepper
- ⦿ 15 ml (1 tablespoon) dried parsley.
- ⦿ A handful of fresh dill, basil, and coriander, finely chopped
- ⦿ ½ red onion, diced
- ⦿ 1 packet Royco Pasta Bolognaise Dry Cook-in Sauce (250 g)

- ⦿ 60 ml (4 tablespoons) soy sauce
- ⦿ 250 ml water

### Method:

- ⦿ In a large pan over low-medium heat, add the boerewors and fry for about 10 minutes, or until golden brown and the oil is released.
- ⦿ Add diced red onion and fry for a further two minutes.
- ⦿ Mix in the chopped dill, basil and coriander.
- ⦿ Add soy sauce and fry for two more minutes to build flavour.
- ⦿ Stir in the Royco Pasta Bolognaise Dry Cook-in Sauce and cook for six minutes, allowing the flavours to develop.
- ⦿ Pour in water, then season with dried parsley, black pepper and turmeric.
- ⦿ Stir everything together and let it simmer for 10 minutes.
- ⦿ Garnish with more fresh dill and coriander before serving.

### Tips:

The stew is best served over rice or alongside creamy mashed potatoes, and pairs beautifully with a glass of red wine, which complements and lifts the rich, savoury sauce.



### About the Chef

Chef Kholofelo Leyfort Mogane is the founder of Leyfort's Kitchen, a proudly South African full-service catering company based in Midrand, Gauteng. After being retrenched from his corporate career in 2019, he turned his passion for food into a thriving business, drawing on his extensive experience in the food service and events management. Leyfort's Kitchen caters to corporate functions, weddings, private celebrations and social gatherings, offering thoughtfully curated menus tailored to each client's unique tastes. He holds an International Diploma in Culinary Arts from the Johannesburg Culinary and Pastry School.

For more information,  
contact: 0766208074

or email: [leyfort@theallans.co.za](mailto:leyfort@theallans.co.za)

You can follow him on social media:

Instagram: [@Leyfortskitchen](https://www.instagram.com/Leyfortskitchen)

TikTok: [@Leyforts\\_Kitchen](https://www.tiktok.com/@Leyforts_Kitchen)

Facebook: [@Cookingwithleyfort](https://www.facebook.com/Cookingwithleyfort)

# Garden Route named the World's Best Road Trip



**T**he Garden Route has been ranked the number one road trip in the world by Autotrader, achieving a score of 90.6 out of 100.

The global study assessed leading road trips based on

factors such as road quality, scenery, weather conditions, visibility, temperature and overall driving experience. The Garden Route emerged as the top performer.

At the centre of this route

is the Garden Route National Park, which spans key sections along the journey and offers a range of nature-based experiences.

The Wilderness Section, located along the N2, is known

for its calm waterways, bird-life, forest cabins, and outdoor activities such as canoeing and mountain biking.

The Knysna Section offers access to estuarine and forest environments, with activities



Kayaking beneath the famous suspension bridge on Storms River in Tsitsikamma



On the Otter Hiking Trail



The suspension bridge over the Storms River



including visits to the Thesen Island area to see the endangered Knysna seahorse, as well as forest trails in Diepwalle and scenic viewpoints.

The Tsitsikamma Section features rugged coastal scenery at Storms River Mouth, with accommodation options, camping sites, and access to the famous

suspension bridge.

The Garden Route National Park remains a key part of this internationally recognised

route, offering diverse landscapes where forests, rivers, mountains, and coastline meet.

Visitors are encouraged to

experience this globally recognised journey and the national park that forms part of it. ❖

[www.sanparks.org/parks/garden-route](http://www.sanparks.org/parks/garden-route)  
\*Scan the QR code to learn more about the Garden Route National Park

