THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

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AN OVERDUE AWAKENING INDEED

Time magazine recently called the US’s fight against systemic racism an overdue awakening. This analogy sadly fits in aptly with what has been happening in our country as the global COVID-19 pandemic makes itself felt across the length and breadth of our economy and day-to-day lives.

The pandemic seems to have highlighted to corporate SA, the general middle- and upper-class populace, and unfortunately government, that our most vulnerable communities continue to live in inhumane poverty. Never before has the fact that apartheid spatial planning, lack of basic infrastructure such as decent housing, roads, sanitation, water supply and electricity, high unemployment numbers and just unprecedented levels of poverty been more evident than it is today. And this, ironically, thanks to a global pandemic that carries its own health challenges and devastations.

When the country went into lockdown at the end of March this year, many of us, including state agencies and ministries were jolted into awareness around the massive gaps in living standards. Simple and often not-thought about activities while we were in lockdown, such as the ability to walk around or exercise on your own property, access to technology and the means to use the internet or social media apps, visiting the grocery store to stockpile toilet paper, canned food and snacks, drive your car with more than one passenger, starkly highlighted the continuously widening gap that still exists between the majority black rural and township communities and the privileged mainly white suburban households.

While it certainly has been jarring to realise that many live in this country without consciously understanding that this divide exists, it’s also heartening to have witnessed how corporate SA, privileged households and local government have partnered up to at least plug some of these holes.

In this issue of the Voice of Local Government, we take a look at how local municipalities have navigated through the COVID-19 pandemic and what innovative and urgent interventions were put in place to allow communities to survive the myriad health and economic challenges they’ve faced (pages 6–13). We also talk to the response to unethical interventions were put in place to allow communities to survive the myriad health and economic challenges they’ve faced (pages 6–13). We also talk to the impact this pandemic has had on our youth (page 22).

SALGA has been hard at work communicating government’s plan of action, programmes and initiatives during this period, in and amongst its regular work projects that aim to assist local communities with service delivery issues. Partnerships with both the Federation of Canadian municipalities (page 43) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (page 33) are yielding great results for local municipalities.

It’s certainly not ever going to be business as usual for government going forward, so we look forward to the many initiatives, programmes and developments that local communities will be a part of as we enter a new reality.

Raina Julies
Some of BonaPeople’s Key Achievements:

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- Over 40 GRAP Compliant Fixed Asset Registers completed.
- More than 56 Internal Audit assignments undertaken.
- Over 15 Management Consulting assignments undertaken.
- More than 60 Annual Financial Statements completed for the public sector.
- Over 15 municipalities assisted with simplified Revenue Enhancement Strategies.
- Regular deployments of BonaPeople to public sector on a consulting or secondment basis.
- Developed and implemented Asset Management System; and Revenue Management System [Meter Auditing and Meter Reading].
- SAICA accredited to train future Chartered Accountants and Internal Auditors. 14 trainees absorbed into our Training Programme to date.
- Recognised and celebrated nationally with prestigious accolades and recognition for excellence across a wide range of business focus facets.
Explaining the AG’s enhanced powers

The difference between material irregularities and irregular expenditure

Irregular expenditure is all spending where the law is not followed in the process leading up to the payment. For example, if the procurement process for the awarding of a construction contract did not comply with legislation on supply chain management, all payments to that contractor will be irregular expenditure. When irregular expenditure is identified, the accounting officer or authority performs an investigation to determine the impact by considering if the non-compliance resulted in a financial loss, whether there was any fraud involved, and if an official should be held accountable. If there was no loss or fraud, the irregular expenditure will be condoned after the necessary disciplinary action had been taken.

As with irregular expenditure, a material irregularity also stems from not following the law, but it has a broader scope and can be applied to fraud and theft and to a breach of fiduciary duty (which means that an official did not do what the legislation requires and/or did not act in the best interest of the auditee). The key difference is that for any non-compliance to be considered a material irregularity, there must already be an indication that the non-compliance resulted in, or is likely to have a material impact, in the form of a material financial loss, the misuse or loss of a material public resource, or substantial harm to a public sector institution or the general public.

Their values differ, as irregular expenditure is the total expenditure, while a material irregularity will not always have a value (for example, substantial harm cannot be quantified). But if the material irregularity relates to a financial loss, the value will be the loss.

An example of irregular expenditure

A lack of a competitive bidding process for the awarding of a contract of R20 million.

The irregular expenditure is all the payments made on the contract to date (e.g. R10 million).

An example of material irregularity

A lack of a competitive bidding process for the awarding of a contract of R20 million resulting in a material financial loss, as the same service could have been delivered at a lower price (e.g. R18 million).

The financial loss is R2 million (what was lost and what can still be lost).
A MIXED BAG OF GOOD AND BAD NEWS
SALGA CEO Xolile George highlights some of the challenges facing municipalities and the opportunities they present while sharing some of SALGA’s achievements

Since last we spoke, the world has undergone a significant and historical change, as the COVID-19 pandemic has swept across the globe, infecting millions and leading to tens of thousands of deaths. Any global crisis affects us all, and in a situation such as we face now – with lockdowns, food shortages, jobs being shed and many citizens suffering enormously – service delivery has never been more important.

As the arm of government at the centre of such delivery, SALGA has expended a lot of energy in advocating on behalf of municipalities to ensure they receive the necessary financial resources to implement measures in curbing and managing the virus. It is no surprise to learn since the declaration of the State of Disaster, our municipalities that have borne the brunt of implementing the regulations laid out by the Minister of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA).

Challenges abound: although relief packages for local government were announced, they have been delivered at a slow pace and have not been enough to meet the real needs that COVID-19 has exposed. The virus has also brought to the surface the ills and challenges faced by the local government sector.

Among these are those in local government who have distastefully taken advantage of the situation, leading to reports of some councillors flouting lockdown regulations, being implicated in food parcel debacles, or just generally being found wanting in a time when they should be providing strong leadership. This raises the spectre of a lack of genuine understanding of the code of ethics of councillors as expressed in the Municipal Systems Act. Bold as per text here.

On a related side note, SALGA has, during this time, appeared in parliament to present its comments on the Municipal Systems Act Amendment Bill, as well as the Select Committee on Appropriations on Eskom and the Division of Revenue Bill.

COVID-19 has also turned the operating models of all sectors on their heads. Of course, bearing in mind the saying that “we should never let a good crisis go to waste”, now is a good time for us to revisit those areas in local government that could require some level of revamping. It should be clear that as we move forward, how we do business will have to be premised around technology, especially data modelling, to be able to plan more accurately and to deliver on the developmental imperatives of the country.

We must, however, not let this pandemic distract us from other key imperatives, including accountability. It is vital that we all play a role in focusing on and ensuring that wrongdoing – in the form of corruption and nonperformance – is highlighted and dealt with, through a defined consequence management framework. Accountability has become more critical than ever, as evidenced by the most recent audit outcomes released by the Auditor-General. These do not inspire confidence.

Another ongoing concern is that of energy supply, particularly as the debt owed by municipalities to Eskom remains a contentious issue. Municipalities themselves are owed billions by government and state-owned entities. To this end, SALGA has been engaging on the issues with the Political Task Team on Eskom, led by Deputy President David Mabuza. Municipalities are presently owed in the region of R18.7-billion by organs of state: SALGA is, therefore, advocating for the appointment of an ombudsman to deal with the various invoice disputes between Eskom and these municipalities.

To end on a happier note, in November, the SALGA’s president, Thembisile Nkadimeng, was elected as co-president of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) after Deputy Minister Parks Tau stepped down as the president of the world body. As someone unafraid to stand up and be counted Nkadimeng has already called for national governments to act on gendered inequalities and enhance wellbeing with universal healthcare and social protection. She has also called for the development of an equality framework in urban planning and legislation to ensure full inclusion of women and girls in the social fabric of cities and regions.

Her election into the presidency of the UCLG adds further prestige to our organisation and cements SALGA’s strategic role in local government, both locally and internationally, in line with our strategic profiling mandate.
The Ups and Downs of Operating During a Pandemic

Local government has found itself at the thin edge of the wedge during the COVID-19 pandemic. Facing revenue losses from all sides, it is nonetheless expected to deliver more to citizens who are also struggling. Rodney Weidemann takes a look at how municipalities are dealing with the challenges.

When South Africa’s national lockdown was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa, most only had a few days following the announcement to prepare. So, it was not only citizens whose lives were thrown into chaos, but also the municipalities that are at the forefront of service delivery. These entities must follow directives for local government as issued by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), which are designed to mitigate and manage both the risks and catastrophic possibilities associated with the virus. At the same time, these municipalities also need to ensure that they continue providing essential services – something particularly tricky in what is now described as the “new normal”.

Perhaps the single biggest concern facing municipalities during the lockdown was the projected reduction in revenue collection.

Citizen Engagement

Eldrid Jordaan, CEO of GovChat, points out that as a citizen engagement platform, GovChat certainly experienced a spike in use since the local outbreak of the coronavirus. He explains that GovChat is a public sector collaboration tool that was spun out of Mxit to craft a simple platform to connect citizens to government.

“With the outbreak of the disease, citizens turned to GovChat to search for their closest COVID-19 public or private testing stations, or even their coronavirus test results. It has also been used to look for public representatives such as ward councillors and traditional leaders, the closest public facilities such as home affairs, police stations and health clinics, and even for application information about the special R350 social relief grant. “This crisis is driving home the message to government that it is vital for citizens to be able to connect to their government. What COVID-19 has done is fast-tracked processes within the public sector that would otherwise have taken much longer to realise. In essence, it has forced us to become more mobile and to effectively digitise the ability to provide public/private communications.”
Local government has been playing a crucial role in efforts aimed at curbing the spread and mitigating the negative impact of the coronavirus. Worth of loans. This is further exacerbated by the fact that many municipal revenue-generating services and facilities have not been operating since the lockdown. These include licencing and vehicle testing centres, community halls, conference facilities, resorts, markets and sporting facilities."

SALGA’s chief officer: Municipal Finance and Economic Growth, Khomotso Letsatsi, announced earlier in the lockdown that the pandemic would result in job losses and reduced income, which ultimately affects municipal revenues and their ability to meet their financial obligations. “The outlook does not look good for the sector across the board,” she says, indicating that municipalities were already struggling to collect revenue from service charges and rates. This has, of course, been worsened by the pandemic. Ratepayers will struggle to pay property rates and service charges, while the number of indigent households, to which municipalities are required to provide basic services, is also increasing as unemployment spikes.”

Letsatsi adds that SALGA has projected a five per cent drop in payment rates, which will cost local government an estimated R14-billion, though this is dependent on how long the lockdown lasts.

Huge efforts being made

Despite this, local municipalities have been making huge efforts to ensure the needs of citizens are met. Mavundza points out that local government has been playing a crucial role in efforts aimed at curbing the spread and mitigating the negative impact of the coronavirus, according to the various regulations and directives. Local government has also made efforts with regard to:

- the identification of isolation and quarantine sites
- identification and making available facilities for shelter for the homeless
- monitoring and enforcement

REVENUE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Perhaps the single biggest concern facing municipalities during the lockdown was the projected reduction in revenue collection, owing to job losses, reduced household incomes and the inability of local authorities to rent out their facilities or generate the normal level of revenue from areas such as traffic fines.

At the same time, suggests Sikheto Mavundza, acting portfolio head: Health, Community Services and Inclusivity at the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the lockdown required people with reduced incomes to stay at home, resulting in higher than normal water and electricity usage. While municipalities heeded SALGA’s call not to disconnect residents who were unable to pay their electricity or water bills, Eskom has been less enthusiastic about a proposal that municipalities be granted a payment holiday because of their revenue collection challenges. “As things stand now, most of the municipalities have indicated that they will not be able to pay June salaries. They have, therefore, not been in a position to pay bulk service accounts to Eskom and Water Boards either and have thus been threatened with electricity cut-offs,” Mavundza says.

“Most will close their books for the 2019/20 financial year with huge bank overdrafts. These cities are facing a risk of debt default and recall for immediate payment of billions of rands
**BIG OPPORTUNITIES IN THE "NEW NORMAL"**

Nomazwi Mhloma, deputy head: ICT Services at eThekwini Municipality, believes that despite current hardships, local government will ultimately gain many technological benefits from the lockdown. She explains that one of the challenges to service delivery has always been the siloed approach taken by many government departments.

"However, the need to work from anywhere, yet still collaborate more closely, is helping to break down the walls of these silos. As government entities begin to successfully employ technologies from the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), so an ecosystem develops that is underscored by trust, safety and security, with efficient systems of governance that result in transparency and accountability," she says.

This, in turn, positions municipalities well for the adoption of 5G, which will deliver high-speed, low-latency connectivity via a ubiquitous network, opening up enormous opportunities for the smart city of the near future. Benefits here include everything from better traffic control and management to stronger security to improvements in e-health and e-education.

This will open up opportunities to reduce unemployment, meet the country’s Sustainable Development Goals and enable knowledge and innovation platforms," she says.

Mavundza agrees that the increased levels of collaboration are beneficial and will drive new behaviours in the future. He points out that councillors and municipal officials have been convening virtual meetings to ensure that municipalities continue to deliver on their mandates, and have been sharing information with their communities through various media platforms.

"I have no doubt that these innovations will go a long way in enhancing service delivery. For example, local government can look to use technology for consulting municipal stakeholders, thereby significantly increasing the number of people reached. They can also use technology to help minimise long queues at municipal pay points and service centres, such as permitting and licensing venues." Many municipalities have also created online platforms for communities to pay their municipal bills. The situation will only improve further after COVID-19, as municipalities are expected to seize the opportunities that arise from innovations aimed at responding to the epidemic," he concludes. ■

**FINDING FUNDING**

National Treasury has granted approval that funds transferred to municipalities, but not contractually committed, can be reallocated to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These reallocations, approved in terms of Section 20 (6) of the Division of Revenue Act, 2019, include:

- R2.4-billion in Urban Settlements Development Grant allocations to metropolitan municipalities. These funds will be used for providing water and sanitation, mainly in underserviced informal settlements and to cover the increased costs of more frequent waste management and other services.
- R1.5-billion in Municipal Infrastructure Grant allocations can be reallocated for the provision of water and sanitation, including where urgent maintenance is needed to restore the functionality of water infrastructure.
- R970-million in Public Transport Network Grant allocations may be reallocated, mainly for sanitisation of public transport facilities.
- R306-million in the indirect Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant was reallocated at the end of the 2019/20 national financial year and transferred to Rand Water to fund the roll-out of water tanks to supply communities without reliable access to water services. A further R151-million has been approved for release from the Municipal Disaster Relief Grant to support non-metropolitan municipalities with the costs of sanitisation and increased provision of other municipal services. Government is also supporting municipalities to reallocate funds from other conditional grants that are projected to be underspent.

"As government entities begin to successfully employ technologies from the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), so an ecosystem develops that is underscored by trust, safety and security, with efficient systems of governance that result in transparency and accountability." – Nomazwi Mhloma
COVID-19 DIGITAL SCREENING FORM

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Following the declaration of the State of Disaster, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that R20-billion would be earmarked to municipalities for services including emergency water supply, increased sanitation, and the provision of food and shelter for the homeless.

Ordinarily, municipalities face numerous challenges, however, the virus has placed additional pressures on municipalities to provide temporary housing for the homeless, swiftly address food security, quickly allocate quarantine sites, roll out preparations for mass burials, and rapidly ensure safety and health within informal settlements for the most vulnerable. Municipalities have had to co-ordinate their response and act quickly, but there is still much to do.

**HOUSING FOR THE HOMELESS**

With regard to temporary housing for the homeless, Mthobeli Kolisa, chief officer: Infrastructure Delivery, Spatial Transformation Services and Sustainability at the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), reported to the parliamentary monitoring group that 156 shelters for the homeless had been provided and some 13 000 people had been accommodated.

Sikhetho Mavundza, acting portfolio head: Health, Community Services and Inclusivity at SALGA, explains that having to provide temporary shelters is negatively impacting municipalities’ finances.

Municipalities work in tandem with the provincial departments of social development that were tasked with providing food and other essential items to the homeless from the disaster relief funds.

To achieve these measures, municipalities have had to reprioritise their budgets to provide accommodation for the homeless. Since the nationwide lockdown, the Provincial Department of Social Development

Since the State of Disaster was declared in March 2020, municipalities are facing complex challenges and huge pressure to provide additional essential services to their citizens. Puseleto Mompe finds out how they are responding to the demands resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
Development in Mpumalanga has placed more than 620 homeless people in temporary shelters around the province and provided them with meals. Regular check-ups and medication are provided by the Department of Health.

The challenge of homelessness is far more complex in more densely populated centres. For instance, Cape Town has over 7 000 homeless people and authorities have been working on extending existing shelters as well as the long-term development of safe spaces across the city in identified communities.

“IT must be noted that the reported allocation of R20-billion to municipalities – a portion of which should go towards shelters for the homeless – is yet to be transferred to municipalities,” says Mavundza.

FOOD FOR THE POOR AND HUNGRY

Another pressing issue the municipalities have to address is that of food security. Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) recently reported that since the start of the national lockdown, the proportion of people experiencing hunger increased from 4.3 to 7 per cent.

The co-ordination and provision of food parcels provided by the Department of Social Development, donor organisations and individuals fall to municipalities, and some have also introduced food banks to improve access to supplies.

The Provincial Department of Social Development in Mpumalanga has placed more than 620 homeless people in temporary shelters around the province and provided them with meals.

Social Development, donor organisations and individuals fall to municipalities, and some have also introduced food banks to improve access to supplies.

North West MEC for Social Development Boitumelo Moiloa says that since the lockdown her department has provided social relief of distress in the form of food parcels to over 1 500 families facing hunger and hardship across the four districts. Distribution was broken down as follows:

- Ngaka Modiri Molema – 565
- Bojanala – 235
- Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati – 382
- Dr Kenneth Kaunda – 336.

According to Moiloa, the normal process of identification and home circumstance assessment was followed to ensure that those who meet the requirements benefit from the social relief of distress programme.

Mavundza says the lack of guidelines for distribution of food parcels and the dearth of co-ordinated mechanisms in both the distribution of food and reporting has been a key challenge.

“As people working with communities on a daily basis, councillors found themselves getting involved in the identification of beneficiaries and the distribution of food parcels, something which many did not find proper,” he explains.

The co-ordination and provision of food parcels provided by the Department of Social Development, donor organisations and generous individuals fall to municipalities, and some have also introduced food banks to improve access to supplies.
Besides reports of manipulation of processes when it comes to identifying beneficiaries in some areas, there have also been incidences of unsafe food being distributed to people. He cautions that without guidelines outlining the criteria on which beneficiaries should be selected and the roles and responsibilities of different role-players in the distribution of food parcels, the reported challenges will continue.

Curtailing Infection Through Quarantine Measures
Preventing new infections in communities is a key factor in curbing the pandemic and quarantine is an important measure for stopping the spread of the disease. While most South Africans will be quarantined in their homes, others can be placed in community-based facilities for the quarantine period.

Many municipalities have identified and made sites available to be used as isolation and quarantine facilities within their local areas.

Municipal environmental health practitioners together with officials from the Department of Health and the Department of Public Health and Infrastructure have also been conducting inspections in the identified facilities. The provincial departments of health are responsible for ensuring that sites meet quarantine and isolation guidelines.

The biggest challenge here has been that municipalities were directed to identify quarantine sites without any guidelines. Recommendations were only made available more than a month after the directive was given. As a result, some identified facilities were later found unsuitable for use as quarantine and isolation sites.

The Eastern Cape government has announced plans to transform the old Mthatha Airport hangars, Buffalo City Stadium and several other state properties into isolation and quarantine sites. In addition, the province also plans to build 500-bed field hospitals in each of its eight districts.

KwaZulu-Natal health officials opened a 275-bed quarantine site in the first week of June ahead of an expected peak of COVID-19 infections in the second half of this year. The facility, situated in the Clairwood Hospital, south of Durban, was built in a little over two months. Authorities said the province now has over 5 000 beds for quarantined patients.

Burying the Dead
Death is a grim reality of the COVID-19 crisis. While no municipality is yet to conduct mass burials, there is no doubt that mass burials may soon have to be conducted given the increase in the number of deaths.

Mavundza explains that discussions about conducting mass burials and the development of guidelines for mass burials are being led by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Municipalities will be faced with the challenge of identifying suitable spaces for mass burials as well as convincing communities to accept mass burials as and when that stage is reached.

Johannesburg mayor Geoff Makhubo recently informed a parliamentary committee that 517 hectares of burial space in the city has been identified for this purpose.

In mid-May, eThekwini municipality spokesperson Msawakhe Mayisela said while the city was focusing on flattening the curve of the pandemic rather than thinking about mass graves, only 5 of the city's 65 graveyards would be able to accept new graves by the end of the year.

Health and Safety Focus
The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) estimates that about 1.4 million households, or between 2.9 and 3.6 million people, live in informal settlements in South Africa.

The Provincial Department of Social Development in Mpumalanga has placed more than 620 homeless people in temporary shelters around the province and provided them with meals.
Municipalities together with the Department of Human Settlement and the Department of Water and Sanitation have scaled up health and safety measures in informal settlements. Mavudza says that the provision of basic services to reduce the vulnerability of people living in informal settlements has been in the form of interventions that include improving access to refuse removal and water and sanitation services to areas that previously had no such access.

In Limpopo, the Valkplaas community in Sekhukhune, received two storage water tankers to supply almost 500 households. In the Free State, Premier Sisi Ntombela reported that by mid-May 134 water trucks had been delivered.

However, improving access to basic services remains limited due to a lack of funds and resources. Municipalities have also made efforts to address the health and safety of the informal dwellers through hygiene education communication campaigns. Councilors and municipal health officials continue to raise awareness, through different means including community radio, social media and visits to the community, on how residents can safeguard their health and safety.

The provision of basic services to reduce the vulnerability of people living in informal settlements has been in the form of interventions that include improving access to refuse removal and water and sanitation services.
ENFORCING ETHICS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ethical leadership is paramount to upholding good governance in municipalities. But, what are municipalities doing when ethical behaviour and integrity by officials is lacking, asks Tersia Booyzen

From the constitution down to municipal bylaws, a great emphasis is placed on the ethical behaviour and integrity of local government officials. It is heartening to see that the courts and political parties are upholding good governance and acting decisively where transgressions have taken place.

The code of conduct for councillors state that a councillor must firstly perform the functions of office in good faith, honestly and a transparent manner; and secondly, at all times, act in the best interest of the municipality and in such a way that the credibility and integrity of the municipality are not compromised.

Unfortunately, there are always some that will engage in political game-playing, poor service delivery, racism and defrauding and stealing from constituents. These are some of the reasons why local municipalities and metros receive negative press for unethical behaviour.

To counter this, a Disciplinary Procedure Collective Agreement was signed in 2018 by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Independent and Allied Trade Union (IMATU), and the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU).

Other than written warnings and suspension without pay, the agreement states that an employee may be dismissed on the first occasion for issues such as intimidation, being under the influence or consuming alcohol or intoxicating drugs while on duty, any act of dishonesty, any act of gross negligence, gross insubordination, wrongful disclosure of privileged information, any act of bribery or corruption, and any other act of misconduct, which would in law constitute grounds for just dismissal.

Since the end of 2019 and especially since the State of Disaster was declared in March, there have been several instances where the law and the agreement have been successfully applied to discipline and correct errant local government officials.

Dominating the news due to its scope is the ANC’s takeover bid of the City of Tshwane. Since last year, the City of Tshwane municipal council in the metro has failed to sit because of the ANC and EFF’s various staged walkouts, motions of no confidence and political disputes. The elected coalition partners, the EFF and the DA, make up about 99 of the seats, but without 108 seated members in the chamber, there is no quorum and no decisions can be made. This has had a severely negative impact on service delivery.

In March, Gauteng premier David Makhura placed the city under administration for failing to carry out its constitutional obligations. In April, the high court in Pretoria overturned Makhura’s decision to dissolve the Tshwane municipal council, but the order was suspended pending the lifting of lockdown restrictions. This means lawfully elected councillors remained out of office while the team of administrators, appointed on 23 March, continue to run the City. On 10 June, the North Gauteng High Court set aside the dissolution of the City of Tshwane council, ruling in favour of the DA, which means the city can sit and elect a new mayor with immediate effect and not wait for the appeal to the Constitutional Court by the Gauteng Provincial Government.
TAKING ACTION AGAINST RACISM
At the beginning of April, Welkom’s Matjhabeng municipality mayor Nkosijani Speelman, referred to the mostly coloured inhabitants of Bronville as “boesmans” while addressing the South African National Defence Force. “In Bronville, you know some of the boesmans, they take some chances; don’t hesitate. I talked to them yesterday but when you close them [down], they get out and drink again,” he was recorded as saying on video.

At the time, the ANC’s provincial spokesperson Thabo Meeko stated: “The issue of Speelman is being dealt with by the ANC provincially. And, according to legislation, we have been informed that we cannot take him out of his mayoral position. The process is guided by municipal bylaw. I can confirm, however, that [Speelman] is suspended as both an ANC member and mayor.”

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FRAUD AND THEFT
The ANC in Mpumalanga has terminated the membership of Musawenkosi “Chippy” Masina, the Ward 2 councillor in the Steve Tshwete local municipality in Middelburg. Municipal officials discovered that he had issued a fraudulent permit to a shopowner Tshwete local municipality in Middelburg. Municipal officials

THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR
Basic values and principles governing public administration 195.

1. Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following principles:
   a. A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
   b. Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
   c. Public administration must be development-oriented.
   d. Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
   e. People’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.
   f. Public administration must be accountable.
   g. Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
   h. Good human-resource management and career-development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated.
   i. Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

2. The above principles apply to:
   a. Administration in every sphere of government;
   b. Organs of state; and
   c. Public enterprises.

Source: The South African Constitution, Chapter 10, Public Administration

The immediate response by leadership is reassuring as the municipality had been identified by the Zondo Commission as one of the Mpumalanga municipalities with a track record of mismanagement, maladministration and general corruption. According to the 2017/2018 Auditor-General’s (AG’s) report, the municipalities had about R2-billion in irregular expenditure of which R236-million was deemed fruitless or wasteful.

SUSPENSIONS FOR VIOLATING REGULATIONS
In the North West province, the ANC leadership suspended the membership of three of its councillors for allegedly flouting lockdown regulations. In Bojanala, Tryphosa Bothokwane of the Moses Kotane Local Municipality has been suspended following her alleged violation of the regulations and related acts of misconduct. The municipality placed her on special leave following allegations made by foreign national traders that she was selling municipality-procured sanitisers.

In the Ngaka Modiri Molema region, Lerato Selebogo and Alfred Nyamane, both deployed in the Ramotshere Moiloa Local Municipality, have also been suspended for violating lockdown regulations and committing acts of misconduct as stipulated in the ANC constitution. The two ANC councillors were suspended following allegations that they were asking for food parcel contributions from businesses for personal gain.

THE STATE OF THE NATION
The AG’s report stated that 74 per cent of municipalities countrywide did not adequately follow up allegations of financial and supply chain management misconduct and fraud, and 45 per cent of the municipalities did not have all the required mechanisms for reporting and investigating transgressions or possible fraud. At 62 per cent of the municipalities, the council failed to conduct the required investigations into all instances of unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure reported in the previous year.

One of the reasons given for the accountability failures was that: “Leadership and municipal officials deliberately or negligently ignored their duties and disobeyed legislation, which was not decisively dealt with through mechanisms for enforcing consequences for transgressions.”

It is encouraging to see the laws and bylaws take their course in the instances cited above. The AG’s findings seem to have found fertile soil and even during the State of Disaster, leadership is acting resolutely and immediately to ensure the integrity and ethical behaviour of local government remains a priority.
On 27 May, a lecturer friend in South Korea posted a message on Facebook: “There are new infections at the university I work at. Just got a government warning on my phone. The good thing is the message tells me the exact location, date and time when the infected people were there. The infected were there last Saturday in the Arts hall at a meeting from 13:00 until 17:00. I love Korean use of contact tracing and clear communication.”

According to tech expert Kai-Fu Lee, South Korea’s use of location-based messaging “has been a crucial tool in the battle to reduce the transmission of the disease.” He says: “Nine out of 10 South Koreans have been getting location-based emergency messages that alert them when they are near a confirmed case.”

Such tools are a fast tech-based aide for public health officials trying to stem a contagious disease outbreak using contact tracing – a sleuthing strategy that involves calling or visiting confirmed carriers to track down people who may have been exposed to the disease. Although imperfect, detecting lines of transmission in this way helps reduce the need for mass quarantine.

But, it requires a lot of manpower. The scale of the current pandemic, combined with the infectiousness and stealth of the virus, means vast armies of contact tracers are required.

Analogue contact tracing, although useful in the way it emphasises rapport and trust between people, has glitches. Language can be a barrier to effective communication and there is skill involved in effectively allaying someone’s fears and anxieties. Convincing a stranger that you’re here to help while instructing them to quarantine isn’t easy. There is also tremendous risk of coming up empty-handed or with incorrect information. Interviewees may lie, fudge details, dodge questions or get defensive. People often fear that sharing information about who they’ve been in contact with is a type of betrayal. Or the timing of interviews may render efforts obsolete because they happen too late due to an insurmountable backlog of cases.

**TECHNOLOGY TO THE RESCUE**

Contact tracing may have squashed Ebola in West Africa, but the size of the current crisis means that it might be prudent to put technology to work. Which brings us back to my lecturer friend. “In Korea,” he wrote, “contact tracing has been made a lot more effective by tracking people’s movements using their smartphones and credit card data. They implemented the laws...”
that make it possible during the MERS outbreak.” South Korea avoided the Chinese hard lockdown approach by relying on new technology. Along with widespread testing, positive individuals are swiftly located and their contacts traced using digital tools.

Everything from security camera footage to mobile phone records is used to trace a case’s activity over the two weeks preceding the positive test.

Similar tech-driven strategies were implemented in Singapore where some 40 per cent of the initial 802 cases received their first indication of possible infection in the form of a health ministry text message.

In China, initial physical restrictions were, over time, replaced by digital surveillance. Based on location, basic health background and travel history, an Alibaba app assigns users a colour – green allows full freedom of movement, while yellow and red invite restrictions or supervised quarantine.

In Hong Kong, digital-tracking bracelets are given to everyone who gets off a plane. My friend went on to explain that South Koreans are generally accepting of this form of surveillance. It’s because, he says, there’s greater emphasis on the good of society as a whole rather than the individual. People are digitally monitored, but they know it and it seldom causes concern or fear. They seem comfortable having certain aspects of personal privacy undermined when it’s in the best interests of society.

However, in the west, the fear of being monitored tends to trump social collectivism. Many have already identified the potential for more widespread Big Brother-style monitoring to emerge on the back of using surveillance technology in the fight against SARS-CoV-2.

Some of this is due to seemingly draconian measures already witnessed.

In Tzaneen local municipality in the Limpopo province, for example, one municipality used drones to try and enforce lockdown and physical distancing, while having the mayor’s voice blast messages about hand washing from the skies.

In China, drones are deployed to detect people not wearing masks in public, while Russia has facial recognition cameras on the streets to catch quarantine violators.

In March, Taiwan became the first nation to use electronic geofencing to ensure individuals followed self-isolation orders. It meant that peoples’ mobile phones held them under surveillance. And in India, it became mandatory for people to download a government app that monitors citizen health and includes GPS tracking.

But, according to Harvard University professor Danielle Allen who heads up the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, “tech-supported contact tracing needn’t give governments or tech companies too much power.” Nor does it need to “trample civil liberties” to be effective, she says.

Take Apple and Google, for example. They say their collaborative app – Exposure Notification – doesn’t collect location or other identifiable information and they claim commitment to preserving personal privacy. It’s opt-in software that – if you have it installed – will notify you if you’ve been in contact with someone who has tested positive. And it prompts you to get tested or to quarantine.

The focus is simply on automating contact tracing, thereby reducing the time it takes to inform someone that they’ve been exposed to the virus.

Since these two tech giants control about three billion smartphones, around 40 per cent of the global population could have access.

Because geolocation is unnecessary for contact tracing, the Apple-Google app doesn’t track users’ locations. It simply provides push notifications to the user.

For public health officials, though, there is value in knowing where the virus has been.

Access to geotagging technology enables them to create detailed maps of where exposed cases and contacts have been so they can identify hotspots and prevent outbreaks. To this end, governments have been rolling out apps that include some data collection and varying levels of centralisation of that data.

By mid-May, some 47 contact-tracing apps were in use in 28 countries. In South Africa, one locally developed resource is Ukheshe’s Track and Trace service, which reports back to you if you’ve been in a venue where infections are reported. The app is free, but needs to be downloaded to a smartphone, which leads to another concern: access. For contact tracing apps to be entirely effective, some 60 per cent of the population must be plugged in. In Africa, we’re lagging.

In Singapore, the technology did nothing to stop the second wave of infections among migrant labourers because many don’t own smartphones.

Of course, contact tracing apps are just part of a broader strategy. And they’re there to support manual contact tracing, not replace it. The idea is to help authorities reach people sooner and get them isolated faster, which suggests that where technology is available, it should be engaged with.

In a pandemic, rapid sharing of accurate information is vital. And smartphones, with their digital collection of data, can assist with that. In the battle against an invisible contagion, our virus detectives need all the help they can get. ■
TAKING TO THE SKIES FOR BETTER SERVICE DELIVERY

In several municipalities around the country, drones are taking to the skies to enhance service delivery, improve community safety and assist with COVID-19 awareness efforts. Dale Hes explores how these municipalities are harnessing the potential of this powerful new technology.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) also known as drones, have useful applications in a variety of areas. From security surveillance to land surveying, photography and videography and even remote-sensing, the use of these remarkable machines has grown exponentially worldwide. And municipalities in South Africa are now jumping on the bandwagon.

TRAINING DRONE PILOTS

In the Gert Sibande District Municipality (GSDM) in Mpumalanga, officials realised the potential of drones to perform municipal functions more efficiently. This includes the assessment of road infrastructure, which prompted the municipality to begin training municipal employees working in this space to become drone pilots. So far, two employees, Tebogo Tsotetsi and Sifiso Simelane, have qualified as drone pilots.

Municipal spokesperson Bongi Ka Dube says that the municipality is one of the first in the country to actively train drone pilots, recognising the potential of drones to enhance operations.

The world is transforming to the science of big data and the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). This is changing the way things are done including the performance of municipal functions. GSDM observed that drone-based technology offers cheaper, safer and faster methods of performing the day-to-day functions in the municipal space. Functions identified by the municipality include the assessment of strategic infrastructure, the monitoring of gas emissions for municipal health surveillance, land mapping and contour surveying.

Although the two employees have officially qualified as drone pilots, the municipality has yet to make use of their services, due to the stringent regulations on UAVs set by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).
“Research is critical in understanding how drone technology or any other technological advancements can assist municipalities in executing their functions.” – Bongi Ka Dube

“We see great potential for drones to help with combatting and preventing crime, as well as collecting important geographical and environmental management information. Technology allows us to do things effectively and efficiently and can cut costs and turnaround times for projects.”

DEDICATED DRONE UNIT
The City of Cape Town was one of the first municipalities in South Africa to begin using drones, hiring external operators to conduct many operations, particularly in community safety. The City has now trained its own pilots and formed a dedicated drone unit that will make use of several different drones.

“We began this process many years ago when we assessed cities internationally to understand the merit and value of the use of drones,” explains JP Smith, mayoral committee member for safety and security.

Smith says that aerial photography has a vast number of uses, but current methods are simply too unaffordable to fully capitalise on the opportunities.

“Currently, most aerial photography is done from helicopters. But this becomes unaffordable. Drones are, therefore, a very quick fix and rapidly pay for themselves compared to using helicopters.”

The city aims to use the drones for the assessment of informal settlements and infrastructure, as well as for disaster management and crime-fighting support purposes.

“It was found that during law enforcement begins a gang operation, the drones can be sent up to act as support. With thermal imaging, they can easily pick up body heat and can also detect any objects that are being discarded, such as a firearm or drugs,” Smith says.

In terms of disaster management, drones can be sent into areas that are too dangerous for people or helicopters to enter.

“They can be used during fires, for example, when wind and smoke make the use of a helicopter unsafe. Also, they can easily conduct assessments of the damage caused by a disaster,” says Smith.

As with many other municipalities exploring the use of drones, the city has been frustrated by the over-regulation and extensive licensing requirements dictated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

“There is currently way too much red tape to get through. We tried to make submissions that the process should be made more streamlined for governments, but this was not successful,” Smith says.

The City’s drone unit is, however, completely prepared to begin operations.

“We are in the final stages of getting all the necessary approvals, so we are ready to roll,” says Smith.

“Research is critical in understanding how drone technology or any other technological advancements can assist municipalities in executing their functions.” – Bongi Ka Dube

“We see great potential for drones to help with combatting and preventing crime, as well as collecting important geographical and environmental management information.” – Neville Ndlala
Without sufficient data, South Africa’s response to COVID-19 would collapse, writes Dale Hes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an unprecedented collaborative effort to produce data that is critical to tracking the current spread of the virus and also to project its future impacts. Local government has a valuable opportunity to learn from this, by placing more emphasis on collection and analysis of data when delivering services to the people.

THE DATA SCIENCE DRIVE

Dr Vukosi Marivate, ABSA chair of data science at the University of Pretoria, has years of experience in the field of data collection and analysis. He highlights how data-driven initiatives are crucial to fully understand the impacts of COVID-19.

“We need to have different data systems that are speaking to each other. It is not only the data about the spread of the pandemic that is important, we also need to be able to deal with the effects on the health system and both the social and economic implications. For example, how much capacity in real-time do we have in the health facilities system (private or public)?”

Dr Marivate and his team developed a COVID-19 South Africa dashboard, which contains detailed information about the pandemic and allows other experts to contribute information.

“The dashboard has allowed over 50 volunteers to work together in making available open COVID-19 data that is sourced from official sources. This data is available for scientists, researchers, innovators and the public to use.”

Dr Marivate and his research group, Data Science for Social Impact, works to better understand how data science can be used to tackle societal challenges in South Africa, linked closely to the functioning of government.

“Valuable work has been done by universities and science councils such as the CSIR in this space. “All universities have researchers who are trying to assist using their expertise and are either analysing data that is linked with COVID-19 or doing modelling. Science councils have also brought in their expertise,” Dr Marivate says.

USING DATA TO IMPROVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE

These collaboratives have provided more evidence of why data collection is so important for improving the operations of municipalities.

“Municipalities need to understand why data is important and how they can capacitate themselves to better handle it, to use it and be able to share open government data. This capacity building is simply not just outsourcing the handling of municipal data, the capacity has to be built within,” says Dr Marivate.

He points to the 8 Principles of Open Government Data, developed by a group of international researchers, as an important guideline for municipalities to follow. The principles state that data should be complete, made widely available to the public timeously and not subject to any restrictions such as copyright.

Dr Marivate’s research group, Data Science for Social Impact, works to better understand how technologies such as artificial intelligence and data science can be used in their scenarios. However, they also have to understand how to responsibly handle these technologies as well as the data required to enable them.”

SALGA has sought to drive open data access through the Municipal Barometer, which recognises that “efficient and effective decision-making has been hindered by the difficulty of accessing readily available and reliable local-level data”.

The web-based portal provides information on local demographic trends, social development, economic growth, environmental and municipal finances at local, district and provincial levels.

It is clear that local governments should make a concerted effort to use these resources and to generate their own reliable data if service delivery outcomes are to be achieved.
Speaking at a recent Trialogue webinar, “Supporting Local Government in the Midst of a Global Pandemic”, Paul Smith, Kagiso Trust’s local government support head, recounted the trust’s ongoing work with the Makana municipality in the Eastern Cape, using it as a case study of what can be achieved.

“When people set aside their differences and get their hands dirty working together, things get done,” says Smith.

The Kagiso Trust began working with the Makana municipality finance department in 2018, assisting with debt and revenue management issues, as well as building capacity and transferring skills. Municipal revenues were shrinking, service delivery levels were rapidly declining, unemployment levels were at an all-time high, and the municipality was unable to attract people to this once sought-after town. “At Kagiso, we wanted to reimagine our support for local government and find ways for our support to impact on marginalised communities directly. Our work with local governments was having some impact, but it was debatable if it was being filtered through to the greater community,” says Smith.

“In Makana, we included three new elements over and above revenue management support. First was indigent management – identifying the poorest of the poor who need the most social support and linking them to the output of the local economic development (LED) strategy. Second was to develop a meaningful, commonly accepted LED strategy that would promote sustainable local job creation. Community engagement to support the formation of an integrated stakeholder coalition to create solutions to local challenges together was third.”

Smith says building stakeholder cohesion is no simple task. Active communities and institutions with diverse views and perspectives have to set aside their differences, agree to collaborate and organise themselves for meaningful constructive engagement. This is what the Kagiso Trust and Makana municipality did, and it gave rise to the Makana Circle of Unity (MCU) platform. Makana has an active civil society that is passionately interested in the region’s prosperity. This group of committed citizens were often referred to as the “Circular Firing Squad”, agreeing on the need for change, but with no consensus on how to achieve it. Kagiso Trust recognised this positive energy as an essential ingredient for transformation and so instituted discussions with stakeholders in 2019.

The MCU, according to Smith, created various focus groups (clusters) to attract stakeholders with relevant interests and skills. Municipal department heads were represented in all clusters providing a first-time opportunity for officials and civil society to share views and agree on key focus areas and initiatives.

“The new MCU collaborative structure has begun reaping the dividends: relationships are being mended, issues are being discussed and solutions found, and, previously polarised groups are collaborating,” says Smith.

The MCU has enabled a new food security cluster to co-ordinate feeding schemes and enhance the regional response to the food security crisis during COVID-19. This includes collaboration with government agencies, SASSA, DSD, SAP and the municipality to make food parcel delivery possible. The MCU has also assisted in developing COVID-19 communication material, manufacturing face masks, producing sanitation liquid, and has actively participated in the Municipal Joint Operation Committee (JOC) meetings.

“Makana leadership has demonstrated that transformation is possible when people set aside differences, embrace disruption, remain people-centric and hold each other accountable. Kagiso Trust looks forward to sharing its experience in Makana with other municipalities,” says Smith.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disastrous effect on the economy of countries worldwide. Never before in South Africa’s democratic history has our country been confronted with such a severe situation.

While attention is currently focused on those most immediately affected by the virus, there are many indications that the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-lasting social, cultural, economic, political and multidimensional impacts on society, especially on young people.

The Local Government Youth Development Forum (LGYDF) is committed to the goals enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Programme of Action for Youth and the UN Youth Strategy. Respect for all human rights – including economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights – is fundamental to the success of public health responses and recovery from the pandemic.

A SPECIAL COMMITTEE IS FORMED
Realising that the pandemic will severely disrupt youth development programmes and activities in the metropolitan, district and local municipalities, the LGYDF had to respond quickly and set up a special COVID-19 committee on youth development in municipalities.

The committee was tasked with developing a COVID-19 response plan that calls young people to act against the pandemic and foster partnerships safely and effectively. The forum recognises the potential of the youth to advance the fight against the pandemic as well as their understanding of the specific impacts the pandemic has and will have on young people. So, the LGYDF has ensured that its COVID-19-related responses uphold young people’s human rights and are inclusive of young people’s specific needs.

SWINGING INTO ACTION
The LGYDF’s special Covid-19 committee has embarked on several actions as part of its COVID-19 response plan.

COVID-19 awareness campaign.
Young people are at the forefront of risk communication initiatives – spreading the word about combatting misinformation, discrimination and stigma related to the crisis, physical distancing and proper measures to stop the spread of the virus.

The youth will disseminate information about the virus in all local languages. Networks of young people, such as those living with HIV, are reaching out to their peers to assess their needs, monitor disruption of services and ensure dissemination of information on how to access antiretrovirals, as well as spreading adapted and fact-based information. Young people are also connecting communities and raising spirits through innovative ideas and social media platforms.

The LGYDF will start the YouthLine as well as the Skeem Saam patrollers in the wards initiatives to promote compliance with the hygiene standards.

Food banks. In the spirit of supporting others, young people will be helping the forum to address the COVID-19-related needs of the most vulnerable in our communities and will safely help seniors and persons with disabilities to access supplies, such as food and medication. The forum will engage all the food banks from both government and private sector to ensure that much-needed food and medication reach the people.

The first phase of the food bank initiative involves recruiting young people in municipalities to be trained as farmers and producers of food that can be sourced, collected, and stored as edible surplus food from the supply chain and redistributed to registered beneficiary organisations (BOs) across South Africa that prepare meals.
The LGYDF recognises the potential of the youth to advance the fight against the pandemic as well as their understanding of the specific impacts the pandemic has and will have on young people.

The forum will approach the private sector to donate data, engage with the mobile network operators to zero-rate service delivery portals, and challenge municipalities to provide free Wi-Fi as part of the basic services to communities. This will enable access to information, e-learning activities and e-services and digital platforms and create easy communication with youth practitioners in municipalities.

RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION
Young people will contribute to data collection for the assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on youth development, women and persons with disabilities. The research will be conducted through the online platforms to make it easy for the youth to participate.

The forum will engage in monitoring and evaluation activities to measure the impact of the interventions from both government and the private sector. The success of the COVID-19 response plan depends on collaboration and programme understanding, knowledge and experience of setting up successful research, monitoring systems, and the identification of areas of improvement. The monitoring and evaluation tool will assist the forum in assessing the difference being made and provide critical intelligence on projects and programmes.

CAPACITY BUILDING
Young people are actively contributing to efforts to reduce the spread of the virus and mitigate the pandemic’s impact. They are also advocating environmental action to drive transformative change.

The LGYDF will continue to engage with the youth in a process of capacity building through its strategy to align youth development officers (YDOs) and assist municipalities in streamlining their youth development programmes.

FINANCIAL AND NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT
The inclusion and participation of the youth in the economy is a cornerstone of the COVID-19 response plan. Young people should be able to actively participate in shaping responses and need to be meaningfully included in all aspects and phases of the response.

The LGYDF will pilot a youth entrepreneurship development programme in eight metropolitan municipalities of South Africa. This will help the economy to recover and enable young entrepreneurs to get back to business. The forum will also advocate for the establishment of enterprise development hubs or supplier development parks in municipalities.

For the world to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic sustainably and equitably, young people must be included and supported. The LGYDF calls on all young people in South Africa, Africa and the world to join efforts with our municipalities and tribal councils to ensure that we deal effectively with the coronavirus and emerge stronger.

The LGYDF recognises the potential of the youth to advance the fight against the pandemic as well as their understanding of the specific impacts the pandemic has and will have on young people.

In addressing the economic and food security impact of the crisis, young workers including farmers and rural entrepreneurs will have to be innovative and use various technologies and communication tools to develop local solutions. Such work is critical to maintain supply chains and build alternate, more resilient and inclusive economies, which are vital to ensure access to adequate food supply for the population.

The second phase of the food bank will reach out to commercial farmers, allowing them to donate their post-harvest surplus produce to fight hunger. These donations will drastically improve the nutritional value of the food we recover.

DATABANK AND DIGITAL HUBS
Young people are experiencing difficulties with connectivity as a result of data costs in the country. As such, they have limited access to the government services that require online applications and they cannot assist the schools with limited resources to transfer and translate school curricula for broader online use.

As part of the LGYDF’s contribution to ensuring a sustainable and long-term solution, it has come up with a “DataBankSA” concept. This involves the storing of data bundles from various sectors of society to distribute to the youth. This will ensure that the youth, particularly the disadvantaged, have access to data for self-empowerment. The aim is to build the capacity of young people to enable them to take charge of their wellbeing.

The LGYDF calls on all young people in South Africa, Africa and the world to join efforts with our municipalities and tribal councils to ensure that we deal effectively with the coronavirus and emerge stronger.
Ntiyiso Consulting is an authentically African and globally wired management consulting firm with expertise across all major industries. We deliver sustainable solutions through five subsidiaries, viz. Ntiyiso Revenue Consulting, Ntiyiso Business Transformation Consulting, Ntiyiso Industrialisation Consulting, Ntiyiso Aviation Services and Tickipay Payment Services.

The past few months have introduced us to a new way of living and working. Ntiyiso Consulting is at the forefront of that evolution, and has the following capabilities that can be leveraged during and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

**BILL PRESENTMENT AND PAYMENT**
This solution aims to improve revenue collection by providing convenient electronic statement delivery and a secure platform for ease of payment of municipal accounts. The system offers guaranteed statement delivery via SMS, email, USSD and WhatsApp.

**DRONE ENABLED OPERATIONS SUPPORT**
We can help your organisation modernise and improve service delivery by using drone enabled solutions. We offer sanitisation and monitoring of public spaces, loud hailing, planning (mapping and surveying), building inspections, surveillance and monitoring of critical infrastructure.

**REVENUE MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT**
To ensure financial sustainability of the municipality, our holistic approach to revenue management will look at revenue completeness, revenue leakages and revenue coverage. Our approach seeks to unlock the revenue value chain, thus increasing revenue and discovering revenue from new sources.

**MANAGEMENT OF FOOD PARCEL DELIVERY**
We provide a digital and distributable voucher to manage food parcel delivery, in line with the government’s COVID-19 food parcel initiative. The key benefits are an increased reach, ensuring all intended recipients receive their parcels, reduced delivery times, reduced duplication/losses and reduced delivery costs.

**TRUTH | TRUST | RESULTS**

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To successfully make a dent in the unemployment statistics, youth unemployment should be tackled through an inclusive approach. Levi Letsoko looks into the efforts being made.

In his budget speech for the year 2020, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni highlighted the aggressive measures to be implemented by the national government (these included the creation of youth employment centres) in its effort to curb youth unemployment. The youth are identified as a vulnerable group that is more likely to be impacted by economic exclusion if this intervention was not immediately implemented.

The minister commended the improvements made in successfully increasing the number of jobs created towards the end of the fourth quarter of 2019 through the implementation of Job Fund projects.

The statistics for the second quarter of 2020 are expected to reveal an increase in unemployment figures as youth employment initiatives took a knock due to the nationwide lockdown that imposed economic downtime to avert the spread of the coronavirus outbreak.

The Local Government Youth Development Forum (LGYDF) is a multistakeholder initiative run by the Joint Planning Committee to address issues directly impacting the wellbeing of the youth from a local government level.

The formation of the forum was aimed at equipping the youth with the necessary resources while positioning them to lead the process of their development.

INNOVATIVE WAYS OF JOB CREATION

Local government have spearheaded the campaign against youth unemployment by creating partnerships with social enterprises, nonprofit organisations and employment hubs to craft opportunities that facilitate a transition for young people into the labour market.

Launched in 2011, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator is a nonprofit social enterprise and key local government partner with extensive experience in building solutions and innovations that aim to solve the global youth unemployment challenge. “We tackle the youth unemployment challenge using data, innovation, partnerships and on-the-ground experience to build pragmatic, implementable solutions that produce results,” says Lebo Nke, executive for partnerships at Harambee.

“It’s not easy to help young, economically disenfranchised work-seekers transition into the labour market when companies are shutting their doors (due to the COVID-19 pandemic). At a time like this, we have to continue to uplift young people to ensure resilience and recovery and provide them with opportunities to build their skills and stay positive,” she adds.

The unemployment rate was already high before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 58 per cent of young people aged between 15 to 34 not being in the workforce by January 2020.

Nke points out that economists predict a dire outcome with the disturbance of the educational yearly calendar and other obstacles associated with a national lockdown while also emphasising the importance of strengthening the effort of ensuring that young people don’t slide further into poverty by remaining locked out of the economy. “As our youth become more economically excluded than before, innovative community-based programmes need to be co-ordinated and scaled up for them through practical and strengthened partnerships with government and civil society,” she says.

“We cannot underestimate the role of youth entrepreneurs in creating employment opportunities. Business support must be made available to them at all times” – Thapelo Maleke
Prior to lockdown, Harambee had paved the way for 160,000 young people into jobs and work experiences with 500 businesses. We had also provided a range of employment-seeking support systems to a network of over 700,000 young work-seekers.

The organisation is currently observing ways of partnering with civil society units and government to explore and consolidate the opportunities available in the South African informal sector that could lead to viable formalised employment for young people after the lockdown.

Research presented by Harambee indicates that there are 1.8 million small businesses currently operating in the informal sector and a third of these are youth-owned.

The businesses range from public transport services (scholar and taxi transportation) to township motor mechanic businesses for young men, plus beautician and food vendor services for young women who have created lucrative opportunities despite their informal trade.

As a way of mitigating the impact of the lockdown on the accelerator’s annual programme, Harambee has improved some of their services to reach young people even during the lockdown.

“We've launched a WhatsApp chatbot to help young people to continue learning – young people who send the word challenge to 087 240 5122 will receive a daily challenge on WhatsApp,” she explains.

“We have also created access to free data-lite, mobile education courses and job-seeking opportunities through a partnership between Harambee and Funzi.”

Through a partnership with the Solidarity Fund, National Youth Development Agency, Tshepo 1 Million, Afrika Tikkun, ENKE and more than 240 other partners, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator has managed to reach five million young South Africans through multiple channels, including phone calls, SMS, social media, WhatsApp, voice recordings and radio campaigns.

**EMPOWERING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS**

Earlier in the year, President Cyril Ramaphosa introduced the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention – a five-year plan to curb the youth unemployment numbers by creating two million jobs for young people.

The initiative is aimed at catalysing collaboration between the various stakeholders in government and the youth in working towards identifying solutions to the scourge facing young people around the country.

The LGYDF has led from the front by involving young people in their COVID-19 response measures directed at communities around the country and through being vocal about creating smoother transitioning of young people into the labour market.

“The LGYDF’s advocacy agenda for municipalities is aimed at ensuring that all vacancies are filled by prioritising youth, women and people with disabilities in the recruitment of municipal staff. Secondly, municipalities are encouraged to do business with youth-owned businesses to create employment,” says Thapelo Maleke, chairperson of the LGYDF.

The LGYDF strongly believes in the empowerment of young entrepreneurs and their businesses as they are touted as the key role-players in creating job opportunities.

Some of the stakeholders (aligned with LGYDF) directly involved with youth entrepreneurs include the National Youth Development Agency and Softstart Business and Technology Incubator.

These organisations are tasked with identifying suitable candidates and businesses that can be nurtured and grown into scalable and fully functional enterprises that can absorb more young people into the labour market through government-led interventions.

“We cannot underestimate the role of youth entrepreneurs in creating employment opportunities. Business support must be made available to them at all times. The municipal procurement policies must be structured in a manner that prioritises youth-owned businesses,” says Maleke.

Organisations like NYDA and Softstart BTI are not fully capitalised by government. As a result, they are prone to financial challenges. The NYDA receives R400-million, which is not enough to address all of the organisation’s objectives.

An increased financial injection is crucial in ensuring that these organisations provide the necessary resources for entrepreneurs and youth-owned businesses.

“The common challenge for these institutions is that they have limited resources and that makes it difficult for them to access young people in rural and far areas, which they can’t reach without maximised resources,” says Maleke.

“Their services and programmes only reach young people based in urban areas. That is one obstacle we must address,” he concludes.
SCHOOL OF ECONOMIC & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

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FOR 2020/2021 BLOCK RELEASE INTAKE

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The City of Johannesburg (COJ) Housing Department won a Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Award at the United Nations 14th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlement in Ethiopia. The prestigious award recognised the South Hills low-cost housing development as a global green model community, citing “its outstanding demonstration in promoting sustainable cities and human settlements as well as the implementation of sustainable development goals”.

THE SOUTH HILLS PROJECT
The South Hills project is one of the COJ’s premier integrated housing developments. It is situated 5km south of the Johannesburg CBD. The R2.3-billion tender was awarded to Standard Bank with Calgro M3 as its development partner. The project consists of 6 204 residential units, which are projected to provide homes to about 32 000 people.

The project is also having a positive impact on the local community through various upliftment initiatives such as the employment of local contractors and labour and the use of local suppliers and various skills and development programmes.

“We believe that affordable housing shouldn’t be just about providing shelter. It also has to enhance quality of life, provide opportunities and support dignity,” says Wikus Lategan, chief executive officer of Calgro M3.

“We are also endeavouring to do as much as possible to make the running costs of the houses affordable for residents,” adds Lategan. Various green initiatives and energy-saving technologies such as gas for water heating (geysers) and cooking, solar water heaters, heat pumps and improved insulation are being implemented. Recycling projects, food gardening and urban greening initiatives are currently also being investigated.

Besides the green component, the added benefit of these measures will reduce electricity demand by the development and make the township socially and visually more attractive.

Calgro M3 will also implement CSI initiatives such as the upgrading of the existing public swimming pool. Buntukazi Xuba, communications officer at the Housing Department says: “The 6 204 units in the development comprise RDP units, bonded rental units, community residential units and affordable social housing units. The development is situated along a transport node with access to more job opportunities.

“The development is not yet complete as it is constructed in phases. We do, however, have beneficiaries already residing on-site in the completed phases,” Xuba explains.

THE 14TH GLOBAL CONGRESS
The 14th Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS 2019) was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It is one of the most important global congresses on the urban agenda, sustainable cities and human settlements. GFHS 2019’s focus theme was “Sustainable Development of Cities and Human Settlements in the Digital Era” and also supported campaigns on smart city and the use of digital technology for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.
Mining giant Glencore Mine Operations joined forces with local government to assist in improving the lives of communities in rural areas where there is inadequate service delivery.

When the Ga-Masha and Ga-Rantho communities located in Jane Furse, Pretoria, engaged in protests about the lack of access to electricity, Glencore Operations South Africa contributed R6-million to the villages to provide electricity for 300 families, creating more than 40 jobs within the community.

Glencore Operations South Africa’s Danie Knoesen says: “Glencore led the project that fully electrified 300 households. In doing so, it has addressed the most basic needs in the communities. “The community is immeasurably satisfied. Feedback from local forums, committees, municipal councillors, district municipality and provincial government is all very good and highly positive.”

ANSWERING GOVERNMENT’S CALL

When President Cyril Ramaphosa called for urgent assistance from corporate businesses in the country to help curb the spread of COVID-19, Glencore responded once more with a R23-million donation to assist distressed communities affected by the virus.

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Most of Glencore’s operations are located in remote areas where there are limited public resources like healthcare. The mining company’s two major businesses, Coal South Africa and Ferroalloys, adapted their existing social investment schemes to address the social needs of communities arising from the spread of the virus. As our host communities continue to deal with challenges raised by this pandemic, and in line with our ethos of progressing together, it remains our priority to assist with initiatives that truly make a difference to their lives. We are very proud of the efforts we have made so far. Over the next few months we will continue to roll out more initiatives together with our partners to help our communities through this pandemic,” says Murray Houston, CEO of Glencore Coal South Africa.

Funding has been assigned to various initiatives including, among others:

• provision of screening and testing in communities
• supply of water tanks in water-scarce communities
• access to e-learning programmes to support learners while schools remain closed
• mass fabric mask production and distribution
• supply of food aid mass distribution of sanitisers and infrared thermometers
• provision of mobile toilets
• the roll-out of Wi-Fi hotspots.

Glencore has also provided hospital equipment such as extra beds and protective personal equipment for health workers to assist local hospitals and clinics in providing adequate healthcare to those affected by the pandemic.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has affected South Africans from all walks of life and we have made major commitments to help boost the government’s efforts and ease the pressure felt by citizens during this tough period. Now more than ever, our communities need access to basic necessities such as clean water, hygiene products and medical equipment to protect them from infection. We will continue to do our part in providing these amenities where possible,” says Glencore Ferroalloys CEO Japie Fullard.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge not just for South Africans, but also for the world at large. As a responsible operator, Glencore continues to draw inspiration from its values of openness, integrity, safety, responsibility and entrepreneurship to help combat the further spread of this pandemic while also protecting the safety and health of our dedicated workforce and our host communities,” he concludes.
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GOOD GOVERNANCE AFRICA
The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed a record of discussions to strengthen the training capacity of the Infrastructure Branch Training Centre (IBTC) on Non-Revenue Water (NRW), a technical co-operation project. This project will develop the operations structure at the IBTC of the Department of Water and Sanitation as well as strengthen the training management capacity so that the IBTC can provide ongoing training in the area of non-revenue water.

This is after South Africa struggled to keep the taps running in some regions of the country. As a result, government provided a plan to reduce the current non-revenue water ratio of 34.6 per cent (national average according to a December 2016 survey) of water facilities, but there are insufficient engineers/technicians in the water supply sector, and even those who are available require further training to develop skills in the area of non-revenue water detection.

William Moraka, head of Technology and Innovations at SALGA, says the project aims to capacitate municipalities to enhance their skills through skills development training. “Most importantly, to expose municipal officials to the Japanese model and approaches in addressing non-revenue water through theoretical and practical training locally and in Japan. Those municipalities will also be exposed to innovative technologies used by the Japanese for leak detection and repairs.”

From 2013 to 2015, Japan hosted South African delegates at the Training and Technical Development Centre of the Bureau of Waterworks in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Based on the participants’ favourable impressions and recommendations of the training equipment and other facilities available for practical training, the IBTC was established by the Department of Water and Sanitation in 2014 and began a similar training programme in South Africa.

However, operating such a training centre unaided is not easy and there are many problems, such as an inadequate number of trainers and facilitators with suitable knowledge and experience, and a lack of equipment. Given these circumstances, there is a need to strengthen the operations and management capacity of the training programme using Japanese technical assistance so that practical training, which meets the needs of the actual workplace, such as the training provided at the Training and Technical Development Centre can be provided.

“Essentially the project’s purpose is to ensure that NRW management skills are developed and utilised in the NRW reduction projects of participating municipalities. As part of the project scope, a non-revenue water training yard facility was developed at a cost of R1.7-million to train municipalities in bulk meter knowledge (including inflow measurement), customer metering (including consumption measurement), water reticulation infrastructure and appurtenances, data logging, water balance, active leak control and conditional assessment (asset management),” says Moraka.

He concluded by saying that project intake was split into four.

“The first intake was the training of eight municipal facilitators, who were trained both locally and in Japan. They came from Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, EThekwini, Buffalo City, UGu District, George and Mbombela. The second intake was four or five municipal representatives from Mogale City, Mopani and uMgungundlovu. The third intake consisted of four to five municipal representatives from JB Marks, Mbombela, King Cetshwayo and Metsimaholo. The fourth intake was planned for March, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, training was postponed. Municipalities earmarked to participate in the fourth intake include Mathole, Ekurhuleni, Sol Plaatjie and Saldanha Bay.”
SECTION 139 INTERVENTION CALLED INTO QUESTION

With many municipalities under administration grappling with expensive legal challenges, service delivery protests and spiralling debt, SALGA and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs question the efficacy of the Constitution’s Section 139 intervention in supporting local government, writes Anél Lewis.

The appointment of administrators who are often lacking the requisite skills to work in the complex environment of local government often leaves these municipalities to flounder with the residents bearing the brunt of poor service delivery and failing infrastructure.

CoGTA and SALGA have respectively raised concerns about the high number of municipalities with Section 139 interventions. Lengthy and costly legal challenges, service delivery protests, spiralling debt and the breakdown of a democratically elected council are just some of the unfortunate consequences for many.

INVOKING A SECTION 139
Section 139 of the Constitution is invoked when a provincial government concludes that a municipality is not fulfilling its executive obligation, explains Dodovu. This could relate to a breakdown in service delivery, poor audit outcomes, irregular expenditure or the inability to pay suppliers.

While there are five methods of intervening in the running of a municipality, Dodovu says the most common application is Section 139 (1) (b) where the municipality’s powers are removed, and an administrator is appointed until the problem is resolved. This decision needs to be approved or refused by the Minister of CoGTA and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) within 14 days.

A Section 139 (1) (c) intervention, which dissolves the municipality entirely, should only be done in “exceptional” circumstances, says Dodovu, as it challenges the mandate of democratically-elected councillors. In this instance, the provincial government is required to inform the Minister of CoGTA and the NCOP immediately of its intention to dissolve the municipality, with new elections and the appointment of a new council within 90 days.

Dodovu emphasises that Section 139 is a measure of “last resort” and should only be considered if there is sufficient evidence that the provincial and national government have done all they could to support and strengthen the capacity of the municipality to fulfil its functions, as set out in Section 154 (1) of the Constitution.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
The constitutional obligation rests with the provincial government and the NCOP is only involved at an advanced stage when a municipality is already in crisis. The NCOP plays no part in invoking a Section 139 intervention, it merely responds when notified. Dodovu says frequently, the

“If the provinces were doing their job correctly, they would recognise the early warning signs that municipalities are not performing well and take the necessary steps to intercede.” – China Dodovu
provincial government falls short of its obligation to support weak municipalities before invoking Section 139. “If the provinces were doing their job correctly, they would recognise the early warning signs that municipalities are not performing well and take the necessary steps to intercede,” says Dodovu.

Mbali Mahlobo, Intergovernmental Relations manager of SALGA, says the association has critical roles to play both preceding and post Section 139 processes. These include:

- developing common approaches for municipalities
- enhancing co-operation, mutual assistance and the sharing of resources among municipalities
- finding solutions to problems relating to local government generally
- facilitating support to municipalities within the framework of co-operate governance and co-operation.

CHALLENGES
Mahlobo says the lack of clarity on the legal framework makes it difficult to implement a Section 139 intervention effectively. Progress updates from the administrator and the provincial government on the status of interventions are also not forthcoming. Mahlobo says: “Due to a lack of proper monitoring and a regulatory framework on reporting, it is difficult to conclude that interventions have been successful over the years or not.” There are often no close-out reports, and it’s mostly unclear why an intervention has ended, or when an intervention should come to an end. As a result, some municipalities limp along enduring multiple interventions, with no oversight from the provincial government. In the Public Affairs Research Institute’s 2019 report Mind the Gap, authors Tracy Ledger and Mahlatse Rampedi explain that the administrator appointed by the provincial government assumes control over all executive functions, such as financial administration, supply chain management and service delivery. The council retains legislative power unless it is dissolved.

Ledger and Rampedi point out, however, that there are no guidelines for the minimum requirements for this administrator, nor is there a detailed frame of reference. The administrator is merely entrusted with the broad tasking of “fixing” the municipality. Dodovu says there may also be resistance from within the municipality to accept intervention by the provincial government. “This defiance – be it a refusal to disclose financial statements or, in extreme cases, the mobilisation of the community to prevent the administrator from entering council offices – exacerbates the municipality’s challenges.

THE AFTERMATH AND THE WAY FORWARD
“As a result, the impact of such interventions ends up not meeting desired objectives of correcting the failures or turning around the challenges that led the municipality to be invoked with Section 139 in the first place,” says Mahlobo.

Ledger and Rampedi note that most of the municipalities with Section 139 interventions were left in a state of operational or financial collapse. “Very few of the interventions had a meaningful and sustained impact on municipal operations or financial health,” they argue. They estimate that it can take five to seven years for a municipality to get back on its feet after being in a state of financial neglect.

Also worrying is the high incidence of “repeat offenders” – municipalities that have been subjected to more than one intervention, casting doubt on the efficacy of the action in the first place. “It’s clear that the intervention did not address the underlying causes,” Ledger and Rampedi conclude.

Both CoGTA and SALGA agree that local government interventions must be regulated and should have clearly intended objectives.

“While there is no doubt that several municipalities face many challenges, and no matter the support provided, there are cases where the application of Section 139 interventions is necessary, but the lack of consistency in ensuring that adequate resources are invested to sustain the intervention is a cause for concern.” – Mbali Mahlobo

WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW
According to SALGA, at the end of June 2020, 36 municipalities were subject to Section 139 of the Constitution. These municipalities fall within six of the nine provinces, with the highest concentration being in KwaZulu-Natal and North West. Research by the Public Affairs Research Institute in 2019 revealed that 140 municipalities have been placed under administration in terms of Section 139 between 1998 and 2018. Of these, 48 were “repeat offenders” with more than one intervention during that period.
in its MFMA report released on 1 July 2020, covering the 2018/2019 financial years, the Auditor-General South Africa’s (AGSA) municipal audit results show that only 20 out of 257 municipalities achieved clean audits. Forty-three per cent attained unqualified audit outcomes and they manage over sixty per cent of the overall budget of local government.

In the report, Auditor-General Kimi Makwetu explained that services are rendered and goods are delivered to consumers in all municipalities with the expectation that they will pay for them. Yet there has been a growing trend of established businesses across the chain showing signs of a diminishing ability to pay for these services, or completely refusing to pay.

This culture of nonpayment for municipal services has resulted in consumer debt of over R181-billion, affecting the ability of municipalities to pay creditors on time. This amount includes intergovernmental debt of over R11-billion by government departments.

"The inability to collect debt from municipal consumers is widespread," said Makwetu. "In these circumstances, it is inevitable that municipalities will struggle to balance the books. Overall, 34 per cent of the municipalities disclosed a deficit – in other words, their expenditure exceeded their income. The total deficit of these municipalities amounted to R6.29-billion."

Makwetu added that the audit office continued to see a rise in fruitless and wasteful expenditure with 200 municipalities losing R2.07-billion in the current year. The audit outcomes also indicate a deteriorating financial health status of municipalities with as much as 31 per cent of municipalities categorised as financially vulnerable.

Over the last three-year period, R4.27-billion of government expenditure was fruitless and wasteful. "Government cannot afford to lose money because of poor decision-making, neglect or inefficiencies," Makwetu said.

Mohammed Lorgat, director of SALGA’s Municipal Audit Support Services, concurred with the report saying while the poor economic climate plays a role in the deterioration of municipalities’ financial health, many are just not managing their finances as well as they should.

“The potential R1.6-billion loss of investments made with the VBS Mutual Bank also significantly weakened the financial position of the 16 affected municipalities and had an impact on the delivery of infrastructure and maintenance projects.”

According to Lorgat, SALGA has been fulfilling its mandate to support municipalities, but there is room for improvement and increased support. SALGA’s goal is to transform and develop local government. In the last financial year, it has adopted actively-driven peer learning as a way to transfer skills. “We have identified that municipalities can benefit from each other, inspire each other, learn from each other and find solutions to challenges among each other,” says Lorgat. “We have facilitated several physical peer learning sessions and with the current COVID-19 circumstances are working on developing an online support portal, which will facilitate online peer learning.”

In addition, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of SALGA held a special meeting on 18 June 2020 and resolved to communicate directly with mayors and accounting officers of municipalities that have transgressed in terms of relevant legislation and demand accountability. SALGA also calls on municipalities to develop audit response plans that will be monitored on a quarterly basis. The organisation plans to conduct skills assessment in municipal finance units as well as getting the relevant professional bodies to oversee the professional conduct of senior managers.

Lastly, a multistakeholder audit steering committee consisting of SALGA, National Treasury and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs has been formed to monitor the implementation of municipal audit response plans and to ensure that the transgressions are remedied as prescribed by the legislation.

“We have identified that municipalities can benefit from each other, inspire each other, learn from each other and find solutions to challenges among each other.” – Mohammed Lorgat
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Recently, SALGA provided input to parliament on three key areas. The first of these, the Municipal Systems Amendment Act of 2011, had been declared by the Constitutional Court as constitutionally invalid, as the incorrect parliamentary process was used to pass it. Parliament was unable to meet the 24-month deadline to remedy this and the Systems Amendment Act was declared invalid with effect from March 2019.

Since then, a new Municipal Systems Amendment Bill has been put forward, and the organisation has provided its views on this, says Lance Joel, COO at SALGA. “SALGA feels that we have had at least eight years of implementation around this, and should thus ask questions about whether the amendments introduced in 2011 offered enough value to warrant bringing them back wholesale, or if we should only adopt those that worked,” Joel says.

“SALGA also raised issues around the principles we want the new bill to confirm, notably the constitutional authority and autonomy of local government to appoint senior municipal managers, and that such appointments should fall within its ambit of responsibility.” Secondly, SALGA also took the stance that local government administration should be professionalised. This means there must be set criteria for each position as well as behavioural expectations from the people appointed to those positions.

“We believe that many of the service delivery challenges facing local government are due to people bringing politics into the work environment. While the 2011 Act had a clause that placed limitations on allowing senior managers to hold political office, we feel that to truly professionalise the local space, this rule should not only apply to senior managers, but also every single municipal employee. Our current discussions so far have indicated that there is a lot of traction and support for this proposal,” says Joel.

“SALGA also undertook a presentation to the Select Committee on Appropriations on Eskom and was involved in discussions with relevant role-players around how to solve the issue of debt owed to Eskom. SALGA’s view is that while we acknowledge that municipalities owe Eskom for the bulk services they have purchased, these municipalities also have enormous amounts owed by citizens, government and businesses for the on-selling of electricity.”

“We believe that many of the service delivery challenges facing local government are due to people bringing politics into the work environment.” – Lance Joel

Finally, SALGA’s representations on the Division of Revenue Bill – which is how the Finance Minister decides to share the budget across the various spheres of government – were focused on ensuring local government receives an equitable share.

“Currently, municipalities receive around nine per cent of the pie, to be split among 257 municipalities,” explains Joel. The division is based on the Local Government Equitable Share Formula, but SALGA views this formula as being outdated and no longer in step with the needs of municipalities. Therefore, we have asked for a review of the formula. The minister had agreed to discuss this, but the lockdown has also negatively affected this process.

“SALGA hopes to have this discussion early enough that we will still see some form of expression of this in the mini-budget presented in October. We feel this is imperative, as COVID-19 has had a massive impact on municipalities – and being at the coalface of service delivery, we believe it is vital they receive additional funds to be able to properly respond in the manner expected of them,” he concludes.
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Better financial controls are needed to ensure accountability in municipalities, conference attendees heard at the 3rd annual local government Performance Management Seminar held by SALGA in February 2020.

The theme for this year’s seminar, which attracted 410 local government stakeholders, was titled “Entrenching Accountability and Consequences Management as Levers for High Performing Municipalities.” The seminar aims to present an opportunity for stakeholders in the local government sector to engage with emerging trends, connect with peers, discuss persistent challenges with integrating and executing performance management systems (PMS), and re-energise efforts for accountability through rigorous performance management.

During her keynote address at the seminar, Alice Muller, acting national audit leader: Auditor-General South Africa, told delegates that over the past decade, the financial health of municipalities had been deteriorating. There had been a lack of service delivery, irregular and wasteful expenditure, and people were not being held accountable for transgressions and poor performance.

To turn this around, Muller suggested that preventative controls be put in place before money leaves the bank. “The cost of not having preventative controls leads to financial loss, high costs of investigation, disciplinary action costs, low morale and productivity, and litigation costs,” she explained. “The solution is to put the right people in the right place and ensure that controls happen daily with adequate documentation.”

Life coach Bonsai Shongwe outlined three Ps that PMS need to consider to achieve performance inspiration: people, process and perspective. “Perspective assists in seeing the vision, people and process,” said Shongwe. He demonstrated that suggestion is often more powerful than knowledge.

“"To develop an ethical organisation, we need to look at the organisational culture. The majority of people want to do the right thing; however, they change behaviour according to the organisation they are in." – Kris Dobie

Accountability and ethical leadership are contributing factors to the poor performance of municipalities, writes Tlsetso Tlellima.

Technical advisor to the presidential commission on the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) Donalda Pretorius highlighted that the 4IR depended on allowing people and machines to collaborate and create a values and cultural revolution as well as an industrial one. She said the presidential commission needed to accelerate SA’s response to the 4IR in a way that allows the country to compete globally.

“We need to embrace tech as a catalyst to repurpose and re-skill employees because tech is transforming industries faster than we expect,” Pretorius explained. “The 4IR will create more jobs than it destroys: 3.3 million jobs will be disrupted, but 5.5 million jobs will be created by 2030. People and machines will collaborate.”

In a panel discussion about PMS for municipalities, it was suggested to introduce quality systems driven by qualified staff and to procure a suitable, easy-to-use and accessible e-PMS system. Panellist Gaobotse Mogosi raised concerns about the current PMS where she found that there was no alignment between organisational and individual performance targets. “The manual system was burdensome, files went missing and there was noncompliance with legislation and regulations,” she said.

Kris Dobie, ethics and anticorruption specialist, said that a local government leadership initiative had been launched and that the ethics survey done in the seminar was part of the information-gathering process. He mentioned the importance of ethical leadership because it links to the challenges currently facing local government.

“If we have ethical people and an ethical organisation, we’re building a good country,” said Dobie. “To develop an ethical organisation, we need to look at the organisational culture. The majority of people want to do the right thing, however, they change behaviour according to the organisation they are in.”

Dobie said it was important to have ethical leaders because when leaders do the right thing, employees follow. Getting rid of negative or unethical leaders or employees is paramount and one way of building an ethical organisation. Dobie added that a code of ethics will be rolled out to all municipalities by 2024.
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THE ASSET MANAGEMENT SUMMIT

Held in March, the asset management summit was hosted at the International Convention Centre in East London. The focus was on mapping municipal asset management while integrating climate change, with a strong emphasis on preparing for a digital future and preparing the groundwork for successful transitions. The summit was intended primarily for municipalities to engage with one another and their international partners from Canada.

OPENING ADDRESS
Helen Neale-May, mayoral committee member, Buffalo City Municipality, delivered the opening address in which she emphasised that every municipality in the country is faced with the same challenges in terms of climate change, asset management and the increasing demand for new infrastructure. She stressed that asset management is important and by investing in existing and new infrastructure, economic growth will be enabled.

STATUS UPDATE ON THE BIGM
Marshall Gallardo, programme manager, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and Tebogo Matlou, project manager, SALGA, presented a status report on the implementation of the Building Inclusive Green Municipalities (BIGM). The project began in November 2016 in the Eastern Cape and involves municipal partnerships between the district municipalities of Mbizana, Port St Johns, King Sabata Dalindyebo, Ngqushwa, Ndambe and Kouga and the Nelson Mandela Bay and Buffalo City metros.

ASSETS, FINANCE AND LEGISLATION
Mohammed Lorgat, director of SALGA’s Municipal Audit Support Programme (MASP), said that assets represent the largest value balance on any municipality’s financial statements. They are directly linked to the provision of service delivery and impact the quality of that service delivery.

James Matsie, specialist: Infrastructure Finance, said that according to legislation, municipal-owned assets have one purpose: ensuring service delivery to support residents in living safe, prosperous and fulfilling lives. “It is important to recognise that managing all assets is a team effort. It’s not about finance, operations, engineering, planning, or even elected officials alone. Everyone must work according to the same basic principles. While municipal administrators can develop cost estimates for delivering service, it is the elected officials who decide on the level of service to be offered and who need to derive the means to finance that delivery,” Burt said.

THE ROLE OF THE FCM
Michael Burt of the FCM said that the FCM’s core mandate is to advocate on behalf of municipalities and to ensure the federal policy and programmes meet the needs of the governments. He said municipal-owned assets have one purpose: infrastructure that provides basic services must be protected no matter what the circumstance. The lack of asset management among municipalities was evident. Challenges in terms of implementation were noted:
- Fragmented asset management support (how to align)
- Non-revenue water
- Noncompliance
- Provision for asset management and maintenance, for example, Eskom
- Leadership (are councillors aware and understand their role?).

GREEN MUNICIPAL FUND
Andy Wardell, general manager, Finance and chief financial officer at District of North Vancouver, focused on the opportunities for funding through the Green Municipal Fund. He explained the funding process, the types of funding and funding allocations, saying that funding is available to support adaptation action, planning, training and resources for municipal work that addresses climate change.
The COVID-19 outbreak has exacerbated many of the faults that we already knew were present in our world. But, it also brings the promise of positive change and hope, writes Puseletso Mompel.

A United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) presidency meeting that took place on April 20, 2020 was attended by nine members of the presidency, including co-president Thembisile Nkadimeng, SALGA’s president and the mayor of Polokwane.

In her contributions, Nkadimeng said: “The COVID-19 pandemic affects all people, but its effects are not felt equally among all people. Globally, women are experiencing exacerbated impacts in terms of security, workload as carers and health-related issues.”

Local and regional governments from all around the world have come together in a display of solidarity and political will with SALGA members sharing their experiences and visions over the past months. The challenges in the protection of basic service delivery and the real situations on the ground have inspired the UCLG decalogue for the post-COVID-19 era – a document envisioned and shaped by the presidency and the membership of UCLG. It aims to guide the UCLG’s advocacy in these times of crisis.

Ten transformative actions outline the steps to revamp the international system and how it interacts with communities. The actions are aimed at protecting those who need it the most and, ultimately, strives to ensure that the sacrifices communities are undertaking during the pandemic and in the immediate aftermath do not become a burden on future generations.

The decalogue underpins the need to guarantee public services and the protection of common goods; it challenges the current unsustainable models of consumption and calls for proximity production models that consider local producers and re-evaluating models of consumption and production. It also calls for the full inclusion of all people and to do so by protecting those who care for communities and those that need special protection.

The decalogue pledges full equality among men and women. It acknowledges the importance of women’s leadership and does not consider it an exception. It also makes a significant call for a stronger multilateral system that can ensure this shift and help the world overcome global problems as one. And, it calls for culture to be put at the heart of human development, declaring it the antidote for the consequences of this crisis.

It will also inform the UCLG’s contributions to the call of the United Nations’ Secretary-General to define the world we want in 2045 at the commemoration of the UN 75th anniversary. Ironically, this happens in the year in which for the first time in history, due to the pandemic, the UN General Assembly will not gather the Heads of State in New York.

The UCLG is committed to building on the strong network of women and men from all over the world who are supporting equality to foster transformation and ensure that its equality-driven movement continues flourishing.

A Call to Action for Women’s Leadership in the post-COVID-19 era has been launched by UCLG Women asking for women’s voices from all generations to be amplified and to contribute to achieving generation equality that can respond to the needs of our communities. Women and men from all spheres of governments are being called to help achieve true gender equality. The UCLG has pledged to support its members around the world with SALGA and South African cities, provincial and local governments at the forefront.
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