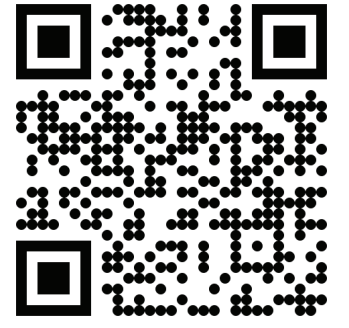


Vuk'uzenzele



Produced by: Government Communication & Information System (GCIS)

MAY EDITION 2 - 2026

Fighting poverty through village economic development



Photos: Supplied by BCC NPO

More Matshediso

A non-profit organisation (NPO) in Mpumalanga is helping to fight poverty at grassroots level, by ensuring that children in early childhood development (ECD) centres are well-fed while receiving education.

Based in Bushbuckridge in the Ehlanzeni District, the Bushbuckridge Crèches Confederation (BCC) was registered in 2022, as part of the BCC cooperative that was established in 2014. The NPO supports ECD programmes of the BCC cooperative, which consists of 55 ECDs.

Speaking to *Vuk'uzenzele* in an interview, the co-founder of the BCC NPO, Jan Vermeulen, said the organisation closely works with a faith-based organisation from the United

States of America (USA) to donate nutritious foods to the ECD centres. However, handouts are only a temporary solution.

Four years ago, the NPO came up with a long-term solution by starting layer and broiler chicken farms at seven of the 55 ECD centres. This was so that they could produce about a dozen eggs per day and chicken to feed the children and sell the surplus. They use profits to buy the next cycle of chicks to ensure sustainability.

"This was made possible by the \$10 000 funding that we received from the United States Embassy in Pretoria. The funding allowed us to buy equipment to build mobile broiler cages, and to also buy 100 chickens and 12 layer

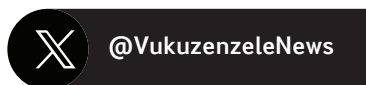
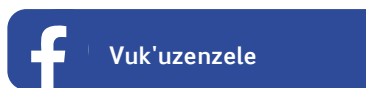
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Tshedimotsetso House: 1035 cnr Francis Beard and Festival streets, Hatfield, Pretoria, 0083

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chickens for each of the seven ECD centres," he explained.

He added that the NPO strives to provide ECD centres with the necessary resources, support and training to fight poverty through farming initiatives that involve poultry and vegetables.

"This approach ensures that young children are nourished, while enabling parents and teachers to work and sell excess produce to their communities, and ultimately creating employment and sustainability," he explained.

He said the mobile broiler cages allow the ECDs to produce their own fertilisers through chicken manure as they grow vegetables on fertile ground where the mobile broiler cages were initially placed, ultimately practicing permaculture.

During the 2021/22 financial year, the National



Development Agency (NDA) became aware of the existence of the BCC NPO. Impressed by its efforts to alleviate poverty in the area, the NDA approved the NPO's application for

funding to roll-out its poultry and vegetable farming project to 15 more ECD centres, bringing the total to 22.

"We received the grant funding worth R 688 776 for

the project. Over and above building the cages and buying chickens, the money also helped us buy chicken feed, including starter mesh, grower, and finisher pellets. This allowed the centres to grow the layers and broilers to a point of sale for both eggs and chicken," said Vermeulen.

He admits that not all ECDs are managing to sustain the model, but the majority are. The BCC NPO is planning to roll-out the programme to the remaining ECDs so all 55 centres are self-sustainable, alleviate poverty and create employment for locals.

The NPO strongly believes

that through village economic development, South Africa can win a fight against poverty because it is a model that uses available community assets supported by local labour.

The NPO continues to work with the international faith-based organisation that recently donated nutritious food supplies for the 55 ECD centres.

Child Protection Week

Vuk'uzenzele highlighted the work of the NPO as the country commemorates the annual National Child Protection Week from 29 May to 5 June, to raise awareness

of the rights of children as articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005).

The campaign is led by the Department of Social Development in partnership with key government departments and civil society organisations rendering child protection services.

Government calls on all South Africans to support Child Protection Week by ensuring that children do not suffer from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation. ©

SADC Ministers to meet over food security and blue economy



By Staff Reporter

Ministers responsible for agriculture, food security, fisheries and aquaculture from across Southern Africa will gather in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, on 29 May 2026, for high-level talks focused on regio-

nal food systems, climate resilience and the blue economy.

The meeting, convened by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), is expected to address pressing challenges affecting food production, livestock health and fisheries development across

the region.

Minister of Agriculture, John Steenhuisen, will chair the ministerial session in his role as chairperson of the Joint Committee of SADC Ministers of Agriculture and Food Security, Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Senior officials from SADC member states are expected

to meet ahead of the ministerial gathering on 27 and 28 May.

Key issues on the agenda

According to the SADC Secretariat, Ministers will review the implementation of previous summit and council decisions while considering measures to strengthen regional food systems and improve resilience against climate-related shocks.

Among the key issues on the agenda will be an update on the region's food and nutrition security situation, including an assessment of the 2025/26 rainfall season, agricultural production forecasts and climate projections for the 2026/27 season.

The meeting is also expected to examine progress under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), including findings from its fifth biennial review, and discuss strategies aimed at increasing youth participation in

agribusiness.

Regional agricultural cooperation initiatives, including the SADC Rice Development Strategy and harmonised seed and fertiliser regulatory systems, will also come under review.

Livestock health is expected to feature prominently during the discussions following recent outbreaks of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) in parts of the region.

FMD Response

SADC said Ministers would receive an update on coordinated regional efforts to contain the disease, following a March 2026 call by the SADC Council of Ministers for stronger cross-border surveillance, harmonised vaccination programmes and improved information sharing among member states.

The organisation said the measures are intended to protect livestock-based livelihoods, regional trade and food security.

The meeting will also

focus on fisheries governance and aquaculture development as SADC countries seek to expand the region's blue economy potential.

Blue economy focus

Ministers are expected to assess implementation of the Programme for Improving Fisheries Governance and Blue Economy Trade Corridors (PROFISHBLUE), alongside initiatives involving tilapia genetic improvement and revisions to the SADC Aquaculture Strategy and Action Plan.

SADC said outcomes from the meeting would feed into broader regional frameworks, including the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, the SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy and SADC Vision 2050.

The regional bloc said the discussions form part of ongoing efforts to promote sustainable economic growth, food security and regional integration among its 16 member states. – SAnews.gov.za. ©



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Investment conferences are turning commitments into jobs



Photos: GCIS

Since the start of this year, we have held a series of high-profile engagements with domestic and international investors.

These have included business forums on the margins of visits to Brazil and Spain, the sixth South Africa Investment Conference in March, and, last week, an Infrastructure Investment Summit convened by BlackRock, one of the world's largest infrastructure investment managers.

These engagements are not 'just for show', as some people have suggested. They are an opportunity to connect investors with local opportunities, and bring together governments, business, banks and development finance institutions.

Around the world, investment conferences and summits are platforms

"Investment is a long-term commitment. Moving from pledges to large-scale growth and employment creation takes time, particularly in sectors where projects take years to reach implementation."

to attract foreign direct investment in a global investor landscape that has become increasingly competitive. The fact that international and domestic investors are willing to commit capital to South Africa demonstrates confidence in our country as an attractive investment destination.

Since we launched our first national investment drive in 2018, we have attracted investments in energy, telecoms, infrastructure, automotive, mining, advanced manufacturing and many other sectors.

On the back of R1.5 trillion in pledges, a total of R634 billion has already been invested into factories, mines, data centres, power plants and other infrastructure, and have been creating jobs.

These include the R4.2 billion investment by BMW to electrify its Rosslyn plant in Gauteng and to support new energy vehicle production; the R500 million investment by Tetra Pak to upgrade its plant in KwaZulu-Natal; Corobrik's R500 million investment to build its Kwastina plant in Gauteng; and the Newlyn PX

terminal in the Port of Durban that began operating in 2024.

Last year, I opened the Ivanplats Platreef mine in Mokopane that originated from a R2.8 billion investment conference pledge.

In addition to creating jobs, these investments are supporting skills development to better equip young South Africans for the rapidly evolving world of work. For example, Microsoft has partnered with the Youth Employment Service (YES) to offer globally recognised certification in high-

demand AI Skills.

This forms part of a more than R5.4 billion investment by Microsoft to expand its cloud and AI infrastructure in South Africa by 2027.

We welcome all forms of investment, whether it is planned or new.

The reality is that we are a long way from where we need to be.

One of the most used measures of investment in the economy is gross fixed capital formation (GFCF), which is currently around 14% of our gross domestic product. The National Development Plan challenges us to reach 30% by 2030.

Our GFCF reached around 21% in 2008, driven by a sustained commodity boom, the start of Eskom's build programme and infrastructure expansion ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. There has been a steady decline since then, as the global financial crisis and the period of state capture progressively undermined private investment and business confidence.

Since 2018 we have sought to arrest this decline. We have matched intent with action, moving to stabilise public finances, resolve the energy crisis and advance structural reforms.

Yet there is still a disconnect between improved investor sentiment and greater investment.

The message we have been taking to our meetings with investors is that we are creating the conditions for growth and providing the necessary policy certainty. As we reiterated at last week's

Infrastructure Investment Summit, we are improving project planning, funding and execution.

Through this, we aim to narrow the gap between investment pledges, implementation and eventually job creation.

We aim to encourage the substantial private capital that is in reserve to be used for productive domestic investment. According to the South African Reserve Bank, by July 2025 South Africa's non-financial companies held R1.8 trillion in reserves.

The task of building a more prosperous, inclusive society is a collective one. It relies on productive investment at scale. That is why we are encouraged that the greatest number of pledges made at the sixth South Africa Investment Conference were from domestic investors. Local businesses – those who know our economic and social conditions best – are making substantial investments in our economy.

As we forge ahead with efforts to attract new investment, we call on the local private sector to be at the forefront of rebuilding investment momentum in our economy. Their confidence will encourage more international capital to follow.

It is now abundantly clear that the engagements and commitments made in conference halls are steadily and increasingly translating into the economic activity that creates jobs and opportunities for South Africans. ©

May is Workers' Month: Here is how to check if you qualify for UIF

Before you start the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) application process, make sure that you actually qualify to claim benefits.

In order to qualify for UIF, you must have been paying UIF contributions.

You can confirm this by looking on your payslip for any deductions that are marked for UIF.

All workers who have been paying UIF contributions can claim UIF if:

- Their employers have become bankrupt.
- Their contracts have ended.
- Their contracts have ended due to the death of an employer.
- They have been dismissed.

Domestic workers can claim if:

- They work for more than one employer and lose their employment with one of the employers, or if their employer dies.

You cannot claim if you:

- Receive benefits from the Compensation Fund.
- Receive benefits from an unemployment fund established under the Labour Relations Act.
- Are suspended from claiming because of fraud.
- Quit your job, resign, or abscond.
- Do not report at set dates and times.
- Refuse training and advice that may be given by UIF staff.

When can you claim UIF?

You can claim UIF starting from your last day of employment until your UIF benefits are used up or you have started working again.

You cannot register for UIF before your current employment contract has expired, and you must claim within six months after you have stopped working.

How to register for UIF?

Unemployed workers must apply for UIF benefits at their nearest labour centre in person.

Step 1: The documentation that you need

Ensure that you have all necessary documents on hand; otherwise, you will be sent away.

You need:

- Your 13-digit bar-coded identity document.
- Form UI-2.8 for banking details.

Tip: This needs to be signed by your bank and accompanied by a stamped bank statement to confirm your bank account details.

- Form UI-19 to show your employment history. This form must be completed by your previous employer.

Step 2: Go to the nearest labour centre

Once you have all your documentation, you must go to the nearest labour centre in person. You can find the address and telephone number of your nearest centre at <http://www.labour.gov.za/contacts/contacts>.

This information was supplied by the Legal Aid Board: <https://legal-aid.co.za/unemployment/>.



Letter

Dear Bursary Committee

I am writing to support my son's application for a bursary. He is a bright and motivated Grade 7 learner with excellent academic performance. Despite our financial challenges, he has consistently worked hard to achieve good grades.

As a parent, I am struggling to pay school fees for him and his two brothers. We are currently behind on payments, which is affecting their education. I am overwhelmed by debt and finding it difficult to make ends meet.

I am also pursuing studies in early childhood development in the hope of improving our situation. However, I am facing challenges in keeping up with fees and securing funding due to my age (39). I remain determined to provide a better future for my children.

A bursary would greatly support my son's academic journey and help ease our financial burden. I would be grateful for any assistance.

Thank you for considering our application.

Yours sincerely,

Sutherland Lungile Antoinette

Response

Dear Ms Sutherland,

Thank you for writing to *Vuk'uzenzele*, a government newspaper published by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS).

Please note that our department does not offer student bursaries.

However, parents and guardians should be aware that public (government) fee-paying schools may offer full, partial or conditional exemption from the payment of school fees. These exemptions are available to parents who are unable to pay school fees and who meet the prescribed qualifying criteria, as determined by the relevant school and the Department of Basic Education.

Parents are encouraged to approach the school directly for further information and assistance with the application process.

Yours sincerely,

Vuk'uzenzele

Child Protection Month launched in KwaZulu-Natal



Sihle Manda

The former Minister of Social Development, Nokuzola Sisisi Tolashe, has called for a united national effort to end violence against children.

She recently launched the 2026 Child Protection Month campaign at Prince Mangosuthu Sports Field in eDumbe Local Municipality in the Zululand District in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), under the theme: “Working together in ending violence against children”.

Addressing the launch, which was attended by government leaders, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) representatives, traditional leaders, parents and children, the former Minister emphasised that protecting young people must be a daily commitment from every sector of society.

“We are here today to fight child abuse, violence against children, statutory rape and child exploitation in our society,” she said. The launch forms part of government’s efforts to

strengthen the protection, safety and wellbeing of children across South Africa.

UNICEF delivered a message of support, highlighting that government alone cannot end violence against children, and that child protection begins at home, is reinforced in schools, and depends on the active involvement of society as a whole.

The former Minister called on parents and communities to reject any form of compensation that shields perpetrators of abuse.

Citizens can also report abuse via **SAPS Crime Stop: 08600 10111**, the **GBV Command Centre: 0800 428 428** or **Childline 116**. **Child Welfare South Africa: 0861 424 453 / 011 452-4110** e-mail: info@childwelfare.org.za

your family is, stop shielding the perpetrators by accepting money, cattle or goats as [compensation]. Those who sexually exploit vulnerable girls and boys must be identified, reported, prosecuted and face the consequences of their heinous actions,” she said.

She further stressed that tackling gender-based violence and femicide, declared a national disaster by President Cyril Ramaphosa, requires stronger reporting, decisive prosecution, and ensuring that every child understands their rights.

“Child Protection is a call to action that reminds all of us to create a safe environment for children. In KZN, we are working every day to protect children, together with all stakeholders. I call on all South Africans to work together with law enforcement to create a safer environment for children,” she said. ☺

“No matter how poor

KZN MEC for Social Development, Mbali Shinga urged communities to work closely with law enforcement and other stakeholders to safeguard children.

“Child Protection is a call to action that reminds all of us to create a safe environment for children. In KZN, we are working every day to protect children, together with all stakeholders. I call on all South Africans to work together with law enforcement to create a safer environment for children,” she said. ☺

Smart tech, safer steps for cane users

Sihle Manda

At just 24 years old, Durban entrepreneurs Landile Mabele and Jabu Swartbooi are using technology to improve mobility for the blind and visually impaired.

Their product, the Navwok Smart Cane, is a smart cane designed to improve safety and independence. Using sensors, the device detects obstacles and alerts users through gentle vibrations or voice prompts.

It also includes navigation features that guide users through unfamiliar spaces. Connected to a companion mobile application, the cane allows users to access routes, settings and updates easily.

In an interview with *Vuk'uzenzele*, Mabele said the inspiration for Navwok came in 2022 when a close

friend lost his eyesight to a medical condition, leading him to become dependent on his family for mobility and physical space navigation.

“I thought hard about how

“I tinkered with a few devices and electronics to create a cane that will help people with visual impairment navigate spaces seamlessly and with ease.”

I could use my skills in technology to improve his life. As someone who worked in government statistics, His typical day-to-day work involved working on a computer, but mobility was his biggest problem. My solution was to start Navwok,” he said.

The cane’s mobile application adds another layer of accessibility through voice-guided navigation.

The app works with prompts that help users to

navigate their way to their desired destination by working out a route, guiding them at specific points and calculating steps that they will take to arrive. Mabele describes himself as a self-taught software technician with a background in electronics.

Developing the technology was not without challenges, and Mabele said; “The journey has been really hard because at first we designed the product from our own perspective. Designing something for the visually impaired community needs to be something that is done with them in mind throughout all steps and understanding the challenges they have.”

“The very first prototype proved the concept but it had a lot of limitations. This is our fourth iteration and had to be inclusive of their reality,” he explained.

Navwok has received support from organisations including the SAB Foundation, University of the Witwatersrand, mLab Southern Africa and the Technology Innovation Agency. ☺



Navwok Lwandile Mabele, Navwok Smart Cane co-founder, with his invention at the recent SA Innovation Week at Nasrec in Johannesburg.

For more information on Navwok,
<https://tuksnovation.co.za/portfolio/navwok/>

From Alexandra to Paris: GOGOS Driving Change



Photos: Supplied

“The biggest shift you see in a gogo is pride, they wear their goGOGOGO T-shirts with joy and strength. It is the excitement of being heard.”

Phakama Mbonambi

When Jane Simmonds stood on a stage in Paris a few weeks ago to accept the Well-being Programmes Award at the Women Changing the World Awards, she wasn't thinking about the glamour of the occasion.

Instead, her mind was on the gogos (grannies) back home in Alexandra who had started it all with a conversation about HIV that no one else wanted to have.

It began in 2014, when a

grandmother in Alexandra told Simmonds that all five of her children had died of AIDS in the early 2000s. She was now raising 13 grandchildren and did not know how to talk to them about HIV/AIDS and safer sexual choices. She asked Simmonds for help.

Simmonds returned to university and completed a Master's in Public Health, determined to find a meaningful answer. Along the way, she recognised what many overlook: grandmothers are not marginalised older people waiting on the sidelines. They are caregivers, community leaders and powerful agents of change.

She founded goGOGOGO in 2020. Today, the organisation works with grandmothers across South Africa who are raising over

four million children in under-resourced communities.

It delivers intergenerational programmes focused on digital literacy, health education and income generation, aimed at improving health outcomes and expanding opportunities for both gogos and the children in their care.

The road from Alexandra to Paris, she said, was built on one thing: a refusal to stop. “Perseverance, dedication, commitment and belief in the extraordinary power and resilience of grandmothers,” she says. “And a determination not to stop speaking — to NGOs, funders and anyone willing to listen about the importance of their work.”

For Simmonds, the win means more than a trophy.

“Gogos are a global phenomenon. They are now being recognised as serious agents of change rather than marginalised older people,” she said.

Her organisation has grown significantly since *Vuk'uzenzele* last featured goGOGOGO in 2021. GOGObOX brings weekly boxing classes to gogos and mkhulus, giving older caregivers time to focus on their own health and well-being.

Masifunde GOGO! (“Let's Read, Gogo!”) sets up free mini-libraries, providing access to African storybooks translated into 11 South African languages, as well as wordless picture books.

These libraries are installed in local centres and run by volunteer gogos who nurture a culture of reading in their communities.

“Literacy remains an untapped bridge to close the generation gap and support the transfer of history, values and identity,” said project lead Hlumelo Gxotiwe. “Gogos are repositories of knowledge and often the first model for children's curiosity and learning.”

Masidlale GOGO! (“Let's Play, Gogo!”) encourages conversations about safe spaces and age-friendly communities, while **Masikhulume GOGO! (“Let's Talk, Gogo!”)** opens discussions on sex, sexuality and gender-based violence between gogos and their adolescent grandchildren.

There is also a programme focused on the first **1,000 days** of a child's life, from pregnancy to age two, where grandmothers are guided on antenatal care, nutrition and breastfeeding.

In addition, gogos earn an income by sewing shopping totes from their homes, which are sold through Amazon, Taste of Africa and Jackson's Food Stores in Johannesburg.

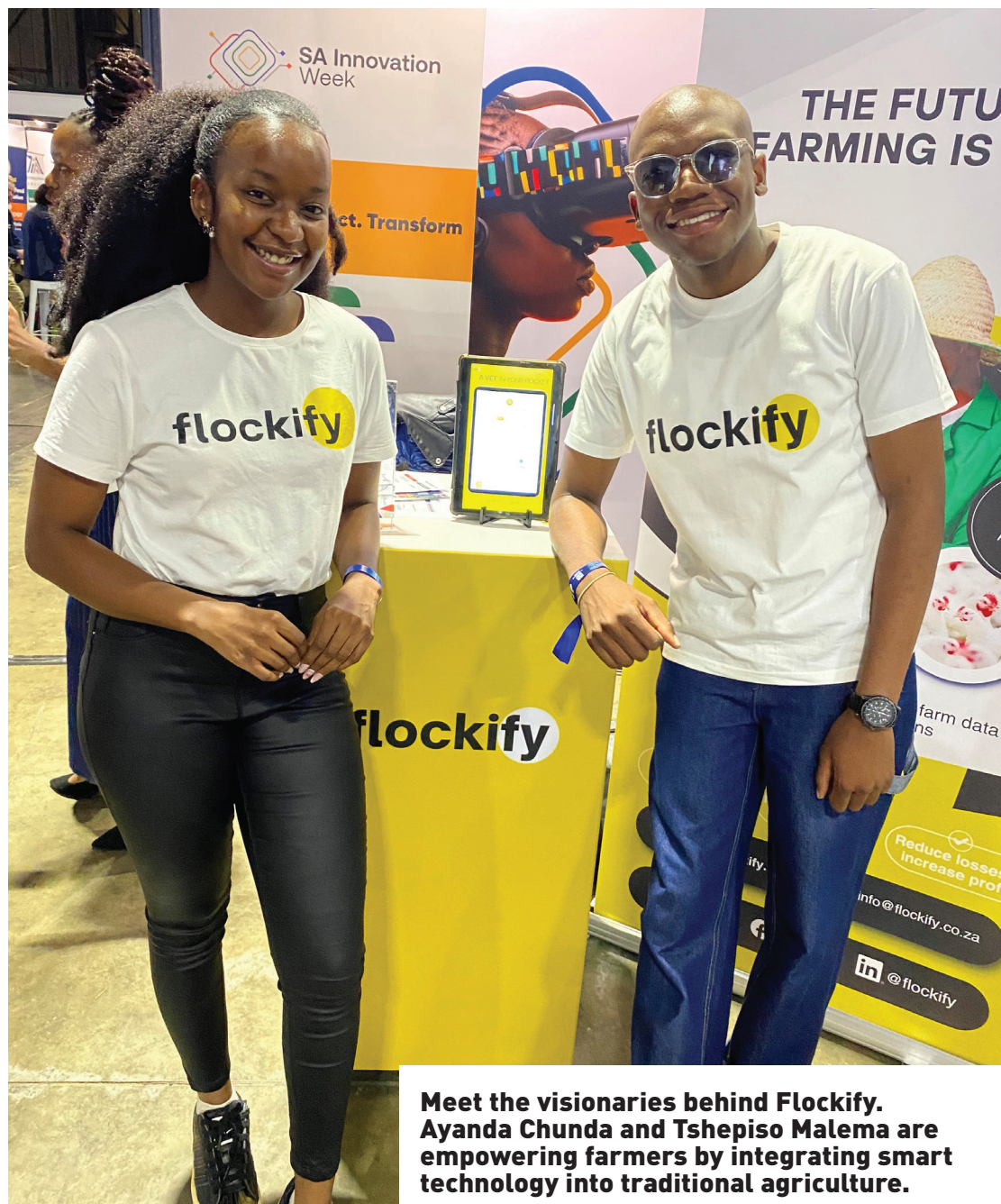
Funding remains the biggest challenge — sustaining staff, maintaining programmes and convincing donors that impact requires people and time, not just equipment.

goGOGOGO is currently supported by IRD Global and the DG Murray Trust, and is actively seeking new partners. The Paris award has given the team a much-needed boost at a critical time. ☺

Jane Simmonds' profound impact on community development has earned her the prestigious Well-being Programmes Award at the Women Changing the World Awards.

For more information email info@go-gogo-go.org.za or visit www.go-gogo-go.org.za.

Flockify brings digital precision to livestock farming



Meet the visionaries behind Flockify. Ayanda Chunda and Tshepiso Malema are empowering farmers by integrating smart technology into traditional agriculture.

Sihle Manda

Agritech start-up Flockify is transforming how livestock farmers manage their operations by combining digital innovation with practical farming experience.

Founded by Tshepiso Malema, the Midrand-based platform was born out of the challenges he encountered on his own farm. Malema, who holds a degree in information systems from the University of Pretoria, is both a poultry farmer and a software developer.

"Flockify is an agritech platform that helps farmers digitise their operations," Malema told *Vuk'uzenzele* in a recent interview.

"We help them manage day-to-day operations and protect their flocks from disease. Once the livestock are ready for market, we also assist them in reaching the marketplace."

Malema farms broilers and

layers, supplying mainly students and universities. His direct involvement in poultry farming helped him identify the gaps that digital tools could fill.

"This idea came from my own experience as a poultry farmer. Despite being young, because I have a background in technology, I had to apply my skills in the family farming business. I come from a farming background, so I decided to start my own poultry farm," he said.

During his five years in the poultry industry, Malema encountered several operational challenges, particularly concerning flock health monitoring. One incident proved to be a turning point.

"I once lost about R50,000 worth of flock because I couldn't detect a virus early," he recalled. "So, I developed a platform for myself that would assist in preventing losses. Once I saw that the platform was working for me, I shared it with other farmers in my network, and that is how it

grew."

Today, Flockify has grown from a personal solution into a pan-African platform with more than 800 users and a team of four employees.

Malema attributes the company's progress to the blend of technical knowledge and farming insight.

The platform's success has encouraged expansion plans. While Flockify currently focuses on livestock management, Malema is preparing to broaden its reach to include crop farming.

"We are planning to launch Cropify in July. This will help crop farmers better manage their operations and increase yields," he said.

Malema sees technology as a critical driver of food security across Africa. "Seeing farmers happy that their animals are healthy and that they are earning more than before they used the platform gives me hope for South Africa and the continent regarding food security," he concluded. ☺

For more information on Flockify, visit flockify.co.za, call 068 474 5436, or email support@flockify.co.za

From lecture hall to successful water business



Obakeng Phale, founder of Aquafina Springs, has secured strategic funding from SEDFA to scale his operations in Mahikeng.

Phakama Mbonambi

Obakeng Phale, 28, is living a dream he has always nurtured: obtaining a solid education, starting a business, and becoming his own boss. He was always drawn to entrepreneurship.

In Grade 10, he and a childhood friend ran a mobile car wash on weekends, taking calls from the community and making a decent living. The entrepreneurial instinct was there long before the business plan.

When he enrolled to study law at the Pearson Institute (now Eduvos) in Potchefstroom in 2016, the

plan was to supplement the qualification with a Master of Business Administration (MBA).

Back then, a water business was not part of the plan; however, by the time he completed his degree in 2020, it was.

Today, Phale runs Aquafina Springs in Mahikeng, a water purification and bottling company backed by the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA). The business supplies purified bottled water, ice, dispensary equipment, and a mobile freezer rental package to local residents and businesses.

"Water is an essential

need," says Phale.

"The water purification market is growing rapidly, and I wanted to build a filtration system that makes water drinkable and safe for the community."

He knew what he wanted to build, but securing funding was the harder part. He heard about SEDA through conversations with other small business owners stuck in the same gap — too big for a micro-grant but not yet established enough for a bank loan.

"Its focus on economic transformation and job creation matched perfectly with what I was trying to achieve," he says.

Applying for support

The application required his Companies and Intellectual Property Commission registration, a South African Revenue Service tax clearance certificate, and a 12-month cash flow projection.

The funding financed an ice machine that expanded his supplier base and brought him closer to owning his full value chain.

"Ice and water go hand in hand," he says. Since then, his distribution network has grown considerably, and the business

has begun diversifying its revenue streams.

His legal training has proved useful. "It helps me read the fine print in contracts, navigate negotiations with confidence, and stay calm under pressure," he says.

He sees himself as a builder first; the law gave him the tools, but the business gave him purpose.

Leaving a conventional career path has not been easy. Phale occasionally takes on temporary legal work to keep the business funded. Otherwise, he runs Aquafina Springs full-time.

Aquafina Springs now employs two people. Phale still has his eye on an MBA; his tycoon ambitions have not gone anywhere. ☺

For more information, contact Aquafina Springs on **Facebook:** Aquafina Springs, **Instagram:** @aquafina.springs

Pretoria hosts the return of Sophiatown



Photos: South African State Theatre

Tickets for the show are R150 and available on www.webtickets.co.za
For more information, visit www.statetheatre.co.za

Sihle Manda

The critically acclaimed South African theatre performance *Sophiatown* will make its last stop on its 2026 national tour at the South African State Theatre (SAST). The Pretoria shows will continue at the SAST till May 29.

Created by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company and directed by Aubrey Sekhabi, *Sophiatown* revisits the famous Johannesburg suburb that became a symbol of culture, music and resistance during the 1940s and 1950s.

In a media statement, the SAST said the pro-

duction “captures a time when music, journalism, politics, and rebellion converged to shape a unique urban African culture.”

The theatre described it as a place “where shebeen queens, gangsters, writers, musicians, activists, and dreamers lived side by side in an atmosphere alive with rhythm, humour, and resistance.”

According to the statement, the revival introduces “a new generation of performers” while “breathing fresh energy into a much-loved classic renowned for its sharp wit, infectious music, and powerful political commentary.”

The SAST said the production reflects on “forced removals, cultural identity, and the resilience of a community whose spirit could not be erased.”

The production features a live band and a creative team that uses music and storytelling to bring the history of Sophiatown to life.

“The production is as entertaining as it is thought-provoking and invites audiences to celebrate South Africa’s cultural heritage while engaging critically with its history,” said the SAST.

The theatre also described the return of Sophiatown as “more than a revival”, saying it is a reminder of the power of art to preserve memory, challenge injustice, and inspire dialogue across generations. The play has an age restriction of 16+. ☺

Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme to boost heritage initiatives

More Matshediso

If you are involved in impactful community-based heritage initiatives that create work opportunities, particularly for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, you stand a chance to receive funding from the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC).

The NHC, an entity of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), is calling on heritage practitioners, community organisations, researchers, and institutions to submit applications for the 2026/27 Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP7) by 31 May.

Applications must include projects that aim to promote and preserve South Africa’s heritage while creating sustainable employment opportunities.

The funding programme forms part of government’s ongoing commitment to economic recovery and social development in the cultural and heritage sectors.

NHC Chief Executive Officer, Dr Thabo Manetsi, said the programme represents more than

financial support for heritage initiatives.

“PESP7 presents an opportunity for communities to become active custodians of South Africa’s heritage while participating meaningfully in the country’s economic recovery efforts,” he said.

He said priority will be given to projects that focus on research, documentation, heritage education, and the transfer of heritage knowledge and skills.

Applications are invited under categories including living heritage, cultural and natural heritage, as well as education and training.

Projects may include oral history documentation, indigenous knowledge preservation, archival and heritage research, cultural education initiatives, intergenerational storytelling, language preservation projects, heritage skills transfer, and other initiatives that contribute to safeguarding South Africa’s diverse heritage landscape.

“The funding programme is open to educational and academic institutions

For enquiries, applicants may contact the PESP team via email at pespfunding@nhc.org.za or call 012 748 3910. www.webtickets.co.za.

involved in heritage projects, non-profit organisations, non-profit companies; community-based organisations, non-governmental orga-

nisations, associations, foundations, community trusts (excluding family trusts), traditional councils, and individuals involved in heritage re-

search projects in partnership with qualifying organisations or entities,” said Manetsi.

The Council is particularly interested in projects

that amplify local voices, preserve indigenous knowledge systems, and create employment pathways for young people and marginalised groups within the heritage sector.

Manetsi said heritage has the power to strengthen social cohesion and contribute to inclusive development.

“Our heritage tells the story of who we are as a nation. Through this funding initiative, the NHC seeks to support projects that not only preserve that story but also ensure that heritage becomes a catalyst for skills development, social inclusion, and community empowerment,” he added.

Interested applicants are encouraged to review the funding guidelines and eligibility requirements available on the NHC website before submitting their applications.

Applications must be submitted online using the NHC’s Praxis Grant Management System, which can be accessed from the NHC website – <https://nhc.praxisgms.co.za/>

The NHC will not accept emailed or hand-delivered applications. ☺

Members of the Reserve Forces Turn to the Military Ombud for Independent Oversight

The Military Ombud continues to play a critical role in ensuring fairness, accountability, and the effective investigation of complaints regarding the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Operating as a vital beacon of administrative justice, the Office is mandated to investigate complaints lodged in writing by current and former members regarding their conditions of service, including matters such as recruitment, appointments, salaries, allowances, promotions, transfers, and termination of service, among others as prescribed in the Defence Act 42 of 2002. Importantly, this oversight extends beyond internal military structures. The Office is also mandated to investigate public complaints regarding the official conduct of SANDF members while on duty. By bridging the gap between armed forces regulation and constitutional rights, the Military Ombud ensures that oversight remains independent, robust, and trusted.

The handling of complaints throughout the financial years underscores the Military Ombud's continued dedication to ensuring accessible, impartial, and prompt resolution. In an environment where delayed justice can deeply affect morale, livelihoods, and confidence in institutional processes, the Office has actively streamlined its systems to better serve its stakeholders and reinforce trust in independent oversight mechanisms.

During the 2025/26 financial year, 353 complaints were finalised, reflecting improvements in turnaround times and a growing number of matters

being concluded within the set performance targets. This operational efficiency highlights a significant step forward in the Office's ability to provide timely redress to those who serve, or have served, the nation.

A closer examination of the Office's recent interventions highlights a range of complaint outcomes that demonstrate the breadth and complexity of matters addressed by the Military Ombud. The lessons drawn from these cases reveal not only the practical implementation of administrative justice, but also recurring challenges encountered by complainants, systemic shortcomings within the Defence environment, and the critical importance of transparent communication and procedural fairness.

Each case has been anonymised and selected for its illustrative value, showing how the Military Ombud's involvement facilitated resolution, clarified policy, or prompted administrative improvement. Collectively, these examples provide insight into the human dimension of the Office's work and reinforce the importance of independent oversight in promoting trust, fairness, and accountability within the military.

Service Termination: Unlawful Removal from the Reserve Force

One of the matters investigat-

ed by the Office concerned the unlawful removal of a Reserve Force member from service.

The Office received a complaint from a former Reserve Force member who alleged that his service had been unfairly terminated and that he had later been unlawfully refused re-enlistment. The dispute arose after a disciplinary conviction under the Military Discipline Code was reported to the South African Police Service criminal record system, resulting in adverse information appearing on a police clearance certificate. The complainant contended that this record led to his suspension from active Reserve Force utilisation and eventual removal from the active Reserve Force database. Subsequently, after obtaining a police clearance certificate indicating that no illicit activity had been identified, he sought restoration to service, but was informed that he had already been removed and would need to re-apply.

The Military Ombud was required to determine whether the termination of the complainant's Reserve Force membership had been effected lawfully and in accordance with the applicable procedure, and whether the continued refusal to re-enlist him remained justified once the adverse record had been challenged and later cleared. In considering the matter, the Office applied the Military Ombud Act 4 of 2012, Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 (PAJA), the general SANDF regulatory framework, and, in particular, Regulation 30 of the Regulations for the Reserve Force, 2017.

The investigation revealed serious irregularities. No documentary proof was produced to show that the mandatory termination procedures under Regulation 30 had been followed. There was no evidence that the Officer Commanding had submitted a written application for termination, that the Chief SANDF had taken the required decision, or that the complainant had been notified in writing and given reasons.

The Office also found that the factual basis for the ad-

verse record was itself questionable. A statement from the Military Police indicated that at least part of the information captured on the police system had been incorrect and that steps had later been taken to rectify it. Against this background, the Military Ombud found that the complainant's removal from the Reserve Force had not been shown to comply with the mandatory legal procedure and was both procedurally and substantively unfair. The continued refusal to re-enlist him was also not supported by a lawful or factually sustainable basis once the later police clearance certificate and corrective information were considered. The conduct that caused the military disciplinary matter to be reflected in the police criminal record system was likewise found to be unreasonable in the circumstances.

The complaint was upheld in terms of section 6(7)(a) of the Military Ombud Act 4 of 2012. The Military Ombud recommended that the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans direct the Chief SANDF to facilitate the complainant's due re-enlistment into the Reserve Force, and that appropriate disciplinary action be considered against responsible officials for failure to comply with the applicable prescripts governing termination of service.

This case demonstrates how administrative irregularities in separation processes can have enduring and disproportionate consequences for members, and why strict compliance with prescribed termination procedures is essential.

Remuneration: Technical Allowance Complaints by Reserve Force Members

The Office further received complaints from four Reserve Force members concerning the non-payment of technical allowance.

The complainants alleged that the allowance had historically been paid in accordance with the applicable implementation instruction, but that, when they later sought payment, they were informed that the allowance had been discontinued and that Reserve Force members were only eligible if placed in qualifying technical posts. They further referred to litigation concerning the cessation of the allowance

within the Department of Defence.

The Office assessed the matters collectively at the outset. In doing so, the Military Ombud had to determine whether the complainants had exhausted the grievance process under the Department of Defence (DoD) Individual Grievances Regulations, 2016, and whether the Office could assume jurisdiction immediately in respect of each complaint.

Upon verification, it was established that one complainant had retired from the Reserve Force shortly after approaching the Office and no longer had access to the Grievance Information Technology System. Because the internal grievance process had effectively become unavailable to him, the Military Ombud assumed jurisdiction over his complaint.

By contrast, the remaining three complainants had not first approached their units to pursue the prescribed grievance route, meaning they had not exhausted the process contemplated by the Individual Grievances Regulations, 2016. The Military Ombud accordingly declined jurisdiction in respect of these three members in terms of section 7(2)(d) of the Military Ombud Act 4 of 2012. At the same time, the Directorate of Labour and Service Relations was requested to assist them in accessing the internal grievance process properly.

This case study demonstrates the Office's balanced approach to jurisdiction by insisting on compliance with the statutory exhaustion requirement where internal remedies remain available, while recognising that such remedies cannot reasonably be insisted upon where they have become practically inaccessible through retirement or administrative exclusion.

Through matters such as these, the Military Ombud continues to reinforce the principles of fairness, accountability, transparency, and administrative justice within the SANDF. Beyond resolving individual disputes, the Office's interventions contribute to strengthening institutional trust, improving governance, and ensuring that the rights and dignity of military members are protected within South Africa's broader constitutional framework.



For further enquiries, please contact the Office of the Military Ombud through the following channels:
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GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

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PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR: FREE STATE PROVINCIAL OFFICE REF NO: 3/1/5/1-26/01

CHIEF DIRECTORATE: Provincial and Local Liaison
SALARY: R1 266 714 per annum (Level 13), (all-inclusive salary package) of which 30% may be structured according to the individual's needs
CENTRE: Bloemfontein

PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR: EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL OFFICE REF NO: 3/1/5/1-26/02

CHIEF DIRECTORATE: Provincial and Local Liaison
SALARY: R1 266 714 per annum (Level 13), (all-inclusive salary package) of which 30% may be structured according to the individual's needs
CENTRE: East London

PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR: GAUTENG PROVINCIAL OFFICE REF NO: 3/1/5/1-26/03

CHIEF DIRECTORATE: Provincial and Local Liaison
SALARY: R1 266 714 per annum (Level 13), (all-inclusive salary package) of which 30% may be structured according to the individual's needs
CENTRE: Johannesburg

APPLICATIONS: Applicants must submit their applications via the link <http://erecruitment.gcis.gov.za> or hand deliver applications to Tshedimoseiso House, 1035 cnr Francis Baard & Festival streets, Hatfield, Pretoria. For Attention: Ms P Kgopyane.

CLOSING DATE: 12 June 2026

ENQUIRIES: Mr Ndlalantle Pinyana: Tel (012) 473 0188

