

SOUND THE ALARM

CORRUPTION IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

corruption
watch

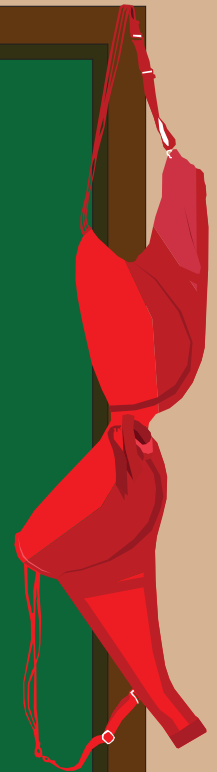


WWW.CORRUPTIONWATCH.ORG.ZA

MELUSI NCALA
AUTHOR

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	2
OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL TRENDS	3
CORRUPTION IN SCHOOLS	3
CORRUPTION IN SETAs	5
CORRUPTION IN TVET COLLEGES	7
CONCLUSION	9



INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Education is viewed as an important tool to dismantle generations of inequality in South Africa, with basic education guaranteed to all in our Bill of Rights. The 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall campaign highlighted the need for free tertiary education as an approach to dealing with structural inequities. Various pieces of legislation governing educational institutions – the South African Schools Act (SASA), Higher Education Act, the Skills Development Act, the South African Quality Authority Act, and the Further Education and Training Act – are bolstered by a set of policies and programmes intended to provide opportunities to impoverished persons and marginalised groups throughout the country.

Notable among these is the National Schools Nutrition Programme, administered since the early 2000s by the Department of Basic Education. This feeding scheme initiative was a follow-on to the Primary School Nutrition Programme, launched in 1994 under the Department of Health by former president Nelson Mandela as a pivotal measure in addressing the hardships experienced by children who come from poor households. There is also the National Qualifications Framework, which is meant to regulate the education sector as a whole and to ensure compliance and consistency across the board.

Despite the exhaustive list of policies, legislation and interventions, ordinary people in South Africa face innumerable challenges on a daily basis to enrol and pay for tuition and accommodation for private and public schools, Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) institutions, and tertiary institutions such as universities and academies.

This is a long-standing problem. Shortly after opening our doors to the public in 2012, Corruption Watch was alarmed to receive hundreds of cases that alleged corruption in early childhood development centres, primary and secondary schools, universities, SETAs, and colleges. As the reports of graft trickled in, ordinary people from all corners of the country purported that acts of bribery, sextortion, abuse of authority, and the flouting of employment and procurement processes were pervasive and in instances, were crippling institutions and stifling opportunities for the most vulnerable who sought to pursue studies.

This led to the organisation's investigative team probing complaints and establishing that the allegations were well founded. Our team of journalists wrote stories to expose the rot, and our researchers initiated a process that led to the capacity training of school governing body members on corruption issues. In our quest for accountability, our team of lawyers sought answers from government departments and law enforcement agencies. These findings were documented and published in our 2015 report titled *Loss of Principle*.

Nonetheless, over the years, more whistle-blowers would ring the alarm when they were confronted with education officials who abused their power or committed brazen acts of criminality, and the apathy of government and law enforcement to act upon the corrupt practices of educators, principals, administrators, unions, and board members. Consequently, corruption in schools, for instance, would count as among the top three areas in the data reports we released over the past decade.

For this reason, including the fact that a great deal more is still to be done to rid the country's educational institutions from wrongdoers, we decided to compile a report looking at certain areas of the education sector. This gives a context of where we currently stand in the fight against corruption in these microcosms that are a reflection of our society.



OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL TRENDS

Corruption Watch's working definition of corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. It is through this lens that we analyse the occurrences of improper, unethical, and illegal conduct perpetuated by those who occupy the offices, lecture halls and classes of the institutions serving as the building blocks of South African society. The thousands of corruption cases – over 36 000 – that the organisation has received from 2012 to the end of 2021 reveal mismanagement of resources, disregard for official processes, and criminal acts, simply because of greed.

Therefore, this sectoral report represents the voices of 3 667 learners and students, mothers, fathers, the elderly who act as guardians and caregivers, and the workers and professionals in our midst who are outraged by the atrocities of those to whom they entrust the power to mould and shape the minds of young South Africans. This sample, representing approximately 10% of the total number of reports received by Corruption Watch, gives us a glimpse as to what is taking place in mainly primary and secondary schools (3 417 reports), SETAs (183), and technical, vocational, education and training (TVET) colleges (67).

The most pervasive forms of corruption across these sectors:

- Misappropriation of resources, which includes reports of theft, embezzlement of funds and misuse of resources, counts for 43%.
- Maladministration, which includes the mismanagement of resources as well as wasteful and fruitless expenditure, counts for 17.1%.
- Abuse of authority, which includes the victimisation of whistle-blowers, counts for 14.2%
- Procurement Irregularities, which includes the solicitation and acceptance of kickbacks in tender processes, counts for 12.3%.
- Employment irregularities, which includes sextortion, bribery for jobs and flouting of recruitment processes, counts for 12.1%.

These alleged acts of corruption span the length and breadth of the country. However, the hotspots, where corrupt activities are reported to occur most frequently, are Gauteng Province, KwaZulu-Natal, and Eastern Cape.

CORRUPTION IN SCHOOLS

In relation to this area, the top three forms of corruption are misappropriation of resources, counting for 45% of corruption cases, followed by maladministration (17%), and abuse of authority (15%). Prevalent too are incidents of bribery and extortion, including allegations of sextortion, and cases relating to employment irregularities.

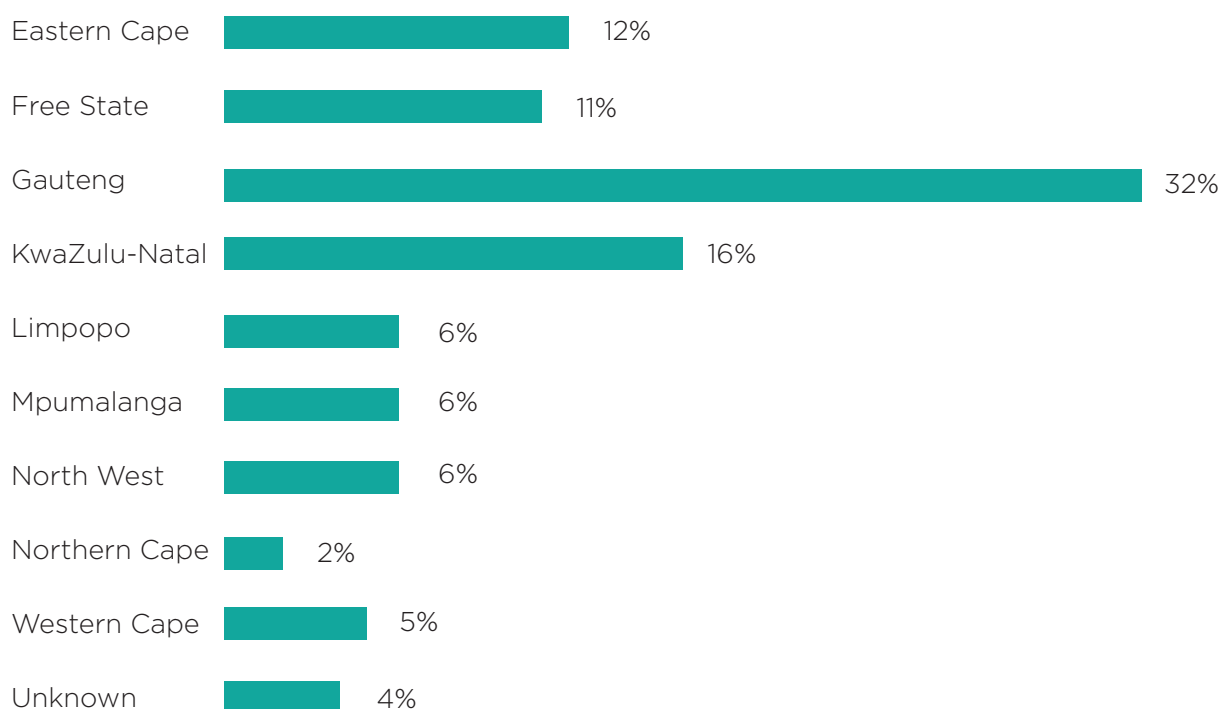
Persons holding positions of influence, for example, principals and school governing body members, are purportedly the primary culprits. These allegations have consistently been made by whistle-blowers for much of the decade in which the data was collected, and common issues relate to feeding schemes, the flouting of procurement processes, and favouritism and nepotism.

Our reports have also shown us that principals recruit persons with whom they have close relations to mainly administrative posts. In some instances, whistle-blowers have reported acts of sextortion –a type of corruption where women are told that they have to provide sexual favours to benefit financially or career-wise. However, according to reporters, this type of corruption extends further in the education sector with female students being asked to sleep with educators for good grades.



TYPES OF CORRUPTION (schools)	PERCENTAGES
Misappropriation of resources	45%
Maladministration	17%
Abuse of authority	15%
Employment irregularities	12%
Procurement irregularities	11%

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION (CORRUPTION IN SCHOOLS)



MISAPPROPRIATION
OF RESOURCES

MALADMINISTRATION

ABUSE OF
AUTHORITY

CORRUPTION IN SCHOOLS PROVINCE	TYPES OF CORRUPTION
Gauteng Province Insight: in this province, abuse of authority and employment irregularities are slightly above average.	Misappropriation of resources - 42% Abuse of Authority - 18% Maladministration - 16% Employment Irregularities - 13% Procurement Irregularities - 11%
KwaZulu-Natal Insight: in this province, maladministration and employment irregularities are above average.	Misappropriation of resources - 45% Maladministration - 20% Employment Corruption - 15% Abuse of Authority - 12% Procurement Corruption - 8%
Eastern Cape Insight: in this province misappropriation of resources and maladministration are higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 50% Maladministration - 20% Abuse of Authority - 12% Procurement Irregularities - 10% Employment Irregularities - 8%
Free State Insight: in this province misappropriation of resources, maladministration, and procurement irregularities are higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 52% Maladministration - 21% Procurement Corruption - 12% Employment Corruption - 8% Abuse of Authority - 7%
Limpopo Insight: in this province, employment irregularities and procurement irregularities are above the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 44% Employment Irregularities - 17% Abuse of Authority - 16% Procurement Irregularities - 15% Maladministration - 8%
Mpumalanga Insight: in this province misappropriation of resources and employment irregularities are above the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 50% Maladministration - 16% Employment Irregularities - 16% Abuse of Authority - 13% Procurement Irregularities - 5%
North West Insight: in this province, misappropriation of resources and abuse of authority are slightly higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 48% Abuse of Authority - 18% Maladministration - 14% Procurement Irregularities - 11% Employment Irregularities - 9%
Northern Cape Insight: in this province, abuse of power and procurement irregularities are significantly higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of resources - 38% Abuse of Authority - 26% Procurement Irregularities - 19% Maladministration - 10% Employment Irregularities - 7%
Western Cape Insight: in this province, abuse of authority is significantly higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 36% Abuse of Authority - 24% Maladministration - 15% Employment Irregularities - 15% Procurement Irregularities - 10%

CORRUPTION IN SETAs

The forms of corruption that are generally reported in SETAs are procurement irregularities, counting for 30% of corruption cases, followed by maladministration, to which 27% of incidents are attributed, and misappropriation of resources, which counts for 31%. Here too, whistle-blowers claim that persons in positions of power solicit bribes and flout recruitment processes. The perpetrators of these acts of graft are said to be individuals administering and rolling out training programmes or the entities that are supposedly implementing learnerships.

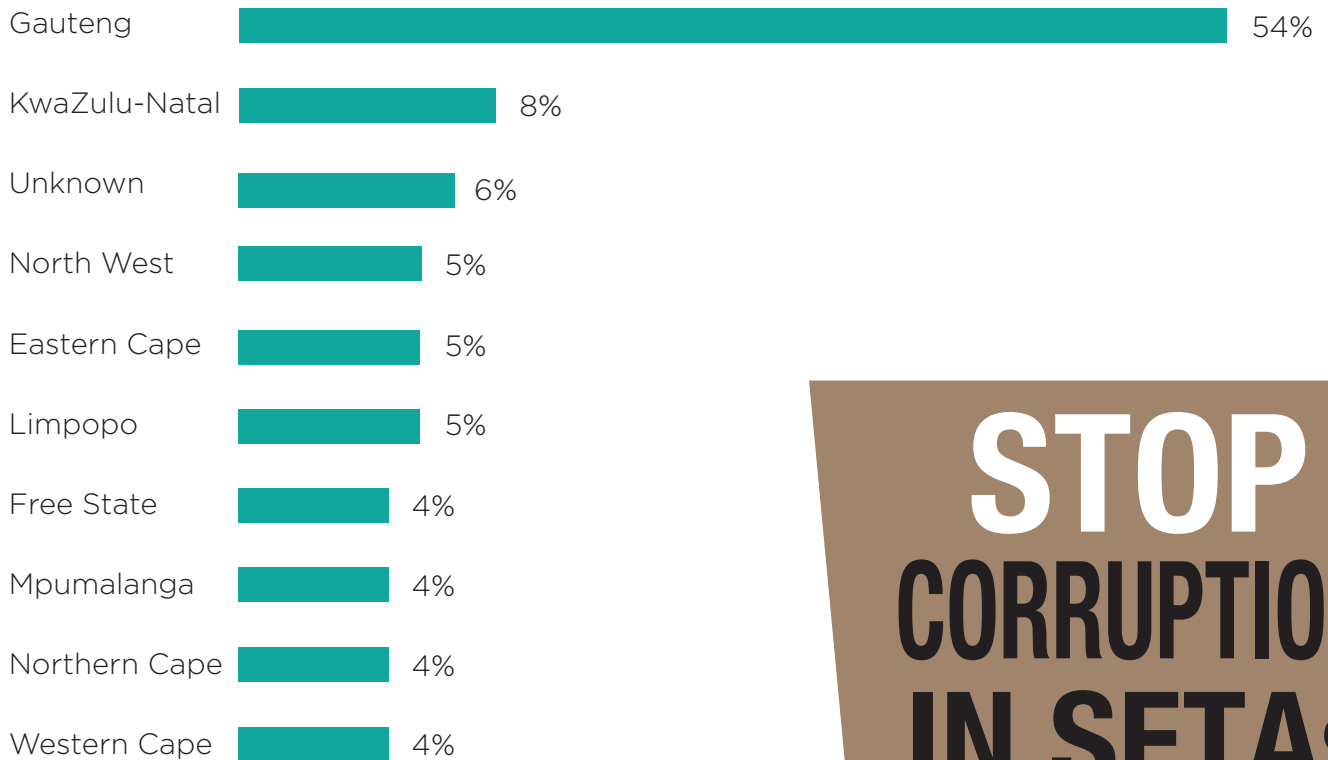
Whistle-blowers have brought to our attention how administrators would short-change students on their stipends. At times, students would receive nothing, leaving them stranded and unable to continue with courses. In some cases, applicants are asked to pay bribes if they want admission into programmes.

The organisation has also received cases of corruption implicating officials from a number of government departments of receiving kickbacks in corrupt procurement deals. Consequently, we are informed, students often find themselves enrolled for programmes that are under-resourced. Those who inquire about these nefarious activities are bullied or forced to deregister from the courses.

TYPES OF CORRUPTION IN SETAs	PERCENTAGES
Misappropriation of Resources	31%
Procurement Irregularities	30%
Maladministration	27%
Employment irregularities	12%



PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION (CORRUPTION IN SETAs)



**STOP
CORRUPTION
IN SETAs**



CORRUPTION IN SETAs PROVINCE	TYPES OF CORRUPTION
Gauteng Insight: in this province, procurement irregularities, misappropriation of resources and employment irregularities are slightly above the national average.	Procurement Irregularities - 37% Misappropriation of Resources - 28% Maladministration - 20% Employment Irregularities - 15%
KwaZulu-Natal Insight: In this province, misappropriation of resources is higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 67% Procurement Irregularities - 17% Maladministration - 16%
North West Insight: in this province, misappropriation of resources dominates.	Misappropriation of Resources - 100%
Eastern Cape Insight: in this province misappropriation of resources and maladministration are higher than the national average.	Misappropriation of Resources - 75% Maladministration - 25%
Limpopo Insight: In this province, maladministration and misappropriation of resources are higher than the national average.	Maladministration - 50% Misappropriation of Resources - 50%
Free State Insight: In this province, procurement irregularities and maladministration are higher than the national average.	Procurement Irregularities - 50% Maladministration - 50%
Mpumalanga Insight: in this province maladministration, misappropriation of resources, and employment irregularities are slightly above the national average.	Maladministration - 40% Procurement Irregularities - 20% Misappropriation of Resources - 20% Employment Irregularities - 20%
Northern Cape Insight: In this province, maladministration and employment irregularities are significantly higher than the national average.	Maladministration - 50% Procurement Irregularities - 25% Employment Irregularities - 25%
Western Cape Insight: In this province, procurement irregularities and maladministration are higher than the national average.	Procurement Irregularities - 50% Maladministration - 50%

CORRUPTION IN TVET COLLEGES

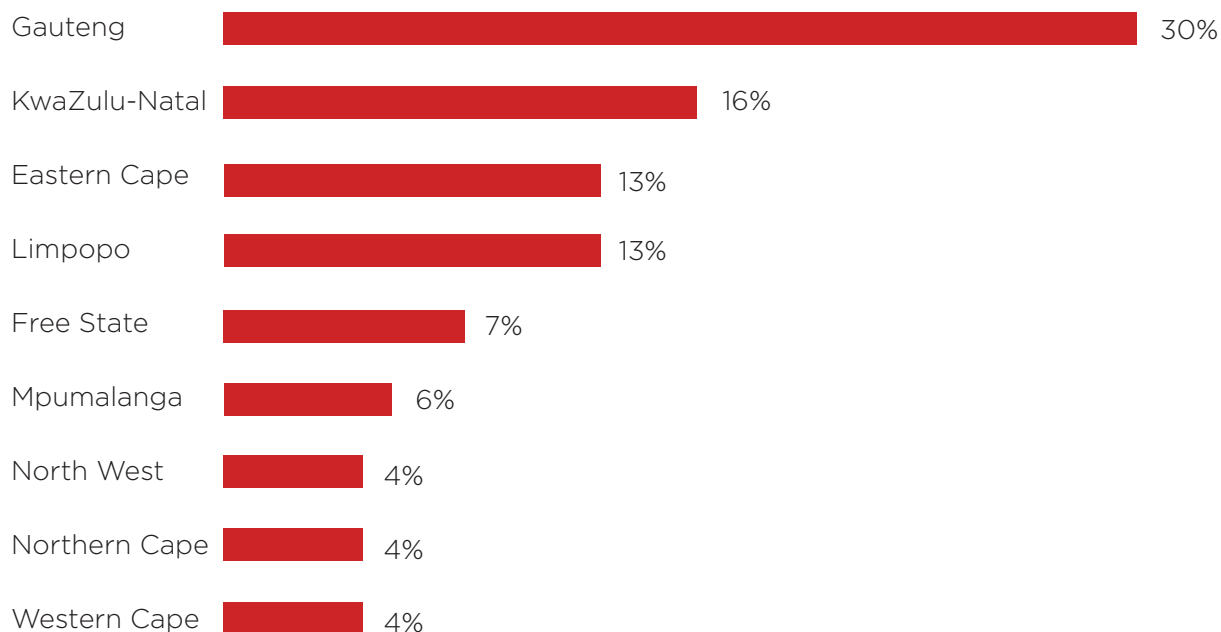
Finally, in this area, the most prominent corruption types are procurement irregularities, employment irregularities, and abuse of authority which count for 32%, 22%, and 16% apiece. As with corruption in schools and SETAs, what is also apparent here are problems relating to theft of resources and funds, as well as bribery and extortion. Corruption Watch is informed that the wrongdoers are mainly municipal officials, and college executives and administrators.

The unethical practices that we have been alerted to are wide ranging. In one of the cases, we were told about a person who was recruited and appointed into a managerial position at a college despite the fact he/she had a criminal record of several offenses. The whistle-blower further reported that the appointee went on to hire a close friend too.

Meanwhile, it is alleged that officials inflate the prices of tenders that are awarded to businesses that they have ties with. In the absence of lifestyle audits, these officials flaunt their ill-gotten gains and ill-treat those who ask questions or report them to the South African Police Service.

TYPES OF CORRUPTION IN TVET COLLEGES	PERCENTAGES
Procurement irregularities	32%
Employment irregularities	22%
Abuse of authority	16%
Bribery-and-extortion	10%
Misappropriation of resources	10%
Maladministration	10%

PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION (CORRUPTION IN TVET COLLEGES)



CORRUPTION IN TVET colleges PROVINCE

TYPES OF CORRUPTION

Gauteng Province

Insight: In this province, bribery and extortion and misappropriation of resources are above the national average.

Procurement Irregularities	- 31%
Misappropriation of Resources	- 23%
Employment Irregularities	- 15%
Bribery and extortion	- 15%
Abuse of Authority	- 8%
Maladministration	- 8%

KwaZulu-Natal

Insight: In this province, employment irregularities and procurement irregularities are higher than the national average.

Employment Irregularities	- 50%
Procurement Irregularities	- 33%
Bribery and Extortion	- 17%

Eastern Cape

Insight: In this province, procurement irregularities and abuse of authority are above the national average.

Procurement Irregularities	- 43%
Abuse of Authority	- 43%
Maladministration	- 14%

Limpopo

Insight: In this province, procurement irregularities, bribery and extortion and misappropriation of resources are above the national average.

Procurement Irregularities	-40%
Bribery and Extortion	- 20%
Misappropriation of Resources	- 20%
Maladministration	- 20%

Free State

Insight: In this province, employment irregularities and abuse of authority are higher than the national average.

Employment Irregularities	- 67%
Abuse of Authority	- 33%

Mpumalanga

Insight: in this province abuse of authority and employment irregularities are higher than the national average.

Abuse of Authority	- 67%
Employment Irregularities	- 33%

North West

Insight: in this province, there is no type of corruption that falls under the top 5 most reported types of corruption.

Northern Cape

Insight: in this province procurement irregularities and employment irregularities are higher than the national average

Procurement Irregularities	- 67%
Employment Irregularities	- 33%

Western Cape

Insight: In this province, maladministration is higher than the national average.

Maladministration	- 100%
-------------------	--------

CONCLUSION

The crime of corruption is as vile as other revelations out of the education sector, uncovered by media and the inquiries done by Chapter 9 bodies.

In fact, though often insidious, corruption is arguably the foundation to the dishonesty and lack of integrity that pervade the education fraternity. We ought to think of it as the proverbial rotten potato that spoils the rest in the bag if not spotted and removed. Therefore, it would be remiss of us to give casual attention to the criminality of principals, board members, educators, administrators, politicians, and those conducting business with the various institutions tasked with developing tens of millions of people in the country.

Ours now is to carry forward the voices of the thousands of whistle-blowers who bravely reported the wrongs that happen in schools, SETAs and TVET colleges.

We call for accountability that goes beyond the authorities finding alternative placement for a person under investigation. That is a deeply troubling form of consequence management which, if anything, rewards the accused.

Greater accountability also speaks to establishing anti-corruption checks and balances in the form of comprehensive policies on corruption and related activities, safe and secure whistle-blower mechanisms, continuous financial literacy training with a strong emphasis on anti-corruption practices, and regular auditing of financial statements as required by law.

Therefore, as we encourage people to continue blowing the whistle on corruption in the sector, we will continue to forge ahead with fighting for change, for the alternative will condemn us to the mercy of a greedy criminal few. The scourge can only be successfully addressed if a determined community of people, driven by ethical values and principles, work together steadfastly.



REPORT CORRUPTION!



REPORT CORRUPTION ONLINE

Report an incident online on
our website now.
The communication is secured
and your information will be
treated with utmost care
and security.

www.corruptionwatch.org.za



CALL CORRUPTION WATCH

011 242 3900

REPORT VIA WHATSAPP

082 579 5220



THE CORRUPTION WATCH OFFICE

CORRUPTION WATCH (RF) NPC

8th Floor South Point Corner
87 De Korte Street
Braamfontein 2001 Johannesburg
PO Box 30630 Braamfontein 2017

info@corruptionwatch.org.za
T: 011 242 39100 / F: 011 403 2392