

KENAKO



MOBILISING FOR JUSTICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

corruption
watch



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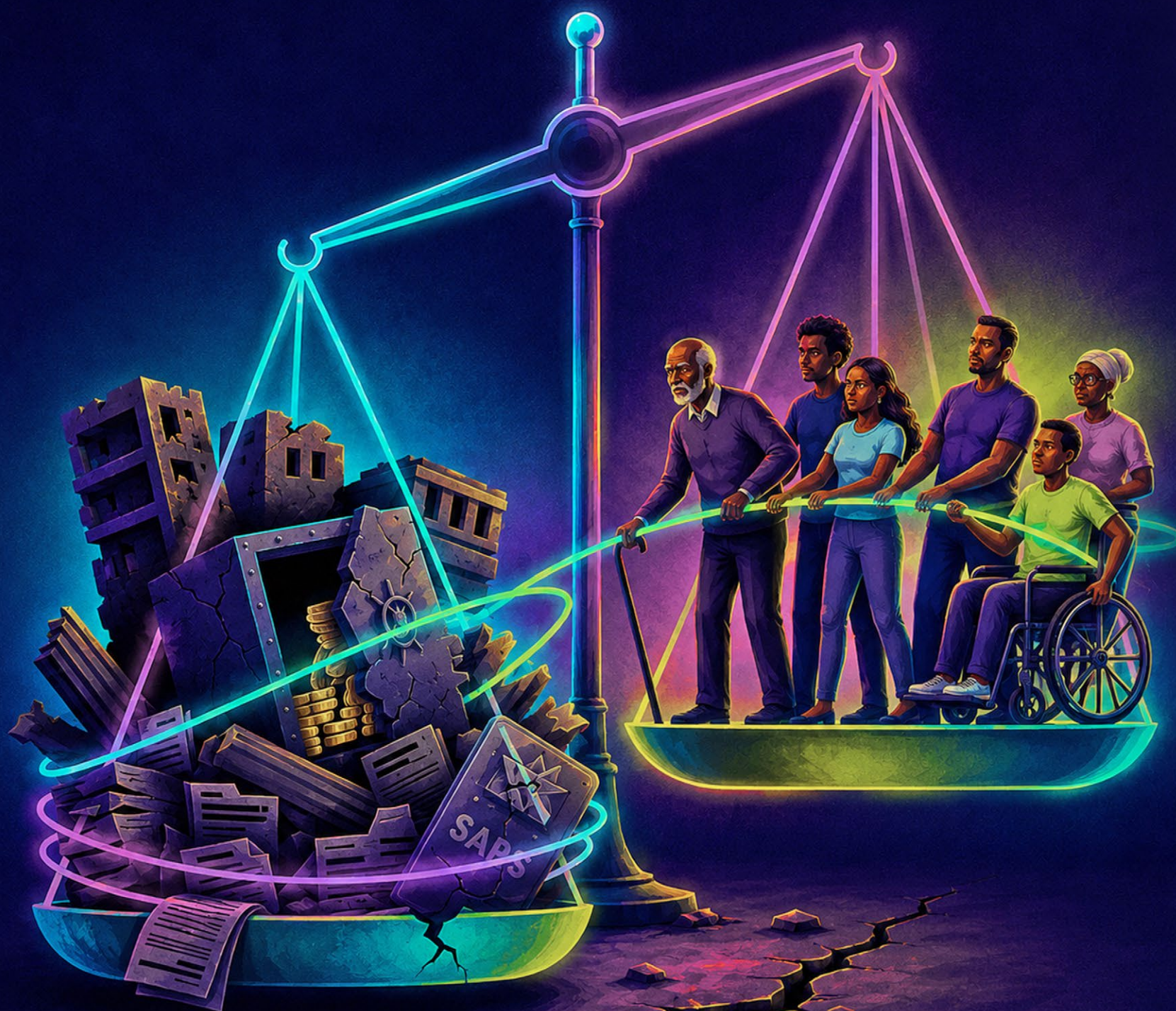
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THE JUSTICE WE DESERVE IS IN OUR HANDS

By Themba Maseko: Corruption Watch Board Chairperson



At the inception of Corruption Watch (CW) in early 2012, the notion of fighting for a corruption-free South Africa was not only a noble one, but one that appeared within reach. Certainly, CW's solicitation of over 40 000 whistle-blower reports over time was a mandate we took on, believing in the strength of the numbers of people directly affected by corruption to help turn the tide on the scourge. We also believed, and still do, that it is with undisputable evidence like these reports that we can assertively hold leadership accountable to the people.

Fourteen years later, we remain motivated to stay the course and fight for a society that stands up against corruption in its many forms, even when the climate within which we work is not always conducive to our objectives. It is in this spirit that we have chosen the theme for this year's annual report, *Ke Nako: Mobilising for Justice*. We recognise the imperative for our society to demand justice and accountability from those in power. We want a move in the right direction, a move that shifts the dial even in global indicators like the Corruption Perceptions Index, which remained stagnant in 2025 for South Africa.

For every campaign, project and programme we have embarked on, every submission made to Parliament for institutional policy or legislative reform; every public or community engagement that team members have had, we have had to remain resolute in the belief that it is the voice of communities in the grassroots that we amplify as we fight for a society that is intolerant of corruption and uplifts the rule of law.

In last year's annual report, we called for supporters of CW to be accountable together, to counter the trajectory of corruption made possible by the weak enforcement of the rule of law, to restore some semblance of order in our daily lives. In a follow-up to that call, we proceed this year to make a further one, mobilising for justice so that we can return to a decent level of confidence in our law enforcement apparatus, even as the core of our criminal justice system is tested through such processes as the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference, and Corruption in the Criminal Justice System, better known as the Madlanga commission. We do this with the understanding that the responsibility to achieve the goal of reducing corruption in South Africa lies with all of us.

During the year under review, 2025, we have had a lot of positive movement in the fight against corruption. The country has been gripped by the revelations that are emanating from the Madlanga commission and exposed the weak guardrails against malfeasance and maladministration.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) is the country's primary crime prevention authority and thus should have the unwavering confidence of citizens in its ability to detect and fight crime, particularly growing instances of organised crime that have seized the country. What we have heard in the commission, however, points to sections of the SAPS being prone to irregular influence and capture by criminal syndicates. The seriousness and impact of these is far-reaching and will continue to diminish public trust in the SAPS and the country's capacity to fight crime.

Indeed, the level of corruption that is being unearthed at the commission offers an opportunity to overhaul the SAPS and strengthen the country's prosecutorial and intelligence capacity and to accelerate the fight against the corruption scourge and crime in general. The overhaul of SAPS must include the professionalisation of senior management appointments, a clear separation of powers between political and administrative roles, improved vetting systems, and regular lifestyle audits for leaders of the SAPS and other law enforcement agencies.

"...WE CALLED FOR SUPPORTERS OF CW TO BE ACCOUNTABLE TOGETHER, TO COUNTER THE TRAJECTORY OF CORRUPTION MADE POSSIBLE BY THE WEAK ENFORCEMENT OF THE RULE OF LAW..."

We await the implementation of the recommendations of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC), which wrapped up its work in August 2025. CW has supported the work of the NACAC in several ways, through the Transparency, Accountability and Integrity Programme (TIP), the first phase of which concluded in 2025. The TIP brings together a grouping of state and non-state actors in a collaborative programme that aims to capacitate institutions that fight corruption in the country. It is established with the support of the German and Swiss governments, with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation as the lead partner, while CW and other organisations are implementing partners.

The NACAC was established in 2022 to help steer the National Anti-Corruption Strategy by looking at ways to establish a sustainable corruption prevention system while strengthening the law enforcement architecture in the country. Former CW executive director David Lewis – who also served as one of nine NACAC councillors – puts its work into perspective in another section of this report, highlighting the important recommendation for the office of public integrity (OPI).

Whether or not the OPI eventually gains the character envisaged by the NACAC – that of an independent criminal justice agency that holds itself to the highest standard of integrity – remains to be seen.

The pillars on which the NACAC was encouraged to design the OPI are vital for every public institution in South Africa that aims to fight corruption.

On another note, the appointment of Advocate Andy Mothibi, the former head of the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), as the new National Director of Public Prosecutions at the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) is welcomed and will go a long way towards strengthening the fight against corruption.

Mothibi's track record of leading successful high-profile investigations at the SIU has contributed to some restoration of confidence in government's ability to bring to book those who have participated in systemic corruption that has pillaged the public purse.

Mothibi also has the task of reinforcing the very centre of the NPA, a strong public prosecution system, amid criticism for failures related to high profile corruption cases.

As for CW, we will continue to perform our oversight role and ensure that the NACAC recommendations are implemented. We look forward to another year of collaborating with our partners in the civil society ecosystem and ensuring that the fight against corruption is strengthened through collaboration and cooperation.

We take this opportunity to thank all our staff, our civic society partners, the many citizens who continue to report corruption, and our funding partners for their continued support.

“WE ARE MOBILISING FOR JUSTICE SO THAT WE CAN RETURN TO A DECENT LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT APPARATUS, EVEN AS THE CORE OF OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS TESTED THROUGH INVESTIGATIVE PROCESSES.”



HOLDING THE LINE: SUSTAINING MOMENTUM THROUGH TRANSITION

By Moira Campbell and Lord Ntambw

Over the course of 2025, the Corruption Watch (CW) team has had to endure through difficulties emanating from a challenging climate of unpredictable changes in politics globally and a significant change in the dynamic of our own political system in South Africa. We have had to maintain our activist agenda through these and other changes by holding the line and keeping a sturdy momentum while doing the work.

TRANSITIONS ARE
NEVER EASY, BUT
THEY ARE BETTER
HANDLED TOGETHER...

As interim leaders appointed by the board in January 2025, our mandate was to ensure organisational stability during a leadership transition that happened to coincide with funding constraints, while keeping every strategic objective of the organisation on track. Here we reflect on a year that tested our resilience as a team and the remarkable journey we continued in ensuring the fight for justice continues, as the theme for this year's report, *Ke Nako: Mobilising for Justice* suggests.

There has seldom been a more pressing time to rally and mobilise for real action as we watch formerly established democracies eroding before our eyes, abandoning not only the rule of law, but also basic humanity, decency, and social justice. Civil society certainly has its work cut out — we cannot let brutality and disregard for human rights prevail. For CW, the motivation to fight for what is right underpins a resilient organisation with an enviable ability to attract individuals who are committed and passionate about fulfilling our mandate of exposing corruption, advocating for transparency and accountability, and driving long-term systemic change.

The activities profiled in this 2025 report speak to that commitment and determination. South Africa's context in 2025 can be seen as a microcosm of democratic resilience amid global democratic decline.

South Africa at a critical juncture

Locally, the formation of South Africa's Government of National Unity in 2024, after the ANC lost its majority in the elections of that year, signalled the necessity of coalition politics as our new reality. Some progress was made in 2025, with the near elimination of loadshedding, the removal from the FATF grey list, and investigations into corruption allegations within the criminal justice system by two constitutionally supported processes, namely the Madlanga commission and the ad hoc committee of Parliament. South Africa's successful G20 hosting — the first on African soil — represented a welcome sign of African leadership, despite controversies surrounding the event.



Significant challenges remain, however. Last year ended without convictions relating to state capture, despite extensive Zondo commission evidence and recommendations released in 2022. In 2026, former member of Parliament Vincent Smith became the first high-profile state capture accused person to be convicted and was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for corruption and money laundering relating to his dealings with Bosasa. The process to address another of the recommendations – the much-anticipated reforms to whistle-blower legislation – remains unresolved, despite several commitments from the executive that the proposed amendments would be publicly released by the end of 2025. Notably, however, one positive consequence of the recommendations of the commission – the process of developing a strategy for implementing the strengthening of the law enforcement architecture and an ethical public service by the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council – concluded with a comprehensive report submitted to President Cyril Ramaphosa.

CW highlights

The activities and achievements listed below are explored in greater detail throughout this report, but we thought it best to highlight them here as well.

Litigation victories: in August the Constitutional Court ruled that the appointment of five commissioners of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) by Parliament's portfolio committee on Women, Children and People with Disabilities in 2023 was invalid — due to Parliament failing in its constitutional duty to facilitate meaningful public participation. CW filed an application to this effect in the same year. This milestone advanced our nearly decade-long work on leadership appointments which kicked off with our Bua Mzansi campaign in 2016.

In a separate matter, the Western Cape High Court found in favour of our application opposing the appointment of Dr John Hlophe to the Judicial Services Commission. The judgment was handed down in June.

Advocacy work: our Land Corruption in Africa team appeared in Parliament with civil society project partners to advocate for accountability for government's failure to properly implement and monitor farm worker equity schemes. Gratifyingly, in January 2026, Land Reform and Rural Development Minister Mzwanele Nyhontso announced that forensic audits are underway, with the department pursuing the recovery of funds allegedly misused in the various schemes and investigating corruption — direct results of our advocacy.

Furthermore, Parliament conducted oversight visits to farms in the Western Cape in March.

Innovation: our Local Government Anti-Corruption Digital Technology Tool (DTT), developed under the EU-funded Strengthening Action Against Corruption (SAAC) project, is a citizen-focused platform promoting transparency, accountability, and civic participation in local government. Users can report corruption or service delivery incidents in their local government authority, while CW uses the data to evaluate the corruption risks by area and provide advocacy support for communities.

One such act of support came in the form of an appearance by CW, project partner Social Change Assistance Trust, and several of the community-based organisations under SAAC before the Eastern Cape legislature in March this year. Watch out for updates on the project across CW's content platforms.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration: in recognition of the concerted fight against corruption needing collaboration among organisations with similar goals, CW has played prominent roles in national anti-corruption fora (arising from the Zondo commission recommendations) focused on vulnerable sectors including health, local government, border management and immigration, infrastructure, and water.

International engagement: as interim leaders, we represented CW at the Africa Regional Meeting and Asset Recovery Workshop in Maputo, the SADC Civil Society Forum in Madagascar, the Transparency International (TI) Movement Summit, and joined the TI delegation at the UN Convention Against Corruption CoSP11 in Doha. These and other events are explored in greater detail in another section of this report.

Our team was well represented in the TI Summit that ran online from 13 – 16 October. The event itself covered a wide range of topics of interest for the movement's chapters around the world, with each nominating subject matter experts as contributors. In the case of CW, three members of the team served as panellists in the following sessions:

- Addressing disinformation and propaganda about corruption;
- Whistle-blower protection and support; and
- Sexual corruption.

All sessions included speakers from across the TI global network, positioning South Africa—and CW—firmly within global anti-corruption discourse.

EVERY REPORT,
EVERY CASE,
EVERY CAMPAIGN
HAS BROUGHT US TO
THIS VANTAGE POINT.
FROM HERE, THE WAY
AHEAD IS IN VIEW.

The chapters were encouraged to establish collaborations in topics that will benefit from a cross-pollination of ideas.

Youth mobilisation: core to our 2025 work was engaging young activists to address corruption's impact on their futures. Key interventions included facilitating in-depth dialogues and developing innovative solutions with youth to tackle corruption. We conducted focus groups testing responses to *Bribes & Whistles*, an anti-corruption board game developed by our team. Our activities culminated in a youth event hosted by the EU Enhancing Accountability Programme, building towards the Ngeke! Festival on 6 December — a concert showcasing aspiring musicians using their voices to reject corruption. These events commemorated International Anti-Corruption Day which is observed on 9 December.

Climate justice: Through TI's Climate Governance and Integrity Programme, our team monitored climate crisis impacts on vulnerable communities across several provinces, tracking funds designated for protection and mitigation.

Lessons learnt and the way ahead

The CGE case took years but created a precedent for public participation in appointments to key institutions — a natural extension of foundations laid through the leadership appointments work. Similarly, the DTT tool stems from our track record of developing technology for exposing corruption and innovating for advocacy, as evidenced by our Veza and Procurement Watch tools on which we have reported previously. Another key takeaway is that collaboration works. Whether through multi-stakeholder fora demonstrating ecosystem effectiveness or adding our voice to regional TI chapters and global campaigns of the movement, one thing is certain: we are stronger together.

Last year also proved that local action has global implications. G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group priorities — stronger whistle-blower protection and support and strengthened asset recovery mechanisms among them — demonstrate how our work contributes to global democratic resilience. We advocate committedly for social justice in ways that resonate with our followers and negotiate for the inclusion of civil society in processes that matter. In reflecting on the past year and the responsibility entrusted to us, we drew inspiration from the previous year's theme: *Accountable Together*. Transitions are never easy, but they are better handled together, with commitment to hold ourselves and each other accountable for the organisation, our work, and our contribution to the country.

Campbell left CW in February, after 12 years as the head of communications. She continues to do work in public governance and accountability. Ntambw is the head of finance at CW.

THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IS IN US ALL

By Lebogang Ramafoko, Corruption Watch Executive Director

When close relatives and friends first heard in December that I had been appointed as executive director of Corruption Watch (CW), some expressed concerns for my safety.

They shared how they have seen whistle-blowers get killed or lose their jobs for speaking out against corruption, particularly where those accused are high-profile, powerful people who remain in positions of influence regardless of what is unearthed in different commissions.

The concern expressed by those close to me underscores the urgent need for better protection for whistle-blowers. Many organisations and activists, including CW, have advocated for the Protected Disclosures Act to be reformed so that whistle-blowers can get better protection. This single Act, once amended, will ensure that those that speak out cannot be removed from jobs as a form of retaliation and left to fight their victimisation in courts, at their own personal cost, while the corrupt have the buffer of state-funded defence working in their favour. The legislation should also address the psycho-social needs of whistle-blowers in a meaningful and progressive way as they perform country duty.

I take on this role fully aware of just how big the problem of corruption is. The different commissions that have come and gone and the current ones and the startling revelations that emanate from them have painted a grim picture of just how endemic corruption is in South Africa.

It has invaded all aspects of our lives, affecting even the most basic services we receive from government. We cannot leave it to law enforcement – which is itself compromised to a worrying degree – to fight this scourge alone.

The whole of society should be invested and involved in the fight against corruption. The South African Constitution turns 30 years old this year. It is also a year of local government elections. Both these moments give us an opportunity to use the power of the Constitution and our right to vote to become active citizens and demand better for ourselves. Whether in the public sector or in the private sector, we need to demand transparency and accountability.

This is not a task that must be taken on by just a few. What we need is to build a solid movement across all of society that is focused on reducing corruption. It means we need to unite towards one common call and goal, to return this country to ethical and accountable leadership.

We will not be silenced. We cannot afford to be silenced. We are all affected by corruption and we have a responsibility to turn the tide against it. In 2026 CW aims to develop its vision 2030, which will outline its priorities for the next few years. We will build on our rich legacy and ask ourselves what role we would like to continue playing in the future. We will seek partnerships and engage the whole of society, especially young people, to imagine and co-create a corruption free future with us. We will outline our advocacy focus and work with others locally, regionally, and internationally to influence and demand policy reforms that will strengthen our fight against corruption.

WHILE THE PROBLEM IS BIG, IT IS NOT INSURMOUNTABLE. WE HAVE A DEEP BELIEF THAT IF WE COME TOGETHER, WE CAN WIN THIS BATTLE. AS MADIBA WOULD SAY, "IT IS IN OUR HANDS!"

INTRODUCTION

This year signals an exciting transition for the Corruption Watch (CW) team, with the arrival of executive director, Lebogang Ramafoko and the development of Vision 2030 that will define the organisation’s strategic direction for the next few years.

Ramafoko has inherited a team of passionate and committed individuals who have delivered on the promises of CW: to expose corruption, to advocate for stronger accountability and governance systems in public institutions, to litigate for fairness in procedures in the public sector, and to fight for stronger whistle-blower protection and support. We have also cemented our presence in communities across South Africa that have one thing in common: they are not prepared to allow their geographic isolation to define how government delivers services to them.

Community support

Between the community engagements by the teams leading the Climate Governance and Integrity and Strengthening Action Against Corruption (SAAC) projects and those working on the youth programme, we reached over 20 different communities in six provinces. Although we engaged them on different topics, the interconnectedness of corruption and bad governance was glaring.

It is satisfying that based on our work with communities, we were invited to Parliament in November 2025 to make an oral submission on the irregularities we found in Farm Worker Equity Schemes covered in another part of this report. This work is part of our Land Corruption in Africa project, in collaboration with partners, the Legal Resources Centre and the Surplus People Project. Another opportunity came in respect of the SAAC project. Although this one only happened in March 2026, when we were invited to the Eastern Cape Legislature, the foundation was built in 2025.

Meeting the lawmakers

Our persistent advocating for accountability in public institutions was rewarded through a Constitutional Court ruling in August last year declaring Parliament’s appointment process for five commissioners of the Commission on Gender Equality invalid due to the legislature’s failure to incorporate sufficient public participation measures. The judgment is an important one because it is implicit recognition of the value of our future work for inclusion and public participation.

Such inclusion has proven vital for strategic reasons. For instance, CW’s participation in multiple anti-corruption fora that address corruption-vulnerable sectors like health, water, the built environment, border management, and local government. CW is visible in these platforms, equipped with evidence contained in whistle-blower reports received since 2012. Our research, campaigns and programmes, litigation, and media and community work are made possible by the brave efforts of these whistle-blowers.

Our whistle-blowers matter

This underscores the urgency of the country’s advancement towards improved whistle-blower protection legislation. CW is contributing to the discussion paper developed by the Department of Justice in 2023 to amend the Protected Disclosures Act, citing the need for it to be more inclusive and not only protect disclosures, but also protect individuals making the disclosures, among other key points.

While we had anticipated that the PDA amendment would have seen movement in 2025, we recognise that the process has complexities and for it to be near perfect, it would have to be thoroughly explored. Certainly, indications from our regional and international partners whose governments have traversed this area are that the process of making whistle-blower legislation strong and effective takes effort.

Regardless of how long it takes, CW can guarantee that we will closely monitor the process. We will watch this and many other developments as we navigate 2026 and enter a new phase of the organisation under new leadership and a renewed strategic direction.



THE NEXT CHAPTER

VISION 2030. MOBILISING FOR JUSTICE. KE NAKO.

WHO WE ARE

As with many other organisations that have undergone leadership transitions, the team at Corruption Watch (CW) has had to do the difficult task of reflecting with purpose to determine where our strengths and weaknesses lie and how we envision our future. As at the time of writing this report, we continue with the efforts of redefining our Strategy 2030 goals.

That said, we have kept our sleeves rolled up while maintaining an impressive momentum with the work we do.

CW is an independent civil society organisation in the social justice sector that was launched in 2012 in response to a climate of growing incidents of corruption in South Africa. We are the local chapter of Transparency International (TI), a global movement with the vision to build accountable public and private institutions that recognise the impact of corruption on human rights.

We are, however, not just an organisation. We are part of a network of diverse institutions that have the common goal of advocating for social justice and fair and transparent processes in governance structures. We're dedicated to encouraging and enabling public participation and activism to prevent, expose, report, and combat corruption. We work with grassroots communities and social groupings alike to collectively find solutions to confronting and reducing corruption.

Our work has taken us to legislatures, provincial and national, where we have used the opportunities provided to advance our advocacy for marginalised communities as we call for accountability from institutions entrusted with public resources. We also want communities across South Africa to know that they can count on digital offerings like our Veza and Local Government Anti-Corruption Digital Technology tools to empower and enable them to demand accountability from their elected officials.

CW also has an interest in local government and how municipalities carry out their service delivery and project planning mandates against the backdrop of poor audit outcomes and corruption risks, among other concerns. We want public procurement to be inclusive but transparent and accountable, with beneficial ownership transparency being a central pillar of the sector.

As we participate in multiple platforms that give us access to decision- and law-makers, we appreciate that the road to a corruption-free South Africa is a long one, but not one that is impossible.

We kicked off 2026 by redefining our strategy as an organisation, but our passion and commitment to the fight for an equitable and just government system was not deterred.

WE ARE THE VOICE THAT CORRUPTION CANNOT SILENCE.



CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2025: SA'S POSITION UNCHANGED

South Africa's achievement in the Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2025 was to maintain its stagnant position of 41 to which the country first descended in 2023. The CPI scores the 180 countries it assesses on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) in terms of perceptions of public sector corruption.

South Africa has, since 2012 when the CPI was first published, failed to reach the significant 50-point mark. The country has moved in the last 10 years or so from 45 in 2016 down to 41 from 2023 to date. The index classifies a score of under 50 as an indication of serious and persistent corruption, which in our case weakens the significant gains of the removal of South Africa from the FATF grey list in October and the immediate response to allegations of police corruption, in the form of the Madlanga commission and the parliamentary ad hoc committee Investigating the matter.

While these two processes do in some way encourage faith in government's fight against corruption, they are unfortunately not enough to help bolster the perception of South Africa boldly fighting corruption. It will take some time after their conclusion and the implementation of whatever recommendations they make before we see further significant progress in the fight against corruption.

The inability of government to act against corruption by introducing new laws or strengthening existing ones to combat it – and the more disturbing pattern of restricting freedoms of expression, association, and assembly – makes it harder for civil society organisations and whistle-blowers to speak out against corruption freely and safely.

When corrupt officials and politicians continue to abuse their power, the frequent results are poor quality services and fiscal crises, as public funds are mismanaged, contributing to enduring poverty, rising inequality, and worsening living standards for millions of people.

The picture for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa is not that much better. For the most part, countries in this region continue to struggle to make significant gains that show improvement on the index. Although this does not exonerate South Africa from scrutiny, given that it is a key economic player in the region, it does raise questions about whether the move to improve and advance governance systems should be a collaborative effort to the extent that laws and regulations allow.

Indeed, the countries and regions that have dominated the CPI over extended periods since 2012 have long established systems that have been kept in place by generations of governments and this translates positively for them in the CPI, year after year. The index makes the stark distinction between how nations with strong, independent institutions, free and fair elections, and open civic space, and those ruled by repressive authoritarian regimes, manage corruption. In general, those classified as full democracies average 71 on the CPI, while flawed democracies average 47 and authoritarian regimes just 32.

Denmark tops the 2025 index with a score of 89, followed by Finland (88) and Singapore (84). With that said, it is disheartening that only a small group of 15 countries, mainly in Western Europe and Asia-Pacific, manage to get scores above 75, although only five reach scores above 80. Contrast those with the two thirds of countries (68%) that fall below 50, indicating serious corruption problems across most of the world. South Africa has several key positive efforts in the pipeline, as mentioned by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his state of the nation address in February. These include a much-anticipated reform of the country's primary whistle-blower protection legislation – a process started back in 2023 with a discussion paper released for public comment by the Department of Justice – as well as the suggested start of a process to establish a single independent anti-corruption institution as recommended by the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council.

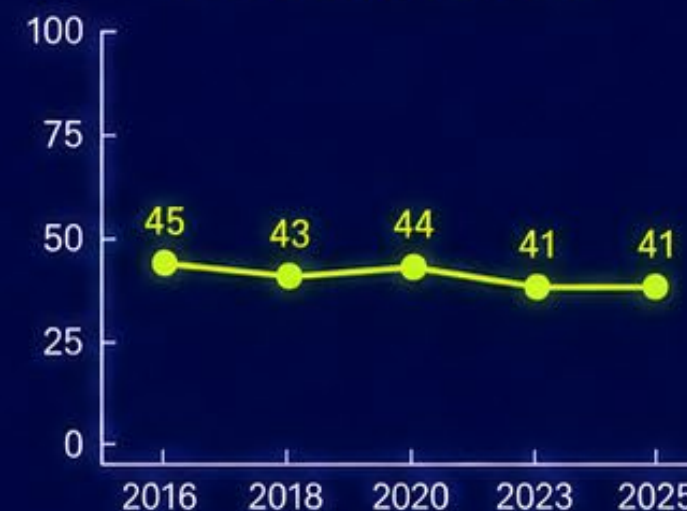
Additionally, the recent appointment of the new head of the National Prosecuting Authority, Advocate Andy Mothibi, to this critical role, following his successes at the Special Investigating Unit, could provide some reprieve for South Africa and hopefully see the country move up in the ranks of the CPI in the foreseeable future.

SA SCORES 41 OUT OF 100

South Africa's position remains unchanged since 2023.



SA'S SCORE OVER TIME



NO IMPROVEMENT SINCE 2016

HOW SA COMPARES IN 2025

Selected countries



FACTORS LEADING TO SA'S STAGNATION



GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO ACT

Failure to combat corruption and capacitate law enforcement.



NO JUSTICE FOR WHISTLE-BLOWERS

Weak protections and support for whistle-blowers.



POOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Frequent service delivery failures.



RISING INEQUALITY & POVERTY

Growing inequality and worsening living standards.



WEAK GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

Laws and regulations often do not support better governance.

WHAT THE DATA REVEALS

As already documented in this report, 2025 was a year of transition on many fronts – globally, nationally, and within Corruption Watch (CW). Despite the uncertainties and challenges, whistle-blowers still found the courage and commitment to report their experiences of corruption in South Africa.

Whistle-blowers have been the cornerstone of this organisation since the outset, fulfilling our objective of giving voice to people who have witnessed and been impacted by corruption first-hand. Their reports have played a critical role in exposing how corruption occurs and takes its toll on the lives of ordinary people, allowing the CW team to respond accordingly and to develop interventions and campaigns highlighting specific focus areas, both geographically and thematically.

These reports have been a central and valuable resource providing critical insights into how, where, and in what form corruption takes place, informing many of our campaigns and activities over the past 14 years. Our whistle-blowers have been our eyes and ears on the ground and have been at the very heart of our journey in fighting corruption in the country.

Organisational shifts

Our secure systems and channels for reporting corruption remained open, despite the shifts within the organisation that culminated in a change in leadership, and despite our lack of active solicitation of reports, due to capacity issues. Last year we referred to the transitional period during which we undertook an overhaul of our reports handling system. In 2025 the focus was on sustaining the organisation through a period of interim leadership, following the departure of the former executive director in January 2025. The arrival of our new executive director in January 2026 has re-anchored the organisation and reinvigorated its vision and commitment to supporting and engaging with our whistle-blowers.

What the numbers say

In 2025, the organisation received a total of 2 222 corruption complaints, about 91% of which were corruption related. This amounted to an average of 185 reports a month, with significant peaks and lows in certain months. The primary channels for reporting were the website (60%), followed by the dedicated WhatsApp channel (23%), with e-mail constituting 16% of reports.

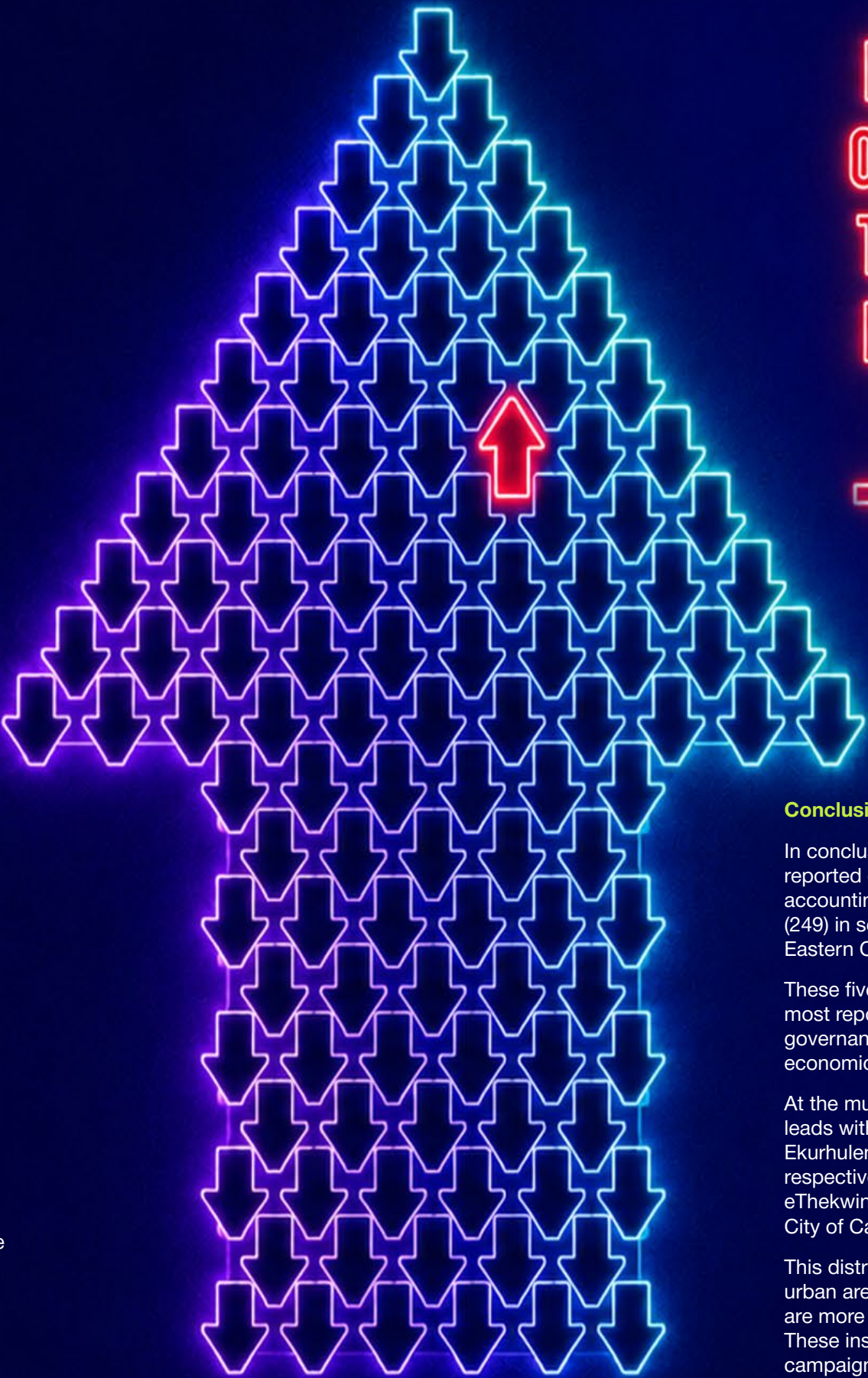
As in 2024, maladministration once again featured as the predominant type of corruption reported in 2025 with 408 cases, followed by fraud (330) and bribery/extortion (245). Other types of prevalent corruption included procurement irregularities (235), dereliction of duty (214), misappropriation of resources (209), and abuse of power (197).

The breakdown by sub-sector places policing (300) once again at the top of the list with the highest number of corruption cases, with basic education coming in second with 221 complaints. Third in line is business (219), followed by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (141), legal and financial services (101), construction (92), and traffic and licensing (82).

The sectors highlighted here, like the breakdown last year, indicate the ongoing failure of government to address systemic corruption in key sectors and institutions, most notably policing and education, although the role of business in fuelling corruption must also receive attention. As the country watches the corruption allegations within the criminal justice system being investigated by the Madlanga commission and the parliamentary ad hoc committee, the extent to which corruption has undermined the effectiveness of our law enforcement agencies becomes ever more clear.

The prevailing inefficiencies within our SOEs, and the inclusion of corruption complaints in legal and financial services as well as construction, also suggests that these sectors play a part in enabling corruption.

In terms of institutions, in 2025 provincial government entities scored the highest number of reports (811), although it was not always possible to indicate which entities, as many complainants chose not to identify them. In general terms, however, the South African Police Service is the most cited entity, followed by the education, justice, home affairs, and health departments. Corruption in local government still featured strongly, accounting for 400 of the total reports, while national government came in with 133 complaints, and SOEs with 116.



**IT ONLY TAKES
ONE TO CHANGE
THE DIRECTION.
IN 2025, THERE
WERE 2.222.**

Conclusion

In conclusion, Gauteng remains the epicentre of reported corruption, leading with 993 cases, and accounting for 45% of reports, with KwaZulu-Natal (249) in second place, followed by Limpopo (182), Eastern Cape (174), and Western Cape (173).

These five provinces collectively account for most reports, signalling a concentration of governance challenges in urban and economically active regions.

At the municipal level, the City of Johannesburg leads with 480 cases, while City of Tshwane and Ekurhuleni follow with 259 and 174 cases respectively. Other notable hotspots include eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (124) and City of Cape Town (121).

This distribution suggests that metropolitan and urban areas, due to their size and complexity, are more prone to corruption-related complaints. These insights can inform targeted anti-corruption campaigns and resource allocation, prioritising high-volume regions for intervention.

In 2025, whistle-blowers continued to expose where corruption is taking root, who is affected, and where intervention is most urgently needed.

2 222

COMPLAINTS
RECEIVED IN 2025

91%

WERE RELATED
TO CORRUPTION



185

REPORTS PER MONTH
(ON AVERAGE)

TOP REPORTING CHANNELS



60%
WEBSITE



23%
WHATSAPP



16%
E-MAIL



YOUR REPORTS.
OUR SYSTEMS.
PUBLIC INTEREST.



TYPE OF CORRUPTION

	MALADMINISTRATION	408
	FRAUD	330
	BRIBERY / EXTORTION	245
	PROCUREMENT IRREGULARITIES	235
	DERELICTION OF DUTY	214
	MISAPPROPRIATION OF RESOURCES	209
	ABUSE OF POWER	197

PROVINCIAL HOTSPOTS



1	GAUTENG	993
2	KWAZULU-NATAL	249
3	LIMPOPO	182
4	EASTERN CAPE	174
5	WESTERN CAPE	173

INSTITUTIONAL LOCATION



811

36%
PROVINCIAL
GOVERNMENT



400

18%
LOCAL
GOVERNMENT



646

29%
UNSPECIFIED /
UNCLEAR



133

6%
NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT



116

5%
SOEs

SECTOR BREAKDOWN



713

OTHER



300

POLICING



221

BASIC
EDUCATION



219

BUSINESS



141

SOEs



101

LEGAL &
FINANCIAL SERVICES



92

CONSTRUCTION



Gauteng remains the epicentre of reported corruption, while policing, education, business and government institutions continue to dominate complaint patterns.



FROM 2024

CORRUPTION ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA

These trends are based on an analysis of the provinces and the sub-types of corruption experienced.

The numbers represent the breakdown of the top five types of corruption in each province.

GAUTENG

246 CASES

TOP ISSUE
FRAUD
25%

	Fraud	61	25%
	Maladministration	35	14%
	Bribery / Extortion	34	14%
	Dereliction of duty	32	13%
	Misappropriation of resources	22	9%

KWAZULU-NATAL

60 CASES

TOP ISSUE
DERELICTION
OF DUTY
20%

	Dereliction of duty	12	20%
	Fraud	11	16%
	Maladministration	9	15%
	Abuse of power	6	10%
	Procurement Irregularities	6	10%

FREE STATE

33 CASES

TOP ISSUE
DERELICTION
OF DUTY
18%

	Dereliction of duty	6	18%
	Fraud	6	18%
	Misappropriation of resources	6	18%
	Employment Irregularities	5	15%
	Maladministration	4	12%

WESTERN CAPE

49 CASES

TOP ISSUE
FRAUD
35%

	Fraud	17	35%
	Dereliction of duty	9	18%
	Abuse of power	8	17%
	Maladministration	4	35%
	Bribery / Extortion	3	6%
	Other	8	10%

KEY INSIGHTS



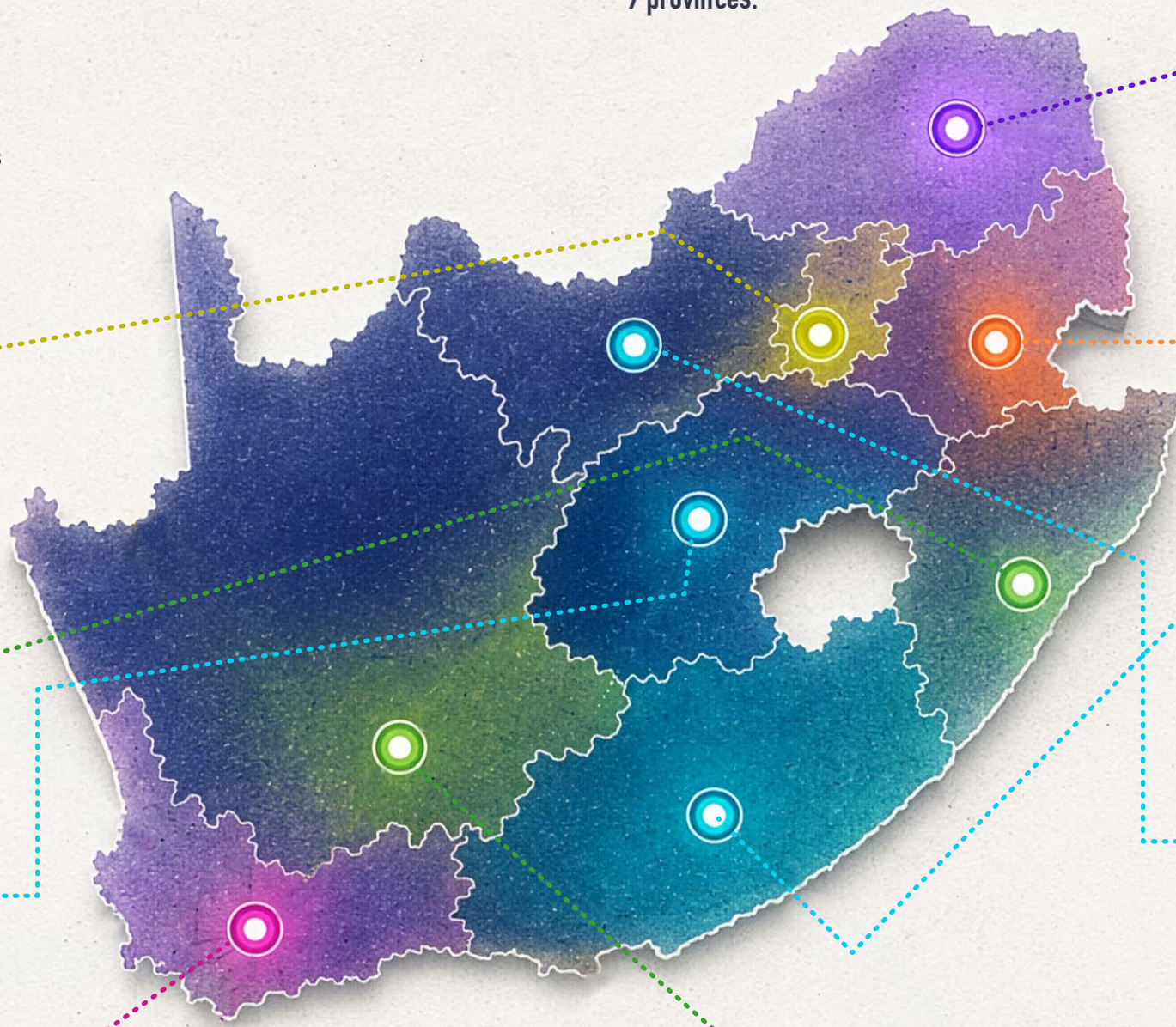
GAUTENG REMAINS
THE NATIONAL HOTSPOT
246 reported incidents.



FRAUD DOMINATES
ACROSS MULTIPLE
PROVINCES
Leads in 4 of the
9 provinces.



DERELICTION OF DUTY
EMERGES AS A GROWING
NATIONAL TREND
Top issue in 4 provinces.



LIMPOPO

35 CASES

TOP ISSUE
MALADMINISTRATION
34%



	Maladministration	12	34%
	Fraud	6	17%
	Misappropriation of resources	4	11%
	Dereliction of duty	3	9%
	Abuse of power	2	5%
	Other	8	24%

EASTERN CAPE

43 CASES

TOP ISSUE
FRAUD
21%



	Fraud	9	27%
	Employment Irregularities	8	19%
	Misappropriation of resources	8	19%
	Dereliction of duty	6	14%
	Abuse of power	4	9%
	Other	8	10%

NORTH WEST

36 CASES

TOP ISSUE
DERELICTION
OF DUTY
19%



	Dereliction of duty	7	19%
	Employment Irregularities	7	19%
	Fraud	6	17%
	Procurement Irregularities	5	14%
	Abuse of power	4	12%
	Other	7	10%

NORTHERN CAPE

8 CASES

TOP ISSUE
DERELICTION
OF DUTY
63%



	Dereliction of duty	5	67%
	Bribery / Extortion	1	13%
	Fraud	1	13%
	Maladministration	1	13%
	Other	0	0%

MPUMALANGA

34 CASES

TOP ISSUE
FRAUD
18%



	Fraud	6	10%
	Misappropriation of resources	6	10%
	Abuse of power	5	15%
	Maladministration	5	15%
	Other	12	34%

PROCUREMENT

The Public Procurement Act (PPA), the piece of legislation that is envisioned to transform South Africa's public procurement system for the better, has drawn both praise and criticism over the past few years. While government positions it as a legislative tool that symbolises meaningful transformation and inclusivity – and hailed as a game changer by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his 2025 State of the Nation Address – other role players in its development have decried its blatant silence on practicality and transparency where it matters.

Civil society organisations made a range of submissions to the then Public Procurement Bill in 2023. For Corruption Watch (CW), several key areas of the bill needed to be fleshed out, and the principle of meaningful public participation needed clear expression in its process. Furthermore, CW called for the need for incentivised

whistle-blowing to assist with the early detection and thus prevention of corruption, to save government resources. A further recommendation was for the separation of the public procurement office from National Treasury in efforts to strengthen accountability mechanisms and aid in effective oversight.

While these did not make it into the final Act, there was still a glimmer of hope as National Treasury took a multi-stakeholder approach in its initiation of the drafting of regulations that would support the PPA. CW welcomed the opportunity to participate further in the process, along with other relevant stakeholders. The organisation was represented in one of the four reference groups tasked with developing the regulations to be presented as the pillars of the PPA.

"The reference groups are made up largely of people and organisations that have been involved in the commentary and engagements on the Act," explains CW attorney Nkululeko Conco. Their core assignment was to scrutinise the Act and start exploring the best ways to approach the regulations, including looking at what has been adopted in other countries.

But does this not translate into civil society and the public doing legislators' work for them? Conco asserts that it is an approach that civil society organisations support because it's an inclusive process that also shows the treasury's responsiveness to the criticisms around its usual regulations drafting processes. Furthermore, it meant that parties that had experienced challenges with different parts of the legislation could have a say in what changes, early on.

"For example, one of the reference groups tackled the topic of debarment [from contracting with government] and how that needs to operate, what the mechanisms that support should look like, how long it should be in practice. Do we want different time periods for different things?"

In the room were some of government's largest procurers of goods and services like state-owned entities and other departments.

"From Treasury's perspective, the thinking must have been that 'some of the things we will not be able to do, so we will need to arrive at a middle ground'."

The work of the reference groups concluded in March 2025 with the anticipation that the treasury would review the regulations that had by then been drafted, and adopt them. By the end of 2025, however, this had not happened, despite a reported public declaration by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana in November that the publishing of final regulations was imminent.

Asked whether the delay in releasing the regulations may have affected how those in government who work in procurement do their work, Conco explains that the regulatory framework is still there – the Public Finance Management Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act, so current systems would not be disrupted. But the questions around the delay remain, and may well be attributed to litigation currently in place, challenging the PPA. Investigative body AmaBhungane and the City of Cape Town have both challenged the legislation on different grounds. Conco is of the thought that National Treasury may well be waiting out those processes, but may also be invested still in finalising the finer details of the drafting process.



INVESTIGATIONS 2025



Providence Academy

In 2015, Corruption Watch (CW) released a report titled Loss of Principle, which highlighted alleged corruption in the education sector. The report was published as part of our schools corruption campaign and included 10 investigations that CW had conducted since the inception of the campaign in 2013.

One of the 10 investigations was into the conduct of the principal of Providence Academy, an independent school located in the central business district of Johannesburg. It is registered as a non-profit establishment and is eligible for financial support from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). Brighton Sikwili, the principal of the school, was implicated by two whistle-blowers who approached CW to allege that Sikwili had manipulated the academic results of grade 11 learners, presumably to bolster the school's chances of continuing to receive funding.

Ten years later, in 2025, new allegations emerged through another CW whistle-blower. Among these was the allegation that the school failed to comply with the Department of Basic Education's safety regulations, resulting in a case of food poisoning that affected multiple learners in February 2025. When parents of the affected learners contacted the GDE to investigate, an official of the department convened a meeting to allay their concerns by assuring them that a full investigation would be conducted. Later, however, the parents learned that the GDE has no record of such an investigation, leading to the conclusion that the "investigator" apparently deployed by the GDE may have been an impostor.

A further claim is that the school is not compliant with the South African Revenue Service and should therefore not be receiving funding from the GDE. CW's own investigation into the legal standing of the school revealed that it is recorded as having closed down and its director (Sikwili) having resigned in 2005.

In July, CW wrote to both the GDE and the City of Johannesburg's environmental health department to enquire about the alleged compliance irregularities and the food poisoning incident. In its response, the City requested that CW rather file a Public Access to Information Act enquiry, given the sensitive nature of the information sought. The GDE did not respond, though the school's attorneys did. Interestingly, the same happened in 2015's investigation. The school attorneys' letter did not respond to the allegations raised by CW, but instead indicated that the whistle-blower is known to them and that they would take action with the relevant authorities against them.

The attorneys further requested that all documents supporting the allegations be furnished to them. CW responded to the letter by indicating to the attorneys that our communication was to the GDE and not them, and that any threats to the person suspected by them to be the whistle-blower would not be tolerated.

The GDE did not respond to a second letter from CW questioning how the original letter would have been forwarded to the school's attorneys. The investigation is ongoing.

EVIDENCE TRAIL



2015 REPORT

CW publishes Loss of Principle, including 10 investigations into corruption in education.



2025 RENEWED ALLEGATIONS

A new whistle-blower reports safety breaches and food poisoning affecting learners.



GDE CONTACTED

Parents contact the GDE to investigate. No record of an official investigation could be verified.



PAIA REQUEST

CW submits a PAIA request to the GDE and environmental health department seeking information on the matter.



INVESTIGATION ONGOING

No substantive response from authorities to date. The investigation continues.



Government Pension Administration Agency

A whistle-blower report alleged irregularities in a lease agreement between the Government Pension Administration Agency (GPAA) and a company called Shula Developers in which there is no building in existence in respect of the lease. CW forwarded an enquiry to the agency, listing the allegations and affording it a right of reply.

While awaiting a response from the agency, however, a news report surfaced noting that the GPAA had appointed a forensic firm to investigate and identify the whistle-blower that had reported corruption within the institution.

CW then wrote to Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana in September, raising concerns on the development and apparent lack of protection of whistle-blowers, based on the news report.

The letter further highlighted the urgency of public institutions recognising that whistle-blower intimidation and victimisation is unacceptable. In its response, received in October 2025, the minister's office acknowledged that intimidation of whistle-blowers is not tolerable and assured CW that the appointment of the forensic firm had been reversed.

To date, CW has received no response to the Public Access to Information Act application for the details of the alleged irregular lease agreement.

CW has not received any response to its correspondence either and calls have not been returned. The investigation is ongoing.

EVIDENCE TRAIL



WHISTLE-BLOWER ALERT

Allegations of an irregular GPAA lease agreement for a building that does not exist.



GPAA RETALIATES

GPAA appoints a forensic firm to identify the whistle-blower, not investigate the corruption.



MINISTER ALERTED

CW writes to Finance Minister Godongwana on whistle-blower intimidation.



PAIA REQUEST

CW files a PAIA application for lease details. No response received.



INVESTIGATION ONGOING

Forensic appointment reversed. GPAA remains unresponsive. The investigation continues.

Parliament secretary's questionable salary increase

CW was approached by a group of concerned whistle-blowers regarding what they claim is the irregular increase of the salary of parliamentary secretary, Xolile George, by as much as 70% since his appointment in June 2022. George had previously held the position of CEO of the South African Local Government Agency, earning in the region of R4-million.

The position was advertised with a salary of R2.4-million per annum in February 2020, and later in March at R2.6-million. The salary increase occurred after George's appointment, coming up to around R4-million and later around R6-million. CW reached out to Parliament asking if the increase was based on an evaluation of his performance and if so, CW requested the report supporting this decision.

Furthermore, CW sought answers from Parliament on the following questions:

- Was the increase based on a formal job evaluation?

- Was the salary determined through a review and recommendation process conducted by Parliament's human resources function?
- Was the implementation of the salary increase formally approved by the parliamentary speaker and the chairperson of the National Council of Provinces?
- Was there transparency and proper oversight in implementing the salary increase?
- Has the office reviewed and implemented the recommendations made by Advocate Karisha Pillay who was commissioned to investigate the unlawful conduct of the former speaker regarding an irregular salary increase?

CW is in possession of minutes of a meeting of an extended public committee convened in June 2022, prior to George's appointment, where members debated his appointment. The minutes record concerns from both the EFF and the DA regarding George's appointment and subsequent salary increase, which appears to have been supported by the ANC.

Further to the minutes, the office of the speaker also sent a letter explaining its benchmarking processes to explain the rationale behind the increase, but committed to furnishing CW with a comprehensive report once a full investigation has been concluded.

EVIDENCE TRAIL



WHISTLE-BLOWER ALERT

Allegations of a 70% salary increase for Parliament secretary Xolile George since June 2022.



SALARY ESCALATION

Position advertised at R2.4-million in 2020. Salary now sits around R6-million.



PARLIAMENT QUERIED

CW requests job evaluations, approvals, and oversight records justifying the increase.



COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 2022 minutes show the EFF and DA raised concerns about George's appointment.



INVESTIGATION ONGOING

Speaker's office commits to a full report. CW awaits its conclusion.

LAND AND CORRUPTION IN AFRICA

Corruption Watch's (CW) Land and Corruption in Africa (LCA) project ended on a high note, garnering the attention of the national legislature on the issue of farm worker equity schemes (FWES).

In November 2025, CW and project partners, the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) and the Surplus People Project (SPP), made presentations to the parliamentary portfolio committee on Land Reform and Rural Development on FWES. This submission underscores CW's commitment to ensuring that the contentious issue of FWES gets the national attention it deserves, and that justice will be realised for farm workers.

Background

The first phase of the LCA project was successfully rolled out from 2014 to 2019 and culminated in a research report. The second phase started in 2021, with seven chapters of Transparency International (TI) taking part, namely Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Each of the chapters then submitted a report to TI for a consolidated analysis of research obtained across the different countries.

Among other goals, the LCA project aims to:

- share information on how land corruption manifests and what its effects are;
- educate citizens about their land rights and how to defend them; and
- work with governments, traditional authorities, the private sector, and civil society to find solutions to combat land corruption.

CW's work on FWES began in phase two of the LCA project. The project recognised the need to advocate for a probe into a review of the policy governing the schemes, started in the 1990s, that has not been upheld by government or business.

The government commissioned consultancy firm ZALO Capital to review the FWES policy, and the review report came out in 2013. About 89 equity schemes were reviewed, the majority of which are in the Western Cape, with the rest in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and other farming regions in the country. As much as R683-million was found to have been spent irregularly, to the detriment of farm workers who were initially meant to be the beneficiaries of the schemes in the first place.

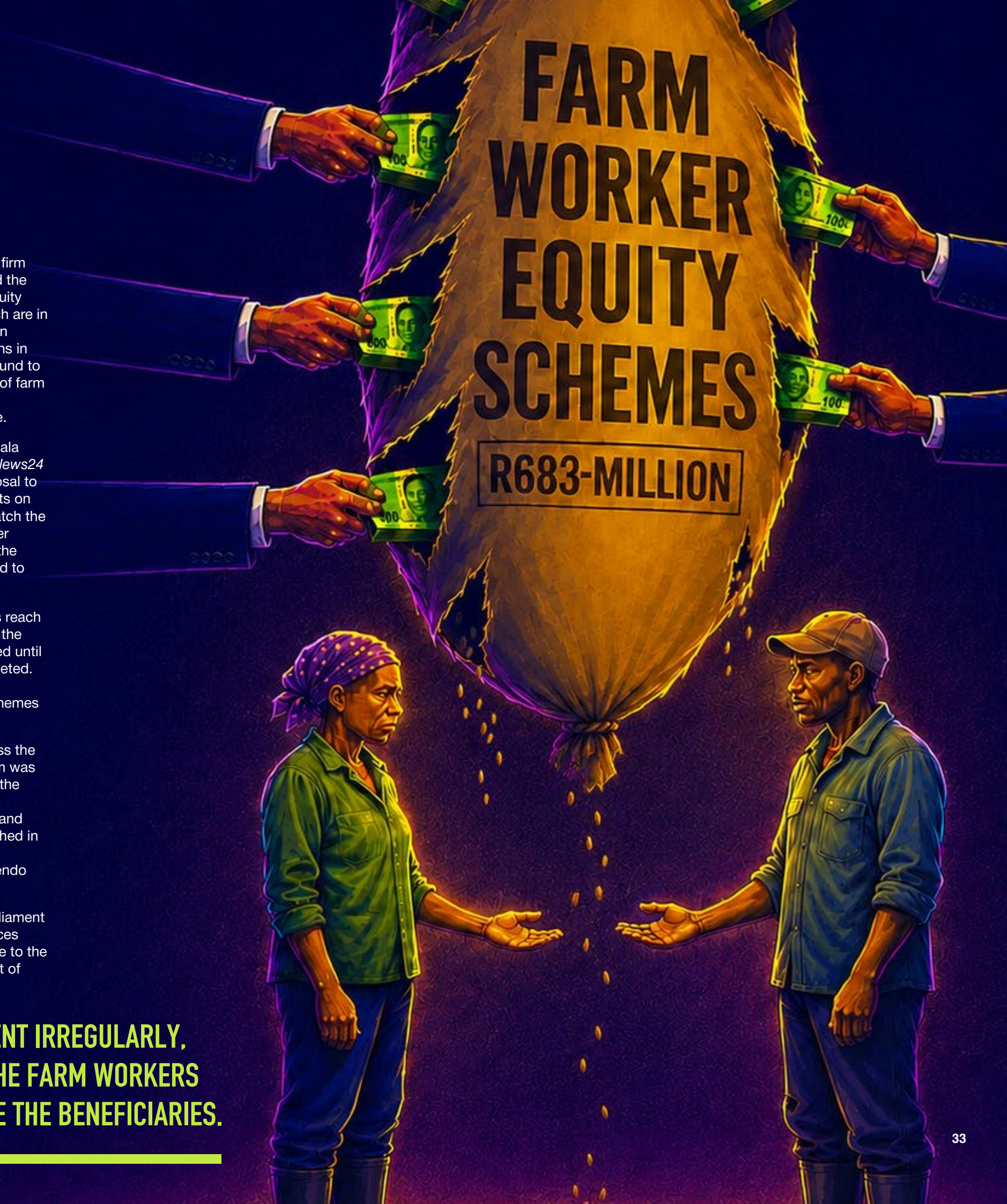
Project lead and senior researcher Melusi Ncala wrote in an opinion piece that appeared on *News24* in November 2023: "The government's proposal to the private sector was to issue financial grants on the condition that the private party would match the monetary figure issued. Grants were given per number of farm workers already working on the farm and whom the private farmer had agreed to bring into the running of the business."

However, in reality, the money did not always reach farm workers and, due to poor monitoring of the grants, this maladministration was not realised until the since-concealed ZALO report was completed. CW, together with the LRC and the SPP, has advocated for a transparent review of the schemes and the release of the report.

Through community engagements held across the above-mentioned provinces, the project team was able to measure the impact of the failures of the schemes on the affected communities. Farm workers' personal stories were documented and curated into a podcast series that CW published in 2024, with the launch hosted by celebrated journalist and news presenter Sakina Kamwendo in Johannesburg.

The culmination of the advocacy work in Parliament was borne out of the need to amplify the voices represented in the podcast, and was also due to the unresponsiveness of the national Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

R683-MILLION WAS SPENT IRREGULARLY, TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE FARM WORKERS WHO WERE MEANT TO BE THE BENEFICIARIES.



The final stretch

In 2025, the LCA team continued with community engagements in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape, armed with public education materials meant for farm worker communities. This was done with the support of social partners like the Surplus People Project and the Support Centre for Land Change (SCLC), community-based groups that have an interest in the topic of land affairs.

The LRC, as a project partner, has driven the legal advocacy element of the project along with CW, which culminated in a formal complaint being submitted to the Eastern Cape office of the public protector in May. The complaint relayed the challenges exposed during interactions with farmworkers who should have rightfully benefited from FWES. The public protector continues to investigate the matter, despite attempts from the department of land reform and rural development to absolve itself from the responsibility of the failures of FWES.

As noted in the previous annual report, CW had earlier published its research on FWES - a policy initiated post-1994 that was aimed at incorporating farm workers as shareholders into farm businesses and socially uplifting them. We also released a report in October 2023 along with the aforementioned podcast series that highlighted experiences of farmworkers on the ground. The community engagements revealed to the team the extent of the neglect that communities most affected by FWES failures have had to endure as a result.

In September, the team organised a petition signed by CW, SPP, LRC, and the SCLC to get the speaker of Parliament to investigate FWES. As a result of this, the portfolio committee invited the organisations represented on the petition to make a formal, more detailed submission. Ncala puts into perspective what motivated the team of partners: "Our basic principles are people centred. We speak on behalf of people who cannot speak for themselves and to amplify their voices. Our duty is to foreground their struggle and to bring their issues to the attention of institutions of power for changes to happen."

"It doesn't get more real than that. You are steeped in community struggle, you are elevating community issues and dealing with the core of corruption as it affects ordinary people. But is also links strongly with systemic issues, so it's the best of both."

Other project-related activities included two communications training sessions for the community-based organisations with which the project team had collaborated. The sessions were part of a skills sharing component of the project.

WE SPEAK ON BEHALF OF PEOPLE WHO CANNOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES AND AMPLIFY THEIR VOICES.





LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

Corruption Watch's (CW) work on leadership appointments, which began in 2016 with the Bua Mzansi Campaign supporting the appointment of the new public protector, saw some important strides in 2025.

Our focus in this regard was on the appointments of leadership of public institutions, that are the bedrock of our constitutional democracy and are important for the efficient delivery of important services.

Public participation in the appointment of leaders of state institutions is intended to hold both the process and the candidates to a high standard. The candidates' interest in leading a public institution is usually an indication of their willingness to be held accountable by the public that they will serve once appointed to office.

An appointment process that demonstrated this pointedly in 2025 was for the national director of public prosecutions (NDPP) – or head of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) – in early December. A committee of experts in the legal and governance fields were appointed by Justice Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi to interview six shortlisted candidates. A call was issued for public review of the candidates with an invitation to submit comments to the committee. However, the call for public review was rendered futile by the committee's failure to make the curricula vitae (CVs) of the candidates publicly available. Concerned by this oversight, CW raised its concerns with the committee. In response, the committee published the CVs and the process continued.

The provision of the CVs was necessary to meet the requirements for full public participation. Furthermore, CVs are essential to assess whether candidates meet the criteria to lead such an important institution as the NPA.

"The timeframe [from the call for public comments to the deadline] was a bit of a problem. The candidates' CVs were not available publicly. We wrote to the committee and at first there was some reluctance, but the CVs were eventually published," says project co-ordinator Tawanda Kaseke.

"These are some of the challenges we encounter, that have to do with the criteria set out and the timeframes given for public submissions."

The interviews were broadcast live for the public to watch, which was not the case for the process that saw the former NDPP head Advocate Shamila Batohi appointed in January 2019.

A surprising turn of events in the appointment this time around, however, is that on the basis of the committee not arriving at a decision to appoint any of the candidates it interviewed, President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed former head of the Special Investigating Unit, Advocate Andy Mothibi, to the position. CW's response was to issue a public statement raising concerns about the fact that

Mothibi did not undergo the required public scrutiny that the interview candidates did. Noting this failure, CW questioned whether the benchmarks for transparency and public participation had been met during the process in December.

CW's position is that transparency in leadership appointment processes remains critical, notwithstanding the president's legal prerogative to make the final appointment. "Yes, the process having undergone a public participation phase only for an individual to be appointed who did not participate does seem to defeat the purpose as far as that exercise of transparency is concerned, but from the side of civil society, in particular CW, we would have done our work on behalf of the South African public in vetting the shortlisted candidates," says Kaseke.

The other processes that CW was involved in during the course of the year include submissions related to the appointment processes for the leadership of the Independent Electoral Commission and the National Lotteries Commission (NLC) a June and November respectively.

In the case of the NLC process, we sought clarification on the criteria to be used by Parliament's portfolio committee on Trade, Industry and Competition in the appointment process for the chairperson of the NLC. Substantially, we noted concerns relating to the Lotteries Act not having a clear set of suitability, qualifications, and experience criteria for the position. Furthermore, we questioned whether the committee had conducted a due diligence exercise to determine whether one of its shortlisted candidates had vacated a political office outside of the National Assembly, a point that CW's project team picked up during the organisation's vetting process of candidates.

We thus recommended that the committee:

- Indicate the reasons informing its recommendations with due regard to the respective candidates' suitability, qualifications, and experience.
- Conduct financial and security vetting of candidates.
- Conduct the necessary vetting of the spouses, life partners, immediate family members, or business associates of the candidates to the extent necessary to comply with section 3C (2) of the Act.
- Consider establishing clearer suitability, qualification, and experience criteria for the appointment of the chairperson.
- The NLC has in the last couple of years been mired in corruption allegations against several of its senior employees, and CW is of the position that members of its board should be above reproach.

For the year ahead, our leadership appointments work will focus on – among others – appointments in the local government sector, given that 2026 is a local government election year.

Kaseke looks forward to this: "There are a lot of appointments anticipated beyond the elections. We are looking to extend our work into monitoring key municipal appointments."

WHAT NOW AFTER NACAC?

By David Lewis, former CW executive director and NACAC councilor

When President Ramaphosa appointed the nine-person National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC), our letters of appointment were accompanied by wide-ranging terms of reference covering important issues relevant to the daunting task of combating corruption.

However, the centrepiece of the tasks assigned to us was an examination of the institutional architecture responsible for fighting corruption, including, in particular, an examination of the argument for and against establishing a new public institution solely focused on the fight against corruption.

In order to tackle the tasks at hand, we set up several work streams, each comprising a team of councilors who were required to report the outcome of their deliberations to the full Council for its consideration. The team examining the institutional architecture was also tasked with making recommendations designed to strengthen the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) responsible for combating corruption.

Office of Public Integrity

NACAC, which submitted its final report to the President in August 2025, recommended the establishment of a new, independent anti-corruption agency, dubbed the Office of Public Integrity (OPI).

There are two recommendations relating to the establishment of the OPI that are central to an understanding of NACAC's recommendations:

- Firstly, the central remit of the OPI will be to **prevent** corruption. In other words, the OPI will not be another LEA. Put another way, it will not enjoy criminal jurisdiction.
- Secondly, to economise on the time and money required to set up a new institution, and to avoid duplication in the assigned functions of the OPI, we have recommended that the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) be absorbed into the OPI.

Preventing corruption

While South Africa has the full panoply of LEAs required for investigating and prosecuting corruption, there is no public agency charged with leading and coordinating the prevention of corruption.

While the LEAs are critically important instruments in the fight against corruption – and we have made a number of recommendations designed to strengthen the criminal justice institutions – the huge returns from engaging in grand corruption invariably outweigh the relatively low risk of successful prosecution. For that reason, criminal justice is, on its own, an insufficient deterrent against corruption.

This is the case in all anti-corruption jurisdictions. Corruption usually involves a clandestine agreement between two parties. It is extremely difficult to prove – especially on the criminal standard of beyond a reasonable doubt – the existence of a clandestine conspiracy. There is no corpse, there are no stolen goods that must be sold on, and there is no revealing murder weapon.

This is why successful prosecution of corruption usually requires a whistle-blower, someone who has overheard some of the conspiratorial talk or someone whose job entails working with information which may reveal the existence of corruption.

The most important instrument for preventing criminal corruption is the power to investigate and remedy systemic corruption. These are investigations of systems operative in a government department or public entity. It may be that a corrupted appointment process has enabled the appointment of corrupt persons to critical posts in key departments, or it may be that the procurement department is not applying the regulations correctly. The board may be weak and not carrying out its oversight functions with sufficient rigour. Where an OPI investigation finds one or more of these flaws in a government department or public entity, it will devise remedies designed to cure these shortcomings in the entity's systems, thus closing the gaps that enable corruption. We have recommended that the OPI be granted the powers required to undertake these investigations, including powers of search and seizure, the power to summon and to interview witnesses under oath, and to convene public hearings.



The SIU is effectively empowered to undertake investigations of systemic corruption. However, the SIU is only entitled to conduct a full investigation and to use its considerable powers of investigation upon receipt of a presidential proclamation. Our recommendation is that, while the president retains his power to initiate an investigation, the OPI should also be empowered to initiate an investigation. To ensure that the OPI does not abuse its power to initiate an investigation, a legal test will have to be devised specifying the conditions which must be present in order to mount an investigation.

Currently, these systemic findings by the SIU are not binding upon the targeted entity or practice. We have recommended that the statute establishing the OPI provides that the findings arising from an investigation of systemic corruption be mandatory upon the institution or practice under investigation.

We make a number of important recommendations which are not elaborated here, which include the gathering and analysis of data related to corruption and which will assist in identifying targets of systemic investigation and in undertaking these investigations. We have also recommended that the OPI be responsible for supporting whistle-blowers.

Combating corruption is not a task for a single agency. It requires the committed participation of all of government and, indeed, all of society. This underlies the importance of assigning the OPI responsibility for public education and public communication and for coordinating government's anti-corruption corruption initiatives and programmes. We believe that what is required is a continual behaviour change programme which will keep the public informed about the changing nature of corruption, its impact on the nation's well-being and the personal risk of engaging in corruption.

Strengthening the LEAs

While it is necessary to complement law enforcement with prevention, it remains imperative that we strengthen the LEAs. Our enquiry has focused on the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the Investigating Directorate against Corruption (IDAC), the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (DPCI or Hawks), and the various units attached to the South African Police Service (SAPS), including those responsible for combating corruption on the part of SAPS personnel.

It is impossible to do justice to describing the dire state of SAPS or to the recommendations we have made for turning around this organisation whose effective functioning is critical, not only for combating corruption, but for the sake of peace and security.

SAPS is an institution of some 200 000 people and an annual budget of approximately R120-billion. The scale and complexity involved in turning around this organisation is monumental. While we believe that our recommendations are important first steps in the process of reforming SAPS, much more will be required to get to the bottom of the problems within SAPS and to devising cures for these problems. We were somewhat hamstrung in our work by our failure to secure an engagement with the national commissioner and his senior officers (with the exception of the leadership of the DPCI).

We were immediately struck by the overly broad and overlapping mandates of the critical anti-corruption units within SAPS and the NPA. In particular, the mandates of the DPCI, responsible for investigating serious corruption and a multitude of other serious crimes, and IDAC, the unit within the NPA responsible for investigating and prosecuting serious corruption and a daunting range of other serious crimes.

We have recommended that IDAC be given the responsibility for investigating and prosecuting serious corruption and serious commercial crime, while the DPCI should be mandated to investigate organised crime. We further recommended that the NPA establish a unit dedicated to prosecuting organised crime. All other mandates currently in the remit of these institutions should revert to SAPS.

SAPS will be mandated to investigate less serious corruption and less serious commercial crime. We have proposed that serious and less serious crimes be distinguished on the basis of the seniority of the public sector official implicated in the alleged crime, with SAPS' provincial structures mandated to investigate corruption and commercial crime that implicates officials below the level of senior middle management, that is below the rank of chief director or the equivalent thereof.

Because the boundaries between these crimes – particularly the division between serious corruption and organised crime – are sometimes porous, we have also made an important recommendation regarding the establishment of a case management committee (CMC) responsible for allocating investigations and prosecutions to the appropriate agency. The CMC is to be chaired by the national director of public prosecutions.

We have also made recommendations regarding the locus of responsibility for investigating police corruption. Serious police corruption – again distinguished from less serious police corruption on the basis of the seniority of the officer implicated – will be allocated for investigation and prosecution by IDAC, with investigation of less serious police corruption allocated to the anti-corruption investigation units located within each province and with the NPA responsible for the prosecution of these crimes.

We have made a range of other recommendations, the most far-reaching of which concern reforms designed to strengthen the independence of the NPA and IDAC. We are also deeply concerned at the lax manner in which disciplinary matters are handled within SAPS. The NACAC has also proposed some important reforms to the governance of SAPS. In particular, we have proposed that a small national police board be established with a mandate to assist SAPS with the development and oversight of an integrity and professionalisation strategy. This board will also advise the president on the appointment of senior leadership posts within SAPS.

Conclusion

South Africa faces a serious and growing corruption and organised crime problem. At the heart of this is the belief that the only effective deterrence in relation to these crimes is robust law enforcement. However, in the light of South Africa's experience and that of peers in the international community, we have recommended that law enforcement be complemented by the establishment of an anti-corruption agency responsible for **preventing** corruption and for coordinating the efforts of all of government and all of society.

This doesn't however relieve us of the imperative to strengthen law enforcement, which is in a parlous state. Indeed, corruption and incompetence, combined with low morale, within SAPS is arguably the most important reason for growing corruption and a recent surge in organised crime. The establishment of NACAC and the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Criminality, Political Interference, and Corruption in the Criminal Justice System, better known as the Madlanga commission, is evidence of government's recognition of the seriousness of this problem both within SAPS and within the society at large. Parliament has evidenced its concern by mounting its own investigation of police corruption.

We have made proposals which we believe will go some way towards solving these massive problems.

However, on their own, these proposals will prove ineffective. As we have stressed this is an 'all of government, all of society problem', and it is imperative that both the government and the entire South African community get behind these efforts. The interrelated problems of rampant corruption and organised crime and the poor performance of our LEAs, particularly SAPS, have reached crisis proportions. As the saying goes, 'never let a good crisis to go to waste'.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW.





CLIMATE GOVERNANCE AND INTEGRITY PROJECT

The climate governance and integrity (CGI) project has been one of the most exciting projects of 2025. The project is intended to raise awareness and advocate for improved climate governance amongst communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. However, in practise, what stood out most has been the depth of knowledge gained from communities on the ground during the project.

South Africa's climate change mitigation agenda is not well known or understood by many in the country's most vulnerable areas, yet it is communities in these areas that have lived experiences of how natural disasters have furthered their exclusion from discussions about solutions for the impact of climate change.

Senior researcher and project lead Melusi Ncala describes it as an opportunity for CW to focus on South Africa's climate architecture and how it may or may not lead to corruption. Climate change corruption refers to the abuse of power, public trust, and/or resources for personal or political gain in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation. This includes the mismanagement or theft of climate governance funds, manipulation of environmental policies, and the improper influence over processes designed to tackle climate change. The project kicked off with a risk assessment that revealed South Africa's areas of concern regarding climate change governance weaknesses. From there, the plan was to raise awareness for communities in these areas. Public education materials were produced with the aim of sharing insights on what climate governance is and how a just transition can be achieved for communities that are most vulnerable.

Through the public education materials, CW outlines the following:

- How climate change corruption occurs.
- Common forms of climate change corruption.
- Consequences of climate change corruption.
- How to address climate change corruption.

Travelling through four provinces, namely the Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, the team engaged with different communities where they imparted knowledge on issues of climate change and the just transition. Additionally, the project yielded a podcast series of five episodes that captures the experiences of communities with climate change and failures in disaster relief by government. It was launched in Johannesburg in April 2026.

Ncala describes the podcast as an advocacy tool aimed at both lawmakers and the activist community that brings the urgency of justice and accountability to the fore and highlights what kind of climate governance guardrails exist and what kind should exist.

It also highlights the dangers of not having consistent climate change mitigation strategies in place for disaster-prone areas. These include delays in climate action; environmental degradation; poor infrastructure development; and misuse of funds meant for disaster resilience for communities such as small-scale farmers, coastal residents, and informal settlements, among other issues.

Not all hope is lost, however, as there are ways that the South African society can take collective responsibility to curb the effects of bad governance in this area. According to the guide, key priorities for where we are include:

- Funding community action by directing climate finance to grassroots cooperatives, farmers, and local civic platforms.
- Reforming land ownership models to promote collective and equitable land models that empower historically excluded groups, including women and youth.
- Ensuring accountability by holding government officials accountable for delivering on climate plans and disclosing spending and exposing and challenging corporate influence.
- Establishing community science hubs that promote youth climate literacy and counter misinformation.
- Advancing a just transition from below by scaling up green job creation and sustainable rural livelihoods through community-led initiatives.

GENDER AND CORRUPTION

Corruption Watch's (CW) gender and corruption work picked up pace in 2025 as phase two of the Transparency, Integrity and Accountability Programme (TIP) began in October. Gender and corruption is one of the topics of focus for TIP2 and in 2025 CW's collaborative partnership work on tackling sexual corruption began in earnest.

In our previous annual report we noted that CW had established a partnership with the African Women Against Corruption Network (AWACN) that was supported by funder and technical support agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Our goal in the year before 2025 was to establish a movement to raise awareness for victims of sexual corruption. To gauge the level of knowledge on this type of corruption among the public, our project partners AWACN and GIZ developed a national survey in 2024. At the start of 2025 we convened a colloquium organised by GIZ in February at which we unpacked the findings of the survey, conducted by research company IPSOS.

Following the colloquium, a now larger group of partners participated in a two-day workshop in July, facilitated by the Collective Leadership Institute, which focused on guiding participants – from civil society, government and business – on how to navigate a successful collaboration with a common goal. Participants included CW, GIZ, Business Unity South Africa, the Commission for Gender Equality, the National School of Government, the Legal Resources Centre, and AWACN. A community of practice (CoP) was formed thereafter that meets bi-monthly to discuss the group's strategic direction and work plan. This year (2026) was decided as the date for the implementation of the strategy. We look forward to providing a comprehensive report on this project in our next annual report.



A critical component of this work for our organisation is to share and engage our regional and international partners on the project, so as to impart and gain insights from partners on navigating the strategic focus on sexual corruption.

An opportune moment to meaningfully engage our partners arose in the form of the TI Movement Summit in October. The summit, held online from 13-17 October, explored a variety of corruption-related topics, in which our team participated. Valencia Talane, a representative of CW on the CoP, participated in the sexual corruption session on the 15th, and sat on a panel of six speakers from different chapters of TI. Each speaker made a presentation of the work the chapter had done in their country, the lessons and challenges faced, and their future plans.

The work undertaken on sexual corruption has been an enriching experience for CW. The CoP process and outcomes, in particular, have highlighted the value of research, strategic partnerships, and global interest in sexual corruption.

This project has also had internal impacts as the gender sensitivity project task team convened and led sessions with the rest of the CW team, encouraging conversations around social norms that influence our workplace and the changes that we as an organisation want to inspire others to make to achieve gender-sensitive cultures. The intersectionality of gender inequality and corruption is well established.

Internally, CW is developing a gender strategy that espouses the principles of accountability and fairness in its work. The appointment of Lebogang Ramafoko as executive director will greatly enhance the development of CW's strategic focus on gender. Ramafoko is a seasoned gender activist with considerable experience in deepening organisational capacity on gender equality and feminist approaches to development.

“OUR GOAL WAS TO ESTABLISH A MOVEMENT TO RAISE AWARENESS FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL CORRUPTION.”

OUR WORK WITH YOUTH

The Youth Interrupter Programme – funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) over three years starting in 2023 – wrapped up its activities in 2025.

In last year's annual report we noted the successful development of a pillar of the programme, the Youth Anti-Corruption Toolkit, which is a comprehensive resource to educate and empower young people in combating corruption. In 2025 we took it to the streets.

The youth project team conducted no less than 15 public engagements at which the toolkit was unpacked, and youth groups trained on its use. Project co-ordinator Tawanda Kaseke explains: "It is an exciting programme that incorporates fun entertainment, education, and awareness targeted at young people in a unique way. Our programme objectives were to develop and disseminate material, namely an anti-corruption toolkit, a facilitators guide for public engagements, and the *Bribes & Whistles* game."

The three deliverables were developed in 2024 and in 2025 the team's goal was to ensure the roll-out of the public engagements and start training people on use of the toolkit for participants in youth engagements and the facilitator guide for trainers.

"The idea was that they would continue the work beyond the project's funding cycle, and that it would be incorporated into youth projects across different communities," explains Kaseke.

The toolkit provides practical insights, tools, and strategies to identify and address corruption in various contexts, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. It was first launched at the National Anti-Corruption Dialogue: Youth Conference in October 2024 and distributed a month later at the Intergenerational Dialogue.

In the 2025 report we also noted that *Bribes & Whistles* was well received and endorsed as a great innovation by members of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, the National Youth Coalition, the Special Investigating Unit, and UNODC at the dialogue.

The engagements held with youth groups were in partnership with the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, a long-standing partner in CW's youth focused work. The engagements were held across the first

and second quarters of the year in Gauteng, with a few in the third quarter. For some of these, the youth involved were of school-going age. They were trained in identifying the types of corruption that exist, how to report corruption, and what an active citizenry looks like. In some of those sessions we also piloted *Bribes & Whistles* to gauge reception. We got a lot of positive feedback from the youth in these communities and as a result there has been some communication about it being commercially available – however, this is still under consideration.

For Youth Month, the team participated in an international youth dialogue hosted by the YMCA in Soweto, where Kaseke led a workshop on youth and activism. At another event in October called Youth Voices, they hosted another workshop along with a civic market to showcase some of the programme's work. "This event saw young people from several of the country's provinces coming to engage with CW's work," says Kaseke. The final event and highlight for the year was the Ngeke! Festival that was hosted by Enhancing Accountability in December. At the two-day event, the team got a chance to showcase their content with youth and to engage them on corruption issues.

While the programme's cycle and activities may have ended, the element of public education continues.

"Part of our campaign plans for 2026 are to focus on voter education, considering that we're heading towards local government elections. We are looking at how we can empower youth between 18 and 35 with voter education. This would involve developing content that primarily speaks to local government elections, and what to look out for at this particular time in terms of corruption."

Kaseke adds that they also look forward to documenting stories of service delivery from a youth perspective. Additionally, there are opportunities to partner with other organisations to advance the youth anti-corruption agenda.

"There is a bit of feedback from our engagements where we've discovered that there is appetite among young people in terms of engaging with such content, because these are some of the issues that they face on a day-to-day basis and the more we engaged with them throughout the project, the more we got to see that they are well aware of how corruption issues affect them within their communities."



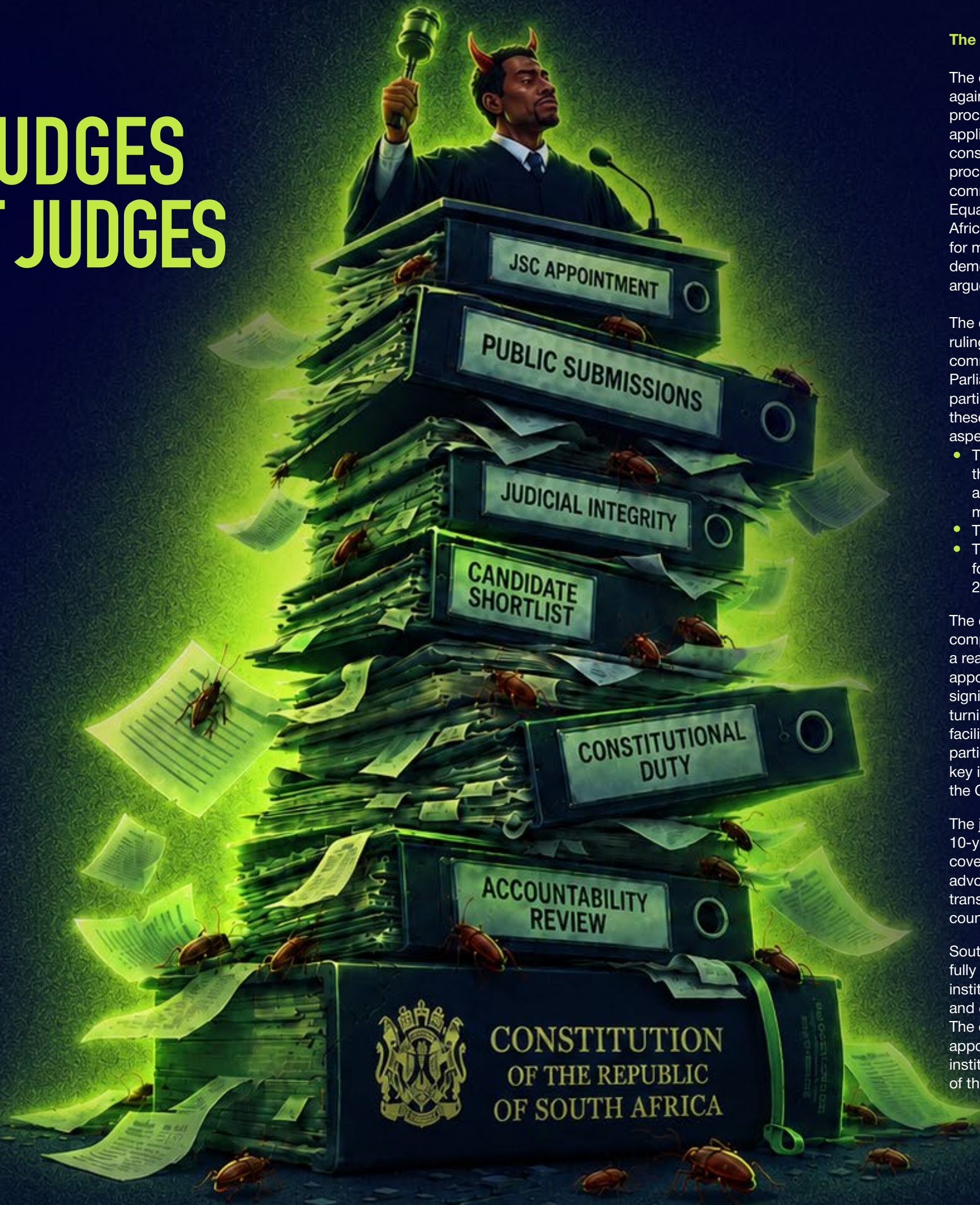
LITIGATION: IMPEACHED JUDGES CAN'T APPOINT JUDGES

As we have reported in previous annual reports, litigation has been a staple of the work of Corruption Watch (CW) for 14 years. During 2025, the courts ruled on two matters launched by CW.

The first involves impeached former judge president of the Western Cape High Court and Mkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP) leader, Dr John Hlophe. The same court decided in June that he could not join the Judicial Services Commission (JSC) and that Parliament's decision to appoint was unconstitutional.

CW brought forward an application in 2024 opposing Hlophe's inclusion in the JSC. This after the speaker of Parliament released the list of members as nominated by their parties. We argued that the JSC performs an important role in the appointment of judges, and it was therefore critical that the designation process be taken seriously and that only suitably qualified persons be appointed. As Hlophe had been removed as a judge for gross misconduct earlier in the same year, his appointment undermined the independence, dignity, and efficacy of the courts. CW further sought to interdict Hlophe from taking part in the October process of interviewing judges, traditionally undertaken by the JSC, of which some members are parliamentarians. This interdict was granted.

"In designating Dr Hlophe to the JSC, the National Assembly (NA) ignored and undermined the constitutional duty placed on it by section 165 (4) of the Constitution to protect the integrity and legitimacy of courts. Not only will the public's respect for the judiciary be affected by Dr Hlophe's appointment, but his designation also constitutes an attack on our constitutional democracy as a whole," read the ruling. An order of costs in favour of CW was made to both the MKP and Hlophe.



The principle of inclusive processes

The other case that CW was involved in, also against Parliament, had to do with appointment processes. In 2023, we brought forward an application challenging the NA's compliance with constitutionally mandated public participation processes in the appointment of five commissioners to the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE). One of the cornerstones of South Africa's constitutional democracy is the provision for members of the public to participate in democratic governance, and our application argued that the NA failed in this requirement.

The court found unanimously in favour of CW, ruling that the appointment of the five commissioners in March 2023 was invalid because Parliament did not allow for reasonable public participation in recommending candidates for these positions. The failure centred on three aspects of the process:

- The provision of inadequate information about the shortlisted candidates to enable the public and civil society organisations to make meaningful and effective submissions.
- The inadequate 14-day period for submissions.
- The unreasonable restriction of an online form limiting written submissions to 2 000 characters.

The court's declaration of the NA's failure to comply with its constitutional obligation to facilitate a reasonable public participation process in the appointment of new CGE commissioners, is a significant victory. On a wider scale, it signals a turning point in enforcing Parliament's role in facilitating processes for meaningful public participation in the appointment of leaders to key institutions, in terms of section 59(1)(a) of the Constitution.

The judgment is a critical milestone in CW's nearly 10-year campaign on leadership appointments – covered in another section of this report – which advocates for meaningful public participation and transparency in choosing candidates to lead the country's public institutions.

South African citizens have a right to participate fully in these processes, particularly where such institutions are at the forefront of ensuring justice and enforcement of human rights in the country. The opportunity for people to have their say in the appointment of representatives to Chapter 9 institutions like the CGE, is an important example of that process.

ACCOUNTABILITY
DOES NOT
ARRIVE ON ITS
OWN. IT HAS TO
BE DEMANDED.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY: THE SAAC PROJECT

Our Strengthening Action Against Corruption (SAAC) project, focusing on local government, made great progress in 2025. The project was launched in 2024 with a baseline survey aimed at determining the make-up and scope of selected community-based organisations (CBOs) in the Eastern Cape.

Representatives of the CBOs were trained at a corruption-busting bootcamp (CBB) in East London in July 2024 on how to identify the corruption and poor service delivery that is embedded in poor accountability systems.

With this training, co-ordinators from the CBOs – with small grants enabled by project funder, the European Union – embarked on a variety of activities to raise awareness about the SAAC and its objectives.

They reported back on their activities at the second CBB, also held in East London in May 2025, expanding on their experiences that included challenges, highlights, and lessons learned in their community engagements. Furthermore, CBB2 was an opportunity for the CBOs to present to both Corruption Watch (CW) and project partners Social Change Assistance Trust as they vied for bigger grants that would enable them to expand on the projects they had already started. The 10 grantees then went back to their communities with a clear new mission: to hold their local municipalities accountable for service delivery failures. An additional component to the accountability exercise was a corruption risk assessment that was carried out with the support of overseeing partner Transparency International.

The assessment process saw 10 field researchers compiling citizen-generated data on corruption to use it to identify common risks across the areas of procurement, recruitment, and contracting, among others.

The data, once analysed, would assist the project partners to advocate for reforms within the different structures of local government.

The assessment was planned for the period between May and the end of 2025 and had several key objectives:

- Determine the risks associated with corruption in local government.
- Focus on the potential reforms that can be achieved through advocacy.
- Determine areas of interest where patterns of irregularity in processes may occur.

Researchers focused on recruitment in municipalities and budget allocations for services, and were also meant to rate the levels of corruption risks associated in the occurrences. Concurrent to the research, the co-ordinators compiled case studies of poor service delivery and lack of accountability from the local authority. CW provided editorial support, with team members writing up the case studies as stories and publishing them on the CW website.

For those community members who wished to report corruption following the awareness campaigns of the CBOs, CW developed a digital tool to facilitate reporting. The tool also features on the SAAC web page and is promoted regularly on CW's social media platforms.

But what of the youth in these communities?

Conceptualised at the beginning of the SAAC project, the Youth Ambassadors for Accountability (YAfA) programme took off in earnest in 2025. The programme comprises 10 young people who are associated with the CBOs mentioned above, who have an interest in fighting corruption and community mobilisation work.

From 10-14 April 2025 the group of YAfAs converged in East London for the first time, primed to receive extensive training on how to run community campaigns and conduct research that enhances the work of their CBOs as well as broad-based media training, with the latter provided by CW. The group was taken through the different stages of campaign work, including awareness raising, how to solicit corruption reports from their communities, how to consolidate these thematically in order to formulate advocacy campaigns, and once these were up and running, how to engage the media by soliciting media awareness and attention and responding to media queries about their campaigns. They were also given an opportunity to come up with corruption types that most commonly affect young people in their communities.

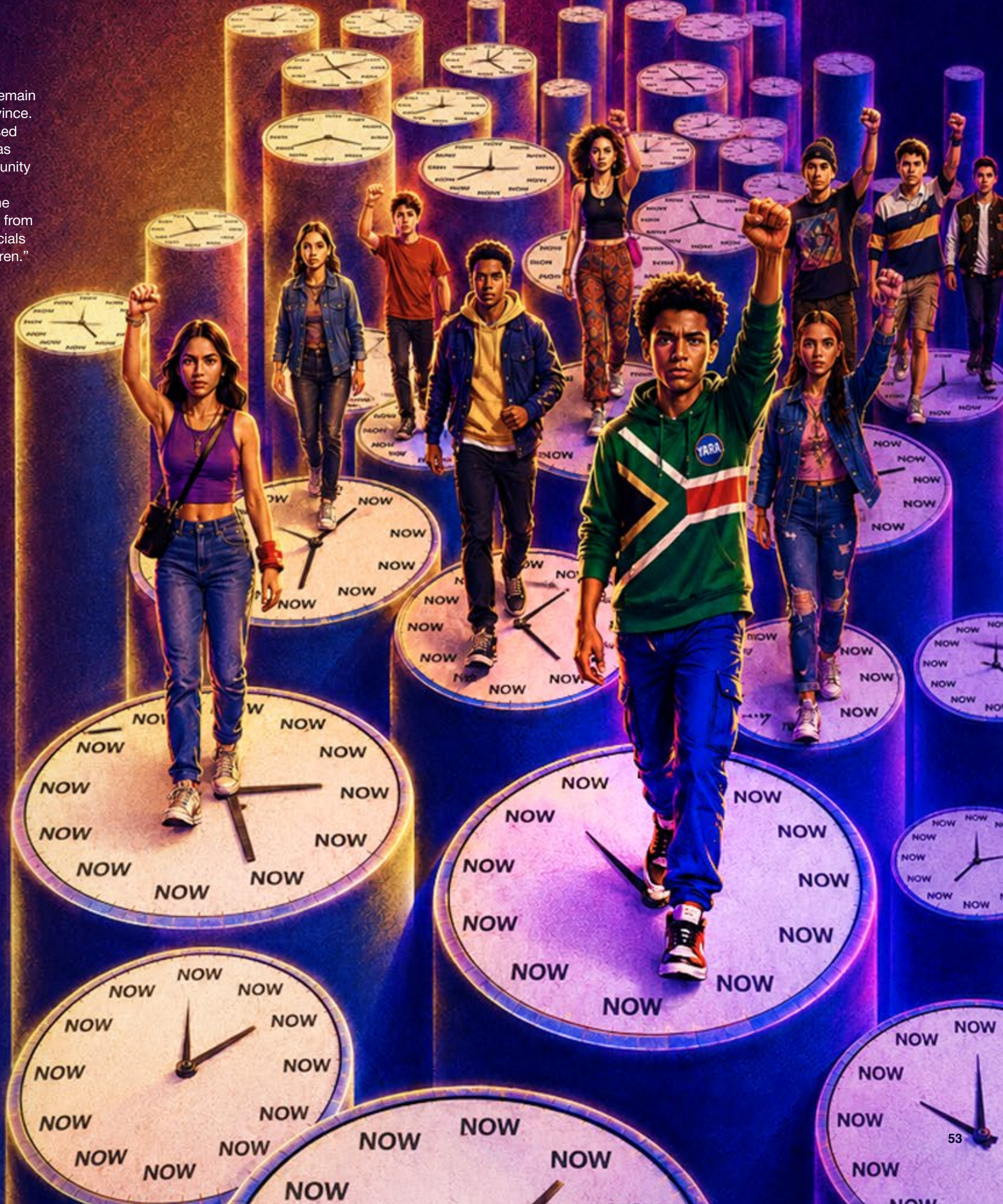
Drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, crime exacerbated by unemployment, mental health challenges, and poorly administered schools were some of the issues identified by the young ambassadors. As part of their broad training, they received media training manuals, which included information on how to conduct interviews, how to design social media campaigns for their community work, and how to engage with other young people in their communities to garner support for their campaigns. A further training session focusing on social media was provided later in the year.

This year sees the phasing out of the SAAC project in its current form, but consensus among the project partners is that a lot of work has been done on the ground, despite the challenges of poor resource management and systemic lack of accountability.

Municipalities across the Eastern Cape are now aware of the project, albeit not conforming to community demands that are brought forward by the co-ordinators and the investigations by field researchers.

Poorly managed bulk water supply services remain one of the biggest challenges across the province. For most of the CBOs, this challenge surpassed many other service delivery issues because, as one co-ordinator put it: “it is hard for a community to function to the best of its ability when its children spend half their time in school and the other half going back and forth to fetch water from far, for their homes. It is really unfair what officials in these municipalities have done to our children.”

**THESE YOUNG
AMBASSADORS
ARE NOT
SPEAKING
FOR THEIR
COMMUNITIES.
THEY ARE
SPEAKING
FROM
WITHIN
THEM.**



THE TRANSPARENCY, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMME

The Transparency, Integrity and Accountability Programme (TIP), launched in 2022, concluded its first three-year cycle in 2025, transitioning from phase one to two in October.

The programme is anchored in a multi-sector approach to building governance capacity in public institutions and enhancing anti-corruption work as anticipated by the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS). It is supported through a partnership agreement between the governments of Germany and South Africa and is co-funded by the German and Swiss governments.

TIP takes a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to supporting the implementation of the NACS in three primary areas:

- Promotion of active involvement of citizens through initiatives that encourage transparency, integrity, and accountability.
- Strengthening of institutional resilience to empower state actors to steer and coordinate implementation of the NACS.
- Establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships between the public sector, private sector, and civil society to build up transparency, integrity, and accountability, with special attention given to human rights, including gender equality.

Through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Corruption Watch (CW) has been part of several TIP initiatives that have shaped its work in several areas such as whistle-blower protection and legislation reform, youth anti-corruption training (see our youth section for more details) and the development of digital tools designed to monitor corruption trends, among others.

In reflecting on the highlights of TIP I, CW looks back on how it played a role as co-chair of the TIP steering committee, alongside the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation in the presidency, as well as co-chair of the TIP's strategic advisory committee which considers strategic issues for inclusion and provides a platform for engagement with funders.

CW is one of the core members of Whistle-blower Support Platform for Reform (WSPR), along with The Whistleblower House, and the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa. The vision of WSPR, which is to harness various skillsets and implement solutions to establish a conducive whistle-blowing environment, is aligned with CW's priorities in relation to whistle-blowers. This whistle-blower protection and support through the WSPR is another vital element of TIP I that we're involved in.

Additionally, CW also served as supporting partner for the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council.

Phase two – or TIP II as it has come to be known among its stakeholders – in 2026 will encompass the topics of public procurement and gender and corruption, with sexual corruption as a focus. CW was included in the establishment of a gender and corruption collaborative compact in 2025 that includes stakeholders from government, civil society, and business. Its main purpose is to advance public awareness and legal advocacy campaigns in the coming months. The group was in its strategic phase at the time of the writing of this report and will report on the 2026 activities in the next annual report.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

During 2025, Corruption Watch (CW) significantly expanded its regional and international presence, strengthening partnerships across Africa, exchanging knowledge and expertise and engaging with global anti-corruption platforms on a range of critical issues.

This work positioned CW as a key player in continental and international anti-corruption efforts while deepening collaboration with Transparency International (TI) and regional civil society organisations.

Africa regional engagement

The TI Africa Regional Meeting (ARM) 2025, hosted by the Center for Public Integrity (CIP) in Maputo, Mozambique, from 17 to 20 June, convened national chapters from across Africa's five regions to advance TI's Strategy 2030: Holding Power to Account.

CW participated in the ARM, presenting on civil society oversight in the South African mining sector as part of the session, Environmental and Natural Resource Governance in Africa. The presentation explored how mining, despite its economic significance, has long driven dispossession, environmental degradation, and weakened community governance.

CW outlined its accountability strategy combining investigative journalism, public interest litigation, and community engagement, highlighting wins such as the Lawyers for Human Rights case that led to the Maledu judgment and progress on consultation standards and beneficial ownership transparency. The session closed with a call for stronger regional collaboration and a unified civil society push for extractives justice across Africa.

The key thematic areas addressed at the 2025 ARM were:

- Environment and natural resource governance, with focus on extractive industries, illicit financial flows, and community rights.
- Shifts in democratic governance across Africa, including shrinking civic space and reduced donor funding.
- Technology and data for anti-corruption work, including challenges of the digital divide. Inclusive service delivery, with findings from TI's Inclusive Service Delivery Africa project revealing pervasive corruption and sextortion in health and education sectors across five African countries.

Asset recovery seminar

Prior to the ARM, CW participated in CIP's Asset Recovery and Compensation to Victims Seminar in June, presenting on civil society experiences in asset recovery. The presentation highlighted South Africa's G20 Presidency as an opportunity to advance anti-corruption priorities, particularly through the Anti-Corruption Working Group's focus on strengthening asset recovery measures and whistle-blower protection mechanisms.

CW emphasised the critical role of civil society collaboration with investigative journalists and law enforcement, drawing on experience from cross-border cases including the Moti Group foreign bribery investigation, a collaboration between CW, TI, The Sentry, and Open Secrets.

Civil society calls for revitalising SADC

The Civil Society Forum 2025, held in Madagascar from 18 to 22 August under the theme "*Revitalising the SADC We Want*," brought together civil society organisations (CSOs) from across the region to tackle pressing development and governance challenges facing Southern Africa.

THE INTERCONNECTED NATURE OF CORRUPTION CHALLENGES ACROSS AFRICA DEMANDS REGIONAL COLLABORATION.

Over two days, sessions covered a broad, but interconnected, range of topics: girls' education and gender equality, child-focused social protection, the SADC Protocol on Children, economic integration and trade justice, and resistance to anti-gender and anti-rights backlash.

Day two focused on youth participation in climate and green transition, civic technology, democratic backsliding and shrinking civic space, and water resource management. The forum concluded with a stocktaking exercise reviewing progress on the 2024 Communiqué, mapping civil society engagement with the SADC structures, and identifying emerging challenges — including the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI), climate change, and financing constraints — signalling a civil society determined to hold regional institutions accountable while adapting to a rapidly shifting landscape.

International platforms / global partnerships

The TI Movement Summit is the flagship internal event, bringing together participants from all chapters globally for four days of active discussion and strategic alignment. The summit showcases work and progress towards TI's global strategic priorities, strengthens the network across regions, and facilitates commitments to joint action on pressing anti-corruption challenges. Priority is given to sessions that are action-focused, dynamic, and bring together diverse voices from across the movement.

Our team was well-represented at the 2025 virtual event in October, with three team members participating in thematic panels. Janine Erasmus spoke on the Addressing Disinformation and Propaganda about Corruption session exploring how disinformation is strategically deployed to undermine public trust, stall reforms, and erode international support for anti-corruption efforts, with particular focus on Eastern Europe and Africa. Moira Campbell participated in the Whistle-blower Protection and Support session, showcasing South Africa's innovative multi-stakeholder collaboration models where CSOs pool expertise to provide comprehensive psycho-social support, legal advocacy, and legislative reform through initiatives like the Whistle-blower Support Platform for Reform.

Moepeng Valencia Talane contributed to the Sexual Corruption panel, highlighting CW's partnership work to raise awareness and advocate for legislation criminalising sexual corruption — a violation of constitutional rights to safety and dignity that disproportionately affects victims in academic and workplace settings. These presentations reflected CW's growing recognition as a thought leader on emerging corruption challenges and gender-responsive approaches.

Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity at CoSP11

The CW interim leadership team attended the 11th Conference of the States Parties to UNCAC (CoSP11) in Doha, Qatar from 14 to 20 December as part of the TI delegation, supported by the Land Corruption in Africa (LCA) project. Participation provided valuable insights into global anti-corruption efforts and confirmed strong alignment between CW's priorities and TI's advocacy focus.

The CoSP11 centred on harnessing AI and new technologies to combat corruption, strengthening international law enforcement cooperation, and promoting youth engagement in anti-corruption efforts. Critical focus areas that align with CW's priority areas of work included:

Whistle-blower protection: Uncovering Corruption Day featured testimonies from some of the 2025 International Anti-Corruption Excellence (ACE) Awards winners – CW is proud that its own deputy board chairperson Marianne Camerer was a distinguished ACE award winner. Sessions included the examination of robust legal frameworks, and how to create resilient ecosystems to expose and fight corruption through a 'whole of society' approach. CW attended sessions on implementing Resolution 10/8, addressing concerns about weaponisation of 'good faith' requirements and the growing threat of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. Panel discussions with UNODC representatives explored technical assistance opportunities and potential partnerships with the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa. The relevance to CW's LCA work was particularly evident, with these dynamics reflected in reports from community monitors and farm workers who face retaliation when exposing corruption in land administration and farm worker equity schemes.

**WHISTLE-BLOWERS PERFORM
A DUTY FOR THE COUNTRY.
THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE TO
PERFORM IT ALONE.**



Gender, discrimination, and sexual corruption:

sessions advancing Resolution 10/10 examined sexual corruption as abuse of power requiring fundamentally different approaches from other corruption types, and the need to move away from language that treats sexual corruption as mutual culpability. CW connected with a team of Uppsala University researchers, who noted South Africa's leadership in bringing this issue to government-level discussion and expressed interest in collaboration. CW continues as an active member of the community of practice, a multi-sector collaboration exploring the topic of sexual corruption in South Africa.

Other engagement: CW's interim leadership participated in sessions of CoSP focused on professional enablers, beneficial ownership transparency (particularly in real estate and across Africa), asset recovery, and political funding transparency. TI's advocacy, alongside the Global Civil Society Coalition for the UNCAC, successfully preserved language on professional service providers in the environmental corruption resolution.

Regional collaboration initiatives

SADC multi-country proposals: building on the ARM outcomes, CW and TI partners developed concept notes for four potential interconnected regional initiatives designed for co-development with TI chapters and civil society partners:

1. Reclaiming democratic space through citizen engagement to confront state capture;
2. Expanding civic tech for accountability by adapting tools (e.g. Veza and Procurement Watch tools) across SADC;
3. Confronting sexual corruption through a regional legal and advocacy framework; and
4. Whistle-blower protection and civic empowerment, including mapping existing laws and developing harmonised protection standards. These proposals leverage CW's tools and experience while emphasising collaboration, scalability, evidence-driven approaches, and survivor / citizen-centred design.

Strategic stakeholder engagements

Throughout 2025, CW strengthened its international partnerships and global anti-corruption engagement.

Team members actively participated in South Africa's G20 Presidency initiatives, contributing to Anti-Corruption Working Group meetings in March and June on themes of public sector transparency, asset recovery efficiency, inclusive civic participation, and whistle-blower protection mechanisms, as well as Development Working Group discussions on illicit financial flows.

The organisation maintained regular engagement with international donors and partners including GIZ, Elma Foundation, and the Social Justice Initiative. We also participated in workshops and training sessions hosted by the Open Society Foundation and the Ford Foundation's Empowered Leaders Programme. The interim leaders hosted and attended events with a range of diplomatic missions from the European Union, namely Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, Canada, and France. CW also deepened cross-border civil society collaboration, working with TI, The Sentry, and Open Secrets on a foreign bribery case focusing on an investigation into the Moti Group's involvement with Zimbabwean elites, demonstrating the critical importance of international partnerships in following money and assets across jurisdictions.

Looking ahead: CW is well-positioned to contribute to TI's continuing advocacy following the CoSP11 on whistle-blower protection (following up Resolution 10/8) and gender, discrimination, and corruption (following up Resolution 10/10), including side event proposals on sexual corruption and measuring discriminatory corruption. The organisation's ongoing work on sexual corruption has the potential to partner with TI chapters globally, and its community-based evidence and FWES case experiences offer concrete country-level examples of how corruption deepens gender inequality and how power imbalances manifest in land governance, providing grounded evidence from rural contexts to inform global discussions.

The ARM 2025 reinforced the interconnected nature of corruption challenges across Africa and the critical importance of regional collaboration. Outcomes from 2025 engagements will guide coordinated regional advocacy, inform contributions to TI's Strategy 2030 objectives, and strengthen partnerships across the anti-corruption ecosystem. Despite resource constraints and shrinking civic space, CW's 2025 international and regional engagements demonstrated remarkable commitment to sustaining anti-corruption efforts through innovation, solidarity, and strategic partnerships at regional and global levels.

Fundraising through innovative ideas

CW's monitoring and evaluation lead Sboniso Nyide participated in a fundraising bootcamp hosted by the TI Secretariat in November. The event convened representatives from 18 national chapters across Africa, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and the Middle East to examine the organisations' long-term sustainability in a shifting global funding landscape.

Importantly, the engagement was not generic. Pre-convening surveys were deliberately integrated into the design and tone of the agenda, ensuring that the programme responded directly to the lived challenges of participating chapters. This was reinforced through real-life simulations that tested strategic decision-making under realistic funding scenarios. A key insight was refreshingly simple: fundraising requires that we ask for money. For organisations often uncomfortable with that posture, the sessions reframed fundraising as a legitimate and necessary expression of mission confidence. The discussions moved beyond proposal techniques to structural questions about positioning, diversification, and safeguarding independence. The bootcamp also challenged assumptions about the limits of public fundraising in constrained economic contexts, including among our own programme constituencies.

For CW, the experience reinforced the idea that sustainability is ultimately a leadership and organisational culture issue. As Matthew King emphasised during the sessions, "we are all fundraisers", not in the narrow sense of writing proposals, but in how we communicate impact, steward relationships, and articulate our value proposition. Fundraising must therefore be embedded in governance, programme architecture, and evidence generation.

Says Nyide of the experience: "I extend sincere thanks to Alexandre, Atlegang, Sara, Zaya, and Matthew from the secretariat fundraising team for convening and guiding a rigorous and forward-looking engagement."



BOARD MEMBERS



Themba Maseko
Board Chairperson

Maseko is the (adjunct) professor and director of Executive Education at the Wits School of Governance. He holds a BA LLB (Wits University) and an MBA (De Montfort University). His career in the public service includes roles as the former CEO of the Government Communication and Information System and government spokesperson; director-general in the Department of Public Service and Administration; and he also served in the National Department of Public Works. He was the first superintendent-general in the Gauteng Department of Education and a Member of Parliament in 1994.

His role in the private sector included short stints as managing director of the Damelin Education Group, an independent management consultant, and communications director at the Business Leadership South Africa. He left the public service after 17 years when he spoke out against the capture of the South African state and was later a witness at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into State Capture, also known as the Zondo Commission. He is the author of *For my Country* and serves on the boards of several other civil society organisations including the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution and Chapter Zero. He is a trustee of the board of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.



Marianne Camerer
Deputy Board Chairperson

Camerer is a senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, where she focuses on ethics, leadership, and accountability, teaching on the leadership modules of the school's part-time and full-time master's programme in Development Policy and Practice. She also supervises master's and PhD students in the areas of leadership, accountability, and anti-corruption. She holds a master's degree in public policy and political philosophy from Oxford and the University of Stellenbosch, and a PhD in Political Studies (University of Witwatersrand).

She was selected as a 2005 Yale World Fellow, a prestigious fellowship awarded to emerging leaders from around the world. Camerer is regarded as an expert on anti-corruption issues. She co-founded the international NGO Global Integrity and served as international director and on its board for 10 years (2005-2015). She was a founding director of the Open Democracy Advice Center (ODAC), an NGO monitoring the implementation and encouraging the use of access to information and whistle-blower protection laws in South Africa. She was recently appointed as a trustee of the Institute for Security Studies.



Zukiswa Kota

Kota is currently the programme head for South Africa at the Public Service Accountability Monitor at Rhodes University. She has extensive experience supporting various social and budget justice interventions including the coordination of a civil society coalition working with the National Treasury to develop a pioneer budget portal to deepen public participation, transparency, and fiscal accountability. In recent years, she has contributed to improving anti-corruption and fiscal transparency in the public sector. She is a member of South Africa's interim steering committee for the Open Government Partnership led by the Department of Public Service and Administration. She serves on the board of trustees of the Equal Education Law Centre and My Vote Counts as well as on the advisory board of the Public Economy Project at Wits University. She is a founding chairperson of the Budget Justice Coalition and the Imali Yethu Coalition for Open Budgets.



Karabo Rajuili

Rajuili is director of country implementation at Open Ownership, providing country support to governments implementing beneficial ownership transparency. Before this, she worked for five years at award-winning independent investigative journalism centre amaBhungane as the advocacy co-ordinator. While at amaBhungane, she served as country chair and regional support (Africa) for the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) Media Freedom Committees in South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya, working with senior journalists and editors in print, digital, and broadcast media. She also worked to secure information rights in the interest of investigative journalism and wherever possible, the wider public, on an array of policy areas including cyber security, digital rights, the intersection of privacy and access to information laws, and beneficial ownership transparency in procurement law reform. She worked on the most recent review of South Africa's Companies Act and was part of successful efforts to advocate for and subsequently draft South Africa's first political party financial transparency law.



Sanan Mirzoyev

An advocate of the High Court of South Africa, Mirzoyev has vast experience in legal research, analysis and drafting, and litigation. Another area of interest for him is policy research and development. He is also skilled in programme and project design, implementation, and management and has driven digital transformation in government, anti-corruption, and governance.



Gary Pienaar

Advocate Gary Pienaar is a research associate with the Human Sciences Research Council's Developmental, Capable and Ethical State research division. He holds a masters in Philosophy in Values and Policy Studies from the University of Stellenbosch, and BA Honours and LLB degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand. Pienaar specialises in constitutional and human rights law; democratic governance, public ethics and integrity, transparency and accountability, and political finance.



Thapelo Musekwa

Musekwa is a seasoned finance professional with over 10 years' experience in the higher education sector. He currently holds the position of senior financial officer at the University of the Witwatersrand, which is also his alma mater. His qualifications include a BCom in Accounting and a Post-graduate Diploma in Business Administration, both from Wits University, and an advanced Diploma in Internal Auditing from Unisa. He is currently enrolled for a Chartered Institute of Management Accountants qualification. He previously served as an executive committee member of Laerskool Gustav Preller as treasurer, while serving as an executive member of the Advisory Council at Potchefstroom College of Agriculture.

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