



Democracy Development Program NPC

www.ddp.org.za



2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Amplifying Citizens Voices

About DDP

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) was established in 1993 as a collaborative initiative with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), a German political foundation. It emerged during South Africa’s transition to democracy, aiming to support the country’s evolving democratic landscape.

From its inception, DDP positioned itself as a non-partisan, non-profit civil society organization committed to strengthening democratic governance and civic participation.



DDP works to:

- Build strong and active communities capable of holding those in power accountable.
- Facilitate political education and citizen engagement.
- Strengthen local government and traditional authority structures.
- Promote youth participation, women in leadership, and migration and social cohesion.
- Support parliamentary engagement and advocacy efforts.

Our Vision

The DDP vision is centered around mobilizing citizens for positive societal change, which encourages co-creating a world of possibilities.

We advocate for an active, informed, and involved citizenry contributing toward

- A transformed society and responsive government through,
 - A strong, organized civil society that actively promotes culture of democracy and supports the development of connected, purposeful and active communities



Our Mission

1

Encouraging citizen engagement with burning issues in politics and development.

2

Holding public and political forums that encourage peaceful and constructive dialogue.

3

Observing elections and strengthening civil society and community voices.

Our Team

Since its founding in 1993, DDP has built a team of passionate professionals who work tirelessly to empower communities, promote good governance, and foster active citizenship. Together, the DDP team embodies a shared commitment to building a more inclusive, accountable, and participatory democracy. Their collective efforts continue to inspire citizen action and strengthen democratic institutions in SA and beyond.



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1. Message from the Executive Director



Dr. Paul Kariuki

Executive Director

As we reflect on the journey of 2025, we are reminded of the remarkable resilience and determination of South Africans in the face of ongoing socio-economic challenges. This year has not only tested our democratic institutions and civic spaces but has also illuminated the strength of collective action and the vital power of citizen engagement.



At the Democracy Development Program (DDP), we embraced the theme “Amplifying Citizens’ Voices.” This theme serves as a clarion call to deepen participatory democracy by fostering inclusive platforms for dialogue, advocacy, and action. Through a variety of initiatives, ranging from community forums and youth leadership workshops to policy roundtables and civic education programs, we have empowered citizens to speak out, collaborate, and actively shape the democratic landscape. These successes reaffirm our belief that democracy is not merely confined to election cycles; it is a living experience, nurtured daily through active participation and accountability.

However, we must also confront the challenges that persist. The lack of meaningful progress on critical issues such as education reform, gender-based violence, and economic inequality continues to hinder our democratic growth. These gaps call for renewed commitment from all sectors of society. It is imperative that we work together to ensure our democracy is not only responsive but also inclusive and transformative.

Looking ahead, our vision for democratic development in South Africa is deeply rooted in transparency and citizen empowerment. We envision a society where every voice matters, especially those of youth, women, and marginalised communities. By leveraging strategic partnerships, embracing digital innovation, and mobilizing grassroots efforts, we will continue to build a democracy that truly reflects the aspirations of all South Africans.

To our partners, funders, and stakeholders, we extend our gratitude for your unwavering support and collaboration. Your belief in our mission has been instrumental in driving impactful change. Together, we are shaping a future where democracy thrives not only in institutions but also in the hearts and actions of the people.

Let us move forward with courage, unity, and purpose, as we continue this vital journey together.

Dr. Paul Kariki

2. Amplifying Citizens' Voices



Translating the 2025 theme into impactful experiences

In 2025, DDP continued to promote participatory democracy in South Africa under the theme “Amplifying Citizens’ Voices.” This theme guided all aspects of DDP’s work, ensuring citizens were actively engaged in democratic processes.

We strengthened local governance by facilitating dialogues between communities and municipal officials through public forums, local government and civic education dialogues and workshops. DDP’s partnership with the IEC also focused on voter education and civic mobilization, helping citizens understand the importance of their vote in the lead-up to the 2026 elections.

In rural areas, DDP worked with traditional leaders to merge cultural governance with democratic principles, promoting education, gender equality, and community development. This approach included marginalized voices in broader policy discussions.

In academia, DDP engaged with higher learning institutions, offering fellowships and leadership programs to foster a new generation of civic-minded leaders. The DDP School of Political Education and Leadership provided training in political literacy and ethical leadership, empowering youth leaders, women and civil society activists.

Recognizing the media’s role in shaping public opinion, DDP collaborated with journalists and digital platforms to amplify citizen narratives. Through media training and storytelling initiatives, DDP elevated underrepresented voices and promoted transparency in governance.

Overall, 2025 was a transformative year for DDP, reinforcing its commitment to building an inclusive democracy where every South African has a voice in shaping the nation’s future.



SPHAMANDLA MHLONGO – SENIOR PROGRAMS OFFICER

3. Our Work:

DDP School of Political Education and Leadership

“Building leadership capacity and enhancing political knowledge among emerging leaders who are committed to deepening democracy in the country”.

Dr. Paul Kariuki.

Political Party Capacity Development

In 2025, we successfully trained 30 individual members from various political parties. Additionally, we hosted **three** capacity-building workshops designed to empower political party representatives with essential skills and knowledge. These workshops focused on enhancing their understanding of political systems and governance, led by Prof Bheki Mngomezulu, Director at CANRAD.

Process Facilitation

We’ve made a significant investment in developing our own team of facilitators, including our Associate Facilitators. This year, we conducted a refresher course to update and align their understanding of our methodology and the processes we use to carry out the work of DDP.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Collaborations with CSOs, IEC, institutions of higher learning, the Inanda Youth Crime Prevention Desk, Municipalities, as well as the media form a robust ecosystem of democratic engagement, ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of our democracy.

Gender and Democracy

We hosted **three** Anti-Corruption workshops in collaboration with the Enhancing Accountability Programme. In addition, we worked closely with female employees at Huntswood to strengthen their understanding of workplace gender-based violence and relevant laws, hosting **four** workshops. We’ve also supported women’s dialogues and conferences across various municipalities, helping to create spaces for meaningful conversations and empowerment.

Media and Democracy

In 2025, the Democracy Development Program (DDP) hosted a total of **four** journalism workshops under its Media and Democracy Program. These workshops were part of a series titled "Media, Democracy, and Governance", with a strong focus on empowering journalists to amplify marginalized voices and promote civic engagement.

Youth and Democracy

We have also engaged institutions of higher learning to broaden the reach of our civic education programs. Through workshops, seminars, and collaborative research, we are cultivating a new generation of active citizens who are critical thinkers and advocates for democratic values.

KZN Legislature - Women's Caucus

(DDP) has been instrumental in fostering collaboration among women’s caucuses across Southern Africa, beginning with its work in KwaZulu-Natal. Following the success in KZN, DDP extended its support to the women’s caucuses in Malawi, Zimbabwe, and most recently Zambia.

CSO Capacity Building Workshops & Mentoring

In 2025, the Democracy Development Program (DDP) placed citizen agency at the heart of its mission, propelling a transformative agenda to amplify voices from the grassroots level. Through its innovative Capacity Building and Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Mentoring initiatives, DDP empowered civil society organisations to become more strategic, inclusive, and impactful in shaping democratic discourse.

This year's workshops covered critical themes such as Media & Democracy, Gendered Corruption, Youth Civic Engagement, and Local Government Advocacy. Each session provided not only practical tools but also collaborative platforms for CSOs to engage meaningfully with both communities and government entities

These workshops transcended traditional skill-building; they fostered a sense of momentum and community, laying the groundwork for a more participatory democracy.

A cornerstone of DDP's approach has been the strengthening of the KZN CSO Coalition, which serves as a vital network for collaboration among civil society actors. By mentoring grassroots changemakers, DDP is cultivating a vibrant civil society ecosystem where citizen voices are not merely heard but actively drive meaningful change.



Pictured: Xoliswa Jwili, DDP Associate Facilitator, at a women's workshop in Huntswood.



Pictured: BlackSash KZN team and the DDP Team at the LGALN workshop.

Moreover, these initiatives have highlighted the importance of inclusivity, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in democratic conversations.

Through targeted training and mentorship, participants have developed the capacity to advocate for their communities, address local issues, and influence policy decisions that affect their lives.



Pictured: Delegates at the LGALN workshop at Eshowe.

As we move forward, DDP remains committed to sustaining this momentum, continuing to empower citizens and organizations alike. The journey toward a more equitable and democratic society is ongoing, and with the collective strength of civil society, we can create a future where every voice matters and every citizen can effect change.

Political Engagements and Capacity Building Initiatives

In 2025, the Democracy Development Program (DDP) continued to champion participatory democracy through a series of strategic engagements aimed at strengthening political institutions, civic awareness, and inclusive governance.

Central to these efforts were two major Political Party Capacity Development Workshops, facilitated by Professor Bheki Mngomezulu, which provided a dynamic platform for political representatives, civil society actors, and community leaders to explore the root causes of voter apathy, strategies for restoring democratic legitimacy, and the importance of community-centered leadership.

Complementing these workshops, DDP hosted two Political Summits—one in partnership with the University of Zululand and the other with the University of Pretoria—to deepen youth engagement and foster academic discourse around democratic renewal.

These summits focused on the role of tertiary institutions in promoting civic education, youth political participation, and policy dialogue.



Pictured: Hon. Nontembeko Boyce, Speaker of the KNZ Provincial Parliament at the DDP International Women's Day Forum.



Pictured: Delegates at DDP Local Government Dialogue in PMB, in partnership with Msunduzi Local Municipality.

DDP also convened a series of Public Forums, including the **Post-State of the Nation Address (SONA) Forum** and the **International Women's Day Forum**, which brought together government officials, academics, civil society leaders, and activists to reflect on national policy, gender equity, and governance transparency.

Furthering its grassroots impact, DDP facilitated 9 Local Government and Civic Education Dialogues aimed at empowering communities with knowledge of local governance structures, promoting accountability, and encouraging active citizen participation in municipal affairs.



Pictured: Political Party representatives and civil Activists with facilitator, Prof. Bheki Mngomezulu and DDP's Dr. Paul Kariuki at a workshop in Durban.

Amplifying Citizen Engagement Through Media

In 2025, our efforts have been characterised by impactful collaborations, extensive media coverage, and innovative programming that enhances democratic participation across KwaZulu-Natal.

A significant highlight of 2025 was our strategic partnership with four community radio stations in KwaZulu-Natal: Intokozo FM, Inanda FM, Siyathuthuka FM, and Vibe FM. Through this collaboration, we produced **13** radio talk shows that addressed critical local government and societal issues.

These programs served as accessible platforms for educating the public on governance, service delivery, and civic rights; facilitating dialogue on pressing challenges such as youth unemployment, gender-based violence, and municipal accountability; and promoting inclusivity by ensuring that underrepresented voices were heard and engaged.



Pictured: DDP Associate Facilitator, Bhekizenzo Mabaso during a show at Siyathuthuka FM.

This initiative significantly expanded our reach, connecting us with thousands of listeners and fostering meaningful, community-driven conversations.



4 Radio Talk Shows

Broadcasting to +
135 000 listeners
acros KZN



4 Radio Talk Shows

Broadcasting to +
80 000 listeners
acros KZN



3 Radio Talk Shows

Broadcasting to +
100 000
listeners across KZN



2 Radio Talk Shows

Broadcasting to +
157 000
listeners across
KZN

Another standout achievement in 2025 was our successful four-part journalism workshop series, led by esteemed media expert Gugu Madonsela. The series, titled “Amplifying Voices for Justice – Journalism in Democracy,” took place from March to July in Durban, bringing together journalists from across the province. Participants engaged in skill-building sessions focused on ethical journalism, investigative reporting, and digital storytelling.

The workshops also encouraged historical reflection on media exclusion during apartheid and explored strategies for inclusive reporting.

In addition to enhancing journalistic capacity, the series fostered collaboration among participants and culminated in the certification of those who completed the program—recognizing their commitment to responsible, impactful journalism.



Pictured: DDP's Suraksha Singh with Gugu Madonsela, handing a certificate of completion to Intokozo FM Journalist, Thobeka Khumalo.



Pictured: Gugu Madonsela Facilitating the Journalism Workshop.

In 2025, our efforts have been characterized by impactful collaborations, extensive media coverage, and innovative programming that enhances democratic participation across KwaZulu-Natal.

As we reflect on 2025, DDP remains dedicated to leveraging media and public engagement as vital tools for democratic transformation.

Our partnerships, programming, and outreach efforts have established a robust foundation for continued impact. We eagerly anticipate expanding these initiatives in 2026, deepening our community engagement, and fostering a media landscape that champions justice, transparency, and active citizenship.

Amplifying Women and Youth Voices in KZN

In 2025, the Democracy Development Program (DDP) continued its mission to strengthen democratic participation and social justice by actively engaging women and youth across KwaZulu-Natal.

Through a series of targeted initiatives, DDP created inclusive platforms for dialogue, education, and advocacy in local municipalities and institutions of higher learning, with a particular focus during Women's Month and Youth Month.



Pictured: Delegates at the DDP Youth Indaba in partnership with MUFG and UMngeni Municipality

“At DDP, partnerships are the heartbeat of transformation”.
Dr Paul Kariuki.

Championing Women Empowerment in Local Municipalities

During Women's Month, DDP collaborated with several local municipalities to host conferences and community dialogues that celebrated and empowered women. These events were designed not only to honor the contributions of women but also to address pressing issues such as gender-based violence, economic inequality, and legal literacy.

One of the flagship events was the Women's Conference in Impendle, held at Phindangene Hall in partnership with the Impendle Local Municipality. Under the theme “SHE Leads: Women Driving Economic Development and Social Change in Local Communities in KZN,” the conference brought together women leaders, activists, and community members to explore strategies for economic empowerment and leadership in local governance.

In Inanda, DDP partnered with the Youth Crime Prevention Desk to host a Women's Seminar focused on combating gender-based violence. Held at the O.R. Tambo Community Center, this seminar provided a safe space for women to share their experiences and advocate for safer, more inclusive communities.



Pictured: Delegates at the Women's Conference in partnership with JPP Local Municipality in Ixopo.

Additionally, DDP facilitated a Women's Dialogue at its Durban offices, themed “Family and Labour Law in Practice: Empowering Young Women Activists through Legal Literacy.” This session equipped young women with essential legal knowledge, enabling them to navigate both personal and professional challenges with confidence and clarity.

Amplifying Youth Voices in Communities and Higher Education

DDP's commitment to youth development was equally evident during Youth Month and throughout the year. In partnership with local municipalities, the organization hosted a series of Municipality-Based Youth Indaba Conferences aimed at strengthening youth voices through civic education and advocacy.

These conferences were held in collaboration with Umngeni, Msunduzi, and Ukhahlamba municipalities, each tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of local youth. The Umngeni Youth Indaba in Howick West focused on youth-led accountability and social activism, while the Msunduzi Youth Indaba in Pietermaritzburg emphasized sustained youth engagement in municipal affairs.

The Ukhahlamba Youth Indaba, held on Youth Day in Bergville, celebrated the legacy of youth activism and equipped participants with tools to influence democratic processes.

Beyond municipal engagements, DDP also extended its youth-focused programming to institutions of higher learning.

Through these dynamic and inclusive initiatives, the Democracy Development Program has reaffirmed its role as a catalyst for change in KwaZulu-Natal. By empowering women and youth to become active participants in their communities and institutions, DDP continues to build a more just, equitable, and democratic society.



Pictured: DDP Associate Facilitator, Sphamandla Khwela at the Youth Indaba in Umzunduzi Municipality

A notable highlight was the Political Summit at the University of Zululand, which explored the role of tertiary institutions in fostering youth political participation.

This summit brought together students, educators, and civic leaders to discuss innovative strategies for engaging young people in governance and policy-making.



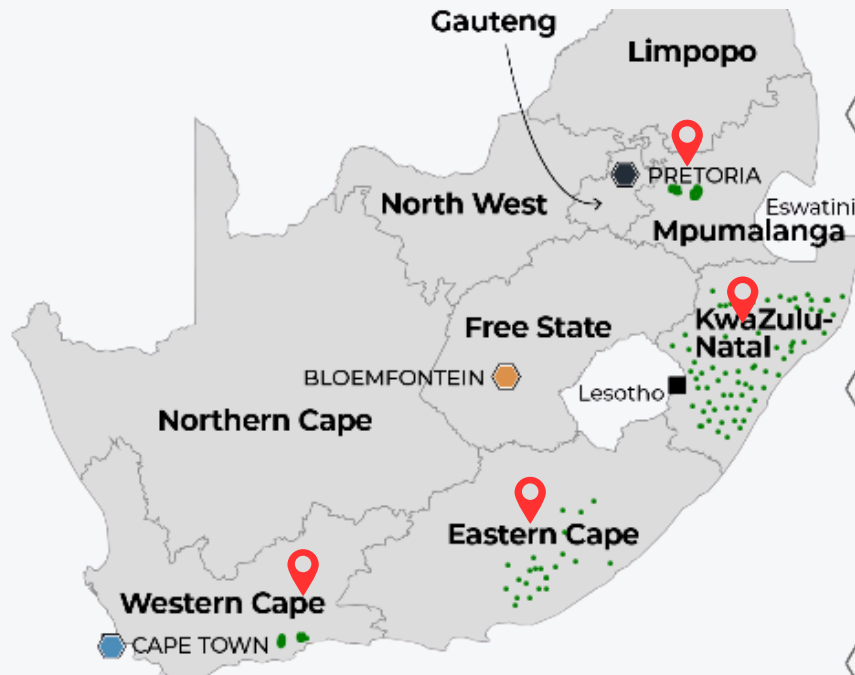
Pictured: Delegates at the Youth Indaba conferences hosted in partnership with local Municipality in KZN.

Siphesihle, 19, was at risk of joining local gangs. After attending the Youth Indaba hosted by DDP and YCPD in June 2025, he joined the desk and began organizing sports events and anti-drug campaigns.

"I used to think crime was the only way out. Now I'm building something better—for myself and my friends."

4. Expanding our Reach Through: Partnerships and Collaborations

DDP has been steadily expanding its footprint beyond KwaZulu-Natal, leveraging strategic partnerships and collaborations to deepen democratic practices across South Africa. Originally based in Durban, DDP has evolved into a national force for civic engagement, education, and community development. (see map below)



Local and National Partners

- District and Local Municipalities in KZN
- CANRAD, Nelson Mandela University
- Center for Community Development
- Inanda Youth Crime Prevention Desk
- Inanda FM
- Siyathuthuka FM
- EmpowerU
- KZN Legislature
- Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)

Central to this expansion is DDP's commitment to building strong and active communities that can hold those in power accountable. Through long-term engagement and accompaniment, the organization shares ideas, skills, and opportunities with local stakeholders.

This approach has enabled DDP to form meaningful partnerships with municipalities and civil society organizations in various provinces.

Continental and International Partners

- Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)
- European Union
- APRM
- African Policy Circle
- National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), Malawi
- Malawian Parliamentary Women's Caucus
- Zambian Parliamentary Women's Caucus
- Zimbabwean Parliamentary Women's Caucus

Notably, DDP has collaborated with municipalities such as the UMkhanyakude District Municipality and UMnsunduzi Local Municipality, among others, to support efforts fostering democratic governance and community empowerment.

Beyond KZN, DDP has engaged with CSOs and institutions of higher learning in provinces such as Gauteng and the Eastern Cape.

DDP also partners with community-based organizations such as EmpowerU Community Development Institute in Lindelani and the Centre for Community Development in Umlazi. These partnerships focus on civic education, leadership development, and strengthening the role of civil society in local governance.



Pictured: DDP Partner, Inanda Youth Crime Prevention Desk volunteers during a campaign at Inanda



Pictured: Dr. Paul Kariuki with DDP Associate and EmpowerU Organization Director, Melusi Mahlaba

A particularly impactful strategy has been DDP’s collaboration with community radio stations across KwaZulu-Natal. These partnerships allow DDP to host radio talk shows that facilitate public dialogue on social issues, educate citizens about their rights and responsibilities, and promote inclusive governance. By leveraging the accessibility and reach of radio, DDP ensures that critical information and diverse perspectives are shared widely, especially in rural and underserved communities.

In addition, **DDP’s Academic Fellowship Program** brings together scholars and practitioners from across South Africa and internationally to contribute to research and thought leadership in democratic governance and social justice. This program supports the development of innovative approaches to civic engagement and policy advocacy.

“Inclusive governance and social justice are not achieved in isolation. They demand a collaborative approach, one that brings together voices from across sectors to empower the marginalized and drive meaningful change”.
Dr. Devi Rajab

Through these multifaceted partnerships, with municipalities, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and media platforms—DDP is building a more inclusive and participatory democracy. Guided by values such as Ubuntu, equity, mutual benefit, and professionalism, DDP continues to empower communities to become active agents of change in shaping South Africa’s democratic future.



Pictured: DDP's Mbalenhle Mkhize with DDP Partners at a women's Conference at Inanda.

5. Our Projects

Our work is rooted in the belief that democracy is not just about elections—it's about everyday participation, transparency, and inclusion. Through our various projects, DDP creates platforms for citizens, especially youth and marginalized groups, to reflect, speak out, and act.



Advancing Community Voices Project

Funded by: Social Justice Initiative (SJI)

Focus: Civic participation and election engagement

Pictured: SJI Team with DDP Team during a site visit in Durban.

The Advancing Community Voices Project is designed to mobilize citizens and civil society for active participation in democratic processes, particularly in the lead-up to national and local elections. The project emphasizes the importance of citizen voices in shaping policy and governance, recognizing that democratic systems directly impact people's lived experiences.

Key objectives include:

- Encouraging voter participation and election observation.
- Strengthening civil society's capacity to mobilize and collaborate.

Activities:

- **3** Capacity-building workshops for youth and community leaders.
- **3** Community dialogues on elections, human rights, and governance.
- **3** Radio talk shows for citizen education.
- Strategic engagements with election management bodies (IEC).

"The promotion of inclusive governance, active citizenship, and democratic accountability is essential for building a just and equitable society". Noxolo, Ntaka

This project was focused on KwaZulu-Natal, with a strong presence in the Greater Durban area. It aims to amplify community voices and ensure that democratic participation is inclusive and informed.





Pictured: DDP team with CF team during a site visit in Durban.

Constitutionalism Fund Project

Funded by: Constitutionalism Fund

Focus: Promoting constitutional democracy and civic education

The Constitutionalism Fund Project supports DDP's efforts to promote constitutional values and deepen understanding of democratic governance. The project focuses on civic education, public dialogue, and policy engagement to ensure that citizens are not only aware of their rights but also equipped to defend and exercise them.

Core focus areas:

- Educating communities on constitutional rights and responsibilities.
- Strengthening civil society's role in upholding constitutional principles.
- Supporting research and thought leadership on constitutional democracy.

Activities

- 10 Community Dialogues
- 10 Community radio shows
- 1 Capacity building workshop

Through this initiative, DDP fosters a culture of accountability and respect for the rule of law, encouraging citizens to actively participate in shaping a just and equitable society.



Strengthening Social Cohesion in Communities in Durban



DDP has continued its impactful work on social cohesion well beyond the initial scope of the EU-funded Migration Project (2020–2023). Now operating as a full-fledged program, DDP's efforts are deeply embedded in the socio-political landscape of KwaZulu-Natal, particularly within the greater Durban Metropolitan area, which has historically been prone to xenophobic tensions.

Pictured: Gugu Madonsela Facilitating the Social Cohesion Conference at Isipingo.

DDP's post-project work focuses on fostering long-term socio-economic cooperation between African migrants and their host communities. This includes initiatives that go beyond immediate migration concerns to address broader issues of racial discrimination, xenophobia, and social exclusion.

The program continues to be informed by ongoing research and data collection, which provide empirical evidence for developing long-term strategies. These studies help identify root causes of xenophobia and guide interventions that are both context-specific and sustainable.

The program is active in several Durban hotspots known for past xenophobic violence—such as KwaMakhutha, KwaMashu, Isipingo, Umlazi, Sydenham and Inanda. In these areas, DDP's work has led to a notable reduction in community conflict, improved intergroup relationships, and enhanced local governance responses to social cohesion challenges.

In 2025, DDP hosted a series of community-based social cohesion conferences in its geographic focus areas. These events brought together local leaders, CSOs, migrants, and residents to discuss challenges and co-create solutions for peaceful coexistence.

The conferences served as platforms for dialogue, cultural exchange, and policy advocacy, reinforcing the program's grassroots approach.



6. TESTIMONIALS AND CASE STUDIES

DDP's impact is rooted in long-term accompaniment-walking alongside communities, sharing knowledge, and nurturing democratic values. Our commitment to Ubuntu, equity, and accountability continues to guide our work, ensuring that democracy is not just a system, but a lived experience for all.

These case studies, from our partners, illustrate the tangible outcomes of our work.

EmpowerU Community Development Institute

Our partnership with the Democracy Development Program (DDP) has been a transformative journey for EmpowerU Community Development Institute.

DDP's inclusive and participatory approach to community engagement has significantly enhanced our ability to build trust and foster meaningful relationships within the Lindelani community.



Pictured: Interventions by EmpowerU organisation in partnership with DDP.



Through the platforms and opportunities co-created with DDP, our visibility and credibility have grown substantially. Community members now have a clearer understanding of our mission and the value we bring. This has led to increased support and participation in our initiatives. Notably, we've seen a surge in youth interest, with more young people actively seeking involvement in our programs. Additionally, other grassroots organizations now view us as a credible partner and are reaching out for collaboration.

Insights from our collaborations with DDP

1. The Importance of Safe and Inclusive Spaces
2. Listening Builds Trust and Drives Collective Action
3. Partnerships Amplify Impact

As a result of these efforts, we have observed increased youth participation in community activities and a notable rise in youth voter turnout during the last elections. The community is more engaged and active, with a significant decline in violent protests.



Impact of our Work with Municipalities

DDP has played a pivotal role in strengthening democratic governance and civic engagement across various municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), including uMkhanyakude District Municipality, uMsunduzi Local Municipality, Johannes Phumani Phungula Local Municipality (formerly Ubuhlebezwe), uThukela District, Umngeni Local Municipality, Impendle Local Municipality, eThekweni Municipality, and Mkhambathini Local Municipality.



Pictured: Women's March at JPP Municipality in partnership with DDP.

DDP's core mission is to empower citizens and communities to become active participants in their own development and governance. Through its Local Government and Citizen Engagement Program, DDP facilitates spaces for critical dialogue, capacity building, and collaborative problem-solving between communities and local government structures.

Key Interventions Facilitated by DDP in these municipalities:

- Public Dialogues and Civic Education
- Youth Empowerment Initiatives
- Legal Literacy and Women's Rights.
- Community Radio Partnerships
- Training of Local Government Officials
- Political Summits and Academic Engagement
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Awareness

Impact and Reach

DDP's interventions have contributed to:

- Improved citizen participation in municipal decision-making.
- Enhanced transparency and accountability in local governance.
- Strengthened relationships between communities and municipal leaders.
- Empowered youth and women to take active roles in shaping their communities.



Pictured: Youth Indaba in partnership with Umngeni Local Municipality and the MUGF.



Inanda Youth Crime Prevention Youth Desk

Inanda, a township in Durban, KZN, has long faced significant social challenges, including high levels of crime, gender-based violence (GBV), youth unemployment, and substance abuse. In response to these issues, the Inanda Youth Crime Prevention Desk (YCPD) was established as a community-driven initiative aimed at engaging young people in crime prevention and social development.

A key partner in this journey has been the Democracy Development Program (DDP), a civil society organization dedicated to deepening democracy through citizen engagement, capacity building, and advocacy.



Pictured: DDP Associate Facilitator, Buhlebuyeza Motseme at the Women’s conference in Inanda

DDP has played a strategic role in supporting the growth and success of the Inanda YCPD. Through its facilitation efforts, DDP has provided both technical and human resource support. A notable example of this collaboration was the Women’s Seminar held on 21 August 2025 at the O.R. Tambo Community Center in Ward 57. This event, co-hosted by DDP and YCPD, focused on empowering young women aged 14–35 through discussions on socio-economic development as a tool to combat GBV, rape, and murder, as well as leadership, community safety, and civic participation.

DDP-backed initiatives in Inanda have included women’s empowerment seminars, youth indabas, school outreach programs, and community dialogues. These efforts have created platforms for youth to engage in discussions around crime, mental health, civic responsibility, and governance.

DDP has cultivated a network of youth leaders and facilitators who now serve in crime prevention desks across eThekweni. These are Bhekizenzo Mabaso who is active at the Marrianhill YCPD and Sakhile Mzimela who is active at the Ntuzuma YCPD to name a few.

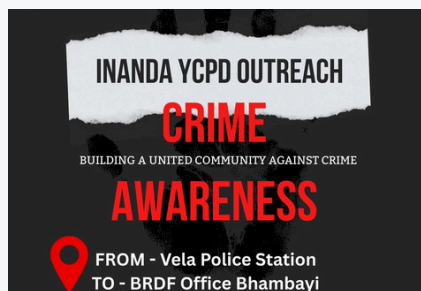
Impact and Reach

The partnership between DDP and Inanda YCPD is more than institutional—it’s deeply human. It’s about young women finding their voice, youth confronting trauma, and communities reclaiming safety. Through DDP’s sustained engagement, Inanda’s youth are not just passive recipients of aid—they are active agents of change, shaping a future where justice, dignity, and peace are possible.

Thandeka, 22, was once a victim of domestic violence. After attending the DDP-supported seminar, she joined the Inanda YCPD and began facilitating school outreach programs on GBV and self-worth.

“DDP gave me the tools to speak out. I now help other girls find their voice. I’m not just surviving—I’m leading.”

She now coordinates youth dialogues and is pursuing a diploma in community development.



7. 2025 HIGHLIGHTS- DDP'S ENGAGEMENT IN NOTABLE NATIONAL EVENTS.

In 2025, DDP played a significant role in shaping and supporting key national events that fostered civic engagement, social cohesion, and inclusive development across South Africa and beyond.



Sphamandal Mhlongo, DDP Senior Programs Officer, at The 5th Annual African PEMO Conference in University of Pretoria

1



Prof. Bheki Mngomezulu Director at CANRAD, with Dr. Paul Kariuki at the Steve Biko Memorial Lecture at Nelson Mandela University

2



DDP's Yolokazi Mfuto and Dr. Paul Kariuki at Regional Conference on Engaging Civil Society in the APRM Process: Lessons from Southern Africa in Irene, Pretoria organised by APRM and SAIIA

3



DDP Partner Liaison and Development Officer, Mbalenhle Mkhize at the 2025 Women's Economic Empowerment Programme hosted by the Presidency and the KZN Legislature in Kokstad

4



Dr Paul Kariuki, Executive Director, Observing the Malawi National Elections in Malawi.

5

8. What lies Ahead for 2026

2026 marks a critical year for South Africa as the nation prepares for the Local Government Elections. This moment presents both challenges and opportunities, from navigating an evolving political landscape to addressing the urgent need for digital civic literacy and increasing youth participation in democratic processes.

In response, DDP is committed to deepening its impact by expanding its reach, refining its methodology, and forging strategic partnerships that amplify the voices of communities and civil society actors. Through these efforts, DDP aims to foster inclusive, informed, and active citizen engagement.

*DDP's 2026 Theme: **Your Vote, Your Voice, Make it Count!** serves as a reviving call to empower individuals to recognise the power of their vote and the importance of their voice in shaping local governance.*

Key Events for 2026



Post SONA Forum



International women's
day forum - in
partnership with the
KZN Legislature



Local Government and
Civic Education Dialogues



Preparing the Citizenry for
the 2026 Local
Government Elections

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