

# NEWSLETTER

## ***Amplifying Citizen Voices:***

## Driving Meaningful Action Amongst Communities and Maximising the Impact of Our Work

By DDP Team



ABOVE: DDP Executive Director, Dr Paul Kariuki

## DIRECTORS NOTE

### **Dr. Paul Kariuki, Executive Director of the DDP**

Throughout our democratic journey, citizens have played a critical role in driving change. Movements like #FeesMustFall and grassroots service delivery protests show the power of collective action to influence policy and hold leaders accountable. These examples highlight why DDP's theme this year, "***Amplifying Citizens Voices,***" is so timely and necessary. We must continue to support mechanisms that elevate these voices: digital platforms, civil society organisations, community forums, and youth engagement initiatives. By doing so, we foster a culture of transparency, inclusion, and responsiveness in governance.

At DDP, we are committed to creating spaces where citizens—especially youth and marginalized groups—can reflect, speak out, and act. Strengthening democracy is not just about election cycles; it's about everyday participation, connection, and advocacy. Over the past months, DDP has organized a range of impactful initiatives, including community dialogues, leadership workshops, policy discussions, and civic engagement programs—all aimed at strengthening democratic participation. These events have provided vital platforms for citizens to voice their concerns, share experiences, and collaborate on solutions that drive meaningful change.

Through this edition, we reflect on *these engagements, their impact, and the conversations* they have sparked in our communities.

# CONFERENCES

## The APC Conference



ABOVE: DDP's Researcher Thelma Nyarhi and Executive Director Dr Paul Kariuki at the APC Conference in Cameroon.

The African Policy Circle (APC) Conference event in Yaoundé, Cameroon, focused on "For the citizen, by the citizen: Connecting policy with participation." This conference aimed to discuss how African citizens can more effectively participate in policymaking and ensure governments prioritize their interests, even in foreign policy.

The event was driven by the APC annual theme "Centring the African Citizen" and sought to address the challenges to democracy in Africa, such as unconstitutional changes in government and the shrinking of civic space, despite strong public support for democratic principles. From May 26–28, the African Policy Circle (APC) Conference 2025 brought together thought leaders, policymakers, and civil society in Yaoundé, Cameroon, to tackle a critical question:

How can African citizens more effectively shape policies—especially foreign policy—to ensure governments truly act in their interests?

Read more [here](#)

Our very own Dr. Paul Kariuki facilitated an insightful session titled "Collaboration 101: How Civil Society, Citizens, and Government Can Work Together for Improved Governance" at the APRM Conference in Cameroon.

The session featured a compelling presentation by Francis Maberu from the Step Up Youth Initiative, highlighting innovative approaches to inclusive governance and civic engagement.

Thelma Nyarhi, Researcher at DDP, delivered an insightful presentation on "The Value of Digital Technology for Civil Society and Its Innovative Applications."

In her talk, she emphasised how digital tools are not just reshaping communication but are also transforming how civil society operates, engages, and advocates for change.



## Africa Day Indaba 2025: Reimagining Africa's Future

On May 22, 2025, the Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD), in partnership with the Democracy Development Program (DDP) and the International Office at Nelson Mandela University, hosted the Afrika Indaba 2025. This significant event took place at the Ocean Sciences Campus in Gqeberha, centred around the theme: "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations."

The Indaba brought together a diverse group of scholars, activists, students, and civil society leaders, all gathered to reflect on the current state of the African continent while envisioning a brighter future. It served as a vital platform for meaningful dialogue, offering intersectional perspectives and innovative ideas grounded in decolonial and Pan-African principles.

Read the full article [here](#).



ABOVE: Delegates at the Africa Day Indaba in Gqeberha.



ABOVE: DDP Executive Director, Dr. Paul Kariuki at the Africa Day Indaba

# Municipality-Based Youth Indaba Conferences 2025

The Democracy Development Program (DDP), in collaboration with three KwaZulu-Natal municipalities, successfully hosted a series of community-based Youth Indaba conferences between March and June 2025. These gatherings were part of a broader initiative to empower young people, amplify their voices, and promote active civic engagement through advocacy and education.

These conferences were held in these Municipalities:

- 🏠 **UMngeni Local Municipality**
- 🏠 **UMsunduzi Local Municipality**
- 🏠 **UKhahlamba District Municipality**

Read more [here](#)



ABOVE: Delegates at the Youth Indaba at UMsunduzi Municipality.



ABOVE: Delegates at the Youth Indaba held at UThukela District Municipality.

“



Association of Social Engagement Facilitators of Southern Africa - Asefsa  
Thank you DDP, the diversity of the group is appreciated.

9w Like Reply



Nomfundo Mkhabela  
I would love an invite when you do have one in Durban, interesting workshop

Comments on the DDP Facebook page

## Political Summit at the University of Zululand

On May 15, 2025, thought leaders, educators, and activists convened at the University of Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal for a landmark Political Summit focused on The Role of Tertiary Institutions in Increasing Youth Political Participation.

Hosted by the Democracy Development Program (DDP) in collaboration with the Centre for Community Development, the summit served as a vital platform for exploring innovative strategies to enhance political engagement among young South Africans.

Read more [here](#)



ABOVE: DDP Senior Programmes Officer, Sphamandla Mhlongo, and Thabile Mdlhuli, DDP Associate Facilitator, with delegates at UNIZULU.

# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH DIALOGUE

The DDP, in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), the Constitutionalism Fund (CF), and the Social Justice Initiative (SJI) has been at the forefront of hosting impactful community dialogues across KwaZulu-Natal, fostering civic education, democratic participation, and social justice.

## Empowering Local Communities



This term, we hosted a total of 4 Local Government and Civic Education dialogues:

**9 April - Lamontville**  
**10 April - Umlazi V section**  
**29 April - PMB, Georgetown Hall**  
**17 May - Newlands East**

And 1 Social Cohesion Conference at Ohlange Library in Inanda



Under the Constitutionalism Fund project (CF) we have hosted 3 community dialogues this term:

**27 April - Mkhambathini Local Municipality**  
**30 April - Mtubatuba**  
**30 May - Umngeni Local Municipality**



Under the SJI Project, we have hosted a series of 3 community dialogues, 2 were done around the first term of the year, this term we completed the dialogues with 1 hosted:

**29 April - Adams Mission**



Dale Elizabeth Schonewolf

Well done team DDP, so proud of you all 😊



1w Like Reply Hide

2 ❤️

Comment on the DDP Facebook page



ABOVE: DDP's Mbalenhle Mkhize at the SJI dialogue at Mkhambathini Local Municipality.

## Working with the Media: Promoting Electoral & Civic Education



### Media Visibility:

DDP has significantly expanded its media presence in South Africa, with its experts regularly featured on television and radio, offering insightful analysis on democratic governance, civic participation, and media freedom.



### CF Community Radio Shows:

In 2025, the CF project hosted 10 radio talk shows, with our associates providing expert analysis on democratic issues in the country.



### SJI Community Radio Shows:

The SJI- Advancing Community Voices Project hosted 3 radio talk shows.

- *These shows were produced in collaboration with our community radio station partners in KZN.*



ABOVE: DDP Associate Bhekizenzo Madlala at Siyathuthuka FM, doing an SJI radio show

# EMPOWERING CHANGE THROUGH WORKSHOPS

## Amplifying Citizen Voice: Journalism Workshop Series



ABOVE: Journalists at the DDP Journalism workshop at the Edward Hotel in Durban, with Gugu Madonsela, DDP Associate Facilitator and DDP's Suraksha Singh

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) recently concluded a transformative four-part workshop series titled "*Media, Democracy, and Governance*." The final session of the series was held on **9 July 2025** in Durban, marking the culmination of a journey that began with the first workshop on **4 March 2025**.

Read more [here](#)

Facebook post from one of the beneficiaries of the 4 part Journalism workshop 🌱



## Political Parties Capacity Building Workshop

As part of our Contemporary Politics Workshop Series, we held the second session of a two-part program for political party representatives in the province. This initiative fostered dialogue and strategic engagement on current political dynamics, promoting a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing provincial actors.

Simultaneously, we conducted a Train-the-Trainer refresher session for our associate facilitators under the Constitutionalism Fund Project. This session reinforced facilitation skills, updated trainers on recent constitutional developments, and ensured alignment with DDP's participatory methodologies.



ABOVE: Prof. Mngomezulu, Director, Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD).

*This is the second session hosted by DDP on contemporary South African politics that I have attended this year. It's essential for any politician to grasp the political landscape of the country, and the best way to achieve that is through education and training. DDP is effectively providing this support to political parties in the province.*

Mboneni Bhekiswayo, from ACTIONSA

# STORIES OF CHANGE: DDP INSPIRING ACTION IN MUNICIPALITIES AND COMMUNITIES

These stories illustrate how DDP has significantly impacted communities and municipalities, empowering them to foster positive change and shape their own futures.



ABOVE: Delegates at a Community dialogue in the UMkhanyakude District Municipality

## • UMkhanyakude District Municipality

Nestled in the northern reaches of KwaZulu-Natal, uMkhanyakude District Municipality has long carried the responsibility of delivering essential services—such as water, sanitation, and infrastructure—to its diverse and vibrant communities. But beyond service delivery, the municipality has embraced a broader mission: to foster development, uphold democratic governance, and ensure a safe, healthy environment for all.

In the past, the municipality faced significant challenges in engaging its communities. Political divisions, limited awareness, and a general disconnect between the municipality and its citizens made it difficult to organise programs or consult meaningfully with residents. Platforms for public participation were minimal, and many community members felt excluded from decisions that directly affected their lives.

Read more [here](#)

## • EmpowerU Community Development Institute



ABOVE: Melusi Mahlaba, Director at EmpowerU, during a DDP Community dialogue

“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.”

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.

Our collaboration with DDP in co-convening community engagements has provided us with valuable insights into amplifying citizens' voices. The three most impactful lessons we’ve learned are:

1. **The Importance of Safe and Inclusive Spaces**
2. Creating environments that are respectful and inclusive encourages participation, especially....[read more](#)

# Strategic Partnerships:

## The DDP Represented at “The Cost of Politics in South Africa” Report Launch hosted by Future Elect.

As we navigate through 2025, our Associate Nonkululeko Hlongwane-Mhlongo—civic educator, strategist, and alumna of the Futurelect Women in Public Office, South Africa Programme—addressed the often-overlooked role of family support in public life at the launch of **The Cost of Politics in South Africa** report.

She emphasized the importance of preparing loved ones for the spotlight and addressing vital concerns related to safety and time. Nonkululeko underscored that effective leadership requires collective strength; when one individual steps forward to lead, their entire community stands behind them.



ABOVE: Nonkululeko Hlongwane-Mhlongo with panelists at the Launch of The Cost Politics in SA Report.

## DDP’s participation at the APRM –SAIIA Conference



ABOVE: DDP Communications Strategist, Yolokazi Mfuto, with Executive Director, Dr Paul Kariuki, at the APRM Conference in Pretoria.

Yolokazi Mfuto, DDP's Communications Strategist, participated in the APRM–SAIIA Conference on Engaging Civil Society in the APRM Process in Irene, Pretoria, on June 3-4, 2025. This engagement underscores her ongoing commitment to youth-led governance and accountability.

Having played a pivotal role in the 2020 APRM Youth Submission Process and presenting findings to South Africa’s National Governance Council in 2021, Yolokazi brought valuable insights to the conference. She led the Economic Empowerment thematic area, collaborating with young leaders nationwide to address national development challenges.

Her contributions aim to influence policy and ensure government accountability to youth aspirations, particularly in implementing the APRM’s governance priorities and Agenda 2063.

# BIDDING FAREWELL

We bid a fond farewell to Tyesha Pillay, our Communications Strategist, as she embarks on an exciting new chapter in her career. We are deeply grateful for her dedication and the valuable contributions she made to DDP over the past three years. She will be missed, and we wish her all the best in her new role.

*“The Democracy Development Program is more than just an organisation - it’s a force for change. By creating platforms for everyday South Africans to be heard and actively shaping solutions to strengthen our democracy, DDP’s impact is both deep and far-reaching.*

*My time at the Democracy Development Program has been nothing short of incredible. Over the past three years, I’ve grown immensely - both personally and professionally. I’m especially grateful for how the team believed in me, trusted my ideas, and gave me the space to learn, lead, and contribute meaningfully. It’s been a privilege to be part of a team so deeply invested in building a more just society. Thank you to the entire DDP family for everything. I’ll always be cheering you on.”*



ABOVE: Tyesha Pillay, Former Communications Strategist

As we wrap up this quarter, the Democracy Development Program has made significant strides in fostering democratic values and practices through its theme, *Amplifying Citizens' Voices*. From empowering local communities to enhancing civic engagement, our initiatives have sparked meaningful dialogue and action. As we look ahead, let’s continue nurturing these vital connections while advocating for meaningful inclusion of citizens in all aspects of nation-building.

**Stay tuned for more exciting engagements in diverse communities, in collaboration with our Associates, Municipalities, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).**

## *Amplifying Citizens' Voices*

*“The DDP helps communities grow stronger by encouraging active participation and supporting fair political processes, making sure every voice matters in building a better future.”*

-Facebook Comment

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