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## 01 Introduction

### *Greetings everyone...*

We hope that you have been keeping safe and well during these challenging times of COVID-19. It has been a few months since our last Newsletter, but we notably appreciate the continued interactions and remarkable commitment from our Civil Society and Provincial Legislature partners.

On 23 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a national lockdown as part of government efforts to fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown regulations and measures were implemented in terms of the National Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002. These measures have affected how Civil Society interacts when conducting advocacy work, citizen mobilisation, capacity development, oversight, and conducting day-to-day work.



▲ NP Legislature

This lockdown period has required of civil society to be vigilant and proactive. The measures in place have given the executive arm of government a large scope of decision-making powers without the ordinary procedures that citizens have to regulate and oversee the use of such powers. This has placed huge responsibilities on civil society and on projects such as Civil Society Participation in Provincial Legislatures (CSPPL). They have had to ensure that citizen voices remain the driving force of democracy; that the rights of the poor and vulnerable citizens to food, healthcare, and safety, and security are protected; and that the government is kept in check during these unprecedented times.



### Update on project staffing

The project team has been prioritising continued engagements with project partners, as well as providing technical and other means of support to Civil Society Organisation (CSO) beneficiaries and profiling the work and impact of project beneficiaries in communities. The team has expanded on its capacities by sourcing the skills of Ms Goiste Monthata who comes back to the project as a research consultant.



## 02 Project Developments

The project continues to make strides in its commitments to enhance the participation of civil society in provincial legislatures and supporting provincial legislatures in their public participation and oversight mandates. Below are some highlights of the previous months:

### Northern Cape

#### Peer to Peer learning workshop:

In February 2020, we hosted a peer to peer learning workshop in Kimberly. At the workshop, we welcomed the participation of two new organisations to the project (Access Advocacy for Albinism and The Barefoot campaign). The Kimberly workshop focused on strengthening existing networks and identifying collaborative advocacy actions among organisations in the province. We look forward to continuing to support our partners through structured online engagements to develop, adjust, and implement their action plans identified at the February 2020 workshop.

#### MOU signing between DWF & NCPL

A key moment of our February 2020 visit to Kimberly was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) ceremony between the Democracy Works Foundation and the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature (NCPL). The ceremony – which was attended by our civil society partners, staff members of the legislature, and media – was graced with the presence of the speaker of the NCPL Hon Newrene Klaaste and DWF's Executive Director Mr Olmo von Meijenfeldt. The MoU was a commitment between DWF and NCPL to collaborate in strengthening public participation in the Northern Cape.

#### Online Knowledge Co-creation Workshops with MPLS

Since the signing of the MOU, and in partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) we have had a series of online, participatory and reflective engagements with MPLs. These engagements are designed to allow a greater understanding of the everyday realities in which MPLs conduct their business. The aim is to improve collective understanding and identify opportunities to support public participation and increased collaboration with CSO in the province.

#### Roundtable & CSO online engagement

In the coming weeks, we look forward to hosting a variety of engagements with MPLs including a virtual roundtable discussion between CSOs and Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPLs).

The aim is to improve collective understanding and identify opportunities to support public participation and increased collaboration with Civil Society Organisations in the province.



▲ Northern Cape CSPPL Workshop



## 02 Project Developments

### North West Province

#### Online engagements

Together with our North West CSO partners, we have been piloting our online training methodology. The initiative has been ongoing since the beginning of March 2020. This online training is delivered via WhatsApp through a series of structured interactions that have had a focus on building understanding around the provincial legislature, the democratic system, and developing advocacy road maps for the various organisations.

The initiative has received a lot of positive feedback from CSO partners in the North West, we are currently facilitating a process to assist CSOs in developing submissions to submit to the Provincial Legislature. This method of online training has presented an opportunity to reach a wider audience of people in remote and rural areas in a very simple and cost-effective way and will pave the way for a future approach to capacity building.

#### New Partnerships with SANAC NW

We have made strategic partnerships with the South African National Aids Council in the North West Province, and are excited to welcome the participation of members from the SANAC civil society task team in our project.



▲ SANAC Meeting

### Limpopo

#### Interaction with the Provincial legislature

We have had official meetings with the secretary of the legislature Mr Mdaka and have had agreements in principle to get the process of MoU signing in motion. The MoU is currently sitting at the legal department of the legislature and we are looking forward to finalising this process.

#### Civil society participation during COVID-19 lockdown

The immediate focus in Limpopo is to implement structured online engagements, based on the training methodology developed with North West CSO's. The methodology is being adapted to the training needs of CSO partners in Limpopo. We would also like to highlight the great work being done by most of our CSO partners in Limpopo that have been actively involved in distributing food parcels and other necessities during the lockdown.

Treatment Action Campaign Limpopo has developed a monitoring tool to audit the state of readiness of health care facilities during the lockdown. This is a tool that can be adapted to monitor a range of institutions and services in communities, and we look forward to sharing this throughout our partner network.



▼ Limpopo Interactions



## 04 Closing Remarks

We continuously strive to provide thought leadership, opinions and discussions around deepening democracy and good governance, with a particular eye on the role provincial legislatures and civil society organisations have to play especially during this time of crises.

We urge our CSO partners to keep checking out our social media pages for a #mycommunitymatters feature highlighting the innovative and excellent work they have been doing during this challenging time of Covid-19. To take a look at our website with links to all our latest publications, please visit:

<https://democracyworks.org.za/category/program/institutions/csppl-programme/>

We appreciate your continued commitment to this project and look forward to interacting with you soon, remember to stay safe and sanitise.

*The CSPPL Team*



▲ CSPPL Team

173 Oxford Road  
The Link, Rosebank  
Johannesburg 2193  
South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)10 023 0835  
Web: [democracyworksfoundation.org](http://democracyworksfoundation.org)  
Fax: +27 (0)86 274 5267  
Email: [info@democracyworksfoundation.org](mailto:info@democracyworksfoundation.org)