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SOUTH AFRICA ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Action for Accountability (A4A) Initiative:

By training 40 CivActs and Activist Media fellows on advocacy tools and digital visual activism and conducting four town hall meetings, the A4A project facilitated increased citizen engagement and awareness. This initiative empowered individuals to advocate for accountability and transparency in governance. The Integrity Icon campaign has joined forces with the Action for Accountability project as one of its outcomes. The process involves collaborating with civic leaders, particularly for this project. We began with the nomination, selection, and vetting process of the top 30 individuals, including Integrity Icons and Civic leaders. After this judges select the top 5 nominees as the new Integrity Icon cohort.

What's on the Menu Mzansi Project:

The training sessions conducted in six provinces with 175 participants under this project contributed to raising awareness about governance issues and anti-corruption efforts. By educating a significant number of individuals, this project enhanced the capacity of citizens to actively participate in governance processes.



Queer Voices Unlocked Project:

By training ten artists as storytellers and film fellows, and publishing their multimedia content, the Queer Voices Unlocked project played a role in amplifying marginalised voices and advocating for inclusivity. This project contributed to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

The combined efforts of these projects led to increased citizen engagement, awareness, and advocacy for governance reforms and anti-corruption measures. The number of meetings, training, publications, and submissions made to the government reflects a proactive approach in addressing governance challenges and promoting transparency and accountability. The Accountability Lab South Africa has significantly impacted governance and anti-corruption efforts in the country and region through its various programs and initiatives.

The experiences and outcomes of our initiatives have taught us valuable lessons for sustainable success in 2024:

- Empowering Communities: Training individuals in advocacy, digital activism, and storytelling is vital for sustained citizen engagement in governance.
- Raising Awareness: Continuous education and awareness campaigns are crucial for keeping communities informed on and engaged in governance issues.
- Amplifying Marginalised Voices: Highlighting marginalised voices is essential for creating a more inclusive society and driving sustainable governance efforts.
- Proactive Approach: Our proactive efforts in meetings, training, publications, and engagement with the government have been instrumental in promoting transparency and driving governance reforms.
- Impact Measurement: Measuring the impact of our initiatives, including citizen engagement and awareness levels, is crucial for informed decision-making and ensuring effectiveness.

The lessons we learned from all our projects guide our strategies for sustainable work in 2024, focusing on community empowerment, awareness-raising, inclusivity, proactive engagement, and impact assessment in governance and anti-corruption efforts.

AL SOUTH AFRICA BY THE NUMBERS

45

CivActs meetings held

4

townhall meetings

1

people's council

772

citizens reached

6

bulletins

77

newsletters

9

social media newsletters

4

submissions made to government



QUEER VOICES UNLOCKED PROJECT

Queer Voices Unlocked aimed to honour and celebrate the resilience and dedication of Queer public servants while advocating for a more inclusive and accepting society. We recruited artists and built partnerships with queer organisations, with GALA as our partner for the project. We gathered 51 nominations and hosted 5 days of training for film fellows and storytellers on film and citizen journalism. We promoted the campaign on Accountability Lab South Facebook and Twitter and were featured in three publications – both print and online. We delved into the visibility and representation of queer individuals in the workplace through 12 Queer Voices Unlocked Project vox pops published on ALSA's social media and website.

Accountability Lab feels like a change-making organisation that actively works to contribute to societal change by not only raising awareness and spotlighting noteworthy people/causes, but by also providing their program participants with a global platform and equipping them with skills that can enable them to create works that can trigger change related to social causes.

- Nomay Matole 2023/4 Queer Voices Unlocked Film fellow

Project Objectives:

- Honour exemplary LGBTQI+ public servants by spotlighting their contributions to positive change and inclusivity.
- Inspire visibility and representation of Queer rights at all levels of public service.
- Foster understanding and promote LGBTQI+ rights, leading to a more inclusive society.
- Challenge stereotypes and barriers faced by LGBTQI+ individuals in the workplace.
- Provide crucial role models for younger LGBTQI+ professionals.





Impact:

- Recognition and celebration of Queer public servants' dedication and integrity.
- Increased visibility and representation of LGBTQI+ individuals in the public service.
- Promotion of understanding, acceptance, and inclusivity in society.
- Initiation of conversations about LGBTQI+ rights and experiences in the workplace.
- Creation of safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals in the public service.

Activities:

- Invited nominations from various regions to identify outstanding queer public servants from different departments.
- Produced documentary films and podcasts showcasing the stories and contributions of the winners.
- Collaborated with young Queer storytellers to create engaging content.
- Partnered with organisations like GALA Queer Archive and Constitutional Hill.
- Supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives in South Africa.

What We Learned:

- Celebrating Queer public servants is crucial for promoting inclusive rights.
- LGBTQI+ individuals show resilience in the face of discrimination.
- Role models are vital for inspiring younger LGBTQI+ professionals.
- Storytelling through the media sparks conversations about LGBTQI+ rights.

Sustainability Factors:

- Collaboration with Queer storytellers creates engaging content.
- Partnerships with organisations amplify campaign impact.
- Support from the Canada Fund ensures financial stability.
- Engagement with stakeholders promotes understanding and inclusivity.
- Empowerment of LGBTQI+ individuals fosters advocacy for rights and inclusivity.

Maureen Velile Majola ALSA's Projects Assistant, recently participated in The Journey of Hope retreat, a transformative experience for LGBTQI+ individuals to explore their spiritual, psychological, and sexual identities. The JoH program offers a three-tiered approach, beginning with 'Habitha' (Swahili for storytelling), where participants reclaim their narratives as sources of strength and resilience.

During the retreat, Maureen had the opportunity to showcase our Queer Voices Unlocked Films, sparking engaging discussions and receiving praise for their captivating portrayal of LGBTQI+ experiences. We're proud to continue amplifying the voices of new faces making strides in their workplaces and communities.

We are most proud of our social media engagement and media coverage in prominent newspapers like City Press, Daily Maverick, and Mamba Online. Additionally, we produced a podcast and successfully launched [film screenings](#) of our queer films at the Human Rights Festival/Film Festival and held an awards ceremony for our Queer Integrity Icons and fellows.

- [City Press](#) print and online is distributed nationally and in neighbouring countries, including Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland. It has a readership of about 2.5 million (source: AMPS 2001A)
- [Daily Maverick](#) Daily Maverick is a South African online news publication and weekly print newspaper with offices in Cape Town and Johannesburg. It has a readership of approximately 6.4 million readers per month ([Similar Web](#))
- [Mamba Online](#), a queer lead online news platform. They reach around 60,000 people a month, says the founder (Luiz De Barros)
- Queer Radio station [interview](#)
- Queer Voice Unlocked five [films](#)
- Queer Voice Unlocked [podcast](#)

The Queer Voices Unlocked Integrity Icon Awards ceremony was held at Workshop 17 in Rosebank on March 28, 2023. We were joined by our funders High Commission of Canada in South Africa, for a discussion on the importance of queer visibility, inclusion, and representation in workspaces and their support in this project. Our partners, networks, and journalists also joined us to support this project.

We then celebrated and spotlighted our Icons, storytellers, and film fellows, honouring their incredible work and participation in the project with awards.





ACTIVIST MEDIA INCUBATOR

The Activist Media Incubator (AMI) empowers communities by providing them with the tools and skills to create multimedia content and narratives. These resources can then be strategically disseminated through community and solidarity networks, and established local-to-national media outlets, enabling communities to tell their stories and amplify their accountability campaigns.

The Incubator selected eight AMI Fellows from local communities, including Lenasia, Finetown, Mondeor, and Makhanda in the Eastern Cape, for a training session. The opportunity is first announced to the CivActs team. Individuals are then identified based on their interests and involvement in media advocacy work. We conduct interviews with 2 to 3 candidates and make the final selection, considering the distribution of people across different areas.

What did we learn?

- The importance of citizen journalism for social justice and creating impactful content.
- The significance of visual activism and effective use of smartphones for capturing and editing photos and videos.
- The role of social media management and distribution in driving social change.
- The value of mentorship programs in enhancing participants' media advocacy skills and understanding of their roles.
- Continuous support through regular meetings, WhatsApp communication, and peer-to-peer assessments effectively addresses challenges and improves skills.



What makes the work sustainable?

- Collaboration with community members and solidarity networks to disseminate multimedia content.
- Continued mentorship and technical support for fellows to ensure ongoing development and engagement.
- Implementing public information and advocacy strategies tailored to each site's needs and priorities.
- Integrating media advocacy campaigns into Youth, Women, and Human Rights Month.

What are we most proud of?

- Engagements on social media and media coverage from prominent newspapers, enhancing visibility and outreach.
- Film fellows hosting The People's hour radio show on Rhodes University's music radio station in Makhanda.
- Production of multimedia content, including bulletins, newsletters, and social media posts, to report on social accountability issues and drive positive change.
- Having successful and positive outcomes on accountability issues

We have engaged in various media advocacy work, utilizing different mediums to reach our audience. Here are the key indicators of our output: 6 bulletins, nine social media newsletters, and 86 newsletters (including social media posts). Fellows were capacitated with multimedia/visual activism training in order to take on citizen journalism work.





Objectives

- Facilitating space for youth engagement and advocacy on the menu of possible commitments related to the South African governance infrastructure.
- Monitoring the South African government's implementation of S4D commitments and uptake of youth asks regarding engagement, participation, and democratisation of political and governance space.
- Facilitating cross-country collaboration on popularising the Menu of Possible commitments in Southern Africa.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU MZANSI AND VOICE2REP

This project aims to empower young people in South Africa to actively participate in shaping democracy and governance. It recognizes that young people are often excluded from these conversations and seeks to provide them with knowledge and tools to hold the government accountable. The project highlights the Menu of Possible Commitments, an initiative by the [Youth Democracy Cohort](#), which outlines priorities for enhancing youth participation. The possible commitments include several thematic focus areas, namely:

1. prioritising youth in governance,
2. supporting youth in government,
3. supporting youth freedom of expression,
4. promoting a culture of youth political participation and,
5. promoting a culture of human rights amongst youth.

By raising awareness, contextualising the commitments, and encouraging their use, the project aims to strengthen youth involvement in governance and ensure the government fulfils its commitments made through the [Summit for Democracy \(S4D\)](#).

ALSA is implementing the project in: Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces. Each convening will include 30 young people from organised youth, student groups, and political parties in South Africa, with a particular focus on girls and young women, the LGBTQIA+ community, and persons with disabilities.



- **Participants:** Participants represented diverse backgrounds, including youth from various regions, youth organisations, and communities with different concerns and perspectives.
- **Group Discussion:** Participants engaged in group discussions focused on thematic areas such as prioritising youth voice in governance, supporting youth in government, freedom of expression, promoting youth political participation, and human rights.
- **Group Exercise – Menu of Possible Commitments ranking:** During each workshop, the facilitator divided the participants into groups of five (5) based on the five thematic areas of the Menu of Possible Commitments. The groups were given approximately an hour to discuss the menu, how to rank priorities as well as any justifications regarding the ranking system. Each group represented how they ranked each priority area.
- **Priorities within thematic areas:** Priorities were ranked within each thematic area, emphasising inclusivity, legislative reform, freedom of expression, civic education, and gender equality.
- **Quotes from workshop participants:** Participants emphasised the importance of youth knowledge empowerment, transparency, inclusivity, addressing discrimination, and creating opportunities for young people to participate in governance. These were captured in each of the provincial workshops.



Provincial Convenings on The Menu of Possible Commitments

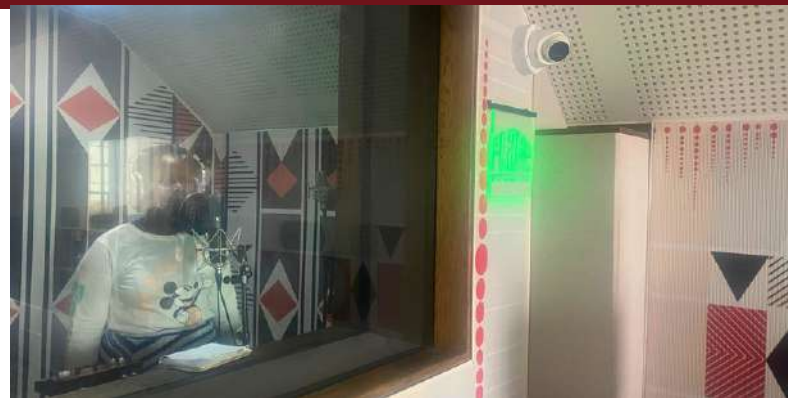
Consultative workshops aimed to discuss priority areas for involving young people in South African participation and democracy, presenting the "Menu of Possible Commitments" as a framework. The ALSA team adapted the Menu of Possible Commitments into a survey using TypeForm and ensured that it was relevant to the South Africa context. The team shared it with the workshop participants via WhatsApp and requested that they fill it in before each workshop to get their input and thoughts on the Menu. We received a total of 36 responses across all six provinces. Not all participants engaged with the Menu before the workshop but did get to engage with it during the group activities at the workshops. ALSA will use the workshops' inputs and TypeForm to develop the localised Menu of Possible Commitments for South Africa.

175 people attended the workshops; 104 were young women, and 3 chose not to identify their gender. The team did not collect data on individuals belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community and people living with disabilities was not collected, but those who chose to identify themselves in the vox pops were recorded at the events.

The workshops aimed to identify and prioritise commitments that the South African government should make to engage and empower young people in various aspects of governance and democracy. Participants were committed to creating positive change in their communities through these commitments.

I'm excited about being the voice of change for young people, educating and improving their involvement in government roles, processes, policies, and practices for the benefit of all citizens.

- Viwe Mzwana - What's on the Menu Mzansi Participant



Voice2Rep Music Competition

Voice2Rep (Voice to Represent) is a music competition for socially conscious musicians and underground or undiscovered artists interested in making music about social justice, youth participation, and accountability. Five young people between the ages of 18 and 35 receive professional training on lyric writing, music production, and mentorship from well-known South African activist musicians, which culminates in the development of a 5-song EP.

The Voice2Rep, What's on the Menu? Edition released a call for artists and selected five young, socially conscious musicians to receive extensive training on the issues and music production, culminating in a five-track EP that will be released in Q3.

We put out the call for participants on ALSA's social media pages, newsletter, and various community WhatsApp groups, including those for the provincial convenings. We also included neighbourhood community groups where ALSA is running service delivery projects and those of youth groups affiliated with partner organisations.

We received 42 submissions from young people across six provinces, with ages ranging from 21 to 34, with a representation of 83.3% Male, 13.9 Female, and 2% transgender. We extended the call for submissions with a campaign exclusively targeting female and queer musicians.

The criteria for selection were; songs with lyrics addressing social justice, youth participation and accountability, performance, and musical talent. The criteria narrowed down the shortlist to seven applicants, and a panel of judges within the ALSA team identified the five winners. We consulted with our colleagues at AL Zimbabwe for guidance on ethics and quality standards, as the competition has run for three iterations there. We then announced our winners.

Training and recordings took place in January 2024, and we look forward to the new young voices to come out on the album.

Impact

- 175 young people across the country were empowered with a tool, the Menu of Possible Commitments to young people by Government, a list of things governments should prioritise to enhance youth participation.
- The menu of possible commitments presents young South Africans with a chance to build on something that can be used to enhance youth participation in governance effectively and to hold the South African state accountable to commitments it has made to the youth.
- Voice2Rep will allow 5 young people to express their challenges and solutions in artistic and creative forms. Music is a powerful tool that keeps giving information in ways beyond events and central control.
- Graduates of ALSA’s Integrity Icon Film Fellowship were empowered to create their own documentaries from start to finish focusing on each of the thematic areas based on the Menu of Possible Commitments.



What’s on the Menu Mzansi Film Fellowship

ALSA recruited filmmakers/fellows in the provinces of Gauteng and the Western Cape to produce five mini-documentaries or short films talking to young people about their perceptions of democratisation and demands to duty bearers and power holders on youth inclusion and democratic participation.

The program is structured to run for four months, with each filmmaker focusing on one of the following thematic areas based on the Menu of Possible Commitments:

- Category 1 - Prioritising youth voice in governance
- Category 2: Supporting youth in government - e.g. documenting parliamentary processes
- Category 3: Supporting youth freedom of expression - e.g. Voice2Rep
- Category 4: Promoting a culture of youth political participation
- Category 5: Promoting a culture of human rights amongst youth - e.g.16 Days of Activism

The film fellows have been trained and upskilled by ALSA. The full cohort of five filmmakers are currently finalising their short films which will be shared widely on ALSA and Youth Democracy Cohort social media platforms and events.

WHAT’S ON THE MENU MZANSI BY THE NUMBERS

6
provinces

7
provincial
convenings

175
total attendees

42
Voice2Rep
entrants

5
Voice2Rep
winners

5
film fellows

5
documentaries
in production



Objectives

- Community reformers are supported to use governance systems and accountability mechanisms to engage with local-level service and governance challenges.
- Community reformers use 'invented' and 'invited' spaces for engagement between 'rights holders' and 'duty bearers' to contribute to inclusive governance and accountability processes.
- Reformers identify, and promote examples of integrity, accountable leadership and service excellence in the public service.

ACTION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The Ahmed Kathrada Foundation (AKF) in partnership with the Accountability Lab South Africa (ALSA) and Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) began a three-year project called Action for Accountability; enhancing public service accountability and good governance in South Africa through citizen-led action for greater transparency and deepened public participation. The overall objective of this action is to strengthen citizen action to enhance accountability and engagement with local governance challenges. The project has incorporated the Lab's CivActs model as part of the work it has conducted.

Activities

The four communities in which A4A is being implemented have embarked on advocacy campaigns, stakeholder engagements, citizen surveys, and citizen journalism to address various issues of service delivery and accountability.

Finetown, Johannesburg

In Finetown, CivActs teams have demanded answers the Department of Health to address the delayed opening of the Finetown Clinic and have engaged the ward 7 councillor on the delay of installations of electricity transformers to supply electricity to some areas as well the construction of a pedestrian bridge for Fine Town residents (especially young students).

Lenasia, South of Johannesburg

CivActs in Lenasia embarked on campaigns to address the lack of water at the Lenasia taxi rank, the Abu-Asvat Bridge, and flooding of homes along the Klip River.

76

total number of participants
from all regions

Impact

- Finetown Clinic:** During a heated service delivery protest in March 2015, residents of an informal settlement near Finetown burned down the local clinic. Construction of the new clinic began in 2017, but there were lengthy delays in its opening. The Finetown community has been told the causes for the delays were electricity connection, late payment to contractors, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the issuing of an occupational certificate during the pandemic when health services were essential.
- CivActs members stepped up the accountability campaign for the opening of the Finetown Clinic. They began calling on the MEC for Health in Gauteng to take accountability for the unopened clinic. They also teamed up with national publication Daily Maverick which wrote an investigative piece on the clinic and other service delivery concerns. On 6 July 2023, the efforts of the A4A Team paid off as the clinic was finally opened. The MEC for Health made several commitments during the opening in relation to the clinic's service delivery standards.
- Through the success of this campaign, we learned about how important it is to put consistent pressure on duty-bearers. We also learned how a program like CivActs can ignite hope in communities and help unite and galvanise people to fight for a common cause.



Mondeor, Johannesburg

The team sought accountability from Rand Water and Johannesburg Water regarding open trenches, continuous water shortages, and the maintenance of parks and recreational areas.

Makhanda, Eastern Cape province

In Makhanda, the campaigns focused on the lack of water supply as well as the deteriorating water quality, advocating for the eradication of the bucket toilet system and inconsistent refuse collection.

What makes the work sustainable?

CivActs participants are trained in the fundamentals of social accountability monitoring and given practical and relevant tools to address service delivery issues in their communities. Skills such as knowledge about the Integrated Development Plan, budgeting, data collection, and dissemination are skills that they can apply beyond the project's life span.

Teams are made up of activists who are based in their communities. They live among other community members who experience some of these social justice issues and are therefore invested in the improvement of their communities as they are directly impacted. The teams were carefully selected using activists who were already doing work on the ground, and they continue to show an interest in applying the knowledge that they have gained in this program to better their communities.

In a town like Makhanda there is very little or no action by the residents to question service delivery-related issues. But since the Action for Accountability (CivActs) project, people have found themselves a platform to express their concerns. Most importantly they are learning constructive mechanisms to address the gaps in service delivery.

- Nthuthu Blow - Community Frontline Associate, Makhanda



FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

A Partnership Project between



@KathradaFound



@AccountLabSA



@PSAM_AFRICA

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

integrity Icon

Principal Mcedi Mtengwana, the 2021 Integrity Icon winner from Kwanobuhle in Gqeberha, has once again been honoured with the National Teachers Award. Despite his continued recognition, he remains remarkably humble. Mcedi emphasises that such accolades serve as motivation, underscoring his unwavering commitment to integrity and exemplary work ethics.

CivActs

The Finetown CivActs team proved that it is possible to co-create solutions to the problems that communities are facing. One of the challenges faced by Finetown community members was the need for a bridge to cross a stream on their daily trips to reach their homes and nearby schools. Through community meetings and written complaints, the team mobilised residents to form a community action team. The team contacted the Daily Maverick to bring attention to the bridge as one of the many service delivery issues facing the community. The team relentlessly engaged the previous and current Ward 7 councillors, and despite initial challenges, including budget constraints, the current Councillor Lois Wizza Simonse took up the cause and engaged the MMC for Roads and Transport in the City of Johannesburg.

After months, the community's persistence and the Councillor's support finally yielded tangible results. By the end of January 2024, the long-awaited bridge construction was underway and opened in March.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY

Action for Accountability Toolkit

The PSAM team designed an Accountability Toolkit to promote active citizenry at a local government level and aims to capacitate the reader with 8 steps on how to engage their local government representatives.

CivActs Surveys

The CFAs completed a total of 12 surveys in 2023/4, investigating various topics including:

Finetown

1. Opening of the Finetown Clinic
2. Quality of health care services at the Finetown Clinic
3. Lack of electricity in Finetown

Lenasia

4. Flooding in Lenasia,
5. Neglect of water infrastructure in Lenasia
6. State of sports and recreational facilities in Lenasia

Mondeor

7. Rand Water Project in Mondeor,
8. State of road infrastructure in Mondeor,
9. State of sports and recreational facilities in Mondeor

Makhanda

10. Water crisis in Makhanda,
11. Water sources in Makhanda
12. Access to a clean environment in Makhanda.

Submission on amendments to the Public Service Regulations

In early 2023, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) invited the public to make submissions on proposed amendments to the Public Service Regulations. PSAM responded to the invitation and prepared a submission that was endorsed by various organisations including ALSA and Ahmed Kathrada Foundation. Three of our recommendations were taken on board by DPSA and have been incorporated into the Public Service Regulations.



STAFF CORNER

Katlego Mohlabane is program coordinator at Accountability Lab South Africa in charge of the What's on the Menu program, where young people hold public leaders such as politicians and government officials through advocacy and one-on-one engagements as well as Voice2Rep where young people make music on accountability, governance, and human rights. He would like to see young people have the tools and means to advocate for their needs without red tape or barriers.

Maureen Majola is the program assistant at Accountability Lab South Africa. She works closely with the program officers on Integrity Icons, Queer Voices Unlocked, Voice2Rep, Whats on the Menu Mzansi to mention a few. She was most excited seeing how Queer Voices Unlocked has sparked interest from a range of people who have received it as important and innovative work.

BUDGET

3

grants

R2.9 mil

total budget for 2023

5

staff members

208

volunteers