



Power from the ground:

Dignity and change in informal settlements



ASIVIKELANE
VOICES OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2026

A note from our Community Facilitator Network Coordinator

This book is a celebration of the Community Facilitators whose dedication, courage, and everyday leadership have shaped the work of Asivikelane across South Africa's municipalities. We celebrate their commitment to the urgency of informal settlement struggles, the hopes and aspirations for human dignity, and better service delivery in their communities.

“Change does not start in boardrooms; it starts on the ground.”



As the Community Facilitator Network Coordinator, I have had the privilege of working with all our Community Facilitators. The work happens in informal settlements – places often left out of budgets, out of plans, and out of sight, but never out of hope. Our Community Facilitators are not outsiders. They live in the communities they serve. They are neighbours, parents, youth, and elders who decided that waiting was no longer an option. They monitor services, collect evidence, engage municipalities and, most importantly, they organise their communities to demand what is rightfully theirs: basic services like water, sanitation, solid waste management, and infrastructure maintenance. This they do with dignity. The stories in this book are not perfect case studies. Some end with a tap finally fixed. Some end with “we’re still fighting.” All of them are real. The campaign is called Asivikelane – “let us protect each other” in isiZulu – because that is exactly what this is all about. Community Facilitators protect their communities by making invisible problems visible and communities protect each other by standing together to solve them.

Their stories remind us that meaningful change begins with relationships. We see the kind of relationships they build with municipal officials against all odds. We see their persistence as they gather data to construct evidence-based testimonies drawn from citizens’ experiences. And we see their willingness to stand with communities as they voice their needs.

Over the years, these Community Facilitators have grown not only as advocates and organisers, but also as community representatives and leaders rooted in the lived realities of the communities they serve. They have made sure they learn the skills and acquire the knowledge that gives them the confidence to address matters not as inferior partners but as equals in the planning and implementation of solutions for basic service delivery in informal settlements.

To our partners, funders, government stakeholders, and participating communities, these stories offer more than impact – they offer a window into the human spirit behind Asivikelane. They show what becomes possible when communities are supported to speak, organise, and act together.

To our Community Facilitators: Thank you. This book exists because of your courage, your time, and your refusal to give up. Your work reminds us that change does not start in boardrooms; it starts on the ground. To the reader: As you read these impact stories, I invite you to see more than broken infrastructure or service delivery challenges. See the power that already exists in communities. See what’s possible when residents, government, and partners work together. And ask yourself: Where do I fit into this story?

Shumani Luruli | Community Facilitator Network Coordinator

Who is Asivikelane?

Asivikelane is a coalition of grassroots organisations working across South Africa to amplify the voices of informal settlement residents speaking out about basic services. We bring together residents, municipal officials, civil society partners, training colleges, and oversight institutions to tackle service delivery challenges.

Hosted by International Budget Partnership South Africa, Asivikelane promotes dignity, agency, and better living conditions for vulnerable residents, ensuring their needs are prioritised in local government planning and spending.



We believe that by training residents, collecting service delivery evidence, and providing diagnostics of budget and service delivery system problems, we can enable residents to engage government.

Asivikelane convenes multi-stakeholder hubs of informal settlement residents, municipal officials, civil society partners, training colleges, and oversight institutions to tackle service delivery challenges. These hubs focus on issues such as water; sanitation; solid waste management; repairs and maintenance of infrastructure; and disaster management.

Hub participants co-design and implement lasting solutions to service delivery problems and their underlying budget challenges.

We currently work in Buffalo City, Cape Town, eThekweni, Johannesburg, Knysna, Mangaung, Tshwane, and Nelson Mandela Bay.



Who are our Community Facilitators?

Community Facilitators are informal settlement residents who help lead Asivikelane's work in their own communities. Because they live in the settlements where they work, they understand the service delivery challenges facing residents and play an important role in connecting communities, Asivikelane partners, and government.

Community Facilitators are identified and recruited by Asivikelane partners and receive training and support to carry out their work.

The Community Facilitator network is a platform where they can share information and knowledge, learn from one another, and build supportive relationships across settlements, hubs and municipalities. Through the network, Asivikelane and its partners provide capacity-building sessions, hub learning exchanges, organisational development workshops for partners, and access to counselling services for Community Facilitators.



Zukile Madikane

Nelson Mandela Bay | Disaster management hub

Partner organisation: Ikhaka Le Africa



My name is Zukile Madikane, Director of Ikhaka Le Africa, a human rights organisation focusing on road safety and basic service delivery in communities.

Ikhaka Le Africa joined Asivikelane in 2025, exposing us to another dimension of community organising – the management of community expectations. Each community naturally has its own internal dynamics, affecting our work as Asivikelane volunteers. Learning to carefully navigate these dynamics was a valuable lesson for us.

What I like most about Asivikelane is its empowerment workshops for Community Facilitators and communities. Our community disaster risk assessment workshop, hosted in partnership with Asivikelane and the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro's Disaster Management Department, taught us to think differently about disasters. We learnt the importance of risk assessments, careful planning, and risk mitigation. We identified disaster risks in our own community, Bayland. We learnt that risk assessment is an ongoing process requiring input from the Department of Education, SASSA, the Department of Health, and the South African Police Services. We learnt the importance of mobilising our community and doing our part. We learnt that we do not have to wait for disasters to happen; through Asivikelane, we can reach out to government entities and proactively minimise the risk of disasters in our community.

In May 2026, we hosted and facilitated a workshop on municipal budgets and Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) in eight informal settlements. This was a significant achievement for us and the communities we represent. Each of the eight settlements drafted comments and made submissions to the Metro's draft budget and IDP. It was great to witness residents producing their own submissions.

“Now we are planning to minimise the risk of disasters *before* they happen.”



We are currently working closely with communities and the Metro's Disaster Management Centre to conduct community risk assessments. We experienced three disasters between March 2026 and June 2026 caused by heavy winds and storms. The difference this year is that we were better prepared as a community to deal with disasters. We knew which services were available to assist with rebuilding our communities and saving lives. We opened shelters located in informal settlements. We continuously assess the impact of disasters in our communities and look for the best ways to prevent them. We also created a platform to assess our own disaster response. In Bayland, we hosted weather alerts training for residents. People are now more knowledgeable and aware of some of the early warning systems. We are also working closely with the Nelson Mandela University to build the capacity of Asivikelane volunteers and community members.

Petunia Mabuza

Tshwane | Solid waste hub

Partner organisation: Planact

planact

“We cleaned and converted
dumpsites to community
parks, sports fields, and
food gardens and now other
communities envy us.”



My name is Petunia Mabuza. I am an Asivikelane Community Facilitator in Phomolong informal settlement. We have many beautiful stories. We started by cleaning dumpsites three years ago and converted them into community parks, sports fields, and food gardens.

We also started recycling and composting in our informal settlement. We give residents buckets to collect organic waste every week. Now that our compost has matured, we are going to package and sell it. What we do is massive and impactful because other communities envy us.

Food & Trees for Africa plans to support us by making a shelter for our recycling and composting projects, teaching us how to grow quality crops, providing a greenhouse, and ensuring our equipment is safely stored. Most importantly, they are going help us become financially sustainable. Their wish is to see us grow as a group of volunteers in the community. With the work that we are doing in the community we attract great opportunities. This would not be possible without Asivikelane.

Because of my involvement in Asivikelane, I also coordinated research for a publication by Cardiff University in collaboration with Wits University and Ardhi University, *Inequality in Walking the 24-Hour City*, launched in October 2025.



Mboniseli Mkhonwana

Buffalo City | Sanitation hub

My name is Mboniseli Mkhonwana. The work of Asivikelane within Buffalo City has played an important role in advancing community participation, dignity, and access to basic sanitation services in several vulnerable communities. Through grassroots activism, community mobilisation, and continuous engagement with municipal stakeholders, important developments were realised during my time as an Asivikelane activist.

In Ward 11 at Hani Park, a toilet facility was successfully constructed for a disabled resident following ongoing advocacy and engagements led by Asivikelane. This intervention highlighted the importance of inclusive sanitation and restoring dignity to vulnerable members of the community. The response by Buffalo City Metro demonstrated how organised community activism can influence service delivery outcomes when communities and civic movements work together constructively.

In Ward 20, Slovo Park, damaged and neglected sanitation infrastructure was repaired through initiatives and pressure driven by Asivikelane. Working closely with residents, challenges were identified and escalated to the relevant municipal structures. The repairs contribute towards improving public health conditions and reducing the risks associated with poor sanitation infrastructure.

At Matsheni Park, educational engagements for residents, facilitated by Asivikelane, highlighted the importance of protecting infrastructure. Community members then began to understand their role in safeguarding communal services and reporting faults on time. Asivikelane also assisted by providing access to a community plumber to address infrastructure-related challenges. This approach promoted both community ownership and sustainable maintenance practices.

A painful but transformative experience was witnessed in Ward 12, Snake Park, in 2023. Residents did not have access to clean drinking water or safe sanitation facilities. Community members were forced to collect water from holes filled from unsafe water sources, often sharing these spaces with animals. Many households relied on self-dug pit toilets, while others were left with no option but to relieve themselves in nearby bushes. This created serious health and environmental risks.



“Sustainable development becomes possible when communities are empowered, organised, and included in decisions affecting their daily lives.”

Asivikelane Community Facilitators conducted community engagements and worked closely with residents to amplify their concerns. Asivikelane also collaborated with the former Ward Councillor, the late Andile Phethani, whose support and commitment to the community played an important role during the process. Through sustained advocacy, monitoring, and pressure directed towards Buffalo City officials over a period of two years, meaningful progress was eventually made.

In June 2025, the first four communal toilets, one standpipe, and one sink water tap were installed at Snake Park. Later, in September, an additional four toilets with taps were constructed, improving sanitation access for the community. These developments represented more than infrastructure delivery; they restored dignity, improved public health conditions, and demonstrated the power of organised community activism in influencing local government responsiveness.

The experiences from these communities reflect the broader impact of Asivikelane in strengthening active citizenship, social accountability, and participatory governance within Buffalo City. They further demonstrate that sustainable development becomes possible when communities are empowered, organised, and included in decisions affecting their daily lives.

Nkululeko Ketelo

eThekweni | Disaster management hub

Partner organisation: Abahlali baseMjondolo



“I learnt about disaster risk assessment, disaster preparedness, and disaster management.”



My name is Nkululeko Ketelo. I stay in Barcelona informal settlement in Ward 75, Lamontville. I am a member and a leader of Abahlali baseMjondolo which means the residents of the shacks.

In June 2025, I was appointed as an Asivikelane Community Facilitator. Through Asivikelane I learnt how to advocate for the provision of basic services through collecting correct and timely data from the community for use as evidence when engaging with the municipality. I ensure that residents receive refuse bags, so that waste can be disposed of in the designated areas.

Through Asivikelane I learnt that my municipality has a responsibility to provide basic services and to repair and maintain those services. They should also collect waste regularly on a weekly basis. I learnt that residents also have an obligation to look after their communal infrastructure. I learnt a lot about disaster risk assessment, the importance of disaster preparedness, and disaster management. I also learnt a lot from other Asivikelane community organisations.

Our community work can be dangerous. Even though we are working to improve living conditions in our communities, there are gatekeepers and opportunists who feel threatened when standards of living improve in informal settlements.

I extend gratitude for my personal development to activists such as Zandile Nsibande, Shumani Luruli, Thando Mhlanga, Samke Phewa, Thapelo Mohapi, Chumile Sali, and everyone involved in Asivikelane. *Sibambisene singawenza umehluko. Amandla ngawethu ngenkani.* (Working together, we can make a difference. Power is ours by force.)



Joel Mayephu

Tshwane | Solid waste hub

My name is Joel Mayephu. I am a social justice and Asivikelane activist. I engage and network with various stakeholders to benefit and uplift informal settlements. I formed relations with community members, leaders and government officials to ensure the success of the Asivikelane solid waste hub in Tshwane.

Asivikelane is unique in its focus on the upskilling and capacity building of Community Facilitators through training and education. Asivikelane taught us to reach out to other stakeholders whom we would not ordinarily engage with as communities. We partnered with the University of South Africa to empower Community Facilitators with conflict resolution skills and with the Rotary Club for a CV writing workshop.

Asivikelane assisted us in viewing waste management holistically and not limiting it to waste collection. We now use waste to empower people in our community. The University of South Africa facilitated waste management and environmental management workshops for Community Facilitators and Tshwane Metro came on board to work with our community.

Baghdad informal settlement used to be squalid and dirty. Asivikelane taught us to think differently about waste, and it is now clean and liveable. We held community workshops with city officials and waste inspectors, and we now have workable waste management practices in place. Waste is now collected every Thursday. I collect refuse bags from the municipality and distribute them across the Baghdad informal settlement. We take photos of the waste collected and send them to the waste inspectors. We count the number of bags collected every week and share that information (including the photos) with the community.

The Social Employment Fund (SEF) programme is also assisting us by paying a stipend to people who are collecting waste. The food waste composting programme is led by the SEF team. Inspired by the eThekweni food waste composting model, in Tshwane we intend to replicate the work they are doing in our informal settlements. We learn a lot from other sites.

We encourage people to recycle waste. We also do upcycling. The mindset of communities is changing now. Waste pickers are acknowledged as partners in waste management; they are seen as part of the community and not as outsiders.

Through our engagement with the City of Tshwane, we now have 20 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers in all seven informal settlements, 350 in total. In Gomora, we started planting trees and community gardens.

“Asivikelane taught us to think differently about waste.”



Limpho Masita

Mangaung | Sanitation hub

Partner organisation: **St James Apostolic Faith Mission**



“It was through Asivikelane that I realised when the people are organised there is a lot that they can achieve.”

My name is Limpho Masita. I was born and bred in Mangaung. I became part of Asivikelane in 2022. Asivikelane gave me a platform to learn about community work and advocacy.

When I started with Asivikelane, it was not an easy journey as I was new to community work, advocacy and working with community structures. In the informal settlements where we were working there was no access to basic services. Politicians were more focused on politics than providing basic services and they made our work and engagements with municipal officials hard. The provision of services was delayed by political interests and there was no will to address service delivery challenges. Informal settlement residents carried the weight of that failure daily. With Asivikelane we started collecting information directly from the residents of informal settlements. The outcomes were clear: there was a lack of sanitation and refuse removal in Mangaung's informal settlements. In every settlement we surveyed, residents relied on self-dug pit toilets. There were no household

taps with running water. In some areas, the entire community depended on a single communal tap that was rarely repaired or maintained by the municipality. In Mkhonto and Saliva, the situation was even more desperate. People had resorted to self-connecting to municipal pipes or walking into neighbouring “formal” areas to collect water just to meet basic needs.

We used the evidence gathered to engage with the municipality. Through Asivikelane's training, we gained the capacity to understand municipal systems and structures. We learnt how to read and engage with the municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and municipal budgets, how public procurement works, and how to use budget advocacy to hold municipal officials accountable. The capacity building training gave us the tools to navigate government structures and to keep showing up even when relationships with officials and councillors were difficult to build.

We decided to make IDP and budget engagements our priority. The logic was simple: if we came to every public participation meeting with verified data, and if we followed up with residents between meetings, we could keep pressure on the municipality and make our demands impossible to ignore. The strategy worked. The data strengthened our voice in public meetings. It gave residents the confidence to speak up. And it created a record we could return to in every follow-up meeting. Over time, sanitation services began to improve.

Asivikelane connected our church with the daily struggles faced by our congregation and our community. Our work proved that churches have a role to play in community development. Faith communities are rooted in these neighbourhoods, and they bring trust and continuity that short-term projects often lack. We learnt that there is power in influencing policy change if you remain consistent and reliable. That consistency has been our hallmark. Despite lukewarm and sometimes uncertain engagement from Mangaung Metro officials, Asivikelane has appeared in the municipal IDP for three consecutive financial years. For a community-led campaign working in a difficult political environment, that is a significant achievement. It means our issues are on the record, budgeted for, and subject to public scrutiny year after year.

The story of Asivikelane in Mangaung is still being written. What started in 2022 with data collection in seven settlements has grown into a sustained effort to change how the municipality plans and delivers services. The lesson for us is clear: when communities collect their own evidence, understand the budget and planning process, and show up consistently, change is possible even in the most challenging metros.

Enrico Farrow

Cape Town | Solid waste hub

Partner organisation: **Thetha Community Organisation**



My name is Enrico Farrow. Being part of Asivikelane has been a meaningful journey for me. It has given me an opportunity to serve residents, grow as a community leader, and contribute to improving waste management in informal settlements. Through this work, I have been able to support change that makes a real difference in the daily lives of residents.

One of the greatest opportunities I have been given by Asivikelane is the chance to work in the five informal settlements of Ward 40 in Gugulethu. This experience has allowed me to engage directly with residents, understand the waste challenges they face, and help promote cleaner, healthier living environments. Working closely with these communities has strengthened my understanding of the importance of dignity, participation, and practical solutions in service delivery.

Asivikelane has also invested in my growth by providing learning opportunities and training, building my confidence and skills. I have gained knowledge about waste separation, recycling, community engagement, and educating others on responsible waste practices. Prior to Asivikelane, I was not interested in recycling. Now I breathe, eat, and sleep recycling. These skills have empowered me to share useful information with residents so that they can manage waste better, understand the value of recycling, and participate in building cleaner communities.

I am also proud of the success of the Asivikelane team in engaging with the City of Cape Town on important waste issues. One of our achievements was the removal of the waste container in Lwazi Park after we participated in a process to show the city that it had become a health hazard. This taught me the power of teamwork, persistence, and constructive engagement with government.

Our positive engagement with Polyco has been another encouraging step forward. Polyco is setting up a recycling hub, creating new opportunities for recycling, skills development, and income generation in communities. This partnership demonstrates what is possible when organisations work with communities to create practical and sustainable solutions for waste management.



“Now I breathe, eat, and sleep recycling.”

Another part of this journey that I value deeply is the opportunity Asivikelane gives me to share recycling skills with partner organisations in other provinces. Being able to exchange knowledge and experiences beyond my own community has widened my perspective and strengthened my commitment to community-led change. It is rewarding to know that the lessons I have learnt can support other organisations and communities as they build their own recycling initiatives.

My story with Asivikelane is a story of growth, service, and hope. It is about learning new skills, sharing knowledge, building partnerships, and helping communities move toward cleaner and more sustainable futures. I am proud to be part of this journey, and I believe the work we are doing today will continue to create opportunities and lasting impact for many people in the future.

Samke Phewa

eThekweni | Disaster management hub

Partner organisation: **Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) / SA SDI Alliance**

SA sdi. Alliance

“Asivikelane has truly helped our communities.”



My name is Samke Phewa. In 307 Avoca Road and Mandeni informal settlements there were no toilets. Residents were using holes, plastic bags, and neighbouring informal settlements to relieve themselves. Through data collection we were able to prioritise specific service delivery challenges and understand what services our community needed. Through Asivikelane we are more focused on access to water, sanitation, and waste collection. This data has strengthened our government engagement – rather than criticising the absence of services, we can use the data as evidence to engage with the municipality. The municipality listens to us better when we use evidence.

Our engagement has led to solving issues of maintenance and repairs of services, and water and sanitation has been provided in our communities. Due to our engagements with government officials, these two communities have been provided with chemical toilets.

As Asivikelane Community Facilitators, we see the experience of our communities first-hand, and we dig deep to resolve these issues. We saw that there were no toilets. We saw that communal ablution blocks had been locked for many years. We intensified our data collection and coupled it with site visits. We started engaging with officials from the Department of Water and Sanitation and shared our data and photos of broken services with them. We now had data to support what we were saying.



We used data profiling to obtain a reliable estimate of the number of households in informal settlements. We did our own intelligence work. We involved local communities in profiling. We shared the data with officials to assist our communities. We organised awareness campaigns in our settlements. We used our relations with Human Settlements and Department of Water and Sanitation officials for the betterment of our communities.

In a settlement, when it was difficult for the municipality to provide an ablution facility, through our advocacy they brought in chemical toilets as an alternative.

One of the other issues affecting our communities was waste. We focused on waste-management data and asked residents about their challenges. They did not get plastic bags from the municipality; they used shopping bags to drop off waste at collection points; they did not have information on the collection points schedule; and they were unaware of how waste mismanagement affected them. Residents learnt that waste skips are available for their use and that these are easier to reach than the collection points.

We organised clean-up campaigns and awareness campaigns. Contractors, Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers and the municipality started collecting waste, and we learnt how waste is managed. Where there were challenges (e.g., a contractor who would only collect yellow bags), communities started finding solutions on how to minimise waste. Residents and officials started engaging directly with each other, relaying when the skip or collection point was full, and requesting the waste collection truck.

We began by drafting a map of the settlement to plot the locations of waste collection points. We identified waste monitors from residents and EPWP workers. We looked for ways to manage waste – for example, if the waste disposal truck is unable to come through, how do we minimise waste differently?

The waste solutions which communities are implementing include sorting household waste, keeping organic waste for community garden composting, setting aside recyclable materials, setting up recycling hubs, and turning rehabilitated dumps into community garden spaces.

“The municipality listens to us better when we use evidence.”

WHAT IS SETTLEMENT PROFILING?

Settlement profiling means collecting basic information about an informal settlement so you can understand it better and plan services more accurately. It can include gathering evidence about the settlement's conditions. This helps to estimate the number of households, understand service delivery gaps, and engage municipal officials with reliable information rather than assumptions.



Noluthando Geja

Tshwane | Solid waste hub

Partner organisation: 1to1 Agency of Engagement



“We moved a community from dumping to dignity, and from waste to wealth.”



My name is Noluthando Geja, and I am built on grit, driven by resourcefulness, and powered by optimism.

I joined Asivikelane as a volunteer in 2021. Itireleng informal settlement was drowning in waste. Children were playing on dump sites, gardens had died, there was no water, no tools and no belief. People had stopped seeing possibilities and lost hope. They only saw problems.

So, we started small in Itireleng. We picked up trash with our bare hands. We built community gardens bed by bed and watered them one watering can at a time. We convinced neighbours that Asivikelane’s motto “let us protect each other” was not just a slogan. It was survival to us.

The impact followed the work. In Itireleng informal settlement, we turned dumping zones into growing zones. Families now harvest vegetables from soil we revived together. Youth, who once loitered around, now lead recycling drives. Residents stopped waiting for trucks and started taking ownership of their streets. We successfully initiated a recycling and compost project using the knowledge we gained through Asivikelane. Waste that once choked our streets is now being diverted, sorted, and returned to the soil as compost to feed the very gardens we have built and grown. We moved a community from dumping to dignity, and from waste to wealth.

Asivikelane rebuilt me. I learnt leadership in the field, not in a classroom. Through Asivikelane I obtained a Leadership and Skills Development Certificate. More than theory, Asivikelane taught me how to network, how to sit at tables I once thought were not for me, how to turn relationships into partnerships, and how to turn waste into resources.

That training is bearing fruit today. Using the information and networking skills I gained through Asivikelane, I have worked with my ward councillor to collaborate with stakeholders such as Laudium Primary, Patrician, Africa Pageants, and the Department of Agriculture. These partnerships are no longer dreams, they are active doors opening for resources, skills, and scale.

My contribution to the community did not go unnoticed. I was honoured with a Community Excellence Award in Environmental and Social Impact. It was not an award for me alone; it was recognition for every resident who participated, every Asivikelane volunteer, and every partner who chose to believe that Itireleng informal settlement community deserves better.

Today, my personal motto “built on grit” is more than just words. It is proof of what can be achieved. I started with nothing but my hands and my voice. I am driven by resourcefulness because we make solutions from what others throw away, and partnerships from what others ignore. I am powered by optimism because I’ve seen a street change when one person refuses to give up. Asivikelane didn’t just change Itireleng, it also changed me. Together, with new allies at our side, we continue to build a better future.

Uzuzingce Mdiba

Johannesburg | Sanitation hub

Partner organisation: Planact

planact

My name is Uzuzingce Mdiba. I joined Asivikelane in 2024. My job is to count the number of Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) toilets in our community and check and report if any are broken.

When trucks come to empty the VIP toilets, they have to remove the concrete slab which often gets broken in the process. We had an incident where a community member was searching for network coverage while talking on the phone and stood on top of a slab. The slab broke and he fell inside. If an elder can easily fall inside, imagine how dangerous it can be for kids, so *nje* (definitely) it was not safe.

We wanted to create safer toilets, especially for the kids. We came up with an idea to redesign the concrete slabs. The new design has a hole in the middle of the slab, with a 5-litre bucket, so you just open the bucket and empty it without removing the whole slab.

Through Asivikelane, we attended construction school to learn how to implement our new idea. I grew up thinking that construction was only for men but attending this training, and being trained by an inspiring woman, made me realise that even physically hard work can be done by women.

After graduating, we decided to test this new idea in a few houses around the community, prioritising the ones that were high risk. The new design worked and we have now started a business making and selling the slabs in our community, but not for free this time! We are now skilled and business-minded graduates. After construction school, I was also given an opportunity by Planact to study office skills and administration.

I fell in love with construction, but I am taking things slowly *akere* (right) as I am still an infant in this industry.

There are many jobs you can do in construction, without getting your hands dirty. I am very privileged to now have an administration certificate, so I can do administrative work. Going forward I can use my certificates to get a job. I have a team and we are selling the slabs, but it doesn't end there. We want to do more in construction and are planning to register our business. Thanks to Asivikelane and Planact for granting me these opportunities. Together we are going forward. Together we can do more. Together we can build.

This is not the end of my story; I am still alive *akere* (right)!

“Together we
can do more,
together we
can build.”



Nonceba Ndlebe

Cape Town | Solid waste hub

Partner organisation: Indibano Yabahlali



“Asivikelane has empowered me with valuable knowledge: waste can be transformed into profitable business opportunities.”



My name is Nonceba Ndlebe. I am from Indibano Yabahlali, and I reside in the Island informal settlement in Makhaza, Khayelitsha. I would like to applaud Asivikelane for the positive impact it has made in my community. Through its educational programmes, Asivikelane has empowered me and my community members with valuable knowledge about waste management and recycling. I have learnt how waste can be transformed into profitable business opportunities, creating livelihoods while contributing to a cleaner environment.



Asivikelane has also played an important role in addressing climate change by promoting recycling and reducing the amount of waste that ends up at landfill sites. This has encouraged me to participate in sustainable recycling projects that benefit both the environment and local households.

Asivikelane has empowered me with the skills and confidence I need to engage government departments on issues affecting my community. Through training, education and support, I am now better equipped to identify challenges, advocate for solutions, and work collaboratively with government stakeholders to improve service delivery.

The work of Asivikelane has not only strengthened my environmental awareness but has also built community capacity, created opportunities for economic participation, and encouraged active citizenship. I am grateful for the support and knowledge that Asivikelane continues to provide to our communities.

Inspiring stories from our Community Plumbers

Asivikelane's Community Plumber initiative trains residents of informal settlements in Cape Town and Knysna to repair and maintain communal taps, toilets and other basic sanitation infrastructure. The initiative not only reduces long waits for municipal repairs, it also develops local skills, creates employment opportunities and strengthens community ownership.

Developed collaboratively with residents, government, training institutions and Asivikelane partners – including Development Action Group (DAG), the Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority (EWSETA), Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the Department of Water and Sanitation, Africa Skills, Industries Education and Training Institute (IETI), and local municipalities – the initiative has trained over 200 informal settlement residents with *Plumbing Hands* and *Assistant Handyperson* skills and equipped them with tools and materials. Community Plumbers are now able to attend to minor faults, improve water and sanitation services, and build relationships with officials and councillors.



Acquiring a new set of skills has boosted the confidence of many residents and opened pathways to new work opportunities, while bringing about sustainable change in these communities.

Asivikelane Community Plumbers are building a generation of young leaders equipped to monitor, maintain and repair essential services while strengthening their communities from within. Their stories demonstrate the power of investing in South Africa's young people: they are improving the reliability of basic services, creating pathways into meaningful employment and driving sustainable change in the communities they call home.

These are their stories...

Vemesia Galant



“This journey has shown me that, when communities are empowered with the right skills and support, real and lasting change is possible.”

Asivikelane has become more than just training – it is a part of my everyday life, a journey of growth and purpose, and a service to my community.

Since Asivikelane started in Knysna, we have witnessed remarkable improvements in our communities. What began as reporting service delivery issues has grown into something much, much bigger.

I became actively involved in repairing minor faults on taps and toilets so that we not only identify problems but also become part of the solution. It is incredibly rewarding to know that, by fixing essential services, I can help restore dignity to families.

I first completed my basic plumbing training, which equipped me with the practical skills – and the confidence – to do even more for my community. It allowed me to assist more households and make a greater impact.

I then completed a five-month accredited skills *Assistant Handyperson* training course at Africa Skills, which was another life-changing milestone. That training deepened my technical knowledge, strengthened my practical abilities, and inspired me to believe in myself and fulfil my potential.

Thanks to the training, guidance, and hands-on experience, I have been equipped with the skills and confidence to serve my communities and build a better future for them and for myself.

Today, I am doing far more than fixing taps and toilets. I am developing skills, creating opportunities, restoring hope, and helping to build stronger, more resilient communities. I am investing in my future while making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Thank you to Asivikelane for believing in me. Thank you for investing in my growth, and for creating opportunities that empower ordinary community members to become agents of change.



Esethu Dumo

The three-month *Plumbing Hands* training taught me about more than pipes; it taught me discipline, patience, and that I can build my own future.

A big thank you to Asivikelane! Thank you for seeing me, for fighting for my community, and for supporting training that gives ordinary people like me a chance to learn and grow. Asivikelane reminds me that our voices from the townships matter.

To my fellow graduates: we did it! We are no longer job seekers. We are problem solvers. Now we are part of the solution to South Africa's water and infrastructure challenges.



“Before the training, I knew nothing about plumbing. Today, I’m walking out with a skill in my hand and pride in my heart.”



Yolanda Nqilo

I’m thankful to Asivikelane. Volunteering has brought opportunities I never imagined. Asivikelane gave me valuable skills and the chance to help my community. I can now fix taps and toilets, and I encourage others to volunteer with Asivikelane.

Asivikelane saw the potential in me and empowered me to be a Community Plumber. Being active in my community has transformed lives.

Asange Charlie

I live in LR informal settlement in Ward 96, Khayelitsha. Through Asivikelane, I had the opportunity to study plumbing.

I completed the Plumbing Hands training and now have practical plumbing skills that I can use to help my community by fixing toilets, taps and drains.

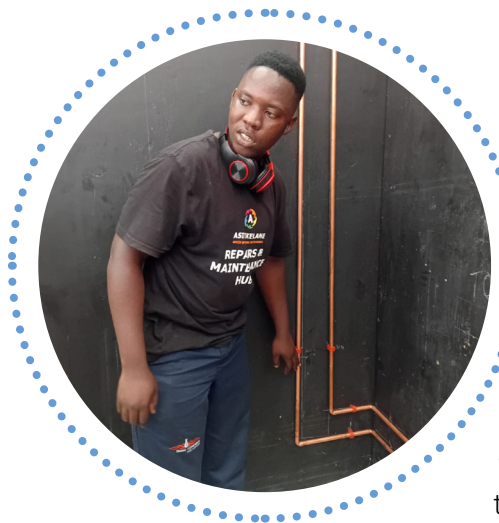


Fregen Galant

I completed the *Plumbing Hands* training at Africa Skills in George, where we combined classroom study with practical, on-site experience. What I enjoyed was the quality of the education, the theory, and the opportunity to work with my hands. I am now working towards a formal plumbing qualification.

“This opportunity is about more than gaining a qualification. When my plumbing training is complete, I hope to share my skills with other young people who also don’t have access to education in a formal trade.”





Lathitha Dida

I live in PJS informal settlement in Ward 89, Khayelitsha. Through Asivikelane, I completed the *Assistant Handyperson* training at IETI. This qualification is more than a certificate: I believe these skills will open doors I never imagined and help me uplift my family.

I'm inspired to continue my studies and attend the *Plumbing Hands* training. The skills I have gained help me put bread on the table and participate in the economy. With this qualification, I can study further and go further in life.

“I vow to teach other young people in my community and transfer my skills. I want to help people and help my community.”

Yolande Mdeleni

I completed the *Assistant Handyperson* training at IETI. Through this training, I've realised that there's a lot that I can do. Before I thought these skills were only for men, but I'm now equipped with the skills to help my community.

I'm surprised that, as a young woman, I can do this job. This has boosted my confidence. I am now an independent woman with skills that can help me in future. Thank you, Asivikelane!



Mzimhle Sitela

I completed the *Assistant Handyperson* training through Asivikelane. Before the training, I thought handyman work was the same as carpentry, but I learnt basic plumbing and electrical skills.

Asivikelane exposed me to things I never imagined possible. I gained new knowledge about the basics of plumbing. I'm thankful to Asivikelane for the opportunity.

Sibongiseni Jodwana

I completed the *Plumbing Hands* training at IETI. At first, I didn't know what being a plumber entailed, or anything about the different types of pipes and tools plumbers use. For me, all tools seemed the same.

“Thanks to DAG and Asivikelane, I have learnt a lot about plumbing. I can now identify different kinds of pipes and understand which tools are used for different jobs.”





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