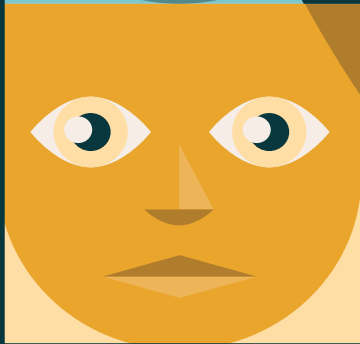


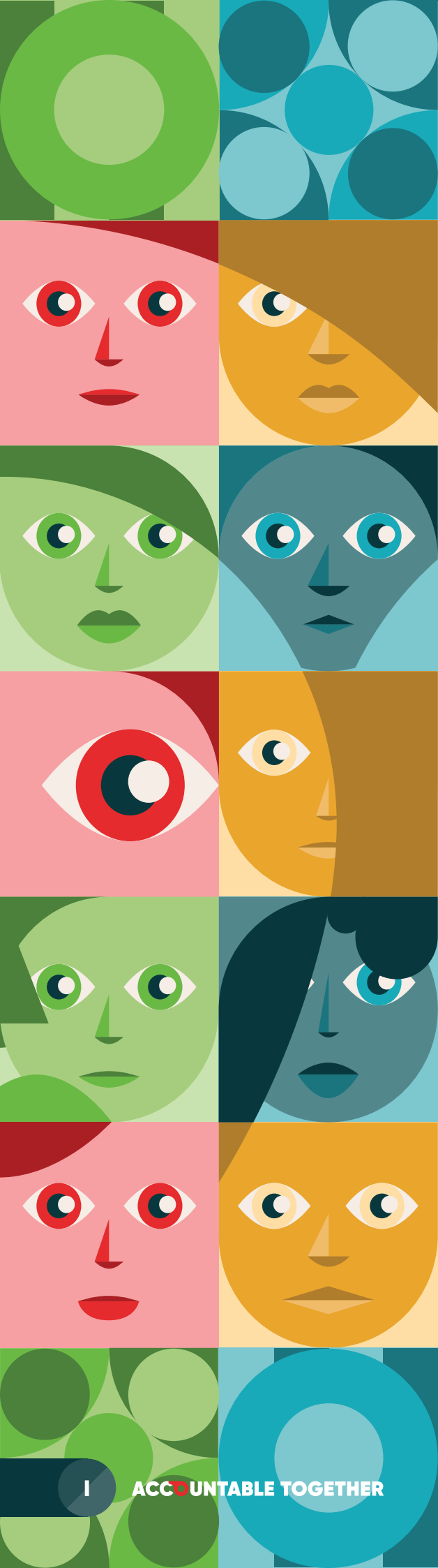
ACCOUNTABLE

corruption
watch



Annual
Report
2024

TOGETHER



Let your **RESPONSIBILITY** to society not falter because you fear you may not make a difference alone.

ACCOUNTABLE TOGETHER

Inspired by our African roots and humanity, guided by the Bauhaus ethos of smart, efficient resource use, and with one shared vision, we can achieve the extraordinary.

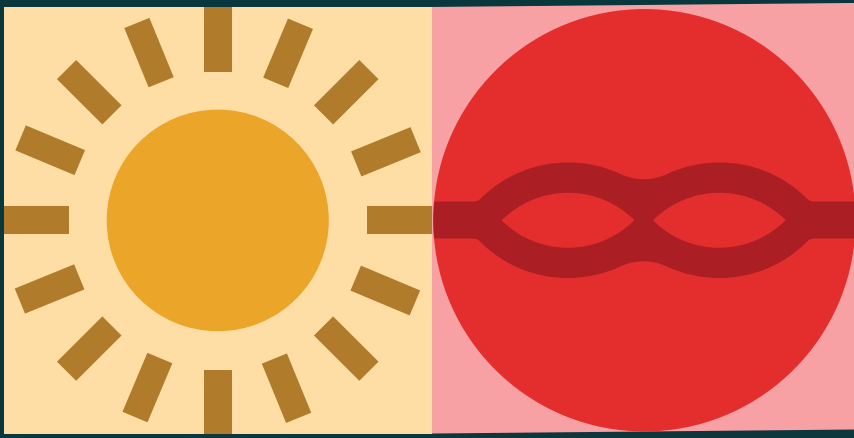


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ACCOUNTABLE CITIZENS MAKE FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE

By Themba Maseko – Corruption Watch chairperson

This edition of our annual report is set against the backdrop of broad reflections in 2024 being a watershed year in electoral democracy, as more than 60 countries across the globe held general elections.

For many of the nations that participated in the democratic exercise of voting in new leaders, the outcomes and impact of the elections will have long-term consequences, including fuelling geopolitical tensions and possibly undermining multilateralism and the gains achieved towards setting and meeting climate change goals, among others. The non-profit sector in particular is already experiencing the impact of such consequences through funding cuts that could have dire costs for the poor and marginalised.

Our own situation here at home – since the May 2024 elections – has some semblance of optimism, but we must acknowledge that we have a long way to go before our own democratic vision is restored for the true benefit of all South Africans who are currently negatively impacted by systemic corruption.

The last time I shared my thoughts on this platform, it was in anticipation of possible changes the general elections would bring to South Africa's socio-political landscape. It was also how this change would potentially usher in a new order that would up the accountability game without compromising the values of our Constitution.

We collectively expected a revolution of sorts, although appreciating that it would not be an easy find, which is why Corruption Watch's (CW) message in our last report, *Changing the Landscape*, was for citizens to act decisively and stop enabling government corruption. One thing was clear: the

polls were going to be a game changer, and the political parties vying for our votes at the time knew as well as we did that we could not continue with business as usual after we cast our votes.

Of course, pre-election surveys predicted a slump in voter turnout due to growing civil disobedience, and in the end that translated into around 11-million registered voters not pitching at the polls altogether. The lower turnout hurt the once-governing party so much so that it had to negotiate a settlement with opposition to arrive at the governments of national and provincial unity (GNU and GPU) as we know them today. It also gave rise to the voice of smaller, previously insignificant players, while confidence went to newcomers who resonated with South Africans across the class spectrum.

The disgruntlement among many South Africans with deteriorating levels of service delivery both leading up to the elections and afterwards is palpable, and the integrity of the promises and commitments of not just the GNU, but also the new opposition, mostly remain to be seen. Certainly the current administration committed to strong anti-corruption strategies that would see a notable change in how our government institutions and apparatus are run. It is on that very note that we should be able to hold it accountable as citizens.

As our country prepares to host a highly anticipated G20 summit at the end of this year, it is incumbent on our leaders to demonstrate how the challenges presented by the changes in geopolitics referred to above, and the impact of these on sustainable climate action and the development of anti-theft and anti-corruption strategies in this regard, are mitigated. The benefits for South Africa and the rest of the continent, should this indeed

happen, will be great. It will mean positive changes for countries that deserve to be protected, as Transparency International (TI) notes in the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, by leaders who have a chance to "advocate for increased climate finance commitments from G20 countries that do not conflate debt repayments, private financing and loans as a substitute for direct mechanisms to mitigate the climate crisis."

What is for certain for many South Africans is that a more determined government – whatever shape it takes – is not going to be enough to reverse our decline into a "flawed" democracy, as TI's Corruption Perceptions Index has characterised our country for the past two years. There may be new policies being implemented, and some strategies for the best working systems across departments may be under review as each minister wants their portfolio to embody their vision, but the problems of the ordinary South African have neither disappeared nor lessened. We remain in crisis mode with regards to several service delivery challenges as I proffered in *Changing the Landscape*.

What we do have, however, is an opportunity to review our part in the future of our country and the small contribution we all can make to reverse the levels of decay in our moral fibre. Never has it been more important than at this stage for all of us to show up for each other without expectation of rewards or gratuity, but only because we are motivated by the change we helped engineer in the last year. It is on us to do our best to counter the decline in our moral standards.

As South Africans we owe it to ourselves to call out the lawlessness that has started to grip our communities and is eating away at our character, gradually encroaching on our freedoms and potentially endangering our lives as we give in to our impatience over poor service delivery. It is in the things that are little now, but that can develop into

bigger things over time. We see – and don't always call out – the continuously worsening misconduct on our roads as motorists skip red or dysfunctional traffic lights out of a combination of frustration and general disobedience; the growing culture of paying bribes for services like drivers' licenses or for faster assistance in healthcare; our readiness to pay for our children's admission into public schools of our preference because we simply don't agree with the systems set in place; our disservice to mining communities with regard to injustices they are subjected to; and other anomalies that we live through in our day to day existence.

We approached the elections differently, whether it was by voting for a slew of different parties to help dilute the one-party authority we've known for 30 years, or by not voting at all. Our decisive stance in participation or non-participation is what ultimately led to the first hung national government of our democratic era, and one that may or may not re-deliver on the democratic promise of our Constitution.

We are not idle in our most fundamental psyche, as numerous citizen-motivated shifts have been made over the past three decades, from street protests to civil action lawsuits against our government, and others. So, in acting together to right what's flawed in our society, we have the opportunity and the strength to change its trajectory from one that is lawless and disobedient to one that is responsible and accountable.

This year, CW encourages all its supporters, partners, donors, and funders to be *Accountable Together* in the interest of bringing South Africa back to the pedestal it once enjoyed as an inspiration for many other nations on the continent and abroad. It starts with the individual, though, and ends with a society that functions by doing right by others all the time, regardless.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY DEFICIT

By Karam Singh – former executive director of Corruption Watch*

South Africa's democratic journey has been nerve-racking, thought-provoking, and exciting all at the same time. The country has made meaningful gains in securing vital rights, improving policy and legislation, and maintaining commitments to greater progress in access to health, education, and public transport for impoverished communities, among others, and creating opportunities for international recognition of local talent and capabilities across many fields. Despite all this, however, there are shortcomings.

Despite these gains, some may feel that democratic progress, robust free and fair elections notwithstanding, is not happening at the speed that it once did. For instance, confidence in that very electoral system has declined in the last five years, as revealed in an Independent Electoral Commission survey, conducted in 2024 with the collaboration of the Human Sciences Research Council. Just 45% of the 13 155 respondents expressed confidence that their votes would be counted accurately, down from 60% in 2019.

But voter participation in elections is very necessary. It is one way of holding leaders to account, because those who are elected to office become answerable to the people who voted for them. This reflects the theme of this year's annual report, **Accountable Together** – a call from Corruption Watch to demand accountability from our leaders and look for it within ourselves.

This all-of-society approach to demanding and promoting accountability must build on the unprecedented gains made after last year's polls, where absolute power was taken away from one party and a more inclusive government was established.

Wanted: more accountability

For a couple of decades now our democratic path has wavered under the burden of deep-seated systemic corruption in various permutations, from state capture to crony kleptocrats. Sustained success in the fight against corruption and organised crime remains elusive, and one of the reasons is that accountability for these illegal activities, especially corruption, is in short supply.

This accountability chasm is one of the most troubling aspects of the democratic journey and transition from apartheid – whether it be all the unfinished cases of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the lack of accountability from an establishment that was never prosecuted, or the long-awaited accountability for the Marikana massacre or for state capture, it's a glaring deficit.

We have yet to see prosecutions for those found by the state capture commission to have a case to answer for allegedly hijacking the state for their private gains – the Guptas, Jacob Zuma, and their co-conspirators and enablers. In the case of the Guptas, this situation also exposes the overall weakness of the global enforcement system that sees us unable to execute a successful extradition.

At the current rate of progress and success within the criminal justice system, people may be forgiven for thinking that we will never close the accountability chasm and ensure those responsible are brought to book and the assets recovered. In some defence of our law enforcement agencies, there needs to be intentional capacitation of strategic fields such as forensic investigations and other specialities. Without improving on such, they will remain underdogs to increasingly sophisticated criminal networks that have perfected the playbook on ducking accountability.

Work to be done

After the euphoria of the first democratic elections in 1994 and the progressive foundation laid by the Constitution in 1996, South Africa was a beacon for the democratic journey, supported by a deep-seated human rights vision, following the brutal struggle against apartheid. Democratic values in South Africa have always been contested, but the trajectory of constitutional jurisprudence helped project the view that when it came to the achievement of socio-economic rights, the South African Constitution placed high demands on state actors.

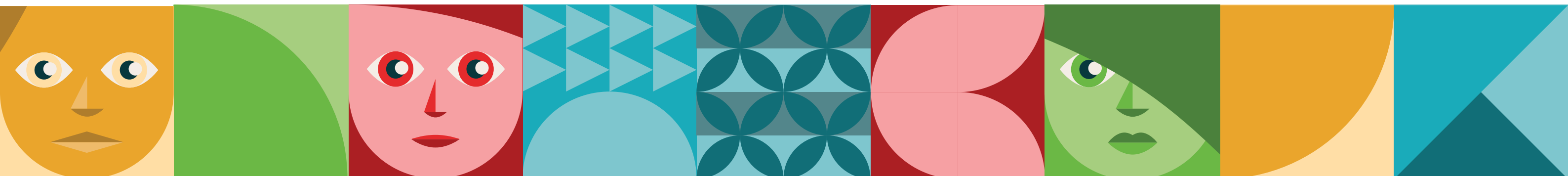
For many, those rights have not been realised. There is a growing scepticism that senior state actors agree on whether to resist the creep towards kleptocracy or to commit to building a system which is resilient and committed to the democratic promise. The lack of focused dedication means the process of reversing state capture, including fixing the criminal justice system, remains partial.

We have made some progress on transparency, but more is needed. We want greater open data regarding public procurement reform, and mandatory lifestyle audits for public officials must be implemented. Collectively we must support the work of public accounts committees at national, provincial, and local government levels. We must ensure the successful implementation of Auditor-General audit findings and the findings and recommendations of Special Investigating Unit proclamations.

Together, we all have a role to play in promoting accountability in the fight against corruption – but also accountability in how we conduct ourselves, build our communities, raise our children, and treat others in our work places. We are all accountable, and we must recognise and promote this value in all the circumstances of our lives. In so doing, we can begin to change the narrative around what we expect from the state and society. As we envision an all-of-society approach to fighting corruption, we must think about how we continue to build a speak-out culture which protects the most courageous and vulnerable who are prepared to blow the whistle.

Exposing corruption should never be in vain. Ensuring accountability can revive the democratic journey and kick-start a new era based on fulfilling democratic values and building better lives.

**Mr Karam Singh stepped down from his role as executive director of Corruption Watch, effective 28 February 2025. More details can be found [here](#).*



INTRO DUCTION

Twenty 24 was a momentous year with numerous important happenings in South Africa and around the world. At home, the most meaningful of these arguably happened in May when citizens around the country cast their votes for their choice of leaders for the next five years.

There is no need to rehash the outcome of that election – suffice it to say that South Africa experienced a significant political shift, as Corruption Watch's (CW) theme for our 2023 annual report, *Changing the Landscape*, intimated. The government of national unity (GNU) is in place, and it now falls to the entire country to work together so that all can thrive.

An important component of that work – not just for CW, but for everyone – is demanding accountability from the GNU on all levels of government, and holding each other accountable for our own stances regarding corruption.

What is accountability, exactly? It means different things to different people. The **Cambridge Dictionary** defines it, simply, as accepting responsibility for what you do and being able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens. Through the CW lens, this means that all sectors of society must take responsibility for their corrupt actions, or their actions resisting corruption, whichever the case may be, and accept the consequences thereof.

That's why the theme of our 2024 annual report is *Accountable Together*. We want accountability – from ourselves first and foremost, from our friends and families, our communities, our businesses, our local government, our provincial government, and out national government. So if, for instance, you as a citizen decided you didn't want to vote in the 2024 election and you're not satisfied with the GNU, you must be accountable for that decision, accepting both responsibility for it, and the result.

This is a simplified example – but accountability is a critical factor in the smooth functioning of democracies. It is, in fact, one of the basic principles of democracy, along with transparency, rule of law, public participation, equality, and free and fair elections, and others. Our bill of rights grants us many different forms of freedom, but that freedom comes with responsibility. We are not exempt from consequences.

That's why in South Africa we need a culture of accountability in all aspects – personal, societal, legal, ethical, political, corporate – and why civil society organisations like CW are so important in helping to ensure that accountability triumphs and democracy is upheld.

Changing mindsets, changing lives

The prevailing culture of tolerance and impunity for corruption is not going to lift people out of poverty, maintain infrastructure, create jobs, or grow the economy.

Knowing this, throughout 2024 CW continued to advocate for enhanced accountability and transparency in the public sector. One of our most anticipated initiatives was the launch in July 2024 of the Strengthening Action Against Corruption (**SAAC**) project, currently active in the Eastern Cape province, in collaboration with Social Change Assistance Trust and Transparency International (TI) and funded by the European Union. The aim of the project is threefold:

- Strengthen anti-corruption initiatives driven by civil society organisations.
- Enhance engagement and collaboration on anti-corruption efforts between civil society, state institutions supporting constitutional democracy, the public, and the private sector.
- Improve transparency, which in turn strengthens the deterrence and detection of corruption across the public and private sectors.

The project is aimed specifically at community advice offices and civil society organisations in the province, equipping them with the knowledge and resources needed to identify and address corruption at community level. By supporting these organisations in mobilising their communities, SAAC

fosters a culture of accountability and transparency that is fundamental to anti-corruption efforts in South Africa.

We also continued with work for the Rallying Efforts to Accelerate Progress (REAP) project, implemented by CW in partnership with TI. Our REAP work focused largely on community consultations, or the lack thereof, in mining. We produced, among other deliverables, **a policy brief** titled *Strengthening FPIC for Inclusive Mining Decisions*. This calls for the enactment of Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act of 1996 (IPILRA) regulations for obtaining free, prior, and informed consent, thus emphasising the importance of meaningful consultation with relevant and affected parties in South Africa's extractive sector.

We also engaged experts to produce two important research reports. In **her report** titled *The Maledu Judgment, IPILRA, and the MPRDA*, Dr Aninka Claassens examines several pivotal South African court judgments that guide on the use and interpretation of the major laws governing mining and tenure security in the country, and the way they could and should be read together. The **other paper**, written by mining and labour law specialist Dr Godknows Mudimu and titled *Meaningful Consultations and Informal Land Rights*, explores the crucial role of consultation in producing sustainable and acceptable outcomes for vulnerable communities.

Corruption fight continues

In the meantime, we continue with our multi-faceted approach to fighting corruption. We contribute to legislation and policy development by analysing bills for flaws that could enable corruption and pushing for the changes we recommend. We scrutinise candidates for appointments to Chapter 9 institutions, taking part in vetting processes and sharing our findings with relevant parliamentary committees. Through webinars, workshops, radio and TV interviews, articles and opinion pieces, and digital tools, we empower people to understand their rights, recognise corruption, and fight it. We participate in global events such as investigative journalism conferences at home and abroad, international anti-corruption conferences and think tanks, and important local events such as the upcoming C20 gathering later this year.

Accountability for CW means that the rule of law should be respected and proper processes followed, so that those who are found guilty of wrongdoing receive a just sanction, justly arrived at.

It also means that the whistle-blowers who continue to come to us will feel that their concerns have been heard, as they remain a focal point of our work. We support them according to our resources and capacity, and in whatever way will be most impactful.

Another new but very important focus area for CW is that of climate governance. This is becoming increasingly critical globally and indeed, it was the theme of TI's **2024 Corruption Perceptions Index**.

Throughout 2024 we worked to lay a foundation for work which actively begins in 2025. We participated in workshops hosted by Open Secrets and ALT Advisory, and we attended TI's Climate Governance Integrity (CGI) annual meeting. The CGI programme aims to ensure that money allocated to climate causes is governed with integrity, transparency, and accountability, so that scarce funds are not stolen, and the most vulnerable people receive the help they need to adapt to the climate crisis.

This stakeholder engagement facilitated valuable knowledge exchanges, expanded our reach, and reinforced our aim to become a key player in climate governance. It also strengthened networks with civil society groups, ALT Advisory, and the Information Regulator, laying the groundwork for future collaboration.

Other work in this field included our endorsement of a submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, emphasising the intersection of access to information, human rights, and climate change. We also conducted a comprehensive risk assessment, providing a solid knowledge base for future advocacy and public education efforts, and identified and mapped 13 key stakeholders, which will guide upcoming engagement activities.

WHO WE ARE

At the heart of every social transformation are the stories and the deeds of people who dare to imagine a better world for all.

Corruption Watch is an independent civil society organisation in the social justice sector, launched in 2012 in response to the spiralling corruption in South Africa. We are the local chapter of Transparency International, a global movement with one vision: a world free of corruption.

But we are not just an organisation – we are a living, breathing, growing community of activists, innovators, shapers, creatives, doers, believers, and bridge-builders.

We're dedicated to encouraging and enabling public participation and activism to prevent, expose, report, and combat corruption. We work with grassroots communities and social groupings to collectively find solutions to confronting and reducing corruption. From government to business to schools, and more, we champion transparency, accountability, integrity, and good governance in every sector of society.

We make it our business to contribute to influencing public policy and shaping the national anti-corruption discourse – but we are not influenced by business, government, or any other sector in our operations. We hold both government and the private sector to account.

Our funders are primarily philanthropic institutions in the social justice sector.

We focus our work on unpacking the impact of corruption on society through a human rights lens.

So on any given day, you might find us engaging with young people to hear their thoughts and concerns about corruption, or taking part in conferences and other events as contributors to national and international anti-corruption dialogue, or researching the connection between corruption and other crimes such as GBV or illicit

financial flows or attacks on whistle-blowers, or supporting community-based organisations that educate communities and amplify unheard voices.

We are committed to being transparent in our successes and failures, accountable to our supporters and stakeholders, and relentless in pursuing positive change in South Africa.

We are Corruption Watch.

OUR DEFINITION OF CORRUPTION:

“**The abuse of entrusted power or resources, by anyone, for private gain**”

VISION:

“**An equitable society actively engaged in countering corruption and pursuing justice**”

MISSION:

“**We expose, confront, and take preventative action against corruption**”

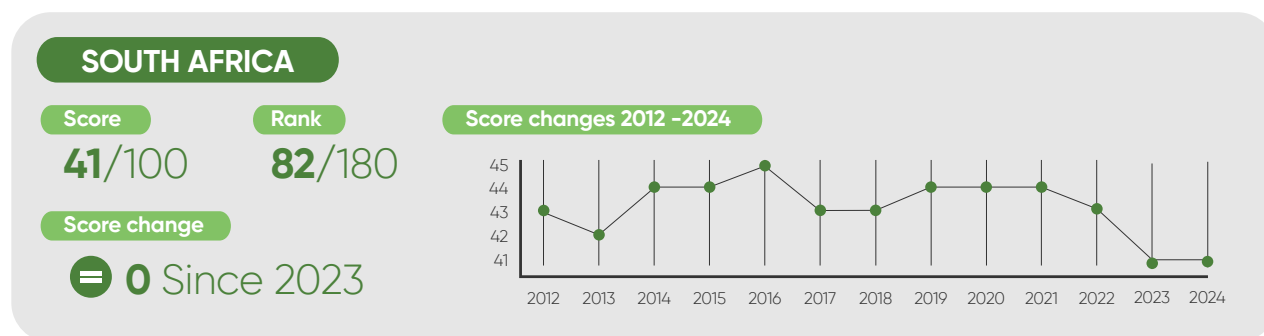


CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2024

WORLD ANTI-CORRUPTION FIGHT SLOWS

South Africa achieved the dubious distinction of at least being consistent on the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), released by Transparency International (TI) on 11 February 2024. In 2023 the country slipped to its lowest score on the CPI since 2012, managing a miserable 41, which it has not improved on in 2024. The CPI scores the 180 countries it assesses on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) in terms of perceptions of public sector corruption.

Since 2012, South Africa has drifted between a low of 41 (2023 and 2024) and an unimpressive high of 45 (2016), unable to get over the significant 50 mark into more positive territory and clearly struggling to improve its score. The CPI views a score of under 50 as an indication of serious and persistent corruption.



South Africa's downward trajectory since 2019 is clearly depicted.

There is no doubt that South Africa's long-standing lack of accountability for corruption plays a role in this perception. While the corrupt continue to get away with their nefarious activities, it will not matter how many innovative anti-corruption measures are established – the perception that corruption is

condoned carries significant influence. This is one of the reasons that the ANC, which has enjoyed the political majority since 1994, was punished at the polls in the 2024 general elections.

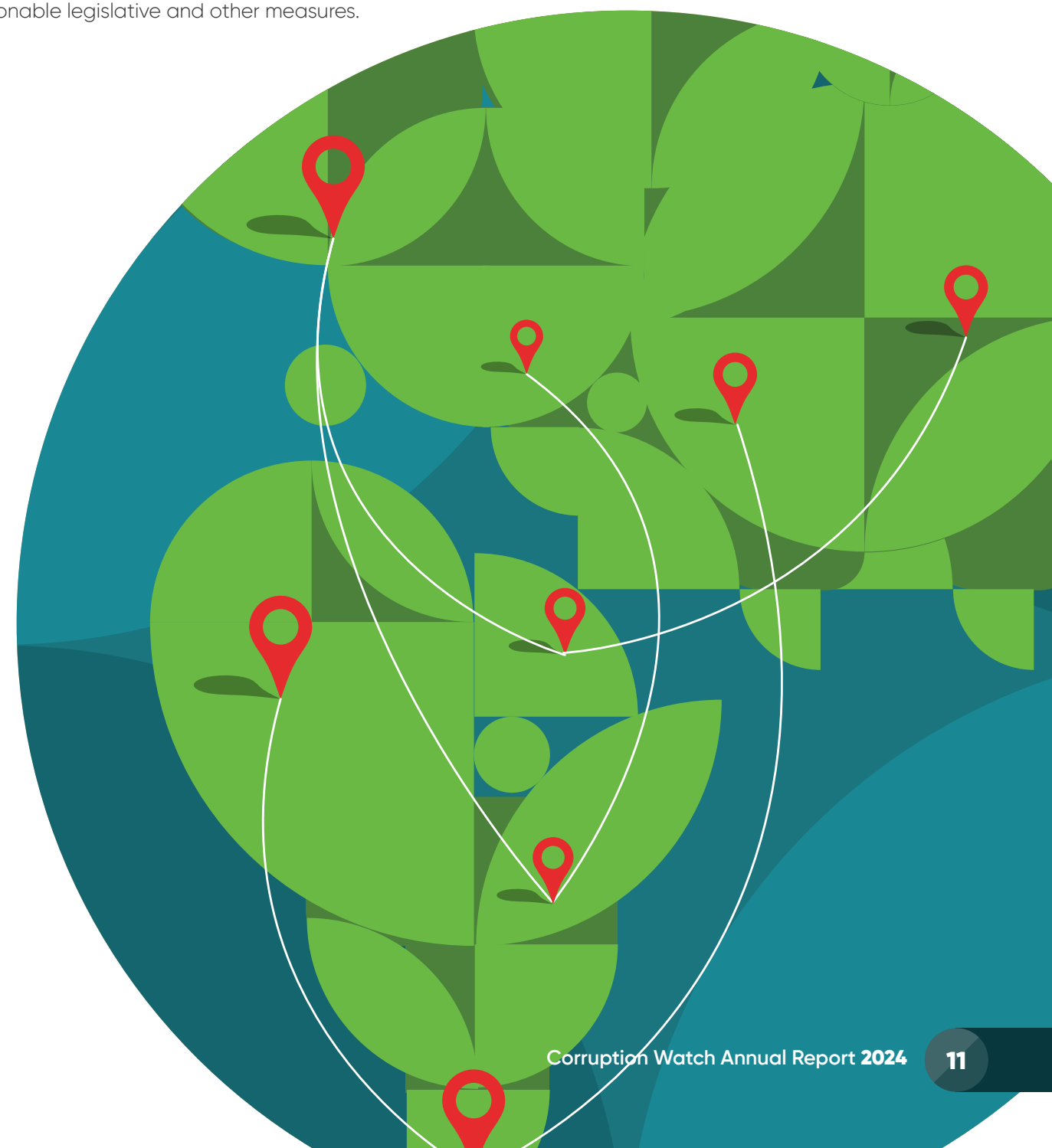
South Africa is not alone, the CPI reveals. The global average score is 43, and of the 180 countries assessed for the index, 148 countries have stagnated or declined since 2012. Only 32 countries have significantly reduced their corruption levels over that period.

"Billions of people live in countries where corruption destroys lives and undermines human rights," says TI in a statement accompanying the index.

Among those human rights is the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well-being, and to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures.

This is the underlying theme for the 2024 CPI, which explores the link between corruption and the climate crisis. It shows that corruption increases the chance that climate initiatives will fail, for various reasons such as misdirection of resources, undue influence on climate policy development, and obstruction of efforts to reduce emissions and implement stringent regulations.

TI makes several recommendations to address these hindrances, urging governments, international organisations, and businesses to place corruption at the centre of the global debate around climate change.



Global trends

Since 2012, most countries have made little to no progress in tackling public sector corruption, and more than two-thirds score less than 50 out of 100. Between 2012 and 2024, just 32 countries improved, while 47 countries declined and 101 countries stayed the same.

For the seventh year in a row, Denmark sits at the top of the CPI, with a score of 90. It is closely followed by Finland and Singapore with scores of 88 and 84 respectively. Countries experiencing conflict or with highly restricted freedoms and weak democratic institutions occupy the bottom of the index – they are South Sudan (8), Somalia (9), and Venezuela (10).

The countries with the most upward movement include Bahrain, Côte d'Ivoire, Moldova, Dominican Republic, Bhutan, and Estonia. Conversely, those with the sharpest downward trajectory over this period include El Salvador, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Russia, Austria, and eSwatini.

Sub-Saharan Africa

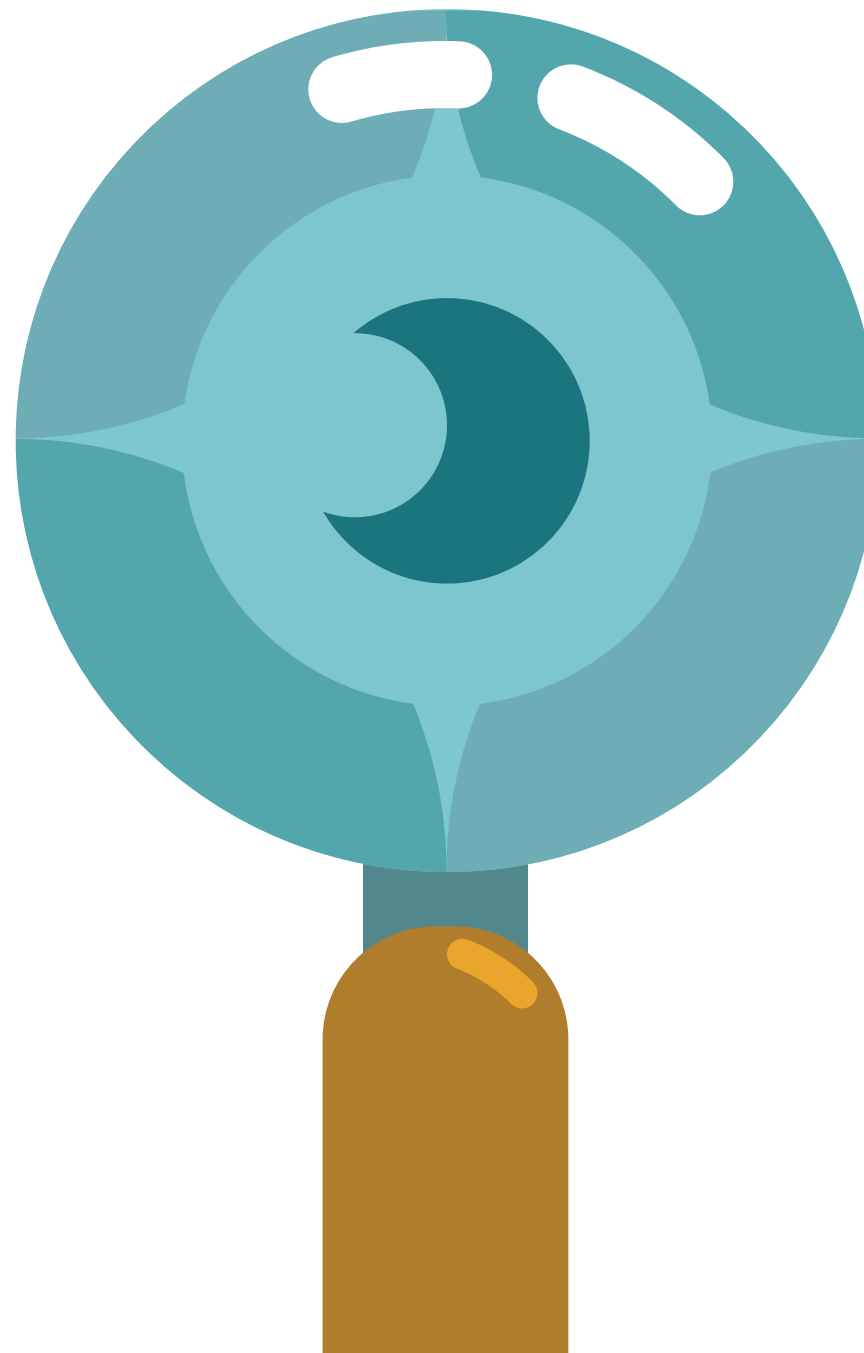
For years now, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has been the lowest performing region, with an average score of 33 out of 100, and with 90% of countries scoring below 50. The highest scorers in the region were Seychelles (72), Cabo Verde (62), and Botswana and Rwanda at 57 each. The lowest scorers – Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Somalia, and South Sudan – declined further this year.

South Africa has not featured in the top 10 SSA countries since 2022. With its failure to improve on its 2023 score, it remains concerningly close to the regional average which itself, as noted above, is nothing to be pleased about.

"In 2025, the country will host the G20 Leaders' Summit, giving it a vital opportunity to advocate for increased climate finance commitments from G20 countries, that do not conflate debt repayments, private financing and loans as a substitute for direct mechanisms to mitigate the climate crisis," TI notes.

Strengthening anti-corruption systems is a critical investment to ensure Africa's people can withstand climate change and secure the socio-economic opportunities needed to build a better future, the organisation adds.

"It is estimated that for every two degrees Celsius of warming, Africa loses about 5% of its GDP."





The numbers

The predominant types of corruption that featured in 2024 are maladministration - a persistent area of concern accounting for 34% of reports - followed by fraud (21%), employment irregularities (16%), bribery or extortion (15%), and procurement irregularities (13%).

The highest number of reports received by sub-sector focused on issues of corruption in the policing sector (13%). The second highest number of complaints was received from the business sector, at 12%, followed by basic education at 11%, and state-owned entities at 7%. These figures speak to government's inadequate approach to confronting challenges in policing, safety and security; access to education; and other rights and services intended to improve people's lives. The figures also show the contribution of business to South Africa's levels of corruption and the lack of appetite to address its impact.

The prevalence of corruption at the local government level emerges again as a key trend. Metropolitan municipalities dominated the top five in terms of the highest number of corruption reports. The cities of Johannesburg, Tshwane and Cape Town along with the eThekweni and Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipalities, collectively account for 51% of all corruption incidents reported.

Turning to the distribution of corruption reports across provinces, Gauteng once again comes out on top with 45% of complaints, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 11%, Western Cape with 9%, and Eastern Cape with 8%.

WHAT THE DATA SAYS

Whistle-blowers have played an important role at Corruption Watch (CW) over the years in highlighting where and how corruption manifests, and in enabling the organisation to be flexible, strategic and intentional in considering which areas to focus on at any given time.

Since inception in 2012, CW has received over 47 000 complaints of alleged corruption, which have provided valuable insight and have helped to shape many of the organisation's interventions and activities. It is thanks to these reports that CW has been able to better understand and expose the damaging impact of corruption on people's lives. This we have done through our community outreach initiatives, our advocacy campaigns and our strategic litigation, among other initiatives.

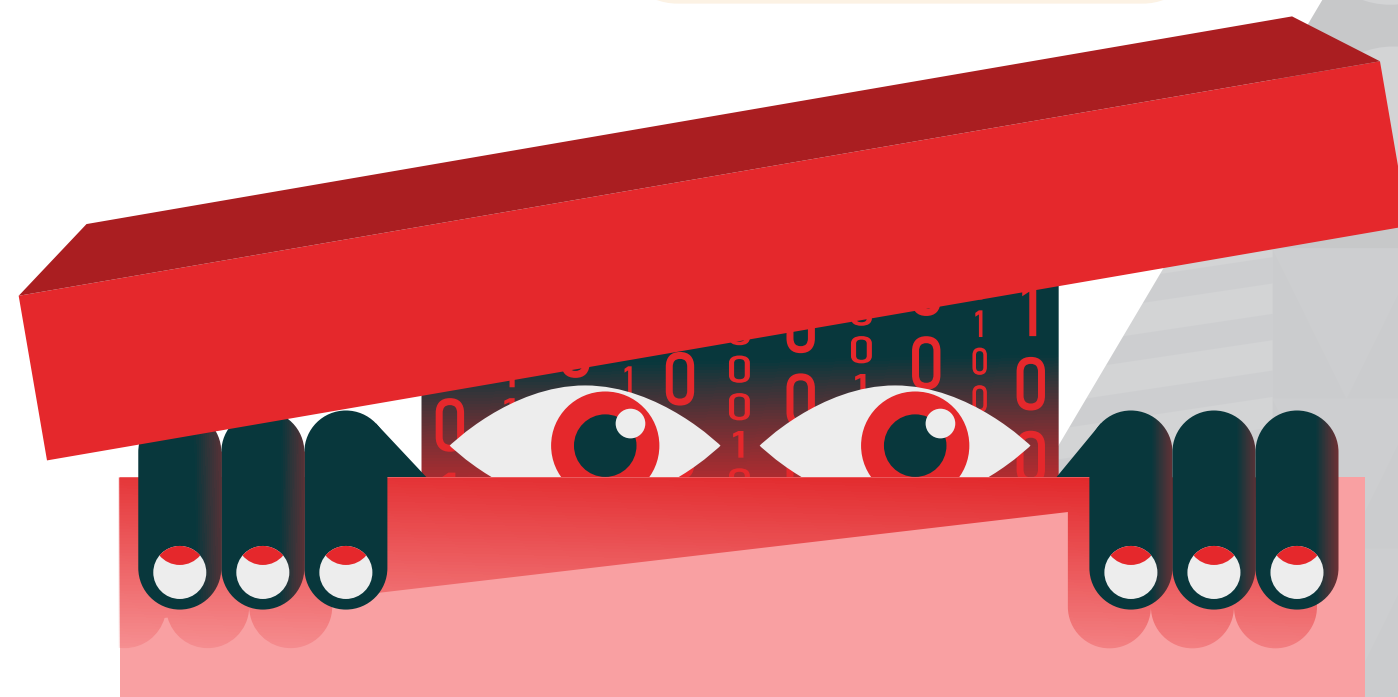
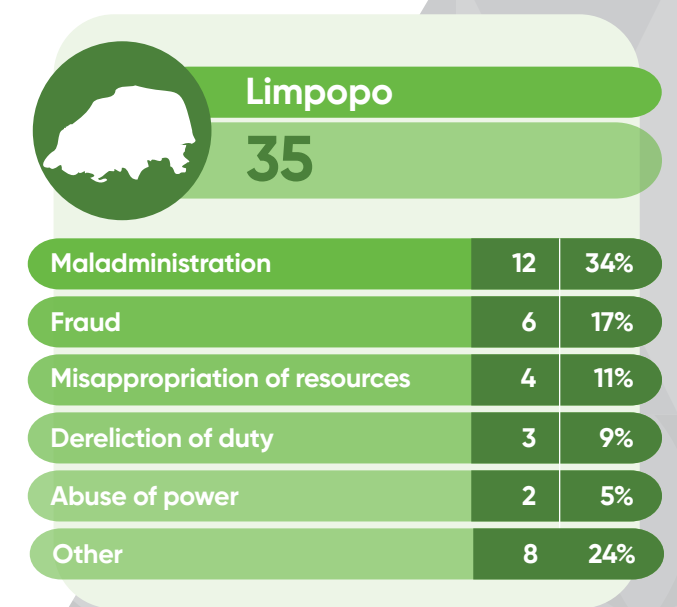
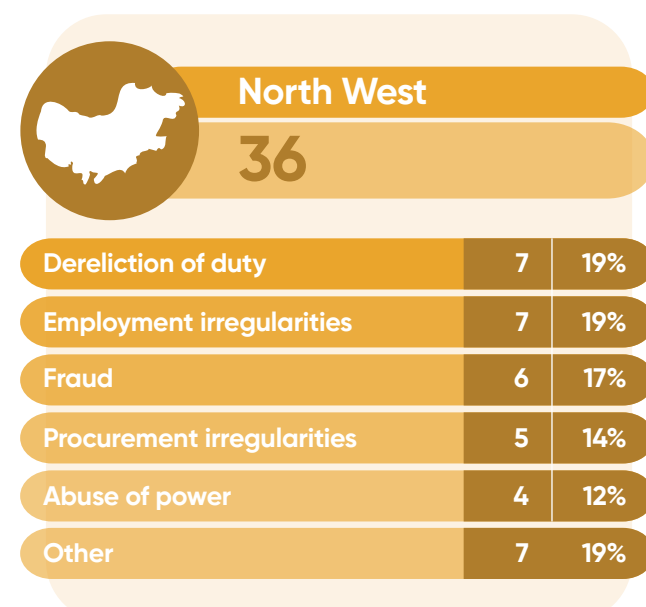
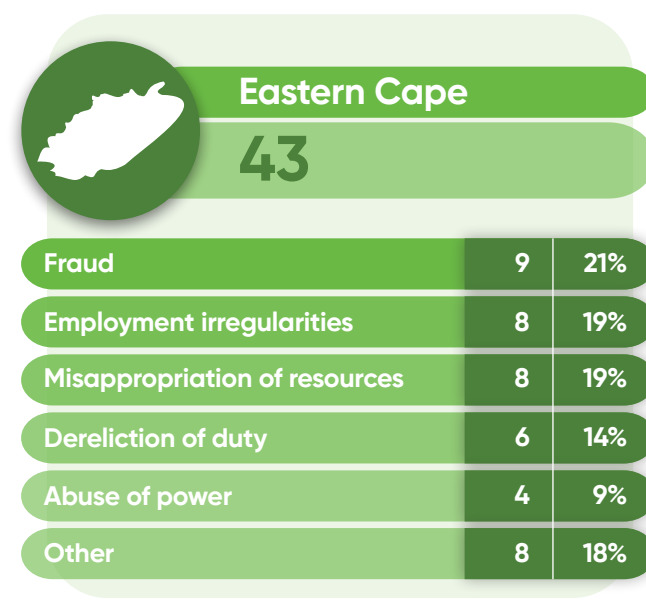
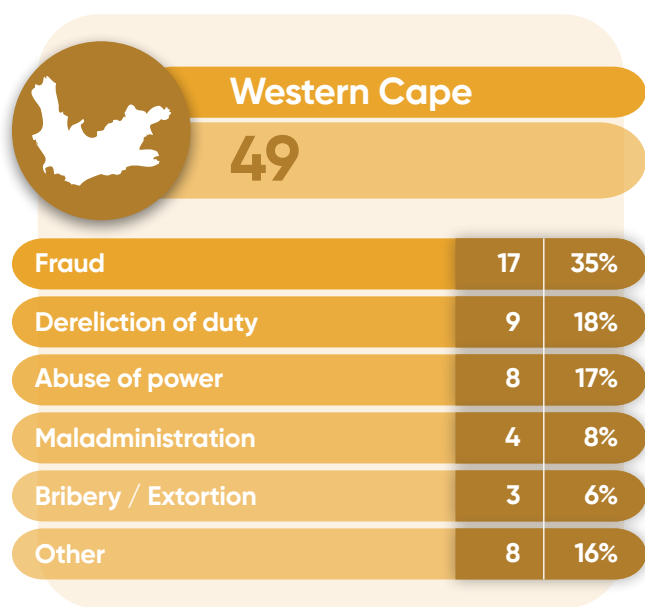
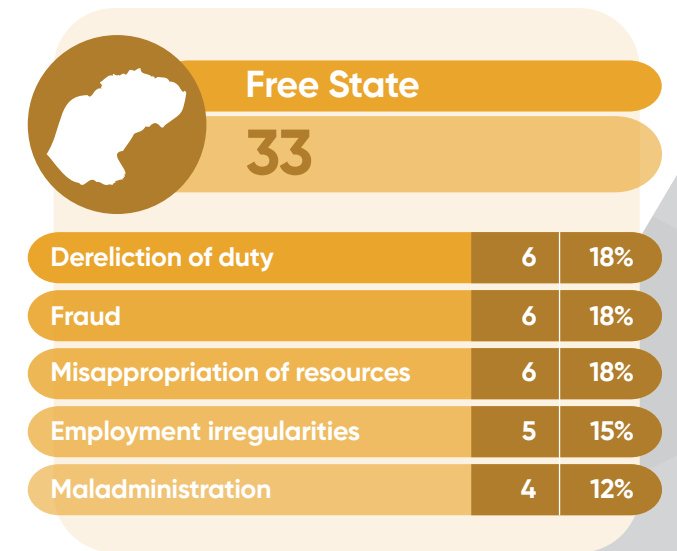
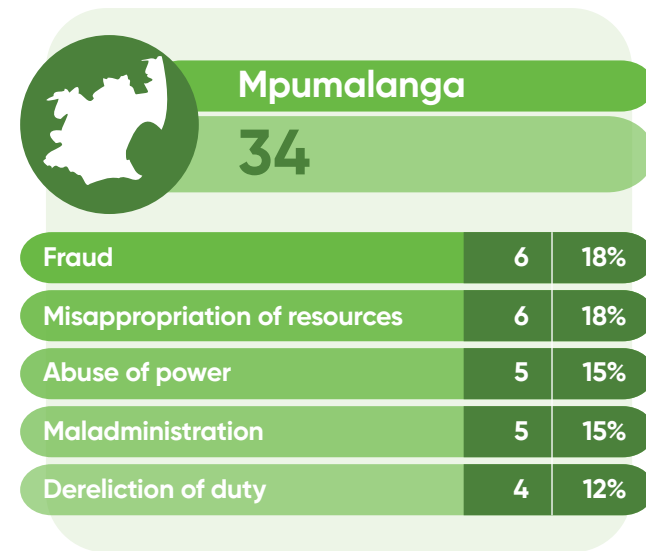
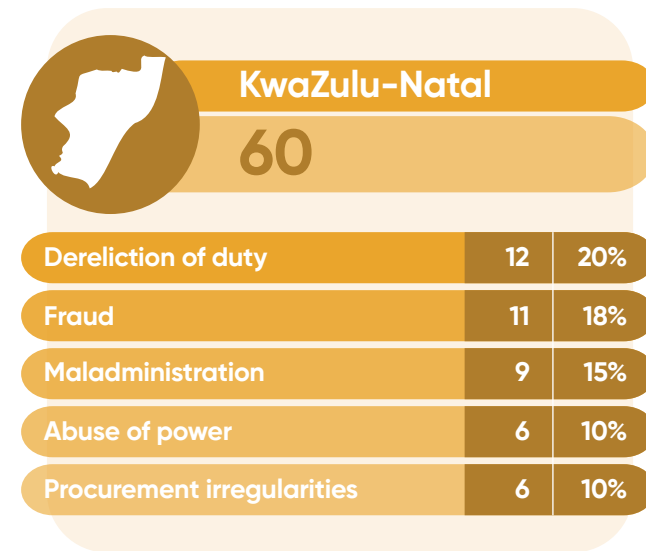
Transitional period

In 2024 the organisation received 546 corruption complaints - a number substantially down from the previous year's 2 110. While this development was not intentional, internal processes leading to a period of transition meant that we had to refocus some of the resources usually intended for complaints management elsewhere. Although this was a temporary measure that has since found resolution, it did mean that during that time we had to hold off on soliciting new complaints in the interest of restructuring our systems.

This meant that our focus remained largely inward-looking for a time, but our rationale was that this period was necessary because it would lead to a renewed organisation, one that many of its members have worked long and hard to build, and would enable us to once again offer the same level of support to our whistle-blowers that we have in the past.



The tables below represent the trends that emerge from analysis of the provinces and the sub-types of corruption experienced. The numbers represent the breakdown of the top five types of corruption in each province:



CW'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

Our work as Corruption Watch (CW) is mostly done locally, with a wide range of initiatives including community engagements, youth workshops, sector-focused webinars, and regular opportunities to make inputs on platforms provided by stakeholders in the anti-corruption space, among others. However, some of the initiatives we've become involved in over the years can also take us out of the country, where we have developed various partnerships and participated in global anti-corruption initiatives that shape our place in the sector globally.

We made our mark in several such initiatives in 2024, from the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), held in Lithuania in June, to the newly established lead-up conference to the IACC for the African region, held in Lusaka, Zambia, in March and the annual Pan African Conference on Illicit Financial Flows (PAC) held in Tunis, Tunisia, in July. On a grander, more ambitious scale, we participated in high-level activities in respect of channelling a clear anti-corruption discourse in the lead-up to the G20 summit in South Africa later this year.

In Lusaka, former executive director of CW, Karam Singh chaired a panel that discussed the topic *The Importance of Asset Declaration and Lifestyle Audits in Combating Kleptocracy*. The session was seen as important for setting the scene for discussions at the rest of the event by highlighting the importance of lifestyle audits and practices in Zambia. Other panellists included Musa Mwenye SC who is the board chairperson of the Zambian Anti-Corruption Commission as well former South African public protector and Stellenbosch University professor Thuli Madonsela and Abubakar Jimoh, the head of communications at the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre in Nigeria.

The panellists spoke to country-specific experiences that they viewed as examples where government systems were undermined, including instances of money laundering and illicit financial flows (IFFs), and the required responses by different governance systems to these challenges. In South Africa's case, the discussion zeroed in on state capture and the successes in asset recovery by both the Asset Forfeiture Unit of the National Prosecuting Authority and the Special Investigating Unit. Also under discussion was the legislation that has been developed around protection from political interference in the state's governance apparatus, such as the Political Party Funding Act which came into law in 2021.

At the IACC, Singh participated in a panel that explored ways of strengthening civil society in the interest of creating resilient democracies and to resist autocracy. The panel viewed the issues through various lenses including human rights, the power of information, and the strengthening of measures to counter corruption.

On another panel, titled *AI: Ally or Enemy? Applications of Artificial Intelligence in procurement and democracy-building*, CW's then head of legal and investigations, Nicki Van 't Reit, presented the organisation's Procurement Watch tool, a digital platform for monitoring public procurement in South Africa. Globally, public procurement bears some of the greatest risk to corruption as it often enables collusive fraud between the private sector and the public service. Greater data transparency can assist the fight against widescale tender fraud. CW board members Zukiswa Kota and Karabo Rajuili also presented on the panel, looking at technological revolutions and their impact on governance.

The consensus was that the current tech revolution, fuelled largely by AI, has unleashed a dark side to information sharing where deep fakes, high-tech surveillance, large scale disinformation, and more are exploited by organised crime and the corrupt. The panel looked to bring greater understanding of the immense positive power of the latest tech innovations and showcase the best examples while also learning how they are "turbocharging" the corrupt.

The PAC's theme for 2024 was *Africa's Tax Agenda in Combating Illicit Financial Flows: From Words to Action*. The event considered the continental best practices to address IFFs and meet the funding gap for Africa's development as envisioned under Agenda 2063, as well as the High-Level Panel's report findings and recommendations for combating IFFs from Africa.

It is significant to note that IFFs are almost equivalent to the development aid and foreign direct investment inflows to the African continent. Should IFFs be effectively curbed, the reliance on development aid and foreign direct investment would diminish. With the changes in the geopolitical agenda – necessitated mainly by the US government's recent executive orders on funding for non-governmental organisations in developing countries – the urgency to deal effectively with IFFs has been heightened. The reason for this is that the presence of IFFs tends to intersect with the financing of climate action strategies of countries most at risk of climate change, putting them at further risk.

The PAC also discussed the effectiveness of current measures implemented to curb IFFs and delegates motivated for better beneficial ownership transparency (BOT), financial controls, and effective prosecution. The benefit for CW in participating in this important conference is that the team gained insights into the best practices on policies and practices meant to curb IFFs, while its efforts to advocate for improved BOT will continue. There remains a need for better reporting and

collection of taxes from corporates, politically exposed persons, and individuals with extensive international exposure.

In preparation for South Africa's hosting of the G20 summit in Johannesburg in November 2025, CW engaged in high-level advocacy, including a roundtable discussion with the G20 anti-corruption working group in Paris in June 2024, where civil society, government officials, and international organisations explored the intersection of corruption, inequality, and sustainable development.

We met with South Africa's G20 representatives from the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) to push for a strong counter-corruption agenda, and contributed to an open letter to G20 Rio summit leadership on IFFs, which was also shared with South Africa's G20 sherpa group.

Additionally, we worked closely with Transparency International (TI) on G20 and C20 strategies, coordinating a meeting with Dirco and TI to discuss South Africa's leadership role. In the lead-up to the G20, we attended the C20 workshop convened by Oxfam, advocating for the re-establishment of the C20 anti-corruption working group, which had been abandoned in 2024.

Our contributions also extended to drafting an op-ed for the TI Secretariat on the importance of South Africa's presidency in advancing the fight against IFFs, and presenting on IFFs in Africa at the TI regional REAP meeting in Berlin in November 2024. Beyond direct engagements, we leveraged social media to call on G20 leaders at the Rio summit and actively participated in C20 planning discussions for 2025. These efforts underscore our commitment to ensuring that anti-corruption remains central to the global economic and governance agenda.

THE TRANSPARENCY, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAMME

We have written about the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit's (GIZ) Transparency, Integrity and Accountability Programme (TIP) in South Africa since its launch in 2022. Over this time, we have publicly launched several of the initiatives meant to take the objectives of the TIP forward. From the digital open data tools on which we pride ourselves, namely the Veza tool and the Procurement Watch online tool that track police corruption and public procurement data respectively, Corruption Watch (CW) has provided insights on how government information is managed and where the gaps are.

We've also made strides in collaborative efforts with other organisations and groupings to take up crucial positions on platforms like the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC), becoming part of its work streams on communications, procurement, legislative reform, and overhauling the institutional architecture. We've also led efforts in other essential topics needing to be explored, such as gender mainstreaming in the anti-corruption space, as well as research and public education on sexual corruption. These we've done in partnership with the GIZ and other organisations such as the African Women Against Corruption Network.

One unique and exciting initiative that we've developed under our Youth Interrupters Programme is an interactive board game named Bribes and Whistles, which CW will launch later this year. It is geared towards youth and was piloted at the National Anti-Corruption Dialogue: Youth Conference in October 2024 after over a year of reviewing and revamping the original concept. The innovative game serves as an engaging educational tool to test players' ethics and integrity,

entertaining with realistic scenarios and decision-making challenges while imparting valuable lessons on the causes, impacts, and prevention of corruption.

The final product promises a stimulating experience which will provoke the thoughts of young participants and spark the necessary discourse that needs to happen in the interest of changing behaviours.

Strong partnerships and initiatives

CW plays an important role as co-chair of the TIP steering committee, alongside the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation in the presidency, as well as co-chair of the TIP's strategic advisory committee which considers strategic issues for inclusion and provides a platform for engagement with funders.

The TIP is a partnership agreement between the governments of Germany and South Africa, co-funded by the German and Swiss governments, that supports state and non-state actors to contribute to the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) and its roll-out, which although approved by Cabinet in December 2020, has been slow to materialise. Similarly, the TIP is committed to providing support to the nine-member NACAC through the work done with the different work streams mentioned above.

In 2024 the CW team continued to take the TIP work forward by engaging actively in the work stream activities. The head of communications represented CW in the communications work stream reference group, assisting with planning and coordinating the media strategy with the media task team for the two-day National Dialogue on 9 and 10 December

2024. CW also participated in a GIZ-facilitated communications workshop for the NACAC earlier in the year.

Another vital element of the TIP that we're involved in is whistle-blower protection and support through the Whistleblower Platform for Reform (WSPR), which had several activities during 2024. CW is one of the core members of WSPR, along with The Whistleblower House, and the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa. The vision of WSPR, which is to harness various skillsets and implement solutions to establish a conducive whistle-blowing environment, is aligned with CW's priorities in relation to whistle-blowers.

One of the initiatives undertaken by WSPR during 2024 was the planning and implementation of the second Annual Whistleblower Awards gala dinner, and the Whistleblower Summit, which took place on 23 and 24 October.

The aim is to foster collaboration and identify concrete actions that could improve the whistle-blower support system, working with others within the space with the shared vision of developing expertise and initiatives, and providing access to a range of skills and resources.

In general, the TIP adopts a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to support the implementation of the NACS in three primary areas:

- Promotion of active involvement of citizens through initiatives that encourage transparency, integrity, and accountability.
- Strengthening of institutional resilience to empower state actors to steer and coordinate implementation of the NACS.
- Establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships between the public sector, private sector, and civil society to build up transparency, integrity, and accountability, with special attention given to human rights, including gender equality.



CW TO PARLY: LET THE PEOPLE HAVE THEIR SAY

By Moepeng Talane

What reasonable measures must Parliament use to ensure meaningful public participation in its processes? This is a question that dominated the hearing of arguments on Thursday 6 March on an application brought forward by Corruption Watch (CW) before the Constitutional Court.

The matter follows the 2022 recommendation to President Cyril Ramaphosa for the appointment of the chairperson and four other commissioners to the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) by the portfolio committee on women, children, and people with disabilities. CW wants the court to declare the appointments invalid – not because the five commissioners are unsuitable – but because of the rushed and limited approach adopted by the committee in seeking public submissions on the process.

CW at the time opted not to make submissions, but sought through a letter to the committee to get it to relax these measures as they were restrictive, only for the committee to reply that the organisation was welcome to expand on any submissions it wished to make, by foregoing the method originally provided for. This option was only offered to CW, while over 500 other members of the public made their submissions under the limited circumstances. A bit more on this later.

Flawed process

What it all comes down to is whether the means adopted by the committee were within reason, given the provisions of section 59 (1)(a) of the Constitution on public participation. Members of the public were meant to make submissions on an online Google form with a character limit of 2 000 , which had to be filled in and submitted

within a period of 10 days from the time of the announcement of the short list. All of this was to be done without the committee having published the CVs of the shortlisted candidates on whose eligibility the public was meant to make the submissions.

Parliament's legal representative, Nikki Stein, argued that the legal provisions for the committee to refrain from publishing CVs can be found in the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), which prohibits the publishing of personal details of any individual without their consent. It sought the assistance of the Information Regulator (IR) to corroborate this point, but CW's argument in its court papers, the IR contends that there was a way around the POPIA, in that CVs of the candidates could be published, provided certain details were redacted from public records.

In its own affidavit, the IR makes the point that the committee could rely on section 11(1)(e) of POPIA. Chairperson Pansy Tlakula states: "The POPIA provides that 'personal information may only be processed if processing is necessary for the proper performance of a public law duty by a public body'." She goes on to say that the committee could rely on that section as justification for the lawful publication of the candidates' CVs. However, it must redact personal information such as their ID numbers and contact details, before publishing such CVs.



Kathleen Hardy, appearing on behalf of CW, argued that the provision for the public to participate is a core value that underpins public participation in Parliament's framework. Parliament also recognises that the first level of public participation is to inform the public of the relevant process, she added, and to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in participating in the process.

"It is our submission that meaningful participation in the recommendation of candidates for Chapter 9 institutions such as the commission can only be achieved if the public has access to adequate information about the candidates."

Why it matters

CW launched its leadership appointments campaign in 2016 towards the end of the term of former public protector Thuli Madonsela. The organisation advocated for meaningful public participation in the appointment process of her successor not as a favour to Madonsela, but on the realisation of a barrage of political and public attacks on her character, owing to her damning discoveries of political corruption in South Africa. It was during Madonsela's term that the controversial Nkandla investigation was completed, where a sitting president was being probed over allegations of undue personal gain at a cost to the taxpayer, for the first time in democratic South Africa.

It was for this reason – the awareness of how vital a regulatory institution the public protector's office is for holding the powerful to account – that CW sought a campaign that would empower the ordinary South African to have a fair and legitimate opportunity to participate in the process of recommending the next public protector.

During the state capture commission, we submitted that leadership appointments to Chapter 9 institutions are particularly important drivers of public participation in Parliament's work and should always be done in a public-facing way. CW's recommendation was indeed accepted by the commission, and recommended by former chief

justice Raymond Zondo as a model Parliament should explore to be taken on permanently.

It is on this basis that CW makes every effort to make submissions to processes involving the appointment of public servants to leadership roles in Chapter 9 institutions. In 2024 we participated in the process involving the recommendation process for the deputy public protector, with the position having been vacated when current public protector Kholeka Gcaleka was appointed on 1 November 2023. The campaign is one that the organisation prides itself on, as it advocates for public institutions such as Parliament to put the public interest obligation of its mandate ahead of the convenience of public office bearers or the executive.

Self-created urgency

To elaborate on this, one of the points that arose in the CGE hearing was that of urgency on the part of the portfolio committee in having to fill the positions in 2022 because the CGE faced a leadership deficit that needed to be addressed.

It was a welcome relief when acting deputy chief justice Mbuyiseli Madlanga asked Advocate Stein if Parliament was not expecting the public to indulge it in an urgency (regarding the process of filling the vacant posts of commissioners) that it had created for itself. The term for commissioners of the CGE typically runs for five years, and had the sixth parliament – which was in place at the time when the previous term for commissioners would have ended – done its duty of launching a recruitment process to fill the positions, the portfolio committee would not have been pressed to invoke a rushed process of the recommendation phase.

For the public to have confidence in the leadership of Chapter 9 institutions that hold the executive and the rest of government to account on the fulfilment of policy directives, cost-effective, fair, and competitive procurement processes, and adherence to national policies that address challenges faced by South Africans daily, they must be able to meaningfully participate in the ascent to

those positions of authority. Unless this is adopted as a true measure of success for democratic processes, and not just a tick box exercise owing to the urgency of circumstances not created by the public, then members of Parliament will never enjoy the full confidence of the constituencies to which they owe their positions.

Trust deficit

One of the arguments brought forward by Advocate Stein was that CW, despite being given an opportunity to expand on its intended submission, failed to do so. Furthermore, the limitations it deems prejudiced against the public did not stop 556 other participants from making submissions.

The flawed reasoning in this argument is that CW should have been relieved at the opportunity to give substantive submissions.

Whether or not such an option was given defeats the purpose, as said submission would have been made without full view of the candidates' CVs in any case. But the position that the organisation took, in the interest of the public participation doctrine of a democratic institution such as Parliament, implied that it had to take a broader approach to bring the unfairness of this situation to the fore.

The CGE case is an important one that will hopefully set the standard for how members of Parliament – in their capacity as public representatives – should perceive the process of asking for, and managing, meaningful public participation.



LAND AND CORRUPTION IN AFRICA IN 2024

As Transparency International's (TI) official chapter in South Africa, Corruption Watch (CW) is part of an important research project probing the connection between land and corruption across several African countries.

Now in phase two (LCA2), the first phase of the *Land and Corruption in Africa* (LCA) project was successfully rolled out from 2014 to 2019 and culminated in a **research report**. The current phase started in 2021 and is due to complete in 2025, with seven chapters taking part, namely Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Among other goals, the LCA project aims to:

- share information on how land corruption manifests and what its effects are;
- educate citizens about their land rights and how to defend them; and
- work with governments, traditional authorities, the private sector, and civil society to find solutions to combat land corruption.

We continued our LCA2 work throughout 2024, with research, publications, multimedia, community engagements, and collaboration with civil society organisations.

In April 2024 South Africa's LCA2 research was published in a **TI compilation report** covering the work of all seven participating chapters. Titled ***This Beautiful Land: Corruption, Discrimination and Land Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa***, the work explored, for the first time, the intersection between corruption and discriminatory practices. The research and report were completed with the partnership of the **Equal Rights Trust**.

Examining evidence and case studies from the seven countries, and drawing insights from desk research, key informant interviews, and original

testimony from affected communities experiencing discrimination, *This Beautiful Land* uncovered clear patterns of how corruption and discrimination interact to impact land rights.

We also participated in the report's webinar launch on 23 April 2024, hosted by the Land Portal.

CW had previously published its research in a standalone report, released in October 2023 along with a gripping five-part podcast series. The work focused on farm worker equity schemes (FWES), a policy initiated post-1994 that was aimed at incorporating farm workers as shareholders into farm businesses and socially uplifting them. Speaking to community organisations, farm workers, government representatives, and farmers, we discovered widespread concern and serious issues regarding the implementation of FWES, including perceptions of corruption and no sign of equality benefits for participants.

CW was further invited to present its work at the LANDac Conference and Summit, held in July 2024 in the Netherlands. The theme of the event was *Land governance and the politics of fair transitions: Deepening the search for social justice*. We presented our research and findings remotely in a session titled ***Exposing Land Corruption: Strengthening Solidarities for Justice***, which delved into the pressing issue of land corruption and poor governance, particularly affecting marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples, pastoralists, and women. Participants were very interested in our use of multimedia, such as the **podcast series** which accompanied our research, as a tool for amplifying our message.

At the same time we continued to partner with key stakeholders to develop public education materials on land corruption, land rights, trust compositions, and FWES. We held two multi-

stakeholder meetings during the year to align efforts on issues such as closing policy loopholes in FWES and ensuring accountability, enhancing livelihoods of FWES beneficiaries, and expanding public awareness on land corruption issues.

We also held a strategic discussion with Western Cape stakeholders to refine FWES-related programmes in response to the political landscape of the province.

A decision was taken to extend the existing MOU with our civil society partners for another 12 months.

In terms of community engagement and capacity building, we conducted seven training sessions in KwaZulu-Natal, in partnership with the Built Environment Support Group. Sessions took place in the rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Dundee, Endundumeni, Mathambo, Effingham, Bester, and Bhambayi and with the Thuleleni Farmers Association. We also distributed almost 500 isiZulu and English public education materials in these communities.

We engaged approximately 260 community members facing housing challenges, land redistribution issues, and land tenure insecurity. Our training focused on understanding land corruption, identifying resources and channels for reporting and addressing land corruption, and guidance on accessing these mechanisms to seek redress.

Finally, we produced and aired a radio advertisement on land corruption, based on FWES research findings. The advertisement aired for five days on the national broadcaster ahead of the national elections in May 2024, targeting the electorate and the broader public.

These efforts all helped to strengthen community knowledge, stakeholder coordination, and public engagement in the fight against land corruption.



CW CONTINUES WORK WITH SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH

Corruption Watch's (CW) Youth Interrupters Programme was part of the youth-focused stakeholder work in 2024. The initiative, which was started in 2023, aims to contribute towards the development of young leaders who are ethical, accountable, and resilient in the fight against corruption and the pursuit of human rights.

Accountability is a crucial element of any anti-corruption initiative, along with ethics, transparency, resilience, and more. This programme is designed to inculcate these values in South Africa's youth.

During last year, we completed several deliverables on national platforms that resulted in positive feedback from multiple stakeholders. For one, we successfully developed and completed the Youth Anti-Corruption Toolkit, which is a comprehensive resource to educate and empower young individuals on combating corruption. It provides practical insights, tools, and strategies to identify and address corruption in various contexts, fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. CW launched the toolkit and the facilitator guide (see below) at the National Anti-Corruption Dialogue: Youth Conference on 30 October 2024. Copies were shared with the audience and were well received.

The National Anti-Corruption Dialogue: Youth Conference took place on 16 and 17 November 2024 at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Gauteng's East Rand. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) led the event, in partnership with other organisations. The aim was to encourage youth to confront and question the South African situation where corruption has become normalised throughout society, and to explore ways and measures to effectively combat it.

The toolkit was also distributed at the Intergenerational Dialogue, which took place in Johannesburg at the Africa Leadership Academy on 30 November 2024. This event was organised by the UN Foundation, YMCA South Africa, Engage South Africa, and the Leading Like Mandela Institute. We participated in the dialogue as well as a civic market where we distributed the youth anti-corruption toolkits.

We also developed a guide to ensure effective facilitation of the programme. It provides detailed instructions, session plans, and activity outlines, equipping trainers and educators with the tools needed to deliver impactful sessions. The guide also serves as a vital resource to enhance understanding and engagement during training activities. It too was showcased at the October event, but copies were not distributed as it is strictly for facilitators of the programme.

Our third big feat was to develop an innovative multi-player board game called *Bribes & Whistles* as part of the broader initiative. The game is an engaging educational tool which tests the ethics and integrity of players. By presenting realistic scenarios and decision-making challenges, the game not only entertains but also imparts valuable lessons on the causes, impacts, and prevention of corruption, all the while encouraging self-reflection and decision making. It too debuted at the Youth Conference and was piloted by participants at the event.

Bribes & Whistles was well received and endorsed as a great innovation by members of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, the National Youth Coalition, the Special Investigating Unit, and UNODC.

The team is currently polishing and refining the content of the game the intention to launch it in 2025 when we embark on phase two of the programme. We also plan to present all the material produced thus far to a wider audience.

In addition to this, we will also conduct multi-series training sessions with representatives from youth leadership initiatives that are focused on leadership ethics, integrity, and actionable strategies to promote transparency within their communities. We are currently working with the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation on the training

sessions as our key partner in conducting youth engagements. We look to conduct facilitator training sessions in Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and the Western Cape this year.

Aside from the Youth Interrupters Programme, we participated in June 2024 in the Youth Voices event, which was hosted by Engage SA and organised to allow civil society organisations and partners to interact with youth, gain insights into youth perspectives, and celebrate youth leadership and civic engagement. As part of the Youth Voices event, we engaged with 200 learners from different communities in Gauteng and Mpumalanga, conducting workshops and through our stand, sharing information and material on our youth programme.

KEEPING AN EYE ON LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

Often, Corruption Watch's (CW) work intersects with that of public institutions in the regulatory space, or as they are often referred to, Chapter 9 (of the Constitution) institutions. We participate in platforms meant to support their initiatives and often call on them for insights and support of our own. Based on this, and because of their vital role in the governance role in the public sector, CW views the decision-making around the leadership of such institutions as one of our national legislature's critical considerations.

Ensuring fruitful and constructive public participation in the appointment processes of such leaders is imperative for upholding the principles of the Constitution, and it is a feat that should not be taken lightly by the members of Parliament seized with this task. Because Parliament represents the public that votes in the parties therein represented, its members are compelled to demand only the leadership of the best standards for public institutions, particularly those that will hold the executive to power.

Recent history in South Africa's body politic, a part of which was a revelatory state capture commission, is proof enough that the country needs ethical leaders in public institutions, and in the case of Chapter 9 bodies, Parliament holds the yardstick for who gets to be appointed.

Why is it important?

It started in 2016 with our Bua Mzansi campaign that sought for an open and public-facing process in the appointment process of the public protector in the latter part of that year. The parliamentary ad hoc committee that was constituted to oversee the process was agreeable to our advocacy for public interviews, which duly happened, and former public protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane was the chosen candidate who took office in October of that year.

We have continued to advocate for the same in subsequent processes, and last year raised the need for the committee charged with the appointment of the deputy public protector as well a commissioner for the Human Rights Commission of South Africa, to follow the same open process. We advocated in October 2024 for the portfolio committee on justice and constitutional development to grant more time than the allocated 10 days for public submissions on the eligibility of the shortlisted candidates for the positions. However, the interviews occurred in November, with no extension granted.

Furthermore, in the interest of offering support to parliamentary processes, CW and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group jointly wrote to the Office for Institutions Supporting Democracy in Parliament (OISD), effectively asking for information on its processes in terms of instituting public consultation processes and offering support from both organisations – should it be required – to simplify the administrative requirements of such.

In a previous intervention in our leadership appointments work, CW in 2023 queried the rushed and inadequate public consultation drive associated with the appointment process for commissioners of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) by Parliament's portfolio committee on women, youth and persons with disabilities. CW argued (as noted in the section strategic litigation section of this report) that the committee failed to fulfil its constitutional obligation to facilitate public involvement in the recommendation process to appoint members of the CGE, making such appointments invalid and unconstitutional.

Our point in the matter is that Parliament as the custodian of the appointment process must be intentional in soliciting meaningful public submissions in respect of such appointments as in the case of the CGE. Such public bodies play an important role in the state's social justice agenda, and the public is entitled to the opportunity to contribute and have access to the platform that decides on their leadership.

ONGOING FOCUS ON PROCUREMENT WORK

Public procurement has been one of Corruption Watch's (CW) focus areas for several years. As such, the organisation continued to strive for positive impact in this area in 2024. Whether it was in establishing or maintaining strategic partnerships, advocating for sustainable reform in policies or systems that govern procurement, or educating the public on how procurement works and should benefit them, CW endeavoured to make an impact.

We worked closely with stakeholders such as National Treasury (NT), the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA), and civil society groups such as the Procurement Reform Working Group and the Multi-stakeholder Partnership on Procurement to build awareness and strengthen policies that prioritise fair competition in public procurement and minimise corruption risks.

Following on our submission to Parliament on the Public Procurement Bill – which was promulgated in 2024 as the Public Procurement Act (PPA) – we had another opportunity last year to make inputs into the broader regulatory framework on

procurement, as National Treasury commenced with the initial phase of the regulations drafting process. Select representatives from civil society, including CW, had an opportunity to provide proposals on the content of the regulations to the Act prior to the drafting of the regulations by the minister of finance. This process has continued into 2025.

CW had engaged in the Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems process led by the World Bank, which culminated in a report released in November 2024 on the suitability of the procurement system, based on the current legislative framework prior to the signing of the PPA into law.

Another highlight was the release of the annual Procurement Risk Trends report, produced under CW's Procurement Watch (PW) tool, in September 2024. The report focuses on the topics of deviations and expansions in public contracts, highlighting gaps in their respective systems, and reports on the status of debarment.

It updates the previous editions and identifies notable developments since the previous reporting period. The data is drawn from reports submitted to NT by all procuring organs of state, the analysis of which is made possible by PW, which aggregates data from the individually published reports.

The 2024 edition was circulated among key stakeholders including the AGSA, NT, and the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer. It provides critical insights into areas where public funds are most at risk, and these findings are presented to the Procurement Multi-Stakeholder Partnership, where CW plays a pivotal role in guiding discussions on necessary reforms.

CW has actively pursued greater accountability in public procurement by advocating for the population of the national tender defaulters register. This advocacy included filing Public Access to Information Act requests and sending letters to national departments, including the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and NT. These efforts are aimed at ensuring that companies and individuals involved in corrupt activities are held accountable and prevented from participating in future government contracts.

CW has actively pursued greater accountability in public procurement by advocating for the population of the national tender defaulters register.



SAAC'S EMPHASIS ON ACCOUNTABILITY AN INSPIRATION FOR COMMUNITIES

The year 2024 saw the establishment of a unique but impactful project made possible by a collaboration between Corruption Watch (CW), the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), and Transparency International (TI). The Strengthening Action Against Corruption (SAAC) project was piloted in the Eastern Cape with the aim of solidifying the basic tenets of accountability, transparency, and active citizenry that make up part of the fabric of our organisation. It is a community-led project, where participants drive the discourse in accountability-seeking groundwork activities.

Funded by the European Union through its Enhancing Accountability Project, SAAC specifically targets community advice offices and civil society organisations (CSOs) across the length and breadth of the province, equipping them with the knowledge and resources needed to identify and address corruption. By supporting these organisations in mobilising their communities, SAAC fosters a culture of accountability and transparency that is fundamental to anti-corruption efforts in South Africa.

The project's primary goals are to:

- Strengthen anti-corruption initiatives driven by CSOs.
- Enhance engagement and collaboration on anti-corruption efforts between civil society, state institutions supporting constitutional democracy, the public, and the private sector.
- Improve transparency, which in turn strengthens the deterrence and detection of corruption across the public and private sectors.

From 15 to 19 July 2024, the SAAC partners hosted a corruption busting bootcamp in East London at which representatives from about 30 community-based organisations (CBOs) were trained in several aspects of corruption fighting. The group included representatives from community advice centres, community development organisations and advocacy groups, among others. The structure and focus of the bootcamp was informed by a baseline survey conducted in April 2024 that sought to assess the envisaged participants' level of awareness regarding the topic of corruption.

One of the bootcamp coordinators, SCAT's Thembi Tshonoyi, says of the project: "My personal wish for the SAAC project is that it empowers us, as young people from the Eastern Cape, with the skills and confidence to challenge corruption in our communities. I use 'us' because I believe I am still affected by the corruption there, as it is one of the reasons why people like me have sought opportunities in other provinces. I hope this project inspires us to advocate for transparency and accountability, so that we can contribute to building a more just and equitable society for future generations."

The CBOs were empowered to set up youth-led initiatives in their communities in various parts of the province, that would educate community members on municipal governance and practices as well as the channels to use to hold their local authorities accountable. Tshonoyi's on-the-ground involvement is as a Youth Ambassadors for Accountability coordinator for SAAC – a role that entails training young people identified by the CBOs in promoting accountability and working with other young people in communities, spreading the importance of working against corruption.

SCAT director Dr Joanne Harding explained why the project chose to use young people as mobilisers in their communities across the Eastern Cape: "Young people are the ones who have to live with the consequences of corruption, and the worse corruption gets, the higher inflation gets. It has long-term implications for countries where corruption is high. This is not a short-term problem that we'll quickly get rid of."

CW's SAAC project lead, Nontobeko Gcabashe, shares the same sentiments. Her personal wish for the project is that it successfully fosters a culture of sustained civic engagement and accountability, empowering communities – not only to challenge corruption, but also to actively shape the policies that impact their daily lives. "I hope it becomes a powerful tool for restoring trust in governance, ensuring that resources are allocated fairly and used efficiently, ultimately improving the quality of life for ordinary people in the Eastern Cape."

SAAC activities continue across the province, with new levels of training incorporated into the project as it progresses in 2025.

CW CONTRIBUTES TO LEGISLATIVE REFORM THROUGH ITS SUBMISSIONS

Part of Corruption Watch's (CW) advocacy work since its establishment involves participating in the process of promoting reform in legislation or in legislative processes that shape the development of new policies or improve existing ones. This is done by way of either solicited or unsolicited submissions to policy reform in areas where the organisation has a strong interest.

Last year was no exception, and when the opportunities arose to partake in such exciting processes, the team took on the tasks with vigour. The first opportunity came in April 2024 when a notice for a private member's bill appeared in the Government Gazette. The notice was published in accordance with section 74(5) of the Constitution and pertained to a bill advocating for the establishment of a new anti-corruption commission (ACC).

CW was further approached by the MP in question to give inputs into the submission of the draft bill. Our understanding was that the proposed legislation should emphasise the need for an independent, accountable body that is free of political interference and espouses the principles of the Constitution in protecting the rights of citizens. CW's submission pointed to the fundamental requirements that such a commission should have to enjoy success in the context of our recent history with corruption and the damage to some of our democratic institutions as a result of state capture.

Among the several points we made on the matter, we submitted that the anti-corruption commission would have to –

1. be established under chapter nine of the Constitution, making it independent from executive authority, within a legal framework that aligns with the principles and provisions of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), of which South Africa is a signatory.
2. be financially and operationally independent to ensure autonomy and fairness in its endeavours, and work closely with the National Prosecuting Authority in preparation of investigations for prosecution.
3. be chaired by a judge, preferably retired, and appointed by the president from a shortlist drawn by the chief justice.
4. ensure that the chairperson of such commission has the power to appoint investigators and other personnel that they consider necessary and beneficial to the commission, including personnel that can carry out public education and monitoring and evaluation tasks on a regular basis.
5. prepare and submit regular reports to the president.
6. have strong prevention, policy development, and coordination functions that will inform the national anti-corruption efforts as well as ensure uniformity in the approach taken by state actors and private actors (where possible).
7. have a clear mandate that allows for the protection of whistle-blowers who report corruption to it. This may include the contact details and preliminary screening/counselling of whistle-blowers wishing to make disclosures, to ensure that they make informed decisions in the process.
8. endeavour to accomplish autonomous tasks such as investigations and enforcement of powers granted to it as per its mandate.

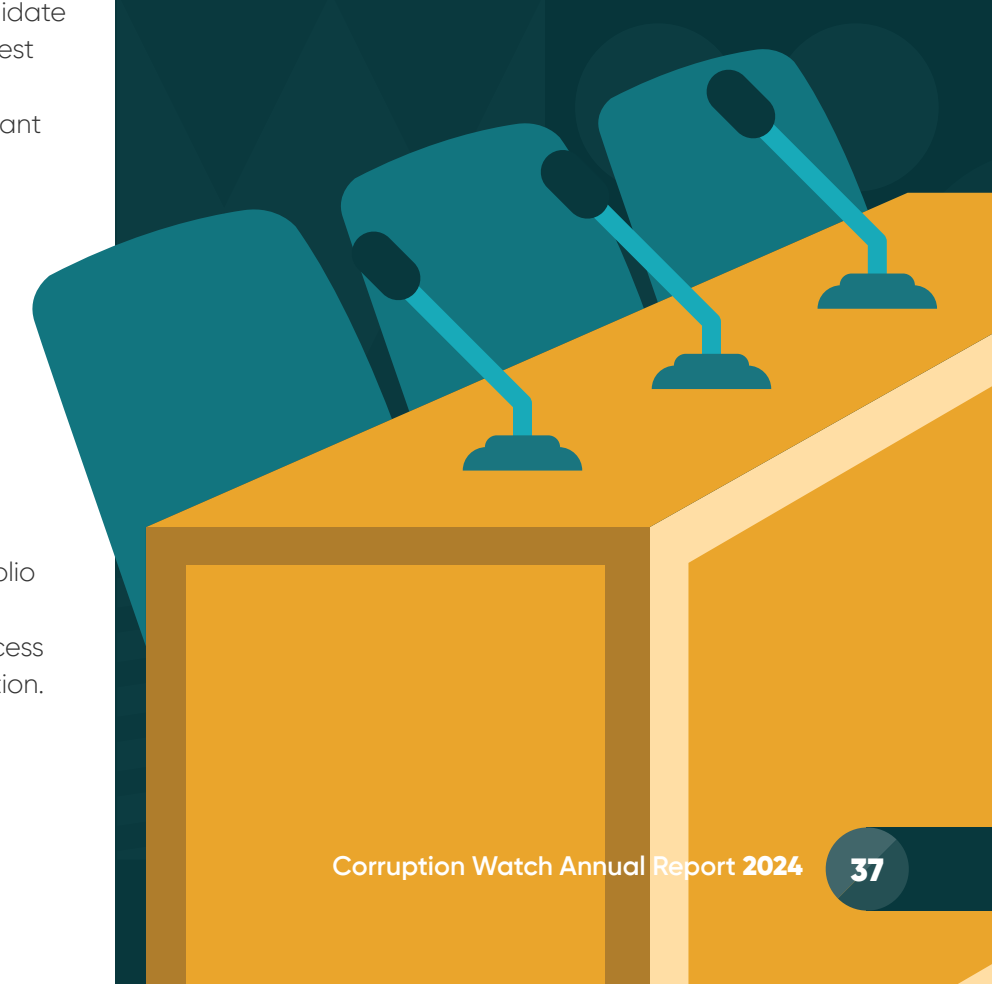
CW advocated further in the submission for the realisation of South Africa's signatory status to the UNCAC, which calls for states to explore the establishment of strong, independent anti-corruption institutions for the sustained fight against systemic corruption.

Other submissions were more specific in their nature, having to do with our leadership appointment work. One The deputy public protector's (DPP) term ended last year. This position – like that of the public protector – has limited tenure, and Parliament becomes involved in the appointment of the individual. Our submission to this effect, and that of the appointment of a commissioner of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), noted the limitations in Parliament's public consultation process. Our concerns included the limited time given for interested parties to vet the 26 and 45 short-listed candidates in respect of the DPP and SAHRC positions respectively. CW viewed the 10-day period allocated for submissions on the candidate list as insufficient for the public or public interest bodies to make substantive inputs into their credentials and their suitability for the important positions for which they were applying.

In the year prior (2023), CW had raised similar concerns with regard to the appointment process involving the head of the Commission of Gender Equality (CGE) as well as several other posts in the organisation. The appointment of the chairperson and four commissioners to the CGE was announced on 25 February 2023. However, the CW team considered the process flawed for several reasons. The portfolio committee only made public the names and qualifications of each candidate, with no access to appropriately redacted CVs for consideration.

Owing to our position on the matter, and having engaged both Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities as well as the presidency on the urgency of the concerns raised, CW opted to litigate. The case, the arguments of which were heard in the Constitutional Court in early March, argues that:

1. Parliament failed to comply with its constitutional obligation to facilitate reasonable public involvement before recommending persons to be appointed as members of the CGE.
2. The appointment of the chairperson and members of the CGE on 1 March 2023 is therefore to be declared invalid.
3. The declaration of invalidity in 2 is suspended for a period of 18 months to enable the first respondent to reconduct the appointment process in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution.



TACKLING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES THROUGH THE REAP PROJECT

Between April 2021 and December 2024, Corruption Watch (CW) was a participant in the EU's Rallying Efforts to Accelerate Progress in Africa (REAP) project, which was led by the Transparency International Secretariat and funded by the European Commission.

CW implemented and led the project in South Africa, which focused on addressing social inequalities in mining host communities. More broadly, REAP aimed to directly support groups at the intersection of income, wealth, and social inequalities, who have been among those most left behind in Kenya and South Africa, and in other countries on the continent.

It did this by creating platforms for land right holders in mine-affected areas, so they may actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their land, property, environment, and livelihoods – especially during the mining permit application period. This included research, advocacy and public outreach initiatives throughout the project's life.

CW had conducted an online baseline study in 2021 to assess the knowledge of communities on community consultation and measure whether communities are meaningfully included in decision making processes throughout the mining life cycle. The results revealed that half of respondents were unaware of or did not participate in consultation meetings with local mining companies, often due to a lack of awareness or because meetings were held only with community leaders, excluding broader community input.

These results became the baseline for our advocacy for policy reform and process amendments with government and mining companies. We also used the data to highlight the flaws in the current processes.

In 2024 we completed several deliverables, all grounded in the community consultations we carried out. We published a **policy brief**, prepared by mining law expert Dr Gaopalelwe Matheba, and titled *Strengthening FPIC for Inclusive Mining Decisions*. It focuses on the requirement to obtain free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) in mining consultations with communities, and calls for the enactment of Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act of 1996 (IPILRA) regulations for obtaining consent, thus emphasising the importance of meaningful consultation with the relevant and affected parties in South Africa's extractive sector. The policy paper was informed by our two academic research papers and the baseline surveys, and was submitted to the parliamentary committees on land and mining as well as relevant government departments.

Two academic research papers were also published – one by mining and labour law specialist Dr Godknows Mudimu and titled *Meaningful consultations and informal land rights*. **The paper** discusses how communities should be consulted to ensure they benefit from mining taking place on their land. **The other paper** was written by founder and former head of the Land and Accountability Research Centre, Dr Aninka Claassens. Titled *The Maledu Judgment, IPILRA and the MPRDA*, the paper examines several pivotal South African court judgments that guide on the use and interpretation of IPILRA and the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002 (MPRDA), and the way the two acts could and should be read together.

We also developed and published public education materials, in multimedia form. They included five animation videos on community consultations and consent, which were posted on our YouTube channel and distributed to community networks through community WhatsApp groups, X (Twitter), and Facebook. We also made a series of short video documentaries capturing the challenges faced by mining host communities as well as one positive case study showcasing how communities can benefit from mining when consultations and decision makings is inclusive.

Finally, we published a **Best Practice Guide on Community Consultation in the South African Extractives Industry**. The document aimed to analyse the South African legal regimes applicable to mining-affected community consultation and consent, providing guidance on how these are to be read and applied together in the context of mining projects, and how these are to apply to the nuanced community structures existing in South Africa.

In June 2024, CW engaged and started fostering relations with the House of Traditional Leaders in the North West province and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, which serves as a possible oversight body on mining deals.

We conducted a one-day advocacy workshop with the traditional leaders on the inclusion of women and youth in decision-making processes in the approval of mining activities and benefit-sharing agreements in South Africa. Government departments involved in the mining industry and civil society organisations who work on these issues were also in attendance.

We continued with our advocacy of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as they relate to mining policy processes concerning traditional land in mining areas. This resulted in an opinion piece titled *The Realisation of Corporate Human Rights Responsibilities by Mining Companies in South Africa*, which was **published** on our website in September.

In October 2024 we conducted research on the objectives of the AU Working Group on Extractives, the scope of its work, and its progress so far. This informed our dialogue with the group and resulted in an **open letter** calling on it to fast-track its anti-corruption work in South Africa's extractive industry. We also advocated for the establishment of a monitoring group in this regard.



OUR IMPORTANT LITIGATION IN 2024

While a lot of Corruption Watch's (CW) work is done in communities, in boardrooms, and on stages of national, regional, and international platforms that allow us to add our voices to social justice agendas that shape our work, a small portion also involves us taking our fight to the courts.

After a hiatus from litigation work, CW returned to the courts in 2024 with a few matters that had the common theme of key leadership appointments in public office.

IEC V MK PARTY

In the first, *IEC v MK Party*, CW was admitted as an amicus curiae in the urgent appeal to the Constitutional Court against the Electoral Court's decision that former President Jacob Zuma is eligible to run as a candidate in the May election.

The urgent appeal raised issues pertaining to the interpretation of the eligibility requirements for membership to the National Assembly (NA), contained in section 47(1)(e) of the Constitution, which would have far-reaching consequences for the preservation of South Africa's democracy and rule of law.

CW's submissions clarified the correct legal interpretation of the section in question, submitting that Zuma was disqualified from running in the 2024 election on the basis that he was convicted by the Constitutional Court of the offence of contempt of court and subjected to a 15-month prison sentence, back in 2021. This disqualification applies even though there was no appeal available to Zuma, since his conviction was handed

down by the apex court and upper guardian of the Constitution. It was argued that an interpretation of the section that does not disqualify Zuma from membership to the NA, on the basis that his conviction was not appealable, would lead to absurdities and negate the purpose of the section, which is to ensure that members of Parliament are not serious violators of the law. The Constitutional Court overturned the Electoral Court's decision, ruling that Zuma's 15-month prison sentence for contempt did indeed disqualify him, as it met the threshold for exclusion from running for office until five years after sentence completion.

CORRUPTION WATCH V SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND OTHERS

The second matter in question involved us initiating proceedings out of the Western Cape High Court in the matter *Corruption Watch v Speaker of the National Assembly and others*. Three related applications were brought by CW, the Democratic Alliance, and Freedom Under Law. It sought to interdict the impeached Dr John Hlophe – the parliamentary leader of the MK Party – from participating in the Judicial Services Commission (JSC).

The interdict was pending a full hearing of CW's challenge to the merits of the NA decision to designate Hlophe to the JSC, which happened in the weeks preceding the publication of this report. The outcome of those proceedings in the Western Cape High Court, however, had not been decided at the time of publication. The effect of the judgment is that Hlophe was interdicted pending the outcome of further proceedings in the High Court and/or related applications lodged with the Constitutional Court.

The rationale for CW pursuing this matter – often conflated with being of a politically motivated nature – is that the JSC performs a vital role in the appointment of judges, and it was therefore critical that the designation process be taken seriously and that only those suitably qualified persons with the highest ethical standards should be appointed. As Hlophe had been impeached and removed as a judge for serious misconduct earlier in the same year, his appointment – following nomination from his party – undermined the independence, dignity, and effectiveness of the courts.

Corruption Watch v Speaker of the National Assembly and others

In the third and final matter of interest – also falling under the theme of leadership appointments – CW again initiated proceedings, this time in the Constitutional Court, over what it deems Parliament's failure to comply with its constitutional obligation to facilitate public participation in the appointment of members to the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) in 2022. The argument that CW raises is whether the NA adopted a reasonable public participation process when recommending persons to be appointed as commissioners.

For background: CW raised concerns as far back as 18 July 2022 with the portfolio committee on women, youth, and persons with disabilities, the Speaker of the NA and the presidency, about what we deemed to be irregularities in the appointment process in respect of the outstanding CGE posts.

Our concerns have consistently revolved around three procedural issues in the appointment process which undermined meaningful public participation, namely:

- That the public was not afforded reasonable opportunity to participate in the appointment process;
- That the committee provided insufficient information, so the public was unable to interrogate whether each candidate had a track record of a commitment to gender equality (a requirement for the appointment);
- That the process undermined substantial engagement by limiting the number of characters that could be used in the online submissions.

We received a response from the committee, which put forward its own explanations and justifications, but did not address the deeper impact of continuing with the process regardless of our submission.

CW further recommended to the president – to whom the recommendations for appointment were made by the committee – to consider making them in an acting capacity while the procedural flaws cited by CW in the appointment process were addressed. But the final decision made was for the appointments to be made final. CW's motivation in this action had been that the CGE plays a crucial role in the fight against gender inequality and gender-based (GBV) in South Africa.

Our approach recognised that the quorum [of commissioners] of the CGE – a point raised by the committee in defending its process, citing the urgency with which the appointments had to be made to ensure leadership stability in the organisation – is critical for it to be able to perform its functions. CW's position is that it is vital that the quorum be appropriately constituted and that its appointments processes are constitutionally compliant and conducted correctly.

In approaching the apex court, CW cited the urgency of the CGE's constitutional mandate in a climate that requires stability in the wake of the staggering GBV figures in the country. The heads of argument were heard in early March, and the ruling on the matter had not been made at the time of publication.



KEEPING PACE WITH GENDER-RELATED MATTERS

Corruption and gender are emerging more and more as topics that intersect across numerous spectra. For organisations like Corruption Watch (CW) that operate in the anti-corruption sector, it has been rewarding to discover and establish partnerships over time that vouch for an intentional, committed undertaking to raise awareness on the gendered aspect of corruption, while also advocating for behavioural change in all of society and legislative and policy reform in government.

As Transparency International states on its website: "A person's gender affects their experiences of corruption in many ways. It can have an impact on how likely they are to pay or take a bribe, which forms of corruption they might face, and how they perceive and act upon them."

For the first time since it was established, CW has a gender-centric programme that is run from within the organisation, led by the Gender Sensitivity Project task team (GSPTT) comprising three members of staff. The GSPTT, formed in August 2024, endeavours to hold accountable all members of the team as well as CW's partners, stakeholders, funders, whistle-blowers, and general communities in acknowledging gender sensitivity and all its elements, particularly as it relates to our work. It is also empowered to research and develop learning materials around the intersections between gender and corruption, and how organisations in our field can continue to empower their own networks.

Outside the organisation, the task team is involved in several initiatives that aim to raise awareness on all gender-focused subject matters such

as sexual corruption, gender-based violence, gender equity in the workplace, and others. Through a tripartite partnership mentioned elsewhere in the report, cultivated with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the African Women Against Corruption Network (AWACN), we are engaging more and more in activities that promote inclusivity for all genders in anti-corruption work, noting the disparities that different genders experience in terms of the violence of corruption and the lack of consequences of it. This is as part of the Transparency, Accountability and Integrity Programme (TIP) that was launched in 2022 by the GIZ and national government.

One of the exciting initiatives to look forward to in 2025 is the rollout of a national survey commissioned by the partners and carried out by leading industry player Ipsos, to gather information on how prevalent sexual corruption is, and how people of different genders have either been affected by it or witnessed how it manifests. We expect the survey lay a good foundation for the much-needed national conversation around sexual corruption. For one, the move from using the term "sextortion" towards "sexual corruption" has been laced with both confusion and controversy. It is only through open, constructive debates around the reasoning behind the language used in the context of this societal problem that we will gain some ground in combating it.

In the earlier phases of the project, engagements with groups of young people across several platforms enabled the team to use the information gathered to motivate for a broader approach, hence the survey. But beyond that, part of the strategic outlook is to drive broader awareness, while advocating for policies or even legislation that recognise the existence of sexual corruption.

Internally within CW, the work of the task team is to not only instil but also to maintain an organisational culture of inclusivity and sensitivity towards gender and its nuances. We have championed the principles of respect of privacy of whistle-blowers, accountability to our stakeholders, and conducting all our work in the public interest. But when these well-meaning endeavours are done without an intentional, strategic goal-orientated programme that can be measured and reviewed based on how it encapsulates the topic of gender, then ours will be a mission unaccomplished.



ACCOUNTABILITY TOGETHER WE CAN DO BETTER

By Cynthia Stimpel

There is always room for improvement when it comes to accountability. Our recent state capture commission highlighted the many cases of corruption without accountability and in the recommendations, provided a laundry list of how we can hold people accountable. But it's debatable whether this has been effectively done.

Perhaps we are not seeing the accountability we had envisaged – of powerful people in orange overalls – after such an extensive, costly judicial exercise meant to uncover the machinations of the biggest corruption network that democratic South Africa has been subjected to since the arms deal of the late 1990s. A good place to start in contextualising accountability may well be to interrogate its definition. The New Collins Concise English Dictionary says to be accountable means 1) responsible to someone or for some action; and 2) able to be explained.

Therefore, to hold someone accountable is to ensure that they are aware of their responsibility for an action or circumstance, and answerable for them.

Across different scenarios like workplaces, civil society organisations (CSOs), and government organisations, we are increasingly discovering

that it is difficult or cumbersome to hold people to account. We appreciate that accountability is a key part of running a working system in any institution, and say the right words – but turning them into action is neither easy nor consistent.

The key lies in starting with ourselves first. I am sure you are all putting your hands up and patting your shoulders, certain that you have integrity and that you constantly hold yourself accountable.

But pause for one moment to think of this simple example most of us can relate to: we are driving toward a traffic control intersection, where the lights are out and no officers are present. The law of the road states that we should stop at the intersection, look right, left, and right again, and only proceed to cross once it is safe to do so and it is our turn.

But more often than not, we will approach with caution, already looking left and right, and then cross without stopping because we noted that there were no vehicles in the intersection. Experience shows that an alarmingly growing number of people will not stop before crossing the road when it is safe. It has

become somewhat customary, yet we still think we were careful and therefore created no risk to any passengers, pedestrians, or other vehicles. This may be factually true, yet we have disobeyed the law. The truth is that the minority who do stop are the ones who hold themselves accountable. They do this without the anticipation of a reward, but simply because the road rules require that we put safety ahead of anything else, and that we must stop.

CSO accountability

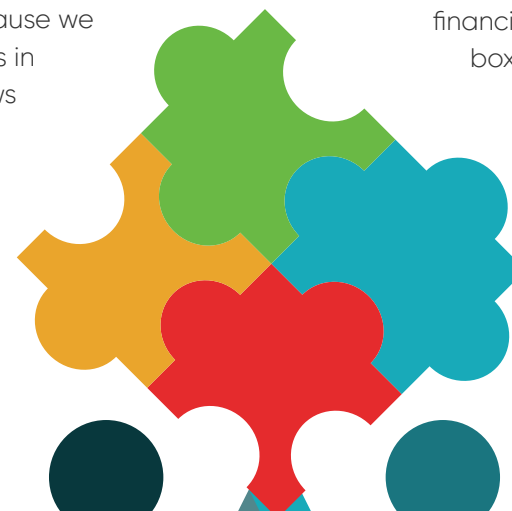
The rules apply even to the civil society sector, which prides itself as being available to hold public office bearers accountable to civilians. Many CSOs receive donor funds to help them carry out their many tasks. They register with the government and other relevant authorities as non-profit companies (NPCs) and are recognised for auditing and tax-related purposes – among others – as NPCs, but how are they held accountable? By having regular webinars and meetings with donors, an annual general meeting, and providing reports and financials to donors. This covers all the tick boxes – but is it enough?

Ethical behaviour plays a big role in the running of an NPC, and there is sometimes a

risk in the opacity with which certain actions can be undertaken. The NPC could obscure or conceal certain actions under the guise of meeting their mandate, deflecting attention from its failure to meet mandatory deliverables by focusing their reporting rather on other areas of work that had successes. This has little relation to how they truly managed their mandate, or the impact thereof.

But CSOs hold government and its institutions to account, on behalf of civilians, and should always strive to do better in holding themselves to a standard higher than that which they deem tolerable.

The measurement should be that the CSO must be able to show that they have acted in a responsible manner in both their management of resources, and in the duties in respect of their public interest mandate. If it's good for the goose (public service), it's good for the gander (civil society). Our government's annual public procurement budget stands at a whopping R1-trillion. This is a lot of



money for a country that has high levels of debt to international lenders, and a high unemployment rate in an economy that is not growing fast enough to help close the gaps on either challenge. So CSOs are rightly placed to monitor and advise on how to improve governance so that public resources are used efficiently and without room for nefarious conduct that could further jeopardise our democratic values. Civil society plays a vital role, and the sector should always have the platform and agency to hold government accountable – but it too should espouse the same standards and principles it wants from government and should encourage the same across society.

Accountability in short supply

Back to the reality on the ground as felt by the ordinary South African. A recent case study on how serious we are about accountability involves the rehabilitation of Lilian Ngoyi Street in Johannesburg, which was rocked by an underground gas explosion in July 2023. One person died and over 40 were injured in the incident.

The original contractor was dismissed a year after the explosion but had already received R19- million for incomplete work, **according to news reports**. The new contractor is on the job and the project is expected to be complete in **August 2025**.

But there must be accountability for the use of public money to pay a service provider R19-million for a service that has not been delivered, especially if the costs thereof are not warranted nor have they been recouped. For the sake of the victims of the unfortunate incident, and the many who were there and suffered trauma when it happened, there needs to be demonstrative action that government takes the rehabilitation process seriously. This includes holding accountable all who are responsible for it, including the private companies that bid for the job.

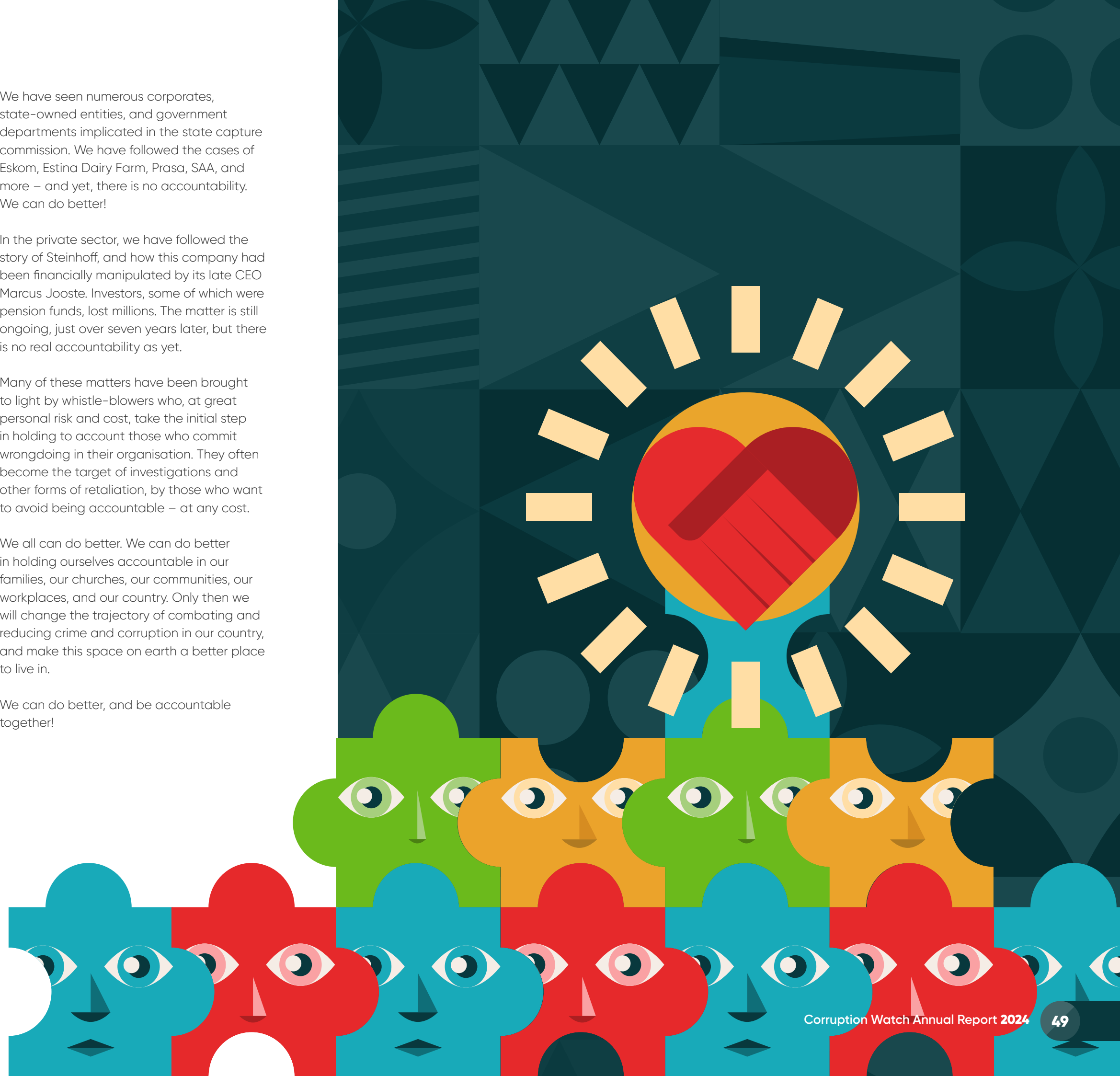
We have seen numerous corporates, state-owned entities, and government departments implicated in the state capture commission. We have followed the cases of Eskom, Estina Dairy Farm, Prasa, SAA, and more – and yet, there is no accountability. We can do better!

In the private sector, we have followed the story of Steinhoff, and how this company had been financially manipulated by its late CEO Marcus Jooste. Investors, some of which were pension funds, lost millions. The matter is still ongoing, just over seven years later, but there is no real accountability as yet.

Many of these matters have been brought to light by whistle-blowers who, at great personal risk and cost, take the initial step in holding to account those who commit wrongdoing in their organisation. They often become the target of investigations and other forms of retaliation, by those who want to avoid being accountable – at any cost.

We all can do better. We can do better in holding ourselves accountable in our families, our churches, our communities, our workplaces, and our country. Only then we will change the trajectory of combating and reducing crime and corruption in our country, and make this space on earth a better place to live in.

We can do better, and be accountable together!



CW BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2024



Prof Themba Maseko
Chairperson

Themba is the (adjunct) professor and director of Executive Education at the Wits School of Governance. He holds a BA LLB (Wits University) and an MBA (De Montfort University). His career in the public service includes roles as the former CEO of the Government Communication and Information System and government spokesperson; director-general in the Department of Public Service and Administration; and he also served in the National Department of Public Works. He was the first superintendent-general in the Gauteng Department of Education and a Member of Parliament in 1994. His role in the private sector included short stints as managing director of the Damelin Education Group, an independent management consultant, and communications director at the Business Leadership South Africa. He left the public service after 17 years when he spoke out against the capture of the South African state and was later a witness at the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into State Capture, also known as the Zondo Commission. He is the author of For my Country and serves on the boards of several other civil society organisations including the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution and Chapter Zero. He is a trustee of the board of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.



Marianne Giddy

Marianne is a senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, where she focuses on ethics, leadership, and accountability, teaching on the leadership modules of the school's part-time and full-time master's programme in Development Policy and Practice. She also supervises master's and PhD students in the area of leadership, accountability and anti-corruption.

She holds master's degrees in public policy and political philosophy from Oxford and the University of Stellenbosch, and a PhD in Political Studies (University of Witwatersrand). She was selected as a 2005 Yale World Fellow, a prestigious fellowship awarded to emerging leaders from around the world. Marianne is regarded as an expert on anti-corruption issues. She co-founded the international NGO Global Integrity and served as international director and on the board for ten years (2005-2015). She was a founding director of the Open Democracy Advice Center (ODAC), an NGO monitoring the implementation and encouraging the use of access to information and whistleblower protection laws in South Africa. She has recently been appointed a Trustee of the Institute for Security Studies.



Gugu McLaren-Ushewokunze

Gugu has over 14 years' experience in social and sustainable development. She has worked across sectors, including civil society, consulting and corporate, and in varying industries. Most of her career has been spent in the corporate sector, where she spearheaded the development and the implementation of sustainable development strategies. She spent six years at Discovery, where she supported the company's shared value business model.

She leads the National Business Initiative's Social Transformation programme, where her responsibilities include developing and implementing the NBI's programme to engage business in driving social transformation, with the aim of addressing inequality and inequity. The programme focuses on companies' internal transformation, and creating diverse and inclusive organisations, skills and youth employability, anti-corruption and encompasses businesses' relationship with society. She holds a MSocSc in Gender Studies and BSc in Psychology and Gender Studies from the University of Cape Town.



Karabo Rajuili

Karabo is Director of Country Implementation at Open Ownership, providing country support to governments implementing beneficial ownership transparency. Before this, she worked for five years at award-winning independent investigative journalism centre amaBhungane, as the advocacy coordinator.

While at amaBhungane, she served as country chair and regional support (Africa) for the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) Media Freedom Committees in South Africa, Uganda and Kenya, working with senior journalists and editors in print, digital and broadcast media. She also worked to secure information rights in the interest of investigative journalism and, wherever possible, the wider public, on an array of policy areas including cyber security, digital rights, the intersection of privacy and access to information laws and beneficial ownership transparency in procurement law reform. She worked on the most recent review of South Africa's Companies Act and was part of successful efforts to advocate for and subsequently draft South Africa's first political party financial transparency law.



Bridgette Mdingayi

Independent board member Bridgette is a cross-sectoral project and programme management professional with experience drawn from a wide range of sectors. Her expertise lies in project formulation/development, capacity building, contract and grants management, social advocacy and development communications, strategic planning, and stakeholder relations.

She has worked extensively across Africa in socio-economic development, social impact, transformation, and sustainability in both the private and NGO sectors. Previously she led the National Business Initiative's Social Transformation portfolio as Head of Social Transformation. Before that she led the Ford Foundation's \$800 000 grant-funded leadership initiative, designed to mobilise young thought leaders across the continent to drive social cohesion and guide the direction of the continent.



Zukiswa Kota

Zukiswa is currently the programme head for South Africa at the Public Service Accountability Monitor at Rhodes University. She has extensive experience supporting various social and budget justice interventions including the coordination of a civil society coalition working with the National Treasury to develop a pioneer budget portal to deepen public participation, transparency, and fiscal accountability. In recent years she has contributed to deepening anti-corruption and fiscal transparency in the public sector. She has been a member of South Africa's interim steering committee for the Open Government Partnership led by the Department of Public Service and Administration. She serves on the board of trustees of the Equal Education Law Centre and My Vote Counts as well as on the advisory board of the Public Economy Project at Wits University. She is a founding chairperson of the Budget Justice Coalition and the Imali Yethu Coalition for Open Budgets.



Karam Singh

Karam spent the last 10 years or so in senior management for various leading public organisations and a global philanthropy. Previously, he held a leading position with the South African Human Rights Commission with particular expertise in the area of socio-economic rights and most recently, led OSF-SA's access to justice initiatives.

His interests vary in the areas of anti-corruption, human rights, social justice and access to justice, though one of his over-riding passions is the issue of anti-corruption – this informed his master's degree (with distinction) in Constitutional and Administrative Law at the University of Pretoria in 2014.

His formal training has been as an attorney both in the US and South Africa, and he remains an admitted attorney in the state of New York and in South Africa.

The CW board recently lost two members – former executive director Karam Singh (in February 2025) and Gugu McLaren-Ushewokunze (in December 2024).

The members of our board guide our mission and vision. The bios of the 2024 members follow above:

CW FUNDERS FOR 2024



ACCOUNTABLE TOGETHER



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