

Chairperson's Report

Nkosikhulule Xhawulengweni Nyembezi

The doors to the Social Change Assistance Trust offices in Woodstock are unlocked. So are the doors of our partner Local Development Agencies (LDAs) across the country after the coronavirus global pandemic forced us to work from home for months for the first time in our history. But that did not mean we were closed for business.

The milestones of 2021 demonstrate SCAT's contribution to building vibrant and sustainable rural communities with empowered individuals, able to claim their rights and improve their livelihoods. Our work in this period has contributed to broader civil society efforts to tackle the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other socio-economic challenges.

Looking back, the past two years have been a complex and turbulent time. Despite this, we have succeeded in consistently implementing our theory of change. Our approach is rooted in the acknowledgement that rural community-based organisations are complex ecosystems situated within the larger systems of their surrounding communities and the nation. Supported by our theory of change, our programmes, which focus on empowering and supporting rural local development agencies (LDAs), have been impactful. SCAT's approach serves to deepen the LDA's understanding of how each component in the ecosystem functions and how they all interact.

In these ecosystems, LDAs used the resources SCAT provided to empower local communities to shape their development agendas and address their development priorities in a year when South Africans voted in local government elections. Our programmes continued to transform the discourse between those in power and the intended beneficiaries of developmental resources. This contribution is crucial for our constitutional democracy. It produces a more inclusive, sustainable and stable model for local economic development by promoting elected public representatives' compliance with the Batho Pele principles on corruption-free delivery of essential services.

Statistics SA will complete a population and housing census in 2022. The much-anticipated data will help us plan and implement our future programmes. Community by community, people are faced with rising inequality, stretched social services, a deficit of trust in corrupt politicians and greedy private businesses, and a damaged climate characterised by inclement weather. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the consequences of building societies on the backs of people struggling under the yoke of chronic unemployment, increasing poverty and income inequality, weak health and education systems, tattered social safety nets, violence against women, and other socio-economic divides. Like the climate change that is rapidly affecting vulnerable communities' livelihoods, the pandemic offers proof that all life on Earth is connected.

2021 was an intense period of coordinated activities through which SCAT worked hard to support the people of 32 communities around the country to get on their feet and stay there. We continued to push the boundaries of how we think, deliver, invest, and manage our Strategic Plan, establishing resilience and financial stability in LDAs and taking steps to make these community organisations agile and more responsive.

The people served by SCAT's partners are vulnerable women and children, the disabled, pensioners, refugees, migrants, farmworkers and domestic workers, and other at-risk individuals in the formal and informal economy. Our continuous assessment of the contribution we make is a source of encouragement. It acknowledges that, as we support the LDAs and help communities prepare, respond, and recover in the face of COVID-19 and climate change, our investments are consistently proving their worth.

In 2021, SCAT further demonstrated the importance of economies of scale in tackling the country's most significant development challenges. Our grant funding design enables the achievement of integrated results at speed and scale during quiet and turbulent times. As always, we are stronger together.

We will continue testing our skills as, with our partners, we navigate a course through COVID-19 and climate change. If inspiration is needed, the 37th anniversary of SCAT in 2021 should provide it. It is time to write the story of the next 37 years and continue charting how to partner with rural organisations. SCAT is committed to making the story one we will be proud to have our grandchildren read aloud. We hope that this snapshot of our progress in 2021 will encourage you to join us.