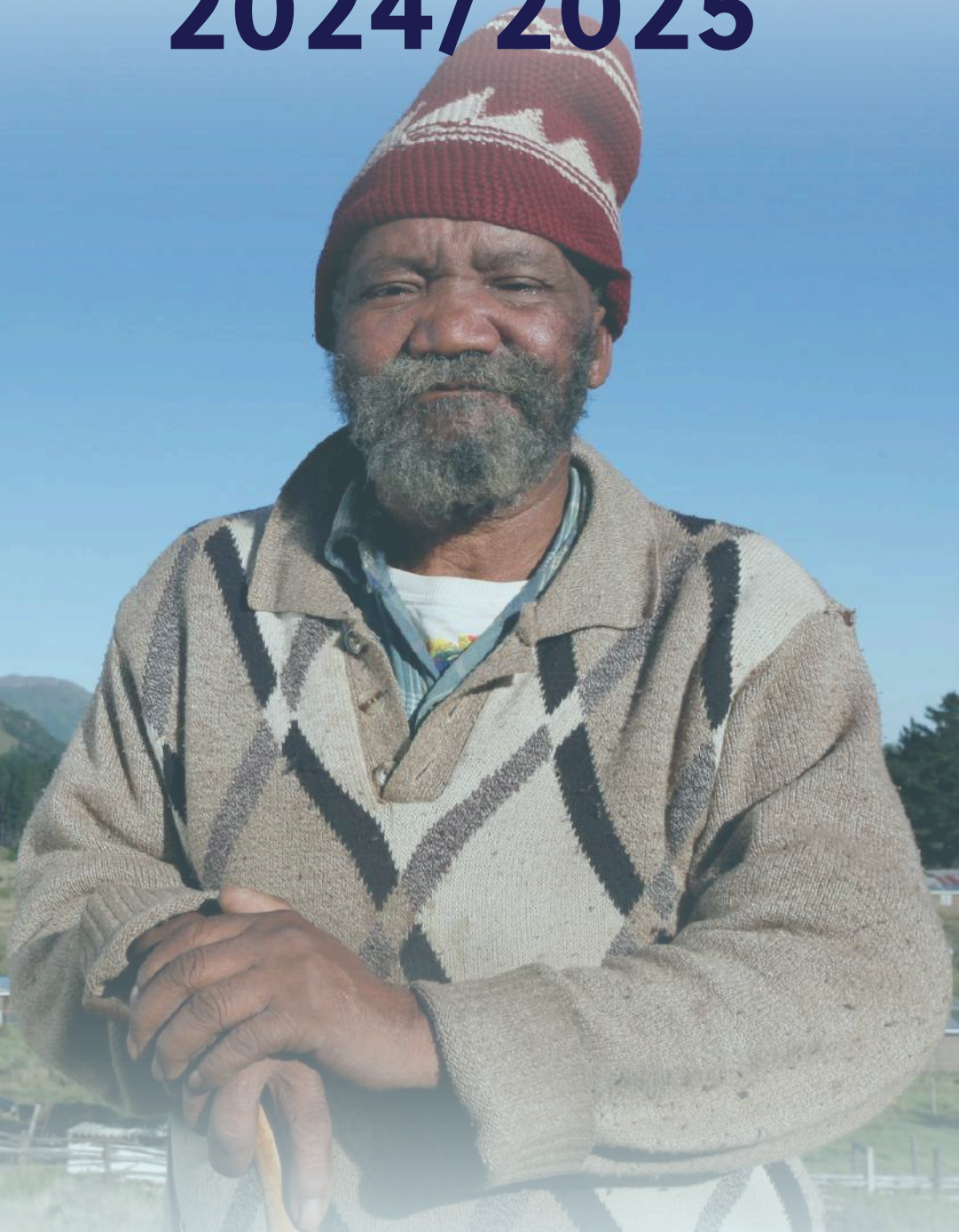




LEGAL
RESOURCES
CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025



45 Years of Public Interest Law



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Steadfast in a changing democracy after forty five years, as we begin to look ahead

The struggles of today remind us that our work is not finished until rights promised on paper are lived realities for all.

This past year, the LRC celebrated its 45th anniversary. It occurred to me on reflection, of this momentous occasion that while we have made some enormous strides of which we can be very proud, and which are indeed worthy of celebration, our service to the people of South Africa remains as vital and pivotal as ever. The 45th anniversary festivities were marked at a very special dinner where the LRC very proudly awarded the 4th George Bizos Human Rights Award to Geoff Budlender SC, who underscored the continued need for the LRC, and organisations like it, to be excellent – to offer the highest quality legal services to the least protected amongst us. And it is with excellence in mind that the LRC forges ahead. Yet, the path is not without speedbumps and potholes. The so-called Year of Democracy saw national and international elections and related consequences of their outcomes unfold in an erratic manner. Some of these outcomes offered hope, and others reminded us of the deeply entrenched inequalities and systemic failures that still confront many communities around the world and here in South Africa. The bottom line is that internationally, democracy remains under strain, even as a record number of countries held national elections in 2024. Misinformation, political extremism, and shrinking civic spaces posed new challenges to democratic participation.

Of course, South Africa held its seventh democratic general election in May 2024. For the first time since 1994, no single party secured a majority, leading to the formation of a government of national unity. This shift has brought with it both anticipation and anxiety, particularly for those communities whose daily struggles require urgent policy attention. The results signalled the public's demand for greater accountability, service delivery, and a renewed social contract. At the same time, the high youth unemployment rate, continuing gender-based violence, and failures in basic service delivery, particularly in education, healthcare, and housing remain stark reminders of the work still to be done.

In the midst of this political transformation, LRC continued to operate as a steadfast voice for the vulnerable by deepening our commitment to strategic litigation, community empowerment, and advocacy.

The Land and Education programmes remained central to our work in 2024. We secured an important victory in the Bapo ba Mogale case, where the High Court affirmed the right of communities to free, prior, and informed consent before mining agreements are concluded. We also provided clarity on the Expropriation Act to ensure land redistribution is carried out lawfully and transparently. Alongside litigation, the Right to Read Campaign continued to gather momentum, shaping national regulations to address the literacy crisis and prioritising early-grade reading as a national imperative.

We also deepened our broader advocacy and accountability initiatives. At the Fisher Peoples Tribunal in Kalk Bay, we helped give legal form to systemic violations against small-scale fishers, culminating in a verdict affirming that their ongoing marginalisation is unconstitutional. Our State Capture and Beyond project, co-funded by the European Union, further expanded its reach through litigation, public awareness campaigns, and coalition-building in response to the Zondo Commission's findings. Together, these initiatives highlight how the LRC combines legal action with advocacy and community empowerment to confront systemic injustice.

From an operational standpoint, the LRC continued its transition into a more agile and transparent structure under the Non-Profit Company (NPC) model. By April 2024, all compliance obligations had been met, including audits, tax clearances, and the establishment of board subcommittees focused on governance and sustainability. Our financial stewardship has been enhanced through robust donor reporting systems, and we have continued to strengthen partnerships with civil society allies and funders committed to transformative justice.

We also welcomed new Board members. Mr Joel Baepi, Head of Legal, Regulatory and Compliance at Africa Data Centres, brings two decades in corporate law, governance and conflict resolution. Fluent in six South African languages, his mergers and acquisitions and stakeholder experience strengthens our governance. Ms Ntombifuthi Simelane adds expertise across mining, FMCG and healthcare, with knowledge of land rights, constitutional and administrative law, and transformation. We also welcome Ms Chipso Pswarayi, an Attorney of the High Court with nineteen years in executive legal roles at Phembani Group, Shanduka Group and Harith Fund Managers. She serves on several boards and offers strength in risk and compliance, corporate social investment, sustainability, transformation and governance. Together they will help steer the organisation through a complex and changing legal and political landscape.

None of this work would have been possible without the dedicated support of our donors, whose solidarity and generosity anchor our efforts. We are also deeply grateful to our Board of Directors, Advisory Board members and staff, each of whom brings expertise, integrity, and commitment to the LRC's mission every single day. This past year has reminded us that our collective strength lies not only in our legal expertise but also in the partnerships we build with communities and allies across South Africa. It is these relationships that make our work sustainable and ensure that victories in the courtroom are translated into lasting change in people's lives.

As our country faces ongoing political shifts and economic uncertainty, the LRC remains rooted in its values: independence, integrity, and an unrelenting pursuit of justice for all. We recognise that the years ahead will not be easy, but we enter this new strategic cycle with clarity of purpose and the resilience that has carried the LRC for 45 years.

We approach the future with cautious optimism and steely resolve. The LRC will continue to adapt, respond, and lead. We remain, as ever, committed to protecting the constitutional rights of the people of South Africa, particularly those whose voices are often sidelined or silenced.



Noluthando (Thandi) Orleyn
Chairman of the Board, Legal Resources Centre

Reflecting on five years of progress to help chart our path ahead



Nersan Govender

Executive Director of the Legal Resources Centre

traditional leadership. Our Land Team has been involved in a comprehensive land administration research project, focused on making recommendations to ensure the protection of communities' off-register rights and interests in their communal land. We remain involved and committed to the implementation of several significant judgments, including *Mwelase v Director-General for the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform* and *Mogale v Speaker of the National Assembly*. Our work representing and advocating for the Green Point Traders also resulted in the re-opening of the Green Point Flea Market earlier this year, re-establishing crucial economic opportunities for our clients.

The Democratising Big Tech Project continues to demand fairness and accountability from tech companies. We launched our successful Legal Resources Radio podcast, tackling topics regarding misinformation, corporate accountability, online harassment, micro-targeting, and online surveillance. Part of our team also attended and presented at DRIF25, presenting research we'd undertaken regarding digital hate speech and misinformation.

Our Legacy Programme is nearing its conclusion. The team has worked tirelessly to bring many long-standing cases to finality, particularly the fraudulent Brusson Finance Scheme. A consolidated case will be launched in the coming months to ensure that our clients regain ownership of the homes that they were fraudulently deprived of by the scheme. Other, more complicated legacy matters, such as the Social Justice Coalition, which challenges the unequal allocation of police resources in poor Black communities compared to affluent white areas in the Western Cape, will remain active. We remain committed to pursuing justice and seeing it through to completion, in line with our values and our obligations to our clients.

Outside of our programmatic work, the Legal Resources Centre has fought to ensure accountability across various sectors. Through our involvement in the historic COSAS 4 Trial, we seek to ensure justice for the victims of Apartheid in South Africa. Through the State Capture and Beyond Project, in collaboration with Human Rights Media Trust and Bread for the World, we empower individuals and communities across the country on issues such as whistle-blowing, active citizenry, and service delivery issues.

The world finds itself in a moment of crisis. Worsening inequality and a deepening disdain for the rule of law and human rights are becoming increasingly evident through gross rights violations perpetuated on an international scale. Recognising this, the Legal Resources Centre remains committed to advancing justice on both a regional and international scale. Supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands, we hosted a successful Regional Gathering focused on issues facing LGBTQIA+ asylum-seekers and refugees in the African context. We also remain a committed member of the INCLO network, working with other national civil liberties and human rights NGOs in the Global South seeking to promote fundamental rights and freedoms across the globe.

2025 has also marked our transition to a new five-year strategy. Under our new strategy, we will maintain our focus on Education and Land Rights, with a new emphasis on Climate Justice and Food Security within the Land Programme. We have also adopted a new focus area, focused on combating gender-based violence with a particular focus on developing the law regarding issues relating to women who kill their abusers and sextortion. Our new strategy ensures our agility and relevance as an organisation in an ever-changing legal and social context.

Our work would not be possible without the generous support of our funders, whose support enables our organisation to fight for a democratic, transparent, and accountable society. Our staff's unwavering dedication to the realisation of human rights and the interests of our clients has seen us to continue to grow from strength to strength over the last year. Looking forward to the year ahead, the Legal Resources Centre remains steadfast in its commitment to social justice. Our new strategic plan entrenches a continued commitment to some of the most important issues our country faces, thirty-one years into its constitutional democracy.

Over the last five years, the Legal Resources Centre successfully executed a strategic plan focused on promoting equitable access to education, accountable land reform in both the rural and urban space, and the finalisation of all outstanding cases under our Legacy Programme. Our work has affirmed the Legal Resources Centre's commitment to the realisation of the promise of South Africa's Constitution and the redress of the systemic social injustices.

Under our Education Programme, we have made significant strides towards eliminating discrimination in schools and ensuring inclusive access to education. At the end of 2024, we received judgment against the Eastern Cape Department of Education and Eastern Cape Department of Transport in *Khula Community Development Project v MEC for Education and Others*. Both Departments were ordered to provide scholar transport to all qualifying learners, affecting more than 100 000 learners left stranded in the Eastern Cape. Through our ongoing work representing the Commission for Gender Equality in *WM* on behalf of *OM v Beaumont Primary School*, we continue to fight for the development of regulations to protect the rights of transgender learners and eliminate discriminatory practices in schools. We also recently obtained judgment against the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education for their non-payment of subsidies to several ECD centres. We also launched litigation against the Department of Home Affairs regarding the substantial late registration of birth applications backlog, resulting in more than approximately 258 000 applications left unprocessed.

We also ran several successful workshops on Educator Sexual Misconduct and Digital Rights at schools across the country. We continue to roll out activations for our Right to Read Campaign, run in collaboration with the South African Human Rights Commission, Equal Education, and SECTION27. The Campaign focuses on making early-grade literacy a national priority to address South Africa's ongoing literacy crisis.

Our Land Programme remains committed to advancing equitable and accountable land reform and defending constitutional rights under



WHO WE ARE

Our Vision & Mission



Vision

A democratic, accountable, and transparent society in which equitable and inclusive access to justice, dignity, and human rights are lived realities for all.



Mission

The LRC takes informed, purposeful action to promote the transformation of South Africa into a democratic, accountable, and transparent society. Using the law as a tool, the LRC works to dismantle structural barriers to justice, dignity, and human rights, ensuring equitable and inclusive access for all.

45 Years of Public Interest Law



WHO WE ARE

Where We Work



4 National Offices:

- Johannesburg
- Cape Town
- Makhanda
- Durban



Courts:

- Constitutional
- Gauteng
- Polokwane
- Makhanda



The Communities Where We Work:

- **Eastern Cape:** Prudhoe, Gwatyu, Port St Johns, Dwesa-Cwebe, Xolobeni, Knysna fishers, Amahlathi, Makhanda community
- **Gauteng:** Silvertown, Alexandra, Johannesburg, Pomona, Kempton Park, Precast community, Yeoville Ratepayers Association
- **KwaZulu-Natal:** Nibela, Kosi Bay, Endumeni Civic Association (Endumeni Municipality), Zamani Transit Camp community (Isipingo), Umlazi U Section, Austerville, Clairwood, Ukhukho, Coastal Fishers, Old Durban Airport farmers
- **Limpopo:** Phaphazela, Moletjie, Tzaneen, Marble Arch
- **Mpumalanga:** Rooifontein, De Putten, Carolina
- **Namibia:** Hai//om people
- **Northern Cape:** Port Nolloth Concordia, Hondeklipbaai
- **North West:** Thekwana, Wildebeestkuil
- **Western Cape:** Simondium, Beaufort West, Langebaan, Ebenhaeser, Mamre, Papendorp, Manenberg, Philippi



WHO WE ARE
Our Team



AARON TIFFLIN
Candidate Attorney



AMANDA MOLI
Office Assistant



AMANDA MPOTULO-MATAMA
Administration Assistant



ANNELINE TURPIN
Attorney



ANSHAL BODASING
Manager in the Office
of the Director



CAMERON MCCONNACHIE
Programme Lead



CATHERINE MARCUS
Attorney



CECILE VAN SCHALKWYK
Attorney



CHARLENE KREUSER
Attorney



CLAIRE RANKIN
Candidate Attorney



DELYSIA WEAH
Company Secretary



EKTAA DEOCHAND
Attorney



ELDONNA MUHWANA
Intern



ESME WARDLE
Office Administrator



FANELESIBONGE NDEBELE
Candidate Attorney



FEEYAZ MOHAMED
Project Accountant





ILENE ABRAMS
Development Manager



JEAN-ANDRE' BUTCHER
Communications Officer



JONATHAN VAN DER WALT
Researcher



JORDAN PITT
Candidate Attorney



KIARA GOVENDER
Candidate Attorney



KIMAL HARVEY
Candidate Attorney



KIREN RUTSCH
Attorney



KRISTEN ABRAHAMS
Candidate Attorney



LERATO LEBOTSE
Project Administrative
Assistant



LINDIWE DUBE
Resource Development
Officer



MADILE MASHININI
Human Resources
Officer



MORAY HATHORN
Attorney



MUYENGA MUGERWA-SEKAWABE
Attorney



NELISWA MBUYAZI
Candidate Attorney



NERSAN GOVENDER
Executive Director



NICHOLAS CHETWIN
Financial Manager



NUHAA HENDRICKS
Candidate Attorney



PULENG MOSIA
Communications Officer



RASHAAD DADOO
Legal Assistant



RETHABILE SINDI
Candidate Attorney



RITTA FAKAZI
Office Assistant



SAADIYAH KADWA
Attorney



SANDILE ZWANE
Administrative Assistant



SANDRA GOVENDER
Office Administrator



SHAATIRAH BABOO
Attorney



SHAISTA BHABHA
Financial Officer



SHENIECE LINDERBOOM
Attorney



SHERYLLE DASS
Programme Lead



SINDISIWE SHOZI
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SIPESIHLE MGUGA
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THANDIWE GEBENGANA
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TOKOLOGO MMAMOGOBO
Attorney



TONY LEONG
IT Systems Developer



TOPSY MACKENZIE
Payroll Officer



TUMELO MACHABA
Candidate Attorney



VUYOKASI SIYO
Finance Administrator



WILMIËN WICOMB
Programme Lead



YANELA FRANS
Candidate Attorney



YOEMNA SAINT
Programme Coordinator



ZAHRAA MOTANI
Candidate Attorney



ZANELE FENGU
Candidate Attorney



ZI CHANNING
IT Systems



ZOLISWA ZAKELA
Office Assistant



ZULFA MOHAMMED
Office Administrator



WHO WE ARE

Our Board of Directors



THANDI ORLEYN
Chairman of the Board



ASHLEY FRANCIS
CEO and Founder of
Safricang Group



CHIPO PSWARAYI
Executive Head: Legal and
Secretarial at Phembani
Group Limited



CHRISTOPHER STONE
Professor of Practice of Public
Integrity at Oxford University's
Blavatnik School of Government



JOEL BAEPI
Head of Legal, Regulatory,
and Compliance at Africa
Data Centres



JOY-MARIE LAWRENCE
Chartered Director,
CEO of Boardvisory Pty
Ltd



JUSTICE LEX MPATI
Retired Judge



LUMKA MLAMBO
Fund Principal at the
SA SME Fund



MARJORIE DA SILVA
External Member, PRC,
Bank of England



MICHAEL KATZ
Professor and Chairman of
Edward Nathan Sonnenberg
(ENS) Africa



MZIWANDILE EZRA DAVIDS
Chairman and Senior
Partner at Bowmans



NERSAN GOVENDER
Executive Director



NTOMBIFUTHI SIMELANE
Head of Legal and
Corporate Affairs at
Ericsson



WHO WE ARE

Celebrating 45 Years of the Legal Resources Centre

On the 31st of October 2024, the LRC celebrated 45 Years of Public Interest Law and awarded Geoff Budlender with the 4th George Bizos Human Rights Award



In 2024, the LRC marked its 45th anniversary with a gala dinner and the awarding of the 4th George Bizos Human Rights Award to Geoff Budlender SC – one of the LRC's founding members. It was a fitting, heartfelt moment to pay tribute to and honour one of our own. The event, held in Johannesburg on 31 October, brought together past and present colleagues, partners, and former clients to honour the LRC's legacy and recommit to its vision and mission to build a South Africa that truly belongs to all who live in it.

Geoff Budlender's acceptance speech was both a tribute to the memory of the past and a challenge to the sheer magnitude of the work that public interest lawyers have to accomplish. He honoured George Bizos's legacy and reminded us that justice demands not just access to lawyers, but access to the best lawyers. He emphasised the importance of linking litigation with grassroots mobilisation and ensuring that court victories translate into real change. "Poor people don't need second-rate lawyers," he said, "they need better lawyers than the rich and powerful."



In her address, LRC Board Chairperson, Thandi Orleyn, reflected on the LRC's enduring relevance, noting that while democracy brought hope, today's challenges reaffirm the need for institutions like the LRC. The anniversary was not just a celebration – it was a veritable call to action.

As we look ahead, we carry forward the conviction that justice belongs to everyone. The LRC has worked tirelessly, and at times with very little resources. But what is certain is that we have always striven to offer our clients first-rate legal services, steeped in humanity and armed with knowledge. The work continues.

[Read Geoff Budlender SC's speech](#) | [Watch a highlights video](#) | [Find out more about our 45 Years of Advocacy](#)



HOW WE WORK

We Use the Law as an Instrument to Realise Human Rights

The LRC brings a breadth of experience and a deep knowledge to the work we do



Over the past five decades, we have gained valuable experience in using strategic litigation, legal reform, research, and advocacy to create positive and long-lasting change in the lives of our beneficiaries.

1

By providing free, expert, and compassionate legal services to individuals, we have provided many ordinary South Africans with the resources to stand up to injustice.

2

By working with our extensive network of civil society partners and allies, in the service of vulnerable individuals and communities in South Africa and other African nations, we have successfully created legal precedents and won judgments that have had a tangible impact on the lives of millions of people living in South Africa and beyond.

3

Our focus areas have included access to land, education, and health care, in addition to advancing gender and racial equality and the rights of the disabled. We have also worked with partners and communities in other parts of Africa and the Global South to support activists facing similar challenges.

4

In addition to this legacy work, we have identified land and education rights as key drivers of change in contemporary South Africa. Members of our experienced and diverse team, working across South Africa, have committed themselves to assisting landless people to gain access to land and to ensure that our children have access to quality basic education.



EDUCATION

Right to Read: From Aspiration to Real Action

Ensuring every child in South Africa learns to read for meaning by age ten through enforceable regulations and real accountability.

South Africa is facing a literacy crisis

81% of South African children under 10 cannot read for meaning in any language. This is a systemic failure which violates the right to basic education for the majority of our learners and deprives them of an integral tool to unlock a lifetime of opportunities.



The ability to read for meaning by the age of ten is a critical educational milestone that a child must achieve in order to realise and enjoy their right to basic education. Literacy is the foundation of all learning. A child who cannot read for meaning cannot fully participate in the curriculum and falls further behind every year. Yet, in South Africa, 8 out of 10 Grade 4 learners still cannot read for meaning in any language – a statistic that not only reflects a crisis in our classrooms but also shows that the right to basic education is not being realised. The Right to Read (“R2R”) campaign was established to try and address this crisis.

Despite the existence of national and provincial reading strategies and plans, the implementation remains inconsistent, underfunded, and unaccountable. Without clear regulations, the right to read is just aspirational. The R2R campaign aims to change that by advocating for legally enforceable reading regulations that clarify the DBE’s obligations in relation to what we call the 4 Ts:

- Training: Specialist training for Foundation Phase teachers in evidence – based literacy methods.
- Time: Sufficient, protected classroom time for the teaching of reading.
- Texts: Quality, language – appropriate reading materials and textbooks in each classroom.
- Testing: Standardised assessments that meaningfully track learner progress and inform interventions.

Our work has been coordinated by a multi-organisational steering committee. Over the past twelve months, the campaign has built a strong foundation to move from advocacy to regulatory reform. We have developed a comprehensive draft of proposed reading regulations grounded in existing law, education research, and classroom realities. These regulations are intended to guide both policy development and advocacy efforts, and cover each of the four Ts. Through roundtables and working groups we have engaged literacy practitioners, researchers, and curriculum advisors to refine the content of the draft regulations. The consultations have provided insight into implementation gaps and helped to align our proposals with what is realistically achievable. This is an ongoing, iterative process. We have also initiated formal engagements with the DBE and presented the rationale of reading regulations. We have launched a dedicated campaign website that serves as a hub for materials, updates and information. We are actively building our coalition by inviting education- focused organizations, researchers, teachers and parent groups to join the campaign through activations.

Together with our partners - the South African Human Rights Commission, Funda Wandu, Section 27, Equal Education, the Equal Education Law Centre and the Centre for Child Law – the next phase of the campaign will include refining the draft regulations, deepening public participation, and getting DBE support for the regulations.

To find out more about the Right to Read Campaign, visit www.righttoread.org.za



“When you read, you equip yourself not just with knowledge, but with the capacity to question, to dream, and to act.”
– Thabo Mbeki



Fighting for Fair Funding in Eastern Cape Schools

The LRC and partners are challenging years of underfunding that deny learners their constitutional right to basic education.

The right to basic education in the South African Constitution is one of the cornerstones in creating a more equal society in which children can fulfil their potential. Unfortunately, the education system has not been immune to the state's austerity measures over the last couple of years. Nowhere has the impact been felt more starkly than in the Eastern Cape, where years of underfunding of the education system has left schools unable to afford the basics necessary for a quality education.

In South Africa, provincial education departments (PEDs) give schools a yearly budget, which is referred to as the school allocation. This budget is meant to cover the running of the school for the financial year, and funds maintenance costs, textbooks and stationery, services such as municipal services, telephones, photocopy machines, and other general expenses such as toilet paper, cleaning products, and other essentials necessary for running a school.

The allocation is determined in terms of the Norms and Standards for School Funding. Every year, the Minister of Education announces a per-learner target in terms of the Norms and Standards. This is the amount that each learner will receive for the financial year. The paper budgets of each school are then calculated based on this target. For example, in 2023/2024, the per-learner target for no-fee schools were R1602 per learner. If a school has 100 learners, then their budget for the year will be R160 200.

Since 2020, the Eastern Cape schools' allocation has been significantly reduced, and schools have consistently been funded under the per-learner target determined by the Minister. In 2020, schools were informed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE) that they would only receive 78% of the per-learner allocation for the 2020/2021 financial year due to budget cuts associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The unilateral decision to reduce the school allocations for all public ordinary schools in the province disrupted financial planning at school level and impacted on the amount of money available to schools for educating the learners.

This reduction set in motion years of underfunding. During the 2021/2022 financial year, no fee-paying schools in the province were informed that while the Amended Norms and Standards determined the minimum target for that financial year to be R1466 per-learner, they would only receive R766,32 per-learner. Simply put, the poorest schools in the province were allocated approximately half of what the Minister determined to be the minimum amount necessary to fund learner-teacher support materials, maintenance, and services to schools.

During 2022/2023, schools received only R815, despite the target being R1536 per-learner. This amounted to about 53% of the per-learner target. The 2023/2024 financial year saw the introduction of a new method of underfunding. When schools in the province received their school allocation letters, they were advised that the ECDOE was again funding at the per-learner target as determined by the Minister. However, the letters went on to explain that schools would not, in fact, receive their full allocation, but that a significant portion would be retained by the ECDOE. The allocation letters indicated that the allocations would be divided in two parts. The first part, which makes up 33.75% of the school allocation, or R834.177 million would be retained by the ECDOE and used to fund 'provincial national norms and standards for school funding budget' that would benefit all schools. The second part, which constitutes the remaining 66.25% of the school allocation, would be paid to the schools.

This decision has been repeated for the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 financial years. The combined impact of the underfunding of public ordinary schools in the Eastern Cape has been devastating. Since 2020, the province has provided each learner with far less funding than their counterparts in other provinces. The reality of the situation is that a child in the Eastern Cape, a province that, according to the national poverty table, is the second poorest in the country, receive less money for their education, than a child attending school in wealthier provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng. While the Amended Norms and Standards, together with the SASA (South African Schools Act) and the Constitution, envision that education funding be focussed on poorer communities to ensure equity, the underfunding of schools by the ECDOE has effectively negated these objectives.

The LRC, representing the Makhanda Circle of Unity, as well as three schools in Makhanda, have approached the Makhanda High Court to review and set aside the decisions to retain the money. The case also seeks to challenge the constitutionality of paragraph 114(b) of the Norms and Standards which allows for a deviation from the per-learner target. The case is set to be heard during 2025/2026.



EDUCATION

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

The LRC and partners are challenging years of underfunding that deny learners their constitutional right to basic education.



There remains a distressing rate of sexual violence in schools, that manifests as a result of social inequality and an unequal access to educational resources in marginalised communities. Children are excluded from the full enjoyment of their right to basic education due to continued sexual violence in schools, which too becomes concentrated where the issue is more prevalent and further entrenches systemic inequalities in these communities.

As part of its work in reducing barriers to access education, the LRC conducted workshops in four provinces across South Africa, namely, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). We exceeded our goal of reaching 1000 learners and edifying their school years with an overview of their rights in the context of their bodies, sexual education, relationships and sexual assault and harassment. Safeguarding the constitutional right to basic education was underscored as being contingent on the comprehensive realisation of the right to dignity, freedom and security, health, bodily and psychological integrity, and equality — particularly within the school environment.

For distribution at the workshops, the LRC developed an SRHR training manual that delved into key legislation such as the Bill of Rights, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997 and the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act 92 of 1996, and explored the social and physiological aspects of SRHR, such as relationships, trauma, puberty and sex. To promote accessibility, the manuals were made available in English, isiZulu, Sepedi and isiXhosa, and following the positive reception of the manuals by schools, have since been released in braille.

The LRC will persist in advancing access to education for all children, by promoting inclusivity in the provision of educational resources relating to SRHR.



Bridging the Digital Divide to Protect Learners' Rights



The Legal Resources Centre ('LRC') presented Digital Rights workshops to 9 schools across 3 provinces, namely, Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape. The LRC formulated and shared with the learners a toolkit, on learner's rights as they relate to accessing the internet, online learning resources, as well as online safety. This is part of the LRC's work on ensuring that learners access their right to digital education and that they have access to the internet as per the Regulations Relating To Minimum Uniform Norms And Standards For Public School Infrastructure, 2013 ('Norms and Standards').

Section 16 of the Norms and Standards obligate the National and Provincial Departments of Basic Education to supply public schools with internet facilities 'wired/wireless' to enhance communication. Whilst some schools have received this provision, the equitable allocation of resources is essential to ensure that all public schools across all provinces are equipped with digital resources. The lack thereof results in learners, primarily those in no-fee schools, having no

access to the internet and digital forms of schooling. This is in stark contrast to the majority of learners in fee-paying schools.

During our workshops with the various schools, we identified the disparity between quintile 1 to 3 and quintiles 4 and 5 schools regarding knowledge of how to access the internet, online learning resources, as well as online safety.

High school learners in quintile 1 to 3, despite having very limited access to digital learning resources, were fully engaged and enthused with our presentation and displayed an apparent eagerness to learn more. Learners in high schools in quintile 4 and 5 displayed a mature understanding of the internet as a tool for both online learning and education. Additionally, they demonstrated clarity on how to navigate the internet safely and often posed questions aimed at bolstering their understanding of how to further protect themselves in the online space.

We also held workshops with learners in primary school with the aim of emphasizing the importance of safe internet practices for young users. The grade 7 learners were fully engaged with our presentation and, through participation, learned about using digital tools not only for social media but also for education.



Even though their schools lacked Wi-Fi and internet access, it appeared from the workshops that most learners use digital tools for their education, including to assist them with homework, studying and assignments. They recognize the importance of the internet for accessing information but were particularly fascinated to learn about digital footprints. Many had encountered cyberbullying but did not fully realize that it was a form of bullying. Their eagerness to ask questions and participate showed their genuine interest in understanding online safety. Given the prevalence of cyberbullying at school, there is a clear need for similar workshops to be held with more learners to address this growing concern.

Regarding learners accessing the digital space, the Department of Basic Education must provide appropriate measures to protect every learner's right to education and development. The LRC will continue to promote digital education for learners to ensure that they realise their right to education. In conclusion, the presentations on digital rights provided valuable insights for learners into online safety, digital education, and learners' digital rights.

Drafting Charge Sheets for the Fisher Peoples Tribunal

Using the law to document and expose the rights violations endured by small-scale fishing communities across South Africa.

In August 2024, the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) supported Masifundise Development Trust and Coastal Links South Africa, in hosting the Fisher Peoples Tribunal — a people-led process designed to expose ongoing rights violations against small-scale fisher communities. People's Tribunals mirror formal judicial processes, but instead of legal enforcement powers, they draw legitimacy from democratic participation, expert oversight, and the testimonies of those most affected.

As legal partner, the LRC guided the structure of the tribunal: consulting on the cases presented, identifying evidentiary requirements for witnesses, and drafting charge sheets that rooted community experiences in legal frameworks. Masifundise meticulously prepared supporting case reports.

Held at the Kalk Bay Catholic Church from 12–14 August, the tribunal convened an esteemed jury of legal experts, academics and human rights defenders. Reflections from a similar tribunal held two decades ago in the same venue reminded all present of the long road from exclusion to legal recognition, including the landmark Kenneth George Equality Court case that led to the formal policy on Small-Scale Fisheries in 2012.



Despite policy gains, implementation of the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy and its regulations has failed many fishers — a failure reflected in six detailed cases brought before the tribunal:

1 The Broken Promises of the Small-Scale Fisheries Policy:

Fishers testified that the current implementation distorts the Policy's original intent, turning small-scale fishers into another category of commercial fishers rather than supporting traditional, artisanal and customary livelihoods. Maria Hoffman, a traditional fisher herself, highlighted how women have been particularly impacted by the exclusion of certain species from the basket allocated to small scale communities, forcing many into poverty and dependence on grants.

2 Gariep Dam and Inland Fisheries Exclusion:

Fishers from the Eastern Cape and Free State spoke of exclusion from fishing rights in the Gariep Dam despite its centrality to their survival. Jeremiah Jordan described the community's struggles after the area was declared a reserve, which came with costly fees and further restricted access. Without an implemented inland fisheries policy, rights remain suspended and poverty deepens.

3

Violence in iSimangaliso Wetland Park

The iSimangaliso case revealed shocking human rights abuses — including harassment, beatings and the death of at least two fishers — at the hands of park rangers. Bongani Mdluli spoke about his brother’s killing and the ongoing fear that drives fishers to operate at night. Witnesses described feeling hunted for simply practising their culture and looking for food.

4

Customary Rights Denied in Dwesa-Cwebe

Despite the Constitutional Court's 2018 Gongqose ruling affirming customary fishing rights, fishers at Dwesa-Cwebe continue to face arrest and violence. Testimony from David Gongqose and others detailed ongoing conflicts with conservation authorities. One harvester, Thobile Mpunzi, was shot and paralysed by rangers. Witnesses described themselves as being treated like criminals on their ancestral lands.

5

Extraction on the West Coast

From Port Nolloth to Papendorp, fishers described the destruction caused by extractive industries, including mining and offshore drilling. Walter Steenkamp recounted flawed consultation processes and environmental violations by companies like Alexkor, with no meaningful accountability. Fishers demanded a moratorium on new projects until real consultation and impact assessments are conducted.

6

Women, Climate and the Intertidal Zone

The April 2022 floods in KwaZulu-Natal devastated mussel beds relied on by women in Umgababa. Witnesses Lindiwe Ndlovu and Tozi Mthiyane described how pollution, poor infrastructure, and a lack of disaster response erased their ability to earn a living. Women who once harvested in safety and solidarity now face hardship with little state support.



The Power of Collective Accountability

While the Tribunal has no legal enforcement authority, it functions as a vital instrument of public truth-telling and solidarity. Defendants, including government departments and mining companies, were invited but declined to participate. Nonetheless, the jurors issued a final verdict in April 2025 confirming that the treatment of small-scale fishers is unconstitutional.

The Tribunal’s findings reaffirmed that state failures, violent implementation, and disregard for customary systems continue to marginalise the very communities the law was meant to protect. It called out the implementation gap between promises made in the 2012 policy and the lived experiences of those on the ground. The LRC is preparing to approach the high Court for relief in some of these cases.

Through its support and legal guidance, the LRC helped give form to the communities’ experiences, ensuring their voices were heard in a process that honours both justice and dignity. When law fails, the people must remind the state of its duty.



The Return of the Green Point Flea Market Almost 17 Years Later

From years of displacement to a long-awaited revival, Cape Town's iconic Sunday market reopens as a hub of heritage, entrepreneurship, and community.

Prior to the construction of the Cape Town Stadium, an informal trader's market was located within the vicinity, called the Green Point Flea Market (the Market). In preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the market was closed in August 2008 with an expectation that the traders would return once the development of the new Cape Town Stadium was complete. Almost 17 years later, the Green Point Flea Market was launched in its historic location.

The Market was started in the early 1980s and at peak, the Market contained an excess of 1000 traders. It is best described as a vibrant Sunday market consisting of crafts, Cape Malay foods, and other local goods. The Market was a long-standing income source for hundreds of vendors (often multigenerational families). Chairperson Rasheda Muller (Chair Muller) noted, it was "the heartbeat of informal trade and entrepreneurship in Cape Town, more than just stalls and sales, with its heritage and identity for many families. It also drew tourists and provided low-cost food and crafts to the public. Its closure abruptly stripped this community of their weekly trade venue."

During and after the World Cup, trader representatives continuously engaged with the City of Cape Town (the City), regarding their return. After many years, in 2019 the City formally allocated a trading area at "Parking 4" (P4) – one of the stadium's parking lots – and opened it as a temporary Sunday market. On the day of its planned opening, the then mayor inaugurated the site and traders began moving in. However, within a few weeks, the city abruptly shut down the P4 market again and explained that the parking was needed for upcoming events, and the traders were once again removed.

The persistent inaction by the City and their disregard of administrative law decisions (2007 Appeal Record of Decision, the 2015 Amendment of the Record of Decision) and the City's disregard of its own Informal Trading By-law and its 2019 trading plan for Green Point; the traders approached the Legal Resources Centre for assistance.

Section 4 of the By-Law creates a default entitlement to trade informally in the City. It reads: "Informal trading is permitted in any area within the jurisdiction of the City, subject to any trading plans adopted by the City, the provisions of this By-Law and any other applicable law." Section 5 empowers the City to adopt trading plans. A trading plan must: Section 5.2.1-define the geographic boundary of the trading area; and Section 5.2.2 demarcate informal trading bays and markets where informal trading is permitted, outside of which informal trading shall be prohibited in that trading area.

A trading plan is a form of subordinate legislation. It is adopted in accordance with the By-Law. Section 6 sets out a detailed process to adopt a trading plan, and section 7 deals with the amendment or revocation of trading plans. One of the conditions for the approval of the construction of the Stadium was that it permits informal trading in the precinct. In 2019, it was ultimately agreed that the traders would trade on Sundays and Public Holidays to P4. This agreement is reflected in the Green Point Trading Plan (Trading Plan) that the City has adopted in terms of section 5 and 6 of the By-Law. It was published in the Provincial Gazette on 13 December 2019. The Trading Plan provides an annexure containing the trading sites, with 308 bays for informal traders. The City had taken a decision that trading would occur in P4; allowing informal trading in the designated areas. The City therefore had no discretion to revoke the Trading Plan by refusing to allow trading at P4.

Any amendment to the Trading Plan can only happen after the City follows processes set out in section 6 of the By-Law, which includes engaging with the informal traders about the proposed amendment. The Trading Plan has not been amended nor has there been any engagement with the informal traders. The City is therefore obligated to implement the Trading Plan in its current form.

Through our engagement with the City, letters of demand, an in-person meeting to discuss the informal traders return to the Cape Town Stadium vicinity and the threat of litigation, the City and the informal traders entered into negotiation agreements in February 2025, with an agreement being reached for the launch of the Market to be in May 2025. The re-opening of the Market saw approximately 100 traders, with 250-300 expected to return in the near future. The Market operates on Sundays (except on event days). Chair Muller at the opening of the Market commented that "If it was not for the LRC, we would not be here today celebrating this economic hub."

For almost 17 years, the traders pleas were ignored by the City. "The traders' persistence, coupled with the LRC's support shifted the balance of power, with the City having no choice but to give effect to the trader's rights to trade within the precinct of the Cape Town Stadium, reviving this historic Market."

Watch the reopening of the Green Point Flea Market: <https://youtu.be/Sxuh3DkXUsw>



Building a Framework for Land Rights in South Africa

A collaborative project mapping the gap between law and lived realities to shape a fair and inclusive land administration system.

Around 60% of people in South Africa live in situations where their land rights are not recorded in any formal land administration system. This means that in many situations rights might be secure but lack legal recognition, the rights holders' access to services can be limited, there may be conflicts about the rights that people have and there may be tensions between rights holders and local power structures (traditional leaders, Communal Property Associations (CPA) Committees, municipalities).

Land administration and securing land rights is a government function, required by the Constitution. The lack of capacity and understanding in government has meant that formulaic and conservative approaches have been adopted and these fail to address real issues on the ground and undermine land rights in the process. What is needed is systemic change to provide a clear framework of land right registration and land administration that will work at scale.

Over several years various civil society organisations who engage with communities with vulnerable land rights in South Africa have been working on issues related to land administration. Some of these organisations, including LRC, Phuhlisani, the Land and Accountability Research Centre, Alliance for Rural Democracy, AFRA, Nkuzi, and LAMOSA, have collaborated to conceptualise the Land Administration Project (LAPA), which is aimed at investigating how land rights are understood and managed on the ground in families, groups and communities in different contexts, and how this links with local authorities, provincial, and national government.

Five sites were identified throughout South Africa. They are Concordia (Northern Cape), Macibini (Eastern Cape), Doornfontein (Limpopo), Bakubung be Ratheo (North West), and three farms in the uMgungundlovu District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. These sites were specifically selected as they represented various forms of land holding structures and rights in land, ranging from land held by communal property associations, private ownership, and labour tenancy. During 2024, the five teams, comprising of members of the various organisations listed above, visited these areas to conduct field work on the local land law and how people manage their land and their rights in the land.

Most of the sites were visited on three or more occasions, where interviews were conducted with the rights holders on the land to clearly map the way in which rights are administered. This research has culminated into five research reports, that will form the basis for continued engagement with government and other stakeholders. The aim is to demonstrate the disparity between the legal framework governing land administration in South Africa and the lived realities of individuals and communities whose rights fall outside of the formal system. The project, which will continue until end 2025, seeks to contribute to the conceptualisation of an integrated land administration system with recommendations for law reform and reconfiguration of governance.



The land buyers of the Bafokeng and their fight for land justice

In 1877, Sir Theophilus Shepstone led the first British annexation of the Transvaal. He believed that the selective use of indigenous political structures and institutions was an important strategy to counter instability in the colonised territories – and imported the same ideas into the Transvaal. In line with this development, the Pretoria Convention of 1881 proclaimed that “all paramount chiefs, chiefs and natives of the Transvaal” would be permitted to buy land. What this meant in practice was that black people could only acquire title through a recognised chief who would act as ‘traditional custodian’ of the land. It further meant that the State, through the Minister of Bantu Affairs, would assume ‘trusteeship’ of the property on behalf of the state-recognised chief. Central to this regime was, on the one hand, the racist notions of ownership as beyond the level of civilisation of black communities and, on the other, the entrenchment of recognised chiefs as key figures in the project of indirect rule.

In 2008, Kgosi Lerou Tshekedi Molotlegi of the Royal Bafokeng nation (RBN) brought a High Court application asking for and order that all land registered ‘in trust’ with the Minister for the Bafokeng be registered in the name of the RBN. The Kgosi alleged that the 61 farms registered on their behalf was bought by the RBN between 1869 and 1963.

The Legal Resources Centre represented several communities who intervened to oppose the application. These communities all fall under the jurisdiction of the RBN, which some of them accept and others reject. However, they have one thing in common: they all say that many of the farms were purchased by smaller groups or ‘sub-communities’ for themselves and their children, and were simply forced by the racist regime of the time to agree that the land be held by a Chief.

Before the issue reached the Court, the LRC indicated that our clients disputed that Kgosi Leruo had the mandate to bring the application on behalf of the RBN in the first place. A decision that affects the land rights of a customary community, our clients said, requires deep and broad consultation amongst the community in terms of their customary law. The dispute over what the Bafokeng customary law of decision making relating to land rights entails was referred to trial and, while the Mahikeng High Court initially found in favour of the Bafokeng, a full bench upheld the LRC clients’ appeal. In finding that Kgosi Leruo was not mandated to bring the application, the Court held that it was proven that the duty to consult, in terms of the Bafokeng customary law, is underpinned by democratic principles including transparency and accountability, the principle that sovereignty lies with the people, and consensus-seeking, promoting kagiso (peace) and free debate.

The Mahikeng High Court initially ruled in favour of the RBN, but on appeal, the Full Bench overturned the decision. It found that the RBN lacked authority to act on behalf of morafe and highlighted that land ownership is a deeply sensitive issue requiring broad consultation. The ruling affirmed that customary law and constitutional rights under section 33 must be upheld.

The Second Attempt:

In 2022, the Kgosi returned to court, alleging to have completed a consultation process compliant with the customary law and that it thus had a mandate for doing so. On paper, the RBN leadership listed an impressive array of meetings with councillors, consultations with 72 kgotlas, and a final vote at a general assembly where 46 kgotlas voted in favour, 10 against, and the rest abstained or were absent.

But when the LRC’s clients again instructed us to challenge the process, citing serious concerns, it became clear that the process merely attempted to create boxes to tick. While only about 2000 of the estimated 300 000 members of the RBN actually attended meetings, the misleading information presented to those in attendance about the nature of the RBN’s intentions, really rendered the process flawed. In addition, the final kgotha kgothe (community meeting) where all the wards would cast their votes, were structured to prevent any debate.

The LRC filed detailed answering affidavits in April 2024 based on analyses of minutes and statements from persons in attendance and those deliberately excluded. These showed that the RBN’s process not only violated constitutional and customary principles, but went against the very spirit of Bafokeng governance — where decisions must be debated and reached in full view of the community, and where land decisions can never be taken lightly.

No reply was filed, and the matter was removed from the roll.

This is, at least for now, an important victory for these communities, in particular as they are up against a very powerful and well-resourced opponent in the form of the Royal Bafokeng Nation. But there are many communities who are the descendants of land buyers who had to agree to have their land held in trust by a chief and who are today struggling to be recognised as the true owners of the land. The restitution process has mostly been unable to deal with these complexities. The LRC is preparing to bring a test case to the Land Court on that very principle that it hopes will provide clarity to the land rights of the many descendants of land-buying syndicates in the old Transvaal.



PROJECTS

Democratising Big Tech

Welcome to Legal Resources Radio, the official podcast of the Legal Resources Centre, where we bring the law to life and explore its impact on building a just, equitable society.



The Democratising Big Tech Programme hit the ground running from its launch in 2023. The LRC team devised a detailed work plan in order to facilitate its move into the digital rights legal advocacy sector. The plan involved compiling broad-based research papers; launching an ongoing social media outreach campaign, conducting advocacy work within the organisation and in collaboration with local and regional organisations, and finally devising a strategic litigation plan.

The following is a concise report on the highlights of the activities that the DBT team organised or took part in. However, before we begin, the LRC would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the organisations and networks with which it worked closely during this period. The digital justice efforts that were made in 2024 and early 2025 could not have been as successful as they were without our collaborations. Thank you to the International Network of Civil Liberties Organisations (INCLO), Global Coalition for Tech Justice (GCTJ), and the African Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA).

Research:

The team launched a research report in November 2024, that discussed AI Surveillance and how this technology has increased the risks and capacity of surveillance technologies. The report analysed how AI surveillance technologies can pose a serious risk to residents of countries whose legal frameworks are not up to the best standards with respect to surveillance and AI. The LRC found that there are significant gaps in the existing South African legal framework and looked at international and regional best practices that could aid South African legislators in improving our system.

In the same month, the team simultaneously launched a report on the extent of specific spyware and surveillance technology that is currently in South Africa. The report sought to answer the following questions: Is spyware being used in South Africa by private and public entities? How prevalent is the use of this technology? And finally, where and in what sectors is the technology being used? The report ultimately concluded that spyware does exist in SA and is being used by both national intelligence agencies and private security/intelligence agencies.

At the end of 2025, the LRC co-authored a research report with CIPIT (Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law), as members of the African Internet Rights Alliance (AIRA) network, called: Contextualising Political Advertising Policy to Political Micro-Targeting in the South Africa 2024 Elections. The report looked at the adequacy of South Africa's regulatory framework in addressing political microtargeting, as well as used advanced techniques, including anomaly detection and topic modelling, to analyse political ads on Facebook during the election period. The analysis reveals significant patterns in how political campaigns used data to target voters, with microtargeting efforts disproportionately impacting certain voter segments.

In February 2025, the LRC, in collaboration with its partners in the International Network of Civil Liberties Organisations (INCLO) launched the Eyes on the Watchers: Challenging the Rise of Police Facial Recognition report. The report's primary aim is to call for the reconsideration and re-evaluation of existing legal and policy frameworks centred on the use of facial recognition technology in policing/law enforcement. In doing so, it analysed the prevailing risks that FRT currently places in human rights and relevant human right violations that have already occurred. Finally, the report devises 18 core principles that are necessary to consider and follow when using FRT in policing and/or law enforcement contexts and includes a set of guidelines for how to use the principles in the real world.

In March 2025, the LRC reviewed the major online platforms' (META, Google, and Tik Tok) election plans in order to deal with the widespread disinformation and misinformation on their feeds. This review was done in comparison to internationally accepted best practices as developed by the European Commission and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. In conclusion, the platforms all fell short with respect to international practices. There was a significant variance as you looked at various regions, with the Global North receiving higher standards of care than the Global South; however, ultimately, the platform's election plans were well short of what was required of them across the board.

Finally, as a member of the Global Coalition for Tech Justice (GCTJ), the LRC participated in the 2024 Year of Democracy Campaign, which served as a call to social media platforms to improve their policies with respect to hate speech, disinformation and incitement of violence



on their platforms. This was of particular concern as 78 countries across the globe were to hold elections in 2024, and the role that social media would play would be bigger than ever before. As a result of the above, at the end of March 2025, the LRC contributed to the GCTJ's report: Clicks, Code, and Consequences: Big Tech's Gamble with Human Lives and Election integrity in the 2024 Year of Democracy. In particular, we reported on the May 2024 case study on South Africa, which spoke to the increase in xenophobic and misogynistic content online during the election period, as well as a plethora of harmful disinformation campaigns that arguably had a significant impact on the election results.

Social Media Campaigns:

LRC has made significant strides in enhancing its online presence and visibility. The increased activity on social media has not only amplified the LRC's profile but also established a solid methodology for integrating the organisation into various digital platforms. This strategic approach has led to a notable boost in our online visibility. The partnerships with international organisations have proven successful, reinforcing our global network and collaboration efforts.

Instagram Lives: The IG Live sessions have been a highlight, featuring engaging and relevant topics that have resonated with our audience. The attendees of these live sessions have shown genuine interest and engagement, reflecting the effectiveness of our content and delivery. Some noteworthy topics of our lives were tackling the topics of dis/misinformation and how to spot election-related content of that type; the ongoing threats faced by migrants and women journalists online; we unpacked our election monitoring experiences with listeners; and finally hosted an episode speaking about what a political part coalition is and what it means going forward.

Podcast: The Live sessions however, had a certain practical drawback in that the longevity of their advocacy effect is left wanting, as the videos were not saved and posted for later viewing. As a result, in late 2024, the LRC launched its Legal Resources Radio podcast. The first episode saw our host Kimal Daniel Harvey joined in the studio by renowned South African criminal journalist, Karyn Maughan. Maughan spoke to us about her experiences with online hate and disinformation campaigns directed at her and her family, the epidemic of misogynistic vitriol online and the launch of her new book, I Will Not Be Silenced.

Our next episode delved into the specifics of the AIRA Political Microtargeting report that the LRC published alongside CIPIT. Kimal interviewed Charlene Kreuser (LRC) and Joseph Theuri (CIPIT) on their processes with respect to drafting the report and their thoughts on the conclusion of the report. Primarily, how political microtargeting campaigns were seen to disproportionately impact certain voter demographics.

The following two episodes formed a two-part series, South Africa: A Surveilled State. In part one, we spoke with Professor Jane Duncan about the expansion of state surveillance and the growing culture of secrecy in intelligence operations. She concluded with a call for legal reform, stronger transparency mechanisms, and public accountability to protect civil liberties.

In part one, Kimal and Murray Hunter (Alt-Advisory) engaged in a fascinating conversation about Facial Recognition Technology, its prevalence in South Africa, and finally, they discussed INCLC's Guiding Principles for the safe and transparent use of FRT.

The podcast thus far has been hugely successful, and you can find more of our episodes on LRC's YouTube channel.

Advocacy:

The LRC participated in and hosted many panel discussions, seminars, webinars and advocacy sessions with partners and other interested organisations.

We hosted the Human Rights in the Context of Policing and Surveillance: A webinar titled "Human Rights in the Context of Policing and Surveillance" took place on 14th/15th August 2024. This event featured the launch of three critical reports: Marikana Expert Panel Report (presented by Nuhaa Hendricks), Facial Recognition Technology and Spyware (presented by Kimal Harvey & Yanela Frans), The Use of Less Lethal Weapons in Crowd Control (presented by Devon Turner), and the keynote address was delivered by Murray Hunter from Alt Advisory, who provided an in-depth discussion on the complexities of surveillance technologies. The event fostered open dialogue and interactive discussions between the speakers and participants.

On February 13, 2025, the LRC participated in a joint INCLC panel discussion, advocating for the regulation and legislation of facial recognition technology (FRT). The LRC discussed and compared the varying global FRT practices and legal frameworks, we then spoke on the Guiding principles and how they may be applied within our specific contexts.

The 2024 Year of Democracy campaign officially launched on September 15, 2024, with an in-person seminar featuring partners from Global Witness (GW), Wits University, and the LRC. The launch served as a key event in driving awareness around the pressing issues of democracy and online harms in the context of elections.

We submitted written comments to two United Nations calls. We submitted comments for the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association – Reflections on the "Super Election" Year. Our submission examined the role of technology in ensuring inclusive elections and protecting the right to public participation. It included insights from our political microtargeting research conducted in partnership with CIPIT under the AIRA network. Then we made submissions on the UN Call for Inputs on the Impact of Disinformation on Human Rights (South Africa focus): This submission addressed the use of social media and algorithmic manipulation to shape public opinion and political narratives. We referenced our investigative collaboration with Global Witness, our political microtargeting research with CIPIT, and contributed best practices to mitigate disinformation's harms.

Conclusion:

Our research, community outreach and interorganisational advocacy efforts have helped us shape our strategy going forward with respect to advocating for a safer and better-regulated digital environment in South Africa and in the African region. This personal and collaborative work had a significant impact on our litigation strategy, and we look forward to sharing with you all how the LRC plans on moving forward in order to achieve digital justice for all South Africans today.



PROJECTS

DBT: Legal Resources Radio

Welcome to Legal Resources Radio, the official podcast of the Legal Resources Centre, where we bring the law to life and explore its impact on building a just, equitable society.



Following its social media facelift on 6 September 2023, the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) set its sights on using online tools to expand its advocacy. In early 2023, the Democratised Big Tech team launched an Instagram LIVE series. The short and witty 30-minute segments were fun and well-received, but their long-term advocacy impact was limited. This created an opportunity to take the journey further. On 25 November 2024, the LRC announced the launch of an exciting new podcast: Legal Resources Radio. Since then, six impactful episodes have been produced, each tackling pressing issues around online discourse and how we consume information in the era of Big Tech. The aim is to expand the podcast across all of the LRC's programmes.

Episode 1: Online Harassment and Disinformation – with Karyn Maughan

Legal journalist Karyn Maughan, known for her high-profile court reporting and personal experience with digital abuse, joined Kimal to explore the threats of online harassment and disinformation. They discussed how social media enables hate speech and bigoted narratives that silence dissent, undermine democracy, and harm victims' dignity—particularly women and minority groups. The episode highlighted the absence of online safety checks, calling for accountability, protection against hate speech, and civil society involvement in creating safer platforms. Maughan also reflected on her book *I Will Not Be Silenced*, in which she details her harassment and the slanderous court case linked to her coverage of former president Jacob Zuma.

Episode 2: Political Microtargeting – with Charlene Kreuser and Joseph Theuri Gitonga

This episode featured Dr Charlene Kreuser, an LRC attorney, and Joseph Theuri Gitonga, a data scientist and tech ethics advocate. Together, they unpacked how political actors exploit personal data to target voter demographics with tailored campaign messages. They explained the mechanics of this technology, its exploitation of legal grey areas, and findings from their report with the African Internet Rights Alliance: *Contextualising Political Advertising Policy to Political Micro-Targeting in the South Africa 2024 Elections*.

The guests warned that social media ad-tech systems can curate optimised environments that are open to manipulation and abuse. Concerns raised included transparency, consent, and democratic integrity. For its part, the LRC has begun to advocate for regulatory reform, given the limits of South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act.

Episode 3: South Africa: A Surveilled State (Part 1) – with Professor Jane Duncan

Professor Jane Duncan, an academic on surveillance and media freedom, outlined the alarming expansion of state surveillance and its threat to constitutional rights. She explained how weak safeguards and oversight enable unlawful monitoring of journalists, activists, and citizens. The episode warned of a growing culture of secrecy and argued for legal reform, transparency, and accountability to protect civil liberties.

Episode 4: South Africa: A Surveilled State (Part 2) – with Murray Hunter

In part two, Murray Hunter, a digital rights expert from ALT Advisory, examined the rise of facial recognition technology (FRT) in South Africa. Marketed as a public safety tool, FRT carries high risks of bias, abuse, and mass privacy violations, especially without regulation. Hunter discussed both unregulated private-sector use and government adoption in policing and Home Affairs. The episode explored frameworks for enforceable ethical standards, independent oversight, and legal protections prioritising human rights and accountability.

Conclusion

Legal Resources Radio represents a bold expansion of the LRC's Big Tech advocacy. By addressing issues such as disinformation, surveillance, political microtargeting, and corporate accountability, the podcast has created a vital space for public-interest discourse in the digital age. Each episode amplifies expert voices, shares lived experiences, and demystifies the law for a broader audience. By embracing storytelling through popular media, the LRC continues to adapt to the evolving landscape of activism, law, and public engagement. As its listener base grows and feedback deepens, Legal Resources Radio is set to become a cornerstone of the organisation's mission to inform, empower, and inspire action through legal education.

Find our podcast here:

- YouTube: <https://sa.lrc.org.za/YouTube>
- Spotify: <https://sa.lrc.org.za/Spotify>
- Apple Podcasts: <https://sa.lrc.org.za/ApplePodcasts>
- Iono.fm: <https://sa.lrc.org.za/Iono>



PROJECTS

State Capture & Beyond

A Project co-funded by the European Union



The State Capture and Beyond (SCAB) project is the result of a successful bid by the LRC and two consortium partners to respond to the findings and recommendations of the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. Running from February 2024 to 31 July 2026, SCAB aims to strengthen accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption efforts through a variety of actions, including litigation, documentary filmmaking and capacity building. The project is co-funded by the European Union through its Enhancing Accountability programme. The consortium consists of three partners: Brot für die Welt (BfdW) as the coordinating partner, with the LRC and Human Rights Media Trust (HRMT) as implementing partners.

Some of the key activities of the project over the 30-month project period will be to engage in

- Capacity building for CSOs, media, and local governments.
- Research and evidence-based advocacy on anti-corruption measures.
- Public awareness campaigns and mobilisation.
- Legal support for communities and strategic litigation.
- Development of digital tools and platforms for monitoring and advocacy.

SCAB's official launch event was held on 23 May 2024, in Johannesburg. The event attracted important stakeholders, partners and allies in the anti-corruption fight. Project launch events were also held in Durban, Makhanda, Cape Town, Rustenburg, Polokwane and eMalahleni. Each event was tailored to both broach the wide scope of the Zondo Commission recommendations, and to home in on the particular effects of corruption (or state capture), maleficence and maladministration in the cities, and provinces that the LRC and HRMT visited. These engagements were crucial to the next steps in the projects, such as identifying the needs of communities, including what the knowledge gaps are, and the potential for legal interventions.

The LRC's primary involvement in the project is to make strategic legal interventions and to provide legal support and advocacy or training to partner organisations, including grassroots movements and community-based organisations. In the first 12 months of the project, the LRC

- Provided ad hoc legal support to communities affected by corruption, including whistleblower protection and water access issues.
- Consulted with amaBhungane about the constitutional deficiencies in the Public Procurement Act (PPA) with a view to launching legal proceedings in year 2 of the project.
- Participated in consultations and advocacy workshops, including a whistleblower conference and discussions on electoral reform.



Other Key Highlights from Year One

Research and Reports: Seven research reports on the critical issues of water, municipal mismanagement, housing, disaster management, health, land, and extractive industries are planned to be produced and launched during the second year of the project. The dissemination of the reports will be accompanied by podcasts and other media. The topics for the reports were decided on after careful analysis of discussions, debate and feedback from the eight launch events.

Workshops and Training: The LRC began a series of training workshops towards the end of the first year of the project on municipal mismanagement and other themes based on findings from initial outreach with communities across 7 cities in 7 provinces. The team also planned and facilitated advocacy workshops on government responsiveness and public participation in governance. The first of these workshops was held in Makhanda in early March in collaboration with the Makana Citizens Front. The workshops focused on providing community members with vital information about how to identify and report municipal corruption and mismanagement and identified key opportunities for public participation in municipal governance.

Coalition Building and Stakeholder Engagement: Together with our implementing partner, HRMT (who drove the process), the team collaborated with grassroots movements, CSOs, and other stakeholders to strengthen networks and coalitions. Support was also provided for the formation of regional coalitions in Gauteng and the Western Cape, focusing on issues like water access and housing.

Public Awareness and Campaigns: LRC lawyers contributed to the development of short documentaries and explainer videos on corruption and whistleblowing. These videos were flighted at capacity building workshops for journalists. The LRC team also participated in public events and campaigns alongside HRMT colleagues to raise awareness about anti-corruption efforts and governance reforms.

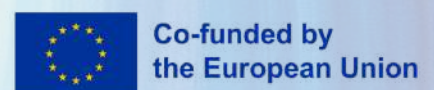
Database and Digital Tools: The project has its own website (beyondstatecapture.org.za) and is a user of multiple social platforms. The website contains all important updates about the project; houses all the literature and research created for the project and has an interactive database of grassroots movements and CSOs involved in anti-corruption efforts.

Collaboration with Partners: During the first year of the project the SCAB team has had the privilege of working with organisations like the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), WaterCan/OUTA, and the Makana Citizens Front to address issues such as healthcare corruption and water crises. The LRC also explored roles with the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC) to advance the Zondo Commission recommendations.

Our Partner's Work

Apart from the vital work of coalition-building and mobilisation, our partner, HRMT has produced five short documentaries, including three case studies and two explainer videos ("What is Corruption?" and "How to Blow the Whistle"). These films highlighted corruption's impact, whistleblowing challenges, and service delivery issues. The documentaries are being used as training materials and distributed widely.

HRMT also conducted impactful media workshops, including a pilot in November 2024 and another in February 2025, focusing on investigative journalism, social media dynamics, and disinformation. These workshops were attended by media professionals and partnered with organisations like AmaBhungane and Media Monitoring Africa.



MEDIA

Media Highlights



177

Online articles published



47

Newspaper Articles



69

Radio Interviews



39

Television Appearances



26,560

Followers

1% growth



2,461

Followers

24% growth



35,275

Followers

-0.9% growth



19,067

Followers

13% growth



1,831

Followers

91% growth



326

Followers

100% growth



186

Followers

100% growth



FUNDING

Our Funders

We would like to express our profound gratitude for the individuals and families who make donations to the LRC

Brot
für die Welt



CONSTITUTIONALISM
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THE JOINT FUND TO PROMOTE & ADVANCE CONSTITUTIONALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA



INCLO



Financial Statements

Legal Resources Centre

NPO Number: 290-199

PBO Number: 930003292

Financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025



FUNDING

Balance Sheet

Assets:

	2025	2024
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	3 189 863	3 256 645
Current Assets		
Trade and other receivables	2 429 164	987 584
Cash and cash equivalents	50 443 213	49 347 325
Total Current Assets	52 872 377	50 334 909
Total Assets	56 062 240	53 591 554

Equity and Liabilities:

	2025	2024
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	30 257 801	30 184 664
Reserves	3 766 432	3 766 432
Total Equity	34 024 233	33 951 096
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	326 893	903 407
Provisions	984 135	1 610 072
Deferred income	20 726 979	17 126 979
Total Current Liabilities	22 038 007	19 640 458
Total Equity & Liabilities	56 062 240	53 591 554



FUNDING

Income Statement

	2025	2024
Revenue	38 952 853	35 367 511
Bequest		12 991 618
Other Income	13 092	78 480
Total Income	38 965 945	48 437 609
Operating Expenses		
Salaries	27 622 046	25 307 992
Programme Costs	6 565 880	5 356 756
Support Costs	8 491 411	7 232 073
Total Operating expenses	42 679 337	37 896 821
Operating (deficit)/ surplus		
	(3 713 392)	10 540 788
Investment income		
	3 786 529	2 649 629
Surplus for the year	73 137	13 190 417

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	2025	2024
ABA Fund for Justice		231 134
ABSA		500 000
African Internet Rights Alliance	161 178	
Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy Africa (RF) NPC	2 700 000	
Brot vir de Weld	3 751 472	6 264 625
Canadian Government		16 984
Claude Leon Foundation	2 500 000	2 500 000
Constitutionalism Fund		2 000 000
The ELMA South Africa Foundation	4 000 000	4 000 000
Ford Foundation	10 169 551	10 283 564
Friends of the Lrc		162 857
Global Witness		23 580
INCLO	688 275	1 925 541
INVESTEC	750 000	750 000
Michael Mones Trust	100 000	100 000
Millenium Trust	1 500 000	1 500 000
Netherlands Embassy	712 394	946 550
One Ocean Hub		363 600
Open Society Foundation		3 780 000
RAITH Foundation	3 164 509	3 013 818
Social Justice Initiative	3 000 000	
The Africa Digital Rights Fund	241 469	
The New Venture Fund	1 731 690	
Zenex Foundation	250 000	



We Asked our Executive Director an Important Question:

“What are your hopes for the future?”



“ I remain committed to the idea that, by holding individuals and institutions accountable, we can build an empowered society in which the constitutional rights of all who live in South Africa are upheld and the promise of the 1994 democratic transition can be realised. ”

Nersan Govender

Executive Director of the Legal Resources Centre

Acknowledgements

Contributors: Anneline Turpin, Anshal Bodasing, Cameron McConnachie, Cecile van Schalkwyk, Delysia Weah, Ektaa Deochand, Jean-Andre' Deenik, Kimal Harvey, Muyenga Mugerwa-Sekawabe, Nersan Govender, Nicholas Chetwin, Nuhaa Hendricks, Puleng Mosia, Saadiyah Kadwa, Shaatirah Hassim, Sheniece Linderboom, Sipesihle Mguga, Wilmien Wicomb and Yanela Frans.





LEGAL
RESOURCES
CENTRE

Celebrating 45 Years of Advocacy

IF YOU WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONNECTING WITH YOU



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