



# PIETERMARITZBURG AGENCY FOR COMMUNITY SOCIAL ACTION

eNewsletter No. 7

May 2013

## CONTENTS:

- 1. From the Director's Desk
- 2. News
- 3. Forthcoming Events and Invitations
- 4. Feature/ Debate
- 5. Meet a PACSA Community Partner Group
- 6. Meet a PACSA Staff Member
- 7. Support PACSA
- 8. Write to us!

### Address:

170 Hoosen Haffejee (Berg) Street, Pietermaritzburg 3200, South Africa

P O Box 2338 Pietermaritzburg 3200, South Africa

Tel: +27 - (0)33 - 342 0052

Fax: +27 - (0)33 - 342 0303

Email: [admin@pacsa.org.za](mailto:admin@pacsa.org.za)

[www.pacsa.org.za](http://www.pacsa.org.za)

## 1. From the Director's Desk

Dear Readers

Greetings from PACSA.

The month of May has been a busy one for us as we stepped up our support for communities grappling with issues of affordability of basic services and victims of gender-based violence and rape. In our experience these issues are not unrelated as incidents of violence, especially gender-based violence, increases in communities facing economic stress.

At the invitation of Fastenopfer, a long-time donor partner of PACSA, Daniela Gennrich (PACSA Consultancy) and I spend 4 days attending their Country Coordinators meeting in Lucerne, Switzerland. This was a real learning experience and networking opportunity for us meeting people from 15 countries, all working for social justice in their various contexts. I also used the opportunity to visit the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance at the World Council of Churches in Geneva and on my return I visited Herzogsägmühle, in Munich. You can read more on the travels in the body of the newsletter.

Fastenopfer staff presenting a concert for all participants at the Coordinators Meeting

We would like to invite all our local readers to join us for PACSA's 34th Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 15 June 2013. Please see details below. We hope that this newsletter provides you with insight into our work. Please feel free to send us your comments.

### FROM MERVYN ABRAHAMS, DIRECTOR

## 2. News

### · Welcome to Belinda Henderson, PA to the PACSA Director

On the 20th May we welcomed a new member to our PACSA team. She is Ms. Belinda Henderson who joins the PACSA family as the Personal Assistant to the PACSA Director, Mervyn Abrahams. Belinda is married to Bryan and has two daughters, Savanna and Shannon. After a week Belinda has already settled into our team and is making the Director's office function more efficiently.



### · Visitors to PACSA

13 students from Saint Paul's University in Ottawa, Canada, visited us on 30 April 2013 to learn about PACSA's contribution in the struggle against apartheid and our current work of accompaniment of community groups. The students are part of a programme focusing on political reconciliation and were in the country to learn about apartheid and how South Africa tried to overcome their own problems. They are part of an exchange programme with St Joseph's Theological Institute in Cedara, who organized their visit to PACSA.

### · Sobantu residents holding Msunduzi Municipality to account for high water bills

Residents in Sobantu village, Pietermaritzburg, have been complaining of high water bills for some time with no response from the municipality. Due to the high costs many residents are rationing their use of water and keeping it to the barest minimum and yet they receive water bills that they cannot afford to pay.

Two weeks ago members of the Umgungundlovu Water Network, a community partner of PACSA, accompanied by 50 local residents undertook a reading of their water meters in order to double check the meter reading the municipality uses to set the bills.

[Read the full article here](#)



### · A visit to Herzogsägmühle in Munich

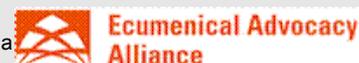
On the way back from the Fastenopfer Coordinators Meeting, I made a short visit to Herzogsägmühle, an

institution that provides social service support in the Southern Bavaria region of Germany, and met with the Director, Mr. Wilfried Knorr. PACSA's relationship with Herzogsägmühle was first established through Bernd Schultheiss, our Youth Consultant and a former Herzogsägmühle staff member. In 2010 a team of 8 young people and 2 staff members from Herzogsägmühle participated in the in PACSA Bopha Sikhona 2010 World Cup tournament and thereafter 9 young people associated with PACSA and 2 staff members spend three weeks at Herzogsägmühle to participate in a sporting event and learn various trades. Mervyns' visit was to cement relationships between the two organisations and discuss possibilities for further collaboration in which Herzogsägmühle staff would come to South Africa and PACSA can send a few young people to Germany for further skills training.

[Read the full article here](#)

#### · **PACSA joins the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance**

Earlier this year PACSA Council, on the recommendation of staff, decided to apply for membership of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, a global alliance of faith-based organizations and churches based in Geneva, Switzerland. On his recent visit to Switzerland to attend the Fastenopfer Coordinators meeting Mervyn Abrahams took time out to visit the offices of the Alliance at the World Council of Churches and had discussions with the executive director of the EAA, Rev. Peter Prove. It was during these discussions that we were informed that our application for membership was approved and that PACSA is the newest member of this global alliance.



[Read the full article here](#)

#### · **Solidarity Campaign in support of rape victims**

The Dindi Youth Development Group, in collaboration with the Sizonqoba group and the uMphithi Men's Network, organised a march and a community dialogue on the 22nd May to take a stand against gender-based violence and the rape of women and children in their community. About 400 women and men of kwaDindi joined the march at different points. Grannies that could not walk travelled with the marchers by kombi. Those who participated expressed their outrage and publicly demanded that criminals and rapists should leave their community and be prosecuted. One girl commented; "please show us how to stop our uncles and fathers from touching us." Some of the men shared how embarrassed they are that men perpetrate such crimes against our own mothers, sisters and daughters.



Other organisations such as Red Cross, Dindi Community Policing Forum, Umphithi, SAPS and one of the local Community social workers spoke at the dialogue and provided information on how to report these crimes to the police and how to preserve evidence.

#### · **UK Aid cut will hurt poor South African women**

The United Kingdom recently announced that they will cut its overseas development aid to South Africa by 2015. In response to this announcement PACSA joined numerous organizations in South Africa and the United Kingdom in questioning the wisdom of this action. We argue that even though the UK aid is a mere 0.018% of South Africa's national budget it is an important indicator of the UK government's solidarity with South Africa's attempt to reverse massive poverty and inequality. From the perspective of global solidarity, the global common good and the current imbalance in trade relations; the UK's decision to cut aid to South Africa is regrettable.

[Read the full article here](#)

#### · **PACSA in Media**

In the past month the following three newspaper articles were published which is connected to our work.

##### **1. Support for men. May 9, 2013**

This article focuses on the work of the Umphithi Men's Network, a PACSA community partner. Umphithi's aim is to build good relationships between men, women and children. One way is to help men learn problem solving skills that avoid violence.

[Read the article here](#)

##### **2. Fingers crossed on Msunduzi electricity tariff. 23 May 2013**

This article refers to a statement issued by one of our community partners, the Electricity Action Group, calling on the Msunduzi Municipality to reconsider the 10% increase on electricity which will come into effect on the 1st July 2013. The group mentions that there has been a 5 fold increase in Unemployment Insurance applications the Dept of Labour indicating escalating unemployment in the city.

[Read the full article here](#)

##### **3. Who's feeling The Pinch in PMB? 23 May 2013**

This article looks at the latest statistics by Statistics SA and shows the widening gap between rich and poor in Pietermaritzburg.

[Read the full article here.](#)

#### · **PACSA on Facebook**

As mentioned in the previous eNewsletter, PACSA now has a face book page that we update on a weekly basis. To get additional information on our work please go to <http://www.facebook.com/PACSAPMB> and "like" the PACSA face book page.

### 3. Events

#### PACSA's Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 15 June 2013

All members, friends and collaborators are invited to the Annual General Meeting.

**Venue:** St John's United Church

**Time:** 10h00 - 14h00

**Programme:** 10h00 : Arrival and tea/coffee  
10h30 : AGM  
12h30 : A light lunch will be served

**Guest Speaker:** Lindela Figlan from Abahlali baseMjondolo.

Lindela Figlan is the current deputy chairperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo, and is a widely published author.

**Join us to hear Lindela talk about Working in a manner that enhances dignity - A challenge for PACSA**

**Membership:** Sign up as a member

**Council Nomination:** Due 11 June 2013

**RSVP:** By 11 June 2013 or to sign up as a member  
Contact: Belinda Henderson on +27 33 342 0052 or belinda@pacsa.org.za



### 4. Features/ Debate

In this month's feature article, **'Beyond the statistics - this is what our city looks like'**, Julie Smith, our Research and Advocacy Coordinator, present the reality of inequality in our city. She writes, "The city must acknowledge the very difficult socio-economic context in which it and its people exist. An intervention which can ensure that either food prices remain affordable or if more money can be in the pockets of struggling households so that sufficient, quality and diverse food can be secured - will play a significant role not only in alleviating poverty but also investing in the future economic development of the city. If the satisfaction of this primary goal means that the state must fully finance or heavily subsidise municipal services and transport to ensure the longer term socio-economic development and social cohesion within the city - then it must."

[Read the full story here](#)

### 5. Meet a PACSA Community Partner Group

#### Meet the Peer Educators Network, a PACSA Community partner group

The Peer Educators Network emerged from PACSA's life-skills work with young people in the Midlands area. The network was started in 2007 and has 47 members. The network work with young people, in schools and the wider community.

The work of the peer educators continues to play a powerful role in the lives of young people in the city. The peers speak the language of the youth and provide safe spaces for youth to talk about their lives, sex, sexuality, teenage pregnancy, gender, power and relationships.

[Read the full article here.](#)



### 6. Meet PACSA Staff Members!

In this edition we introduce two staff members, Ms. Nareshnie Maharaj and Ms. Julie Smith.

#### Nareshnie Maharaj, Senior Manager: Finance/HR/Admin

Hi, I am Nareshnie Maharaj the Senior Manager: Finance/HR/Admin at PACSA. I have been with PACSA for 6 years. I am married, with 2 daughters.

My expertise lies in Financial Management, having 13 years' experience in the NGO sector, with the proven ability to handle complex intensive project budgets. I have a great passion for social change from a faith based perspective, and am happy to apply my skills to contribute



to achieving PACSA's goals. My qualifications are:

- Diploma in Pastel Accounting, and completed a course on Pastel Payroll.
- Higher diploma in Bookkeeping-Varsity College
- Diploma from Oxford University for Financial Management
- Diploma from Varsity College - Business Management and Administration.

#### **Julie Smith, Research and Advocacy Coordinator**

Julie is PACSA's Research and Advocacy Coordinator. Julie has worked with PACSA on and off since 2005. She took up a permanent position in January 2013.

Julie holds a PhD (Development Studies) from Rhodes University. Her major research focus over the last ten years has been on social policy in relation to municipal service delivery and citizenship; specifically municipal service tariffs, indigent policies, free basic services and citizen perceptions of and responses to local state power and discipline.

She has worked with various research institutions, multidisciplinary research teams, community groups, NGOs, CBOs, advocacy and rights campaigns and government units. She is competent in employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies where and as appropriate for the achievement of an outcome which reflects both a scientific rigour and sensitivity to the voice narrative of real people. Julie is passionately committed to social science research that makes a difference for ordinary citizens.

Julie's current work within PACSA is building organisational capacity around research and advocacy. Her current issue focuses are municipal service affordability, spaces for political contestation, electricity and free basic services, food price affordability, and dignity.



Julie Smith (left) with Zama Mthembu (right)

#### **7. Support PACSA financially through the Woolworths My School Card**



PACSA is now registered as a beneficiary of the Woolworths My School card programme. This means that the My School card users can list PACSA as a beneficiary and we will receive a small contribution each time you swipe your card at Woolworths. If you are a card user and would like to list PACSA as a beneficiary then please follow the steps below:

1. Link your current Woolworths Card to MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet by calling 0860 100 445 and make PACSA one of your charities.
2. If you already have a MySchool card, but would like to change your beneficiary, simply call our Client Service Centre (0860 100 445) - there is no need to get a new card!
3. If you don't have a MySchool card yet, simply apply for your card online or fill out an application in store.

If online:

Go to the Woolies website: [www.woolworths.co.za](http://www.woolworths.co.za);

o Click on Reward Yourself - it's on the top button bar

o Go to the box titled: Reward a School of Charity and click on click there for more information.

o Then follow the steps outlined

NOTE: The list of possible charities is right at the TOP of the form - go down the list and choose PACSA (My Village). Visit [www.myvillagemyplanet.co.za](http://www.myvillagemyplanet.co.za) for a comprehensive list of Villages and Planets or to read more.

#### **8. Please write to us!**

*Tell us your story to inspire or challenge us to action!*

*We look forward to hearing from you!*