



eNewsletter No. 02

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1. FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dear Readers

Greetings from PACSA.

In this E-Newsletter we share some of the highlights of our work over the past month as well as the articles we have been reading together as staff. We hope you will find these useful.

Kind regards

FROM MERVYN ABRAHAMS
PACSA Director

2. NEWS

· Affordability crisis deepens in Msunduzi Municipality

The struggle facing poor households in the Msunduzi Municipality to procure sufficient water, electricity and sanitation, continue to deepen. At a time when numerous households face electricity disconnections and at least 5 people have been electrocuted due to illegal electricity connections, the municipality proposed an increase of 7.39% on electricity tariffs and 8.3% on water for 2014/2015. In a written and oral submission to the Msunduzi Municipality, PACSA argued that the affordability crisis has now become entrenched for poor households. This is evident from the horrific decisions poor households are being forced to make across the city of putting food on the table or paying an electricity re-connection fee; or paying school fees, buying school clothes and books or paying an 'arranged' amount to lawyers for illegitimate water and rates arrears; burying a child or paying a current municipal account.

[Read the full article here](#)

· South Africa's 2014 Budget: More of the same paradigm

In the run-up to the 2014 Budget speech PACSA wrote to the Minister of Finance requesting an increase in social grants and minimum wages so that all households are able to afford a basic basket of food. We argued that social grants are too low and far below our October 2013 figure of R1509.34 which our Food Price Barometer shows is the minimum cost of a basket of basic food for a household of 7 persons. Our position is based on the fact that national outcomes will continue to be poor if our people are hungry and unable therefore to make optimal use of the state's investment in education and health. While the Minister alluded to increased spending on subsistence and small scale farming (albeit without giving any firm details) because most South Africans are net buyers of food, with purchases made at supermarkets, investments in small scale farming are not going to make a substantial impact on ensuring that poor households are better able to secure enough quality food.

[Read the full article here](#)

· PACSA and Partners explore most significant change story-telling methodology

PACSA and 12 of our community partners took part in workshop, on the 19th and 20th of February, to explore the most significant change story-telling methodology and its use in our work of social change. As we proceeded we amended the original methodology to better speak to our context and ensure that the voices that shape the story provide the meaning and significance



that the story holds.

[Read the full article \(with photo gallery\) here](#)

· **Sharing experiences on models of organisational leadership** On the 11th of February 2013, Mervyn Abrahams and Thulas Ndlovu participated in a leadership exposure programme hosted by Rural Development Support Programme (RDSP) at Glenmore Pastoral Centre in Durban. 14 people from 6 organizations participated. The programme aimed at opening up discussion on different views on leadership; state of leadership in South Africa and leadership challenges at community level.



[Read the full article \(with photo gallery\) here](#)

· **Visitors at PACSA**

Jacques Briard was in South Africa as the representative of CIDSE, an international alliance of Catholic Development agencies, attending the events to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of Archbishop Denis Hurley in Durban. Jacques is a long-time friend of PACSA and has been the Southern African programme officer for Entraide et Fraternite for many years. It was great to re-connect with Jacques and his views of the current situation facing South Africa.



Barbara Berger, the new marketing officer at Mensen met een missie in the Netherlands, a long-time PACSA donor partner, interrupted her holiday in South Africa to connect with us at PACSA. She was accompanied by her friend Barbara Van Koppen who works as a researcher on gender and water issues in Pretoria. It was wonderful to connect and share ideas on our common mission in the world.

3. PACSA IN THE MEDIA

Print Media

· **To eat or pay rates?**

[Read the full article here](#)

Television

· **1KZNTV**

Thulani Mthlale was on 1KZNTV during the eve of valentine day on the 23rd February 2014. He was invited to in the panel during the Lifestyle Show which was screened at 20h30. The show covered topics like; what are men's expectations in the relationship, how to deal with infidelity in a relationship and what causes it, dealing with children from outside marriage, dealing with the ex-lover who keeps on popping to your relationship. PACSA successfully responded to these questions and issues based on the experience of working with men and women through platforms like mixed gender dialogues and couples sessions.

· **African News Network 7**

Mervyn Abrahams was interviewed on PACSA's response to the 2014 national budget on the 26 February 2014 for the prime-time news bulletins that evening.

[Read the full article here](#)

4. UPCOMING EVENTS

· **Re-launching the PACSA website**

Over the past few months we have worked on creating a more user-friendly website and integrating new features such as a photo-gallery, video clips and podcasts. The new website

will be launched after the PACSA Council meeting on the 17th March 2014. We invite all our readers to visit the site and give us feedback.

• **Roundtable on Alternative Masculinities**

PACSA in partnership with the Goedgedacht Forum for Social Reflection will host a Roundtable on Alternative Masculinities on the 20th March 2014 in Pietermaritzburg.

5. FEATURE ARTICLES

Over the past weeks the PACSA staff has read the following two articles as a means to sharpen joint our analysis of the context. We present these two articles, one written by Richard Pithouse and one written by Gillian Schutte, which provides an analysis of the nature of our democracy and elite power and the manner in which the middle class seeks to understand structural poverty in SA today. These articles appeared on the SACSIS website and were discussed by PACSA staff as part of our regular process of reflection and learning.

• **Celebrating a murderous state**

By: Richard Pithouse

The public discussion around the pageantry at the annual opening of Parliament often treats the event more like the Oscars than a serious attempt to take some measure of where we are. It is frequently received as if the dignity of the nation is invested in the quality of the spectacle produced by this performance of elite power. With politicians implicitly measured against celebrities disappointments are inevitable. This year the discussion about how people looked and dressed a discussion...



[Read the full article here](#)

• **Middle class narratives and the disconnect with the poor**

By: Gillian Schutte

Middle class narratives on the poor are highly problematic in a society like South Africa where huge class cleavages exist between the rich and the poor. While this is certainly not true of everyone in this class, for the most part, middle class people buy into the same metanarrative about the poor. This metanarrative is a storyline that creates a definite "us and them" scenario. The core belief is that "they" (the poor) are "lazy" and their poverty is caused by their laziness just as wealth is caused by hard work. There are many other secondary storylines developed around this core belief.



[Read the full article here](#)

6. WRITE TO US!

Here we encourage our readers to write to us!