



Leveraging ICT in agriculture to develop rural communities

Critical role players recognise the Eastern Cape's potential to improve the livelihood of its communities through agriculture and rural development by using ICT. [Read more on p1](#)



Developing competencies with e-skills

The Intel Easy Steps course was offered by the Limpopo CoLab, in partnership with the Intel 'She Will Connect' initiative. [Read more on p4](#)



e-Skills research to inform policy and implementation

Research is part of the cycle of embedding e-skills (digital skills) in South Africa. It informs and improves decision making. [Read more on p7](#)



International Conference on Public Participation

The International Conference on Public Participation (ICPP) was held from 18-19 February 2016 in Durban. [Read more on p11](#)

Contents

- p1** Leveraging ICT in agriculture to develop rural communities
- p3** Contact NEMISA
- p4** Developing competencies with e-skills
- p5** Meet Molatelo Mainetje, filmmaker and entrepreneur
- p7** e-Skills research to inform policy and implementation
- The role of gender in influencing and impacting on ICT use in marginalised communities
- p8**
- Conditions for using social media to engage with marginalised communities
- p10** International Conference on Public Participation
- e-Citizenship: a panacea for citizen driven services?
- p11** The provincial e-skills CoLabs



Critical role players recognise the Eastern Cape's (EC) potential to improve the livelihood of its communities through agriculture and rural development by using ICT. Because this needs partnership and innovative approaches, the EC CoLab: ICT for Rural Development has been organising mini conferences to develop the process. These are hosted together with:

- Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC)
- Walter Sisulu University (WSU) Centre for Community Engagement and Internationalisation (CE&I)

The second 'ICT and Agriculture: Realising the Development Dividend' mini conference was held on 18 February 2016 in East London.

Collaborative approach defined in the first conference

The approach agreed upon in the launch seminar (March



About ECSECC and their participation

- The mini conference partner, the Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council (ECSECC), hosts the Human Resource Development Council for the Eastern Cape. ECSECC has a primary concern with skills development in support of provincial strategic priorities.
- ECSECC also hosts the Eastern Cape ICT Working Group, where a broad range of stakeholders drive the province's ICT agenda. In particular, ECSECC is supporting the Office of the Premier in the implementation of the Eastern Cape broadband master plan.
- As part of its work to support the growth of the agriculture sector in the province, ECSECC's aim at the mini conference was to generate knowledge about ICT for agriculture and its prospects for supporting small-holder farmers. ECSECC connects ideas with institutional agents and facilitates partnerships for execution.

What is ECSECC?

ECSECC is a multi-stakeholder policy research and development planning organisation. They focus on evolving new forms of development cooperation between government, labour, organised business and developmental non-governmental organisations.



What is ICT?

ICT stands for information and communication technology.

What is an e-skill (digital skills)?

An e-skill is more than knowing the basics of how to use a computer (computer literacy). While it's essential to be computer literate, the important question is: what can you do with that? **An e-skill means being able to use technology to add benefit to your life – to actively take part in the world and move ahead.**

2015) outlined three main components for the programme to use ICT for rural development in the agriculture sector. These components form a continuous cycle of research and development:

- Research: Initial (eg identifying key issues, the policy environment, best practices and existing resources) and ongoing research (eg monitoring and evaluation of interventions, the study of research theses and reports, annual conference etc)
- Product development: This focuses on the development or sourcing of apps and systems, technology (eg hardware) and multi-channel communication tools (eg tv, radio, webinars, podcasts, videos and portals)
- Skills development: Developing or sourcing of courses (certificates, diplomas, degrees etc) and providing training and learner access to training

To achieve maximum impact, these activities should take place within the framework of multi-stakeholder collaboration and aggregation.

Aligning with broadband policy – infrastructure, services and e-skills

This approach aligns with the Digital Opportunity pillar of South Africa's broadband policy, SA Connect. SA Connect recognises that providing infrastructure alone will not create an e-literate society. While infrastructure and services are essential, there needs to be a demand for these. Hence one of the SA Connect pillars is called Digital Opportunity. This focuses on creating the demand through developing a nation of people that are e-skilled and e-astute.

Themes of the 2016 programme

The 2016 conference shared some of the existing and potential practices taking place by role players. It showed the context in which ICT can, should and is being used to help increase agricultural productivity, capacitate small

 to next page

Article continued: Leveraging ICT in agriculture to develop rural communities

and emerging farmers, and encourage the participation of women and youth, among other objectives. There were also examples of how training in ICT and training using ICT are critical components of this.

The mini conference was opened by Prof Khaya Mfenyana, Interim Vice-Chancellor, WSU. The conference was placed in a provincial context by the MEC for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform, Hon Mr Mlibo Qoboshiyane. Among other points, the MEC highlighted the need for a provincial database covering the agricultural landscape and systems (or applications) that provide real-time data of benefit to farmers. Examples include weather reports and market prices.

The following plenary presentations were made:

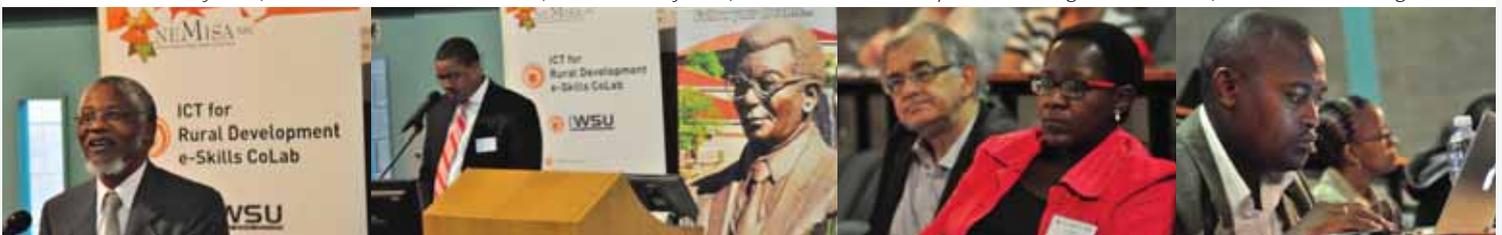
- **Using ICT to develop agricultural value chains in Africa** (Dr Vuyokazi Mahlati, African Financial Group) – This outlined the importance of value chain development to grow and transform Eastern Cape, African and South African agriculture. The use of ICT can be a major contributor to improved organisation, communication and connecting the right people. Dr Mahlati unveiled the Ivili Loboya app which will be used to connect smallholders and processors in the Eastern Cape wool and cashmere sector.
- **Enhancing rural ICT access in the Eastern Cape** (Mr Ayanda Madyibi, Provincial CIO from the Office of the Premier) – He spoke on the current status of broadband roll-out in the province and related activities. These included establishing the Provincial Broadband Steering Committee and sub-committees. The EC e-Skills CoLab co-chairs the skills sub-committee with the Eastern Cape Development Corporation.

There were also panel discussions:

- **To what extent can ICT help increase agricultural productivity through providing access to knowledge, information and technology? Practical examples from the Eastern Cape and beyond.** Panel Chair: Mr Luthando Jack (COO of ECSECC). Panellists included: Mr Johann Janse van Rensburg (CSIR), Mr
- **What ICT training is needed to bridge the digital divide in the agricultural sector and how ICT can be used to provide sector-related training.** Panel Chair: Mr Mzoli Payi (Director WSU CE&I). Panellists included: Prof Walter Claassen (WC e-Skills CoLab), Mr Lwando Rwayi (principal of the Arthur Mfebe Agricultural

 to next page

L to R: Prof Mfenyana (Interim Vice-Chancellor, WSU), Mr Qoboshiyane (MEC for Rural Development and Agrarian Reform), conference delegates



Article continued: Leveraging ICT in agriculture to develop rural communities

Senior Secondary School) and Mr Vijay Makanjee (RuLIV). Prof Van Greunen (NMMU), who could not attend, sent an audio visual presentation. Prof Claassen highlighted the need for an e-Skills Framework to organise the various digital skills needed for different groups of users. Mr Rwayi showed how computers and tablets are used in the classroom to successfully introduce learners to technology use in the agriculture sector. For example, students are required to develop business plans for the marketing of crops grown on the school farm.

The way forward was presented by Ms Lorna van der Merwe from the EC e-Skills CoLab. The conference was closed by Prof Denis Jumbam, Dean Faculty of Natural Sciences, WSU.

Two main outcomes – ICT and Agriculture working group and a digital repository

The intention is to find ways to direct these initiatives towards a larger effort. Two main outcomes were proposed:

- **Establishing a provincial ICT and Agriculture Working Group (working within the ambit of the Provincial ICT Working Group).** This will provide direction for those looking to start initiatives in the sector and avoid unnecessary duplication and wasted expenditure. Maximum impact will be achieved by going forward as multi-stakeholders working together with a common goal – to leverage ICT to realise the development dividend for the EC rural communities.
- **Establishing a (moderated) digital platform to serve as a repository** of relevant resources and information. This will provide an entry point to the wealth of useful information and free research, tools etc on the internet. It will include South African data, in particular EC data. For example, highlighting existing agriculture-related technology and apps (or those being designed) can steer funds for new innovation into identified needs that are not being addressed.

Positive reception

The event was for anyone with an interest in training and skills, product development and research related to using technology for rural development, as well as those involved with agriculture. There were around 90 attendees. Of the 39% that responded to the evaluation form, there was 100% agreement that the conference was worthwhile. 😊



L to R: Siv Hesjedal (ECSECC, Conference Organiser and Programme Chair), Dumisani Sondlo (DIPS and NEMISA), Hon Mlibo Qoboshiyane (MEC, Rural Development and Agrarian Reform), Ayanda Madyibi (Provisional CIO, OTP), Dr Vuyo Mahlati (African Financial Group), Lorna van der Merwe (NEMISA e-Skills CoLab, Conference organiser)

In the news

The event was reported on by The Herald on 19 February 2016 'MEC calls for development of technology to boost agriculture' www.heraldlive.co.za/mec-calls-development-technology-boost-agriculture/



NEMISA's head office will be moving to the following address at the end of April: South Building Waterview Corner, 2 Oppenheimer Ave, Bruma Lake Office Park, Bruma 2026.

Contact NEMISA

The National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) can be contacted at the following:

- info@nemisa.co.za
- 011 484 0583
- 21 Girton Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193
- PO Box 545 Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2006

 e-Skills training

Developing competencies with e-skills



Often computer literacy courses are offered without being contextualised. Participants simply learn to use software applications but not how to apply these tools in their environment. Digital literacy can be defined, in part, as the ability to use technology as a tool in a situation pertinent to the user. (This is compared to defining it as achieving certain levels in a computer literacy programme.)

The Limpopo e-Skills CoLab has been running a digital literacy programme that focuses on competencies needed by the participants. "In this instance, we measure whether an individual has achieved a level of computer literacy – for functioning in a particular context – by asking what they could do before the learning programme and then after the programme," says Andrew Scholtz from the Limpopo e-Skills CoLab. This evaluation is supported by other monitoring and evaluation.

The Intel Easy Steps course: The Intel Easy Steps course was offered by the Limpopo e-Skills CoLab, in partnership with the Intel 'She Will Connect' initiative. It was conducted in November and December 2015. There were 237 young women (aged between 15 and 26) who participated in the programme.

Participant responses

- "Basically the course has inspired me now. As we talk, I have a plan of starting my own business all because of the skills that I have acquired during the course."
- "Thanks for such great opportunity. I'm equipped and my... computer skills have improved. Hope this training might help other black woman like me."
- "This course was the best because it has left me very inspired and driven."
- "I got here with the attitude that I actually know everything, and then I sat for a moment realised that my computer skills were actually numb...thank you for the wonderful experience."
- "The training made me realise my potential. The training helped to boost my self-esteem because of the presentations we had."

What does the course involve? Intel Easy Steps involves acquiring basic computer skills in word processing, presentations, spreadsheets, email and the internet. Then participants discover how these skills can be applied so as to have a positive impact on their daily lives. This includes:

- An introduction into entrepreneurship
- Managing money and finances (including creating a cash flow projection)
- Creating a budget or business plan
- Developing a marketing plan
- Branding yourself or your business
- Creating a portfolio to present to the group

Results? Following are the results from the course.

Introduction to computers and operating systems	At the beginning of the course 50% of the participants felt comfortable with finding their way around computers and operating systems. By the end of the course this had increased to 90%.
Internet and email	At the beginning, 43% of the participants felt comfortable using internet and email. By the end, this had increased to 86%.
Word processing	At the beginning, 43% of the participants felt comfortable with word processing. By the end, this had increased to 96%.
Spreadsheets	At the beginning, 25% of the participants felt comfortable using spreadsheets. By the end, this had increased to 87%.
Multimedia	At the beginning, 47% of the participants felt comfortable using multimedia. By the end, this had increased to 95%.

The value: "These young participants have been exposed to technology and the role that these tools can play in their daily lives and in improving their circumstances," says Mr Scholtz.

Follow up: A significant challenge will be access to technology and the internet. The Limpopo e-Skills CoLab intends to follow-up to determine the impact of Intel Easy Steps on the participants' lives in the future. 😊



NEMISA alumni

Meet Molatelo Mainetje, filmmaker and entrepreneur



Molatelo Mainetje is an award-winning TV producer, video director and documentary film maker. She is a filmmaker entrepreneur and part of NEMISA's alumni. We find out more about her.

Q Tell us a little about your work?

I'm the owner of Bolobathaba Multimedia. I am also a board member and secretary of the Documentary Filmmakers' Association of SA and I founded the Bolobathaba Filmmaking Project in 2009.

Q What happened with your studies?

I grew up in rural GaModjadji, Limpopo. We didn't have access to TV and the other things that kids do these days. I never imagined that I would be a businesswoman or be in the broadcasting industry. In 1999, I was in my final year of study at the then-named University of the North (now called University of Limpopo) when I was chosen as part of the first NEMISA student intake. There I obtained a post-graduate Diploma in TV Production.

Q How did you get to where you are now?

In 2003, my first business, Lilitha Multimedia, went through a business incubation process. This was part of an initiative by the then-named Department of Communications. That's what instilled the spirit of entrepreneurship in me. I kept my day job and ran my business on the side.

My entry into the professional world was working as a trainee video editor on Generations. My full-time employment history has included being a local producer for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Africa bureau) and working as a producer for eNews Channel Africa (eNCA).

Q When did you go out on your own?

I realised I needed to focus on my own business. So in 2013,

I resigned from my full-time job at eNCA. By then Lilitha Multimedia had dissolved because of partnership challenges so I started Bolobathaba Multimedia. I registered it in 2010 as the sole owner.

It's been challenging to be on my own but very fulfilling. As an entrepreneur, I can go for months without an income. Making a TV programme or a film can take years. I've been working on several freelance documentary projects, while trying to stay afloat as a business. This work involves pitching to broadcasters, looking for funding (which takes a lot of time) and taking the projects and completed films to international film festivals and markets.

Q Tell us about your development initiative, Bolobathaba Filmmaking Project?

I started it in 2009 at my home village. It's a community development initiative by my company. We train young people in television and film production, as well as in acting. I used to do it during the holidays but, in 2014, I recruited a full-time trainer, set up a production office and beefed up the equipment.

The project was self-funded from 2009 until 2015. Then the National Film and Video Foundation gave us funding to do four months of training. It meant that we could be more structured and use outside trainers.

We're currently looking at ways to create a platform where the trainees can use their skills and earn an income. We've lost many good people who needed money so had to find any work they could. Some are still unemployed.

 to next page

Some comedy clips created by Bolobathaba Filmmaking Project trainees as part of the training

- Vulozwi TV Adult Class: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbViAzOrdmo
- Vulozwi TV Water Boys www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy_iktX06-0
- Vulozwi TV Bold and Beautiful: www.youtube.com/watch?v=k26GF8siCXA
- Vulozwi TV Voice of God: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tYAWKTTdCw
- Vulozwi TV Child of God: www.youtube.com/watch?v=m22cE9D0j6g

Article continued: Meet Molatelo Mainetje, filmmaker and entrepreneur

This is what NEMISA told us on our first day, as the first intake in 2000. We should use the skills learnt at the institute not only to help transform the industry but also to use the platform to tell our own stories and empower others. I'm doing exactly that.

Q So you also want to create a television channel. Explain what's happening there?

I founded Vulozwi TV with the hope of growing it into a television channel. It focuses on the marginalised people of South Africa.

A lot of work has been done on social media to ensure it has the market base and content. The idea is that Vulozwi TV will also be the platform that creates employment for the Bolobathaba Filmmaking Project trainees. The business is currently in progress.

Q Advice for those who want to go into broadcasting?

It's about passion, hard work, perseverance and vision. Don't be afraid to take risks and break from the norm. If you have a concept and believe in it, it doesn't matter who says what or how long it takes to mature, just keep fighting for it. Modify it, if necessary. Learn from the negatives and keep moving.

Most importantly, I've learnt to work on multiple projects at the same time. While it takes effort, time and money, it also multiplies your chances of success.

Molatelo's experience at NEMISA

After university, a lot of my friends and classmates were off to the bigger cities. Without any city contacts or family to stay with, I had to go back to my village and hope for the best. So I went home, feeling directionless.

It was early January 2000 when I received a call from NEMISA. I was selected as one of their first student intakes.

Some of Molatelo Mainetje's achievements

- Winning the United National Media Peace Award (TV News and Current Affairs category) in 2007
- She has written numerous documentaries, including 'Rwanda: Rise Dry Bones', 'Makhwaya' and 'A Helping Hand'.
- Molatelo has also produced a number of films, starting with 'Nnakotse' in 2009.
- In 2013 and 2015, she was chosen to be part of SA's delegation of filmmakers to the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in the Netherlands.

I was just a girl from rural Limpopo and then suddenly I was in the world of broadcasting. I have memories of the first time holding a camera and my first editing lesson. I remember asking our video editing lecturer, Eddie Mbalo: "*Ke e bethe?* (Should I hit it?)". This referred to his instruction to stop the knob so that there is an in-point for the edit. (And no I didn't hit it, I learnt to press the button.)

I met people I never thought I could and did things I never thought possible. I remember the diversity of people in the first intake – from all over South Africa. NEMISA created a harmonious learning environment for us.

Today if my editor lets me down, I sit and edit myself. If my camera operator doesn't pitch, I operate the camera myself. I write too. I can run a full production by myself, only asking help to perfect it. That's why I can train others because I'm multi-skilled. NEMISA gave me a platform to unleash my potential. It played a role, not only in my life, but in the lives of the community that raised me. 😊

Farewell and good luck!

Ms Moira Malakalaka, NEMISA Chief Financial Officer, has moved onto new pastures. She was at NEMISA from June 2008 to February 2016. She started as a Finance Manager.





Research on e-skills

e-Skills research to inform policy and implementation

Research is part of the cycle of embedding e-skills (digital skills) in South Africa. It leads to understanding how e-skills can be used effectively within a South African context. This informs and improves decision making, as well as improving implementation. Following are two research areas that are being studied:

- The role of gender in influencing and impacting on ICT use in marginalised communities
- Conditions for using social media to engage with marginalised communities and the role of e-inclusion intermediaries (ICT resources in disadvantaged areas)

The role of gender in influencing and impacting on ICT use in marginalised communities



Carlynn Pokpas from the University of the Western Cape

Carlynn Pokpas (University of the Western Cape) is currently doing her doctoral thesis on the role of gender in influencing and impacting on ICT use in marginalised communities.

Women disconnected from digital revolution

People need to know how to use ICT to benefit from the opportunities. This includes being able to participate socially, economically and politically. A large percentage of the population remains excluded from this digital revolution. Women, in particular, form an alarming majority of the disconnected.

Digital gender gap reflects inequalities outside the digital sphere

To understand why women are disconnected in the digital age, there is a focus on the role of gender as well as the digital gender gap. The focus looks at various issues, from the differences in ICT access for men and women to the quality of use.

The digital gender gap reflects (and increases) the gender inequalities that exist outside the digital sphere. There are longstanding inequalities that are often encoded into society as social norms. These often restrict women's access and meaningful use of ICT. It leads to a negative cycle between digital exclusion, unemployment, low income and lack of education and literacy.

Empowering women vital – especially for development goals

ICT can provide women with opportunities to improve their quality of life. It can assist with changing the power relations between men and women, tackling existing gender inequality.

Addressing a digital gender gap and empowering women is also vital for contributing to national socio-economic development and developmental goals. Empowered women can make a significant difference to the economy, society and the country.

Causes for the digital gender gap

Adopting ICTs is slower among low income socio-economic groups in South Africa, particularly with more sophisticated technologies. One of the main reasons is unaffordable internet access.

While there are high levels of cellphone ownership, research shows significant differences in the type of device and how it is used. Far more men own internet-enabled cellphones and far more men use the internet. This is due to higher income and education, as well as additional responsibilities around unpaid housework and childcare.

The research shows that the South African digital gender gap is largely because more women are unemployed and poorly educated. (The information comes from *'Lifting the veil on ICT gender indicators in Africa'*, Deen-swaray, Gillwald, and Morrell. 2012).

 to next page



Article continued: e-Skills research to inform policy and implementation

Lack of information on gender-based use of ICT

There is little information on a gender-based perspective of ICT use in South Africa and Africa. It's important to understand how women use, understand and view ICT, as well as to show the challenges that limit or prevent use. (Information about women in marginalised communities is

especially important.)

This research can help with the effective implementation of strategies and interventions that address the challenges. The UWC research aims to contribute to this body of knowledge, with a particular focus on marginalised communities.

Conditions for using social media to engage with marginalised communities



Natasha Katunga from the University of the Western Cape

Natasha Katunga (University of the Western Cape) is conducting her doctoral thesis research on social media, identifying the conditions needed to use these tools to engage with marginalised communities. The research will also look at the role of e-inclusion intermediaries (ICT-based resources in marginalised communities).

Creating a South African knowledge-based society

As part of the digital revolution, the internet and other technologies are changing the way we live and work. These technologies have an enormous impact on individuals, industries and government – they are changing the way society and economies work.



What is an information or knowledge society?

It describes a society based on creating, distributing and using information and knowledge. It is a society with an economy where the use of information and knowledge becomes one of the most significant economic and cultural activities.



What is social media?

Social media means the online communications channels that allow people to create communities, interact, collaborate and share content. These can be websites and internet/online applications.

The aim is for South Africa to become a knowledge-based society and digital economy. The benefits include the population knowing about their rights, the economy and opportunities. It also means that citizens can use the knowledge, along with technology, to participate electronically (e-participate) and to improve themselves and their communities.

To gain these and other benefits, the population needs access to ICTs and the e-skills to use them. However, this is still to become a reality for SA.

Marginalised communities are also digitally and socially excluded

Communities become marginalised for a number of reasons, such as poverty and lack of education. These marginalised communities are also digitally and socially excluded from society. This means they cannot participate fully in a digital economy or access online government services provided for their benefit.

Marginalised communities not using ICT resources (e-inclusion intermediaries)

The only way some marginalised people can access internet is through organisations that provide ICT resources for free or at a very low cost in their disadvantaged communities. Examples of these organisations include telecentres or internet cafes. (Ms Katunga's research refers to these organisations as e-inclusion intermediaries.)

e-Inclusion intermediaries aim to equip community members with engagement skills and tools to participate in the information society (and consequently uplift their

 to next page

Article continued: e-Skills research to inform policy and implementation

communities). However, people are not using the services. There are numerous reasons, including not knowing about the e-inclusion intermediaries and the services they offer or what they can do for individuals and the community.

Using social media to create awareness about available ICT resources

Within marginalised communities, mobile devices have become increasingly popular. These are used for engagement and accessing the internet. Social media, in particular, is used by marginalised communities.

Some South African e-inclusion intermediaries are successfully using social media to reach vulnerable people and promote e-inclusion initiatives. This allows them to market their services, provide information and – most importantly – engage with community members.

Other e-inclusion intermediaries also need to engage effectively with their community members. Thus, we need to find out how successful e-inclusion intermediaries are using social media to accomplish their goals. Once the full cycle of the process is understood (strategies, tools, which social media platforms etc), recommendations can be made.

Role of e-inclusion intermediaries in marginalised communities

For all South Africans to be e-literate by 2030 (as set out by the National Development Plan), e-inclusion is essential. This means that all people are included – they have access to technology, information and the digital skills (e-skills) to use



What are e-inclusion intermediaries?

e-Inclusion intermediaries are public, private or civil society organisations that focus on social inclusion through ICTs or promote the use of ICTs to enhance the socio-economic inclusion of marginalised and disadvantaged groups and of people at risk of exclusion.

Examples of e-inclusion intermediaries:

- public internet access points
- internet cafés
- e-centres
- business centres

ICTs effectively. This is particularly important for communities that are currently marginalised. With the South African government moving to online service delivery, marginalised communities need to be able to access these services.

Current practices and theories position e-inclusion intermediaries as a link between technology and people. This includes providing digital literacy as well as other skills around technology (e-skills).

e-Inclusion intermediaries to rethink communication strategies

While there are e-inclusion intermediaries focused on marginalised communities, in general these have not been effective. Research indicates that this may be due to lack of awareness of the intermediaries and the services they provide. This shows us that current communication channels (used by the intermediaries) are not effective.

e-Inclusion intermediaries need to rethink their communication strategies. Marginalised communities are using social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) to communicate, share and access information straight from their mobile devices. Thus e-inclusion intermediaries need to also use social media to engage with community members more effectively.

Public sector social media use needs to be researched

While the conditions around social media use in business have been documented, this is not so for public sector. Furthermore, business strategies for social media are not easily adapted for the public sector.

An expected UWC research outcome is a structured set of recommendations. These will focus on how e-inclusion intermediaries can use social media effectively as an engagement channel to reach vulnerable people in marginalised communities. 😊



e-Skills and public participation

International Conference on Public Participation

The International Conference on Public Participation (ICPP) was held from 18-19 February 2016 in Durban. It was hosted by the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and the Ethekwini Municipality in partnership with NEMISA's KZN e-Skills CoLab, MILE (Municipal Institute of Learning), Live Moya and Evaluations.

Audience: The audience comprised of national, provincial and local government officials.

Conference aims: Following are some of the aims and benefits.

- To create a platform for critical discussion around implementing public participation. This includes understanding the history, context, principles and approaches to participatory democracy, as well as looking at legal and regulatory frameworks.
- To enhance the capacity of the 200 municipal employees currently registered as students of the Public Participation Training Programme at DUT. (Students prepared presentations for the conference.)
- To gain an understanding of reasons for public service delivery protests and how to deal with them (within the context of people-centred development and good governance).

What is public participation?

As explained by the International Association for Public Participation, public participation is the "collective efforts of the beneficiaries of development (ordinary people) to organise and pool their social capital... to obtain grassroots objectives through influencing, directing and eventually owning the development process."

It's about the empowerment and participation of ordinary people. The idea is that people work with government and officials to improve their situation – socially, politically, economically, politically etc. People and communities then build self reliance and capacity so they can contribute to sustainable development.

Across the world, the role of public participation is recognised as central to achieving sustainable and democratic governance. However, typically there is a gap between the legislative and policy framework (which is inclusive and supportive of public participation) and practices on the ground. Government officials, politicians, civil society groups, academics and ordinary citizens all have an interest in bridging that gap and making public participation real.

Programme: The conference was opened by Councillor Logie Naidoo (Ethekwini Municipality) and Professor Jairam Reddy (Chair: DUT Council). This was followed by sessions that included the following topics. There were international and local academics and government officials as speakers.

- Overview of public participation: making public participation real.
- South African, African and international experiences of public participation.
- Case studies in public participation
- e-Participation, leadership and service delivery

Next steps? The aim is to publish a book on public participation consisting of selected papers from the conference.

 to next page



Councillor Logie Naidoo of Ethekwini Municipality



Prof. Jairam Reddy, Chairperson of DUT Council



Dr. Maliga Reddy, Associate Director of Public Management at DUT

Article continued: International Conference on Public Participation

e-Citizenship: A panacea for citizen driven services?

At the International Conference on Public Participation, Dr Colin Thakur (KZN e-Skills CoLab Director) and Dr Ndivhoniswani Aaron Tshidzumba (NEMISA CEO) presented on 'e-Citizenship: a panacea for citizen driven services?' The paper examines the nature and extent of e-citizenship activities within South Africa through case studies.

Post-apartheid South Africa has a vibrant culture of community activism. This activism has led to an increasing number of community protests over unfulfilled promises. As a developmental economy, South Africa may struggle to meet these demands. This challenge multiplies in the face of a global recession. However, during apartheid the community turned to itself to solve some challenges.

The paper looks at the new and emerging uses of technologies, such as social media, to solve citizen centric challenges in South Africa. The promise of e-government is still in its infancy in South Africa. Even when solutions are presented, they generally haven't been used by the public. This paper reconsiders if citizen's activism, through social media at least, can partially fulfil this gap?

Social media refers to forms of electronic communication, such as web sites for social networking

and micro-blogging, through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

Social media is very useful for social activists. It's an instant form of communication, easy to use and transparent. South Africa's demographic figures show there are 50.4 million citizens (Stats SA, 2015) and 46% are active internet users. This implies almost 1 in 2 citizens are internet users. There are 79.1 million mobile subscriptions, which is more than the population (including youth and children). The number of social media accounts is 11.8 million or 22% of the population. (40% of the users are under the age of 25.) In essence, there is a tipping point of access to social media for this to be used as a mechanism for social activism.

Following are examples of social media use for social activism. Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have been used by local communities for local community support, such as:

- Neighbourhood security, eg monitoring and alerting around suspicious activity
- Locating a person thought to be missing
- Locating someone who has been hijacked
- Locating missing pets
- As an early warning system for natural occurrences such as thunderstorms

Delegates at the International Conference on Public Participation



The provincial e-skills CoLabs

The provincial e-skills CoLabs are based at universities. Each has a focus on a specific area in e-skills:

- **Western Cape e-Skills CoLab:** e-Inclusion and Social Innovation, based at the University of the Western Cape
- **KwaZulu-Natal e-Skills CoLab:** e-Enablement for Effective Service Delivery, based at Durban University of Technology
- **Eastern Cape e-Skills CoLab:** ICT for Rural Development, based at Walter Sisulu University
- **Gauteng e-Skills CoLab:** Creative New Media Industries, based at the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA)
- **Limpopo e-Skills CoLab:** Connected Health, based at the University of Limpopo
- **Southern Gauteng/Northern e-Skills Cape CoLab:** e-Literacy and e-Business (knowledge economy and e-social astuteness), based at the Vaal University of Technology
- **North West e-Skills Cape CoLab:** e-Agro-tourism, based at the University of the North West