



Symposium on Deindustrialisation of Small Towns

15 October 2025: Heidelberg

Profiles of Panellists

1. Zamokwakhe Ludidi Somhlaba

Research and Political Risk Advisory Manager, Frontline Africa Advisory

Zamokwakhe is a Research and Political Risk Advisory Manager at Frontline Africa Advisory, supporting private sector clients navigate South Africa's dynamic and constantly evolving political and public policy environment. This with a view to empowering clients to identify crucial areas of policy intervention and lobbying avenues for favourable policy outcomes.

For a period spanning ten years, he participated in numerous public policy initiatives under the auspices of the African Union, its agencies such as NEPAD and development finance institutions as the UNDP, AfDB and DBSA, among others.

Within the context of the country's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), he facilitated stakeholder engagements across the national, provincial and local spheres. These stakeholders included high-level government, business, political, labour leaders as well as civil society formations.

He served as a Speech Writer for successive Ministers of Public Service and Administration, and later the Head of Open Government Partnership (OGP) supporting then State President's Special Envoy on OGP.

Zamokwakhe holds a Master of Arts Degree in International Studies (with particular focus on African Political Economy) and numerous other business management certificates.

2. Bafana Sibisi

Second Deputy President, SANCO | Group CEO, Africawise Developments (Pty) Ltd | Non-Executive Director, Gautrain Management Agency

Bafana is an architect, development expert, and housing specialist. As Second Deputy President of SANCO and Group CEO of Africawise Developments, he combines civic leadership with strategic business insight.

He serves as Non-Executive Director of the Gautrain Management Agency and holds an MBA. He is currently completing a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) at Tshwane University of Technology.



3. Mohau Mokhele

Labour Leader, Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU)

Mohau has nearly two decades of experience as a labour activist, serving across all structures of FAWU. He is a former Provincial Treasurer and National Executive Committee member, contributing to workers' rights and organisational development.

He has participated in labour-inclusive committees at British American Tobacco (BAT) and currently serves as Shop Steward and Chairperson of the BAT Provident Fund.

4. Siyabulela Jentile

Director, Civic Roots Advocacy NPC

Siyabulela is a globally recognised South African civic leader, human rights defender, and social justice advocate who transitioned from civil engineering to civil rights to champion equity, justice, and accountable governance. He is the Director of Civic Root Advocacy NPC, a public policy advocacy organisation advancing community-led, evidence-based reform, and the Founder and President of #NotInMyName International, one of South Africa's most prominent social justice movements.

An Obama Foundation Leader, Mandela Washington Fellow, and the first South African and Southern African Laureate of the French Government's Initiative Marianne, Siyabulela has engaged leading global institutions including UNESCO, the UN Human Rights Council, and the European Parliament. He has received multiple leadership awards in recognition of his contributions to democratic participation, governance reform, and gender equality.

He previously served as one of only two African Advisors to the Together First Global Campaign, a global coalition advancing inclusive and accountable reform of international governance systems. A former contributing writer for the UNA-United Kingdom Magazine, Siyabulela is also a self-published author and member of the International Leadership Association. He uses his voice and writing to advance justice, accountability, and civic empowerment.

Recognised by both the United Nations and the African Union for his leadership in promoting civic participation and human rights, Siyabulela continues to shape vital conversations on democracy, accountability, and social transformation. He remains deeply passionate about people and about the enduring promise of democracy.

5. Nosipho Khonkwane

General Manager, Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP)

Nosipho has 19 years experience in Enterprise Development, results oriented, strategic thinker balancing with strong operations management, having led and inspired development and



implementation of innovative support programmes for Small and Medium Enterprises in South Africa.

Prior Seda, Worked as Industrial Advisor for the Cape Manufacturing Advisory Centre. This is where my Industrial Engineering background and passion led me to be an award winner for the National Excellent performer. Joined Seda in 2006 as Manager responsible for the rolling out of the network of Seda branches, policies and systems. Moved to the ranks of Senior Manager Technology Transfer in 2008-2011 and also filled a gap as Senior Manager Business Incubation programme. moved to the responsibility of Provincial Manager Gauteng, created and maintained a network of 4 branches , applying an innovative facilitation model where staff costs and office space were covered by partners. Became Executive Manager in 2014 focusing on promoting sustainable growth of Small and Medium enterprises through creation and support of technology incubation platforms, technology transfer and conformity assessment interventions.

Championed the launch of the Knowledge platforms such as Inaugural South African Incubation Conference (SABIC) and Incubation Governance Management Development programme (IGMDP). Led key national projects such as roll-out of Digital hubs, Township business incubators, Pitch and Perfect and Female in Tech initiative (FEM-IN-TECH). Experience in corporate governance having participated in boards and committees of boards of NPCs and within public sector. 5 year experience in Chairing funding adjudication panels.

6. Thulani Kunene

Member, Gauteng Provincial Legislature | Deputy Chair of Chairs

Kunene has held significant official positions across public service, local government, and political leadership in South Africa. His career began with roles at Soweto Community Radio (1994), as a training facilitator for the Gauteng Students Forum (1997), and merchandiser for Field Marketing Group (1997-2000). Elected as a councillor in Emfuleni in 2000, he served as Member of the Mayoral Committee and Chief Whip until 2009, followed by an appointment as Director at Sedibeng District Municipality. Recruited back in 2012 as Director of Stakeholder Management at the Gauteng Department of Health, he later coordinated ANC Gauteng Provincial Elections from 2015 to 2024. In 2024, he was elected as a Member of the Gauteng Legislature and appointed Deputy Chair of Chairs in July, marking a notable return to provincial governance.

Kunene's leadership extends to key roles within the ANC and allied organizations, including ANCYL Branch Organizer, Treasurer, and Political Education Head; Regional Executive Member; ANC Branch Deputy Secretary, Secretary, and Treasurer; ANC Sedibeng Elections Coordinator; and Regional Deputy Secretary. He was elected ANC Regional Chairperson in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. In the Young Communist League, he served as Gauteng Provincial Chairperson, and in the SACP, as Sedibeng District Coordinator and Secretary. His diverse educational qualifications, including a Communication Science degree from UNISA and diplomas in Municipal and Project Management, underscore his commitment to public service, complemented by his role as a lay preacher at Palm Springs Church of Christ.



7. Cllr. Mluleki Nkosi
Executive Mayor, Lesedi Local Municipality

Nkosi is a seasoned leader with extensive experience in government and private sector roles, currently serving as the Executive Mayor of Lesedi Local Municipality since 2021. His career spans municipal governance, procurement, payroll administration, and expenditure management. Starting as a Clerical Assistant at Lesedi Local Municipality (1999–2002), he progressed to Senior Administrative Officer (Payroll) and Chief Administrative Officer (Procurement and Contracts) at Transnet Freight (2003–2009). Politically, he served as a PR Councillor in Sedibeng District (2011), Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Services at Lesedi (2011–2012) and Sports, Recreation, Arts, and Culture at Sedibeng (2009–2011), and Speaker of Council at Lesedi (2016–2021). His educational background includes a National Diploma in Commercial Practice from Tshwane University of Technology and a qualification in Leadership in Municipal Governance from the University of Witwatersrand.

Nkosi has held significant leadership roles within the ANC and community organizations. He was involved in the ANC Youth League as a BEC member (1999) and held various positions in the ANC, including Deputy Chairperson and Secretary of local branches, and member of the Sedibeng Regional Executive Committee (2009–2011, 2014), where he led portfolios in Education, Skills Development, and Arts and Culture. He also served as Deputy Chairperson of the ANC Regional Executive Committee and Head of Mobilization for the Regional Election Team. In community leadership, he was active in the Ratanda Community Policing Forum, serving as Acting Secretary (1999–2000), Secretary (2000–2003), Chairperson (2003–2005), and Chairperson of the Heidelberg Community Policing Broader Forum (2005–2007). His student leadership roles at Tshwane University of Technology included SASCO Political Commissar, Chairperson of the All-Residence Council, and SRC Elections Transport Officer (1996–1998).

8. Mr. Bulumko Nelana
Deputy Director-General: Economic Planning, Gauteng Department of Economic Development

Nelana is currently responsible for research, knowledge management, economic policy, industrial sector development, and inclusive economic development at the Gauteng Department of Economic Development (GDED), as well as leadership and improving service delivery in the Economic Planning branch.

Previously, he was the CEO at Buffalo City Metropolitan Development Agency (BCMDA), and the Managing Director at Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ). Before joining the City of Johannesburg, Mr Nelana was the Head of Department and Accounting Officer for the Eastern Cape's Department of Economic Affairs, Environment and Tourism.

Other previous responsibilities of Mr Nelana include the Chief Director: Strategy (Department of Social Development – SA), MD (Dimensions Development Network Pty Ltd), Chief Director:



Financial Management Training (Provincial Treasury – EC (SA)), Program Manager: Development Planning (Ecsecc), Deputy Chairperson (Eastern Cape Youth Commission) and a Local Government Trainer (Afesis-corporation).

9. Lloyd M. Machimani

Senior Town Planner, Lesedi Local Municipality

Machimani is Senior Town Planner at Lesedi Local Municipality, responsible for municipal spatial planning, land-use management, and urban development oversight. His work ensures sustainable and coherent local planning and zoning compliance.

10. Thami Klassen

Acting Chief Director: Regional Industrial Development, Department of Trade, Industry & Competition (the dtic)

Klassen is a Director and strategic development leader currently serving at the Department of Trade, Industry & Competition (the dtic) in Pretoria, where he has been driving economic development initiatives since 2010. He has built a distinguished career spanning over three decades across mining, tourism, renewable energy, and economic development sectors. His professional journey started in the mining industry, working as a Technologist and Project Supervisor in Hydro & Chemical Metallurgy at Anglo American Research Laboratories. He later obtained a qualification in Extraction Metallurgy, at Wits Technikon, where he practised a solid foundation in scientific research, process optimization, and project management. His further work as a Metallurgist at RMP Properties focused on gold and PGM production from mine dump reclamations around Gauteng.

He transitioned into entrepreneurship and tourism development in the early 2000s where he served and established Soweto Tourism Development Association (SOTODA), Big 5 Joburg Tourism and contributed to tourism infrastructure development of Soweto and Joburg.

Since joining the dtic, he has been instrumental in the genesis of economic development landscape for the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Programme, evaluating proposals for economic zones and facilitating investments across the country. He serves on multiple boards, including TASEZ, Namakwa and Vaal SEZs, and as a Member and Chair of the Adjudication Committee for the Critical Infrastructure Programme at the dtic. He is currently the Acting Chief Director of Regional Industrial Development and leads the Chief Directorate Unit of Regional Industrial Clusters, focusing on implementing Industrial Parks and developing Townships and Rural Economies. Thami Klassen has recently completed a Post-graduate Diploma in Management Practice from Henley Business School and holds various certificates in Economic & Policy Development (from the University of the Witwatersrand) and others through participation in international training programs with organisations such as JICA, UNDP and UNIDO - focusing on industrial cluster development and economic development zones implementation.



11. Victor Lobi

Victor Lobi serves as the current Secretary General of the Lesedi Black Business Forum (LBBF) and as a director of VicLobi Financial Solutions. He completed the New Management Development Program at the University of Stellenbosch. Following experience in various professional roles, he founded a construction company in 2011, which he continues to lead to this day.

12. Tshepo Mazibuko

Tshepo Mazibuko, is a resident of Lesedi Municipality and is a director of Makgopheng Construction, currently he is the sitting President of the Lesedi Black Business Forum which was started in 2016, to champion interest of black business within the Lesedi municipality