

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the State of Local Governance Publication, themed 'Community Resilience and Vulnerability in South Africa' explores the notion of resilience and how communities exposed to extreme vulnerabilities and poverty respond to the daily stresses and challenges. The papers presented in the publication examine resilience literature and present case studies which demonstrate strategies employed by communities to overcome their circumstance through adapting and transforming as well as identifies the roles of external agents, i.e. non-government organisations, the state, and the factors that promote and or undermine community resilience.

The introductory paper presents resilience by looking at the origins and development of the term and critically examines its meaning. The paper also explores the notion of social vulnerability as it deepens the understanding of community resilience. The paper criticises resilience thinking for not recognising that the majority of people in countries like South Africa live in a state of 'generalised precariousness', for not adequately taking account of power and social justice, and for devaluing context and specificity. The paper also reviews how resilience and vulnerability are dealt with in the National Development Plan, concluding that it falls prey to similar critiques. Finally the paper seeks to define what a resilient community looks like and provides a framework for community resilience which can be applied to the South African context.

The Built Environment Support Group presents a case study of North East Sector 2 informal settlement in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, and draws on the vulnerability framework by Pasteur (2011) to identify vulnerabilities and hazards this community is exposed to. The paper demonstrates how this community was able to adapt and take a proactive approach to human settlement development as well as its ability to draw on organisational capacity to strengthen their position in negotiating with the state.

The paper by the Community Organisation Resource Centre presents the Langrug informal settlement in Franschhoek, Western Cape, as a demonstration of development from below through collaborative planning and strategic partnerships with government and community organisations to address community needs. The ability of government to provide adequate services to informal settlements is limited and Langrug is no exception to the lack of services. The need for water and dignified sanitation services inspired community members to create alternatives and strengthen community cohesion. The paper draws strongly on resilience theory which focuses on strength of the individual and system which will enable it to rise above adversity.

Rural communities across the country are faced with numerous challenges which expose landless farmers and rural families to negotiate daily for their survival. The paper by the Trust for Community Outreach and Education presents a case of small-scale farming in three rural municipalities in the Western Cape. This paper highlights some of the challenges in rural communities and how through collective organisation and partnerships communities are able to adapt, challenge their status quo and strengthen their livelihoods.

The paper by Khanya-aicdd explores how savings-led microfinance systems can address particular dimensions of vulnerability and enable the poor, women in particular, to cope with shocks and stresses due to ill health, death or natural factors. Focusing on Izandla Niyagezana in KwaZulu-Natal, the paper demonstrates how a savings group can strengthen social cohesion and contribute to livelihood strategies of the poor, thereby enhancing resilience.

The paper by Isandla Institute presents conflict as an element to be identified and addressed within development planning to neutralise power imbalances and strengthen those who are most vulnerable. The paper poses that contestation and conflict are part and parcel of democracy and should be acknowledged and harnessed in democratic decision-making. Mindful that contestation can be both constructive and destructive, the paper argues for an attitudinal shift and the adoption of approaches such as appreciative enquiry, mediation and conflict transformation to ensure that contestation can be explored and integrated constructively into development processes.

The paper by Afesis-corplan argues that the societal and generational woundedness experienced prevents the county from reaching its full potential and that in order to move forward the past must be confronted first. The growth and unity that has been achieved must not be minimised, but there is still much to be done as is evident in violent expressions of frustration by the people toward government, towards each other and toward themselves, which is a result of past (collective) injustices, anger and aggression. The paper suggests that mechanisms need to be established that will address the woundedness and aggression and argues for the development of networked healing spaces to enable citizens to confront, understand, transcend and release the pain and trauma of the past.

The Democracy Development Programme presents the Lavender Hill community in the Western Cape with its multiple vulnerabilities. It is an impoverished community dominated by gangs, drugs and violence, yet through an innovative process of visioning and capacity building, including drawing on community gifts and resources, members of the community were able to transform their engagement with the state and mobilise for social change. This paper illustrates how a community is able to draw on their collective skills, assets and resources to create change and how an NGO can act as a catalyst for development.

The papers present an array of dissatisfied communities who draw on some form of resource, process, organisation and personal strength by creating connections and social capital to bring about positive change in the community and lives of citizens. These case studies demonstrate community resilience as evidenced in social mobilisation and collective action to address social vulnerability. At the same time, the papers remind us of the role and responsibilities of other actors, most notably the state, to address social vulnerability, support self-organisation of communities, and forge innovative partnerships around learning and implementation.