



Institutional Background

[Democracy Works Foundation](#) (DWF) is a southern African non-profit company with headquarters in South Africa, which promotes and develops inclusive, equitable and sustainable consensus democracies.

How are we coping with the lockdown conditions?

The Covid-19 disaster response grants the executive wide powers and significant amounts of money have been allocated. For these reasons, guarding democratic freedoms, institutions and structures has never been more important. The DWF team has quickly responded to the crisis.

The [Democracy Works Academy](#), an initiative run in partnership with the [In Transformation Initiative](#) (ITI) to develop and support young leaders, has moved all its training seminars online and developing virtual, interactive learning approaches. The [Southern African Political Parties and Dialogue](#) programme, is a USAID-funded initiative implemented in 6 countries in partnership with [Freedom House Southern Africa](#). The programme aims to strengthen the internal capacities of political parties and key actors and to enhance their capacity in influencing water and energy policies that respond to citizen needs. The programme is shifting to virtual meetings with political parties, online and phone-based data collection and is piloting a virtual regional conference for political parties. The [Civil Society Organisations' Participation in Provincial Legislatures](#) (CSPPL) programme, implemented with technical support from the [Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#) (WFD) and co-funding from the [European Union \(EU\)](#), is using WhatsApp to learn about the challenges and the resilience in vulnerable communities and piloting online learning events for provincial legislature staff.

Challenges for vulnerable communities

Lockdown is virtually impossible for people living in informal settlements and the deployment of the army to enforce lockdown conditions has come with reports of abuse and beatings. Unemployment and poverty have only been compounded during this crisis, leaving people desperate for basic necessities including food and water.

Communities are struggling to access health care services, medication and professional counselling or helplines. A particular need exists for services for people living in abusive relationships, unable to access any of the safety nets that may have existed before the lockdown.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are responding actively to the challenge. Many are using digital apps to spread awareness or to alert police. Community outreach officers are providing information at essential goods stores. Mobile clinics serving far-flung rural areas are organising shelter networks. DWF is supporting these CSOs in actively engaging their provincial legislatures to highlight service shortfalls and share the reality their communities are faced with.