

Speaker Profiles



*Eternal Evolution-
Transforming for
Sustainability*

NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2025
25-27 AUGUST

*Brixton Multipurpose Centre, 78 Foyle Ave, Mayfair West,
Johannesburg*



Azola Manjati

Topic: Overview of Johannesburg's Cemeteries

Azola Manjati is an experienced public sector leader with over 15 years in environmental services and municipal operations, specializing in cemetery development, management, and policy implementation. He currently serves as the Manager of Cemeteries and Crematoria at Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) and is an Executive Member of the South African Cemetery Association (SACA).

Azola has played a critical role in municipal cemetery planning and management across several municipalities. In Johannesburg, he leads strategic oversight of cemetery and crematoria services, ensuring service delivery, asset control, compliance, and infrastructure development. Previously, in the Langeberg Municipality, he was responsible for the formulation of cemetery by-laws, development of new burial grounds, and enhancement of public facilities. During his tenure at the City of Cape Town, he managed parks operations, contributing to the maintenance and development of public open spaces as part of broader green infrastructure. In addition, Azola served as Deputy Director at SANBI (South African National Biodiversity Institute), where he provided strategic leadership at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, overseeing governance, operations, and biodiversity conservation.

His qualifications include a Postgraduate Diploma in Project Management, a Degree in Horticulture, a Minimum Municipal Competency Level, and he is currently completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Management.

Azola is passionate about sustainable, dignified burial solutions and brings deep insight into municipal planning, policy, and stakeholder engagement across South Africa's urban and rural landscapes.

Synopsis:

JCPZ oversees 42 cemeteries (37 are passive and 5 active) and 3 crematoria across Johannesburg. Historically, the first cemetery was established in 1886, with notable sites like Braamfontein, Brixton, and Avalon reflecting the city's evolving socio-political and cultural history.



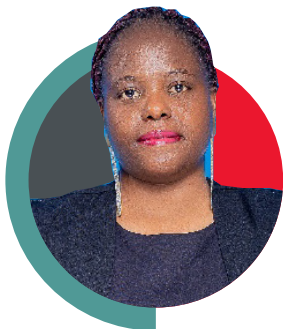
Baloyi Magezi Elijah, PhD

Topic: “Bring him/her back home”

I began my career as a Primary School teacher (1987–88), then moved on to teach at Humula High School near Malamulele, Limpopo. I later pursued Theology, completing a BA and Candidacy into Ministry in 1998 at the University of Potchefstroom. I was ordained as a Reformed Minister on 22 May 1999. As NRF C2 rated researcher I have published more than 50 journal articles and four books. My current research on Erosion of African Burial traditions awarded me with membership and grant which invited me to collaborate with some international scholars selected from around the globe in Princeton, USA from August to December 2024 under the topic of “Thriving in Diverse Contexts.” I previously chaired the Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology. I recently managed to secure research partnership between CONTRALESA and UNISA on the lost African funeral, burial and mourning practices.

Synopsis:

The fact that death and burial are conceptualised and addressed within cultural and religious confines opens a discussion as to check how suggested methods of burial over against the traditional ones are handled or perceived by Black South Africans. The religious, cultural and traditional contestations are important to address as a way to seek what can be done within the context of the challenges of burial space as well as developing environmental and health problems.



Beauty Kujinga

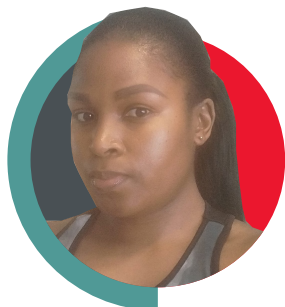
Topic: Sustainable Death Care in Africa

I am a motivated and adaptable development professional with a strong passion for excellence and continuous growth. I am the founder of Rock and Roll Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing women's development and empowerment.

Known for quickly mastering technology and handling sensitive information with discretion, I bring a blend of professionalism, diplomacy, and effective communication skills. I thrive both independently and in team environments, consistently demonstrating initiative, integrity, and a commitment to achieving meaningful impact. My strengths include analytical thinking, interpersonal effectiveness, and relationship management. With a flexible and enthusiastic approach, I remain eager to embrace new challenges that contribute to both personal and community development.

Synopsis:

Africa's death care systems are under strain from urban growth, land scarcity, and environmental pressures. Cremation offers a dignified, sustainable alternative that addresses these challenges. The future lies in harmonizing cultural values with innovative, eco-friendly solutions.



Boitumelo Faith Mafafo

Topic: Green Fencing in Urban Cemeteries

Detail-oriented certified Professional Natural Scientist (SACNASP Reg No: I65923) with 10 years' experience focusing on urban greening, plant health, and maintenance. Skilled in coordinating research, testing, and development projects, with a strong background in leadership and operational efficiency.

Currently Regional Manager at Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (2024–present), overseeing regional performance and providing strategic direction aligned with corporate goals. Responsible for leading the integrated service delivery plan across parks, open spaces, cemeteries, and multiple departments. Manage regional annual budgets and foster strategic partnerships to enhance service delivery and promote environmental priorities.

Previously served as Senior Horticulturist (2014–2024), contributing expertise in horticulture and plant management. Proven ability to optimize resource allocation to meet strategic objectives of Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo and the City of Johannesburg.

Synopsis:

The presentation is about investigating the connection between criminal activities such as vandalism theft, in the public cemeteries that are owned by City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. The paper is concentrating on the cemetery functionality and the location. In conclusion this research recommend green fencing as an environmentally sustainable mitigation plan to fence off the cemeteries.



Dr Relebohile Ncha

Topic: Challenges Faced by Provincial Forensic Pathology Services: Strengthening Collaboration with Local Government

Dr Relebohile Ncha is Medical Doctor, graduated with her medical degree from University of Cape Town in 2006. She furthered her studies in the field of Public Health Medicine where she obtained her master's degree in public health, Master of Medicine in Community Health as well as the College of Medicine Fellowship in Public Health Medicine. Dr Ncha is a health systems and preventative medicine specialist and has extensive experience within the public and private health sector. Currently, Dr Ncha is a Chief Director at the National Department of Health responsible for Hospitals and Tertiary health service. She is also in charge of Forensic pathology Services and is also the head of the secretariate for the National Forensic Pathology Committee.

Synopsis:

The presentaion will cover the landsscape of Forensic pathology services in the country. Then I will talk to process issues around handling of unidentified bodies and challenges that we encounter especially relating to local municipality. Then I will cover the recommendations.



Dorah Kiki

Topic: Reimagining Cemeteries: Climate Risk, Vulnerability and Sustainable Development

Dorah Kiki serves as the Senior Advisor: Environmental Management and Sustainability at the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). In this role, she has significantly contributed to SALGA's Social Cohesion and Environmental Management programmes. These span key areas such as migration, cemeteries management, arts and culture, libraries, environmental compliance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecosystem-based adaptation, biodiversity, and sustainability.

She has led several national projects and represented SALGA on major platforms including the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) Technical Working Group for South Africa's 2023 Migration Profile Report and the South Africa–European Union Dialogue. Dorah has worked closely with the IOM, Statistics South Africa, and CSIR on critical intersections like migration, health, and climate change.

She collaborates with departments including Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment; Home Affairs; Human Settlements; and Employment and Labour. Dorah holds a Master's in Environment from the University of Pretoria and is pursuing a second in Environmental Science at Wits, with research focused on climate change and food systems.



Mr. Rabelani Tshikalange

Topic: Reimagining Cemeteries: Climate Risk, Vulnerability and Sustainable Development

Is a Specialist: Environmental Management, Climate Change and Sustainability at SALGA, holding a master's degree in environmental science from Wits University. He previously served as Programme Manager and Head of Climate Change and Resilience at the City of Johannesburg for six years. Mr.Tshikalange has also worked as Director for Green Economy Programmes & Projects with the Western Cape Government. At the national level, he has experience with the Department of Minerals & Energy in the Energy Efficiency & Environment Directorate, as well as the Department of Environmental Affairs, where he headed Climate Change Mitigation Implementation and contributed to the UNFCCC's international climate change negotiations. He is also an active advisory board member of the University of Johannesburg Process, Energy and Environment Technology Station (UJ PEETS).

Synopsis:

Reimagining Cemeteries: Climate Risk, Vulnerability, and Sustainable Urban Development

As cities grapple with the escalating impacts of climate change, urban cemeteries (which are often overlooked in planning) are emerging as critical spaces at the intersection of environmental vulnerability, cultural heritage, and sustainable development. This presentation explores how cemeteries, traditionally seen as static and sacred, can be reimagined as dynamic, multifunctional landscapes that contribute to climate resilience, biodiversity, and inclusive urban futures.

The presentation highlights the physical and socio-cultural vulnerabilities of cemeteries to climate hazards such as flooding, heatwaves, and land degradation. It also examines innovative approaches to cemetery design and management that align with green infrastructure principles, circular economy practices, and community engagement.

Participants will gain insights into:

- The climate-related risks facing cemeteries in urban and peri-urban contexts.
- Strategies for integrating cemeteries into broader sustainability and resilience agendas.
- Policy and planning tools for transforming cemeteries into inclusive, ecologically valuable public spaces.



Lusanda Paul

Topic: Circular Memorial Eco-entrepreneurship

Meet Lusanda Paul, a Master's student in Business and Administration as well as an aspiring film professional passionate about storytelling, innovation, and impact. With a strong background in film and media, she explores creative and inclusive ways to bring diverse narratives to life on screen. Her ability to excel across fields reflects her commitment to lifelong learning and adaptability.

Lusanda is a published academic and is actively building a research portfolio focused on sustainability, creative industries, and innovation. She is deeply invested in contributing to knowledge and plans to pursue further scholarly work in the future.

Beyond academia, Lusanda is a polyglot and avid reader, constantly expanding her cultural and intellectual horizons. Her love for language, literature, and visual storytelling enriches her content creation, where she blends insight and creativity with purpose.

With a professional yet personable approach, Lusanda brings excellence, curiosity, and originality to every pursuit—ready to make a meaningful impact across disciplines.

Synopsis:

This presentation introduces Circular Memorial Eco-Entrepreneurship—a fresh, sustainability-driven approach to reimagining cemeteries as eco-conscious, community-empowered spaces. Rooted in circular economy principles, the paper explores how green innovation, cultural sensitivity, and entrepreneurial thinking can transform memorial practices for a more sustainable future.



Mrs Katharine Sarabjiet

Topic: Sustainability in Long-Term Planning

Katharine Sarabjiet is a Professional Town and Regional Planner at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA). She holds a National Diploma and Bachelor of Technology in Town and Regional Planning from Durban University of Technology. With experience spanning eThekweni Municipality, the South African Medical Research Council, and Msunduzi Municipality, Katharine has been with KZN CoGTA since 2012. Her expertise includes developing provincial protocols for cemeteries and development applications, supporting integrated settlement planning, and providing technical support to intergovernmental task teams. She is committed to aligning long-term planning with infrastructure and budgeting while empowering stakeholders on spatial planning and development issues.

Synopsis:

My presentation provides a holistic view of the various development and planning considerations that go behind establishing cemeteries, and therefore contextualises its sustainability, as a land use, in relation to the long-term growth of settlements. The fundamental focus is to help capacitate key role players in being pragmatic when answering a fundamental question - Do cemeteries still have a place within the built landscape of many Municipalities?



Bongumusa Walter Ngema

Topic: Urban Cemeteries as Green Development

Is a postgraduate student pursuing a Master of Business and Management Sciences with a focus on Sustainability at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. His research and academic interests lie in environmental justice, green development, and urban sustainability. Bongumusa is currently a Paralegal Intern at the Department of Justice and serves as the Country Chairperson of G17 UAC South Africa. He has gained practical experience through roles at the BRICS Research Institute and LaTonisi Business Consultants. He is committed to youth development, sustainability advocacy, and bridging policy and grassroots environmental challenges. Passionate about learning, he believes in contributing innovative ideas and gaining insights from platforms like the SACA Conference. His work on urban cemeteries explores how these spaces can serve both environmental and social functions in urban development planning.

Synopsis:

This presentation explores sustainable cemetery innovations and policy trends in urban South Africa, focusing on Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban. It examines how cities are responding to land scarcity and environmental concerns through green burial practices. Using Ecological Modernisation Theory, the study analyses policy reform, stakeholder roles, and planning innovations that align death care with climate resilience and cultural sensitivity.



Bishop Ngobeli

Topic: The Impact of Homelessness in Cemeteries: A case study in the City of Johannesburg

Senior Manager: Protected Areas and Environmental Enforcement at Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo, Founder of Association of Parks and Recreation Africa and Bishop Ngobeli Foundation. He is currently serve at National Forestry Advisory Committee (South Africa), South Africa Council for Natural Scientific Profession Advisor Council. Former World Urban Parks Board member and Former President of the Institute of Environmental and Recreation Management.

Bishop Ngobeli is interested in advocating for Parks for All and Greening of Africa. To see every kid in Africa to have a park in the communities and have a liveable green community. We need to continue developing open spaces for our communities and greening programs will provide benefits far reaching beyond health, and wellbeing. Let's give future generations access to the best quality, vibrant and equitable open spaces. He has been involved in various Greening initiative such as Presidential 10 Million Tree Planting Program, Garden of Remembrance, Nelson Mandela International Day of Tree Planting, SHEEVOLVES 1000 Stories and 100 000 tree planting and currently the Forest of Freedom at the Freedom Park Heritage Site.

Bishop Ngobeli is a certified Parks Profession and had been awarded various accolades such as World Urban Parks Emerging Leader in 2020 and South African National Parks Kudu Award 2024.

Synopsis:

Homelessness in South Africa is a complex and pervasive issue deeply rooted in the country's socio-economic disparities, particularly the legacy of apartheid, leading to high rates of unemployment, inadequate affordable housing, and poverty, which disproportionately affect marginalized communities; this results in a significant population of individuals living on the streets, facing challenges like lack of access to basic needs, health services, and social support, demanding a multi-faceted approach from government agencies, NGOs, and civil society to address the structural causes and provide effective interventions to alleviate the issue.

The City of Joburg as the mega City in Africa and World is not exception when it comes to homelessness. People come to the City looking for the greener pastures and when that is not achieved people find themselves residing in public open spaces such as parks, rivers and streams, cemeteries and other ecological sensitive areas.

Cemeteries are designed to be used by communities as a resting place for loved ones, they are regarded a secret space where communities feel connected to their lost loved ones. It became a challenge when these spaces are transformed to be use illegally as sleeping areas and no longer function as resting places for those who has departed on earth. Communities tend to avoid visiting these spaces as they become crime areas and base of all social issues.



Antionette Morgan

Topic: The Friends of Johannesburg Cemeteries

Antionette Morgan is a registered tourist guide with a strong interest in Johannesburg's historical cemeteries. She has been an active volunteer and committee member of the Friends of Johannesburg Cemeteries for the past two years, where she focuses on research, public tours, and heritage conservation.

Antionette also volunteers with the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation, contributing to various initiatives including guided walks, and is a member of her local branch of the Genealogical Society. Her work centres on exploring and sharing the stories of Johannesburg's past through cemetery tours and local history projects.

While she does not hold a formal history qualification, her commitment and ongoing involvement reflect a deep personal passion for heritage and public engagement.

Synopsis:

The Friends of Johannesburg Cemeteries (FoJC), founded in 2018 by Sarah Welham under the Johannesburg Heritage Foundation, is a volunteer-driven initiative that cares for neglected graves in Braamfontein and Brixton cemeteries. Working closely with Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo, FoJC organises clean-ups, restoration projects, and historical research to preserve the dignity and heritage of those buried. The group has successfully restored thousands of vandalised ash niches, assists communities with grave-related concerns, and promotes cemetery tours to raise awareness and funds. FoJC envisions turning cemeteries into respected green spaces for public use while safeguarding their historical and cultural value.



Kathryn Smith (Associate Professor)

Topic: Visualising Personhood: cemeteries as archives of the future

Is a visual artist, curator and pracademic working across archival, forensic, humanitarian, and historical contexts. She has exhibited internationally and published widely across scholarly and popular contexts, and featured on episode 18 of the podcast How To Die: The Forensic Artist.

She is associate professor and chair of the Department of Visual Arts (Stellenbosch University), specialising in interdisciplinary and collaborative practices, and directs VIZ.Lab, a transdisciplinary studio/lab interested in art-science-technology interactions and offering research, training and service delivery in forensic human identification and reimagining heritage practices.

Synopsis:

Visualising Personhood: cemeteries as archives of the future

Over nearly three decades of research-driven artistic and curatorial practice, the dead and their representations have become a central concern, and cemeteries and archives represent twinned resources for reconstructing past lives and events. Like cemeteries, archives carry the physical traces of past lives. Like archives, cemeteries do not exist for their inhabitants, but for current and future generations. If, as the idea goes, the way a community treats its dead is an indication of how it takes care of the living, how do our cemeteries measure up?

This presentation will reflect on work undertaken in forensic and heritage contexts, applying digital technologies to the identification and depiction of the known and anonymous dead. Informed by notions of postmortem personhood and the right to be identified in death, and guided by the affordances forensic care (M'Charek and Casartelli, 2009) and the cautions of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003), this work combines scientific and artistic methods to create images that transform otherwise abject human remains – and sometimes archival documents – into visual representations of living appearance that seek to engage the public in various ways, whether to assist in identifying an unknown person, provide information about a death or disappearance, or offers new ways of personifying historical periods and events.





Welcerinie Bender

Topic: The Silent Crisis: Unidentified Natural Deaths and Legislative Gaps in Western Cape Public Hospitals

I am a dedicated and motivated individual with strong creativity and excellent interpersonal skills. I am a quick learner with diverse abilities, including proficient problem-solving and analytical skills. I excel both independently and as a team player, showing respect for others and their viewpoints. In academic settings, I am diligent, conscientious, and enthusiastic in my task execution. I possess a pleasant sense of humour and self-confidence. My attire and grooming reflect a high level of self-esteem.

Synopsis:

This presentation explores the overlooked potential humanitarian crisis of unidentified natural deaths in South African public hospitals, with a specific focus on the Western Cape Province. Using a mixed-method approach, the study quantifies the number of unidentified individuals who died from natural causes between 2021 and 2024 and critically examines the legislative and procedural gaps that hinder their management and identification. Findings reveal fragmented national legislation, a lack of standard operating procedures, and institutional inefficiencies that contribute to delays in identification and pauper burials. The presentation calls for policy reform, interdepartmental coordination, and the implementation of ethical, standardised identification protocols.



Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai

Topic: Municipal Innovations

Dr. R.D. Gwisai is an environmental health, pollution, and quality management scientist with 21 years' experience in teaching, research, consultancy, and extension work. His focus includes waste management and pollution control; safety, health and environmental legislation; development control and urban planning. Currently, he is the Pro Vice – Chancellor (Academics) at Unicaf University and has held roles at multiple institutions including the University of East London, Liverpool John Moores University, Bindura University of Science Education, Solusi University and the University of Botswana. He is affiliated with several technical committees of standards development at ISO, ARSO, SAZ and serves in several advisory and leadership roles across the globe, Africa and Zimbabwe. He is a fellow and member of professional bodies and industry associations. Dr. Gwisai is a published academic, journal editor and reviewer, and an international conference speaker.

Synopsis:

KEY WORDS: Burial Regulations, Innovations, Norms, Practices, Environmental Consequences, Land – use Planning and Dynamics, Memorial Spaces

Zimbabwean Municipalities lack space for burial sites. Using a PRISMA literature search and review from ProQuest, EBSCO, Taylor and Francis Online, African Journals Online databases where seventy – four (74) articles met the criteria. Evidence shows that burial innovations and spaces face the NIMBY phenomenon, while the preferences of the bereaved are based on affordability, cultural, religious and traditional beliefs.



Ms Linda Paul

Topic: Circular Memorial Economies: Reimagining Sustainable Deathcare through Eco-Entrepreneurship”

Ms. Linda Paul is a distinguished academician and accomplished professional with over 30 years of experience, including 26 in higher education. Currently pursuing a PhD in Public Administration at Durban University of Technology, she holds an MBA and a Master's in Development Studies. Ms. Paul's extensive research interests span higher education policies, entrepreneurship, human resources, public policy, and development studies. Her scholarly contributions include numerous articles and book chapters. Additionally, in 2024 and 2025, she has presented numerous papers at key international conferences, addressing diverse topics such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, AI's impact on education, business resilience, ODeL strategies, and economic inequality. Renowned for her interpersonal skills, commitment to service, and multilingual proficiency, Ms. Paul consistently fosters academic excellence and innovation, inspiring future generations.

Synopsis:

This presentation explores circular memorial economies as a transformative approach to sustainable deathcare. It highlights how eco-entrepreneurship is reshaping end-of-life practices by integrating biodegradable materials, green burial innovations, and community-led memorial services. The discussion reimagines death not as an endpoint, but as part of a regenerative cycle that aligns with environmental ethics and the circular economy.



Chantel L. Carelse-Williams

Topic: “Flames of Innovation: Entrepreneurial Models for Sustainable Transformation in Urban Crematorium Infrastructure

Meet Chantel Carelse-Williams, a dedicated and forward-thinking master's student currently pursuing her degree in Entrepreneurship, with a strong professional background in education and organisational development. With a growing passion for innovation in the funeral and memorialization space, Chantel is committed to reimagining traditional end-of-life services through technology, sustainability, and inclusive design.

Her academic journey bridges entrepreneurship, environmental consciousness, and social impact—reflecting her drive to contribute meaningfully to academic discourse and real-world transformation. Known for her warm, professional presence and purpose-driven mindset, Chantel brings depth, curiosity, and innovation to every endeavour.

Synopsis:

This talk explores entrepreneurial approaches to building sustainable urban cremation infrastructure, highlighting business models that merge eco-conscious design, technology, and community needs.



Dr. Piali Haldar

Topic: Reimagining Memorial Practices

Dr Piali Haldar earned her MBA from the Institute of Rural Management Anand and completed her PhD at Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra. Her core areas of specialization include rural marketing, rural development, branding strategy, and consumer behaviour. With over 20 years of experience in academia and research, she has published extensively in renowned journals listed in ABDC and Scopus. She has authored one textbook on Marketing and edited three academic books. Dr. Haldar has presented her research at numerous national and international conferences and has contributed more than 50 papers to reputed journals, edited volumes, and conference proceedings.

Synopsis:

Traditional memorial practices, often resource-intensive and environmentally harmful, are increasingly being re-evaluated in light of ecological concerns. This paper explores emerging sustainable alternatives, including natural burials, biodegradable urns, aquamation, human composting, and digital memorials, which offer meaningful remembrance with reduced environmental impact. Despite their benefits, these practices face regulatory, cultural, and religious barriers; the paper advocates for updated policies, industry collaboration, and public education to support this shift. Integrating sustainability into the death care industry promises to uphold human dignity while fostering environmental stewardship and planetary well-being.



Mr Vusi Skosana

Topic: Importance of EIA and Regulations

Born in Siyabuswa, formerly part of the Kwandebele homeland, now under Dr JS Moroka Municipality in Mpumalanga. He completed both his primary and secondary education in the district.

He holds an MSc in Environmental Ecology from the University of Pretoria and a Master's in Environmental Management from the University of the Free State. His other qualifications include a BTech in Natural Science: Conservation from UNISA and a National Diploma in Natural Science: Conservation from Mangosuthu University of Technology. Mr. Skosana has over 28 years of public service experience. He has worked in the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Gauteng Department of Environment, and the national Departments of Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs. Since 2007, he has served in the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. He is currently Director of Integrated Environmental Authorisations, overseeing national infrastructure EIA applications. An open-minded and approachable individual, he is known for his interactive style—and he's a proud Sagittarius.



Dr Hasani Patrick Shikolokolo

Topic: Efficient Space use in Burial Sites

Holds a PhD in Development Studies from University of South Africa. He is a retired government official who used to work as a Deputy Director managing Capacity and Skills Development for the three spheres of government. His target groups were government officials and political leaders. He has contributed in policy development of the Department of Human Settlements which shaped the implementation of programmes and projects.

He is currently serving as an Academic facilitator at the University of South Africa and a part time lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology. He is also a member of the Erosion of funeral practices team and the current project with CONTRALESA is "Critical reflection on the erosion of post-colonial African Funeral Tradition." He has reviewed several articles and also presented to conferences.



National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (NHTKL) KGOSI THABO MILTON SEATLHOLO, RAPULANA!

Chairperson of the Southern African Network of Traditional Leaders in Drug Demand Reduction (SANTLDDR)

Kgosi Thabo Milton Seatlholo is a prominent leader in traditional governance and community development. He currently serves as Chairperson of the Southern African Network of Traditional Leaders in Drug Demand Reduction (SANTLDDR), elected in December 2024 in Arusha, Tanzania, after previously serving as Interim Chairperson. In this role, he leads collaborative efforts across SADC countries to combat drug and substance abuse in traditional communities.

Since 31 October 2022, Kgosi Seatlholo has been Chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (NHTKL) — the youngest in its history. Representing more than 7,000 traditional leaders and 25 million people, he has championed a “developmental monarchs” approach to rural growth through strategic public and private partnerships. Under his leadership, the NHTKL has advanced initiatives in governance, justice, social development, economic growth, culture, heritage, and land reform.

Notable achievements include leading the InvestRural strategy, launching memorial lectures to honour community heroes, influencing rural policy reforms, expanding grassroots outreach, and securing resources for community upliftment — such as building a home for an indigent family.

In June 2025, President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed him to the Eminent Persons Group to guide the National Dialogue. He is also a member of the North West Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders and the Senior Traditional Leader of the Barolong Boo Rapulana Traditional Community.

A strong advocate for indigenous knowledge systems, Kgosi Seatlholo has served on national expert panels and promotes their integration in addressing socio-economic challenges. His academic background includes political leadership, business administration, and specialised training in African leadership and indigenous systems.