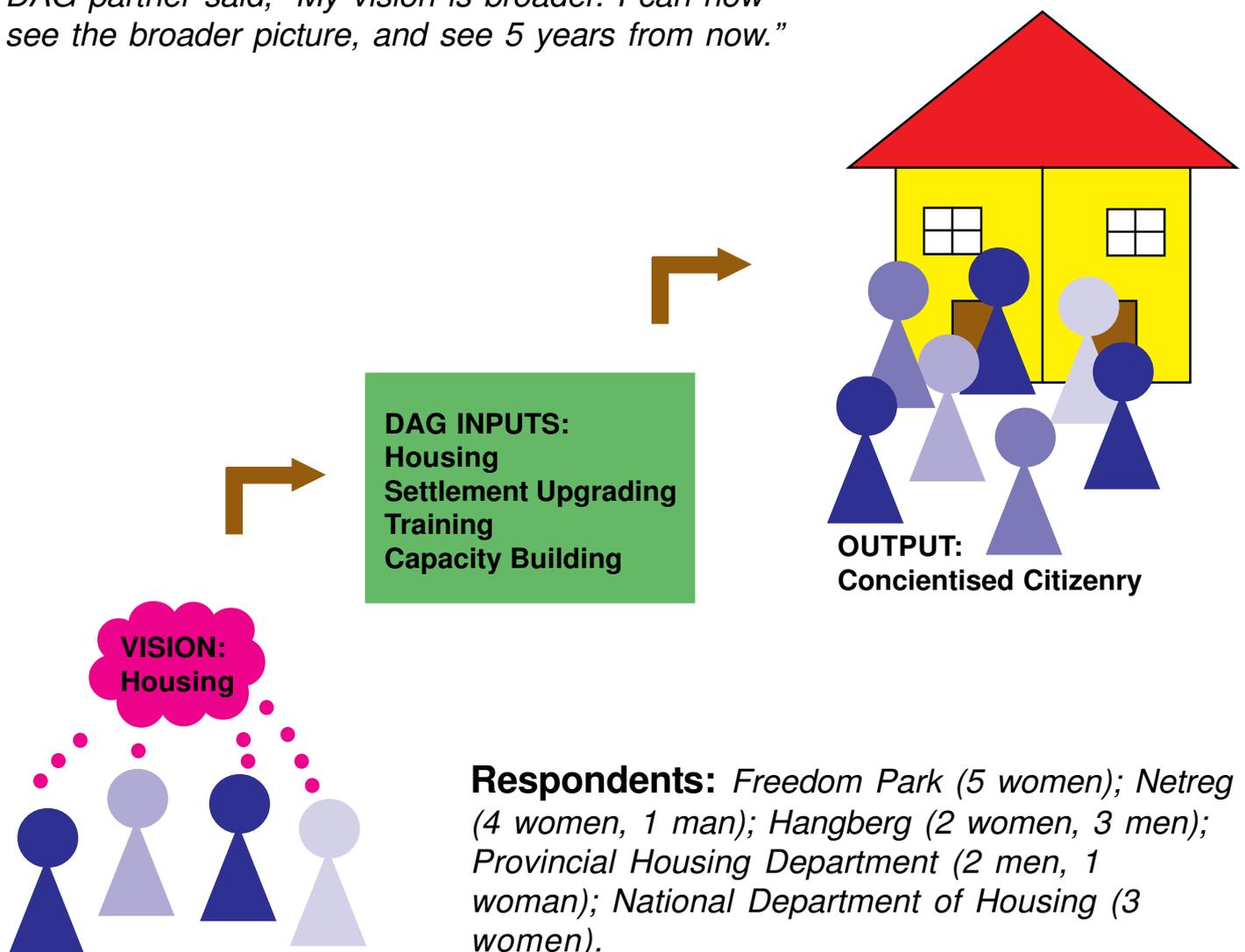


Most Significant Change Development Action Group

Date: 10 February 2009

DAG's Most Significant Change: *As an organisation, we believe our most significant change has been strengthening the leadership capacity of community members to interface and dialogue with a diverse range of government and non-government actors to meet their basic needs. We have used a very specific, concrete intervention, namely housing and settlement upgrading, to organise community actors to utilise their agency to become an active, involved citizenry. Through our training and capacity building programmes, we not only support communities to access housing, but also raise their social consciousness in the process. Thus, feedback suggests to us that our real impact is our contribution to building a sustainable and inclusive socio-political context. As Mona Miller, one DAG partner said, "My vision is broader. I can now see the broader picture, and see 5 years from now."*





FREEDOM PARK

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE : Education and Training from DAG

In 1998, the Freedom Park Community, largely comprised of people living in overcrowded conditions in Mitchell's Plain, chose to take action. They spotted an overgrown field adjacent to where they currently lived, which was owned by the city of Cape Town and zoned for a school. The school, however, had never been built and the property devolved into a hotspot of crime. Rapes, robberies, and drug transactions occurred regularly. The Freedom Park community decided to clear the field, eradicate the opportunity for illegal activity, and build shacks on the property. They organised themselves, resisted eviction, and approached DAG to help them build formal houses in 2000. Today, the project is almost complete – and 493 families have homes of their own.



MONA

My name is Mona Miller and I stay in Freedom Park for 10 years now. I was living in a shack for 14 years, and now in the last year I got my new house, which Niall Mellon Townships Initiative and DAG built.

For years I struggled. There are a lot of challenges living in a shack. You have to have endurance, you have to have patience, you have

to suffer hardships. When DAG came along, it was like shining a light. Because we were people who wanted houses, but didn't know how to go about it. And don't even know who to see or who to speak to. But they got us to the right department and the right people at the right times.

And they gave us a lot of training that I was part of. I never know a lot of things, but now I some-

I could help them, and refer them to the head of the department. So, it was hard work, but it was worth it, it was worth it.

Not only the leadership that effected me, but the personal changes also. The personal changes within yourself and the way you look at things is different. Your vision is broader. You can now see the broader picture, and see even five years from now, or 10 years from now. And it doesn't stop there, because, I believe that whatever I've learned, I've told my children about it. And I've seen the results, because my children now know the sacrifice that I made, the time, the effort. And they know now what sacrifice is about. I wanted to inspire my children to lead a fruitful journey in life. And they look up to me now. They want to be educated. My son is in grade 11 and my daughter finished grade twelve. I'm still trying to find the money for her to continue. They both want to go somewhere in life. Also, I'm much more open minded. I might know that I don't know all yet, I don't know all yet, I don't know all. I'm much more open minded and interested in learning. One day I want to be a parliamentarian!

"I never know a lot of things, but now sometimes I say I'm overeducated!"

times say that I'm *overeducated* because all the information and knowledge DAG has given us. I never dreamt that I would be educated. And now I have all this knowledge, and when someone has a problem,



FREEDOM PARK

PATRICIA

I'm Patricia Christians, the vice chair now of Freedom Park. I'm very grateful to, I'm very grateful to be a part of this project for having a second chance of getting a house. There are many people outside of Freedom Park that don't have this chance. I have no stress about paying my bond because the payment was a decision that came from me. The loan was interest free. So I pay my bond, and no stress, no interest.

"I won't mess it up! I won't mess up my second chance!"



Previously I had a house until my husband lost his job. So we moved from room to room because we couldn't afford a bank house again. No one would give us a loan. We were, like, black-listed. And all because we moved to a shack here

in Freedom Park, and struggled with the people here, that I was offered this loan and got another chance. I can say it's a real second chance, and I will never slip this chance through my fingers by not paying my house. Because it's not that it's

a lot of money that you have to pay, and I can afford it. Each beneficiary here in Freedom Park that had a house before, had to join a savings group to qualify for the loan. I pay R300 per month. I won't mess up my second chance!

LESAR

"I now know a hell of a lot of the construction side of things."



My name is Lesar, everyone knows me as Lee, and I am the [Community Liaison Officer] CLO of Freedom Park in the construction side of things. The significant change in my life is that I now know a hell of a lot of the construction side of

knew nothing of community work, or what. Nothing of construction. And I've been attending different workshops given by DAG, and other organisations, attending those workshops. I've empowered myself a lot, so that if this job is fin-

ished, I can go and find me a different job then going to work in a factory or on the taxi again. I feel there will be a better opportunity for a better job in the future for myself.

things. I worked as the CLO for infrastructure, so I know about plumbing and how roads get made. I worked on the roads helping the local labour build these roads. And also with the construction. I'm involved in all these things.

The greatest part of everything is that, I think is that, 13 years ago, I used to work on the taxi as a taxi guard and I never

ished, I can go and find me a different job then going to work in a factory or on the taxi again. I feel there will be a better opportunity for a better job in the future for myself.

And for me, I think it is really important for what I achieved because being disabled, being disabled, and not finding a job, and collecting disability. I cancelled the disability, and offered not having an income, to go for all these trainings, so I can begin to know some things, and then get a better job in life. So, I think I have achieved a lot, and I think in the future there is still a lot for me to do. You know what I mean? And just not stay as a CLO, but find a better job, taking responsibility. Because it's not easy working in communities and working with people. Things don't happen...overnight. It's a hell of a lot of small things that come with it. You get a lot of problems with the community. But it's also very important that you have the passion for working with communities and doing these things. And keep on doing what you're doing. And also fighting for a house, I think it's great. Yea.

FREEDOMPARK



ADIELAH

“My job, the position that I have is the best...so, the change from being a committee member to the CLO of marketing. I LOVE my job.”

My name is Adielah VanSchalkwyk. I'm CLO for marketing. I've worked for the Housing Support Centre. And your question was? [Erin: What was the most significant change that you've experienced in your living situation.] What was the most significant change? Oohhh, there's many. First of all, my house. Moving from my shack to my house. The fact of living here in Freedom Park. I have been on the housing waiting list for 15 years!

My job, the position that I have is the best, I was a former committee member. So the change from being a committee member to

beneficiaries come in to fill out subsidy forms, deed of sales, electricity, water, refuge, liase with beneficiaries when they need to sign documents. I love my job!

Besides the fact that I love my job, it is very challenging. We have problems with only about 3 more beneficiaries that need to be sorted. Who have divorce problems, or other problems. From plus minus 12 people with problems, it has come down to the amount of 3. That is really challenging me. It's very stressful because they are not doing anything to help themselves. I have to help them help themselves. And the project is about to end, so it is very challenging.

be a CLO of marketing. I love my job! My responsibilities are to see that the ben-

What is going to happen to those three if they don't get everything sorted? That's my job. It's hard, but I love it! The very best thing is to see the beneficiaries, you know man, they come and they want information. Those people living in people's yards. They come here and they want to see when they can move in. And I get to tell them when their house is ready. I give them the good news...My brain is tired man, it's a Monday...

During this time, I've been working so hard, my children almost want to divorce me as a mother, but they see my commitment. I've been doing this a long time. They see my personal sacrifice. They think it's unbelievable as well. You won't be a success if you don't have a passion. I have a passion. My mother told me “You have to start something right, for it to end right.”

WAHEEBA

Because I move into my home. My most significant change is when I move into my house because I couldn't hear the wind, nor the rain. And I woke up in the morning and find “Oh, it rained last night.” Up until now I think, “Did it really happen? Are you really in a house?” So that was my most important day of my life. I spent 10 years in a shack, and I stayed in different rooms, many rooms. For 18 years, I moved from on room to another room, until the stage when I came to stay in Freedom Park.

“My most significant change is when I move into my house because I couldn't hear the wind, nor the rain.”





NETREG

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE : Positive Environment for Children

In 1986, with the support of SANCO leadership, Netreg identified land and housing as a development priority for many of the backyard shack dwellers. They formed the Netreg Housing Committee (NHC) and located a vacant piece of land alongside Modderdam Road. The NHC and DAG began negotiations with politicians and local authorities to secure the land for a PHP housing project. Initially, the Provincial Authority was not prepared to release the land because it was reserved for road improvements, but after much investigation, the bulk of the land was given to the Netreg Community. Almost 2 decades later, a medium density housing development with 191 homes has been completed on site.



SHAMEEMA



First, I want to say thank you to Mr. Mellon, but I also want to say thank you to DAG for what they've done. I mean it was sometimes you had to stand outside in the rain waiting for keys, but

because, sorry I don't like to cry, [...] because she never had her space and privacy because she was living in a tiny room, and she could never bring friends home, for me to watch over

they didn't give up. They stand there and help us through everything. And for what I am today, it's because of DAG, besides my mother. And, you know, to have a house, it's a big privilege. I think if it was earlier for me, my life and my daughter's life would have been different. Because I'm one of the very early grandma's now

them. We were staying in a backyard. There was no communication, and we never had a round-table, because we never had a table. And a table's important. You discuss everything. But

“And for what I am today, it's because of DAG...besides my mother.”

now she's got the baby, and I'm an early granny. But now that we have our own house, things change. And we are really, really happy. Its just she made a mistake, but the baby's not the mistake. So we are starting over in our house. And we are very, very happy, Thank you DAG!



LETTIE

“My boys even made up house rules: We can’t swear, we must love each other, always be there for each other.”

My name is Lettie. I guess the greatest significance for me....I was so pregnant by the time we were finishing this whole thingy here. And I came and I watched how they build my house. You know. And my stomach’s growing. And I said to myself, “At least before the baby comes, I want this house to be done.” Because I had 2 children and both of them were staying in a shack like a Wendy house, and they grew up there, and it was so small, and they didn’t have enough place for them to play. I had a 2-room Wendy house, and the one room was the kitchen, the bedroom, the sitting room, and the dining room,

born after that, and there was no water in the house. And we had to carry buckets and buckets of water to wash the baby, to wash me, and to get everything done. It was a whole process. But I now have a great sense of accomplishment. I’m a homeowner. I can go to my house, lock my door, unlock my door. It feels so great from where I came, to where we are now. And DAG has played a major role in giving us tools, how to save water, how to save electricity, how to be a homeowner. We had workshops how to become a homeowner and how to take care of your house. This was before we had the houses.

And this played a major role because when we got the houses, we could say: “Hey! Switch off the lights now. We don’t need electricity. Switch off the TV.” Because we now wanted to be responsible. It’s nice. It’s nice being a homeowner. And having your children sit in their room, you know? “Go to your room, and don’t come out until you know what you’ve done.” It’s nice man. Before, if you say: “Go to your room,” [the child has to] sit next to you, you know? There is no other room. And maybe you want to watch TV, but you said: “No TV!” So, you have to turn the TV to one side and keep the volume down. But now you can say: “Go to your room and close the door.” They are more disciplined because they know there are home rules, there are ground rules. My boys even made up house rules: We can’t swear; we must love each other; always be there for each other. They also know, we are living in a house! I think it’s nice, it’s nice having a house.

NOLAN

“There’s this sense that I’m a homeowner. I don’t have to walk through someone else’s house to get out of my Wendy house.”

I’ve been living in this community all my life. I went to primary school here, I got married here, and started a family. I lived in a Wendy house for almost 14 years. [...] Seeing this house project here, this took a very, very long time to get off the ground. So, by the time I got my house, I wanted to make sure everything was the way I wanted it to be. It was done and everything. [...] And now there’s this sense that I’m a homeowner – I don’t have to go through someone else’s house, just to get out of my Wendy house. I need to take responsibility for what I’ve acquired. The kids can run and play where they want to, within the house, or in the yard, or wherever. And that’s basically the biggest thing for me, you know, the privacy, the freedom. [...] We walked in our house on Christmas Eve two years ago. And just the sense of having Christmas on my very own, as a family, that was quite significant for us. And getting to know other neighbours, and the surrounding areas. Because I lived at one end of this area, and now I’m at this end. So, I needed to start making friends with other people in the community. I think that’s basically in a nutshell for me.





KOEBRA

“You really get your children in order because they know when it’s sleeping time. Now you can say: ‘Now it’s reading time, it’s bath time.’”

For me as a homeowner, for me it feels like my quality time with my family is there. I’ve got my home. I’ve got a right to say “no.” I’ve got the right because it’s my house. If I don’t want guests in my house, I don’t have to have them, because I’m the owner. I moved in two days before the holidays. And so it was a whole family gathering! And you know what? The water pipes were not

owners of the main house], who would interrupt and want to know what you are talking with your friends. And that’s the greatest now – to invite people, and not have to be afraid, not have to worry if the front owners like them or will interfere or what. And you’re free. And you’re free and you say: “Now it’s time to lock my door and no one’s coming in because it’s sleeping time.” And

even right that time! So, we have to go borrow water by the church. And that time, I mean, is just quality time with your family. And, [there used] to come people [the

you know what? You get your children in order. Because they know when it’s sleeping time. Now you can say: “now it’s reading time, it’s bath time.” And the shower! You know the shower! We used to use the water in the small bucket. And now the children can’t wait when it’s shower time. So that’s the basic story. [laughter] Yes, that’s my story, I’m very grateful, and to DAG. Very grateful. Because if it wasn’t for DAG to help us... [sigh]. And even for us, to send us to training. Because you know what? I was a very quiet person, who didn’t speak. At first you sit in the meeting, and I was just like that, not saying a word. And then Crystal [from DAG] would say, “No, you must speak!” And that’s my story.

ROSEMARIE



My name is Rosemarie Stoffles, I was the treasurer of Netreg housing project. The best thing I like is that I don’t have to speak English. And I lived in a 2-room shack, 4 meters by 8 meters with 4 people. There was no private bathroom.

small, and it was so tight we were all fighting. Now it’s a big place we can sit together, we can talk together, we can watch television together. And so, I’d like to say a big thank you to DAG for the privilege and rights they have given to us.

When I moved in to my house, I made some changes. I moved in with my bed, and there was no lights and water. But the bed is there. I waited for the lights and the water to be put on. For me, it’s very important for my self-esteem that I am a house owner and have all my children around me and everybody has their own place. We can sit together and we can talk. So, before everything was too

And the courses that they sent us on. I can use it. I can go to the church and show them how to do the finances. I am very grateful for the inputs that

“It’s very important for my self-esteem that I am a house owner and have my children around me and everyone has their own place.”

they gave us on the courses. And DAG must come again and help the other people in Netreg. That’s all I can think of.



HANGBERG

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE : Strong Committee & Training

Hangberg is one of the very few settlements in the southern suburbs not subject to forced removals in the 1980's and as such has been in existence for 40 years. In the 70's hostels were built on the lower slopes of the settlement to accommodate fishermen, and in the 80's a large number of council flats were built as rental housing. Since the late 1990's housing delivery has not been possible largely due to the absence of land, however, the demand for permanent residence has only increased. As such, informal dwellings have sprung up all over Hangberg. Shackdwellers, backyarders, and wendy house occupants have approached DAG to help find a long-term housing solution. They are just at the beginning of their struggle.



KEVIN

“With DAG, I definitely helped show my people that there is a way.”

Our aim is now to get the land ownership. That is the main thing. Development can come afterward, but ownership is the first priority because if the people know they own the land, then they know there is a possibility of development. But now they say “Hey. We are sitting on land that doesn't belong to us, it belongs to this city or that.” If people know they own this land, then they know, now we can develop. Then they can bring the materials, whatever they want. We [the

committee] went to various meetings with the city to sort out this land story and stuff like that. They still hold up that process. But the committee has land as our first priority this year. [...] Otherwise, this project is not going to survive. Now we need to control this whole area. People now are just coming to put up shacks wherever. We need to control this whole area for development. [...]

DAG was very much supportive. Even when it comes to sending us to meetings, and guiding us through the whole process. They sent us on a leadership course even. Where we went to go study this kind of stuff, even with government. Now we know. That's why we can go out there and speak to the people, and go out there and speak to the city. Firstly, I didn't have that courage to speak to a crowd. But now I do. With DAG, I have definitely helped show my people that there is a way, not to sit, to show them that if we stand together, we can become many things.

Because there are a lot of things that government is sitting with [land, housing, sanitation], and we need those things also. There are schools, education. It's a bit slack around here and our kids are dropping out of school. They are sitting there, smoking ganga, or drinking, or ticking – They are taking the best away from our kids, and leaving them with nothing. That's not enough for our kids. Parents, they don't have work. And a kid can't learn with an empty stomach. [...] The government controls everything we need. That's why our people need to get together and stand together, cause otherwise we will not be able to get what we need. You can't do it as an individual person.

DAG took us on a trip last year to various developments, government developments, like rushed developments. The people's houses are cracking. It's not suitable. And we don't want that here. That's why they took us through, so that we as a committee, bring that back to our community and explain to them what kind of development we want. We don't want cracks, or whatever. We can't just accept whatever. We have to be involved.





MARCO

“There were just a few good things that happened because of the committee.”

There were just a few good things that happened because of the committee. Like the electricity they put up here. And water to a certain extent. They put it to centralised points, and then if you could afford it, you brought it to your house. And the sewage lines, one toilet every seven households. But you still have to leg up to that thing. We really need fire hydrants, something like that. Because there was a fire a few years ago in one of these places. It was burning and everyone tries to put it out. But the pressure in the pipes is so weak, if two families, or two guys open at the same time, there's no pressure in the pipes. Hydrants could be centralised like they did for toilets. And someone can keep an eye on that thing. What I would really like to see is we get proper housing, or the piece of paper that says you own this land.

CHARMAINE

“Those people sitting on the committee, they try their best!”

And those people sitting on the committee, they try their best. They try their best on the committee. Every now and then, they go in, they report, they lay their report. But the government doesn't come out and look what is happening with us. They just sit there, you see? And that makes us sick. The committee goes out and goes to the government and asks for things but the government doesn't come have a look. The government just does what they want to do. [...] If the government does come, they sit, and they make empty promises. For years, empty promises. But the committee keeps on going to government. [...] These people do everything to get something right for us in the community.



LANA

“DAG took us to Freedom Park and Delft. We went to Delft to meet with committees that side.”

First of all, it's me and my mom and my son that stays in this two room place. At the moment you can see what it looks like. It didn't used to look like this a year ago. And I went to the committee they were here, and I showed them: Listen here my roof is leaking, and it floods, and it lean to the front. And if the wind comes, the place would go to the ground, right down. And they told me to go to the committee meeting [unclear] and then they were building this place. And I moved in here, and as you can see at the moment, they built this. And they put

up toilets for the people, even if it wasn't for everyone. There's not so many illegal structures around, because they keep it under watch. If goes up an illegal structure, you can go to the committee and say “listen there is a structure going up.” Now I'm part of the committee, I'm a volunteer on the committee. For me, they did a lot. [...] The committee did a lot. While I was on a committee as a volunteer, DAG took us to Freedom Park and Delft. Then we went to Delft to go see and meet with the committees that side. And they gave us information about where they coming from. And I think from hearing all the committees, this committee is most stable.

Working With GOVERNMENT

Partnering with the **WESTERN CAPE GOVERNMENT**

1

Brian Denton, Deputy Director, Department of Local Government & Housing:

“DAG has definitely brought communities together and made them more aware of the State at the provincial and municipal level. They have done great work in facilitating community involvement with State services.”

2

John Thabatha, Department of Local Government & Housing:

“DAG has provided trained the community leadership to: 1. negotiate for access to land; 2. understand the essentials of land utilisation and planning; 3. take on the role of developers; 4. partner with various stakeholders; 5. and influence policy to be in line with the needs of the poorest of the poor. I can personally confirm that DAG has also changed the way officials approach the implementation of policies and give priority to communities.”

3

Shanaaz Majiet, Head of Department, Department of Local Government & Housing:

DAG has consistently demonstrated in partnership with government, with our department in particular, a critical voice of civil society and has conducted very informative research that has aided government thinking, and rethinking, and has always reflected the changing perspectives on the ground. We use DAG and rely on DAG to be that voice. We have had much engagement in joint projects – DAG has helped us to unblock many PHP, People’s Housing Process, projects. DAG also has a phenomenal track record on ground in communities. They are a trusted partner and ally of government and communities, without compromising independent thinking. We have a range of different mega projects, like the N2 Gateway housing project. DAG has been critical of our department and municipality to ensure that the temporary relocation areas we are using are up to standards in terms of quality of life, health and basic services, and inspire and affirm human dignity. Through their surveying, DAG held up the mirror and showed us the unintended consequences of some of our decisions. They helped us see that basic standards and services must be maintained and not to lose sight of that. They consistently show integrity in managing the partnership with government, and have increasingly more currency. They have a very good grasp of policy, stakeholder management, community consultations, and are contributors to our backyarder policy which is currently being developed. We, as government, are improved because we can tap into their network and their community trust. DAG adds a great deal of value to communities and government and will continue to be an important partner in the future.

Partnering with **NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

1. PHP DESIGN :

DAG has added extensive insight and experience in the design of the new People’s Housing Process over the past 6 years.

2. UNBLOCKING PROJECTS :

They have added insight into the unblocking of PHP projects nationally, though their case studies have mostly been in the Western Cape

3. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING :

And, they have a very strong programme of training and capacity building for PHP communities.

Odette Crofton and her team in the ePHP Directorate. Crofton is the Chief Director of Social and Rental Housing and e PHP.

