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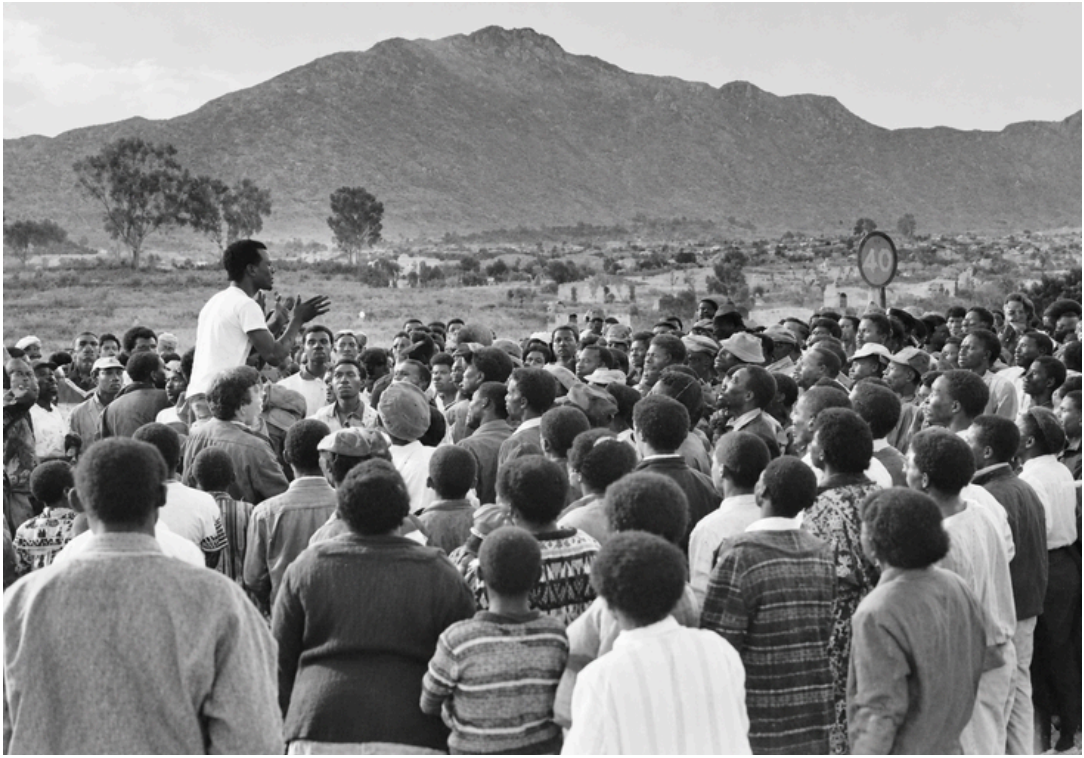
Crossroads informal settlement, **1986**

In May 1986, violent clashes between the Witdoeke and Crossroads residents devastated the settlement, leaving thousands displaced. In direct response, a public call for communities to shape the rebuilding of their neighbourhoods led to DAG's formation, with a founding commitment to participatory planning and community-led urban development.

GUY TILLIM

40 years DAG Development Action Group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Lawaaikamp, George, **1987**

As Lawaaikamp residents resisted forced removals and fought for the right to remain in their homes, DAG played a pivotal role in facilitating negotiations between the community and George Municipality. Working alongside residents, municipal officials, professional planners and engineers, DAG helped advance the province's first in situ upgrade – an approach that enabled residents to remain in their homes while collectively shaping the future of their settlement around their needs, knowledge and aspirations.

THE CAPE ARGUS

40 years DAG Development Action Group


HOUSES
NOT
BRIBES!

Nyanga, **1988**

As Nyanga residents mobilised to demand accountability from local government over housing concerns, DAG increasingly worked alongside communities in their struggles for more responsive local governance.

ERIC MILLER

40 years DAG Development Action Group


Peace in our city
Stop the killings
BREAD
NOT

Cape Town, **1989**

As more than 30,000 people marched through Cape Town in defiance of apartheid's state of emergency, demand for DAG's work continued to grow. Across this work, one thread remained constant: it was rooted in, and made possible by, the strength and active citizenship of local civic organisations.

ERIC MILLER

40 years DAG Development Action Group


END
APARTHEID
NOW
JOB RESERVE

Port Nolloth, **1990**

As Port Nolloth residents mobilised against the forced removal of families from Tente Dorp, they challenged the apartheid spatial planning policies that shaped their town. In the year Nelson Mandela was released, DAG's work began to lay the foundations for a new approach to spatial planning in a democratic South Africa.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group


ANC
DWE

Tambo Square, Gugulethu, **1991**

As the apartheid government weakened, Tambo Square residents came together for the first time on land secured through collective struggle. DAG was there to facilitate a participatory envisioning process, helping residents shape a shared vision for their new neighbourhood.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group


WENNERS SÊ JA
NP
JA
17 MAART
REFERENDUM
SAY
YES
TO A
NEGOTIATED
CONSTITUTION
IT'S NOW
or
NEVER
NO!
REFERENDUM
GEE
SUID-AFRIKA
DIE
JA-WOORD
Stem JA
17 MAART

Cape Town, **1992**

As the apartheid government tested support for political reform through a whites-only referendum, South Africa's political landscape continued to shift. Against this backdrop, DAG continued to challenge forced removals, with its advocacy beginning to yield tangible results as families began to return to homes they had been forcibly removed from.

ERIC MILLER

40 years DAG Development Action Group


6
6
7

Bloekombos, Cape Town, **1993**

After resisting repeated attempts at removal, Bloekombos residents organised to secure their right to stay and shape the future of their community. Working alongside DAG, the Bloekombos Development Committee helped bring residents into negotiations with government, contribute to plans for the settlement and secure resources for improved services and community facilities. Through this process, residents strengthened their collective voice and their ability to participate in decisions about the development of their neighbourhood.

ERIC MILLER

40 years DAG Development Action Group


HOUSING SUBSIDIES
SERVICES FINANCE
Tenant housing
Better housing
Tenant control
SOCIAL
HOUSING FINANCE
Rates
Mortgage
The demands:
- Adequate housing
- Public transport
- Schools
- Clinics
- Recreation
- Employment

Cape Town, **1994**

As South Africa entered a new democratic era in 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) set out a vision for addressing the inequalities inherited from apartheid through people-centred development. DAG ran a Community Management of Low Income Housing Projects course that year, introducing communities to the RDP and helping them understand how they could engage with and shape its implementation.

ERIC MILLER

40 years DAG Development Action Group


MASAKHANE

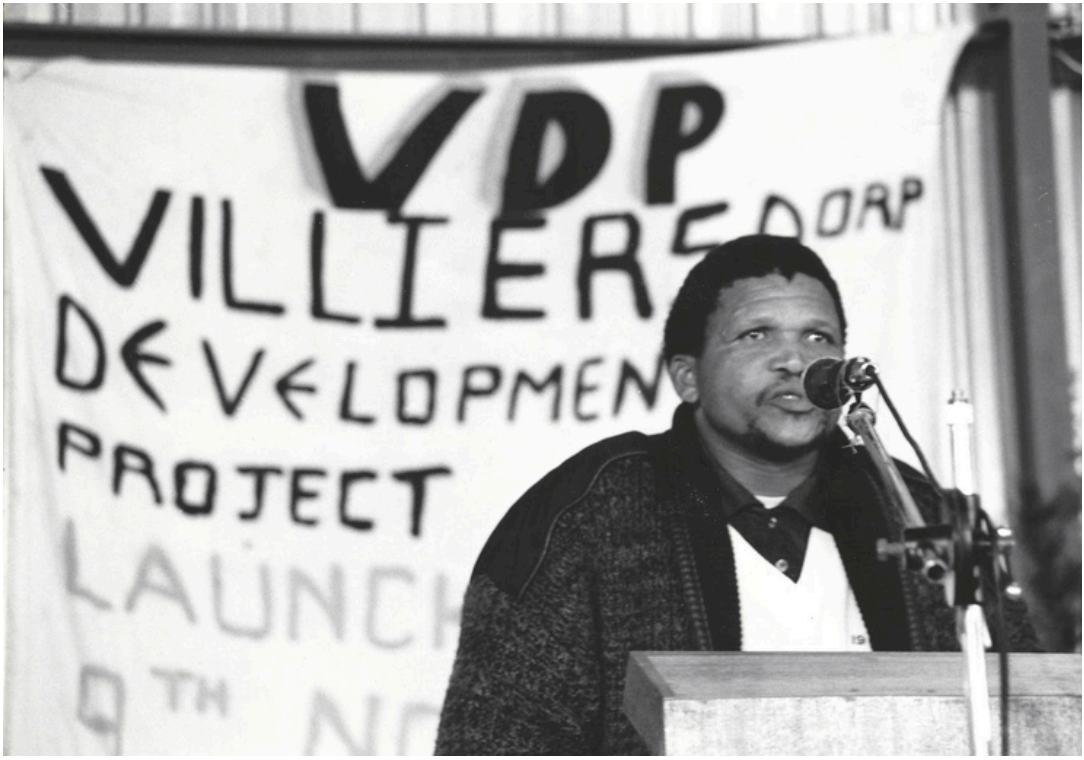


Marconi Beam, Cape Town, **1995**

When President Nelson Mandela launched the national Masakhane Campaign in Marconi Beam in 1995, it marked an important moment in the new government's efforts to rebuild communities through partnership between residents and the state. DAG worked alongside residents throughout the campaign's implementation, helping to translate this vision into action on the ground.

ERIC MILLER

40 years DAG Development Action Group


VDP
VILLIERSDORP
DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT
LAUNCH
9TH

Villiersdorp, **1996**

As Villiersdorp residents sought better housing and living conditions, DAG worked alongside the community to develop a locally driven plan for upgrading the area. Launched in 1996, the project placed residents at the centre of shaping their neighbourhood, from planning and basic services to exploring affordable, locally appropriate building methods.

SUE KRAMER

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Villiersdorp, **1997**

With a community-led development plan in place, Villiersdorp residents began putting their vision for the neighbourhood into action. From improving local infrastructure to shaping their built environment, residents were active participants in turning their plans into tangible change.

SUE KRAMER

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Joe Slovo Park, Cape Town, **1998**

As families moved from Marconi Beam into new homes in nearby Joe Slovo Park, residents began making their new neighbourhood their own. Women and children came together to care for their shared environment, reflecting the role of community action in building a place to call home.

NASIEF MANIE

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Khayelitsha, **1999**

As residents of Khayelitsha sought greater control over the delivery of their housing, the Masithembane Housing Project embraced a community-led approach to building homes. With DAG's assistance, residents harnessed their housing subsidies, collective organisation and own labour to construct homes incrementally through the People's Housing Process.

NASIEF MANIE

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Khayelitsha, **2000**

Through the Homeless and Squatters Housing Project (HOSHOP), residents of Khayelitsha came together to take greater control over their housing futures. Working alongside the community, DAG provided technical and organisational support to help residents build the skills, structures and collective capacity to plan, manage and construct their own homes. The initiative demonstrated the potential of people-led housing, with residents at the centre of shaping and delivering lasting solutions for their community.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

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Cape Town, **2001**

Through the People's Housing Process, Khayelitsha residents continued to take an active role in delivering their own housing. With DAG's assistance, communities organised, managed resources and built their homes incrementally, demonstrating the potential of a more participatory approach to housing delivery.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

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Cape Town, **2002**

Recognising that communities hold valuable knowledge of their own needs and circumstances, DAG worked alongside residents to explore innovative, locally appropriate building practices. Through the development and implementation of techniques such as sandbag construction, residents were equipped to draw on their own skills and ingenuity to develop housing solutions grounded in the realities of their communities.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Cape Town, **2003**

As households with limited resources found creative ways to build and improve their homes incrementally, residents demonstrated the ingenuity and potential of self-help housing. DAG recognised the value of these emerging solutions and continued to develop mechanisms that equipped communities to pursue their own housing aspirations.

PAOLO ROBAZZO

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Imizamo Yethu, Cape Town, **2004**

As inadequate sanitation and overcrowding placed growing pressure on Imizamo Yethu residents, questions of housing need and access to state subsidies became increasingly urgent. At the request of the Imizamo Yethu Working Group, DAG undertook a door-to-door survey to build a clearer picture of the community, its living conditions and the households eligible for housing assistance.

PAOLO ROBAZZO

40 Years DAG Development Action Group



Netreg, Cape Town, **2005**

As Netreg residents sought to secure their right to the city, the community worked alongside DAG, the City of Cape Town and other partners to redesign and rebuild their neighbourhood through self-help housing. Grounded in residents' livelihoods and aspirations, the project went beyond improving housing conditions to strengthen local economic opportunities and community control over the future of their settlement. For residents, receiving the keys to their new homes marked an important milestone in this collective effort to shape a neighbourhood on their own terms.

HELEN ROURKE

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Freedom Park, Cape Town, **2006**

As South Africa moved further into its second decade of democracy, the gap between housing promises and delivery remained stark. At 80 years old, this woman was still waiting for a home of her own, reflecting the growing housing backlog and the enduring consequences of delayed delivery.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Cape Town, **2007**

Well-designed medium-density housing offers an opportunity to make better use of scarce, well-located urban land while creating welcoming places for people to live. DAG drew on its research and work with community partners to advocate for more equitable land use and housing policies, engaging government and civil society to advance affordable housing options that contributed to more inclusive cities.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

40 years DAG Development Action Group

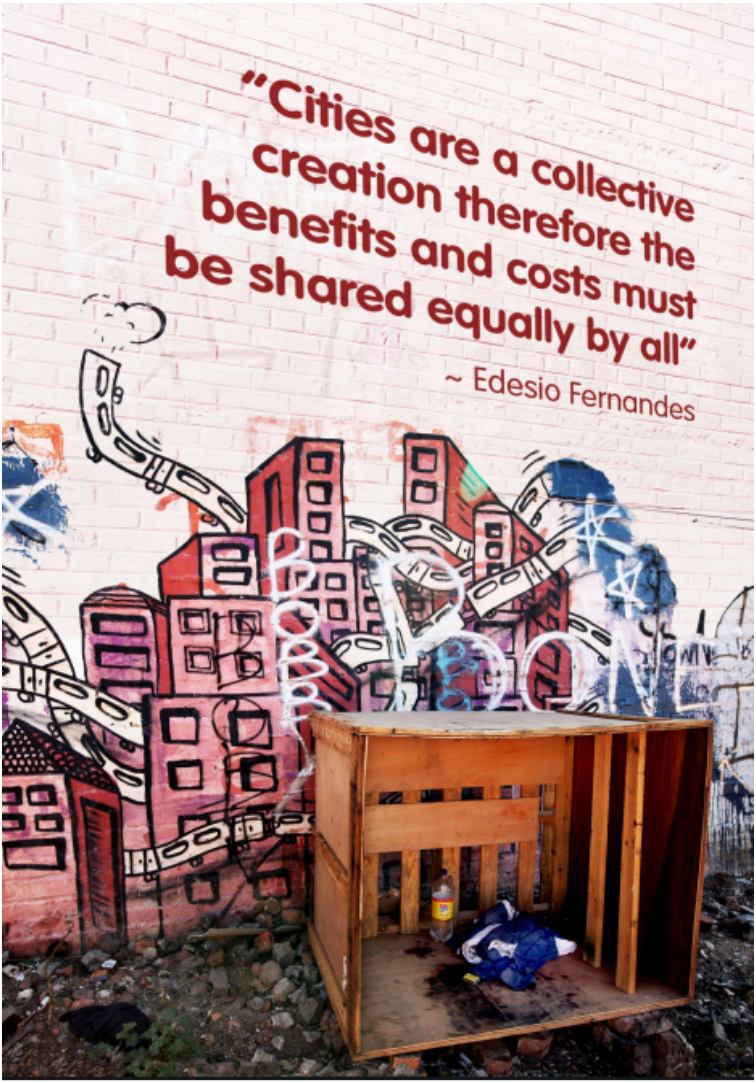


Hangberg, Cape Town, **2008**

As Hangberg residents continued to navigate growing housing pressures and uncertainty over their tenure, DAG worked alongside the community to advance an in-situ upgrading approach. By supporting residents to shape plans for their neighbourhood, DAG helped champion a housing process that prioritised improved living conditions while enabling families to remain in the place they called home.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

40 years DAG Development Action Group


"Cities are a collective creation therefore the benefits and costs must be shared equally by all"
~ Edesio Fernandes

Cape Town, **2009**

Cities are shaped by collective investment, public infrastructure and the contributions of the people who live and work in them. Yet the benefits of urban growth are not shared equally, with rising land values often deepening inequality and pushing lower-income residents further from well-located opportunities. DAG has advocated for Land Value Capture as a way to return publicly generated increases in land value to the public good, helping fund affordable housing and build more inclusive cities.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group


People Shall Share in The Country's Wealth



Khayelitsha, **2010**

As Cape Town grappled with how to translate the principles of spatial justice into practice, DAG advocated for more equitable planning decisions that challenged the legacy of spatial apartheid and aimed to ensure that the benefits of urban development were more widely shared.

ROWAN PYBUS

40 years DAG Development Action Group


LET'S RE-IMAGINE
OUR CITY TOGETHER



Good Hope Centre, Cape Town, **2011**

After working alongside 25 civil society organisations to develop proposals for a more inclusive Cape Town, DAG brought over 1,000 residents together at the Good Hope Centre in 2012 for the Re-imagine Our City public event. The gathering marked a milestone in building a shared vision for a more integrated, equitable and participatory city.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Khayelitsha, **2012**

When stalled housing projects left thousands of Khayelitsha households waiting for adequate homes, DAG worked alongside residents, community organisations and government to unblock the People's Housing Process. By strengthening partnerships, institutional systems and local skills development, DAG helped unlock R64 million in housing subsidies for 2,173 households.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Cape Town, **2013**

Recognising that residents hold essential knowledge about their communities and their priorities for change, DAG developed a participatory action planning approach to informal settlement upgrading. Working alongside the City of Cape Town and communities across Khayelitsha and Philippi, DAG facilitated a process that reached 31 informal settlements and 19,258 households. Through community workshops, mapping and locally developed action plans, residents helped shape the priorities and direction of future upgrading, laying the groundwork for more inclusive, collaborative planning.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Cape Town, **2014**

After years of waiting for a home promised through the Zenzele housing project, beneficiaries were left frustrated by a lack of accountability and progress. When DAG became involved in 2007, it worked to rebuild trust through consistent communication, transparent engagement and platforms where residents could seek answers and hold the process to account. For this couple, that work helped unlock progress on their home, with construction finally moving forward.

PAUL GRENDON

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Khayelitsha, **2015**

As Khayelitsha continued to face challenges around housing, land tenure and basic services, DAG worked alongside communities to advance a more integrated approach to neighbourhood development. This included securing strategically located land for innovative, mixed-use affordable housing that brought homes, livelihoods and opportunities closer together.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Cape Town, **2016**

Recognising the need for accessible housing finance for low-income families, DAG established the Kuyasa Fund in 1999. Operating independently until 2021, the fund provided housing microfinance that enabled families to build, improve and complete their own homes, changing the living conditions of more than 52,000 people through incremental housing improvements.

DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

40 years

DAG
Development
Action
Group



Mshini Wam informal settlement, Cape Town, **2017**

Affordable rental housing emerged as a vital, yet often ignored sector of the housing market. As a result, DAG launched its Contractor and Developer Academy to enable and equip those working in this sphere

THOM PIERCE

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Zonnebloem, Cape Town, **2018**

As the city transformed under the weight of market forces, DAG continued to work alongside communities in Woodstock and Salt River to strengthen their ability to shape their neighbourhoods.

ALEXIA WEBSTER

40 years DAG Development Action Group

Gatesville, Cape Town, **2019**

As Gatesville tenants faced uncertainty over the future ownership and management of their homes, DAG worked alongside the Tenants Committee to build their capacity to negotiate fair tenure arrangements. Through collective advocacy, residents secured a rental freeze for seniors and the scrapping of outstanding rental arrears.

TATUM SMITH

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Smutsville informal settlement, Sedgefield, **2020**

As Covid-19 plunged the country into lockdown, informal settlement residents faced heightened vulnerability due to inadequate resources and infrastructure. In response, DAG began its work on the Asivikelane Campaign, which collaborates with residents and state entities to work towards service delivery solutions.

JE'NINE MAY

40 years DAG Development Action Group





Stables Informal Settlement, Salt River, **2021**

As gentrification, spatial inequality and evictions threatened communities in Salt River, DAG worked alongside residents to advocate for their housing needs, protect their sense of belonging and secure access to the amenities that make neighbourhoods thrive. This work has contributed to tangible shifts in state relocation practices.

JE'NINE MAY

40 years DAG Development Action Group


Re-imagining
Eastridge
A community-centred approach
to neighbourhood regeneration.



Eastridge, Mitchell's Plain, **2022**

As Mitchells Plain grappled with declining economic activity, rising crime and limited public investment, DAG collaborated with local civics to develop an evidence-based community vision for the neighbourhood, laying the foundation for future development pathways.

JE'NINE MAY

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Khayelitsha, **2023**

Contractors and developers supported by DAG's Contractor and Developer Academy survey their building plans as new affordable housing units take shape.

ESTHER SCHIPPERS

40 years DAG Development Action Group



Stellenbosch, **2024**

As rising housing costs increasingly excluded Stellenbosch's working class, DAG worked alongside the municipality to develop planning tools that would enable the delivery of inclusionary housing. This collaboration led to the adoption of Stellenbosch's Inclusionary Zoning Policy, only the second of its kind in South Africa.

SEBASTIAN MACHILL

40 years DAG Development Action Group



University of Cape Town, **2025**

Built environment professionals are often disconnected from the lived realities of the communities they design for. DAG works with tertiary institutions to bring community voices into the classroom, connecting students with residents' experiences, knowledge and solutions to foster more participatory, people-centred urban design.

KATHRYN BYRNES

40 years DAG Development Action Group


ieti
Industries Education & Training Institute
ASIVIKELANE
VOICES OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS
ieti
Industries Education & Training Institute

Khayelitsha, **2026**

Slow municipal response times often leave informal settlement residents without water or sanitation for extended periods. Through Asivikelane, DAG has equipped over 200 residents in Cape Town and Knysna with plumbing and handyperson skills, enabling them to work alongside municipalities to resolve minor service faults and strengthen local service delivery.

KATHRYN BYRNES

40 years DAG Development Action Group