

# JOINING FORCES TO BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The **Joe Slovo Foundation** and SALGA plan to implement an open citizen communication programme to help build resilient communities.



The foundation has secured commitments from Vodacom and MTN to successfully host this platform in South Africa.

The foundation's mission is to empower lesser developed and impoverished African regions.

**T**he Joe Slovo Foundation presentation on Smart, Resilient and Sustainable Cities at the SALGA National Conference has led to a joining of forces that will benefit communities around South Africa.

The foundation was established in 2010 to commemorate the life and work of Joe Slovo, a leader and hero of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Martin Dohy from the Joe Slovo Foundation said the foundation's mission is to empower lesser developed and impoverished African regions. Dohy described resilience as the ability of communities, individuals, institutions, businesses and systems to survive, adapt and grow; no matter what kind of chronic stress and acute shocks they experience.

Some of the chronic stresses include high unemployment, inefficient transport

systems, endemic violence, and sudden events such as terrorism and natural disasters, while food scarcity and water shortages add further stress.

The Joe Slovo Foundation has been working with the United Nations Humanitarian Programme and intends to partner with SALGA to reach municipalities by rolling out an open citizen communication mobile services platform for free. "However, individual municipalities need to provide their buy-in to ensure the proper integration of the system to communities across South Africa," Dohy explained.

Another area requiring stakeholder support was the mobile services platform, a cloud-based platform that provides the interaction between urban information systems and mobile services provided by apps or via SMS/ USSD requests.

The service will provide a number of humanitarian benefits to citizens including the following:

- Up-to-date notifications about forthcoming disasters
- Guidelines to cope with damage and survival
- Ability to create a route to nearest shelter or victim assistance centre
- Ability to track the location of family members
- Ability to create alerts in cases of emergency situations
- Giving women the ability to press a panic button in case of violence.

The commission made several recommendations that will be tabled and adopted by the conference. ■