

OUR CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Engage actively with citizens

PERFORMANCE MEASURE

% implementation of actions as per our citizen engagement programmes stakeholder engagement plans)

2020-21 TARGETS

80% – 100% of the actions for 2020-21

2020-21 ACTUAL

81%

Enhanced citizen engagement continues to be viewed as essential internationally among supreme audit institutions. The outbreak of the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns initially disrupted how organisations disseminated messages through conferences and other face-to-face engagements.

Our investment in building and developing social media platforms as official channels to engage citizens had an impact on the presence of our audit messages in the public discourse. These well-established social media platforms allowed us to keep the public informed on issues of public accountability, transparency and good governance.

We also used social media platforms to create awareness of our proactive approach to real-time audits and profiled the auditor-general and the AGSA as thought leaders by highlighting the auditor-general's participation at the Intosai CBC webinars, online media interviews and virtual panel discussions.

When the special reports were released, social media platforms were used to drive messages using #AGSAcovidReport. These reports were issued in an environment where many citizens were anxious and asking questions about the R500 billion in relief funds. The reports and our coverage provided accurate information about the

funding, directed the conversation towards preventative controls, offered updates on the issues and, most importantly, provided the public with messages of assurance that the AGSA is examining the public purse.

Enhancing community reach

Informed media coverage and engaging citizens on province-specific issues

We coordinated provincial media workshops and general report briefings that resulted in regional journalists reporting on the PAA enhancements and general report messages from an informed position. This conveyed our key messages to their communities in a balanced manner.

Engagement with professional associations and industry organisations

With social distancing restrictions introduced by the pandemic, we used virtual engagements as an alternative to face-to-face sessions with professional bodies. During these sessions, we shared audit outcomes, provided insight on our role and mandate, and engaged as thought leaders on various topics that have an impact on the profession. Topics included promoting ethical behaviour, sharing insight on public accountability and proactively auditing covid-19 expenditure, fraud and corruption.

These platforms allowed us to strengthen our relations with professional bodies, ensure that our voice is heard, increase our impact, receive stakeholder feedback and enhance our brand presence. Our leadership was invited to share their messages at webinars, conferences, seminars, symposiums and other professional forums hosted by:

- Black Management Forum (BMF)
- Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers (Cigfaro)
- CFO SA
- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE)
- Association for the Advancement of Black Accountants of Southern Africa (Abasa)
- Saica

Tsakani Maluleke was appointed the non-executive chair of the Board of Directors of Saica last year, while she was deputy auditor-general. In the same period, the African Women Chartered Accountants (Awca) honoured her with the public sector leader of the year award at their women's month conference. The award recognised her as an exceptional business leader who demonstrated the tenacity to succeed in her career while continuing to inspire others.

Our engagement with civil society organisations

We engaged with CSOs to explore mutually beneficial opportunities for sharing information and engaging on initiatives that formed part of government's covid-19 relief efforts. The key focus was to use this information for our risk assessment process by narrowing our attention onto hotspots and challenges.

We continued to share input on fraud, corruption in infrastructure and personal protective equipment procurement processes, with reflections on the current progress of procurement reform in relation to national development agendas.

We also presented an overview of audit outcomes, provided an update on the PAA, and deliberated on how ailing municipalities can be restored to functioning, efficient local government institutions.

The CSOs appreciated our engagements and efforts to strengthen good governance in the public sector. Long-term relationships with CSOs will assist to deepen our risk assessments and clarify our messages.

Interactions with the media

Strategic media interactions during this period largely aimed to improve balanced media coverage of our audit messages as a demonstration of the value of our investment in our media sessions. Briefings included interviews with the major mainstream media agencies such as the SABC, Newzroom Afrika and eNCA and print media publications to ensure that the general report messages were widely reported.

As part of planned, strategic communication initiatives with journalists, we also discussed the progress in implementing the enhanced PAA and clarified new concepts such as MIs, and their comparison to already known audit concepts such as irregular expenditure.

Media coverage trends

Independent media analysis of the AGSA's coverage shows that the media largely focused on messages conveyed in the three special reports and the 2019-20 national and provincial government general reports. While the media continued to report on public sector expenditure patterns, they increased their reporting on the meaning of the enhanced PAA, especially the MI implementation and findings.

Social media

In our push for continuous improvements and focus on building a sustainable digital communication environment, we developed a citizen-specific information portal to access simplified articles about our role, mandate and related topics. This portal can be found at <https://onlineagsa.co.za/>.

Using social media, we raised awareness of, and directed traffic to, articles and videos on our portal (through #RaiseTheBar/This affects you too campaign). We increased the reach and impact of our messages by sharing digital versions of our reports, guides, newsletters and magazines.

Our social media community grew by 21,8 % from 63 029 to 82 934 subscribers, and generated over 7 million organic impressions from our messages and just under 350 000 engagements. This improvement in the number of people following and liking our social media channels including Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter suggests that our investment in these channels is certainly paying off.

Appropriate social media campaigns were also used to share national, provincial and local government audit outcomes for both audit cycles using #AGSAreport, and highlight our socio-economic development efforts.

International thought leadership

We continued to play a key leadership role within the global community of 195 supreme audit institutions as the chair of the CBC, which is one of Intosai's four strategic goals. The CBC supports SAIs to maximise their value and benefits to society by developing their professional capacities. The interruption caused by the covid-19 global pandemic was used as an opportunity to respond with agility and successfully advance the CBC's key objectives through alternative means.

Through our participation in Intosai, Afrosai-e and the African Union Committee (AUC), we contribute towards the building of "the Africa we want", an aspiration of Africa's Agenda 2063, as well as a stronger global community of SAIs.

