

Closing the Digital Divide with an Old-School Solution: A Printed Book!

By Erica Kleine

For most tech-savvy, digitally-connected people, access to the vast repository of information available at their fingertips online is something that is largely taken for granted. But like many other modern conveniences, the benefits of technology are not evenly distributed.

South Africa boasts relatively advanced technological infrastructure and capacity, but of the country's roughly 60 million citizens, shockingly, 16.6 million do not use the Internet at all. *[Source: Data Reportal – 'Digital 2023: South Africa']*

Perhaps even more surprising — and something that most affluent people find difficult to believe — is that of the 43.4 million — or 72.3% — of South Africans who *do* use the Internet, the majority only have access at work or shopping centres.

This discrepancy is primarily caused by poor or no reception, intermittent or no electricity, and the high cost of data – especially in rural and underprivileged areas.

With the collective knowledge of the world increasingly moving online, millions of South Africans are being left behind, exacerbating existing divisions and inequalities, and undermining our country's potential for growth and development.

*“Knowledge is power. Information is liberating.
Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family.”*

– Kofi Annan

However, there is hope in the form of the recently-launched '*Resource Directory*'. Set to be published annually by South African Conversations – an independent, majority Black-owned, social-entrepreneurial micro-publisher and media company – the home-grown *Resource Directory* is a boon to the many South Africans who are excluded from the privileges afforded by modern electronic communications.

This unique, comprehensive 368-page printed directory connects readers to a wealth of essential knowledge, tools and resources that are freely available, both off- and online. It is an invaluable – and most importantly, accessible – tool to help individuals, families and communities navigate their way through the challenges they face, and towards increased wellness, peace and prosperity.

The publication is a must-have for churches, educational institutions, businesses, policymakers and people who serve society and want to help create a better world*.

"This directory is one of the most incredible resources I have ever come across. It is an extraordinarily beautiful and accessible tool providing access to information and knowledge that communities can draw on to give substance to the rights provided for us by our Constitution."

- Dr Marjorie Jobson, National Director, Khulumani Support Group

One of the novel aspects of the *Resource Directory* that makes it especially user-friendly is that it features 25 categories of solutions, addressing a wide range of issues, including education, health, human rights, social justice, animal welfare, entrepreneurship, gender-based violence, women's rights, disability, and much more.

The *Resource Directory's* format includes not only contact listings, or 'classifieds', but also articles about best practices and recommendations about useful publications, apps and videos that can make a difference in poor, disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Plus, it offers tips and advice on how to use these resources effectively and safely.

It enables anyone – regardless of their literacy level, technical ability or access to data – to participate in the exciting possibilities that the Internet makes available: information that will allow them to learn new skills, find jobs, create sustainable livelihoods, access affordable housing, learn how to grow food, start a business, access healthcare, protect their rights, participate in democracy — and so much more.

The one-of-a-kind *Resource Directory* offers something no other publication — nor, for that matter, even the Internet — does: easy, equitable access to reliable information from credible sources; it covers all possible bases.

"This book should be in every home that doesn't have access to the internet because it tells South Africans exactly where to find solutions to every conceivable challenge they may experience. It's like having access to Google but in print and tailor-made for South Africa."

- Lumko Mtimde, Former Special Advisor to the Minister in the Presidency, The Presidency, Republic of South Africa

By making such valuable – even life-saving – information available, it has never been easier or more convenient for people from vulnerable and disadvantaged circumstances to find what they need quickly and efficiently.

Regardless of who you are or what role you play in our society, you will almost certainly find something useful and relevant in this treasure trove of knowledge. This innovative

book brings the promise of a more just, equal and inclusive world by making sure that no one is sidelined by the Digital Revolution.

“Even for those with access to the internet, having everything in one place in a logical structure makes it much easier to find the resources you might be looking for and resources you may not even have known you needed or existed.”

– Dave Wilson, CEO and Co-founder of the National Mentorship Movement

To find out more about the *South African Conversations Resource Directory* and to purchase a copy for yourself – or as a gift one for someone who may not be able to afford a copy for their family, [click here](#).

**NPOs can list their organisations free of charge. Visit www.southafricanconversations.co.za/resource-directory-listing-request/ to fill in a Listing Request, so that your organisation will be included in the next edition.*