SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
SAIA
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President's Year End Letter 2025



Free State & Northern Cape Institute President Strydom with SAIA President Janet Saaiman celebrate with award winners 30 October 2025

As we bring 2025 to a close, it is both timely and essential to reflect on the progress made over the past six months. This has been a period of rebuilding, reconnecting, and redefining our direction as an Institute. SAIA has spent this time strengthening relationships, testing new approaches, and revisiting established practices to ensure that the organisation is positioned for long-term sustainability and success.

During our 2024 interviews with past Presidents, Al Stratford offered a piece of wisdom: *one cannot fix the plane while it is in flight — it must first be grounded.* The Board has taken this advice to heart.



During 2025 the SAIA office space was merged with that of GIfA making for more efficient operations for both organisations. Pictured L to R: Louda van der Merwe, EO of GIfA, Avela Swana, Admin Assistant: SAIA and Janet Saaiman, SAIA President

We deliberately decided to "ground" SAIA, pause, and focus on fundamental repairs. This intentional reset has allowed us to carefully and systematically rebuild the systems that support our members and the profession at large.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our members for their patience, encouragement, and understanding during this period of organisational overhaul. With our newly energised executive team — **Peta, Hugh, and Avela** — the SAIA office is operating with renewed capability and purpose. While some ICT challenges remain and require urgent attention, our financial administration is firmly on track. **Imagine SA** has been instrumental in resolving past backlogs and compiling the **2025 Annual Financial Statements**, which are now undergoing audit.

The **Editorial, Transformation, Practice, Education, Ethics, and Heritage Committees** are being re-established. In the coming months, the Board will review and refine all Terms of Reference to ensure that regional voices are fully reflected and that our structures serve the interests of all SAIA members.

Communication remains a priority as we explore new channels and the revival of both online and printed magazines. These platforms will aim to celebrate our members, showcase their work, and increase the profession's visibility.

"One cannot fix the plane while it is in flight — it must first be grounded."

- AL STRATFORD, FORMER SAIA PRESIDENT



Above: the AZA 2025 was hosted at UJ in August



Below: AUA President Francis Sossah (l) Thandeka Palai (c) from Botswana they will be hosting the AUA 2028 in Gaborone; Musunka Silungwe (r) ZIA President

AZA2025 was held at UJ at the end of August 2025. The event was extremely well organised thanks to the efforts of Daniel van der Merwe and the GIfA office and we thank them for their efforts. There were 79 speakers, 32 moderators, 650 student attendees and 150 professional attendees. The next AZA will be 2027 and we look forward to a new location.

International and continental engagement has also progressed, with ongoing communication with the **CAA**, **UIA**, and **AUA**. We are optimistic that these relationships will open doors and bring meaningful benefits to SAIA members. We invite those who can volunteer their time and expertise to represent SAIA on various committees — your contributions will strengthen the profession and support our collective future. Regular updates on these initiatives will follow.

Carin Combrinck serves as the Co-Director of the newly established work group on Informal Settlements as part of the International Union of Architects (UIA). A survey is being developed that will be distributed globally in January (in six languages) to assess the role that the architectural profession plays in upgrading informal settlements worldwide. The team plans on sharing the outcomes of this during the Barcelona conference in 2026. This initiative hopes to make inroads in this particular field.

Angela Hesketh is appointed as a member of the UIA Public Health Group (PHG) for Region V (Africa) and nominated as chairperson for the term 2024-2026. The intention of the PHG for this period was to allow regions to operate more independently so that there would be more opportunity for every member to be involved and to see regional activities coming forward.

All of this works towards the UIA congress next year in Barcelona. However, Region V is wanting to compile a database of regulations, standards, and guidelines for the design of healthcare facilities within the region. Other members are spearheading this activity from Kenya. Angela has committed to communicating with other member countries in southern Africa, such as Mauritius, Botswana and Malawi.

It has been a privilege to attend several regional award ceremonies and university exhibitions recently. I extend heartfelt congratulations to the hardworking students, the dedicated educators who guide them. We eagerly anticipate the **2026 Corobrik Student Awards** and the **Corobrik SAIA Awards of Excellence**, milestones that continue to highlight innovation and excellence within our profession. There are 52 entries for the Awards of Excellence and we are busy assembling a panel of adjudicators for the visits scheduled for early March. We are busy resuscitating our Social Media platforms and will be sharing the progress and the delight of these national entries.

"Dialogues in Sticks and Stones: Spatial testimonies of the East African slave trade in Nkhotakota, Malawi

Staying on a winning streak UFS Architecture student **Glory Kamthunzi** from Malawi, has been awarded the prestigious international **RIBA President's Medal 2025**. Congratulations to Glory and the UFS Architecture Staff. Please find a report on her submission here



RIBA Silver Medal winner Glory Kamthunzi from UFS and from Malawi

Source: Facebook

Dedicated Accounts and Membership Administrator, Flora de Bruyn finished 5 years of service at the end of November 2025. We would like to thank her for her service.

As we enter the holiday season, I wish you peace, rest, and serenity. May 2026 be a year of prosperity, renewed purpose, and continued collaboration.