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## Pothole crisis: SA in a w(hole) lot of trouble

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SOUTH Africa has a whopping 25 million potholes in its countrywide roads network, compared to 15 million recorded five years ago.

These eye-watering figures were revealed at the 7th South African Roads Federation (SARF) Regional Conference for Africa which kicked off in Cape Town on Tuesday. Leading experts and decision-makers from across the globe are sharing their knowledge at the gathering.

The South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited (Sanral), said the main reason for the state of the country's roads is inadequate maintenance, which "results in a vicious cycle that creates even deeper holes in the pockets of the administering authorities".

It currently costs between R700 and R1 500/km<sup>2</sup> to fix one pothole, depending on its size. The lack of maintenance increases the repair costs by 18 times if a full rehabilitation of a road is deemed necessary, Sanral said.

Former SARF president, Mutshutshu Nxumalo, said while South Africa's road network was one of the country's greatest assets, a mere 5% was allocated to it from the national fiscus.

"Sanral is doing good work, but they

can't do it on their own. There is an imbalance between the understanding of what needs to be achieved and the political will. We have legislation but the wrong leadership..."

Nxumalo said the fallout from inadequate road maintenance was "far-reaching and disastrous". It puts public safety at risk, causing the destruction of transport routes, disrupting movement of goods, negatively impacting tourism and resulting in major claims from the Road Accident Fund.

In August, the national Department of Transport launched Operation Vala Zonke, a national campaign aimed at eradicating potholes across the country, with Sanral as the implementing agency.

"The initiative has reported significant success in most provinces in just 10 weeks. As figures come in, Johannesburg has already fixed and filled an impressive 112 699 potholes, North West Province 28 578, Limpopo Province 25 431 and the Free State has 16 540 fewer potholes, thanks to Operation Vala Zonke," said Sanral.

Arrive Alive (AA) owner and developer, Johan Jonck, said there was a lack of preventative maintenance.

"Whereas our national roads are mostly in excellent condition, it is the local roads where local municipalities



A CAR drives past a pothole in Pimville, Soweto. | ITUMELENG ENGLISH African News Agency (ANA)

have to budget and effectively maintain roads where we find most of the problems.

"It also doesn't help that our freight rail has deteriorated over the years..." added Jonck.

The Western Cape Provincial Transport and Public Works department spokesperson, Jandré Bakker, said through planning and hard work, provincial roads are in a good condition.

Bakker said the province had completed its 10-year planning cycle in the form of the Road Asset Management Plan which covers the period 2022/23 to 2031/32.

He added that the department spent its complete R1.1 billion received from the Division of Revenue Act.