

### **“We are here to find solutions”, says Minister Zulu**

“We are not here for ourselves. We are here because we want to find solutions in changing the lives of our people,” said Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu, MP, in her opening remarks at the Presidential Social Sector Summit held in Johannesburg this week. A multi-sectoral delegation of more than 200 embraced the long overdue summit. The summit was a call from President Cyril Ramaphosa’s 2018 State of the Nation Address. Minister Zulu said the call could not be heeded in 2020 when the whole world shut down to escape the danger that came with the Covid-19 global pandemic.

According to Minister Zulu, while it was important to set up mechanisms that will reverse the scourge of inequality, poverty, and unemployment - it was essential to acknowledge the importance of servicing an integrated society. She said integrating society was part of making the work of the social sector visible. She added that for as long as there was a disintegrated society, efforts to liberate people from poverty and other social ills would be impossible.

“And the reason why we are here is because integration of society that we want is a work in progress. And if anybody believes that work in progress is something that can happen overnight, they’d be very mistaken,” she said.

The Minister dubbed the Social Sector gathering the People’s Summit highlighting that the aim of the summit was to take a long-range view of the challenges that government and the social sector are continuously addressing in communities. But also said the success stories had to be highlighted and use these as the guiding light out of the adversity millions of people face.

Adding to the minister’s note about success story, Gauteng MEC for Social Development Morakane Mosupoe who was also the programme director, announced that about 400 young people (in her province) were lifted out of poverty and no longer depend on government social grants through various government initiative. She admitted it wasn’t

enough, but there was work in progress to sustain the trajectory of success stories to ensure people are not dependent on social grants.

SASSA came under the spotlight when Mr Ashwell Jenneker from Statistics South Africa showed how many people depended on social grants to escape living below the poverty line. The short session showed the spreading cancers that stood in South Africa's way to prosperity; Unemployment and lack education especially among young people. Stats SA presentation said 12 percent of households were vulnerable to hunger compared to the 27 percent recorded in the previous report. Jenneker alluded the improvement to social grants and other government interventions.

"We wanted to employ 150,000 people (for the census). We couldn't find them, and we just found 101,000 people. So, there's some problem in our society that even when they miss work, people don't necessarily take it. So, I don't think we always understand the psychological impact of not having employment and how the 12,4 million people are orientating themselves to even find work when there is work," he said. He also showed statistics that showed 12,4 million had given up on looking for work.

Minister of Employment and Labour, Thulas Nxesi, MP, drew a picture of the personnel gaps in government, especially in social services like police and health facilities. He said the summit had to come up with ways to help government navigate to an environment of public service that creates patriotism and trust. Nxesi said it was important for government to take stock of its own inadequacies to deliver services to people.

Jimmy Gotyana, president of the Alliance of NPO Networks NEDLAC Community Constituency, said he was looking forward to President Cyril Ramaphosa signing a social compact that would elevate the state of civil society. That will happen after the gathering breaks into commissions that will produce a collaborated effort from the social sector to create a better life for all. The summit continues until 05 August 2022.