

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, DURING THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MONTH LAUNCH, BLUEGUMBOSCH STADIUM, FREE STATE

Programme Director; HOD Ms Mahlogonolo Maboe;
Deputy Minister of Social Development, Mrs Maria Ntuli;
MEC for Social Development, Ms Sisi Ntombela;
Executive Mayor of Thabo Mofutsanyana, Dr Balekile Mzangwa;
Executive Mayor of Maluti A Phofung Municipality, Ms Mathokoana Mopeli;
Acting Director-General, Mr Coceko Pakade;
National Development Agency (NDA) CEO, Ms Vuyelwa Nhlapo;
Managers and officials of Social Development, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and NDA;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen;

It is an honour for me together with the Social Development team to launch the 2012 Social Development month. This year is an important year for our organisation, the ANC, as it marked 100 years of its existence and commitment to the struggle of the majority of our people. In line with the celebration of the organisation, the Department also showed its appreciation to older persons around the country who turned 100 years and above. The President opened his guesthouse and celebrated with us this past Sunday. We want to tell our grandparents that we appreciate their continued support in looking after our orphaned and vulnerable children. I would like to assure them that no grandchild will be removed from their protection and care.

We further call on all South Africans to join us this Sunday as we celebrate Grandparents day.

Ladies and Gentlemen...

I would like to extend my gratitude to the provincial government of Free State for embracing with both hands our invitation to launch this crucial month on their province.

The Department of Social Development has identified October month as a period during which we reach out to meet and interact with the citizens of South Africa. The purpose is to improve communication with the people we are here to serve, and to assess the ways in which we can improve the manner in which government contributes to improving the well-being of all South Africans.

Ladies and gentlemen...

This government is committed to reducing high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. An important component of that strategy is to improve household food security so that all South Africans have access to nutritious food. Our strategy is integrated in that it seeks to support families and help small farmers improve their capacity to produce food to feed the nation. This includes looking at ways to lower the prices of essential foods and improving access to social assistance measures, such as grants and food distribution programmes.

To reduce poverty and associated challenges, the Department of Social Development works with its provincial counter-parts, our agencies - South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the National Development Agency (NDA) - and with non-governmental organisation (NGOs) as well as community-based organisations (CBOs).

It is only through structured and committed partnerships that we can successfully implement our mandate which is to improve the lives of all South Africans. This launch is the fulfilment of the promise we made last year during the Child Protection Week campaign.

We were fortunate to meet Clara Mokoena, a grandmother hailing from Qwaqwa who uses her own house to accommodate and take care of children - an act which is very generous and developmental as it allows young parents to continue with their studies. Through this work, Mme Mokoena is making an investment in the future of these children, their parents and our society. I want to express my sincere and heartfelt "thank you" to her as well as all the other grandparents and community members who are doing similar work.

The Department of Correctional Services volunteered to assist with the building of an Early Childhood Development facility and we would like to appreciate these noble efforts. The promise became a reality today as we officially opened the Lethabong Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre. More than R1 million was spent in construction of this facility and an additional amount of R190 000.00 was donated by the Free State Department of Social Development for paving, fencing, lawns and equipment. Lethabong ECD centre is a subsidised facility which will be registered for 100 children.

The Lethabong centre has employed a manager and four ECD practitioners including the staff who will be responsible for cooking and cleaning of this facility. The Free State Department of Social Development, in partnership with the NDA, allocated an amount of R7,5 million Rand for the reconstruction of seven facilities and the renovation of four facilities. We are proud to announce that nine of these facilities were completed.

The second facility that is still under construction is being erected here in QwaQwa in collaboration with the NDA. It is a Drop-in Centre which will cater for children in need of care, and protection in Slovo Park.

The Free State Department of Social Development allocated R1,9 million Rand for this project which should be completed in the next four weeks. To honour and congratulate the newly elected Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, we decided to name a facility in this area after her, as a gesture of gratitude towards the contribution she made to our organisation, the ANC, and the people of this country. We say Mbokodo! This morning we paid a visit to this facility.

Ladies and Gentlemen this government does not make empty promises, as it is sometimes alleged, but we are walking our talk.

We are doing this in line with the desire to care and improve the lives of our rural communities, with the needs of our children at heart.

Our experience has taught us that most challenges facing our communities can be resolved when government and other role-players, support the efforts of our people and their organisations to improve their communities. We need to work with communities and not expect the poor to carry the burden on their own.

This year Social Development month is launched under the theme, "Working together to enhance community capacity to fight poverty, unemployment and Inequality".

Programme Director

We are launching this year's Social Development month by reflecting on the progress we made with consideration to the areas visited last year.

The department, in collaboration with other spheres of government, recently conducted the monitoring visits. During these visits we had an opportunity to assess progress made since last year October. These areas include amongst others, Mookgophong in Limpopo, Tjakastad, Matsulu and Mangweni in Mpumalanga as well as Cassel in Northern Cape.

The monitoring visits which were held in September this year revealed that we are gradually making an impact in rural communities. To supplement these positive strides, plans are in place to take the progress made to another level. I appeal to all South Africans to join us in reflecting on successes made during the Social Development month last year.

When we visited Mookgophong last year, their livelihoods were characterised by malnutrition, poverty and unemployment. Other social ills which required immediate intervention were substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy.

Between October last year and March this year, 118 backyard gardens were established to assist with malnutrition in Mookgophong. In addition, 67 household food gardens were established at Phomolong during Mandela Day celebrations. Other interventions included the allocation of dry seeds for planting for identified malnutrition cases and others received food parcels.

In the interest of older persons, the department facilitated a partnership between Arcon Foundation and Russels furniture which led to a donation of vegetable tunnels. Close to one hundred older persons are beneficiaries of the Mookgophong Service Centre. Activities in the Centre include laundry, knitting and gardening services to generate income. In reducing Mookgophong's levels of unemployment, there are 300 vulnerable households which benefit from poverty reduction programmes initiated by Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). They are responsible for bush clearing and receiving a monthly stipend.

In Mpumalanga province, we conducted a Social Crime Prevention campaign and reached about 650 community members of the Tjakastad area. Since the launch of the campaign, crimes such as gangsterism have decreased because of improved working relations between the community and the Community Policing Forum (CPF).

We conducted two HIV/AIDS campaigns, including Siyayinqoba Door-to-Door campaign, and also reached hundreds of people. People who test for HIV/AIDS have increased and we have seen an improvement in the Home and Community Based Care services as well as the Love Life Programmes.

In Gauteng province, Devon area, a bakery project is operating under the management of eight women. The NDA allocated an amount of R1 million to fund Hlwayela Project and Poultry Farming.

For the sake of time, I will not mention all achievements. It is important to state that Dobe and Mbashe areas in the Eastern Cape are part of these successes.

Esigwalini Food Production project serves as one of the means to alleviate the effects of poverty and unemployment in the Eastern Cape Province. Three villages benefited from this project and it makes vegetable and maize crops accessible. Located next to Umtata river, which serves as a source for water, Esigwalini has rich soil suitable for farming. In August this year, the Department held an NPO summit in Gauteng.

We held pre-summit conversations with NPOs in all our provinces, and the youth who attended these dialogues made it known that they wanted their voices heard by their government. We have heard their cries and the Department is planning a youth camp in December to be held in Bloemfontein. The camp will be preceded by provincial dialogues which start in the Free State this Friday.

As a continuation of the TV series, Kwanda, the Department of Social Development will, together with its partner Soul City, be launching Kwanda Talk which will be flighted on SABC TV in November.

In conclusion, we call upon all South Africans including the community of QwaQwa to support and work in partnership with government in making South Africa a better country.

The involvement and participation of communities is significant as it adds value and improves the lives of our people, in particular, those who live under trying circumstances. The Social Development month is imperative for us to listen and guide our people on how to create sustainable livelihoods, because this government is a caring government. Together we can, indeed, do more!

Thank you