

A CALL TO REBUILD FAMILIES - 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FAMILIES



FAMILY is a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a physical residence, according to the Social Development White Paper on Families.

South Africa is celebrating 30 Years of Democracy since the first democratic elections were held in 1994, following the end of the apartheid regime. At the same time, the United Nations is celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of Families. It was for this reason that the Department of Social Development organised a celebration in Orlando East, Soweto on Friday, 24 May 2024 under the theme “**Families in building social cohesion through social and behaviour change programmes**”.

At the celebration, Mr Peter Netshipale, DSD Acting Director General said the day is meant to:

- Celebrate the family as an important unit and key building block of a well-functioning community and nation.
- Highlight family interventions that the community benefited from in the past 30 years from government and other stakeholders.
- Reaffirm the role of the family unit, as one of the main agents of building social cohesion in communities.

He continued to say that the day will highlight threats that undermine the role of families in building effective individuals and sustainable communities.

On the other hand, Minister of Social Development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu said, “As we celebrate families, we are conscious that families have transformed. There are child-headed, granny-headed, single parent headed families, as an example. The new formation of families brings more challenges that government and the nation should be conscious of. However, there are certain values that we must not lose as South Africans regardless of this transformation. Parents still have responsibilities to raise their children, grandparents still need to support the children and communities to support each other. Individuals have the responsibility to ensure that families are well coordinated and participate in the local economies to build communities.

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Minister Zulu went on to say that the Older Persons Forum should start following those who have the history and wisdom; and document their stories so that future generations can learn where they come from. She commented that as we go into the next 30 years, government will increase its investment in people to ensure that families and communities are further strengthened.

There were other speakers on the day from organisations that are implementing family related programmes like FAMSA, Kemoja, Sinovuyo, Fathers in the Picture and Risiha. All these speakers' messages were to encourage parents to spend time with their children. Mr Nhlanhla Zwane for Dads in the Picture said that children spell love as **TIME**, any other thing that parents do should be add-ons. **Parents Listen and Observe** was the message.

The day was also marked by the testimonies from families that received social development services for the past 30 years from the Department of Social Development and its agencies SASSA & NDA.

Mr Thabo Makete, Programme Director of Sedibeng SA Bophelo (SSB) – meaning Fountain of Life, represented NDA beneficiaries. His testimony reflected on the importance of the funding they receive from government and other stakeholders as NPOs for them to effectively support families. Sedibeng sa Bophelo is a Soweto CARA-funded project that serves Mapetla East and the surrounding areas.

Mr Makete informed participants that their organisation was formed in 2001 by a group of ladies who were concerned with the effects of HIV/AIDS in their community. People were sick and others were dying, families were disintegrating, and children were left behind as orphans. SSB was established for this purpose, and they have since ventured into other programmes to support their communities. Over the years they have been supporting the community of Mapetla with HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, child-headed families and Gender Based Violence & Femicide (GBV&F) programmes.

"In 2021, the NDA gave us R 150 000.00 to support the GBV&F programme. The funds were used to create awareness by hosting community dialogues, support of the GBV&F victims with psychosocial and legal issues. The funds assisted us to reach to victims that we were not able to reach out to," Makete concluded.

The Department of Social Development has various programmes such as sustainable livelihoods, youth development, older persons services, HIV/AIDS, Child Protection, Victim Empowerment, substance abuse, social crime protection and disability services to ensure that families are strengthened.

"Families are like branches on a tree, we grow in different directions, yet our roots remain as one." – Unknown

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