

RADICAL TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Human Settlements' attempt to create a mass of disciplined and empowered people through policy interventions must be supplemented by the will and quality-driven desire of the youth.

This message resonated throughout the two days of interaction, information-sharing and discussions at the Youth in Human Settlements Summit held in Durban from 3rd December 2018.

The Summit, which targeted around 250 delegates from across the Province, created a platform to deepen and empower the capacity of young people.

It aimed to give momentum to President Cyril Ramaphosa's call to reform the economy with youth at its core.

President Ramaphosa, in his State of the Nation Address (February 16, 2018), stressed that: "Our task, as South Africans, is to seize this moment of hope and renewal, and to work together to ensure that it makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our people".

It is within this spirit that the Summit aimed to inspire, empower and connect youth in the human settlements value chain.



MEC Ravi Pillay in a group gesture depicting a unified approach to creating sustainable human settlements

The MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Mr Ravi Pillay, set the tone for the Summit by impressing upon young entrepreneurs to “decide on a specialist field and ensure that value is added”. He encouraged the youth not to lose sight of soft skills in the human settlements sector. Reference here was made to skills such as social facilitation which remains a challenge and a business opportunity that youth can explore.



Young entrepreneurs listen attentively to presentations from guest speakers

Proposals stemming from discussions towards the economic empowerment of youth in human settlements included the following;

- Funding for youth-owned enterprises should be structured in terms of co-operatives.
- There should be a database of all youth-owned enterprises and also of entrepreneurs living with disabilities.
- A directive should be sent to all Municipalities to implement the 30% set aside for the youth.
- Skills Development and the Graduate Placement Programme need to be prioritised, with training and funding support in specialised fields. Youth need to be alerted about other work opportunities in the human settlements chain, besides construction. Youth also need to be empowered with financial management and business administration skills.
- More interaction between representatives from youth-owned companies and officials from the Department is required to identify and overcome challenges regarding youth empowerment initiatives.

The way forward, as outlined by the Acting Head of Department Mr Mdu Zungu in his closing, will be defined by a model for enterprise supplier development and an implementation plan for increased youth economic participation in human settlements sector, taking into account all proposals and comments made during the Summit.