

The critical role NGOs play in South Africa

Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu has applauded the NGO sector which is at the forefront of implementing programmes that uphold human rights and giving a voice to the most vulnerable in society.



Image source: CDC from [Pexels](#)

This comes as South Africa marks World Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Day, which is celebrated annually by the United Nations and international development organisations across the globe on 27 February.

The day recognises and honours the fundamental contribution of NGOs and civil society organisations as crucial actors of change and their commitment to social justice and building a humane and inclusive society.

“On World NGO Day, I thank all local NGOs as key partners of government in initiating and implementing programmes in local communities that ensure no one is left behind.

“The Covid-19 pandemic provided a classic example of the critical role of the sector and also demonstrated what and how much we can achieve when we work together,” Zulu said.

Minister Zulu highlighted that early this month, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national state of disaster due to heavy rainfall and devastating floods that have affected seven provinces in the country.

She said the NGO sector has and continues to be in the forefront of the national rapid response, recovery and rebuilding efforts.

"It is for this reason that our government will continue to support this sector through the creation of an enabling legislative environment for it to flourish and contribute to our national development," Minister Zulu said.

The Minister said South Africa has a large and vibrant civil society.



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25 Nov 2022



Registered NGOs

As of 23 February, 270,313 NGOs were registered with the NPO Directorate in the Department of Social Development, up from 221,000 registered organisations in October 2019.

As of March 2021, nearly 25,700 public benefit organisations (PBOs) were listed on the South African Revenue Service (Sars) website, representing an increase of just over 1,500 organisations since March 2020.

The sector employs almost one million people, according to the 2020 Trialogue Business Handbook.

Between 2019/2020-2022/2023 financial years, a total of 69,484 NGOs across the country were funded by the Department of Social Development to the tune of R7bn.

In recognition of the important role of the NGO sector, the department hosted the Presidential Sector Summit in 2022, which culminated in the signing of the Social Sector Framework Agreement.

The agreement sets the basis for a strong state-civil society partnership to tackle the triple challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, and fight the pandemic of gender-based violence and gender inequality, among others.

"At the heart of the agreement is the recognition that NGOs play a pivotal role in the realisation of the National Development Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, the sector also plays an important role in skills development and creation of job opportunities, particularly for women and youth who are the hardest hit by the high levels of unemployment in South Africa," the Minister said.

Data from Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey for quarter 2 of 2022 indicate that 648,000 jobs were gained between the first quarter of 2022 and the second quarter of 2022. Of this number, the biggest job gains were recorded in the NGO sector which created 276,000 sustainable job opportunities.

In South Africa, NGOs are registered in terms of the Non-Profit Organisations Act (Act No.71 of 1998).



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NPO regulations

Recently, the President signed and approved NPO Amendments as contained in the General Laws Amendment Act, 2022 (Act No. 22 of 2022).

This is to ensure the new regulatory framework is responsive to the challenges faced by the NGO sector and to reflect the country's adherence to the principles of a constitutional democracy that is underpinned by the commitments to a free, equal and open society.

The review of the NPO Act is also motivated by the need to implement the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

In the same breath, the NPO Regulations in respect of amendments to the Non-Profit Organisation Act, 1997, as contained in the General Laws Amendment Act, 2022 (Act No. 22 of 2022) were gazzetted to solicit public comments.

The closing date for submission is 21 March 2023. NPOs are encouraged to submit their comments to MphoMn@dsd.gov.za.

Minister Zulu encouraged all NGOs to check their compliance status, update organisation details and submit their annual reports to the Department of Social Development.

"Section 2 of the NPO Act makes provision for all registered NGOs to maintain adequate standards of governance, transparency, and public accountability through the submission of annual reports. The department has simplified the reporting process to ensure that all registered NGOs, big or small, duly comply with the Act," Zulu said.

To check the registration status visit <http://www.npo.gov.za> and under the heading "Top Tasks," look for "Check the Status of an Organisation." Fill in the NPO name or APP number in the space provided and click "Find".

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