

Minister commends NGOs for innovation and excellence

In 25 years of working in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) space in South Africa, respected NGO activist, Prof John Volmink had never been invited to an Education NGO Leadership Summit, recently.

“This is a fantastic opportunity and a new experience,” Prof Volmink told an audience of thought leaders in basic education, gathered at Kopanong Hotel and Conference Centre in Benoni.

The historic event, held on 11 March, was a national Education NGO Leadership Summit for NGOs convened by the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT); the delegates took stock of their roles in implementing the National Development Plan (NDP), as well as their operational circumstances and sustainability.

Specific reference was made to the NDP goal of eliminating poverty and inequality and reducing inequality by 2030. According to the plan, South Africa can realise these goals by promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society.

Minister of Basic Education, Miss Angie Motshekga, addressed over 100 delegates representing government, unions, NGOs, the private sector and funders.

The Minister echoed President Jacob Zuma’s address to the 2014 National Teachers Awards when he said: “Education is a societal issue and requires all sectors and communities to work together,” to resolve the challenges of the sector.

“We have in the basic education sector what seems to be a mammoth task,” said Minister Motshekga. “The governing party, the ANC in its 53rd National Conference held in Mangaung resolved among others that: All measures must be taken to strengthen



Angie Motshekga

the basic education sector to provide more opportunities for young people as well as increasing retention, progression, and completion rates in the basic education sector.”

In response to this challenge, government and other stakeholders launched the NECT on 16 July 2013, to strengthen partnerships among business, civil society, government and labour to achieve the education goals set out in the NDP.

Minister Motshekga confirmed that R326 million has been allocated to the NECT for various programmes which seek to unlock the potential of the basic education sector.

Godwin Khosa, CEO of NECT, urged all present to acknowledge leadership and management as central to achieving improvements in education. During the discussions, Tebogo Mahuma, a Corporate Social Investment advisor, reported that the sustainability of NGOs rested on the sector’s ability to impact sustainability of the education improvement investments.

During the course of the summit NGOs agreed that there is a need for continuous regeneration and

adaptability to a changing environment and new technologies.

“The issue of standard operational procedures for the sector was raised very strongly in the discussion,” said Mahuma.

“We need a framework that will enable us to work together even though at times we are competitors. It is important to have a coordinated voice as NGOs and to develop a culture of sharing and collaboration.”

Summing up the day’s proceedings Khosa said: “I must emphasise the importance of conversations among the NGOs, the private sector funders and government. There is a clear and unequivocal support for the role that the NGO sector plays in the implementation of the NDP.”

He proposed the formulation of a practical plan for the way forward driven by a technical team knowledgeable of pertinent issues that emerged at the summit.

In closing; Minister Motshekga acknowledged the sterling support she has received from the NGO sector during her long career in public office.

“Government benefits a lot from the excellent work that the NGO sector does, when we need distinction in our work we look to the NGOs to provide the cutting edge.

“With our reading campaign NGOs came forward with ideas. For example, work carried out in 18 districts was carried through to 81 districts. I wish to thank in particular the leadership of the NGOs; we are very grateful.

“We commit to following up on this summit so that our children are indeed the beneficiaries of all the work that has been done and the brains that exist in this country,” she concluded.