

SOUTH AFRICA
PETIDA CHOMPHOO

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Anti-Xenophobia Dialogue

14TH FEBRUARY 2018

The Anti-Xenophobia Dialogue is done in cooperation with the South African Council of Churches in Gauteng. It forms part of a series of events which aims at the eradication of xenophobia and promotion of social cohesion by strengthening conflict resolution skills of community leaders, improving liaison with Government and other agencies on the provision of relief during attacks.

The first Dialogue took place on the 14th of February 2018 at Khotso House in Johannesburg.

Guest speakers at this Dialogue included Rev. Gift Moerane (Provincial Ecumenical Secretary, South African Council of Churches, Gauteng), Lusungu Phiri (Lawyers for Human Rights, Legal Counselor), Abenge Buswato (African Diaspora Forum) and Phillip Molekoa (South African Human Rights Commission). Gosiame Choabi (South African Council of Churches) was the moderator.

After a Prayer, conducted by Dorcas Women, the Dialogue was opened by **Rev. Gift Moerane**, giving a warm welcome to the provincial South Af-

rican Council of Churches (SACC) Gauteng church leader's consultation. He gave background information on the work of SACC on the migrants' ministry and their emergency and refugee programme, which aims to provide sanctuary for the refugees. He pointed out that the anti-xenophobia events should learn from the past SACC programmes and build a ministry that would recommit to help alleviate the struggle of the uprooted communities, of both non-nationals and locals. Rev Moerane made a plea to all churches to work together and to share space and limited resources with non-nationals. He suggested several action points: The Anti-Xenophobia ministry should be established by end of 2018. They should provide enough capacity to churches on dealing with migrants and the refugee ministry. It is also needed to conduct a study or seek more information on how many foreign owned businesses operate where SACC member churches are involved in. Moreover the anti-xenophobia dialogues should be taken to all communities to raise

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awareness and education on issues of migration.

Nancy Msibi from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung South Africa underscored that foreign foundations like KAS and other organizations in South Africa are also operated by non-nationals. If there is no dealing with xenophobia violence, these organizations will be concerned how this will affect their work. The KAS seeks to be proactive in addressing and combating xenophobia tendencies through its partners like SACC.

Lusungu Phiri from Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) is responsible for refugees and migrants in the country. The LHR's programme of statelessness focusses on individuals who become stateless due to reasons beyond their control. The project seeks to protect migrants' rights and dignity as enshrined in the Constitution. She described how stateless individuals cannot have a legal binding marriage, cannot access permanent jobs or services provided by the state. Their kids cannot access schooling or attain academic qualifications. Stateless people have no freedom movement due to threats of arrest, persecution, detention and possible deportation. Regarding these issues one of the LHR's action points is the provision of a mobile unit to assist with the registration and provision of related information. The first location for the mobile unit will be in Tembisa. They also will partner with SACC during

dialogues to educate locals on statelessness and the issues of integration. Ms Phiri also mentioned that her office helps nationals who are stateless for various reasons. Others it may be because the parents are South African but the children were born outside the borders of South Africa and they were not registered in the country of their birth.

Phillip Molekoa from the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). SAHRC derives its mandate from the South African Constitution as contained in Chapter 9. Its mandate includes the Protection of Human Rights and Human dignity. Therefore the SAHRC has to monitor the respect on human rights and dignity, also towards those of LGBTIQ and non-nationals. Together with other stakeholders they will host the Human Rights Festival at the Constitutional Hill. The SAHRC and the SACC-GP will develop a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize and support the anti-xenophobia dialogues.

Abenge Buswato of the African Diaspora Forum alluded to the fact that issues on migrants are very complex and diverse. This causes stigmatization and allegations against non-nationals. The challenge or problem is rooted in the masses and has a potential to spiral out of control. His presentation showed that there is a need for improved documentation of children and young people, in order to prevent

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young delinquents. He supports general amnesty for those without legal documentation and calls on the strengthening of the people to people solidarity. Therefore people need to get intensively educated on migration and the legislation for South Africans and state institutions.

The following discussion round produced the following conclusions: In order to conduct efficient and transparent educational work on site it is needed to collect as much information and numbers on victims of xenophobia as possible. The Lawyers for Human Rights need to make an available mobile unit to assist with documentation and advice for both nationals and non-nationals. As planned Tembisa will be the first location to start with and to consider all action points as proposed by the presenters.



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The report is accessible online.