

The Democracy Development Program (DDP) hosted the 2nd annual Youth Indaba recently. The conference took place from 30 June to 1 July 2016 at the Premier Hotel in Pinetown. DDP teamed up with youth organisations in KwaZulu Natal namely: YMCA, Youth Inter-Active (YIA), Activate, Youth Leadership Team (YLT) and the Greater KwaMakhutha Community Foundation (GKCF). They were represented by 10 members each at the Indaba.

The National Youth Policy 2015-2020, unity among youth organisations in KZN and the professionalisation of youth work were the main points of discussion in breakaway sessions and round table discussions.

Youth activist Kanyisa Boozi and Amazulu Football Club spokesman and YMCA board chairman Philani Mabaso were guest speakers on day 1. Boozi said: "The biggest possibility that we've got in this room is you. Youth work is the only thing that will save our country." In 2014 Boozi was profiled in the Mail and Guardian 200 Young South Africans publication as "noteworthy and newsworthy" in the civil society sector. She is the chief administrator of Young Generation Thinkers, an organisation that aims to "create generational strategists by getting young people actively involved in policy making". She urged youth to read and familiarise themselves with the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 and see where they fit in it. She said: "For us to change/fight anything on the system we need to know what's in it. You can't fight/reject what you don't know. We're going to work our tails off to bring life to that document."

Mabaso who is also the chairman of the Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) in KZN advised youth in detail on how to start organisations or projects and how to sustain them. He said organisations must plan for everything they do and take themselves seriously no matter how small they are. He encouraged organisations to form partnerships "when you work together the impact is better" he said.

Mabaso's advice came in handy as youth had to think of ideas of a project they want to start and provide detailed planning. This introduced youth to project planning skills. They were critiqued and advised by experienced youth workers. They presented their "wash line ideas" and were encouraged to meet up after the Indaba to further develop their plans.

Active youth participation in communities was another issue highlighted. The following were noted as issues that hinder youth participation in communities:

- A lack of positive role models led to them engaging in negative activity
- Youth that is actively involved is seen as 'dull and boring'
- Information resources are far and require traveling with money youth doesn't have.
- Unity among youth organisations is an issue. Campaigns are duplicated instead of uniting for greater impact.
- There were organisations registered but not active because of political interference. Preference given to those with membership of a favoured political party.
- Youth living beyond their means to impress peers.

One of the participants said: "Youth knows that there are issues but they believe that they are not the ones that are supposed to fix them. They remove themselves from the narrative."

Despite challenges, there were still positive aspects that youth in their communities are involved in like book clubs, various performing arts, hand crafts, sports, and volunteering to assist the elderly and sick.