

Malamulela Social Movement for the Unemployed (MSMU) submission to the Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Labor.

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Introduction

Malamulela Social Movement for the Unemployed (MSMU) was established in 1996 as a national organization that represents the interests of the unemployed (including unemployed youths in this regard). The organization's membership is well over 650 000 (2005 figures) and recognizes that there are well over 5 million people who are unemployed in this country. Unemployed youths are well over 3 million as per the 1996 Census survey. That is why MSMU continues to encourage all the unemployed to be organized in one way or the other for purposes of targeted programmes.

The topic on Youth Unemployment is both complicated and broad. It might well result into the unresolved issues around general unemployment, for as long as this initiative does not become a mere lip-service. It is however clear from the Umsobomvu Youth Fund /Human Sciences Research Council Status of the Youth (2005 report) that the government is indeed taking the issue of youth unemployment seriously. The very reason that the Portfolio Committee on Labor has decided to engage with this challenge, attests to that. The current Minister of Labor, Mr. Membathisi Mdladlana had rightly referred to this challenge of youth unemployment, as 'a powder keg waiting to explode' (28/09/2005). MSMU would therefore like to commend the Portfolio Committee for initiating these initial deliberations on unemployment, and hope that this process would translate into measurable outcomes.

This, input would first lay a foundation around efforts internationally, explore an integrated approach to the topic, detail the demographics around the problem at hand, and conclude with a way forward.

International policy framework

South Africa is a signatory to various international covenants that prioritize issues on youth development. The Millennium Development Goals also demands member countries to realize strategies on decent work for young people. Therefore, the operative word here is decent work as opposed to exploitation at the detriment of youths. It is there-

fore imperative that this committee should ensure that whatever comes out of this process, should be able to pass the test of decency.

An integrated approach

The National Youth development Policy Framework (2002-2007) is a clear example of a programme that provides for an integrated approach to challenges that faces the young people of this country. This comprehensive and holistic approach to youth development contains very interesting plans adopted by the youths of this country. Of great interest in the policy framework, is the need to align every aspect of youth development with a set of principles and values.

The policy framework clearly identifies unemployed youths as a target group that requires specific attention. In addition to all of this, there is an element of mainstreaming youth concerns, such as youth unemployment throughout government structures, with a view to create an enabling environment for the intended development. It is clear from this that the question of programmes coordination, and appropriate measurable tools would need to be developed in the process. This it may be added, would also require clear and achievable programme of action with its associated time-lines.

The big picture

Youth unemployment is characterized by various complexities such as those reflected in the 1996 census survey. The following list is not limited to gender, race and province, however it is more complex as explained. Issues of educational background, skill, accessibility to resources, accessibility to relevant information, discrimination in the community, psychological factors etc, also play an important role in the whole challenge facing unemployed youths. The following have tended to cloud the big picture:

- . Young females are many compared to young males.
- . African unemployed youths are the highest compared to other race groups.
- . Youth unemployment is also informed by provincial differences with the highest unemployment experienced in the KZN province.

Real challenges

Virtually all deliberations around unemployment and youth unemployment in particular, would continue to be marred by some of the challenges that we and our unemployed organizations faces on a daily basis. Justice would not be seen to prevail if the challenge around unemployment is merely taken as a theoretical tool for intellectual discussions. We hope that the following inputs would be of grave assistance to this committee for consideration, when it finally takes its decisions.

1. Statistics are very crucial here. Tangible figures have to be demonstrated as to, how many youths that are unemployed do we really talk about. This would

amongst other drives, involve establishing local structures of the unemployed on the ground, who would in-turn help in the processes of doing fieldwork at every street, every ward, every region, every province and ultimately, nationally.

2. Logic follows, that there should be an establishment of a national office of the unemployed youths which would amongst other issues, coordinate activities between itself, members and other stakeholders such as NPO's, unions, business and government.
3. The national office with all the political buy-in it would have amassed, should be instrumental in the establishment of one-stop shops at every ward. Their focus would be amongst other issues, be to provide relevant information on job opportunities, available vacancies and learnership training to the unemployed.
4. There is also a need for the prioritization of strategic employment opportunities that would cater for the varying interests of the youths such as in IT, engineering, communications etc.
5. The ability of registered placement institutions and companies to link up with offices of the unemployed, and be prepared to place their members into available jobs. The placements of unemployed youths, should ensure that none of our people would regard them as a money spin-off for the few.
6. All the above processes should be able to have a buy-in, from various stakeholders such as political parties, business, educational institutions, unions, government and civil society in general.
7. Continuous monitoring of the processes would need an injection of funds, so as to ensure that the objectives are attained within given time-frames.
8. This would also include an injection of resources to cover for over-heads and the overall management of the programme.

Conclusion

Mlamulela Social Movement for the Unemployed is therefore very pleased that parliament has at last come to identify the issue of unemployment, as a critical issue affecting the youth of this country. We therefore caution, that the good intentions of this

process, should not end here. It must neither be a lip service such as the infamous Presidential Jobs Summit of 1996. MSMU is prepared to make every single contribution to ensure that this process becomes a success. We therefore thank the Portfolio Committee on Labor for having provided us with this opportunity to make this presentation.

References

The youth of South Africa, selected findings from census '96, Statistics SA.

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