



social development

Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

*Inaugural Summit for the Professionalisation of
Community Development*

*“Building sustainable, equitable and vibrant
communities”*

26-28 October 2011

EXTRACTS FROM THE SUMMIT REPORT

(Executive Summary, Introduction, Key Resolutions, Wayforward and Conclusion)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the *Inaugural Summit for the Professionalisation of Community Development* was to provide a joint platform to consult stakeholders within the community development sector to map a process towards the professionalisation of the practice of community development.

The summit covered three thematic areas specifically around the practice of community development in South Africa, the process of professionalisation, and lessons learnt from peer professional bodies. Expert speakers and practitioners from South Africa and internationally concurred that professionalisation of community development was critical to achieving standardisation of the practice to the benefit of communities. Inputs from peer professional bodies suggested that the process of professionalisation begins with an association for community development, followed by the establishment of a unified professional body and finally the formation of an independent statutory council for community development.

The Department of Social Development both at national and provincial level expressed support of the summit in recognition of the significance of community development in society. This was evidenced by statements from political heads including the Hon. Minister and the Hon. Deputy Minister of the National Department of Social Development, and the MEC for the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development and Special Programmes. In this regard, the Deputy Minister formally pronounced the launch of an association for community development as the first step in the professionalisation process.

Finally, there was a clear consensus and mandate from the delegates through facilitated group discussion for the need to professionalise. The delegates acknowledged the collaborative nature of the summit and committed to fully participating in the ongoing process of professionalising the practice of community development.

1 INTRODUCTION

"People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's [persons] house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man [person] has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself by what he does ... by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing, and why; by his own full participation"

former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, 1973 (as quoted by Maistry, 2011:2)

1.1 PURPOSE OF SUMMIT

The purpose of the *Inaugural Summit for the Professionalisation of Community Development* was to provide a joint platform to consult stakeholders within the community development sector to map a process towards the professionalisation of the practice of community development (see Figure 1: Professionalisation Process).

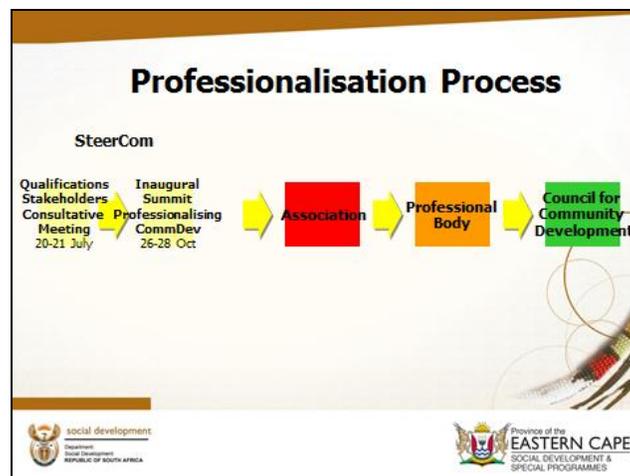


Figure 1: Professionalisation Process

1.1.1 Delegates

The three day summit was held at the Vulindlela Village in Coega, Eastern Cape, 26-28 October 2011. The summit was attended by officials, practitioners, academics and experts from across the spectrum of community development. The delegates represented a wide variety of organisations in the sector including the Department of Social Development (DSD), Further Education & Training (FET) Institutions, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA), other professional bodies, as well as Non-

Profit/Non-Governmental Organisations (NPOs/NGOs), Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO SUMMIT

This inaugural summit follows on from the *Community Development Qualifications Stakeholders Consultative Meeting* organised by the National Department of Social Development at Birchwood, Johannesburg on 20-21 July 2011.

The purpose of that meeting was to update delegates from relevant departments, educational institutions, qualifications authorities, stakeholders and other interested parties from various provinces on progress around the NQF process related to community development qualifications.

At that meeting, it was proposed that a consultative summit be held to discuss the process of professionalising the practice of community development in South Africa. A Community Development Professionalisation Steering Committee (CDPSC) was elected to organise this summit and the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development and Special Programmes offered to host the event. Together, the partners have worked tirelessly since July in preparing for this October summit.

1.3 THEMES OF SUMMIT

In this regard, the summit specifically endeavoured to achieve consensus around the following three thematic areas as follows:

- Gaining a common understanding around the *practice* of community development in South Africa and internationally;
- Obtaining a mandate for *professionalisation*, particularly towards the establishment of a future professional body; and
- Understanding the *process* of professionalisation, drawing lessons from peer professional bodies.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF SUMMIT

The summit was structured using a highly participatory approach so that delegates could share and learn from invited experts and from each other as much as possible (see Appendix I: Outline of Summit).

Expert Presentations

The thematic areas were introduced through expert presentations over the three days. Each presentation was followed by facilitated panel discussions to ensure maximum knowledge sharing between delegates and presenters. The high level summaries of each presentation that are contained in this report must be reviewed in conjunction with each presenter's detailed paper and/or accompanying PowerPoint slides (please see Appendix III: Reference to Presentations).

Collaborative Forums

During the two afternoon sessions, the delegates were organised into a series of collaborative group forums around four discussion topics as follows:

- Topic 1: Understanding of community development
- Topic 2: Purpose of community development in the South African context
- Topic 3: Understanding of the professionalisation of community development
- Topic 4: Role of an association in community development

The objective of the group discussion forums was to obtain a consensus view and general mandate around each topic from the delegates. These views formed the basis of the way forward. The summit then concluded with a presentation of summary of decisions made to date and next steps to be taken going forward.

2.1 KEY RESOLUTIONS

Key resolutions which emerged from the summit are summarised as follows:

- There was a clear mandate from the delegates of the need to form an association for community development, followed by the establishment of a unified professional body and finally the formation of an independent statutory council for community development.
- The Department of Social Development expressed support of the summit as a response to the recognition of the significance of community development. In response to the initiatives of practitioners and stakeholders, the Hon. Deputy Minister of Social Development formally pronounced the launch of the association for community development.
- The delegates acknowledged the collaborative nature of this summit and committed to fully participating in the process of professionalising the practice of community development.

2.2 WAY FORWARD

Ms Cornel Hart, in her capacity as a member of the Steering Committee, concluded the deliberations of the Inaugural Summit. She reminded delegates of the work done to date in formulating the NQF levels 4, 5 and 8 in community development. She reiterated the fact that the process of professionalisation required an association of community development practitioners to be formed, leading towards a professional body and ultimately a council for community development. Given that community development is a collective, holistic and integrative process towards sustainable well-being, Hart took the opportunity to propose a community well-being model that measures five dimensions, i.e. social, economic, cultural, ecological and infrastructural.

2.2.1 Pre-Summit Survey

Ms Hart presented the outcomes of a survey of invited delegates conducted prior to the summit in which 96% of respondents indicated that community development should be professionalised and 92% of respondents indicated that community development should have its own independent status.

2.2.2 Next Steps

On behalf of the Steering Committee, the following commitments were made to:

- consolidate all group reports;
- prepare a draft Terms of Reference for the Association for dissemination;
- establish the Association by 2012;
- continue remaining tasks from the July meeting workshop;
- conduct an RPL pilot with SAQA; and
- continuously communicate and report back to delegates.

3 CONCLUSION

This report documents the outcomes of the Inaugural Summit on the Professionalisation of Community Development.

The summit could not have happened without the hard work of the Steering Committee together with dedicated officials at the National Department of Social Development and the Eastern Cape Department of Social Development and Special Programmes. The success of the summit was due to the enthusiastic participation and committed engagement of all delegates.

There was an overwhelming mandate by the delegates to professionalise the practice of community development. The announcement of the launch of the association of community development practitioners by the Honourable Deputy Minister of Social Development, as a champion of the process, is an important first step in that direction. The real test of the success of this venture will be for all stakeholders in the sector to take ownership of the process.