



Monday, 15 November 2021

Dear Fellow South African,

Just as the COVID-19 pandemic has tested our resolve as a nation and united us as a people, it has also illustrated once more that community-based and civil society organisations are the lifeblood of this country.

Since the earliest days of the pandemic, civil society organisations have played an essential role in supporting the public health response and sustaining livelihoods.

When government embarked on an extensive relief programme to support people in distress, community organisations partnered with us to make it happen. In many ways this was a true expression of the Thuma Mina spirit. Among other things, they helped to expand sheltering services for survivors of gender-based violence and kept community early childhood development centres running. There were many local community kitchens that sprung up to deal with hunger, often supported by local volunteers, restaurant owners, supermarkets and farmers.

And while meeting vital community needs, these organisations are also creating jobs. This is a strength that we want to build on through the new Social Employment Fund, which has just been launched as part of the second phase of the Presidential Employment Stimulus.

Through this fund, non-governmental, community-based and civil society organisations as well as social enterprises will be supported to create jobs while undertaking work that serves the common good and is not for profit.

This could include work that promotes food security, healthcare, education support, greening the environment, better public spaces, community safety and action against gender-based violence.

It is expected that the Social Employment Fund will create around 50,000 work opportunities. A total of R800 million has been allocated to the fund, which is being led by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and managed by the Industrial Development Corporation.

Applications are now open for organisations to become the fund's Strategic Implementing Partners. These partners must be able to create work for at least 1,000 participants, and will be expected to reach the employment target within the first quarter of implementation.

No less than 80% of the funds received needs to be spent on wages. This will ensure that the work supported by the Fund is labour intensive, provides meaningful experience and delivers real social value. Social employment is not about work alone, but about creating high-quality assets and services for communities.

Public employment programmes are particularly important when there are not enough jobs being created in the private sector. As our economy starts to recover from the effects of COVID-19, public employment fills a vital gap as companies get back on their feet and start hiring again.

Work opportunities under the Social Employment Fund will be part-time. This means more people can participate and participants can be employed and have a secure income for longer. This gives participants the time to develop the structure, skills and networks associated with participation in work.

Participants will perform an average of two days of work a week, and we want to encourage the private sector and the donor community to support these organisations, which will enable participants to be paid for more workdays a week.

As the International Labour Organization notes, work experience and skills acquired through public employment programmes can improve a person's chances of being employed, becoming self-employed or starting their own business.

As with the other programmes of the Presidential Employment Stimulus, this fund will have a broader transformative impact by engaging unemployed people to carry out socially valuable activities such as educating our youngest citizens, greening our communities, and providing care and support to society's most vulnerable.

As we strive to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of the pandemic, the Social Employment Fund

will not only create more work opportunities and support more livelihoods, it will also be a critical driver of development and social upliftment.

Through this fund, and the many organisations it will support, government aims to mobilise the abundant energy and capabilities of the wider society to create work for the common good.

With best regards,

*Cybil Ramaphosa*