

Social Solidarity in Action

Press Release 16 May 2022

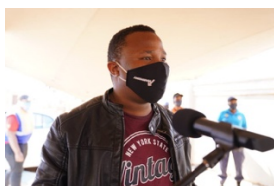


Historic Azaadville Meeting

Community leaders from a diverse spectrum of organisations met on Thursday 12 May 2022 to set up a local solidarity network as a civil society revival initiative in Azaadville/Kagiso and surrounding areas.

Facilitated by local ward councilor Shabier Dabhelia, the meeting inspired hope and is a good example of how communities throughout South Africa can work together with common vision and values to build a better future.

The local leaders expressed desire for uniting the community and sharing knowledge, skills and experiences for local economic empowerment. They felt that the rich spirit of uBuntu that is so prevalent when communities in South Africa rally together in times of disaster or crisis such as the recent floods in KZN or the riots in July last year must be channeled more proactively into on-going community development and upliftment programmes.



Ward Councilor Resha Lwando from neighboring Greater Lusaka ward was in attendance with Councilor Thlantha Nhlapo.

The participants included ward councilors from neighboring areas, Rietvallei Civic Association, Mrs F. Chohan, Advocate Iqbal Mohammed and Yusuf Bodhania from the Azaadville Ratepayers Association, representatives from Jamiatul Ulema West Rand, Doctor Mohammed from Azaadville Health & Welfare, Mr Gulabbhai from Seva Samaj and other community leaders David Rengasamy, Niyaz Hajee, Macintosh Mkhontwana, Fazila Waja, Doctor Naeema Ahmed, Yacoob Patel, Zaid Haffejee and Architect Talha Jeena.

Faizel Katkodia, representing the MUSA delegation at the meeting, said it was encouraging to see the community come together in this way as people from different faiths and backgrounds all share common values and have a common objective for well-being of the community.

Yusuf Dindar recalled how the Azaadville/Kagiso community “rallied to help victims of the tragic Swaneville massacre in 1991 during a period of heightened political violence where this very same venue (Azaadville Civic Centre) was a sanctuary and hub for local peace building”.

Socio-Economic Justice and Transformation

The MUSA delegation engaged local leaders on the important role of Civil Society in advancing Socio-Economic Justice and promoting Transformative Consciousness, which is about bringing change that uplifts and dignifies people. Presenting at the meeting, Yusuf Patel said that “we have reached a critical juncture in the country and have a choice to either spiral into permanent despondence or to put all our energy into renewal, uniting and developing our communities and country.”

Community-Driven Development

Participants emphasised that a shift in ambition is needed by the entire community towards more self-reliance and self-driven development focusing on trade and operating small businesses to building networks and partnerships for industrialisation and digital economy. “There has to be a mindset change from being mere cogs and consumers in the current economic system which is not working for everyone to taking charge of own destiny and becoming drivers of value and wealth creation. A new economic paradigm is needed”.

The meeting discussed how transformative Islamic, African and Vedic values and approaches can be infused into a new economic model of societal and environmental well-being, and bottom-up community driven development.

More innovative and responsive government policy and funding instruments including the new Gauteng Township Economy fund and the priority human settlement and housing development programme can support this approach.

Helping to Uplift those in Need

Ikbal Kolia sharing lessons from Lenasia encouraged a new form of economic solidarity to take shape within Azaadville/Kagiso where those with skills and experience can assist those in need through training programmes, trade networks, micro-business loans and business partnerships.

A deliberate effort is required to build bridges between the more resourced and less resourced members of the community. Active steps have to be taken to transform the space and society. Soraya Bibi-Khan urged young people and especially Women in the area to be more involved as they better appreciate and understand nurturing of family and community.

Local Solidarity Network

Just as civil society was at the forefront of dismantling apartheid at a political level and just as civil society is leading relief and humanitarian efforts today, it can be a key driver for enabling local good governance and socio-economic transformation. It was expressed that “the community must become more robust in holding government accountable and can go beyond this to focus on a bigger vision for development of the area. Communities should not be beholden to empty promises and need to value their own strengths and assets in breaking the apartheid mould to envisage and build the entire area into an attractive, integrated, sustainable and prosperous town.”

The local solidarity network driven by a steering committee made up of the organisations that participated in the meeting will focus on:

- Reimagining the local space and economy and developing a shared vision for the area;
- Better co-operation and coordination between various community-based structures and organisations;
- Improved communication with the broader community;
- Promote continuous dialogue and programmes between communities from different backgrounds and sectors;
- Strengthen collective voice of the community and form coalition to engage Local Government planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring - Improve Local Governance and local leadership; and
- *Overcome racial, cultural, spatial and class divides.*

This format of community dialogues and cooperation was heralded by the participants as being extremely valuable and is something that would be worth replicating across the country.

List of Organisations:

1. Jaamia Masjid Trust.
2. Neighbourhood Watch.
3. Muslim women's forum.
4. Ashraful Aid.
5. Sports Committee.
6. The 3 schools management team.
7. Darul Uloom.
8. South Indian Society.
9. Full Gospel Church.
10. Seva Samaj
11. Rate Payers association.
12. Rietvallei Peoples Movement.
13. Sanco - Kagiso branch.
14. Local Councillors and Ward Committees

Issued By: MUSA (Movement for a United South Africa)

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