

**The Zola Skweyiya Lecture on
South African Social Policy 2011
Tuesday, 17 May 2011, 5 p.m.
Oxford Institute of Social Policy
Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square, Oxford**

‘Building on inclusive, comprehensive and non-discriminatory social welfare system in post-apartheid South Africa: A Reflection on achievements and continuing challenges’

- **The High Commissioner for Namibia, His Excellency Mr George Liswaniso**
- **Professor Roger Goodman, Head of the Social Sciences Division.**
- **Professor Martin Seeleib-Kaiser, The Head of Department of Social Policy and Intervention;**
- **Professor Michael Noble, Director of the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy;**
- **Mr Vusi Madonsela, Director General of the Department of Social Development, South Africa**
- **Dr Gemma Wright, Deputy Director of the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy;**
- **Mr David McLennan, Deputy Director of the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy**
- **Members of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention;**

- **Members of the University of Oxford here present;**
- **Invited and Distinguished Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Today is a special day. It is a special day for the Government of South Africa, the people of South Africa that I serve, and the African National Congress, the ruling party in South Africa and the oldest liberation movement on the African continent. The African National Congress has been my political home since 1956. It is through the teachings and social transformation principles of the African National Congress that I stand here today.

It is the illustrious contributions of men and women such as Charlotte Manye Maxeke, Dorothy Nyembe, Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi, Chief Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and many other stalwarts of the struggle for the total emancipation of the African peoples that have provided guidance to many of us as we dedicate our lives to the improvement of the quality of life of all South Africans.

As the African National Congress, over the many decades of our existence, we have made important contributions in the fight against colonialism, segregation, apartheid and other forms and systems of oppression, exploitation and

domination. Today's lecture comes at a very opportune moment in the history of the struggle of the people of South Africa. Next year, the African National Congress will be celebrating 100 years of intensive involvement in the fight for liberation in South Africa and in Africa. In the same vein as this lecture the centenary celebrations will be a moment of celebration and reflection. Tomorrow South Africa will be holding the third local government elections since the dawn of democracy. South Africans will be casting their votes. For the African National Congress, the elections mark another moment of reflection on our record of achievements and challenges in meeting the needs of South Africa's citizens.

In the post-apartheid period we continue our fight against poverty and to provide opportunities for the development and advancement of the people of South Africa. Let us be reminded that in 1923 the South African National Native Congress, which later became the African National Congress, adopted a Bill of Rights in which we demanded the constitutional right of an equal share in the management and direction of the affairs of the then Dominion of South Africa.

In 1943, in another Bill of Rights, we categorically stated that 'We, the African people in the Union of South Africa, urgently demand the granting of full citizenship rights such as are enjoyed by all Europeans in South Africa'. This Bill of

Rights drew upon the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 which was brokered by Sir Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt and agreed upon by the Allied Forces as a post-war settlement and pact. In 1955, the African

National Congress was part of the Congress of the People that adopted the Freedom Charter in Kliptown. In this historic document we declared that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people'.

In the 1990s, as we negotiated an inclusive political settlement for a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa, we introduced and promoted the idea of a Government of National Unity. This idea has been adopted in other societies in the resolution of political conflicts. In 1996 we adopted the post-apartheid South African Constitution, which is one of the most advanced constitutions in the modern world and has become an international point of reference in jurisprudence on social and economic rights and is setting new perspectives in human rights law and scholarship.

Ladies and gentlemen!

The Zola Skweyiya Lecture on South African Social Policy is in my view a rightful recognition of the contributions of the African National Congress that I have outlined. It is a rightful recognition of the endeavour and tireless efforts of comrades in the democratic movement, in civil society formations and in academia in South Africa and other parts of the world. This inaugural lecture is an outcome of and reflects the sterling work and selfless contributions of many people here at the University of Oxford. These many people have worked tirelessly and made great strides in supporting the development of Social Policy and Evidence-Based Policy Making in South Africa, both in Government and in academia. This continues to happen under the intellectual guidance and able leadership of Professor Michael Noble. To you Professor Michael Noble and your team of researchers and social policy experts, and members of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, we say in South Africa *'ningadinwa nangomso'*. May you find even greater strength and determination to do more and contribute further!

Ladies and gentlemen!

Prior to my assignment as South African High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, I was the Minister of Social Development for two consecutive terms. Before that I was Minister of Public Service and Administration. I served the

people of South Africa as a cabinet Minister for fifteen years beginning in 1994 after the fall of apartheid. It is the experiences, the insights and the challenges that I came to understand and dealt with in my capacity as Minister of Social Development for ten years that I base my analysis and reflections.

As a way of background the Department of Social Development in South Africa has a partnership with the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy which is part of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention. Over the many years of our partnership the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy has worked with us in conducting cutting-edge social research that has shaped our policy formulation and interventions in remarkable ways. The Centre has worked with us in capacity building in both research and social policy and social policy analysis. It was in December 2000, more than ten years ago, that members of the Taylor Committee were here at Oxford University deliberating on matters that were urgent and important for a post-apartheid social welfare system. I appointed the Taylor Committee to investigate possibilities and parameters for an inclusive and comprehensive social welfare and social security system for South Africa.

One of the important observations from the Taylor Committee was the crucial need to build expertise and capacity in social policy and evidence-based policy making within the South Africa government, particularly the social development sector. For the Department of Social Development to discharge its mandate of being the lead Department in addressing poverty in post-apartheid South Africa, we needed to build sound expertise in social policy and evidence-based policy making. This saw the birth of the Strengthening Analytical Capacity in Evidence-Based Decision Making Programme, the SACED Programme in short. This Programme is generously funded by the Department for International Development of the UK Government.

There are many achievements that we made under the SACED Programme. In May 2006, the Department of Social Policy and Social Work hosted a delegation of Members of Executive Council of South Africa's provinces and high level policy makers from national and provincial spheres of government. The objective of the colloquium was to build ongoing dialogue that highlights the interplay between research, policy and politics. Since 2005, as part of the SACED partnership the Department of Social Development working with the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy has trained more than three hundred senior policy makers in South Africa. Recently the training in social

policy and social policy analysis was extended to members of the Portfolio Committee of Social Development in the South African parliament. Through the SACED Programme we have been able to go beyond the borders of South Africa into neighbouring countries in the Southern Africa region. The Southern Africa region continues to be faced by endemic poverty which manifests itself in multiple ways.

In November 2009, we hosted jointly with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services of the Government of Zambia a roundtable of Departments of Social Development, Social Affairs and Community Development. These Departments working in the area of human and social development shared experiences, lessons and took resolutions on designing and implementing effective inter-sectoral policies. Again In November 2010 high level civil servants from countries in the region attended a social policy and social policy analysis course in Swakopmund, Namibia. This course was jointly offered by the Department of Social Development in South Africa, the University of Oxford and the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University in South Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

With this background on how we arrived where we are today, let me turn to the central theme of today's lecture. I have termed this lecture '*Building an inclusive, comprehensive and non-discriminatory social welfare system in post-apartheid South Africa: A reflection on achievements and continuing challenges*'. I intend to address this complex issue in this way.

First I will touch on what was the prevailing dominant ideological context globally at the time we were negotiating for a non-racial democratic South Africa. The post-apartheid development agenda was not and is not immune to dominant currents in ideas, ideologies and prescriptions at the global level. As you will see, we were also influenced by these.

Second, I will answer the question, '*How did we respond as the state and government to the post-1994 human and social development challenge?*' Addressing poverty among black people in particular was then and still is the one overarching goal of the South African government.

Third, the South African Constitution is central in our consideration of an inclusive, comprehensive and non-discriminatory social welfare system. There are clear social policy directives that come from the provisions of our 1996 Constitution.

Fourth, South Africa after the fall of apartheid took its rightful place in the community of nations of the world. We became active in multi lateral forums such as in the work of the United Nations. We went onto sign and ratify conventions, covenants and declarations. These also directly influence our national social policy context as they are about children's rights, social and economic rights, social protection and other issues that are relevant to the social welfare of citizens.

Fifth, I will look at our achievements in the social development sector in addressing the worst forms of poverty since 1994. It is important to point out the challenges that remain and obstacles towards achieving the type of society we envision to become and aspire to be. Built into all these aspects of these reflections is the central role of social policy within the South African context in tackling poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We cannot escape history! We cannot escape the context and conditions that are placed on us by decisions and practices of those who have lived and governed before us. In order to

appreciate the need to build an inclusive, comprehensive and non-discriminatory social welfare system in the post-apartheid era, a historical perspective and analysis is proper. Let us be reminded that the formation of the South African National Native Congress in 1912 was as a response to the accelerated and cumulative dispossession of the African people of the then Union of South Africa. The human and social development challenges we faced in 1994, the challenges we continue to face in 2011 are an outcome of centuries of colonialism, segregation and apartheid. These social, political and economic systems were characterised by conquest, subjugation, domination, exploitation, racial discrimination and systematic dispossession.

The economic wellbeing and affluence that is enjoyed by some sections of the South African population are an outcome of planned and deliberate social policies and practices that benefitted some and disadvantaged others. Our history bequeathed on us Bantustans and homelands characterised by social indicators such as maternal mortality, infant mortality, child malnutrition. These social indicators are the same as for countries at war or for countries that have just emerged from the devastation of war. In 1994 the greater majority of our people live in these areas without basic adequate housing, sanitation, clean water, schools, clinics, libraries and other amenities that are essential for human and social development. This historical

reality must be borne in mind when we reflect on our experiences, achievements and challenges.

The negotiations for a free democratic non-sexist South Africa happened at a specific moment in the history of the world, at a specific moment in the history of ideas that rule and govern the world. Nelson Mandela was released in February 1990. The year before, in 1989, it was the Fall of the Berlin Wall. This was an immensely symbolic event and moment in the history of the world. As international author Francis Fukuyama, a political economist, in the book *'The End of History and the Last Man'* asserted, this was a period that marked 'the end of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' and 'in its economic manifestation, liberalism is the recognition of the right of free economic activity and economic exchange based on private property and the markets'.

In some powerful and influential quarters in the world this event marked the erosion of the validity of the idea of the central role of the state in economic planning and active involvement in the regulation of the market. The Fall of the Berlin Wall added more fuel to the neoliberal agenda that sought the retrenchment of the state. The state versus market debate was heightened and sharpened. The role of

the state even in social democratic dispensations came under attack. Market-based social insurance, private health care, the privatisation of education, private pension schemes, the liberalisation of trade, the introduction of user fees and the war against the very foundations of the welfare state were presented and also imposed as solutions to the human, social and economic development challenges. The Washington Consensus propagated by the International Monetary Fund implored governments mainly in the developing world that they had to liberalise and open up their economies, privatise state owned enterprises and pursue a strict regime of fiscal discipline to limit the budget deficit and strictly control spending.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Many countries in the world had enjoyed the golden age of the welfare state. This period saw unprecedented achievements in lowering infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, raising levels of educational attainment and making other important gains in human and social development. During this golden age the state was a key actor in the provision of quality education, quality health care, social assistance, contributing in early childhood development and in other social needs.

It was in this global context with these dominant ideas and the market ideology that negotiations in South Africa ensued and culminated in the holding of inclusive national elections of April 1994. It was in this context that we set out to construct our responses to the human and social development challenges faced by the people of South Africa. How did we respond to the post-1994 human and social development challenges? The nature of the outcome of our negotiated settlement meant that the apartheid era state architecture and form remained largely intact. The former republic of South Africa with its four provinces, the TBVC states of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei, and the many self-governing territories that were an extension of the Bantustan system all had to be incorporated into the Republic of South Africa with nine provinces. We inherited a civil service that had built and maintained the apartheid system as well as the Bantustan system.

In the post apartheid era we created a three sphere system of government made up of the national, the provincial and the local. We created new institutions and state agencies to advance the development agenda through legislation and policy. The primary function of national departments is to formulate national policy. The nine provinces and the local sphere of government implement these policies. There are

challenges that this arrangement has presented over the years. The main one is that by definition different spheres of government are responsible for different aspects of the policy process, that is, policy making is separated from policy implementation.

In the social development sector our approach has been informed by the understanding that at the centre of integrated human and social development is a social and economic system that concerns itself with quality early childhood development as a foundation for successful life-long development, quality education at all stages and levels, quality health care, successful school to work transition as youth enter the world of work and the economy as skilled labour and entrepreneurs, the provision of benefits throughout working life such as maternity leave, sick leave, training on the job, provision for retirement and others. Crucially, integrated social and human development requires the provision of social assistance in instances where individuals or households are unable to support themselves and their families. For the Department of Social Development, herein lies the crucial role of Social Policy in the South African context. It is about designing effective policies with linkages and connectedness throughout the lifecycle and building strong linkages between social policy and economic policy.

There is general and common agreement on the above statement. The vexing question is how do we get to our goal, which social policy and economic policy choices are to be made? There is contestation of these ideas at the global level. There is contestation of these ideas at the national level. Importantly, there is also contestation of the very ideas within the same government, between departments of the same government. This is where the issue of evidence-based decision making in government comes in and becomes very relevant as we seek to understand what works under what circumstances.

In the period before the April 1994 elections, the African National Congress adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the RDP in short. The RDP was a pact between the African National Congress, the labour movement, the South African Communist Party and civil society organisations. When the African National Congress became the ruling party in the Government of National Unity, the RDP was officially adopted as the macro-policy framework within which all government departments and spheres of government understood and placed their policy interventions. The RDP was an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework that sought to mobilise all our people and our country's resources toward the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future. In the RDP we committed

to take all necessary measures to grow and develop South Africa's economy. We stated that;

At the heart of the Government of National Unity is a commitment to effectively address the problems of poverty and the gross inequality evident in all aspects of South African society ... [and] ... alleviate the poverty, low wages and extreme inequalities in wages and wealth generated by the apartheid system to meet basic needs, and thus ensure that every South African has a decent living standard and economic security.

The social policy imperatives for South Africa in the post-apartheid era are evident in this statement regarding the RDP.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

One of the serious challenges that we faced in 1994 as the ANC was that we did not have reliable social and economic statistics, information and indicators for our newly found society and country. The lack of information on the extensive multi-dimensional poverty in South Africa had been noticed and taken into account by the ANC even before the 1994 elections. The collection of comprehensive and complete statistics on all race groups was not a priority of the apartheid regime. The absence of information which is

the basis in planning was further compounded by the exclusion of the TBVC states from the 1970s.

In 1993 the African National Congress approached experts on poverty to conduct a study to collect statistics and information on poverty in South Africa. The outcome was the 'Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development' undertaken by the World Bank and the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town. This study was a milestone in poverty research as it became the policy base for anti-poverty policies and also informed the analysis of poverty in the post-apartheid period.

In our quest as a new nation to understand the social and economic conditions under which our citizens were living we conducted our first post-apartheid analysis of poverty in 1995. This study showed us that in 1995 poverty in South Africa had a strong rural dimension. Some 75 per cent of South Africa's poor lived in rural areas, concentrated in the former homelands and TBVC states. Poverty in South Africa had a strong regional dimension. Nearly two thirds of South Africa's poor lived in three provinces, the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and the recent day Limpopo Province. Poverty in South Africa had a strong employment dimension. Unemployment rates among the poor stood at 50 per cent,

compared to only 4 per cent among the richest 20 per cent. Poverty in South Africa had a strong gender and age dimension. Female-headed households had a 50 per cent higher poverty rate than male-headed households. Finally, over 45 per cent of the poor were children below 16 years. Over the years we have built a strong system for the collection of information and statistics. Our national statistics agency undertakes annual and regular household surveys and in October this year we will hold our third census in the democratic era.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

In June 1996 we introduced the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy, GEAR in short. This strategy represented our attempt at shaping the trajectory of South Africa's economic development in the democratic era. GEAR was a 'strategy for rebuilding and restructuring the economy'. Through this strategy we sought a 'competitive fast-growing economy which creates sufficient jobs for all work seekers, a redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor, a society in which sound health, education and other services are available to all and an environment in which homes are secure and places of work are productive'. Further we saw this strategy as the vehicle to deliver us to the goals captured in the RDP. The RDP was

the goal. GEAR was the means. In 1996 GEAR set very specific targets. South Africa was to achieve annual growth in real GDP of 6 per cent per annum with four hundred thousand new jobs created annually by the year 2000. Economic growth did happen but jobs for the millions of unskilled, low skilled South Africans with low education level did not happen. A number of analysts referred to the economic growth as jobless growth.

Arguments and counter-arguments have been made on the wisdom of adopting this macro-economic framework. If there is one single policy framework that captures the contestation of ideas within the South African political economy, GEAR is that policy framework. The essence of GEAR in both conceptualisation and practice was that it sought to liberalise and open South Africa's markets, promoted privatisation and created a favourable market for investment, particularly Foreign Direct Investment. Accompanying this macro-economic policy was the fiscal discipline that limited the national budget deficit to an upper limit of 3 per cent thus restricting fiscal spending in many areas.

There are those who maintain the view that this provided South Africa with much needed fiscal health. Many disagree. For example, research conducted on the consequences of the

introduction of user fees for water show that undue burden was placed on the poor especially those who could not afford the user fees. A study by the Municipal Services Project on the cholera epidemic of 2000-2001 showed that ‘the policies of cost recovery had disadvantaged those for whom even a small charge of R20 a month was too much’ and ‘those who could not afford the new charges being implemented in August 2000 were returning to traditional and untreated water sources and were falling victim to the disease’.

Analysis of GEAR from the labour movement in South Africa was that South Africa had a self imposed Structural Adjustment Programme. The challenge that GEAR presented was that whilst we severely restricted the budget deficit, the health, housing, education and social welfare challenges inherited in the apartheid era were monumental. The other challenge of GEAR was that the envisaged employment creation did not materialise. In simple language this meant that the children of the unemployed, poor and economically marginalised had to rely on state social assistance. The higher the unemployment levels in a country, the higher the demand for different forms of state social assistance.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Let me state categorically that in the social development sector we are also convinced that the best form of social security is a job, a decent job. Of critical importance is that decent work is central to efforts to reduce poverty primarily through decent wages that allow citizens not to fall or live in poverty. Decent work is also a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

In South Africa when we use the expanded definition of unemployment, between 34 and 40 per cent of South Africans do not have jobs. There is also the endemic problem of the working poor as a result of low wages in some sectors of the economy. Under these circumstances the expectations and demands on the state to provide social assistance are legitimate. Our Constitution makes provision for social assistance when individuals are not able to support themselves and their families.

It was in this social and economic context of poverty and unemployment that calls for a Basic Income Grant were made back in 2001. The aim of the grant was to provide all South Africans with a minimum level of income and to enable the poorest households to meet their basic needs. The call for the Basic Income Grant grew stronger as the years went by. There were those who remain violently opposed to this proposal. My view was that and still is that when we

consider the levels of destitution, the levels of abject poverty and want, when we consider South Africa's social indicators that reflect extreme forms of poverty, the social justice and human dignity that are central pillars of our Constitution require that the state intervenes and intervenes positively.

It was in this milieu of contestations and disagreements that allegations of social grants causing dependency and teenage pregnancy came up. Research evidence shows the contrary. Households that are in receipt of social grants are more active in job searches and go onto start survivalist and small enterprises. The income security and predictability that the social grants provide also allow households to take risks to augment their overall income. Teenage pregnancy has been on the decline in South Africa for more than a decade. The view that South Africans struggled to free their country and themselves from racial discrimination and are now not interested in building their country but want to lie down and laze in the African sun and wait for government to give them free handouts without them lifting a finger is indeed a disturbing, unfortunate and untrue one.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Let me turn my attention to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This founding document of post-apartheid, democratic South Africa is central in our consideration of social policy in South Africa. The central principles and provisions that are enshrined in our Constitution include democratic values, social justice, fundamental human rights, the commitment to improve the quality of life of all citizens, the commitment to equality, and the commitment to uphold the human dignity of every citizen. The South African Constitution is at the very heart of what we consider to be the goals of social policy in South Africa's social, political and economic landscape. In a very real way our Constitution directs the executive and the legislature on what the policy interventions must be and what social outcomes must be realised. The vision of the type of society we want to be as South Africans, our aspirations as a people, and the goals of all our efforts as a state are contained and enshrined in the Constitution. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution is very detailed in its expression of civil, political and social and economic rights.

The centuries of racial discrimination did not only deny black people political freedom and freedom of movement and residence, it also brought about extensive and deep levels of poverty. As the ANC stated in 1992 in the document *'Ready to Govern: ANC policy guidelines for a democratic South Africa'*;

Past minority governments and the current apartheid regime have pursued active political and social policies which, amongst other things, have led to extreme levels of poverty and disease in the rural areas; the creation of urban ghettos where people have been denied even the most basic means of survival as a result of severely limited access to decent homes, electricity, water-borne sewerage, tarred roads, and recreational facilities; an education system preparing the majority of South Africans for lives of subordination and low wage jobs; a social security system geared almost entirely to fulfilling the needs of the white minority; a health system that has seriously neglected the well-being of most South Africans; the social and political marginalisation of the majority of people, the African community in particular, through their exclusion from public life and decision making as well as the denial of their culture .

The post-apartheid Constitution and its provisions and relevance to issues about social policy in South Africa are to be appreciated within this landscape. The ANC argued strongly and was firm on the inclusion of a Bill of Rights which was to be the foundation of a post-apartheid democratic system and non-racial citizenship. In 1955 in the Freedom Charter South Africans expressed the nature and

character of the society they were fighting for. Our post-apartheid Constitution follows the same principles.

At the height of negotiations with the apartheid state our position as the ANC on human rights and social and economic rights were made clear in several documents. In November 1990 the ANC published a *Draft Bill of Rights*. In April 1991 we made our views and position known in the publication '*Constitutional principles for a democratic South Africa*'. In this document we made the following statement;

The Bill of Rights should in clear and unambiguous language guarantee the rights of personal freedom and political expression. It should also protect and enhance rights of the individual to practise her or his religion and culture and speak her or his language. It should acknowledge the importance of securing minimum conditions of decent and dignified living for all South Africans ... [and] ... Appropriate constitutional expression must therefore be found to guarantee basic human rights in relation to nutrition, shelter, education, health, employment and welfare. Government should be under a constitutional duty to work towards the establishment of a guaranteed and expanding floor of social, economic and educational rights for everybody.

In the historic South African elections of April 1994, the Election Manifesto of the ANC committed ‘to build a better life for all, a constitution and Bill of Rights which guarantee human rights for all, including the right to a minimum standard of life’. We went on to state that;

Democracy means more than just the vote. It must be measured by the quality of life of ordinary people - men and women, young and old, rural and urban. It means giving all South Africans the opportunity to share in the country's wealth, to contribute to its development and to improve their own lives.

It was indeed the ANC working together with political formations that fought against apartheid that ushered in South Africa's Constitution that is today acknowledged the world over for its clarity and braveness on enshrined socio-economic rights. These rights are a tool in the fight against poverty. Let me highlight four sections that are part of the Bill of Rights in our Constitution.

Section 26 on housing, states that ‘everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right’.

Section 27 on health care, food, water and social security states that ‘everyone has the right to have access to health care services, including reproductive health care, sufficient food and water, and social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance’. The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights.

Section 28 on children, states that ‘every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services’.

Section 29 on education, states that ‘everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education’.

As expressed in the four sections above, whilst the social and economic rights on housing, health care, food, water and social security, are qualified through available resources and progressive realisation, children’s rights to basic nutrition,

shelter, basic health care services and social services do not have the same qualifications.

The social and economic rights in South Africa's Constitution have to be viewed together with the Constitutional commitments to social justice, human rights and human dignity. The inclusion of social and economic rights in the Constitution was not without contestations. Some held the view that the inclusion will interfere with the separation of powers as the judiciary will be forced to meddle in matters of policy which is the preserve of the executive. Others felt that the inclusion placed an unnecessary and cumbersome burden on the state and this will prevent the executive from taking appropriate policy decisions as the social and economic situation dictated and allowed.

Reinforcing the Bill of Rights in our Constitution, particularly the social and economic rights, are the conventions, covenants and declarations that South Africa has signed or ratified as we take an active role in the work of the United Nations in the international arena. South Africa has signed or ratified or adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, World Summit on Social Development Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and many

others. All these are relevant in the fight against poverty which is one of the key goals of our Constitution.

It was part of South Africa's return and active role in the work of the United Nations that I assumed the role of Chairperson of United Nations Commission for Social Development. The Commission is responsible for following up on the implementation of the resolutions and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995. Some of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration are to create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development, eradicate absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each country and support full employment as a basic policy goal. Further to this I was President of the Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO Management of Social Transformation Programme for two terms from 2005 - 2009. The objective of the MOST Programme is to build interface between research, policy and practise and promote evidence-based policy making at the national, regional and international levels. One of the lasting achievements of the MOST Programme is the establishment of regional fora of Ministers of Social Development in nearly all regions of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me now reflect on our achievements in human and social development and the fight against poverty in the ten years I was responsible for the political leadership of the Department of Social Development and the social development sector. Our achievements in human and social development since 1994 are part of how we responded as the state and as government through the policies we formulated and the programme we implemented. Great strides have been made in the provision of housing, sanitation, clean water, income support to poor families and other key areas.

In 1994 we inherited a social welfare system that was fragmented and highly differentiated in terms of quality of services. The apartheid era welfare system was made up of fourteen different departments for the various population groups in the then Republic of South Africa and the homelands and self-governing territories. In 1994 the state social assistance system was differentiated along racial lines. The main form of state assistance at this point was the State Maintenance Grant which was paid mainly to White and Coloured women. Whilst 'all South Africans in the former Republic of South Africa were eligible for the grant, for a variety of reasons African women were largely excluded from access and most of the former homelands and the 'independent states' did not administer it'. In February 1996,

the then Minister for Welfare convened the Lund Committee to, among other things, undertake a critical appraisal of the system of state support to children and families. One of the recommendations of Lund Committee, led by Professor Lund of KwaZulu-Natal, was the introduction of a means-tested flat-rate child support benefit to be paid to a primary caregiver.

In 1997 the Department adopted the White Paper for Social Welfare. This marked the transformation of the welfare sector from a narrow strictly welfare focus to a broad context-relevant developmental social welfare perspective. Among other things the White Paper sought to promote and strengthen partnerships between the government, the community and the organisations of civil society and in the private sector who were involved in the delivery of services, to give effect to international conventions and to realise the relevant objectives of the Constitution and the RDP.

It was with these initiatives in the Social Welfare Sector that the ANC held its 50th Conference in Mafikeng in December 1997. This was a period of intense state construction and the building of government Departments and state agencies. Of paramount importance was the provision of policy directives to make sure that the goals of social transformation and the

fight against poverty began to make a difference the in lives of South Africans. At this conference there were concerns raised that government was not reflecting the policies of the ANC and that there was little that had been achieved in both policy and programmes in addressing the plight of those living in poverty in South Africa. The rights in the Constitution, especially the social and economic rights, remained elusive without clear policies and programmes towards achieving them. At the conference there were views that the realisation of social and economic rights in the Constitution was not fiscally affordable. We countered with the view that if that was the case it therefore meant that the Constitution is not affordable. This reflected healthy debate and the contestation of ideas at congress in the ANC.

Some of the resolutions of the conference reflect these concerns. On poverty the resolution was that 'poverty is the single greatest burden of South Africa's people. Attacking poverty and deprivation was the first priority of the democratic government. On the child support grants the conference noted that the State Maintenance Grant was to be abolished as from 19 December 1997 as this grant reached a small percentage of children and was not sustainable or equitable. A child support benefit which will replace the State Maintenance Grant and will target 48% of the poorest children in South Africa was to be introduced.

When I was appointed Minister for Welfare in 1999 the concerns raised at the ANC conference and the resolutions taken that fell within the ambit of the Department became the centre of focus and shaped the mission of the Department. The role of the department in the fight against poverty was clear and we had to contribute decisively to the overall social policy thrust of government. Two key tasks were undertaken at this early stage. The first was the appointment of the Taylor Committee of Inquiry into Comprehensive Social Security. The second was the renaming of the Department to the Department of Social Development.

The Taylor Committee provided sound recommendations on a comprehensive social security system built on three pillars, namely, non-contributory social assistance paid from state revenue, Secondly, statutory contributory social insurance such as unemployment insurance and finally private voluntary insurance regulated by the state. In the ten years I was in the Department of Social Development we achieved the deracialisation of the social welfare system and made giant steps in building the state social assistance pillar in the context of high levels of unemployment and poverty especially child poverty and poverty among senior citizens.

In the year 2000 the name of the Department of Welfare was changed to the Department of Social Development. The motivation for this change were many. Here are a few. The focus on 'welfare' did not cover the entire mandate of leading the fight against poverty in government. Developmental social welfare necessitated that we move beyond the social work case approach to working in dynamic ways with partners in communities, NGOs, civil society, the private sector to bring about integrated and comprehensive human and social development. Moreover our mandate compelled us to work closely with other government departments to look at outcomes of their policies for the social development sector. Our overall goal in the change of name is best captured in this resolution from the UN Commission for Social Development. The resolution calls for;

Integrating social and economic policies in order to eradicate poverty, promote full employment, enhance social integration, achieve equality between women and men, ensure access to basic social services for all, reduce inequality and mitigate adverse impacts of economic shocks.

As part of our refocus we adopted The Ten Point Plan and committed ourselves to deal with the following; - rebuilding of family, community and social relations, - integrated poverty eradication strategy, - comprehensive social security

system, - violence against women and children, older persons and other vulnerable groups - HIV/AIDS, - youth development, - accessibility of social welfare services, - services to people with disabilities, - commitment to co-operative governance, - train, educate, redeploy and employ a new category of workers in social development.

Ladies and gentlemen!

In our assessment of the responsibilities we carry as the social development sector for the various social groups we deal with in social welfare it became clear that we do not have the numbers of social workers necessary for us to discharge our mandate in full. This was part of the social welfare deficit that characterised the apartheid era which meant that some areas were severely under-serviced. In policy implementation one can have the best designed policy but without the necessary physical infrastructure and trained personnel on the ground to implement the policy there will be no impact registered. We had passed a number of Acts on the care, protection, support and prevention of abuse and neglect on many of our vulnerable groups. It was with this understanding that we embarked on our ambitious social work scholarship programme. We started off with 253 students in 2006. There were one thousand four hundred and

twenty in 2007 and by 2009 six thousand students were on our system on their way to qualify as social workers.

Ladies and gentlemen!

One of the areas of work in which we have made unparalleled achievement as a country is in the area of state social grants. There are three key interventions that stand out in this regard. The first is the growth in the child support grant and the realisation of the provisions of the Constitution on children's rights. The second is the universalisation of the old age state pension. The third is the equalisation of the age of qualification for both men and women.

As our Constitution prescribes, all our children are now eligible for the means-tested Child Support Grant. The child support grant has grown from a few thousand in 1998 to about 10.5 million children currently. In 1999 we had only 23 thousand children on the child support grant. By 2002 we had reached 1.3million children. By 2009 there were 9.5million children benefiting from the child support grant. Our conviction is that far from creating fiscal wastage and creating dependency, we are actually making an investment on children in South Africa, an investment on the future of our country. That is a responsibility we cannot turn our

backs on. Similarly growth on the state old age pension has been steady but remarkable. In 1997 there were 1.7 million beneficiaries. In 2009 there were 2.6 million senior citizens receiving this grant.

With regards to old age state pensions we have managed to bring back into the social policy dialogue the term ‘universalisation’. This is now the policy principle that has been adopted. Means testing has been done away with on the state old age pension. We are, as I indicated above, in the final phase of providing old age state pensions to all men and women from the age of 60. Research on the utilisation of both the child support grant and the old age pension shows that there are positive developmental outcomes for children in families that receive social grants.

As is expected in a world of contestation of ideas, especially in South Africa, there are concerns that the numbers of South Africans on social grants are too high and have been increasing exponentially. The issue of grants causing dependency on the state has gained currency. However, certain issues need due consideration here. First, before the removal of racial discrimination from the social security system and indeed the entire social development sector, the numbers of people on state social assistance were few. The majority of our people were not included in the system thus

rendering them to all sorts of survivalist modes of existence and the harshness of life that comes with destitution. When we abolished racial differentiation the numbers on social security system actually grew as per the size of the black population. Second, our social assistance programme has managed to stave off civil discord. We cannot imagine the severe poverty, the destitution and levels of want that would be there without the social grants. Social grants act as buffers against chronic poverty, extreme want and deprivation.

Under these challenges and trying conditions we face as a country and a society, it is encouraging that the South African Government's Ten Year review concluded that social grants are the most effective Anti Poverty Strategy of Government. Without the social grants income distribution in South Africa will be severely skewed and those on the lower end of the income distribution will have nothing to buy the basic essentials of life with.

Ladies and gentlemen!

I have taken you on a journey that we have travelled in fulfilling the needs of South Africans in the democratic era. I have shared and reflected on social policy goals of our

democratic society. What we have done this far demonstrates achievements and successes we have made. In the social development sector we continue to create better opportunities for South Africans living in poverty.

However, with all the gains we have made there are still critical challenges we face as a society. If we do not address these continuing challenges the gains we have made may come under threat. Chief among these challenges is the high level of unemployment in South Africa. This problem affects black women and black youth disproportionately. When it comes to our youth we face the ominous prospect of having 35 year olds who have very little or no experience of full time employment with benefits. This means that we have millions of South Africans who are not contributing to the development of our economy and not paying taxes but will rely on state support at some point in their lives. The social and economic consequences of unemployment for the individual, the family, the community and the whole society are well established. The unemployment challenge brings into sharp focus policy outcomes in education, skills, training, labour market policies and the labour absorption capacity of the economy.

HIV and AIDS continue to ravage our communities. The national prevalence rate stands at 11 per cent of the total

population. This has grave consequences for households that either have bread winners who are chronically ill or who succumb to the many diseases associated with the epidemic. The AIDS epidemic undermines the ability of families to generate incomes as those who should be working fall sick and are often cared for by children who have to miss school. The worst is when parents die and leave behind orphaned children and this increases their level of vulnerability.

Next on our catalogue of pressing challenges is the problem of the working poor. These are people who are employed, receive a wage but live in poverty. This circumstance arises not because of irresponsibility and improper use of earnings but as a direct consequence of the low wages received from employment. Of particular concern in the social development sector is that a significant number of the working poor also qualify for and receive social assistance such as the child support grant. In South Africa we have to make sure that employment contributes to moving people out of poverty.

Growing levels of income inequality are an ongoing concern in our society. South Africa is one of the most unequal societies when it comes to income distribution. Our latest figures indicate the poorest 20 per cent of our population accounts for less than 1.5 per cent of national household income. The poorest 40% of the population accounts for less

than 7% of total national household income. This includes household income from social grants. The top ten per cent of our income distribution commands 51 per cent of household income. The problem with such levels of inequality is that it breeds dissatisfaction and is a threat to political stability in the country.

Our other challenge is that there is growing concern with the fiscal sustainability and affordability of the state's social assistance programme. Currently different social grants are paid to about 30 per cent of the South African population. It is worth noting that 88 per cent of these social grants are paid to children below 18 years and older persons above 60 years. Our social security system is not comprehensive enough as it does not cover South Africans between ages 18 and 60 unless they are people with disability or are in extremely destitute circumstances. In South Africa, for as long as millions remain unemployed and without income, the demand for the state to intervene will remain. It is not that South Africa has not experienced positive economic growth, the problem is the quality of the growth that has not so far ensured greater income flows to poor households.

As a country we also need to bring together social policy and economic policy in our planning and execution of the fight against poverty. The key questions is *'economic growth for*

what purpose, to what end? As noted in the Budget Review of 2010 ‘in order to achieve growth, create jobs and reduce poverty, South Africa needs sound macroeconomic policies, microeconomic reform, education and skills, capable, efficient government, public employment programmes, social safety nets and support to business’. It is the inter-linkages and alignment in these social and economic policy areas that must be strengthened for better outcomes for all South Africans.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Once again I express my appreciation for the recognition and honour bestowed on me through the Zola Skweyiya lecture on South African Social Policy. I have the highest confidence that this annual lecture will grow to become a sound platform for the exchange of ideas on social policy as we strive to construct effective methods to address South Africa’s, Africa’s and indeed the world’s human and social development challenges.

The challenges remain. The challenges are urgent. We need to work together. We cannot fail those living in poverty as we fight for a better world, a better future for all in South Africa and in the world.

I thank you.
