



NDA

National
Development
Agency

ROUNDTABLE REPORT

**NDA AMENDMENT BILL
STAKEHOLDER
CONSULTATION**

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Facilitator

Ms Mpho Mngxitama

Acting DDG
Community Development - DSD

Ms. Mpho Mngxitama officially opened the Roundtable discussion, emphasising its objective of gathering stakeholder inputs to inform the development of the NDA Bill. She highlighted the importance of engaging diverse perspectives to strengthen and enhance the legislative framework.

She extended a warm welcome to all attendees, both in person at the Nelson Mandela Foundation and those participating online. Special acknowledgments were given to key stakeholders, including the Chairperson of the NDA Board, Ms. Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu, the Deputy Chairperson, Chief Livhuwani Matsila, and other NDA Board Members. Also in attendance were Mr. Peter Netshipale, Acting Director-General of the Department of Social Development (DSD), representatives from the Minister's Office, and the Acting CEOs of both SASSA and the NDA, Mr. Matlou and Mr. Buthelezi, respectively.

Furthermore, she recognised the presence of key partners from the private sector, civil society organizations, including Dr. Mkhabela from the Barloworld Foundation, Dr. Ntuli from GBRV, Mr. Tshefuta from NEDLAC, and representatives from National Youth Initiatives, FinMark Trust, Kagiso Trust, Inyathelo, SANACO, Trialogue, and SAYEC, among others. Officials from National DSD and NDA were also in attendance.

In concluding her remarks, she emphasized that this session was primarily dedicated to Civil Society and urged government officials to allow ample space for CSO representatives to share their insights and contributions. With these acknowledgments, the programme was formally declared open.



Facilitator

Mr Thembinkosi Josopu
NDA Board Member

Mr. Thembinkosi Josopu, a member of the NDA Board, introduced the event by highlighting the presence of three distinguished speakers, each bringing extensive experience in civil society and development practice. He provided an overview of their professional backgrounds and set the stage for the discussions, emphasizing the relevance of their insights to the themes of the session.

To ensure the NDA plays a leading role in poverty alleviation through CSOs, the Act must be revised to position the agency as a more effective and efficient state entity. Addressing the identified gaps in the current Act will result in its amendment and subsequent submission to Parliament for approval.

This resulted the NDA convening a Roundtable Dialogue to solicit inputs from different Stakeholders which will then be collated and submitted to DSD to start the process of public engagement and drafting of the NDA Amendment Bill. Key stakeholders included civil society representatives, government officials, academic institutions, and development partners, engaged in discussions centered on the NDA's mandate, operational challenges, legislative reforms, and strategies for poverty eradication.



Welcome and Purpose

Mr Thabani Buthelezi

Acting CEO - NDA



In his opening remarks, Mr. Buthelezi highlighted the importance of legislative clarity in enhancing the NDA's mandate for poverty eradication. He emphasised that the Roundtable served as a platform for NDA stakeholders to provide input on the proposed amendments to the NDA Act. While the Department of Social Development (DSD) remains the custodian of the Act's review, the NDA is engaging its stakeholders, particularly Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to ensure their perspectives are considered in the amendment process.

He acknowledged concerns from the National Treasury regarding functional overlaps between the NDA and other government departments, particularly the DSD's NPO Directorate, which also provides capacity-building support to non-profit organisations (NPOs). He stressed that the NDA's engagement on the amendment process does not seek to override the policy role of the DSD but rather to align its legislative framework with current realities. He further underscored the evolving nature of poverty in South Africa since the NDA's establishment in 1998. While government interventions over the past 26 years have sought to alleviate poverty, it remains persistent and manifests in new forms, including rising inequality and social ills such as gender-based violence and substance abuse. Additionally, disaster management has become increasingly linked to poverty, as vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by environmental and economic shocks.

To remain relevant and responsive, the NDA must reposition itself to effectively address these emerging challenges and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. The DSD will still hold consultations for public comments on the amendment Bill policy custodians. In his closing remarks, Mr. Buthelezi emphasised the critical role of the NDA as a government agency that must remain relevant and responsive to poverty eradication efforts. He reiterated that the NDA should not be perceived merely as an extension of the DSD but as an independent government entity, established under Schedule 3(A) of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), with a mandate to report to Parliament through the Minister of Social Development. He posed a key question: How do we ensure that the NDA effectively functions as a government agency with a broad and impactful mandate? Addressing this, he highlighted the urgent need for the NDA to forge and strengthen strategic partnerships, given that the demand for its services continues to grow exponentially, far exceeding its allocated budget. He stressed that partnerships should not only focus on financial contributions but should also leverage non-monetary resources such as expertise, infrastructure, and technical support to enhance the NDA's capacity to deliver sustainable solutions for poverty reduction in South Africa.

Vision of the NDA

Ms Nozabelo Ruth Bhengu

NDA Board Chairperson



In outlining the vision of the NDA, Ms. Bhengu reflected on the agency's original mandate as the "voice of the poor", emphasising how institutional shifts over time have eroded this foundational role. She stressed that the NDA Amendment Bill must undergo extensive consultation before it reaches Parliament to ensure it is shaped by the voices of those directly affected. She cautioned against developing laws, policies, and programs that are detached from the realities on the ground, noting the critical distinction between felt needs, which emerge from lived experience and perceived needs, which are assumptions made without proper consultation.

She emphasised that CSOs remain central to the NDA's mission, as explicitly outlined in the NDA Act. While poverty eradication remains a complex challenge, the legislation mandates the NDA to facilitate this process within the South African context. To fulfil this mandate effectively, the NDA must prioritise partnerships with CSOs beyond just grant funding. These partnerships should foster knowledge exchange, capacity building, and opportunities that empower CSOs to drive community development.

Ms. Bhengu highlighted that the NDA is undergoing a strategic review to realign itself with its original pillars, which positioned CSOs as key partners. She underscored the importance of capacity building, not just in terms of financial support but also through structured learning and skills development programs. The NDA is already engaging international partners, such as the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV), which has provided training to NDA officials and facilitated learning exchanges with cooperative models in Eswatini.

In closing, Ms. Bhengu stressed that the NDA Amendment Bill must create an enabling environment for the NDA to fully execute its mandate. If the current legislation restricts the NDA's ability to work effectively with CSOs or hinders poverty eradication efforts, then these issues must be addressed. She reinforced that the Roundtable was not just about the NDA as an institution, but about ensuring it serves the people it was created to support, while also strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders to achieve its mission. The Chairperson urged all stakeholders, particularly the NDA, to take a moment of deep reflection. She emphasised that as the NDA looks ahead, it must first look back to examine its origins, assessing past challenges, and critically evaluating the missteps made along the way. The key question, she posed, is whether, if given the opportunity to correct those mistakes, the NDA would repeat them or instead adopt new, more effective approaches to fulfilling its mandate. She underscored the importance of a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation, stating that progress requires a structured process: PLAN, IMPLEMENT, REFLECT, and then CHANGE the plan, but never by repeating the same mistakes.

Rationale For The NDA Act Review

Mr Peter Netshipale

Acting Director General - DSD



Mr. Peter Netshipale, Acting Director General at the Department of Social Development provided an insightful overview of the NDA Act, emphasising the evolving socio-economic landscape in South Africa. He highlighted the rising inflation and the increasing cost of living, stressing that while government interventions such as social grants through SASSA which are crucial, additional targeted support mechanisms are needed to prevent severe hunger and deprivation among the unemployed population. He underscored that poverty is a complex and multidimensional issue, requiring dynamic and adaptable strategies rather than repetitive approaches. Importantly, he drew attention to the direct correlation between poverty and escalating social ills, including but not limited to, gender-based violence, substance abuse, child neglect, and teenage pregnancy. He posed a critical question: Could addressing poverty more effectively reduce the prevalence of these social issues?

Reflecting on the 2018 review of the NDA's mandate, which was funded by National Treasury, he noted that the assessment evaluated the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the NDA mandate. The findings confirmed that the NDA was indeed fulfilling its mandate but raised concerns regarding its positioning and influence. A key proposal from the review was to elevate the NDA as the apex development agency in South Africa, ensuring it is recognised, valued, and adequately resourced. While the legislative framework for the NDA was well-conceived, the implementation of its mandate had been a challenge. Amending the NDA Act presents an opportunity to refine and strengthen its legislative foundation. However, only 15% of the Act can be amended, if the percentage of the amendments are more than 15%, then Parliament would require a new policy framework. This constraint means that careful consideration must be given to identifying the most critical legislative changes that will enhance the NDA's operational effectiveness within the 15% allowance.

Mr. Netshipale announced that following this Roundtable, a larger Civil Society Summit will be convened to expand these discussions and formalise inputs from stakeholders. The NDA will be responsible for hosting this summit, using it as a platform to showcase its work and strengthen partnerships.

In concluding, he reiterated that the NDA must play a central coordinating role in national poverty eradication efforts. The discussions at this Roundtable serve as a critical step in shaping the NDA Amendment Bill to ensure it is strategic, impactful, and forward-looking, positioning the NDA as a development champion in South Africa.



**At the core of the
NDA Mandate is
Poverty Eradication
Not Reduction or
Alleviation**

KEY POINT

**NDA to strategically
reposition itself as a
key Social and
Economic
Development
Institution**



To achieve this strategic Re-positioning of the NDA as a key social and economic development institution, The NDA must:

- Adopt a distinctive development approach that sets it apart from traditional government departments
- Redefine how poverty is measured to develop targeted, data-driven interventions.
- Leverage private sector partnerships, as government alone cannot fully address poverty eradication.
- Incorporate 4IR and AI-driven solutions to modernise development interventions. Implement a "development with a face and a name" model, ensuring that poverty eradication strategies are person-centered and community-driven.

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Summary of the NDA Act

Advocate Kesiamo Moloi - NDA

Advocate Moloi, provided a comprehensive overview of the NDA Act, tracing its origins, key legislative provisions, and amendments over time. His presentation set the foundation for roundtable discussions on potential changes to the Act, ensuring that deliberations were informed by both historical context and the current realities faced by the NDA and civil society stakeholders. Adv. Moloi emphasised that amending the NDA Act must be a consultative process to ensure that changes address current challenges and emerging development needs.

Key focus areas in this presentation included but were not limited to, strengthening internal accountability structures, enhancing governance mechanisms, and improving operational efficiency. The Bill seeks to clarify that the NDA is not part of the Public Service, streamline the relationship between the NDA Act and the PFMA, and redefine the functions of the Board to ensure a clear separation between oversight and operations. Additionally, it proposes changes to the appointment process of the Board Chairperson, the dissolution of the Board, and interim governance arrangements. The CEO's term will be set at a renewable five-year period, and redundant provisions overlapping with Treasury Regulations will be repealed. Other significant amendments include empowering the Board to delegate certain funding decisions for efficiency, removing prescriptive requirements on Board committees, and refining governance structures to support the NDA's mandate in poverty eradication. He concluded by reaffirming the roundtable that the legislative process will involve internal stakeholder consultations, legal review, Cabinet approval, public participation, and ultimately, submission to Parliament for further deliberation and enactment. [\[Presentation\]](#)



Philosophical Foundation of the NDA

Dr Sibongile Mkhabela
Executive at Barloworld Empowerment Foundation



Dr. Sibongile Mkhabela, one of the pioneers of the NDA Act, provided a thought-provoking reflection on the philosophical underpinnings that originally shaped the NDA's establishment. She cautioned that the current discussions around amending the NDA Act risk being premature and misaligned if they do not first revisit the fundamental principles that guided its creation.

She emphasised that when they conceptualised the NDA, it was not intended to eradicate poverty directly but rather to redefine poverty and shift the approach to addressing it. The NDA was initially placed under the Department of Finance following an early period under the Office of the President to ensure that it had the authority and capacity to coordinate multiple government departments. This placement recognised poverty as a cross-cutting issue, rather than simply a social pathology to be managed by a single department.

Dr. Mkhabela argued that the 2003 amendments, which moved the NDA to the Department of Social Development, significantly weakened its ability to convene and influence other government departments. Unlike Finance, which has budgetary control and coordination power, DSD does not have the same capacity to direct interdepartmental collaboration. She pointed out that, during the NDA's formative years, its governance structure reflected a balance of power with civil society and government representatives working together in a Steering Committee that also reported to NEDLAC.

Dr. Mkhabela stressed that the NDA was never intended to become another service delivery agency, competing with CSOs. Instead, its role was to act as a high-level coordinating body, ensuring that communities received the resources and opportunities they needed for sustainable development.

Dr. Mkhabela pointed out that the NDA Act of 1998 in its original form, provided a strong governance framework that ensured civil society had a significant role in decision-making. However, subsequent amendments weakened the power dynamics, shifting control towards government oversight and limiting the NDA's autonomy.

She stressed that if the original governance structure had remained intact, with NGOs holding a majority on the Board, the NDA would have been in a better position to mobilise resources, challenge government inefficiencies, and coordinate poverty eradication efforts more effectively. The move away from this model has resulted in the NDA relying solely on government funding, instead of leveraging international partnerships and alternative funding sources as originally intended.

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Dr Mkhabela

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Poverty is not just about money, but about the absence of opportunities and options and should not be defined solely in monetary terms but as a lack of access to networks, institutions, and opportunities that enable people to improve their circumstances. Drawing from global best practices, she referenced Sweden's model, where every citizen is part of a network, whether a labour movement, religious group, or stokvel, highlighting the importance of social belonging and organisational structures in addressing poverty.

The NDA was designed to be an institutional convener, not an implementer by facilitating and supporting CSOs rather than deliver programs directly. Research was established as the third pillar of the NDA Act, ensuring that development strategies were based on data and insights from communities. The NDA should challenge government departments by using research findings to influence policy and improve development interventions.

In conclusion, Dr. Mkhabela made a powerful argument that the core issue is not the legislation itself but rather the deviation from its original intent. If the 1998 NDA Act had remained untouched, with CSOs playing a stronger role in governance, the NDA would have retained its independence and influence over national development policies. She cautioned that the NDA must not position itself as an implementer on the ground, as this diminishes its ability to act as a high-level development coordinator and policy influencer. Instead, its focus should be on holding government accountable for effective poverty eradication strategies, Raising difficult but necessary policy questions on development and Ensuring that CSOs remain central to the NDA's operations and decision-making.

Her final message was clear that if the NDA continues to misunderstand its philosophy and moves further away from its original purpose, it risks becoming just another NGO rather than the strategic and influential development agency it was designed to be



**'Poverty is
not just about money,
but about the
absence of
opportunities and
options'**

The Voice of Civil Society

Mr Thulani Tshefuta

Overall Convenor for NEDLAC Constituency



Mr. Thulani Tshefuta, representing the NEDLAC Community Constituency, provided a strategic and pragmatic perspective on the role of the NDA and its legislative amendments. He emphasised that while the Roundtable would not resolve all complexities surrounding the NDA's mandate, it provided a platform to frame the broader philosophical and structural considerations that must guide the agency's future.

He underscored that any discussion on the form and structure of the NDA must be informed by the substance of its mandate. Debating how the NDA should be positioned without first aligning it to the core objectives it must fulfil would be futile. From a civil society standpoint, he stated that the NDA could technically exist within any government department, but what truly matters is ensuring that it retains a cross-cutting mandate that spans multiple government functions and sectors.

While some argue that the NDA should be placed under the Presidency, given that in the past and currently poverty eradication initiatives have been led from there, Mr. Tshefuta acknowledged that its current positioning within the Department of Social Development is not necessarily an impediment. He noted that Social Development is not merely a welfare function as it encompasses a much broader development agenda that aligns with the NDA's purpose.

However, he cautioned against narrowly viewing the NDA as a DSD entity, emphasising that its mandate must reflect a whole-of-government approach. The NDA must be given the authority to tap into functions and resources across departments, ensuring that poverty eradication efforts are coordinated and impactful. From a legislative standpoint, this means introducing legal enablers that compel government departments to align with the NDA's mandate, preventing them from operating in silos or resisting collaboration.

Mr. Tshefuta made a compelling argument that poverty eradication requires more than just funding new programs, it demands better coordination of existing resources. He noted that many government departments fail to fully utilise their budgets, often returning unspent funds to National Treasury. Instead of allowing these funds to be redirected elsewhere, a portion should be channelled into NDA-led civil society interventions. The NDA must not only coordinate but also quantify poverty-related needs, ensuring that resources are allocated where they are most urgently required.

In closing, Mr. Tshefuta stated that while some argue that the NDA should purely focus on economic development, NEDLAC believes that its mandate should balance both social and economic development. Unlike other economic development institutions, the NDA must prioritise social outcomes and impact ensuring that economic investments result in measurable improvements in the lives of vulnerable communities.

Four Pillars that should shape the NDA's Interventions

Pillar 1: Education and Skills Development

The NDA's capacity-building efforts should be its primary intervention, focusing on training and skills development for CSOs and communities. Currently, multiple institutions engage in capacity-building efforts, but none are legally embedded within the civil society sector the way the NDA is. The NDA must coordinate these fragmented efforts, ensuring that CSOs receive structured and impactful support.

Pillar 2: Social Protection and Security

While DSD and SASSA play a role in social security, some of their outreach functions should ideally be transferred to the NDA to ensure that they are linked to sustainable development efforts. Providing food parcels or temporary relief without a follow-up strategy for economic self-sufficiency is ineffective. The NDA should anchor these interventions with sustainable solutions that lift people out of poverty.

Pillar 3: Employment Creation

While public employment programs and private sector initiatives contribute to job creation, the NDA must ensure that employment interventions are rooted in communities. Many individuals may never enter the formal job market, but they can thrive in community-driven economic activities such as agriculture, cooperatives, and social enterprises. The NDA should create localised employment opportunities that generate income at a community level, fostering long-term economic participation.

Pillar 4: Enterprise Development

There are already multiple institutions responsible for enterprise development, such as the NEF, IDC etc. The private sector also contributes billions through Corporate Social Investment but much of this funding is scattered and lacks strategic alignment. The NDA must position itself as the conduit for social entrepreneurship, with a strong emphasis on cooperative development, ensuring that funding is directed towards sustainable, community-driven enterprises rather than short-term corporate philanthropy.



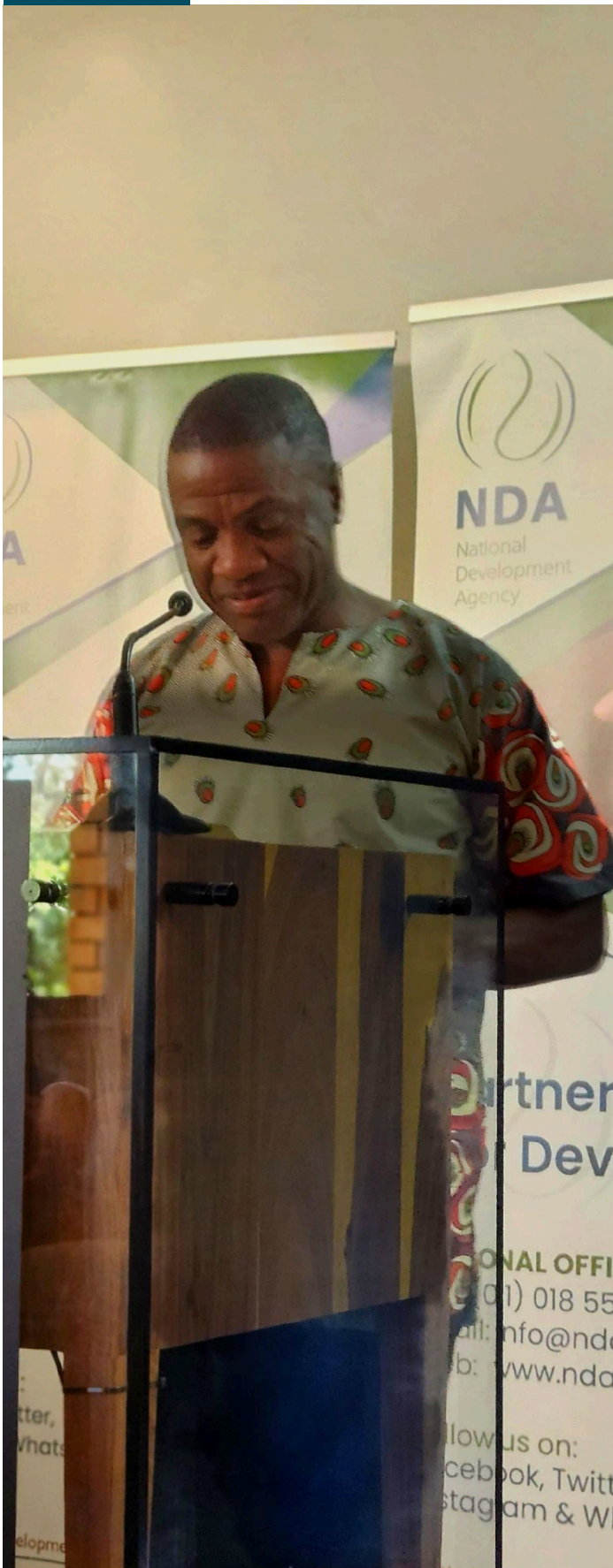
while some argue that the NDA should purely focus on economic development, NEDLAC believes that its mandate should balance both social and economic development.

Ultimately, the NDA must position itself as the central coordinating agency for a whole-of-society approach to poverty eradication, leveraging its legal mandate, partnerships, and research capabilities to drive systemic change.

The Voice from Strategic Partnerships

Dr Bongumusa Ntuli

German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV)



Dr. Bongumusa Ntuli from the German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV) provided valuable insights into the role and potential of the NDA in addressing systemic poverty and fostering economic self-sufficiency. Dr. Ntuli emphasised the significance of cooperative models worldwide, noting that over one billion people are members of cooperatives, particularly in Europe, the Americas, China, Russia, and BRICS nations. He highlighted the success of cooperative savings models in Eswatini, which have amassed substantial financial reserves independent of government funding.

In assessing the NDA's mandate, Dr. Ntuli raised concerns about the declining fiscal allocation from the government and the potential reduction in foreign donor funding. This financial constraint necessitates a strategic shift to ensure the NDA remains impactful in its efforts to address poverty.

Dr. Ntuli urged the NDA to rethink its strategic approach and legislative framework to enhance its authority and effectiveness. His key recommendations included Legislative and Strategic Repositioning by the NDA to work towards a revised legislative framework that clearly defines its target beneficiaries and strengthens its authority within DSD. A new Act should articulate NDA's mandate in a manner that ensures alignment with key government departments, reinforcing its role as a central player in poverty eradication.

In defining the Target Market for NDA's Interventions, the NDA should focus on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty by targeting children from low-income households, particularly those attending no-fee schools. Interventions should aim to ensure that future generations do not remain dependent on social grants. He put emphasis on NDA playing an active role in Advocacy and Policy Leadership where it should spearhead the formulation of action-oriented policies that directly address the challenges of poverty and economic dependency. The Agency should take a leadership role in guiding departments such as SASSA, DSB, Local Economic Development local government and municipalities in designing policies that ensure government-disbursed funds are reinvested within communities to drive sustainable economic growth.

Dr. Ntuli's insights call for a fundamental shift in how the NDA operates, emphasising that it should move beyond its current survival mode and assert its role as a leading national development agency. Strengthening its legislative mandate, clearly defining its target market, and championing policy reforms will enable the NDA to foster economic participation and self-sufficiency among the country's most vulnerable populations. These strategic shifts will not only enhance the NDA's impact but also position it as a pivotal institution in the broader poverty eradication space in the country.



RECAP OF KEY INSIGHTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussions highlighted the crucial role of Civil Society in shaping legislative amendments, emphasising that while technocrats facilitate the process, the voices and lived experiences of those directly affected by the legislation must drive its content. Although these discussions may present uncomfortable truths, it remains imperative to engage with them openly, as policymakers and implementers must ensure that legislative frameworks remain relevant and responsive to current challenges.

A shared understanding emerged regarding the overarching goal of poverty eradication, which aligns with the core mandate of the NDA. However, it was acknowledged that the socio-economic landscape has evolved since the NDA's establishment, necessitating a reassessment of its legislative framework. As with any institution operating in a dynamic environment, periodic reflection is essential to determine whether existing policies remain effective, what changes are required, and how these modifications can enhance the impact of the agency's work. The philosophical principles outlined by Dr. Mkhabela were also noted, particularly the interconnectedness between the NDA and the National Development Plan, reinforcing the NDA should be the custodian of the NDP.

A critical point raised was the definition of Civil Society Organisations. Clearly defining CSOs will enable the NDA to refine its target groups, understand their characteristics, and ensure that its programmes are effectively aligned with the needs of these organisations. Establishing a precise definition will be instrumental in guiding programming and policy direction. Looking ahead, the DSD will lead the legislative amendment process, with the NDA playing a supporting role. The feedback generated from this Roundtable will be submitted to the NDA, and the process for public submissions will be made available on the NDA's website by the close of business. Stakeholders will have until 28 February 2025 to submit their comments, after which DSD will initiate the process of drafting the Bill, incorporating the received inputs. The legislative drafting process will involve legal experts from both the DSD and NDA to ensure that stakeholder contributions are translated into legally sound provisions. The draft Bill will then be subjected to the formal government law-making processes, including gazetting for a 30-day public consultation period. Following this, additional refinements will be made based on public feedback.

An essential stage in the process will involve the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME), which will assess the proposed amendments against the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System (SEIAS) to ensure that the changes meet regulatory requirements. Engagements with NEDLAC will also be conducted as part of the consultative process before the Bill is ultimately tabled in Parliament. Stakeholders were encouraged to remain engaged throughout the legislative process, as there will be multiple opportunities to contribute before the final Bill is enacted.



Vote of Thanks

Chief Livhuwani Matsila

Deputy Chairperson of the NDA Board

The Deputy Chairperson of the NDA Board, Chief Livhuwani Matsila, emphasised the importance of the NDA making substantive contributions to the legislative process concerning the Bill. He noted that, in its current form, the Bill lacks the depth and transformative provisions necessary to effectively remodel the NDA. If left unchanged, the Bill risks being an ineffective legislative exercise that fails to address critical structural and governance challenges.

One of the key concerns highlighted was the composition of the NDA Board, particularly the role of government departments. Chief Matsila stressed the need for explicit legislative provisions that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of government departments represented on the NDA Board. Currently, while government representatives serve on the Board, their contributions remain limited due to the absence of a structured framework. He suggested that a stronger legislative framework should be introduced to ensure that partnerships between the NDA and relevant departments are mandated by law.

He further advocated for a more fundamental legislative shift in reconfiguring the NDA. Rather than continuing to function solely as a state entity, the NDA should explore alternative models, such as incorporating elements of private sector shareholding similar to emerging trends in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). Such an approach could enhance the NDA's sustainability and reduce its reliance on state funding.

As part of the NDA's internal deliberations, Chief Matsila underscored the importance of preparing well-structured submissions that clearly define the roles of various government departments in supporting the NDA's mandate. He questioned the rationale behind limiting departmental representation to six, emphasising the need for a well-reasoned and tightly framed proposal. He further noted that if interdepartmental collaborations, such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with a particular department, were to be formalised, they should be derived directly from the NDA Act. This would ensure compliance with legislative and hold departments accountable for not supporting the NDA.

In conclusion, he urged the NDA to adopt stronger and more assertive language in drafting its proposed amendments to the Bill. A well-articulated legislative framework would provide greater clarity for the Department of Social Development and Parliament, ensuring that the NDA's role and partnerships are effectively legislated. He expressed gratitude to all stakeholders for their engagement and reaffirmed the NDA's commitment to contributing meaningfully to the legislative process.

Ann Brown (NGOLaws) - The entire sector should align its initiatives and strategies with the National Development Plan (NDP). Social entrepreneurship training plays a crucial role in the success of both cooperatives and NPOs, facilitating their growth and sustainability.

Mr Lawrence Bale (SANACO) what are the specific roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder serving as a Board member of the NDA? In this context, how can the cooperative sector be formally recognised and included to ensure its representation and active participation in policy discussions and decision-making processes?

Mr Lungisani Dladla (Finmark Trust) - Is there a need to revisit and review the NDA Act to align it with the National Development Plan (NDP)?

Response by Dr Mkhabela - The NDA has not positioned itself as a leading institution in driving the NDP. Currently, when the NDP is considered at a national level, the NDA is not immediately recognised as a key implementing agency. Instead, the NDA is primarily associated with funding specific organisations rather than playing a central role in coordinating and facilitating dialogue between Civil Society and Government. This indicates that the NDA's coordination and convening functions have not been fully realised. Furthermore, the legislative framework governing the NDA was significantly weakened following the 2003 amendments to the Act. As it stands, the Act leans more towards strategic considerations rather than being a purely legislative framework.

Mr Jimmy Gotyana (Alliance of NPO Networks) - The NGO sector has observed a shift in NDA funding allocations, with a notable increase in financial support directed towards cooperatives rather than NGOs. In light of this, the sector recommends that the NDA provide a clear definition of its target beneficiaries to ensure transparency and alignment with its mandate.

Furthermore, there is sector-wide concern regarding the ongoing amendment bill process. While it is acknowledged that the NDA has undertaken consultations, there is a prevailing view that a drafting team should be constituted to develop the bill. This team should also be responsible for receiving and reviewing inputs from all interested and affected parties to enhance inclusivity in the legislative drafting process.

The sector also raises concerns about the legitimacy of the consultation process. While the NDA has made efforts to engage CSOs, it is recommended that an independent oversight forum be established to monitor and ensure the integrity of the consultation process. This would strengthen confidence in the process and enhance stakeholder participation.

Lastly, the sector acknowledges the ongoing development of the NPO Policy Framework led by DSD, in which NPOs play a central role. It is, therefore, crucial to ensure alignment between the outcomes of the NDA Amendment Bill and the NPO Policy Framework to prevent policy inconsistencies and to create a coherent regulatory environment for the sector.

The sector urges the NDA to take these recommendations into consideration to foster an inclusive, transparent, and consultative amendment process that effectively serves the interests of all stakeholders within the civil society landscape.

Centre for Community Development - Is the NDA going to have consultations with provinces?

Response by Chief Matsila - The NDA is not responsible for drafting, processing, or passing the Bill into law. Rather, the NDA's role is to facilitate stakeholder engagement to ensure that key stakeholders are consulted and have an opportunity to contribute their insights. The inputs generated from this session will be compiled and submitted to DSD which serves as the policy custodian. Additionally, the legislative process involves multiple stages of consultation. As the custodian of the policy, the DSD will conduct its own public consultation process to gather inputs. Furthermore, Parliament will also facilitate its own public consultation and review process before deliberating on the Bill. Only after these processes are concluded will the Bill be recommended to the President for assent and formal enactment as law.

Mr Lungisani (Finmark Trust) - Is the objective of the discussions to address a policy matter or a strategic issue? A thorough diagnostic process must be undertaken to identify and analyse the root causes of the challenges facing the NDA. Without this process, discussions risk becoming superficial, focusing on minor adjustments on the Act rather than substantive problem-solving.

Response by Mr Buthelezi (NDA) - The diagnosis was done by National Treasury in 2016 and was focusing on the mandate and the function overlap with other departments.

The NDA also had its own diagnosis which led to the Turnaround Strategy that was approved by the NDA Board in July 2024. The Turnaround Strategy looked holistically at the operations of the NDA and if it is fit for purpose, right structures, capacity, resources etc.

REFLECTIONS

The Roundtable on the NDA Amendment Bill has served as a critical platform for stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions about the future of the National Development Agency and its legislative framework. The diverse perspectives shared during this session have highlighted both the opportunities and challenges in strengthening the NDA's role in supporting civil society, poverty eradication, and national development priorities.

With the mandate of promoting consultations and debating development policy between CSOs and organs of state, the NDA remains committed to ensuring that the voices of civil society, government entities, development partners, and academic institutions are not only heard but also meaningfully considered in shaping the amendment of the NDA Act.

While the finalization of the Bill rests with the Department of Social Development (DSD) and Parliament, this Roundtable has laid a strong foundation for informed and evidence-based inputs that will contribute to the broader policy deliberations.

We urge all stakeholders to remain actively involved in the legislative process and to submit their comments by 28 February 2025. We extend our sincere appreciation to all participants for their invaluable contributions and for reinforcing the shared vision of an NDA that is responsive, effective, and well-positioned to drive sustainable development in South Africa. Together, we will continue working towards a legislative framework that empowers civil society and ensures a stronger, more impactful NDA.

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