



## **African Diaspora Forum**

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2016/05/13

Breakfast working session between the Gauteng Premier and the  
African Diaspora Forum (ADF)

Honourable David Makhura,  
MECs  
Community Leaders  
Ladies and Gentlemen

We are very honored, to meet with the Premier this morning.

While in some provinces, Premiers are asking to expropriate the migrant community,

Honorable David Makhura, you are taking your time to meet with the migrant community, to listen to us, and to tell us your plan to work for an integrated province. Those who don't know you will be surprised. For some of us, we knew that you are that Premier who takes time to listen and to provide solutions. Just to refresh our memories, last year during the violent attack on migrants, you were the one who came down on the streets of Johannesburg to say NO to the violence.

Honourable, you are giving us an opportunity to report on socioeconomic, political and broader challenges faced by the migrant's community.

### ***Migrants' participation in structures dealing with migration issues***

We welcome the Premier's initiative to appoint the *Eminent Group of Nation-Building and Social Cohesion Champions* in April 2016. We believe that Gauteng needs a comprehensive and multifaceted response to address issues like racism and xenophobia. Indeed a provincial plan of action to combat racism and xenophobia is a significant step.

Xenophobia should not be considered less harmful and pervasive than racism: discriminations on the basis of race, nationality or ethnicity divide a nation and need to be addressed together. The Migrant's community is prepared to work together with the Gauteng Provincial Government, and in particular with the appointed group of experts to fight discriminations like xenophobia and racism.

We would like to underline that migrant communities need to be involved within institutions that seek to solve migrations issues:

It might be difficult for the Government to try and provide solutions to issues related to migrants, without the migrants themselves.



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The Migrant Help Desk at the CoJ is exclusively run by South African officials: by refusing to employ migrants themselves, the Help Desk is limiting itself to reach migrant communities and its understanding of migrants' challenges. The African Diaspora Forum suggests to the Gauteng Provincial Government to include migrants into its International Desk in order to foster the abilities of its team to address migrants' issues in the province.

### ***Barriers to education for immigrant learners***

In the Gauteng province, many cases have been reported to NGOs at the 2016 registration period, whereby immigrant learners are not being admitted over documentation in public schools. In practice, immigrant learners have for years been de-prioritized, charged illegal registration fees, or excluded as the result of xenophobic prejudices. The GDE's new online system, systematically excludes most immigrant children from the outset. The system does not accept passport numbers, asylum seeker and/or refugee permit numbers. This means that the GDE is not only allowing the exclusion of immigrant learners, it is in fact *planning* for them to be excluded coming 2017 and other years.

We would like to use this opportunity to encourage the GDE to look into the curriculum of our learners, and find a way to touch on the rest of the continent. Our many attempts to reach the MEC basic education since February 2016 did not work.

### ***Limitations on migrants' entrepreneurial initiatives***

Opening a business is very challenging for migrants. Beside the struggle they face to obtain documentations and a license for their business to operate, migrants are put at risk in their everyday activities. The regular attacks on spazzashop owners highlight how rapidly they can lose everything and are put under life threat. There has been numerous reports of police not protecting migrants during xenophobic attacks, or even taking part in the looting. Migrants employ South Africans and bring values to the national economy, but are disregarded as draining resources.

Institutional barriers to banking add to this insecure business activities. Indeed, asylum seekers cannot even open an account in South Africa.

### ***Denial of right to health and discriminatory social protection***



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In Gauteng hospitals, asylum seekers are required to pay upfront before being admitted. This legislation puts significant barriers to right to health of migrants, and is causing many lost of lives. Hospitals are thus meant to discriminate patients based on their legal status and ability to pay. In addition, social support do not provide help for migrant communities: there is no shelters for displaced migrants in Gauteng, and the specific challenges of vulnerable migrant women are not addressed.

### **social cohesion in the different communities**

Migrants are been constantly attacked in the Gauteng province. We need to encourage some activities in the communities to reduce the scourge of the xenophobic attacks.

### **Few requests from the migrant's community**

- The African Diaspora Forum (ADF) has extended an invitation to come and bless our Africa day Festival on the 25th May in Yeoville which is also the hub of different African communities.
- The migrant's community is requesting a premise where different civil society organisations can be operating from.
- A yearly financial resources allocated to support our social cohesion programs and other programs currently underway and/or upcoming in the different communities. This will reduce the number of violence we are witnessing in the townships.
- Institutions like Universities, Hospitals, Banks, Police, Home Affairs should be more migrants friendly.
- The informal business sector needs to be regulated and well managed taking into account the important contribution of the migrant community.
- Although it is not your province issue, we are requesting to amnesty all illegal migrants and grant them with some permits to allow them to contribute to the economy of the country.

Thank you very much