

SOCIAL COHESION CONFERENCES 2025

Stronger together: from conflict to connections

As migration continues to shape South Africa's social landscape, the Democracy Development Program (DDP), in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), has deepened its efforts in 2025 to strengthen social cohesion and inclusive community development. This year's initiatives, spanning social cohesion conferences, capacity-building workshops, and inter-communal activities — reflect our ongoing commitment to building unity through diversity. Across eThekweni, communities have come together to exchange ideas, confront challenges, and co-create solutions that nurture peace, inclusion, and shared growth.



Pictured: Social Cohesion conference in KwaMakhutha

These sessions, officiated by DDP Executive Director Dr. Paul Kariuki, were facilitated by our seasoned associate facilitator, Sis. Gugu.

She shared her reflections on the significance of these social cohesion conferences, emphasizing the vital role of community dialogues in nation-building and commending all participants for their active engagement and robust discussions.



Above: Dr. Paul Kariuki and Gugu Madonsela at a Migration Committees workshop with committee members.

Ohlange, eThekweni- 06 May 2025

We at DDP partnered with PINK Tourism Hub in convening the first inaugural Social Cohesion Conference on 6 May 2025 at the Ohlange Library in Inanda. Officiated our Executive Director Dr. Paul Kariuki and facilitated by Sis. Gugu, the event brought together community leaders, youth organisations, faith-based groups, and residents from Inanda, Phoenix, and surrounding areas.

The conference provided a safe and engaging platform to unpack historical tensions, celebrate shared heritage, and explore pathways for unity across racial and cultural divides. Through dynamic dialogue sessions, storytelling, and collaborative discussions, participants reflected on the importance of nation-building through inclusive community dialogue.



Pictured: Community leaders in Ohlange.



Pictured: Community immense in discussions in Ohlange.

Key outcomes from the conference:

- A renewed sense of shared identity and collective resilience among participating communities.
- Development of practical recommendations and an action plan to strengthen inter-community trust, economic inclusion, and youth empowerment.
- Empowerment of local leaders and youth advocates to champion unity and non-racialism in their communities.
- Documentation of insights to inform ongoing social cohesion initiatives across KwaZulu-Natal and beyond.

DDP and its partners commend all participants for their robust engagement and reaffirm their commitment to fostering peace, understanding, and collaboration in building a united South Africa.

Durban, eThekweni – 26 August 2025



Pictured: Migration management committee members in Durban.

On the 26th August, at Edward hotel, we hosted a Capacity Building Workshop for Migration Management Committees (MMCs) under the theme “Strengthening Migration Management Committees – Social Cohesion Promotion Capabilities.” The session brought together MMC members, community representatives, and partners committed to promoting peaceful coexistence and collaborative community development.

The workshop provided a platform for reflection, learning, and strategic planning. Participants engaged in robust discussions on defining social cohesion, identifying sources of community tension, and developing practical strategies to strengthen trust, cooperation, and inclusive local governance.



Key Outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of social cohesion principles and their application in community-based migration management.
- Identification of key community tensions and actionable steps to address them through dialogue and collaboration.
- Development of SMART-based community action plans to guide MMC initiatives.
- Strengthened networking and coordination among MMCs and local stakeholders to promote peace and inclusion.

The DDP commends all participants for their active engagement and reaffirms its commitment to supporting strong, inclusive communities that embrace diversity and shared progress.

Activate, Mobilize, Educate

KwaMashu, eThekweni - 06 September 2025

The second Social Cohesion Conference took place at Ntuzuma A Hall, bringing together over 80 participants—mainly youth from local communities, civil society, and migrant groups. We hosted this event with support from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and the Lindelani Youth Forum, this conference provided an open platform to discuss migration, inclusion, and community unity under the theme:

“Migration and Inclusive Economic Growth: Unlocking Potential through Skills, Entrepreneurship, and Access to Services.”

The conference featured a structured debate between youth groups representing differing perspectives on migration.



Pictured: Participants in group discussions in KwaMashu



Key Outcomes:

- Strengthened relationships and empathy between locals and non-locals.
- Greater awareness of the positive economic contributions of legally documented migrants.
- Youth-driven solutions focusing on skills development and entrepreneurship.
- Community recommendations for authorities on managing migration constructively.
- Foundation for ongoing community dialogue and conflict prevention mechanisms.
- Enhanced resilience against xenophobic sentiments and misinformation.
- A more unified, collaborative KwaMashu committed to inclusive growth and social harmony.

KwaMakhutha, eThekweni – 09 September 2025

The KwaMakhutha Social Cohesion Conference brought together law enforcement officials, migrant workers, community leaders, local residents, and health practitioners for a powerful day of dialogue and collaboration. We also had dynamic panel discussion featured representatives from SAPS, the KwaMakhutha Community Patrol Forum, and health professionals from the local clinic, who unpacked pressing issues related to safety, social cohesion, and the socio-economic realities faced by residents and migrants alike.

Participants engaged actively in exploring strategies to strengthen trust, promote unity, and enhance community security, while acknowledging the need for continuous collaboration between civil society, local authorities, and residents.



Pictured: Participants in KwaMakhutha.



Key Outcomes

- Improved relationships between residents, migrant workers, and local authorities through constructive engagement.
- Shared understanding of the role of law enforcement and health institutions in promoting community safety and well-being.
- Collective action points identified to strengthen the KwaMakhutha Community Patrol Forum's collaboration with SAPS and local structures.
- Commitment to ongoing dialogue as a tool for conflict prevention and strengthening community cohesion.

Pictured: Law enforcement officers engaging in discussions in KwaMakhutha.

Umlazi, eThekweni – 10 September 2025

We convened another Social Cohesion Conference in KwaMakhutha, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders including paralegals, the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Ward Councillor, representatives from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's HIV Research Unit, municipal officials from eThekweni Municipality, and members of the Thuthuzela Community Centre in Umlazi.

The conference created an open and inclusive space to discuss pressing community challenges, including health hazards, crime, and the presence of undocumented foreign nationals. Through robust and respectful dialogue, participants unpacked the root causes of these issues and explored collective strategies to address them.



Pictured: Participants in umlazi dressed in sports attire.



Pictured: Health care officials and community engaging in discussions in Umlazi.

Key Outcomes

- Enhanced collaboration among SAPS, municipal officials, the University of KwaZulu-Natal HIV Research Unit, Thuthuzela Community Centre, and community structures to address crime and health-related challenges.
- Improved understanding of the interconnected nature of health, safety, and migration issues within the Umlazi community.
- Strengthened community cohesion, with participants reaffirming that unity and communication are vital to sustaining peace and stability.

Isipingo, eThekweni – 12 September 2025

We concluded the month's final Social Cohesion Conference at Ramalinga Hall in Isipingo, marking a significant milestone in our ongoing journey of dialogue, reflection, and unity. This series of community dialogues has brought together citizens, local leaders, and key stakeholders to confront pressing social challenges and explore pathways toward healing, inclusion, and shared progress.

This session stood out as a testament to the power of collaboration — uniting voices from law enforcement, municipal offices, academia, health sectors, and grassroots organisations to collectively address issues of crime, public health, and migration. Together, participants affirmed that connection, understanding, and joint action are the foundation for lasting peace and resilience.

This final gathering was more than a conclusion — it was a call to action for all South Africans to continue building bridges of trust and belonging.

DDP remains committed to amplifying citizen voices and ensuring that communities are central to shaping a more just, inclusive, and democratic South Africa



Pictured: Participants in Isipingo.



Pictured: Facillitator sis Gugu

Key Outcomes

- strengthened trust between residents, local authorities, and migrant communities through open, respectful dialogue.
- Empowerment of citizens to take active roles in co-creating solutions and sustaining community peace.
- Consolidation of a provincial framework for social cohesion, informed by insights and commitments from all DDP-KAS community dialogues held throughout the month.
- Renewed commitment to inclusion, cooperation, and continued engagement, underscoring that long-term transformation begins with unity at the local level.

#Amplifying citizens voices through Social Cohesion Conference



"The DDP helps communities grow stronger by encouraging solution driven community dialogues and fostering unity better"
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