

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, TO
NEWLY RECRUITED FINANCE GRADUATES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE RANCH RESORT, POLOKWANE
MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

06 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,

MEC for Social Development, Ms Florence Radzilani,

MEC for Finance, Mr Kgaboa Magoai,

Head of the Department of Social Development, Ms Thembeni Elphie
Mhlongo,

Head of Treasury, Mr Gavin Prat,

Our newly recruited finance graduates,

Members of the media,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thobela, Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Good Morning, Goeie Môre,

It is an honour to stand before the architects of numbers, custodians of value and future guardians of public resources as we welcome you into the Limpopo Provincial Government. Today, we are not merely welcoming contract professionals into our fold; we are welcoming fresh knowledge, new energy, analytical excellence and most importantly, an opportunity to strengthen the financial foundations of our Department of Social Development.

Your expertise has the power to turn numbers into insight, insight into sound decisions and sound decisions into tangible impact. As you begin this journey, I challenge you to bring fresh eyes to old problems, courage to difficult conversations and integrity to every financial decision you make. Together, let us balance the books; let us balance resources with priorities, expenditure with accountability and today's decisions with tomorrow's needs.

You are joining a government that exists to serve the people. Public service is not simply a career; it is a responsibility entrusted to us by the people of Limpopo. Your appointment therefore comes with an obligation to serve with professionalism, discipline, integrity and a deep understanding that every rand entrusted to government belongs to the people.

The Department of Social Development carries a particularly important responsibility. It serves some of the most vulnerable members of our society: children, older persons, persons with disabilities, families living in poverty and survivors of gender-based violence, among others.

A significant portion of these services are delivered through non-profit organisations across our communities. This is where your role becomes particularly important. You have been brought into the Department to strengthen the financial management of these NPOs and to help ensure that public resources reach the people for whom they were intended.

Programme Director,

We cannot, however, pretend that everything is in order.

During the 2025/26 financial year, serious financial management challenges emerged within the Department's NPO funding environment. By the end of the first quarter, the Department had spent only 8.5 percent of its NPO budget against an expected quarterly expenditure of 25 percent. Treasury engagements subsequently highlighted weaknesses in NPO compliance and financial management.

These challenges were also reflected in the Auditor-General's findings. The Department regressed to a qualified audit opinion, after previously achieving an unqualified opinion. This regression requires our urgent attention.

Among the findings was an amount of R14.077 million transferred to non-compliant NPOs, while a further R23.826 million was transferred to NPOs without sufficient supporting evidence to provide assurance that the funds were used for their intended purposes. This represents an exposure of approximately R37.9 million in transfers and subsidies that could not be adequately supported.

The Department also recorded more than R9 million in fruitless and wasteful expenditure, linked to weaknesses including invoice verification, contract management and monitoring of NPO-funded programmes.

This is why your work matters.

You are not here merely to capture figures, reconcile accounts or identify discrepancies. You are here to help change the culture of financial management within the NPO environment.

We expect you to interrogate the numbers. Ask difficult questions. Verify supporting documents. Monitor compliance. Identify risks before they become findings. Assist NPOs to improve their financial systems and ensure that every transaction can withstand scrutiny.

The Department has received 11 audit findings relating to NPOs. Our expectation is that your intervention will contribute meaningfully towards addressing these weaknesses and strengthening the Department's internal controls.

I therefore urge you to approach this assignment with three principles: **integrity, diligence and accountability.**

Never compromise your integrity because of convenience. Never sign what you have not verified. Never allow familiarity to replace compliance. And never forget that the public funds you are dealing with are not yours or ours, they belong to the people of Limpopo.

The responsibility before you is significant, but so is the opportunity. You have an opportunity to contribute to restoring financial discipline, strengthening accountability and improving the audit trajectory of a department whose work touches the lives of thousands of vulnerable people.

I challenge you to leave your mark, not through the number of reports you produce, but through the improvements you help create.

Welcome to public service. Welcome to the Department of Social Development. May your knowledge become action, may your numbers tell the truth and may your work restore confidence in the management of public resources.

Together, let us turn this challenge into an opportunity for renewal, stronger accountability and better service to the people of Limpopo.

I thank you.