

# Business can reconnect with its purpose as pandemic restrictions ease

Issued by [Triologue](#)

21 Apr 2022

This year's Triologue Business in Society Conference focuses on reconnection, with keynote speakers that include Professor Thuli Madonsela, Trudi Makhaya, the Reverend Frank Chikane and Mallence Bart-Williams lined up to address vital issues in development and responsible business.



Professor Thuli Madonsela



Reverend Frank Chikane



Trudi Makhaya

South Africa has faced innumerable challenges during the past two years, from the consequences of years of state capture to living under a pandemic-induced state of emergency. Pandemic restrictions, along with unprecedented levels of hunger and poverty, have frayed the social fabric and tested our resilience as a nation.

However, as pandemic restrictions begin to ease, and society begins to regroup after the worst of the crisis, we are beginning to reconnect with one another and with our collective sense of purpose.

Prior to the pandemic, volunteering was a popular way to connect with communities, with 71% of companies offering volunteering programmes, according to research conducted by responsible business and sustainability consultancy Trialogue. More than a quarter of companies surveyed said their volunteering programmes were put on hold in 2020, with 77% of employees not volunteering – but 18% of companies introduced new volunteering programmes, proving that there

were ways to overcome social distancing.

With this context in mind, Trialogue has themed its annual Business in Society Conference around reconnection, investigating new ways to collaborate for greater social impact. The conference, which will take place on 10 and 11 May, will focus on four core themes: equitable philanthropy, inclusive growth in the green economy, futureproofing the development sector, and driving employee engagement.

Each theme speaks to lessons learnt during the pandemic, when global inequality increased, companies and non-profit organisations were stretched to capacity attempting to meet extraordinary need, and awareness around our multiple, interconnected vulnerabilities increased.

### **Hybrid event to draw a global audience**

The Trialogue Business in Society Conference was held virtually during 2020 and 2021, and as such reached a wider audience than before, with global speakers and delegates participating in robust discussions about responsible business and corporate social investment.

This year, the conference will be presented in hybrid format to allow delegates from all over the country – and the world – to attend, whether in person or virtually. The physical event, which can accommodate 150 delegates, will be held at The Wanders Club in Johannesburg.

“We are excited to present this year’s conference as a hybrid event, offering many of the benefits of an in-person conference alongside some of the inclusive and convenient features of a virtual event,” says Trialogue director Cathy Duff. “We are delighted to host some significant change agents in person, who will address smaller audiences at the venue – and their talks will be streamed live for those delegates participating virtually. Our afternoon sessions, which will be held exclusively in-person, will give delegates the opportunity to workshop content in greater depth and with structured outcomes.”

### **Celebrated speakers to take to the stage**

A host of celebrated keynote speakers will take the stage, including Professor Thuli Madonsela, chair in Social Justice Research at Stellenbosch University and founder of the Thuma Foundation, an independent democracy leadership and literacy public benefit organisation; the Reverend Frank Chikane, chairperson of Kagiso Trust; Trudi Makhaya, special economic advisor to President Cyril Ramaphosa; and Mallence Bart-Williams, founder of Sierra Leone-based ‘sharity’ Folorunsho, initiated with street children in Freetown.

In addition to keynote speeches and executive overviews, the conference will feature robust panel discussions, facilitated breakout sessions, in-person networking, and the ever-popular MTN Donors Den, in which three non-profit organisations pitch innovative projects to win cash prizes. In addition, delegates will be able to visit exhibition stands – and each delegate attending the full conference, either in person or virtually, will receive a swag box full of enticing goodies, courtesy of valued sponsors.

To whet your appetite, enjoy some highlights from the [2021 conference](#).

For more information about the Trialogue Business in Society Conference 2022, and to register, visit: <https://trialogue.co.za/business-society-conference-2022/>.

Please read the FAQs on the conference webpage, or email [conference@trialogue.co.za](mailto:conference@trialogue.co.za) for more information.

*The Trialogue Business in Society Virtual Conference is presented in partnership with: Vodacom, Nedbank, MTN SA Foundation, Rand Water Foundation, Sanlam Foundation and Volkswagen South Africa.*

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