

The Star

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3 FUTURES

... FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

THIS time last year, 33 prominent intellectuals and leaders came together in a place called Dinokeng, in Gauteng, and, with backing from Old Mutual and Nedbank, began to map out the future of South Africa. What emerged were three possibilities, which they called the Dinokeng scenarios: as a country we could choose to walk together, walk apart or walk behind.

If we chose to walk apart, we would pursue a path of growing discontent marked by a failure in leadership. If we decided to walk behind, it would be in the shadow of an all-

powerful state in a scenario that assumes an apathetic public toeing the line. But if civil society were to engage more with the government and hold it to account, then we could begin to walk together as a nation towards a more hopeful future.

Over the next five weeks Independent Newspapers, in conjunction with e.tv, will tease out the scenarios in a series of televised debates and weekly supplements which you will find in our newspapers each Monday. Today we look at the critical role of civil society.

We want to get the country talking. We hope we can count on you.

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ILLUSTRATION: DINOKENG SCENARIOS



UPRISING: Black pupils take to the streets of Soweto to protest against the quality of their education on June 16, 1976 – a historic day that heralded a new era of citizen activism.



TURNING POINT: Sixty-nine people were killed in the Sharpeville Massacre on March 21, 1960, after which citizen activism was quelled for more than a decade.
PICTURE: ALF KHUMALO

ARISE ACTIVE CITIZENS!

It's time we walked together towards a better future

'CITIZEN activism is like a virus," says Vincent Maphai. "There are times when it's dormant, but it can come back again."

It was alive and kicking in the late 1950s as apartheid got into full swing, the 57-year-old activist-turned-academic-turned-businessman says. It faded in the wake of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre when the weight of the regime came down on black South Africa.

In the years that followed it was hard to imagine 1976, when young people would take up the cudgels and help bring down apartheid.

Yet, ironically, it was the new democratic dispensation that would quell citizen activism after 1994.

There are a few good logical and reasonable explanations for that, Maphai says.

"The people thought: 'Let us give the new government a chance.' And second, there was a feeling that if you take on the ANC, you are in some way counter-revolutionary. Third, a lot of the hard-nosed activists of the 1980s ended up in the government themselves."

So, in the years that followed, political engagement on the part of the public went into another dormant phase.

But now it's time for the active citizen to return, the Dinokeng team are arguing: it's time we began to walk together towards a better future.

When they presented their findings last May, the scenario planners acknowledged the achievements of the past 15 years, but highlighted several issues: the deep structural problems in the economy; the 20-24 age group, of which half are unemployed; a health system that is crumbling

and an education system that does not work; the one in five who make it to university; the four who don't; and life expectancy which has decreased under democracy's watch.

"We're saying it's time to have that conversation as a country and as a nation that we've never had," Maphai says.

We've had 15 years to have that conversation, but no one was talking. Why now?

"Because we're entering a second transition period. The first phase was euphoric. We felt we were aligning our dreams with reality. But as much as euphoria creates imagination, it can also create uncertainty, and with it disillusionment". This sowed the seeds for the scenarios.

"One of the good things about the scenarios is that they force you to step out of your comfort zone and look at life outside your own radar."

Maphai is quick to note that this is not about any kind of fear about Jacob Zuma as president. There is no suggestion on their part that the new government cannot and will not perform, he says.

This is about a young democracy that has followed the leader for the past 15 years, but has now reached the conclusion that more can be achieved with more hands on deck.

"By now the liberation dividend has been paid and people are beginning to ask: 'Where do I come in here?'"

For too many years the government had a dismissive attitude, particularly in areas of security and HIV/Aids, with the "feeling that if you don't like it, lump it". And with that, levels of accountability and transparency began to drop, he argues.

But times are changing, he insists. He points to the split in the



BY
FIONA
FORDE

ruling party this time last year, the likes of which had never happened before to a liberation movement such as the ANC on this continent. That resulted in the formation of Cope. "so the ANC is no longer the sole party that can call in the liberation dividend", as Cope also has Struggle stalwarts in its ranks.

That the ANC could split signifies something greater than a political statement. It spells out an awakening of activism that has been dormant all these years.

"Civil society is slowly beginning to reassert its role. I see it in the attention that is being given to the state abuse of resources, particularly in areas like corruption. The public was also very outspoken on the Scorpions issue, signs that (people) are beginning to ask: 'Whose country is this now?'"

"Another distinguishing feature is that whites are becoming less apologetic about being white and (have) the feeling that they can also criticise this country, regardless of whether it is run by blacks or not. They are also saying: 'This is our country.'"

However, the fact remains that the ANC won 65.90 percent of the national vote in the general elections in April, and it is hard to imagine why the ruling party would want to join forces with the Dinokeng team.

"We are not giving Zuma a blueprint of how to do his work. We



Whites are becoming less apologetic about being white and the feeling that they can also criticise this country, regardless of whether it is run by blacks or not. They are also saying: 'This is our country.'

– Vincent Maphai

are simply saying we are going to push you harder than we have done in the past. If the government continues to be unaccountable and people continue to reward it with more votes, then we run the risk of getting an even more unaccountable government. So it is not the government we are talking to here, but to citizens, on how they can begin to hold government accountable in the future.

"Remember, the distinctive feature of the Zuma government is that unlike the Madiba and Mbeki governments, they can no longer rely only on the liberation dividend... They will have to rely on their record of service delivery. And

if they fail to deliver, and that failure is largely explained by the fact that it did not draw on wider resources in society when it had the chance to do so, then that will be a very hard failure to acknowledge.

"So we are not telling them what to do," Maphai points out. "If they want to go their own route – walking ahead in Dinokeng jargon – that's fine, so long as they actually deliver. But our belief is that we doubt they will, without drawing on all of the broader national skills. That's what we have learnt from the past 15 years."

● This is an edited version of an interview that appeared in our sister titles earlier this year.



Civic groups give power to ordinary citizens and ensure state accountability

 BY
**ADAM
HABIB**

TIME FOR A SOCIAL PACT

THE DINOKENG Scenario exercise posits three outcomes. The most positive of these, "Walking Together", assumes an empowered civil society interacting with a responsive state. This is indeed a prerequisite if we are to have shared development. Thankfully, the initiative's participants recognised that socio-economic development is not simply a technical or policy exercise. Rather it is about accountability of political elites to their citizens.

How to ensure this should be the overriding concern of those interested in shared development.

Political elites become responsive to citizens not because they are good or bad individuals.

They become responsive because the political and systemic context conditions them to do so. The most defining feature of such a context is that citizens have power or leverage over their political elites. This occurs because either political elites are in competition for the electoral affections of citizens, or the latter are mobilised creating an empowered civil society. These two systemic features entrench the accountability of political elites to their citizens facilitating a responsive government.

But citizens are not a homogenous group. Some stakeholders among the citizenry, like business or the upper classes, have much greater influence given their access to and control over resources. This is why organising poorer citizens and workers through unions or civic organisations is so important for socio-economic development.

It pluralises power within civil society, preventing perverse consequences where political elites only become responsive to rich citizens, and enables a more equitable accountability of the state to all its citizens.

But conflict between empowered stakeholders in civil society can also compromise development if it does not occur within manageable boundaries, or if it creates perpetual instability. This is why a social pact appeals to leadership figures in business, labour and the state. It promises the possibility of peace between warring social partners, a non-zero outcome where all sides may get at least a part of what they desire. For a political elite which needs to manage popular and stakeholder expectations and grow the economy, it is a particularly attractive solution.

But South Africa has not had a great track record when it comes to social pacts in the post-apartheid phase. The one attempted in the 1990s, remnants of which still exist today, failed because the unequal power relations between business and labour did not facilitate equitable outcomes for all social partners. Despite the romanticised illusions and political rhetoric of Nedlac's founders, in essence it was designed as a co-optive mechanism



JOINT EFFORT: Trade unions are central to socio-economic development. PICTURE: HERBERT MATIMBA

to emasculate labour's demands.

Currently, however, systemic conditions defined by among others, the empowered position of the unions in the post-Polokwane era, and the changed international environment as a result of both the economic crisis and the unravelling of the conservative global economic consensus, have equalised

economic voice between business and labour, and created a greater predisposition towards viable and equitable social pacts.

But systemic conditions alone do not enable the emergence of social pacts. Such pacts also require political will and leadership. And South Africa's current political leadership has been lacking in this

regard. President Jacob Zuma, his ministers, and the leadership of the ANC have essentially failed in this regard.

The ANC's and government's responses have not been all that imaginative. ANC secretary-general Gwede Mantashe responded by chastising Cosatu workers for compromising the image of the

Zuma administration.

Trevor Manuel accused business of cowardice and asked it to stand up to the might of the unions.

Zuma has remained silent on the issue, characteristically promising everything to everyone in his State of the Nation address. None of this has or will enable the management of popular expectations.

It can only truly be addressed by astute political management. This does not mean berating workers for populism or compromising Zuma's image. Rather, it would have required recognising that popular and privileged expectations are tied by an umbilical cord, and neither can be reined in without the other.

It would have required political elites recognising that they cannot demand that citizens and workers have patience, without themselves sacrificing perks like expensive cars, houses, and generous official expense accounts.

It would require Zuma berating corporate executives for their own lavish packages and requesting them to forego their bonuses this year; and to take lower-than-inflationary increases in their packages. Sacrifices in this recession should not only be made by workers and the poor.

Some would of course warn us of disillusioning the business community and investment fleeing our shores. But is this really true or is it scaremongering? As long as a climate exists to make profit, the business community is mature enough to remain.

Remember, US President Obama has berated American business executives for their lavish million dollar bonuses.

Prime Minister Brown, President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel have done the same. Yet none of them have a single communist in their ranks. How is it that this government which has at least half a dozen openly committed communists and socialists in the cabinet cannot do the same?

The irony is that whereas the social pact of the 1990s failed because of systemic conditions, the one of the post-April 2009 era may be stillborn because of a lack of bold political leadership. Such leadership needs to manage the expectations of citizens and workers, and the business community, politicians and state officials.

The ANC and the government leaders have tried the former, but not the latter. Paralysed by a fear of markets and their reaction, the leadership is reluctant to engage, even timidly with reining in the expectations of business executives, the upper middle classes and the political elite. But as long as they fail to do so, or are perceived to be doing so, they will fail to rein in popular expectations. And so long as this is not done, a social pact cannot be realised.

● *Adam Habib is Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Advancement at the University of Johannesburg*



WALKING TOGETHER

One good cause – quality schooling – to unite them all

by LISA FERRAZZINI

OVERCOMING deficiencies at the core of education impelled a group of activists to launch an organisation that has, in less than two years, made its mark on the national debate about inequalities in schools.

Equal Education (EE) began with an informal discussion among a group of friends including activists Zucko Achmat, Nathan Gidani and Mervyn Moolah. In South Africa, the need for a national campaign for quality and equality in education and to unite the movement's first board members.

Some of young Cape Towners also involved in the Treatment Action Campaign, started to build the organisation last year. EE now has members in 24 schools in the Western Cape.

When EE began its first campaign was to have a group of broken windows fixed at a Khayelitsha school, taken by a matric pupil. The group had given disposable cameras to pupils to capture images of what they would like to see changed and they were to provide it at their schools.

A public rally followed and EE successfully campaigned for the Department (WCED) to fix the broken windows. EE has since fixed windows in one place today, but they had wanted to, the learners could have broken them again, but they are protected by the attitudes of the learners. They have taken pictures of the broken windows and sent them to the head of EE's school, says Jojo Hasson, the head of EE's school.

Early this year EE stepped in when pupils from another Khayelitsha school, Chris Hani Secondary complained that they had no books. EE had certain suspects for several weeks.

Meetings with the school were

held and EE arranged for a teacher from another school to teach matrices at weekends. The WCED also started investigating complaints at the school.

In May EE launched a new campaign to tackle another problem faced by the school.

On the first day of the campaign, launched at eight Khayelitsha schools, 627 pupils from just one school arrived late.

As part of the campaign, pupils held a protest at the school and schools and handed out pamphlets to their fellow pupils encouraging them to be on time. A march to motivate pupils to be punctual was also held in Khayelitsha.

By the end of May EE reported that the campaign was starting to show signs of success.

At a school where more than 100 pupils were on time just a few weeks ago, EE launched its school libraries campaign, aimed at equipping every school with a fully functional library as well as a librarian.

In September an estimated 3 000 pupils and parents from Cape Town's streets marched through Cape Town's streets calling for a national policy that would provide for functioning libraries in all schools.

Hasson believes the organisation's campaigns have been successful because they have drawn attention to the problems themselves, not just the politics.

"With the latecoming campaign, for example, we stated that learners and teachers must be at school on time. We had to make it clear that it was not just the learners' fault."

Hasson says the organisation's success is rooted in the involvement of individuals, including pupils and parents in the movement.

"It's about growing a group of young people who are not just protesting, but believe that change is possible."



SAV IT FOR WORDS: Cape pupils march as part of Equal Education's campaign for school libraries. The campaign is aimed at equipping schools with proper libraries and a librarian.

PICTURE: HEIK KAUGER

FIFTEEN years into democracy, the black majority in South Africa as the formerly disenfranchised masses do battle with their supposed liberators for the right to life.

Across the country, what has been a long and weary process of power, water, electricity, sanitation and waste removal – have reached unprecedented levels. The number of major protests are nearly double that of a previous high four years ago.

Two weeks ago, while the media's attention was focused on Sakile, near Sanderton in Mpumalanga, at least three other smaller protests

were taking place along the N4, districts that went largely unreported. Communities are tugging in one direction and another, walking apart.

Dissatisfaction is growing, and with it comes the realisation that many black communities have never had decent service delivery.

Development Index, which measures the quality of life, South Africa ranked 129 out of 182 countries, since 1990.

In the second annual Mo Ibrahim Africa award, South Africa ranked fifth, performing fairly poorly, predictably, in terms of safety and security, sustainable economic opportunity and human

development. But that analysis is based on data that is at least two years old – a mistake in a fast-changing South Africa.

started under "the previous administration" of former president Thabo Mbeki and recently presented by Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs Sielso Shikela, looking at the bleak picture of rampant political in-fighting, nepotism, patronage and general maladministration.

But a cursory tour of townships

would tell you this. The true value of the report lies in the recommendations – in the short and medium term – which call for innovation and constant review of the way municipalities go about their business.

The study speeches and occasional political interventions from the ANC and the government make of a crisis that has been left fester for too long.

With key members of grassroots organisations taking up roles in the

government and formal businesses, there is a dearth of experienced community leaders able to mobilise their Zuma T-shirts. And while the anarchy scenes may indicate an insurrection against the government, it is not a call for anger is levelled at councillors, in some cases provincial authorities, but almost never at the national government and Luthuli House.

Instead, much of the mobilisation is for far positions in the council or tenders.

Honest councillors who are trying to see to the needs of their

constituencies often complain of being hampered by red tape. In many instances, there is a lack of functions – political appointees responsible for the day-to-day running of the municipalities.

In one case, for instance, a nurse was appointed as a council manager in charge of development and planning.

Of the 283 municipalities across the country, 57 are regarded as financially unviable; some wholly depend on government grants.

Some protesters complain about the high cost of services. And now communities are moving to a culture of non-payment, putting the government in a catch-22.

3 FUTURES ... JUST ONE CHOICE



IN RIOTS WE TRUST: Residents of the Elias Motsoaledi informal settlement in Soweto crowd around piles of burning rubbish during a service delivery protest.

PICTURE: CHRIS COLLINGRIDGE

As the honeymoon ends, they're going their separate ways

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WALKING BEHIND

Road naming is another scar on the city's psyche

SARAH BUCKLEY

IT PRESENTED itself as the perfect opportunity for some nation building.

Changing the names of the streets of Durban should have been a chance for the city's out-separating communities.

It could have narrowed some of the yawning gaps and melted some of the divides.

But rather than listen and consult to the people, the ANC's city manager Michael Stutcliffe steamrolled ahead and renamed some 100 of the city's streets, roads, highways and buildings with hardly a whisper of consultation.

Some of the perfect examples of what happens when an autocratic-style of government forces its people to walk behind and to the line.

It just doesn't work.

Today the city is facing legal challenges from the thousands who claim the process was fatally flawed.

It was as crude as some folk waking up to find their street name had changed, without any input or consultation.

It became an one-man show rather than a community-driven project.

Northway was at thoroughfare despite the fact that 27 000 objections were registered against some of the names presented.

They all got on their ears.

But it was renamed Kenneth Kaunda, after a man who plundered his own country into darkness, as the DA's John Steenhuisen put it.

It's a sad state of affairs. It could have been avoided. It could have been done right.

Reconciliation and taught the city's folk how easy it can be to find a common ground.

Instead it etched another scar onto the city's psyche that goes quite a number of new street signs vandalised beyond recognition.



CHIEF MAY: Ailed Guevara at the official ceremony to name the revolutionary Che Guevara

PICTURE: PHIL DRYE

South Africa, or Durban for that matter many of the city's folk asked? The ANC had no ready answers. It's the Speaker of the d'fkhkhat council, could say.

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OUT WITH THE OLD: Signage for one of the Durban street name changes is erected, with Smith Street becoming Anton Lembede Street, Point Road became Mahatma Gandhi Road last year.

PICTURE: TERRY HOWWOOD



AN IDEAL BETRAYAL

ANC seems reluctant to help South Africans rebuild their structures



BY
**JABULANI
SIKHAKHANE**

SUCCESSIVE ANC governments have yet to show any serious intent to help civil society back on its feet. Yet, without a vibrant and an active civil society, South African democracy runs the risk that it will decay.

Civil society in this case refers to the groups that are formed for collective purposes outside of the state and the marketplace. So, trade unions – which are institutions that are embedded in the marketplace – don't fit the civil society description.

Communities, the majority of whom are poor and illiterate, need the resources and the power of government to help them occupy the space that they used to during the struggle against apartheid.

As the Dinokeng Scenarios team pointed in a report earlier this year, South Africa has a long history of active civil society engagement.

"Ordinary South Africans participated energetically in the struggle for their liberation. The strategy of making apartheid society 'ungovernable' depended entirely on the participation and commitment of ordinary citizens," the Dinokeng report said.

A demise in civil engagement with the state post-1994 has left most communities without the socio-political structures that provided a sense of leadership for the community.

In essence, there is a leadership vacuum in most communities.

It would appear that the ANC government is reluctant to help these communities rebuild their structures, especially because they will pose the biggest threat to the party's dominance of the political landscape.

As the post-Polokwane leadership of the ANC has made clear, the party wants to be in charge and that means that all layers of government, not only the political heads of government departments but the civil servants too, must be answerable to Luthuli House, the ANC headquarters.

In that kind of arrangement, there is no room for a strong and an active civil society that constantly engages and challenges the state and its institutions.

Yet it's when communities use their collective strength to tackle their problems, British politician David Blunkett once said, that they build respect – self-respect, both as individuals and as a community, respect for others, and respect for the practices and institutions of democracy.

"Communities are in a better position to be able to tackle the challenges they face if they are enabled to develop the capacity to initiate and direct collective action.



VICTORY PARTY: President Jacob Zuma speaks at an ANC celebration event in the Joburg CBD following the party's victory in the elections in April. It's one of the responsibilities of the state to support civil society groups, says the writer. PICTURE: SHAYNE ROBINSON



“Communities are in a better position to be able to tackle the challenges they face if they are enabled to develop the capacity to initiate and direct collective action. But the support they need ... is not always easily accessible and government can do more to join up our work in this area more effectively.”

– British politician David Blunkett

“But the support they need to do this is not always easily accessible and government can do more to join up our work in this area more effectively,” he said in his 2003 Scarman Lecture.

“Apart from ensuring community groups can expand their capacity to operate, we should also pay attention to the skills and confidence building associated with community development practices.

“Active citizens make strong communities.

“They do so because in addition to what they contribute themselves, they bring other people and resources into play to solve common problems.”

This calls for a state that will not only allow citizens the space they need to make their own worlds, but will provide them with the

resources, financial and otherwise, that the communities need to build the capacity, the social assets, and the leadership which will enable them to become active citizens.

There are a number of initiatives across the country where the renewal of civil society institutions has been successfully undertaken.

The problem with most of these is that they are dependent solely on funding from international donor agencies and private sector firms. These sources of funding tend to be limited and of a short-term nature.

One such initiative is the Intervention with Microfinance for Aids and Gender Equity (Image), a project developed by the Rural Aids and Development Action Research (RADAR), itself a collaboration between the School of Public Health

at the University of Witwatersrand and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Image has successfully rebuilt community structures in the Burgersfort Municipality in the Sekhukhune region of Limpopo to such an extent that these communities have managed to push civil servants to provide them with better healthcare and police services.

Image, in partnership with the Small Enterprise Foundation (SEF), a developmental microfinancier, educates women who are SEF clients on gender issues and community mobilisation to tackle these.

South Africa needs more such initiatives, but for them to mushroom all over the country, government will have to come to

the party with financial and other support.

This calls for a state that is a true servant, as outlined by British author Geoff Mulgan in his book, *Good and Bad Power: The Ideals and Betrayals of Government*.

A servant state, says Mulgan, releases the energies of the people to make the world for themselves.

“To make this possible states can be moved away from their traditional role of creating and running structures towards roles which are more about creating infrastructures – underlying capacities that support people to make their own worlds.”

Chris Brown, a professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, highlights the need for a balance between a strong state and a vibrant civil society.

“There is very little margin of error here – if the state is too extensive it will strangle civil society at birth, too weak and private institutions will compete for its role as provider of order,” Brown wrote in his paper, “Cosmopolitanism, world citizenship and civil society”.

The ANC's idea of a developmental state runs the risk that it will become a patronising state that leaves little room for citizen involvement, other than as passive beneficiaries of government programmes. Even where civil society has been active, it risks being trampled on by the developmental state juggernaut.



Sicelo Shiceka has the unenviable task of turning the country's dysfunctional municipalities into centres of service delivery



MAN WITH A PLAN: Minister Sicelo Shiceka has a turnaround strategy for local government.

PICTURE: DUMISANI SIBEKO

THE GENUINE OFFER?

STAFF REPORTER

WITH a near two-thirds majority of the vote under its belt, does the ANC-led government really need civil society?

For 15 years, it has gone it alone and left its imprint on the new South Africa. Does it really want to entertain an active citizenry at this hour of the game?

Indeed, don't some policies suggest a more interventionist form of governance, rather than an enabling state?

Six months into the job, Sicelo Shiceka says he needs all the help he can get.

As minister of cooperative governance and traditional affairs, arguably one of the more contentious portfolios in President Jacob Zuma's cabinet, he is appealing for civil society to come on board and help him turn his ship around.

"My view is that after 1994 we marginalised a very important component: the white community," he argues.

"They developed skills under the apartheid-led system, but their capacity and capability have not been utilised. But the time has come to change all that and bring in everyone who wants to be part of the new South Africa. We're extending our hand and we are calling on all South Africans to come and meet us halfway and extend theirs, too."

When he stepped into his role in May, Shiceka was met with growing discontent. Though the masses had returned the ANC to power for a fourth term with Zuma, as the man of the people, at the helm, their plight remained unchanged. One service delivery protest led to another.

Shiceka began to talk to communities. He told them that they had his ear. He said he wanted to find solutions and the only way to correct the problem was to understand their needs. And though his words did not put the fires out overnight, he believes he's making headway. The solutions won't come immediately, he says, but they will come.

He is putting together a turnaround team "composed of civil society and organisations that can make a contribution, a real contribution, to our local governments and municipalities".

The group will include members of the private sector; regardless of race, creed or colour: It will include civil society groups "that are key in our society". He also wants to draw in municipal experts and develop a database of critical and essential skills.

Is there a limit to his ambition? Wouldn't an over-ambitious civil force loosen the ANC's grip on power in municipalities?

"It's time to move away from petty politics. Local governments are not working. We can't play politics any more. We have to make this work," he says.

As he maps out his turnaround

Local government is what provides water, electricity, roads, traffic lights. If we get it right, if we can really work together as a country at the level of local government, then I firmly believe we can do much more than get service delivery right...

strategy, he knows that several communities have started to break away, going it alone. Fed up with poor service delivery, they have started a protest of a different kind, refusing to pay rates.

Headed by Carien Visser, the Sannieshof Ratepayers

Association, in North West, started the trend, which has caught on across the country. Now more residents are following in her footsteps and using their rate money to do the work themselves.

"She's exactly the kind of person we want to work with," Shiceka says.

"Some white communities protest with their wallet or with their vote. The black communities protest with their feet or by burning tyres. It doesn't matter how they're protesting. The message is the same. They're not happy with what we're doing and it's our job to sort this out."

He sees his turnaround strategy as "a project that's pregnant with the potential of uniting the nation. Because local government affects everyone's life. It's like the Department of Home Affairs, it's with you from birth to death. Local government is what provides water, electricity, roads, traffic lights. Every aspect of day-to-day living. It's not like education, where you can opt for private schools. Or health, where you can use private clinics.

"And if we get it right, if we can really work together as a country at the level of local government, then I firmly believe we can do much more than get service delivery right," he says, arguing that his project has the ability to stitch the country together.

It's a commendable move, but it does have its pitfalls. If he is to bring in white skills, how are black

communities likely to respond? Will it not fuel even more discontent and insecurity?

"If you're feeling insecure, it's because you don't have the skill. So we have to begin to train our people," he says.

His plan is to carry out a comprehensive audit of each municipality, accounting for skills or skills deficits and identifying the potential economic growth in each region.

The turnaround strategy is a work in progress and will not be finalised until December, when it will be presented to the government. Depending on approval, he will begin to roll it out next year. It's an ambitious move, and is likely to come with a hefty price tag at a time when local governments are deeply in debt.

"It has to be done," he says. He's working towards 2014, when his term as minister will come to an end and when the country will celebrate 20 years of freedom.

"And by then, protests have to be a thing of the past.

"If it costs money, we have to do it. Because the current state of affairs is not sustainable. We need something different if we are to build the nation.

"And the only way to build the nation is to bring the nation with us.

"And remember, we changed the name of the department from local government to co-operative governance. And we did that for a reason. If we all unite behind this, nothing can stop us."



BE AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

EDUCATION INITIATIVE

EQUAL Education (EE) is a Khayelitsha-based organisation that brings together pupils, parents, teachers and community members who want to work for quality education through analysis and activism. The organisation is driven by research and engages in evidence-based activism to try to improve schools. Its members are guided by the belief that good education will enable poor and marginalised people to have an equal opportunity in life. More information: www.equaleducation.org.za



CHILD PROTECTION

Matla A Bana is a charity project that works to address grey areas in the child protection system in South Africa. It was started by Callie and Monique Strydom some years ago, and they still manage the project. In the past few years it has spread its wings to become a nationwide endeavour, though it works primarily in Gauteng and the Western Cape. Contact: matla@mweb.co.za or 021 913 9107

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: You can help kids have a meal each day.

PICTURE: SCHALK VAN ZUYDAM / AP

It's time to get involved and build a brighter future for South Africa – just find something that suits your skills

HELP THE HOMELESS

U-TURN is a grassroots organisation that has been working with the homeless in Cape Town since 1997. It operates from a temporary structure in Lansdowne Road while renovations are being completed on a new warehouse, part of which will provide a home for homeless men as well as skills training workshops. Though it has a small core team of staff, it relies heavily on volunteers who help the homeless to help themselves in rehabilitation.

Contact: info@homeless.org.za

CRIME & SAFETY

THERE is hardly a suburb in the country that doesn't have its own community policing forum (CPF). They started in 1995, when the constitution made provisions for them to work with the police and maintain a partnership with the community in the fight against crime. And through these critical partnerships many CPFs have made a substantial dent in crime statistics. It doesn't take much. All it requires is an understanding that more hands at the helm can make a difference in your community. Contact your local police station to find out more about the CPF in your area.

YOUTH INITIATIVES

GOOGOGETTERS is a new network of 500 grandmothers across South Africa who support teenagers and their younger siblings to develop a sense of purpose and belonging in life. As part of this loveLife programme, the grandmothers will help keep youngsters at school, help them get social grants, prevent sexual and physical abuse, and increase access to food. Many of these children come from families affected by HIV/Aids. At least 10 000 children are supported through this network. Each grandmother takes care of 20 children. goGogetters is a branch of loveLife. More information: www.lovelife.org.za

MENTAL HEALTH

FOR THE past 14 years, the SA Depression and Anxiety Group has been providing counselling services, mental health awareness programs, powerful media campaigns, school talks and rural outreach initiatives to thousands of patients, families and communities. The group is committed to quality counselling, outreach programmes and capacity-building work throughout the country. It has more than 180 support groups nationwide, and has an extensive referral guide reaching into the most remote regions of South Africa. More information: www.sadag.co.za

HOUSING DRIVE

THE NIALL Mellon Township Initiative is calling on all South Africans, either as individuals or as part of a corporation, to contribute financially or volunteer for a day on one of its many building sites in the Western Cape and Gauteng. And with that you can give a family a leg up in life and a way out of shack-life. You don't have to be a skilled builder. All you need is the time, the energy and the will to make a difference.

More information: www.townshiptrust.org.za

NURTURING NATURE

IF MOTHER Earth is your concern, the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute is worth a look. It tries to find ways to care for water resources and catchments, look after rare plants and animals, reduce fossil fuel consumption, promote sustainable livelihoods and educate children and adults to better understand the world in which they live.

More information: www.safcei.org.za

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On Wednesday night, eNews Channel 403 on DStv launches a new series of **The Big Debate** hosted by Redi Direko, which takes an exclusive look at the **Dinokeng Scenarios**

This week the panel of well known names and faces will tease out the issue of the future for Civil Society in South Africa

e NEWS
www.mybigdebate.com