

MISSION STATEMENT

South Africa comes from the past that created enormous inequalities between the rich and the poor. Failure to bridge the relentlessly increasing gap between the poor and the rich, increasing poverty, unemployment, high figures of HIV/AIDS have compounded uncontrollable and misdirected frustration among people, that finds its vent through xenophobic outrage, relentless and mounting service delivery protests and crime, let alone increasing number of children-headed families under destitution, hunger and starvation.

The emergence of 1994 democratic dispensation was hoped to transform historical socio-economic inequalities and injustices that continue to isolate and hamper progress in developing the capacities of poor communities to free themselves from poverty and its related consequences

Since 1994 policy making in South Africa has been assumed to be a more inclusive participatory democracy. As a result it has become fairly common for policy makers in authority to assume that policies formulated by the current government will always be implementable and will always meet the needs of the poor communities

However analysis agrees that despite the relatively sophisticated policy-making mechanisms and the flurry of white papers, green papers and legislation the government has failed to realise its objectives. The consequences of its actions have no objects of their critical reflection therefore yielding contradictory outcomes.

In spite of energetic efforts of policy innovations by government to better the lives of the majority of the poor, life conditions of poor communities continue to deteriorate to crisis proportions. Post 1994 democratic dispensation has dismally failed to reverse the frontiers of poverty, destitution, unemployment and related factors in South Africa.

Alarming still is that 2021 local government elections have registered less than 46% voters turn out, the highest voters' apathy ever recorded since 1994. Saacso believes This is a red light for a failing democracy and a harbinger of a fast coming fascism, despotic and autocratic rule and if not confronted in time South African democracy is at risk. During the 2021 local elections 55% of the population abstained from voting for any party. Saacso believes that there are less chances that this majority of voters will ever vote unless there is a fundamental change in the lives of the people or the cause factor is confronted head on. Saacso believes there is a dire need to organise all races both white and black living in South Africa to unite against race based politics to move from ethnic based politics to value based politics that recognise merits, excellence and probity above ethnic identification.

As a result, the **South African Active Civil Society Organisation (SAACSO)** believes that self-organisations of citizens, is a panacea and a compelling force to

provide relevant solutions to reverse poverty, unemployment and related factors through the promotion of communities' self-development and their demand for the fulfilment of their rights.

Saacso believes that to develop communities, it is necessary to acknowledge the centrality of citizenship and state power. However in practice for many government officials and ministries, development is all about the state efforts. This perception inculcates citizens' docility and inactivity in communities' self-development. It reduces citizens to simpletons of periodic elections and objects of consultation by government, elevating the State to be all and end-all of development.

Saacso believes that citizens are not passive recipients of government delivery. True development is a highest degree of government relevant policy innovations above, a highest degree of citizens' activities below and a highest degree of integration of the two in the middle. True development is a product of effective state and progressive active citizenry.

The government is voted into power on the basis of a social contract based on mutual trust between the Citizens who are voters and government the Duty-bearers, that the government will control political power and manage the economy in the interest of broad based human sustainability, protection of all people's rights and promotion of their right to demand the fulfilment of their rights, under the public watchfulness.

It takes considerable efforts to manage decision making in a way that respects all members' interests. Sometimes many governments are not neutral actors in pursuit of the public interests, but rather act on behalf of economically powerful elite. People's organisations may be derailed by State violence or party politics, or stifled by red-tape and the complexities of legislation.

Citizenship and the State are central to any development worth mentioning. The challenge is to combine the State and active citizens. The relationship between the two is complex because they march in different rhythms.

The steady grind of State machineries contrasting with the ebb and flow of civil society activism. In many cases, a long-term development requires an element of deferred gratifications, requiring business to re-invest rather than skim off profits, rich people to accept redistribution of wealth and income for the sake of national stability and growth.

The holistic effort to reduce vulnerability should be based on supporting and strengthening the self-organisation of the poor people to pursue development as they see it fit and inspired by doctrines of their own development agenda, rather than to depend on government's hand-outs and State development initiatives.

The deeply inequitable forms of Global governance must be overhauled so that capital flows, migration, trade and investment are managed in the interest of broad based human sustainability.

Powerful governments must stop imposing particular economic policies on developing countries and start recognising that effective States and active Citizens are the main actors in the drama of development and must be allowed to experiment, fail, learn and succeed.

Poverty is a state of relative powerlessness in which people are denied the ability to control crucial aspects of their lives. It is a symptom of deeply rooted inequalities and unequal power relationships institutionalised through policies and practises at the level of State, Society and household. People often lack money, land, resources and freedom because they are discriminated against on the grounds of one or more aspects of their personal identity, their class, gender, ethnicity, age constraining their ability to claim and control the resources that allow them choices in life.

The underlying purpose of Rights based approach to development is to identify ways of transforming the self-perpetuating vicious circles of poverty, disempowerment and conflict into virtuous circles in which all people as rights-holders, can demand accountability from States and duty-bearers where duty-bearers have both the willingness and capacity to fulfil, protect and promote people's human Rights. The human Rights approach rejects the notion that people living in poverty can only meet their basic needs as passive recipients of charity. People are the active subjects of their own development, as they seek to realise their rights.

All development actors, including government should seek to build people's capacities to do so, by guaranteeing their Rights to the essentials of a decent life, protection against violence, repression, access to information and technology. people's capacity to realise their Rights and State capacity to fulfil them are dependent on their relative power relations. Inequality in power drives the motor of Socio-economic inequality in the lives of the poor and the rich alike.

Power resembles a force field that permeates households, communities and society at large, shaping both the inter-actions and inner most thoughts of individuals and groups. It is only detectable through its impact on events

To achieve lasting improvements in people's lives, require harnessing the state's power not doing away with it within families, communities at large. People in positions of power are usually better resourced, connected, organised and skilled in pursuing their interests and can use their power to maintain their privileges and exclude others from the charmed circles.

Economic power and political power are always interwoven. Elites in all countries have historically gone to extreme often bloody lengths to maintain and even increase their dominance that structure and practices on issues such as the lack of transparency or accountability that reinforce these inequalities is no accident.

Efforts to reform them meet dogged and sometimes violent resistance. Redistribution of economic and political power more fairly is often the first step towards disrupting this self-perpetuating circles of inequality.

The purpose of getting power is to give it away, indeed those who are in power may opt to share it for a combination of altruistic and selfish reasons, in the end.

Harnessing power for development depends not on the virtues or calculations of individual leaders, but on the combination of public watchfulness and institutional checks and balances, such as the division of power, role of law and an independent media- all based on the guarantee of Rights.

Asserting Rights can be slow, legal and peaceful, but very often it involves moments of confrontation and struggle when the powerful resists often with force and the newly empowered refuse to back down in some of the epic struggles for justice.

Citizens must change the technocratic vision held by many that the civil society is a passive consumer of State services delivered by the government officials and the incumbents.

Democracy is about equality and protection of people's Rights at the State, Societal, family and household levels. It must promote individuals' political rights and civil liberties, such as freedom of speech and association. These in turn entrench democratic values and foster democratic politics, paving the way for the enjoyment of socio-economic Rights.

Where democracies fail to address inequalities civil involvement and voter turnout falls.

Black and white people must form partnerships based on mutual respect and unfettered expression of different views. These partnerships must advance their mutual interests and articulate their right to demand accountability from duty-bearers and duty-bearers must protect and promote their right to do so. Civil society must not seek conformity, they must seek a vibrant dynamic engagement with government enriched by democratic debate that values diverse views and accommodates dissent. We must make real the fundamental right of all people to freely express themselves.

To achieve all our goals, we must hold ourselves to the highest standard of service probity and integrity. Together we must build a society that prizes excellence and rewards effort.