We can do it for ourselves

The poor of South Africa should be mobilised to spearhead their own social and economic development.

SOUTH Africa needs to make a strategic shift towards involving ordinary people in spearheading their own social and economic development initiatives. Instead of a top-down service delivery mechanism that culminates into a wheelbarrow state, says Deputy Minister of Public Works Jeremy Cronin.

"Those tremendous values of the struggle of the '70s and '80s in particular, of public participation, got a bit lost and the message that we tended to send was Akuta discontinues."

"This is refreshing to see programmes that work well, when they work.

"They (the public) tend to do these programmes themselves on a voluntary basis in any case and we are able to move in with our programmes and resources," he says.

For him what is wonderful about these programmes is the partnerships and relationship that is created with the government, where the government ceases to become a service delivery machine that delivers services to the people.

"In these programmes, communities become engaged and help in taking care of their own resources as well-built community cohesion.

"People begin to take care of their communities and the municipalities cannot assist that. It's not communities that sit back and say the government must fix that," he said.

This is even more pivotal in communities that are ravaged by social ill, such as poverty, Aids and drugs.

"It's amazing to see programmes that work well on how it builds confidence. You know we are dealing with households in South Africa were there is multigenerational unemployment were grandparents, parents and now an 18 year old youth have never experienced the socialising impact of work and the heavy capitalistic labour market just isn't creating jobs. There is a massive market failure," he says.

"It is these public employment programmes that are important for creating an alternative form of work and validating work that does not necessarily need one to work for a boss.

"This takes issue with the position and the DA for arguing against these government interventions and labelling them as programmes that do not constitute "real work.""

"Well it is a whole lot more real than handing out pamphlets for some estate agent at a street corner. This is rewarding as it gives dignity to households without income streams when it works well," he says.

He argues that part of what tends to slow down social and economic development in SA can be traced back to the negotiations agreement of 1994, as big business used the democratic breakthrough to distance itself from the看不到南.png