

# What we need to unshackle SA from our horrible past



**Adrianna Randall**

One can become desensitised to the shocking level of inequality in South Africa because many citizens remain trapped in a state of dispossession. Unemployment, poverty and hopelessness have become the order of the day.

The World Bank recently released its inequality report titled: “Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in SA”. The findings were to some extent optimistic with regards to growth. However, there were also some detrimental and concerning projections.

The country’s quarterly gross domestic product output rose to 1.4%, due to a greater-than-expected farming output, yet it is far from the targeted growth rate of 5% annually required to get SA back on track.

One of the reasons for this underperformance is due to the harsh socioeconomic challenges plaguing the country. These include inequality, poverty and unemployment, and until strategies are put in place through realistic policy development, a GDP

target of 5% will remain elusive.

Inequality in South Africa has been one of the most constant issues since the dawn of democracy. Apartheid spatial planning is still present and entrenches the reality of societal inequality.

The richest 10% currently accounts for 71% of household wealth, while the bottom 60% only accounts for 7%. The household spending power for the poor is significantly disproportionate, with the recently increased VAT from 14% to 15% negatively affecting 60% of poor households.

Poverty and unemployment are also some of the key issues identified by the report that limit GDP growth.

There is a disproportion in the workforce of unskilled and semi-skilled than those that possess skills.

The problem here is with regards to education – or rather lack thereof. This failure of the ANC government has widened a gaping gap with regards to income and employability.

The question that then follows is what should a clean, functioning

government do about this?

The DA proposes that South Africa seriously focuses on increasing entrepreneurial competition, effective skills transfer and developing a young digital savvy workforce.

The entrepreneurial sector remains a critical ally for job creation. However, for business to grow and invest in an economy there must be political stability, functional infrastructure and a skilled workforce.

As a government, we will invest in up-skilling South Africa’s workforce. This will be achieved through the establishment of artisan learning institutions that will focus on skills development to make individuals more employable.

Vocational employment is an approach the DA will champion in partnership with the private sector to encourage on-the-job training coupled with skills transfer.

Under the ANC, the Expanded Public Works Programme is failing since it has become a huge patronage

network for ANC-linked individuals. In the cities where the DA governs, we have revised this programme to ensure that work opportunities are accessible to all no matter their political party affiliation.

The World Bank report suggests that SA invest in skilled labour migration. This, coupled with firm immigration controls, can attract much-needed skills into the country to increase our knowledge of the economy. As a country, it is important to be reflective of the millennia we currently operate in.

We are entering the fourth industrial revolution, also known as the information age. It is critical that we take a proactive approach to ensure that we invest in digital skills such as IT, programming and communication and make the internet widely accessible.

What is required now is good governance, accountability and innovation to unshackle us from the legacy of our past.

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