



ANC TODAY

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HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Intensify the struggle to realise the rights of all our people

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa



ACT 108 OF 1996

On the occasion of Human Rights Day, which is celebrated across the country on Saturday 21 March, attention should turn to progress made in securing the rights of all South Africans. And what more needs to be done.

In 15 years of freedom, the Bill of Rights has helped to safeguard the rights of all South Africans. The institutions of state, including the Constitutional Court, have been used to enforce people's rights where necessary. But the state not only has a responsibility to

protect people's rights from violation. It has also been given responsibility for progressively advancing the socio-economic rights of citizens. These include the right to housing, health care, food, water and social security.

Given the country's history, and the systematic manner in which the majority of people were denied access to even the most basic human needs, the drafters of the Constitution wanted to make sure that the democratic government took steps to meet these needs.

With respect to each of these basic rights, the Constitution says the state "must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights". So how well have we done?

Land

The Constitution says that the state must foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis, and to return land to those whose land had been dispossessed after 1913. This is a difficult task given the extremely skewed land ownership patterns in the country. But progress has been made.

Through the ANC government's land restitution programme, assets worth R12.5 billion were transferred to 1.4 million beneficiaries between 1994 and 2007. Although most land restitution cases have been settled - either through the return of land or monetary compensation - the remaining 5,000 or so cases have been moving slowly due to their complexity.

In its 15 Year Review, government notes: "The government set a target of transferring 30% of white-owned agricultural land through restitution, redistribution and tenure reform by 2014, which amounts to 24.9 million hectares. The total transferred by 2009 amounted to 4.8 million hectares, indicating that the land reform programme would have to be stepped up considerably to meet the 2014 target."

One of the serious shortcomings in the land programme - the lack of proper support to those who have received land - has prompted the ANC to make this a major pillar of its 2009 election manifesto. It plans not only to intensify the land reform programme, but also to provide recipients with technical skills and financial resources to productively use the land.

WEEK IN REVIEW

Hani killer denied parole | The Pretoria High Court dismisses the parole application of Clive Derby-Lewis, one of the killers of ANC and SACP stalwart Chris Hani. Derby-Lewis and Janus Walusz were found guilty of Hani's murder on 10 April 1993, an act that threatened to derail the process towards a political settlement.

Military hands over power in Madagascar | After months of street protests, Madagascar's president, Marc Ravalomanana, resigns and places power in the hands of the military. Within hours, the military announces an opposition leader, Andry Rajoelina, is in charge.

Massive drug bust at Johannesburg airport | Police seize R170 million worth of drugs at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. The drugs weighing 565kg were discovered during a routine check on a flight from Pakistan.

Meeting with teachers on education | The ANC meets with the South Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (SAOU) - SA Teachers' Union - to discuss education and building an inclusive South Africa. The meeting was convened as part of the ANC's Inclusive South Africa programme and follows two previous meetings of the organisations.

Housing

When the ANC was voted into government in 1994, the country was facing a major housing backlog. Successive apartheid governments had refused to build houses for black South Africans in an effort to control influx into urban centres.

The Constitution says that everyone has a right to adequate housing. Since 1994, over 2.3 million houses have been built. This has brought adequate housing to nearly 10 million South Africans, a fifth of the population. But there have been difficulties. The average household size has dropped, meaning that more houses are needed than before. Also, migration of people from rural areas to the urban centres has led to a growth in informal settlements. It has also not always been possible to find suitable land close to economic activity, with the result that much time and money is spent by such people on transport.

The ANC has begun to take a more integrated approach to the development of human settlements, not merely building housing units, but also developing the infrastructure needed for any viable community. In its manifesto, the ANC says it will increase access to secure and decent housing for all, including through the conversion of hostels into family housing units; speeding up provision of public rental and social housing; and supporting community self-building efforts.

Health care

To address the constitutional right of South Africans to health care services, including reproductive health care, the ANC increased per capita spending on health by 22% in real terms in the ten years from 1996 to 2006. Around 1,600 more clinics have been built, and 248 out of 400 public hospitals have been revitalised and refurbished. Almost 95% of South Africans live within 5km of a health facility.

But problems still remain. One of these is the cost of medical care, which is often beyond the means of the poor. The management of health care facilities is not up to standard. There are often long queues in waiting rooms, facilities aren't properly cared for, and medicines are not always available. There is also a shortage of doctors, nurses and other health care workers. The HIV and AIDS epidemic is also taking a toll on people's health and straining health care resources.

In the next five years the ANC plans to introduce a National Health Insurance (NHI) system, to provide health care that is free at the point of service. This will be publicly funded and managed. It will also improve quality standards for both public and private sectors, and improve management skills at all levels of health system.

The upgrading of public hospitals and clinics will continue. It will also work hard to implement the national HIV and AIDS plan, which aims, among other things, to reduce the rate of new infections by 50% by 2011.

Education

The Constitution says that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education, which the state must make progressively available and accessible. Further, they have a right to receive education in the official language of their choice, where feasible.

Since 1994, progress has been made in deracialising funding for education and its prioritisation in the national budget. Expenditure on all education programmes has expanded rapidly, even if it is off a small base for programmes like early childhood development, adult basic education, and further education and training.

As a result, the adult participation rate is high. About 600,00 children attend crèches and pre-schools. The matriculation pass rate has risen from 58% in 1994 to 65% in 2007. Overcrowding in classrooms has been reduced, and the mass literacy campaign is now reaching about half a million people.

But still a lot needs to be done. The quality of teaching needs to be improved, particularly in maths and science. Many poor people still struggle to afford the cost of schooling, and particularly find it difficult to move on to higher education. Many schools are still under-resourced. There is still an imbalance in the availability of resources for schools in former white areas and those in townships. This shows itself in the general discrepancies in results.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

22 March 1907: Indians protest against the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act, which forces them to carry passbooks. The Act requires them to have their fingerprints registered and to show their passbooks to police on demand.

20 March 1960: The Pondoland revolt starts, in which many people are arrested following their rejection of tribal authorities and Transkei self-government.

21 March 1960: Police open fire on a group of protesters marching to the local police station in Sharpeville, killing 69 people and injuring 180 others, in what has come to be known as the Sharpeville Massacre. The killings led to a massive clampdown on political organisations and activists. The day is now commemorated as Human Rights Day.

As part of its efforts to make schooling free and compulsory for all children, the ANC will begin by ensuring that at least 60% of schools are no-fee schools. It will also invest resources in literacy programmes - to eradicate illiteracy by 2014 - and introduce a sustainable early childhood education system.

It will improve the quality of schooling, particularly performance in mathematics, science, technology and language development; and promote the status of teachers, ensuring the employment of adequate numbers, and improving their remuneration and training. To improve access by students from poor families to tertiary education, it will review and improve the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

Food and water

The Constitution says that everyone has a right to sufficient food and water. To achieve this, the ANC government provided access to clean water to 88% of the population by 2007, up from 62% in 1996. Programmes to achieve this have been targeted at the poor. The challenge now is to extend access to water to those still without it, especially in rural areas; to ensure that it is affordable for the poor; and to maintain an adequate supply of usable water into the future.

Given recent increases in food prices, globally and in South Africa, the ANC is now paying greater attention to the challenge of food security. It plans to introduce a 'food for all' programme to make basic foods available at affordable prices to poor households and communities. It will also expand access to food production schemes in rural and peri-urban areas, and support existing community schemes. An emergency food relief programme will be put in place in an effort to ensure that no person goes hungry.

Social security

The Constitution says everyone has the right to have access to social security, "including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance". Over the last 15 years, the ANC government has provided support to the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Today 12.5 million people receive social grants, of which eight million are children. This intervention has contributed to the reduction in overall levels of poverty.

As people continue to emerge from poverty, thanks in the main to increased employment and improved skills levels, government will need to continue to provide a social security net for the poor and vulnerable. Among the plans for the next five years, the ANC will expand the provision of the child support grant to children aged 15 to 18 in a phased manner, linked to a compulsory school attendance requirement. It will also introduce a contributory social security system to provide for guaranteed retirement, disability and survivors' benefits.

It is clear that a great deal has been done since the constitution came into effect in 1997 to progressively realise the socio-economic rights of all South Africans. At the forefront of this effort has been the ANC, working together with all sectors of society.

But clearly there is still a lot that needs to be done. As South Africans gather this Human Rights Day to celebrate everything we've achieved, we should recommit ourselves to intensify the achievement of all these rights for all South Africans.

LATEST STATEMENTS

ANC President meets with religious & traditional leaders in North West, 18 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docs/pr/2009/pr0318.html>

ANC concludes meeting with SAOU, 17 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0317c.html>

ANC North West rejects report in The Star, 17 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0317b.html>

ANC launches weekly comic series, 17 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0317a.html>

ANC welcomes ruling on Derby-Lewis parole application, 17 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0317.html>

ANC North West outraged by Sowetan report, 16 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0316a.html>

ANC will respond to objections through due process, 16 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0316.html>

Defectors free to come back home, Mantashe, 15 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0315.html>

ANC condemns Northern Cape incident, 14 March 2009

<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/pr/2009/pr0314.html>

Together we can climb the hills that still lie ahead



Among the achievements of the last 15 years, one of the starkest challenges that remain is the condition of people living in rural areas.

Great strides have been made in other areas. We have managed to usher in a new age of democracy and peace. We have reduced poverty, grown the economy, created jobs, facilitated the development of a thriving private sector, and built sustainable settlements and houses for the poor.

While these achievements are to be celebrated, much more still needs to be done.

Over the next five years the ANC will focus on creating decent work, education, health care, dealing with crime decisively and rural development. While all these are important, the last of these - rural development - requires particular attention

South Africa is still emerging from a divided past. Such a divide had been entrenched through systematic deprivation of the majority of the benefits derived from the country's abundant natural resources. A central piece of this was the dispossession of land, which would later take the form of bantustan system. The African majority was sandwiched in a mere 13% of the total land cover, while the white settlers took the remaining rich 87%..

The black majority never enjoyed security of tenure and their areas were often neglected and underdeveloped. African areas and rural African settlements have the highest backlog of both social and economic infrastructure. As a result there is a high incidence of poverty, major health problems, high unemployment and widespread malnutrition. These problems have been highlighted in the recent cholera outbreaks and other water quality related problems like typhoid and diarrhoea. These areas have not been spared other health challenges such as high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Top of the rural development agenda is the issue of access to land for agriculture, food security and economic development. History has it that agriculture has always been a springboard for development in all countries. Reform of land use, access and ownership is at the core of achieving a united, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa. The slow pace of land redistribution creates the threat of all sorts of instability.

The experiences of the past 15 years teach us that access to land alone, without adequate support, leads to the collapse of productivity of once highly productive land. In the past ten years we have witnessed how tracts of land have been taken over for non food production purposes, such as golf estates, game lodges and to expand settlements, compromising the food security situation of the country.

On the other hand, greed has led to the destruction of farmer support collectives organised in the form of cooperatives. The advent of high-tech mechanisation has led to a reduction in employment in agriculture. It has also led to environmental degradation owing to deep tillage that puts a strain on our water resources and energy. Agrarian transformation talks to these issues.

We therefore need to move immediately to speed up land and agrarian reform to allow for access to land for both economic and food production.

We should pursue mass food production programmes that are driven by government through the provision of tractors, implements and seeds. No land should be left fallow. Government should also provide technical support through advice by well-equipped extension workers and by broadening access to markets.

It should also provide access to finance through grants and microfinance through structures like the Micro-Agricultural Finance Initiative of South Africa (MAFISA) and provincial agricultural development agencies. Government should support the establishment of community or cooperative banks.

LATEST SPEECHES

Address by ANC President Jacob Zuma at the Rhema Church prayer service, 15 March 2009
<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docs/history/zuma/2009/jz0315.html>

Address by President Motlanthe at th NUMSA Job Security Conference, 14 March 2009
<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/history/motlanthe/2009/km014.html>

Response by President Motlanthe to the debate of the National House of Traditional Leaders, 12 March 2009
<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?docancdocs/history/motlanthe/2009/km012.html>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Human Rights Day commemoratio
Saturday, 21 March 2009
Langa taxi rank terminus, Cape Town
11h30

ANC President addresses rally in Limpopo
Sunday, 22 March 2009
Jane Furse Sports Ground
15h00

ANC President addresses prayer services
Tuesday, 24 March 2009
Qokololo Stadium, Edendale, Pietermaritzburg
09h00

We need to fast track the upgrade of tenure through proclamation of most rural settlements into sustainable settlements with necessary roads, water, sanitation, electricity and communication infrastructure.

Social infrastructure like health and education facilities has to be in place. Efforts should be made to resuscitate agricultural cooperatives to provide peer support and reduce cost of inputs through collective bulk buying.

The ANC understands that societal challenges are more diverse and complex in their nature. Former President Nelson Mandela said that, "after climbing a great hill, one finds that there are many more hills to climb". More hills lie ahead, but working together we can do more.

>> *Dina Pule is a member of the ANC National Executive Committee.*