

Change4ever campaign

Blueprint for a better future

Ordinary South Africans offer suggestions on what would bring about change in the country

Mitzi du Plessis

In September South Africans were issued a challenge — come up with a visionary response to the question: “If you could change one thing forever, what would it be?”

An initiative of the Southern Africa Trust, the Change4ever campaign aims to raise R1-million through online pledges and a dedicated SMS line. It will also give insight into what South Africans believe would bring about change in the country and the region. The funds generated will be used to enable the trust to find lasting solutions to the region's cycle of poverty.

The citizens of South Africa rose to the challenge. The initial responses show that South Africans care about the future of their country and fellow citizens and that they are willing to take action to build a better life for all. An analysis of the received messages shows that there are a number of pressing issues that the public would like to tackle head on.

South Africans feel strongly that government and politicians should be more transparent, less corrupt and should distribute state and donor funds wisely. To build a



Many South Africans would like to ensure that each child has access to quality education and at least one nutritious meal a day. Photograph: Lisa Skinner

stronger economy for the future, they would like bank charges and interest eliminated.

Education and job creation clearly lie close to many people's hearts as a way to eliminate poverty. South Africans are making a strong case for an improvement in the standard of education at all levels.

Free boarding schools with a crèche for children in need were mooted as a way to ensure that Aids orphans and their dependants receive food, education and a home.

Crime, corruption and greed came under a lot of scrutiny. The public would like to see an end to crime, “especially violent crimes that happen to undeserving people”. They want to reverse the perception that a person's worth is measured by how much money he or she has and not by his or her contribution to society's advancement. To change this, respondents feel, would put a stop to corruption and greed at all levels of society.

As far as essential services such as

health, justice, safety and security are concerned, South Africans would like to ensure that the status of and respect for teachers, nurses and the police is restored in the eyes of every citizen and that they are applauded for the services they provide.

South Africans would like to see a drastic improvement in the state of hospices in black communities and an end to the spread of HIV/Aids, children dying from malnutrition and the way in which the justice system continues to fail women.

For children South Africans want a world of difference. They want to ensure that each child has access to good quality education and at least one nutritious meal a day. They feel strongly that both parents should accept “the 18 years of responsibility that go with the pleasure of creating a child”.

In the fight against poverty, violence and abuse they want to eradicate all violence and abuse directed at women and children. They would like to see the country introducing a basic income grant and ensuring that all South Africans have a piece of land registered in their name.

Respondents see prejudice and misperceptions as being at the root of many of South Africa's problems and would like to eradicate all prejudice based on religion, race, sexuality or gender.

They want to wipe out the negative stigma attached to being HIV infected: “If people could view it on the same level as any other chronic illnesses more people would test regularly.” Mostly South Africans want people to take responsibility for their own lives: “Forget the notion that you are a victim and therefore entitled to handouts.”

Finally, respondents want to “put God back in to the schools. Without God there will be no morals.”

For more information on the Southern Africa Trust and its campaign visit www.change4ever.org

If you could change one thing forever, what would it be?

“I would change the way we see ourselves and our country. We so easily emphasise the negative. Have you looked around and realised what great people we are? We thrive under difficult situations, we are forgiving and innovative. I say we start celebrating who we are!”

Lira, singer

SMS “CHANGE” and your answer to 36545 or answer online

By sending an SMS, you will not only help to define what needs to change forever – in your work, family, friendships, community, country and world – but also support the many groups working for lasting solutions to poverty. More than 100 million people in southern Africa live in extreme poverty. They sometimes get help, but soon return to their life of poverty. Things don't change permanently if the root causes of poverty are not addressed. It's not enough to give temporary relief. By addressing the root causes we can create lasting solutions to overcome poverty forever. With each SMS, you donate R5 to change4ever. This not only gives you the opportunity to have your say about what you would like to change forever – but at the same time take action to create the change you want to see.

www.change4ever.org

