

## Drivers of Change

# The change we need

## Reflections on the 2010 Drivers of Change awards

**Neville Gabriel**

**W**e cannot hope for a better tomorrow and ignore the scandalous levels of poverty today.

More than 100-million people live in absolute poverty in Southern Africa.

Our efforts to eradicate poverty are too often piecemeal, conventional, sporadic and disjointed. Yet the scale of the problem requires collective, bold, innovative and determined action that goes beyond refining the inner technicalities of specific poverty reduction projects, of which there are a multitude.

We must imagine a different way of doing things and working together and act to construct it. We need systemic change if we will ever succeed in the historic task of our age to overcome poverty.

Systemic change means not just trying to do better projects and doing specific projects better, but also transforming the relationships between different role players and initiatives – within sectors and between different sectors.

It means expanding how we think about what we can do to transform our future and how we work together to do that. It means taking account in what we do of how the whole sys-

tem operates – and taking action that breaks through its limitations to create new opportunities that yield better results.

Businesses, for example, should do more to join up the many small projects that are variously supported through corporate social investment (CSI) programmes – both individually and collectively. They should also do more to optimise their role in wealth creation and pro-poor development through innovations that grow profitable markets among low-income communities and maximise efficiency gains by integrating poor communities in their value chains.

The social benefits for the future will be as lucrative as the profits that could be maximised now. Doing such inclusive business can be good business.

But there is too little of that happening in our region. That is why the panel of judges have not given the Drivers of Change award in the business category this year.

Other than doing more of the same as before, none of the entries showed the level of creativity that can propel business to break the do-good, compliance and “social investment” conceptual barriers that retard a bold new way of doing good business from emerging in our region.

We need drivers of change in business who recognise the excellent

opportunities there are for business models that target innovations to undeveloped markets and suppliers. And we need corporate social responsibility practitioners who join up different initiatives into coherent programmes that can deliver change-producing results at scale and that last.

Yet there are good signs that things are changing in other sectors. The winners of this year's Drivers of Change awards in other categories are showing that systemic change is possible.

There is a clear trend towards more strategic partnerships. And a move away from pointing fingers towards providing leadership that bridges the divides that prevent us from achieving real and lasting results in poverty reduction.

At the request of the judges, this year we introduced a new chairperson's award to recognise outstanding initiatives that speak to current challenges facing our region. The inaugural winner of this award is the Yeoville Community School in Johannesburg, for providing access to education to undocumented poor, migrant children in the face of the South African education system's hostility towards undocumented migrants.

The school goes well beyond the normal education curriculum. It teaches its children and the surround-



**Drivers of Change award winners such as the Yeoville Community School show that systemic change is possible.** Photo: Ayanda Sitole

ing community to value intercultural diversity amid widespread xenophobia. It is a driver of change by being an outstanding example of how possible it is to build a united and caring regional community in Southern Africa – something we need to learn again if regional economic integration is ever to work.

Through approaches that jolt our far too conventional ways of seeing and doing things, initiatives that ena-

ble systemic transformation rather than doing more of what has reached its limits, and strategic partnerships that join up the dots, Africa's development can be an easier task that is more attainable. That is what the Drivers of Change awards are about.

**Neville Gabriel is the executive director of the Southern Africa Trust and a member of the panel of judges for the awards**

## The worth of an achievement is not in the value of the accolades it receives,

### but in its inspiring others to exceed it.

The Southern Africa Trust congratulates the 2010 Drivers of Change Award Winners:

#### Government

Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) for being instrumental in bringing together the region's 3 economic blocs: COMESA, the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This is resulting in the 3 communities rapidly working towards trading as a single market of about 600 million people, leading to more political stability and prosperity.

#### Civil Society

Ikamva Youth, in recognition of their classic model that leverages on the power of peer to peer learning, mentoring and volunteerism, and cross sector partnerships to transform South Africa's educational landscape. The learners are drivers of change for setting a good example for other younger learners to become agents of change for their own success.

Special commendation was given to the Rural Women's Movement for using experiences of poor rural women and girls to contribute to policy making processes and secure a better life for women.

#### Individual

Jay Naidoo, for driving socio-economic development not only in South Africa but in the whole southern Africa region and beyond. He has worked closely with poor communities and always affirms that his most important insights came directly from people facing the daily challenges of poverty.

#### Chairperson's award

In recognition of the great work that organisations are doing to eradicate poverty, the Southern Africa Trust introduces a new Chairperson's award. The award is given to outstanding organisations or individuals who may not have met all the criteria for the awards or may not have been nominated, but are making noteworthy contribution to driving systemic change in the way things are done in southern Africa.

The Yeoville Community School received the award for providing access to education to undocumented poor migrant children, in the face of the South African education system's hostility towards accepting undocumented migrants into the system.

The Southern Africa Trust thanks all the organisations and individuals that submitted nominations.

Go to [www.southernafricatrust.org](http://www.southernafricatrust.org) for more details.



DRIVERS OF CHANGE



Southern Africa Trust  
Investing in the future



Mail & Guardian  
Investing in the future  
Contributing to the well-being of society