

Drivers of change

Taking charge of the future

Neville Gabriel

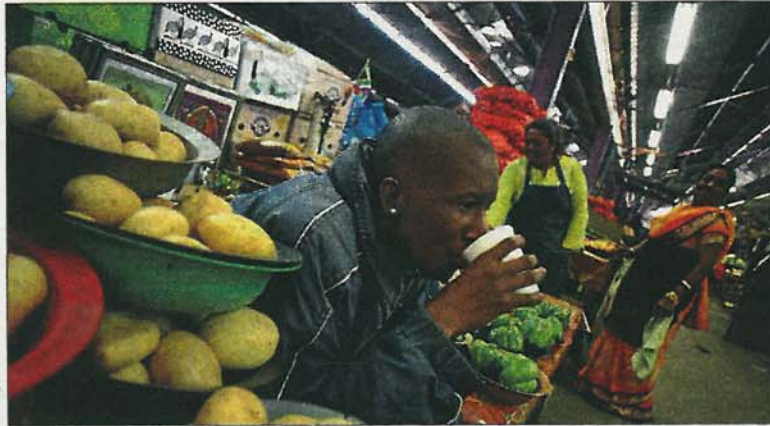
Working to achieve development and overcome poverty often seems like just a maze of jargon and frenetic management activity. How dull.

The real stuff of development is more about relationships: relationships between the rich and poor, states and citizens, men and women, older and younger, powerful and marginalised, secure and vulnerable, between the past, the present, and the future. It is about relationships across the public, private and social sectors. It is about relationships across the borders of our countries.

For too long in our part of the world we have reinforced the fault lines in those relationships rather than filling them in. That makes for bad development. It results, for example, in the alarming reality that more than half of South African young people under the age of 25 are jobless.

We need to build stronger relationships between the different parts of our society for greater cohesion and better accountability so that development works better, within a shared vision of where we want to be.

Where relationships are stronger, accountability works better. And development is more efficient and effective in driving down poverty.



Award winner: Asiye eTafuleni takes the interests of informal traders at Durban's Warwick Avenue to city planners. Photo: Rajesh Jantilal/AFP

Yet in times of upheaval and uncertainty business, government and civil society groups alike tend to retreat into self-interest rather than build relationships to co-operate with others.

For businesses the sheen of corporate social responsibility wears thin and the profit margin rules. For governments inclusive approaches give way to hard-line defences of state security and national interest.

For civil society groups, serious analysis and nose-to-the-grindstone development excellence turn to antagonism and contestation for resources.

But times of crisis offer the best opportunity to innovate. They present

optimal conditions in which to start doing things differently. We need people and organisations who drive such change, even at times of uncertainty. They show us that another way is not only possible but better; better for the poor and excluded and for all of us. That is what the Drivers of Change awards are all about.

This year we recognise individuals and groups from across the business, government and civic spheres who are leading the change to a new way of doing things, even when others are either overly hawkish or too cautious.

They have been leading the change they want to see, rather than reacting to new conditions in which they happen to find themselves. And

they show us the results that can be achieved through visionary and inclusive approaches.

The calibre of the finalists in all four Drivers of Change Award categories demonstrates an essential characteristic of innovation: rapid testing, finding traction and quickly adapting strategies to maintain focus on the intended goal of progressive development, even when it means bucking the trend.

They all demonstrate that working in partnership with others is an effective strategy for good development.

Working with city managers, town planners, researchers and informal traders, Asiye eTafuleni takes the voice of informal traders from Durban's Warwick Avenue market to the table of policy formulation and development planning for a more inclusive city. The organisation won the award in the civil society category for its remarkable model of inclusive inner-city development.

The Trust for Urban Housing Finance won the business category. It is truly doing well by doing good. Through strong partnerships, the trust is transforming inner-city living environments by opening the property market to those who actually live there. Going where commercial banks have been too cagey to go, they have turned domestic workers into successful first-time property entrepreneurs.

The speaker of Namibia's Parliament, Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab, won the award in the government category not only for his remarkable contribution to the development of Namibia, but also for presiding over the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration that gave rise to the worldwide millennium development goals and for chairing the UN reform process. These initiatives have championed inclusive approaches.

Public protector Thuli Madonsela has been working fast and hard to restore confidence in the public sphere in South Africa and to place the public interest above self-interest in governance systems. She received the award in the individual category for driving this change.

Effective development to overcome poverty is about more than complex plans with big words and a frenzy of activities. It is about actively working to change how we relate to one another and how we work together to create a new future.

Botswana President Ian Khama, our guest of honour this year, said it well at the awards dinner: "If we do not lead the change, the change will lead us to where we may not want to be."

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

The Southern Africa Trust applauds the winners of the 2011 Drivers of Change Awards!

Asiye eTafuleni, meaning "let's go to the table", collaborates with informal traders, local government officials, and town planners to creatively include the voices and interests of informal traders in urban planning and development. Through its innovative work in the Warwick Avenue market area in Durban, South Africa, Asiye eTafuleni is a driver of change towards more inclusive cities across southern Africa. Asiye eTafuleni won the award in the civil society category.

The Trust for Urban Housing, supported by Futuregrowth Asset Management, is driving change in inner city property renewal. The Trust supports emerging inner-city property entrepreneurs by financing building projects that transform inner city living spaces for the rental property market. It empowers poor people to join the property investment market in areas where banks are reluctant to invest. The Trust won the award in the business category.

Dr Theo Ben Gurirab, the Speaker of Namibia's parliament, won the award in the government category for his life-long work to create a stable and prosperous Namibia, for presiding over the adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration that resulted in the adoption of the worldwide Millennium Development Goals, and for chairing the UN reform process. In a changing world where the governance of international organisations and development strategies needs urgent transformation, Dr Gurirab has been a driver of change!

Adv Thuli Madonsela forfeited a Harvard scholarship to help draft South Africa's post-apartheid constitution. In addition, she contributed to writing a host of laws to transform South Africa's legal system. As South Africa's Public Protector, Adv Madonsela carries out her mission without fear or prejudice – bringing a new prominence to what is in the public interest and to the primacy of the public sphere. She won the award in the individual category.

Thank you for the many nominations received!



Scan with your phone to find out more or go to www.southernaficatruster.org

