

Abstract

In the fifteen years since 1994 South Africa has made remarkable strides towards political stability and economic progress from the dead end of apartheid. April 2009 saw the third peaceful, free and fair general election of the democratic era. In it, although the ANC's dominance was confirmed with a close to two-thirds majority nationally, the opposition Democratic Alliance DA won an outright majority in the Western Cape Province and has formed a regional government there, to complement its leadership of the governing coalition in the city of Cape Town. Especially for those who believe that prolonged one-party dominance threatens the decay of democratic institutions and practices, the DA's progress moves it up a gear from watchdog opposition to competitor in governance.

Despite South Africa's political and economic progress, many pressing and daunting challenges remain. None is greater than unemployment. The official unemployment rate has fallen to a still appalling 23%, but this figure excludes 'discouraged work seekers'. If these are included in an 'expanded' rate, the figure is well over 30%. Young people bear the brunt of this. In some areas 60% of those under thirty are unemployed.

The brute fact of mass unemployment impacts on all of South Africa's challenges. The bottom line is, all the country's challenges are challenges of economic growth. The key to addressing them is to unlock opportunities for enterprise and employment by improving access to markets and equipping the multitudes of people who remain excluded with the quality education to participate effectively in these markets.

Brief Profile

Ann Bernstein, founding executive director of the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE), is one of South Africa's leading development experts and policy analysts.

In 1994 she was appointed a member of the Transformation Team and then the Board of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (1994 - 2001). In 2005 she was selected as a Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC. In 2007 she joined the Board of the Brenthurst Foundation. In 2008 and 2009 she was invited to the World Economic Forum in Davos as an African faculty member. She has published extensively on business, democracy, development and policy-making in South Africa, including the books *Migration and Refugee Policies* (with M. Weiner, 1999), *Business and Democracy: Cohabitation or Contradiction?* (with P.L. Berger, 1998), and *Policy Making in A New Democracy: South Africa's Challenges for the 21st century* (1999).

In its fourteen years of existence the CDE has become a powerful national resource. An independent think tank specializing in questions of growth and development, the organization has achieved national impact. It is regarded by many, including the London Financial Times, as South Africa's "most respected policy centre for social and economic

development.” CDE has a unique niche in the country’s policy debates, able to attract the most senior officials, politicians, experts and business executives to its robust workshops and policy forums. CDE’s track record is one of excellence in the development of policy ideas, credible local and international research to back these up, effective strategies to provoke public debate and influence in government.

CDE has a special focus on the role of business and its contribution to development. The organisations most recent publications include: *Accelerating Growth in tough times: A CDE and Business Leadership South Africa workshop on inclusive growth and job creation* (2009), *Land Reform in South Africa: Getting back on track* (2008); and *Doubling for Growth: Addressing the maths and science challenge in South Africa’s schools* (2007).