

Featured SET policy:

Transforming society and uniting the country (Chapter 15, NDP)

In a series of articles, the NSTF is unpacking the National Development Plan (NDP). The focus is on understanding it from a science, engineering, technology (SET) perspective. The NDP is seen as a blueprint/guiding document for South Africa. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030.

- The complete document – ‘[National Development Plan – vision for 2030](#)’
- The executive summary – ‘[National Development Plan 2030, Our future – make it work, executive summary](#)’.

<p>NDP chapter: Overview</p> <p>This considers the context and background of the NDP. See 1 – Understanding the context of the National Development Plan (NDP). It also sets the stage for understanding what makes a developmental state. See 2 – The National Development Plan and the developmental state. There is also a summary of the plan and key targets and actions.</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 1: Key drivers of change</p> <p>The synopsis is called 3 – Science and technology as drivers of development</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 2: Demographic trends</p> <p>The synopsis is called 4 – Demographic trends PLUS the NDP’s 5th anniversary</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 3: Economy and employment</p> <p>The synopsis is called 5 – National system of innovation and R&D critical for growing the economy</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 4: Economic infrastructure</p> <p>The synopsis is called 6 – Developing a strong network of economic infrastructure – transport, energy, water resources, and ICT</p>	<p>An economy that will create more jobs </p>
<p>NDP chapter 5: Transition to a low carbon economy</p> <p>The synopsis is called 7 – Transitioning SA to a low carbon economy that responds to climate change</p>	<p>Transition to a low-carbon economy </p>
<p>NDP chapter 6: Inclusive rural economy</p> <p>The synopsis is called Section 8 of the NSTF series – An inclusive rural economy</p>	<p>An inclusive and integrated rural economy </p>
<p>NDP chapter 7: Positioning South Africa in the world</p> <p>The synopsis is called Section 9 of the NSTF series – Positioning South Africa in the world (Chapter 7, NDP)</p>	
<p>NDP chapter 8: Transforming human settlements</p> <p>The synopsis is called Section 10 of the NSTF series – Transforming human settlements (Chapter 8, NDP)</p>	<p>Reversing the spatial effects of apartheid </p>
<p>NDP chapter 9: Improving education, innovation and training</p>	<p>Improving the quality of education, training and innovation </p>
<p>NDP chapter 10: Promoting health</p>	<p>Quality healthcare for all </p>
<p>NDP chapter 11: Social protection</p>	<p>Social protection </p>

NDP chapter 12: Building safer communities	Building safer communities	
NDP chapter 13: Building a capable state	Reforming the public service	
NDP chapter 14: Fighting corruption	Fighting corruption	
NDP chapter 15: Transforming society and uniting the country	Transforming society and uniting the country	

Chapter 15, National Development Plan – Transforming society and uniting the country

This chapter draws together what is needed to transform South African society to be prosperous, non-sexist, non-racial and democratic. These are key values in South Africa’s Constitution. The intention is to build “a virtuous cycle of confidence and trust, a growing economy and broadening of opportunities” through nation building. According to the National Development Plan (NDP), nation building and transformation “deals with implementing redress, promoting economic and social inclusion, social cohesion, active citizenry and broad-based leadership and, the crafting of a social compact”.

The challenges

The NDP states that “South African society remains divided.” This is across all fronts, such as, education, religion, geography, and an unequal economy. Privilege is framed through race, class, space, and gender – and this impacts on access to and quality of services and opportunities.

This is where human and social capital need to be understood. “High levels of human capital allow people to work and families to accumulate assets. These earnings then enable families to invest in better quality education. This creates a cycle where richer people are able to increase productivity and earnings, at a much faster pace than the poor.” So even if the law has changed, strong historical inequities continue to exist.

Unemployment is high, particularly among black youth and women. Beyond historical inequities, the economy hasn’t generated enough new opportunities through employment or entrepreneurship. There is also gender bias against women, particularly in education and jobs. Further discrimination is seen around sexuality and disabilities.

Geography (where you live) has a significant impact on quality of life and economic opportunities. While rural communities may have improved public services, there still isn’t a lot of infrastructure nor quality education and healthcare. Many rural communities are far from dynamic economic activity. Again, this means missed opportunities and an ongoing cycle of poverty. Urban spatial patterns haven’t been reversed since apartheid. Consequently, the poor often live far from work without effective public transport. Limited mobility means limited work prospects.

The above outlines some of the existing systemic racism that needs to be changed to stop it reproducing and reinforcing. This is not just about the government or state making changes. As the NDP notes “...all South Africans have roles as responsible and active citizens to be agents of their own development”.

What is Vision 2030?

The NDP offers a vision of a society where commonalities take priority over differences. South Africans’ “lived experiences will progressively undermine and cut across the divisions of race, gender, space and class. The nation will be more accepting of peoples’ multiple identities.” This is an

inclusive society and economy with increased interaction across social and racial groups. It is a society with strong leadership and active and responsible citizens that focus on building capabilities and redressing past wrongs.

Embedding values

Seeding society with the values in the Constitution is seen as essential. A variety of ways to do so are suggested:

- Supporting all forms of families as they play a critical role in “shaping independent, productive and responsible people”
- Embedding the values in schools (including the curricula)
- Supporting independent media as this is critical for democracy, holding government to account, and building informed citizens

Addressing disparities

The NDP notes: “Equal opportunity is about reducing the impact of factors such as gender, ethnicity, place of birth and parental income and wealth and family background on people’s life chances.

Success in life should depend on people’s choices, effort and talents, not their circumstances at birth.”

The economy has not grown quickly enough nor has it transformed (especially regarding economic inclusion). Apartheid systematically restricted opportunities for the majority of South Africans. This included meaningful economic participation including self-employment, accumulation of assets, and access to skills and to quality education. South Africa’s current economic structure continues this pattern of exclusion. Economic growth trends contribute to rising wage inequality and inequality in society. Examples include the decline of sectors that employ low-skilled people, such as agriculture and mining.

The NDP says that Government needs to “provide the catalyst” for the virtuous cycle “of improving education, rising confidence, greater investment, increasing employment and incomes and ultimately leading to falling levels of inequality”.

The Constitution specifically calls for righting the wrongs of the past. Part of economic transformation is Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). This means institutionalised empowerment of the previously disadvantaged. This looks at transforming ownership of the economy through:

- Managing, owning and controlling business and production
- Creating more opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Preferential procurement
- Companies focusing on skills development and developing human potential
- Equitable representation on all levels ie employment equity and workplace opportunity

Land reform is also highlighted. “The Constitution protects property rights and prevents confiscation of property without due compensation, but it also provides a legal, political and moral basis for redress measures such as land reform.” There are three principles: deracialising the rural economy; equitable land allocation and use, and sustained production for food security.

The NDP notes that **only “by reducing poverty and inequality through broadening opportunity for all can the country achieve transformation”.**

Promoting social cohesion

“The key to the country’s unity is embracing the reality that all South Africans have many identities, and yet are South African.” The aim is to promote social cohesion – working together and uniting around a vision of a better South Africa. This is with the understanding that “dealing with the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality is critical to building social cohesion”. The NDP includes the importance of individuals with transnational identities and specifically speaks out against xenophobia.

“The government needs citizens to speak out when things are going wrong.” Active citizenry and leadership are also essential for social cohesion. This includes: participatory governance, citizen participation, and inspirational leadership at all levels of society. The focus is on honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.