

THE CORRECT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA

BY

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The issue of **Communal Land Rights** is the most critical issue upon which depends the development potential for the entire country of South Africa. This is the most critical knob we must touch and turn in fashioning the correct development strategy for the country –that is, in fashioning the correct development strategy for the elimination of poverty, the health crisis, unemployment, and for spurring forward the values and principles of African civilization.

The KwaZulu/Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs has told us that more than half of all arable land in the

Province, 5.4 million hectares, is in Communal Land areas, under the sovereignty of Traditional Leaders. **Note that this is the source of the heavy statistics on poverty, diseases, social misery, and underdevelopment in KwaZulu/Natal.** It must be noted that “SIYAVUNA”, the development project in rural areas which gives the Department great pride, does not have as its target this heaviest and largest site of poverty, hunger, and misery in African rural areas of the Province!

Communal Land, and rural areas, loom very large in the physical and human configuration and portrait of South Africa. **The future of our country depends directly on what we do, and what we fail to do, on Communal Lands and rural areas.** Do not be fooled by the cities and towns in which you live and work: South Africa is overwhelmingly a rural society.

Here are the figures released in 1997 by Statistics South Africa:

Urban

Non-Urban

KwaZulu/Natal	43.5%	56.5%
Eastern Cape	37.3%	62.7%
Mpumalanga	37.3%	62.7%
North West	34.8%	65.2%
Limpopo	11.9%	88.1%
Gauteng	96.4%	3.6%
Western Cape	89.9%	10.1%
Northern Cape	71.7%	28.3%
Free State	69.6%	30.4%

It is clear from these figures that the overwhelming majority of the population of the country, Africans, is still largely rural, even overwhelmingly rural –**and these millions of African people live their lives within Communal Lands.**

The fundamental economic problem of our country is contained in the statement made in November 2000, by the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Ms. Lindiwe Hendricks: “Our recent survey finds that one out of two people in rural SA do not have food to consume in a day.” (Business Day, 21 November 2000, p. 2)

The Development Bank of South Africa, in a survey of anti-poverty strategies in the country, concluded that the Government Development Strategy has failed to address this problem. Rural development strategies, so far, are heavily weighted in favour of assisting small Black farmers intent on becoming successful in Commercial Agriculture. **The considerable moneys and attention being given to small Black farmers do not reach the millions of people in Communal Lands: these millions of people are so poor that they do not qualify to be considered as small commercial farmers! They live a hand-to-mouth existence, i. e., they are in self-subsistence agriculture.**

The extreme poverty in Communal Lands is forcing millions of people to move to our cities and towns. In other words, poverty and social misery are migrating from Communal Land areas to cities and towns! Our cities and towns do not have the infrastructure sufficient and powerful enough to bear this heavy weight. Hence, the Housing crisis, the Health and Hospital crisis, the

unemployment crisis, the School crisis, the Government Budget crisis, and the alarming crime statistics, and social-sexual pathologies in our communities.

The economists advising our leaders have ignored a basic principle of elementary economics. A market economy needs commodities and buyers of commodities. There must be consumer demand for commodities, and buying power possessed by those demanding the commodities.

An axiom of US economics is that the consumer demand and buying power of the majority members of US society is the driving engine of the US economy. The World Bank and IMF long ago said that the weakness of the South African economy is the smallness of its domestic market. Why is it small? There are historical reasons for that: racism, which only developed a small sector of the population of the country –the White Community; job reservation; migrant labour system; colonialism; the impact of capitalism and imperialism on colonized and semi-colonial societies. This resulted in the development of Whites (tiny section of society), on one hand, and the underdevelopment of the overwhelming majority of society, the African population. This brought about the economic ruin of African rural

communities. **This is the nub of the problem of the capitalist economy in Africa, and the problem in our economy and society; the overwhelming majority of the population are the poor, starving African people in underdeveloped rural areas.** This majority section of society **is not an able participant in the country's market economy.** This is what constitutes the **smallness of the domestic market**, which the World Bank and IMF call the weakness of our economy.

THE FAILURE OF DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNAL LAND AREAS, AND THE DETERIORATION AND DEGRADATION OF HUMAN LIVING CONDITIONS IN COMMUNAL LANDS, IS NOW THE HEAVY DRAG THAT IS PULLING DOWN THE ECONOMY OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY; THAT IS DESTROYING WHATEVER WAS SANE AND HEALTHY AND ACCEPTABLE AND ADMIRABLE IN FAMILY LIFE, IN COMMUNITY LIFE, AND IN HUMAN RELATIONS IN THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE.

There is dirty, poisonous water running virtually all over our society; and the tap from which that water comes is

impoverishment and degradation of life in Communal Land areas.

I am saying to our elites and Government: CLOSE THAT TAP! TURN THAT POISONOUS AND DIRTY WATER OFF! Closing that tap, turning that dirty and poisonous water off means designing and implementing correct development policies for Communal Land areas.

Searching for small Black commercial farmers, and giving them generous Government subsidies and assistance, **does not eliminate poverty, hunger, diseases, unemployment and hopelessness in Communal Land areas. These millions of people are so poor that they do not qualify for these generous Government subsidies and assistance.**

Under these conditions, the threads holding together family relations break in many areas; the threads of morality tend to break; hopelessness and hustling tendency overwhelm many people.

Do you not see what has happened to our children and youth? To our schools? To the safety of our streets and homes? Do you not see the souring teenage pregnancy rate? The social and sexual pathology in our midst?

Let us turn to the millions of people in Communal Lands. **Only communal development strategies will succeed in developing Communal Land areas, beginning, first and foremost, with FOOD PRODUCTION.**

Our strategy should be the following:

- Our first focus should be the households in every village of Communal Lands, who cannot produce enough food to eat each day. These households are the majority in every village; hence the food crisis in rural areas. Our program of action, in this respect, should be to put in place a process for increasing the capacity of every household in the village to produce enough food to meet their basic

needs. We shall mobilize the resources and skills needed for this part of the project, and put in place an implementation plan and program.

- We should also start a campaign, and educational project, to encourage **urban farming**. We can learn a lot about urban farming from the experience of Cuba.

A start can be made, in most cases, right where we are, even before we solve the “land question”. The land on which most rural Africans stay, and depend for survival, is non-productive land. A national, loud public campaign, a loud propaganda campaign, needs to be started, on Radio, on Television, in newspapers, in schools, in Taxis, in Billboards, in sports fields, about this new economic policy which should involve and touch almost all the people.

This issue and cause should receive the high profile attention which liberation movements wanted to win for the liberation struggle. Our

leaders must champion this campaign, travel around rural areas, and give top priority to this programme and policy.

- The second focus shall be on those households with already developed capacity to enter the field of commercial agriculture. These are already catered for in the on-going programs of the Department of Agriculture, DBSA, etc. We shall enter into partnership with such developers.
- Addressing the problem of food security also means addressing the problem of malnutrition and diseases. **The basis of good health is good nutrition.** Increasing the capacity of every household for the production of food for daily consumption is an easily measurable and identifiable output, with clear timelines (harvest time).
- We shall also put in place a program of repairing the damages on the bodies and appearances of rural people, resulting from malnutrition. In other words, while waiting for a good harvest, we shall supply vitamin-mineral supplements, and educate the members of each village on how to take these supplements, and on the crucial importance of these supplements. This plan of action shall soon bear

fruit in changes in the eyes, faces, skin and bodies of the poor: this shall have immense effects on the health of the people. This plan of action shall also penetrate into the schools.

- The outcome here is not only the repairs on the bodies of masses of poor people in rural areas, but also a great financial saving for the government, as the health of our people improves, resulting in **vast reduction of pressure on our health facilities –savings on monies to be paid for medicine, for hospital beds, linen, doctors' and nurses' services, etc.**

Our development strategy is comprehensive and multi-dimensional.

However, as we solve the food crisis we shall put in place processes for the all-round development of communities in the various spheres of health, education, road construction, housing, science and technology, arts and culture, all in harmony with the cultural traditions of the people, and in harmony with the programs already designed and being implemented by various arms of government and civil society.

- Another policy activity shall be to increase the capacity, and to boost the imagination of those individuals, households, groups, or villages, or companies, that want to develop rural industries or agribusiness. Another policy activity should be aimed at developing the infrastructure of transportation; boosting the imagination of rural people in designing and constructing culture-friendly and appropriate housing (not duplicating township houses in African rural areas); developing proper health care facilities, and boosting and empowering the imagination of rural people in fostering health care; developing the infrastructure for education, and mobilizing local cultures to facilitate education in rural areas, not just the education of the young, but also the education of adults; supporting and empowering the development and production of the arts; and research and development of traditional African crops, as well as of African traditional medicine . We are talking here about the totality of rural development.

I emphasize: the starting point in this regeneration, transformation, and development of our economy and society is the focus on COMMUNAL LANDS.

The important point is that this shall have an enormous, positive psychological effect on society as a whole; it shall give rise to hopeful activity within the country-at-large. It shall inject hope, inspiration, and purpose, into the minds and spirit of the masses of society members in our country, and shall create a sense of purpose to millions of people in society.

Focus on rural people, and on rural areas, benefits the urban economy, simply because the monies that go into the pockets of rural people are used by rural people to buy goods and services produced in urban areas. Therefore, such developments in rural areas, among rural people, become stimulants to the urban economy, and add dynamism to the entire economy. This contributes towards

increasing the purchasing, or buying power, or consumer demand, of the masses of African people.

Developing the 60 to 70 percent of our population currently in rural and semi-rural areas **means, in effect, creating a wider and bigger market for goods and services than currently exist.**

This shall have enormous spin-off effects in the entire economy, both nationally and internationally. **It is the development of the buying power of the masses of African people, and the creation of a bigger and wider market than currently exist, which shall stimulate the development and growth of the entire economy of the nation; it is the development of the buying power of the millions of African people, A which shall then become an attraction for foreign investment.**

“TO THE COUNTRYSIDE!” should be the slogan of the entire country.

We need to plan and schedule visits by urban people to the rural areas, to see for themselves the poverty and debilitating underdevelopment of rural people. This is a necessary awakening, education, and moral empowerment of urban people, especially of our legislators, civil servants, and government leaders; and also of our urban youth, trade unions members, and ordinary urbanites –above all Whites, Indians, and Coloureds and Africans living in cities.

We cannot address the fundamental problems in front of us without a comprehensive Cultural Revolution in the country.

The most difficult challenge to Whites, Indians, and Coloureds, **and to educated Africans**, is to change their mind-set, which is largely Western, and to be willing to go to ordinary African people in rural and semi-rural areas, to learn from these ordinary African people the principles and patterns of African civilization.

For Whites, Indians, Coloureds, and African youth in Model C schools, the first challenge is to learn African languages. This can only be done genuinely from the inside of African communities. Therefore, Whites, Indians, Coloureds, and Urban Africans must get inside the communities in Communal Lands. The manner in which this “getting inside the African rural community” should be done can be put on the agenda for discussion; undoubtedly, many good ideas and suggestions shall emerge.

During holiday seasons, hundreds of thousands of Chinese youth and professionals go to the Western region of China, the most underdeveloped but richly endowed region, to do constructive development work in the communities. We should also organize hundreds of thousands of urban people, youth, religious groups, of all races and ethnic groups, to go to communities in Communal Land areas, to do constructive, development work.

Everyone shall become transformed by this experience; this shall be the re-education of the entire nation, from which shall result true reconciliation between different races, between urban people and rural people, and between youth and adults and the aged.

This should be accompanied by fruitful, vigorous discussions involving urban people and rural people, involving African, White, Indian, and Coloured people.

From this experience shall also emerge new conceptualizations of democracy, brotherhood and sisterhood and UBUNTU.

**THIS IS THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US, IF WE WANT TO
MOVE THIS COUNTRY FORWARD.**

African civilization was born and developed in the Village Communes. We can regenerate and develop our economy, society, morality, intellectual and spiritual life, and all our human relations, through focusing on the Communes in the Communal Land areas of our society.