

and finds that the poor have adopted a patient attitude in

regard to the RDP.

THERE is no cynicism on the ground about the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). People in the townships of the Western Cape are upbeat about delivery of improvements to their lives.

Mzwakhe Zwana, 34, is confident that the new government will fulfil at least some of its promises and says that change is "already noticeable". "There are people who come out here and give us soup and bread when the weather is very cold. They tell us that the government is looking to our problems."

Unemployed and homeless, Zwana hopes the RDP will give him a job so that he can return to his family in Site C, Khayelitsha. He left his wife and two children three years ago after losing his job. Realising he could no longer support them, he "sneaked away".

He now survives by begging from motorists stopping at traffic lights in Lansdowne Road. Sometimes he scavenges at the local dumpsites. "Only God knows how I manage to make it through the day," he says.

Domestic worker and single mother Elizabeth Dube, 48, who lives in Mbekweni, Paarl, with her three children and two of her sister's, hopes the RDP will help domestic workers get better pay. Dube says her employer has already started showing concern for her well-being and has placed her in insurance schemes.

"If only the RDP can ensure that such

'Looking to our problems'

arrangements are extended to all domestic workers!"

Xolile Ndinisa, 25, of Crossroads, expects the RDP to alleviate the desperate unemployment in the townships. Studying community development at the University of the Western Cape, Ndinisa says the companies that are going to build roads and houses will consult and employ local labour. In that way people will be actively involved in the RDP.

Ndinisa is concerned that the RDP has not been thoroughly explained to the people but adds: "Through television and radio they know it's something that is going to meet their problems. Workshops can quickly solve this difficulty."

The slow pace of implementation of the RDP in the region is what concerns Xakabantu Jongaphi, 36, a former shop steward of the Nyanga administration office

branch of the South African Municipal Workers' Union. However, he attributes this to the collapse of local government structures.

"The abandonment of local government structures by former councillors left an empty space. Things will go back to normality probably after the coming local government elections," he says.

"Ikapa Town Council moved the local administration office – which used to be at Nyanga – away from the people it is supposed to serve. Participation of communities in development will ensure such things do not happen in future without consultation. We will make sure the council is administered by people who understand our problems."

A house is what 30-year-old Ntombekhaya Nomvete of Guguletu wants from the RDP.

Journalist Mark Jansen, 26, wants the RDP to address the prejudices created by years of apartheid rule, specifically by addressing imbalances between township and white schools. He thinks black teachers should be encouraged to apply for posts in white areas.

"A common practice is that blacks are employed in these schools to teach Xhosa. They should be empowered to teach other challenging subjects such as physics, biology and mathematics. Some of them even qualify to be principals. These are some of the problems that should be addressed by local governments." ■

In search of Mr Verligte

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the organisation's armed wing Apla. Hugely criticised for what was construed in a variety of quarters as an action that threatened the gains of the negotiation process, Kriel remains adamant that he did what he had to do.

The result was a noticeable drop in terror attacks and a PAC-initiated meeting in Harare. "I didn't mince my words," he says of the meeting. "They accepted that I was going to give them more, unless they came to an agreement."

This is the kind of tough talk that was familiar as the Kriel style. But he has no nostalgia for the past. "That part of my career is past. I never attend reunions."

However, he defends the security forces, says 99 percent are good, honourable people,

and denies all knowledge of hit squads, assassinations and mayhem in the ranks. He is also "extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to be minister of law and order" and "thoroughly enjoyed it".

So, who is this man called Hernus Kriel who demonstrates the political ability to wield carrot and stick with equal vigour; who can stare down his foes without the flicker of an eyelid but enjoys nothing more than to share an evening meal of traditional farmer's tripe and rice with friends? Who is the man that spearheaded security force clashes with civil society but now declares that the notion of justice is the guiding principle according to which he lives his life?

It had to be asked: "Mr Kriel, have you

changed, or do you think you have been misunderstood all these years?"

He doesn't laugh, agrees he has changed, says he sees himself as something of an agent of change. He traces the shifts in the National Party back to the days of John Vorster when, he says, the first cracks started appearing in the apartheid edifice. Younger members of the party, including himself, "played a role in changing the party from within, had an influence on the thinking of the party over the years".

If they had known then what we all know now – that the result would be an apartheid-free South Africa led by Mandela – would they have persisted?

He hesitates only for a moment. "I think we wanted change because that is also a development process in your own thinking. Once you start change, then you develop with the change that is taking place. And eventually you will come to the conclusion that there is no other alternative." ■