

The Reconstruction and Development Programme

Women's only hope

The ANC, SACP, Cosatu and other progressive political organisations have come up with a plan called the Reconstruction and Development Programme. *Susan Shabangu*, ANC candidate for the new government and gender co-ordinator of the Transport and General Workers Union, argues it is the only hope for women in this country



The ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme says all children under the age of six should have free health care

Alice Radebe has to wake up at 5 am every morning to fetch water from the nearest pond. She has to walk a long distance carrying a heavy bucket on her head. It is worse in winter when it is still dark and very cold. And to wash with cold water is a big problem, especially for the little children.

This is only one of the problems affecting women every day of their lives. Women are affected more than anyone else by unemployment, homelessness and not having electricity,

proper toilets and running water. As women, we live in fear of violence and rape, every single day — not only in the streets but also in our homes.

As a woman worker, I know the hardships women face and I say — we have had enough. The new government must make sure that women in South Africa are treated with respect and as equal citizens.

African National Congress (ANC) president Nelson Mandela knows the problems affecting women. The ANC, together with the Congress of

South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and other progressive organisations, has come up with a plan called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). In drawing up this programme, these organisations looked at our problems very seriously.

Many proposals which were put forward by women's organisations have been included in the RDP. Throughout the programme, women's issues are highlighted as a priority.

Photo: Cedric Munn

The RDP has plans aimed at building the economy and providing jobs, homes, electricity, water, affordable health care, education and laws that do not discriminate against women. It is the only hope for women to get a better life in the new South Africa.

JOBS

The RDP aims to create between 300 000 to 500 000 jobs a year through public works programmes. These programmes will build houses, provide electricity, water and sanitation and build schools and creches, playgrounds and roads.

These are basic needs which the new government will have to meet.

The people who work in the public works programmes will also be given training so that they have skills to find other employment when the projects are completed. Women will be given preference in the public works programme, not only in employment but also in meeting specific needs. For example, the RDP will see providing clean water and electricity as an urgent matter, so that women like Alice Radebe do not have to walk miles to fetch water.

The RDP proposes to build one million new houses within the next five years and electrify two-and-a-half million new homes. Water and sanitation will be provided to more and more people as the years go by. These programmes will create jobs and, at the same time, meet the basic needs of the people.

Jobs will also be created



Phyllis - Cedric Nunn

The RDP says clinics and hospitals should be built close to where people live so they don't have to travel too far

through other programmes aimed at building the economy. Affirmative action is one way the ANC will ensure that women are promoted and developed to take on key positions. The ANC has already set an example by electing many women as candidates for the new government.

It is not enough to say women must have equal opportunities when we know that mothers are tied up looking after children. The programme therefore looks at ways of providing affordable childcare facilities so that women can take up challenging jobs. It also supports the rights of women to have an abortion early in their pregnancy if they choose to.

HEALTH

Because health care is very expensive and out of reach of many people, the RDP looks at building clinics and hospitals

in the areas where people live so that they do not have to travel long distances. Health care will be free for all children under the age of six and all children will be vaccinated against measles within the next three years.

EDUCATION

Our education system today does not care much about girls and women. The school system trains girls to be secretaries, nurses or teachers — if they are lucky. Careers like medicine, law, engineering and management are reserved for boys. The RDP will encourage girls to take up subjects like maths and science.

When families cannot afford to educate all their children, it is always the girls who are made to leave school so that their brothers can have an education. That will not be a problem if the RDP is set in motion because it will provide 10



Photo: Elmwood Jiyane



Photo: Andrew Tshabangu

Above: Education under the National Party government suffered due to a lack of facilities. Under an ANC government, all children will have 10 years of free schooling
Left: Affordable childcare will be provided so that women can follow their careers

Every day, our courts let rapists go scott free or give them light sentences. Lawyers and police often make women feel that they are responsible for rape and battery. The law dealing with rape and battery cases must be more sympathetic to women and give stronger sentences to rapists and men who beat up women.

Daily, women are raped and beaten up by their husbands or partners. The police and law officers often see this as a domestic matter which must be sorted out in the home. The ANC wants this changed. Women will be educated about their rights under the law so that they can take the culprits to court.

The RDP is the only programme which aims to meet the needs of all the people and gives special attention to women. It is therefore important that, as women who want change, we become involved in discussions on the RDP and how to implement the changes. ✪

years of free schooling for all children.

LAWS

We know that there are many laws and customs which discriminate against us as women. For example, laws which allow

men to inherit the family's wealth, tax laws which make married women pay more than men, traditional laws which allow men to have more than one wife and laws which discriminate against single mothers. The RDP argues that these laws must be scrapped.