



CONCLUSION

South Africa's democracy was built on the back of one of the most powerful examples of civic activism in modern history. The Constitution, which concretises South Africa's democratic state, confirms citizenship as a status associated with holding rights. The National Development Plan echoes this notion and adds the notion of citizenship as an active process by including active citizenship as one of the three cogs in the wheel of development. The NDP clearly articulates that the failure of the public, civic and market sectors to work together towards long term development objectives will derail the implementation of the plan for South Africa.

DUE TO the complexity of South Africa's history and current challenges in government, the vertical relationship between citizens/civic actors and the state is anything but simple. Similarly, horizontal relationships between different political and geographic communities are complex and infused with power dynamics. Active citizenship as a multi-dimensional notion needs to find meaningful expression in the relationship between civic actors on the one hand, and between civic actors and the state on the other hand.

The public and social sectors are jointly responsible for nurturing an enabling environment which allows for social cohesion. This publication makes a strong argument for local government structures to prioritise inclusivity in the development planning process by making sincere community engagement an inherent part of their operations. At the same time, civil society should support communities and marginalised social groups to allow for constructive engagement among civic actors and with the state. In addition to civic education, dialogue is an important methodology to enable listening, engaging, learning and collective visioning. A context that allows for constructive deliberations will better inform the development process and garner a greater level of trust between community and government. This will also hold therapeutic value for South African communities seeking to come to terms with the deep hurt of historical neglect and injustice.

With this publication, the GGLN seeks to make a meaningful contribution to understanding, animating and sustaining active citizenship. The key learnings offered here articulate that active citizenship does not happen in a vacuum nor does it constitute a simple definition. The context provides the canvass against which agency and identity is formed, claims are made and citizenship is assessed. Inequality, poverty and unemployment largely define this context, which calls for a radical political vision of participation in development to ensure transformative outcomes are realised. The absence of such a vision and of strong political will to engage citizens and civic actors in the development process will lead to counterproductive outcomes. Transforming political culture and fostering a culture of shared ownership among civic and public actors warrants a political theory of change which acknowledge the voice of (extra-) ordinary citizens in development.

Active citizenship matters; the wheels of development cannot turn unless each cog is lubricated and works in tandem with the other cogs.