



Being Poor

A STUDY OF THE BASIC NEEDS
AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF
POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION IN
VOSLOORUS

Working Paper No 5





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List of Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Framework
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
ASGISA	Accelerated and Share Growth Initiative for South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
BNB	Basic Needs Basket
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IES	Income Expenditure Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
CBO	Community Based Organizations
SPU	Self Protection Unit
SDU	Self Defence Unit
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
SPII	Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute

Terms and Definitions¹

<p>POVERTY</p>	<p>Poverty means different things to different people. In popular discourse, poverty is a 'portmanteau' in that the word captures a range of meanings. One important thread in poverty discourse is the notion of material lack, especially the lack of resources necessary for survival. At their crudest, poverty studies and definitions have resorted to identifying what goods a human being would require to prevent them from physical extinction. However such parochial definitions of poverty fail to take into account other important aspects of poverty such as agency and dignity: people surviving poverty remain poor in so far as being in poverty erodes their self-respect and human dignity, or if they are not able to fulfil their minimal social obligations in society. Another important aspect is that of subjective experience: people are ordinarily considered poor if they experience forms of lack that lead to suffering.</p> <p>All the above aspects of poverty are present to various degrees in more technical conceptualisations of poverty. As has been considered, the study of poverty has many shades of meanings and is therefore, by implication, multi-disciplinary. It is not the exclusive domain of any single science, including economics. Poverty can be construed in a narrow or broad sense. In the narrowest sense it means lack of income. While in the broadest sense poverty can be seen as multidimensional, encompassing other issues such as housing, health, education and access to services. It furthermore encompasses avenues to accessing resources, and what is referred to as 'social capital', and access to social power relations.</p> <p>Poverty can be construed in a minimalist or more expansive way: the most minimalist way is to consider people who are poor as being those who are unable to survive even in the short term, namely, people who are utterly without the means of survival. A more expansive understanding of poverty is that people are poor if they are unable to participate in society as full citizens. As will be explored further in Chapters Five and Six, there are a number of ways of conceptualising and defining poverty. The definition of poverty has been expanded over recent years from representing a state of bare survival to embracing access to resources that would enable a person to participate fully in their broader society.</p>
<p>DEPRIVATION</p>	<p>Deprivation refers to the effects of poverty on a person's life. 'Multiple deprivation' is often used interchangeably with 'multidimensional poverty' and the term 'deprivation' is popular with some commentators as it is not 'contaminated' with notions of minimal subsistence which is sometimes associated with the word 'poverty'. Deprivation also takes into account how being poor limits what a person "can and cannot do" both in terms of immediate and future actions. This definition of deprivation can be compared to an understanding of</p>

¹ Many of these definitions are taken from Chapter 2 of "The Measurement of Poverty in South Africa Project: Key Issues", SPII, 2007

	<p>poverty reflecting what poor people “have or do not have” (Alcock, 2006). Deprivation is therefore usually assessed using indicators that directly measure different types of deprivation rather than solely measuring lack of income. In South Africa, quite often, various scholars have talked about “lived poverty” (Mattes et al., 2003). This is a much more direct way of measuring what it <i>means</i> to be poor. Indicators of deprivation usually include lack of access to key services such as electricity, water and sanitation, or lacking decent housing.</p>
<p>INEQUALITY</p>	<p>Inequality has two equally important meanings. In a sociological sense, inequality is a characteristic of social power relations. Inequality is said to be present if membership of different social groups is linked to highly differential power relations. In this sense, inequality is closely linked to the notion of social exclusion in that unequal power relations may be linked to differential access to political or socio-economic rights. Inequality here also is linked to the existence of deeply institutionalised social hierarchies, as between ‘masters’ and ‘servants’ in slave and post-slave societies, or in societies where class identity and race are closely linked. Inequality in this sense cannot be directly measured because it is a feature of relations. It is however possible to develop indirect indicators that measure the impact of unequal social power relations.</p> <p>In a much narrower quantitative and economic sense, inequality can refer to an imbalance in the distribution of particular resources, such as income, in a specific population. In a well-resourced country, the existence of poverty can be said to be a manifestation of inequality. The Gini coefficient is a measure of distributional inequality in a population. Other ways of measuring inequality include mean log deviation and the Theil Indices. These last two measures are both general and often random class inequality measures (Hoogeveen and Ozler, 2006, 72). It is important to track inequality on a very regular basis as inequality measures provide a disaggregation of poverty dynamics.</p> <p>Policies that are adopted to reduce inequality must contain some element of redistribution of resources from the wealthier to the poorer members of that society (Alcock, 2006). A progressive income tax system that taxes wealthier people at a higher tax rate than poorer people is one such measure that most countries adopt. Development Economists in the last century were divided on whether inequality posed a positive stimulus to economic growth and development, with one view being that a certain amount of inequality would stimulate competition with a positive impact on levels of productivity. The World Bank’s 2006 World Development Report however articulates a concern that very high levels of inequality can and do retard rates of economic development².</p>
<p>POVERTY RELIEF</p>	<p>Poverty relief refers to policies and interventions that seek to give short term assistance to people who are living in poverty, and are usually linked to some external shock that pushes people into a more severe state of vulnerability than before. It is accordingly often seen as “emergency relief”. Examples of these programmes include the Department of Social</p>

² While economic growth has the potential to beneficially impact on poverty eradication, the impact will in general only be positive if the growth is accompanied by a progressive shift in expenditure distribution, according to Hoogeveen and Özler (2006). The writers conclude that in the absence of such a progressive shift it would take 23 years of sustained economic growth of 5% per annum for the average poor household to move out of poverty.

	Development's short term "Social Relief of Distress Grant", as well as food parcels and drought or flood relief. These policies are not intended primarily to be developmental, but to give aid to address immediate needs.
POVERTY ALLEVIATION	Poverty alleviation also aims to reduce the negative impact of poverty on the lives of poor people, but in a more sustained and permanent way than poverty relief programmes. It includes the state's social grant programmes which alleviate the impact of poverty for many people. Poverty alleviation programmes tend to have longer term goals and are in general more developmental than Poverty Relief programmes. Thus the state's social grant policies both provide immediate relief for poor people, but have also been found to provide a developmental stimulus by empowering people who live in households in which members (children, disabled persons or old age persons) receive social grants to look for jobs or start their own small businesses in order to supplement household incomes and eventually getting out of the poverty trap.
POVERTY REDUCTION	Poverty reduction usually refers to strategies and policies that reduce the number or percentage of people living in poverty or the severity of the impact of poverty on the lives of poor people.
POVERTY ERADICATION	Very simply, poverty eradication means ending the existence of poverty. The state has committed itself to the eradication of poverty in South Africa, and has set the objective of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2014.
SOCIAL GRANTS	Social grants are social assistance cash transfers which in South Africa are provided to certain vulnerable groups, namely children, the aged, people living with certain disabilities and orphans, and are based on means tests.
SOCIAL SECURITY	Social security collectively refers to contributory social insurance and non-contributory social assistance.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	Social assistance refers to revenue funded non-contributory social cash transfers or grants to individuals in South Africa. Social assistance in South Africa has a redistributive effect as a result of the progressive structuring of the Income Tax system.
SOCIAL INSURANCE	Social insurance refers to state administered and/or regulated insurance funds including Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Road Accident Fund. Private insurance schemes include medical aids, disability provision, and retirement and life insurance schemes.

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This paper was written by Idah Makukule.



Abstract

The goal to substantially eradicate poverty and inequality in South Africa hinges on access to far greater sources of information resources on the form and nature of poverty than just mere statistic at the disposal of decision-makers. While facts and figures are an undoubtedly crucial part of the arsenal in the fight against poverty, recent South African studies suggesting the multiple-faceted nature of poverty are indicative of the need for an understanding of poverty which goes beyond simple issues of income insecurity. Ironically, a major criticism of current policy literature on poverty is the conspicuous absence of the voice of the poor within its colossal tome. Though purporting to advocate for the interests of the poor, much of the policy literature is devoid of tangible personal stories, such as the daily grind of survival and its human cost, both at personal and community levels.

In a nutshell, current policy literature and analysis is often marked by social distance and is consequently devoid of empathy. This research report of the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) seeks to reverse current policy research trends on poverty by putting the poor, their voice and experience at the centre of the research process. Using Vosloorus Township, the research report sets out the initial findings arising from the focus group studies, the localised survey and the observational studies that took place over a nine-month period. Out of the research outcomes, the report then goes on to distil recommendations on approaches and strategies that the state and other actors can adopt in attempts at supporting people's initiatives in the fight against poverty. The report also seeks to identify those barriers or obstacles that appear to be too large for people to manipulate and that would require some structural change and thus unlock potential in as far as grassroots initiatives are concerned.

The report primarily explores income expenditure patterns and localised perceptions of poverty and how basic needs are met in Extension 28 Vosloorus Township. Vosloorus is both a formal and informal township located 35 kilometres east of Johannesburg and falls under the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan government in the province of Gauteng, South Africa. In this instance the income expenditure in the targeted households was determined using the Basic Needs Basket (BNB) research methodology. The basic needs methodology has been popularised by the World Bank and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and commended for being less theoretical and more practical (Haines 2000:47). It represents a radical departure away from development approaches which emphasise the *method* rather than the satisfaction of the concrete needs experienced by the poor characteristic of many development initiatives. The BNB research tool has been applied by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) which is based in Lusaka, Zambia, in to order alleviate the plight of the poor by making sure their voices are heard as a prerequisite to tackling challenges in a more concrete way. The JCTR survey monitored the prices of food and non-food items in Lusaka on a monthly period and assessed the amount needed for a family of four. In this instance the JCTR used the BNB tool for advocacy purposes aimed at ensuring that the Zambian government, in particular and the nation as a whole, constantly take into account matters of poverty and its effects on society. In South Africa, the BNB tool has also been adopted by SPII and used in Vosloorus with the aim of exploring income and food expenditure within the 40 sampled households and discerning any patterns.

Spending priorities

Before entering the field SPII had hypothesised that the poor are spending a large part of their income on food, transport and education. The fieldwork, coupled with the resultant findings, has confirmed this hypothesis, which means that dialogue on the adjustment of regional prices can now begin in earnest. While all indications point to a decrease in the food prices, food prices in South Africa are increasing despite the country's [good] economic standing. Some of the explanation for rising food prices may be as a result of the price fixing phenomenon though the weak or non-existent regulatory framework for basic food prices is to a large extent a factor. The latter is particularly crucial considering widespread food insecurity and the fact that the majority of South Africans are spending a large bulk of their income on food and still are unable to afford a staple diet.

Coping mechanisms

This report also highlights the income expenditure patterns of households and their coping strategies for moving out of the poverty trap and vulnerability. Social cohesion, in the form of strong social networks, appears to be the primary coping mechanism adopted in the community to cope with issues of food insecurity, lack of clothing, school uniforms and fees. With social cohesion playing such a central role in people's coping mechanisms, the research had to interrogate the nature and form of social cohesion. Do they enable the households to move out of poverty or are they merely a coping strategy for the moment? From our findings, social cohesion is a measure of temporary relief and not of permanent security.

The need for information

Findings from the research illustrate that access to information can be used to begin to cope with poverty. Section 32(1) of the Constitution states that (a) "everyone has the right of access to information held by the state; or (b) any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights." Government communication and information has been variously described as inadequate and lacking coherence where it seeks to target the most vulnerable section of society. Current government communication and information distribution channels are primarily pamphlets (and other printed media), the use of Public Service Announcements (especially radio broadcasts) and the medium of *Izimbizo*, which combine public consultation with communication, and the *Thusong* Centres, previously called Multi-Purpose Community Centres. There is ongoing debate on the efficacy of the various media in the distribution of information at grassroots level, where it is needed mostly.

The ambiguous role of education

Also forming part of the pre-fieldwork hypotheses was the importance of education in mitigating poverty in the long-term. The hypothesis was confirmed by the research findings in that education appeared to be highly rated as a tool that the poor can use to dig themselves out of the poverty rut. Despite the many obstacles to education that are associated with poverty, the high school dropout rate amongst youth in Vosloorus was very low. Survey participants had the perception or belief that staying in school will help improve their chances of finding work but also noted that there will be challenges all the way, including finding work after graduation. These findings coincide with Altman (Altman 2007:7) who has argued that large portions of school leavers will struggle to find work as there is already high

unemployment in the country. Throughout her research she argues that education can increase labour market competition levels among black African unemployed youth.

Active agency

The case studies presented in this study present people's lived experiences and perceptions of poverty. They throw light on their daily expenditure patterns and attempts to meet some of their most basic needs. Perhaps the most telling aspect of the case studies is that they demonstrate the fact that the poor and officially marginalised are often not passive participants or mere victims of circumstantial poverty, but are engaged in an ongoing struggle to use available resources to break the cycle of poverty. The principal elements of the daily fight against poverty are manifest through the building of strong social networks and participation in small informal trading initiatives, albeit peripheral.

Causes of poverty and drivers of further pauperisation

The research paints a very bleak picture of the high unemployment rate in the community. This was by and large expected given the high national unemployment rate and its bearing on poverty. As is elucidated in the report, many households rely on social security grants in the absence of paid work. The grants are in turn used for various micro-enterprises as well as for the provision of basic needs.

Feminisation of poverty

Perhaps the most striking observation is that the majority of the households under review in Vosloorus were female headed, with the absence of male figureheads within the household structures indicative of the feminisation of poverty.

HIV/AIDS pandemic

The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on household structure has to be taken into account. Death of a breadwinner and ill health is sufficient to push vulnerable households into poverty or keep them in poverty traps or push poor households into destitution. For some of the households in Vosloorus this has been the case. There have also been destructive coping strategies that have been employed by households, such as having multiple sexual partners in order to be able to sustain the household. A participant indicated that in order to have her basic needs met she has to have multiple partners, with each partner assigned a responsibility to provide for respective needs like the provision for mealie meal, meat, clothing or cellular phone airtime. It further emerged through discussions how in some cases people were often forced to compromise safe sexual practices under the coercive pull of money, which illustrates the sometimes precarious coping strategies that are being adopted to meet basic needs.

Impact of poverty on youth

Poverty in general and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on households in particular have an enormous impact on the education and consequently the overall aspirations of young people to break out of the poverty cycle. Research results found that there was more than one person infected by HIV/AIDS in each of the target households. The roots of intergenerational poverty are manifested by the fact that in instances where the burden of ill-health or unemployment gets increasingly heavy, younger members of households are forced to take on roles as caregivers or breadwinners.

Chapter One: Introduction

South Africa's economic growth has been on the upswing during the years prior to the global economic recession, with the growth rate averaging about 5%. Employment creation also seemed to be on the rise and improving (www.undp.org.za), in tandem with the growing economy. Before the impact of the global recession began to really bite, the unemployment percentage in 2008 was around 22%, down from the 31% it was 2003 (Nhlapo-Hlophe 2009). Much of the economic growth in the informal sector has been attributed to the increased roll out of social grants and associated employment opportunities.

In spite of this bullish outlook, there has been a progressive increase in the number of people living in poverty. Using the relative poverty measure, the number of people estimated to be living in poverty increased from 17,060,571 or 40.6% of the population in 1996, to 20,551,295 or 42.9% in 2007³. Overall the positive economic growth over the past decade and a half is accurately described as "jobless growth" due to its poor showing on the employment creation front and failing to lift the majority of South Africans from the doldrums of poverty. In 1994, 20% of the black population were a middle class in the making, while the poorer 60% of blacks were considerably poorer than in 1974" (Terreblanche 2006:3). The increasing impoverishment of the black majority since 1994 is, then, a trend that continues from the formal political oppression of apartheid. The struggle to overcome the past impoverishment is exacerbated by new and diverse drivers of poverty and inequality that tighten the hold of the poverty trap.

Although often punted as a panacea to all the social and economic ills associated with poverty, reality seems to suggest that employment does not guarantee a life free from want. A feature of South Africa's current work environment is the prevalence of the working poor and the underemployed, people who struggle to meet their basic needs and continue to experience socio-economic exclusion, despite their formal inclusion into the labour force.

South Africa, as part of Sub-Saharan Africa, has the highest incidences of poverty in the world, which has been rising in the last decade. The high incidence of poverty illustrates the challenges that the government is facing. Between 1996 and 2001 the total income share of the black Africans population rose from 78% to 80% but the value of the income share remained at 38%. the total income share of the white population fell from 11% to 9% during the same period, but the white population value of its share increased from 47% to 48% according to the Stats-SA Income Expenditure Survey (2005/2006)⁴. Furthermore "Inter-African" inequality has also increased, with Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) creating an even greater gap between the rich and the poor. BEE's core principles of poverty alleviation as a basis for societal transformation have been subsumed by an elitist self-enrichment agenda (Hurwitz and Luiz, 2007).

According to Leibbrandt et al, income inequality has risen from 0.68 on the Gini Coefficient (Inequality can be measured using the Gini Co-efficient, 0 being total equality, 1 being absolute inequality) to 0.73 in 2001. Furthermore, a Human Sciences Research Council (HRSC)⁵ factsheet on poverty indicates

³ Ibid.

⁴ The Income Expenditure Survey has been conducted by Statistics South Africa to determine expenditure patterns for South African households. How many households and how regularly is it done?

⁵ HSRC Fact Sheet 1. 26 July 2004.

that income inequality had grown from a baseline of 0.69 in 1996 to a higher rate of 0.77 in 2001 (SPII 2008). Mean per capita income has grown in all deciles between 2000 and 2005/6, but the distribution of the growth has been very different across income deciles. According to the 2005/05 Income and Expenditure Survey, above average increases in the distribution of the growth occurred in income deciles 1, 2, 3, and 10, and increases in the remaining deciles was registered as below average. The above-average increase in the lowest income decile has been attributed directly to the impact of the increased access to social grants⁶ (SPII 2008).

From this analysis, the top 10 % of South Africans earn 50% of the overall income, while the lowest two deciles access 1.5% of the total national income⁷. The top decile's mean income was 94 times that of the lowest decile⁸ (SPII 2008).

Table 1: Poverty indicators by province

Province	No. of poor persons (million)	% of population in poverty	Poverty gap (R billion)	Share of poverty gap
Eastern Cape	4.6	72%	14.8	18.2%
Free State	1.8	68%	5.9	7.2%
Gauteng	3.7	42%	12.1	14.9%
KwaZulu-Natal	5.7	61%	18.3	22.5%
Limpopo	4.1	77%	11.5	14.1%
Mpumalanga	1.8	57%	7.1	8.7%
North West	1.9	52%	6.1	7.5%
Northern Cape	0.5	61%	1.5	1.8%
Western Cape	1.4	32%	4.1	5.0%
South Africa	25.7	57%	81.3	100.0%

Source: HSRC Fact sheet No 1 July 2004 Poverty in South Africa

While research illustrates a steady rise of inequality in South Africa, access to social grants, which provide income for many poor households, was found by StatsSA to have lowered the Gini coefficient from 0.80 to 0.73. As a social policy tool to address inequality in South Africa, the payment of social grants continues to play a significant role. But the intentionally progressive nature of the income tax system has been shown in this Income Expenditure Survey to have no statistical significance as far as inequality reduction goes (beyond being the source of the revenue for the grants)⁹. This is a powerful argument in favour of extending coverage to social grants to currently excluded poor people should the

⁶ StatsSA, IES 2005/06, Analysis report, 2 and 35.

⁷ StatsSA, IES 2005/06, 2.

⁸ StatsSA, IES 2005/06, 31.

⁹ StatsSA, IES 2005/06, 35.

state be concerned at the apparent unstoppable increase in income inequality within South Africa (SPII 2008).

Currently 65% of workers in the formal sector earn around R2, 500 a month, which is not adequate to live a decent life (Civil Society Speaks 2008:13). This fact reiterates the arguments that although a few black South African benefited (and continue to benefit) from BEE, a huge majority have been left in worse conditions (Aguero et al 2007). With the increase in income inequality (which will be exacerbated by the backward and downward linkages of the current global financial crisis) the majority of South Africans regularly go hungry and experience chronic food insecurity, resulting in malnutrition and the inability to work and therefore certain destitution for millions of people (www.cind.org.za). In a study by the National Department of Health (DoH) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), it was found that in 2003 children in 7% of households were often hungry and that a further 17% sometimes went hungry.¹⁰

Government interventions in this regard are evidenced by the fact that 92.2% or 3.4-million children aged 7-18 who experience hunger continued to go to school due to the national school nutrition programmes that have been implemented.¹¹ Though providing much needed relief, many people living in poverty often complain of the inadequacy of the state's safety nets.¹² Regrettably for many, the various forms of social security are more about survival on a daily basis rather than the developmental aspects for which social grants were designed for, namely, unleashing the potential of the poor to find possible ways out of their vulnerabilities. This is a critical factor for policymakers to consider as they develop comprehensive and multi-layered anti-poverty policies and programmes.

According to (Landman et al 2003), 40% of the population is living in poverty, with 15% of the poorest struggling to survive, thus indicating that the poor have been unable to experience the benefits of post-apartheid liberation. Figures on poverty are often fraught with difficult, polarised and politicised debates which make engagement almost impossible. A fact sheet constructed by the HSRC has shown that the poverty gap in South Africa has grown by R56-billion in 1996 to R81-billion in 2006 - an indication that poor households have sunk deeper into poverty. Below is a table of poverty indicators by province.

Table 2: Gini coefficient by population group as percentiles, 1991 to 2001

	1991	1996	2001
African	0.62	0.66	0.72
White	0.46	0.50	0.60
Coloured	0.52	0.56	0.64
Asian	0.49	0.52	0.60
Total	0.68	0.69	0.77

Source: HSRC Fact sheet No 1 July 2004 Poverty in South Africa

¹⁰ OECD. 2008. Reviews of National Policies for education South Africa, p 23

¹¹ ibid

¹² There has been research that has explored formal and policy safety nets Smith (2002) *Trevor tends to the poor* and Taylor (2002) *What kind of social security*. Until recently there has been little attention that has been on the informal safety nets what does this mean? Arnall (2004) *Perception of informal safety net*.

KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape have the highest numbers of poor people. This is despite the strong economic growth specifically in Gauteng. Gauteng has been estimated by Statistics South Africa (2008) to have the largest share of the South African population. It is interesting to note from the above table that although there is a large headcount of people living in poverty in Gauteng (3.7-million), the proportion of poor people living in Gauteng is the second lowest in the country (second only to the Western Cape). In contrast, the Eastern Cape has both a high headcount and a high proportion of poor people. It is clear that these differences must result in differences in the strategies employed by all levels of government in dealing with poverty.

The issue of internal patterns of migration also has to be taken into account in this regard. In rural areas, "62% of the population is poor, compared with 13% in metropolitan areas and 25% in secondary cities" (Gelb, 2003: 11). The majority of the poor live in rural areas, and there is a distinct correlation between some of the areas of worst deprivation and the former homelands. In order to cope with the lack of employment and poor service delivery structures in many of these areas, people move to the urban areas in hopes of securing employment and improvement in their livelihoods. This has recently led to a noticeable increase in urban poverty, both in townships and in the inner cities where people live in shacks and failing high rise slums respectively, lacking in both situations basics such as water and sanitation, safety and security.

2. Safety nets: a poverty eradication or alleviation strategy?

The South African social safety net has expanded considerably in the last decade. Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security System for South Africa also known as The Taylor report¹³ (2002:15) states that "South Africa's social safety net has its roots in a set of apartheid labour and welfare policies that were racially biased and premised on full-employment." With the transition to a democratic government in 1994, the issue of welfare and safety nets formed an integral part of the South African government's strategy to eradicate poverty. Five key principles were introduced in the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and social security was highlighted as one of the basic needs that have to be met in order to rebuild the country. Social Security policy was codified in the 1997 Welfare White Paper.

The Welfare White Paper was drafted after wide consultations with different sectors in South Africa. It was drafted to be in line with the proposed direction given by the United Nations World Summit for Social Development 1995. The White Paper heralded a shift in policy from the previous "welfarist" principles to an expanded position seeking to promote "developmental social welfare principles". This commitment was to develop interventions that would support people to "promot[e] their own wellbeing and contribute[e] to the growth and development of our nation"¹⁴ (SPII, 2008a). The plan at the time was

¹³ In 2001 the government set up a commission into a comprehensive System of Social security for South Africa which was chaired by Vivien Taylor. The role of the committee was to advise government on a social security reform process. This process involved the assessment of the problems of poverty in South Africa and the also examining the existing social grants and to propose a reform for the process. In May 2002 a consolidated report known as the Taylor report was released and the right to access social assistances was highlighted as key as part of a poverty eradication initiative.

¹⁴ Preamble, paragraph 2.

to incorporate a declaration of a “War on Poverty”¹⁵¹⁶ which would be a rallying point for addressing the structural causes of poverty as well as the symptoms of “additional social problems such as family disintegration, adults and children in trouble with the law and substance abuse”¹⁷ (SPII 2008a).

Broader social welfare policies were to be based on the following principles¹⁸:

- (1) The government will take steps to ensure the progressive achievement of social security for all including appropriate social assistance for those unable to support themselves and their dependents
- (2) Equity
- (3) Non-discrimination
- (4) Democracy, incorporating appropriate and effective mechanisms will be created to promote the participation of the public and all welfare constituencies in decision-making about welfare policies and programmes which affect them
- (5) Improved quality of life
- (6) Human rights as articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
- (7) People-centred policies
- (8) Investment in human capital, which in turn contributes to economic development
- (9) Sustainability
- (10) Partnership
- (11) Intersectoral collaboration
- (12) Decentralization of service delivery
- (13) Quality services
- (14) Transparency and accountability
- (15) Accessibility
- (16) Appropriateness and
- (17) Ubuntu.

The principles of social security more specifically were to be based on four pillars - namely, private savings, social insurance, social assistance and social relief.¹⁹ These pillars were to operate in an integrated way to ensure “universal access to an integrated and sustainable social security system” aimed at ensuring that “every South African should have a minimum income, sufficient to meet basic subsistence needs, and should not have to live below minimum acceptable standards”.²⁰

The White Paper is clear about the need to address poverty and improve people’s well-being. It also asserts that a change in people’s well-being will not automatically be a spinoff from economic growth, but unambiguously states the need for certain fiscal trade-offs to ensure that social spending does not restrict economic growth. Furthermore it states that any expansion of social services would be conditional upon economic growth. And as a result of this, the White Paper cautions that the “high expectations of many people for the new democratic government to deliver welfare services and programmes ... cannot be fully met in the short term”²¹ (SPII, 2008). In Chapter 8, the policy paper

¹⁵ This is a cause of some confusion given the war that was declared on poverty and the subsequent provincial and national war rooms that were established in 2008.

¹⁶ Chapter 2, par 27.

¹⁷ Chapter 2, Par 27 (c).

¹⁸ These can be found in Chapter 2, pps 8 to 24.

¹⁹ Chapter 7, par 1.

²⁰ Chapter 7, par 27.

²¹ Chapter 1, par 9.

further stated that “in view of fiscal constraints²², it is not possible for the welfare function to grow in the medium-term. Real growth will be accommodated by restructuring the welfare function”.²³

Although the White Paper was published in the same year as the inauguration of the Constitution, there appears however to be a sorry absence of a rights framework to social security, despite some rhetorical references. It thus unwittingly contains the policy contradictions that determined the shape and form of social assistance policy in the ensuing years, specifically that the desire to expand social security and social assistance (and the acknowledgement of the necessity to do so) is at one and the same time constrained by the concern that drives the macro-economic conservatism of the Growth Employment and Reconstruction policies (SPII, 2008a). Some of the inherent failings in the White Paper looked with the Department of Social Development (DSD) appointed Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa (The Taylor Committee). The Taylor Committee’s mandate was to investigate approaches to developing a comprehensive social security system. Its consolidated report was produced in March 2002.²⁴ Although the recommendations of the Committee appear to have informed many of the subsequent policy shifts within the Department - including the establishment of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) - the official and binding status of the Committee Report appears unclear (SPII 2008).

The high levels of unemployment coupled with extreme levels of poverty and inequality limit the anti-poverty effect of investments by the state and other players to reduce poverty and specifically to create decent jobs. Ongoing disagreement between business and labour on the role an allegedly inflexible labour market appears to have on economic development is another unfortunate obfuscation that the country can at this time ill afford. Aggregate demand needs to increase in order to promote local manufacturing and sales. The high inequality of income limits the size of the population that has access to disposable income, and those that do have disposable income are more likely to spend it on imported goods than on what is locally produced, including food items. The following observations by Michael Aliber (2002) reflect on the question of why in the absence of formal employment, more people do not take up informal employment. His conclusion points to, amongst others, the issue of lack of demand as a result of the high level of poverty in the communities in which the unemployed generally live:

Kingdom and Knight therefore ask the question why the unemployed do not enter informal sector self-employment in larger numbers, and conclude that, in so far as the unemployed are much worse off than the informally employed across a range of indicators, then there must be barriers to entry. Among these barriers to entry are possibly lack of capital, lack of entrepreneurial skills, and inability to penetrate informal community networks that may control opportunities, e.g. by controlling access to street space or taxi routes. The fact that informal sector self-employment is on average more likely to ease household poverty than informal sector employment ... also suggests that there are barriers to entry that must be contended with. Unfortunately, quite possibly the biggest limitation on the SMME at this point in time is not an entry barrier but that lack of an effective market.

Government is not well placed to foster the SMME sector. Thus far, it has attempted to do so in two ways: indirectly, through the creation of institutions that render support to the SMME sector (Khula and Ntsika), and directly through the promotion of income-generation projects. Thus far neither strategy has been proven to be very effective, and the direct promotion of income generation projects has been

²² Based on the conservative principles of the macro-economic policy GEAR.

²³ Par 11.

²⁴ *Protecting the Present, Transforming the Future. Report of the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security System for South Africa*

downright discouraging. The reasons for the disappointment have very likely less to do with whether or not government is 'doing its job well' than with the question of whether this is the sort of function that government is suited to performing. As suggested above, there is reason to suspect that, no matter how assiduously government pursues its multi-pronged SMME promotion strategy, it is doomed to bear little fruit in many areas so long as disposable income in poor communities remains so low. As Ardington (1988) shows, for example, income-earning opportunities from self-employment tend to diminish when formal sector ("core economy") employment falls, since lower remittances to rural areas means less disposable income fuelling the informal economy there. The decline in formal sector employment may have intensified the need to see the SMME sector thrive, but it has also imperilled the prospects for exactly that to happen. It is likely that the most efficacious SMME promotion strategy would be to ensure that disposable incomes are increased on a broad basis, whether this is through a massively scaled-up public works programme or the introduction of a basic income grant.

The above argument suggests a distinct developmental potential to the expansion of the cover of social grants. The South African social development system is one that has benefited a large majority who are poor; had it not been for this intervention the levels of poverty would be abysmal. But the reality still remains that while there are a few who are cushioned by this safety net, a large number who do not have access to social grants fall through the cracks and remain in poverty. The role of these safety nets is to "both mitigate the vulnerability (to droughts and flood, illnesses and twins) of the working poor and to compensate for those who are too old or ill to work. Such security indeed can stimulate entrepreneurship and growth" (Lipton 1997:1004). The above comment can be viewed both positively and negatively: given the small value of the grants measured against these critical objectives and it would be difficult to 'stimulate entrepreneurship', but in a developmental light, welfare grants make a vast difference in cases where previously there was no access to funds. The available grants are subject to peculiar conditions which are set out in the Social Assistance Act 2004 and the Regulations to that Act.²⁵ The values of the currently available grants to date are as follows:

Table 3: Values of grants

Old Age Grant	R1010.00
Disability Grant	R1010.00
Care Dependency Grant	R1010.00
Foster Child Grant	R680.00
Grant-in-Aid	R240.00
War Veteran's Grant	R1030.00
Social Relief if Distress Grant	Food parcels amounting to the old age grant
Child Support Grant	R240.00

²⁵ Regulations in Terms of the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, no. R. 162, Government Gazette 27316 of 22 February 2005.

Table 4: Types of social grants and eligibility criteria

Type of Grant	Eligibility Criteria
The Old Age Grant	The OAG is available to both men and women. To qualify for an Old Age Grant for men there has been a reduction from 65 years for men to 63 in 2008, and in 2009 it is 61 and in 2010 the age to qualify will be 60. Bringing men in line with women who receive at 60.
Disability Grant	The disability grant value is less than the minimum wages set by the Department of Labour annually. To qualify the recipients needs to be 18 to 59 years of age if a female and 18 to 62 years of age if male.
Care Dependency Grant	The applicants must be permanent South African residents. The age of the child must be under the 18 years. A medical assessment or report confirming permanent or severe disability should also be submitted. The care-dependent child should not be cared for in a state institution. The applicant's spouse must meet the requirements of the means test except for foster parents. The income of foster parents will not be taken into account.
Foster Child Grant	The applicant and child must be resident in South Africa and the child should be younger than 18 years. The foster parent must be a South African citizen, permanent resident, or have refugee status. A court order indicating foster care status should be made available. The child must remain in the care of the foster parent(s).
Child Support Grant	The Child Support Grant was introduced through the enactment of the Welfare Laws Amendment Act 106 of 1997. This amendment, however, built quite superficially on the foundations of the 1992 Social Assistance Act. The Taylor Committee on Social Grants is still fighting to extend the eligibility of the child support grant to all children under 18 (still in the process of being won in practice). The applicant must be the primary care giver of the child and the child/children must be under the age of 15 years

Grant-in-Aid	This grant is paid in addition to another grant in cases in which the beneficiary requires full time attendance by another person due to his or her mental or physical disabilities. This amount is meant to cover the costs of such full-time care. The recipient should not be cared for in an institution that receives a subsidy from the State for the care/housing of such beneficiary.
War Veteran's Grant	Applicants must be residents in South Africa and over the age of 60 or disabled. They must have fought in the Second World War or the Korean War and members of the former South African liberation armies. The applicant's spouse must meet the requirements of the means test; and the recipient should not be maintained or cared for in a state institution; and must not be a recipient of another social grant.
Social Relief of Distress Grant	This is also viewed as a social grant, but is available for a limited period (up to 6 months) when persons find themselves in 'distressed' circumstances. ²⁶ These include death, the institutionalisation or illness of a breadwinner and external disasters. The amount of the grant cannot exceed the maximum amount of other grants, and despite the fact that this is considered a grant, it can be made available in kind (e.g. food parcels) rather than cash.

The social grants provide a form of relief but for many there have been various challenges in terms of access. The media attention that SASSA received last year has also been an indication of the difficulty of access, with the main highlight being that as of June 1st 2008 potential grant recipients would not need an ID to apply for a social grant. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has increased the vulnerability of the youth who also represent the age cohort of greatest unemployment, with this vulnerability being seen in high levels of extreme poverty and malnutrition. In South Africa child poverty is prevalent with as many as one in five children reporting hunger. In the face of such high levels of child poverty, and given that Section 28 of the Constitution defines a child as all those people who are under 18 years of age, there have been calls to universalise the Child Support grant. There are 10.7-million children currently in South Africa under the age of 15²⁷, and a further 4.9-million children between 15 and 19 years of age. If a universal grant was made available, approximately 15-million children under the age of 18 would have access at a current estimated cost of R3.3-billion per annum (excluding administrative or infrastructure costs) (SPII 2008). Major obstacles for beneficiaries are the lack of formal documentation. Often it

²⁶ Regulation 9.

²⁷ Mid-year Population Estimates, South Africa; 2007. Table 4.

happens that the primary beneficiary will not have an ID book and one of the requirements to gain access to social grants is to produce an ID and a birth certificate. A new regulation was introduced on International Children's Day, the 1st of June 2008,, to enable eligible applicants who do not have the required documentation to access social grants. This will ensure maximum reach to those who are in need of assistance, an intention that was made clear in the National Budget Speech, 2008:

"Drawing on the work of the interdepartmental team on social security reform, we will begin to address the difficulties of the present means tests. The qualifying household income threshold for the child support grant will be raised and the means test formula that applies to the old age grant and disability grant will be revised, contributing both to easier administration of these restrictions and broader access of the poor to income support. Details of these reforms will be contained in amendments to the Social Assistance Act and its regulations, which will be tabled by the Minister of Social Development."

In a presentation delivered by the Director-General of Social Development, Vusi Madonsela, at a conference in Cape Town between 10 and 14 March 2008, the question of the means test was listed as a "Strategic Challenge in Social Assistance" as a result of the following:

"Most of the grants are Means Tested. As a result, we rely on applicants to declare their income... result[ing] in inclusion and exclusion errors, and... the multiple cost of targeting has financial, social, and political costs that may exceed the realized benefits."²⁸

As part of this review, the Department of Social Development recently commissioned a research paper by EPRI (Economic Policy Research Institute)²⁹ which was aimed at designing and implementing social cash transfer programmes. The main recommendations of this report are:

- The financial, political, and social costs of targeting on both the state and applicants are large, and create economic distortions.
- Proxy targeting as used in other countries, however, is not feasible within a rights-based society.
- A gradual move towards a universal system of benefits would be most efficient, eliminating exclusions and perverse incentives.
- Micro-simulation suggests that completely abolishing means tests is affordable within the current grant system.
- The means test should accordingly be abolished; in the alternative, the means test for the Child Support grant should be adjusted for inflation.
- The value of all grants should keep track on a monthly basis with the published Consumer Price Index for the lowest quintile.
- Means test thresholds should either be indexed to the grant benefit levels or to the same CPI.

Other types of obstacles have been identified such as conditionalities attached to the social security grants system and the lack of chronic illness grants which a specific challenge given the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The absence of a specific income grant to assist those people taking ARV treatment often

²⁸ Overview of the Social Security Programmes in South Africa. Vusi Madonsela: Director-General.

²⁹ Review of targeting mechanisms, means tests and values for South Africa's social grants. 4 July 2007.

negates the investment in their health as these drugs require a specific nutritional intake to be effective. On the other hand, some commentators argue that South Africa's social grants are relatively free of conditionalities as these are in general imposed by policy makers ostensibly to prevent abuse.³⁰ As such policy makers are open to accusations of paternalism and the misguided belief that their discretion encourages constructive rather than destructive behaviour of poor recipients (SPII, 2008). The review of the South African Social Security system has resulted in the identification of certain gaps, such as the targeting and mean test, and as a result the threshold was amended as from August 2008:

Table 5: The income and assets threshold for means test as of August 2008

Asset threshold		
Single person		R451 200
Married persons		R902 400
Income threshold		
	Social Grant	
Single person		R26 928
Married persons		R53 856
	Child Support Grant	
Single person		R25 200
Married persons		R50 400
	Care dependency Grant	
Single person		R112 800
Married persons		R225 600

Source: www.dsd.gov

The above discussion highlights key challenges for the South African government as it illustrates that the intended beneficiaries of safety nets are not always reached. Social safety nets have sparked debates amongst academics and policy makers, divided between those who can be classified as neo-liberals arguing that social grants are 'fiscally unaffordable' and can create dependency. The other end of the debate is backed up by large volumes of research which point to a view that maintains that this small contribution does provide a slight form of economic relief to individuals who are poor or are at risk of destitution (Poggenpoel and Oliver, undated, cited in SPII 2008).

³⁰ Samson et al, 8.

3. Basic services and spending patterns

Section 27 of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution (Act 106 of 1996) guarantees every individual living in South Africa the right of access to adequate food, healthcare, water, and social security. Access to social security is granted to all permanent residents. But there has been a debate within communities on whether foreign nationals should be afforded the same socio-economic rights as South Africans. The Forced Migration Study Programme of Wits and CORMSA (Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa) have established that the xenophobic attacks that took place in May 2008 were sparked by discontent with the distribution of RDP housing as locals felt that foreign nationals were favoured in this process for economic reasons. Due to corruption in the Department of Human Settlements (formerly the Department of Housing), it has been possible for foreign nationals to buy free RDP houses from unscrupulous officials. This highlights the corruption that takes place and relative advantages that foreign nationals may have over poor South Africans.

Over the last decade there have been many demonstrations against the lack of delivery of water, sanitation, housing and electricity. Government's implementation of universal access to free basic allocations of services was stymied by a lack of resources. But the resolve to achieve universal access seemed to gather momentum after then president Thabo Mbeki stated that "the provision of free basic amounts of electricity and water to our people will alleviate the plight of the poorest among us" (Mbeki, 2001). Mbeki's statement was made with particular reference to the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's (DWAF) implementation of free water provision.

3.1 Free basic water and electricity

Part of the following sections draw heavily on SPII's work (2008) South Africa: poverty, social security and civil society, triangulation and transformation. The state of affairs with regard to access to water prior to the implementation of the Free Water policy in 2001 was as expected in the doldrums. A combination of apartheid services legacy and unemployment meant that the majority of the poor were being denied basic services for a decent life. With the high unemployment rate and the current economic crisis, the majority of the poor are still unable to pay for their municipal services. In 2000/1 there was an adoption of a policy that provides 'a basket of free basic services to all'. The basket of services included solid waste removal, water and sanitation, and electricity. The basket was also linked to an indigent policy that targeted to the poorest communities, forming an integral part of poverty alleviation for poor households. The main thrust of the policy was on the provision of a basic amount of free water and electricity.

The introduction of the Free Basic Water and Free Basic Electricity policy resulted in the number of municipalities adopting indigent policies to ensure that poor households have access to basic services. The Basic Free Water policy has been implemented on a larger scale and allows for six free kilolitres of water to all households. The amount was based on the World Health Organization's recommendations of 25 litres per person per day, which comes to 200 litres for an average South African household of eight. It has been estimated that by 2006, 84.7% of the 12.8-million households had access to water as defined by the RDP standards, but 6% (765,176 households) had no access to any water infrastructure. According to the Presidency, by 2006, 9.5-million households had access to government's Free Basic Water programme.³¹ In spite of these gains, 11.9% of Black Africans in 2001 still had to source water

³¹ Development Indicators Mid term Review, The Presidency, 2006, 29.

from a stream, dam, river or spring, compared to 0.8% of Coloured people and 0.1% of Indians/Asians and Whites respectively.³²

3.2 Sanitation services

The government also focused on the provision of sanitation to poor households, as lack of sanitation has consequences for public health. The primary focus was to install sewerage infrastructure and provide adequate toilets, but badly designed and operated systems themselves pose health risks, requiring therefore the upgrading and maintenance of existing systems. By 2006, 70.75% of households in South Africa had access to acceptable sanitation (defined as a ventilated improved pit latrine), leaving a backlog of more than 3.7-million households³³. Households without access to basic sanitation services continue to use the bucket system, pit toilets, or the veld. While over 97% of Whites and Indian/Asian people in South Africa had access to a flush or a chemical toilet in the 2001 Census, only 41.6% of Black African people did. More than a third (36.2%) of Black Africans still had to use a pit latrine in 2001, compared to just under 5% of Coloured people, 1% of Indian/Asian people, and 0.4% of White people.³⁴

3.3 Housing provisioning

Access to housing is important as it provides an individual with a fixed asset and shelter. Section 26(1) and (2) states that everyone in South Africa has the right to adequate housing, and the state is obliged to take reasonable legislative and other measures with available resources to progressively realise this right. Since 1996 both formal and informal housing has increased steadily. The total number of households has also increased from 9,059,606 in 1996 to 12,726,000 in 2005. According to statistics issued by the Presidency, the total number of houses completed from 1994 till March 2006 was 2.3-million, although it is not clear whether these refer to all houses built, or to only state-provided housing such as RDP houses, subsidized houses and rental stock.³⁵

Access to formal housing is significantly determined by race or population group. Based on their analysis of the 2001 National Census in 2001, 59.7% of Black Africans had access to formal dwellings, 88.5% of Coloured people had access to formal dwellings³⁶, while the rates amongst Indians/Asians and Whites was 96.6% and 97% respectively. Housing is linked to the land question, the resolution of which has been a big priority of post-1994 governments. Millions of people were systematically robbed of their land under the former colonial and apartheid regimes. Government's target is to redistribute 30% of the total agricultural land between 2000 and 2015. Progress in meeting this target has, however, been very slow, and as at 2005/06, only 1,486,399 of the sequentially targeted 13,563,000 hectares had in fact been redistributed

4. Aim of the Research

The overall aim of this study has been to systematically collect data on personal accounts of poverty, reflecting the experience of beneficiaries. The report provides the social dimensions of poverty in the Vosloorus area, involving the use of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches as part of an attempt to understand how the increase in food prices affects the poor and what coping strategies have been used by individual households in trying to escape or deal with poverty or food insecurity and meet

³² Leibbrandt et al, 2006.118

³³ Development Indicators Mid term Review, The Presidency, 2006, 30.

³⁴ Leibbrandt et al, 2006.125.

³⁵ Development Indicators Mid Term Review, The Presidency, 2006, 28.

³⁶ Leibbrandt et al, 2006, 115.

their basic needs. The decision to use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies stemmed from a concern that household surveys on their own fail to account for the social dimensions of poverty and only document economic factors. The main objective of the study is then the following

- To explore income expenditure, how it is utilised by the household to meet their basic needs.
- To explore coping strategies put in place by communities when dealing with poverty.
- Explore innovative ways of measuring poverty through the needs-based approach.
- The basic needs basket can be used to monitor and evaluate eradication programmes that have been set in place, namely, feeding schemes for school children, free health, social grants, and RDP housing.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

1. Methodology

The overall approach for this research is qualitative and quantitative in nature³⁷. Data collection was undertaken through an ethnographic approach, using participant observation and creating case studies. A household survey and the use of the Income and Expenditure Survey (IES) 2005/2006 make up the quantitative aspects of the survey. Participant observation covers the qualitative aspects. This study relies heavily on the qualitative aspects to ascertain detailed accounts of people's perceptions and experiences of poverty and the coping strategies they have put in place. The research involved three months of fieldwork. A variety of interviews were conducted to obtain data on social structures and coping strategies within the communities. This part of the process was meant to verify and expand the researcher's in situ observations. A desktop analysis on the issues of poverty, inequality and unemployment was done. In addition, basic food and non-food items were collected from designated stores on a monthly basis. Visual tools (photographs) are also used throughout the report as they provide visual snapshots for tracking changes within a community, more specifically infrastructural changes. They assist with the assessment of whether resources have been made available and well utilized to effect change within the communities under study.

2. Basic Needs Basket

The BNB is a research tool that is used to assess income expenditure of a household. The following categories of needs are explored: housing, food, education, child care, health and transportation. The BNB also monitors food and non-food items. This can contribute to analyzing the required minimum income to have a decent life. "The Minimum Income Standard" (MIS) reflects what people *need* to spend and not what they *actually* spend" (Bradshaw et al 2008:1) (own emphasis) to meet have their basic needs. Thus the MIS projects what people need to spend in order to have a decent standard of living. The IES of 2005/2006 has also been used as it provides data expenditure patterns between the different race groups and it was also used to inform the understanding of the BNB.

This particular research project has covered various approaches in terms of measuring poverty, from the money metric approach, to the biological minimum consumption necessary for survival and the minimum standard of living (Baud et al 2007). The basket of needs that has been created has been amalgamated with food essentials and non-food essentials. The sample of food essentials was structured to represent sufficient nutritional levels in a balance of calories, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals and carbohydrates. The non-food essentials have been used in relationship with the *Engel curve* a tool which is used in the analysis of the dynamics of household welfare (Kedir and Girma 2007). This process explores the purchasing of inferior goods as quality products become relatively expensive.

³⁷ This has been consistent with the methodology that has been used by the World Bank on the [Moving out of Poverty Study: An overview 2008](#).

3. Household survey

A household survey was carried out in four different clusters in Vosloorus Extension 28. A total of 40 households participated in the study in February/March 2009. Prior to the actual survey a pilot of ten households was carried out in November 2008. Within each cluster ten households were selected using random sampling. The questionnaire was aimed at obtaining information and views of households on income expenditure and coping strategies in terms of access to government services. The data sets of the questionnaires also explored the socio-economic aspects of poverty. This was carried out through discussions on issues of income, health, education, and consumption patterns. Discussing coping strategies utilized in the households highlighted the psycho-social aspects of poverty. Working with household expenditure to determine levels of deprivation is more manageable than working with income, which individuals either under- or overestimate. Another crucial point that is worth noting is that the poor supplement their income in many forms and this further distorts the measure of deprivation on terms of income. The completed questionnaires were computed into the statistical software package SPSS, and analysed; the statistical findings are reported in the data analysis section.

4. Food Price Monitoring

Part of the methodology has been the monitoring of food prices³⁸ over a period of six months. This was done at the beginning of every month from February 2009 to date. The current food crisis has the potential of escalating, leading the majority of poor people to suffer controlled starvation and malnutrition. The food basket was taken to a dietician who analysed the content and analysed the nutritional value of the basket.³⁹ Food diaries were also given to five households that took part in the survey. The aim of the diaries was to collect, in detail, items that were consumed by each household. Because the sample size of the survey was 40, only five households were selected to take part due to time constraints and limited resources. The information that was presented in the food diary provides a picture of the types of food consumed by households on a daily basis and further contributes to the assessment of the nutritional value of the food basket.

5. Participant observation and case studies

Participant observation explores individuals' "symbolic interactions" (Geertz 1973)⁴⁰, thus enabling the research to be descriptive, explanatory, interpretive and giving voice to poor and marginalized communities. From the 40 households that took part in the survey an additional five houses were selected within the study area through the use of purposive sampling. Through participant observation detailed life histories were collected.⁴¹ Two days were spent by researchers in the selected households in which time their daily practices and coping strategies were observed. Throughout the visits several discussions were carried out as to how households in Extension 28 have their basic needs met. This type of approach explored open -ended inquiry and followed the format of semi-structured and in-depth interviews covering life histories, views on education and government's poverty eradication strategies.

³⁸ This was adapted from PACSA. The list attached as annexure 1.

³⁹ The findings will be discussed in the data analysis section.

⁴⁰ Thick description is a concept popularised by Geertz. The use of thick description in this particular research enables detailed accounts of survival strategies that have been used by groups.

⁴¹ Real names are not used in the case studies; all participants did give consent to taking part in the study, and most had no problem with being photographed and having the conversations recorded.

The field sites were revisited throughout the research project and also triangulated. This form of data collection allows for an in-depth analysis of households that includes participants' perceptions. An observation of people in their own environment means that a holistic understanding of their world and interactions is reached.

At a personal level, the initial approach of the researcher was to spend a night with the households as part of the participant observation process. This, however, was not possible for a number of reasons, not least of which was a lack of food and space. Focus groups were also used with different CBO's in Kathorus (Kathehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus) area as a form of triangulation. Three focus groups were conducted in the area and covered people's perceptions and descriptions of poverty. This also looked at issues of access to government resources, education, poverty traps, and ways to overcome poverty. The findings presented here are snapshots of the struggle against poverty in statistical and ethnographic detail.

Chapter Three: Literature Review⁴²

This section examines the theoretical assumptions which inform this report. Different literature on poverty studies in South Africa will be examined. The work that has been covered may not be comprehensive, but for the purpose of this discussion it is explanatory where debates on the literature on poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa are referenced. The review also underlines the gaps that have been noted and how this part of the theoretical framework fits into the broader research project. The literature forms a point of departure for the research of the Basic Needs Basket (BNB), which regionally (Southern African Development Community) to date has taken various forms as applied by civil society research and advocacy bodies.

1. Defining poverty

The current and most challenging and pressing issue facing the South African government is finding solutions for the high numbers of people living in conditions of poverty and unemployment. Poverty is a social problem that affects every individual in society, but partly due to the contested nature of poverty only a selected few try to get to grips with this issue. This report provides a discussion on poverty in its multidimensional economic, political and social aspects. Alcock (1993) argues that “many people, including academics, campaigners, and politicians talk about the problem of poverty, and underlying their discussion is the assumption that identifying the problem of poverty provides a basis for action upon which all will agree.”⁴³ Poverty is complex in nature and is ever shifting.

South Africa is currently experiencing the legacies of systematic exploitation during the country's apartheid past, manifest in the fact that the majority of its population continue to live in poverty. As essential as the debate on the definition of poverty may be as an academic exercise, there is an even greater need to begin to concretely focus the debate on the objective aspects of what poverty is, understand its origins and begin to work towards workable solutions. South Africa needs to move from discussing and describing poverty to addressing it (Desai 2005). Government's anti-poverty framework is principally in the form of the National Anti-Poverty Framework. The Framework has however raised the ire of civil society and has been roundly criticised for its lack of clear targets, implementation roadmaps and a lack of focus because of its broadness. It has also come under fire for not fully addressing the multidimensional aspects of poverty and it is still being drafted.

Ambrose (2003) argues that discussion around poverty focuses more on the economic factors which usually are structural in nature, rather than exploring the social nature of poverty and this is attributed to the fact that poverty is a political matter. Consequently this report attempts to address both the economic and social nature of poverty by situating itself in the multiple understanding of poverty and notes that it is preferable to use several definitions of poverty. The approach on poverty has covered three fields (Spicker 2007), the first being a '*material approach*' which is a needs-based approach and assesses levels of deprivation and low-income standards of living. The second approach is the '*economic circumstances*' which explores the resources that the poor have at their disposal and also takes into account the distances which they have to travel in order to access resources. The social

⁴² A comprehensive discussion of the literature review is appended at the end of the report

⁴³ Alcock, 1993, *Understanding Poverty*. London: Macmillan Press.

standing in which a person finds him- or herself also plays a role in whether they are able to access resources. The third approach explores the '*social relationship*', whereby the social standing of an individual and their access to power and opportunities is assessed. With the exploration of social relationships the issue of dependence on state grants is one that comes out strongly, , but as Spicker (2007) argues a distinction between receiving benefits and being poor is rarely debated. Lack of access to income results in social exclusion and people are not able to fully participate in society. In this form of approach poverty is also about the right to have access to basic structures that have been put in place by the state. Through this the state is obliged to provide for its poor and individuals (and communities) have the right to engage with people who are in power.

The 1995 United Nations Copenhagen Declaration defines poverty as including: (1) Lack of income (2) Hunger and malnutrition (3) Ill health (4) Limited or no education (5) Limited or no access to basic services (6) Increased mortality from illness (7) Homelessness and inadequate housing (8) Unsafe environment (9) Social discrimination and exclusion (10) Lack of participation in decision-making and (11) Lack of participation in civil, social and cultural life. A common feature in definitions of poverty is often emphasis on the quality of life of individuals, social participation and meeting basic needs. It further falls under three categories, namely, absolute poverty, relative poverty and capabilities poverty:

- Absolute poverty refers to subsistence below the minimum and socially acceptable living conditions while relative poverty compares the lowest bracket of a population with the upper bracket (Adeya undated, paragraph 3)."
- Capabilities poverty is the fulfilment of people's basic needs and "to let them do things of intrinsic worth (Kingdon and Knight 2004:3). It is in this context that poverty is usually measured. "Poverty is more than a lack of income. Poverty exists when an individual or a household's access to income, jobs, and/or infrastructure is inadequate or sufficiently unequal to prohibit full access to opportunities in society. The condition of poverty is caused by a combination of social, economic, spatial, environmental, and political factors" (Parnell and Mosdell 2003:4).

2. Poverty Measure

There has been much debate on the various ways in which poverty can be measured. Recent research conducted by SPII provides guidelines of poverty measures that have been used in South Africa tabulated below:

Table 6: Different types of poverty definitions and measures

Poverty Approach	Type of Indicator
Fractions of the income distribution	Relative poverty in South Africa is usually defined by reference to the bottom 20% or 40% of the expenditure distribution. This approach is problematic because poverty ⁴⁴ as defined here can never be eradicated.
\$1 and \$2 a day	This approach was developed in 1990 and since then many developing countries have used the \$1 and \$2 approach. The main thrust of the argument is that this process allowed for easy comparative analysis amongst countries. This particular approach has received a fair amount of criticism because of the arbitrary calibration of poverty.
The Poverty Datum Line	The majority of measures developed in South Africa were money-based poverty lines. The poverty lines had a limited basket of goods and reflected an absolute conceptualization of poverty.
Minimum Living and Supplemental living level	The minimum living level was first developed in the mid-1970s by the Bureau for Market research at the University of Pretoria and covered the barest essential, SPII (2007). The main approach was to measure the “lowest sum possible on which a specific household can live” (Budlender et al 2006 in SPII 2007). A secondary poverty line was used which also included a few more basic benchmarks and was know as the Supplemented Living Levels (SPII 2007). This form of measure was discontinued in 2002 (Meth 2006) in SPII 2007)
Household Subsistence Level	Developed by Potgieter at the University of Port Elizabeth, this approach accounts for the following: medical expenses, education, savings, holiday/recreation, insurance, buying household equipment and any transport beyond that of the breadwinner going to and from work (Meth 2006). Potgieter’s work is very important and influential because during the time when he began this work, there was little academic debate around the issue.
Hoogeveen and Özler - Upper and Lower Bound Poverty Lines	In 2004 Hoogeveen and Özler developed an upper (R593 per month) and lower bound (R322 per month) normative consumption- based poverty line using the ‘cost of basic needs’ approach (based on 2000 prices) (SPII 2007:31).
Food insecurity as a measure of poverty	Much work has been done to develop a food poverty line, a nutritionally balanced and minimalist diet for households (Rose and Charlton 2001 in SPII 2007). This research used the ‘very low cost food ration scale for food

⁴⁴ SPII 2007

	<p>items used by the household subsistence level and then used the 1995 Income and Expenditure Survey to calculate the costs of this subsistence diet for households. It was concluded that 42.6% of South Africans experienced food poverty, or fell below the food poverty line (Rose and Charlton 2001 in SPII 2007).</p>
UNDP Indices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The UNDP has developed a series of indices making up the Human Development Index which includes three weighted indices: 1) life expectancy index, 2) educational attainment index, and 3) gross domestic product index. ▪ The Gender empowerment index measures gender equity in terms of political participation and economic opportunities (SPII 2007). ▪ The Service deprivation index measure backlogs in accessing basic goods.
Indices of multiple deprivation	<p>Nine provincial indices of multiple deprivation for South Africa have been produced at ward level using 2001 census data (Noble et al 2006a, 2006c in SPII 2007)</p>
Other Composite Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Klassen's Deprivation Index for 1997 and 2000 ▪ Provincial level 'developmental indices' comprising a household infrastructure index and a household circumstances index (Hirschowitz et al, 2000). ▪ Four Magisterial district-level deprivation indices which focus on the relationship between deprivation and health inequalities in South Africa (McIntyre et al 2000) ▪ Vichi's 1997 Index of Deprivation using factor analysis on Living Standards and Development.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Findings

1. Site Description and Situation Analysis

The study was undertaken in Vosloorus, in the Gauteng province. Vosloorus is a fairly large township covering approximately 223,915 hectares⁴⁵ and has experienced significant population growth in the last decade. It is situated near Boksburg, east of Johannesburg and is now part of the Ekurhuleni metropolitan government. The township was established in 1963 (Gervais-Lambony 2006:1) to accommodate black people who were forcefully removed from Stirtonville under the Group Areas Act. Forced removals at the time were either motivated by the fact that black people occupied land that was earmarked for whites only or were too close to white residential areas.

Vosloorus has since its early settlement undergone radical architectural and infrastructural changes over the years, and more particularly over the past decade. The original matchbox houses and hostel dormitories now seem to be overshadowed by more informal settlements in the form of shack dwellings. There has also been an increase in home ownership (people applying for mortgage houses) and an increase in the number of RDP houses.

Kathorus is well known for the political violence that took place in the 1980s and early 1990s in the townships. Kathlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus are merely separated by streets and were effectively a single entity through whose artificial boundaries violence would surge from one township to the next. Kathorus is further famed for its self defence units (SDU) and self protection units (SPU) that were run by youth to curb the apartheid state-sponsored violence, making Vosloorus a formidable black local political hub of the 1980s (Gervais-Lambony 2006:3).

Like many black areas in South Africa the Vosloorus Township continues to experience many service delivery challenges despite the reconstruction and development inroads of the post-apartheid state. The RDP housing backlogs are the most concrete expression of the multifaceted service delivery deficits.

Vosloorus falls within the Ekurhuleni metropolitan area which plays a significant role in the economy of Gauteng. Its core economic activities cover parts of the City of Johannesburg, the Tshwane Metropolis and the OR Tambo International Airport, and contributes approximately 25% to the Gross Geographic Product of Gauteng (Metropolitan Spatial Development framework 2007:2). Located in the southern area of Ekurhuleni, Vosloorus is currently experiencing growth in agricultural production and has a diverse and growing population. However, despite the economic growth of Ekurhuleni Metropolis, the rate of unemployment remains high and stands at 37.7% (ibid. 2007:3). Added to the burden of unemployment is the increasing population density in the metropolis' black townships which make up as much as 5.7% of South Africa's total population (Global Insight 2008:14).

Vosloorus has also been affected by the current HIV/AIDS pandemic that is sweeping through much of the sub-Saharan region. Preliminary evidence from the field suggests that many of the youth are affected by the pandemic, with the proportion of child headed households or orphans left in the care of their grandparents high. Countrywide, child-headed households increased from 118,000 in 2002 to

⁴⁵ <http://www.fallingrain.com/world/SF/4/Vosloorus.html>

148,000 in 2007.⁴⁶ The South African Institute of Race Relation has estimated that child headed households have increased by 25% and the deepening crisis in the wake of the pandemic is likely to result in an even greater impact on household dynamics.

In Vosloorus education as that widely punted panacea to poverty is all but functional in the township. It is marked by overall poor performance of schools and quality of outcomes. Those parents who can afford (or barely afford) it are increasingly moving their children to schools out of the townships, in favour of Model-C public schools or private schools in formerly white areas which are perceived to offer better standards of education. The added transport costs puts further strains on household incomes.⁴⁷

2. Data Analysis

2.1 Poverty levels in Vosloorus households

As intimated throughout the report this study sought to reflect the grassroots realities of poverty and deprivation in the community of Vosloorus. Towards this end this section explores individual household dynamics in the research site and further provides an analysis using research instruments, which include the household survey, participant observation, focus group discussions and case studies.

40 households were surveyed denoting a total of 158 household members as respondents, based on the maximum and minimum household sizes of nine and two people respectively. Of the total household sample, 57.50% accessed government grants and pensions, and these were usually the main sources of income in the households.

A finding that is noteworthy from the participant observation element of the research is the large extent to which individuals and households rely on government grants. Perhaps as result of the heavy dependence on income grants, tensions between community members and social workers (in their position as mediators of government grants) were much evident, resulting in numerous allegations of poor service delivery in this regard.

Much grief surrounded the grant application process, from filling out forms, their submission to the closest welfare office and eventual decision by the SASSA. Investigations into the bureaucratic delays point to human resources incapacities. The only clinic servicing Extension 28 had only one social worker, which seems to explain the sluggish delivery of social services.

The dishonesty on the part of some grant applicants also emerged as a source of conflict between applicants on one hand and social workers on the other as some household members tended to manipulate the truth so that they could qualify for social grants.

What the above illustrates is the location of the social in the grant-provision chain and the large powers of discretion in the process. More importantly it illustrates the lived reality of many poor households, shedding insights into current trends in poverty in the peri-urban context as well as highlighting personalised accounts of how individuals within the communities overcome poverty and hunger.

⁴⁶ http://www.ci.org.za/CHILDRENCOUNT/IMAGES/CONTENT/pdf/childhead_2007.pdf

⁴⁷ Model C a concept that became popular in the 1990s and refers to the interracial schools in former white residential areas.

As the graph below indicates the majority of surveyed households were female headed, at 77.5%, while those that were headed by males stood at 20.5%, with the least being headed by grandmothers (and other) at 2.5%. These figures also substantiate observations of the increasing feminisation of poverty and the changing notions of traditionally male-headed households.

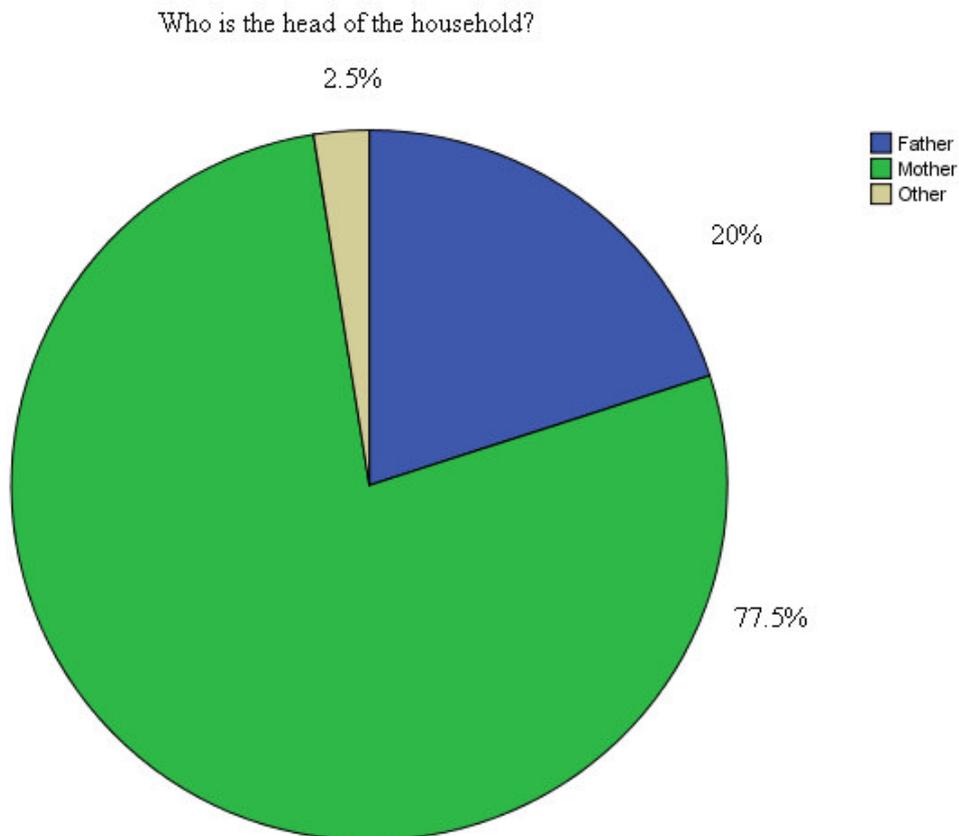


Figure 1: head of household

More and more households that were visited as part of the participant observation exercise pointed to the growing trend of families that were headed by the elderly. Though this phenomenon could be attributed to several factors, the chief reasons being the loss of life due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and many mothers leaving children in the care of the grandparents to keep or pursue employment opportunities elsewhere.

The average age of the head of the household was 47 with the average age 27 years; the oldest person registered was 91. If the survey sample was larger it would have revealed a much bigger number of households that were headed by elderly people, bringing into further relief the large extent to which many families depend on pension grants for the elderly in order to meet basic needs.⁴⁸ Similarly, all

⁴⁸ Although through the survey it became evident that that large numbers of the household depend on social grants, the extent to which they do depend in Vosloorus has not been dealt with in greater detail.

indications from ethnographies and focus group exercises also pointed to the fact that a large number of households were also headed by the elderly.

What is further worth noting as well is the fact that many households have a single (one) breadwinner, a circumstance which puts the families in vulnerable situations should something happen to the breadwinners' capacities to bring in income.

2.2 Marital status of households

Of the 40 households surveyed it was found that 27.5% were single, 25% were widowed people and the married and divorced made up 15% of the sample. Those who never married made up 10% of the sample while those who were separated from their partners were 7.5% of the sample. With 52% of the South African population being female (Statistics South Africa 2009:7), the high numbers of single households is to be expected.

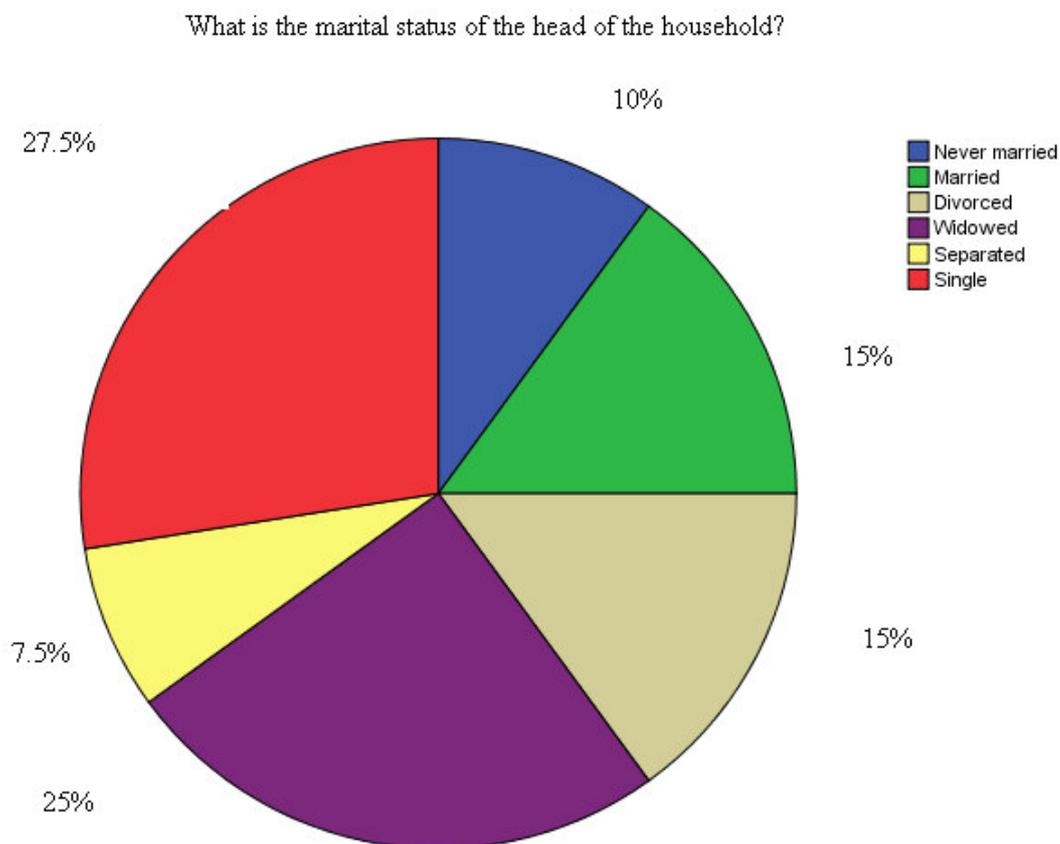


Figure 2: Household marital statuses

It further emerged during ethnographies that a high percentage of single women are often left with the responsibility to raise children on their own. Some of the explanations offered for this were the inability of men to afford *lobola*⁴⁹ or the high costs associated with a white (western) wedding. Superficially the

⁴⁹ A customary process that takes place between families of two people who want to engage in marriage and the families negotiate cash or cow transfers from the mans family to the woman's family. It is also a process where families get to know one another.

solution to this obstacle may seem quite simple, involving a signature at the local magistrate's office. But the social consequence of this action would be exposure to ridicule as both *ukulobola* and the "white" wedding often carry high legitimacy value in terms of the marital relationship.

Some of the explanation perhaps has to do with rising marital separations, with the concept of long-term commitment increasingly becoming obsolete due to changing behavioural patterns and mindsets. Terreblanche (2002) has argued that apartheid created a particular mindset within black communities aspects of which may be self-destructive and increasing vulnerability to sexually transmittable diseases, for example, in cases of multiple partners. This study confirms his observations and suggests a concerted effort by all sectors of society is necessary to mitigate the legacies of the past.

2.3 Education

Section 29 of the Constitution of South Africa guarantees the right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education. The state is expected to take reasonable measures for the progressive realisation of these rights by all South Africans.

As noted throughout the study, education is seen as a tool for uprooting people from poverty and deprivation. Indications from discussions are that many households often spend a large part of their income on the education of children at the expense of meeting "short-term" basic needs because of a strong belief that education can in the long-term increase their collective chances of effectively competing in the labour market.

Data from the survey confirms the prevalent sentiments on education. The annual amount spent on annual school fees varied and in some cases where children attended private schools fees were as high as R7, 710 per term. In one particular case, it emerged that the affordability of high private school fees was due to the contribution of the father (absent) and the said fees would have been otherwise totally affordable for the mother heading the household.

Other households opted for the exemption of fees as part of a coping strategy, while others would ask for assistance from family members. It is worth noting that fees for government schools in the townships range from minimum of R50 and maximum of R300. per annum. The difficulty to pay such seemingly low fees and the application for exemptions from paying school fees illustrates the levels of destitution of the households. However the process of applying for an exemption from school fees is time consuming and in view of almost non-existent basic resources:

The first thing that you have to do is go to the police station with a bank statement if you have one, so that they can see where you stand financially. After that you go to the school where you will sign an indigent form that states that you cannot afford to pay for the fees, and this usually happens at the beginning of the year, and by this stage everybody knows that if you go on this certain date that you do not have money at home and that there are financial issues at home. There are also many problems that we face when we have to go to the school and ask for help because some of these principals do not know how to talk to us, they will say that we are lying and that we do have money to pay for the fees, this will also make you not want to go there and tell people about the situation that you find yourself in. Even if we do cover the money for the fees there is also the issue of buying school [books], giving the children lunch money and also transport. You find that at times there is no money to buy a uniform, or that your child is moving into high school and they need a new full uniform that sometimes we

cannot afford and you know how kids are: they have issues with these things and they may not want to go to school.⁵⁰

The above extract illustrates the difficulties associated with obtaining the exemption from school fees and reflects the fact that there is a level of dignity lost in this process. Applicants are in contact with more than one official and are subjected to having to retell their stories more than once, sometimes to less sympathetic officials. The difficulties (and impact on self-esteem) with applying for the exemption from school fees often came to the fore in discussions without the facilitator's prompting. Although it transpired that participants were aware of their right to access free education, they found the process cumbersome and costly in terms of time and resources. It further emerged that access to "free education" was in fact not free at all as household savings were spent on school clothing, lunch money and on occasions transport. The high premium placed on these schooling costs other than school fees was also linked to rising youth delinquency. A participant from a focus group discussion stated that lack of access to proper uniform and lunch money, coupled with peer pressure, is a significant determinant of youth behaviour:

"yes and also peer pressure and then if you are from a family where nobody is employed and you have to go to school where you have to walk and other children catch taxis and then you get to school and all your friends have money to buy a Kota [bunny chow] for lunch and you do not have. And then all of them they are wearing full uniform and you only have one white shirt for school; and they also have some other colour shirts that they wear at some other days and you do not have it; they have pull-overs [jerseys] and blazers and they look smart, and then some other children will see that they do not look like the rest of the other children."

Ekupholeni Focus Group

Another respondent added that:

"especially on the day when you do not wear uniform, and then they will come with all these names of shoes, bo (like) Nike, Lacoste and all those things and then he will have to come with these old school shoes and then they will be teasing them especially in the high school."

Ekupholeni Focus Group

The two anecdotes typically illustrate some of the pressures youth people go through in having to conform to the materialistic standards set by their peers. The challenges of overcoming these pressures also suggest that mitigating measures should be investigated in the social and psychological realms as well. Sourdin (2003) has argued that unlike young people in other parts of the world who typically only have to worry about getting along with family and peer pressure, South African youth have to worry about issues of violence, poverty and HIV/AIDS as well. Their everyday challenges may seem somewhat ordinary, but the circumstances in which they have to live are extraordinary.

Hard and anecdotal evidence suggest that "free education" should go beyond school fees exemptions or the provision of physical facilities and suggests that the state should ensure *real* free education by tackling extraneous barriers to access such nutrition and school clothing. Possible interventions in this regard may include the extension of feeding schemes to high schools and assistance with school uniforms, by for example, linking with local sewing collectives, which would have multiple beneficial outcomes in the community.

⁵⁰ Discussion from the field February 2009

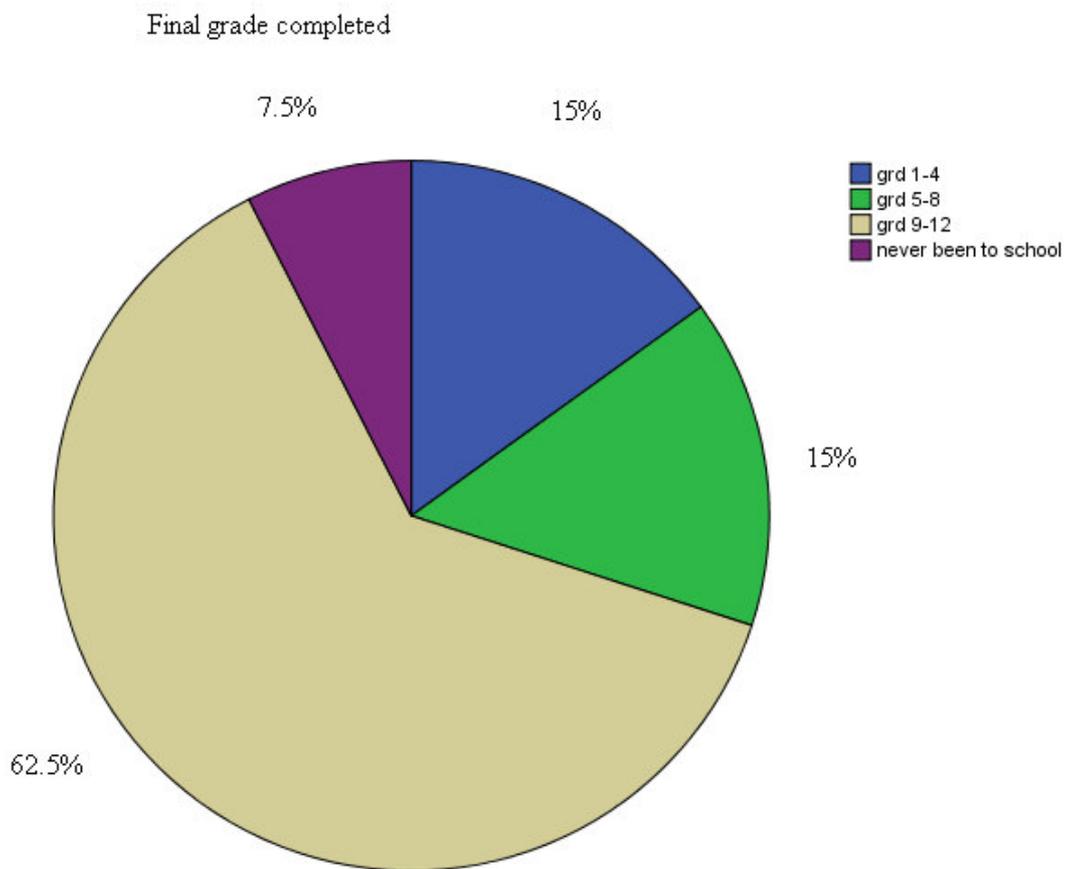


Figure 3: Final grade completed

Amongst the surveyed households, it was found that the majority of the households had someone who had attained grade 9-12 (62.5%) of schooling and had school-going dependants under the age of 20, which reflected a high premium placed on investing in education. Another 7.5% that had never been to school were in households that were headed by grandparents or where the head of the household grew up in the rural areas and the family had been too poor to send the children to school. For women specifically the available option out of poverty was then to get married or move to the urban areas. The survey also noted a high dropout rate which is attributed to the legacy of the apartheid education system.

2.4 Employment

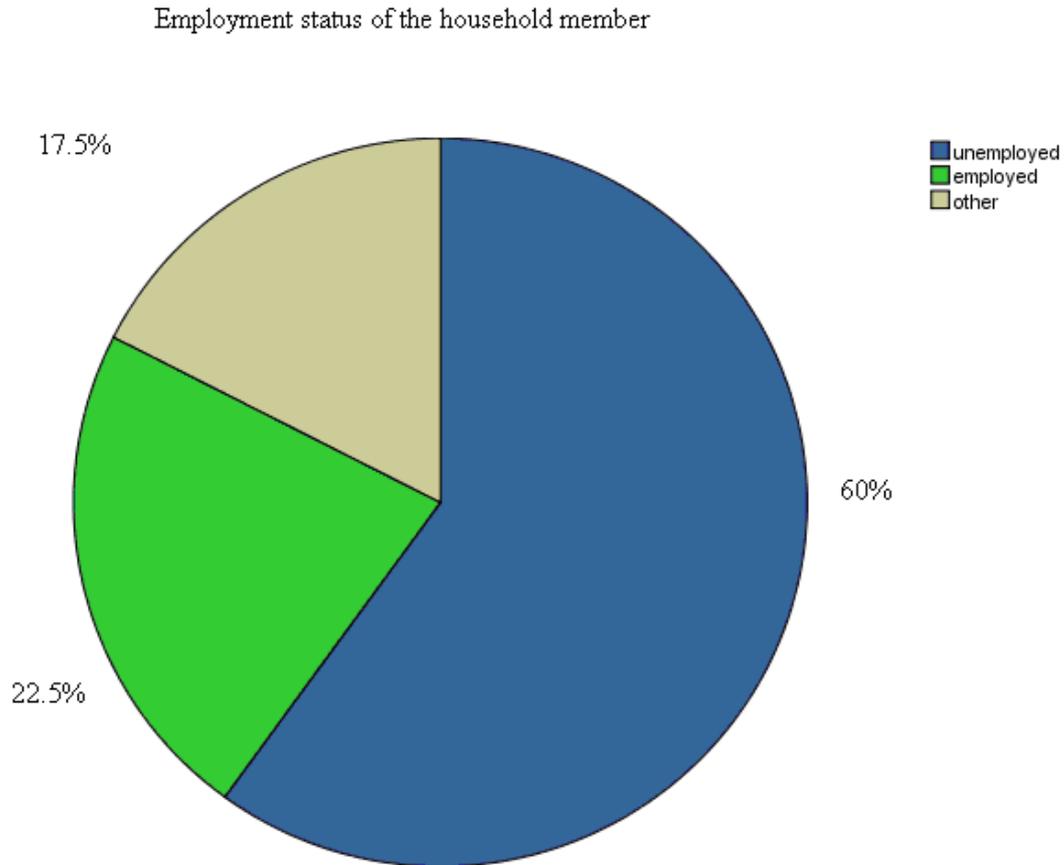


Figure 4: Employment status of the head of the households

The number of people unemployed in the survey was high at 60% and only 22.5% were employed, with 17.5% self-employed or characterising themselves as 'other'. The data collected corresponds with national data sets: for the area of Vosloorus unemployment was 47.6%. Despite the fact that Ekurhuleni is part of the industrial hub, it has been unable to create sufficient employment opportunities for the surrounding communities. In a population total of 75, 679 people, Vosloorus only has an economically active population of 38,087⁵¹ which demonstrates the high levels of unemployment in the area. The annual household income in Vosloorus is low and for some there are no income generating opportunities within the households. The majority of the population in the area falls into the low-income earning bracket. The table below illustrates annual household income in Vosloorus:

⁵¹ Census 2001

Table 7: Annual household income in Vosloorus

Annual household income	Vosloorus
No income	10,703.50
R1 – R4 800	1,715.44
R4 801 - R 9 600	4,633.90
R9 601 - R 19 200	7,134.40
R19 201 - R 38 400	8,729.98
R38 401 - R 76 800	6,475.59
R76 801 - R153 600	2,814.42
R153 601 – R307 200	598.532
R307 201 – R614 400	125.824
R614 401 - R1 228 800	9.844
R1 228 801 - R2 457 600	112.474
R2 457 601 and more	22.214

Source: Census 2001 statistics South Africa

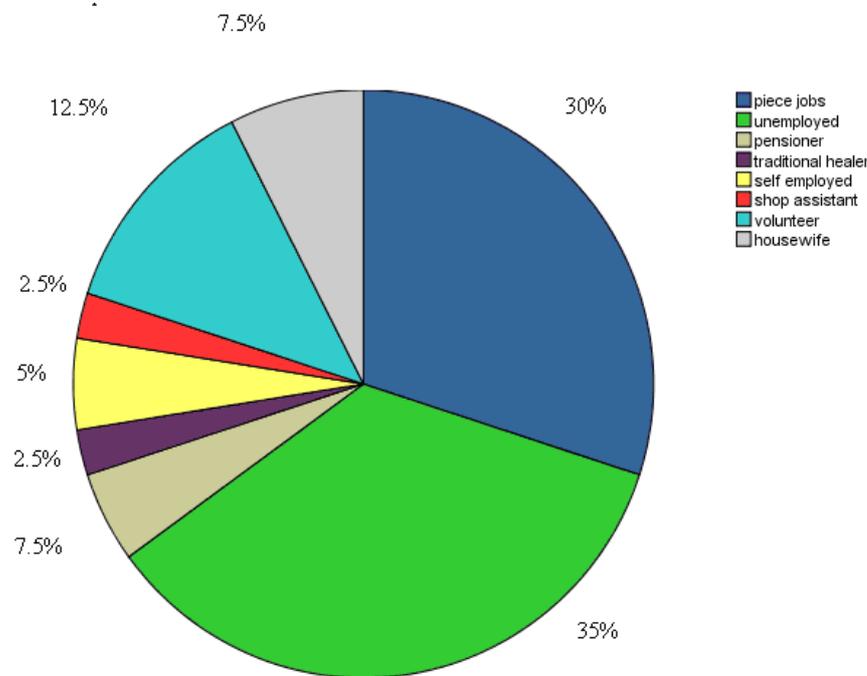


Figure 5: Occupation of the head of the household

The township's depressed economic environment and the resultant unemployment have led the many household members seeking "volunteer" work in civil society organisations, mainly in the Community Based Organisations (CBOs) sector. Many of the community initiatives in the Vosloorus are in the areas of home-based care for people with various disabilities and supporting child headed households. Volunteers are paid a monthly stipend of R1000.00 which goes some way toward meeting basic needs.

The survey results further indicate income from both formal and informal employment, though the majority of the households fall in the lower income bracket and are therefore vulnerable to exogenous shocks such as the persistent increase in food prices. Other households reported that they were surviving solely on social grants as forms of income. The minimum household income received was R440 a month (a combination of 2 child grants) and the maximum was R2,500 for an individual working

as a shop assistant. Of the households which relied on the Child Support Grant (CSG) of R440, the income barely made ends meet, with household members often going to bed on empty stomachs. A head of household in such circumstances had on more than one occasion attempted to apply for access to the Social Relief of Distress (SROD) grant but her attempts were largely unsuccessful.

2.5 Social grants

There is a critical volume of research on the use of social grants used by the poor to supplement their meagre income, showing that grants are not an end in themselves. In the area under study, Vosloorus Extension 28, the high unemployment rate has resulted in a heavy and almost exclusive reliance by households on the social grant income, which should, it is submitted, require the state to revisit its policy assumptions, objectives and design in this regard.

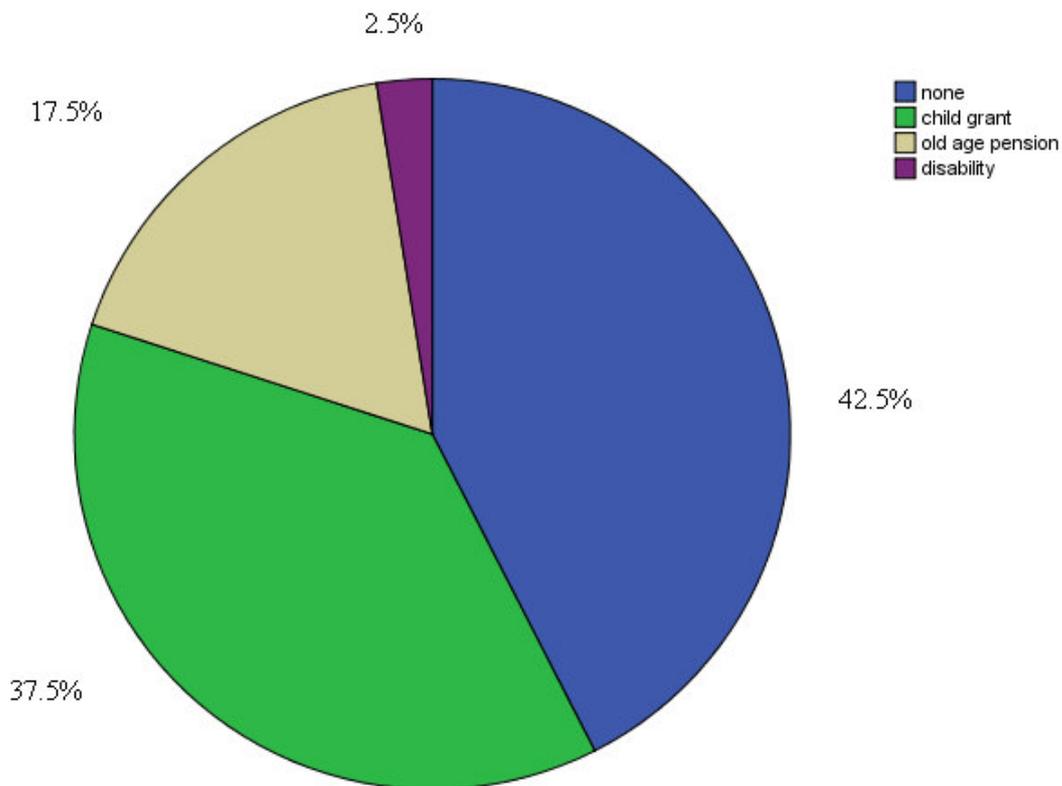


Figure 6: Types of grants received

The study unearthed a number of people who were eligible for grants but somehow slipped through the social security net for a variety of reasons. In June 2008 government introduced a policy which permitted applications for grants without the requirement for an Identity Document (ID). However a February 2009 survey by SPII revealed that 42.5% of the households still had no access to the various grants despite their eligibility, with of 12.5% stating the lack of possession of an ID as the main reason.

Government information and communication on services appears not to be filtering through the community level even in instances where there have been active campaigns aimed at encouraging people to apply for IDs free of charge.⁵² While some of the respondents to questions around access to grants may have been less than honest in declaring their receipt of grants, the scale would still be negligible.

The survey further indicated that 37.5% of the households stated that they received a Child Support Grant (CSG), which is the most widely accessed grant, with 17.5% receiving the Old Age Grant (OAG) and only 2.5% with access to disability grants. Below is Mama Beauty's⁵³ case study, a casual worker who often relies on her aunt's pension to survive.

BOX 1: ASSISTANCE FROM FAMILY

Mama Beauty is a 54 year old female who has been living with her aunt in Extension 28 (Phase 1 area) since 1992. Although Beauty does casual work, washing, ironing and cleaning to get some income, her main source of income for basic needs is her aunt's old age grant. The combined household income hardly meets the family's basic needs and often results in payment arrears for municipal services, chiefly for electricity which costs R50 fortnightly.

Mama Beauty, a divorcee, has three grown up children, twin boys and a daughter, who live elsewhere, but occasionally visit her and assist with groceries and paying for electricity. The deeply religious Beauty says she has lost faith in the present government and is of the view that life was better during the pre-1994 dispensation when she had full-time employment. She further decries the lack of community unity and lethargy of many people to fight for their rights.

A key issue that Beauty raised about her current predicament leads her to conclude that life 'back in the days' was better because she was employed and could look after herself. She further feels that the present government's anti-poverty initiatives are ineffective and is of the view that the solution lies with employment creation.

⁵² This process usually takes place just before the elections. No you can not state this – you can say that in this instance....

⁵³ Pseudonyms have been used for the participants to ensure anonymity, although consent forms were signed and participants have agreed to have their real names used.

Beauty concludes that though there was no freedom at least people did not go hungry, but has brought with it a radical change in living conditions as many remain in the shackles of poverty.

BOX 2: RELIANCE ON THE CSG AS INCOME

Anna is a 41-year-old female and lives in Vosloorus Extension 28 (Phase 1). She has three children, a boy in high school aged 17, two girls, aged 13 and 10. Anna was previously married and separated from her first husband of 17 years. She then lived with her new partner who passed away in 2004.

Unemployed, Beauty's main source of household income comes in the form of child support grants for her two, younger children. She makes additional money as a "runner", the bag holder for *fafi*, a numbers gambling game also known as *umChina*, a reference to the typically Chinese man who operates the scheme. The small earnings from *fafi* contribute toward household expenses.

Beauty's position as *fafi* has strengthened social networks that come in handy in times of difficulties. Although she has extended relatives, Beauty says they have problems of their own and the relationship has been sour one for a while. Her neighbours provide strong moral and material support.

Although she has access to the child grant, she feels that it is not enough because she is raising three children and that she has no other form of income. She has attempted to get the emergency relief fund but has been unsuccessful on the grounds that she is already a recipient of a child support grant on behalf of her two young children.

The several occasions she attempted to apply for the grant left her weary of government departments as she encountered insensitive officials who said they were too busy dealing with the previous month's workload to process her application.

2.6 Presence of assets in households

The chart below indicates that 72.5% of the households owned their dwelling and 27.5% were renting. The high proportion of ownership is largely attributed to the provision of RDP houses. Sizes of house structures range from 1 to as many as 8 rooms (where owners built rooms on to the standard RDP house to accommodate extended families or for rental income. Undoubtedly, government's RDP housing provision for the population has been a success in some parts of Vosloorus but has not been without dissatisfaction the positive figures notwithstanding.

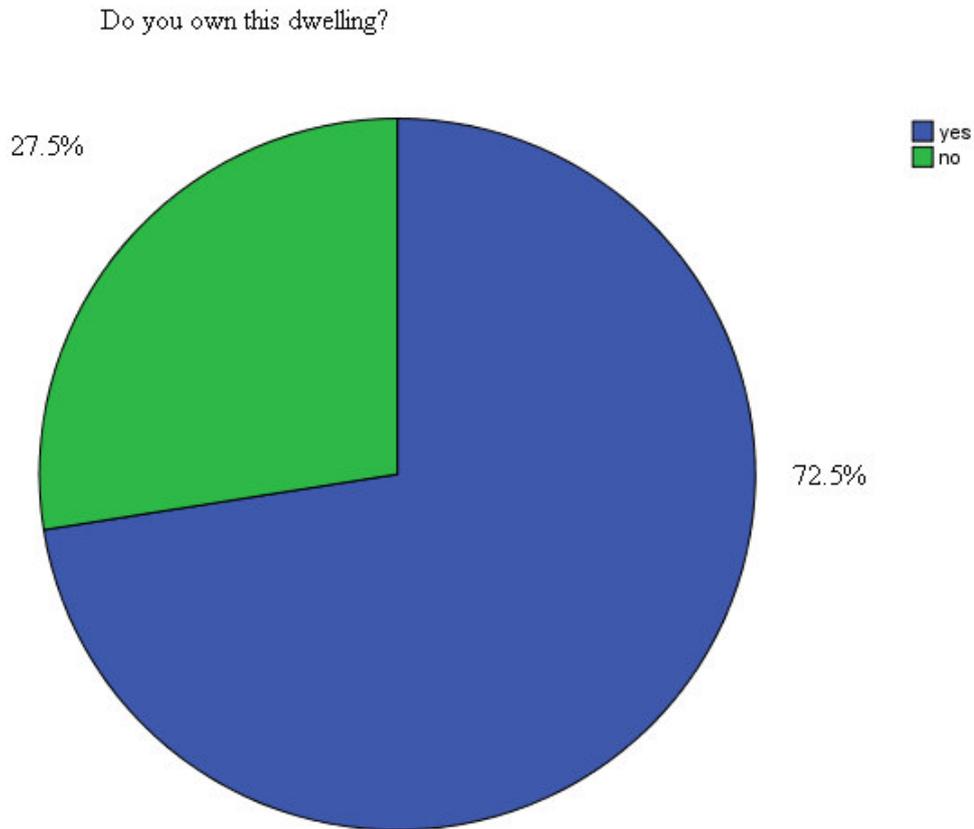


Figure: 7 Ownership of assets

2.7 Energy, water and sanitation

In terms of availability of assets in the household we found that 97.5% of the households had electricity, and 2, 5% has no electricity because of their location in informal settlements. 17.5% of the households had hot piped water and 82.5 percent did not, with the different being attributed to the non-availability of geysers in the households. Although service has been slow in the area, the provisions of water and sanitation have been fairly implemented. Water and sanitation was commensurate with policy – either indoor (75%) or outdoor (30%).

Results from the survey indicate that 82.5% households paid for water and electricity and 17.5% did not pay because they were unable to afford the prices. This issue was further explored when researchers asked households if they had ever experienced a disconnection of water or electricity. The responses to this question were mixed, with some households stating that they had never experienced disconnections and others expressing a contrary view.

In Extension 28, all participating households who never experienced disconnections of water and/or electricity attributed this to the willingness on the part of the municipality to negotiate arrears and permit defaulters to pay what they can afford. Nevertheless, researchers observed a high prevalence of illegal electricity connections. Indeed, some respondents stated that they do not pay for municipal services at all.

As a measure to deal with illegal connections, Eskom workers were deployed to assess and rectify the situation. This process involved Eskom workers entering households on a door-to-door basis and if an illegal connection was discovered the meter box would be removed. To have the meter box reconnected, according to community members from the area, a fee of R2, 500 is charged. To prevent the removal of their meter boxes no-one would simply answer their doors when Eskom workers came. The people from Eskom caught on to this tactic and they dressed more casually when going from door to door and this was effective for a while. But people have learned whether to answer a stranger's knock or simply not answer as a way to temporarily cope with the threat of disconnection.

3. Assets needed for a decent living

This section used the 'socially perceived approach' that has been adapted from Wright (2008). The approach originated in Britain, but has since been used in 15 other countries. The approach focuses on people's perceptions of assets that are necessary to have a decent living. In the case of the Vosloorus research work, the list of assets that were considered was adapted from the study that was conducted by Wright to ascertain what needs people consider essential for a decent life, the views of individuals on the streets of the township were polled. The pilot inquiry at the lowest level of the community was intended to put into practice the concept and principles of "people-centred policy making" which informed the creation of a new list of needed assets for the survey.

As the sample size of the survey was relatively small, validation necessitated the institution of a focus group discussion prior to carrying out the survey. Three sets of questions were asked, beginning with asking participants what they thought were the key elements that would ensure a decent life by providing a list of priorities. The need for money topped the lists of the majority of participants, though this particular need slid in terms of priorities or importance in favour of employment as participants would of course prefer a predictable source of income to a once-off bonus.

The list items were then fed into the SPSS software for statistical analysis, using the multiple responses, and the following as items that were deemed necessary for a decent life were derived:

Table 8: Assets needed for a decent life

ITEMS	% OF ITEMS ESSENTIAL FOR DECENT LIFE
Bed	100%
Sanitary facilities (Bath and toilet in the house)	100%
A clean environment	100%
Refrigerator	100%
Enough food	100%
Education	100%
Security (fence or wall)	100%
Recreation	100%
Respect	100%
Television set	97.5%
Radio	97.5%
The ability to buy food	97.5%
Stove/ cooker	97.5%
Sofa	97.5%
House (type of house)	95%

Street light	95%
Electricity and Water	95%
Employment	95%
Kitchen unit	95%
Being part of a community	95%
Satellite TV/ DSTV	92.5%
Washing machine	92.5%
Land line	92.5%
Cell Phone	92.5%
Computer	92.5%
DVD Machine	90%
Culture	90%
Internet	87.5%
Living with parents	87.5%
Sewing machine	82.5%
Knitting machine	80%
Car vehicle	80%
Dish washer	77.5%
Coal Stove	75%
Hand grinder	45%
Bicycle	22.5%

4. Access to health

Access to sufficient healthcare is essential to ensuring quality of life and has obvious implications for people's abilities to work, generate income and fully participate in the affairs of the community. Section 27 (1)(a) states that everyone has the right to healthcare services, including reproductive health. Furthermore Section 27 (3) states that no one may be refused medical treatment. The state has an obligation to ensure that there is sufficient healthcare for its citizens. The state contributes over 40% of all expenditure in the public health sector to service 80% of the population.⁵⁴ The remaining 60% of national health expenditure is for private health services. This means that 20% of the population have their health needs provided with 60% of the national health-spend.

That the public health system is under enormous strain is a widely accepted diagnosis, underscored by the recent wave of industrial action by health practitioners. The health system is marked by chronic management incapacities, insufficient personnel and infrastructural resources, and often squalid working conditions.

Health provision at micro-levels is not different to the macro picture, with some clinics in Vosloorus being almost dysfunctional to the extent that even the most dedicated staff are being pushed to the verge of acute demoralisation.

With the exception of the clinic in Extension 14, J Dumane, the other clinics in the area are not functioning to their full capacity and experience severe shortages of staff and equipment. The provisions of free healthcare services are provided according to ward demarcations, but under-performance and lack of delivery of quality health services are putting a strain on the only well-run clinic in the area as

⁵⁴ <http://www.southafrica.info/about/health/health.htm>

people jump ward boundaries to seek assistance at the J Dumane Clinic. The most widely used source of healthcare (82.5% of the households) was the clinic, as they do not have to pay for a consultation and medication. The problem for many was that the queues are usually long and without a guarantee you will get to see a doctor by the end of consulting hours.

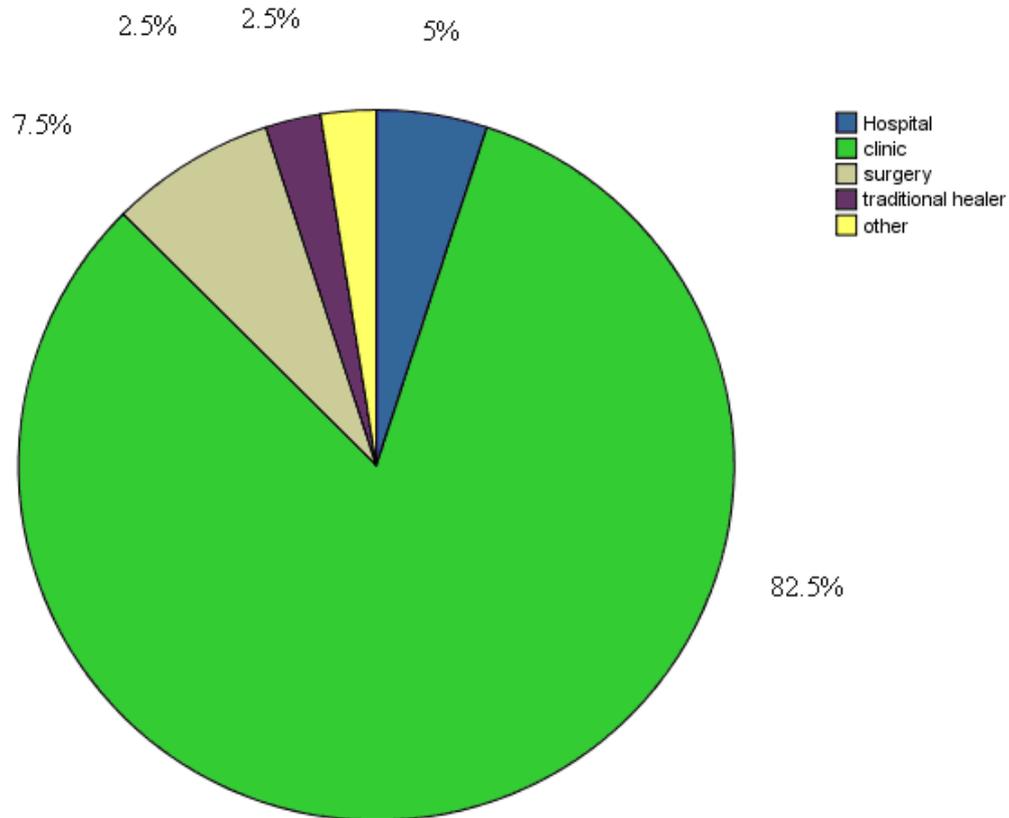


Figure 8: Preferred Health Providers

The hospital is also used by many suffering chronic illnesses, and many instances the service provided at the hospital is better than at the clinic. The biggest challenge faced by patients is a lack of money for transportation, and that is why the majority opt for the clinics nearer-by. 7.5% of households will use a private surgery for consultation with a doctor or a medical prescription. Most households will go to a surgery if visits to the clinic have not yielded the desired outcomes and the individual remains ill. Another 7.5% opted for alternative medical practices such as a traditional healer or self-medication.

The above illustrates the challenges that many poor people face in terms of access to health services, particularly those people living with HIV/AIDS. As with the lack of other basic services, people have developed coping mechanisms to side-step barriers to access health services as indicated in the graph below:

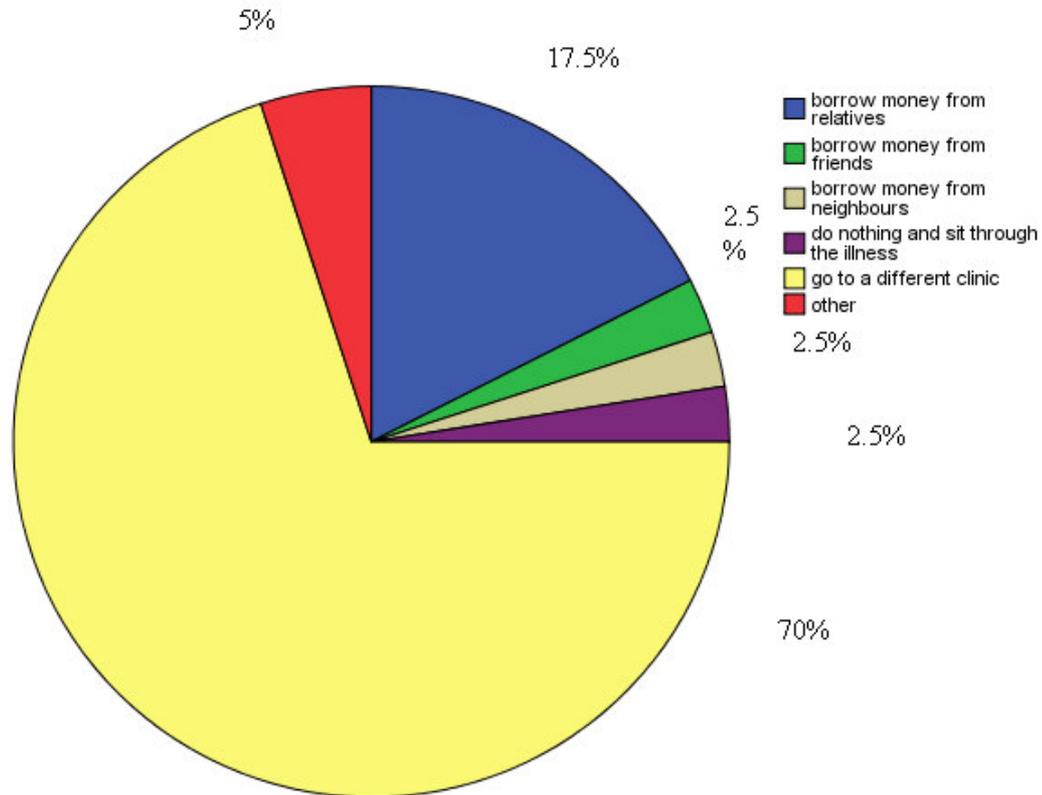


Figure 9: Coping mechanisms employed for lack of health care

In an attempt to cope with the lack of services the majority of households (70%) will go to different clinics. 17.5% of respondents opted to borrow money from relatives in order to visit a doctor in a private surgery where the standard consultation fee is about R220. 2.5% would borrow money from neighbours to do so. Only 2.5% would opt to do nothing and sit through the illness, while 5% would opt for alternative remedies as provided by a traditional healer.

5. Basic Food Security

Hunger must rate as one of the most extreme forms of exclusion and for many poor people its severity threatens to undermine their constitutionally guaranteed right to Life. Section 27(1) (b) of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to sufficient food and water. Similarly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) state that “a human rights approach to food security places immediate and inclusive obligation on governments to create capacity for their people to feed themselves.”⁵⁵.

Lack of food can be used as an indicator for the extent of poverty; as part of the process for collecting data, therefore, prices on food and non-food essentials were monitored on a monthly basis between February and April 2009.⁵⁶ The intention of the monitoring of prices was to ascertain the global impact of the financial crisis and the coping strategies of low-income households. The prices were collected at the beginning of each month from JD wholesalers in Goldspot, which is where the majority of households in

⁵⁵ <http://uk.oneworld.bet/guides/food>, date accessed 11 August 2008

⁵⁶ We have continued to monitor food prices throughout.

Vosloorus purchase their goods. Additionally, the researchers collected prices from the street corner vegetable stalls, which supply locals with vegetables.

The list of the food items were basic staple items that a poor household use on a day-to-day basis, while the non-food items were made up of household basics such as electricity, Vaseline and washing powder. Below is a BNB from the month of February and March 2009 that illustrates the increase in food prices:

Table 9: A comparison of food prices February to July 2009

COMMODITY	February RAND	July RAND
Mealie meal*	R 45.99	R 49.99
Flour	R 89.99	R87.99
Rice	R 49.99	R89.99
Meat	R 30.00	R49.99
Potatoes	R 45.00	R25
Cooking oil	R 30.00	R29.99
Beans	R 14.99	R15.99
Tomatoes	R 10.00	R20
Onions	R 10.00	R5
Sugar	R 16.99	R89.99
Tea	R 15.99	R21.99
Milk**	R 19.99	R20
Bread***	R 4.06	R4.99
Salt	R 9.99	R9.99
Eggs	R 69.99	R65.99
Cabbage	R 10.00	R6
Margarine	R 16.99	R17.99
Soup	R 2.79	R2.35
Fish	R 12.99	R14.99
Spinach	R 10.00	R6
Total	R 515.74	R 634.22

What could be deduced from the above total figures is that, for a reported number of up to eleven thousand households in Vosloorus without access to income or whose main sources of income are social grants food insecurity is a reality.60% of the participants in the survey were found to be food insecure, a margin that was amplified by food prices increases during the months under review. 45% of the respondents stated that they had three meals a day, while 37.5% said they had 4 meals a day. 12.5% stated that they had two meals a day and 10% had one meal a day. The discussion on nutrition within the basket highlights the dangers of not eating regularly. It also points to the need for serious government interventions to ensure household food security.

There was a slight decrease in the total cost of the food basket beginning in March 2009, due to a preference for a less expensive brand than the brand purchased previously. The price rose again in subsequent months, however. The price of mealie meal also inflated, from R45.99 in February to R47.95 in March and R49.99 in July. The total cost of the food basket had decreased to R1500.31, which trend had been attributed to changes in brand choice. For purposes of triangulation, there was constant consultation with households so as to keep track of what was happening in their daily life and interactions.

The benefits of good nutrition have a direct and positive impact on savings in the health system and make for a generally productive populace. A study by Capital Initiative, which used a similar basket to the one applied in Vosloorus, calculated the recommended basket and its food costing specified for healthy consumption in the city.

Table 10: Recommended balanced diet “grocery list”

Item	Quantity	Price
Bread	1	R5.89
Maize	5kg	R16.99
Soup bones	643g bag	R3.34
Maas	1 carton	R7.39
Milk	2lt	R15.99
Spinach	Bunch	R2.99
Carrots	Bunch	R2.99
Tomatoes	1	R1.61
Onion	1	R1.17
Apple	1	R1.49
Potato	1	R2.49
Banana	1	R1.34
Orange	1	R2.04
Total		R65.72

Table 11: Daily nutrition budget per person

Item	Quantity	Price Size
Bread	3 slices	R0.87
Maize	500g cooked	R0.50
Soup bones	450g	R2.44
Maas	1 carton	R7.39
Spinach	100g raw(4leaves)	R0.66
Carrots	1	R0.32
Tomatoes	1	R1.61
Onion	1	R1.17
Apple	1	R1.49
Banana	1	R1.34
Orange	1	R2.04
Total		R22.31

Source: Capital Initiative

Capital Initiative concluded that R691 would secure a balanced diet per person monthly, a total of R3,458.05 for a family of five (Capital Initiative 2009:12-13). The amount may seem affordable to middle and high income earners, but for an average worker who earns less than R2, 500 fulfilling the need for a healthy balanced diet is likely to be out of reach.

5.1 Nutrition within the basket

The Vosloorus study indicates an increase in food prices, with little or no increase in household income, which puts pressure on the ideal nutrition of households. Part of the household survey assessed the nutritional value of the food basket, and this section further explores food expenditure patterns, using weekly food diaries for households.

The weekly diary tool was meant to prevent over reliance on the basket list only. The food amount was inputted into the statistical package SPSS and taking the average amount of food consumed for analysis by a dietician. Overall, the conclusion from the nutritional analysis was positive in terms of the nutritional value of the basket, but noted a deficiency in some nutrients due to issues of affordability.

. Table 12: Daily food intake for a 30-year old female

Daily on 2009/03/30	
168g of Bread, Brown	168.00g
17ml of Sunflower Oil	17.00g
15g of Egg, Chicken, White, Raw	15.00g
14g of Pilchard In Tomato Sauce	14.00g
100g of Wheat Flour, Cake Flour	100.00g
8g of Apple, Average, Raw	8.00g
7g of Banana, Raw (peeled)	7.00g
20g of Spinach, Raw	20.00g
75g of Cabbage, Raw	75.00g
17 g of Beans, Dried, Cooked	17.00g
104g of Maize-meal, Raw (white)	104.00g
17 g of Chicken, Fresh, Raw	17.00g
50ml of Milk, Full Fat / Whole, Fresh	50.00g
42g of Rice, White, Cooked	42.00g
4g of Salt, Table, Iodised	4.00g

83g of Sugar, White, Granulated	83.00g
8g of Tomato, Raw	8.00g
2g of Tea, Brewed	2.00g
6g of Coffee, Brewed/ Instant	6.00g
83g of Potato, Raw	83.00g
8g of Carrot, Raw	8.00g

Table 12: MLL Daily food rations for adult men performing fairly hard work and adult women performing light work⁵⁷

Food	Men (age in years)			Women (age in years)				
	19-22	23-50	51+	19-22	23-50	51+	Pregnant	Nursing
Milk (full cream milk powder)	40 g	40 g	40 g	40 g	40 g	40 g	60 g	60 g
Meat, fish, eggs and peanut butter	73g	73g	73g	73g	73g	73g	80g	86
Baked beans	58g	58g	58g	58g	58g	58g	58g	58g
Fresh vegetables	330g	330g	330g	330g	330g	330g	330g	330g
Margarine	20g	20g	15g	15g	15g	10g	20g	20g
Oil	20ml	20ml	20ml	20ml	20ml	20ml	20ml	20ml
Brown or whole wheat bread	280g	280g	175g	140g	140g	105g	175g	175g
Grain products (mainly mealie)	340g	340g	280g	180g	180g	150g	180g	180g
Sugar and jam	70g	70g	45g	40g	40g	35g	70g	70g
Coffee and tea	7g	7g	7g	7g	7g	7g	7g	7g
Salt	4g	4g	4g	4g	4g	4g	4g	4g
Spices and seasoning	5g	5g	5g	5g	5g	5g	5g	5g

Source: Martins and Maritz (2004) in Martins (2005)

⁵⁷ Research conducted by Martins and Maritz (2004) using the minimum living level (MLL) the daily food intake for adult male and adult women in order to have sufficient nutrients and be able to perform work activities

A comparison of the two preceding tables indicates a nutritional deficiency amongst the participants of the Vosloorus study when using “the recommended energy allowance for an adult female is 2,200 kilocalories per day” as a yardstick for analysis (Rose et al 2004:2). The contents of the food basket do not meet the recommended daily nutritional intake. Findings from the basket as well as food diaries indicate predominance in carbohydrate food intake and miniscule intake of protein, fat, iron, calcium, and vitamins, which were all below the recommended daily allowance. Widespread nutritional deficiency in the area under study has obvious health implications, particularly in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the strain malnutrition places on the productivity of individuals. Some reprieve in this regard is indicated by the fact that though 87.5% of the participants purchased all of their consumable goods, a few cultivated spinach, carrots, cabbage and tomatoes, with spinach increasingly becoming a feature of the daily diet as it grows throughout the year. Research data further indicates that 45% of the households ate three times a day and 32.5% ate four times a day. According to the food diaries and ethnographies most of the participants ate bread and tea in the morning, soft porridge or bread and tea for lunch and porridge and a vegetable such as cabbage, spinach or tomatoes and onion mix, and a piece of meat if available, for supper. The diaries indicate a lack of nutritional variety.

Chapter Five: Main Recommendations

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Administrative justice and access to information

While Section 33 of the Constitution states everyone has the right to just administrative action this promise often did not correspond with the realities at the coalface of service delivery. The Vosloorus research study unearthed many cases of maladministration which presented a major barrier to access to grants and other government services. There were some blatant cases of the violation of this right by government officials. Similarly Section 32 of the Constitution guarantees the right to access information but empirical evidence point to the unwillingness of civil servants to comply with information requests and ineffective publicity by the government of the rightful procedures to access information.

- Government information and communication content has a strong bias toward print and internet media without the attendant distribution channels for information to reach the poorest sections of the South African society. The efficacy of government information and technology based Thusong multi-purpose community centres is inconclusive and their presence in the area covered by the study was non-existent. A re-evaluation and revamping of Thusong Centre could still improve their potential as sources of useful government information as well as that of ideas on global innovation trends on a variety of issues such as the possible campaign for the provision of solar power for heating and cooking, which could radically lower the electricity expenditure of households.
- A potential source for local government communication at a grassroots level, at least from the distribution point of view, is partnerships with local CBOs. Most organised local civil society initiatives are already fulfilling this function, albeit in an ad hoc or unsystematic manner. Such partnerships also have a potential of generating local job opportunities.

Food pricing and food affordability

- There is an urgent need to develop a food for all policy in South Africa. The findings of this research point to disturbing levels of deprivation and food insecurity which affirm the imperative that basic food items should not be subjected to market forces. This research has also highlighted that for many poor households, the increase in food prices means that basic foods are out of reach for the majority who are in the low-income bracket, and those who are unable to secure employment. The BNB is a potentially useful tool for monitoring food prices and for providing facts for dialogue and lobbying on this critical issue.
- The results from the BNB can also be used for wage negotiations as it illustrates the necessary needs for increase in wages because the research has illustrated the difficulties that low-income earners, the poor and the working poor are not consuming enough nutrition. This is also a good tool to measure the impact of the poverty strategies that have been put in place since 1994.

- The use of the BNB as part of a national poverty line can be beneficial, by using the food basket and expenditure which can be differentiated by the rural and urban areas to see the amount that is necessary to have basic needs met. The qualitative approach would then mean that we are able to capture adequately poverty at household levels.

Adequate nutrition

- The findings with regard to the nutritional quality of households' food intake in general and government intervention such as school nutrition programmes show that they have to be subjected to more rigorous nutritional standards. Policy makers and analysts need to develop far more concrete knowledge of the levels of nutrition and food deprivation in the local contexts to ensure that policy choices are not arbitrary but scientific.
- Government has zero rated 19 items; however, the relief that this has brought has been diminished by recent revelations of widespread price-fixing on staples like mealie meal and milk. Such unbridled collusion on the part of large business monopolies suggests a need for much tighter regulation of basic food items to guarantee adequate nutrition for all.

Income security

The research points to the fact that economic growth does not necessarily result in the expected rise in employment opportunities. Instead the positive growth rate that South Africa has experienced thus far has been described as "jobless growth". And while short-term income relief in the form of the various social grants certainly go a long way toward providing some income to the destitute, such measures are unsustainable on the part of the government budget and the long-term relief of the intended beneficiaries.

Government's Expanded Public Works programme, which promises a much bigger impact in terms of employment creation, poverty eradication and stimulating economic growth, continues to be on the fringes of the national development discourse and its success or failures largely remain indeterminate.

The extended public works programme is one of governments programmes aimed at providing poverty and income relief. The Programme was initiated in April 2004 to initiate economic growth and sustainable development by giving particular attention to the following sectors:

- Infrastructure - to increase the labour intensity of state-funded programmes
- Social-work opportunities in the public social programmes such as home-based care
- Economic - support income generating programmes which will utilise government expenditure on goods and services
- Environment - create work opportunities in the public environment improvement programmes.

The programme remains a viable instrument for the social and economic transformation of South Africa, provided there are concerted efforts to evaluate its impact thus far so as to pave the way for its invigoration. The re-looking of

the EPWP also needs to take into account the high percentages of youth unemployment by particularly focusing on appropriate skills development.

Chapter Six: Concluding Remarks

Disaffection, which is real or perceived, is a regular media item as many of the marginalised communities increasingly take their real or perceived violation of their constitutional rights over access to basic services to the streets. Ambrose (2003) argues that poverty and deprivation are a result of “local malfunctions in management and service delivery, not with structural forces.” He further argues that these localised unbearable conditions affect poor individuals who live in poor communities to the level of breaking point. Ambrose notes that these (“local malfunctions”) are consequences of the quality of local service providers. In the South African context there have also been similar experiences with regard to service delivery. Service delivery in South Africa is very slow and within poor communities it is even worse with little or no action taking place. To overcome this, local residents need to stand together so that their voices are heard. Poor service delivery goes hand-in-hand with corruption. The lack of performance review in the government sector has meant that officials who have been underperforming and the mismanagement of funds can take place easily. For example the delivery of RDP houses has been surrounded with much controversy, including issues of lack of performance and delivery. The breakdown in service delivery resulting in countless protests from communities such as in Diepsloot, in the Gauteng province, may just be an instrument by communities to exert constant review of performance and to hold government accountable.

Ambrose’s (2003) argument illustrates the need for a greater debate on the issues of accountability and transparency within the government departments and introduces the notion that local residents need to take the initiative to regenerate their communities. This would result in the constructive use of time, creating and maintaining boundaries of rules and expectations. The approach would focus on the role of the state and to what extent has the state been successful in becoming developmental while also being democratic. The states ability to be developmental is through its interventions, regulation and planning. Edigheji (2005:9) states that “a democratic developmental state is one that not only embodies the principles of electoral democracy, but also ensures citizens’ participation in the development and governance processes. Thus when questioning how the democratic developmental state can be placed in the African context, it is pertinent to bring citizenship back into politics.” Edigheji highlights the importance of participation in the development state in order for all to achieve growth and development in the state. A comprehensive definition of the developmental state is thus, “as one whose ideological underpinnings are developmental and one that seriously attempts to construct and deploy its administrative and political resources to the task of economic development” (Mkandawire in Edigheji 2005:12). In other words developmental goals should be formed with key social groups to entail participation around policy formation and developmental goals.

The overall findings of the Vosloorus research study point to the fact that although South Africa’s experience of an economic boom in the years following the demise of apartheid, this did not result in employment creation and the reduction of poverty. The study further notes government’s commendable efforts at widening the social security net through various means but these are similarly not up to the quality and scale for the progressive reduction and eventual eradication of poverty, deprivation and chronic inequalities. It is in this context that failure to reflect (and adapt) on the impact of anti-poverty strategies is described by Van Bueren (2004: xiv) as “poverty of the imagination

[that] has been underestimated as a contributing factor to impoverishment". Simply expressed, Van Bueren means that uncreative and unresponsive policies and strategies are as liable a cause of poverty as any others.

It is with Van Bueren's observation in mind that the Vosloorus study was undertaken. The investigation explored the background context of poverty, inequality, unemployment from a theoretical perspective. Perhaps the study's strongest feature is that it locates the discourse on poverty in the lived realities of the people of Vosloorus Extension 28, with the aid of tools such as the Basic Needs Basket to assess household's expenditure patterns and coping mechanisms. The microscopic findings of the study mirrored the structural roots and nature of unemployment, poverty and inequality and raises alarm bells over the large numbers of people who are potentially slipping over the poverty precipice.

More crucially the research process was as much a learning experience for researchers as it was for the participants. A tool such as the Basic Needs Basket certainly went a long way in raising awareness on optimising household nutritional intake even in the face of limited resources. It is hoped that the Basic Needs Basket tool will be eventually adopted for nutrition education by interested people both in the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

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