



## **Towards a Decent Living Level – Income Levels and Socially Perceived Necessities**

**Pretoria: HSRC Video Conference Centre, 1st floor HSRC Library,  
Human Sciences Research Council, 134 Pretorius Street**

**Cape Town : HSRC, 12th Floor, Plein Park Building (Opposite  
Revenue Office), Plein Street (Video Link)**

**17 March 2015  
9.30 am to 2 pm**

South Africa is characterised as being one of the most unequal countries in the world, both in terms of income and assets. Other inequalities however are equally pervasive, including inequalities of race, class, gender, age and spatial location.

Poverty and inequality inform each other in a deeply structural manner in South Africa. Solutions to both accordingly need to be based on structural changes of the manner in which opportunities and resources and incomes are distributed in South Africa. Given the high levels of inequality that exist, however, it is important to know whether across the cleavages, there is a core consensus regarding what would constitute a decent living level that all South Africans should be able to access.

The recent National Development Plan (NDP) introduced into the national discourse the notion of a comprehensive ‘decent standard of living’ that should be enjoyed by all South Africans by 2030. It further encouraged national debate regarding what this standard should be, one that enabled people to meet a variety of needs, goods and services.

Such a discourse needs to be distinguished from the question of poverty lines, which tend to be survivalist in nature and have been the subject of contestation for decades, given the Apartheid use of survivalist poverty lines to ‘scientifically’ justify paying black African workers extremely low wages. This departure to a decent standard of living as set out in the NDP needs to be welcomed as

constituting the building blocks for a truly developmental state, in which each person is able to develop their full potential.

This however takes us back to the initial question: does sufficient consensus exist regarding what are considered to be essentials for a decent standard of living by the majority of South Africans.

Between 2006 and 2008, CASASP answered this question in the affirmative. Using a combination of focus groups and a module in the 2008 South African Social Attitudes Survey, CASASP discovered that there was a high degree of consensus. 36 out of the initial 50 items presented to participants in the CASASP study were deemed to be essential by the majority of the population, and there was an extremely high degree of consensus between different groups, despite the levels of division in South Africa.

In late 2014, SASPRI, in collaboration with SPII and the LRS and supported by the FES, expanded the initial work of CASASP to ask, using Statistics South Africa's 2007/08 Living Conditions Survey, what the relationship was between people who have these 36 socially perceived necessities (SPN)s and people's income levels.

SPII, SASPRI and the LRS accordingly invite you to a seminar on 17 March 2015 at which the findings of the nature of this relationship will be released for the first time. We shall also consider the previous contestations surrounding the past headcount poverty lines, as we consider alternative methodologies that would enable the views of ordinary South Africans to be heard in this critical debate, and we further engage in identifying modalities of distribution that would enable all South Africans to enjoy a decent living level as called for in the National Development Plan.

This seminar builds on past discussions hosted by SPII and the LRS, supported by the FES, in which the linkages between a Decent Standard of Living, the Living Wage Campaign and the notion of a Social Wage were unpacked. Deepening our understanding of this subject should hone related discussions regarding the National Minimum Wage.

The seminar will be hosted at the HSRC Building in Pretoria, with a live video link- up at the Cape Town HSRC offices, followed by a finger lunch. Should you wish to attend, kindly complete the attached RSVP form and return to Fortunate Mabuza at [Fortunate@spii.org.za](mailto:Fortunate@spii.org.za); by **Wednesday 4 March 2015**. Please do not hesitate to contact Ms Mabuza with any related enquiries on 011 833 0161. There are limited funds to assist with travel costs.



Please fill in the Registration Form below and email it back to [fortunate@spii.org.za](mailto:fortunate@spii.org.za) or contact **Fortunate Mabuza** at (+27) 11 833 0161

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Dietary Requirements	