



## 10 YEARS OF SPII: A DECADE OF CHANGE

As the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) marks the first ten years of its existence, we celebrate a decade of research, advocacy, policy influence, and building a network with policy-makers, funders, and more recently, grassroots-level connections. Ten years on, SPII has become a research think-tank with breadth in its scope, footprint, and stakeholders. The fruits of SPII's projects today have roots in a long-term strong vision of social justice. We celebrate 10 Years of SPII with this special edition.



### IN THIS EDITION

*SADC BIG consults faith-based actors* | Pg 4

**Hot Topic:** *Election manifestos dissected* | Pg 6

*SPII looks back on 10 years* | Pg 8

**Guest Writer:** *ActionAid SA Director at Fatima Shabodien* | Pg 12

## DEMYSTIFYING THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) recently found itself in the middle of a media whirlwind when it decided to weigh in on the National Minimum Wage (NMW) debate that had the country abuzz due to either a lack of information or misinformation being filtered to the ground. The organisation became aware of this void when media reports started reflecting the views of naysayers who favoured free market practices over policies which protect all workers. We felt it necessary to demystify the NMW which the South African government had committed to in 2014.

Continued on Page 3



NOTE FROM THE SPIL DIRECTOR:

## 10 YEARS OF SPIL: A DECADE OF CHANGE

By Isobel Frye

This month sees SPIL heading towards the end of our first decade. Much has changed within the organisation. Staff have come and some have sadly left and our board has grown, although we still have some of our original trustees volunteering their time and strategic wisdom in this oversight capacity of SPIL.

Nationally, much has changed too. In 2006, Thabo Mbeki was still President of both the ruling party, and the country. In 2006, before the global financial crisis, growth was recorded at 5%, and in 2006/07, we recorded a budget surplus for the first time in a democratic South Africa. The broad definition of unemployment, which includes unemployed people who have been discouraged and hence ended any employment search, in 2005 was 38,8% of the workforce, according to the LFS.

Since then we have experienced the backlash of the global financial crisis. The narrow definition of unemployment has increased to just over 26%, and our national growth rate is predicted to be around 0,6% of GDP. However, despite the restricted growth, government has increased its coverage of people receiving social cash transfers to just over 16 million recipients. Social cash transfers

constitute the primary source of income for 21% of households, and access to ARVs has dramatically increased. On reflection, would we say that SPIL is still a relevant civil society institution?

We definitely think so! Despite South Africa's adoption of the National Development Plan 2030, we have not seen a significant dent in our levels of poverty, unemployment- and perhaps most worrying – inequality. SPIL has been involved in the NEDLAC-based negotiations for a National Minimum Wage, which have gone on for far too long, we believe. A meaningful minimum wage will assist in some way to reduce poverty, but it will not suffice to eradicate poverty, especially given the low levels of the most prevalent cash transfer, the child support grant (R330 per child per month).

SPIL believes that new and bold thinking is required to radically transform our economy and reverse the inter-generational patterns of marginalisation. Part of our work in this regard includes new thinking about fleshing out of the concept of a decent standard of living that should be the birth right of every person living in South Africa, as called for in the NDP. This we would like to

be the guiding objective of all social and economic policies in South Africa, and a yardstick against which the wealth of the rich elite can be gauged.

A further aspect of our work that is increasingly taking shape is our socio-economic rights monitoring tool that we are developing with the Ford Foundation, the South African Human Rights Commission and the Foundation for Human Rights. The tool is a combination of policy and budget analysis, and the development and population of statistical indicators to monitor the extent and pace of the progressive realisation of the socio-economic rights in the Constitution. This work has become all the more critical as a result of the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in early 2015 (finally) 21 years after we signed it.

Much has changed in the past ten years; but for as long as change is needed in the region, SPIL remains committed to its vision of social justice.

**Heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to our cause.**



Cover Story Continued

We used Worker’s Day to officially launch an awareness campaign which aims to educate citizens at various levels of society about the NMW based on research and fact, not speculation. We did so by means of publishing a Sunday Times op-ed which caught the attention of both Talk Radio 702 and SAFM; these national broadcasters offered us prime airtime to unpack the true impact of a nationwide “floor” wage.

SPII, as a member of the Financial Sector Campaign Coalition, is represented in Community Constituency of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) which mediates NMW negotiations. Our position, based on various examples from around the world where a minimum wage was adopted, is that while the NMW is not the sole solution to poverty and inequality in South Africa, it is likely to:

- Simulate the economy by increasing the working class’ spending power, which will then impact job creation; and
- Address massive wage inequality in the country by bumping up the wages of lower level earners.

In short, the induction of an empirically determined NMW will improve the quality of life for many South Africans affording them a decent standard of living.

The aforementioned media opportunities were phenomenal for the organisation’s goal to share knowledge on the matter considering their national footprint; however, in order to reach and engage with people who are most likely to be affected by the development, SPII has embarked on a variety of interventions to ensure that not only are citizens kept in the loop, but that they contribute the process.

## SETTING THE AGENDA

SPII facilitated a series of consultations with various civil society movements in May to determine what some of the burning concerns about the NMW are, and to help inform the targeting of our communication. Our awareness campaign favours the use of community media outlets as they operate in disadvantaged communities that are generally underserved by large-scale commercial media, have limited access

to public information and are limited in their ability to participate in public discourse at a national scale.

Community media outlets also allow SPII the platform to deliver messaging in the vernacular of these communities so that the campaign is not exclusive. So far, the organisation has worked closely with Worker World Media Production to inform NMW discussions in five official

languages across 40 community radio stations nationwide.

As a member of the NMW Communications Task Team at NEDLAC, SPII is vigorously lobbying for the use of grassroots media and the production of NMW information resources that are easily accessible to the public, such as an online video and graphics that can be shared on social media.

## DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

Looking beyond the material the organisation will make available on its digital platforms, SPII and Co-Operative for Research and Education (CORE) kicked off a series of 27 workshops with civil society organisations across the country in Potchefstroom last month. As these organisations work so closely with communities likely to be most affected by the NMW, we found it crucial to the

campaign that they be trained.

SPII, the Southern African Social Policy Research Institute (SASPRI) and the Labour Research Institute (LRS) have also partnered with the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) research team from Loughborough University on a pilot project to test their methodology in the South African context later this year.

Their research on the MIS in the United Kingdom greatly influenced a new higher minimum wage for over-25s introduced there earlier this year.

The pilot study aims to determine if the MIS model is viable for South Africa, and if so, it will be used to gauge what the average worker must earn for decent standard of living.



Reflection

TAVENGWA M NHONGO //  
AFRICA PLATFORM FOR  
SOCIAL PROTECTION

Over the years, Isobel has distinguished herself as a knowledgeable, principled and vocal campaigner of issues of human rights and social protection and in particular, for the protection of the weak and marginalised. She has blended well with professionals and colleagues of all tribes, races and religions to push the agenda of addressing the needs of

the underprivileged members of our society. She is now a campaigner for the basic income grant (BIG) and must be on the verge of being referred to as Madam BIG, but essentially because she believes that putting a reasonable amount of cash into the hands of the poor will take many of them out of poverty.



## SPII CONSULTS FAITH-BASED ACTORS ON SOCIAL PROTECTION ADVOCACY

SPII's SADC BIG Campaign Coordinator, Nkateko Chauke and Director, Isobel Frye participated in the Church of Sweden (CoS) regional consultation: Faith-Based Actors for Tax Funded Social Protection in East and Southern Africa, that was held from 24-26 May in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. The consultation was devoted to discussing what civil society, in particular faith-based organisations, can do to engage in the cause for social protection.

The consultation focused on discussing the discourse of social protection and how it is often defined by organs of state, business communities and civil society differently. Through debate and discussion, the delegates explored the different definitions of social protection by institutions such as the World Bank, who defines social protection as a tool for development. While

on the other hand, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) focuses its definition on workers or more formally known, the labour force – it be in the formal or informal sectors of employment.

During the deliberations, the Africa Platform for Social Protection (APSP) set out to define social protection as a development framework that looks at social protection as one component to eradicate poverty that should be inclusive of social security and social services, anchored by a rights-based approach and coupled with principles of solidarity and equal wealth distribution. Moreover, the efforts of development actors including civil society and faith-based actors should explore ways to integrate traditional measures of social protection into the conceptualisation and implementation of

social protection programmes.

The Norwegian Christian Aid presented on financing for social protection, leading the discussion around the lack of regulatory framework to curb the loss of funds through illicit financial flows from extractives industries. Adding that evidence from the recently leaked Panama Papers demonstrates that the world's richest population and business communities direct their wealth to tax havens and that 1% of the world's richest population control 99% of the world's wealth. The delegation placed their focus on exploring ways in which governments can raise enough revenue to secure the provision of adequate social protection programmes which should be inclusive of developing tax incentives and legislation at national level.

A field visit to two villages in Bagamoyo District enabled us to learn about the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) which is centered on two interventions including conditional cash transfers targeted at 66 villages and community driven interventions to invest in the livelihoods of communities. The initiative in Bagamoyo is funded by the World Bank; the participating families are selected in collaboration with the communities at the local level and are enrolled onto the programme.

Representatives from the District Council of Bagamoyo that are responsible for implementation of the TASAF programme provided the delegates with a presentation outlining its successes and challenges. The achievements of the program include: improved service delivery; increased school enrolment for children as their parents are able to afford their school uniform and textbooks; improved food security at household level through the conditional cash transfers; improved child and elderly well-being through contributions towards access to

health services; increasing community membership to the community health fund; and stimulated small local businesses through community-driven investment schemes. One of the challenges presented by the District Council representative of TASAF was reflected by the fact that the District Council

*...faith-based actors are already providing social services to the constituencies they serve...*

receives 25% of their funds to implement the program from donor funding as well, which in often cases is not enough for the required cost of implementation, with minimal state contribution.

Within this context, the outcome of the consultation was the recognition of the important role that faith-based actors play in the cause for social protection. This is because faith-based actors are already providing social services to the

constituencies they serve; faith-based actors have very strong support systems and extensive networks; they have the ability to generate confidence within and among communities, and are in a position to generally assist governments and gain community support. Most importantly, the voice and support of faith-based actors is crucial to the cause of social protection because they have a moral ground that both governments and communities can rely on, and an influential voice that can be trusted to work to the benefit of communities.

Therefore, integrating diaconal approaches to social justice in our efforts to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality through advocacy for the roll out of robust unconditional and non-targeted social protection programs (including the roll out of a basic income grant as advocated for and promoted by the SADC Basic Income Grant Campaign) remains a crucial exercise for organs of state, business communities, civil society and faith-based actors.



Reflection

LANGA ZITA/  
SPII CHAIRPERSON

The democratic process is tireless; and it is a privilege for SPII to be able to play an active role in shaping the future of this land. As we celebrate a decade since SPII was established, we are proud to announce that the organisation has grown significantly; both in standing and scope. Our research has not only steered

public discourse around poverty and inequality but also served as the foundation of several motions that aimed to affect policy change. I would like to acknowledge all the staff and partners of the Institute who have made possible this amazing work.

# HOT TOPIC: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF PARTY MANIFESTOS ON ORDINARY SOUTH AFRICANS?

Matshidiso Motsoeneng

This year, South Africa will hold perhaps one of the most violent elections since 1994. Since last year, political rivalry has resulted in increased violence around party candidate lists, Tlokwe bi-elections, municipal demarcation and the so-called service delivery protests.

The launch of political manifestos by the country's governing party the African National Congress (ANC), the official opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) and the new kid on the block Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) left more questions than answers as I vigorously listened to their delivery as well as reading through the many colourful pages of the documents.

A manifesto is an official declaration of intent, motive or promotion of ideas by an individual, group, political party or government. Manifestos have for a long time come to be used as a political machinery of election campaigns (propaganda?) and perhaps the most old famous one be known to us is the Communist Manifesto.

So what did the country's three most influential parties have for us? As a research Institute that is committed to finding evidence-based solutions to poverty and inequality, we sought to inspect the promises made to address critical issues relating to service delivery such as unemployment and employment strategies and of course the burning issue 'corruption' in local municipalities.



Photo credit: Marvin Adams

## THE DA MANIFESTO

The 32-page local elections manifesto at face value looks convincing, riddled with self-praise in municipalities that the DA governs in. The DA manifesto provides some details into the strategies to speed service delivery. For example, the manifesto states that the DA will "prioritise the upgrade of informal settlements and the provision of serviced sites so that all residents can access basic services."

The manifesto goes into further details into how access to basic services will be carried out but one can't help but think of Khayelitsha and other spaces occupied by poor people in places where the DA governs. If the DA is really pro-poor then why that is the Social Justice Coalition states that "21% of Cape Town's household population are informal households. This means that 21% of households get just 1% of the City's total capital allocation for water and sanitation."

## THE ANC MANIFESTO

For a party that has the experience, the ANC manifesto did not have an analysis of progress made to refer to. The extent to which past promises were met also did not feature.

The manifesto states that the ANC will “enhance the capacity of municipalities” to be able to deliver basic services better to local communities. It also goes further to say that they will “develop and strengthen local economies, create jobs and promote job placements”. These are statements that have riddled the manifesto, without any plan of action mentioned; yet we are led to believe that the 2016 local governance will be different.

For local economic development (LED) and youth unemployment the manifesto promises to “ensure that all municipalities develop special programmes targeting youth cooperatives and enterprises”. Currently, many municipalities do not even have functioning LED departments or up-to-date LED strategies if in existence at all. So upon seeing these promises in the manifesto one has to wonder if the ANC has taken enough time to do an introspection of their current municipalities and source out the real problems and work with communities to find solutions to these.

## THE EFF MANIFESTO

For a party that does not have any local governing experience, the EFF manifesto was no less detailed than the ANC manifesto. The manifesto promises a lot of things, from Early Childhood Centres to homebased care workers on an average of one worker per 100 households.

This manifesto appeared to throw figures to statements without

the provision of a rationale behind allocating one home-based health worker per 100 households. Apart from this disorientation, this manifesto stated that it would redistribute land and provide housing to communities, not taking into account that the functions of human settlements is a function of the provincial government and not local government.

## CONCLUSION

These manifestos communicate each party’s national strategy; the local elections provide an ideal political climate for this communication. However, these elections do not necessarily affect the general national economy and international politics as each of the manifestos lead us to believe. National general elections are the general platforms where international issues such as foreign policy and economic trade strategies feature. Local elections are mainly about focusing on issues that affect constituencies such as basic services, local employment and efficiently run municipalities.

With that said, none of these parties have made any real promises to hold them to account; none looked at the gendered dimensions that exist in the delivery of services, or an explicit local economy policy that looks at strengthening the local informal economy. Issues such as the capacitation of young people to have skills to compete in international markets are also lacking, despite a strong focus of the youth by all.

This year’s elections may well be the most violent elections since 1994; growing dissatisfaction screams for change, yet promises for change seem to be nothing more than that.



Reflection

**KARAM SINGH/**  
SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION

In the period from late 2012 through 2014, when I was Head of Research at the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), I had the good fortune of working with SPII. At the time, the SAHRC and SPII collaborated on a project to develop indicators to measure the progressive realisation of socio-economic rights. This work was ground breaking and in line with international best practice in the area of seeking to provide concrete measurement

to the process of monitoring the attainment of socio-economic rights. Identification of measurements for service delivery increases transparency and accountability and is essential to deepening a culture of human rights in South Africa. SPII have made and are making a significant contribution in this regard and going forward will hopefully continue to deepen this vital work.

# 10 YEARS OF SPII

## "A SOCIAL JUSTICE VISION BECOMES REALITY"

As the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) marks the first ten years of its existence, we celebrate a decade of research, advocacy, policy influence, and building a network with policy-makers, funders, and more recently, grassroots-level connections. Ten years on, SPII has become a research think-tank with breadth in its scope, footprint, and stakeholders. The fruits of SPII's projects today have roots in a long-term strong vision of social justice – most significantly, the development of a platform which provides access to research for use in advocacy and activism.



### ORIGINAL VISION

The story of SPII's vision comes from SPII's director Isobel Frye, who was part of the mastermind behind the beginnings of SPII in 2006. Poverty as a state of crisis in South Africa formed the backdrop of the conditions which sparked the original concept, which developed in the void between the poverty crisis and the lack of any formal definition of poverty, little statistics about people living in poverty, and "nothing forthcoming in terms of anti-poverty policy," says Frye.

Late 2005, through working together on a number of campaigns, the founding trustees noticed such a void, and

decided to create a state-of-the-art research meets advocacy think-tank. Initially, SPII wanted to provide civil society groups with research. Eventually, it became apparent that there was a significant disconnect between the analysis of poverty and how that analysis makes a difference for those experiencing poverty.

"It's not about drawing conclusions on behalf of people, but about asking them," says Frye.

Thus a people-centred approach became part of the core of SPII's vision.

## GRASSROOTS DIRECTIONS

As SPII takes a more grassroots-level approach to research and influencing policy the original vision is coming to fruition through projects such as the completed (2013-2015) Social Protection and Local Economic Development (LED) Graduation Pilot project and the Citizen-Based Monitoring Tool project.

As Matshidiso Motsoeneng, junior researcher at SPII, says, "This monitoring must not just end with secondary sources. The idea is that there has to be a lot more voices from the ground in policy-making and policy-influencing as well as monitoring, yet the challenge to a grassroots-level approach to research is that people's lives are very unpredictable and you won't necessarily get the results you expect."

SPII's community-based approach to its research allows "communities define poverty for themselves and what a decent standard of living is," according to Nkateko Chauke, Campaign Coordinator for the SADC BIG Campaign which advocates for a universal income grant in the region.

"The biggest challenge is getting our 52 network partners to use their platforms and agency in a proactive manner in order to expand the SADC BIG campaign," says Chauke.

The SADC BIG Campaign is important for SPII in that it marks SPII's expansion into southern Africa as a region and its increasing scale of influence as a whole. The organisation's migration toward the digital dissemination of information also aims to advance SPII's scope.

## PLANS FOR DIGITAL INNOVATION

According to Daniel McLaren, senior researcher and Socio-Economic Rights Monitoring Tool project manager, in the next three years SPII is looking to launch an online platform which will provide a tool for easy access to extensive research on the state of socio-economic rights in South Africa. "People can use this platform to get very quick access to the information they want, what are the laws, how the rights have changed, as well as disaggregate information," says McLaren. The point is that "we can't do this in isolation," and SPII's work is most useful if it is available to policy-makers and citizens alike.

## VISION TO REALITY

Tracing the origins of SPII's biggest projects to their initial conceptions, it is clear that what SPII has accomplished in 2016 is much of what it set out to do in 2006. Looking towards the future, SPII is taking a direction which extends beyond the abstract to more tangible, grassroots-level initiatives.

SPII is no longer "analysing poverty to death", as director Frye puts it, but is now looking toward a more inclusive, participatory approach to anti-poverty policy and research. From this comes the challenge of trying to work out the most robust forms of participation and responsibility. "If you are able to show that the work you have been doing is influenced by actual people and real circumstances, you are able to have a more significant impact and constituency in monitoring the government," says Frye.



## NEW ONLINE LOOK

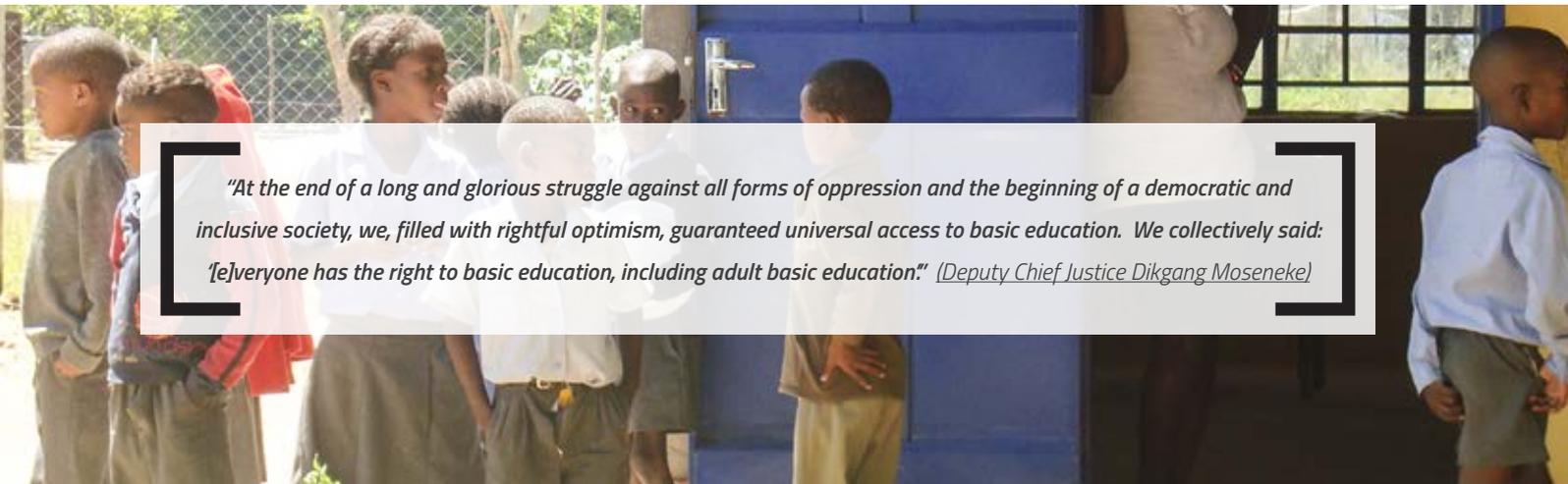
Recently SPII has revamped its website, in commemoration of its 10 year existence, making all of its projects and reports more readily accessible through a streamlined and interactive browsing experience, making it easier to navigate, and with a layout in line with international web design trends. Its adaptation to mobile screens means you can browse

[www.spii.org.za](http://www.spii.org.za) on your tablet or cellphone and read up on the latest SPII news or access a report. The SADC BIG Campaign section has moved away from the SPII site onto its own microsite, [www.spii.org.za/sadcbigcampaign](http://www.spii.org.za/sadcbigcampaign), featuring all SADC BIG country profiles and comprehensive reports.

# TOWARDS EQUITY –

## A CONSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Daniel McLaren & Nurina Ally



*"At the end of a long and glorious struggle against all forms of oppression and the beginning of a democratic and inclusive society, we, filled with rightful optimism, guaranteed universal access to basic education. We collectively said: [e]veryone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education." (Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke)*

The Constitution guarantees every person the right to a basic education. However, Apartheid's legacy of skewed resource distribution continues to impact on the realisation of this right. By the mid-1960s, the Apartheid government was spending, on conservative estimates, a tragic **10 times more** on white learners than on black learners. Redressing this unequal resource distribution is a moral, socio-economic and constitutional imperative.

In this article - the first in a four part series on public school funding under the theme "Towards Equity" - we outline the constitutional framework that must inform education spending and resource distribution in South Africa.

***"The right to basic education is immediately realisable"***

The right to basic education, guaranteed in section 29(1)(a) of the Constitution, is distinct from other socio-economic rights. The state's duty to ensure the realisation of other socio-economic rights (such as housing, social security and health-care) may be achieved progressively over time and within available resources. By contrast, the right to basic education is immediately realisable.

In a landmark judgment, Justice Bess Nkabinde of the Constitutional Court explained: "Unlike some of the other socio-economic rights, this right [to basic education] is immediately realisable. There is no internal limitation requiring that the right be "progressively realised" within "available resources" subject to "reasonable legislative measures"."

Basic education is thus constitutionally affirmed as a public good which must be made accessible to all individuals immediately: to every learner, without exception. This indicates the fundamental importance that the Constitution places on education and the obligation to ensure that the right to a basic education is given priority in the policies, plans and budgets. Education funding models must therefore be based on the target of immediately ensuring that all learners access the right to basic education.

***"Substantive equality, transformation and redress in the provision of basic education"***

Equality is one of the fundamental goals of the Constitution. Substantive – rather than merely formal – equality for all South Africans is key to the transformation required by the Constitution. The Constitution places

a positive obligation on the state to promote the achievement of equality. The Constitutional Court has warned that "[a]bsent a positive commitment progressively to eradicate socially constructed barriers to equality and to root out systematic or institutionalised under-privilege, the constitutional promise of equality before the law and its equal protection and benefit must, in the context of our country, ring hollow."

Equal access to basic education in South Africa is key to achieving substantive equality. Section 29 has been interpreted by our courts to impose an obligation on the State to not only provide education but to also simultaneously redress past imbalances caused by the racially discriminatory laws and practices of the colonial and Apartheid eras.

***"The Constitution guarantees access to a quality education"***

The Constitutional Court has emphasised that "education is the engine of any society". It is the primary way in which economically and socially marginalised adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities. The right to a basic education thus provides recognition and a means for realisation



of the inherent dignity, equality and freedom of every person, while also providing a very necessary platform for the effective functioning of the democratic system as a whole. These

principles signal that the right to a basic education must be guarantee access to education that is of an adequate quality.

## A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

What implications does this constellation of constitutional principles have on how the state should approach the question of funding public schools? Read together, these rights and principles establish a set of fundamental obligations on the state which, at minimum, entails the following:

- **The state must prioritise education funding as basic education is an immediately accessible public good.**

- Access to education alone is not sufficient. Substantive equality requires that access to quality education is equalised and that no person or group of people should receive a vastly inferior education to anyone else.

- **A progressive funding model for education is required which lifts the standards of historically disadvantaged schools up to the level of resource expenditure (inputs) and quality of learning (outputs) provided by historically advantaged schools.**

Significantly, the South African Schools Act recognises the need to “provide an education of progressively high quality . . . [and] uphold the rights of all learners”. Furthermore, that Act specifically obliges the State to “fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education

and the redress of past inequalities in education provision”. However, whilst the legislation is laudable for its recognition of the constitutional goal, the mechanics of education funding in South Africa is failing to achieve its progressive aims.

In the next article in this series, we will begin to unpack how basic education is funded in South Africa. Focusing on the distribution of funds among the provinces, and the budget for personnel costs, we will highlight the challenges and opportunities these crucial budget processes pose for the achievement of greater equity and equality in our public schools.

WHAT THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRES		HOW THIS IMPACTS THE BUDGET PROCESS
<b>Priority</b>	Basic education must be accessible to all immediately.	Basic education must be treated as a priority in government budgeting processes.
<b>Quality</b>	The right to basic education is a right to an education of an adequate quality.	Resources must be harnessed and invested by the state into the basic education system which are sufficient to ensure adequate levels of quality.
<b>Equality</b>	Education of an adequate quality must be made available and accessible to all.	<p><b>Among others:</b></p> <p>No-one may be denied access to education on the basis of their inability to pay fees;</p> <p>All schools must have access to the resources necessary to provide a quality, basic education;</p> <p>Schools that were underfunded in the past must receive relatively more resources from the state than schools that were well funded during apartheid, in order to rectify past funding imbalances.</p>

Follow the collaborative series of articles by Equal Education and SPII here



Reflection

VENITIA GOVENDER //  
SPII TRUSTEE

Having joined the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute board of trustees five years ago, I am proud to say that the organisation has grown quite significantly in a very short space of time. The increasing frequency of our input into key policy negotiations and platforms – such as NEDLAC – validates our research

model and solidifies SPII's place as a catalyst between state and non-state entities to achieve an end to poverty and inequality in the sub region. We have ambitiously expanded our scale and scope accordingly and remain committed to a vision rooted in philanthropy.

# INEQUALITY: THE PRICE OF PRIVILEGE AND UNCHECKED POWER

Fatima Shabodien

Year after year we are reminded that South Africa is at the forefront of a shocking global trend. Inequality of all kinds is increasing and the result is a global society that is sharply divided between a handful of the mega-rich and everyone else.

Though the economic disparities are shocking, they are not the whole story. Societies are divided by class, race and gender with poor women of colour being the hardest hit by the multiple levels of discrimination and institutional injustice.

At the global level, ActionAid's "The Price of Privilege", an international report being released this week in South Africa, documents how economic policy has been used since the 1980s to force African countries to adopt policies based on lies. Those lies include the idea that free markets and a small state will lead to greater growth and prosperity for all. If the rich grow richer than everyone else, well, that is necessary because the "rising tide raises all boats", we were told.

We now have decades of experience showing that though the tide has risen, many boats have sprung a leak or sunk. In South Africa, the richest 16 people control almost as much wealth as the poorest 30 million. Those figures, derived from Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Database, tell a shocking story, especially when one considers that many of the richest individuals and corporations don't pay their fair share of tax.

Against this background of extreme wealth is a reality of on-going injustice. Women remain at the bottom of every class and racial division in society and every year South African women perform roughly three times the amount of unpaid care work that men do. Despite the end of apartheid, blacks are still four times more likely to be unemployed. And a just, equitable and sustainable process of land reform to ensure that women smallholder farmers have access to and control over agricultural land is long overdue. White commercial farmers still control more than 60% of agricultural land.

Both in South Africa and at a global level the solutions are relatively straightforward from a policy perspective. We know about the kinds of solutions that would increase growth, decrease economic inequality and allow women more control over their daily lives. They include economic policy that is designed to create more and better jobs for women and men, social protections including guaranteed minimum wages for all, and equal pay for equal work for women.

These policies are no longer controversial. Even the IMF (the institution that sold us on many of the lies) has come out in support of stronger unions and better wages, narrowing the gender pay gap, and some forms of redistribution. They've even come out against austerity, though it is a bitter pill that it took the example of Greece for them to realize

that the medicine they'd been feeding Africans for years was poisonous.

So what's to debate? Even the neoliberals agree that inequality is not just morally but also economically bad. We at ActionAid would like to see more far-reaching solutions such as a tax on individual wealth above R15 million or a CEO pay cap tied to the wages of the lowest paid individual in a company, but even less ambitious proposals are being steadfastly ignored, sometimes by the very institutions that propose them.

The problem, as events like the Panama papers leak reveal, is not policy; it's politics. Because the global community has allowed the wealth to accumulate so much, they have converted that wealth into political power. They don't do this directly – Donald Trump aside, there are very few billionaire politicians – but behind the scenes they have captured political parties of every persuasion across the African continent and beyond. In South Africa, the debate is around Nkandla and the Guptas, but elite capture of the state is an issue in just about any country you can name, north or south, rich or poor.

The question then becomes more than just about the extreme inequalities. Those inequalities have driven us to a point where we can no longer pretend that our governance systems represent the will of the people. Elites use the power they buy first and foremost to



consolidate their own access to wealth. Ending corporate tax dodging is not on the agenda because it is an issue that threatens the super-rich. #Feesmustfall is on the agenda despite their opposition.

And therein lies the solution. Despite the odds being stacked against ordinary people in terms of money, in terms of the

numbers of people, we're talking about tens of millions against a handful of the super-rich. If we all come together with communities that have been struggling for their rights for years, we can fight inequality and change the system.

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**FATIMA SHABODIEN** //  
*COUNTRY DIRECTOR AT  
ACTIONAID SOUTH AFRICA.*

**AASA** is a member of ActionAid International, a global movement of people working together to further human rights and eradicate poverty.



# COMMUNITY MAPPING OF HUMAN RIGHTS CHALLENGES IN EVATON

**Matshidiso Motsoeneng**

SPII's Socio-Economic Rights (SERs) Monitoring Tool project team is currently conducting a community mapping exercise project aims to bring in the voices of the people who are affected by the delivery or the lack thereof of the different SERs in Evaton, Emfuleni.

The project aims to establish relations with the greater population of Evaton as well as strengthen former relations with the community. It also aims to strengthen and promote meaningful and effective participation in governance and development at a community level by mapping human rights challenges in the community using participatory action research.

Anticipated outcomes include raising levels of awareness of the community around human rights challenges as well as enabling the community to produce a community mapping report outlining the human rights challenges in Evaton.

With the assistance of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) expert, Heidi Attwood, the community of Evaton will receive training and guidance using participatory research methodologies for the duration of this project.

To conduct this project, SPII has partnered with a local community-based organisation called the Bokamoso Skills and Economic Development Centre based in Small Farms Evaton which has a great focus on providing education and skills for the community to mitigate challenges of poverty and unemployment.

With the assistance of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) expert, Heidi Attwood, the community of Evaton will receive training and guidance using participatory research methodologies for the duration of this project.

**THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN INITIATED WITH GUIDING PRINCIPLES COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN MIND:**

Privileging community member's knowledge with respect to their experiences, perceptions and analysis will be emphasised

Participation is both a means to an end and an end in itself thereby regarding participation as a right in itself

The research process will be allowed to evolve in response to the environment and to emerging project findings

Diversity, complexity and power relations are acknowledged and accounted for as far as possible: An awareness of power between the different actors is critical, as well as the possible invisibility and exclusion of certain groups within Evaton. Care will be taken to ensure that the methods of intervention from the researchers does not ignore and entrench power dynamics between the different actors.

# WELFARE KIDS' FUNERAL COVER PITS INSURERS AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

Franz Wild

Sanlam Ltd. and Lion of Africa Assurance Co. are among insurers whose sale of funeral policies for children on welfare has led to a confrontation with South Africa's government, which wants to end the practice.

Agents for the companies and other insurers sell policies to parents or guardians who receive the welfare grants on the children's behalf. The forms they sign include a written mandate permitting a deduction directly from the grant before it's paid into their bank accounts.

People on welfare are among the least educated in South Africa and many don't understand what they are committing to, according to the state welfare agency. The South African Social Security Agency, or Sassa, is "inundated" with complaints about deductions people say they had not knowingly approved, it said in a court submission related to the issue.



Disputes with Sassa highlight the tension over how financial firms are allegedly profiting from the country's poorest people. Government agencies are scrutinizing the practice to try and protect welfare recipients, prompting both companies to go to court to stop the government from taking action in cases that will be heard this month. The government welfare agency wants to ban deductions from social grants for funeral

policies for children. Currently the law only allows deductions from grants for funeral insurance and those cannot exceed 10 percent of the value of the grant.

"It's a massive exploitation of the most vulnerable people in the country for profit," Isobel Frye, director of the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute, said by phone from Johannesburg. "It's fleeing the poor."

[Read the full article here](#)



Reflection

**Participant no.65\* of Social Protection and Local Economic Development (LED):**  
Graduation Pilot Project

"I realised that I had not been saving money for the growth of the business as I didn't know how much money my business makes a day. After I attended the workshop that SPII invited me to, I came back to my business and started putting money aside and I was able to buy a second zozo (corrugated iron structure) and opened the second hair salon business." [Translation into English]

\*Participant No.65 is a middle-aged woman who runs a dress making business in Zone 3 Evaton Township. She was a participant in the Social Protection and Local Economic Development (LED): Graduation Pilot Project which run for 24 months (October 2013- September 2015) by the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII).

# SPII *Matters*

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

14 August 2016

### **THE BIG DEBATE –**

SPII TO PARTAKE IN TELEVISION DEBATE

The SPII Socio-Economic Rights (SERs) Monitoring Tool research team will join a panel of experts on etv talk show, The Big Debate, as they unpack the issue of 'food security'. SPII was invited to attend because of its report on the progressive realisation of the right to food in South Africa. The show airs Sundays at 10AM on etv.

### **PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT –**

ENDORSE THE SADC BIG CAMPAIGN NOW

Reform inequality? Eradicate poverty? Stimulate social progression and economic transformation? SADC Basic Income Grant (BIG) Campaign advocates for the roll out a universal BIG funded mainly through a tax on extractives. Regular basic income grants will provide a move towards a decent standard of living for all and a gradual recovery of decades of generational poverty.

[Click here to endorse the campaign](#)

Please contact Fortunate Mabuza at SPII should you wish to have any information about any of the announcements - Email: [fortunate@spii.org.za](mailto:fortunate@spii.org.za)



[www.spii.org.za](http://www.spii.org.za)

*Building up knowledge  
to break down Poverty*

## SPII Services:

SPII provides the following services:

Bringing people together, "honest broker" at roundtables and seminars

Conference host, bringing together a verity of stakeholders to share new information

Basic Needs Basket research – a representative sample of poorest members of society

Research project

Policy support and analysis

Training in research methodologies – on request

*SPII is a not-for-profit  
Public benefit Organisation*

*Tax deductible donations and bequests are welcomed to enable us to build our sustainability and to continue to undertake these critical projects.*

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