

The poor are GETTING POORER

The number of people living in poverty is increasing

By Bonolo Sekudu

LIFE for the poor is not getting better in South Africa. While economic growth and empowerment is always on government's lips, ordinary citizens aren't benefiting. In South Africa more than 90 percent of black people live in poverty and this isn't getting any better, according to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA).



The gap between the rich and poor is far too wide in South Africa, making the country an unequal society

POVERTY FACTS

Last year, Stats SA released figures that exposed failure by government to successfully curb poverty. Stats SA compiled a report on poverty trends which confirmed that the number of people living in extreme poverty, for instance, living on R441 per person per month increased from the 11 million in 2011 to 13, 8 million in 2015. The report further indicated that the upper bound poverty level was R992 per person. These statistics are an absolute shock considering how much the country's Constitution is considered to be one of the best in the world.

WHY IS POVERTY NOT GETTING ANY BETTER

The Director of the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII), Isobel Frye, says poverty is caused by complex issues such as historical deprivation of black people.

"The inhumane levels of the apartheid wage structure continues today: in addition to the extremely high levels of unemployment, it is

appalling that two thirds of people in formal employment earn less than R3 300 per month, which is simply not a living wage," Isobel says. SPII believes that poverty in South Africa is caused essentially by a lack of access to assets for the vast majority of people.

"Assets are multi-fold, ranging from land, to housing, to businesses,

to education and training. In short, assets provide income. The deprivation of concrete assets was central to apartheid as people were deprived of their land and opportunities to own and develop businesses were restricted according to racial discrimination.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

South Africa is known for being an unequal society as the gap between the rich and poor is far too wide. The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) is fighting for equality in pertinent issues affecting all South Africans.

"Poverty inequalities and exclusions are hallmarks of a highly unequal society. The economy has not rapidly grown enough to draw the hoped for numbers of unemployed people in the labour market and those excluded are typically also marginalised," says a report by the SAHRC addressing poverty disparities.

"In other words, they tend to be the rural, uneducated women and young people may still remain outside the mainstream economy society."

PICTURES: SUPPLIED / GALLO IMAGES

Do you think the poor are getting poorer?



DUDUZILE KHUMALO

Africa will still face the same challenges. Traditions and culture have an effect on growth.



LESEGO MOKOTHU

People tend to rely on government grants and fail to start their own businesses.



NOMAZA NALA

Poverty is caused by high birth rates, lack of skilled people, educating people to be job seekers rather than to be job creators. ✿