SPIItalk

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MONEY MATTERS:

A REFLECTION ON SOUTH AFRICA IN 2017

EDITOR

Hopolang Selebalo

WRITERS

Dennis Webster, **Isobel** Frye,
Hopolang Selebalo

DESIGN

Ten18: Graphic & Architectural Design

WEB ADMINISTRATION

Delphine Ngcongo

www.spii.org.za

This edition of SPII Talk looks back on the events that took place in South Africa in 2017, particularly the last quarter of the year.

During this period, the South African government and its parastatals were plagued by the exposure of numerous scandals, including allegations of state capture and conflicts of interest. Many of these claims were substantiated by the publication of a string of emails between state officials and the Gupta family, in an expose which came to be known as #GuptaLeaks.

In a blow to the commitments to economic and social transformation, in August 2017, StatsSA released the *Poverty Trends Report*, which shockingly revealed that in 2015 over 50% of South Africans wereliving in poverty. While this mirrored many anecdotal references to an increase in poverty, what we saw was that for the first time since 2006, the numbers of people living in poverty began to rise across all poverty measures in 2015 - a situation exacerbated by the country's increasing levels of unemployment and inequality.

On top of this, in a bid to cut costs, the Gauteng Department of Health's removal of psychiatric patients from a fully capable institution- Life Esidimeni- to a number of unregistered and ill-equipped NGO's resulted in the deaths of over 140 patients. There has been a huge public outcry, and the state set up a formal arbitration process to investigate a variety of aspects of the incident. The deaths have been described as the '*greatest cause of human rights violation since the dawn of democracy*'. Dennis Webster's op-ed, SA's Ill Hurt by Public Health Cuts, on page 4 examines the state of our health care system.

The presidential announcement in December 2017 of government-subsidised fee free higher education for poor and working class students, beginning in 2018, was met with surprise and conflicting reactions. President Zuma's statement, made on the eve of the ANC's elective conference and three months after receiving the Heher Commission report into feasible funding options for tertiary education, raised a number of questions, none more pressing than where the additional funds will come from. Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba, in his October 2017 Mid-Term Budget Policy Statement, painted a rather gloomy economic picture, asserting that the country is accruing debt faster than it is raising revenue, and that we face a R50 billion shortfall. In order to accommodate fee-free higher education, what trade-offs need to be made? Which of the socio-economic rights may need to be compromised? Hopolang Selebalo discusses the possible consequences of divesting monies away from social assistance, towards funding fee-free higher education, on page 6.

The ANC's 54th national elective conference in December 2017, was preceded by a highly contested and polarised campaign trail comprised of two main candidates, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Cyril Ramphosa. The months leading up the conference saw intensifying divisions within an already fractured organisation. Some political analysts and those from the general public, critiqued Dlamini-Zuma's backing by President Zuma and the likes of Ace Magashule, and she was, by default painted with the same brush as her backers. Ramaphosa did not escape scathing comments on his role in the 2013 Marikana massacre, and his apparently cosy relationship with the private sector. At the end of that 16 December weekend, Cyril Ramaphosa emerged as President of the party. Prior to the much anticipated conference, Dennis Webster interrogated whether electing a new party president would make a difference for South Africa's worrying economic and social status, in his op-ed, New Boss, Same as the Old Boss on page 8.

This issue of SPII Talk also reflects on the work of the SADC BIG Campaign and the Basic Needs Basket, which have both, sadly, drawn to a close. SPII's Director, Isobel Frye, examines what we mean by a decent standard of living, and we also reflect on the headway we have made with regard to social media and dissemination of SPII's research.

SA'S ILL HURT BY PUBLIC HEALTH CUTS

DENNIS WEBSTER

Vuyo Aaron Ngqondwana was one of the hundreds of psychiatric patients moved out of Life Esidimeni in callous cost-cutting measures by the Gauteng Department of Health. He was moved to the Cullinan Care and Rehabilitation Centre, where he died months later. An autopsy found a large plastic sheet in Vuyo's stomach. He died of aspirational pneumonia.

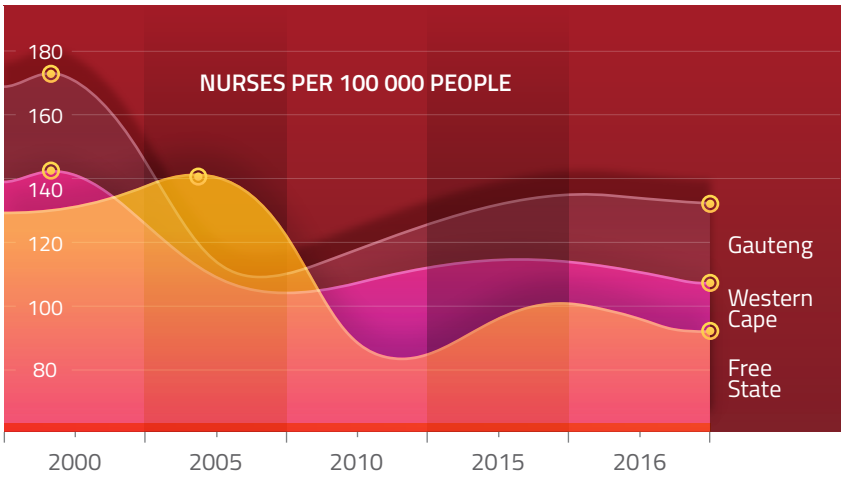
South Africa has looked on in disbelief as the events resulting in the death of Vuyo, and more than 140 other psychiatric patients in NGOs around Gauteng have been laid bare before the Life Esidimeni arbitration, headed by former Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke. The Gauteng Department of Health's austerity measures put the lives of hundreds of some of the most vulnerable patients in the system at risk, and the result could not have been more harrowing. Vuyo's father, Christian Ngqondwana, recounting when he heard of his son's death, said, "I was very cold, I shivered, I cried like a baby." While Christian and other family members delivered gruelling accounts at the arbitration process, Minister of Finance Malusi Gigaba delivered his maiden Mid-Term Budget Policy Strategy (MTBPS). With a national revenue shortfall in excess of R50 billion and growing, the immediate future of public expenditure on policy commitments and a more equitable realisation of socio-economic realisation has been called into question. This is exacerbated by the fact that an increasing chunk of government expenditure will go towards servicing debt and assisting financially crippled state-owned enterprises.

Perhaps there is no better time to step back and take stock of the public health-care system, and to start to answer the broader question:

WHAT SHAPE IS OUR HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM REALLY IN?

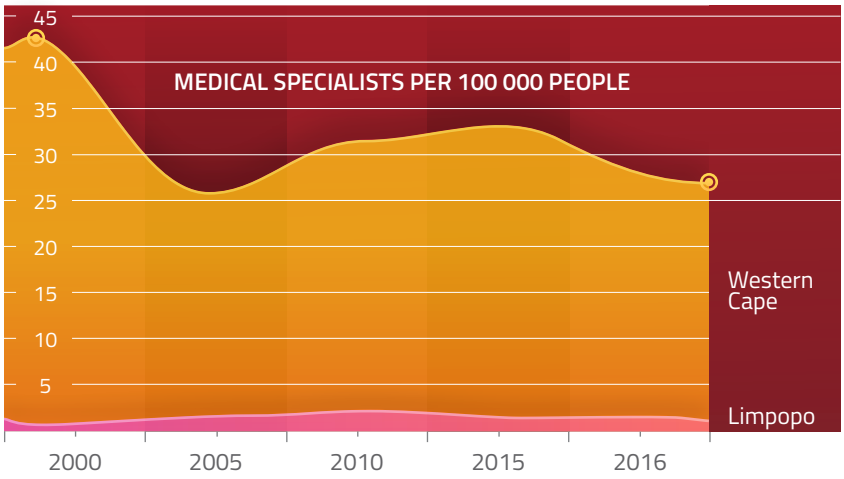
Let's start at an obvious and important place – who is taking care of South Africans, and where are they? The Department of Health initially kept expenditure high to offset the inevitable effects of the 2008 global financial crisis. However it has been in full blown austerity mode since the 2012/13 financial year, when both the number of filled posts in the health sector and the amount of money used to pay the people in those posts began to drop dramatically.

These austerity measures have had a marked impact on the number of health workers in the public health sector. While the number of filled posts in provincial Departments of Health increased by 80 679 between 2006 and 2012, they fell by 5 473 between 2012 and 2016. In the figure below, from a recent review of the right of access to health care services conducted by SPII, it is clearly visible that the number of nurses – the backbone of any functioning public health system – have decreased in Free State, Gauteng and Western Cape.



Rural provinces are, however, disproportionately burdened by cost cutting measures. Dramatic provincial inequalities, usually along urban/rural lines, have developed in the distribution of almost every type of health care worker. The graph below, for instance, shows that in 2016, there were only 1.3 specialists for every 100 000 people living in Limpopo. At the same time, the Western Cape had 26 more specialists per 100 000 people. These and other alarming trends in the number and distribution of health-care workers in South Africa as a whole stand to reason: budgets intended specifically for the training and development of health professionals have seen drastic cuts.

The next obvious question is what we need these health care workers for? South Africa's epidemiological mortality profile has changed over the last decade, in part due to government's successes in coming to grips with the HIV / AIDS pandemic. Non-communicable diseases like diabetes and hypertension have surpassed communicable diseases as the main cause of death of South Africans. Some figures attributed 56% of deaths in 2015 to non-communicable diseases, compared to 33% as a result of communicable diseases and 11% as a result of injuries.



Government has made notable gains in tackling TB-HIV co-infections. The deadly duo remain a serious challenge in South Africa, however. While new infection rates have fallen, tuberculosis continues to be the number one single cause of death. The 8 metros in South Africa account for about 40% of TB infections. eThekwini has the highest number of TB cases in South Africa, yet it also has one of the lowest treatment success rates. It also has the highest proportion of TB patients who have not been evaluated (18.5%) and is also among the five districts with the lowest proportion of HIV-positive TB patients on anti-retroviral treatment (70%).

Without health-care workers, a health system cannot function.

The long awaited National Health Insurance (NHI) policy, which was released earlier this year, has the potential to radically transform the health-care system. It would shake the foundations of the two-tier system we inherited from apartheid where an overwhelmingly white minority receive quality private services while the overwhelming black majority are left to rely on a public system gasping for adequate funds. NHI would ensure that quality health care is available to all regardless of socio-economic status or geographical location.

Current budgeting for the implementation of NHI remains scant, however. And as with most things, the success of the NHI depends on an efficient public health system. Without health-care workers, a health system cannot function. If the intention to roll out current NHI pilots contained in national policy is to be taken seriously, the project will require not only greater allocation of funds, but robust capacity building in the public health sector in order to support the programme.

The Constitution places an onus on the state to progressively realise people's socio-economic rights, meaning that over time access to health-care cannot narrow and must consistently broaden. And there have been notable successes in the government's efforts at ensuring everyone in South Africa progressively enjoys the right to health care services since the transition to democracy, especially with regard to addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. However very real challenges remain. Indeed, there are numerous instances in which aspects of people's right to health care services have regressed, and in some cases quite dramatically.

When one considers that more than four in every five people in South Africa fall beyond the purview of the private health-care system, it becomes clear that the burden of addressing these shortcomings will fall squarely on the shoulders of the state.

Like so many other post-apartheid atrocities, the callous deaths of psychiatric patients as a result of attempts to balance the books, highlighted during the Life Esidimeni arbitration, will likely vanish into memory. We should not make the mistake of thinking that the human costs of austerity are limited to Life Esidimeni though. Our public health care system is under a cost-cutting siege, which will only deepen with mounting investor pressure on treasury to balance the books.

Our challenge is to demand a system of government allocation and expenditure which prioritises people and not elite class interests. Public funds should be keeping nurses in hospitals and clinics stocked, and not used to pursue nuclear energy or mop up the spills of inefficient state owned enterprises.

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UNDER SIEGE:

THE NEED TO PROTECT SOCIAL GRANTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

HOPOLANG SELEBALO

The drafters of the Constitution were aware that there would be competing claims for delivery of equally pressing socio-economic rights after apartheid. They were anxious that the competing nature of these claims be debated in a transparent manner. These are very necessary debates in a country in which wealth is accumulating as rapidly as poverty is deepening.

It has been just over two weeks since President Jacob Zuma released the much awaited Heher fees commission report. The commission was appointed to look into the feasibility of free higher education and training for South African students. Other than the prioritisation of fee-free education for students in TVET colleges, the report concluded that full funding for higher education would not be feasible for students in tertiary institutions. The state simply does not have the financial means to do so at the moment.

"the pittance received by child support grant beneficiaries of only R380 in 2017 falls not only below the upper bound poverty line, but the food poverty line (FPL) as well."

Prior to the release of the report, media speculation had been rife that the president aimed to by-pass the commission's recommendations and forge ahead with a plan to provide free higher education for all students. It has been estimated that an additional R30-billion would be required from the state coffers to accomplish this. Although there has been silence with regard to this possibility from the Presidency – supposedly to allow the inter-ministerial task team and presidential fiscal committee to process the report – many still anticipate that an announcement will be made.

Should the president decide to push ahead with this project, the major question to be asked is where these additional funds would come from, especially in light of the gloomy economic picture painted by the Minister of Finance, Malusi Gigaba, during this year's Mid-Term Budget Policy Statement. In a nutshell, the minister told us that the state has accrued debt faster than it has collected revenue, resulting in a shortfall of approximately R50-billion. The cost of new debt is set to rise even further after last week's credit downgrading by S&P Global. Gigaba announced that servicing the costs of government borrowing, which will grow to an average of 11% of government spend, will be the single largest expenditure growth sector. This will be exacerbated by the continued assistance of financially unsustainable State-owned Enterprises.

South Africa is among the most unequal countries in the world, and has exceptionally high levels of poverty and unemployment. The recently published Poverty Trends report found that over 55% of the South African population is living in poverty, and that one in four people cannot afford to purchase the food they need to stay alive. This is coupled with an increasing unemployment rate, which stands at 36.5% when we include discouraged work-seekers. In the midst of this, social assistance is vital to mitigate against these staggering economic forces, to say nothing of the fact that it is a right enshrined in our Constitution. Statistics South Africa revealed in the 2016 General Household Survey that nearly half of South African households receive social grants as their main source of income.

Social assistance grants have been the most successful poverty alleviation policy in democratic South Africa, and have increasingly become a mainstream reliable source of livelihood. However, there are a number of flaws associated with the grants which need serious consideration and intervention. For example, the pittance received by child support grant beneficiaries of only R380 in 2017 falls not only below the upper bound poverty line, but the food poverty line (FPL) as well. To explain, StatsSA describes the FPL as

"the rand value below which individuals are unable to purchase or consume enough food to supply them with the minimum per-capita-per-day energy requirement for adequate health".

This means that the money received every month by child grant beneficiaries is not enough to buy the basic nutritional requirements to stay alive.

Disturbingly, the 2017 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement stated that R350-million had been declared in unspent social assistance funds "due to lower than anticipated spending on child support and disability grants as a result of efficiency in eligibility". We can only assume from the latter part of this sentence that this "efficiency in eligibility" has resulted in the exclusion of a number of households that desperately need the disability and child support grants. This supposed "saving" contradicts statements made by consecutive ministers of finance over the last five years, who committed to eradicating the means test for children and older people due to the very high levels of poverty in these age groups.

However, the biggest challenge with the provision of social assistance is that it does not cover the working age population or what is often called the "missing middle": those between the ages of 18 and 59. Yet, levels of unemployment are increasing for these very same people. Surely the absence of a grant for this cohort goes against the constitutional obligation that everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance?

SPII's recent report, Monitoring the right of access to social security and appropriate social assistance in South Africa, shows that the value of grants like the old age grant or child support grant is eroded when beneficiaries have to share these monies with other family members who are indigent but do not qualify for social assistance.

This is taking place in a context where beneficiaries are threatened by the possible erosion of their income through the proposal to take money away to fund higher education. Additionally, the grant payment agency, Sassa, has been locked in protracted Constitutional Court litigation regarding its irregular contracts with current payment provider Cash Paymaster Services.

Whatever the outcome, we need to ensure that social grants are protected from politicians' vested interests and serve those that desperately need them. The result, otherwise, would be calamitous.

HOPOLANG SELEBALO
Senior Researcher

Selebalo is the Senior Researcher and Project Manager of the Socio-Economic Rights Project at the Studies in Poverty Inequality Institute (SPII).

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE DAILY MAVERICK

NEW BOSS, SAME AS THE OLD BOSS

DENNIS WEBSTER

Africa's oldest liberation movement will start its fifty-fourth national conference on December 16, 2017. By the time the delegates leave four days later, Jacob Zuma's second and final term as South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) president will have come to an end. He will remain president of South Africa, at least in theory. There's recent precedent in the ANC to recall the national president if they are no longer party president. It was after Zuma himself ascended to the helm of the party at the fifty-second national conference in Polokwane in 2007 that Thabo Mbeki was forced by the party to step down as South African president. Zuma's future may be uncertain, but his legacy is not.

His presidency has been marred by the state-sanctioned massacre of thirty-seven striking mine workers at Marikana, the near non-payment of the social grants that 30 percent of the nation relies on to stay alive, the death of more than 140 psychiatric patients as a result of reckless cost cutting, and the politically motivated assassinations of more than sixty people over a two-year period in KwaZulu-Natal province.

Yet these events hardly register in accounts of Zuma's tenure, so steady is the rate of new scandals. The gross mismanagement of state-owned enterprises and the capture of state resources by private individuals through Zuma's networks of patronage have given the president's opponents new ammunition.

Recently, Zuma prompted the resignation of a senior official in the national treasury after he tampered with the national budgeting process, an unprecedented move for a president. Zuma claims his actions aimed to provide free higher education, but some suggest that his initiative may further burden the already creaking social-grants system and may well deliver South Africa into the arms and terms of the International Monetary Fund. So much for the "radical-economic transformation" Zuma's defenders still say is on the horizon.

Division will be the real legacy of Zuma's two terms in office. The fault lines tearing apart the ANC are only widening in the lead-up to the conference. Zuma's polarizing effect has also worsened schisms beyond the ANC, splintering South Africa's traditionally powerful labour movement and reducing the Communist Party to confusion.

The only self-identifying left-wing political party with any electoral clout, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), has largely limited itself into an anti-Zuma platform insofar as it has occasionally joined ranks with the center-right opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), to spite Zuma's ANC. In some instances, this alliance has ground local service delivery to a halt.

Radical platforms remain at the grassroots. Many farm workers in the Western Cape province, for instance, have joined the Commercial Stevedoring and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU) — a relatively small union that employs militant class politics in its struggle against some of the most powerful commercial

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agricultural interests in the country. Abahlali baseMjondolo, South Africa's oldest social movement, continues to mobilize for more equitable access to land, housing, and services with tremendous success, even in the face of state repression and political assassinations. But a credible left alternative on the scale needed to challenge or replace Zuma — one that might find solutions to South Africa's economic crisis more generally — remains elusive both within and beyond the ANC.

The liberal consensus argues that the path from where we are to where we need to go will depend almost entirely on which of the two frontrunners succeeds Zuma. Both of his would-be successors, the former head of the African Union, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, and the country's current deputy president, Cyril Ramaphosa, claim to be "protecting the democratic revolution." But each remains loyal to a status quo that has kept most South Africans in economic precarity long after the end of apartheid.

As much as the end of Zuma's term is welcome, his successor will not end the suffocating socioeconomic crisis. South Africa's problems are structural. While Zuma may have worsened them, they preceded him and they will succeed him, too.

South Africa's deepening crisis is not a question of personality politics. But if the end of Zuma's leadership doesn't represent an end to the economic crisis, then what's at stake at the upcoming conference? Answering this question begins with a bald profile of the most urgent concern that his successors will face — the structure of the economy.

Since the fall of apartheid, South Africa has steadily cemented itself as the world's most unequal society. The top 1 percent of earners take home 17 percent of all income, and the top 10 percent earn 60 percent.

The picture gets even worse when it comes to wealth inequality. The top 1 percent own 67 percent of all wealth in South Africa, while the top 10 percent own 93 percent, giving the country a wealth Gini coefficient of 0.95.

Inequality between countries is generally much starker than inequality within countries, but not so in South Africa. It is the only country on the planet where the national levels of wealth inequality mirror global rates. In other words, the richest people in South Africa are among the richest in the world, and the poorest are among the poorest.

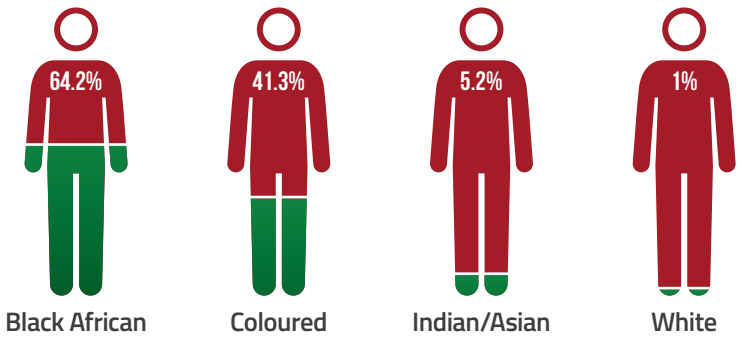
While the world's developed nations were widely distributing resources for much of the post-war period, stimulating aggregate demand and growth, the South African apartheid state oversaw the most sophisticated legal and economic structures of racism the world had ever seen.

This structure — which excluded most South Africans — created severe economic issues. Only around 20 percent of South Africa can be considered middle class. The government's own figures show that more than half of South Africa's population is poor, and one in four struggle to pay for food. Independent estimates suggest that poverty levels approach 70 percent and that half of the population is chronically poor, meaning they aren't likely to move out of poverty.

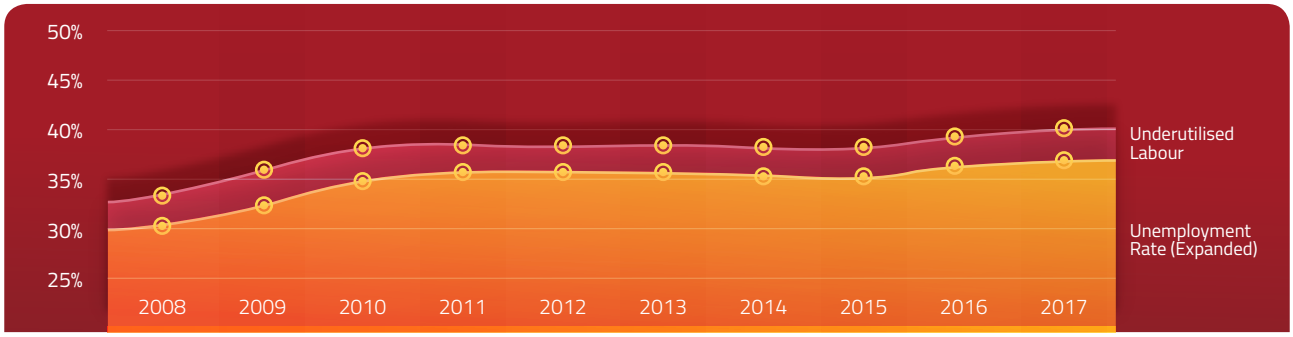
This poverty still largely reflects the racial categories legislated during the apartheid years. A great majority of black Africans live in poverty, while only 1 percent of whites do.

SOUTH AFRICAN POVERTY BY RACE

This kind of rancid poverty and inequality makes sense once you look at the unemployment figures. This year alone, more than one in every three people was out of work. When we include underutilized labour, this number grows to almost 40 percent.

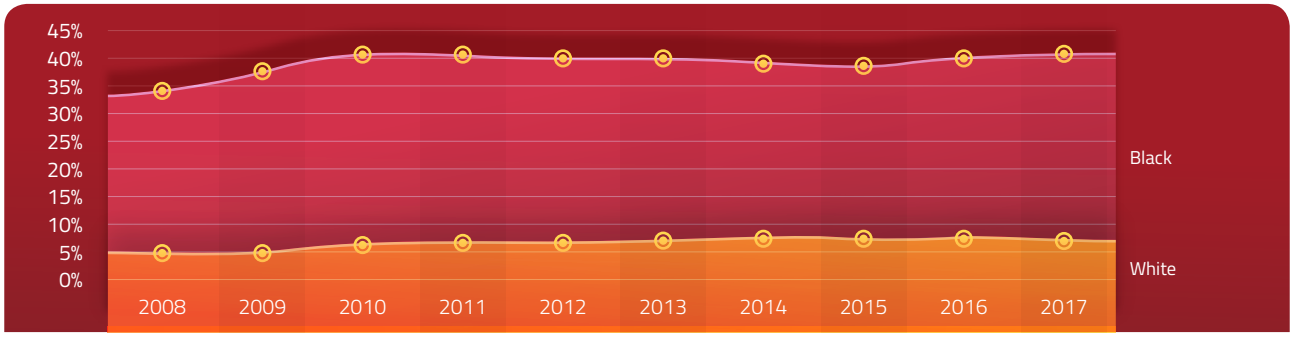


SOUTH AFRICAN UNEMPLOYMENT



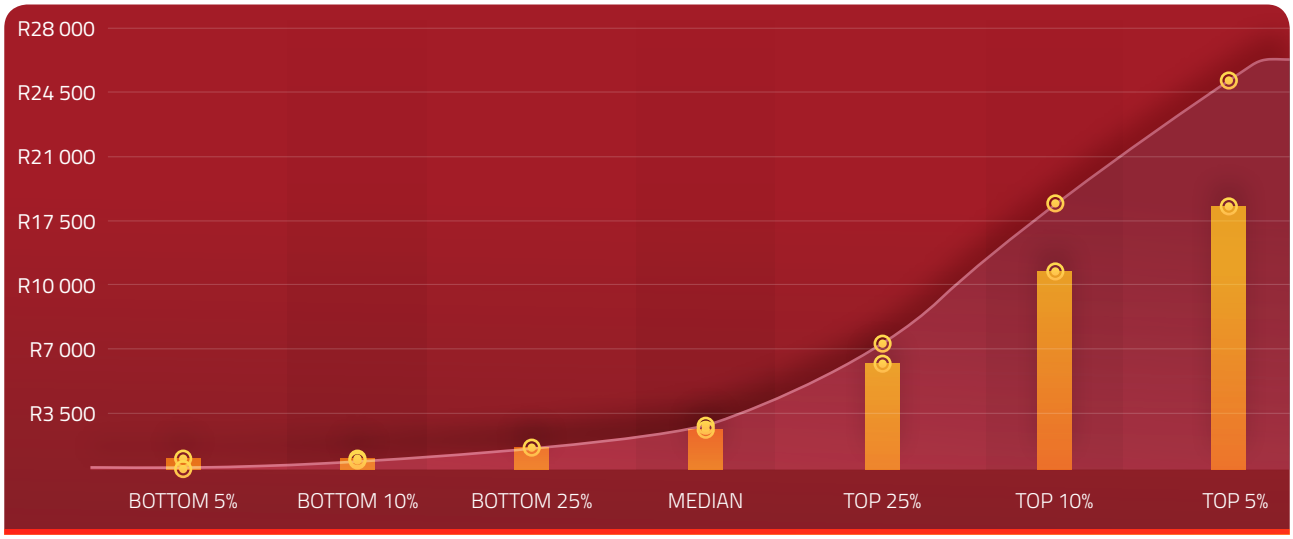
An increasing percentage of those out of work are now experiencing long-term unemployment, and employment rates remain as racially untransformed as poverty.

SOUTH AFRICAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY RACE



Furthermore, the economy radically favours the top 5 percent. Around half of South African workers now earn less than R20 per hour, which will become the country's first national minimum wage on May 1, 2018. The top 5 percent on average earn fifty times more than the lowest paid group.

MONTHLY SOUTH AFRICAN INCOMES, 2010–15



2015	R500	R800	R1 700	R3 100	R8 000	R18 000	R26 000
2010	R600	R866	R1 500	R2 900	R6 900	R12 885	R17 106

Incomes have soared at the top end of the economy and crashed at the bottom. As wages for the top 5 percent grew 40 percent, pay for the bottom 5 percent fell 17 percent.

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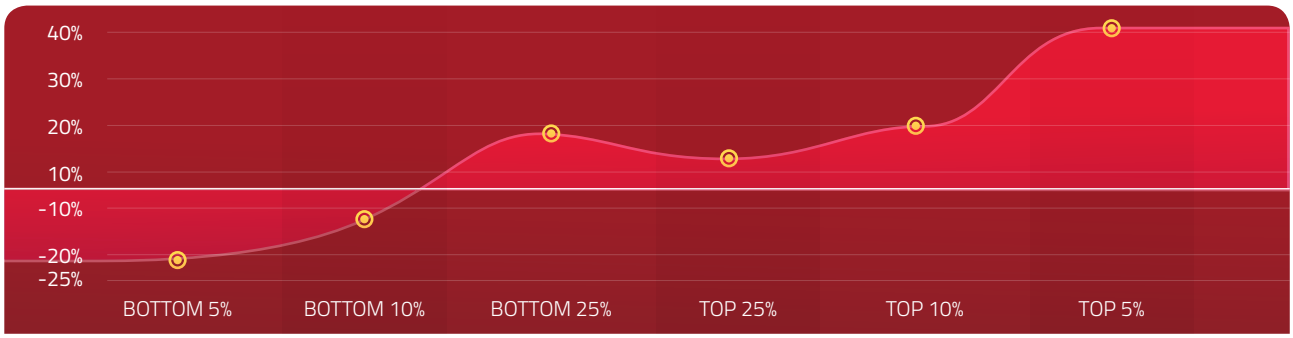
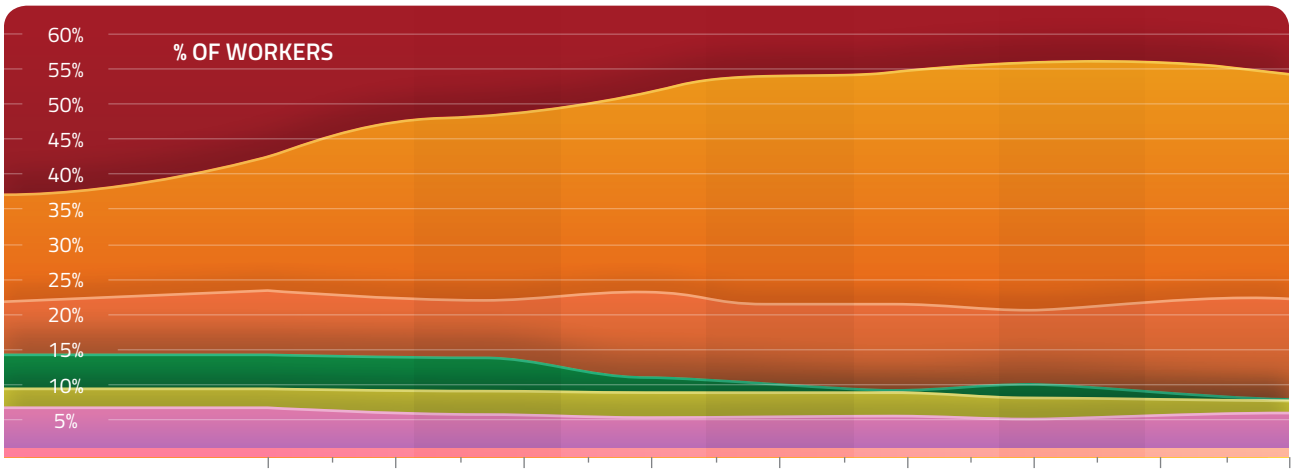
GROWTH IN SOUTH AFRICAN INCOMES, 2010–15



Despite strong labour legislation, workers at the bottom remain vulnerable to non-compliant bosses. For example, almost 40 percent of domestic workers reported earnings below that sector's minimum wage.

Between 2010 and 2017, the percentage of workers whose salary increases were determined only by their employer rose from 45.2 percent to 55.9 percent. This arrangement keeps wages low and prevents workers from having a say over their salary — not to mention their other working conditions.

WHO DETERMINES WORKERS' SALARY INCREASES?



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Employer only	45.2	48.3	50.1	53.8	53.9	55.7	56.3	55.9
Union and Employer	23.5	22.7	23.5	22.1	22.1	21.1	22.1	22.5
Individual and Employer	14.6	14.2	11.9	10.1	9.5	9.7	8.2	8.1
Bargaining Council	9.7	9.2	9.3	8.8	8.9	8.2	8.0	7.8
No Regular Increment	7.0	5.6	5.1	5.3	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.7

The state has led the few successful initiatives to address South Africa's chronic socio-economic problems. Public-sector employment has increased at a faster rate than private-sector work, and the extension of previously whites-only social security to the entire population has done the most to reduce poverty and inequality.

But even these meagre gains are now under threat. Reports suggest that Zuma's national budget will cut funding for housing and social grants. More broadly, the ANC is adopting austerity measures and considering privatizing some state-owned enterprises.

The task of dismantling the liberal consensus that South Africa's calamity is a personnel crisis rather than a structural one has become urgent. Jacob Zuma is not South Africa's only problem. South Africa faces more of the same, regardless of who emerges as the ANC's fourteenth president following the conference.

DENNIS WEBSTER
Researcher at SPII

Webster is a researcher working on the Socio-economic Rights Monitoring Tool Project at the Studies in Poverty Inequality Institute (SPII).

MEDIA MATTERS

SPII continues to pursue innovative means of communicating our work to the public. Social media is at the heart of these efforts, and our profile and performance on both Twitter and Facebook has gone from strength to strength.

While we continue to share our work, and other important work of interest from South Africa and the rest of the world, our major success recently on these important for a has been the condensing and communicating of complex statistical and budgetary information in accessible and easily digestible ways.

By profiling one key statistical indicator and government budgetary performance indicator related to the enjoyment of socio-economic rights every week, we have taken an important next step in keeping the public informed regarding their rights, and what might be standing in the way of their enjoyment of those rights.

We have also condensed complex but important poverty and inequality data into simple infographics. South Africa's egregious levels of poverty and inequality remain the country's most pressing challenges, and public awareness and debate in this regard are crucial. SPII's infographics have made a significant contribution to this debate, and have reached almost half a million people.

95%

of South Africa's wealth is owned by 5% of the population.

SPII PARTNERS WITH NATIONAL TREASURY

In that last quarter of 2017, SPII, along with several sister organisations formed the Imali Yethu coalition. Imali Yethu is comprised of the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM), Equal Education Law Centre (EELC), Social Justice Coalition (SJC), Right2Know Campaign (R2K), SECTION27 and MobiSAM. The coalition works with the South African National Treasury to make budget information more accessible, user friendly and empowering.

OpenUp, which has been contracted by National Treasury, will develop an on-line Open Budget Portal, which seeks to make national and provincial budget data, drawn from various sources, more accessible. This data will include information on a number of socio-economic rights, such as basic education, housing, water and sanitation.

The development of the portal has involved extensive public consultation, which is set to continue, to ensure that it is user-friendly and accessible.

For more information visit Imali Yethu.

WE WISH TO THANK ALL OF OUR FIELD WORKERS AND OUR SUPPORTERS.

Our hope is that future years will be able to show a marked decrease in the poverty impact for many more households as household incomes grows through the national minimum wage and a living social wage.

BASIC NEEDS BASKET PROJECT

This project, which has been running for seven years, is sadly drawing to an end. The intention of the project was to develop a data source for trend analysis regarding price inflation on low income households as a tool to advocate for higher wage increases by workers' organisations, and social wage increases. The project most recently was undertaken in partnership with advice office field workers from ACAOSA (the Association of Community-based Advice Offices of South Africa) who collected price data from one rural and one urban shop across South Africa.

The data we collected, together with qualitative comments and case study insights, enabled us to better understand the impact of poverty on poor households, including the monthly choices that people made, the constraints and the real loneliness of poverty on household heads expected to make miracles happen.

As we anticipate the development of the Decent Standard of Living Index (DSLI), we have wrapped up this project for now.

REFLECTION ON THE SADC BIG CAMPAIGN

The SADC BIG Campaign's purpose was to build on momentum built up over the years in advocating for a SADC-wide basic income grant funded primarily through tax on extractives.

In 2017, the movement for basic income made remarkable strides throughout the world, from the launch of Finland's and Canada's basic income pilots to GiveDirectly's basic income project, the largest in history to be launched after the Kenyan elections. The Ministry for Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare in Namibia, is considering the roll out of a basic income in the country, particularly to address the social protection coverage gap of those aged between 18-59 years.

Despite the regional and international basic income movements, the concept of a basic income in the Southern Africa region is still met with scepticism. In South Africa for example, *statistical research* highlights the critical extent to which social security grants reduce what the real levels of poverty would otherwise be. However, there are no social grants for able-bodied working age people between the ages of 18 and 59. The result, is that a large number of poor households are without access to social security.

This reluctance to roll-out a universal basic income grant in many Southern African countries is due to two possible reasons; firstly, a lack of political will, and secondly a lack of information. To tackle the latter, the SADC BIG Campaign has over the past year focused on awareness raising, through rigorous civil society engagements and increased media presence through traditional and social media.

Through a partnership with Amandla.mobi the Campaign called on the Minster of Social Development in South Africa, Bathabile Dlamini, to champion the process of a SADC BIG and close the poverty gap in the region.

The SADC BIG Campaign's secretariat was housed at SPII. Sadly the campaign has currently had to be mothballed as we wait for further funding partners to come on board and enable us to re-galvanise what is truly a worthy principle.

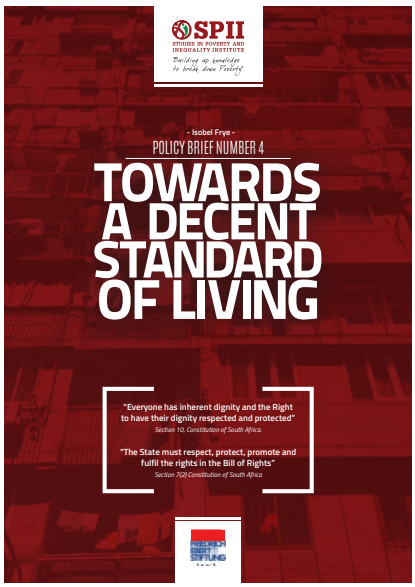
Click Here To Sign The Petition

TOWARDS A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING

As many SPII Talk readers will know, the call for the adoption of a decent standard of living was first made by SPII in 2012. The aim has always been to challenge the elites and decision makers to think differently about poverty – to move away from basic survivalism, and towards the meeting of a basic floor that would equate to a more decent standard of life, one that could be reached progressively through deliberate policy choices and funding. Despite the constitutional guarantees to socio-economic rights, we have seen that poverty in fact is increasing in South Africa. A firm commitment to the pursuit of a DSI for all is necessary in South Africa, and this is something that we as SPII shall be challenging the drafters of political party manifestoes ahead of the 2019 general elections.

September 2017 however saw the highly successful hosting a two day colloquium on a DSL in Johannesburg. With opening inputs from the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Gugile Nkwinti and Cde Zwelinzima Vavi as well as the chair of SPII, Cde Langa Zita, the vast scope of what would constitute a decent or adequate standard of living was interrogated with sector activists and academics and policy makers, and on the second day we looked into budgeting and maximising available resources for the state to achieve the necessary levels of radical economic transformation.

SPII's work in coordinating the research on the development of a Decent Standard of Living Index with Wits University, the Labour Research Service and the Southern African Social Policy Research Institute continues to generate exciting findings. In early 2018 we shall be testing the initial outcomes of this research through focus groups which should enable us to move on to the next phase, with the launch of the index planned for early August 2018.



ISOBEL FRYE
Director

Isobel Frye is the Director of the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII).

SPII Matters

UPCOMING EVENTS

There are no upcoming events.

To stay up to date with the latest news from SPII, please visit Facebook and Twitter:

/studiesinpovertyandinequalityinstitute */SPII1*

SPII NEWS

SPII Website Now Up

After months of being down due to a persistent cyberattack, we are pleased to announce that we have rebuilt our website and it is officially live. We are, however, in the process of replacing files that may be missing from the site.

Please contact **advocacy@spii.org.za** if you are experiencing any trouble with our website: **www.spii.org.za**

10 Years of SPII
Building up knowlege to break down Poverty

***CLICK HERE:* TO VIEW TEN YEARS OF SPII MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD AND TRUSTEES**

www.spii.org.za/index.php/video

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

SPII
STUDIES IN POVERTY AND INEQUALITY INSTITUTE
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

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Training in research methodologies – on request

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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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CONTACT US

Civicus House,
31 Quinn Street,
Newtown,
Johannesburg

PO Box 31747,
Braamfontein, 2017

Tel: + 27 11 833 0161
Fax: + 27 11 832 3085
Email: fortunate@spii.org.za