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Quality of Life

There is little doubt that South Africa has come a very long way since the release of Nelson Mandela and the overthrow of apartheid. It has liberated its people from the shackles of a regime based on racial segregation, domination and oppression, it has successfully consolidated representative democracy, the rule of law is upheld by an independent judiciary and a highly progressive and laudable constitution, and it has (in the main) stabilized and grown its economy to an extent inconceivable during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. At least until 2008, South Africa had 14 years of uninterrupted growth – with rates exceeding 5% between 2004 and 2007. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) now stands at \$600 billion, which puts South Africa in the same league as the Netherlands, Poland and Argentina. With only 6.5% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa produces 37.3% of its GDP. Since 1994 the government has built close to three million houses; and more than 13 million people now receive social grants.¹

These figures are corroborated by the latest census, which identifies a number of significant achievements.² The proportion of the 'black African' population with higher education more than doubled between 1996 and 2011 and those with no schooling more than halved during the same period (as did the overall proportion of those with no schooling). Over the past ten years, the average annual household income in South Africa more than doubled (up to R103 204 in 2011 from R48 385 in 2001, an increase of 113.3% in nominal terms). There has been a substantial increase in the percentage of households living in a formal dwelling as compared to traditional and informal dwellings: in 1996, 65.1% of households lived in formal dwellings, as compared to 77.6% in 2011; the percentage of households living in traditional dwellings almost halved (although the percentage of households living in informal dwellings decreased

¹ F. W. de Klerk, 'We Astounded the World and Will Do so Again', *The Times*, 13 February, 2010, p. 24.

² Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011: Statistical Release (Revised)[online](2012), P0301.4. Available from: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P03014/P030142011.pdf> [accessed 25 May 2013].

by less than 3%, from 16.2% in 1996 to 13.6% in 2011). During the same period the percentage of households with access to piped water within their dwelling or yard increased from 60.8% to 73.4%. Finally, most impressively, the percentage of households that use electricity for lighting – that is, have been successfully connected to the national energy grid – rose from 58.2% in 1996 to 84.7% in 2011 and to 85% in 2012.³

Given the common consensus that access to housing, water and education combined with above-inflation income increases are not only necessary for the satisfaction of basic or vital human needs⁴ but also that these are vital for helping to lift people out of poverty, this combination of economic stabilization and the introduction of various mechanisms to satisfy vital needs has been an unmitigated success story, particularly in terms of helping large swathes of the population escape conditions of *extreme* poverty. This is corroborated by a number of studies, including the General Household Surveys (GHS) 2001–2007, that show that although the record for the late 1990s is not as clear-cut, a sharp increase in pro-poor public expenditure on social assistance programmes did lead to a reduction in poverty.⁵ Moreover, this is true when using a low poverty line (US\$1 per capita per day, or R250 per capita per month) and a higher poverty line (US\$1.5 per day, or R422 per capita per month): utilizing the former Bhorat and Van der Westhuizen found that the proportion of South Africans living in poverty fell from about 31% in 1995 to about 23% in 2005, and using the latter they found the rate fell, if a lot less dramatically, from about 52% to about 48%.⁶ In other words, although ANC claims in the mid-2000s that the data shows that South Africans had ‘never had it so good’ and that it had laid the ‘foundation for a better life for all’ were clearly over-stated, the post-apartheid government has succeeded in reducing the proportion of the population living in conditions of extreme poverty, that is, the number of people with incomes below US\$1 per day.⁷

³ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011, pp. 34, 41, 57, 59, 61; Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012 (Revised Version)[online](2012), Statistics Release PO318. Available from: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/P0318/P0318August2012.pdf> [accessed 28 August 2013], p. 25.

⁴ On the overlap and distinction between the two, see L. Hamilton, *The Political Philosophy of Needs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵ J. Seekings, ‘Poverty and Inequality in South Africa, 1994–2007’ in *After Apartheid: Reinventing South Africa?*, ed. I. Shapiro and K. Trebeau (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 27–28.

⁶ Cited in Seekings, ‘Poverty and Inequality in South Africa’, p. 27. The rand equivalents are adapted from Meth, who provides an elaborate analysis of the intricate complexities around the seemingly simple notion of low and high poverty lines. C. Meth, ‘Half-measures Revisited: The ANC’s Unemployment and Poverty Reduction Goals’ in *Poverty and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed. H. Bhorat and R. Kanbur (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), p. 400.

⁷ Seekings, ‘Poverty and Inequality in South Africa’, pp. 23–25.

In this chapter, I use various sources to assess the existing levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment and education in South Africa to provide a snapshot of the existing quality of life for most South Africans;⁸ and, in so doing, I compare the current state of affairs to ten and twenty years back, at the end of three and half centuries of alien rule, first colonial of various forms and then legalized racism and oppression in the form of nearly half a decade of apartheid.

Poverty

The figures just quoted, however, mask a much deeper, systemic problem that the post-apartheid ANC government in South Africa has failed to address: not only the fact that levels of absolute poverty remain remarkably, stubbornly high for a relatively wealthy middle-income country of South Africa's stature, but also that the picture regarding poverty, inequality, education and unemployment when taken together is much, much bleaker. In fact, not only is it much bleaker than the portrait just sketched, it paints a grim depiction indeed of the fact that the various macroeconomic policies instituted over the last 20 years have, one after the other, failed to change the distorted socio-economic landscape inherited from apartheid South Africa.

As regards absolute poverty, according to the South African government, in 2007 the total number of people living in conditions of extreme poverty, that is, living on or below R250 per month or approximately US\$1 per day, stood at just over 11 million individuals or 19% of the total population. The proportion of people living just above this extreme, that is, on or below R365 per month or US\$1.5 per day, stood at 41%.⁹ This general trend is corroborated by two further studies from a year earlier and a year later that provide evidence to show that between 30% and 40% of the population are unable adequately to meet their basic needs, 17.6% are illiterate, 43% experienced a food shortage and 10%

⁸ For more on the relationship between poverty, inequality, education, freedom and quality of life, see A. Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1985a); A. Sen, 'Well-being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984', in *Journal of Philosophy*, 82.4 (1985b), pp. 169–221; A. Sen, 'The Equality of What?', in *Liberty, Equality, and Law*, ed. S. M. McMurrin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987a), pp. 137–162; A. Sen, *On Ethics and Economics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987b); A. Sen, *Inequality Reexamined* (Oxford: Basil Clarendon Press, 1992); A. Sen, 'Positional Objectivity', in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 22 (1993), pp. 126–145; A. Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁹ The Presidency Republic of South Africa, Development Indicators 2008 [online](2008). Available from: <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=84952> [accessed 9 July 2010], pp. 26–27.

experienced a food shortage *always* or *many times* in the 12 months ending May 2009.¹⁰ If anything, as regards illiteracy in the work-age population, these figures constitute an underestimate, at least according to the latest census (2011) and the latest (2012) General Household Survey (GHS): the census records that more than one-fifth (20.8%) of individuals over the age of 20 years were functionally illiterate and GHS puts the 2012 figure at 16.5%.¹¹

In terms of housing, between 2002 and 2008 there was a slight increase from 13.1% to 13.4% in the proportion of families living in informal dwellings and by 2012 there had been a further increase to 14.1%.¹² And, in the 12 months ending May 2009, 37% of South Africans experienced a shortage of clean water and 15% of South Africans experienced a shortage of clean water *always* or *many times*.¹³ These figures for absolute poverty in South Africa are much lower as compared to other African countries such as Kenya, Senegal and Zambia, but this is like comparing apples and pears, as these countries are not *middle*-income countries and do not have anywhere near the levels of income, infrastructure, general development and GDP per capita as South Africa, however skewed its spread and efficacy is thanks to the extreme distortions of apartheid's legacy. Comparable poverty rates in Chile, Mexico, Indonesia, Jamaica, Malaysia and Tunisia, for example, have been much lower across this whole two-decade period.¹⁴ Only Brazil matched South Africa in the 1990s,¹⁵ but the former has since implemented highly successful poverty reduction programmes, which leaves South Africa now as the sole outlier in terms of absolute poverty in the *middle*-income country bracket.

Moreover, absolute income poverty is just one measure of welfare or well-being. As initiated by the groundbreaking ethical and economic work of Amartya

¹⁰ Statistics South Africa (SSA), 2007/2008 Human Development Report, South Africa [online](2008). Available from: http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_ZAF.html [accessed 9 July 2010]; A. Leatt, 'Income Poverty in South Africa' [online]. Available from: http://www.ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2006/gauge2006_incomepoverty.pdf [accessed July 2010]; Poverty Net, Understanding Poverty and World Bank Poverty Report [online](2008). Available from: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,,contentMDK:20153855~menuPK:435040~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:430367,00.html> [accessed 10 July 2010]; Afrobarometer, *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 68* [online] (2009). Available from: http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfrobriefNo68_21may09_newfinal.pdf [accessed 19 July 2010], pp. 5–6.

¹¹ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011; Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012, p. 14.

¹² Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey July 2008 [online](2012). Available from: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P0318July2008.pdf> [accessed 8 July 2010], p. 5; Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012, p. 22.

¹³ Afrobarometer, *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 68*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Seekings, 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa', p. 21.

¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1999* (Geneva: United Nations Development Programme, 1999).

Sen,¹⁶ the Human Development Index (HDI) is a broader measure of quality of life, reported in the UNDP's annual *Human Development Report (HDR)*. The HDI comprises three components: an 'educational attainment index', constructed out of adult literacy rates and gross school enrolment rates; a 'life expectancy index', derived from data on life expectancy at birth; and an index of Gross National Income (GNI) per capita expressed in constant 2005 international dollars converted using purchasing power parity (PPP) rates.¹⁷ The first thing to note about this measure across time is that South Africa's absolute HDI has been more or less the same ever since 1990, when it was 0.621, up until the latest assessment (2012), when it was 0.629,¹⁸ but that this has meant a steady drop in its global ranking relative to the HDI of other countries from 90 in 1994 to 125 in 2007 and 121 in 2012. Disaggregating further, these indicators show that, with the exception of 1999, there was a sharp drop off in ranking from 1994 until 2002, when South Africa reached a global ranking of 119, a position it has more or less stabilized at, slipping as low as 125th in 2006.¹⁹ This is out of a total number of 187 countries, and these stabilized low rankings for South Africa put it in the lower half of what the *HDR* calls 'medium human development', the third of four categories, on a par with countries such as Indonesia, which has surged up the rankings over the last two decades, and surrounded by countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Viet Nam, with much lower GDP per capita. Most of the other *middle*-income countries, categorized in terms of GDP per capita, are much higher up on the *HDR* rankings in the 'high human development category', for example, Poland (39th), Chile (40th) and even South Africa's erstwhile highly unequal 'partner in crime', Brazil (85th).

This rapid decline in South Africa's absolute and relative HDI is due, in major part, to the rapid decline in life expectancy in South Africa. One of the important

¹⁶ A. Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (San Francisco: Holden Day, 1970); A. Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities*; Sen, 'Well-being, Agency and Freedom'; Sen, 'The Equality of What?'; Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*; Sen, *Inequality Reexamined*; Sen, 'Positional Objectivity'; Sen, *Development as Freedom*.

¹⁷ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Explanatory Note on 2013 HDI Composite Indices: South Africa* [online] (Geneva: United Nations Development Programme, 2013b). Available from: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/ZAF.pdf> [accessed 26 August 2013].

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World* [online] (Geneva: United Nations Development Programme: 2013a). Available from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2013_EN_complete.pdf [accessed 23 August 2013], p.149; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Explanatory Note on 2013 HDI Composite Indices: South Africa* [online].

¹⁹ Seekings, 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa', pp. 30–31; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World* [online] p. 149.

consequences of absolute poverty is the direct effects it has on quality of life and, ultimately, on rates of mortality. According to the latest HDI, in 2012 in South Africa life expectancy at birth was 53.4 years, and this following a recent rise since 2005, when it was just over 50 years.²⁰ Moreover, as is now common knowledge, in the case of South Africa this very low figure has been heavily influenced by the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, thanks in significant degree to the effects of the Thabo Mbeki-led ANC government denial regarding the scientific evidence for the link between HIV and AIDS and their subsequent very slow roll-out of a national treatment campaign. By 2010, AIDS reduced life expectancy at birth in South Africa by almost 20 years: without AIDS it would have been 68 years; with AIDS and AIDS denialism, it was 52.2 years.²¹ Besides the human tragedy of this very poor political judgement and associated lack of accountability that allowed it to continue more or less unchallenged for so long, if anything, it has rolled back decades of development,²² generating in many areas a lost generation: child-headed households, significantly lowered household income, the need therefore to seek employment and thus leave formal education at a younger age than would otherwise be the case, and so on. As regards general health, according to the UNDP report of 2007–2008, 31% of South Africans face the probability of not surviving past the age of 50, which is a measure of the poor state of healthcare provision, lack of universal access to existing provision, the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the effects of South Africa's political representatives' lack of accountability. (As I argue in the next chapter, the latter is due to the nature of its macro-political institutional structure.) Child mortality rates have not improved in South Africa since 1990. Finally, 'black' South Africans experience poverty at over three times the rate of 'white' and 'indian' respondents.²³

This generally very parlous state of affairs regarding poverty is corroborated overall by a new UNDP index called the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), introduced in 2010, which identifies multiple deprivations in education,

²⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Explanatory Note on 2013 HDI Composite Indices: South Africa* [online].

²¹ Seekings, 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa', p. 31 – claims there corrected in light of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Explanatory Note on 2013 HDI Composite Indices: South Africa* [online].

²² N. Nattrass, 'AIDS and Human Security in Southern Africa', in *Social Dynamics*, 28.1 (2002), pp. 1–19; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World: Explanatory Note on 2013 HDI Composite Indices: South Africa* [online].

²³ Afrobarometer, *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 68* [online] p. 8.

health and standard of living, providing a means of assessing whether an entire household (i.e. everyone in it) is either multidimensionally poor or *vulnerable* to or at risk of becoming multidimensionally poor. In South Africa's case the latest relevant figures were collected in 2008, when 13.4% of the population lived in multidimensional poverty and a further 22.2% were vulnerable to multiple deprivations. It follows that at least 35.6% of South Africa's population are either deprived across all dimensions, some dimensions or are at severe risk of becoming so. The most outstanding feature of these measures, however, is the disparity between South Africa's GNI per capita (\$9,594) and its HDI and MPI.²⁴ Taken alone, South Africa's GNI per capita would place it squarely within the *middle*-income category and puts it on a par with most of the countries in the *HDR*'s 'High Human Development' category, but its HDI and MPI indicators place it much further down the rankings. More specific HDI comparison is useful too: Brazil, for example, has a GNI per capita (\$10,152) very similar to that of South Africa and yet ranks 85th, not to mention Montenegro (GNI per capita of \$10,471 and ranked 52nd) or the fact that Cuba (59th), Grenada (63rd), Serbia (64th), Peru (77th), Macedonia (78th), Ukraine (78th) and all the other countries bar five that are ranked between Ukraine and South Africa all have a GNI per capita lower than South Africa, in some cases significantly lower. This discrepancy between GNI per capita rank and HDI rank is also calculated in the *HDR*, and South Africa has the infamy of scoring -42, the 4th worse score on the entire index of 187 countries.²⁵ This points to one of the main causes not only of poverty in South Africa but also of the lack of freedom that still prevails in South Africa: the extreme inequality it has failed to eradicate.

Inequality

South Africa is one of the most unequal societies on earth. The Gini coefficient is a widely accepted summary measure of income (or wealth) inequality that ranges from zero (perfect equality in the distribution of income or wealth) to one (perfect inequality in the distribution of income or wealth). South Africa had a Gini coefficient of 0.72, the world's highest. This unequal distribution means that large parts of the South African population are unable to benefit

²⁴ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World* [online], p. 145.

²⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013*, pp. 144–147.

equally from economic growth: for example, in 2008 the poorest 40% of households, which comprise 55% of the South African population, were responsible for just below 10% of national consumption expenditure, whilst the poorest 10% of households (17% of the population) were only responsible for 2% of consumption. This is in stark contrast to the richest 10% of households (which account for only 6% of the population) that are responsible for 45% of consumption.²⁶ The World Bank's latest figures, from 2009, corroborate this reality of extreme inequality: the poorest 10% of population were responsible for only 1% of consumption, whereas the richest 10% of the population was responsible for 52% of consumption.²⁷

Moreover, since 1996, despite some inroads into eradicating some components of extreme poverty, as outlined in the previous section, South Africa has become more unequal, not less unequal. Leibbrandt's calculations using the 1995 and 2000 Income and Expenditure Surveys show that the Gini coefficient for household per capita income rose by five percentage points over five years, from 0.65 to 0.7. The 1996 and 2001 population census data corroborate this finding nearly perfectly.²⁸ These not only corroborate the findings about the current states of affairs regarding inequality, but also show that matters have only further worsened since 1996. Moreover, as Seekings argues, the Gini coefficient may even underestimate the degree of inequality in contemporary South Africa as it is reportedly less sensitive to changes at either end of the income distribution and more sensitive to changes in the middle. 'South Africa's rich are unusually rich and South Africa's poor are exceptionally poor, even relative to other unequal societies. If the poor are getting relatively poorer, therefore, the Gini coefficient shows less change than alternative measures of distribution, such as the mean logarithmic deviation.'²⁹

There has also been some recent dispute regarding the way in which the Gini coefficient is calculated, with a study in 2010 suggesting that it fails to take into account sufficiently the impact of government policies such as social grants

²⁶ P. Armstrong, B. Lekezwa and K. Siebrits, 'Poverty in South Africa: A Profile based on Recent Household Surveys' [online] (University of Stellenbosch, 2008). Available from: <http://www.ekon.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2008/wp042008/wp-04-2008.pdf> [accessed 20 July 2010] cf. The Presidency Republic of South Africa, Development Indicators 2008 [online], p. 25.

²⁷ World Bank, 2013 People: World Development Indicators: Distribution of Income or Consumption [online] (2012). Available from: <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.9> [accessed 27 August 2013].

²⁸ J. Seekings, N. Nattrass and M. V. Leibbrandt, *Income Inequality After Apartheid* (University of Cape Town Centre for Social Science Research: Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, 2004) cited in Seekings, 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa', p. 28.

²⁹ Seekings, 'Poverty and Inequality in South Africa, 1994–2007', p. 29, citing J. Hoogeveen and B. Özler, 'Poverty and Inequality in Post-apartheid South Africa', in *Poverty and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, p. 72.

and free services, amongst others; social grants, in particular, have seen a sharp increase in uptake, with 12.7% of the population in 2002 as compared to 29.6% of the population in 2012 benefitting as individuals from social grants of one form or another. Concurrently, the percentage of households that received at least one grant increased from 29.9% in 2003 to 45.3% in 2009, before declining slightly to 43.6% in 2012.³⁰ The 2010 study found that when the income from social grants and free services was included in the calculation, the figure for South Africa drops to 0.61.³¹ Even if this is correct, however, which many contest, this figure is not very far from the Gini index provided by both the latest *HDR* and the World Bank of 63.1 or an equivalent Gini coefficient of 0.63; more importantly, even this lowered figure corroborates that South Africa is one of the most unequal, if not the most unequal place on earth – compare South Africa's figure to that of Egypt (0.31), India (0.33), Indonesia (0.34), Russia (0.4), Paraguay (0.52) and Brazil (0.55).³²

There is little doubt, therefore, that even if South African government intervention is beginning to eradicate extreme poverty, the overall picture regarding inequality is much gloomier: contrary to what many may assume following the end of apartheid and the election into power of a supposedly pro-poor party, the ANC, since 1994 South Africa has become more unequal not less unequal. *The World Top Incomes Database* corroborates this picture of increasing inequality in South Africa. This database and associated studies produce time-series analysis of the top incomes within countries not by reference to household surveys and other subjective information, whose veracity many have questioned, but objective data taken from annual tax submission statistics provided by the administration of tax revenues, in the case of South Africa by the South African Revenue Services. These figures indicate there is little doubt that South Africa is becoming more and more unequal. To take just one example from the study, in 2002 in South Africa those in the top 5% of income prior to tax shared 34.36% of the total income, and this has risen steadily until 2010 (the latest year that figures are available for) to 38.19% of the total income.³³

³⁰ Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012 [online], pp. 2, 19–20.

³¹ L. Donnelly, 'Welfare Could Be Gini in the Bottle', *Mail & Guardian*, 10 May 2013.

³² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of The South: Human Progress in a Diverse World* [online]; World Bank, 2013 People: World Development Indicators: Distribution of Income or Consumption [online]; Donnelly, 'Welfare Could Be Gini in the Bottle.'

³³ F. Alvaredo, A. B. Atkinson, T. Piketty and E. Saez, *The World Top Incomes Database* [online](2012). Available from: <http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/#Database> [accessed 28 August 2013], database South Africa.

Education and unemployment

In line with the moderate success regarding governmental response to extreme poverty and the provision for vital needs, there has been some success since 1996 in reducing the proportion of the population without any schooling at all. As the 2011 Census indicates, the proportion of persons aged 20 years who have no schooling halved from 19.1% in 1996 to 8.6% in 2011; moreover, according to the latest General Household Survey, by 2012 this percentage had been further reduced to 5.8%, although the latter figure is noted as probably an underestimate.³⁴ Further disaggregated, the census indicates a marked impact on one of the previously disadvantaged groups, 'black African', improving school attendance markedly for this group: from 24.0% of this group receiving no schooling in 1996 to 10.5% in 2011, as compared to, for example, very little change in the 'white' population's figures, an improvement from 1.1% receiving no schooling in 1996 to 0.6% in 2011. Moreover, at the higher end, there has been significant improvement in the inclusion of the 'black African' population in the higher education system, with more than double the proportion of persons with higher education between 1996 and 2011, an increase of 3.6% to 8.3%.³⁵

These improvements at the level of basic education and the increases for the previously highly disadvantaged 'black African' population, however, mask a generally very troubling state of affairs regarding education in South Africa, especially regarding its capacities and outputs in terms of training its population to be critical and employable citizens. For example, although the percentage of persons aged 5–24 years attending a school in 2011 was as high as 93%, the percentage attending a technikon or university was a staggeringly low 3% of this population. Moreover, there has been very little increase in this proportion since the end of apartheid: in 1996 7.1% of persons aged 20 years and older were able to claim 'higher education' as their highest level of educational attainment; by 2011 this had only increased to 11.8%.³⁶ Even more startling for this vital process of creating critical, literate and skilled citizens is the fact that between 2001 and 2011 there was a *decrease* in the proportion of persons aged 20 years and above choosing to study the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences at the

³⁴ Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012 [online], p.12.

³⁵ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011; Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012 [online], pp. 33–34.

³⁶ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011, p. 33.

tertiary level: in the natural sciences from 2.35% to 1.9%, in the humanities from 0.95% to 0.6% and in the social sciences from 6.0% to 4.95%.³⁷

There is little dispute that South Africa's education system is systematically flawed, but comparisons with education systems and results in other countries really bring this reality into sharp relief. A recent World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Information Technology Report 2013 ranks South Africa's maths and science education second-last in the world, only ahead of Yemen. Furthermore, across all disciplines it ranks the quality of South Africa's education system 140th of 144 countries and internet access at schools 111th of 143 countries.³⁸ South African pupils routinely perform very badly in standardized international benchmarking tests (especially in mathematics), often ranking behind less-developed African countries.³⁹ It is no wonder that, according to the 2010 General Household Survey, although 98% of children between the ages of 7 and 15 years (the compulsory age range) are enrolled in schools, and that of every 100 pupils who start in Grade 1, about 94 reach Grade 9, dropout rates increase sharply in the 3-year senior secondary school phase – of every 100 starting Grade 10, fewer than 60 write the National Senior Certificate; and dropout rates increase *very* sharply subsequently in tertiary education – about half of those who enrol for degrees complete them and about 40% of those enrolling for diplomas do the same.⁴⁰ This is a consequence of an extremely unhealthy mix of post-apartheid educational policy that reacted against the authoritarian and rote learning characteristics of apartheid education policy, opting for progressive policy, learner creativity, tests and examinations by portfolios of work, group work as against competitive individualism and so on, but without the necessary training for those who were to introduce the new curriculum – the teachers themselves – coupled with very poor and often non-existent accountability structures in schools. The result, as studies consistently show, is low time on task and low cognitive effort made by teachers and learners alike.⁴¹ In short, the result is a low-quality mass schooling system that fails to prepare learners for tertiary education or

³⁷ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011, p. 37, averages created from disaggregated gender difference.

³⁸ E. Pickwoth, 'Joint Initiative to Foster Education Reform', *Business Day*, 2 August 2013, p. 4.

³⁹ R. de Kadt and C. Simkins, 'The Political Economy of Pervasive Rent-seeking', *Thesis Eleven*, 115 (2013), p. 117.

⁴⁰ Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2010 (Revised Version), Statistics Release PO318, (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2010b); de Kadt and Simkins, 'The Political Economy of Pervasive Rent-seeking' Corroborated by Statistics South Africa (SSA), General Household Survey 2012 [online], p.12.

⁴¹ de Kadt and Simkins, 'The Political Economy of Pervasive Rent-seeking'.

employment and a tertiary education sector that has stagnated and is unable to provide the kind of quality or quantity of graduates necessary for the growing the economy and critical citizenship. Needless to say the likelihood of sustained growth and associated mechanisms for overcoming inequality and poverty depend on an educational system that can produce many more and many better qualified graduates. Moreover, as argued in de Kadt and Simkins, the filtering that takes place in secondary education and higher education means that those with a university qualification command high returns in the labour market and suffer markedly less unemployment than others.⁴² These few can therefore seek and charge high rents for their skills, which impacts negatively on an already critical and unsustainable level of unemployment in South Africa.

Since 1994 any systemic attempts that have been made to alleviate absolute levels of poverty and unemployment and the extent of inequality have failed dismally. In fact in some instances conditions have worsened. Strict, official unemployment, for example, increased from 20% to 25.5% from 1994 to 2007⁴³; as of 2011 matters had either worsened significantly if the census is your benchmark – 29.8% – or they have stabilized if the 2011 4th quarter results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) are correct.⁴⁴ Depending on your source, over the last ten years or so there have been small fluctuations during different annual quarters but up until the present, approximately 25% of the population have been officially unemployed: according to Statistics South Africa, the latest figure stands at 25.2% of the population.⁴⁵ It is important to note, moreover, that this strict, official definition of unemployment does not include discouraged work seekers. These are people who are able and willing to work, but have given up any hope of finding employment. In other words the real, expanded figure regarding the percentage of unemployed is likely to be much higher, anywhere between 30 and 40% of the population; the 2011 census gives it as exactly 40% and the 4th quarter QLFS of 2011 as 35.4%.⁴⁶ Moreover, the highest rates of unemployment are found amongst young adults, those between the ages of 18 and 24 years. According to the census of 2011, a staggering

⁴² de Kadt and Simkins, 'The Political Economy of Pervasive Rent-seeking'.

⁴³ South African Institute of Race Relations, Unemployment and Poverty: An Overview 28th November 2008 [online](2008). Available from: http://www.sairr.org.za/sairr-today/news_item.2008-11-28.9488661622/?searchterm=povetry%20statistics [accessed 5 July 2010].

⁴⁴ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011.

⁴⁵ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 1, 2013, Statistical Release P0211 [online](2013). Available from: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2013.pdf> [accessed 28 August 2013], p. xiv.

⁴⁶ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011.

48.6% of this age group is unemployed as calculated officially (i.e. not including discouraged work seekers) and an even more troubling 59.1% of this group is unemployed according to the expanded calculation (that includes discouraged work seekers).⁴⁷ This is a very worrying trend for the future of South Africa. In some countries this is offset by a large and efficient tertiary education sector that keeps this cohort in education and trains them for skilled jobs in the future. In South Africa the situation is bleak indeed: currently only 16% of those eligible for tertiary education find places in existing institutions of tertiary education; and, even more worryingly, of the 2.8 million South Africans between the ages of 18 and 24 years who in 2007 were not in employment, education and training, two million (71%) had not achieved grade 12 (final school year), and of these 0.5 million (18%) had not progressed beyond primary school.⁴⁸ And things have worsened since: towards the end of 2013, it looks as if almost a million school dropouts eligible for university entrance will *not* find places in universities and will thus end up in job queues; job queues that lead nowhere. The economy is shedding jobs and these school dropouts will constitute another million job seekers in a situation in which '3.5 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the first quarter of 2013 were not absorbed into employment, education or training'.⁴⁹

In other words, there is a compounding effect on unemployment. The economy and its macroeconomic masters are not even able to keep unemployment stable. The economy cannot even nearly absorb new work-seekers, let alone those already searching (not to mention those who have given up looking). Moreover, even if the economy were somehow to begin creating jobs, it is not clear whether those out of work would even be able to fill these positions, unless the jobs that were created all required unskilled labour, not exactly the recipe for enabling the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment in a middle-income country. Moreover, as if the current state of affairs was not bad enough, these figures for this age group make any realistic observer of South Africa gloomy regarding the possibility of reducing poverty, inequality and unemployment in South Africa's medium-term future. As I argue in the subsequent three chapters, much will depend on reorienting South Africa's macroeconomic, macro-political and educational institutions and practices.

⁴⁷ Statistics South Africa (SSA), Census 2011.

⁴⁸ M. Metcalfe, 'Mistakes We Cannot Make Again', *Mail & Guardian*, 3 to 9 September 2010.

⁴⁹ Minister for Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, quoted in N. Mtshali, 'Universities Unable to Satisfy Demand for Places: Despite New Measures and New Universities, Almost a Million Matriculants Will End Up in Job Queues', *The Star*, 3 September 2013.

The health and freedom of the South African polity

As is apparent from the figures regarding poverty, inequality, health, education and unemployment in the previous sections, in and of itself poverty has dire effects on the well-being, life expectancy, general health and education of a large proportion of South Africa's population. Under current economic conditions a life trapped in a cycle of poverty is a life without power and thus a life without freedom across all four dimensions discussed in Chapter 1: without the financial means to satisfy properly my vital needs, I do not have the power to do or be as I would otherwise do or be (*in extremis* my situation *forces* me to act in certain ways in order often to stave off starvation, but even above that floor, if all my resources are directed towards the satisfaction of my vital needs, I have no surplus to use for my empowerment); nor do I have the time, education or power to determine who represents me, to take part in actively resisting the norms and practices of my society or to control those representatives that determine my economic environment.

However, the effects on power and freedom of absolute poverty are only exacerbated and exaggerated when they occur alongside extreme inequality, as is the case in South Africa. The very high levels of inequality in South Africa not only mean that a large proportion of the population struggle or are unable to meet their vital needs and thus enact the power necessary for freedom, they also skew the relative power and thus freedom of different sectors of society. I will elaborate on only two here. First, relatively poor citizens are left out of the economic loop in two ways: (a) they fail to prosper from a generally prosperous economy; and (b) they therefore have relatively little or no means of influencing their political and economic representatives, in particular with regard to the macroeconomic decisions that will affect whether or not they could be free and active economic agents in the future. They therefore become trapped in a cycle of less and less freedom. In contrast, the relatively affluent not only benefit directly from any positive national economic outcomes, they are also able to determine their future prospects by dint of their greater influence over macroeconomic policy, as a consequence of not only their greater purchasing power but also their direct and indirect links to policymakers (see Chapters 3 and 4).

However, the relatively wealthy are not exempt from the negative effects of high levels of inequality. They too are adversely affected in a number of ways. These are varied in number and kind but all have the effect of disempowering citizens and thus making them less free. South Africa's high levels of inequality

give rise to a very high incidence of social ills that affect everyone, even the most wealthy and protected. It is not just the poor and deprived in isolation who suffer from the effects of inequality, but also the bulk of the population. In the most extreme and direct way, this is felt in the form of crime in general and violent crime in particular. Although the poor in South Africa are often the victims of crime, and as regards certain forms of crime, such as rape and murder, this is overwhelmingly the case, in no way whatsoever are the wealthy free from violent crime. In fact, they are often specifically targeted as a result of their wealth – armed robbery in South Africa occurs at very high levels in seemingly highly protected, wealthy suburbs and neighbourhoods. For example, Sandton, in Johannesburg, one of the wealthiest suburbs in South Africa, had the most cases of house robberies in the country during 2009–2010.⁵⁰ National crime statistics for 2008–2009 show a recent surge in house robberies (an increase of 27%), an overall increase in crime in general, and a slight drop in the murder rate; but despite the latter it is still the case that in South Africa about 50 people are murdered a day – slightly more than in the USA, which has six times South Africa's 50-million population.⁵¹ In 2009–2010 there was a slight decline in murders, hijackings and sex crimes, while house and business robberies increased again.⁵² Moreover, there is much evidence in South Africa and across the world that there is a direct and robust causal relation between high levels of inequality and crime.⁵³

However, the severe social damage caused by inequality does not stop at violent crime. The high levels of inequality in South Africa also cause less direct, if equally damaging, effects on the whole population. These take the form of general stress, mutual distrust, conflict, violence, bad health, short lives, mental illness and low productivity. The lived experience in South Africa further bolsters some relatively new literature on the effects of inequality on the general health of

⁵⁰ The Star, "Still too many murders": Experts Voice Caution as Major-crime Stats Show Decline, *The Star*, 10 September 2010.

⁵¹ Mail & Guardian, 2009. 'SA Murder Rate Drops Slightly, Overall Crime up', *Mail & Guardian*, 22 September 2010; South African Police Service, South African Government Crime Statistics, 2009 [online](2009). Available from: http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2009/crime_stats.htm [accessed 5 July 2010].

⁵² The Star, "Still too many murders".

⁵³ R. G. Wilkinson, *The Impact of Inequality: How to Make Sick Societies Healthier* (London: Routledge, 2005); R. G. Wilkinson and K. Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost All Do Better* (London: Allen Lane, 2009) cf. South African Police Service, 'Address by Minister of Police, Nathi Mthethwa, Deputy Minister Fikile Mbalula and Police Commissioner Bheki Cele to the members of the National Press Club' [online](2010). Available from: http://www.saps.gov.za/_dynamicModules/internetSite/newsBuild.asp?myURL=938 [accessed 15 July 2010]; Time Live, 'Cele Points Finger at "Nigerians in Sandton"', *Times Live*, 7 December 2009.

populations. Despite the incredible success of South Africa's relatively non-violent transformation and the rapidity with which many of its citizens have embraced Mandela's clarion call for the creation of a 'rainbow nation', the persistent high levels of material inequality make the wealthy, in particular, very distrustful of the poor, very protective of their precarious positions of relative wealth and often plagued by high levels of fear regarding their own and their family's health, safety and security. In this way and others, inequality breeds stress across the full spectrum of society, not just among the downtrodden, and this leads to a high incidence of syndromes such as depression, phobias of different sorts and basic anxiety. For example, incidents of mental illness are 500% higher across the whole population spectrum in the most unequal societies than in the most equal ones.⁵⁴ If these and other studies are correct – that there is a direct causal link between inequality and poor health, that is, mental and physical illness – there is little doubt that there exists a causal relation between high levels of inequality and power. If one is consistently having to struggle against poor health, one will accordingly lack the power to do or be as one would otherwise do or be, to take part in the selection and control of one's representatives and to resist the norms of one's society. It follows, therefore, that if one conceives of freedom in terms of power, the high levels of inequality experienced in South Africa severely curtail the freedom of all of its citizens. The second way therefore in which inequality and related problems associated with high levels of unemployment and a very poor educational system skew societal power relations and thus undermine the freedom as power of most of the population is through these causal links between inequality, crime, fear, mental and physical illness and thus freedom as power. It is not for nothing that many people in South Africa often speak about how important it is to be 'free from fear'.

In sum, then, given the levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment and poor education in South Africa, a large proportion of the population are faced with a continuous struggle to meet their vital needs and thus do not have the time or power to be free, and only a relatively small proportion of South Africans are able to act as they would otherwise choose or, more ambitiously, with the power to influence South Africa's macroeconomic policy. However, under the conditions prevalent in South Africa today, even these relatively powerful individuals lack freedom as a consequence of being constrained by crime, the fear of crime and the associated phobias and anxieties. A cycle of poverty for some when associated with high levels of inequality and unemployment has become a cycle of less and less freedom for all.

⁵⁴ Wilkinson, *The Impact of Inequality*; Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*.

Freedom's indivisibility

All South Africans lack freedom, even the economic and political elites, though, of course, the degree to which they lack it is significantly less than the impoverished, unemployed and poorly educated majority. As regards certain specific actions and indicators, such as life expectancy, nutrition, security, power of representatives and so on, members of the elite are freer than their impoverished and dominated fellow citizens. However, the very fact of the latter's states of domination undermines freedom for all South Africans, even the most opulent, lucky, malfeasant or hard-working elites. This is the case partly for reasons related to the famous claims made by Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and Mandela⁵⁵ regarding the fact that freedom depends on liberating the 'master and the slave', the 'oppressor and the oppressed' or, in Mandela's own words,

[f]reedom is indivisible; the chains on any one of my people were the chains on all of them; the chains on all of my people were the chains on me... the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed... The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.⁵⁶

Although at the start of this quote he is describing conditions under apartheid, at the end he is clear that even following liberation from apartheid that statuses of 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' continued and would continue until real freedom for all was created. Under current conditions of political liberation in South Africa, it is better to see this not in terms of the direct oppression of one individual or group by another, but in terms of domination: the fact that the stagnation or worsening of economic and political conditions generates resilient states of domination that cause lack of freedom as power for all.

As I argued in Chapter 1, states of domination are characterized by power relations that block or fail to empower individuals in their attempts to determine and satisfy their needs. This can take various forms. Existing power relations can: (a) mislead me in my attempts to *identify* my needs; (b) ensure that I do not have the means or voice to *express* my needs; (c) disable meaningful *evaluation* of needs; and (d) constrain the capacity to *meet* needs. If we combine

⁵⁵ J.-J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, in J.-J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. V. Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1762]), pp. 39–152; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, foreword J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977 [1807]); K. Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, introduced G. Stedman-Jones (London: Penguin, 2002 [1848]); N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Johannesburg: Macdonald Purnell, 1995).

⁵⁶ Mandela, *Freedom*, pp. 616–617.

the corrupt and distorted patronage politics of post-apartheid South Africa, which are partly a consequence of an unfortunate elite compromise, with the current conditions of poverty, inequality, unemployment, poor education and high levels of crime, it is easy to see that most South Africans are dominated in at least one of these ways. This will become even more apparent in the subsequent two chapters. My point is that although South Africans no longer live under conditions of intentional, direct oppression of one individual or group by another, it does not follow from this that they are now free and nor does it follow that they are now best placed to conceive of freedom in purely individualistic or atomistic terms. Various forms of domination still pervade South Africa and, as a result, our individual freedom and its lack and that of our fellow citizens are indivisible.

Our freedom depends on the freedom of others in the sense that we live in complex, interdependent modern states, within which our power to do as we would like, to conform or transgress and to determine who governs and how they do so, especially with regard to economic policy, depend ultimately on the *power* of all citizens across the four domains outlined in Chapter 1. Freedom is possible only when all citizens are able and willing to exercise their powers across all four of these dimensions of freedom as power. Without these substantive political and economic achievements and ideals, even if some citizens have enough resources to do as they would otherwise like to do, the existence of other citizens that do *not* and the persistence of various forms of domination will mean that South Africans taken together lack freedom.⁵⁷

There have been and still are various external and internal attempts to ‘escape’ from this lack of freedom in South Africa. As regards external escape, it is a well-known fact that many South Africans with the power and desire to do so have left South Africa to escape from the levels of crime, fear and anxiety created by the social, economic and political ills described above. Many have also left for reasons of outright racism, a deep-rooted prejudice that must be overcome. Many of those who have left might have found greater freedom elsewhere, but there is little doubt that their individual ‘escape’ will not do much to change the lack of freedom that exists within South Africa, unless of course their ‘escape’

⁵⁷ Cf. G. A. Cohen, ‘Capitalism, Freedom and the Proletariat’ in *The Liberty Reader*, ed. D. Miller (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); and on ‘collective unfreedom’ for a similar if different analytical framework for understanding this, see L. Hamilton, ‘Collective Unfreedom in South Africa’, *Contemporary Politics*, 17.4 (2011), pp. 355–372; and for a critique thereof, see L. Hamilton, *Freedom is Power: Liberty Through Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

has meant an overall reduction in the amount of racism left in South Africa, which would undoubtedly make South Africans freer. In any case, those that have 'escaped' have not displayed much solidarity for the cause of the new South Africa and those that are left behind are in South Africa either out of lack of power, resources, desire (or some combination of all three) to leave, diffidence about their chances of leaving or finding more freedom elsewhere, or as a consequence of solidarity for the 'new' South Africa. In any case, the status of those that have left is of no consequence because, if they have taken up citizenship elsewhere, they are no longer South African, or at least not uniquely so; their degree of freedom is now determined by the material conditions of their new place of abode and the individual and group powers and freedoms that prevail there.

As regards the possibility for internal escape, given the foregoing account of the various dimensions of freedom and the extant forms of domination in South Africa, it seems reasonable to conclude that South Africans collectively lack freedom to significant degrees because the four forms of domination discussed above mean that the cycle of poverty for some quickly translates into a cycle of less and less freedom for all; or, in other words, humans living under collective conditions are free only if other members of the collective are also free because if any of them lack freedom as power they tend to create a similar lack of freedom in others. This is the case because their lack of power may force them to act in ways that impair the freedom of those who would otherwise have sufficient power and freedom. This is when reality bites and it comes in the form of powerlessness, violence, crime, fear and anxiety, all the result of living in a highly unequal society.

This is also where the case of South Africa highlights the stark inadequacies of the orthodox liberal account of freedom as equivalent to being 'free from interference' or 'free from politics'. To assume that you are free because you can 'do what you want' in your 'private sphere', secure behind high walls, security fencing and protected by private police forces and with sufficient resources to meet all your needs and wants is to misunderstand gravely the nature of freedom. Thus the Freedom Charter of 1955 is eerily prophetic (and very far from being realized) when it proclaims in its penultimate section entitled 'There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort' that 'Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished', although of course those that composed these lines had in mind those without adequate housing. It is a great irony of history that now the seemingly secure and comfortable have fenced themselves in to the extent that they could be said to have ghettoized themselves.

Even for the most 'secure' reality bites in the form of crime, either over the high walls or outside of the 'private sphere'. To live in a society in which large swathes of the population do not have the power to exercise, critique and generate their formal freedoms, where a smaller but economically more powerful proportion of the population either completely miscomprehends freedom or is too 'corrupted' (in Machiavelli's sense of the term) to identify it, is to live in a society and polity that collectively lacks freedom to significant degrees. It is in this sense that Mandela is right regarding freedom's indivisibility, even if he may not have articulated it in these terms. The political struggle against apartheid brought things into stark relief, but, unfortunately, so does contemporary South Africa. Freedom's indivisibility is made only more apparent, if more complex, when we conceive of it not just in terms of individual and group power, but also in terms of the freedoms and power of the political representatives of the individuals and groups that constitute South Africa, as will become evident in the next chapter.