

YOUNG PEOPLE IN  
SOUTH AFRICA IN 2005

Where  
we're  
at &  
where  
we're  
going



**UMSOBOMVU**  
YOUTH FUND

ESTABLISHED 2001

Commissioned by the Umsobomvu Youth Fund  
and compiled by the Human Sciences Research Council

Published by UYF  
Umsobomvu House  
11 Broadwalk Avenue, Halfway House, 1685  
South Africa  
[www.youthportal.org.za](http://www.youthportal.org.za)

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First published 2005

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Production by HSRC Press  
Cover by Jenny Young  
Print management by comPress

Suggested citation: Morrow, S., Panday, S. & Richter, L. (2005)  
*Where we're at and where we're going: Young people in South Africa in 2005.*  
Johannesburg: Umsobomvu Youth Fund.

# CONTENTS

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Acronyms iv

Executive summary v

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | INTRODUCTION  | 1  |
| 2. | BACKGROUND  | 3  |
|    | The approach of this report                                   | 4  |
|    | This report and earlier studies                               | 4  |
| 3. | ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND POVERTY                            | 7  |
|    | Where we are  | 7  |
|    | Responses   | 11 |
|    | Advocacy  | 12 |
|    | Youth business development (non-financial enterprise support) | 12 |
|    | Enterprise finance support                                    | 13 |
|    | Local economic development                                    | 14 |
|    | Recommendations   | 14 |
| 4. | EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT                              | 15 |
|    | Where we are  | 15 |
|    | Responses   | 19 |
|    | Recommendations   | 21 |
| 5. | HEALTH AND WELL-BEING   | 23 |
|    | Where we are  | 23 |
|    | Responses   | 25 |
|    | Recommendations   | 28 |
| 6. | SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT                       | 29 |
|    | Where we are  | 29 |
|    | Responses   | 32 |
|    | Recommendations   | 33 |
| 7. | CONCLUSION  | 35 |
|    | Old and new now   | 35 |
|    | From tokenism to commitment                                   | 36 |
|    | References  | 39 |



## ACRONYMS

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|         |  |
|---------|--|
| ABET    | Adult Basic Education and Training                                     |
| AU      | African Union  |
| BBBEE   | Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment                                 |
| CASE    | Community Agency for Social Enquiry                                    |
| CBO     | Community-Based Organisation   |
| CV      | Curriculum Vitae   |
| DTI     | Department of Trade and Industry                                       |
| EPWP    | Expanded Public Works Programme  |
| FBO     | Faith-Based Organisation   |
| FET     | Further Education and Training   |
| HSRC    | Human Sciences Research Council  |
| IDP     | Integrated Development Plans   |
| NAFCI   | National Adolescent Friendly Clinic Initiative                         |
| NGO     | Non-Governmental Organisation  |
| NEDLAC  | National Economic Development and Labour Council                       |
| NEPAD   | New Partnership for Africa's Development                               |
| NICRO   | National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders |
| NIMSS   | National Injury Mortality Surveillance System                          |
| NQF     | National Qualifications Framework                                      |
| NSFAS   | National Student Financial Aid Scheme                                  |
| NYC     | National Youth Commission  |
| NYDF    | National Youth Development Forum                                       |
| NYDPF   | National Youth Development Policy Framework                            |
| NYSP    | National Youth Service Programme                                       |
| PHC     | Primary Health Care  |
| SA-ADAM | South African Drug Abuse Monitoring (research programme)               |
| SAQA    | South African Qualifications Authority                                 |
| SAWEN   | South African Women Enterprise Network                                 |
| SAYC    | South African Youth Council  |
| SAYCO   | South African Youth Congress   |
| SEDA    | Small Enterprise Development Agency                                    |
| SETAs   | Sector Education and Training Authorities                              |
| SLOT    | School Leavers Opportunity Training                                    |
| SMMEs   | Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises                                    |
| STD     | Sexually Transmitted Disease   |
| SYR     | Status of Youth Report   |
| UDF     | United Democratic Front  |
| UYF     | Umsobomvu Youth Fund   |
| VCT     | Voluntary Counselling and Testing                                      |
| YES     | Youth Employment Summit  |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This overview of young people in South Africa, commissioned by the Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF), is a call to action. As a tool to aid programming, the UYF requested the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to conduct a secondary review of available material and data and a national survey on the status of youth in the country. This review aims to create a picture of youth, especially in relation to education, economic and civic participation, and health and well-being. In keeping with the action-oriented nature of the review, the report begins with principles for youth development and recommendations about what needs to be done. The body of the report gives the background and rationale behind these ideas.

In keeping with the youth development *framework*, the following general principles should continue to guide youth policy:

- Youth development should be approached as part of the development of the whole society, and should not be seen in isolation. This also applies to governmental initiatives.
- Youth and youthfulness should be viewed as an opportunity and young people as a resource rather than as a problem. Young people are, in general, optimistic, potentially innovative, flexible and globally-oriented.
- However, young people are not homogeneous, and their diversity must be factored into youth policy and practice. Marginalised groups within the youth population must be identified and assisted.
- Young women, especially, must be enabled to become economically active and to succeed in conventionally male careers.
- Much has already been done in the field of youth development, but it is important to consolidate, mobilise and build on the strengths of the sector.
- Youth development is too important an area in which to waste resources: there should be coherence in the roles, institutions and capacities needed for youth development.
- The full resources of modern knowledge and information management must be used in the service of youth development.

These general principles should be implemented through a variety of *approaches* that include:

- The development of a long-term strategy outlined in a ten-year vision for youth development in South Africa, together with a Youth Charter that mainstreams youth issues and provides indicators.
- The championing of youth development through an effective advocacy and communication strategy on mainstreaming youth development in government policies and programmes.
- The strengthening of capacity, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation and best practice, as well as the dissemination of these factors, in the youth development sector.
- Co-operation between youth development programmes and the Department of Social Development. As youth are located within families and communities, both important supports for young people, this co-operation will strengthen families.
- The sensitising of schooling to the needs of the labour market and economic opportunities. Schooling should include entrepreneurship studies, and more learners should be encouraged to attend Further Education and Training colleges.
- The allocation of resources to produce more and better-quality teachers.
- The balancing of entrepreneurship (as one strategy for job creation, employment and economic participation) with other strategies devoted to these goals.

- The application of consistent standards in training institutions to improve youth job-creation – non-governmental organisation (NGO), faith-based organisation (FBO) and community-based organisation (CBO) accreditation programmes need to be strengthened, procurement systems improved, and programme designs improved, evaluated and taken to scale where merited.
- Education and business need to collaborate more effectively, in areas such as curriculum development, internships and work placements.
- The adoption of imaginative and innovative approaches, such as opportunities for franchising and public procurement, to encourage economic advancement among young people.

These principles and approaches should be woven into all the sectors covered in this report. The following are specific recommendations, and are repeated at the end of the chapters to which they apply.

In the area of *economic participation and poverty* we recommend that:

- Macro-economic interventions, such as the encouragement of foreign direct investment, have the potential to benefit young people. However, active steps should be taken to harness the potential of these opportunities for young people.
- Government's plan to halve unemployment by 2014 should focus strongly on young people, as they represent 70 per cent of the unemployed population.
- Careful attention should be paid to monitoring the balance between the demand for different competencies, skills and qualifications and the supply of human resources produced by education and training systems. That is, education should be closely linked to preparation for work.
- Entrepreneurship training and other initiatives, such as youth co-operatives, should be strengthened further to promote youth economic activity.
- Life skills should be a vital component of formal and informal education and training – there should be a conscious orientation towards building social capital among young people, especially those whose access to substantial economic and other networks has been limited.

Some crucial recommendations in the fields of *education and skills development* are that:

- Every effort should be made to retain young people in education of good quality, and strenuous efforts should be made to dissuade them from dropping out before completing their secondary education.
- Young people who have prematurely left the education system should be encouraged to take up other modes of education, through, for example, Further Education and Training (FET), Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and mature entry into higher education.
- Quality education should reflect contemporary requirements in the world of work. This, among other things, requires a holistic approach to education that includes technical skills, life skills and preparation for work.
- Adequate resources must be made available to increase the integration required between education and training.

Some crucial recommendations in the area of *health and well-being* are that:

- Life skills should be stressed within the framework of a holistic approach to the development of young people with an emphasis on creating awareness and skilling youth to cope with the multiple challenges to their health.

- The focus on education and job creation needs to be increased, to discourage young people from adopting risky patterns of behaviour such as crime, substance abuse, potential exposure to HIV/AIDS and unplanned pregnancies. These patterns can often be traced back to lack of opportunities, unemployment and poor life prospects.
- Family and community cohesion, as a protective shield for young people, should be encouraged and supported, and an intergenerational approach that avoids treating the views of young people as having less consequence should be taken.
- Healthy lifestyles should be encouraged. Young people should have access to multiple opportunities and facilities for sport and recreation, and the means to access such facilities.
- Unfair and dishonest forms of marketing and advertising to young people of legal but addictive substances such as tobacco and alcohol, should be outlawed.

In the field of *social integration and civic engagement*, the recommendations are that:

- Opportunities should be made available for young people to affirm their worth and to draw on the resources of the cultures with which they identify.
- Young people should be valued. There should be forums for them to participate in decision and policy-making in a meaningful way, and opportunities for them to interact with each other and with other generations.
- Specifically, youth should have greater opportunities to interact with government, particularly at local government level, to participate in and shape community priorities and service delivery.
- The frequent media misrepresentations of youth and youth culture should be tempered and a more balanced approach encouraged.







# Introduction

This report encapsulates the main findings of the Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF) *Status of Youth Report* (SYR), based on research conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) on commission to the UYF. The SYR was based on a literature review, secondary data analysis, and a national survey of young people, aged 18 to 35, carried out in late 2003. The report contains a very large collection of interesting and important data, organised under a number of headings including education and skills development; labour market participation; poverty and inequality; youth and health; crime and violence; and social integration and civic engagement. Only some of these findings are reflected in this shorter document. The SYR is just one of the ways in which the UYF has interacted with the research community, of which the HSRC is a crucial part, in providing a sound foundation for the developmental and information work – designing and outsourcing job creation programmes, supporting existing youth initiatives, supporting capacity building for service providers – with which the organisation is engaged.

This short report has a different aim to the longer SYR. In particular, it relates the main findings of the study to the policy environment and to attempts, particularly by government and by government-supported bodies, to transform policy into practice. It is, therefore, both a report of research carried out, and a record of and commentary on the practice of youth development as it is evolving in contemporary South Africa with its strengths and weaknesses, its achievements and shortcomings. This report intends to make a case rather than simply to describe a situation. It comes from within the youth development community and, in a field where pessimism is rife, makes no apologies for highlighting what appear to be successful or potentially successful youth policies, not with the intention of handing out bouquets, or claiming easy victories where reflection and self-criticism may be more appropriate, but rather to identify what is working and to encourage more efforts along similar lines.

The main source for this document is the SYR, which is forthcoming as a separate publication. It also draws heavily on:

- the proceedings of four workshops held from March to May 2005, attended by both UYF and HSRC staff as well as the Department of Social Development, the South African Youth Council, the National Youth Development Network and the National Youth Commission. These workshops covered a 2004 discussion paper by F  b   Potgieter, on the content and themes arising from the SYR titled *'Towards the second decade of freedom: Issues and themes arising from the State of Youth 2003 Report'*. Potgieter also chaired and facilitated the four workshops
- a 2003 advocacy document written by the HSRC for the UYF by Linda Richter and others
- a range of other reports, publications and conversations in the youth policy domain.

In this document, bibliographic references have been kept to a minimum, and footnotes have been entirely eliminated. For details of this sort, the reader is referred to the SYR.





# Background

South Africa is a young country. As a democracy, it emerged little more than a decade ago. It is young also in that, in contrast with the 'developed' world, nearly 40 per cent of its people are between 14 and 35 years of age. Youth in South Africa are therefore not an obscure sub-culture – they are a very large part of the population. Youth 'problems' – opportunities, initiatives and imagination too – are more prominent in South Africa than in older societies. This is clear in the recent history of South Africa. The youth were crucial to the modern South African revolution in 1976 and thereafter. In mid-1987, Jeremy Seekings wrote that the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) – the youth umbrella of the then United Democratic Front (UDF) – claimed '1,200 local affiliates, with a signed-up membership of over half-a-million, and a support base of two million... Even taking account of considerable exaggeration, there was clearly a massive growth in terms of both organisations and membership'. In the political field, but also more widely, youth represent the country's heroic past, complex present and unknown future, filled with potential.

There are many ways of looking at youth. These ways matter because they determine how the situation of young people is analysed and how action is taken in their interests. This report adopts an integrated youth development approach. It treats young people neither as children nor as unformed or incomplete adults, but rather as young adults with their own strengths, talents and energies, and also with particular problems that should be faced in collaboration with them and, as far as possible, on their own ground. Thus, though they can, like everyone, be assumed to *have* problems, they should not be regarded as *being* a problem. They should, in other words, be treated as seriously as other members of society, without condescension. Youth development should be holistic and integrated, dealing with all aspects of young people's lives, and it should deal with them without putting these aspects into separate compartments. It should take account of diversity, particularly crucial in the multifaceted South African context, which means recognising that young people are not homogeneous but have different approaches and needs. A life-cycle approach is preferable, treating young people, including those who are disabled, as flowing from and to a series of stages, and as part of society as a whole, not in isolation. Finally, young people should have a voice in discussions and be involved in decisions that affect them and the country at large.

South African youth development policy, best expressed in the 1997 National Youth Policy and the subsequent National Youth Development Policy Framework 2000–2007 (NYDPF), encapsulates all this by stressing integrated youth development which is an integral part of overall social policy, targeting youth initiatives and strengthening capacity. It emphasises the need for redress, non-discrimination, diversity, responsiveness, sustainability, participation, inclusiveness, transparency, and accessibility. These are the ideals by which the framers and implementers of most government and civil society projects and programmes attempt to abide. In 1999 Parliament formed a Portfolio Committee on youth, women and the disabled. Though this diversity of responsibilities, including women and the disabled of all ages with youth, may have made this committee less effective than it might have been, its formation did indicate that the question of youth was firmly on the political agenda.

## The approach of this report

This report approaches South African youth in four ways: it provides a *window* into and a *benchmark* for the condition of youth at the time the survey was carried out in late 2003, describes the *policy and practice* of youth development in South Africa today, and identifies and recommends some *directions* that youth policy might – or even should – take. It asks questions such as what is the contemporary state of youth? What are the substantial actual interventions and the significant pilot projects, and what is the policy and legislative framework? What are the gaps in these?

There is no single conclusion that can be reached about South African youth, unless the conclusion is that diversity and paradox are central. For example, the situation of some young women seems to have improved, especially with respect to education, while unemployment has worsened. Simplistic judgements – that the future for youth is uniformly bleak or hopeful – will be avoided. An attempt will be made to give a reflective and realistic picture, accepting that apparent contradictions can be true at the same time – that, for example, more jobs are available in certain sectors, but that these opportunities are not necessarily translated into an increase in the rate of youth employment.

However, we can be paralysed by complexity. This report tries to avoid this. It has four substantive sections – on education and skills development, on economic participation and poverty, on health and well-being, and on social integration and civic engagement – each of which, after a short introduction, gives some basic facts about South African youth in these areas. Initiatives are then described – in policy, legislation, implementation, pilot programmes – that attempt to intervene positively in the interests of youth. Each section concludes with content-specific recommendations. Finally, there is a concluding section that discusses what appear to be the major issues emerging from the report. Based on these issues, the report makes some recommendations on the directions that future policy and action might usefully take.

## This report and earlier studies

This document, as mentioned earlier, is based on a longer, more detailed SYR. It also rests on other youth research, of which South Africa is lucky to have a rich store spanning a number of disciplines. These studies are themselves products of their often divided, contentious environment, and demonstrate that good scholarship, especially that which is relevant to contemporary issues with policy implications, is never neutral and dispassionate. Within these works there are different approaches, interpretations and conclusions.

In 1993, when youth violence and a malfunctioning education system seemed to be important aspects of the fluid political situation, the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) and the Joint Enrichment Project published the results of a national baseline survey. The report – *Growing up Tough: a National Survey of South African Youth* – contested the concept of a ‘lost generation’ and investigated the social factors impacting on the situation of young people. It demonstrated that by 1989, only one in ten young people could find work in the formal sector, and concluded that, at that stage, 75 per cent of young people – black and white – were in danger of being marginalized. The Cooperative Research Programme on South African Youth was integrated at much the same time, published as *Youth in the New South Africa* in 1994. The chapters in

this volume also concluded that there was no youth crisis in South Africa. However, it proposed a list of youth problems that required interventions, and advocated a national youth policy to address these problems.

The concern about the potential of a largely unemployed and disillusioned youth to destabilise society intensified in the stressful months following the assassination of Chris Hani in 1993. Some went as far as to propose military-style conscription. The National Youth Development Forum (NYDF) convened a multi-sectoral task team to develop a plan for national youth service, and piloted four youth service projects in 1994/5, the lessons of which informed the subsequent National Youth Commission Green Paper on National Youth Service. These concerns, which included anxiety about the fate of those whose schooling had been interrupted or who had missed out on schooling in the 1980s, also lay behind the Out-of-School Youth Initiative of 1994-96, commissioned from CASE by the NYDF and the Department of Education. This led to the formation of a number of youth colleges to cater for those young people who had failed matriculation and were excluded from returning to school. However, these colleges were closed three years later due to budget constraints and the emergence of a coherent Further Education and Training (FET) sector. Also, the Inter-ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk of 1995-98, starting as an enquiry into young people in conflict with the law and into the juvenile justice system, was broadened into an attempt to lay the foundations of a developmentally oriented and integrated child and youth care system.

Other studies followed: CASE carried out and published *Youth 2000: a Study of Youth in South Africa*, seen as a follow-up to its survey of 1992-93. The 2002 *State of Youth Report* emanated from the National Youth Commission (NYC). It provided updated baseline data on youth, and made policy recommendations against the background of policies followed since 1994. The Medical Research Council carried out *The First South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey* in 2002 for the Department of Health to establish key risk behaviour amongst youth and children below the age of 19 years. This survey aimed to provide a basis for policies and interventions, and develop a baseline for tracking changes and the impact of these interventions. The report recommended the establishment of a Youth Development Programme responsible for health and social development programming across government social clusters, in conjunction with the NYC.

In addition to these research projects concentrating on all or a significant section of young people, there have been studies dealing with specific areas concerning youth. Youth-based institutions like the National and Provincial Youth Commissions and the UYF initiated some of these, but many also came from researchers in universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and various government departments. All of these studies, from various perspectives, found the situation of South African youth a cause of concern that should be amongst the priorities of post-apartheid South Africa. They also agreed that the needs of young people should not be confined to the margins of national policy, but should rather be a central issue in the context of national development as a whole. This report derives from and is part of this history of reflective, policy-oriented youth research.

Since 1994, South Africa has begun to play its full role in the community of world and particularly African nations, in youth matters as in others. This was signalled in 1995 by South African adherence to the United Nations' *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, which identified ten priority areas for action aimed at improving the well-being of young people. It is confirmed in South Africa's pivotal role

in various organisations and initiatives such as the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), with their stress on youth issues. In 2004 *The Young Face of NEPAD: Children and Young People in the New Partnership for Africa's Development*, jointly published by the AU, NEPAD, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and UNICEF, aptly summed up this international concern, highlighting health and particularly HIV/AIDS and education. South Africa is also playing a key role in co-ordinating the regional response to the global Youth Employment Summit (YES) campaign that seeks to stimulate youth employment. Today, South Africa draws from and contributes to Africa-wide and worldwide youth research, policy and practice.



# Economic participation and poverty

Unemployment is arguably South Africa's major scourge. However, the lack of jobs is not confined to South Africa alone, or to any one age, or racial group. Nonetheless, privilege for some and lack of privilege for others in the past – and even the present – has meant that unemployment impacts most heavily on the black population, and particularly on young people who are crowding into the labour market. South African economic policy has to be implemented carefully in the real but limited space between globalisation, mechanisation, technological innovation and other phenomena that affect job creation, particularly at the unskilled end of the labour market. Countries that have tried to cut their economies off from the world behind tariff barriers, and currencies that are not allowed to find their value on the open market, have stagnated or even spiralled into recession, with their industrial base shrinking and exports falling. The modern world economy is unforgiving to those who attempt to defy it, but it is the only world there is, and South Africa, like other countries, must accommodate this reality as best it can. This is the context of South Africa's high rate of unemployment and of the attempts at different levels to ameliorate it. The recent budget, however, seems to demonstrate that rigorous fiscal prudence has indeed laid the foundation for an increase in social spending and made job creation possible, and sustainable, by the sound management of the economy.

### Where we are

The big issues for youth in terms of the economy and poverty are the following:

- Unemployment affects young people – that is, youth comprise the largest proportion of the unemployed.
- Within the youth group, young people with little education, women and rural youth are worse affected by unemployment than others.
- Social capital – family, networks of friends and acquaintances, clubs and associations – are often crucial to the economic participation of young people, especially to their entry into the labour market.
- Insecure employment, and low levels of self-employment, characterise the work experience of many young people.

Poverty is closely linked to employment and unemployment:

- The younger the poorer – children, because of their dependence on poor households, are the largest group among the poor. Youth aged between 18 and 24, many also still dependent on these poor households, are the next most impoverished section of the population.
- Poverty among young people aged 25 to 35 stems more from unemployment than from direct dependence on impoverished households.

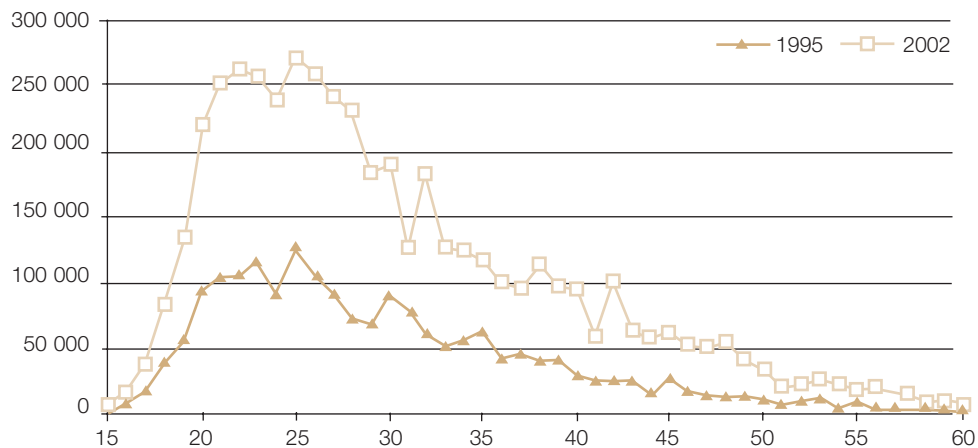
The research for this report confirmed that youth unemployment is a critical problem. This is not surprising where, in spite of an economy that is prospering by many measures, with some exceptions the workforce has a low level of skill, formal sector employment growth is slow, and there is debate about the extent to which the informal economy is creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods. More than two-thirds of South Africans between the ages of 18 and 35 are unemployed, and more than two-thirds of the young people who took part in the survey have never had the opportunity to work. Africans and women make up the largest proportion of unemployed people; of

these, those living in rural areas are the most severely affected, often isolated by deeply embedded patterns of male and youth labour migration.

Although employment has increased for all races since 1995, opportunities lag far behind the increase in the number of people who are potentially economically active. Between 1997 and 2002, the population of people aged between 18 and 35 years of age who could be participating in the labour market increased from 6 million to 8.4 million, while the number of people who were employed only rose from 4.3 to 4.9 million. During this period, the number of unemployed young people therefore increased from 1.7 to 3.5 million. Unemployment has become predominantly a problem of the young. Although the employment prospects of young people appear to be deteriorating, this must be seen within a context where there is growth and rising skill intensity in some areas of employment, and where there are shortages of skilled workers. A vital question therefore is how to educate and train young people in areas where there is a demand for their labour – a problem addressed in the next section of this report.

The extent to which unemployment is predominantly a youth problem is illustrated in Figure 1, and Figure 2 demonstrates how substantially this is a problem for black youth in particular:

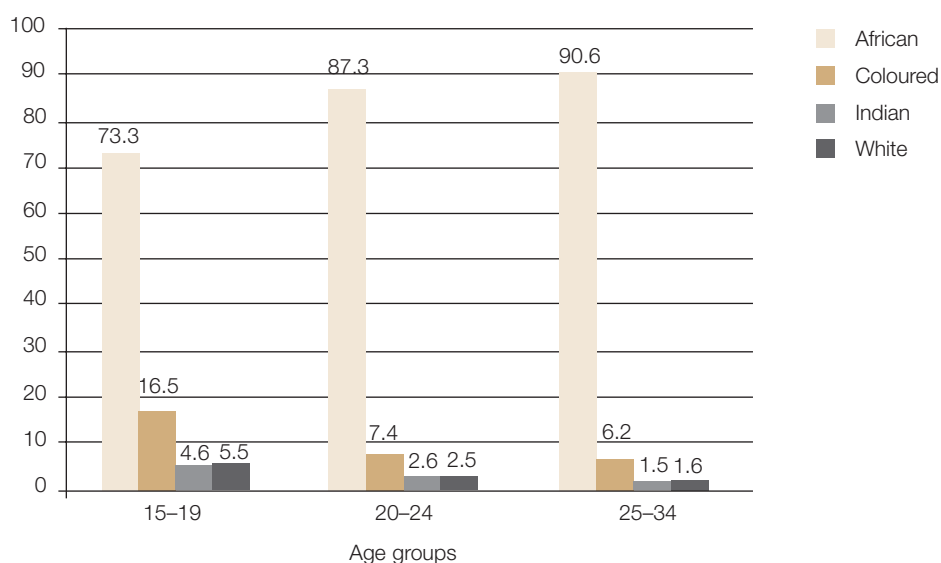
Figure 1: Number of unemployed by age, 1995 & 2002



Source: Woolard and Altman (2004), calculated from Stats SA: OHS 1995 and LFS Sept 2002.



Figure 2: Percentage unemployment by age and race, 2002



Source: Stats SA, LFS Sept 2002

Increased education improves prospects of employment, and the more educated a person is, the less time they will tend to spend looking for work – an average of a year in the case of a young person who has completed secondary education. However, at 33 per cent, unemployment remains high even for people with secondary qualifications. The rate of unemployment for those with tertiary qualifications, at 5.1 per cent, is considerably lower, though it is increasing at a faster rate amongst black than white graduates. Most unemployed graduates are those with degrees in education; business, commerce and management studies; or health sciences, and are generally from historically disadvantaged institutions. Given the needs in all these areas, this suggests that the quality and/or the perception of the quality of these degrees may be a major problem.

The most important route through which young people find their first job is personal contacts and networks, with formal and impersonal applications becoming more significant once the applicant has accumulated some work experience. A third of young people say they found their first job through personal contacts, while 15 per cent obtained employment through sending out their curriculum vitae (CV). In the case of second jobs, 23.5 per cent found employment by sending out their CVs. For black students in particular, there is a lack of available career information. Career guidance programmes in public schools are weak and, given their history of isolation and disadvantage, family and social networks in most black families and communities tend to be inexperienced in giving advice on career and business opportunities. Though new regulations will make this impossible, black students still tend to drop mathematics and science early in their schooling, which hobbles their future progress in many areas.

What sort of work do young people find? At least a quarter of all working young people are employed in temporary positions, and over two thirds work in the services sector. An increasing proportion work in the informal economy. Almost two-thirds of young people with jobs work in the private sector, one-fifth work for government, one-tenth work for NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) and just over one in 20 are domestic workers. African and coloured young people are most likely to be found working in

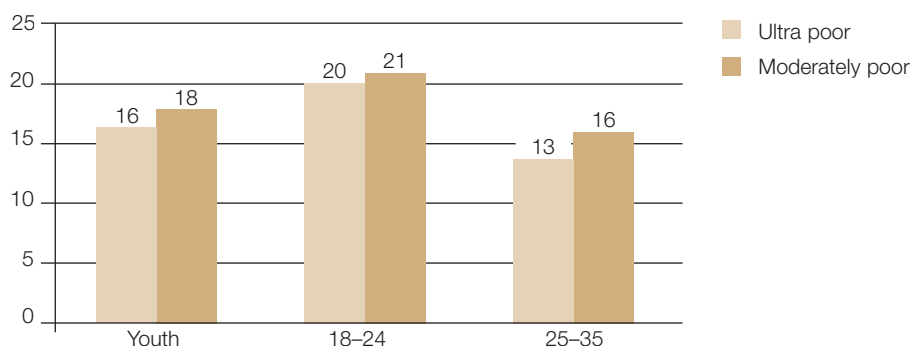
elementary occupations that do not require high levels of education. Union membership amongst young people is rare, showing that young people tend to have informal jobs that are not unionised.

Only a small proportion (6%) of respondents are self-employed. Two-thirds of these are male. Fifty-one per cent of self-employed youth say they could not find formal employment. This implies that self-employment is often forced upon people from a position of weakness, not chosen from a position of strength. It is also difficult for young, poor and inexperienced people, without significant assets to serve as security, to gain access to the credit needed to launch an enterprise. In addition, there is a high correlation between young people with work experience and those who succeed as entrepreneurs.

Research has shown that unemployment has various effects on people, such as feelings of powerlessness and futility that may manifest in depression and even despair. The poverty that results from unemployment is more measurable on a social, as opposed to an individual, level. Given the number of low-paid jobs, employment does not necessarily mean prosperity. Unemployment is a sure indicator of poverty, however.

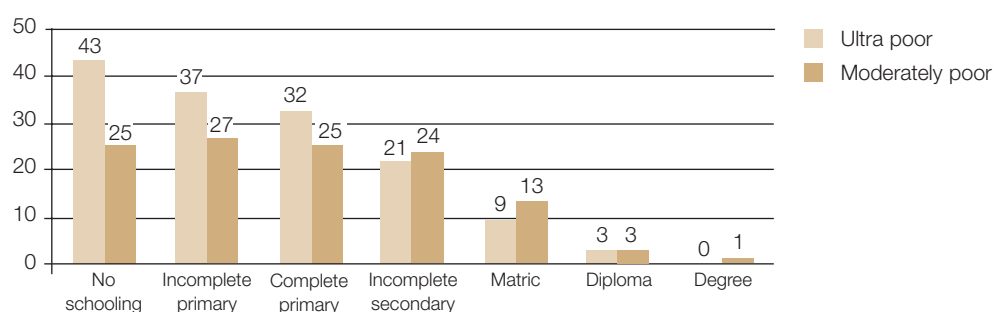
How poor are young people? What are the characteristics of the youthful poor? One third of all youth live in poverty, including the 16 per cent that form part of the ultra-poor – those having the highest rates of poverty. Ultra-poverty is most common among 18 to 24-year-olds. The predictable factors of race, geographical situation and gender are key factors in the distribution of youth impoverishment. There is a close correlation between levels of education and poverty. So improving the education levels of younger women is an important contributing factor to closing the gender income and poverty gap. The household of origin of a young person is another factor indicating poverty – poor and unemployed young people tend to come from poor households where unemployment is the norm. In other words, poverty tends to reproduce itself among children and young people from already impoverished homes. Figures 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the extent of youth poverty, and the relationship of poverty to education levels.

Figure 3: Youth poverty in South Africa by percentage, 2000



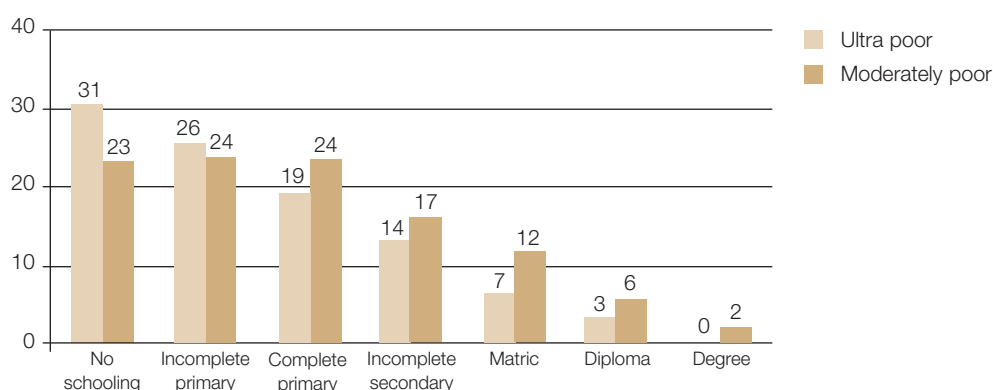
Source: Stats SA, IES/LFS 2000, calculated for SYR

Figure 4: Poverty status among 18 to 24-year-olds, percentage by education, 2000



Source: Stats SA, IES/LFS 2000, calculated for SYR

Figure 5: Poverty status among 25 to 35-year-olds, percentage by education, 2000



Source: Stats SA, IES/LFS 2000, calculated for SYR

## Responses

Numerous challenges and difficulties limit the ways in which youth can engage in the economy. However, within the limitations dictated by social and economic realities, many initiatives are attempting to improve the situation and enable young people to participate in economic activities. Some of these initiatives are in education, training, and information dissemination, and are dealt with elsewhere in this report. Others are intended to assist young people to participate directly in income production, for example through micro finance and co-operatives, participation in local economic development, and business and entrepreneurship development. Many of these initiatives are still at the pilot stage, and some have the potential to be scaled up to have a real effect on the youth labour market. Other initiatives cross the boundaries of training and entrepreneurship, for example the UYF's programmes on access to career information, employment and entrepreneurship, skills training and support for self-employment, all guided by a programme of conceptual and empirical research. The National Youth Service Programme (NYSP), which plans to provide qualifications, work experience and a monthly allowance to people while they serve the community, is another example. Consistent with the principles of youth

development, young people need to be seen as part of society. Initiatives to reduce overall unemployment and to increase work experience, like the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), have greatly benefited young people.

### **Advocacy**

The most vigorous advocacy activities in the youth sector have been around youth unemployment. At the 1998 Presidential Job Summit and the Growth and Development Summit in 2003, the youth sector lobbied other social partners to persuade them to acknowledge the gravity of youth unemployment. The youth NGO sector has been active in piloting innovative programmes of the sort outlined below to increase the economic participation of young people. On an international level, South Africa, through the Youth Development Network, coordinates the Southern African chapter for the implementation of the YES Campaign, whose aim is to stimulate youth employment.

### **Youth business development (non-financial enterprise support)**

The conventional labour market is not likely to supply anything near the number of jobs necessary to absorb all those seeking work in the immediate future. The hope is that young people will begin to create these opportunities, becoming entrepreneurs who start small businesses and create income for themselves and jobs for their communities through their own efforts. For this to happen, enterprising young people will need support in terms of training, finance, access to markets and technology. This is the role of the UYF Business Development Unit and other initiatives such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) incentive schemes.

Youth business development faces a number of challenges. It is generally accepted that those most likely to succeed as entrepreneurs are not inexperienced young people with incomplete schooling, or people straight out of secondary school or higher education, but rather people with specific work experience and practical knowledge. Evidence from other southern African countries, for instance that published by Farstad in 2002, indicates that at school level, teaching entrepreneurship – whether integrated into other subjects, delivered within the framework of career guidance, or offered as a separate subject – does not translate into self-employment within two years of learners' leaving school. However, such programmes may help to predispose learners towards subsequent self-employment. Supporting young entrepreneurs therefore requires careful selection of candidates who, once chosen, will receive the best training and support. How is this being handled?

Youth business development is part of the overall approach to the development of small business. The key document and legislation in this field is the 1995 White Paper, the National Strategy on Small Business Promotion and Support, followed by the Small Business Act of 1996, which was intended to create an enabling environment for the development of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and stimulate entrepreneurship. Broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE) also has an explicit youth dimension, with government policy identifying young people as one of the key target groups. The same is true of the various economic sectoral charters that identify youth as a target group for economic empowerment. Apart from the inclusion of youth in these broader contexts, specific steps have been taken to focus directly on youth economic empowerment. The vehicles for this are the UYF and the NYC as well as the Ntsika Enterprise Promotion Agency and the National Manufacturing Advice Centre now falling under the umbrella of the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA).

These direct interventions also face challenges. They rely on service providers, many of which are insufficiently qualified in the field of youth entrepreneurship support and development, leading to an inadequate grounding for the young people that they serve. They tend to provide training but little follow-up support. An associated problem is the lack of best practice standards, which leads to a particularly high failure rate by young entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship training still tends to be marginal to the core education and training institutions. For example, entrepreneurship is still not integrated into the school curriculum. Nevertheless, there are encouraging initiatives. Important research, key to well-informed decision-making, has been and is being done, through, for example, Ntsika's School Leavers Opportunity Training (SLOT), and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report that begins to benchmark South Africa in relation to other countries in this field. Programmes like UYF's Business Development Service Voucher Programme are setting new standards in providing quality support for young entrepreneurs, and there are parallel initiatives housed in higher education institutions, the business sector and elsewhere. Government also is attempting to create a more effective legislative environment, through amendments to the Small Business Act (2003, 2004) and through more focussed implementation – the formation of SEDA, for example. Training for small enterprise development as catered for in the National Skills Fund still remains a largely untapped resource.

### **Enterprise finance support**

Youth activists emphasise the necessity for youth participation in the economy. However, economies are in themselves not structured to concentrate specifically on the interests of youth, and even government, which has broader welfare concerns, cannot afford to focus too narrowly on one section of the population. What then is the nature of the policy environment, not particularly youth-oriented, that may provide opportunities for youth economic development?

Some of the policy and legislative landmarks are

- the Small Business Strategy (1995) and the Small Business (1996) and Amendment Acts (2003 and 2004)
- the Co-operative Development Policy and Strategy and the Co-operatives Bill (2005)
- the National Small Business Council (1996)
- the Micro Finance Regulatory Council Regulations (1999)
- the DTI's Micro Finance Apex Fund (2004), and DTI programmes which include various incentive schemes
- the South African Women Enterprise Network (SAWEN) (2001)
- Technology for Women in Business (1998).

Micro finance for youth entrepreneurs is problematic. The regulations in this area do not focus enough on the essential need to produce and sell. The UYF supports two enterprise-oriented lenders, but this is inadequate for the needs identified. The policy implication is that resources should be directed to supporting small businesses run by youth entrepreneurs. Support by Khula and Ntsika, organisations devoted to supporting small business in general, has also gone to youth, in part through the encouragement of the UYF, which has encouraged the market to see young people, with their energy and imagination, as good business investments. Similarly, the UYF, with its own pilot scheme as valuable practical experience, is working with the DTI to expand the role of youth in co-operative enterprises.

There are important gaps in this area, however. Market access for youth enterprises is often a problem, particularly in rural areas. Training and capacity-development is inadequate, as is access to credit. Government policy at all levels, from the local to the national, needs to be more sensitive to the need to promote youth economic empowerment, and existing and forthcoming measures – in the fields of black economic empowerment and co-operatives legislation, for example – need to incorporate elements that favour youth enterprise. Also, imaginative steps must be considered, such as preferential procurement policies for young entrepreneurs. Again, though, these initiatives will largely benefit entrepreneurs who are already active – that is, youth leading with independence, confidence and imagination.

### **Local economic development**

In contemporary South Africa, all levels of government are expected to contribute to economic and social development to improve life for all. This has placed new emphasis on the developmental role of local government. Setting out this vision, and providing guidelines for its realisation, are the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). Consultation with all stakeholders, including the youth, is at the heart of the IDPs.

The development process embodied in the IDPs is meant to provide a voice – and jobs – for young people, through providing space for the formulation of youth development strategies, and through integrating youth development into mainstream municipal development programmes. This is the aspiration, and the foundation for future youth development at this level has been laid. However, little has yet been achieved, and opportunities to harness youth energies to the process of local economic development remain largely unexploited.

### **Recommendations**

In the area of economic participation and poverty we recommend that:

- Macro-economic interventions, such as the encouragement of foreign direct investment, have the potential to benefit young people. However, active steps should be taken to harness the potential of these opportunities for young people.
- Government's plan to halve unemployment by 2014 should focus strongly on young people, as they represent 70 per cent of the unemployed population.
- Careful attention should be paid to monitoring the balance between the demand for different competencies, skills and qualifications and the supply of human resources produced by education and training systems. That is, education should be closely linked to preparation for work.
- Entrepreneurship training and other initiatives, such as youth co-operatives, should be strengthened further to promote youth economic activity.
- Life skills should be a vital component of formal and informal education and training – there should be a conscious orientation towards building social capital among young people, especially those whose access to substantial economic and other networks has been limited.



# Education and skills development

Contemporary South Africa has inherited education and training systems skewed by racial inequality. While numerical expansion of African education, and that of women, predates the early 1990s, this was accompanied by poor-quality institutions, curricula, teaching and infrastructure. The challenge, while not damaging what is of merit in the existing system, is to create structures of education and training that produce critical, skilled, flexible, employable young people who are able to be economically active outside the arena of formal employment. Excellent education and training will not in themselves create livelihoods, but without them, it will not be possible to take advantage of opportunities that exist or to create new opportunities. Education and training are rightly seen as lifelong pursuits, starting before and continuing after the age-range with which we are concerned. However, despite the foundations that were laid earlier in their lives, young people take crucial paths from the age of about 18. Many do not complete secondary school, others do and some enter higher or further education and training, with skills that will hopefully assist them to become economically active. Others enter a state of unemployment or underemployment from which it is difficult for them to emerge. Therefore, education and skills development are key areas of support for young people.

### Where we are

These are the outstanding characteristics of South African education with respect to youth:

- Educational opportunity and involvement has expanded massively, particularly for African people and women.
- Young people value education. They aspire to it and see it as the road to achievement.
- The more education a person has, the more likely it is that he or she is going to be employed, and the sooner they will get work.
- Problems exist regarding the quality and appropriateness of education, repetitions and dropping out of the system. Many young people with low or no levels of formal education find themselves in an environment of high unemployment and acute economic competition.
- Life skills training is inadequate, so young people are inadequately prepared to take decisions about their own lives.

Though most young people value education, racial and gender inequalities often determine which young people are able to continue their educational involvement. Nearly half the African youth who are not studying cite financial reasons for not continuing with their education. The striking differences between the educational levels to which young people from different population groups rise are illustrated in Table 1. These are diminishing, however.

Table 1: Highest levels of education of youth by age and race, as a percentage of population, 1995 and 2002

| Level of education   | African |      | Coloured |      | Indian |      | White |      |
|----------------------|---------|------|----------|------|--------|------|-------|------|
|                      | 1995    | 2002 | 1995     | 2002 | 1995   | 2002 | 1995  | 2002 |
| No education         |         |      |          |      |        |      |       |      |
| 18–24 years          | 4.2     | 1.5  | 2.2      | 0.9  | 0.4    | 0.3  | 0.2   | 0.1  |
| 25–35 years          | 8.0     | 4.8  | 4.1      | 3.8  | 0.8    | 0.4  | 0.2   | -    |
| Primary              |         |      |          |      |        |      |       |      |
| 18–24 years          | 21.6    | 15.8 | 19.1     | 18.8 | 2.2    | 1.4  | 0.5   | 0.9  |
| 25–35 years          | 29.1    | 21.8 | 27.8     | 27.9 | 5.1    | 1.9  | 0.3   | 0.3  |
| Incomplete secondary |         |      |          |      |        |      |       |      |
| 18–24 years          | 56.3    | 55.0 | 50.1     | 45.2 | 31.9   | 18.5 | 23.6  | 19.0 |
| 25–35 years          | 38.6    | 38.1 | 45.6     | 37.4 | 42.0   | 22.7 | 23.8  | 15.6 |
| Matric               |         |      |          |      |        |      |       |      |
| 18–24 years          | 15.7    | 23.9 | 25.5     | 31.1 | 57.3   | 69.1 | 59.0  | 61.0 |
| 25–35 years          | 17.2    | 25.3 | 17.1     | 22.7 | 39.5   | 53.6 | 44.4  | 44.5 |
| Tertiary             |         |      |          |      |        |      |       |      |
| 18–24 years          | 2.2     | 3.8  | 3.3      | 4.0  | 8.3    | 10.7 | 16.0  | 19.0 |
| 25–35 years          | 7.1     | 10.0 | 5.4      | 8.2  | 12.5   | 21.2 | 31.5  | 39.7 |

Source: Calculated from Stats SA's 1995, OHS and LFS, February 2002

Education remains inefficient – due to repetitions and dropouts, the average number of years needed to reach Grade 12 is 60 per cent higher than the minimum 12 years. Another challenge is that young people do not generally perceive school environments as safe or supportive, with the most disadvantaged schools reporting high levels of bullying, fighting (including sometimes with weapons) and vandalism.

A key area in education is the quality of teaching. Well-educated young people are the products of well-trained and well-qualified teachers. The change from an inputs-oriented to an outcomes-based approach provides an appropriate framework for good-quality education. However, the quality of teaching as measured by the combined impact of educator qualifications and classroom management of the teaching and learning process appears absolutely crucial. Thus, though many challenges remain in this area, the recent emphasis on improvements in teacher training is vitally important in maintaining and raising the quality of education.

The relationship between level of education achieved and employment or unemployment is direct and clear. The higher the level of education a young person attains, the more likely he or she is to be employed. However, the highest *rate* of growth in unemployment since 1995 (not the absolute numbers) has been among people with matriculation and tertiary education. Educated young Africans are worst affected by this trend. The unemployment problems of better-educated youth relate partly to the types of education that they have received, and partly to the kinds of institutions from which they have graduated. The mismatch between some kinds of tertiary study and the job market is illustrated in Table 2.



Table 2: Degreed unemployed distribution by field of study and race (percentage)

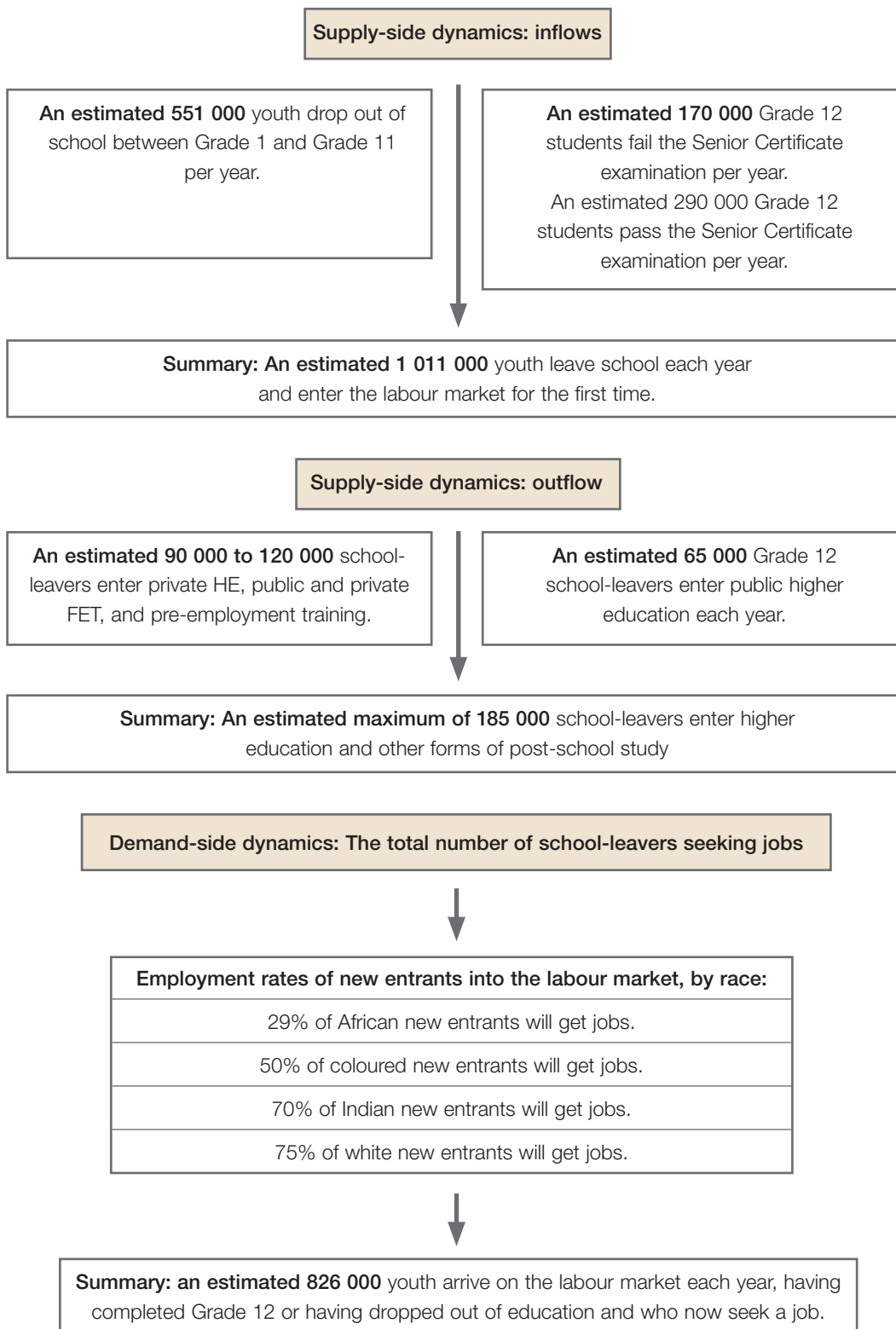
| Area of study                                    | African | Coloured | Indian | White  | Total  |
|--|---------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| Communication Studies & Languages                | 4.33    | 0.00     | 100.00 | 7.35   | 5.58   |
| Education, Training & Development                | 32.87   | 41.37    | 0.00   | 10.47  | 28.04  |
| Manufacturing, Engineering & Development         | 3.9     | 0.00     | 0.00   | 0.00   | 2.87   |
| Human & Social studies                           | 8.55    | 0.00     | 0.00   | 14.66  | 9.50   |
| Law, Military science, Security                  | 5.22    | 22.18    | 0.00   | 3.57   | 5.48   |
| Health Sciences & Social Service                 | 11.43   | 36.45    | 0.00   | 10.57  | 12.08  |
| Agriculture & Nature Conservation                | 2.2     | 0.00     | 0.00   | 0.00   | 1.62   |
| Culture & Arts                                   | 6.62    | 0.00     | 0.00   | 3.92   | 5.74   |
| Business, Commerce & Management Studies          | 21.5    | 0.00     | 0.00   | 30.32  | 22.46  |
| Physical, Mathematical, Computer & Life sciences | 3.39    | 0.00     | 0.00   | 13.92  | 5.53   |
| Physical Planning & Construction                 | 0.00    | 0.00     | 0.00   | 5.02   | 1.10   |
| Total  | 100.00  | 100.00   | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Source: Bhorat, 2003: 46

About a fifth of unemployed young people believe that they will never find a job. While it would be unwise to generalise, the effects of this on the self-image and behaviour of these young people can be serious. They may opt out of mainstream society and take refuge in gangs and other sub-cultures, where alternative identities are developed, and they may become involved in risky lifestyles involving substance abuse, crime and violence. Similarly, some, with more varied and possibly more ambiguous effects, may become involved in socially quiescent or activist religious or social movements.

As already stated, lack of finance is the main reason young people give for not pursuing further study to the desired level. Thirty-six per cent of young people who wanted to further their education reported in the *Youth 2000* study that money was the major constraint. A 2002 HSRC study by Cosser & du Toit found that two thirds of the 2001 Grade 12 cohort who were not studying a year later cited lack of finance as the main reason for not continuing with their education. Seventy-three per cent of the 2001 Grade 12 learner cohort said they intended to enter higher education within three years of the survey date. However, only 23 per cent of this group were able to fulfil this ambition. The mismatch between aspiration and reality is a major source of disillusionment. This might be partly ameliorated by good career guidance, and indeed a large proportion of school leavers say that they had some form of career guidance in their Grade 11 or 12 years. However, the quality of this guidance is uncertain, and its timing is often not scheduled for maximum benefit.

Figure 6: Supply-side and demand-side flows



Source: Kraak, 2004: 30

There are some daunting estimates of the numbers of young people entering and leaving the educational system. About 551 000 youth drop out of school between Grade 1 and Grade 11 per year. Approximately 170 000 Grade 12 students fail the Senior Certificate examination every year, and 290 000 pass. In short, about 1 011 000 youth leave school each year and enter the labour market for the first time – only 29 per cent of them with a completed secondary school education. Ninety to 120 000 school-leavers enter private higher education, public and private further education and training and pre-employment training each year. About 65 000 Grade 12 school-leavers enter public higher education each year. Thus, an estimated maximum of 185 000 school-leavers enter higher education and other forms of post-school study each year. On the demand side, an estimated 826 000 school-leaving youth seeking jobs arrive on the labour market each year, having completed Grade 12 or dropped out of education. Of new entrants to the labour market, 29 per cent of Africans will get jobs; 50 per cent of coloureds; 70 per cent of Indians and 75 per cent of whites, as shown in Figure 6.

## Responses

Education and training is a huge area, involving numerous bodies in the public, private and NGO spheres. Government, however, has a particular responsibility in creating a framework within which different initiatives take place and, hopefully, complement each other. Also, education and training mobilise numerous people and extensive resources, and time is required to organise and implement such large-scale initiatives. Rapid results cannot be expected and hasty experiments can be disastrous.

Many young people in South Africa, particularly those from poor backgrounds, the majority of whom are black, are still at school into their early 20s. This makes secondary schooling a significant area for those concerned with youth development. There have been major positive changes in the way South African schooling is organised, though educational systems are difficult and slow to change. The basic legislation in this area is the South African Schools Act of 1996. This act deracialised schooling, though in practice, given South African geographical realities, the racial profile of most schools in rural and township areas has not changed substantially. It also initiated a system that, by allowing wealthier parents to augment state subsidies to schools, kept the middle classes in the system and began the slow process of transforming the educational system from one based on racial caste to one based on social class without distinctions of race. Thus, while the majority of impoverished youth are black, increasing numbers of better-off black families send their children to formerly white schools. These schools are involved in many subtle and contradictory ways in the remaking of the South African class and race system. Most youth, however, attend less privileged schools whose pupils are drawn solely from the black community.

Issues of class and race saturate the educational system. It is a difficult matter of encouraging equity, expanding provision, and at the same time ensuring educational quality. Real efforts have been and are being made to move simultaneously in these directions with, for example, increasing primary and secondary school enrolment, a decline in average class size and a female enrolment in schools that now exceeds that of males. However, social capital built up over many years is a powerful influence. It is ironic that a body like the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and the criteria set out in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) intended to implement fairness, equality, and comparability, but ended up constructing outcomes and setting benchmarks more easily met by middle-class young people of all races than by poor children and youth from their often inadequate schools.

Further education and training is another area where there have been advances that benefit youth. The Further Education and Training Act of 1998 has set the agenda for addressing past imbalances by

- improving young peoples' access
- becoming more responsive to the needs of industry and local communities
- transforming the curriculum
- strengthening partnerships with the private sector
- shifting the emphasis from throughput to the employability of college learners.

Colleges have been reshaped and reduced in number from 150 to 50, making them more responsive to economic requirements and to the training needs of young people. Evidence from elsewhere in Africa and other parts of the world seems to suggest that investment in FET tends to open up possibilities for youth employment at the intermediate skill levels where there are many opportunities. Skills like these are badly needed by the South African economy.

The National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF) of 2001 provides the context for the government's youth policy. It breaks with the conception of youth development as a dilettante form of social work, and argues for an integrated youth development strategy. This involves an approach that

- is holistic and integrated
- considers questions of redress
- is non-discriminatory
- acknowledges diversity amongst young people
- is responsive to the specific needs and contexts of young people
- is sustainable
- is participatory, inclusive, transparent and accessible.

A Department of Education initiative described in the NYDPF is the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). NSFAS is the framework for a major, and growing, commitment of funds for redressing unequal access to higher education.

On-the-job training and skills acquisition is another crucial area. The Skills Development Act (1998) and the Skills Development and Levies Act (1999), with their impact on work-based skills development and transfer, benefit young people particularly through the introduction of learnerships for pre-employed and unemployed young people. These acts created the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the role of which is to administer levies, set standards and oversee training in different economic areas, review work place skills plans and sector skills plans, reimburse employers for engaging in training, and develop and register learnerships. A number of these new bodies has had quite serious teething problems, and there has already been some significant restructuring in the area. Some consider the SETAs to have an inadequate focus on youth. In addition, some companies simply regard the levy as a cost of doing business, but are not engaged in training. Nonetheless, SETAs should in time make for a more accessible skills-training regime for young people.

There is indeed evidence that learnerships have been a real success. A recent baseline study for the Department of Labour reported that 'learnerships are working, and working well, according to surveys among learners and among employers' (Jennings et al., 2004). More than three-quarters of the learners interviewed in this study were subsequently employed, most by the employers where they had undertaken their learnerships. The vast majority said that their expectations of the learnerships had been met or exceeded.

However, numerous unemployed young people, many of them leaving school prematurely, are not part of mainstream education and training. What strategies can be adopted to promote their skills?

A response to this question, outlined in a Green Paper, is the concept of a National Youth Service Programme (NYSP), developed by the NYC, an important element in the National Skills Development Strategy of 2001, now a governmental initiative. Through its service approach, this strategy plans to benefit communities while providing skills, development opportunities and involvement in social regeneration and nation building for the youth who live in them. Young people will participate for 12 to 18 months in activities that are socially useful and empowering, and which also develop personal skills. They will be surrounded by an ethos of service and positive national commitment, while preparing for the world of work. This plan has not been translated into reality yet, but it gives a sense of the way in which future policy may evolve.

Before 1994, in the face of Bantu Education, educational NGOs played a vital role in keeping the vision of a democratic and humane educational system alive by running courses, producing teaching materials, and fending off the more extreme and self-destructive proposals from elements within the liberation movements that there should be 'no education before liberation'. Educational NGOs went through a difficult period in the late 1990s, with many unable to survive in the new environment where most foreign funding went directly to government, and where redistribution to civil society was fatally slow.

Now, surviving and new NGOs are adapting to the new environment by stressing businesslike methods, and are contributing in various educational and training spheres, often as sub-contractors to government. Sometimes these contributions are in important areas that are nevertheless not the main thrust of government's efforts, and this is why they should, in part, be seen as assisting the unemployed and undereducated. An example is the somewhat neglected area of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). Many NGOs from the 1980s and early 1990s devoted to this area have disappeared. Some have adapted to the new environment to become highly professional organisations, producing literacy materials and running courses for industry and for traditional community-based programmes. Many other national and regional organisations contribute collectively to youth progress in different areas of education and training.

## Recommendations

Some crucial recommendations in this field are that:

- Every effort should be made to retain young people in education of good quality, and strenuous efforts should be made to dissuade them from dropping out before completing their secondary education.
- Young people who have prematurely left the education system should be encouraged to take up other modes of education, through, for example, FET, ABET and mature entry into higher education.
- Quality education should reflect contemporary requirements in the world of work. This, among other things, requires a holistic approach to education that includes technical skills, life skills and preparation for work.
- Adequate resources must be made available to increase the integration required between education and training.





# Health and well-being

'Health' here refers to more than the absence of illness and injury. It includes a range of social circumstances such as

- young people's sexual behaviour, and the associated risks of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV/AIDS
- disability
- substance use and abuse
- suicide
- crime and violence.

This report thus works from a social rather than a narrow medical definition of health.

### Where we are

The critical issues in youth health are the following:

- Young people comprise the healthiest section of the community.
- However, substance use, and sometimes abuse, is increasing, and the gap in substance use and abuse between men and women is narrowing.
- Suicide and mental health problems are significant among young people.
- HIV/AIDS is a major threat to the well-being and survival of young people. However, increasing numbers of young people are taking preventative measures.
- Young people are the most prominent victims and perpetrators of violence and crime. They are, for example, the largest group in prison.

The SYR survey confirms what is known from other studies: that young people are entering sexual relationships earlier, and that many young women, and some young men, are forced to leave school prematurely because of unwanted pregnancies. On the other hand, young South Africans are marrying later and there seems to be an overall decline in formal marriage among young people. (This is complicated in the South African case by the varieties of marriage in statute and traditional law, and by the fact that marriage in many communities is more a process than a single event). However, these trends do not seem to detract from the emphasis that young people place on taking care of families and running households. These remain at the core of their envisaged adult identity.

Young people report themselves as generally healthy. Nearly 99 per cent of respondents said that their health was good or average. However, being African, living in a rural area, having little formal education, low household income, and not working, are all associated with below average self-rated health. The perception of living with a disability also varies: overall, 3.6 per cent of youth said that they had a disability. Most of these were African or coloured young people. However, young people with primary education or less were six times more likely to report having a disability than those with a degree. Consistent with international findings, nearly twice as many young men as young women reported themselves as having a disability. African young people with a disability were less likely than those from other groups to receive disability grants.

Smoking increases with age and income. Reductions in tobacco use associated with legislative control in the late 1990s are being lost, as shown by the finding that 27 per cent of young people between the ages of 24 and 35 smoke cigarettes. Smoking is highest among white women (48 per cent) and lowest among African women (eight per

cent). There is a strong correlation between smoking and reported alcohol and drug use. A worrying trend is below-the-line advertising that attempts to enlist young people through cellphone connections into smoking and drinking by holding events where these commodities are freely available.

Alcohol use among young people seems to be increasing, though 42 per cent of young people say they never drink alcohol. Young white people have the highest rate of drinking, with a third of young men and women drinking alcohol weekly. The rates of drinking among African, coloured and Indian women are steadily approaching those of men.

Thirteen per cent of young people say they have used a recreational drug, with white youth reporting considerably higher drug use than other groups. There are very small gender differences in drug use and, like alcohol and cigarette smoking, such use is more prominent among white and better-educated youth than among other groups.

There are indications that young people are increasingly taking measures to prevent HIV infection. There is increased reporting of condom use at the first sexual encounter, and thereafter. Young people aged from 18 to 24, in almost all population groups and both genders, are nearly 50 per cent more likely to report having used a condom at first sex, and thereafter, than youth in the 25 to 35 year age group.

Nearly one in ten young people reported knowing someone who died of AIDS, and studies indicate that close association with someone who is infected and/or dies from an HIV/AIDS-related condition is likely to lead to an increase in the adoption of preventative measures. Nearly a third of young people have been tested for HIV, though a smaller percentage than this know their HIV status, as not all young people return to receive the results of their tests. Preventative behaviour is higher amongst young people who know their HIV status, creating the imperative for expanded voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) among young people.

Fear of violence is a reality to a significant number of young people. More than 20 per cent of the young people surveyed said they had been threatened with a gun or knife, and more than 12 per cent had been assaulted and injured with weapons of this kind. African and coloured youth, especially young men, were more likely than their white and Indian peers to have been assaulted using a weapon. More than twice as many men as women said they had been injured as a result of such an assault. Although we lack national statistics on the extent of gender violence among young people aged 18 to 35, indications are that levels are high. Violence can also be self-inflicted: the highest rate of suicide occurs in the 20 to 34 year age range. More than 10 000 young people kill themselves each year, and nearly ten per cent of the youth surveyed said they had thought about killing themselves in the previous year. These data are broadly supported by the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS), which indicates that 36 per cent of all deaths of 15 to 29-year-olds, and also of 30 to 44-year-olds, are unnatural, caused by accidents or violence. According to NIMSS, in 2001, young people between 20 and 34 comprised 55 per cent of murder victims and 47 per cent of suicides. Nearly seven times more males than females were the victims of murder.

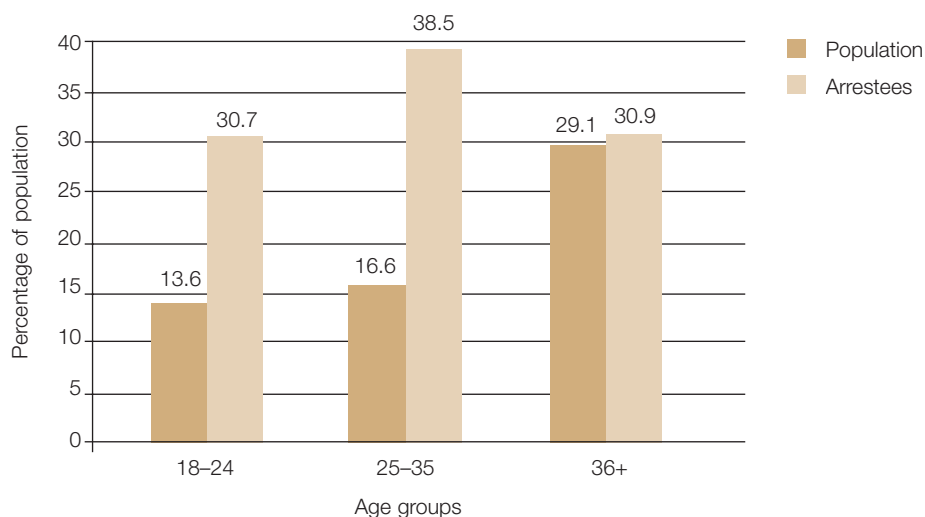
Violence against the person is a crime in itself, and is associated with other kinds of crime. By global standards, South Africa has a very high rate of violent crime, though it may now be levelling off. A third of all crimes recorded in South Africa involve violence,



compared to 15 per cent in the United States and six per cent in the United Kingdom. Crime rates are uneven over the country, with the Western Cape, Gauteng and the Northern Cape having the highest recorded rates, and Limpopo the lowest.

Young people are disproportionately the victims and perpetrators of crime and violence. For example, in June 2002, 36 per cent of the prison population was under the age of 26, with 53 per cent of those awaiting trial being in the same age group. Similarly, the South African Drug Abuse Monitoring national survey (SA-ADAM) of arrestees showed that 69 per cent of people detained by the police were between 18 and 35. Figure 7 shows the national proportion by age group of arrestees compared with the proportion of this age group in the South African population as a whole:

*Figure 7: Comparison of age groups as percentage of the general population (OHS 1999) with age groups of arrestees (SA-ADAM national survey)*



*Source: Stats SA (1999) OHS and SA-ADAM National Survey data: calculated for SYR*

## Responses

Though young people are in general the healthiest section of the population, there are areas where they are disproportionately at risk – through sexually transmitted diseases, the hazards accompanying unplanned and unwanted pregnancy, substance abuse, and accidents and violence, including self-inflicted violence. The long-term unemployment referred to earlier in this report also poses risks to the mental health of young people and may be associated with increased social and behavioural problems.

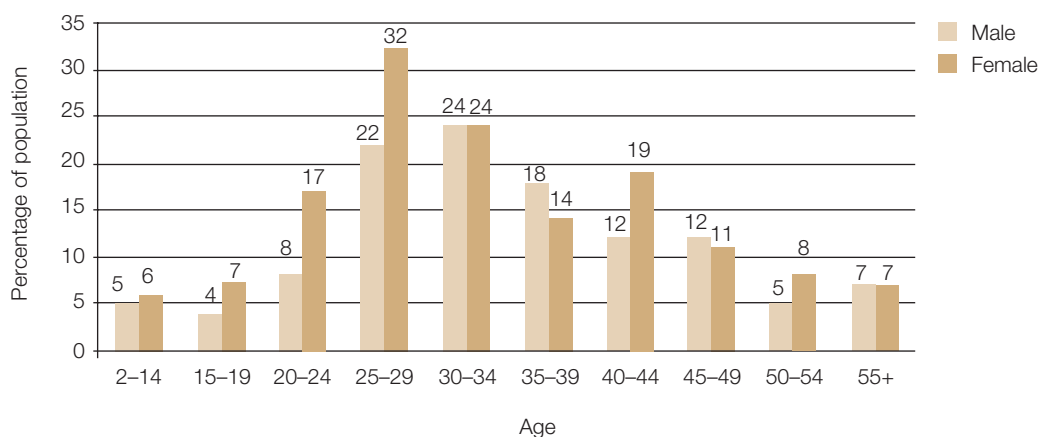
Much of the legislation affecting the health and safety of young people applies also to other age groups, but there are also specifically youth-oriented measures. The Health Act of 2003 is the South African health charter in the new dispensation. Its provisions affect all South Africans, but are perhaps particularly relevant to those between 18 and 35, given that this is the period during which many women will have most or perhaps all of their children. In this regard, the Health Act legislates for free health care for pregnant women, children under the age of six years and people with disabilities. Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities are available from 4 350 PHC access centres. Nonetheless, as quoted

in the Presidency's 2003 *Towards a Ten Year Review*, in spite of successes in mother and child care, infant mortality increased from 40 to 45 per 1 000 births between 1991 and 1998, and maternal mortality averages around 150 per 100 000 live births. Child grants, however, have been an important support for women and their children.

The Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996, providing a free service, caters for women of any age, including minors, and is intended to address also the major problem of unwanted adolescent pregnancies. However, though this law increases women's choices, it is often difficult to put into practice effectively because of lack of awareness, limited access in many rural areas, stigmatisation of women who elect to have a termination, and conscientious objection by some health professionals.

Policy on HIV/AIDS and its implementation has been controversial in South Africa. Apart from a range of preventative programmes, Departments of Health at national and provincial levels, building on some non-governmental initiatives in Cape Town and elsewhere, are beginning to distribute anti-retroviral treatment, and are doing the necessary training to make this possible and safe within the context of an overall emphasis on poverty reduction and good nutrition. The loveLife campaign is directed at young people. It integrates information and advice about HIV/AIDS and its prevention with a lifestyle message that attempts to speak to the concerns and interests of those entering or in the early stages of sexual maturity. LoveLife has also initiated the National Adolescent Friendly Clinic Initiative (NAFCI). This provides health care services to young people, bypassing the negative attitudes of some health staff, and takes a non-judgemental and helpful approach to the needs of young people regarding contraception and pregnancy in the context of HIV/AIDS. Numbers should be treated with caution, as difficulties in acquiring reliable data and changing levels of infection outdate surveys rapidly. But Figure 8 gives some idea of the particular vulnerability of young people to the virus:

Figure 8: Prevalence of HIV percentage by gender and age, South Africa 2002



Source: Sbisana & Simbayi, 2002:52

Numerous other policies and programmes, often reaching across the boundaries of health and education, serve young people and point ahead to further initiatives:

- The 2003 Department of Health School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines address the question of learners' health in the contexts of their communities.

- The Policy Guidelines for Youth and Adolescent Health respond to the health and well-being of adolescents and youth between 10 and 24.
- Life skills training in schools includes such topics as nutrition, HIV/AIDS, safety, violence, abuse and environmental health.
- *Rutanganang* ('learning from one another'), developed by the Departments of Education and Health together with other local and international partners, provides guidelines for young people to educate each other on the dangers of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

Various policies and programmes have been developed to address high rates of youth involvement in crime and violence. Initiatives in the area of youth take place in the overall context of the National Crime Prevention Strategy and the Integrated Justice System, and include such initiatives as the revival of Community Policing Forums. The most important youth-directed initiative is the development of a comprehensive juvenile justice system. When enacted, the Child Justice Bill will be the first legislation in South Africa to address the issue of children in conflict with the law through diversion programmes. In this it is greatly assisted by the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) and other NGOs. However, young people as discussed here do not fall under this legislation, and their needs are only partly responded to in the recent White Paper on Correctional Services (2005).

Although not designed solely for young people, probation services and other social mechanisms have enabled alternative types of sentencing for children and young people in trouble with the law. Home-based supervision as opposed to the rigours of the criminal justice system is more likely to lead to the reintegration of young people into society in general and their families in particular. If all this should fail, young people sentenced to confinement are given life skills and technical training at a network of secure care centres.

Gender violence is an issue that has received much attention through the work of gender organisations, both governmental – the Commission on Gender Equality and the Office on the Status of Women – and a vocal non-governmental sector. These organisations were instrumental in lobbying for the promulgation of the Domestic Violence Act (1998) and other landmark legislation such as the Termination of Pregnancy Act (1996), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (1998) and the Maintenance Act (1998) that work to promote the rights of women.

Initiatives concerning drug dependency are often not exclusively relevant to youth, but have a particular significance in this area. They range from the Tobacco Products Control Amendment Act of 1999, which put in place controls on the sale and use of tobacco products that are among the most stringent in the world, to the Prevention and Treatment of Drug Dependency Amendment Act of the same year, which provides for the creation of a Central Drug Authority to oversee initiatives in this area, and in particular to develop a National Drug Master Plan. In parallel, measures like the Department of Social Development's *Ke Moja* ('no thanks') campaign to educate the public on the dangers of drug use, and the Department of Education's 2002 National Policy on the Management of Drug Abuse by learners in schools and FET institutions, continue to grapple with youth drug dependency. Policy is not simply concerned with reacting to crises and dangers: the family policy released by the Department of Social Development early in 2005 attempts to take a rounded approach to society's basic building-block.

## **Recommendations**

Some crucial recommendations in the area of health and well-being are that:

- Life skills should be stressed within the framework of a holistic approach to the development of young people. Youth need to be provided with skills to cope with multiple challenges to their health.
- The focus on education and job creation needs to be increased, to discourage young people from adopting risky patterns of behaviour such as crime, substance abuse, potential exposure to HIV/AIDS and unplanned pregnancies. These patterns can often be traced back to lack of opportunities, unemployment and poor life prospects.
- Family and community cohesion as a protective shield for young people should be encouraged and supported, and an intergenerational approach that avoids treating the views of young people as having less consequence should be taken.
- Healthy lifestyles should be encouraged. Young people should have access to opportunities and facilities for sport and recreation.
- Unfair and dishonest forms of marketing and advertising to young people of legal but addictive substances such as tobacco and alcohol, should be outlawed.



# Social integration and civic engagement

South African youth have always played a vital role in their society, collaborating and sometimes conflicting with their elders. In the modern history of the country, young people were crucial in attacking and ultimately overthrowing apartheid, from the dramatic events in Soweto and elsewhere in 1976 to the youth mobilisation of the 1980s in Alexandra and other townships that shook the state and created the preconditions for the negotiations and political settlement of the early 1990s.

However, the youth into whose situation the Status of Youth Report enquires are of a different generation. As Levine notes, writing about youth participation in the 1999 elections, ‘voters aged 18 and 20 (who showed the lowest levels of registration of all age cohorts) were between 9 and 11 years old when Mandela was released. They hadn’t been born in 1976 and would have no memory of the formation of the UDF or COSATU’.

The disengagement of some youth from participation in elections is a global phenomenon, and should not necessarily be taken as a sign of social withdrawal. Nevertheless, youth participation in political processes and active citizenship are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, patterns of participation and engagement established in youth tend to continue into adulthood. If adolescents do not see the value of participating in learner representative structures or other kinds of voluntary organisations whilst at school, they are unlikely to participate as young adults in political institutions or community structures. Patterns of formal participation and engagement generally emerge during the formative years of puberty and adolescence. If young people are to play an informed part in civic life, they need to grasp why they should register to vote and why they should exercise their constitutional right to vote by the time they are old enough to vote for the first time.

Secondly, community participation is also about building social capital and networks. Young people who are active in some form of organisation, whether it is a youth club, a church or cultural or sports group, are less likely to fall through the cracks in society and engage in risky and self-destructive behaviour. Organisational participation also enhances skills in networking, accessing information, communication, self-esteem and a range of other competencies.

### Where we are

The critical issues in terms of social integration and civic participation for young people are the following:

- Many young people participate voluntarily, or informally, in civic activities, including via e-technology for those who have access to it.
- There is limited access to sports and recreational facilities for most, apart from middle-class youth.
- In spite of initiatives to improve the situation in schools, access to information and information technology tends mainly to be open to young people from the middle class.

- Religious affiliation and practice is an important aspect of the social participation of many young people.

There are many reasons for concern about the marginalisation and social exclusion of large sections of South African youth. There is high and rising youth unemployment, widespread poverty, a rising rate of HIV infection to which young people are particularly vulnerable, a decline in marriage rates, substantial numbers of early and unwanted pregnancies, and high rates of crime and violence. In line with global trends, many young South Africans seem to be withdrawing from political participation, and are not registering to vote or voting. For instance, in common with the whole South African population, rates of participation in the 1994 election by young people were high, but youth participation in the 2004 election was considerably less than that of older people. Thus there would appear to be signs of disillusionment with political and economic institutions.

However, care should be taken in interpreting data. Though the rate of political involvement among registered voters between 18 and 20 years is low, it is higher amongst those from 21 to 35. Also, young people may fail to register, and regret this when the poll actually takes place – so failure to vote may not always indicate indifference or hostility to the political process. On another level, the claim by the African National Congress Youth League that it has a membership of more than 500 000 suggests a commitment to political involvement amongst at least a section of young people.

In a time of rapid social change, definitions of ‘political involvement’ are altering. There has been a shift from party to issue-based politics, and this is particularly true among young people. Activism over HIV/AIDS, the environment, and social and cultural matters of many kinds may to some extent have displaced party allegiances, and this needs to be taken into account before easy judgements are made about youth that appears apathetic. New modes of communication are also prominent; although Internet use is confined predominantly to middle-class young people, the cellular telephone has penetrated youth culture deeply at all levels of society, and provides access to information and opportunities for social engagement.

Involvement in youth and community organisations is seen as an important indicator of youth civic engagement, as well as a predictor of later involvement in community and political affairs. However, with quite widely differing patterns according to gender, age, population group, urban or rural location and employment status, there are in general low levels of participation by young South Africans in organised activities. For example, 66 per cent of respondents have never participated in a community sports team, 75 per cent have never been involved with a community society or club, and 80 per cent have never been members of a civic or community organisation. There is, however, widespread attendance by young people at religious services, which, among other things, raises significant questions about the picture of young people as materialistic and worldly. Table 3 gives a picture of the frequency with which young people claimed to involve themselves in some typical organised and informal activities.

Table 3: Rates of participation in organised and unorganised activities, 2003

| Activity   | Never | A few times a year | Once or twice a month | Once a week | A few times a week | Daily or almost daily |
|--|-------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Played in a community sports team  | 65.8  | 14.1               | 8.4                   | 3.9         | 4.8                | 3.1                   |
| Supported a community sports team by attending their matches/games                             | 50.4  | 20.7               | 12.3                  | 6.6         | 6.3                | 3.7                   |
| Participated in a community society or club  | 75.3  | 10.6               | 6.9                   | 2.8         | 2.5                | 1.8                   |
| Worked in a community garden   | 88.0  | 6.4                | 3.3                   | 0.9         | 0.6                | 0.8                   |
| Collected money or goods for a community project, church or a charitable organisation          | 63.9  | 20.8               | 7.7                   | 3.7         | 2.9                | 1.0                   |
| Participated in sports or a sports club outside your community                                 | 70.4  | 13.4               | 7.5                   | 3.8         | 3.3                | 1.6                   |
| Participated in a dance or music group   | 67.2  | 16.3               | 7.9                   | 4.5         | 2.7                | 1.4                   |
| Attended a cultural event  | 51.2  | 32.5               | 9.7                   | 3.6         | 2.1                | 0.8                   |
| Participated as a member of a civic or community organisation other than those mentioned above | 80.1  | 10.6               | 4.0                   | 2.1         | 1.6                | 1.5                   |
| Watched the news on TV   | 16.4  | 7.1                | 5.0                   | 4.4         | 19.1               | 48.0                  |
| Read the newspaper   | 18.0  | 9.4                | 9.0                   | 8.4         | 28.0               | 27.2                  |
| Gave money to someone who is poor or hungry  | 38.4  | 30.1               | 13.1                  | 6.6         | 7.1                | 4.7                   |
| Attended a religious service   | 20.2  | 17.1               | 13.1                  | 24.9        | 13.7               | 10.9                  |
| Attended a stokvel meeting/gathering   | 73.1  | 10.8               | 7.4                   | 3.1         | 3.0                | 2.6                   |
| Attended a burial society meeting  | 57.1  | 14.7               | 13.1                  | 10.4        | 3.3                | 1.4                   |

As well as a degree of civic passivity, long-term health problems are likely given low levels of involvement in sport combined with widespread and lengthy television viewing.

Reflecting persisting racial divisions in education, there are inequalities in the provision of school sporting facilities and in participation in school sports. Sixty-one per cent of white school learners participate in school sports, but far fewer in other population groups. This undoubtedly reflects the facilities available in different types of school; African, coloured and Indian learners in previously white schools are likely to have participation rates as high as those of their white fellow-learners. As in other areas, social class is beginning to be a more important determinant of participation than race. Those who have not participated in sports in school tend to continue not to be involved when they leave.

Use of community facilities such as youth centres, parks and sports facilities differs considerably between different categories of youth. For example, coloured and African youth are more than twice as likely as Indian and white youth to use youth centres, while Indian and white young people make greater use of sports facilities. This reflects historical patterns of provision. Rural areas have the lowest rate of use of these facilities, largely because of inadequate provision and access.

Differences of access and advantage are apparent in relation to activities such as listening to the radio, watching television, using the Internet and reading books, newspapers and magazines. For example, Indian youth have high rates of listening to the radio, watching television and reading newspapers, while use of the Internet and the playing of computer and arcade games is high among white youth. African and coloured youth have higher rates of reading for entertainment, while it seems young white people are more likely to read books for studying.

For whatever reasons – probably in large part because the opportunities to meet, determined by entrenched geographical and educational patterns, make contact difficult – friendships across racial lines are still relatively limited, especially for African youth. Many young people, especially among African youth who are still confined to all-African environments, do not have the opportunity to meet those of other races, so not too much should be made of this finding.

## **Responses**

There have been important government and civil society initiatives to create vehicles for youth participation and give a voice to young people in shaping the course of their own and their country's development. Prominent among these are organisations such as the NYC, UYF and South African Youth Council (SAYC). These rest upon a foundation of initiatives by youth themselves in many spheres.

Young people in South Africa create and use remarkable and varied networks. On one level, churches, mosques, temples and synagogues are prominent. Young people from all social backgrounds participate in large numbers in religious observance and in the social networks that accompany this. Indeed, religious observance, always strong in South Africa, seems to be undergoing a revival in which young people are playing a prominent part. Religious organisations therefore present an important platform for youth engagement and youth participation in issues of social and environmental concern.



Young South Africans also use modern technology with great flair and dexterity. The cellphone has penetrated deeply into youth culture in every class and race, and texting, for example, has become a crucial mode of communication and networking for young people. Electronic arcade games, unknown to earlier generations, are a focus and meeting place for many young people. The Internet, email and e-chat rooms are available to growing numbers through initiatives such as multi-purpose community centres, loveLife's Y-centres and UYF advisory centres. Community radio is a cheap and often youth-dominated medium with great potential for local activism and creativity. Combined with the new environmental and other social movements mentioned earlier, this new technology, and new uses of old technology, may have the potential for young people to make a distinctive and innovative contribution to the country's intellectual and political life.

Many initiatives whose focus appears primarily economic also assist with social integration and development. An example is the NYSP, which provides services to the community and encourages young people's sense of social responsibility. It also enables young people to acquire qualifications and experience, and to receive a monthly allowance. The Building for Sport and Recreation Programme, that works in tandem with the Siyadlala Mass Participation Programme, uses sport and recreation to create employment opportunities for young people while fostering national development in disadvantaged, rural and high-crime areas.

If they are fortunate, young people interact with the world from a background of supportive families, and government is attempting to strengthen this fundamental social element. The Department of Social Development launched the Integrated National Family Policy in 2005 to support the basic needs of families and make resources available, where necessary, for their systematic rebuilding. The Department of Correctional Services' recent White Paper (2005) also rests on fostering family and community cohesion as primary mechanisms to discourage crime. This paper recognises that social re-integration is the biggest hurdle to rehabilitation, and offers concrete steps to enable it to take place successfully. The Social Cluster of government in partnership with civil society is also working towards rebuilding the social fabric of society through the Moral Regeneration Movement and other initiatives such as safe cities and safe school projects.

A formidable hurdle that our fledgling democracy faces is to overcome mistrust, prejudices and racial division to generate a sense of shared nationhood and identity. Young people, as innovators and hopeful aspirants, should be at the forefront of carving out a unique South African identity with their increasing opportunities for social interaction.

Young people engage with their rapidly changing world in ways too numerous to capture here. They are a reservoir of hope for the future, though they are also presented with challenges. We can be confident that they will surmount these challenges and build society with imagination and creativity.

## **Recommendations**

In the field of social integration and civic engagement recommendations are that:

- Opportunities should be made available for young people to affirm their worth and to draw on the resources of the cultures with which they identify.

- Young people should be valued. There should be forums for them to participate in decision and policy-making in a meaningful way, and opportunities for them to interact with each other and with other generations.
- Specifically, youth should have greater opportunities to interact with government, particularly at local government level, to participate in and shape community priorities and service delivery.
- The frequent media misrepresentations of youth and youth culture should be tempered and a more balanced approach encouraged.

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