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Cover: *Residents at a protest for services in Marikana informal settlement in Philippi East in June 2019. Reflecting on the next general election in South Africa in May 2024, HSRC research shows support for coalitions is strongly based on perceptions of whether such arrangements will improve service delivery.*
Photo: *Velani Ludidi, GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)*

EDITOR'S NOTE

By Antoinette Oosthuizen

We are almost a quarter into 2024, and South Africans are gearing up for the next general elections taking place on 29 May. With analysts predicting an era of coalition governments, our feature article for this edition discusses important findings from HSRC surveys on public perspectives about coalitions.

In line with our commitment to free and fair democratic elections, our experts have also provided oversight during general elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which took place in December 2023. An HSRC team embarked on an election observation mission in downtown Kinshasa. The disabling impact of several polio outbreaks is apparent in the DRC and the team reports back on the struggles of voters who were differently physically abled.

As can be expected around elections, politicians are vocal about the past failures of others and their promised solutions to a country's persisting challenges. In South Africa, much of these are driven by poverty, inequality and unemployment. The HSRC's mandate is to prioritise social science research that helps us understand the roots, drivers and complexities of these challenges, and to inform policies and interventions that improve lives.

In this edition, two articles focus on education issues. One study draws attention to the potential consequences of providing South African youth with tuition-free higher education. A key finding is that there has been a trade-off between expanding access to education and maintaining educational quality aligned with international standards.

Another study explored parents' beliefs about the safety and quality of South African primary and secondary schools. While parents rated the quality of their children's schools highly, they admittedly knew relatively little about the daily workings of these schools.

This issue's focus on women also includes the HSRC's Women Rise project in the Eastern Cape, which explored how women in rural areas had been impacted by COVID-19, and what could have been done better to find women-managed solutions to public health and livelihood challenges.

We also highlight the need for gender-sensitive policies to address the needs and roles of women in water management. Recently, HSRC researchers published a policy brief focusing on the significant gender discrepancy in control of, and access to, water resources in South Africa.

HSRC researchers who work to help improve South Africa's social housing programme say South Africa hasn't prioritised the release and development of land in well-located areas. This means that social housing projects are being developed further and further away from inner cities or core areas that offer educational and employment opportunities.

As South Africa continues to grapple with persistent load shedding, we draw valuable lessons from Uruguay's transition to renewable energy. An article looks at an interesting comparative analysis by Uruguayan innovation scholar Professor Isabel Bortagaray concerning innovation policy's role in addressing water and energy crises.

Also read about a policy brief on the importance of institutionalising the social integration of immigrants into South African communities, HSRC pilot projects to facilitate effective and inclusive e-participation governance and implementation, and toolkits to guide African science granting councils in the effective management and use of data to inform their funding policy.

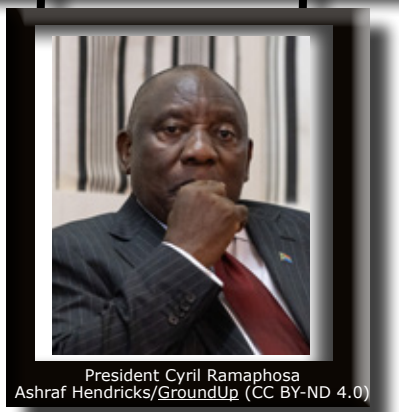
Please feel free to comment or contact our researchers at the email addresses provided below each article.

The Review Team

A HOLY ALLIANCE?

Public opinion on political party coalitions in South Africa

Julius Malema; Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)



President Cyril Ramaphosa
Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

John Steenhuisen; Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

For the past 20 years, the HSRC has been involved in electoral research in support of the Independent Electoral Commission. With debates focusing on a predicted era of coalition governments ahead of the national and provincial elections on 29 May, this article looks at understanding public perceptions of coalition governments. Given the nation's history of apartheid and its subsequent transition to democracy, it is plausible that perceptions regarding coalitions are rooted in broader sentiments about political representation, inclusivity and power-sharing. ***By Jare Struwig and Narnia Bohler-Muller***

Along with the increasing fragmentation of the political landscape and the rise of smaller parties, coalitions are likely to become more prevalent and more powerful in South African politics. Understanding public perceptions about coalitions, therefore, is as valuable from a research perspective as it is for political parties, policymakers and civil society to navigate coalition dynamics effectively, and to help build consensus.

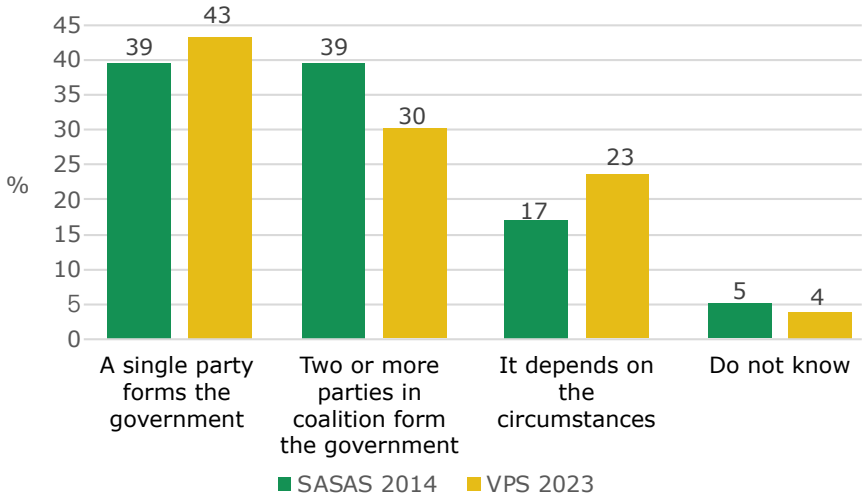
The HSRC's South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS) and the Voter Participation Survey (VPS) collect data on public perceptions related to politics, voting and governance. These surveys reach a representative sample of people living in South Africa aged 16 years and older, obtaining perspectives from different race groups, people from different socio-economic backgrounds and provinces, and from rural and urban areas.

Preference for single-party versus coalition governments

In 2014 and 2023, South Africans were asked whether a single-party government or a multiparty coalition government would be best for South African democracy in general. In the 2014 SASAS survey, 39% of respondents preferred a single-party government, with the same percentage favouring a coalition government involving two or more parties (Fig. 1). Just under a fifth (17%) indicated that their preference depended on contextual circumstances, while the remaining 5% were unsure as to how best to respond.

When repeated in 2023 using the VPS survey, the results showed that there had been a slight shift in preference, with 43% favouring a single-party government, a slight increase from 2014. Conversely, support for coalition governments decreased more significantly from 39% to 30%. Despite the increase in coalition governance in the past decade, support for coalition governance did not grow sequentially – possibly as a result of many challenges of coalitions at municipal level.

Figure 1. Preference for single-party or coalition government as being best for democracy (2014 and 2023, %)

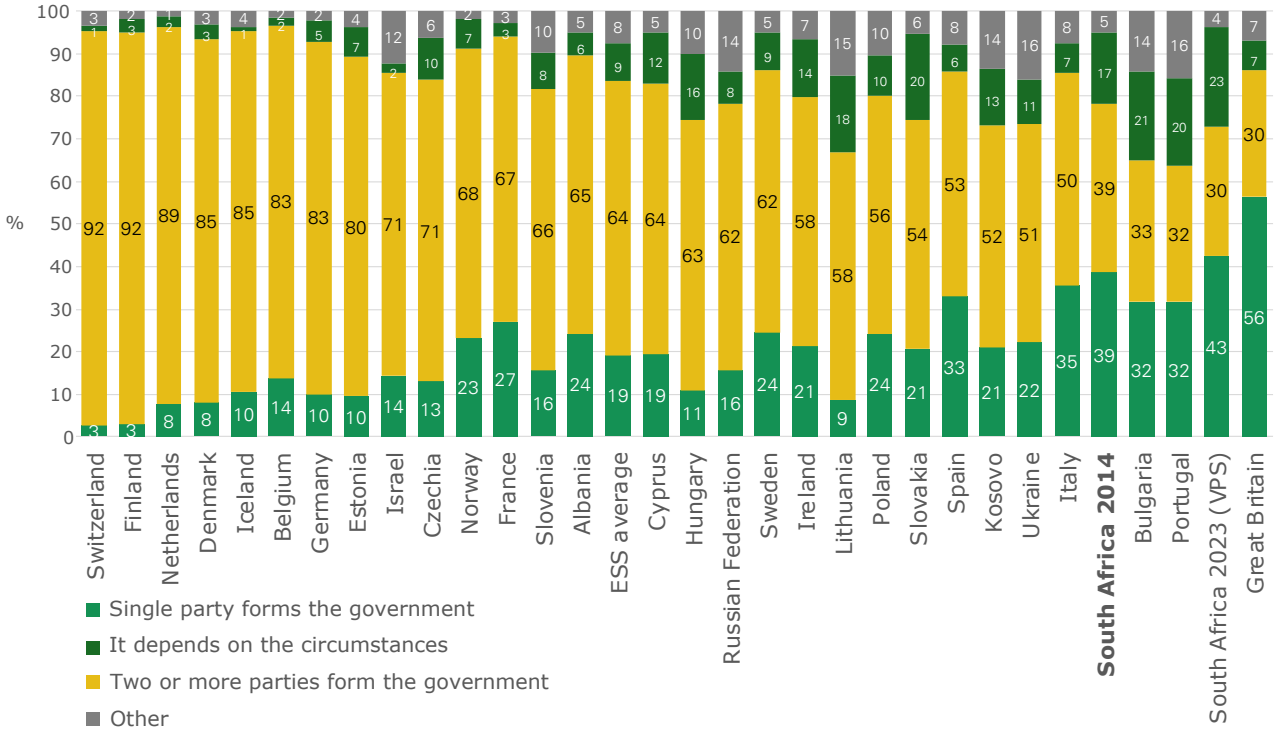


Source: HSRC

South African coalition preferences in comparative perspective

Results from Round 6 (2012/13) of the European Social Survey (ESS) help contextualise South African preferences for or against coalition governments by providing comparative data using the same survey measure. In particular, the use of the ESS data assists in answering the question as to whether the observed level of support for coalition governance in the country is high, low or in between.

Figure 2. Preference for single-party or coalition-party government: South Africa in comparative perspective (2014, ranked high to low based on the share answering that it would be best for democracy if there were "two or more parties for the government" in coalition)



Source: HSRC SASAS 2014 and ESS ERIC Round 6 (2012/13)

The comparative analysis reveals that, on average, South Africans were *less supportive* of coalition governments than in many other countries (Fig. 2). South Africa ranked fourth lowest in terms of preference for a coalition government among the countries that participated in the ESS round. Only Bulgaria, Portugal and Great Britain were less in favour of a coalition government than South Africa at the time. The scale of variation between South Africa and the European countries most in favour of coalition government is appreciable – compared to the 30% support for this type of governance in South Africa, it approximates 90% in countries such as Switzerland, Finland and the Netherlands.

In the intervening decade since 2014, the preference for coalition government at the national level observed in Figure 1 points to declining support for this governance option, despite (or perhaps as a result of) its increasing commonality at the municipal level, where party politics interfere with service delivery.

Degrees of consensus in South African preferences

We examined the socio-demographic and spatial differences in the preference for coalition government over single-party government in the country in 2014 and 2023. In 2014, there were no observable differences in support for this form of governance based on age, gender, educational attainment, subjective poverty status or the lived experience of a coalition government at local municipality level. The main basis of variation was along racial and provincial lines.

In 2023, age differences in support for coalition government remained insignificant, and there were only marginal differences along gender and educational lines. However, clearer differences in support were apparent based on race, subjective poverty status, socio-economic status, the lived experience of coalition government at local municipality level and province of residence. However, if we add all these variables together into a regression analysis, only provincial differences remain significant. These are displayed in Table 1 and indicate higher than average support for coalitions in 2023, as evident in the Free State, Northern Cape and Gauteng. In all other provinces, a single-party government remained the dominant preference.

Table 1. Preference for single-party or coalition-party government by province (VPS, 2023)

	A single party forms the government	Two or more parties in coalition	It depends on the circumstances	Do not know
1. Western Cape	50%	13%	31%	7%
2. Eastern Cape	48%	33%	15%	4%
3. Northern Cape	34%	37%	26%	4%
4. Free State	31%	59%	8%	3%
5. KwaZulu-Natal	48%	27%	24%	1%
6. North West	44%	34%	18%	4%
7. Gauteng	35%	36%	25%	3%
8. Mpumalanga	36%	30%	32%	3%
9. Limpopo	51%	23%	19%	6%

Source: HSRC

What are the other drivers of support for a coalition government in South Africa?

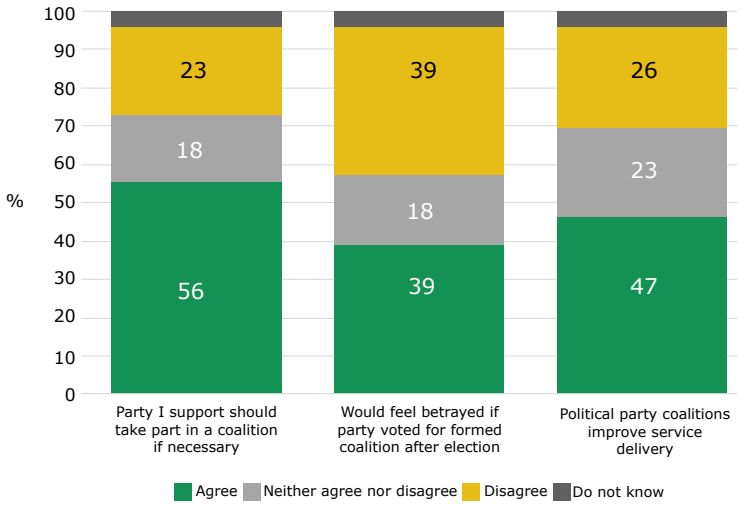
1. Political support measures

We tested the effect of political party support on coalition preferences in SASAS datasets from 2014 and 2023 (political support was not included in the VPS of 2023). In both years of surveying, there was not a statistically significant difference in coalition preferences among political parties, even after socio-demographic and spatial measures were added as controls. This result is interesting, given the increasing commonality of coalition talks among political parties at national, provincial and municipal levels. This finding suggests that, for now, supporters of different political parties tend to express similar levels of support for coalitions on average.

2. The influence of other coalition beliefs

To determine whether other coalition beliefs informed overall preference for coalition governance, South Africans were asked whether they would support their party entering a coalition post-election, feel betrayed if the party they voted for formed a coalition post-election, and if they believed coalitions would enhance service-delivery performance. From Figure 3, it is evident that more than half (56%) are open to their party of choice entering a coalition, with 23% opposing this and 22% neutral or uncertain. Just under half were also positive that coalitions would improve service delivery in the country, while 26% were doubtful and 27% were neutral or uncertain. Around two-fifths (39%) felt that parties entering coalitions post-electorally represented a betrayal of voter choice, with an equivalent share refuting this critical assessment.

Figure 3. Other coalition beliefs (2023, %)



Source: HSRC

Support for single party governance or coalition governance therefore seems to be driven by perceptions of improved services rather than a specific political ideology.

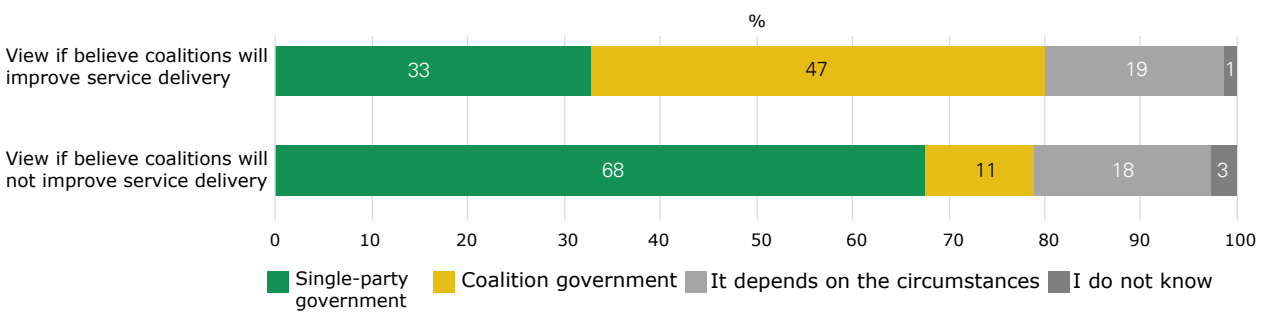
Former President Jacob Zuma and President Cyril Ramaphosa (then deputy-president) in the National Assembly during the 2016 State of the Nation Address debates at Parliament
Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Tests using regression analysis found that support for: (a) one's party entering a coalition; (b) rejecting the idea that coalitions are a betrayal of voter choice; and (c) a belief that coalitions may result in better service performance all emerged as significant predictors of general support for a coalition government in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, these beliefs had the strongest effects on preferences, and further reduced the influence of socio-demographic, spatial and political factors.

Convincing the electorate of service improvements will be instrumental in bolstering support for coalitions in future electoral contests.

Of the three beliefs tested on general support for coalition government in the country, the regression analysis showed that the strongest influence – by a considerable margin – was a belief in positive service delivery outcomes. As Figure 4 shows, 47% of those supporting such a view were partial to coalition governance in the country, compared to a mere 11% of those who were sceptical of improved service performance. It would seem that support for coalitions is strongly based on perceptions of whether such arrangements will improve service delivery. Support for single-party governance or coalition governance therefore seems to be driven by perceptions of improved services rather than a specific political ideology. Convincing the electorate of service improvements will be instrumental in bolstering support for coalitions in future electoral contests.

Figure 4. The influence of service-delivery outcomes on support for coalition government (2023, %)



Source: HSRC

Conclusion

The findings of the survey analysis presented above shed light on the complex landscape of public opinion regarding political party coalitions in South Africa. On examination of representative data from 2014 and 2023, the preference for coalition governments has shown a slight decline in observed support. Despite this finding, a considerable portion of the population remains open to the idea of coalition governance, albeit with nuanced differences across certain demographic and spatial variables.

A comparative analysis with select European countries highlights South Africa's relatively lower support for coalition governments. However, certain provinces, such as the Free State, Northern Cape and Gauteng, exhibit higher-than-average support for coalitions, indicating regional variations in preference.

Furthermore, political allegiance appears to have surprisingly minimal influence on coalition preferences at this stage, with supporters of different parties expressing similar levels of support for coalition governance. Instead, beliefs such as the perceived impact on service delivery and the acceptance of parties entering coalitions post-election, emerge as significant predictors of general support for coalition government in South Africa.

In conclusion, while coalition governance remains a divisive issue in South Africa, there is a notable segment of society that favours the concept, particularly when reinforced by positive expectations of outcome and a mature political view that coalition politics does not equate to a betrayal of voter choice. As the country's political landscape continues to evolve, understanding these nuances in public opinion is essential for policymakers and stakeholders to navigate coalition dynamics effectively and foster consensus-building in the pursuit of democratic consolidation and social cohesion in South Africa.

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Former President Jacob Zuma and then Deputy-President Cyril Ramaphosa during the ANC's 103rd birthday at the Cape Town stadium in 2015.
Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

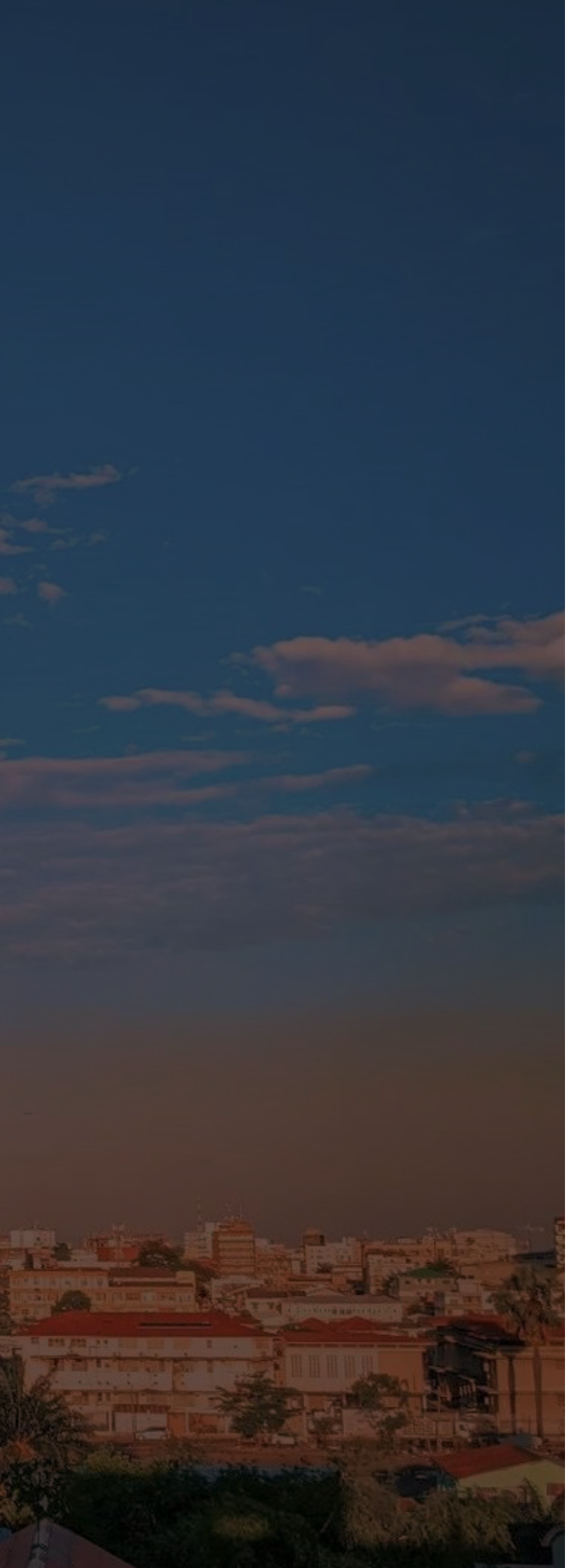
Every vote counts:

a case of accessibility in the DRC elections

On 20 December 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) held general elections. The HSRC Africa Institute of South Africa is committed to contributing towards knowledge generation of African democratic and electoral processes. In line with this goal, representatives from the institute embarked on an election observation mission to the DRC in La Gombe, downtown Kinshasa. In this report, we share some key challenges identified during the elections. This article focuses on the experiences of people who are differently physically abled, especially in the case of DRC, where the impact of several polio outbreaks is apparent.

By Dr Palesa Sekhejane, Bonginkosi Ngwenya and Kutlwano Mohale

Skyline of La Gombe in downtown Kinshasa in the DRC (September 2023)
Photo: ByaduniaEspoir, CC BY-SA 4.0



In 2014, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) published a report on the status of people living with disabilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It showed that the main causes of disability related to insufficient vaccination programmes; parents' lack of knowledge about common childhood diseases and treatment; landmine-caused accidents; traffic vehicle accidents; leprosy; poor hygiene; and improper medication.

The African Union's categorisation of people living with disabilities and other vulnerabilities is based on the following: having parts of their body mutilated or amputated; visual and hearing impairments; psychosocial or intellectual limitations; limited motor functionality; and impairments caused by albinism, age and pregnancy.

Arguing as to why African states should ratify the African Disability Protocol, Elim Shanko describes a situation in Africa where people with disabilities face intersectional marginalisation owing to poverty and gender discrimination, and says few countries in Africa protect their rights through legislation. In the 2006 general elections (National Democratic Institute 2023), only 2% of people with disabilities voted. This highlighted the importance of programmes by DRC organisations such as the National Democratic Institute, which works towards empowering people with disabilities to engage in politics and to become full members of society so they can have a say in decisions that affect their daily lives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) of 2006 is the first global, legally binding human rights treaty that recognises persons with disabilities as capable of claiming universal rights and making decisions for their lives based on their informed consent, including participating in democratic processes such as elections. The principles of the UNCRPD include accessibility, i.e. infrastructure provision; assistive devices such as braille materials; reasonable accommodations; sign language interpreters; and awareness and sensitisation on election campaigns.

According to Shanko, 47 African countries are party to the treaty, including the DRC, which signed the UNCPRD in 2014. In 2019, Minister Irène Esambo Diata – who lives with a disability herself – was appointed the first-ever minister for people living with disabilities in the DRC. As one in eight individuals in the DRC live with vulnerabilities, this was a significant move to integrate such people into society and create conditions for them to participate in public decision-making.

In January 2023, during the run-up to the election, Esambo Diata urged people living with disabilities and other vulnerabilities to register to vote to obtain their voter cards, and to run for the elections – in institutions such as municipal councils, and national and provincial assemblies – to defend their cause as a crucial part of social life. She also stressed that people living with disabilities are entitled to specific voting measures and procedures as per Article 18 of Organic Law No. 22/003 of 3 May 2022 (Agence Congolaise de Presse 2023), which protects their rights.

It stipulates: 'A person with disabilities has the right to specific voting measures and procedures. The State shall provide appropriate, accessible, easy-to-understand and easy-to-use electoral equipment and materials to guarantee the full exercise of the right to vote by persons with disabilities.'

HSRC researchers on an election observation mission in La Gombe, downtown Kinshasa in the DRC (December 2023) Photo: HSRC

Despite such advances, the HSRC election observation mission team noted inconsistencies in the aspirations of the government, and what took place.

What was observed

Based on predictions and expectations about how the elections would play out, election day was marred by several challenges, such as the late opening of polling stations and various irregularities observed in the voting procedure.

With regard to equal participation in the elections, the HSRC team witnessed obstacles to the participation of voters, particularly for people with disabilities. Infrastructure access in the DRC is a challenge, and citizens with disabilities experienced difficulties, as some polling stations made no provision to accommodate people with physical, visual or hearing differences, or for the elderly.

A Congolese woman votes on 20 December 2023 at a polling station in Matonge, one of the oldest districts of Kinshasa. Photo: MONUSCO Photos, CC BY-SA 2.0

In some polling stations, there was no provision for a sign language electoral lexicon for voters with hearing impairments, wheelchair ramps were absent and, in some cases, the team observed voters on crutches having to use staircases to enter voting rooms. One voting station was packed with elderly women who had been sitting on the ground in the hot sun for an extended period. All these observations were indicative of poor preparation for, and consideration of, voters with disabilities and other vulnerabilities.

Recommendations for the next elections

Based on the above reflections on the inclusivity of the 2023 DRC elections, the HSRC election observation team recommends providing shaded areas with seating to accommodate voters with disabilities and other vulnerabilities. Queue marshals should also form part of the team of election officials to help guide and prioritise them.

Another recommendation is for the election organising committee to source and employ people who are specifically trained to aid people with various disabilities, and treat them with dignity to ensure their full participation in the elections. This is with the recognition of the Organic Law No. 22/003 of May 3, 2022, on the protection and promotion of the rights of people, indicating that a sign language electoral lexicon must developed by the Independent National Electoral Commission, and the recruitment of two advisors (hearing impairment specialists) in charge of ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the electoral process.

For example, they should ensure that a sign language electoral lexicon is present for voters with hearing impairments, as per the June 2022 amendment of Law No. 06/006 of March 9, 2006, on the Organization of Presidential, Legislative. Lastly, the incumbent, the electoral commission and other partners involved in the organisation of elections should invest in upgrading existing infrastructure in La Gombe to ensure full inclusion and participation of all voters by installing ramps where necessary and employing sufficient lighting in the polling stations.

Such investments will benefit the electorate in the long term – because school buildings were primarily used during these elections, investing in them in this way will be more conducive to effective teaching and learning, and offer better conditions for future voter registration and voting.

Conclusion

In closing, while provisions were made for the inclusion of voters with disabilities and other vulnerabilities during the 2023 elections, the HSRC election observation team was not able to report on them positively. This finding is also supported by a lack of reporting about the implementations made to accommodate this voter category. However, following the creation of the ministry in charge of ensuring the social and political inclusion of people with disabilities and other vulnerabilities in the DRC, the HSRC team hopes to see improvement during the administration of President Félix Tshisekedi.

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HSRC researchers arrive at a voting station in La Gombe, downtown Kinshasa in the DRC where they were on an election observation mission in December 2023. Photo: HSRC

Post-COVID-19 recovery process: women engaged in farming in Tsolo, Eastern Cape, June 2023
Photo: Bonelwa Nogqaza

Women Rise:
rebuilding rural livelihoods post-COVID-19

In rural South Africa, the well-being of communities is deeply rooted in connections – family bonds, village relations and links to urban areas. According to researcher Leslie Bank of the HSRC, these are not just threads but lifelines. "It's the relationships between people – the mutuality, the connectedness between women – that allow resources to be distributed," he says. During the COVID-19 lockdown, many of these ties were broken. Co-led by Bank, the Women Rise post-pandemic recovery and reconstruction project is using participatory research to reveal women's experiences of COVID-19 in rural areas and to support their efforts to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. ***By Andrea Teagle***

When graduate Bonelwa Nogqaza set off for the village of Tsolo in the Eastern Cape in April 2023, her mission was deceptively simple: to live alongside women in the community and document their everyday lives. One of eight field researchers of the Women Rise project, Nogqaza wanted to find out how women in rural areas had been impacted by COVID-19 and how their communities were emerging from the impact. According to Prof. Leslie Bank, the Woman Rise project leader, the project aimed, through a "people's science" approach, to find out how the state could better handle shocks in future and how communities could be supported in their rebuilding efforts.

Tsolo is surrounded by flat fields of green, occasionally interrupted by the pointed hills for which the town is named. Simple houses give way to South African staples lining the main road: Ackermans, a Spar, a KFC. Street traders display their wares under bright umbrellas, and the occasional cow wanders by. On her arrival, Nogqaza was met warmly by her host family. "I think we clicked from the very get-go," she says. But, despite the friendliness of the Tsolo residents, scratching beneath the surface took time.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, communities like Tsolo were struck particularly hard. Women's experiences of the restrictions were difficult and personal; they used the term "*ukuvala isango*" (closing the gate) to describe their experience of exclusion. Nogqaza was both an outsider and a researcher. "I also come from a village," she explains, "so I know how someone relates to you as an individual compared to how they relate to you as an educated person." Recalling how residents clammed up when she began asking research questions, pen in hand, she realised she needed a different approach.

In a blog post – part of the project outcomes – she writes that she wanted to 'hand over the stick' – reverse the researcher-subject power dynamic to learn from these women's knowledge and experience.

'Handing over the stick'

To build trust, the young researcher decided to write individual letters to each woman, offering them the space to share their stories in confidence. The decision was also a nod to their history: during apartheid and colonial eras, migrant workers had sustained their relationships by writing back home. "That's where I got the thick details of their lives: their stories, their challenges, their happy moments, their bad moments… They were journalling about their lives."

She writes, 'I have now … personally met many older women, not just because of the words contained in the letters we exchanged, but because of the meaning of hand-written letters in a landscape scarred by enforced separation and the history of migrant labour.' This was the start of Nogqaza's integration into the community.

Engaging communities

The anecdote serves as an example of how local communities can be engaged in research. In a book that preceded the study, *Covid and Custom in Rural South Africa*, Bank argues that engagement with local leaders was sorely absent in the state's response to COVID-19.

During the peak of the pandemic, in mid-2020, state actors blamed traditional family gatherings and funerals for rising infection rates in rural areas. Rather than working with community leaders to agree on solutions, and to gain the buy-in of communities, the government clamped down on these events and enforced other preventative measures that conflicted with isiXhosa beliefs. For the residents of rural Eastern Cape, the government's war against the coronavirus evolved into a collision with custom and culture, Bank argues, which undermined the effectiveness of preventative measures and left lasting scars on traditional ways of life.

The Women Rise project is taking the first steps to engage with communities to understand what could have been done better and to find women-managed solutions to public health and livelihood challenges. In this way, they hope to increase community resilience to future external shocks.

Intersecting challenges

The stories that Nogqaza and the other field researchers collected bear testament to the devastation wreaked by COVID-19 in the rural Eastern Cape, the epicentre of the epidemic. Here, Bank and colleagues write, women bore a heavy load 'as custodians of family health, as care workers, mothers, anchors for rural livelihoods and community organisers'.

Nogqaza encountered on a personal level the struggles individuals faced. She bore witness to grief for lost family members, and child-headed households "where they'd be depending on a child support grant. There was no income". Drug use increased as many young people were left without employment.

"COVID-19 disrupted [the Tsolo residents'] lives. People lost jobs. Breadwinners lost the status of being breadwinners," she says. Many women found themselves in vulnerable situations because they had no way of supporting themselves financially. Some stayed in or entered abusive relationships "because they didn't have food at home. They needed that man to provide for them".

Nogqaza realised that many of the issues that women in rural areas face are connected. For instance, she says, "If maybe I learned that people had encountered GBV [gender-based violence], it would actually link to issues of unemployment, issues of poverty and issues of mental health."

In her conversations, Nogqaza found that people often used the isiXhosa term "*mgowo*" (going through a lot) to refer to mental health issues such as depression or anxiety. "It's not that they're not aware that they're going through these things," she says. "It's that the language that academics use and the terminologies that people on the ground use are totally different."

Bringers of hope

According to Bank, the project has shown that, if women were hit disproportionately hard by COVID-19, they were also instrumental in rebuilding efforts. People are investing their time and money mainly into repairing social connections, he says. "What a lot of the work speaks to is this reconnecting process and this real desire to bring families back together."

In the coastal community of Cwebe, 150km south of Tsolo, Women Rise researcher Zipho Xego observed how, on one occasion, a swarm of bees visited the Dwesa-Cwebewasa

homestead. In isiXhosa (Bomvana) culture, Xego writes with Bank, the movements of bees is believed to convey spiritual messages. Sure enough, shortly after the arrival of the bees, one of the daughters of the home received a nursing job offer.

The women of the homestead organised a celebratory ritual to gather people and to thank the ancestors for the good fortune. Such rituals serve as reminders to the community 'that there was still hope amid poverty, hunger and unemployment'. Xego and Bank reflect that, as custodians of their homes and homesteads, women are often the ones who operationalise hope.

Pointing to the lockdown travel restrictions that prevented people in urban areas from returning to their rural homes, Bank says, "Many rural communities want to revitalise … these cultures of migration and the ritual processes that sustain them, and that, in turn, sustain these rural communities in various ways, materially as well as spiritually and culturally."

Re-opening the gate

In Tsolo, Nogqaza observed that many women are realising the value of diverse income streams in the wake of COVID-19. Some are growing small vegetable gardens or finding other business opportunities. "Women who previously relied on their husbands are inspired to start their own small businesses," she says. "Others don't have the finances or the skills to do so."

Nogqaza and the other graduate researchers returned home in August 2023. The team is now in the action phase of the project, exploring policy and infrastructure that can "re-open the gate" (*ukuvula isango*), by tackling issues at the household and community level.

According to Bank, observations from the research phase have revealed a disconnect between the market-orientated solutions that the state proposes and people's livelihood practices. "These practices depend as much on people's relationships to each other as they do on whatever opportunity there might be in the market."

Much of the data that is used to define issues such as hunger and gender-based violence comes from clinics, police stations, Statistics South Africa and so on, says Bank. By situating these issues in the lives of individuals, the Women Rise project aims to reveal connections and intersections that are not always evident. "Over the next few months, we will be doing action workshops on key issues in 10 rural communities and we will also be hosting public dialogues and debates on issues like gender-based violence, hunger, mental health, reproductive health, addiction and livelihoods."

Note:

The Women Rise project, funded by the International Development Research Centre, involves a partnership between the Human Sciences Research Council, McGill University in Canada, Walter Sisulu University in South Africa and the Eastern Cape Socio-economic Consultative Council (ECSECC). Dr Adam Cooper is the study's principal investigator at the HSRC, while Professor Leslie Bank, a retired member of the HSRC staff, is the project leader, along with co-principal investigators, Kathleen Rice and Ian Assam from the Eastern Cape Socio Economic Consultative Council. The team will present the project findings at the World Anthropological Union Congress in November 2024.

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Photo: E.L.S.K.E Photography/IWMI, Flickr

Economic and rural development through gender-responsive water-management policies

The legacy of apartheid and persistent patriarchal cultural structures propagate unequal gender resource access in South Africa. Limits on rural women's abilities to access water affect their economic success, educational opportunities, health and social mobility. In a recent policy brief, HSRC researchers presented important findings on the causes of, and solutions to, water-access inequality.
By Jessie-Lee Smith

Gender inequality in South Africa inhibits development and the economic success of many households. For example, an article in the 2023 September issue of the HSRC *Review* reported land ownership discrepancies between men and women. Such discrepancies limit the ability of women to contribute to food security, nutrition and sustainable livelihoods within their communities and in South Africa as a whole.

In 2000, the South African government outlined a National Gender Policy Framework, which established the country's vision and planned interventions to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. However, the implementation of this framework has been charged with many obstacles, and its pathways and goals are no longer aligned with current developments and challenges in South Africa. As such, the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) has commissioned the HSRC to review and update the framework by researching how gender inequalities currently impact aspects of South African society.

Recently, HSRC researchers Drs Sikhulumile Sinyolo and Catherine Ndinda worked with Rhodes University lecturer Dr Sandie Phakathi to publish a policy brief regarding gendered access to water. This brief brings to light a significant gender discrepancy in control and access to water resources in South Africa.

The current distribution of water licencing and control in South Africa is 10.5% for women and 89.5% for men, particularly prevalent in rural communities around the country. These figures failed to meet targets of the Water Allocation Reform Strategy, which for women were 30% in 2014 and 40% in 2019. "It is imperative that researchers inform government stakeholders about the research findings on water inequality in South Africa, given the stark numbers that underscore the severity of the issue," says Sinyolo.

Historic gender and racial policy injustice have meant that a deficit in female land ownership has resulted in few women having direct access to, or control over, water sources. In an interview with *HSRC Review*, Phakathi points to the apartheid regime having contributed to profound disparities in land and water access. For example, in the agricultural sector, black women face notable inequalities in acquiring agricultural water licences, underscoring the broader racial and gender disparities.

Several cultural and social mechanisms also contribute to water access deficits. For example, established gender roles mean that women are overwhelmingly responsible for providing water for domestic use, such as for cooking, cleaning and washing. "Women and girls bear the main responsibility of water collection, thus negatively impacting their leisure time, educational performance and productivity," Phakathi told the *HSRC Review*. Inadequate water access also contributes to girls missing school due to long walks for water collection, during which time they also become vulnerable to sexual harassment, she added.

Community governance structures, such as water users' associations, are dominated by men who give themselves an upper hand in terms of access and control. In water-scarce areas, access to irrigation water is based on a first-come, first-served basis, so domestic burdens can often keep women from attaining what they need. Heavy-duty maintenance on canals and pipes also provides men with power over water access and usage, as they have the time and strength to keep the infrastructure running, giving them leverage to access these reserves.

Yet access to water remains key for economic development and success. It allows women to engage in small-scale farming or agriculture, which enables them to contribute to household income, food security and the economy. It also means that domestic burdens are lightened, allowing women more time to participate in other educational and economic activities.

Water access is also vital for maintaining health and hygiene. With limited access to water, women and their dependants are at increased risk of disease or illness. Easy access to water can also increase a woman's self-esteem, allowing them to maintain expected social conformities concerning hygiene and beauty.

According to the policy brief, to effectively deal with inequalities in water access, the land-water and gender relationship should be dealt with simultaneously because, if addressed separately, it will continue to result in reforms that will not benefit women in the water sector. Current water management policies are a primary driver of gendered water access as gender-blind policies do not consider gender-specific needs and roles, and inadvertently perpetuate gender inequalities in water access.

Policies that are sensitive to gender issues can address the specific needs and roles of women in water management. For example, the government should enforce policies that put women in decision-making positions in water governance to ensure that they are involved in the planning and implementation process. Land policy that encourages land ownership by women is also essential to combating water-access inequality. "The policy brief proposes a Land and Water Nexus Policy to ensure the intersectionality of land and water rights, emphasising that women should benefit from land reform programmes, as land ownership is a prerequisite for water rights," says Phakathi.

Phakathi also insists that "infrastructure development policies should target areas with high gender disparities, aiming to alleviate the physical burden of water collection for women and girls". This means that the government should focus on placing water points closer to households, so that women don't spend hours of their day trekking to access water.

The government and other stakeholders need to prioritise community-based initiatives, capacity-building programmes and awareness campaigns, and emphasise collecting disaggregated data on water usage and access. These projects should aim at enhancing women's knowledge, participation and decision-making in water-related activities to help close gender inequality and water-access gaps.

According to Phakathi, while the South African government has taken steps to address historical injustices and gendered disparities in water access, challenges persist. "Comprehensive reforms in land-water governance, effective implementation of existing laws and targeted strategies to empower women – including through education – are crucial for rectifying the gendered nature of water access in post-apartheid South Africa."

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Fee-free higher education may not sufficiently impact unemployment and inequality rates, considering the costs

The South African government has validated the right of its citizens to free tertiary education. Since the #FeesMustFall movement in 2016, it has been committed to subsidising fee-free education for 90% of academically qualified university and college students. Yet these investments come at a cost. HSRC research draws attention to the potential consequences of providing South African youth with tuition-free higher education.

By Jessie-Lee Smith

South Africa faces high rates of inequality, which shapes the lives of many young people. For example, inequalities shape resource access and success in primary, secondary and tertiary education. It has been decades since democratic South Africa made tertiary education accessible to everyone, yet the majority of the country is still unable to afford it. Inequalities in tertiary education access came to a head between 2015 and 2017, when students from around South Africa took to the streets in protest of government-mandated rising university tuition fees. Many of these protests became violent, and damages to university infrastructure totalled more than R460 million.

The extent and the repercussions of these national protests led to important discussions between South African youth, students, academics, and public and private stakeholders. At the end of 2017, former President Jacob Zuma promised to provide free tertiary education to 90% of academically eligible students. Since then, public student aid programmes like the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) pledged, and have made steps, to increase tertiary education subsidies for low- and middle-income students.

In 2018, the South African government guaranteed a contribution of R4.5 billion to subsidise tertiary education for low-income students – or students whose combined households bring in less than R350 000 per year. Similarly, in 2024, the Department of Higher Education and Training announced that it was adding R3.8 billion to NSFAS to aid "missing middle" students, or students whose families have a total annual income of between R350 000 and R600 000.

Providing free education to the South African population aims to rectify historical injustices of unequal access to tertiary education. Zama Mthombeni, a chief researcher at the HSRC, argues argues that enhanced employability and income prospects allow graduates to access better job opportunities, disrupting the cycle of poverty within their families and setting a positive example for future generations.

Between 2019 and 2022, NSFAS disbursed R123 billion worth of loans for 2 918 624 beneficiaries. Yet a weak economy and a national debt of over R5 billion as of February 2024 fosters debate surrounding the efficacy of these investments. If South Africa is going to keep Zuma's promise to provide free education for 90% of its population, an initial R2.88 trillion will need to be invested.

Providing free education will require major investments, and HSRC researchers are contributing to the discussion by adding systematic data and evidence to the debate. A study released by the HSRC in 2023 provides an overview of the financial constraints and unforeseen costs of providing fee-free education to all those in need in South Africa. "The exploration of financial pressures imposed on the government due to fee-free education policy offers crucial insights for policymakers, enabling informed decision-making to sustain and enhance educational initiatives," says Mthombeni.

One key finding of this study is that there has been a trade-off between expanding access to education and maintaining educational quality aligned with international standards. The ability of South Africans to access education has increased, yet infrastructure and educational resource accessibility are growing at a much slower rate, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, under-resourced institutions and concerns about the overall quality of education.

Another key finding points to the negative impact that fee-free tuition would have on the South African economy. To accommodate greater numbers of students, universities need to expand their infrastructure and their resources. Other necessities such as boarding fees, textbooks, childcare and school bags also continue to increase in price. To accommodate rising prices, the government may have to increase income tax, leading to a decrease in spending power. This poses some concern, considering the constantly rising cost of living in the country. On the other hand, if government budgets were readjusted, it may lead to unfavourable outcomes for other public sectors such as healthcare: South African hospitals, for example, are already understaffed and under-resourced.

Further research conducted by the HSRC provides more insight into the potential consequences of investing in higher education. According to Dr Adam Cooper, a chief research specialist at the HSRC, "the focus on higher education is fuelling a university degree 'arms race' that does not help create 'mid-level' skills positions and is therefore not having a significant impact on the extremely high rates of youth unemployment." This research also highlights how increasing the funding for higher education takes money away from primary and secondary education and the poorest, who will never attend university.

Theoretical ideas of bridging inequalities and alleviating poverty with subsidised education need to be upheld and supported by systematic research and data. "Through rigorous qualitative content analysis grounded in scholarly literature, this research not only advances academic understanding, but also serves as a valuable resource for shaping future educational policies that are equitable, sustainable and supportive of societal progress," says Mthombeni.

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Photo: Ian Barbour, Flickr

Parents' perception of the South African education system and the power they hold within it

Parents play a significant, if not essential, role in the education of their children. This role continues throughout a child's school years, where a parent's engagement with the syllabus, teachers, principals and governing bodies serves as a vital part of the school ecosystem. In turn, a parent's perception of the power they have over their child's safety and success at school, and the competence and transparency of the school's educators, play a role in the manner and extent to which a parent will engage with the schooling process. A mixed-methods study conducted by HSRC researchers outlines parents' beliefs about the safety and quality of the South African schooling system. ***By Jessie-Lee Smith***

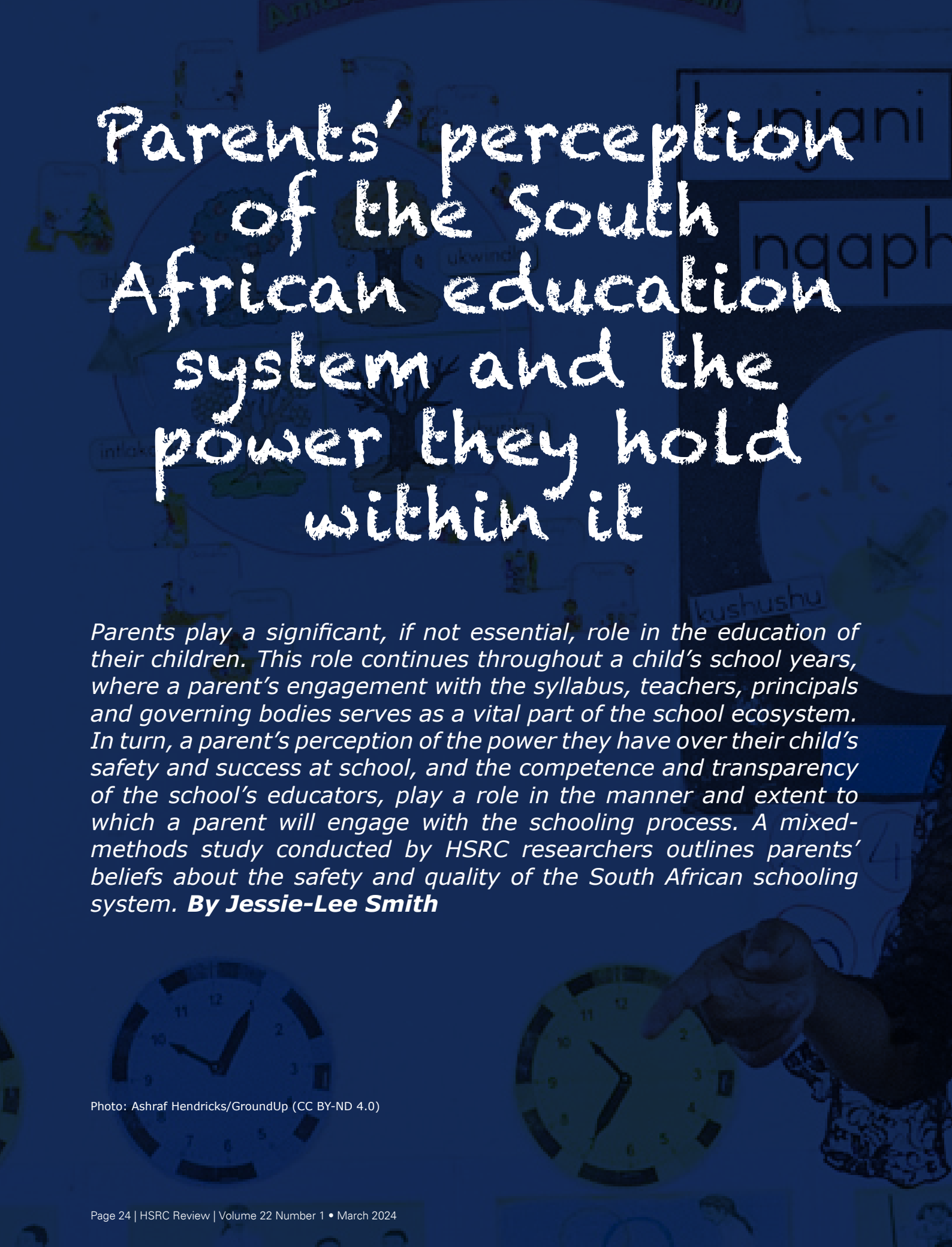
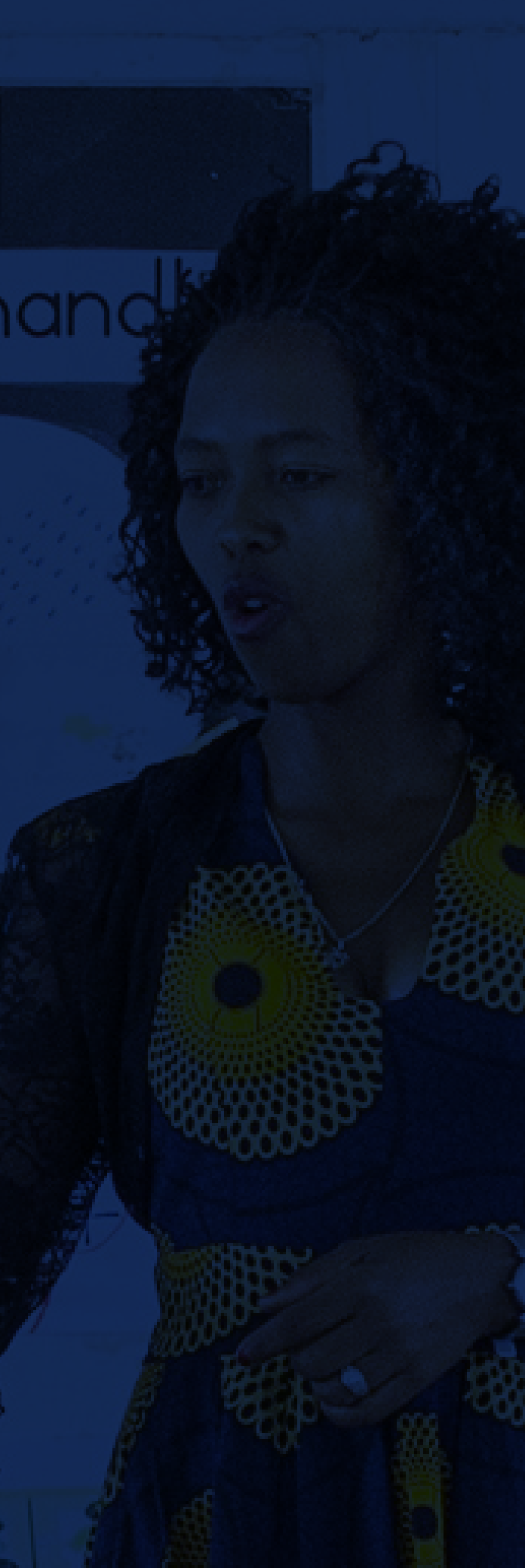


Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)



Parents' perceptions of the quality of education their children receive are not well known in South Africa. However, understanding these perceptions can allow stakeholders to provide mechanisms for parental engagement and improve the quality of education in the country.

Therefore, in partnership with Parent Power and the DG Murray Trust, the HSRC conducted a national survey of South African parents with children in primary or secondary school. This survey – the first of its kind in South Africa – was representative of all socio-economic and cultural groups in the country. Complemented by qualitative interviews, the goal of the research was to determine the factors that shape a parent's sense of power in their child's education.

"This research brings us closer to understanding where the challenges and potential solutions lie in promoting better relationships between parents and the school system, including how communication strategies and school governance can be improved," says Dr Candice Groenewald, a chief research specialist at the HSRC.

In the survey, researchers focused their data collection on five main domains. These domains included: (i) perceptions of their children's happiness at school; (ii) evaluations of their children's safety at school; (iii) confidence in their children's school principals; (iv) knowledge of the school; and (v) perception of their power in their children's schools. The responses to the questions asked were used to develop a Parent Power Index: a metric that gauged the perceived power that parents feel they have over their children's education.

Happiness of children at school

The overarching belief of South African parents was that their children were happy at school. The response to questions about happiness was overwhelmingly positive, with more than 80% of parents believing that their children got along with their peers, liked and respected their educators, were eager to learn and enjoyed going to school. Even on the lowest-rated question, over 75% of parents still agreed or strongly agreed that their children understood their work and homework assignments.

Several factors played a role in predicting parents' evaluations of their children's happiness at school. For example, parents who reported that their child had sufficient textbooks and a clean environment considered their child happier and better adjusted at school. Whether a parent perceived their child as happy at school also depended on their child's gender. For example, girls' parents reported them as being happier at school than boys. Between ethnic groups, black African parents reported higher child happiness than white parents.

Safety of children at school

As with their belief that their children were happy at school, more than 80% of parents believed that their children were safe at school. This belief was predicated on parents' perception that their children were secure and not affected by bullying, that alcohol and drugs were not a problem, and that the principal was actively involved in keeping children safe.

Several factors influenced these perceptions. For example, age and parental education level positively influenced the perceptions of school safety, meaning that older and more highly educated parents had a stronger perception of security. On the other hand, students' age had a negative impact on perceptions of safety, with parents of older children believing their children's schools were less safe. The following tended to rate their children's safety as relatively low: parents from coloured families, single-parent households, women and those who struggle to understand the language of learning.

Confidence in principals

Questions were posed regarding the principal's actions, aims, warmth and trustworthiness towards children. Questions were also posed with regard to how principals treated and communicated with parents. On almost all fronts, more than 80% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had confidence in the principal of their child's school. Only the statement 'The principal treats all parents fairly' scored just under 80%. In other words, parental confidence in school principals was extremely high.

Qualities that positively impacted confidence in principals included good management of school operations, the extent of resources made available to children, and well-functioning school governing bodies. When compared to other groups, the following categories of parents had less confidence in their child's principal: black African parents, single parents and parents with greater access to educational resources that supported homework.

Knowledge of school

The statement: 'I know what is going on at my child's school' was presented to the survey participants. Parents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Overall, the parents rated their knowledge of what went on at their child's school as relatively low. For example, only 52% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 27% believed that they did not know what went on in their child's school, and 21% remained neutral.

Parents of children in private schools and public schools in metropolitan areas felt substantially more out of the loop with the happenings at their child's school. Most South African parents said that they wanted to know more about what was happening at their child's school and we can see a clear demand for knowledge in the survey data.

Parent empowerment

Despite most parents feeling as though they didn't know enough about what went on in their child's school, almost 80% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt empowered by their children's schools in all aspects. The statements regarding parents' perceived power measured whether parents felt 'listened to' and 'respected' by teachers; whether teachers encouraged children to respect each other's differences; and whether teachers listened to and respected learners.

Parent power was positively linked to all other indicators identified in this survey. For example, parents who reported that their child had enough textbooks and sufficient access to educational resources at home, those who were satisfied with overall performance, and

those whose children knew what to expect at school all felt more empowered. Well-functioning school governing bodies were also positively associated with parents' sense of power in relation to their child's school.

Concluding remarks

Overall, the survey results show that in four of the five domains, over three-quarters of the parents were positive about the state of their children's education. Most parents believed that their children were happy and safe at school, and had overall positive perceptions of their school's principal and educators, and their influence at school. An outlying domain was that many parents felt out of the loop with regard to school happenings. Only slightly more than half of the surveyed parents believed that they knew what was happening at school, while the rest couldn't confirm or did not know.

While parents rated the quality of schools highly, they admittedly knew relatively little about their school's daily workings. According to senior research specialist at the HSRC, Dr Adam Cooper, "Their assessment of quality was more based on pastoral care and the school providing children with meals, uniforms, etc. This raises questions about how parents perceive the roles of schools and school personnel in a society like ours. Whether educators are seen as additional parents or whether they are primarily responsible for teaching and learning the school curriculum are important issues to be resolved."

Understanding parents' perceptions of their children's schools is important in South Africa as "parents' knowledge, understanding and involvement in the child's schooling play an important role in the child's schooling success," says Groenewald. Moreover, Cooper argues that parents in any democracy shouldn't just be consumers or clients to whom education is offered, but that "parents should be active participants in their children's schooling so that schools might become institutions where they can have power to influence and direct schools for the benefit of their children".

Going forward, Groenewald maintains that "open, inclusive and responsive school systems will facilitate empowerment and knowledge production amongst parents. This, in turn, creates opportunities for parents to advocate for better-quality school systems, and more awareness of how positive parent-child and parent-school relationships can be formed towards the child's schooling success".

Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

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What we can learn from Uruguay's transition to renewable energy

South Africa and Uruguay have more than their location on the 34th parallel south in common. As developing economies of the Global South, they share many development challenges about which lessons can be drawn through research collaboration. Since 2017, the HSRC's Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators has worked with Uruguayan innovation scholar Professor Isabel Bortagaray, whose comparative analysis concerns innovation policy's role in addressing water and energy crises. As South Africa continues to grapple with persistent load shedding, what lessons can be drawn from Uruguay's transition to renewable energy? ***By Katharine McKenzie***

Photo: Pipirafa, Wikimedia Commons

HSRC international research fellow, Prof. Isabel Bortagaray, has worked with the Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators since 2017. Pictured here from left to right: Dr Yasser Buchana, Zinzi Hlakula, Setsoheng Mayeki, Dr Glenda Kruss, Prof. Isabel Bortagaray, Dr Il-haam Petersen, Nicole van Rheede, Dr Mbongeni Maziya and Bongiwe Ngqaqu. Photo: HSRC

Since Uruguay initiated a drastic shift in its energy strategy about two decades ago, it has become recognised globally as one of the leading users of renewable energy in the world. The country also shares many developmental problems with South Africa, including most recently a drought that has severely threatened water security.

Professor Isabel Bortagaray, a sociologist at the Universidad de la República de Uruguay, has worked with the HSRC Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators since 2017. As one of the centre's international research fellows, she has been developing insights from comparative analyses of South African and Uruguayan innovation responses to water and energy security crises.

During a visit to South Africa in late 2022, Bortagaray presented at a seminar where she discussed the role of science, technology and innovation (STI) policy in the two countries with stakeholders in the national system of innovation, providing a compelling case study of Uruguay's recent energy transition.

Uruguay's state-led energy policy is one of the few national policies that "is really state led, not a government policy, but a state policy supported by the entire political system. That is not common in our country. So, it has been a radical transformation in terms of scale, scope and timespan," said Bortagaray.

Factors that contributed to the policy change included "a very traumatic beginning of the 21st century, with a very deep economic crisis, following Argentina's crisis. There was a realisation that we needed to increase energy security", she said.

At the time, Uruguay's energy supply was not meeting the needs of the country; the national electricity system was highly dependent on hydroelectric sources and fossil fuel inputs, and was disrupted by a severe drought and the high price of petrol. This resulted in a search for alternative energy strategies.

New strategies for energy alternatives

"The one that was looking the most likely was nuclear power, which we did not have. But that was very controversial," said Bortagaray.

An expert commission was created to assess nuclear power for Uruguay.

"We had a citizen jury, led and fostered by the university to explore different perspectives. That jury concluded that the social costs to future generations going into nuclear would be very high."

At the same time, a new political party came to power.

"With that, the environment, science, technology and innovation became part of the political narrative. Energy policy was conceived as a productive development policy" that should satisfy national energy needs affordably, contribute to competitiveness and promote healthier energy consumption habits.

It also aimed to achieve "national energy independence" in the context of Uruguay's economic integration with neighbouring states. "The scale of Uruguay's energy transformation was dramatic. By 2019, 98% of the grid was based on renewable sources, while in 2005, only 37% of energy was generated by renewables," reported Bortagaray. This enabled Uruguay to export energy based on the country's new, robust energy mix.

A key factor in this decisive shift was the country's "long-standing academic and research capabilities in wind energy".

A second important factor, said Bortagaray, was "decisive political will – a crucial issue that really made a difference".

The public electricity company that led the process also played an important role, together with a mix of funding instruments to enable the transition. This allowed the electricity company to assure the purchase of wind energy for 20-year contract periods, mitigating risk for new energy suppliers.

Today, most of Uruguay's wind parks are privately owned and have long-term power purchase agreements with the national electricity utility.

STI policy and energy transitions

"Of course, I am simplifying the complexity that is behind this," said Bortagaray, acknowledging too that Uruguay "missed having an explicit STI policy underlying this major transformation and development strategy, particularly having more endogenous development processes in place".

Wind turbines on a mountain Maldonado, Uruguay
Photo: Matias Contreras, Unsplash

On the relationship between STI policy and its practical implementation, Bortagaray called for deeper thinking about the linkages between governance, STI and other national policies.

"We need to reflect on the learnings from COVID-19 because we had very good management of the health crisis, based on a very strong connection between policy and research, and policy and the scientific community. But as soon as COVID-19 finished, that was dismantled. We in the Global South also need to strengthen our linkages and learning interactions."

Opportunities for South Africa in a just energy transition

Bortagaray's presentation at the seminar sparked much discussion in the context of South Africa's current energy crisis. Nina Callahan, a researcher at the Centre for Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University, as discussant, noted that South Africa was undergoing an energy transition, with the desire to ensure a "just" transition.

"To understand the role of policy in the transition, how to steer it, how we diagnose the problem and the ways that we respond to it," was important for South Africa, said Callahan.

Callahan and other speakers suggested that South Africa could learn from the Uruguay case, including the "renewed social contracting" that underpinned Uruguay's energy transition, the focus on energy sovereignty, the institutional innovation that paved the way for change, and the social coalition-building that served to identify common interests and negotiate trade-offs.

She noted that Uruguay had responded to its energy crisis "at the right time" even though this meant difficult negotiations within the society, while South Africa was "past the right time", and now required urgent and robust responses to address the electricity crisis imposed on the society and the economy.

"We are also operating in the shadow of state capture," said Callahan, "where there is low trust, and low capability within the state and central institutions in our country."

This means extra vigilance in approaching innovative solutions to prevent corruption.

While South Africa's energy transition is not proceeding in an orderly manner, Callahan concluded by focusing on the opportunities that it holds: "The idea of decarbonisation for development is very much about a reindustrialisation programme and harnessing the technologies available, not only in developing and manufacturing for renewable energy, but also in the technologies around green hydrogen, battery storage and electric vehicles. There are so many opportunities for us that this energy transition presents."

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Social housing as a means of upward social mobility

South Africa's social housing programme could help reduce segregation and promote socio-economic mobility by providing low-income individuals and families access to desirable neighbourhoods that are close to jobs, resources, amenities and opportunities. The effects of social housing on upward mobility are not well understood and few mechanisms are in place to measure the programme's impacts at the household level. HSRC researchers have begun to examine these questions and are leading processes to improve the programme's contribution to socio-economic transformation in the country.
By Jessie-Lee Smith

South Africa has among the highest levels of income and wealth inequality in the world. This is evident when comparing the standards of living between neighbourhoods in South African cities. Since its first democratic election, the South African government has initiated two major housing programmes, first under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994 and then Breaking New Ground (BNG) in 2004. These projects emphasised the constitutional right to adequate housing and have resulted in the development of more than three million subsidised RDP/BNG dwellings across the country. Yet millions of families and individuals still live in undignified homes and under conditions of economic precarity.

The mass construction of low-density housing units has amplified neighbourhood inequalities in major cities. This is because the government has tended towards building free-standing houses on cheaper land on the outskirts of cities, which offer less access to resources and fewer economic opportunities. The social housing policy, by contrast, has the explicit aim of reducing segregation and promoting spatial transformation, although the programme has remained a fraction of the size of the human settlements budget. Social housing is subsidised rental accommodation in medium-density apartment blocks, offered to low- and middle-income households. Accredited not-for-profit social housing institutions and private sector companies build and manage social housing projects in better-situated areas with government subsidies and private-sector finance.

Theoretically, social housing allows individuals and families access to otherwise unaffordable urban areas with more economic opportunities and improved social amenities. According to HSRC senior research specialist, Professor Andreas Scheba, social housing specifically aims to bring low- and middle-income people into better-situated neighbourhoods and to address spatial segregation and spatial injustice. "If located in high-value inner-city areas, social housing would mean better employment opportunities, disposable incomes, decreased travel costs, better education and better healthcare," says Scheba.

Social housing can also allow multiple families to benefit from the same public investment in housing infrastructure. For example, accessible resources and opportunities could promote upward mobility among tenants, which eventually facilitates a movement out of the programme altogether and into private homeownership. In other words, social housing could aid in the alleviation of poverty and social inequality through a "move in, move up and move out" mechanism.

In 2020, HSRC researchers Profs Ivan Turok, Justin Visagie and Andreas Scheba embarked on a project to document the role of social housing in reducing inequality in South African cities. This research was conducted in the face of significant gaps in knowledge and information about past and current social housing developments and their impact. Funded by the Agence Française de Développement through the European Union Research Facility on Inequalities, the project ended in 2021 with a webinar in which the researchers shared their findings with key sector stakeholders – including representatives of the Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA), National Association of Social Housing Organisations (NASHO), National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC), the Development Bank of Southern Africa, Development Action Group and other civil society organisations, and academics.

A key finding presented at the webinar was that South Africa hasn't prioritised the release and development of land in well-located areas, leading to a 'spatial drift' of social housing projects. "More and more social housing projects are being developed further and further away from inner cities or core areas because of the price [of], and limited access to, well-located land," Scheba reported. A 2021 report released by the HSRC showed that when subsidised dwelling developments are built away from city centres, inhabitants' access to jobs, educational facilities, amenities and public services is more limited. Transport also remains a heavy burden on these households, as cost and accessibility often limit their access to certain opportunities.

Yet, the government owns sizable amounts of land in well-located parts of our cities, with good access to economic opportunities and social amenities. Scheba emphasises that the issue of land is important to highlight because, while there is a lot of pressure on the local and national government to release public land, progress of this release has been slow. "Public land release is a very straightforward way for the government to support the delivery of social housing in our cities," says Scheba.

In 2023, Turok and Scheba led a research project with the Development Action Group, examining how local governments can more effectively release land for social and affordable housing in our cities. The reports will be launched in the first half of 2024.

HSRC researchers also found major gaps in information surrounding ongoing social housing projects. Therefore, they are leading a collaborative process with SHRA, NASHO and others to develop a "social housing portal", which will provide residents, researchers, policymakers and social activists with an open-access platform to obtain up-to-date information about social housing projects in the country.

This portal will sustain the needs and desires of stakeholders and individuals to access systematic data on all social housing projects across South Africa. "It is clear that key stakeholders, residents and communities are interested in engaging in the discussion, and appreciate public knowledge and evidence," says Scheba. "The web portal will present data on social housing organisations, information about key social housing institutions, and an interactive map so the public can see where the social housing projects are located in South African cities, how many there are and how big they are." The integration of population, spatial and socio-economic information will allow for even richer analysis.

A major gap identified by HSRC researchers was information about the success rates of upward socio-economic mobility among beneficiaries of social housing projects. "There is so much demand and effort to just increase delivery of social housing that there isn't enough attention being placed on what it actually does for tenants and how it meets its own objectives," says Scheba.

In a recently published study led by Visagie, the team examined the effects of selected social housing projects on social mobility in major South African cities. The HSRC team found that upward mobility was modest and that effects were far more complicated than anticipated. Positive mobility was seen in less than 8% of

households, who left social housing for home ownership, and in 14% of households, who moved because of better work opportunities. Other common reasons for tenants to leave social housing complexes were that they couldn't afford the rent, or for other neutral reasons, such as their relocation to another city. While unfavourable labour markets and wider economic circumstances influence the upward mobility of social housing tenants, researchers also found that social housing institutions and policymakers generally did not give sufficient attention to household upliftment.

"Evidence is patchy and inconclusive, and more systematic research needs to be done," says Scheba. Public and private stakeholders need to invest more resources into monitoring and evaluating the impacts of social housing on low- and middle-income households. With more research and careful analysis of data, stakeholders will better understand and be able to promote social housing's contribution to upward mobility in the country.

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The housing crisis in South Africa has led to numerous protests over the years, with social housing projects having brought some relief. However, were these a means of upward social mobility or are most of them located too far from economic hubs? Photo: Pierre F. Lombard, Wikimedia Commons

Police released stun grenades and tear gas to disperse the crowds during an anti-immigrant march in Pretoria in 2017. Photo: Ihsaan Haffejee, GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Limpopo policy dialogue highlights the importance of integrating foreign nationals into South African communities

Xenophobia is a critical issue in South Africa, as attitudes towards immigrants are often negative and threatening. Despite empirical evidence showing that immigrants have an overall positive effect on employment and the South African economy, violence and negative rhetoric continue. In November 2023, ***Jessie-Lee Smith*** *attended a policy dialogue in Polokwane, Limpopo, where HSRC researcher* ***Dr Mathias F. Alubafi*** *presented a policy brief on the importance of institutionalising the social integration of immigrants into South African communities. Smith and Alubafi present recent HSRC research on xenophobia in this article.*

The number of immigrants in South Africa has increased steadily over the past 30 years. Statistics South Africa showed that the number of residents born outside of South Africa rose from 958 188 in Census 1996 to 2.4 million in Census 2022. This was a minute portion of the population, with foreign nationals making up only 3% of the more than 62 million people living in South Africa at the time. Despite fears to the contrary, it has been reported that immigrants moving into South Africa have no negative effect on the economy or the labour market. Rather, according to data from a World Bank report in 1996–2011 and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Centre, inflows of foreign nationals were found to have had a positive effect on employment for all South Africans.

Despite this finding, the HSRC's 2021 round of the South African Social Attitudes Survey showed that the majority of South Africans believe foreigners in South Africa worsen unemployment and other socio-economic problems. These feelings are often fostered in radical interest groups like the anti-migrant street group Operation Dudula, recurring vigilantism and severely disruptive road blockades organised by truckers. One significant belief is that tens of millions of undocumented migrants reside in South Africa. However, while difficulties surrounding the identification of this number exist, demographic registration data clearly (and unequivocally) show that this number is hugely exaggerated. Job loss and unemployment due to immigration are also major concerns for South Africans. Yet, multiple studies present foreign participation in the various sectors of the labour market as constant at a maximum of 10–12% per sector.

Misinformation about the effects of immigration into South Africa needs to be resolved, and for many years, the HSRC has produced research and recommendations as to how to achieve this. In 2020, the HSRC published two policy briefs – based on the results of an opinion survey poll – on attitudes towards cross-border migrants and refugees in provinces where most non-nationals live and work. Policy Brief 1 stated that 26% of South Africans were strongly opposed to immigration, and that 56% had mixed feelings. This opinion poll also showed that most South Africans obtained their information about foreign nationals from broadcast media, and religion had largely shaped their opinions. It was therefore suggested that cooperation between prominent religious and political leaders and South African celebrities was critical to ending xenophobia.

The Second Policy Brief showed how negative stereotypes about cross-border migrants

and refugees were common in many towns and villages, with people describing these groups as 'violent' and 'dishonest'. There was also a link made in public discourse between migration and socio-economic problems. However, the more interactions South Africans had with people not born in South Africa, the less likely they were to have xenophobic views. Therefore, induction programmes (language and cultural classes), blended job creation programmes (that harness the economic benefits of migration and help stimulate the local economy – for South African citizens, too) and pathways to employment were said to be essential to ending negative attitudes directed at foreigners. Moreover, improved access to documentation for non-citizens was recommended, as this would allow foreigners to better integrate, and be better protected and less vulnerable, and would also formalise their contributions to South Africa.

Despite these suggestions, xenophobic violence has continued over the past few years, and attitudes remain largely negative. Recently, the Presidency of South Africa and the HSRC Surplus Fund commissioned research into the root causes of anti-immigrant rhetoric. Presented in a policy brief, the findings showed that South Africa's government could improve immigration issues and limit violence by enhancing internal processes for immigration and post-immigration integration. While South Africa conforms to global immigration norms, there is a disjuncture between policy objectives and implementation. Therefore, on 26 November 2023, HSRC researcher Dr Mathias F. Alubafi presented the policy brief at a policy dialogue at the Limpopo Office of the Premier. This brief drew on some of the key findings of the previous two policy briefs, and according to Alubafi, focused on "the importance of integration as a way of promoting living together as diverse communities".

One important theme of the policy brief and the dialogue was that current institutional processes often fail foreign nationals. South African law requires that immigration practices be centrally coordinated by the Department of Home Affairs. Yet the management of these processes has constantly been susceptible to malpractice, and government mechanisms have often failed to control and maintain ethical practices. For example, a significant backlog exists in the issuing of visas to foreign nationals, which increases opportunities for corruption. "Corrupt officials asking for large unofficial sums of money, the issuing of fake residential permits and bribes, and the production of fraudulent passports are examples of ways in which Home Affairs officials delegitimise immigration," says Alubafi. He adds that malpractice in departments needs to be transparently communicated to the public. This transparency can empower citizens and reduce the misinformation that often triggers violence against immigrants.

The policy brief presented at the Limpopo dialogue also asserts that institutionalising social and economic integration would legitimise foreign nationals in South African society. By allowing immigrants to take advantage of skills development programmes that can support their integration into the economy, the government can curb their participation in illegal or parallel economic activities. Moreover, programmes focused on skilling and local language proficiencies could reduce the anonymity of residents in host communities, increase opportunities for social contact and solidarity, and be an avenue for social capital creation across nationality lines.

Conclusion

The South African government has implemented strategies to curb illegal immigration into South Africa. "One of the major actions that the government has taken is the inauguration of the Border Management Authority. It is expected that the putting in place of the Border Management Authority will help reduce the number of undocumented or illegal immigrants coming into South Africa," says Alubafi. However, integrating legal immigrants into social and economic life in South Africa is critical to ending xenophobic violence. The policy brief presented to the Office of the Premier in Polokwane sought to inform stakeholders about the importance of socially integrating foreign nationals into South African society and of the significant problems in legitimising the process of Home Affairs' issuance of permits.

Alubafi asserts that "the issue of immigration and integration of immigrants into South African communities is a fundamental one – and requires perspectives from both South Africans and immigrants on how this can be addressed". A migrant interviewed during the research told interviewers, 'Sporadic violence and xenophobia in most cases is always provoked by the suspicion that undocumented or illegal immigrants are responsible for all the bad things happening in South African communities and cities. Integration of immigrants through regularising their stay in the country and communities can greatly address the issue of suspicion and violence.'

Key leaders from the coalition of faith-based organisations, trade unions, NGOs and corporate South Africa speak out against xenophobia during during a march in Newtown, Johannesburg. Photo: GCIS, Flickr

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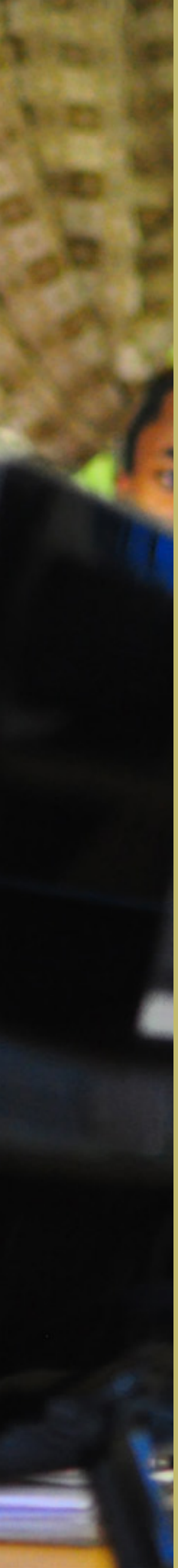
Photo: Beyond Access, Flickr



HSRC project to strengthen inclusive policy development by facilitating effective e-participation implementation

Since the creation of the internet, governments have used electronic platforms to engage and communicate with their people. Yet a socio-economic divide in South Africa persistently offers some groups more access to participation in policy and planning processes than others. Considering this inequality and the importance of technology in modern democratic life, the HSRC's e-Participation and Policy Modelling Platform for South Africa (ePPMOSA) project is working to facilitate effective and inclusive e-participation governance and implementation. ***By Jessie-Lee Smith***

Public participation is a cornerstone of democratic processes in South Africa and is defined as an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making. When properly implemented and managed, public participation can ensure that developmental plans and services are more relevant to local needs, improve service delivery oversight, and promote community action by empowering communities to take control and responsibility over their own lives and livelihoods.

Over the past 20 years, South African government agencies have adopted and implemented public participation mechanisms through the use of digital technology. National and local government bodies and municipalities share policy, planning and performance information on their respective websites, and have also encouraged public participation by inviting comments via website forms or email submissions. In addition, various departments, legislatures, towns and cities have experimented with digital tools, such as social media open data and artificial intelligence, to facilitate civic engagement and communication.

The HSRC is committed to enhancing democracy by promoting transparent governance and accountable leadership, and revitalising public participation. Now, the use and impact of digital technology have become a key research focus of its e-Participation and Policy Modelling Platform for South Africa (ePPMOSA) project.

The ePPMOSA project intends to guide the implementation of e-participatory pilot projects in six South African municipalities.

By researching international e-participation practices; running workshops to identify where municipalities currently struggle and thrive in this arena; building demonstrations and proof of concept applications; and developing an online toolkit, the project team works with stakeholders to deepen its knowledge of implementing inclusive e-participation.

The project places a strong emphasis on peer learning as an approach to information gathering and the design of pilot projects. Peer learning is essential to the success of e-participation initiatives because of rapid changes in the technology space, and uncertainty about which tools and methods are suitable for local contexts. "Peer-learning facilitates the exchange of knowledge and practical experiences between practitioners," says Dr Tlou Ramoroka, a chief research specialist at the HSRC. "Peer learning also helps individuals to feel more connected to one another, building a sense of solidarity amongst municipality and government practitioners," she adds. Through a helpful network that endures beyond the e-participation initiative, the project team hopes to sustain creative thinking and the implementation of innovative solutions that can support inclusive and effective public participation.

As a result, multiple workshops are being held in municipalities to facilitate sharing between different departments on how they go about public participation and any opportunities they identify to utilise technology. In addition, two group workshops have been held in partnership with the Civic Tech Innovation Forum, in which all the ePPMOSA partner municipalities – from Rustenburg to Cape Town – meet and share ideas and lessons on e-participation. Insights from this and other workshops will be used to empower and inform e-participation technologies, governance and implementation.

How e-participation is designed, implemented and managed is essential to ensuring inclusive outcomes. This is especially true in South Africa, where unequal access to resources and technology continues to prevail. A recent review article by HSRC researchers compares how the international community approaches the governance of e-participation to South Africa's own legislative and policy frameworks. The comparison was made with South Africa's mandate of increasing the inclusivity of marginalised groups in mind.

The research highlights two additional points: that e-participation needs to align with a broader programme of digital empowerment and rights, rather than create harm or worsen inequality; and that, with the growth of online movements, governments need to plan how to engage with civic-led and bottom-up engagement more effectively. These observations suggest a great need for the development of supporting frameworks and tools, which will aid actors in implementation and governance.

"To increase the efficacy, inclusivity and security of digital democratic processes, further research on e-participation research is crucial. It offers the body of knowledge required for stakeholders, technologists and policymakers to make well-informed decisions and progress in this area," says Ramoroka. At the same time, this research needs to be translated into practical frameworks and tools to support the successful implementation and governance of e-participation. To address this objective, the ePPMOSA team has initiated a living toolkit, which provides updated and relevant information on e-participation, drawn from hundreds of projects and pilot pioneers.

This toolkit is updated regularly with new information relating to several key elements of e-participation. For example, the accessibility of public participation at low costs and with available technology is an important element of e-participation. To this end, the ePPMOSA toolkit provides links to multiple projects showing how accessibility can be improved. One instance is MomConnect – a South African National Department of Health initiative – which has shown the effectiveness of WhatsApp and SMS technology in connecting with constituents and guiding their experiences with government services. Other key elements covered by the toolkit include

verification of participant identity; protection of personal information; moderation of online conversations; organisation of inputs; tracking of the participation process; and civic education on public participation processes and the use of technology.

The team continues to present and share its experiences in various spaces, for example at a policy dialogue in 2023. "The participants emphasised that understanding the broader policy context in which e-participation is situated is important for effective implementation, diverse stakeholder engagement, legal and regulatory compliance, better resource allocation and strategic planning for e-participation projects, sustainability, and the impact of such initiatives," says Dr Yul Derek Davids, a research director at the HSRC.

Considering the importance and power of technology in everyday life, the path towards more electronic governance needs to be navigated thoughtfully and carefully. The ePPMOSA team has been working from many angles to foster effective and inclusive e-participation practices in South Africa. This project is ongoing and is expected to start launching pilot projects during 2024.

Note:
The ePPMOSA project is an initiative of the Department of Science and Innovation and the South African Local Government Association, supported by funding from the European Union and South African National Treasury. It is implemented by the HSRC's Developmental, Capable and Ethical State division and Impact Centre, in collaboration with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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HSRC toolkits aid science granting councils in the use of evidence to inform funding-policy decisions

In many African countries, governments are using science, technology and innovation to boost socio-economic development. An important factor in the effective management of scientific advancements is the successful allocation of research, development and innovation funds. To this end, the HSRC has developed toolkits to guide African science granting councils in the effective management and use of data to inform their funding policy. ***By Jessie-Lee Smith***

The African Union is currently preparing for the successor to the 10-year 2024 Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa. This plan pushed for more research in science, technology and innovation (STI) throughout the African continent and required more investments in the field. With limited resources, STI-funding stakeholders, such as African science granting councils, will need to make informed decisions about where to allocate funds.

Science granting councils play a central role, and balance multiple mandates to set national research agendas, manage funds for research and innovation activities, gather evidence on STI and advise on STI policy. They typically do so with limited funding, human resources, and organisational capacity.

While public funding for STI is increasing in Africa, the history of granting such funding on the continent has been disparate. "Identifying the grand challenges and allocating grant funding to research in key priority developmental areas that address these grand challenges are paramount," says research manager, Darryn Whisgary, from the HSRC's Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators (CeSTII).

A significant issue for science granting councils in Africa, however, is the lack of guiding resources that cater to the specifically developing nature of STI on the continent. Examples from first-world economies are often insufficient, as their national capabilities and systems of innovation do not align with African national and regional development priorities.

To assist in this regard, in 2015, South Africa's National Research Foundation, in collaboration with Canada's International Development and Research Centre, founded the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI). Through the use of STI data and evidence, this initiative serves as a guide for several sub-Saharan science granting councils to manage their funding and strengthen their policies. Based on the reputation of their science, technology and innovation indicators research, the SGCI encouraged the HSRC to collaborate with them on the design and the creation of the Evidence in Policy (Evi-Pol) project.

The Evi-Pol project contributes to the SGCI by strengthening the strategic use, management and digitalisation of data. "Considering the importance of tackling STI challenges in Africa, our team is committed to building the capabilities of African science granting councils

to use data to inform STI policies [through specific toolkits geared towards achieving this objective],” explains Whisgary.

Since its initiation, the project has formulated and published four toolkits to aid science granting organisations in utilising data to its fullest potential. The toolkits cover four areas of data management: the preservation and use of data (data curation); data governance; the management of data and digitalisation; and data-informed decision and policy-making, providing step-by-step guidance and practical, editable templates.

Evi-Pol Toolkits

STI Policy Review Toolkit
STI policies in science granting councils are guidelines that dictate the management of STI development and funding. For granting councils to allocate and distribute funds effectively, these policies need to be aligned with national, regional and global developmental priorities across government and policy systems. The STI Policy Review Toolkit provides practices and templates that guide councils in reviewing their policies against these priorities. These practices have been workshopped through a collaboration between researchers, African policymakers and science granting councils, and are presented in a user-friendly, visually appealing and comprehensive manner.

Digital Transformation Roadmap
Technology provides an enormous opportunity for the transformation of business processes and operations. For example, digitalisation can allow granting councils to consolidate, access, and utilise data and evidence to reach their policy and funding goals more effectively. The Evi-Pol Digital Transformation Roadmap provides milestones and guidelines meant to strengthen digitalisation, organisational planning and performance. This roadmap’s strength lies in the participatory approach with which it was developed. Through consultation, co-creation and local network building, this toolkit was created as a bottom-up approach to bolstering the digitalisation process of science granting councils.

Data Governance Toolkit
Within science granting councils, data governance refers to internal standards and policies used to manage how data is gathered, stored, processed and disposed of. Good data governance policies increase the trust, reputation and security of data within STI funding entities. Created with data governors in mind, the Data Governance Toolkit offers frameworks for data management, quality, security, privacy and compliance that cater to the specific needs of science granting councils. This step-by-step guide is comprehensive and easy to use, aided by its systematic and visual appeal.

Data Curation Toolkit
Strong data curation mechanisms are essential for the storing, sharing and preservation of data. With effective data curation, data will be explained, publicised and presented in alignment with FAIR principles: findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable. The Data Curation Toolkit serves to inform and guide granting councils in planning, preparing and managing data so that they align with these principles. Systematic and comprehensive, this toolkit provides stakeholders with a theoretical understanding, practical guidelines and tools for strong data curation.

These Evi-Pol toolkits have been presented to many stakeholders including the SGCI, the Southern African Development Community, the African Union Development Agency's New Partnership for Africa's Development, and the Department of Science and Innovation, to increase their reach and impact. Science granting councils in Zambia, Namibia and Uganda, and the Ministry of Science and Technology of Mozambique, are using these toolkits to review their policies and/or digitalise their data.

The HSRC, as part of the Evi-Pol project, has achieved funding for a second phase of the project and is working to make its toolkits increasingly available and user-friendly through an online digital portal. According to Whisgary, "The HSRC and councils are now focusing on developing a community of practice for STI measurement throughout the African continent. To facilitate this, we have developed a series of engagement sessions, which will, for 2024, focus on STI data quality assurance, best practices for conducting national R&D surveys and using STI data to inform national STI policies."

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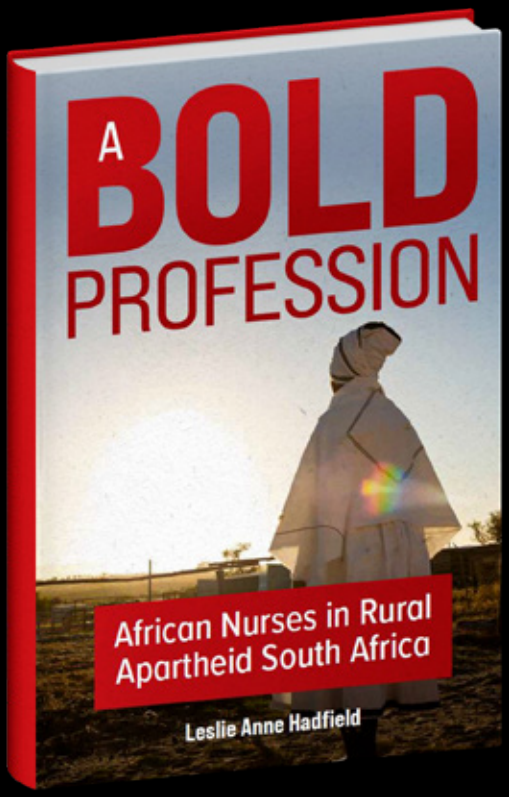

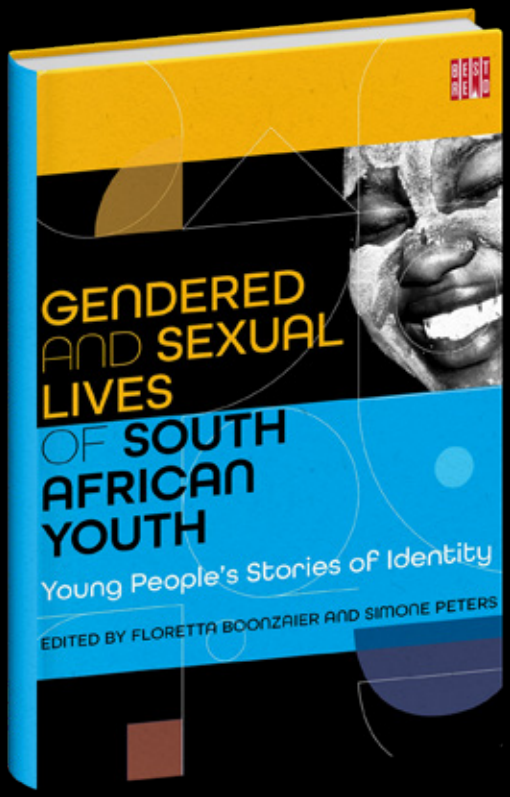

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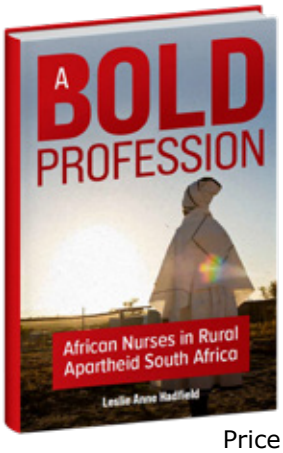

A Bold Profession

African Nurses in Rural Apartheid South Africa

Author:	Leslie Anne Hadfield
Publication:	February 2024
ISBN (soft cover):	978-0-7969-2659-3
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Extent:	276 pp

Price
R380

ABOUT THE BOOK

Although their daily work may seem commonplace, nurses occupy a crucial position in society where several debates and social issues intersect. This was certainly the case for African female nurses who navigated the implications of apartheid politics, African healing practices and changing gender relations in South Africa. Drawing on the words of nurses themselves and extensive archival work, *A Bold Profession* demonstrates how nurses working in rural Ciskei from the 1960s to the 1980s helped shape notions of health and healing in rural communities as they negotiated different medical beliefs and practices, and changing gender roles. Their training, commitment and acknowledgement of Xhosa medicine helped them succeed in providing healthcare in difficult circumstances.

The developments of this historic period and the actions of nurses working within the complicated apartheid homeland system are important to understanding the healthcare history South Africa has inherited. This history also sheds light on current challenges nations face in ensuring access to quality healthcare, increases our understanding of the exchanges between medical systems, and addresses the long-time challenges of professional women in balancing their careers and family lives.

The volume fills an important gap for scholars studying the history of women, nursing and healthcare in South Africa, illuminating the humanity of healthcare workers.

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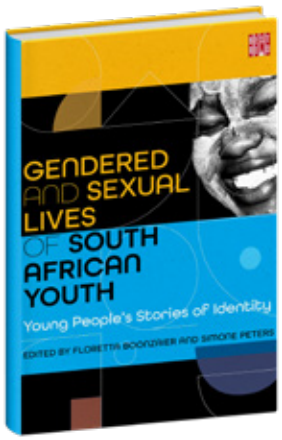

Gendered and Sexual Lives of South African Youth

Young People's Stories of Identity

Volume Editors:	Floretta Boonzaier and Simone Peters
Publication:	March 2024
ISBN:	978-1-928246-64-0
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Extent:	224 pp

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R350

Gendered and Sexual Lives of South African Youth: Young People's Stories of Identity speaks to a gap in current work on South African youth – namely, the lack of a sustained gendered analysis of young people's lives in the post-apartheid context. This lack has meant that opportunities to engage young people in discourses of equality and non-violence continue to be marginal. High rates of gendered and sexual violence, fuelled by continuing gendered inequalities, alongside their intersections with other forms of inequity, provide the impetus for the project. The book project showcases the work undertaken by the authors, who have employed participatory research methodologies with diverse groups of young people.

This research provides the opportunity to engage with youth in ways that depart significantly from moralistic and protectionist standpoints about gender and sexuality, while enabling them to develop a critical consciousness about their gendered and sexual identifications and lives. The authors' work explores young people's experiences of, and identifications with, gender and sexuality, and their intersections with other categories such as race, class, age or place. It brings to the forefront the knowledge and expertise that young people have about their own experiences and lives, and how they might be able to live freely, equally and without violence.

The book will interest researchers and policymakers who seek to advance the interests of South African youth, and mainstream readers who seek to expand their understanding of the topic.

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