

# FACING MARIKANA:

## Inequality, fragmentation, violence and challenges for leadership

Following the tragic series of events which culminated in the shooting of 34 striking Lonmin workers on 16 August when police opened fire on the workers, the HSRC hosted a seminar to create a platform for participants to reflect and explore the questions arising from the Marikana-Lonmin tragedy. Since then, a formal Commission of Enquiry was established by government. *Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela* reviews aspects of the discourse that could assist the research community, policy makers and citizen-activists.

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The HSRC is one institution, among others, with a responsibility to respond to societal concerns and contribute in building critical linkages between research, policy and action, thus enhancing the development impact of social science research in South Africa.

This seminar served as a platform for a discursive conversation on questions that deserve evidence-based research by the HSRC in collaboration with other partners, particularly the public and the private sector, labour unions, community-based organisations, local and international research institutions and international development agencies. Obviously some themes arising from the topic (inequality, fragmentation, violence and leadership) are not new, but what nuances does this tragedy bring into sharper focus?

The context is that since 1994, South Africa has been involved in a democratic and a transformation project which has encountered both recognisable progress and complex problems, as stated by Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan in his Medium Term Policy Speech, 25 October 2012. Some of these problems are exposed by this tragedy. What do the struggles of workers and ordinary South Africans, such as those we saw in Marikana, mean in a post-apartheid democracy? How can they be characterised and what do they explain about historical and contemporary changes in society, power relations and implications of the dominant political-economic paradigm in our world?

Again, the call here is for intellectual rigour in our country as we research, debate and positively seek to contribute in addressing the challenges of our times. That is why we need greater investment in collective effort and resources to increase the depth of our analysis and a qualitative change in policy impact.

In proposing a potential research agenda that could have useful policy benefits, I suggest four interrelated focus areas which, while they are not intended to be exhaustive, deal with the economic, social, democracy, governance and leadership themes, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Facing Marikana - potential research areas to inform policy and practice

ECONOMIC	SOCIAL
<p><b>Inequality in SA: patterns and challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dynamics of inequality, unemployment, job reservation, poverty; class, race, gender discrimination, structure and agency relations</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic sectors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mining, Charter processes and outcomes</li> <li>Mining companies, domestic and international operations</li> <li>Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)</li> </ul> <p><b>Industrial relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changing patterns of interaction</li> <li>Wage setting and labour regulation</li> <li>Industrial action, patterns of fragmentation and violence</li> </ul>	<p><b>The migrant labour system</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survival: The individual and family context</li> <li>Money flows, coping with indebtedness</li> <li>Quality of life</li> <li>Basic services</li> <li>Re-thinking human settlements</li> <li>Mining towns and social life</li> </ul>



**Table 2: Facing Marikana - potential research areas to inform policy and practice**

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE	LEADERSHIP
<p><b>Citizenship and modes of collective engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voices of the poor, listening</li> <li>• Intra and inter-organisational dynamics (labour organisations, political organisations)</li> <li>• The role of the media and social networks</li> </ul> <p><b>Perceptions and attitudes towards public institutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive, the three spheres of government; policing and conflict mediation</li> <li>• Judiciary, the courts and social justice system</li> <li>• The legislature and its role in the wake of such tragedies</li> </ul>	<p><b>At all levels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leadership</li> <li>• Political leadership</li> <li>• Business leadership</li> <li>• The social distance between leaders and constituencies</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Ethics</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul>

It is impossible, in an article of this nature, to summarise all the inputs of panel members, including Reverend Sakhumzi Qiqimana who lives in Marikana and was involved in the negotiations between the mineworkers and mine management, Mr Jay Naidoo, a former Cabinet minister, Professor Ivan Turok, HSRC and Dr Temba Masilela, HSRC, and other participants in the seminar. Suffice to say that they debated and reinforced the various elements of these potential research areas.

In highlighting some of the economic development challenges, Prof. Turok posed the challenge: 'We own 80% of the world's platinum. We can do much more both to beneficiate and to research how we can influence the price of this resource'.

On perceptions about BEE, Reverend Qiqimana suggested that the voices of

miners were unheard and 'Even people who were supposed to speak for them changed their position to own some shares in the mining companies'.

In dealing with matters of leadership, Mr Naidoo pointed out that, 'There is a dislocation between the factory floor leadership and community leadership, leading to angry people taking to the streets in the absence of an organisation. Law and order has to be built street-by-street, family-by-family and the leaders must have a legitimate voice and channels to raise their grievances'.

In dealing with the migrant labour system, Mr Naidoo called for improved research efforts and policy interventions, stating that migrant workers are to be found all over the country and the SADC region: 'How do we understand that environment?'

There are different tendencies and contradictions at play. He went on to suggest that, 'We haven't understood that. That's where social research would have been so fundamentally important about trying to find solutions to these intractable problems, and there are no short-term solutions. This is painstaking work that has to be done'.

In closing the seminar, Dr Masilela emphasised the need to strengthen research on political economy and the important role of the HSRC in developing a research agenda that responds to some of the questions arising from the Marikana-Lonmin tragedy.

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Mr Jay Naidoo.

Dr Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela.

Reverend Sakhumzi Qiqimana.

