

A focus on youth: An opportunity to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty

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“No political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life... attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government.”

National Development Plan 2030¹

Twenty-one years into the new, democratic South Africa, poverty levels remain high, especially in population groups that were discriminated against during apartheid. To alleviate the worst levels of poverty, the government provides a “social wage package” that includes social grants, no-fee schools, free public health and the delivery of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses.²

A recent and increased emphasis on early childhood development (ECD) also aims to improve the situation of the large numbers of young children who remain affected by poverty, and to create pathways to a more stable life for them in the future. It is generally recognised that children who have been given a better start in life will be able to grow into healthy, independent young adults, able to break the cycle of poverty with their own children.³ While this approach fits the government’s dedication to alleviating poverty in the short and long run, it runs the risk of overlooking the situation of the current youth cohort.

Aside from the Child Support Grant (CSG), little evidence-based support continues for children as they turn into adolescents and later into young adults, yet this youth stage is recognised internationally as a critical point for interventions that can lead to long-lasting change.⁴ Informed by a life course understanding of development, this issue of the *South African Child Gauge* therefore highlights the precarious situation of children as they transition into young adulthood, with a focus on youth aged 15 – 24 years. More than half of all young people in South Africa live in income poverty⁵ and are faced with low levels of education, high levels of unemployment and a very restricted access to the social grant system. If left unchanged, this generation of young people will continue to see their lives constrained. The next generation of children, who will be raised by today’s youth, will grow up in an equally precarious context.⁶

This essay considers the following questions:

- Why focus on youth and the intergenerational transmission of poverty in South Africa?
- What is known about the “born free” generation in South Africa?
- What do we mean by the intergenerational transmission of poverty?

- What dimensions of poverty affect South Africa’s youth?
- What are the potential windows of opportunity for intervention?
- What is the existing policy framework on youth in South Africa?

Why focus on youth and the intergenerational transmission of poverty in South Africa?

At the time of South Africa’s transition to democracy, hopes were high for the generation of children who were being born. Today, 21 years into democracy, this cohort is “coming of age”. They form a particularly large part of South Africa’s population: just under 50% of the current population are under the age of 25, and just over 20% are between the ages of 15 and 24.⁷ Researchers and politicians often refer to these young people as the “Born Frees”. Born into a democratic South Africa that theoretically should have opened up “opportunities for all”, they are considered a possible “demographic dividend”,⁸ which could help drive growth and reduce dependency ratios¹.

Yet despite the many promises of a “better life for all”, racial, class and gender inequalities continue to shape young people’s lives, dreams and opportunities. Especially among previously disadvantaged groups, levels of school drop-out, un(der)employment and discouraged work-seekers are high. The situation has led many to think of young people in South Africa as “a lost generation” or a “ticking time bomb” needing to be “diffused”.⁹ The heightened sense of exclusion among young people is expected to increase “levels of frustration and impatience”. South Africa’s National Development Plan (NDP) warns that the country must “find ways to reduce alarming levels of youth unemployment and to provide young people with broader opportunities ... Failure to act will threaten democratic gains”.¹⁰ While there is little or no evidence to suggest that young people would be more inclined to take part in violent protests or national conflict,¹¹ failure to act would indeed threaten democratic gains as it would mean a failure to fulfil young people’s constitutional rights. It would lead to lower levels of physical and mental well-being among the current youth cohort, and continue to feed the intergenerational cycle of exclusion and poverty.¹²

i The dependency ratio is calculated by considering the number of children (0 – 14-year-olds) and older persons (65 years or over) in relation to the working-age population (15 – 64-year-olds).

ii The life course approach recognises that developments during childhood, adolescence and young adulthood influence well-being and socio-economic outcomes in later life, while also considering that a person’s life course trajectory is shaped by broader socio-economic factors (see no. 4 [Dornan, 2014] in the references).

It is therefore important for policies, programmes and interventions to extend beyond childhood and to take into account other key points in the life cycle, such as the transition from childhood to adolescence, and from youth to adulthood.ⁱⁱⁱ These are considered crucial stages of development. Adolescence, for instance, is the time in which children “move toward social and economic independence, develop identity, and acquire skills needed to carry out adult relationships and roles. ... it is a time of tremendous growth and potential but also of considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences”.¹³ Interventions that help youth through these transitions are key to their future well-being.

By taking stock of “the state of youth” today, this issue of the *South African Child Gauge* allows for reflection on the changes that are necessary to increase the life chances of these young people and those of the next generation of children. In order to focus specifically on the transitions from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to young adulthood, this issue of the *Child Gauge* uses the international definition of “youth” as those between the ages of 15 and 24.

The South African government’s definition of youth is broader and includes those aged 14 – 35 years, recognising that young people’s transition to an “independent, sustainable livelihood can take a relatively long time”.¹⁴ But using one large age cohort without further distinction between age groups may hinder an understanding of the potentially very different needs, experiences and expectations of younger and older “youth”: for example, the needs of a 30-year-old parent may be different to those of a 15-year-old student. This makes it difficult to be focused and specific about the policies and interventions aimed at improving young people’s lives. We therefore choose to use the more narrow definition, following common international practice.¹⁵

What is known about the “born free” generation in South Africa?

Could it be that the continued emphasis on possibilities for this so-called “born free” generation is misguided and hinders a full understanding of the policy interventions needed to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty? This generation was born into a situation characterised by high levels of inequality and poverty that were the consequence of deliberate apartheid-era policies. Those policies created a range of barriers – or structural constraintsⁱⁱⁱ – for the vast majority of South Africa’s people, severely limiting their choices and possibilities for upward socio-economic mobility. And while the advent of the post-apartheid period brought political freedom, it left in place these legacies of disadvantage.

Poverty and inequality rooted in apartheid past^{iv}

From 1948 to the late 1980s, the official apartheid state implemented a series of regulations that would not only physically

segregate population groups but would also treat them differently before the law. The aim was to support and protect the superiority of the country’s white minority in all spheres of life.

Barriers were erected against any attempt to gain a political voice, or to find routes for upward social mobility, for the country’s African majority. They were systematically excluded, to various degrees, from education, employment, business opportunities, housing and land.¹⁶ Expenditure for services was differentiated according to race with the lowest levels of spending in education, health care, housing, and so on, allocated to the African majority. Cities were reshaped and, at the same time, millions were moved into separate “homelands”. High levels of poverty in these rural areas forced many men into a migrant labour system that tore their families apart.¹⁷

The apartheid policy framework and its rigorous implementation created an enormous financial, human and social capital deficit in the parental generation of many of today’s “Born Frees”. For instance, at the end of 1996, the difference in educational attainment between Africans and Whites was enormous. While the majority of young White adults had graduated from high school or enrolled in higher education, only 18% of African youth and 24% of Coloured youth had the same levels of schooling. Overall, White adults had an average of 12 years of education, whereas Coloured and African adults had an average of eight and six years respectively.^v Africans who did reach higher levels of education would have had to do so mainly through the Bantu education system, which was designed intentionally to provide lower levels of skills to Africans than to their White, Indian and Coloured peers.

This educational deficit translated into large inequalities in employment prospects, which were reinforced by formal discrimination in the apartheid labour market. The apartheid system limited employment opportunities to certain racial groups, for example, reserving particular occupations in the mining and manufacturing industries specifically for White workers. Menial and semi-skilled positions were reserved for those who were considered “Non-White”, and who had no access to managerial positions and higher, more stable incomes.

It is into that unequal society that today’s “Born Frees” were born. The first decades of their lives did indeed evolve in a politically liberated South Africa, where a range of policies and interventions have aimed to mitigate the inequalities of the past: a single educational system was introduced and schools were officially obliged to accept all children without discrimination; the social grant system was expanded; labour regulations were put in place to protect workers’ rights; affirmative action policies were introduced; the delivery of public services and formal houses increased steeply.

Yet the quality of life and pathways to a better future for many young people today are still hindered by the disadvantage and

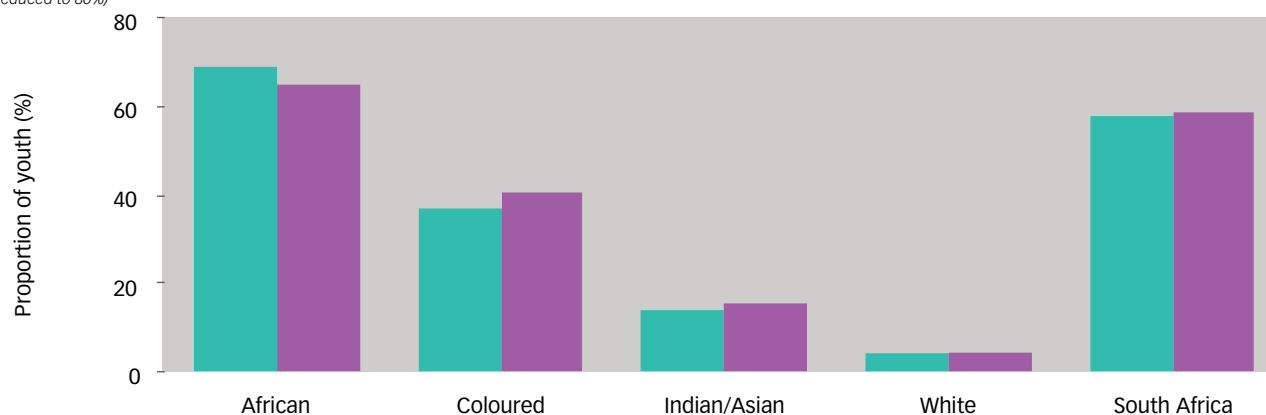
iii Economic, political and other institutions of a society, as well as dominant values and norms that “structure”, “shape” or “constrain” people’s lives, opportunities and choices.

iv This section draws heavily on and contains extracts from chapter 2, “Apartheid legacies”, in: Newman K & De Lannoy A (2014) *After Freedom, the Rise of a Post-apartheid Generation in Democratic South Africa*. Boston, US: Beacon Press. (PP. 20-39)

v Authors’ own calculations based on weighted data from the Census 1996 10% sample.

Figure 1: Number and proportion of youth living in income-poor households, by race, 1996 & 2011

("Upper bound" poverty line: individuals living in households with monthly per capita income less than R620, in 2011 Rands)
(Y-axis reduced to 80%)



1996	68.8%	37.2%	13.8%	4.1%	57.4%
	3,032,000	223,000	24,000	23,000	3,323,000
2011	64.8%	40.4%	15.4%	4.4%	58.5%
	4,627,000	297,000	27,000	19,000	4,981,000

Source: Statistics South Africa (1996, 2011) *Census*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Emily Frame, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT.

Notes: Youth are defined as persons aged 15 – 24 years. For 2011, the Stats SA upper-bound poverty line of R620 per person per month was used and for comparability, this figure was deflated, using a CPI deflator, to R258 for 1996. Individuals in households captured as having zero income or missing income were excluded from the analysis in both years. Calculations based on weighted data from the Census 1996 and 2011 10% samples.

vulnerabilities experienced by their parents. Figure 1 illustrates how poverty levels among this young generation remain strikingly close to those of their parental generation (most of whom would have been young people in 1996), with particularly high levels of poverty among African and Coloured youth in both years.

Understanding the multiple dimensions of poverty

Analyses of the Census data show that, in 2011, 53% of the South African population was still living below the upper-bound poverty line of R620 per person per month.

Table 1 shows that income poverty, as measured using the Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) upper-bound, lower-bound and food poverty lines, remains strongly associated with race, gender and age. Africans, females, children and youth are over-represented among the poor. In particular, 65% of children and 59% of young people are living below the upper-bound poverty line, while only 43% of the adult population fall below this line.

However, poverty is not only experienced in the form of financial deprivation but also through limited access to public goods such as (good quality) education, health care, clean water, sanitation, "proper" housing, and so on.¹⁸

*Poverty is about deprivation in many dimensions – hunger and under nutrition, dirty drinking water, illiteracy, a lack of access to health services, social isolation and exploitation, as well as low income and assets.*¹⁹

These various dimensions of poverty (or "vulnerabilities") are often interrelated: for example, ill health can compromise educational outcomes, which in turn determine employment chances and

income. Similarly, low income may affect mental well-being, which may influence one's ability to work, and income.²⁰ All are key mechanisms in the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Table 1: Income poverty by race, gender and age, 2011

	Upper-bound poverty line (%)	Lower-bound poverty line (%)	Food poverty line (%)
By race			
African	60.3	48.1	37.6
Coloured	38.5	25.4	17.6
Indian/Asian	14.2	8.5	6.0
White	4.0	2.3	1.7
By gender			
Male	50.1	38.9	30.1
Female	55.0	43.6	33.9
By age			
Children (0 – 14)	65.0	53.9	42.9
Youth (15 – 24)	58.5	47.0	37.1
Adults (25+)	42.7	31.3	23.5
Total	52.6	41.3	32.1

Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *Census*. Pretoria: Stats SA.

Analysis by Emily Frame, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT

Notes: The upper-bound, lower-bound and food poverty lines are derived by Stats SA. Their Rand values, in 2011 prices, are R620, R443 and R321 per person per month respectively. Individuals in households captured as having zero income or missing income were excluded from the analysis. Calculations based on weighted data from the Census 1996 and 2011 10% samples.

Case 1: Siya's story – How the lack of various kinds of capital impacts on young people's chances to upward mobility

Siya (not his real name) was 22 and living in Gugulethu, Cape Town, with his grandmother, cousin, the cousin's mother and daughter. The grandmother's pension was the family's main income, supplemented by Siya's earnings from small jobs. His siblings lived in the Eastern Cape. Both Siya's parents had passed away. His mother got sick and died in 1997; his father was shot in Gugulethu in 2003 "over nothing ... he died for nothing".

Originally, Siya had hoped to study engineering at the University of Cape Town, but he was told his matric results were too weak to enter the mainstream programme. He then decided to apply at the (then) Cape Technikon, and only later realised that the university might have been an option if someone had explained the process to him more clearly:

I went to UCT and they told me to do a bridging programme for one year before. I said, one year, it was going to be a waste of time. What I am told now [is that] you also happen to do something for one year, but still finish on time. No one ever tells you about these things.

Siya's father had been paying for his civil engineering study at the Cape Technikon. After his death, Siya informed the Technikon and applied for several funding possibilities, but was unsuccessful and could not continue his studies. Yet he placed an enormous emphasis on the importance of education for his

future. He felt disappointed and depressed about being "stuck" in poverty, and stressed that he was not where he "would have wanted to be":

When I was six I had this dream of driving a car and living in my own flat, that sort of thing. I am now 21 years old; people of my age have cars and live in their own space, they are not staying with grandmothers, ... those are the sort of things that stress me.

Nevertheless, Siya described himself as a "go-getter", an outgoing person with a strong interest in community development: "I care, and I would like to make a difference in whatever way." He looked for, and found, short-term employment and managed to fund short courses for himself. Two years after he had to leave college, he succeeded in securing funding and picked up his part-time studies at the Cape Technikon. He struggled to catch up with schoolwork after his very long absence, but remained determined. He struggled also with his home situation: his grandmother had fallen ill and had moved back to the Eastern Cape. Siya felt he no longer had a real home and claimed that the remainder of the family with whom he now lived did not give him support for his education. He was very concerned he would not make it through the exams at the end of the year because of all the worries he had.

Source: De Lannoy A (2008) *Educational Decision-Making in an Era of AIDS*. PhD Thesis, Department of Sociology. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

What do we mean by the intergenerational transmission of poverty?

The poverty dynamics described above, if left unchecked, are likely to also have a negative influence on the lives of the next generation:²¹ they will be *transmitted* from one generation to the next. This happens as older generations transmit different "capitals" to the younger ones, such as:²²

- financial capital (assets, but also debt, land, cash and so on);
- human capital (levels of education, but also health or illness, coping strategies and so on);
- cultural capital (knowledge of systems such as education and the labour market);
- social capital (networks between individuals and groups that allow people to collaborate);
- symbolic capital (status, place in society).²³

Transfer of these capitals is influenced by a complex set of factors, both within and outside an individual's household.

At an individual level, physical and mental health, for instance, may be transmitted across the generations through various mechanisms. In South Africa, African women are particularly vulnerable to depression as a result of the combination of high levels of poverty, unemployment and violence.²⁴ If left untreated,

their adolescent children too may suffer from mental disorders, and depression increases the risk of drop-out amongst school-going girls.²⁵

At the household level, resources play a significant role. A child born in a poorer family is more likely to have restricted opportunities throughout his or her life, compared to a child born in a wealthier household. The latter will have better access to services, resources, knowledge and support, all of which impact on the kinds of choices and decisions the family and the child can make about his or her life – for example, what schools they can attend and their approach to schooling.²⁶ Assets (or debts) accumulated within a household also influence this kind of decision-making. Outside of the household, broader social determinants of the intergenerational transmission of poverty include a shortage of jobs driven by slow economic growth, and discrimination on the basis of race, class, gender, or disability.²⁷

It is clear that the apartheid system created inequality not only in terms of income or personal well-being, but also in terms of other kinds of capital that enable or impede progress for youth today. Youth from lower-class backgrounds may thus lack the necessary kinds of "capital" to enable upward social mobility.²⁸ They may lack knowledge and information ("cultural capital") about the educational and labour market that they need to make

informed choices. Youth from poorer environments may also lack the financial means (“economic capital”), the status or prestige (“symbolic capital”) and the networks (“social capital”) that would provide them with the leverage needed to enter better educational institutions. For example, high school learners in South Africa need to decide on their final matric subjects as early as grade 9, and that decision will in turn define their opportunities for further study and employment. In a context where parents, teachers and surrounding institutions may themselves lack the information necessary to make an informed choice, this may lead to a foreclosure of opportunities.

Policies and interventions aimed at breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty therefore need to extend beyond a focus on income and help young people access a range of different kinds of “capital”.²⁹ In the case of Siya (see case 1), for instance, a one-stop, integrated intervention that provided him with emotional and social care, and that informed him about his educational, funding and housing options could have made a world of difference.

What dimensions of poverty affect South Africa’s youth?

Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has seen some upward social mobility among the African population. Nationally representative studies such as the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) allow comparison of the outcomes of parents and their children. Findings show that the number of completed years of education have increased substantially across the generations: from three years for grandparents, to five – six years for parents, and an average of 10 years for the current generation.³⁰

However, this upward trend in education has not translated into increased employment or a positive change in the type of employment that people take up. Despite the youth’s higher levels of education, overall educational attainment remains low and literacy and numeracy levels are weak, especially among the poorer African and Coloured youth. Access to good quality education remains constrained for young people from poorer backgrounds and more than half of all pupils in South Africa drop out of high school before completing their final matric examination³¹ (see the essay on p. 34). As a consequence, many are unable to access higher education and training (see the post-school essay on p. 42). Yet, in the contemporary labour market, it is these higher levels of education that have a positive impact on employment opportunities and income and are necessary to break the intergenerational cycle.³²

Unemployment rates in the country are high: almost 25% according to the official definition, and over 40% when including those people who have become discouraged and have given up looking for work. The majority of those who are unemployed are African. In the first quarter of 2015, Stats SA estimated that the unemployment rate for youth aged 15 – 34 was just under 37%, compared to 17% among adults aged 35 – 64 and a national average unemployment rate of about 26%.³³ Incorporating the numbers of

young people who are unemployed but who have given up looking for work would place the unemployment rate among young people at over 44%.^{vi}

Even for many of those who are employed, higher levels of schooling have not translated into better jobs than their parents. Almost half of all African children in the country end up with a job that sits at the same skills level as their parents, which are generally, and because of historical reasons, among the lowest skills levels in the country.³⁴ High levels of unemployment and employment at the lowest skills levels have an inevitable effect on income (see the essay on p. 51). Income, in turn, is also related to other mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of poverty including: nutrition, stress levels, restricted access to and uptake of health care (see p. 60), the role of parenting (discussed in the essay on p. 69), a sense of isolation (pp. 83) and restricted access to basic services and housing, that affect parents, younger children and older youth.³⁵

In general then, this issue of the *Child Gauge* seeks to understand the dynamics of persistent, intergenerational poverty by exploring in detail many of the dimensions that drive this cycle. It is important, however, to remember that all of these dimensions are interrelated: “most mechanisms work simultaneously, reinforcing each other in different directions”.³⁶ (For example, the essay on p. 75 captures some of this by looking at both the drivers and impact of mobility during the youth stage.)

Figure 2 illustrates how, despite improvements in education and access to household services, the patterns of deprivation among this younger generation remain very similar to those of their parents (most of whom would have been young people in 1996).

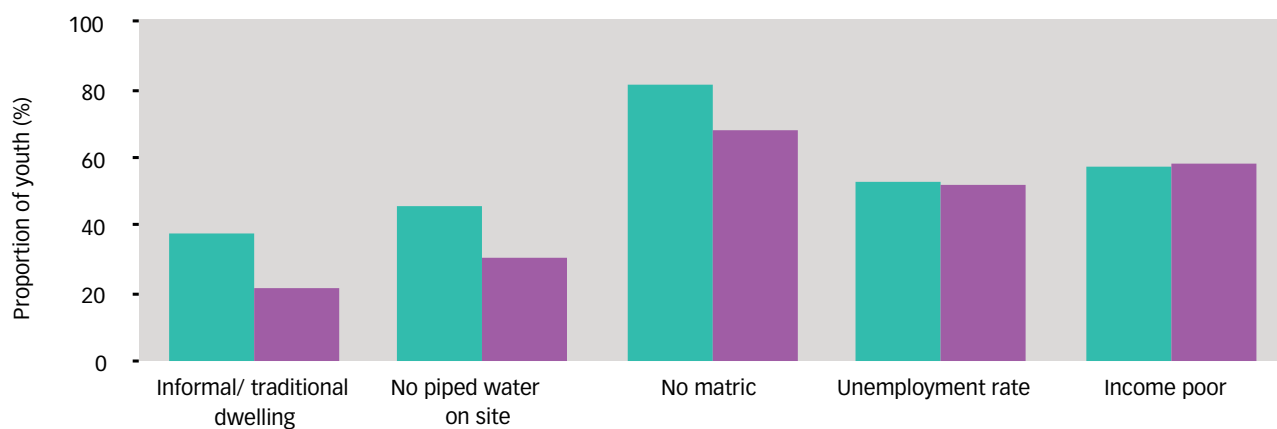
Understanding the multiple dimensions of poverty and how they intersect is crucial in developing efficient and comprehensive policies that support today’s youth as they strive to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. It is not sufficient, for example, to think about young people as “only unemployed”. The majority of them also lack access to quality education, financial resources to study, information that would support them in their decision-making around health and sexual relations, and social networks that can help them think through further schooling or migration. In recent years, innovative tools have been developed to assess multidimensional poverty. In particular, the Alkire Foster method has gained traction among policy-makers because of its ability to analyse multiple deprivations that affect poor individuals at the same time (as outlined in box 1 on p. 29).³⁷

What are the potential windows of opportunity?

How then, can the negative cycles of poverty transmission be disrupted? Many of the social, economic, institutional and political drivers of the intergenerational transmission of poverty can be interrupted by factors that are equally structural, for example, through the extended social grants system and other aspects of the social wage package. These are, in essence, “public transfers”

vi Depending on how the youth age group is defined, this figure goes up even more. In the second quarter of 2012, among 20- to 24-year-old Africans, the broad unemployment rate was around 66%, according to: Levinsohn J (2014) Youth unemployment policy. In: Bhorat H, Hirsch A, Kanbur R & Ncube M (eds) *The Oxford Companion to the Economics of South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Figure 2: Patterns of deprivation in the youth population, 1996 and 2011



1996	37.7%	46.0%	81.8%	53.2%	57.4%
2011	21.4%	30.9%	68.2%	52.2%	58.5%

Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *Census*. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Emily Frame, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT.
Notes: Youth are defined as persons aged 15 – 24 years. The unemployment rate for the youth population is based on the narrow definition. Income-poor youth are defined as youth living in households with per capita monthly incomes below the Stats SA upper-bound poverty line of R620 for 2011. For comparability, this figure was deflated, using a CPI deflator, to R258 for 1996. Individuals in households captured as having zero incomes or missing incomes were excluded from the analysis in both years. Calculations based on weighted data from the Census 1996 and 2011 10% samples.

of resources between the generations. The redistribution of funds through the tax system, for example, has allowed for an expanded Child Support Grant system and Old Age Pension system. Both of these in turn have a proven positive effect not only on the recipients of the grants but also on their households.

Analyses of NIDS have, for instance, indicated that job search among young people increases in households that access the Old Age Pension.³⁸ Also, access to social grants helps mitigate the intergenerational transmission of mental health problems from mothers to adolescent children.³⁹ Social grants are also linked to a range of other interventions including free access to health care and school-fee exemptions, which is important as learners consistently indicate that a lack of funding is one of the main reasons for dropping out of school (see analysis of school attendance on p. 34).

However, such public transfers of resources alone may be insufficient to break the cycle: in the case of education, for example, expenses consist of more than just fees and include also the cost of books, transport, uniforms, extra-curricular activities, and so on. The *quality* of education matters too, as it influences the levels of knowledge and skills that youth can draw on when they leave school and attempt to access either higher education or the labour market.

Importantly though, the interruption of the intergenerational transmission of poverty is not only dependent on these kinds of structural interventions. It also depends on young people's agency and resilience. The extent to which individuals are able to, and do, act upon their situation, the kinds of strategies they apply in attempting to bring about change, and the ways in which they react to opportunities available to them may all help to bring about

change. Popular media reports may not often present them as such, but young people do not simply “undergo” their context, they act upon it as well.

The majority of poor, African youth also have very high aspirations. Many describe their desire for “a better life” with stable jobs and higher income and many perceive education and higher education as the main pathway to achieving their dreams⁴⁰ (as illustrated by Siya's story in case 1). It is therefore essential to understand how young people from impoverished backgrounds manage to build on their aspirations and change their trajectories in order to develop interventions and policies that support youth in creating meaningful lives for them and their families. Yet agency and resilience and their role in breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty are not very well understood.

The essays contained in this *Child Gauge* describe and explore the existing evidence on various factors that contribute to the presently dire situation of many young people and the longer-term impact of those factors. Delivering quality education, preventing school drop-out, enabling access to higher education, training and the labour market, understanding and alleviating the heavy burden of disease among young people, supporting their sense of belonging and citizenship in the broader South African context – these are all areas that need to be addressed to break the cycle of persistent poverty. Teasing out the complex interrelationships between the structural constraints confronting young people and their aspirations and behaviour is crucial. It is within that reality that policies aimed at youth development need to intervene, and it is imperative that these policies open up new possibilities for youth to which they are able and willing to respond.

What is the existing policy framework on youth in South Africa?

... human lives are battered and diminished in all kinds of different ways, and the first task, seen in this perspective, is to acknowledge that deprivations of very different kinds have to be accommodated within a general overarching framework [emphasis added]⁴¹

While much of the current situation of young people can be considered to have its roots in apartheid, it is equally important to ask why more than 20 years of post-apartheid policies and interventions have not managed to make a significant shift in the life chances of today's youth.

Since the 1990s, South Africa has at least officially shown a concern with youth development, but the actual implementation of effective, well-grounded policies to support youth development has been lacking.

The African National Congress (ANC) promised the establishment of a national youth service in its 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme and, in 1996, the National Youth Commission was established. The National Youth Development Policy Framework⁴² set out recommendations for 2002 – 2007, followed by the establishment of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) in 2008, and several revised National Youth Development Plans.

The NYDA's mandate is broad and ranges from "initiating, designing, co-ordinating, evaluating and monitoring all programmes aimed at integrating the youth into the economy and society in general" and "promoting a uniform approach by all organs of the state, private sector and non-governmental organisations".^{vii}

Alongside the NYDA, there are currently also "youth desks" in various government departments at national and provincial level and a youth desk in the Presidency but there is no youth ministry, nor a parliamentary oversight committee with a specific focus on youth matters.^{viii} The roles of these various "desks" and "agencies" remain unclear and uncoordinated. This hinders a truly integrated approach to youth development that is grounded in a thorough understanding of the realities of youth and the way in which multiple dimensions of poverty intersect and constrain young people's life chances.

The current National Youth Policy (2015 – 2020)⁴³ attempts to address some of these concerns. It recognises that government has in previous years not necessarily taken the views and realities of youth into account when drafting policies and interventions, and that fragmentation and a lack of co-ordination between various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders have hindered the development and implementation of a coherent and efficient youth development policy. It also calls on various government departments to focus on five pillars that would enable youth development:

1. economic inclusion and participation;
2. education, skills and training;
3. health and well-being;
4. nation-building and social cohesion; and
5. building a youth machinery for efficient delivery and responsibilities.

The policy focuses on both "mainstreaming" youth-related issues within these departments, and delivering "dedicated youth platforms" to address issues 1 to 4. However, it does little to engage with the interconnectedness of these issues. Indeed, while its intention seems otherwise, the policy continues to promote a fragmented approach to youth development with a proliferation of agencies and various kinds of "desks" at the local, provincial and national government levels. The concluding essay (p. 92) picks up this discussion, drawing on the evidence from the various essays.

The evidence and cases presented in this issue illustrate the need for a clear, powerful and integrated approach to fulfil young people's basic constitutional rights. This requires a dedicated, central coordinating mechanism to guide and support the various government departments in their coordination of youth-related development programmes and interventions. It remains unclear how the work of the various desks will be coordinated, but also how the relevant departments (such as the Department of Small Business Development, Department of Higher Education and Training and Department of Health) will be made aware of, and supported in, their roles and duties. Without buy-in from these different role-players and a commitment to share responsibilities and information with the other departments, the recommendations contained in the policy run the risk of – yet again – remaining a wish list.

vii For a complete overview, see the National Youth Development Policy 2015 – 2020.

viii The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation currently carries the responsibility of holding government (and the NYDA) responsible for delivering on their promises, but there is little coordination or alignment between this committee and the Presidency.

Box 1: Measuring multidimensional poverty among the youth

Money-metric measures of poverty do not fully capture the experience of poor people. Research shows that the poor define poverty much more broadly, citing multiple dimensions of deprivation that are interrelated and often co-occur.⁴⁴ The Alkire Foster method is a way of measuring poverty that takes into account these multiple forms of deprivation.

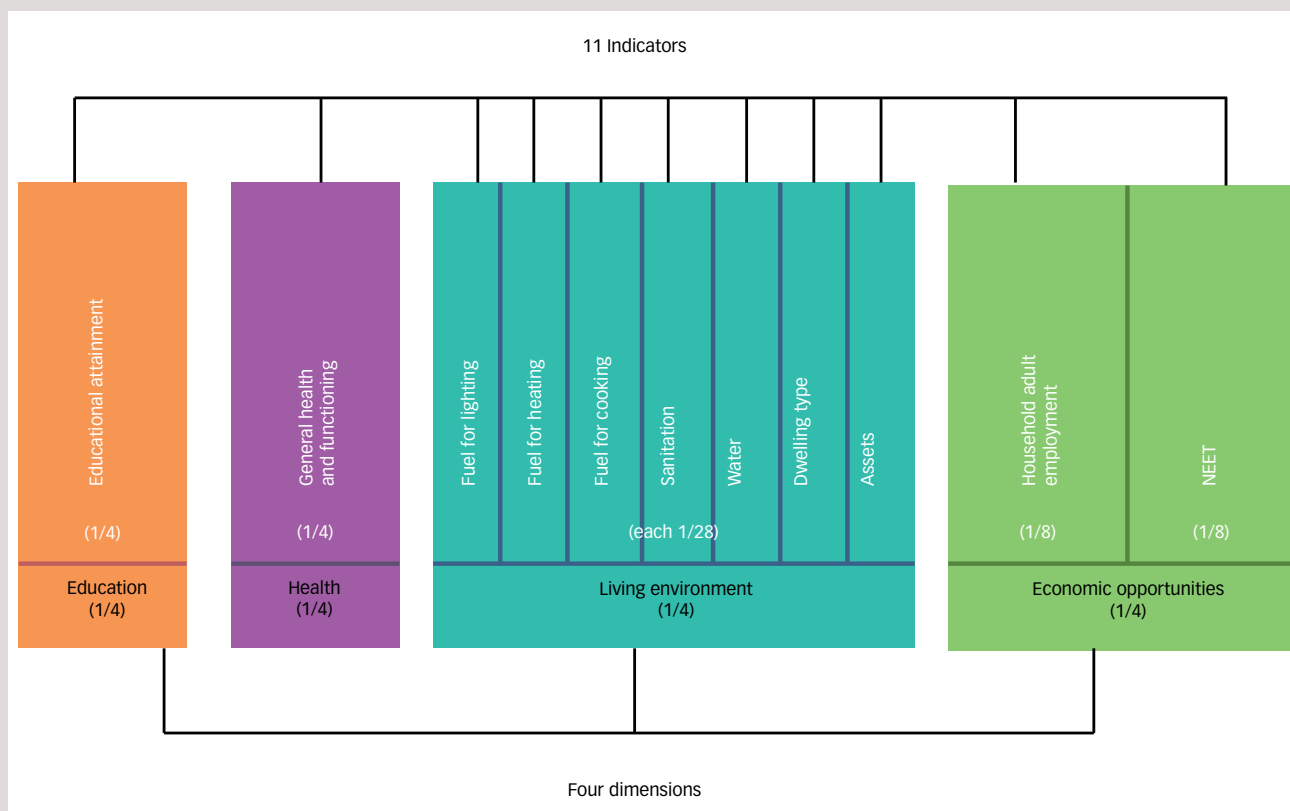
Applying this method, a Youth Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for individuals aged 15 – 24 was constructed using data from the 2011 Census. While several analyses of multidimensional poverty in South Africa exist, most look at deprivation at the household level.⁴⁵ By including dimensions and indicators that reflect experiences unique or particularly relevant to young people, the Youth MPI aims to provide a youth-focused perspective of deprivation.

The Youth MPI comprises 11 indicators in the dimensions of education, health, living environment and economic opportunities (as illustrated in figure 3).^{ix} Each of the indicators is associated with a deprivation cut-off that defines whether a young person is deprived in that area. For example, under

sanitation, a young person is defined as deprived if he or she is living in a household without a flush toilet;^x and under “NEET”, a young person is defined as deprived if he or she is not in employment, education or training. For a full list of the deprivation cut-offs associated with each indicator, see table 2 on page 30.

Using these cut-offs, the number of deprivations each young person experiences is added up, with the four dimensions receiving equal importance in the overall score. If a young person is deprived in a third or more of the indicators, he or she is considered multidimensionally poor. With these stipulations, one can calculate the percentage of youth who are multidimensionally poor (the incidence of poverty) as well as the average proportion of dimensions in which poor youth are deprived (the average intensity of poverty). The results show that in 2011, 33% of young people were multidimensionally poor (incidence of poverty), and that, on average, those young people who were multidimensionally poor experienced deprivation in 50% of the indicators (intensity of poverty).

Figure 3: Components of the Youth Multidimensional Poverty Index



Source: Adapted from: Alkire S & Santos ME (2014) Measuring acute poverty in the developing world: Robustness and scope of the Multidimensional Poverty Index. *World Development*, 59: 251-274.

ix The development of the South African Youth MPI is work in progress. Further details on the design and methodology will be available in: Leibbrandt M, De Lannoy A & Frame E (forthcoming) *Measuring Multidimensional Youth Poverty in South Africa at the Sub-national Level*. SALDRU Working Paper. Cape Town: SALDRU, UCT.

x Our definition of the water and sanitation indicators is based on Stats SA's MPI work (see no. 45 in the references).

The Youth MPI can be used as an analytical tool to highlight the spatial patterns of youth poverty. This is important in a context like South Africa, where advantage and disadvantage are spatially concentrated. Figure 4 shows how the incidence of multidimensional poverty among the youth population varies across municipalities, with the darker red indicating a higher percentage of poor youth in those municipalities. This map highlights the deep levels of deprivation that continue to be found within the former homeland areas, even within the youth cohort.

The overall Youth MPI is calculated by multiplying the incidence of poverty by the average intensity. Figure 5 maps

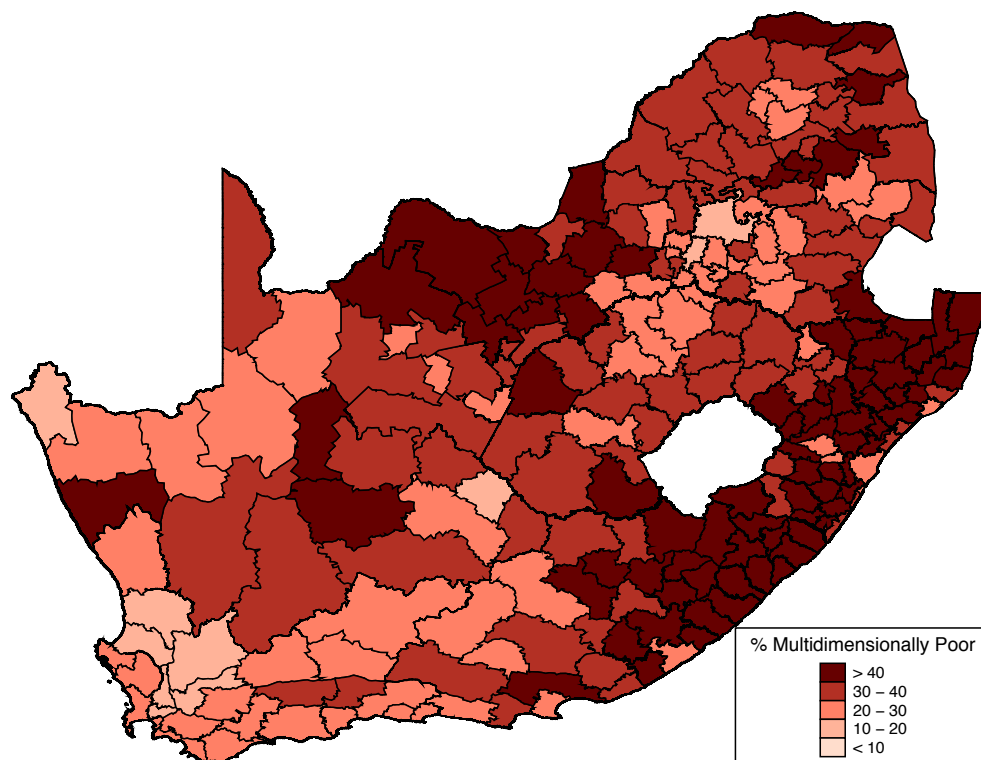
the Youth MPI for each municipality in South Africa, with the darker red indicating a higher score and therefore greater poverty for the youth population in those municipalities. The strength of this index is that it reflects both the percentage of the youth population that is poor *as well as* the intensity of the deprivation suffered. Within one province, for example, two municipalities may have a similar percentage of multidimensionally poor youth, but the intensity of deprivation may be higher in one municipality. By combining incidence and intensity, the overall index is able to highlight these differences and therefore provide a more nuanced picture of poverty than traditional measures.

Table 2: Deprivation cut-offs for the Youth Multidimensional Poverty Index

Dimensions of poverty	Indicator	Deprived if...
Education	Educational attainment	Individual is age 15 – 16 and has completed less than primary school Individual is age 17 – 20 and has completed less than grade 9 Individual is age 21 – 24 and has completed less than matric or matric equivalent
Health	General health and functioning	Individual experiences difficulty in one or more functions: hearing, vision, communication, mobility (walking or climbing stairs), cognition (remembering or concentrating)
Living environment	Fuel for lighting	Individual is living in a household that is using paraffin/candles/ nothing/other for lighting
	Fuel for heating	Individual is living in a household that is using paraffin/wood/coal/ dung/other/none for heating
	Fuel for cooking	Individual is living in a household that is using paraffin/wood/coal/ dung/other/none for cooking
	Sanitation	Individual is living in a household without a flush toilet
	Water	Individual is living in a household without piped water on site
	Dwelling type	Individual is living in a household that is an informal shack/traditional dwelling/caravan/tent/other
	Assets	Individual is living in a household that does not own more than two of: radio, TV, landline, mobile phone, bike, motorbike or refrigerator AND does not own a car or truck
Economic opportunities	Household adult employment	Individual is living in a household where no working-age adults (18 – 64) are employed
	NEET	Individual is not in education, employment or training

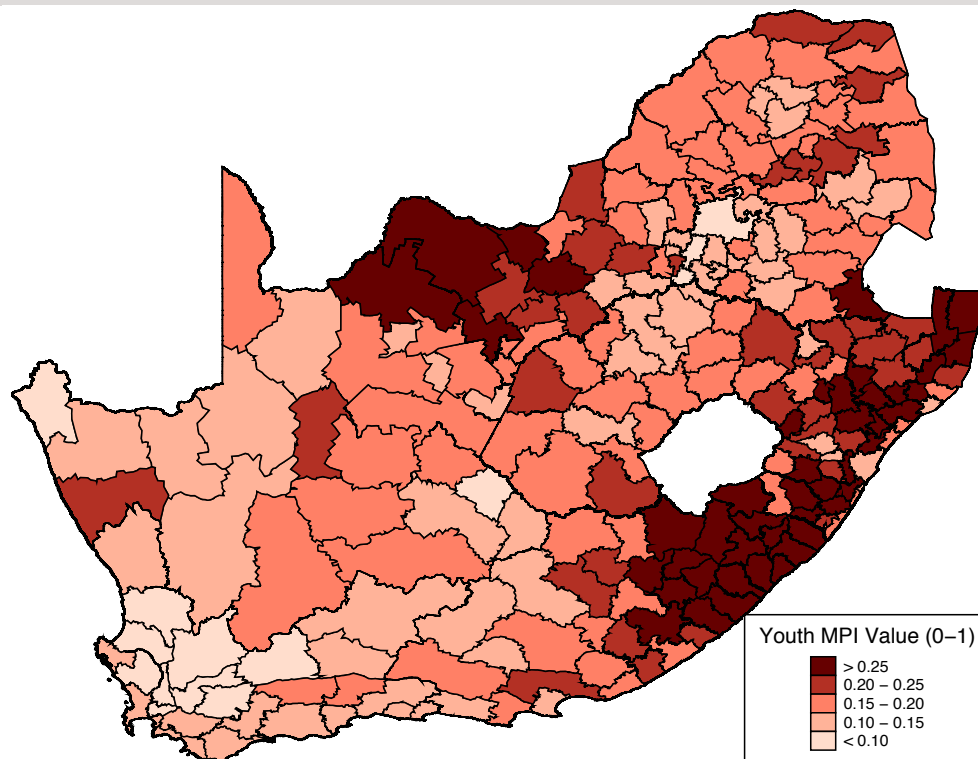
Source: Adapted from: Alkire S & Santos ME (2014) Measuring acute poverty in the developing world: Robustness and scope of the Multidimensional Poverty Index. *World Development*, 59: 251-274.

Figure 4: Incidence of multidimensional poverty amongst youth in South Africa, by municipality, 2011



Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *Census*. Pretoria: Stats SA.
Calculations by Emily Frame, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT, based on weighted data from the Census 2011 10% sample.

Figure 5: Youth Multidimensional Poverty Index, by municipality, 2011

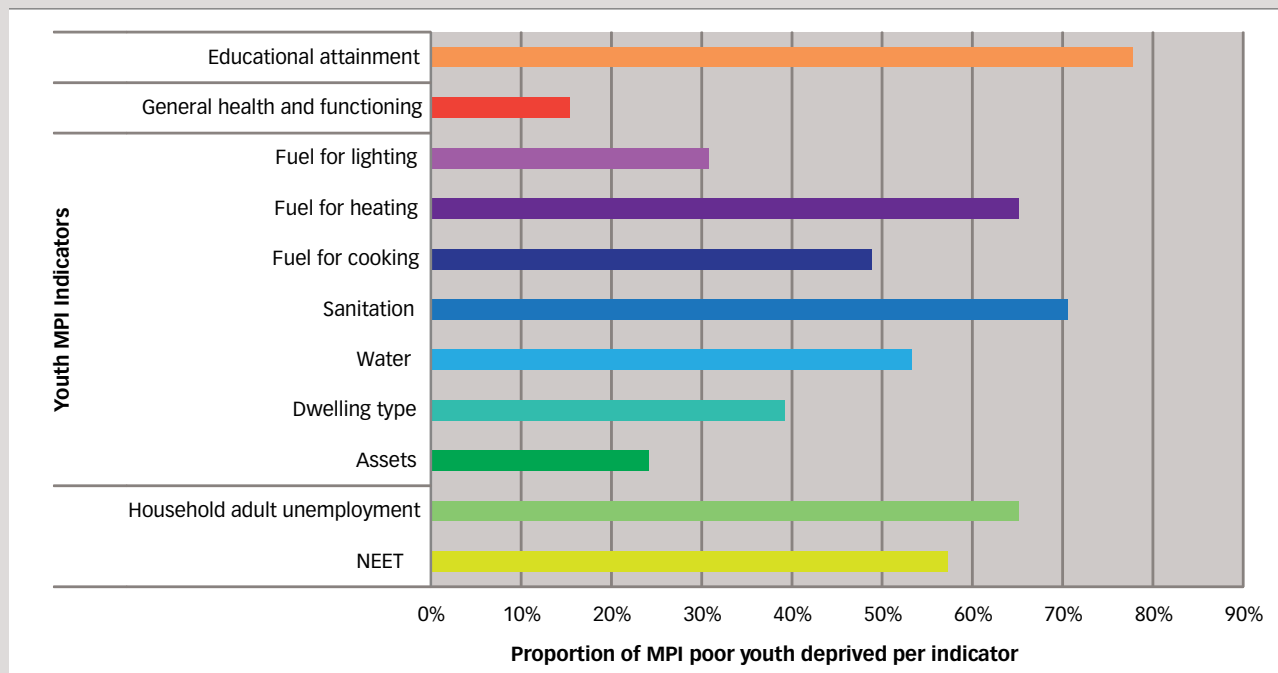


Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *Census*. Pretoria: Stats SA.
Calculations by Emily Frame, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT, based on weighted data from the Census 2011 10% sample.

The Youth MPI can be unpacked in a number of ways to provide valuable insights about multidimensional poverty in the youth population. Figure 6, for example, shows the proportion of the youth population that is poor *and* deprived in each indicator. Notably, deprivation in educational attainment and sanitation is especially high, affecting 78% and 70% of the multidimensionally poor youth respectively.

Youth-centered analyses of deprivation are key to improving our understanding of the situation of young people in South Africa. The Youth MPI is a valuable tool for such analyses as it provides a robust assessment of multidimensional poverty that is uniquely suited to youth living in the South African context and is able to highlight important spatial inequalities that continue to exist.

Figure 6: Dimensions of deprivation among multidimensionally poor youth, 2011



Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) *Census*. Pretoria: Stats SA.
Calculations by Emily Frame, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, UCT, based on weighted data from the Census 2011 10% sample.

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