

# Quality of life in South Africa – the first ten years of democracy

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## Abstract

South Africa celebrated ten years of democracy in 2004. This special issue of *Social Indicators Research (SIR)* reviews developments that have impacted on the quality of life of ordinary South Africans during the transition period. The issue updates an earlier volume of *SIR* (Volume 41) published in 1997 and as a stand-alone volume. The earlier volume was initiated following *SIR* editor Alex Michalos' first visit to South Africa. This update on quality of life in South Africa follows on his return visit to the country in 2004 to see firsthand the changes that had occurred in the meantime. This introductory article outlines major achievements of and setbacks for the new democracy and the challenges facing it in future. It provides the background for the evaluations of a range of quality of life domains and issues including poverty and inequality, crime, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, migration and housing, religiosity, reconciliation, and optimism for the future which are covered in the eleven articles that follow. The introduction divides the articles under the headings of challenges, achievements, monitoring quality of life, and social capital for the future. The overview article concludes that improvements in quality of life have been uneven but goodwill and a positive outlook bode well for South African quality of life in future.

**Key words** democracy; quality of life; South Africa

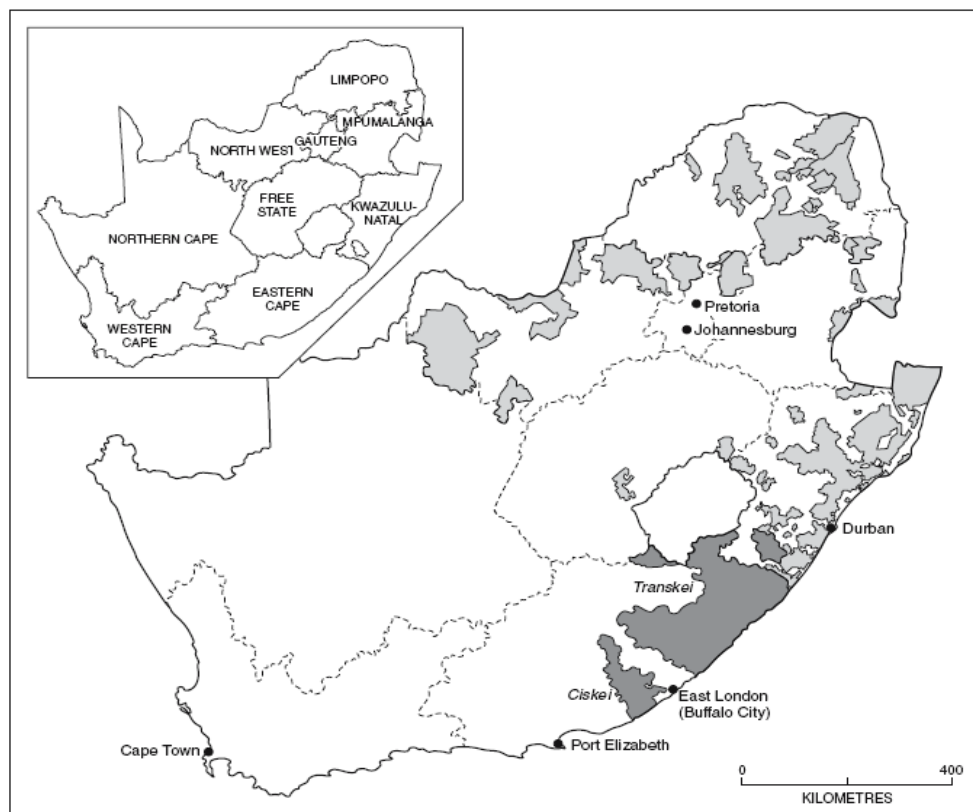


Fig. 1. Map of South Africa in 2006 showing select place names referred to by authors in this issue: Provinces (see inset), cities, and the former 'homelands' (shaded).

# 1. A quality of life update

This special issue follows on an earlier one written in 1996 and published the next year as volume 41 in *Social Indicators Research* and as a stand-alone volume (Møller, 1997a). The earlier collection of papers reviewed the emergent issues in the heady years following on the negotiated settlement of the early nineties that led to the first open national elections in April 1994. The papers covered concerns critical for the well-being of average South Africans during the transition ranging from economics, politics, and development planning. The contributors discussed legacies of the past, including poverty and social inequality (Klasen, 1997; May and Norten, 1997; Hirschowitz and Orkin, 1997a); problems of transition such as trauma and crime (Hirschowitz and Orkin, 1997b; Louw, 1997); and the hopes for the future in economic growth and development (Corder, 1997; Beukes and van der Colff 1997; Gill and Hall, 1997), a deeper understanding of democracy (Mattes and Christie, 1997), and a healthy dose of optimism (Harris, 1997). In this introduction, we aim to provide readers with some background on socio-economic and sociopolitical trends in the first decade of democracy.

Since 1994, South Africa has held further peaceful polls, two national elections in 1999 and 2004, and municipal-level elections in 2002 and in 2006. All elections have been declared mainly free and fair, and the Independent Electoral Commission has been commended for overseeing efficiently run polls. The long snaking queues of the first open elections of April 1994, the icon of South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy, are a faded memory of the past. The excitement of the first democratic elections may have worn off, but South Africans still believe in the basic principles of democracy learnt in voter education lessons in the run-up to the first open elections (Møller and Hanf, 1995).

## 1.1. Trends in Life Satisfaction and Happiness

Observers have noted the new confidence and self assurance of South Africans in the democratic era (Giliomee and Schlemmer, 1994). South African pride swelled in the wake of the first democratic elections following a negotiated settlement. The South African Quality of Life Trends Study succinctly captured the post-election euphoria when all South Africans reported that they were satisfied with life (see Figure 2) and happy (Møller, 1998). The positive assessment of life among black South Africans who voted for the first time was a complete departure from their unhappiness and discontent under apartheid. Because national quality of life trends are known for their stability over time, this spontaneous outburst of happiness following the birth of democracy was a benchmark finding in quality-of-life studies (Møller, 2004a, b).

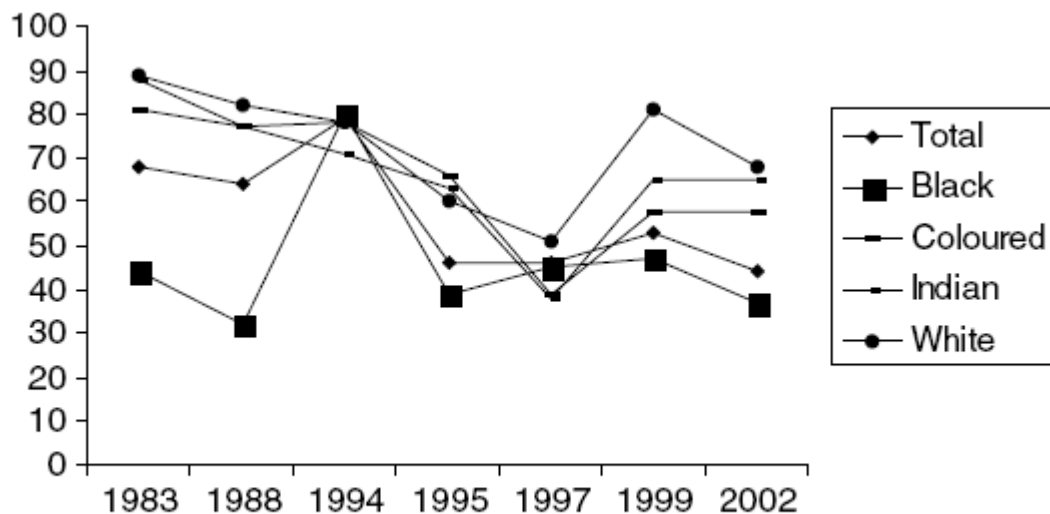


Fig. 2. South African Quality of Life Trends: Percentages satisfied with life-as-a-whole.

According to the quality-of-life literature, it is the more central concerns of self, family and livelihoods that are associated with subjective wellbeing. This is well-documented in South African studies (e.g., Møller, 1998). More peripheral issues are of lesser importance. Easterlin notes that seminal cross-national research conducted by Cantril in the 1960s found ‘‘broad international or domestic issues, such as war, political or civil liberty, and social equality, were not often mentioned’’ as quality-of-life concerns (Easterlin, 2002; p.158, on Cantril, 1965). Seen from this viewpoint, the satisfaction that political freedoms continue to give to rank-and-file South Africans is extraordinary. Citizen satisfaction is evident in findings reported in this issue that even people living with HIV/AIDS rate political gains under democracy in the same positive light as family life. Consider that in 1983, during the darkest days of apartheid, only 36% of black South Africans were satisfied with their political rights according to the South African Quality of Life Trends study. By 1988, at the height of the liberation struggle, the percentage satisfied had dropped to 33%. One year into democracy in 1995, the study recorded 45% of black South Africans satisfied with the new choices and freedoms under democracy.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later, in 2005, Booyesen and colleagues replicated these indicators and found fully 76% satisfied with their political rights among people living with HIV/AIDS in the Free State. Unusually, in the 2005 study led by Booyesen, political satisfactions ranked almost on par with satisfaction with family life. Tellingly, it is mainly the right to vote that boosted political satisfaction from apartheid lows of 31% satisfied with their rights in 1983 and 22% in 1988, up to 78% in 1995 – the year after the first open elections. In the 2005 study conducted among persons living with HIV/AIDS, satisfaction with the right to vote shot up to 97%. And similarly, over nine in ten (94%) were satisfied with their freedom of movement. These results suggest there is an appreciation of democratic freedom that transcends everyday concerns to create a deep sense of personal fulfilment.

## **2. Achievements and setbacks**

The emergent concerns for South Africans in the transition to democracy have been shaped by the visions of their new leaders. The Mandela presidency (1994 – 1999) promoted reconciliation and the ideal of the ‘rainbow nation’ to bridge the deep divides in South African society. A paper in this issue asks how reconciled South Africans are as a result of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission chaired by Nobel peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Mbeki presidency (1999 – 2004, re-elected for a second 5-year term) has emphasised accelerated service delivery to achieve the ‘better life for all’ promised to South Africans under democracy. As set out in the government’s ten year review, Mbeki’s government is committed to the Millennium Goals of halving poverty and unemployment before 2015.

### **2.1. Reconstruction and Development**

The earlier issue could report only public knowledge and expectations of the populist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that was to fulfil the new African National Congress-led government’s promise of a better life for all. Meanwhile, RDP promises have been translated into concrete houses that are allocated free to first-time homeowners. The targets of a million houses by 2000, and the rollout of clean water, electricity and telecommunications have by and large been met (see Hemson and O’Donovan, 2006). This issue reports on the significance in the lives of ordinary South Africans of housing and service delivery (Figure 1). Three papers in this issue review the impact of service delivery on quality of life in metropolitan areas and the country as a whole from a citizen perspective.

Although the million houses by 2000 promised to first-time voters were delivered in the nick of time, there were initial setbacks. In the mid-1990s the ambitious RDP had to be put on the back burner when the new government found its coffers were empty and it needed to shore up economic strength before distributing largesse to the people. Understandably, in the eyes of populists the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme was synonymous with broken promises. Since that time South Africa’s sound macroeconomic policy has earned international recognition for achieving stability to go forward. Economic growth has been slow but steady. While there was negative growth in the 1980s, some 2%, growth has been positive, some plus 2%, in the first decade of democracy. However, this growth has not translated into the jobs as set out in the GEAR macroeconomic strategy that temporarily displaced the RDP programme. In fact, jobs have been shed to allow the economy to compete globally. At the time of writing in early 2006, pundits speculate for the first time in decades

that 4% growth will be achieved and 6% growth may not be unattainable (O'Grady, 2005). At the same time, tax collection has become increasingly efficient. Partly as a result of this additional revenue, the new millennium has seen significant increases in social spending to alleviate poverty in the wake of job loss and joblessness.<sup>2</sup> Along with free housing for new homeowners, the state is in the process of implementing free basic services, water and electricity, to the poor. In fulfilment of the original election promises and the RDP charter, free education will be introduced in select schools within the next few years (Blaine, 2006).

## **2.2. Youth and the New Generation**

Perhaps the legacy of apartheid is still most apparent in the field of education. The former Bantu education policy that prepared black school children only for menial labour as 'hewers of wood' has left its mark.<sup>3</sup>

Although South Africa has made large investments in education by most international standards,<sup>4</sup> it has failed to produce the skills needed for South Africa to compete in the global economy. In the first decade of the new millennium, there are plans under way in some sectors to import technical and engineering skills and to entice South Africans living abroad back to the country to fill the skills deficit (Boyle, 2006).

The new era has also witnessed a new contract between the generations. It was Soweto high school pupils that were in the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle in 1976. The 'struggle' generation is now in its forties and represents the new power elite. Their children have only secondhand knowledge of apartheid if at all. The politicised youth of the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced with the material youth that does not share the ethos and values of the struggle generation that was willing to forego education to obtain its freedom. The new generation has been born into a human rights culture and measures its success in material terms.

## **2.3. Urbanisation and the Housing Backlog**

An indication of new-found freedom is that South Africans are increasingly voting with their feet to fulfil their ambitions of the good life. The mushrooming of shantytowns on the periphery of South Africa's major cities is evidence of this agency. For example, Cape Town has doubled its size over the last 20 years. The first sight for many visitors to Cape Town is a ribbon of shack settlements leading from the airport right up to the suburbs nestled under the city's landmark Table Mountain. Ironically, the rural population of the former 'homelands' who suffered most from underdevelopment in the past, has been hardest hit by the rising cost of living in the new era. Large-scale rural to urban migration has reshaped the country's settlement patterns in the past ten years. As households opt to split into smaller units and rural dwellers gravitate to urban areas in search of livelihoods or at least access to services, the housing and infrastructure backlog in major centres has increased in spite of the over million new houses built since 1994. Although South Africa aims to eliminate informal housing through its RDP housing subsidies, the proportion of shack dwellers has increased as successive new waves of migrants move into the towns. Two articles in this issue review the background to rural to urban migration and the perceived needs of informal settlers.

## **2.4. Poverty and Social Exclusion**

The related themes of poverty, unemployment, inequality and social exclusion, cited as legacies of the past, continue to be key cross-cutting themes in this issue. South Africa's sound macro-economic policy has not created sufficient jobs to absorb the new entrants into the labour market each year. More than two-thirds of South Africans between 18 and 35 years are unemployed. The official unemployment rate that excludes discouraged workseekers stood at 26.7% in early 2006, in spite of the 658,000 jobs that were created in the year to September 2005. Ironically, the economy's relatively strong performance in 2005 had had the effect of raising the unemployment rate by prompting discouraged job seekers to re-enter the labour market. Successive high-level think tanks have developed various programmes that have failed to accelerate job creation. Nevertheless, the renewed prospect of 6% growth has given fresh impetus to launch a new job-creation initiative.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, worker rights have made significant progress in the past ten years. Along with minimum wages and contracts to replace informal and at times exploitative master-servant relationships, workers have gained access to unemployment insurance, regulated leave conditions and paid vacations. However, South Africans in jobs may

have gained at the expense of those without jobs. The introduction of enlightened labour regulations may also have increased joblessness. Minimum wage legislation has resulted in many farm workers being forced off the farms and domestic workers being dismissed from the kitchens and gardens of suburbia. Small employers have laid off workers to minimise the additional paperwork and larger employers have replaced permanent staff with contract workers. Recently, some relaxation of the new labour laws has occurred in the hope of creating a climate more conducive to job creation.

## **2.5. Welfare Challenges**

Unemployment's twin problem is increased dependency on the state. The social safety net has been widened to alleviate the hardships caused by jobless growth. The value of existing social grants has increased significantly since 1994 to keep pace with the rising cost of living and a new child grant has been added to the swatch of social grants available to low-income households.<sup>6</sup> It is not uncommon for a social grant to provide the only cash income in a household. Newly enfranchised citizens feel entitled to state support in the absence of other means of livelihoods. Thus, a new form of paternalism and patronage between state and citizen has succeeded the one that existed between white employers and black workers in the colonial and apartheid eras. As long as government transfers remain the most important source of household income and means of survival, it is foreseeable that the poor will continue to be dependent on state handouts.

## **2.6. The New International Yardstick**

South Africa's economic stability in the first ten years of democracy has restored international recognition to the former pariah state. Intent on proving it will not fail, unlike other African states, and to attract foreign direct investment, South Africa has adopted First World economic and organisational standards of efficiency while seeking to retain its African identity. The country's new leaders have sought to achieve the highest possible standards in every sphere of life while also seeking to accelerate transformation in record time. Reacting to electricity outages, the editor of *Business Day* (2005) commented:

...When the state failed to live up to its promises, there were always private sector providers eager to do the job, at a price. ...It was this pragmatic approach to getting things done against the odds that distinguished us from many of our northern neighbours and allowed us to dream that South Africa would be different, that we would show the world that Africa was not a lost cause after all.

The politics of 'doing too many things too quickly'<sup>7</sup> has provoked cynicism from the political opposition and also tried the patience of the ruling African National Congress's alliance partners.<sup>8</sup> South Africa's model constitution and far-sighted new laws suffer from legitimacy when they cannot be implemented due to lack of political will, shortage of skilled personnel, and a poor work ethic.

## **2.7. South Africa as Role Model**

Despite its shortcomings, in some respects South Africa has overtaken its international role models. South Africa is the only state in the world that has voluntarily disarmed its nuclear arsenal. Its Truth and Reconciliation Commission is widely regarded as a model for restoring peaceful co-existence in countries that have experienced civil war. For a substantial proportion of South Africans the work of the TRC is a source of national pride (Møller and Dickow, 2002). A major public health achievement in the first decade of democracy includes the banning of smoking in public places. The non-smoking rule, achieved almost overnight with little public resistance, appears to have become the accepted norm. A 'green' success is the ban on plastic bags that has removed the unsightly yellow 'Karoo daisies' which formerly littered the countryside. In their place the more than a million new single-story RDP housing units dot the landscape from Cape Town in the south to Limpopo Province in the north. Picturesque traditional thatched huts have become more of a rarity found only in deep rural areas.

## 2.8. Transformation and Growing Pains

A major challenge for the new democracy continues to be the pace and scope of transformation. The colonial and apartheid eras suppressed black entrepreneurship as ruthlessly as political insurrection. Unsurprisingly, efforts to develop entrepreneurship have borne few fruits in the past decade. However, some leading role models have emerged. Interestingly, it is the former trade unionists turned politicians in 1994 who have become South Africa's new captains of industry and commerce. Affirmative action and equity measures such as Black Economic Empowerment have benefited an increasingly affluent but miniscule black minority. The new political and economic elite have variously been accused of being greedy and insensitive to the plight of the poor (Terreblanche, 2002). On the other hand, the spending power of the emergent black middle class is regarded as a major factor in driving economic growth. At the same time, the transition period has increased inequalities in society. Formerly, the major social divide was between the richer white minority and the poorer black majority. Black economic empowerment and an emergent black middle class have increased the gap between rich black urban dwellers and their poorer country cousins.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly controversial is the extent of corruption in the new era. Some argue that corruption has not increased but merely become more visible under the new political dispensation, owing to greater transparency. In 1994, the salaries of parliamentarians and municipal officials were set at relatively high levels precisely to render civil servants less susceptible to bribes and favouritism. However, the higher salaries paid to civil servants and parliamentarians have served to increase wage expectations in other sectors and to exacerbate income inequalities. The result has been the creation of a new political elite dependent on retaining their seats in parliament to maintain a lavish lifestyle. On the other hand, government employees in essential services such as education, policing and health services remain underpaid. Inadequately trained and underpaid personnel are poorly equipped to provide essential services and to maintain safety and security (Sparks, 2003, pp. 226ff). Unsurprisingly, qualified personnel have been tempted to move to greener pastures in developed countries. This has accentuated the country's shortage of skills and further depressed levels of services.

The introduction to the earlier volume cited the new South Africa's extraordinary confidence in indicators to track the success of the new democracy in delivering services (Møller, 1997b). Some ten years on, the government's official report on its achievements and future challenges bristled with statistics. With the wisdom of hindsight, the enthusiasm with which 'key performance' indicators have been introduced to monitor progress in delivery has not been without unintended consequences. For example, service bonuses, intended as incentives to achieve peak performances based on these indicators, have become gratuitous in the case of 70% of the most financially troubled municipalities paying performance bonuses to their managers (Hartley, 2006).

One indication of greater democratic maturity may be the heated debate over corruption, serious errors of judgment, and abuse of power and position. In the mid-1990s such transgressions were excused and attributed to lack of experience on the part of the new democrats. Ten years later, there is greater pressure on the ruling party to sanction poor performance, greed, and abuse of power, and to call for exemplary behaviour on the part of politicians and civil servants. Importantly, protection has been introduced for whistleblowers, and the media plays an important role in ensuring that democratic ideals of transparency and free speech are upheld.

## 2.9. Legitimate Leadership

In successive national and local government elections, the ruling African National Congress has now assumed leadership in all nine provinces and in the vast majority of the 284 municipalities. Ironically, at the height of its political power, when it has a majority of over 70% of the popular vote, the ANC suffers from a legitimacy crisis owing to a series of corruption scandals that have touched the highest levels of government and affected the succession for presidency at the end of Mbeki's term in office. Corruption in the highest levels of government has tarnished the image of the Mbeki presidency. Prior to 1994, the ANC always assumed the higher moral ground. In the new era, the legitimacy crisis is partly due to its loss of moral superiority (Mde and Brown, 2006). In the eyes of the political opposition and even in its own ranks, the political elite have squandered their leadership credentials. Earlier rounds of quality-of-life research evidenced disappointment among former political activists that the new South African elite would so quickly lose their idealism and succumb to the temptations of material possessions (Møller and Dickow, 2002). More recently Archbishop Tutu in an interview with an American journalist expressed similar sentiments:

We were maybe too starry-eyed, and reckoned because we were involved in a noble struggle, we imagined that the idealisms of that would carry over automatically to the post-apartheid period. ... I imagined that we would be producing a society that was compassionate and caring, a society that said, even if you are poor, you should have a proper sense of self-worth, you should know that you matter. (Gezarin, 2006).

## **2.10. Patience Wearing Thin**

As mentioned earlier, the Mbeki presidency has adopted service delivery as its major goal. In the first years of democracy, citizens were asked to be patient before reaping the material benefits of democracy. Characteristic of South African quality-of-life trends has been the optimism of the disenfranchised under apartheid and the still disadvantaged in the new era. Typically, ordinary black South Africans have expressed dissatisfaction with their life circumstances while expecting life to get better in future. Since 1994, the new government's promises of a 'better life for all' have struck a sympathetic chord with the electorate. However, there are emergent signs that the patience with which ordinary people have waited for their basic needs to be met is slowly wearing thin. Ten years on, new social movements are crystallising around delivery issues. In the run up to the 2006 local government elections, the country experienced a series of popular strikes and protest actions to voice dissatisfaction with the provision of housing, service delivery, nepotism and corruption at the local government level. In several instances, residents of cross-border municipalities clashed with the state when their municipality was incorporated into the province not of their choosing. Tellingly, in each instance, the popular choice was incorporation into the province that had the better record of service delivery.

Even though many new voters may be disenchanted with the performance of the elected government, especially at the local level, they know that only the African National Congress, with its over two-thirds majority of the vote, has the power to provide for their basic needs. According to Niehaus (2005), reporting on one of the cross-border municipalities referred to above, support for the ANC brings benefits in the form of patronage, social security, housing, better infrastructure, and community development. Voting for the ruling party constitutes a strategic, sometimes cynical, attempt by desperately impoverished households to secure access to social welfare. At the national level, survey evidence suggests that over four in ten black South Africans would be prepared to give unqualified support for leaders in an election regardless of performance.<sup>10</sup>

The Mbeki presidency's failure to act decisively to combat the AIDS epidemic and to condemn human rights abuses in neighbouring Zimbabwe, are considered among its worst shortcomings by the political opposition. Regarding the latter, South Africa's policy of appeasement has damaged its credibility internationally. Although foreign policy issues are not known to have a direct impact on quality of life, South Africa's position on human rights abuses and violations of political freedoms nevertheless will be relevant for identity and national pride which in turn are associated with personal well-being (Dickow and Møller, 2002).

## **2.11. The New Challenge of HIV/AIDS**

The emergent issues in the late 1990s not covered in the earlier volume on quality of life in South Africa are also revealing. The first presidency neglected to act decisively with the HIV/AIDS epidemic sweeping through sub-Saharan Africa (see Shisana and Zungu-Dirwayi, 2003 and MacFarlane, 2004, for an overview). Mbeki's presidency initially denied that the HIV virus led to AIDS, a position that has undermined programmes to curb mother-to-child transmission of the disease. It was only when shamed by AIDS activists, who portrayed negligence on the part of government in stark terms of genocide, that a programme of anti-retroviral treatment in public hospitals was introduced in 2004. The anti-retroviral rollout is proceeding slowly and at the time of writing only some 15% of those in need of antiretroviral treatment were receiving drugs by mid-2005 (Kahn, 2005b). To date the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS has prevented many South Africans from presenting for testing and knowing their status. Access to anti-retroviral treatment and a temporary disability grant may have created new incentives to know one's status, but the strong stigma attached to the disease is unlikely to disappear overnight. In the mid-1990s HIV/AIDS activists, who disclosed their status, suffered public humiliation or in some few cases even death. Increasingly the stand taken by life-affirming campaigns and activists such as the Treatment Action Campaign have captured the public imagination. It may be anticipated that access to treatment will in future become a human rights issue for South Africans similar to basic housing and infrastructure needs in the 1990s.

Currently, South Africa has the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world with an estimated 5.2 million or some 11% HIV-positive. An estimated 1.5 million South Africans have died of AIDS, which is now the leading cause of death. HIV/AIDS threatens to reverse many of the development gains that South Africa has achieved. AIDS is not a notifiable disease in South Africa which has made it more difficult to assess accurately the rates of affliction and may have added to the stigma attached to the disease. Until recently, in survey after survey, HIV/AIDS has never been spontaneously mentioned as one of the country's top problems. It is poverty and unemployment, issues of the living that have tended to overshadow issues of the dying. South Africans are learning to live with the disease and by 2006, the majority of households will have had personal experience of the disease and a high proportion will have grieved the death of a member of the extended family. However, the antiretroviral programme has brought new hope and a lease of life to persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

It has also improved the morale of professional and lay health workers to see a new South African miracle at work.<sup>11</sup> With the introduction of antiretroviral treatment, the prospects for South Africans to live a long and happy life, the definition of quality of life favoured by Veenhoven (2005), is poised to increase in future.

### **3. This issue**

It is against this background of a society in transition, that this collection of papers charts progress made by South Africa since 1994 and outlines challenges in the new millennium. Generally, an emergent trend in South African indicator studies also evident in this update is the increased use of longitudinal and panel studies to monitor trends over time. In contrast to the isolation and inward-looking focus of earlier quality-of-life studies conducted during the period when South Africa was a pariah state, social scientists are now seeking to see South Africa from a more global perspective. Many papers in this issue use international yardsticks to better understand South Africa's world standing and the progress it has made in many different spheres of life since democracy.

The quality of life concept is in the public domain. Therefore this issue considers South African well-being and welfare from a wide range of perspectives including those of social scientists, policy and market analysts, and practitioners. The papers are ordered loosely under the headings of challenges, achievements, monitoring progress in quality of life, and social capital to take South Africans forward.

#### **3.1. Challenges**

Martins' paper addresses the extent of poverty and inequality that still marks South Africa since democracy. The material gains that poor South Africans hoped to achieve under democracy have eluded mainly the rural poor. His study uses household expenditure as an indicator of poverty and inequality of wealth that also allows for international comparison. The analysis confirms the growing black middle class (20% wealthiest households are now Africans) and shows up a very skewed income distribution.

Freedom of movement is one of the major gains under democracy. Ndegwa, Horner and Esau study the relationship between migration, income poverty, and health in the case of Cape Town. Migration to the city has increased enormously since the abolition in 1986 of the hated pass laws that restricted black geographical mobility. Cape Town, formerly a coloured labour-preference area, has now become a major receiving area for migration streams from the Eastern Cape Province. The study highlights the challenges facing the metropolis to provide an acceptable quality of life for newcomers.

Louw has updated her earlier article on trends in crime written in 1996. She reports that crime has decreased, but levels are still unacceptably high by international standards, in particular violent crime. With the wisdom of hindsight, her paper looks in greater depth at the underlying attitudes and values that may contribute to the persistence of crime ten years into democracy, particularly in the case of abuse against women in a society committed to gender equality.

#### **3.2. Achievements**

The work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Nobel peace laureate former Archbishop Desmond Tutu completed its work in 1998. Gibson's ambitious research aimed to discover



whether the TRC had been successful in reconciling South Africans. His paper provides convincing proof to back his proposition. One indicator of success according to Gibson is that both the oppressors and the oppressed admitted that atrocities were committed in their own ranks. Quality-of-life researchers, who specialise in measuring the intangibles that defy quantification, will appreciate Gibson's ingenuity in developing appropriate indicators to weigh the evidence. The wide-ranging study also shows that lack of opportunities for South Africans to meet on an equal footing may remain an obstacle to improving a better interracial understanding. Future research may reveal whether the next cohorts of young people who are educated together from childhood may develop similar tastes and interests that will cement relationships across South Africa's cultural divides. Booyesen and his colleagues address one of the most serious new challenges to South Africa's infant democracy. HIV/AIDS is a cross-cutting issue that impacts on virtually all domains of life. In their seminal research, Booyesen and his colleagues trace the experience of the first patients to benefit from South Africa's rollout of antiretroviral drugs in the province of the Free State. The panel study suggests that the success of the antiretroviral treatment programme may depend on far more than the pills people take. The heart of the matter is that factors such as social support and freedom from stigmatisation may also be significant for the well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS.

### **3.3. Monitoring Quality of Life and Service Delivery**

Higgs argues that South Africa's new democracy requires a more comprehensive index to capture the complexities of the quality of life concept. His instrument, called the Everyday Quality of Life Index, is based on a broad model of well-being that covers a wide range of factors ranging from external to very personal. His article outlines the rationale underlying the index construction and reports results from two rounds of surveys. His innovative index provides a new tool for policy makers, service providers and marketers to assess the impact of their interventions in enhancing the quality of life of South Africans from different walks of life.

The reduction of over 1000 municipalities to 284 has reduced the official number of South African cities but increased the area and heterogeneity of people in their jurisdiction. Municipalities now include both urban and rural populations with very different development needs and lifestyles. Two articles by O'Leary and Richards and Mutsonziwa explore quality of city life in South Africa's sprawling metropolitan areas. O'Leary reports on a longitudinal study of quality of life in greater Durban, Ethekwini, conducted between 1998 and 2005 that is still under way. The study aims to get feedback on life satisfaction and aspirations and everyday problems to better serve the needs of citizens. In the second article, Richards, O'Leary and Mutsonziwa focus on quality of life in informal settlements in three metropolitan areas: Alexandra Township in the heart of the City of Johannesburg, Buffalo City (East London) and Durban. Alexandra, affectionately known as 'Alex' to local residents, is one of the few black townships that was not removed to a black 'homeland' on the urban periphery during the apartheid era. The three studies highlight the importance of service delivery and fulfilment of the election promises of housing, clean water and electricity for perceived quality of life. Interestingly, in both studies, citizens also rate intangible aspects of the community life, such as social connectivity and feelings of belonging, as important enhancers of residential well-being.

Møller examines the correlates of life satisfaction in Statistics South Africa's 2002 General Household Survey. The profiles of satisfied and dissatisfied South Africans suggest that the new government's welfare policy may have boosted life satisfaction for the beneficiaries of the RDP. However, there are some signs of political alienation and satisfaction is partly dependent on different reference standards in rural and urban areas. Ten years on, it is still the basic necessities in life, such as freedom from hunger, a solid roof over one's head, and a regular source of cash income, that makes for satisfied South Africans.

### **3.4. Social Capital for the Future**

Religion has always played an important role in South Africa's history. The Dutch Reformed Church was formerly considered to represent the ruling National Party at prayer during the apartheid era. The ecumenical churches of South Africa played an important role in the anti-apartheid movement and continue to act as moral watchdogs and champions of the poor in the new era. The success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has variously been attributed to the credibility of the religious leaders who presided over the commission's work.

In this issue, Rule examines national survey data to explore the link between religiosity and various measures of quality of life including life satisfaction. He reports that religiosity, as measured in terms of beliefs and religious participation, is positively related to both material quality of life and life satisfaction. Pentecostals and members of Charismatic Churches emerge as having the highest levels of life satisfaction. The earlier volume's last chapter looked at South Africa's optimism. To round off this issue Harris reports on the continuation of the trend. The new science of happiness that is increasingly gaining currency, has set out to prove that a positive outlook on life pays happiness dividends. Harris' trend analysis, based on time series data dating back to the 1970s, shows that South Africans now face the future with more confidence that things will go their way. This national attribute may be one of South Africa's major strengths.

In the past South Africa has prided itself on its uniqueness. Ten years on, sights are set on becoming a normal society. The introduction to the earlier issue (Schlemmer and Møller, 1997) concluded that South Africa's social indicators might get worse before they got better. There is some evidence of back treading, for instance in service delivery, reported in this issue, but the majority of South Africans are optimistic and have seen improvements in their standard of living and quality of life. At the same time a minority are still 'surviving the transition' and struggling with 'a difficult life', to cite two titles included in the earlier issue. There are signs of impatience when democracy has not lived up to expectations. It is obvious that the growing pains of the transition such as poverty and increasing economic inequalities and backlogs in infrastructure will continue to present challenges in future. However, South Africa's resilience, religiosity, optimism, and ingenuity to overcome these problems, bode well for South Africa's quality of life in future.

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## **Notes**

1 Items read: 'your right to vote', 'your life compared with that of other race groups', 'the respect shown to you by other race groups', 'the way you get on with other race groups', and 'your freedom of movement'.

2 Government spending on social grants grew on average 30% a year between 2001–2002 and 2004–2005 (Kahn, 2005a).

3 In his infamous 7 June 1954 announcement on Bantu education, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd declared that the policy of his department was that "there is no place for the Bantu in the European community above certain categories of labour, except in their own areas."

4 Some 20% of the total budget and 6–7% of GDP was spent on education in the past decade (SAIRR, 1996:95; 2003:225).

5 The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa was launched in 2006.

6 The number of beneficiaries of social grants rose from 3.6 million in 2001 to 10 million in 2005. Child-support grants, which were extended to include children up to their 14th birthday in 2005 were paid out to 5.6 million children in 2005, up from 975'000 in 2001 (Kahn, 2005a).

7 This was a recurrent observation by panelists interviewed during the run-up to the 1999 national elections reported in Møller and Dickow (2002).

8 African National Congress alliance partners are the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the Communist Party.

9 Inequality among blacks/Africans measured by the gini coefficient increased from 0.53 to 0.64 or 20.75% between 1996 and 2005. During the same period the gini coefficient increased 8.33% from 0.60 to 0.65 in the total population (SAIRR Fast Facts, 2005, p.2).

10 Unpublished result from the 2002 democracy study commissioned by the Unesco International Center for Human Sciences, Byblos, Lebanon reported in Møller (2004b). The item was phrased: 'even if these leaders act in a way I do not understand, I would still support them in an election'.

11 Since 1994, South Africa has been called the land of miracles with reference to the negotiated settlement that avoided a civil war (see e.g., Friedman and Atkinson, 1994; Sparks, 2003).

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