

SOUTH AFRICA

SUMMARY

South Africa has come a long way since democracy was won in 1994. It has moved from a structurally racist society and an economy near bankruptcy to having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, sustained economic development, high levels of social investment and an initial transformation of the social and economic fabric of South Africa. However implementation is slow, uneven and often absent entirely.

These deficiencies are exacerbated due to factors like patterns of nepotism and patronage at all levels of society, inefficiency, lack of capacity and corruption in both the private and public spheres. High levels of poverty, socio-economic inequality and unemployment places South Africa in a very challenging position moving forward. Spatial patterns of apartheid still exist and are deepened by these reality, in particular in rural areas. Social conservatism is growing and this is reflected in the growth of “right wing” churches, xenophobia, homophobia, and calls for the death penalty, changes in laws concerning abortion, sexual rights, women’s rights, the promotion of the Traditional Courts Bill etc. The widespread violence against women runs parallel to such patterns of inequality, conservatism and patriarchy. South Africa is still suffering from one of the most severe hiv and aids epidemics in the world with more than five million infected. This causes a disintegrated social fabric, deepened inequality as well as placing an enormous burden on state institutions.

South African civil society is vibrant and pluralistic. There is great potential in the engagement of its organizations and ordinary citizens even though tendency is that social forces are weakening and frequently take on violent and destructive forms. Platforms for joint action, coordination and debate is missing, resulting in further fragmentation and division. In response to divisions, mistrust and violence, the state seems not to have found its way when handling such events, presently most often responding violently and with increased repression.

Following today’s categorization of South Africa as an upper middle income country, the international donor community, including Sweden and the EU, is currently drastically down scaling its development commitments. Sweden ended its bilateral cooperation completely in 2013. Such developments resonates within civil society and effects many of the donors focusing on its development and strengthening. This runs the risk of hampering achievements made and fails to recognise the dual nature of South African society and the complex character of its unfinished transformation.

South African democracy continues to find itself in a consolidation phase and the coming ten year period will be crucial with relation to the success or failure of social transformation. The ongoing and deep economic and social challenges paired with the need to further support civil society’s role and voice in process of transformation motivates the presence of the Olof Palme International Center and our agenda for change.

POLITICAL SITUATION

South Africa won its independence in 1994 as one of the last colonies on the African continent. It was one of 51 founding members of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 but came into disrepute during the years of Apartheid. It was only after 1994 that the country made its way back as a full member of the UN General Assembly. It is an important member of the African Union (AU), with former Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms. Nkosasana Dlamini Zuma being the chairperson currently, as well as within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). South Africa's bonds with the former liberation movements in especially Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia are strong and play an important role in defining and shaping foreign politics and priorities within and beyond the region.

South Africa has a population of approximately 53 million out of which 29 percent is younger than 15 years¹. There are eleven ethnic groups with the major African ones being Zulu, Xhosa, Basotho, Bapedi and Venda with ethnic identities playing an increasingly important role in internal politics. The legacy of Apartheid is still apparent and perpetuates most of society and the economy. The major societal differences still persisting is defined by the racial, spatial and economical structures created and reinforced under the previous regime.

The African National Congress (ANC) took a lead in the struggle for national liberation and became the uniting political force during the transition period pre 1994. The ANC that was banned from mobilization in the country for decades mainly positioned itself in exile. Mobilization inside South Africa however remained strong and vivid, especially during the 1970s and 1980s with the re-emerging trade union movement, the student organizations, the churches and the neighborhood associations being central to the struggle. When the ANC was unbanned and its' structures could be reconfigured from a role underground and in exile, the party assumed the role as liberators. Together with its political allies, dominated the political scene the last twenty years. There are formal separation of power. Elections are held regularly and are deemed to be free and fair. There is an intense public debate and a lively media with several both private and public media houses participating without major political interference².

Essential for South African internal political dynamics is the tripartite alliance consisting of the South African labor movement and stemming from the time of the liberation struggle. The ANC, the Confederation of Trade Union Movements (COSATU), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the South African Civic Organization (SANCO) has a historical relationship, define common policies as well as reinforce each other's organizations. Of late the strength and coherency of the alliance is coming under increasing pressure. Both within the ruling party, the trade union movement and among the Alliance members themselves there are growing tensions and challenges at various levels. Most significant of these are the infighting of COSATU as well as the differences between ANC and COSATU on key national policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP).

The ANC has almost doubled its membership over the last period reaching a total of 1, 2 million members. The party has also had the chance to celebrate hundred years of existence as well as its 52nd Congress. There are organizational challenges especially within the provincial

¹ Statistics South Africa, mid-year report 2013

² Human Rights Watch. *Country Report 2013, South Africa*

structures³. The youth wing is severely weakened from the conflict arising around its former president Julius Malema. The ANC led government has also been heavily criticized on a number of instances: during the events in Marikana, the use of public funds for the restructuring of President Jacob Zuma's homestead Nkandla, the use of Waterkloof airbase during the Indian media mogul Gupta family wedding and the accusation of bribery by ANC chairperson Baleka Mbete with relation to mining rights. This has led to ongoing and heated debates as well as decreased levels of trust between the government, the party, media and the public.

With relation to this there are a number of interesting political contenders for power growing in strength. The Democratic Alliance is attracting more support and is more aggressively challenging the ANC. From the far left there are a growing number of smaller organizations with the relatively newly formed party the Economic Freedom Fighters attracting most attention.

An important ingredient for the dynamics of South African society is the widespread corruption. South Africa ranks 72 out of 177 countries in the corruption perception index⁴. There are worrying signs of diminishing levels of public trust with 54 percent stating that they think corruption has increased a lot over the last two years. The police, political parties, Parliament and civil servants are seen as corrupt or extremely corrupt by more than 70 percent of the respondents⁵. The widespread existence of corruption and nepotism in South Africa both in the public and private domain, remain one of the greatest obstacles to development and further erodes the trust needed to sustain the social contract.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

The progress South Africa has made since 1994 is demonstrated by advancements in almost all development indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals. This is reflected clearly in a recent study looking at multidimensional poverty indicators with a broader perspective of development. South Africa has seen a sharp drop since 1993, when 37 percent of the population was considered multidimensionally poor, to eight percent in 2010, and with those considered to be extremely poor dropping from 17 percent to 4 percent⁶. The country ranks 118 in the HDI out of 187 countries, rising steadily since 1980 and finds itself above the regional average.

Despite these improvements and consistent economic growth however, the country remains one of the most unequal in the world with a Gini coefficient is about 0,63. The income gap has widened over the last years with the lowest percentile falling behind considerably⁷. Vast numbers of people still live in poverty. One of the methods used by Statistics South Africa, identifies 577 ZAR per month and family as a measure of poverty with 45,5 percent living under it. In the Eastern Cape these figures are only second to Limpopo and stands at 60,8 percent⁸.

³ Organizational Report 52nd Congress, by Secretary General Gwede Mantashe

⁴ Transparency International (2013). *Corruption Perception Index*.

⁵ Global Corruption Barometer (2013). *South Africa*.

⁶ Finn et al (2013). *What happened to multidimensional poverty in South Africa between 1993 and 2010?*

⁷ United Nations Human Development Report 2014

⁸ Statistics South Africa (2014). *Poverty Trends in South Africa 2006-2011*

Poverty and inequality is further exacerbated by the persistent and high levels of unemployment. For the third quarter 2014 it rose to standing at 25,4 percent. Also awarding South Africa with one of the highest rates in the world. If discouraged people are included this number rises further to 35,8 percent. A number that decreases further when looked at from a gender, racial, age groups as well as per provinces with the Eastern Cape being worst effected standing at 43,0 percent unemployment⁹.

South Africa has some 6,3 million people living with HIV/AIDS. This was the highest number of infected people in the world in 2013. Prevalence is 19,1 percent among those aged 15 to 49, with some age groups being particularly affected. The number of people living with hiv and aids was estimated to have increased by a million over the past decade¹⁰. The epidemic is gendered in that more women are infected than men. 57 percent of all those infected in South Africa are women. Prevalence rates also varies a lot by province. In Kwazulu-Natal, the province with the highest prevalence and one of the worst affected regions in the world, just under 40 percent in the age group 15 to 49 are living with HIV. However there are also positive developments occurring. For the age group 15-49 years incidence rates has dropped with almost a third and infections in children (0-14 years old) have halved since 2001. Treatment campaigns have improved and an estimated of six and half million deaths is estimated to have been avoided. Socially, the epidemic has had a huge impact on family structures, leaving many children without parents and in many cases leaving girl children as young as eight years to support and raise their siblings. It furthermore puts an enormous burden on the public system. Two million adults in South Africa were on anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment while an additional two and half million were in need of the drugs. Eventually more than six million people will need the lifelong medication¹¹.

Many social factors contribute to the spread of hiv such as inequality and social instability, poverty, patriarchy, sexual violence, internal migration and high levels of sexual transmitted infections. Research shows that South Africans generally have high levels of knowledge about the means of transmission of HIV and understanding of the methods of prevention but this has not translated into HIV preventive behavior. Behavior and social change are long term processes. Factors that predispose people to infection; poverty, patriarchy, inequality and illiteracy, cannot be addressed in the short term. Vulnerability to, and the impact of the epidemic are proving to be most damaging at community and household level.

In 1994 the target was to redistribute 30 percent of South Africa's land. The expressed aim was that ownership of land should be proportionate to the composition of the population. Twenty years later much remains to be done. Something that is now also being acknowledged by the government and a door has been opened to a more interventionist approach to redistribution and land reform¹². There is a growing unrest and impatience in the rural areas regarding the speed and form that the process is taking. Demands related to a new and rearticulated land reform process range from the establishment of local markets, the acknowledgment of ownership rights, the importance of small scale farming, ecology, access to investment capital,

⁹ Statistics South Africa (2014). *Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 3*.

¹⁰ UNAIDS Global Report 2013

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² IRIN, http://www.irinnews.org/pdf/embargoed_south_africa_issue3_report_for_press_0723.pdf, entered 2014-01-10.

support mechanisms and infrastructure have been presented collectively¹³. Political voices are being articulated trying to capitalize on this frustration, speaking of expropriation without compensation. The issue of land remains one of South Africa's major economic and democratic challenges.

The right to a healthy environment for present and future generations is enshrined in the Constitution and South Africa has a wide range of well-articulated policies in place to tackle all the major issues of importance such as air pollution, soil erosion and pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, bio diversity and preservation. However, as for most countries, these policies, laws and provisions carries little weight when seen to running contrary to the economic development. Extractive industries, transportation, energy production, infrastructural projects and food production all influence the environment severely often without proper analysis of its consequences and consequent measures in place to curb them. Negative impacts on the environment is widespread occur on a regular basis.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

One of the major achievements of South Africa is the establishment of a far reaching and progressive Constitution with an extensive Bill of Rights. The rights of every South African to civil and human liberties, health, water, decent living, education and food is guaranteed and South Africa has ratified most of the central international treaties¹⁴. There is no formal hindrance to the right of assembly, to form organizations or to form and join trade unions. South Africa has also been a driving force with relation to regional treaties within the framework of the AU. It has furthermore ratified the fundamental conventions to the ILO and the trade union density is among the highest on the African continent¹⁵. The country ranks 29 in the Democracy Index, just before Slovenia and Italy and finds itself on the brinks of being considered a full democracy¹⁶. There is a constitutional framework reflective of human rights and an alignment of general policy and a legal framework. This provides South Africa with the necessary space for enhanced participation of citizens; space to organise and build people's movements and to have dissenting views. Hence, the legal framework is well established, what is missing is not primarily the legal or political framework but the implementation of the ambitions that they embody. As a consequence there are a lot of strides remaining when it comes to inequality, the rights of women, unemployment, and access to equal education, housing and health.

Women's rights and gender equality. The strong legal tradition in South Africa is also reflected in the area of gender with the signing of all key regional and international treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the SADC protocol on gender and development. But also when it comes to gender equality political will, capacity and resources hinders implementation. The majority of women are mired in poverty, face untold discrimination in the family, the workplace, communities and society as a whole.

¹³ People's Assembly Land, Race and Nation Conference 22 June 2013, Formal declaration

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ ILO Normlex, accessed 2013-10-23

¹⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit (2013). *Democracy Index 2013*

The most critical form it takes across the country is the violence against women and girls (VAW). South Africa has been cited as having amongst the highest levels of VAW in the world for a country not at war. This includes rape, battery, sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment, incest, financial deprivation (men taking money from women or denying them access to financial resources), child abuse, femicide, trafficking for sexual exploitation, the rape of lesbian women (referred to as corrective rape by perpetrators) female genital mutilation and other harmful cultural and traditional practises. A research study conducted in 3 provinces in the country indicated that 19 to 28 percent of women have suffered physical violence. Other studies conducted on sexual violence indicate that as many as 60 percent of female teenagers are subjected to physical assault from male partners and approximately 30 percent are coerced into sexual activity. Harmful cultural, traditional and religious practises are increasing at an alarming rate. The practises include the abduction and rape of girls, virginity testing, food restriction for pubescent girls, witch killing, forced marriages, female genital mutilation, pregnant girls expelled from churches, dowry violence and many others. Violence against women is further exacerbated by poverty, lack of access to basic services and resources. Limited or no economic activity and the subsequent lack of resources that flow from this is a further obstacle to women and girls being free of violence against women. A lack of food security and access to land are all factors that contribute to violence against women. The increasing levels of VAW are a direct result of an entrenched process of gender identity development through which men of all races and ethnic divisions have learned to believe in their unquestionable authority and their total right to have power and control over women. These notions of masculinity are supported and promoted in all spheres of society.

Children's rights, including violence, sexual abuse and the right to education. In addition to the sexual and physical violence accounted for in the previous section, children are suffering greatly from the hiv and aids epidemic. There are an estimated 3, 7 million orphans in South Africa, about half of whom have lost one or both parents to AIDS; and 150, 000 children are believed to be living in child-headed households¹⁷. Furthermore these children are even more vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse and suffer to a higher degree of poverty and unemployment. This also relates to access to education. There has been some major improvements made with relation to access to education. However the quality of education and the situation in the schools are issues of great concern. As reported in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report, South Africa ranks 133rd for its primary education and 140 for its higher education and training system out of 144 countries¹⁸. Recent studies at Stellenbosch University reveals that persistence of two essentially different educational systems, one dysfunctional accounting for 75 percent schools and a functional accounting for the remaining 25 percent. The education system seems to propagate, rather than mitigate, inequality¹⁹.

Discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation. Also with relation to issues of identity and sexual orientation South African legislation is very progressive but it seems that homophobia is on the increase. Implementation of South Africa's legal obligations should be informed by the Yogyakarta Principles, adopted by independent experts that codify the status of international human rights law as it applies to sexual orientation and gender identity.

¹⁷ UNICEF South Africa, http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection_6633.html

¹⁸ World Economic Forum (2014). *Global Competitiveness Report – South Africa*

¹⁹ Nicholas Spaull (2012). Research on Socio-Economic Policy. Stellenbosch University

However, lesbian women are suffering discrimination in all walks of life²⁰. The rape and murder of lesbian women is on the rise at institutions of higher learning, in many community settings and in the community at large. Black lesbian women are specifically targeted suffering the highest number of violations of their rights. This attack on the sexuality of lesbian women demonstrates the conservative, traditional and fundamentalist attitudes of men towards women generally. The State contradicts itself in respect of lesbians. On the one hand it has the most progressive legislation on LGBTQI rights in the world at the same time South Africa recently voted to have the language of LGBTQI changed in the UN, which in effect takes away the rights and protection of LGBTQI's. What is sorely lacking is effective implementation of those provisions.²¹

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

The South African civil society is vibrant and active and the labor movement is amongst the strongest on the continent. The trade union movement is headed by three main federations. COSATU is the largest followed by the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU). All are members of the global union International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). However, the trade unions have suffered a number of blows during the recent period both externally and internally with high levels of infighting. The scene has changed for the work of the trade unions. There is a decrease in the levels of organizing generally. Related to both increased tensions, lack of material progress for workers as well as mistrust amongst workers there was widespread unrest in the labor market during 2012-2013 with massive loss of revenue and jobs particularly in the mining and farming sectors as a consequence. A record high of 114 strikes occurred in 2013 resulting in about 6, 7 billion rand lost in wages. 52 of these strikes were unprotected, occurring in the middle of collective agreements²². Employers and other stake holders have during the period more aggressively positioned themselves and their efforts to destabilize and discredit the trade unions. Media often follow the same rhetoric with a growing tendency to describe the trade unions as corrupt, separate interests and as uncontrolled, disruptive and destructive forces. Infighting, especially amongst the ranks of COSATU has reached high levels, culminating in a locked position related to the support or not for the National Development Plan, the e-tolling system, the youth wage subsidy as well as suspended COSATU Secretary General, Zwelinzima Vavi destiny. An increased tendency towards personalization of the trade union hampers the day to day work. COSATU themselves points to two main challenges: the continuing lack of influence and power of women as well as the fall in membership mainly due to the spread of contractual worker and labor brokers making it more difficult to organize and recruit²³.

A long side the trade union movement there is a wide range of other active civil society organizations with voice and capacity. Most of these are organized professionally, not member based and have no intention to change. The legitimacy of these non-governmental organizations (NGO) and community based organizations (CBO) are acquired through the relevance and visibility of their actions and their relationship with the communities they aim to serve. From this perspective being a more professional NGO guarantees the integrity and

²⁰ Human Rights Watch (2014).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Department of Labour (2013). *Annual Industrial Action Report*.

²³ COSATU Worker's Survey 2012.

well-functioning of the organization. An interesting process of organizing is the recent year's mobilization in the rural areas with the small scale farmers and farm worker organizations as well as the landless movements joining forces for the first time on issues of common interest.

There are various platforms for cooperation between civil society and government at a number of levels. Local aids councils are one of these examples, and recent efforts made on behalf of government to include civil society in decision making processes around the revision of land, is another²⁴. There is however widespread critique concerning the forms and functioning of these forms for cooperation as well as lack of trust towards the government's interest and willingness to real participation. In general there is growing mistrust between government and civil society, with government officials and representatives of the ruling alliance labelling some organizations in the NGO sector as trouble makers and controlled by foreign capital and civil society looking upon government as a failed promise. Within civil society there also seems to be a widening gap between the trade union movement, especially the alliance partners, and other organizations characterized by mutual distrust and suspicion. Some initiatives at new and innovative alliances is taking form.

Violence is part and puzzle of many of the social protests in the country. The recurrent service delivery protests often deteriorate into burning cars, blocking roads and destroying public property. The official response to these protests against inequalities and lack of service delivery is often securitization and increased state repression. A reaction that in most cases adds to the problems that caused them in the first place. The massacre in Marikana is a striking example of this vicious circle that further erodes the trust and mutual respect needed to uphold the social compact.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

With South Africa rising to a middle income country and the acceptance into the BRIC collective, the international community seem to take a similar stance. There is a strong tendency to withdraw support in accordance with DAC recommendations. The Swedish government decided to end development cooperation completely in 2013. The other Nordic countries share similar views with Finland being the exception. Other European countries are following the same trend. Netherland's development cooperation came to an end 2013, as well as Belgium. Great Britain is in the middle of a five year programme ending 2018, but with many of the projects coming to an end in 2014/2015. The European Commission is downscaling drastically and the future of the Human Rights Fund that has played an important role for civil society is uncertain. USAID stands out as maintaining its support to South Africa, putting a lot of emphasis on the work to decrease VAW.

The few Swedish NGO:s present remain determent to continue. The Swedish church is presenting a new three year application focusing on socioeconomic rights, gender equality and health. The Africa Groups of Sweden (AGS) and the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Co-operation are also planning to stay in South Africa, both with a more thematic and regional focus. The AGS concentrate their offices and have moved to Johannesburg and resides in the same building as the Palme Center. There is furthermore an ongoing and vital twinning cooperation with more than ten Swedish municipalities. Men for

²⁴ Human Rights Watch (2014). *Country Report 2014, South Africa*

gender equality and Naturskyddsföreningen (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) also have a few projects in the country.

The international NGO: s close to the Palme Center are more heterogenic in their approaches but most of them are staying. Only the Dutch organization FNV is phasing out as of 2014. The German FES, Rosa Luxembourg Foundation and Bread for the World remains. The Belgium FOS is staying but their country programme is quite small. The Norwegian People's Aid is staying but their support to South Africa is also limited. The Finnish SASK is going through some changes but remains. The British Oxfam is continuing their programmes with a new strategy in place focusing on inequality. The Ford Foundation has quite a big programme in South Africa focusing on hiv and aids, human rights and economic inequality and governance. The Open Society Initiative also has a big programme focusing on human rights and governance, media freedom and foreign policy issues.

There are growing concerns within civil society on how to continue and sustain ongoing activities and programs when international funding is being withdrawn. It has caused a big discussion on whether or not it is too early to leave, with the country standing at a crossroads, with many of the positive results achieved running the risk of not sustaining themselves. In this regard the support to civil society has an important role to play. Even if civil society cannot take over bilateral cooperation there is room and need for continued relations. The Olof Palme International Center is well positioned to continue its work added value in South Africa consists of being a donor able to support more political and advocacy aspects of our partners work. We are considered by our partners to be an open and easy to work with donor with a shared political vision. At present there are a few, and diminishing number of international donors and NGO: s present whereby the importance of OPC is estimated to grow as others pull out.

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

Overall objective

Women and workers have contributed to increased equality and towards the consolidation of democracy in South Africa

Programme objective

The target groups women and workers have strengthened capacity which contributes to increased respect for their rights

Intermediate objective 1

Protection of women's rights has been strengthened

Intermediate objective 2

The target groups have increased knowledge and awareness about their rights.

Intermediate objective 3

The Palme Center partner organisations have improved their ability to mobilise target groups.