



## **Reducing Inequalities in South Africa: Searching for Solutions**

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### **Introduction**

There is consensus that inequalities are very high in South Africa, and mostly between population groups. Although class inequalities exist, racial inequalities remain prominent which should not be surprising. This is largely because of the political history of the country and the inability of the successive democratic governments since 1994 to effectively address inequalities. It is also not surprising that inequalities remain high and it would have still been high even if the democratic government would have been effective. It takes time to reducing inequalities. The major concern regarding South Africa, given its political history, is that inequalities have been increasing during the democratic dispensation. This is what threatens the future of South Africa, if not already threatening the present. It is therefore important to not only analyse the inequalities but to proffer possible solutions with an understanding of why the numerous interventions aimed at reducing inequalities in South Africa have not worked.

This paper examines various inequalities in the democratic dispensation (post-1994) and it deliberately focuses on the recent period because there are many other studies that have analysed inequalities during the 1990s and 2000s. The first part of the paper – the next sections – deals with economic, labour market, higher education and healthcare related inequalities. Although it is important, political inequality is not covered because it has been extensively discussed in Gumede (2015). The analysis of different aspects of inequality is followed by a discussion of the interventions that have been put in place since 1994 to reducing inequalities. The discussion of various interventions considers why those interventions have not reduced

inequalities, mainly focusing on economic related inequalities. Before concluding, the paper makes proposals regarding possible solutions for reducing inequalities in South Africa.

Essentially, as argued elsewhere, although (income) inequality has to do with the labour market and a skewed structure of the economy in South Africa, the entrenched legacy of apartheid colonialism has ensured that economic inequality has increased and remains very high – apartheid colonialism is a shorthand for over 350 years of oppression and discrimination of the majority Africans by the minority whites. This fundamental issue needs to be taken seriously when considering options for reducing inequalities in South Africa. The standard proposals (e.g. increasing minimum wages, investing in education, progressive taxation and others) might not work well in South Africa if the structure of the economy, state-society relations and the functioning of global capital do not change.

## **Inequalities in democratic South Africa**

### *Income Inequalities*

Income is understood as revenue streams from wages, salaries, interest on a savings accounts, as well as dividends from shares of stocks, rent, and profits from selling something for more than the amount it was purchased for. It is by far the most common aspect used to measure economic inequality in society, and it also often used to analyse the distribution of household expenditure. Income inequality refers to the degree to which income is distributed unevenly for population groups, among and within the groups. The most common tool to measure income inequality is the Gini coefficient or index which is based on the Lorenz curve, which plots the share of the population against income received.

While South Africa has experienced a sustained positive economic growth since mid-1990s, the impact of this growth on reducing inequality inherited from apartheid has been disappointing (Visagie 2013) and income inequality has remained high due to the structure of the economy of South Africa (Gumede, 2015). Arguably, income inequality remains stubbornly high because the number of jobs created by the economy barely kept pace with growth of the economically

active population. Unemployment remains between 25 percent and 35 percent depending on whether one counts as being unemployed discouraged workers who have given up looking for a job (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The situation is also compounded by the fact that the social transfers system caters only for children from poor households, the elderly and people with disabilities. Therefore, income inequality remains very high because of wage inequalities in the labour market on the one hand, and the wide gap between those who are employed and those who are unemployed on the other hand (Liebbrandt *et al* 2009; van der Berg *et al* 2008).

*Table 1: Mean and median income comparison by population group, 1993 & 2008*

Population group	Mean income (R)		Median income (R)	
	1993	2008	1993	2008
African	539	816	304	367
Coloured	1 072	1 381	795	800
Indian	2 148	4 288	1 430	1 860
White	4 632	6 275	3 418	4 188
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 147</b>	<b>1 456</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>450</b>

*Source:* Adapted from Liebbrandt et al (2012)

As Table 1 shows, the mean and median income shares by population group in 1993 and 2008 differ significantly by population group. There was a 51.4 percent increase in mean income during 1993-2008 for the African population group. The mean income for Africans was R539 in 1993 and R816 in 2008. The Coloured population experienced a 28.8 percent increase in mean income during the same period. The figures were 99.6 percent for the Indian population and 35.5 percent for the white population. *Mean* income is the amount obtained by dividing the total aggregate income of a group by the number of units in that group (which is the average), while *median* income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount and half having income below that amount. Table 1 also shows that, in terms of the mean income, the Indian population were the biggest beneficiaries of income distribution since the dawn of the democratic dispensation during 1993-2008. However, the picture is slightly different when one investigates the median income. There was a 20.7 percent increase in median income for the African population. The figures were 0.6 percent increase for Coloureds, 30.1 percent increase for Indians and 22.5 percent increase for

whites. Once again, the Indian population is the biggest beneficiary in terms of the increase in median income and the Coloureds are the worse.

Looking at household income by gender and population group from the 2012 Income and Expenditure Survey, as shown in Table 2, the African population group accounted for 44.6 percent of the income in 2012 while Coloureds accounted for 9.9 percent and 5.4 percent for Indians and 40.1 percent for whites. There was also a huge disparity in the distribution of income in terms of the gender of the household head. Male-headed households accounted for 76.7 percent of the income share while the female-headed households accounted for 23.3 percent of the total income. By implication, comparing Tables 1 and 2, the distribution of income appears to have been stagnant during the democratic period in South Africa particularly in the 2000s.

*Table 2: Annual household income by gender and population group of household head, 2012*

Head of household	Rand amount (in millions)	Proportion (%)
<b>All households</b>	1 567 455	100.0
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	1 201 714	76.7
<b>Female</b>	365 741	23.3
<b>Population group</b>		
<b>Black/African</b>	699 154	44.6
<b>Coloured</b>	154 730	9.9
<b>Indian/Asian</b>	84 495	5.4
<b>White</b>	629 075	40.1

Source: Statistics South Africa (IES), 2012

In the most recent period, data permitting, it is interesting to observe that all population groups derive most of their income from work actually. However, not surprisingly, households headed by whites derive a greater share of the income from capital than other population groups. The white population group received 3.6 percent of their total income from capital. On the other hand, Africans derived 9.6 percent of their total income from pensions, social insurance and family allowance. Although this is understandable given the fact that Africans as a group do not

own much income generating assets, it is curious that this has not changed even in 2017. The figures in Table 3 (showing the averages of annual income by population group) were derived from the Living Conditions Survey (LCS) published by Statistics South Africa in 2017.

*Table 3: Average annual income by population group of the household head, 2017*

Source of income	Black/African		Coloured		Indian/Asian		White		Total	
	Average income	(%)								
Income from work	69 094	74.3	131 699	76.2	215 784	79.4	300 498	67.6	100 246	72.6
Income from capital	842	0.9	1 364	0.8	2 173	0.8	16 184	3.6	2 451	1.8
Pensions, social insurance, family allowances	8 921	9.6	12 260	7.1	10 028	3.7	30 739	6.9	11 378	8.2
Income from individuals	2 194	2.4	2 430	1.4	3 309	1.2	5 232	1.2	2 542	1.8
Other income	1 261	1.4	2 265	1.3	2 323	0.9	6 520	1.5	1 886	1.4
Imputed rent on owned dwelling	10 671	11.5	22 747	13.2	38 005	14.0	85 271	19.2	19 665	14.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92 983</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>172 765</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>271 621</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>444 446</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>138 168</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa (LCS), 2017

It is clear that the majority of poor African rely on state support in the form of pensions. Also, due to the configurations of African households and their economic situation, most rely on other family members for financial support. The Indian population is the one that least relies on pensions, social insurance and family allowance. This is in line with the data in Table 1 as the

Indian population group has benefited most from income distribution since the dawn of democracy in South Africa or at least for the period examined.

### *Labour market inequalities*

As hinted earlier, the South African labour market is characterized by deep and severe inequalities along class and racial lines. Africans were for many years discriminated against throughout colonial and apartheid years through official state policies. However, this should not mask other inequalities, especially those between men and women as well as inequalities between those employed and those who are unemployed. Most of the legislative discriminatory measures were amended and abolished in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, it would seem that the ramifications of the past discriminatory measures will be felt for a long time to come. The fact that Africans are still underrepresented in several senior and skilled positions in the private sector can probably be attributed to these measures and poor educational outcomes. Discriminatory measures such as Job Reservation Act, the Group Areas Act and several other pieces of discriminatory legislation resulted in the entrenchment of discriminatory practices and sedimentation of inequalities in the labour market. Also, until the 1980s Africans were excluded from the provisions of the Labour Relations Act, meaning they could not bargain collectively to improve their conditions of employment and wages.

The successive democratic governments have promulgated various legislative measures to redress the imbalances of the past within the labour market. Legislation such as Labour Relations Act of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and Employment Equity Act of 1998 have been very progressive in term of promoting workers that have been disenfranchised and discriminated against in the past. However, as data indicates, there is a lot

still to be done, especially in the private sector, for the labour market to reflect the racial and gender profile of the economically active population in the country. For instance, although there is some progress with regards to the employment of the previously disadvantaged individuals at the middle-management level and skilled occupations, the private sector is still dismally lacking behind when it comes to the top management level.

Table 4 shows that in 2005 Africans comprised 77.69 percent of the economically active population (EAP). EAP refers to people between the ages 15 to 64 years of age who are either employed or unemployed and are looking employment.

*Table 4. National economically active population (EAP) by race and gender % (2005-2018)*

	2005 (Sep)	2011 (Q1)	2018 (Q2)
<b>African</b>	77.69%	78.18%	80.35%
<b>Coloured</b>	9.05%	9.36%	9.10%
<b>Indian</b>	2.81%	2.85%	2.65%
<b>White</b>	10.45%	9.61%	7.90%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Male</b>	48.18%	48.50%	49.46%
<b>Female</b>	51.82%	51.50%	50.54%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Adapted from Labour Force Survey (2005) & Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2011 & 2018)

As Table 4 shows, in 2011 and 2018 the percentage of economically active Africans increased from 78.18 to 80.35 percent respectively. Coloured population has been relatively stable at 9.05, 9.36 and 9.10 percent in 2005, 2011 and 2018 respectively. The Indian population has also been relatively stable at 2.81, 2.85 and 2.65 percent in 2005, 2011 and 2018 respectively. The white economically active population has decreased from 10.45 percent in 2005 to 9.61 percent in 2011 and 7.90 percent in 2018. Regarding the gender of the EAP, females, on the one hand, comprised 51.82 percent in 2005, 51.50 percent in 2011 and 50.54 in 2018. On the hand, males were 48.18 percent in 2005, 48.50 percent in 2011 and 49.46 in 2018. There is almost gender parity when it comes to economically active population in 2018.

However, although Africans comprise almost 80 percent of the economically active population, the percentage share of Africans in top management for both the public and private sectors in 2005 was 31.2 percent and it has declined to 14.3 percent in 2018.

*Table 5. Top Management level by race and gender (2005 – 2018) (%)*

	2005	2012	2018
<b>African</b>	31,2%	18,5%	14,3%
<b>Coloured</b>	5,4%	4,8%	5,1%
<b>Indian</b>	5,8%	7,5%	9,5%
<b>White</b>	57,6%	65,3%	67,7%
<b>Foreign</b>		3,9%	3,4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Male</b>	80,8%	80,8%	77,1%
<b>Female</b>	19,2%	19,2%	22,9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Commission for Employment Equity Annual Reports (2005, 2012 & 2018)

The share of the Coloured population group remains relatively unchanged at 5.4, 4.8 and 5.1 percent in 2005, 2012 and 2018 respectively while the share of Indian population at top management level increased from 5.8 percent in 2005 to 7.5 percent in 2012 and 9.5 percent in 2018. The white population group's representation in top management increased from 57.6 percent in 2005 to 65.3 percent in 2012 and 67.7 in 2018. Regarding gender representation, there is a relatively huge gap between male and female workers. In 2005 male representation at top management level was at 80.8 percent, while that of female representation was at 19.2 percent. The figures were the same for 2012 but changed to 77.1 and 22.9 percent for 2018 respectively, implying some improvement albeit negligible.

For senior management level, as Table 6 shows, Africans had 74.9 percent representation in 2005, then it declined drastically in 2012 to 21.8 percent and 22.1 in 2018. The Coloured population's representation at this level increased from 4.0 percent in 2005 to 7.0 percent and 7.7 percent in 2018. The Indian population also showed an increased in representation from 1.8

percent in 2005 to 9.6 percent in 2012 and 10.9 percent in 2018. There was a marked increase in the white population representation from 19.3 percent in 2005 to 59.1 percent in 2012 and a slight drop to 56.1 percent in 2018. The gender representation is not as wide as at the top management level. It stood at 55.4 percent for females and 44.6 percent for males in 2005. It dropped drastically in subsequent years to 28.2 percent and 71.8 percent respectively for females and males in 2012. However, it improved slightly in 2018 to 33.8 percent and 66.2 percent for females and males. Although there is still a yawning gap between females and males at senior management level, representation is better than top management level.

*Table 6. Senior Management level by race and gender (2005 – 2018) (%)*

	2005	2012	2018
<b>African</b>	74,9%	21,8%	22,1%
<b>Coloured</b>	4,0%	7,0%	7,7%
<b>Indian</b>	1,8%	9,6%	10,9%
<b>White</b>	19,3%	59,1%	56,1%
<b>Foreign</b>		2,5%	3,2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Male</b>	44,6%	71,8%	66,2%
<b>Female</b>	55,4%	28,2%	33,8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Commission for Employment Equity Annual Reports (2005, 2012 & 2018)

Table 7 shows representation of the population groups at top management level for both government and private sectors. Clearly, and probably not surprising, Africans are mostly employed in government for the top management level.

*Table 7. Top Management - Government and private sector by race & gender (2011 & 2018) (%)*

	<b>Govt.</b>		<b>Private</b>	
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>African</b>	69,0%	72,2%	11,2%	10,9%
<b>Coloured</b>	9,3%	8,4%	4,2%	4,9%
<b>Indian</b>	5,6%	6,3%	7,7%	9,6%
<b>White</b>	15,5%	12,6%	72,5%	71,1%
<b>Foreign</b>	0,5%	0,4%	4,4%	3,5%

<b>Male</b>	70,2%	67,4%	82,7%	78,4%
<b>Female</b>	29,8%	32,6%	17,3%	21,6%

**Source:** Commission for Employment Equity Annual Reports (2012 & 2018)

The figures stood at 69 percent in 2012 and slightly increased to 72.2 percent in 2018 for the African population group. In the private sector, the figures are dismally disappointing at 11.2 percent and 10.9 percent in 2018. For the Coloured population, they are also better represented in government employment as the figures were 9.3 percent in 2012 and 8.4 percent in 2018. In the private sector the figures were 4.2 percent in 2012 and 4.9 percent in 2018. The Indian population is slightly better represented in the private sector than in government employment. The figure for government representation of Indians are 5.6 percent in 2012 and 6.3 percent in 2018. In the private sector, the figures stood at 7.7 percent in 2012 and 9.6 percent in 2018. The white population representation is heavily biased towards the private sector. In the government employment, white representation stood at 15.5 percent in 2012 and 12.6 percent in 2018. In the private sector, the figures were 72.5 percent in 2012 and 71.1 percent in 2018.

Regarding gender representation, there is a huge gap between males and females in both government and private sectors. In the government employment, the figures stood at 70.2 percent for males and 29.8 percent for females in 2012. In 2018, there was a slight improvement as the figures stood at 67.7 percent for males and 32.6 percent for females. In the private sector, the gender gap is even worse. The figures stood at 82.7 percent for males and 17.3 percent for females in 2012. In 2018, there was a slight improvement as the figures stood at 78.4 percent for males and 21.6 percent for females. This shows that there is still a long way to go in achieving racial and gender representation that reflects EAP in the private sector.

Similarly, for senior management level for both government and private sectors Africans are mostly employed in the government as Table 8 shows.

Table 8. Senior Management - Government and private sector by race & gender (2011 & 2018) (%)

	Govt.		Private	
	2012	2018	2012	2018
<b>African</b>	61%	69,1%	13,4	15,7%
<b>Coloured</b>	8,1%	7,7%	6,7	7,7%
<b>Indian</b>	7,0%	6,9%	10,2	11,5%
<b>White</b>	23,2%	15,6%	66,9	61,7%
<b>Foreign</b>	7,0%	0,7%	2,8	3,4%
<b>Male</b>	64,6%	61,0%	73,8%	67,7%
<b>Female</b>	35,4%	39,0%	26,2%	32,3%

Source: Commission for Employment Equity Annual Reports (2012 & 2018)

The figures stood at 61 percent in 2012 and slightly increased to 69.1 percent in 2018. In the private sector, the figures are slightly better than top management level. In 2012 they stood at 13.4 percent and 15.7 percent in 2018. For the Coloured population, there wasn't that much difference between government and private sector employment as the figures were 8.1 percent in 2012 and 7.7 percent in 2018 in government. In the private sector the figures were 6.7 percent in 2012 and 7.7 percent in 2018. The Indian population is slightly better represented in the private sector than in government employment, just as at top management level. The figure for government representation of Indians are 7.0 percent in 2012 and 6.9 percent in 2018. In the private sector, the figures stood at 10.2 percent in 2012 and 11.5 percent in 2018. The white population representation is also deeply biased towards the private sector at this level. In the government employment, white representation stood at 23.2 percent in 2012 and 15.6 percent in 2018. There has been a decrease of white representation from 2012 to 2018. In the private sector, the figures were 66.9 percent in 2012 and 61.7 percent in 2018.

With regard to gender representation, for government employment, the figures stood at 64.6 percent for males and 35.4 percent for females in 2012, which is a much better representation for females than at top management level. In 2018, there was a slight improvement as the figures stood at 61 percent for males and 39 percent for females. In the private sector, the gender gap is still huge but improved slightly from 2012 to 2018. The figures stood at 73.8 percent for males and 26.2 percent for females in 2012. In 2018, there was a slight improvement as the figures stood at 67.7 percent for males and 32.3 percent for females.

### *Inequalities in the higher education sector*

Undoubtedly, education matters. It also matters a great deal for the standard of living and mobility (Becker, 1964; Psacharopoulos, 1973; Haveman and Wolfe, 1984; Cohn and Addison, 1998; Glewwe, 1999; Heckman, 2000). As Gumede and Biyase (2017) found in the context of South Africa, education enhances better employment and earnings. For this reason, inequality in the provision of education becomes a main driver of inequalities in other spheres of life. Parents who never had opportunities to obtain education are more likely to have children who are also more likely not to obtain education and, if they do, they are more likely to perform poorly (Cohen, 1987; Davis-Kean, 200; Dubow, Boxer and Huesmann, 2009). Thus, access to education determines chances of success in life, as well as the economic and social development of countries. Individuals who are better educated tend to obtain better jobs with higher earnings. This enables them to secure better education for their children as well. Children born into destitute families may not have access to the same educational opportunities. Thus, it is important to note that educational disparities can persist across generations (i.e. intergenerational).

Before democracy, education had been vital to the apartheid policies and strategies advancing segregation and racial hierarchy that was profoundly damaging for the African majority (Gumede, 2013). In a new democratic South Africa, education was positioned at the top of the hierarchy in terms of transformation priorities (Chisholm and Petersen, 1999; Harber, 2013).

The Bill of Rights of South Africa's Constitution states that all South Africans have the right to a basic education as well as adult basic education and further education, and the state must take reasonable measures to make it progressively available and accessible to the people (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Yet despite this constitutional edict, there are still huge inequalities in terms of educational access and quality in South Africa. Educational inequality in South Africa refers to two distinct issues: (i) unequal access to education and inequality in overall educational attainment between different racial groups and (ii) differences in the quality of education available to different groups. It must be acknowledged that South Africa has one of the highest rates of public investment in education in the world: at about 7% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 20% of total state expenditure, the government spends more on education than on any other sector.

Access to higher education and training has long been a problem in South Africa, hence this subsection deals with higher education and training. During the apartheid era, the state not only ensured that the African majority were denied the sort of learning experiences which would prepare them for tertiary study but also that access to well-resourced institutions of higher education were only reserved for white students (Branson, Garlick, Lam and Liebbrandt, 2012). Decades later into the democratic dispensation, the divisions in the higher education system created as part of apartheid are still hard to eradicate (Council on Higher Education, 2016). After coming to power, the mandate of the new the democratic government in relation to access to higher education was the achievement of equity.

The historically white liberal universities were the earliest ones to attempt to achieve a more equitable dispensation with regard to access to higher education (Boughey, 2002). However, these universities took advantage of loopholes in the policy to admit a small number of African students who were seen to have the potential to succeed at tertiary level provided that they were offered the necessary support (Bunting, 2002; Steyn and de Villiers, 2005). In those days, the support provided by the universities to African students was the provision of additional

classes in study 'skills' and language, complemented by additional tutorials in the mainstream courses (Chisholm, 2004).

To transform the higher education sector, especially demographic profile of academic staffing, policy and legislation were seen as the primary instruments to bring this about this objective. The South African labour policy and legislation in the last twenty-four years had a clear goal redressing the inequities of the apartheid labour system, and it has played a significant role in shaping the academic staffing complement. However, although a lot has been achieved since 1994, hiring and retention patterns still appear to perpetuate largely racialised and gender-biased patterns (Council on Higher Education, 2016). Regarding race, statistics on the profile of academic staff in the public universities show that, while a lot has changed, the situation does not yet reflect the demographics of the country as Table 9 shows (though only up until 2012 due to data constraints)

*Table 9: Headcount permanent academic staff by population group (1994, 2004 & 2012)*

	<b>1994</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>African</b>	1 129	3 566	5 430
<b>Coloured</b>	431	756	1 077
<b>Indian</b>	535	1 233	1 477
<b>White</b>	10 699	9 854	9 261
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 794</b>	<b>15 409</b>	<b>17 245</b>

**Source:** Council on Higher Education, 2016

In 1994 Africans comprised 8.8 percent of the permanent academic staff members of the country's public universities, and the corresponding figures for other population groups were 3.4 percent for Coloureds, 4.2 percent for Indians and 83.6 percent for whites. In 2004 the figures for the same categories were 23.1 percent for Africans, 4.9 percent for Coloureds, 8 percent for Indians and 63.9 percent for whites. The ten-year period, 1994 to 2004, shows a dramatic increase in the number of African academic staff member, as a percentage of the overall academic staff, and a corresponding decline for whites. Also, the overall permanent academic staff complement increased by 20.4 percent in the ten-year period from 1994 to

2004. In 2012, the figures were 31.5 percent for Africans, 6.2 percent for Coloureds, 8.6 percent for Indians and 53.7 percent for whites. The overall staff complement increased by 11.9 percent from 2004 to 2012. This shows that there has been a major improvement in terms of the employment of the previously disadvantaged groups in public higher education institutions, or this challenge was more pronounced until 2012 (as that is the latest year with data).

*Table 10: Headcount of both permanent and temporary academic staff by population group (2004, 2008 & 2012)*

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>African</b>	9 127	10 494	16 429
<b>Coloured</b>	1 861	2 176	2 664
<b>Indian</b>	3 352	3 730	4 346
<b>White</b>	25 745	24 009	27 456
<b>Total</b>	<b>40 085</b>	<b>40 409</b>	<b>50 895</b>

**Source:** Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2016

Looking at the headcount of both permanent and temporary academic staff at public universities, as Table 10 shows, Africans comprised 22.8 percent, Coloureds 4.6 percent, Indians 8.4 percent and whites had 64.2 percent in 2004. In 2008 the corresponding figures were 25.9 percent for Africans, 5.4 percent for Coloureds, 9.2 percent for Indians and 59.4 percent for whites. From 2004 to 2008, Africans, Coloureds and Indians managed to increase their share of the staff complement while that of Whites decreased. In 2012, the figures were 32.3 percent for Africans, 5.2 percent for Coloureds, 8.5 percent for Indians and 53.9 percent for whites. In 2004, the permanent academic staff in public universities accounted for only 38.4 percent of all staff members, the remainder was the temporary staff. In 2012, the corresponding figures were 33.9 percent for permanent staff and 66.1 percent. Permanent academic staff comprised 38.4 percent in 2004 and 33.9 percent in 2012. This implies that the majority of the academic staff is temporary workers, and this applies to all racial groups. Between 2004 and 2012, permanent academic staff declined by 13.4 percent in the overall staff complement.

Regarding gender, as Table 11 shows the headcount permanent academic staff by gender, women comprised 31.9 percent of the permanent staff in 1994, 41.1 percent in 2004 and 44.8 percent in 2012. While the corresponding figures for men were 68.1 percent in 1994, 58.9 percent in 2004 and 55.2 percent in 2012.

*Table 11: Headcount permanent academic staff by gender 1994, 2004 and 2012*

	<b>1994</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2012</b>
Women	4105	6344	7820
Men	8747	9104	9631
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12852</b>	<b>15448</b>	<b>17451</b>

**Source:** Council for Higher Education and Transformation, 2016

This implies a steady increase in the number of women appointed in permanent academic posts in public universities. This could be attributed to the progressive nature of the country's labour laws in terms of advancing gender equality as well as the changing nature of the academic space that has allowed more women to enter the profession. Women are now able to enter fields that were 'traditionally' men's domain such as law, engineering and construction.

According to Higher Education South Africa (HESA) (2014), on the eve of the democratic dispensation, the *gross participation rate* (the total enrolment in higher education as a proportion of the 20-24 age group) in public higher education was 17 percent. Participation rates were highly skewed for different racial groups: the figures were 9 percent for Africans, 13 percent for Coloureds, 40 percent for Indians and 70 percent for whites. In 1993, while blacks (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) comprised 89 percent of the population, black students constituted only 52 percent of a total of approximately 473 000 students. Africans, although constituting 77 percent of the population, made up just 40 percent of total enrolments. Whites comprised 11 percent of the population, but white students constituted 48 percent of total

enrolments. At 43 percent, there was also under-representation of women as students. These statistics, taken together with the patterns of enrolments by fields of study and qualifications levels, show the relative exclusion of blacks and women in public higher education in South Africa in 1994 (HESA, 2014).

Since 1994, the headcount enrolments at South Africa's universities have approximately doubled to almost one million students. Student numbers increased from 495 356 in 1994 (the number includes universities, including technikons and teacher training colleges) to 983 698 in 2013 in public universities and universities of technology (HESA, 2014). The goal of the *National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa* of 2001 was to increase participation in higher education to 20% for the 18-24 age cohort (Ministry of Education, 2001). The expansion of student numbers and improvement of access to higher education for disadvantaged black people were seen as key to overcoming apartheid inequalities and producing the high-level skills needed to drive economic growth (Branson *et al*, 2012). Universities were required to enrol many more students of all race groups and build a student body that more accurately reflected South Africa's demographic make-up (Ministry of Education, 2001).

According to Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2016), South Africa's student participation rate, the proportion of 18-24-year-olds in higher education, is fast approaching the 20 percent mark. However, while access to higher education has significantly improved, there are still huge racial divides between the participation rates of young people. Some 60 percent of whites and more than 50 percent of Indians enter higher education in South Africa, while the corresponding rate for Africans is only around 11 percent and 7 percent for Coloureds (DHET, 2015). The main reason for this is the low-quality primary and secondary schooling, particularly in rural and township schools. Since its establishment in 1999, the government-funded National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), formerly known as Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA), has played an important role in enabling financially disadvantaged students to access higher education (CHE, 2016).

*Table 12: Total enrolments by population group, 2009-2013*

	<b>African</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2009</b>	549 817	55 100	53 628	179 231	837 776
<b>2010</b>	602 078	58 176	54 492	178 190	892 936
<b>2011</b>	646 826	59 312	54 698	177 365	938 201
<b>2012</b>	669 808	58 671	52 284	172 610	953 373
<b>2013</b>	696 950	61 034	53 787	171 927	983 698

**Source:** Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2016

As Table 12 indicates, the figures for different racial categories in 2009 were 65.6 percent for Africans, 6.6 percent for Coloureds, 6.4 percent for Indians and 21.4 percent for whites. In 2011, the figures were 68.9 percent for Africans, 6.3 percent for Coloureds, 5.8 percent for Indians and 18.9 percent for whites. In 2013, the figures were 70.8 percent for Africans, 6.2 percent for Coloureds, 5.5 percent for Indians and 17.5 percent for whites. The table above shows proportion of Africans enrolling at higher education institutions has been steadily increasing since 2009 while that Coloureds, Indians and whites has been correspondingly declining.

Regarding gender, the gender profile in South African higher education has changed significantly in the public higher education sector during the democratic dispensation.

*Table 13: Total enrolments by gender, 2009-2013*

	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>2009</b>	478 187	359 589	837 776
<b>2010</b>	512 580	380 356	892 936
<b>2011</b>	543 047	395 154	938 201
<b>2012</b>	554 937	398 436	953 373
<b>2013</b>	573 705	409 993	983 698

**Source:** Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2016

As Table 13 shows, female enrolments accounted for 57.1 percent in 2009, 57.9 percent in 2011 and 58.3 percent in 2013. The corresponding figures for males are 42.9 percent in 2009, 42.1 percent in 2011 and 41.7 percent in 2013. The imbalance in enrolments in higher education,

which has been steadily increasing since 2009 appear to have shifted in favour of women, especially compared to the demographics of the country.

### *Inequalities in the health care sector*

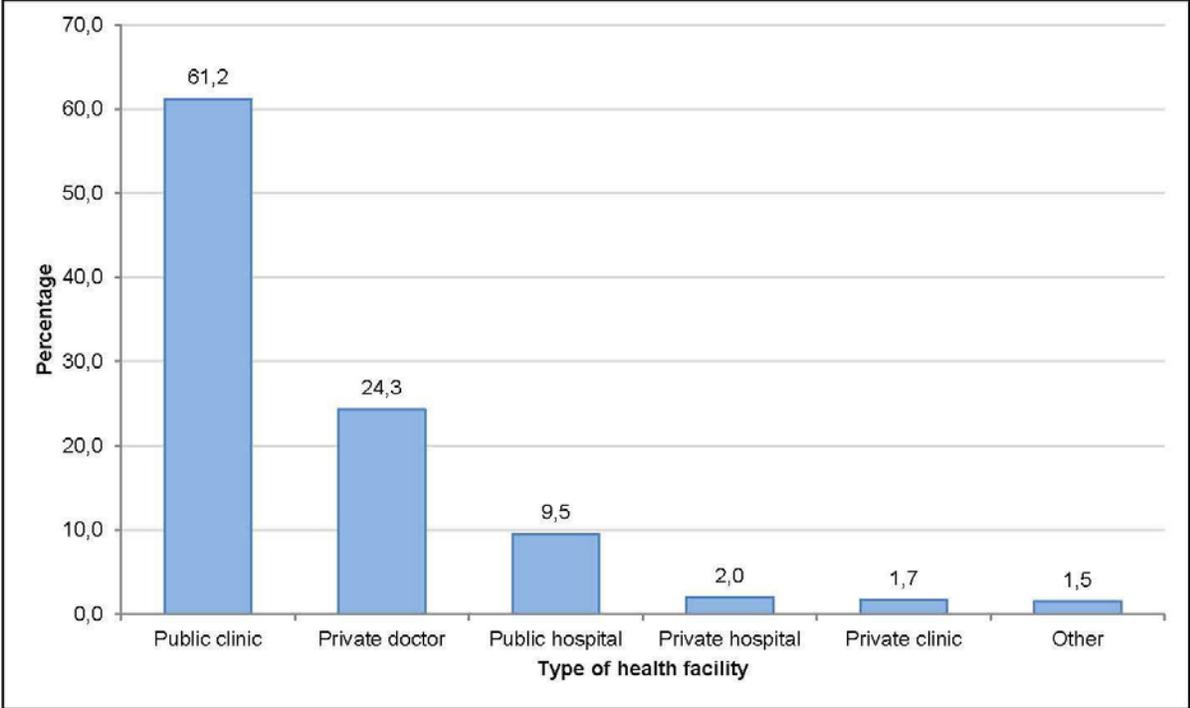
Inequalities in health have to do with disparities in both the health status and the health care access between different population groups in South Africa. As in inequality in education, inequality in health leads to inequality in other aspects of life as health affects a person's ability to be productive at work and to engage in other activities of life. Inequality in health care access refers differences in usage of health facilities between different population groups. Health care access is highly influenced by income and physical barriers to accessing health care facilities such as clinics and hospitals.

Although many interventions have been put in place since 1994 regarding healthcare, South Africa is still grappling with significant health inequalities. There are striking differences in rates of disease and mortality between population groups, which reflect racial differences in the access to basic household living conditions and other determinants of health (Mayosi and Benatar, 2014). There are substantial inequities in health between provinces and also within provinces (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Also, differences in health between men and women are also marked. Mortality is 1,38 times higher in men than in women, despite the fact that women have a higher rate of HIV infection (Mayosi and Benatar, 2014). When evaluating changes in South Africa's health care infrastructure since 1994, it is crucial to differentiate between the public and private sectors. Towards the late 1980s South Africa experienced substantial growth in private hospital development, and they catered largely to the white population (Coovadia *et al*, 2009). The increase in private hospitals accelerated during the 1990s, reflecting pressure to reduce the budget deficit and an international climate moving towards private-sector provision of health care (Lalloo *et al*, 2004; Stuckler *et al*, 2011).

According to Statistics South Africa (2013), in 2011 there were 4 200 public health facilities in South Africa. The ratio of people per clinic was 13 718, exceeding the World Health

Organisation (WHO) guidelines of 10 000 people per clinic. Since 1994, more than 1 600 clinics have been built or upgraded by the government. Also, free health care for children under six years and for pregnant or breastfeeding mothers was introduced after 1994.

Graph 1: Percentage distribution of households by type of health facility used



Source: Statistics SA, 2013

Graph 1 shows the percentage distribution of households by type of health facility used. The analysis of healthcare facilities by population group and province of usual residence used are classified as follows: public sector refers to public hospitals and clinics; private sector refers to

private hospitals, private doctors and private clinics; and others refers to unspecified public sector facilities, pharmacies, employer facilities, spiritual healers, homeopaths and traditional healers. It shows that the majority of households went to public sector clinics (61.2 percent) first when members of their households were ill or injured and decided to seek medical help. Followed by households who went to the private doctors at 24.3 percent and those who went to the public hospital at 9.5 percent. The private hospitals, private clinics and other health related facilities, such as pharmacies, employer facilities, spiritual healers, homeopaths and traditional healers, were used by a total of about 5 percent of the households.

*Table 14: Percentage distribution of households by type of health facility used*

Characteristics	Type of health facility			
	Public sector	Private sector	Other	Total
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>70,6</b>	<b>27,9</b>	<b>1,5</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>Population group</b>				
Black African	81,3	17,2	1,5	100,0
Coloured	63,1	35,5	1,4	100,0
Indian/Asian	35,6	64,1	0,3	100,0
White	10,5	88,0	1,5	100,0
<b>Province of usual residence</b>				
Western Cape	52,5	46,1	1,4	100,0
Eastern Cape	80,8	18,2	1,0	100,0
Northern Cape	73,3	25,6	1,1	100,0
Free State	63,6	35,1	1,3	100,0
KwaZulu-Natal	77,2	22,0	0,8	100,0
North West	73,3	23,0	3,8	100,0
Gauteng	62,8	35,9	1,3	100,0
Mpumalanga	72,6	25,9	1,5	100,0
Limpopo	86,7	11,0	2,2	100,0

**Source:** Statistics SA, 2013

Table 14 shows the percentage distribution of households by type of health facility used. The table shows that households from the African (83.1 percent) and the Coloured (63.1 percent) population groups mostly used health facilities in the public sector, whereas those from the white (88 percent) and the Indian/Asian (64.1 percent) population groups mostly used health facilities in the private sector. There were particularly wide differences between the African and the White population groups. As much as 81.3 percent of the Africans used the public health facilities compared to 10.5 percent of the whites that used the same facilities. On the other hand, 88n percent of whites used private health facilities compared to 17.2 percent of Africans who used private health facilities. With regard to province of usual residence, Table 12 also shows that the public sector health facilities were the most common type of health facilities used in all provinces, although in differing magnitude. More than three quarters of households in three provinces, Limpopo (86.7 percent), Eastern Cape (80.8 percent) and KwaZulu-Natal (77.2 percent), used public health facilities. The use of these facilities was also common in Northern Cape (73.3 percent), North West (73.3 percent) and Mpumalanga (72.6 percent). On the other hand, while the majority of households in Western Cape, Gauteng and Free State used public health facilities, these three provinces had the highest proportion of those who used the private sector health facilities (46.1, 35.9 and 35.1 percent respectively).

### **Reducing inequalities in South Africa**

As argued elsewhere, among the complex issues when dealing with inequalities in South Africa has to do with “how the operations of global capital have undermined efforts to reverse the legacy of racialised economic inequality” (Gumede, 2015: 92). It is largely “the entrenched legacy of apartheid colonialism [that] has ensured that it [inequality] increases...” (Gumede, 2015: 91). It is racialised economic inequality largely because the average income of Africans as a share of the white population group has remained low and intra-group inequality suggests that the high inequality in South Africa is driven by the white population group.

Arguably, not much was done in the first 20 years of democracy in tackling income inequality in particular. There appears to have been a view that the economic inequality that South Africa

was experiencing was not bad – or at least it was explainable because it was as a consequence of intra-African group inequality. It however turns out, as explained in Gumede (2015: 97), that “the more significant increase in income inequality [during 2005-2011] occurred within the white segment of the population” and this is attributed to the structure of the economy favouring the white population group. By implication, the answer is in the structure of the South African economy (as many have argued). Part of the challenge is that state-capital relations (in the context of state-society relations) favour the private sector. As argued elsewhere, “the government appears to be captured by the private sector or the state-capital relations favour profits over people” (Gumede, 2018: 199). Put differently, “state-capital relations that are fundamentally in favour of the private sector at the expense of the people or development” (Gumede, 2018: 200).

To some extent, the democratic government has made attempts to level the playing field. Various pieces of legislation (some were/are amendments) have been put in place since 1994: Labour Relations Act of 1995, Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, Employment Equity Act of 1998, Affirmative Action Act of 1998, Skills Development Act of 1998 and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003. These legislative interventions have played some role, as the earlier analyses of data shows. So are others such as those in the higher education and healthcare sectors, as well as shelter and housing. These interventions could not be effective though as explained above because the fundamental issue has to do with the structure of the economy which is also linked to how global capital functions. This does not mean that South Africa cannot implement the ‘standard menu’ aimed at reducing inequalities. It however implies that something much more fundamental would have to be done in South Africa to reduce inequalities. For instance, progressive taxation has not made a dent on income inequality.

That said, the new National Minimum Wage Act of 2018 might be one intervention with a lot of potential. That combined with social grants could make a dent on the Gini Coefficient, although the threshold amount for the minimum wage appears small and social grants mainly help keep

poor people out of extreme poverty. The sustainable interventions, however, have to be around economic and social policies as well as robust education and health policies. A whole range of factors need attention when it comes to education and health. Perhaps something as big as the proposed National Health Insurance is needed for education too. Part of the challenge when it comes to education and health is poor implementation. So, even though there are policy constraints the implementation is weak which has meant that the quality in both education and health is poor.

The one area that needs further thinking is economic policy. Because government will not be able to lead economic policy alone, it is important that there is consensus among the main role players how to better pursue economic development that can be inclusive. The restructuring of the economy requires all parties to come to the party, so to speak. The efforts to restructure the economy should also deal with the labour market. As many studies have shown, wage differentials contribute to a high income inequality in South Africa. Therefore, the labour market needs to be attended to in order that it can also absorb more people in employment. This is another area that needs a partnership, at least between the private sector and government. The relationship between the private sector and government needs to be transformed so that it can be at the benefit of society as a whole.

As indicated earlier, state-society relations need to be re-configured so that they can benefit society as a whole instead of only some sectors of society. At issue, fundamentally, is the socio-economic development approach that can work better in/for South Africa. It is in this context that social policy is important. With an agreed economic policy and a robust social policy, inequalities in South Africa would reduce. Of course, other interventions such as broadening the asset base of the majority Africans and redistributive policies/programmes, would also catalyse the reduction of inequalities. And government needs to implement better. For instance, interventions around public procurement could have assisted better in improving the financial base for Africans.

Another big issue is political patronage, particularly in dealing with political inequality. Even if South Africa gets policies right and the economy is successfully restructured, if patronage continues many inequalities will not reduce (sufficiently). It is in this context that political leadership, at all levels of government, is important. Therefore, a discussion about the socio-economic development approach should also confront the challenge of political patronage. This is fundamentally the issue of political parties. The world over, political parties thrive on patronage politics. Of course it is worse in some countries, and South Africa is one of examples of how patronage politics can cripple inclusive development. That is why some argue that the workers' movements are the future for the world. The limitation of this view is that many people are not employed. As such, the mobilization and conscientisation through workers' movements do not cover whole of our societies. Also, workers' movements often transport to 'normal' political parties.

## **Conclusion**

For a country like South Africa, inequalities are dangerous. The political history of the country dictates that challenges such as inequality, unemployment and poverty are a ticking time bomb especially because these challenges afflict the African majority which was oppressed. In any society, these challenges can reverse many gains or cause many problems. For a country with the political history as repulsive as that of South Africa, these challenges could ultimately burn the country down.

It is interesting to observe that there were instances in the post-apartheid period when the inequality gap was closing. There was a time when the number of Africans in managerial positions was increasing. There has been some progress in African academics in the higher education sector. There was a time when Africans were getting jobs. All this implies that it is possible to dent inequalities, even in the global context when capital holds governments ransom and even with the political history that South Africa has. All in all though, fundamental interventions in the economy are critical for properly dealing with inequalities. Social policy is

also critical. Fundamentally, though, the socio-economic development model for the country within the context of the kind of society that South Africa should ultimately be is the issue.

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