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Cover: *Traditional dancers at the official opening of the Ikusas'elihle Clinic in Sweetwaters (Mpumaza), a semi-rural community near Pietermaritzburg in the Umgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal. This clinic will be home to several current and future clinical trials aimed at improving the health and wellness of this community.*

Photo: Antonio Erasmus

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EDITOR'S NOTE

By Antoinette Oosthuizen

Recently, the HSRC celebrated the official opening of the Ikusas'elihle Clinic in Sweetwaters, a semi-rural community near Pietermaritzburg in the Umgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal. In this edition of the *HSRC Review*, an article looks at the value of community-based research and the clinical trials to be conducted there.

The HSRC also hosted a conference in March on transformative leadership in Zanzibar, Tanzania, where young leaders gathered with social science researchers to debate what transformative action looks like in African contexts. We feature several articles based on presentations given at this event.

Analysing data that focused on how change happens in resource-constrained schools, the HSRC's Andrea Juan and Sylvia Hannan hypothesised that the way school principals ran their schools would explain some of the variations in no-fee schools' performance in the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. No-fee-paying schools, operating in resource-constrained contexts, generally have low achievement scores, but there are exceptions, possibly due to the transformative leadership practices of their principals.

Krish Chetty looked at the role of blockchain technology in transformative leadership. Explaining how blockchain works, he also examined how it could be applied based on principles of social justice that enable fair competition and provide equal opportunities for all to participate in the economy.

We also feature an article about a new documentary, *The Spirit of Kanju: Leaders transforming Africa*, which was created by graduates of the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship Program as part of an HSRC research study. Showcasing transformative leadership in action, it illustrated how seemingly small actions can have far-reaching ripple effects in African contexts.

A further three articles focus on grants. Peter Jacobs and his colleagues report back on the final two debates in the HSRC's webinar series discussing issues related to a universal basic income grant (UBIG). The debates focused on the role of civil society and the real or potential differences a UBIG could make to poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

Based on research conducted in partnership with the HSRC, a Black Sash report highlighted the critical role that the social relief of distress grant played in keeping vulnerable South Africans afloat during the COVID-19 outbreaks. It also underscored the current administration challenges that limit the effectiveness of grants and how these might be overcome.

In an article in *Africa Insight*, Cheryl Hendricks, former executive director of the HSRC's Africa Institute of South Africa, and Tochukwu Omenma of the University of Nigeria argued that a focus on military tactics has been counter-productive to the African Union's aim of 'silencing the guns' in the Sahel region. Recent developments in the region support this view, writes Andrea Teagle.

We also feature an article about a new HSRC project, *Housing as Economic Policy*, which aims to bring housing experts together in a series of public dialogues to interrogate the contribution that housing could make to promoting more inclusive and equitable economic development.

Finally, our book page includes two book reviews. *South African Foreign Policy Review, Volume 4: Ramaphosa and the New Dawn for South African Foreign Policy* explores the norms and values, architecture, conceptual frameworks and practice of foreign policy and diplomacy. And *Violent Ecotropes: Petroculture in the Niger Delta* provides a unique view of the cultural aspects of the oil extraction industry within the societies where it operates. It highlights the complexity of the universal environmental challenges of our time.

The Ikusas'elihle Clinic:

Health research with the Sweetwaters community



In April, the HSRC's Centre for Community-based Research launched a clinic facility in Sweetwaters near Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal. This clinic will be home to several current and future clinical trials aimed at improving the health and wellness of this community. By living and working in the community, researchers gain a deeper understanding of its challenges.

By Antoinette Oosthuizen



Photo: Antonio Erasmus, Flickr

The HSRC has been conducting research in Sweetwaters (Mpumaza), a semi-rural community on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg in the Umgungundlovu District of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), since 2004. Many people who live there experience unemployment and extreme poverty. While conducting research in the community, the researchers have become particularly sensitised to the challenges posed by HIV and tuberculosis (TB).

On 20 April 2022, the HSRC's Centre for Community-based Research (CCBR) launched the Ikusas'elihle Clinic in Sweetwaters, which was built in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the University of Washington. Several clinical trials will be carried out at the facility focusing on health challenges in the region, for example, to evaluate the efficacy of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) treatments to prevent HIV infection, and to evaluate methods to improve TB detection.

Why PrEP?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends daily PrEP treatment with the antiretroviral drug tenofovir for HIV-negative individuals who are at substantial risk of contracting HIV due to their personal circumstances. When a person on PrEP is exposed to HIV – for example through sexual activity – the drug can stop the virus from entering the body's cells. One of the highest rates of new HIV infections in the world is among young African women. They are therefore a critical target population group for PrEP treatment. Dr Shannon Bosman, director of clinical projects at the CCBR, said at the official opening of the Ikusas'elihle Clinic.

“In recent HIV prevention trials, which provided the best available standard of prevention services – including condoms, services to treat and prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and counselling – we still saw that women were becoming newly infected with HIV.”

Truvada, a drug containing tenofovir, is available in South Africa, but the fact that it needs to be taken daily at least 90% of the time to be effective is a challenge, said Bosman. Other forms of PrEP include the intravaginal dapivirine ring, and cabotegravir, a long-acting injectable that women take every two months to protect them from HIV infection, but these are not yet available in South Africa.

Another option is the long-acting islatravir PrEP tablet, which is available locally, and is the focus of the ImPower Clinical Trial at the Ikusas'elihle Clinic. It is the third phase of a clinical study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of oral islatravir, which is a once-monthly PrEP treatment for women at high risk of HIV infection.



From left: Prof Khangelani Zuma, divisional executive of the HSRC Human and Social Capabilities division, HSRC Deputy CEO- Research (Acting) Prof Heidi van Rooyen and KwaMpumuza Traditional Council's Inkosi Ntsikayezwe W. Zondi oversaw the official opening of the Ikusas'elihle Clinic in Sweetwaters (Mpumuza), KwaZulu-Natal.

Photo: Antonio Erasmus, Flickr

“The study will evaluate how well islatravir works, how safe it is and how tolerable it is, compared with Truvada,” explains Bosman. “Participants will be randomised, so they will get either islatravir or Truvada and then be followed up for three years to see what happens during the study.” It will be a double-blind study, meaning neither the researchers nor the participants will know which of the two drugs participants receive, thereby ensuring that the results aren’t biased. Approximately 4500 participants – 90% from Africa and 10% from the USA – will participate. At Sweetwaters, 200 to 250 young women will be enrolled.

The researchers will also work on the INSIGHT clinical trial, a study to evaluate daily oral PrEP uptake, adherence, persistence, and preferences among young women in several African countries.

“We know PrEP works well, but we need to understand who takes PrEP and who doesn’t, how long women want to stay on it and their preferences for attributes of such long-acting PrEP products. Attributes of drug formulations would include dose and form (injectables or pills and the size of the pills), frequency of dosing (e.g., daily versus monthly or six-monthly) and the side effect profile.”

Researchers will enrol 3000 sexually active, HIV-negative women aged 16 to 30 in eSwatini, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. At the Ikusas’elihle Clinic, 150 young women will be offered PrEP and followed up for six months.

“The results of these trials will guide future interventions and provide information on how the Department of Health’s current PrEP rollout programme can be strengthened,” said Bosman.

Finding TB faster

Undetected TB in Africa remains a major public concern with catastrophic health and financial consequences. “Current guidelines rely on active TB case finding – testing those with symptoms, and then diagnosing and treating them. However, we know there is a long period when people with TB can be asymptomatic,” said Bosman. The delayed onset of treatment results in prolonged infection, increased disease transmission and a higher risk of suffering and death. “To diagnose these cases earlier, we need cost-effective screening tests that can guide us on who to test with the more expensive sputum sample TB test.”

Community-based TB screening and triage testing as part of a health campaign could be a cost-effective and impactful diagnostic strategy. “A triage strategy is when you take inexpensive rapid tests that can be performed first to guide you on when to conduct the more expensive tests. This will reduce diagnostic costs and improve early access to diagnoses and outcomes.”

Researchers at the Ikusas’elihle Clinic have completed enrolment and are working on the follow-up phase of a trial to evaluate the accuracy of two TB screening tests.

Computer-Aided Detection for TB (CAD4TB) is a software program using artificial intelligence to analyse a chest X-ray, producing a risk score that indicates the need for further TB screening. The other method is a C-reactive protein (CRP) assay measuring an inflammatory marker to determine the risk of having TB.

This phase of the research looks at the accuracy of the CAD4TB and CRP methods compared with the GeneXpert test, which is the most widely used rapid diagnostic test for TB and the standard of care. “We have enrolled 700 adults who were symptomatic of TB and offered them the chest X-ray, CRP, GeneXpert, and sputum testing. Another 700 were enrolled in Lesotho and a follow-up will be completed in the next three months. We will then use this study to guide the upcoming community phase of this study,” said Bosman.

The purpose of the next phase is to investigate the effectiveness of a community-based TB testing algorithm consisting of the chest X-ray analysed by the CAD4TB system, point-of-care CRP triage testing and GeneXpert testing to evaluate the cost and the cost-effectiveness of the screening triage algorithm.

“We will enrol adults living in the community with or without symptoms of TB. They will be offered a chest X-ray. If it indicates they may have TB, they will be offered the CRP assay test and then sputum testing for TB. The aim is to see if this approach works to reduce the cost of diagnosing TB and increase the number of cases we find,” said Bosman. The trial will enrol 20 000 adults 18 years and older, 5700 of them from the Msunduzi and Greater Edendale areas and the rest in Lesotho.

The value of a community centre

Prof Khangelani Zuma, divisional executive of the HSRC’s Human and Social Capabilities research division, said the community plays an important role in the success of the HSRC’s research in Sweetwaters. Living and working in the community helps to sensitise our researchers to local challenges and needs, while providing democratic spaces for knowledge co-creation. “This enables us to generate high-quality, evidence-based findings that are non-exploitative and community-owned,” he said.

Note: The ImPower and INSIGHT trials are funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through the University of Washington, Seattle in the USA. The TB trials are funded by the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership through the Swiss Tropical and the Public Health Institute, Switzerland.

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Photo: Antonio Erasmus, Flickr



From left to right: Emmanuel Ampomah, Didier Habimana, Eugene Paramoer, Charles Katulamu, John Lubaale, Maxwell Aladago, Joy Birungi, Sharlene Swartz, Miriam Atuya, Rahab Wangari, Stephanie Achiong, and Hilda Namakula

From beating the odds to changing the odds:

Transformative leadership in Africa



Researchers at the HSRC conference on transformative leadership in March 2022, in Zanzibar, Tanzania

Photo: Antonio Erasmus

Food security, conservation, girls' schooling and human rights organisations, infrastructure projects, and robotics lessons for young people. These are just a handful of the initiatives led by young graduates of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, who attended the HSRC conference on transformative leadership from 21 to 26 March 2022, in Zanzibar, Tanzania. These young leaders gathered with social science researchers to debate what transformative action looks like in African contexts. How does it differ from social action? And what is the impact of education on young people's leadership skills? **Andrea Teagle** reports.

In her opening address at the HSRC's conference on transformative leadership, Sharlene Swartz, head of the Inclusive Economic Development research division at the HSRC, noted that in 2021 the world experienced more than 20 armed conflicts, each having over 1000 fatalities – and many with over 10,000 fatalities. Almost half of these conflicts were happening on the African continent. Against this backdrop, the symposium's focus on how leaders could bring about systemic change and social justice was particularly pertinent, she said.

The conference was part of a large-scale longitudinal study following nearly 2,000 alumni of the [Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program](#). These young people – secondary school and university graduates – were awarded scholarships and holistic support to complete their studies. In turn, they were asked to make their education count not only for themselves but also to benefit their communities and wider society. The programme is aimed at developing a new generation of African leaders.

Transactional, transformational or transformative?

At the core of the Mastercard Foundation's programme is the evolving concept of *transformative* leadership, which is not well defined beyond "the act of engaging others, in an ethical manner, to generate positive and lasting change."

African and global scholars distinguish (albeit not systematically) transactional, transformational and transformative leadership, Swartz said at the symposium. Transactional styles of leadership, such as authoritarian and servant leadership, describe how leaders' actions direct others. In contrast, transformational leadership aims to bring about change in organisations and institutions.

The outcome of transformational leadership is not set and could thus be to maximise profit or to bring about efficiency or equality.

Transformative leadership goes a step further. It is aimed at social change in the political, social and economic spheres with the clear intention to bring about social justice. It is this moral aim that distinguishes transformative leadership from other conceptions of leadership, argued Swartz. “[Transformative leadership] is not content to change the lives of individuals without also unearthing... and dismantling those structures of power and privilege that act against equity and freedom and that necessitate the need for change or help in the first place.”

During the symposium, researchers presented over 30 papers on various aspects of transformative leadership in African contexts, which were debated and interrogated by the young graduates who, in turn, presented a documentary on leadership that – together with filmmaker Eugene Parmoer – they had spent almost two years creating.

The imprint of education

The documentary, *Kanju: leaders transforming Africa*, was part of research activity in *The Imprint of Education* study, which sought to explore young graduates’ understanding and implementation of transformative leadership. The study also included qualitative and quantitative research towards the same end.

In interviews, the majority of the 117 participants identified themselves as leaders, speaking of leadership in transactional terms. However, only about a quarter of those participants spoke specifically of their understanding of *transformative* leadership: leadership that brings about social justice as a clear goal.

After the first year of data collection, 60% of the 403 university graduates who took part in a quantitative survey reported possessing skills such as the ability to transform good ideas into action and being able to motivate people to work towards a common goal. Far fewer, however, were able to say they had the skills to bring about systemic change. The survey found that a fifth (21%) of participants thought they had ‘the skill to use government policies to solve problems in my community’, while just over a third (36%) had ‘the skill to show people how all forms of injustice are related, for example, racism, sexism, and prejudice against those living with disabilities or who were immigrants’. But many (71% and 58% respectively) expressed a desire to learn these two skills.

Not surprisingly, given that the average age of these university graduates was 27, very few aimed to make major impacts beyond changing individual lives in local communities, and very few were measuring the impacts of their efforts, Swartz said. Most were silent on the effects of structures of oppression like sexism, racism, greed and nepotism.

Researcher Nothando Ntshayintshayi of the HSRC’s Inclusive Economic Development research division said that the *Imprint* study suggested that many of the programme graduates saw transformational and transformative leadership as existing on a spectrum, with some identifying systemic change as a future aspiration.

Incorporating African perspectives

To change the odds of individuals and entire communities being able to thrive, the continent needs transformative leaders who can speak truth to power, and to mobilise projects, programmes and people committed to systemic change, Swartz said.



Former HSRC CEO Prof Crain Soudien during his opening address at the conference in Zanzibar, Tanzania, 21 March 2022. **Photo:** Antonio Erasmus



Prof Sharlene Swartz talks about the concept of transformative leadership, Zanzibar, Tanzania, 21 March 2022. **Photo:** Antonio Erasmus

But what does this kind of leadership look like in practice? How can transformative leadership be assessed and developed in different African contexts? In this respect, keynote speaker Prof 'Funmi Olonisakin argued for the importance of incorporating African outlooks and practices such as *Ubuntu* and *Harambee*. Similarly, Western-based leadership concepts should be made visible and interrogated and discarded where they are not useful or relevant.

In his presentation on pre-colonial leadership in Africa, the HSRC's Matthews Makgamatha emphasised the diversity of leadership types and societal structures, ranging from just to unjust. This kind of nuanced exploration of the kinds of societies that promoted equity and freedom is critical to formulating a workable, useful leadership model. And Olonisakin argued that despite the variation on the African continent, a shared history of colonisation connects more than it divides us and offers opportunities for building new African understandings of leadership action.

A cost too great?

The late Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, is credited with having once said, "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river and find out why they are falling in."

Referring to Tutu's words, Swartz said that real change requires going upriver to find out why people are falling in, and to change the systems that allow them to continue doing so. But she acknowledged that changing systems often comes with a heavy cost: in some places, individuals who speak out on political issues put their lives at risk. "Is this what we are expecting of these young people?" she questioned.

Mastercard Foundation alumna Sepiso Mwamelo, who studied Africa and international development at the University of Edinburgh, pointed out that, while scholarship programmes were life-changing opportunities, the expectation of driving social change can be a heavy one for young people to bear without support. She challenged the audience to hold the state accountable to its people, and to think of ways of caring for young leaders.

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The HSRC's Matthews Makgamatha in discussion with Rahab Wangari, a data scientist and Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program graduate, during the transformative leadership conference in Zanzibar, Tanzania, 21 March 2022.
Photo: Antonio Erasmus



Photo: Freepik

How transformative principals can close the achievement gap in South African schools

South African schools face the challenge of equipping learners to thrive in a society already buckling under the weight of unemployment, inequality and poverty. Despite innovative policy changes in the education system, resource-constrained schools in South Africa (no-fee schools) continue to struggle to produce competitive academic results. A recent paper by the HSRC's Andrea Juan and Sylvia Hannan shows that, while some factors of academic performance are linked to the availability of resources, transformative leaders attuned to the learning environment and committed to change can help to close the achievement gap. By **Andrea Teagle**

At the core of transformative leadership is the goal to achieve systemic change and social justice. To paraphrase Sharlene Swartz, who spoke at the HSRC's March 2022 symposium on transformative leadership in African contexts, transformative leadership is about changing the odds to allow many to thrive, rather than empowering a few to succeed and beat the odds, despite systemic obstacles.

Keeping in mind this goal of bringing about change for more than just a few, what role can transformative leaders play? At the symposium, which brought together scholars and young leaders from across the African continent, the HSRC's Andrea Juan and Sylvia Hannan presented an analysis of data that focused on how change happens in resource-constrained schools.

The researchers used South African data from the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), an international assessment that measures educational performance of Grade 4 or 5 and Grade 8 or 9 learners and helps countries to monitor their

education systems over time. Focusing on the Grade 5 data, they grouped fee-paying and no-fee-paying schools to approximate well-resourced and resource-constrained schools, respectively. In South Africa, schools' achievement scores in mathematics and other subjects are largely clustered at opposite ends of the performance spectrum. No-fee-paying schools, located in poor communities and operating in resource-constrained contexts, generally have low achievement scores – although some exceptions do exist.

Juan and Hannan found that 17% of the no-fee-paying primary schools produced above-average mathematics achievement scores – with average scores above the national average. These unexpected higher scorers they dubbed 'transformative schools'.

Despite operating in resource-constrained settings, these schools had managed to empower many learners to thrive. How had they changed the odds of academic success for their learners?

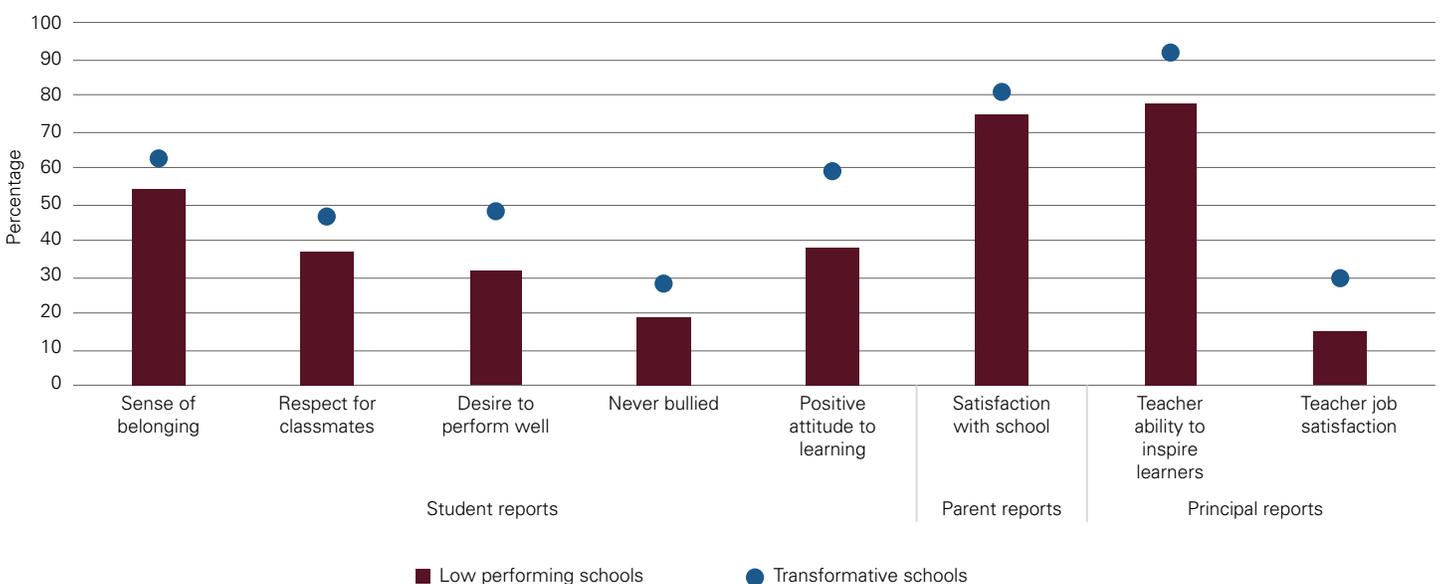
Articulating a common vision

The HSRC duo hypothesised that the way school principals ran their schools would explain some of the variations in no-fee schools' performance. Some factors, of course, are beyond the control of principals. These include limited school resources, larger class sizes and the home environment of learners. But some factors, such as the quality of teaching and the creation of a safe and orderly environment, could be influenced by transformative leadership practices.

Speaking at the symposium, Juan argued that quality of leadership was particularly important in resource-constrained schools. Previous literature has indicated that the ability of a principal to create a shared vision was central to building effective, equitable and inclusive institutions, she said. A leader's shared vision could influence (1) whether the school environment is conducive to learning and teaching; (2) to what degree there is a focus on achievement and excellence; and 3) whether there is collaboration between school stakeholders, including principals, teachers, parents and learners.

In total, Hannan and Juan explored 20 variables conceptually related to transformative leadership that fall into the above three categories, comparing the achievement scores of 'transformative' no-fee schools with other no-fee-paying schools (Figures 1 to 3). The scores are based on responses to the TIMSS contextual questionnaires by school principals, teachers and learners.

Figure 1: Conducive learning and teaching environment



Source: TIMSS 2019 Grade 5 South African dataset

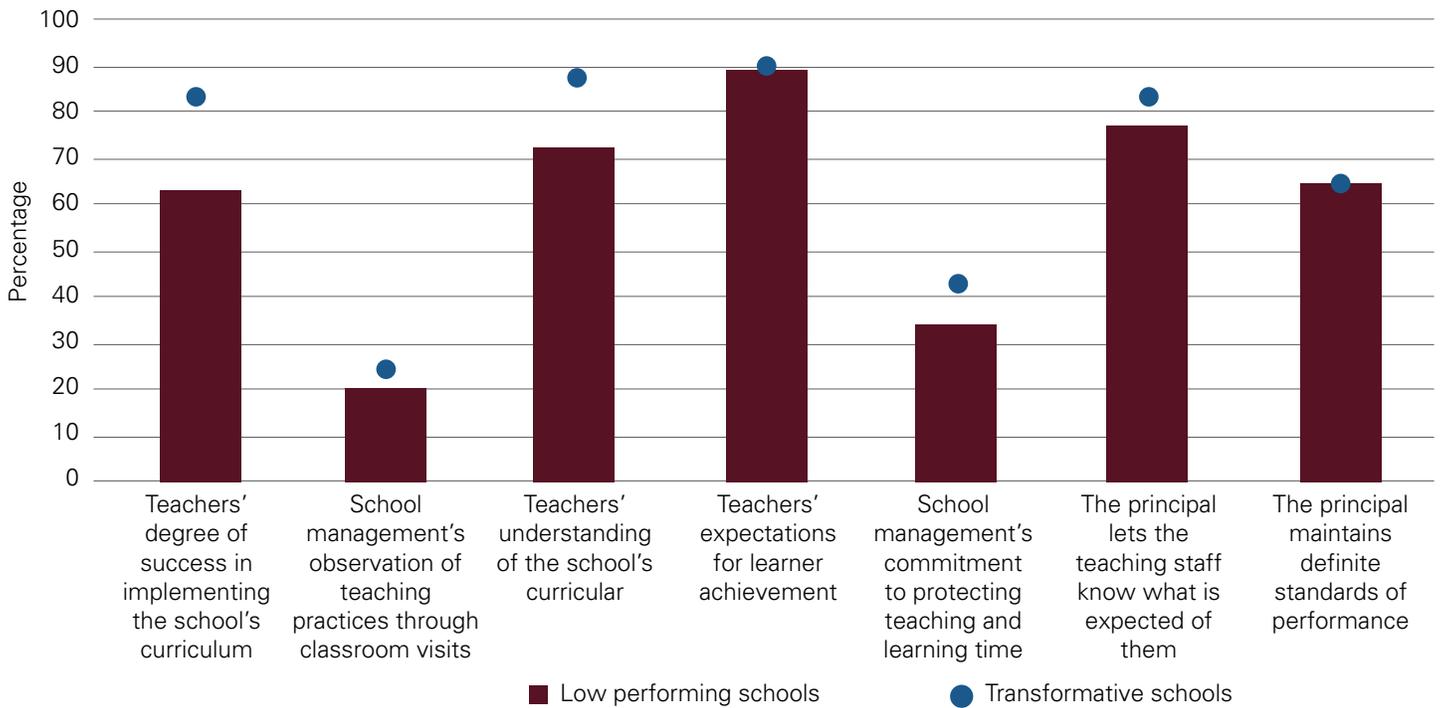
"When we looked at [transformative] schools, they generally showed higher scores on 20 indicators which we have clustered into three groups related to a conducive learning and teaching environment, academic achievement, and collaboration – all of which we believe depend on transformative leadership," Hannan said.

The widest gaps between transformative no-fee-paying schools and the rest were in the 'conducive learning and teaching environment' category. In transformative schools, learners were more likely to report a sense of belonging, to respect their classmates and to experience less bullying. More learners in these schools reported wanting to perform well and had a positive attitude towards maths. Teachers were more likely to inspire learners and to report higher job satisfaction. (Figure 1).

Although the degree to which leadership was responsible for the higher scores in these schools was not ascertainable from the data, Juan and Hannan referred to previous research that suggests that principals play a key role in promoting inclusive and respectful learning environments.

This makes intuitive sense: teachers who are supported and who are encouraged to collaborate are better equipped to inspire learners. Principals can also implement strategies to support struggling learners and to address bullying and poor discipline – although some potential measures might be limited by lack of resources.

Figure 2: Focus on academic achievement (teacher reports)



Source: TIMSS 2019 Grade 5 South African dataset

A focus on academic excellence

Gaps also emerged in the achievement scores of transformative and non-transformative no-fee schools in the 'focus on academic achievement' category (Figure 2).

The data indicated that in the higher-achieving schools, teachers were more likely to succeed in implementing the curriculum and were more likely to understand the curriculum. Again, how much of this variation is due to leadership is not ascertainable from the data. However, the authors refer to [other research](#) that found that principals who "developed strategies and activities that aligned with the school's mission, and placed emphasis on academic success, were more effective in leading their staff and experienced greater improvement in learner outcomes".

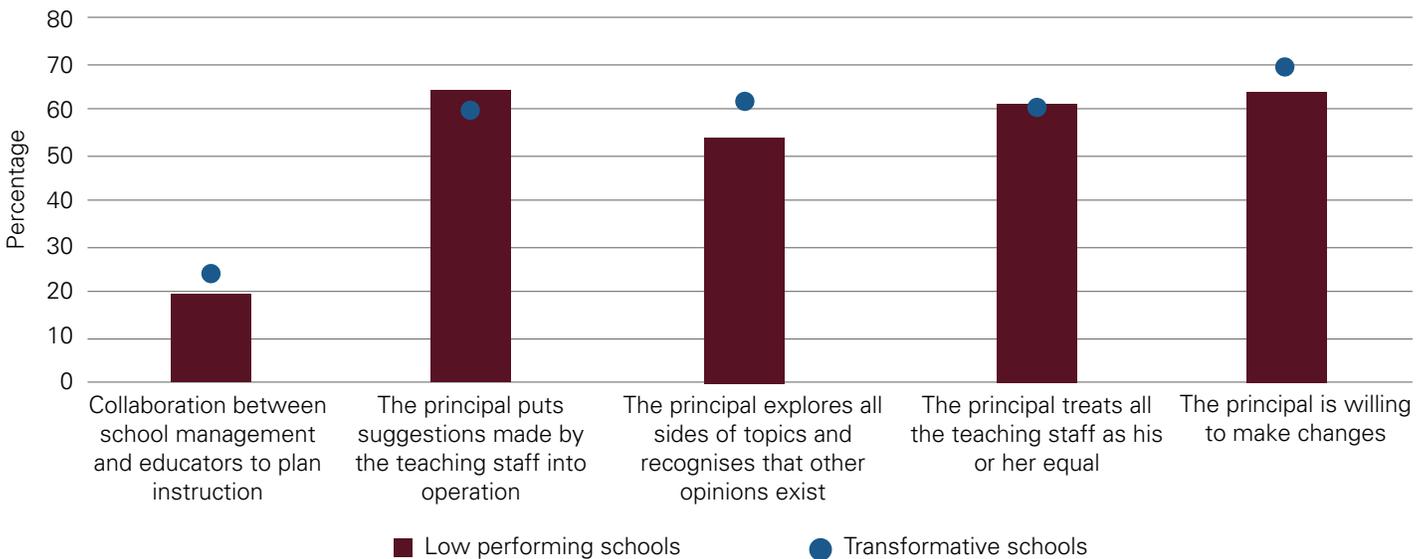


Photo: Katerina Holmes, Pexels

Collaboration

Finally, the analysis found that collaboration may have had some positive impact on the achievement of transformative schools (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Teacher reports of collaboration between school principals, management and staff



Source: TIMSS 2019 Grade 5 South African dataset

Three of the five indicators were higher in these schools, with more teachers reporting that principals explored all sides of a topic, recognised different opinions, and that they were willing to make changes.

The authors concluded that no-fee schools that achieved above the national average in TIMSS display many of the characteristics that can be influenced by effective leadership. “Transformative leadership in schools is not an abstract notion,” Juan argued. “Nor does it require Herculean efforts, but it can be obtained using specific practices with system-changing outcomes.”

Schools are thus an important setting for transformative leadership, because of the potential for inter-generational multiplier effects – empowered learners can become transformative leaders, helping to build a more equitable future for South Africa.

For a full description of the TIMSS methodology and data, please see: Reddy, V., Winnaar, L., Harvey, J., Hannan, S., Isdale, K., Arends, F. & Juan, A. (2022). The South African TIMSS 2019 Grade 5 Results: Building Achievement and Bridging Achievement Gaps. HSRC Press, Cape Town.

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Photo: [Freepik](#)

Blockchain – a tool for transformative leaders

To deliver the change needed in the developing world, a transformative leader needs to have a vision of a reimagined future and the will to develop systems or infrastructure that consolidate their socially just policies to ensure long-term benefits to the people. To be truly transformative, these policies must be systemised.

Krish Chetty examines how blockchain technologies can be used to achieve this.

Many transformative leaders fail to achieve meaningful change, as our political, economic and social systems are too restrictive. For example, informal traders desperately need microfinancing services, but current financial systems are exclusionary and unable to offer affordable loans that cater to their needs. The developing world is desperate for new political, economic and social systems supported by relevant information systems that promote inclusion and fair competition, replacing systems that protect political and economic power brokers and intermediaries. Blockchain technology could be the solution that a transformative leader uses to realise their vision of social justice.

Blockchain in simple terms

Blockchain is a technology which enables us to store transactions and other types of information in a digital format. Unlike a typical computer database, information is stored in a ledger format. The database is only appended to and never edited. Each transaction is timestamped to promote traceability. Unlike regular databases, the ledger is replicated and stored on a network of computers. As the ledger is distributed across the network, the term distributed ledger technology is often used to describe a blockchain. Each computer, referred to as a node, constantly verifies the contents of its ledger against every other copy of the ledger stored on the network. A blockchain network can track business information like payments, orders, production processes, etc. Because of how the blocks are stored and verified, the block can't be changed without changing every copy of the blockchain simultaneously, reducing the risk of fraud or exploitation through hacking. Much of a blockchain's value lies in its transparent and shared nature and potential to save costs for the user by reducing system intermediaries. The blockchain systematises trust, negating the need for power brokers.

Ultimately, a blockchain system is just a tool. To wield this tool, we must understand what is broken, and how it could be fixed using the tool, and have the skill to use it. The challenge is that blockchain and how it could be helpful is not always understood.

A blockchain comprises multiple 'blocks'. The block is simply an encoding of information relevant to a transaction. This block includes details of the sender, the receiver, the amount in question and other information necessary for the transaction.

If we were building a system for land registration, we would store data about the location of the land, the size, dimensions and other details. The block can also integrate coding, which defines the action that should take place when the transaction is sent or received. Not every blockchain has integrated this coding feature, but this design aspect provides the foundations for smart contracts and autonomous systems. Lastly, each block is timestamped, so one knows exactly when the transaction was executed.

To create the blockchain, a series of these blocks are linked together in chronological order. The blockchain maintains a permanent record of transactions that pass through the system. This record of transactions is often described as a ledger of transactions. However, the power of the

blockchain is found in its replication of the ledger. Copies of the blockchain can be stored across a network of computers. Each participating computer in the network storing the blockchain ledger is updated as a transaction executes. The system then constantly verifies the accuracy of the ledger on every machine.

How is the blockchain different?

Current traditional databases are based on a single copy of the truth. There is just one record, and the system users must trust the system's owner to maintain the system's accuracy. This centralised trust is a design flaw that persists across every traditional system. The blockchain solves the trust problem, as we no longer need to trust the system owner but instead place our trust in the accuracy of the data. The algorithm to distribute transactions has been proven to be mathematically sound and is an innovative marvel. Almost all traditional systems are based on placing trust in an intermediary or an institution. For instance, investment in developing countries depends strongly on the scoring of rating agencies such as Moody's. When a country is downgraded to junk status, we must trust that Moody's is a reputable institution, but the data at the heart of the decision is not transparent or available to all.

The blockchain is just a system, which is neither good nor evil. The system must be configured by an architect and developer who define how it should be applied. It could potentially be used to harm its end users if developed by an unscrupulous actor. However, the inverse is true as well. The transformative leader has the opportunity to wield this tool to enact meaningful, transformative change.

Blockchain's transformative potential

This transformative change could be enacted by replacing our current systems of privilege. By replacing systems that place trust in an institution or financial and economic power brokers, one can promote greater impartiality in how subscribers participate. Power brokers, unfortunately, have the opportunity to wield their power in ways that drive exclusion.

As a new system, a blockchain could also be built based on principles of social justice that enable fair competition and provide equal opportunities for all subscribers to participate in the economy. For example, South Africa's renewable energy sector was paralysed by the requirement that the minister of minerals and energy and the National Energy Regulator of South Africa approve the licence of each independent power producer. This policy requirement caused a significant backlog that harmed the industry and introduced delays that have lasted several years.

Suppose the process was automated by adopting a system that integrates trust. In that case, the signoff process could be drastically accelerated, unlocking the country's renewable energy sector and thus transforming society.

Similarly, the global development finance system is broken. It [has been found that 94% of funds](#) donated by well-meaning people don't reach their intended beneficiaries in the developing world. Instead, the system is built to ensure that every stakeholder in the chain gets a slice of the pie. Ultimately, the system is designed to enable the system and not to solve the social problem. A functioning blockchain system that connected donors to beneficiaries could distribute all the funds fairly to all those subscribed. Removing the intermediaries in the transaction chain will dramatically improve the lives of the system beneficiaries. These changes are built on the centring of trust in the blockchain design.

Another use case relates to reimagining our governance and citizen participation systems. It is possible to decentralise decision making using a blockchain system that promotes collaborative decision making. Blockchain systems could give all citizens a voice. Citizens could directly propose policy changes on which the community could vote. If all citizens had access to the blockchain system, it could be used to hold elections securely and at a minimal cost. Such applications already exist in smart cities in Estonia and Singapore.

Implications for transformation

While these ideas sound promising, they are premised on a world where all people have permanent high-speed internet access. Therefore, addressing the internet access challenge is a central developmental priority. Changing the system might also be met with extreme resistance, especially since it is designed to benefit a few. Those few are the minority but also the powerful. The transformative leader must recognise that our current systems are broken and must be replaced to implement meaningful change. The critical point for transformative leaders to consider is longevity. How long will your socially-just policy last in a world where immoral actors are looking for any opportunity to change things back to how they were? Meaningful, transformative change must be supported by a change in the system. Blockchain can be the means to that end.

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Young leaders capture leadership's ripple effects in *Kanju* documentary

Behind the scenes:

The alumni learnt filmmaking techniques, including how to use equipment like ring lights and microphones, in the making of the documentary.

Source: *The Spirit of Kanju: Leaders transforming Africa*

The beginnings of change might not look like much. It starts, perhaps, with a hoe and a determination to clear a road, or some vegetable seeds and a passion for women's empowerment. A new documentary, *The Spirit of Kanju: Leaders transforming Africa*, created by graduates of the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship Program as part of an HSRC research study, showcases transformative leadership in action – and illustrates how seemingly small actions can have far-reaching ripple effects. By **Andrea Teagle**

A group of young people gather around a table, bending over a partly disassembled robot. Freda Yawson, senior manager of infrastructure and innovation at the African Centre for Economic Transformation in Accra, Ghana, explains that they are learning the basics of robotics. “We are creating students who can think creatively...” she says. “We are trying to not just come up with ideas, but we want to eventually turn these solutions into real products and services that actually change society.”

The filmed scene is one of the leadership accounts featured in the documentary *The Spirit of Kanju: leaders transforming Africa*, which was launched at a recent HSRC symposium in Zanzibar, Tanzania, on transformative leadership in African contexts. Produced by 19 alumni

of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, the documentary features several young graduates and community leaders, like Yawson, who are driving positive societal change – or, to quote the filmmakers: those who are “shining examples of the leaders Africa needs.”

Moving between Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, the documentary illustrates how the framework of transformative leadership translates into different contexts, responding to particular societal challenges. We meet Malassen Hamida, the co-founder of the Mazingira Women Initiative in Nairobi, Kenya, which provides agricultural training and support to women and educates the community on climate change. At the University of Pretoria, we find Dr Clarity Mapengo, a post-doctoral researcher, demonstrating how she created

a plastic packaging substitute out of fruit and vegetable waste. Also in Nairobi, Kenya, we encounter Victoria Gichuhi, the head of [Daraja Academy](#), which provides quality education for girls who would not otherwise have the means to attend secondary school.

Each of these young leaders, and others featured in the documentary, displays the spirit of *Kanju*: “the specific creativity born from African difficulty”. At a symposium concerned with the definition and scope of transformative leadership, the documentary provided, in the words of [Prof Catherine Hoppers](#), “living examples of leadership” in action.

Love in action

Two of the central pillars of transformative leadership, as the young filmmakers see it, are action and innovation. It is apt then that in the two-year making of the documentary, the alumni explored and demonstrated transformative leadership, as together they learnt about filmmaking and, through a narrative lens, interrogated what leadership meant to them.

“Now I understand what kind of a weapon I actually have [in my smartphone],” says Mapengo, who was part of the filmmaking team, laughing on camera. “We walk around with our phones. We don’t really understand that they could do more, in... telling a story or just having an impact, which is more than just taking a snapshot.”

The other pillars of transformative leadership that tie together the individual leadership stories in *Kanju* are collaboration and love. A stand-out example of love in action is Emmanuel Niringiyama, who took it upon himself to build a road in Karongi district in Rwanda, connecting residents of Gakubwe village to the nearest hospital. In Pretoria, South Africa, another leader, Puleng Tsie helps to make science hands-on for young people and the general public at the University of Pretoria’s science centre, [Sci-Enza](#).

“Ubuntu is integral to everything we do, because what it says is ‘I recognise you; I see you; I hear you.’... And what is leadership without people?...” Tsie explains. “I think that is the essence of ubuntu... You have to look after each other, you have to empower each other. You have to bring up those who are with you.”

Small steps toward transformation?

The definition of transformative leadership offered by the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program is “the act of engaging others, in an ethical manner, to generate positive and lasting change”.

One point on which the graduates differed from the framework of transformative leadership as laid out by the HSRC’s Sharlene Swartz and others at the documentary launch, is the level at which transformative leadership operates. In her paper on the concept of transformative leadership, Swartz argues that it “can be distinguished

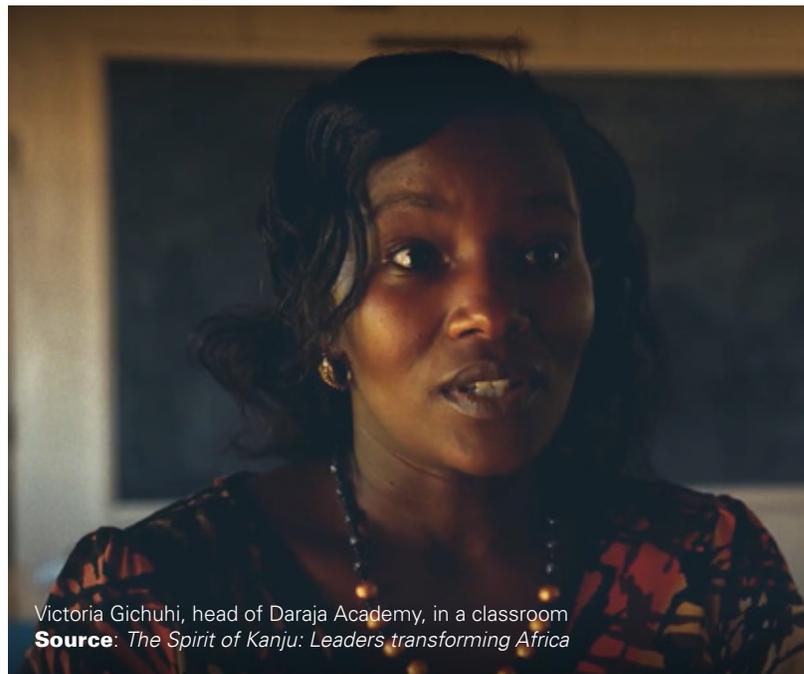
from [transformational leadership], since transformative leadership transcends the immediate concerns of a single organisation or institution and takes as its unit of influence wider social, political and material issues”.

But for most of the graduates, for now at least, leadership takes place at the community level. In the discussion that took place after the documentary launch, a few of the young filmmakers talked about how Niringiyama had inspired them through his singular commitment to building a road. The effect that Niringiyama’s actions had had on his peers suggests that his impact will not stop where his road ends. Perhaps then, the community focus of the young leaders is not at odds with the societal level aims of transformative leadership after all. Perhaps, like the making of the documentary itself, becoming a transformative leader is a journey of increasing influence and impact.

The filmmakers capture this view in one scene in the documentary, in which Gichuhi is shot close up at the [Daraja Academy](#) high school. “Change is from big to small,” Gichuhi says, placing careful and equal emphasis on ‘big’ and ‘small’. In the dark classroom behind her, girls work each day towards a secondary education – and a chance to become champions of equality in their communities. “But it is the small that actually has more multiplier effects, because then the small can be done by more people.”

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Victoria Gichuhi, head of Daraja Academy, in a classroom
Source: *The Spirit of Kanju: Leaders transforming Africa*

Tracking UBIG benefits:

Differences in developmental outcomes

What impact would a universal basic income grant have on South Africa's economy, and to what extent would it improve living standards? Debates on the potential developmental impact of a universal basic income grant (UBIG) often focus on these questions. The third UBIG webinar hosted by the HSRC, the Institute for Economic Justice and the Pay the Grants movement concentrated on the real or potential differences this type of grant could make to poverty, inequality, and unemployment. **Matume Maila**, **Peter Jacobs** and **Asanda Ntunta** share their thoughts.

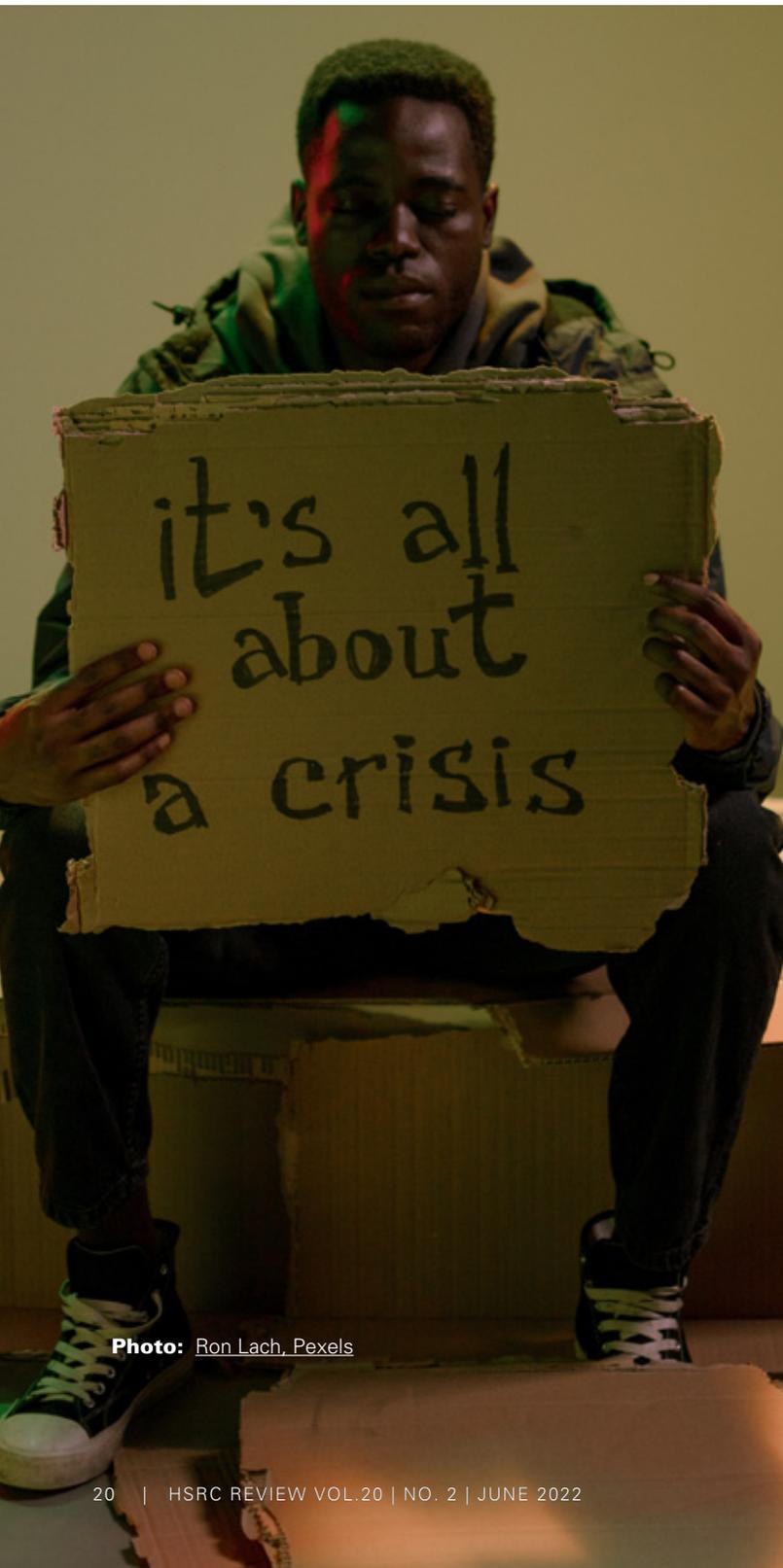


Photo: Ron Lach, Pexels

In response to the COVID-19 socioeconomic crisis, many countries strengthened their social protection measures, often expanding the type of assistance that quickly reaches poor and vulnerable people in socioeconomic distress. Innovative social relief programmes, such as a universal basic income guarantee (UBIG), have also been considered or introduced in some countries. The South African authorities followed this global trend with its own safety net variants such as the social relief of distress (SRD) grant and targeted food assistance programmes. Invariably, the main motivation for these social assistance schemes was to make a visible and long-term positive difference to developmental outcomes for destitute individuals and families.

Evaluations of the developmental effects of social transfers have grown in volume globally, but the scientific rigour of these assessments has also been finetuned. Even if UBIG schemes are not mature enough for full impact assessments, lessons from comparable welfare interventions offer learnings that break new ground. In her presentation at the third UBIG webinar hosted by the HSRC, the Institute for Economic Justice and the Pay the Grants movement, Dr Kate Orkin, a senior research fellow at the Blavatnik School of Government in Oxford, shared insights from a large body of evaluations on the effects of cash grant programmes on long-term economic benefits. She said that donor agencies and governments base their investments in social grants on evidence from evaluations, hence their popularity. Empirical evidence indicates that a large proportion of the grant is used to purchase food, and significantly reduces hunger, especially child malnutrition. Orkin reported that "having a grant in the household is known to reduce secondary school dropout". To support her main argument, Orkin also cited examples in which beneficiaries used the grant to invest in agricultural inputs for the sustainable expansion of agricultural output.

The social assistance interventions by the South African government in response to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were critical in assisting the vulnerable population to gain access to food, Matume Maila, a researcher at the HSRC, said at the webinar. Maila added that the provision of food parcels, SRD grants and other social programmes during the pandemic significantly reduced hunger and improved food security.

International and local empirical evidence shows that cash transfer programmes have positive effects on the welfare of vulnerable populations. International evidence shows that emergency-type grants are important during economic shocks as they prevent the poor from sinking deeper into poverty. The rollout of social assistance during the pandemic was substantial, but the question is whether this should be expanded into UBIG, which is a universal intervention that provides permanent minimum benefits for everyone.

Ihsaan Bassier, a researcher affiliated to the Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), traced the UBIG impact debate back to design and targeting questions. On average, a basic income grant premised on individual means testing (like the child support grant, social relief of distress or most basic income grant proposals) differs in its impacts from a family-based design.

Bassier's impact framework questions the magnitude of the quantified impact: how large is the impact on the poverty gap and fiscal spending? A family poverty grant (FPG) targets all adults in poor households. If the FPG is set at R460 per month, which is below the food poverty line of R624, then it can potentially cut the poverty gap by 94%. By contrast, a basic income grant of R624 for all eligible people aged 18–59 reduces the poverty gap by roughly 52%. Moreover, the estimated cost of the FPG is in the order of R59bn per year, whereas the basic income grant is more than R200bn per year. The national treasury favours an FPG as a replacement for the COVID-19 SRD. But the FPG is politically divisive and costly as some SRD recipients will be excluded because they fall outside the targeted beneficiaries.

In theory, Bassier highlighted, the FPG is cost-efficient in reducing poverty levels compared to other policy options simulated in the study. He further reminded webinar participants that useful impact studies must also “take into account the second-order effects, which are the macro multipliers and local stimulus effects” that may pose additional estimation complexities.

Dr Asghar Adelzadeh, chief economic modeler at Applied Development Research Solutions, explained at the webinar that a basic income grant is “a fiscally neutral pro-poor social policy” as it substantially cuts poverty and

inequality without unsustainable increases in government spending. To arrive at this conclusion, Adelzadeh used a linked microeconomic-macroeconomic simulation model for South Africa. His modelled options start with a post-COVID-19 future without a basic income grant, called the ‘baseline scenario’. This baseline is then compared to simulated models with three versions of a basic income grant at different poverty lines: an unemployed, adult, or universal grant. The results of the model show that introducing a basic income grant would have a positive impact on economic growth. Furthermore, it would generate employment while also lowering income inequality and eradicating poverty in South Africa.

Shaeera Kalla, an activist at the Pay the Grants movement, brought a civil society angle to the conversation about the potential developmental impact of a UBIG. South Africa is grappling with several different crises, with about 24 million people depending on grants, she said. It is clear from the evidence presented by the speakers that the implementation of a basic income grant would have positive impacts on the economy. These insights must now be blended with more practical research about UBIG complementary interventions as it is not a silver bullet for impactful developmental outcomes. The challenges that the country faces highlight that we have a weak state and a weak civil society, said Kalla. Progressive civil society players should think about ways to overcome perception biases against the implementation of a basic income grant in the country, she added.

According to Adelzadeh, it is crucial to have a strategy that puts pressure on the post-1994 macro-economic policy framework in South Africa that is very conservative in its deliberations, with no space for effective discussion. It does not enhance economic growth, create jobs, or assist people to move out of poverty. Additionally, the framework is against social programmes that are expensive and helpful to the poor at the same time. Hence, society needs to become more active in pushing for policy revision.

*Towards the end of 2021, the HSRC co-hosted, with the Institute for Economic Justice and the Pay the Grants movement, four poverty and inequality webinars on the UBIG debate. This overview is based on [the third webinar](#) under the title **#BigQuestionsForUBIG: What is the impact?***

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Role of civil society in realising a universal basic income guarantee

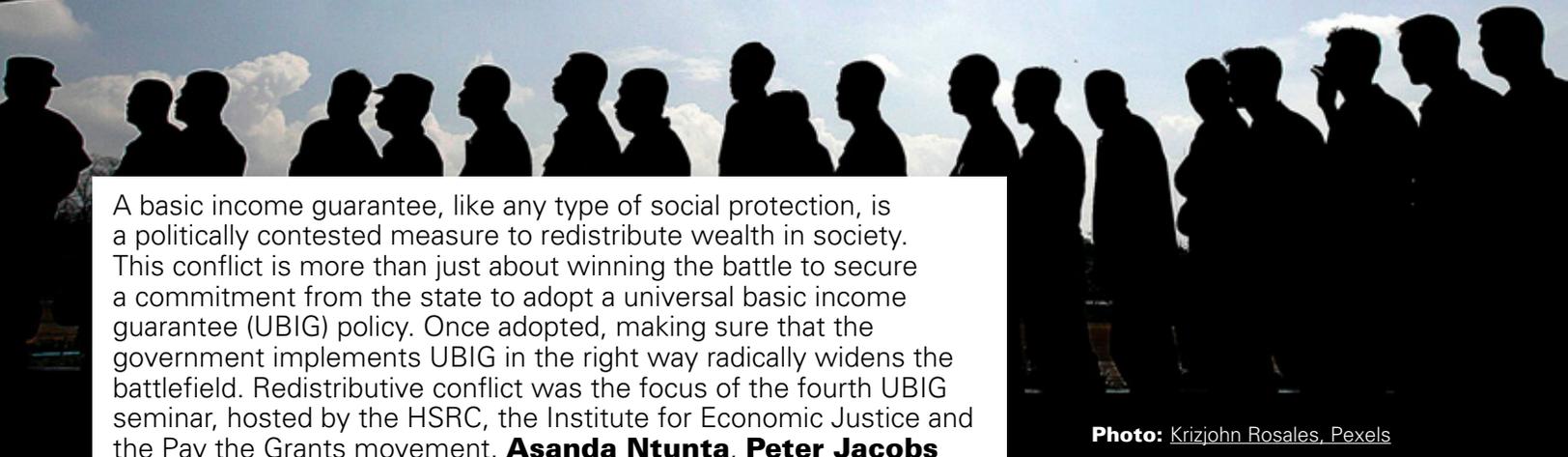


Photo: Krizjohn Rosales, Pexels

A basic income guarantee, like any type of social protection, is a politically contested measure to redistribute wealth in society. This conflict is more than just about winning the battle to secure a commitment from the state to adopt a universal basic income guarantee (UBIG) policy. Once adopted, making sure that the government implements UBIG in the right way radically widens the battlefield. Redistributive conflict was the focus of the fourth UBIG seminar, hosted by the HSRC, the Institute for Economic Justice and the Pay the Grants movement. **Asanda Ntunta, Peter Jacobs** and **Palesa Sekhejane** share their thoughts on the significance of civil society activism for UBIG.

South Africa's deep and enduring socioeconomic crises have not yet resulted in a universal basic income guarantee (UBIG). However, with the promise of comprehensive social security reform high on the government's agenda, prospects for a UBIG look more hopeful than in the past. Even so, difficult questions about political tensions around pro-poor redistribution, the political will of the government, and whether civil society groups can meaningfully influence UBIG policy must be answered.

General Alfred Moyo, coordinator in the Fight Inequality Alliance and #PayTheGrants campaign, spoke on these issues at the recent fourth and final UBIG webinar hosted by the HSRC, the Institute for Economic Justice and the Pay the Grants movement. He tied the lack of political will of the government on UBIG to the defence of a socioeconomic system, which is based on growing wealth polarisation.

Civil society movements confront formidable macro-economic and political opposition in the battle for a UBIG, which includes anti-BIG narratives and the persistence of divisions and fragmentation among these movements. In Moyo's view, "the anti-BIG narratives that enjoy government backing do not only lack transparency and accountability but exclude would-be beneficiaries of UBIG from critical policy decisions." The Department of Social Development (DSD) papers on comprehensive social security reforms, for example, pay lip service to bottom-up

and participatory policy development. Moyo also lamented how the state is micromanaging UBIG public discourses and processes, which frustrates rather than facilitates civil society activism.

What the government needs to do, Moyo contended, is to break with its fiscal model based on austerity budgeting. The government must place the protection of the interests of the working class or the marginalised first while also transforming the underlying capitalist system and making the policy spaces inclusive to civil society demands, he said.

Lebogang Mulaisi, a labour market policy coordinator at the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), endorsed these views, underscoring the urgency for unity among civil society movements around UBIG. Bringing trade unions together with civil society movements should help amplify the collective voice for UBIG; however, the risk of it being shoved off the policy agenda remains huge. She stressed that solid empirical evidence is also essential to back social movement calls for the implementation of UBIG. Trade unions want the social relief of distress (SRD) grant to be extended but at a decent living standard well above R350 per month, she said. In addition to this demand, the activities of COSATU affiliates "include mass power mobilisation, educating and training workers on the benefits of UBIG and leading and supporting advocacy groups for UBIG," Mulaisi reported.

Trade unions are figuring out ways to persuade their members and non-unionised workers to join the battles for a UBIG, because it is sensible from both livelihoods and solidarity perspectives, she said. Stretching meagre incomes to assist needy relatives or neighbours is a common practice in worker communities. Moreover, solidarity struggles have deep roots in the labour movement. Mulaisi also compared the popularity of the fight for UBIG in COSATU with that of civil society organisations. In her opinion, trade union activism lags civil society activism with this demand. The envisaged social movement for UBIG ought to prioritise closing the gaps between these two types of organisations.

Another trade unionist, Ferron Pedro, a working-class campaigns coordinator and educator for the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), agreed with proposals for united civil society action for UBIG. She reminded webinar participants that advocacy, mobilisation and struggles for UBIG have a history spanning decades. The impact of COVID-19, coupled with numerous gaps and shortcomings in current social safety nets, make the urgency for UBIG more compelling, said Pedro. Public pressure on policymakers through mass action for UBIG is crucial, but insufficient rallying of communities behind these actions also requires civil society movements to step up campaigns to educate communities about the benefits of this social policy, she said.

“The struggle for increasing wages is not separate from the struggle for UBIG.” The SAFTU leadership is working towards a Working-Class Summit in 2022, with UBIG mobilisations as the core focus. Maximum unity of trade unions and other grassroots movements needs to be built from the bottom, she said. “What is at stake in this debate is who decides how society is organised and how wealth is distributed. To make UBIG a reality it is urgent to raise the consciousness and confidence of the working class to take back socioeconomic control from the ruling elite.”

Both trade unionists emphasised that consciously building a clear understanding of UBIG within communities must go hand-in-hand with greater awareness of how to organise protests in the face of an infectious pandemic. Physical distancing restrictions that come with COVID-19 regulations might hamper the “going to streets”, classic mode of trade union struggles, but do not impose an outright ban on mass protests. Pressuring the state through mass action calls for more creativity in how civil society movements execute such actions.

How the country gets to a UBIG policy is impossible to envisage without inspecting the logic of policy change. This means that the prospects for a UBIG policy must be grounded in the country’s policy development realities. In his speech, Professor Alex van den Heever from the University of the Witwatersrand and a member of the Expert Panel on Basic Income Support included a cautionary note on how policy processes work. South Africa has “a shallow and vulnerable institutional framework that makes it difficult to achieve incremental advances in areas of social assistance and the current social grants framework,” he said.

On such a fundamental policy shift, the constitution envisages change through deliberative societal conversations and decisions. Instead of developing policy through consensus, decision making among a minority in an undemocratic way has become normalised, said Van den Heever. He added that policymaking pathways are fraught with bottlenecks, blockages and pitfalls, which indicates that UBIG will be won through difficult incremental struggles over time.

Conclusion

A need exists for a giant social movement for UBIG and critical conversations about how to bring such a movement into being. The delinked conceptualisation of a basic grant and cost of living are contradictory, and thus evade equitable social security reform, redistributive justice and social solidarity. Lessons from history suggest that it will be a battle on multiple fronts, and the negative UBIG messaging that overshadows the public discourse needs to be defeated. With the false dichotomies and prejudice of social grants debunked, the participatory assertion of the realisation of rights should empower marginalised communities to join UBIG campaigns.

*Towards the end of 2021, the HSRC, the Institute for Economic Justice and the Pay the Grants movement hosted webinars on the UBIG debate. This overview is based on the [fourth webinar](#) under the title **#BigQuestionsForUBIG: How Do We Get There?***

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What we can learn from the COVID-19 grant

The hunger and poverty crisis that the social relief of distress grant aimed to alleviate was exacerbated by COVID-19, but it existed long before the pandemic. The introduction of the grant provided a basis on which to assess the role that expanded permanent social security – such as a targeted basic income grant – could play in assisting people in South Africa. A Black Sash report, based on research conducted in partnership with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), highlighted the critical role that the grant played in keeping vulnerable South Africans afloat. It also underscored the current administration challenges that limit the effectiveness of grants, and how these might be overcome. By **Andrea Teagle**

How was the R350 COVID-19 social relief of distress grant experienced? For one recipient, “[It] has brought that little difference [...] I am able to buy the basics [but] I could not buy soap [or] washing powder”. Another recipient said, “there is no such [thing] as ‘little money’... Imagine not having money to even buy sanitary pads; you have to ask. Imagine those who do not have anyone to ask. I really appreciate it.”

These statements from participants in a recent Black Sash-commissioned case study on the COVID-19 social relief of distress grant encapsulate one of the core findings of the underlying research, that the grant – introduced in May 2020 – has been critical but insufficient. From the evidence of its effectiveness comes a call to introduce a permanent social grant for working-age adults who previously could not access social protection. From the evidence of its limitations, Benita Moolman, the programme manager of the [Global Citizenship Programme](#) at the University of Cape Town, argued at the report launch in May 2022 for a broader conceptualisation of social equity in South Africa.

In the report, titled [It’s a Lifeline but it’s Not Enough](#), the Black Sash calls for the state to consider a permanent system of basic income support. This would include people aged between 18 and 59, with little or no income, who were previously excluded from the social assistance system.

The recommendation is seen as an incremental step towards a basic income grant. The current grant is due to expire in March 2023.

Basic social protection

The report combines an analysis of the social grant policy framework, regulatory and delivery mechanisms, and a case study of social relief of distress grant applicants during 2021 and early 2022. The case study, led by the HSRC’s Candice Groenewald, included 6 men and 13 women across the working-age spectrum of 18 to 56, who were interviewed telephonically. Their stories revealed what Groenewald referred to as “the inevitability of hardship” during the pandemic.

Five of the interviewees were unemployed at the start of the pandemic; by the time of the study, this number had shot up to twelve. The accounts from those receiving the grant highlight the importance of social protection for the working-age population, with 10 of the 13 agreeing that it really helped.

The researchers observed that South Africa’s permanent social grants are insufficient to alleviate hunger. Rachel Bukasa, the National Director of the Black Sash, noted that the basic poverty line is R624, while the child support grant is R420. Due to elevated youth unemployment, and the racialised, gendered nature of poverty, poor black women and young people remain particularly under-protected.

Photo: Freepik

Gaps in social protection partly stem from the policy having been inherited from the apartheid era, when it was designed for the minority white population. Thandiwe Matthews of the University of the Witwatersrand explained that, during apartheid, access to social assistance was predicated on the idea of a male worker in full-time formal employment, while women were presumed to be caregivers. Today, unemployed women (and men) of working age still do not have access to permanent social assistance in their own right.

Under new regulations that came into effect on 23 April 2022, the eligibility threshold for the social relief of distress grant was lowered from R624 to R350 – such that, if an applicant has above that amount in their bank account, regardless of where that money came from, they are automatically disqualified. Black Sash argues that, rather than phase out the grant, the government should convert it to a permanent form of basic income support, as ‘one element of a broader social protection floor, in order to realise a more just and equitable society in South Africa’. Extended social protection should also extend to food security, health, housing and psychosocial support.

One way to extend social protection would be to find ways of targeting collectives in addition to providing grants to individuals. For example, Moolman said, hairdressers and fruit and vegetable sellers in the informal sector tend to be poor, black women. How can we develop policies on that level to protect these collectives?

‘Pillar to post’ phenomenon

The study participants described how the R350 grant quickly dwindled in the face of various collection obstacles. On arriving at the Post Office collection points, many were confronted with snaking queues that barely moved

throughout the day. Those who couldn’t wait might pay a placeholder R50 to stand there for them, and there were reports of recipients bribing security guards to let them jump the queue. Sometimes, grant releases were deferred, and applicants went home empty-handed to face another day of transport costs and long waits.

Some participants instead chose to accept bank charges (reportedly R7 to R10) to have the money transferred directly to their bank accounts. Only two of the recipients reported using SASSA gold cards, which can be used to withdraw cash at particular outlets.

Some participants reported having difficulties with the application process, with data costs and connection issues featuring prominently. Others described what Groenewald referred to as the “pillar to post phenomenon” – being sent to different departments for the required documents and information. Two study participants had their applications rejected because of outdated information on the social grant database indicating, incorrectly, that they were receiving [Unemployment Insurance Fund](#) benefits.

The Black Sash is advocating for a one-stop shop for social grant applicants to streamline the process and remove administrative obstacles to social protection, Moolman said.

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Photo: Freepik



The French Barkhane Force in the south of Mali
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

‘Silencing the guns’ in the Sahel region?

In February 2022, France’s President Emmanuel Macron announced that French forces would be exiting Mali, where they have been fighting violent extremists since 2013. France would be redeploying its troops in neighbouring Niger, another former French colony beset with violent extremism, and the biggest supplier of uranium that is fuelling France’s nuclear power stations. However, increased militarisation in the Sahel region has failed to stem attacks by extremist groups. In a 2019 article in *Africa Insight*, Cheryl Hendricks, then Executive Director of the HSRC’s Africa Institute of South Africa, and Tochukwu Omenma of the University of Nigeria argued that a focus on military tactics has in fact been counter-productive to the AU’s aim of ‘silencing the guns’ in this region. Recent developments in the region support this view, writes **Andrea Teagle**.

Many of the countries in the Sahel region are beset by poverty, uneven development, inequality and governance challenges, and natural resources are mined for the benefit of other nations. As temperatures rise, desertification has increased. These are not conditions in which much thrives. But, across the region, which extends from Senegal eastward to Sudan, violent extremist groups – with various local and international links – have mushroomed. Responsible for brutal civilian attacks, such organisations exploit poor governance to gain footholds of support and reliance. For example, extremist groups in Mali and Burkina Faso [stepped in](#) to provide water and sanitation in certain areas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Boko Haram, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahar (ISIS-GS), and the umbrella organisation, Jamaat Nasr al Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), among other groups in the Sahel, have also spurred the growing presence of local, regional and international military troops. These include the French Barkhane Force, the Multinational Joint Task Force (targeting Boko Haram

in Nigeria, Niger and others), and the G5 Joint Force of the Sahel. International funding comes mostly from France and the USA. Hendricks and Omenma note that, among the fragile states in the region, increased militarisation deepens and creates new dependence on foreign forces for security and humanitarian assistance.

The HSRC’s Puleg Hlanyane, of the Africa Institute of South Africa division, warns that the decline of French influence in Mali opens the doors for other powers such as China, Russia and Turkey to step in. On the other hand, she adds, “the withdrawal of the French troops is not entirely negative because having security provided by a foreign power impedes political development.”

Evidence bears this out. Despite the presence of foreign troops for more than a decade, peace and stability have evaded the region. The year 2021 saw a 70% increase in violent extremist attacks in the Sahel, according to the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies. Additionally, more civilians in Mali and Burkina Faso [died at the hands of](#)

[security forces](#) – comprising national and foreign troops – than as a result of violent extremist attacks or communal violence in 2020, according to the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project](#). Such state atrocities fuel distrust of governments, [feed into extremist group propaganda](#), and contribute to the widespread impression of ‘[terrorists on both sides](#)’ in these countries.

Fragile states

Militarisation in response to violent extremism diverts funds away from socioeconomic and human security challenges that have complex colonial and contemporary roots. Despite an abundance of natural resources, Hendricks and Omenma write, many of the governments in the Sahel are unable to fulfil the basic functions of a state – to provide [human security](#), which includes meeting social and economic needs. Rural communities near borders have particularly poor access to basic services, such as healthcare, education, electricity, water and sanitation. Foreign troops have tended to focus on protecting their own interests, which sometimes run counter to the needs of local communities.

Hlanyane and her colleague Nicasius Achu Check observe that governments’ inability to operate in remote areas is a major obstacle to the AU’s [Silencing the Guns](#) initiative. ‘The absence of the state in the nooks and crannies of the continent has undermined peace and security,’ they [write](#). They add that the presence of local chiefs in these areas has created parallel structures that divide the loyalty of the populations. State corruption is also widespread, justice systems tend to be weak, certain groups are marginalised, and in some cases, military governments use their relationships with foreign forces to [remain in power](#). These factors contribute to what Hendricks and Omenma term an ‘opportunity structure’ for violent extremism to thrive.

‘More attention should be diverted to address the lack of human security and the governance and socioeconomic challenges in the Sahel,’ they argue.

More like Mauritania?

A map of violent extremist groups across the Sahel has a notable clear space, bordering Mali to the west: Mauritania. Here, the government has managed to largely prevent violent extremism in recent years, despite its positioning. How has it achieved this?

Creating bridges for jihadist recruits to re-enter society may be an important step. In addition to overhauling its military – improving the living conditions of soldiers, increasing pay, and training – Mauritania has focused on addressing socioeconomic challenges. In remote areas of the desert – particularly along the southeast border – the government has [prioritised infrastructure and development](#).

The government has also [built channels of communication](#) with members of extremist groups. The strategy includes an ideological dialogue component, while also recognising the socioeconomic and other factors that compel young people to join extremist groups. According to [Hassane Koné](#) and [Ornella Moderan](#) of the [Institute for Security Studies](#), efforts to facilitate reintegration and to prevent radicalisation include vocational training for ‘repentants’ and students of Islamic schools (mahdharas) who might be targeted for recruitment.

As the influence of France – which has refused to negotiate with violent extremists – declines, the approach has [gained favour](#) in parts of the Sahel, despite its challenges. In February 2022, Niger’s president, Mohamed Bazoum, announced that the government had released nine prisoners to initiate discussions with jihadist groups as part of ‘[the search for peace](#)’. With the withdrawal of French troops, Mali may [soon follow suit](#).

Co-ordinated approach

Some analysts suspect that the Mauritanian government has signed a mutual non-aggression pact with violent extremist groups – agreeing not to target their positions in exchange for Mauritania’s exemption from attacks. The government has denied this. Such a pact, critics argue, would serve to undermine counter-terrorism attacks in the region. [Koné](#) and [Moderan](#) note that in some instances, fighters who returned to violence after engaging in dialogue in Mauritania did indeed move to neighbouring countries. They write: ‘For Sahelian states, this means that talks with jihadists require a coordinated approach, to avoid a displacement effect that could shift the terrorism problem around the region.’ The increase in violent extremism in other parts of Africa has led to [a call](#) for a continental approach to the problem.

Attempts to silence the guns with gunshot in the Sahel have not proved effective. As Hendricks and Omenma argue, ‘these violent extremist groups are in a contest for power; therefore, they also have to be engaged at a political level.’ Military engagement should be balanced with inclusive peacebuilding approaches that ‘engage communities and violent extremists in dialogue and negotiations, respectively, and... produce transformed state-security relations.’

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Residents build a shack in Makhaza, an informal settlement in Khayelitsha, Cape Town where, just like in the rest of South Africa, informal housing and homelessness are the results of structural exclusion, coupled with burgeoning unemployment and poverty.
Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Housing as economic policy:

The role of housing in addressing SA's biggest challenges

What can housing contribute to inclusive economic development in South Africa? This is the key question that a new HSRC project, Housing as Economic Policy, aims to address. **Andreas Scheba, Ivan Turok and Justin Visagie** discuss how this work could help to unravel the role of housing in addressing South Africa's biggest economic challenges.

Housing is a much-debated topic in South Africa, and often hits the headlines, but it is rarely discussed from an economic perspective. Yet its embeddedness in the economy is conspicuous. Stark differences in housing conditions, especially between the leafy suburbs and overcrowded townships in our cities, reflect longstanding socio-economic inequalities. Growing levels of informal housing and homelessness are the result of structural exclusion, coupled with burgeoning unemployment and poverty. Meanwhile, private property has become a major investment vehicle and a means of growing wealth for middle-income and rich households: owner-occupied housing is South Africa's single largest asset class worth more than R3 trillion. Activating housing's function as an economic and financial asset for the poor has also become a feature of recent government initiatives like [Operation Vulindlela](#).

While most people have experienced the intricate relationship between housing and economy, especially during pandemic-induced government lockdowns, the linkages between the two are not always well understood. There is a lack of systematic data and critical research on the economic aspects of housing in South Africa, especially from a political-economic perspective that recognises the country's deepening economic, social and institutional crisis. While many housing scholars neglect the economic and financial dimensions of housing, economists tend to ignore housing's various roles in wealth production and distribution. Policy debates on housing are dominated by social justice and human rights concerns without adequate connection to economic policy discussions.

A new HSRC project, Housing as Economic Policy, aims to bring housing scholars/practitioners and progressive economists together in a constructive dialogue to interrogate the contribution that housing could and should make to promoting more inclusive and equitable economic development. What is the role of housing in our current economic crisis and what opportunities does it offer to spur economic recovery that benefits those most in need? At the heart of this endeavour are three public dialogues where state-of-the-art knowledge and evidence will be discussed. These will take place during the latter part of 2022, each focused on a critical economic issue:

Dialogue 1: Housing for economic recovery

South Africa suffers from extremely high unemployment and extensive poverty. It also has an unprecedented housing backlog. Housing could play a central role in the economic recovery because of its many linkages to different industries and the latent demand for better accommodation, particularly in cities. The construction sector is also labour intensive, with low levels of import penetration, and many opportunities for SMEs. For households, their premises could be used to generate income (e.g. home-based enterprises and rental accommodation), particularly in well-located urban areas. New financial products and services are penetrating the low-cost housing market to stimulate growth and investment. In this dialogue, we discuss how the production and consumption of housing can accelerate inclusive growth, both in formal and informal sectors, and what measures are needed to mobilise increased investment in housing that create shared prosperity. Key questions are:

- How can housing production and consumption trigger inclusive growth?
- How can we maximise the economic spinoffs of low-cost and informal housing?
- What are the opportunities and risks involved in extending housing microfinance to poorer communities?

Dialogue 2: Housing and inequality

South Africa is reputed to be the most unequal country in the world in terms of income and wealth, yet the role of housing or property in contributing to wealth gaps remains poorly explored. Inequalities in housing reflect historical and contemporary inequalities related to the structure of the economy (e.g. ownership of land) as well as at the household level (e.g. employment, income and education). But housing, as an economic and financial asset, also contributes to and amplifies these economic inequalities in various ways. Some analysts view the growing financialisation of housing – prioritising housing as a financial asset to generate wealth – as a major contributor to rising economic inequalities and housing poverty. Through their investments in and management of neighbourhoods, governments directly influence inequalities in house prices. Much of the value in housing lies in its location rather than the attributes of the physical premises. In this dialogue, we aim to shed light on how housing assets reinforce wealth inequalities and discuss policy levers to promote a more just and equitable society. Key questions are:

- What is the contribution of housing to wealth inequalities in the country?
- Which places and social groups benefit most from property wealth and why?
- What is the government's role in directly or indirectly influencing property wealth inequalities?
- How can housing policy reduce inequalities and contribute to shared prosperity?

Dialogue 3: Alternative economies off/for housing

The economic and financial crisis facing South Africa means that traditional formal sector driven approaches to housing provision have become increasingly constrained. Precarious incomes exclude poor people from accessing housing via the formal market. Declining public sector delivery rates of subsidised housing have resulted in long waiting lists and rising backlogs. Consequently, alternative modes of housing provision are increasingly important. In this dialogue, we discuss alternative approaches to housing, including social housing, housing commons and cooperatives, and their connection with wider efforts to promote solidarity or human rights enhancing economies. Key questions are:

- What are the key economic principles and practices of housing alternatives?
- How are they implemented and transformed in practice?
- What are the opportunities and risks of alternative housing approaches within wider efforts to promote a solidarity economy?



Reclaim the City supporters hold a picket during the 4th annual Affordable Housing Africa conference at the African Pride hotel in Cape Town in 2017. Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/ GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)



Reclaim the City supporters occupy the Woodstock Hospital in 2017. The occupiers were demanding clarity on affordable housing on the Helen Bowden and Woodstock Hospital sites. Photo: Ashraf Hendricks/GroundUp (CC BY-ND 4.0)

Conclusion: Housing as economic opportunity

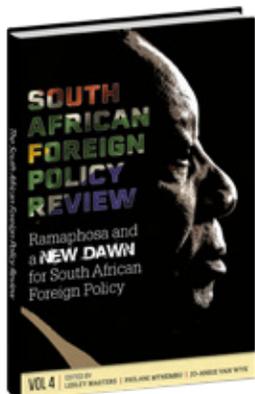
In many countries around the world, housing has moved to the centre of public debates about a post-COVID-19 economic recovery. Parallel crises of growing poverty, wealth inequalities and housing unaffordability have resulted in calls for more research and action on the links between housing and inclusive economies. In South Africa, the connections between housing and the stagnant, racialised and unequal economy are conspicuous but ill-understood. This project – focused on three evidence-based dialogues between housing scholars/practitioners, economists and the government – will shed more light on this topic. Those interested in contributing to making these events a success should contact Dr Andreas Scheba at ascheba@hsrc.ac.za

Note: The Housing as Economic Policy project is funded by the HSRC's Inclusive Economic Development (IED) division as part of what is known as an IED Kaleidoscope initiative intended to engage policymakers and researchers.

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Price **R650**

South African Foreign Policy Review, Volume 4 Ramaphosa and the New Dawn for South African Foreign Policy

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ABOUT THE BOOK

President Cyril Ramaphosa's notion of a 'new dawn' as the clarion call for his presidency is yet to manifest fully in South Africa's foreign policy. However, some changes that have already taken place indicate a departure from the foreign policy of the Zuma era. While Ramaphosa's emphasis on foreign direct investment and trade seems to be the cornerstone of his tenure's foreign policy, other developments and continuities require deeper reflection, which is one of the objectives of the review. As a reflection and assessment of the Ramaphosa era, it focuses on foreign policy leadership, foreign policy architecture, diplomacy, questions such as national interests and national identity, and South Africa's bilateral and multilateral relations. Contributors to this fourth volume of the highly successful South African Foreign Policy Review series include South African and international experts, and will, like previous volumes, be of great use to diplomats, academics, students, government officials, parliamentarians, politicians, the media, and civil society.

The South African Foreign Policy Review, Volume 4, continues to build on the analysis of South Africa's conduct internationally. The review fills a gap in the continuity of analysis on South African foreign policy, providing an important resource in tracing trends and developments. If the country is to maintain and grow its role in the region and international affairs more broadly, scholars, practitioners and the general public alike, need to be able to take stock of how the country has conducted itself internationally so far, and how it could improve on multiple fronts, including regional leadership, balancing principles and practice, and supporting diplomatic practice.

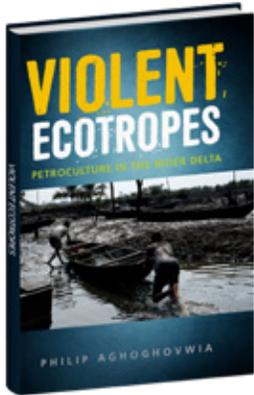
The fourth volume of the *South African Foreign Policy Review*, edited by Lesley Masters, Jo-Ansie van Wyk and Philani Mthembu, comprises 18 chapters and explores the norms and values, architecture, conceptual frameworks and practice of foreign policy and diplomacy.

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Violent Ecotropes

Petroculture in the Niger Delta

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ABOUT THE BOOK

The Niger Delta, the crude oil extraction centre of Nigeria, has become an archetype of global consumption happening at the expense of local communities and habitats. Much is made of the spectacle of violence in this region: environmental devastation, local community protests and youth violence on account of the perceived injustices associated with the oil extractive industrial complex. The involvement of a global cartel of oil smuggling from this region, known as 'bunkering', fuels and finances local militancy, which in turn exacerbates violence in this beleaguered landscape of oil.

This book provides a unique view of the cultural aspects of the oil extraction industry within the societies where it operates. It highlights the complexity of the universal environmental challenges of our time and provides research lenses through which to understand this complex issue: who and what are represented in this oil culture, the charged and often clashing contexts of the globalised fossil fuel extraction industry versus the ecologies of directly affected people and places, that will persist for as long as carbon-based economies exist.

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