

# UPROOTING POVERTY

## The South African Challenge

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Poverty is not knowing where your next meal is going to come from, and always wondering when the council is going to put your furniture out and always praying that your husband must not lose his job. To me that is poverty.  
 – Mrs. Witbooi, Philipstown, Karoo  
 (33: 23)

Poverty is like illness. It shows itself in different ways in different historical situations, and it has diverse causes. Treatment generally requires careful diagnosis. In this book we are concerned with discovering the nature of poverty as it exists in South Africa today, and with understanding its root causes in order that we may think through as systematically as possible what action must be taken both to 'cure', or remove, existing poverty as well as to prevent further outbreaks of this scourge. We shall find that it is not always easy to make a clear distinction between the facts or symptoms of poverty and its origins. Not only are there several different dimensions of material and non-material poverty but there is also a complex interaction between cause and effect, which makes it difficult to describe a state of poverty without considering those factors, themselves aspects of poverty, that cause further misery (4: 1–18). For example, is it best to think of illiteracy in modern society as a manifestation, even a consequence, of poverty or as one of its causes? There is no clear answer to this question, but we have wrestled with it as we have sought to bring some sort of order to the mass of material quarried for this book by hundreds of different research workers all over the sub-continent.

### *Danger of statistics*

In his classic study on *The Mismeasure of Man* (1981), Stephen Jay Gould has shown the great dangers facing all scientists who seek to reduce complex phenomena (such as intelligence) to single numbers. Lest we fall into the same trap of those white, middle-class, male natural scientists of Europe and North America who for years and years persuaded themselves (by careful statistical measurement of cranium size, skull capacity, or whatever) that somehow the owners of white, middle-class, male skulls were naturally more intelligent than those unfortunate beings who were black, poor, and/or female, it is important that we begin with an explicit recognition of the complexity of poverty.

In seeking to define the phenomenon we must be careful not to confine our thinking to those characteristics that appear important to people living within the sheltered walls of an urban university. For this reason when the Carnegie Inquiry began, research workers were not provided with a nice clean definition of poverty that they could measure (and compare with other places and other times), but were told instead to go out into the highways and byways of the country to meet people who endured poverty and those who lived or worked with them and to listen to what they, from their own experience, understood poverty to mean. And then to describe and try to measure that.

This is an untidy process and was scathingly condemned by an economist of the World Bank, at a seminar in Washington on the Inquiry, as one that

produced mere 'anecdotal evidence'. What he failed to note was that until one has a real feel for the situation in which one is working, the most sophisticated statistical sampling techniques in the world can serve, like Gould's biologists, to obscure rather than to illuminate the truth. Polly Hill has written with telling effect about the devastating consequences of the failure of economists to understand crucial aspects (such as the economic role of women) in societies for which they were presuming to advocate development policies (1986).

We do not wish to be misunderstood: statistical analysis is essential, and the effort to toughen up the soft social sciences by improving the quality of statistics is one of the most significant intellectual advances of our time. But precisely because the numbers are so important it is vital to pause at the beginning to consider what we are measuring and, perhaps even more significant, what we are not measuring. In the social sciences there has to be a constant tension between the case-study methodology as practised by anthropologists, and the representative statistical sample derived from questionnaires beloved by sociologists and economists. Each is periodically driven to distraction by the other. But each badly needs the other in order to avoid the Scylla of assuming that a particular case study is typical of a whole population and the Charybdis of asserting that what has been enumerated (and statistically analysed) is necessarily the whole (or even the most important part) of the truth.

For this reason the various field reports from many different parts of the country that were amongst the papers presented at the Carnegie conference are invaluable, for whilst they are not always comparable they draw attention to aspects of poverty that might otherwise fall through the grid of the university-based statistician and be neither noticed nor measured, let alone assessed. It is from these papers that we learn that no adequate description of poverty can satisfactorily reduce it to a single number. Poverty is not one-dimensional; it has many faces as we shall see in the chapters that follow.

At the same time we recognise that an overall statistic, however simplified, can furnish invaluable information, provided its limitations are clearly recognised. To return to our medical analogy for a moment, we know that a simple statistical indicator such as body temperature is useful in the early stages of examination to indicate whether the patient is unwell or not, but it is of little help in diagnosing whether the disease is measles, chicken-pox, polio, or the common cold. Similarly, in seeking to deal with poverty it is helpful to 'take the temperature' of the society, as it were, before delving deeper to discover precisely what is wrong, and why.

In his magisterial history of *The African Poor* John Iliffe, wrestling to carve out a usable definition of poverty, has drawn attention to the fact that

two levels of want have existed in Africa for several centuries. On one level have been the very large numbers – perhaps most Africans at most times – obliged to struggle continuously to preserve themselves and their dependants from physical want. These will be called the poor. On another level have been smaller numbers who have

permanently or temporarily failed in that struggle and have fallen into physical want. These will be called the very poor or destitute. Of course there was no sharp dividing line between them. Yet the distinction has cross-cultural validity. It existed in ancient Greece. It was identified by Charles Booth's pioneer study of London during the 1880s, which defined the poor as those 'living under a struggle to obtain the necessaries of life and make both ends meet' and the very poor as those who 'live in a state of chronic want'. The distinction between *pauvre* and *indigent* was drawn in early modern France, where 'both *pauvre* and *indigent* knew hunger, but the *indigent* were never free from it'. In Africa the distinction existed in some, but not all, pre-colonial languages and has appeared frequently since, most recently in accounts of South African resettlement sites during the early 1980s. (1987: 2)

### Some basic statistics

The distinction is useful not least in focusing attention upon the vulnerability of those enduring poverty. Sudden changes can throw people, who are just managing to make ends meet, into a situation of utter destitution. We shall begin by trying to measure the wider numbers of those who are poor in the sense of 'living under a struggle to obtain the necessaries of life'. We use for our calibrations the various poverty lines that have been developed in the country.

The poverty datum line (PDL) was introduced to South Africa by Batson at the University of Cape Town during the Second World War in order to help measure the extent of poverty in the rapidly growing slums and townships of the western Cape. It was subsequently refined and modified, at the beginning of the 1970s, as the trade unions re-emerged as a force for change and guidelines were needed in the debate with management about minimum wages. The minimum living level (MLL) and the supplementary living level (SLL) developed by Nel are used by the Bureau of Market Research at the University of South Africa. The household subsistence level (HSL) and the household effective level (HEL) have been monitored by Potgieter at the University of Port Elizabeth. The following table summarises the basic information about these various levels of poverty.

All the measures have been severely criticised, not least for the degree of subjectivity involved in estimating theoretical minima (Budlender 1985: 2). Indeed there is considerable dispute in the learned international journals as to whether it is even theoretically possible to determine a minimum level of calorie intake to ensure subsistence of the human body, for it has been shown that, depending on food intake, the human body can sustain itself for long periods of time at different weight equilibria (Timmer, 1987: 689). Besides, as Beckerman has cryptically observed (3: 10), it does not really make sense to define poverty at some minimum living level when people continue to survive below it. Measurement of the extent of poverty can be extremely sensitive both to tiny variations in its definition as well as to ways of adjusting for inflation. In some Third World countries, for example, economists have found that a 10 per cent change in the number of calories assumed necessary for

subsistence can shift the proportion of households living in poverty by 50 per cent or more. And in Britain, Beckerman has shown how in measuring the impact of social security on poverty over the period 1961 to 1976, 'alternative methods of adjusting the estimates for demographic changes or for inflation meant that the estimates of poverty, over this period, doubled, fell by 30%, or remained more or less the same, depending on which method one adopted!' (3: 5) Such cautionary tales serve as a salutary warning against the misuse, whether conscious or unconscious, of poverty statistics to prove what one is wanting to prove and of the need to interpret them with a due sense of their fragility.

Table 1.01: Levels of poverty: definitions and statistics, 1980-5

| Initials | Value (R/month) |      | Coverage   | Poverty level as % of average white mining earnings in 1980 |
|----------|-----------------|------|--|---|
|          | 1980            | 1985 |  |   |
| PDL      | 195             | 345  | Food, clothing, fuel/lighting, washing/cleansing, rent, transport  | 19%   |
| MLL*     | 189             | 350  | As above + tax, medical expenses, education, household equipment replacement   | 18%   |
| SLL*     | 240             | 446  | MLL + more for each item + recreation/entertainment, personal care, pension, UIF, medical, burial contributions. Approx. MLL + 30% | 23%   |
| HSL†     | 195             | 345  | As for PDL   | 19%   |
| HEL†     | 293             | 518  | HSL + 50%  | 28%   |

Sources: Potgieter, 1974, 1978 and 1985; Budlender, 1985: 1; Bureau of Market Research (BMR) cited in Saldru Handbook, 1986: 407 and 17: 5

\* These figures are for an average-sized African household of 5.45 persons and are the weighted average (in August) for 25 urban areas covered by the BMR. Particular figures will vary according to size of household, colour-caste, and area.

† Average costs for African households of 6 persons in the 5 major urban areas.

Note: In the rural areas cash required for subsistence is not much less despite lower costs for such items as housing and transport, and despite some food production by the household. For example in the Transkei, 1983/4, when the urban HSL (for a family of 5) was R296, that for a household (of 6 persons) in the rural areas was R246 (44: 4).

In South Africa as a whole, including the reserves, the proportion of the total population living, in 1980, below subsistence (measured as the urban MLL) was estimated to be 50 per cent. For Africans throughout the country the proportion was estimated to be nearly two-thirds (60.5 per cent), whilst for those living in the reserves no less than 81 per cent of the households were in dire poverty (Simkins, 1984: 181).

However, the most striking feature of poverty in South Africa is the degree of inequality that exists. The statistics, rough as they are, show the width of the gulf between grinding poverty and massive wealth. In 1970, the richest 20

per cent of the population in South Africa owned 75 per cent of the wealth, compared with 62 per cent in Brazil and 39 per cent in the United States. In 1978, according to a careful statistical analysis by De Lange and Van Seventer at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa's Gini coefficient (which measures inequality) was the highest of any of the 57 countries in the world for which data are available (PCS 16: 23). In South Africa its value is 0.66.\*

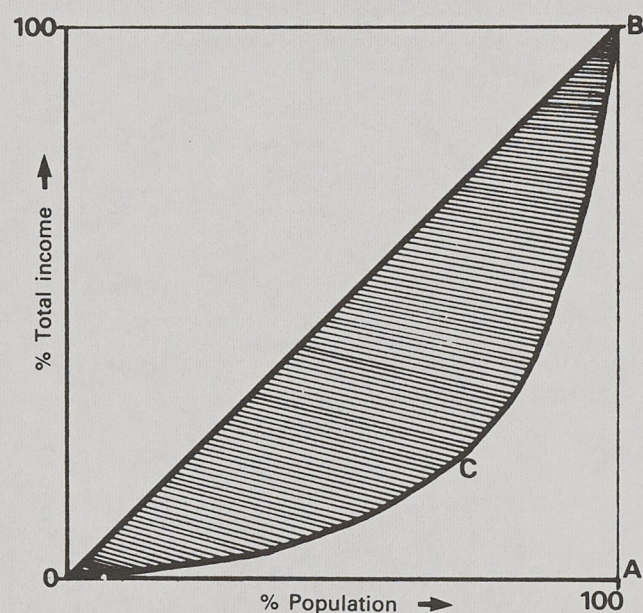


Fig. 1.01: Gini coefficient

In the diagram, the Gini coefficient measures the ratio of the area OCB to the triangle OAB. Where there was no inequality (and the bottom 10 per cent of the population earned 10 per cent of the total income) the shaded area would vanish and the Gini coefficient would be zero.

And income is closely correlated with 'race' or colour-caste, as may be seen from the following tables, the first of which shows the distribution of households by colour-caste and income. Whilst almost one-third of all African households, for example, earned less than R500 per year in 1975, only one in fifty (2 per cent) of whites were so poor. Similarly, whilst 95 per cent of African households had an annual income of less than R3 000, only 11 per cent of whites were in the same position.

\* An earlier study (Devereux, 1983: 35) found that between 1976 and 1980 the Gini coefficient in South Africa fell 'quite dramatically' from 0.65 to 0.57. There is certainly evidence to suggest that over the decade 1970 and 1980 the share of total income going to blacks rose whilst that going to whites fell substantially. However our assessment is that the 1978 figure (0.66) for the Gini coefficient, calculated from the detailed information in the Social Accounting Matrix now available for that year, is the most accurate to date.

Table 1.02: Household annual income distribution, 1975 (as a percentage of households in each group)

|          | <R500 | <R1 500 | <R3 000 | <R8 000 |
|----------|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| White    | 2     | 4       | 11      | 50      |
| Asian    | 12    | 35      | 69      | 96      |
| Coloured | 25    | 54      | 78      | 98      |
| African  | 31    | 74      | 95      | 99.6    |
| Total    | 24    | 56      | 74      | 88      |

Source: (269: 3)

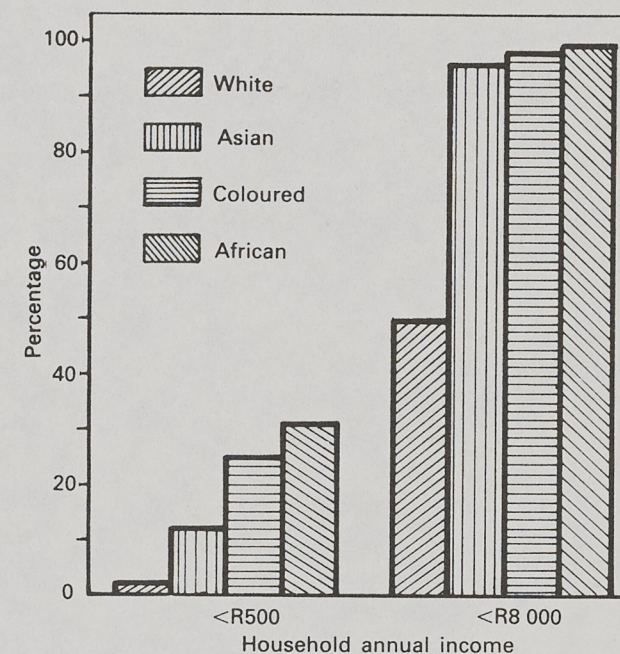


Fig. 1.02: Household annual income distribution, 1975

Whilst poverty is not confined to any one racial-caste in South Africa it is concentrated mostly amongst blacks, particularly Africans. The following table shows the estimated real disposable income per person, in 1983, according to group.

Table 1.03: Annual disposable income per capita, 1983

|                               | Rands |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| White                         | 6 242 |
| Asian                         | 2 289 |
| Coloured                      | 1 630 |
| African – metropolitan areas* | 1 366 |
| – non-growth areas†           | 388   |

Source: Van Wyk, 1984 cited in Eberstadt, 1988: 23

\* As defined by the BMR

† Also defined by the BMR. Areas relate primarily to the reserves.

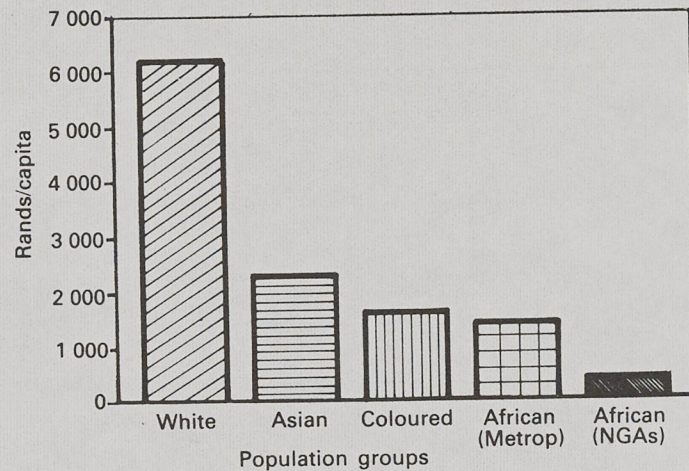


Fig. 1.03: Annual disposable income, 1983

But have things changed in recent years? And if so how? The following table shows the changing pattern of income distribution over the period 1960–80.

Table 1.04: Income distribution in South Africa, 1960–1980 (as a percentage of 'census income' going to each racial-caste)

|          | 1960* | 1970 | 1980 | % 1980 population |
|----------|-------|------|------|-------------------|
| White    | 72.9  | 71.2 | 64.9 | 15                |
| Asian    | 1.9   | 2.4  | 3.0  | 3                 |
| Coloured | 5.5   | 6.7  | 7.2  | 9                 |
| African  | 19.7  | 19.8 | 24.9 | 73                |
| Total    | 100   | 100  | 100  | 100               |

Source: McGrath as cited in Saldru Handbook, 1986: 536

\* Census data for 1960 was adjusted.

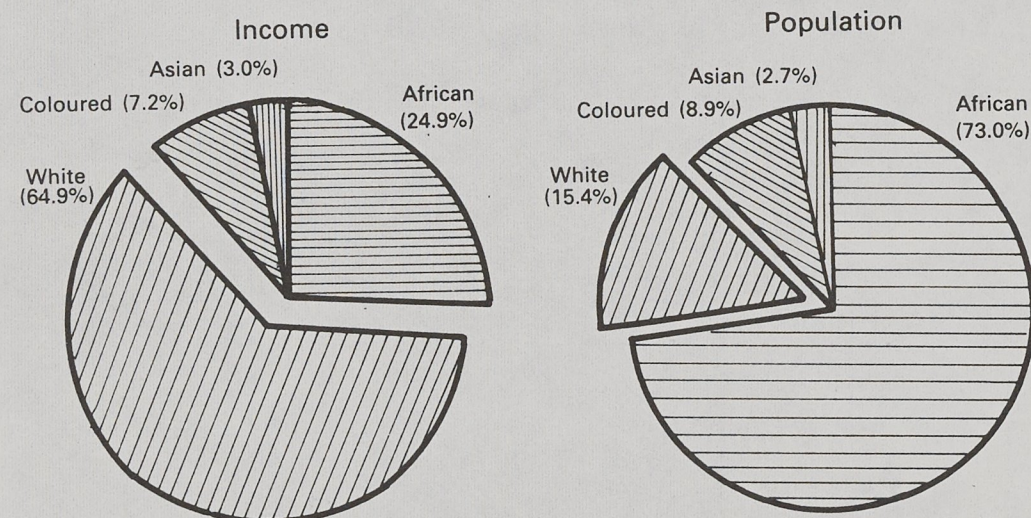


Fig. 1.04: Income and population distribution, by colour-caste, 1980

In 1980 (whites who constituted less than one-sixth of the population) earned almost two-thirds of the income, whilst Africans (who made up nearly three-quarters of the people) earned only one-quarter. But in 1970 the situation had been even worse. The above statistics and other indicators show that during the 1970s there was a marked shift in the distribution of income away from whites to blacks, particularly Africans. In the reserves, for example, between 1960 and 1980 the proportion of households living in poverty (below the minimum living level) seems to have fallen from 99 per cent to 81 per cent whilst in the country as a whole, considering households of all races, the proportion enduring poverty fell from 75 to 50 per cent (Simkins, 1984: 181). Another indication of the shift in income distribution during the 1970s is the fact that the income share of the richest 20 per cent fell from 75 to 61 per cent.

But these hopeful signs have to be set against a number of other considerations. First, given the increase in total population over the same period, the absolute number of those living in poverty in South Africa has probably risen from 13 million to 15 million persons (Simkins, 1984: 181). Second, the numbers of those who are very poor, if not utterly destitute, have risen dramatically. In the reserves, for example, the number of destitute persons – defined as those living in households with no visible means of support from remittances, local jobs, land, cattle, pensions or other transfer payments – rose six-fold over the period 1960–80 from 250 000 to 1 430 000 (7: 12 and 311: 5). It has been estimated, moreover, that in 1980 the bottom 40 per cent of the population earned only 8 per cent of the income (Devereux, 1984: 37). Amongst the very poor the indicators suggest strongly that the position has been getting worse. Third, these figures take no account of what has been happening to levels of poverty and to income distribution in limitrophe countries such as Lesotho and Mozambique as a result of changes in the structure and policies (particularly with regard to labour recruitment) of the South African political economy. It is also important to note that these statistics refer only to income streams and not to the stock of assets (such as land, housing, or industrial shares) whose distribution between racial-castes is likely to be even more skewed.

What seems to have happened is that, as in the United States over much the same period, inequalities between blacks widened as wealth trickled down to a small but growing middle class, whilst the majority were left far behind (Harrington, 1984: 125–6). This conclusion is reinforced by the significant finding that within the African population, taken separately, the most recent calculation (for 1978) of the Gini coefficient (=0.55) indicates a relatively high degree of inequality. Amongst whites alone, on the other hand, income is distributed fairly evenly and the Gini coefficient of 0.39 is similar to that of Western democratic countries (PCS 16: 23). The fact that the wealth of the country is more equitably distributed amongst whites, at the top end of the economic spectrum, serves to reinforce the high degree of inequality within the society as a whole.

One consequence of the link between inequality and poverty in South

Africa may be seen in the following table drawn up by Amartya Sen from the 1986 World Development Report, showing life-expectancy at birth compared with average resources (measured in terms of gross national product) in various countries. South Africa, with a per capita gross national product six or seven times higher than that of China or Sri Lanka, has a life-expectancy at birth less than four-fifths that of the two much poorer countries.

Table 1.05: Opulence and life-expectancy, 1984

| Country      | GNP per head (\$) | Life-expectancy at birth (years) |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| China        | 310               | 69                               |
| Sri Lanka    | 360               | 70                               |
| Brazil       | 1 720             | 64                               |
| Mexico       | 2 040             | 66                               |
| South Africa | 2 340             | 54                               |

Source: Sen, 1987: 17

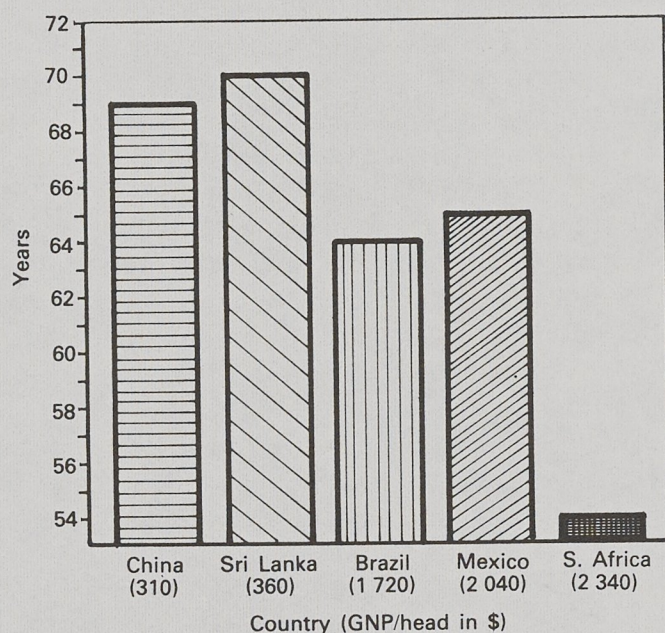


Fig. 1.05: Opulence and life-expectancy, 1984

### Who's who

For those unfamiliar with the finer details of South African definitions of racial categories it is perhaps helpful to know who's who and to recognise there is more to colour than meets the eye. Not even the architects of apartheid have been able to develop a clear, let alone scientific, basis for dividing the population. In terms of the Population Registration Act (1950) the people of South Africa are divided into a number of so-called 'racial' or 'ethnic' groups. Quite apart from the unscientific basis of such divisions, and the breathtaking oversimplification of the country's history which they assert, the very words

used to identify each group are contentious. The divisions are essentially political and, at this stage, are perhaps best seen as 'colour-castes'. For our purposes we follow the official terminology for those who are classified as 'white', 'coloured', and 'Asian'. For the remaining three-quarters of the population we shall use the term 'African' without generally breaking them down into the various ethnic components used by Pretoria. The term 'black' will be used in the inclusive sense to refer to all those who are not classified as 'white'. At the time of the 1985 census, the total population of South Africa (including the independent homelands) was 33.7 million of whom 25.0 million (74 per cent) were African; 4.9 million (15 per cent) were white; 2.9 million (8 per cent) were coloured; and 0.9 million (3 per cent) were Asian (Eberstadt, 1988: 22).

Cutting across, but also partly reinforcing, these colour-castes are the boundaries of language. Four major languages are spoken in the country whilst a host of others, from Africa, Europe, and India, are each the mother tongue of anything up to one million people. Two out of every five (43 per cent) South Africans speaks one of the Nguni dialects (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele) whilst one in four (24 per cent) speaks a form of Sotho (North Sotho or Pedi, South Sotho, and Tswana). One in six (16 per cent) speaks Afrikaans as a first language, whilst English is the mother tongue of only one in twelve (8 per cent) although it is rapidly becoming the common means of communication, as a second (or third) language for the majority of South Africans.

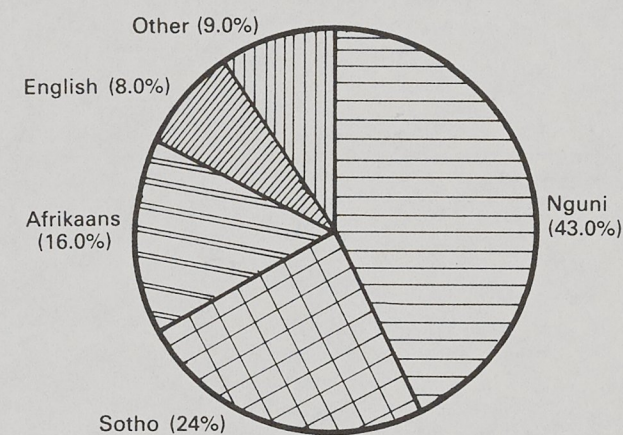


Fig. 1.06: Home languages, 1980

### Geography of poverty

In South Africa the inequalities of colour-caste are reinforced by those of geographic administration, particularly amongst Africans. Indicators such as income per head or infant mortality rates all suggest that poverty (and the form it takes) varies widely according to certain geographic, or rather geographically-administrative, categories. South Africa, like Gaul, can be divided broadly into three parts: the metropolitan areas of the major cities; the platteland comprising the towns and the white-owned commercial farms together with

the smaller dorps or villages of the country; and the reserves (sometimes called homelands, or Bantustans, or even Black National States) originally set aside in terms of the 1913 Natives Land Act for occupation by Africans. Further land was allocated in 1936 to make a total, scattered in hundreds of fragments across the country, of 13.7 per cent of the whole. It is these reserves (now partly consolidated), the residue of nearly three centuries of conquest by white invaders, that form the ten 'Black states' which are the centrepiece of government policy with regard to Africans. The following table shows the breakdown of the African population at the time of the 1980 census, by the geo-administrative divisions of the political economy.

Table 1.06: Geographic distribution of African population, 1980

|                    | Number<br>(× 1 000) | Proportion<br>(%) |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Metropolitan areas | 3 916               | 18.7              |
| Platteland: urban  | 1 691               | 8.1               |
| rural              | 4 310               | 20.6              |
| total              | 6 001               | 28.7              |
| Reserves: urban    | 1 521               | 7.3               |
| rural              | 9 738               | 46.4              |
| total              | 11 056*             | 53.7              |
| Total: urban       | 7 128               | 34.0              |
| rural              | 14 048              | 67.0              |
| Grand total        | 20 972†             |                   |

Source: Saldru Handbook, 1986: 9-14

\* Another estimate is 11 245.

† Another estimate is 21 367. (The numbers do not all add up exactly because different statistical sources were used.)

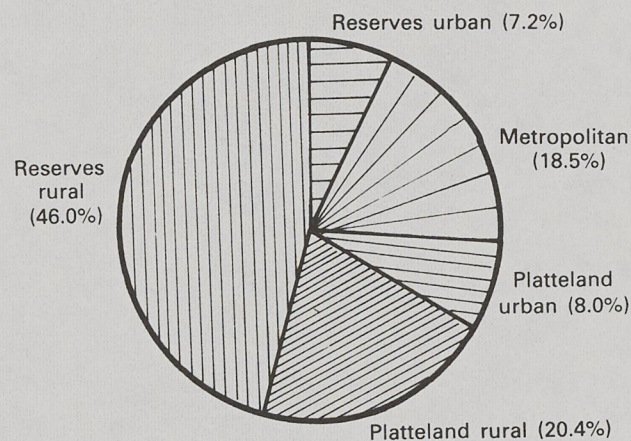


Fig. 1.07: Geographic distribution of African population, 1980

The importance of where people live in determining the degree of poverty they must endure is shown in the following table.

Table 1.07: The geography of poverty (Africans only), 1975

|                  | Percentage households in each income category |        |        | Mean annual income<br>(rands) |
|------------------|---|--------|--------|-------------------------------|
|                  | <R500   | <R1500 | <R3000 |                               |
| Reserves*        | 40  | 84     | 98     | 925                           |
| Platteland rural | 45  | 95     | 99,6   | 670                           |
| Platteland urban | 6   | 49     | 90     | 1 709                         |
| Metropolitan†    | 4   | 38     | 84     | 2 017                         |
| Total            | 31  | 74     | 95     | 1 152                         |

Source: 269: 5

\* Excluding overlapping segments of the metropolitan regions.

† Including overlapping segments of the metropolitan regions in the reserves.

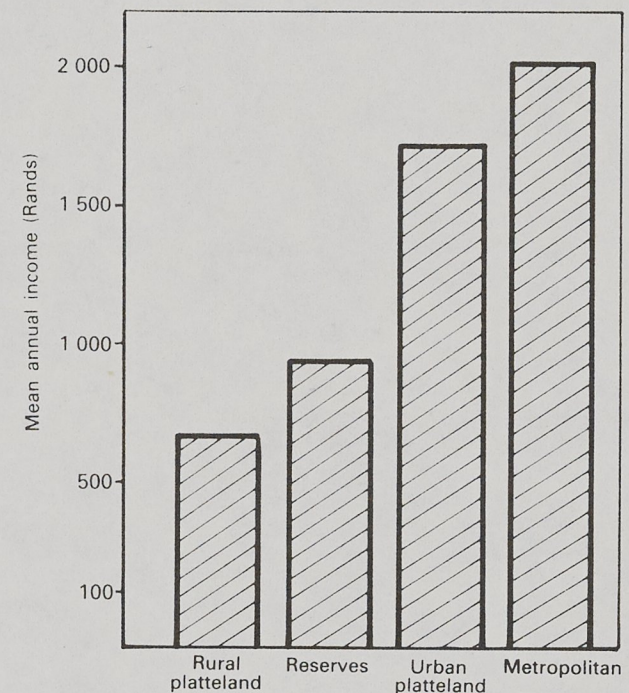


Fig. 1.08: Geography of poverty, Africans only, 1975

Several important points emerge. Poverty in the rural platteland (that is, on white-owned farms and the small dorps or villages) seems to be worse than anywhere else, with average income in 1975 being approximately half that of all African households in the country as a whole. The really poor households (with annual incomes of <R500) are concentrated on the rural platteland and in the reserves, rather than in the towns and cities. It is also surprising to note that in 1975 poverty in the towns and dorps of South Africa (excluding the eleven major metropolitan centres) seemed to be less pervasive than either in the rural areas of the platteland or the reserves.

For the South African population as a whole the primary geographic division is between those who are urbanised and those still living in the rural areas. The following table shows the pattern of urbanisation and the dramatic

changes under way, particularly for Africans, during the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Table 1.08: Proportion of population estimated in urban areas

|          | 1904<br>(%) | 1936<br>(%) | 1960<br>(%) | 1980<br>(%) | 2000<br>(%) |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| African  | 10          | 17          | 32          | 33          | 47          |
| Coloured | 51          | 54          | 68          | 77          | 85          |
| Asian    | 37          | 66          | 83          | 91          | 91          |
| White    | 53          | 65          | 84          | 88          | 90          |
| Total    | 23          | 31          | 47          | 47          | 58          |

Source: RSA, Department of Statistics, 1974: 1.12 and Simkins, 1983: 143ff

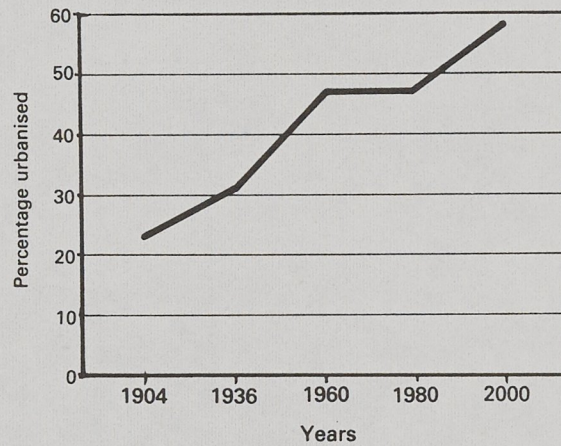
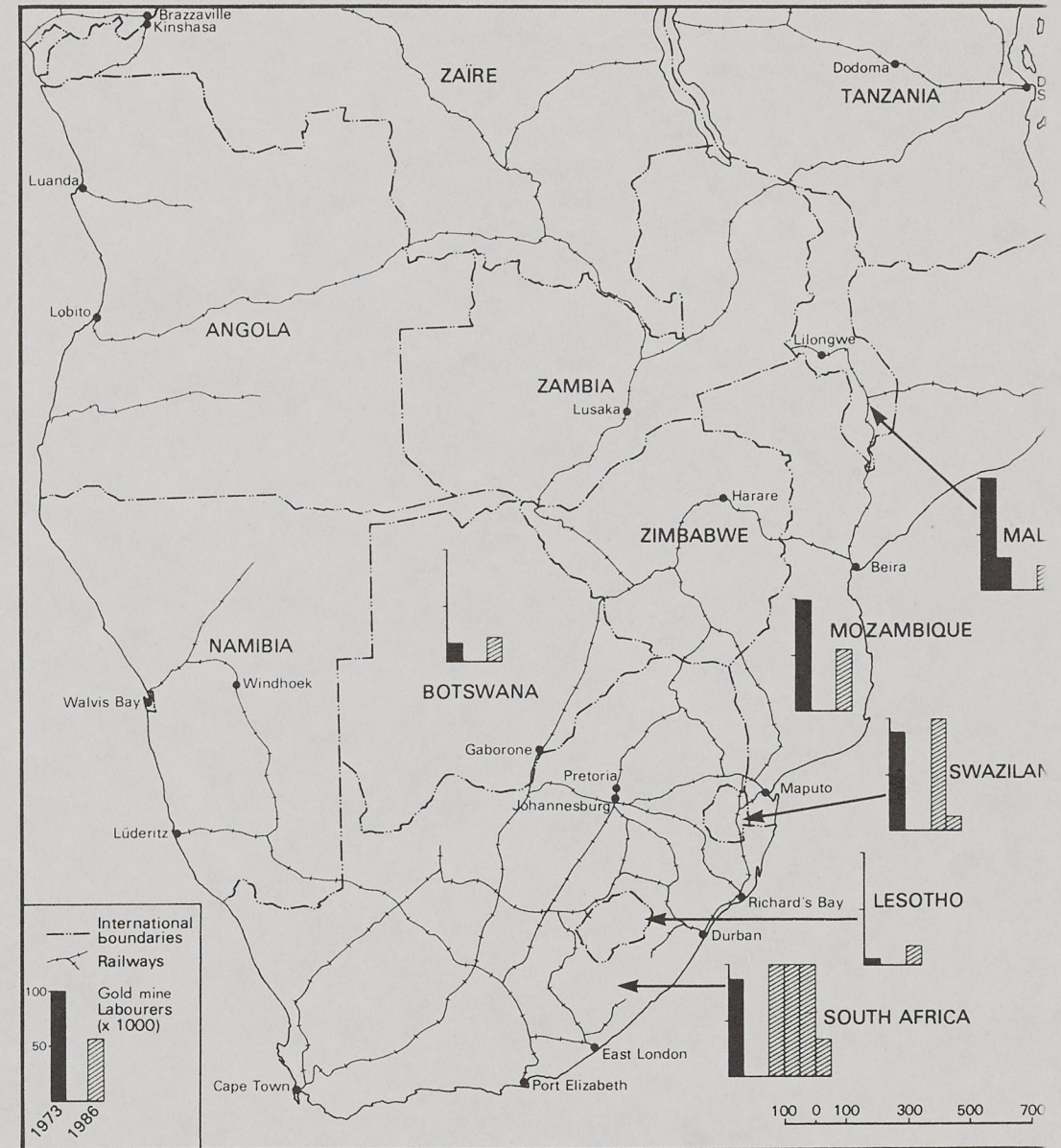


Fig. 1.09: Urbanisation, 1904-2000

### South Africa in southern Africa

It is important that this study of poverty should be made with a clear recognition of the wider regional context in which it occurs. Southern Africa is a region in which a century of industrial revolution centred on the gold-mining industry and based on a system of oscillating labour migration has forged a single economy whose boundaries are far wider than those of the political nation-state in which the gold mines are located.

In the light of the region's economic history it is clear that any attempt to localise poverty by focusing on one small area (for example the Ciskei) in isolation from the wider economy would be profoundly misleading. Even more seriously, too narrow a geographic focus could easily result in strategies being developed to reduce poverty in one area (such as the Transkei) but which did so primarily at the expense of poor people somewhere else (such as in Lesotho or Mozambique).



Southern Africa: labour migrancy and the South African gold mines



The precise nature of the economic linkages (including labour migration, transport infrastructure, investment, or trade) between South Africa and the different countries in the region varies considerably and is the subject of a good deal of current analysis and writing (see, for example, Minter, 1986 and Lewis, forthcoming). For our purposes it is sufficient, at this stage, simply to place South Africa within the wider context of southern Africa, defined in this study to include also Namibia and the nine countries of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). In 1980 the area, population, and gross domestic product of these ten countries were as follows:

Table 1.09: Southern Africa, 1984: area, population, and GDP per capita

|                 | Area<br>(x1000 sq. km) | Population<br>(millions) | Pop. density<br>(persons/km) | GDP<br>(\$bn) | GDP/capita<br>(\$) |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Angola          | 1 247                  | 9.9                      | 8                            | 4.7           | 470                |
| Botswana        | 600                    | 1.0                      | 2                            | 1.0           | 990                |
| Lesotho         | 30                     | 1.5                      | 50                           | 0.4*          | 240*               |
| Malawi          | 118                    | 6.8                      | 58                           | 1.1           | 160                |
| Mozambique      | 802                    | 13.4                     | 17                           | 2.8           | 210                |
| Swaziland       | 17                     | 0.7                      | 41                           | 0.6           | 770                |
| Tanzania        | 945                    | 21.5                     | 23                           | 4.4           | 200                |
| Zambia          | 753                    | 6.4                      | 8                            | 2.6           | 410                |
| Zimbabwe        | 391                    | 8.1                      | 21                           | 4.6           | 570                |
| Namibia         | 824                    | 1.1                      | 1                            | 1.2           | 1 100              |
| The Ten         | 5 727                  | 69.3                     | 12                           | 23.4          | 330                |
| South Africa    | 1 221                  | 31.6                     | 26                           | 73.4*         | 2300*†             |
| Southern Africa | 6 948                  | 102.0                    | 15                           | 96.8          | 950                |

Source: Lewis, 1987

\* Figures are for 1983.

† See table 1.03 for a disaggregation of this average. Using a 1983 exchange rate of R1.20 = \$1.00 white income averaged \$5202 per annum whilst Africans in the 'non-growth areas' (i.e. the reserves) had a disposable income of \$323 which was no better than the average in the ten SADCC countries of southern Africa, including Namibia.

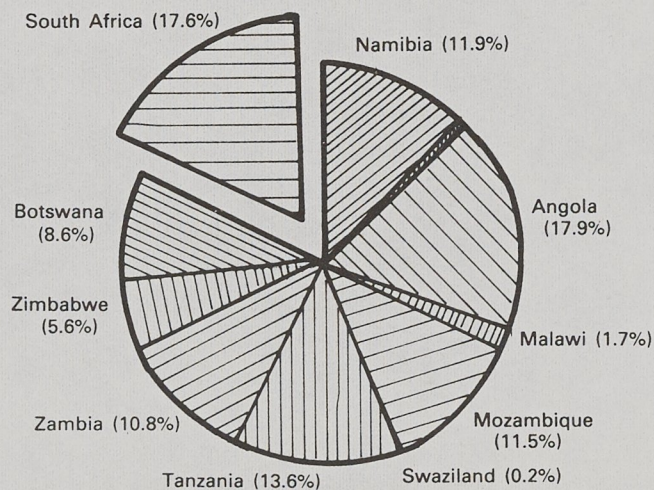


Fig. 1.10a: Southern Africa land area

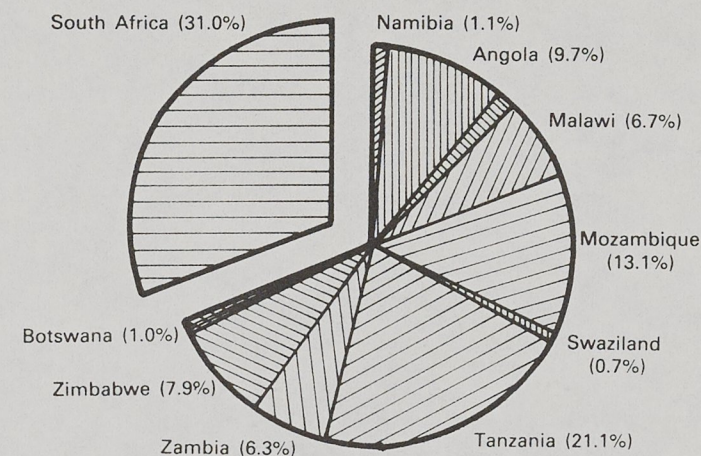


Fig. 1.10b: Southern Africa population, 1984

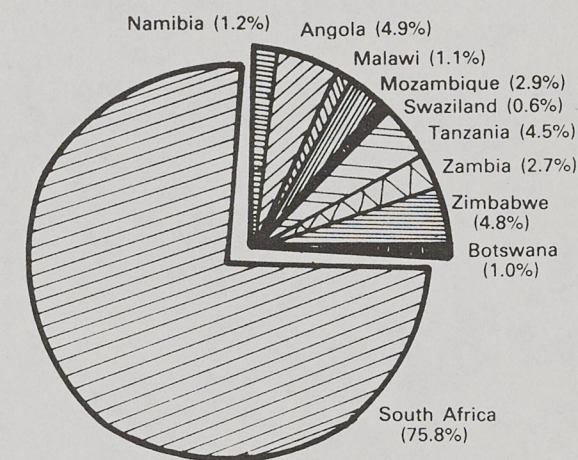


Fig. 1.10c: Southern Africa GDP, 1984

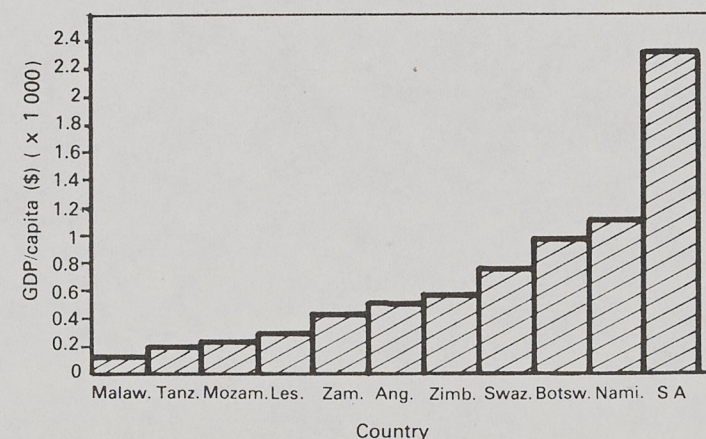


Fig. 1.10d: Southern Africa GDP per capita, 1984

30 *The faces of poverty*

Four of the six countries touching South Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia) have tiny populations relative to South Africa as a whole. Indeed it is worth noting that by 1980 the population of Soweto in Johannesburg alone was probably as great as, if not greater than, any one of them.\*

In the region as a whole South Africa accounts for just under one-third of the population but more than three-quarters of the gross domestic product. If, as a first approximation, one assumes that white South Africans, constituting 15 per cent of the country's population, receive 60 per cent of the gross domestic product, then in the region as a whole this group, constituting 4.7 per cent of the population, receives approximately 45 per cent of the total wealth in southern Africa. Clearly, when one considers the region as a whole the boundaries of colour-caste and of geography are fundamental in determining the distribution of income and the incidence of poverty.

In this book we shall focus primarily on South Africa, but always within the wider context of the region as a whole. For an understanding of the dynamics of the economic, political, and military interaction between South Africa and these SADCC/Frontline states will do much to illuminate the nature of poverty and the twin processes of accumulation and impoverishment in what is simultaneously the richest and the poorest region in Africa.

\* We are indebted to the late Charles Bloomberg for this observation.