

SHiNE FACT SHEET: POVERTY IN OUR MIDST ROBS US OF OUR COLLECTIVE DIGNITY



INTRODUCTION

This fact sheet is developed to provide relevant information on poverty in South Africa. This is in the context of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC/Commission) having launched the Social Harmony National Effort (SHiNE) on 27 September 2022. SHiNE recognises the deep divides and high levels of social disharmony across South Africa and creates a platform for engagements on the issues that plague the country and citizens. SHiNE notes that despite various efforts and strides taken by the democratic government of South Africa to pull people out of abject poverty, many people still live in abject poverty. SHiNE further notes that for the country to move forward, a general sense of solidarity and decision making that invokes and evokes compassion is required in dealing with poverty which is one of the key drivers of disharmony and a non-cohesive South African society.

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Social Harmony National Effort



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Poverty: Definition and Measurements in the South African context

- ✓ No globally agreed definition of poverty exists; however, all the myriad definitions have a common golden thread, which is the notion of material lack.¹
- ✓ There is a wide acknowledgment that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes other dimensions of living standards.²
- ✓ South Africa is bound by a myriad of international treaties to adopt a poverty measure and strive towards poverty eradication. For instance, South Africa is a signatory to the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration, which obliges signatories to develop a country specific measure of poverty by 1996.
- ✓ The South African Constitution imposes a positive obligation on the state to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights.³ The Bill of Rights lists several rights which relate to the wellbeing of a person, such as healthcare, food and water, housing amongst others.
- ✓ South Africa has been using national poverty lines to measure poverty in South Africa since 2012. The national poverty lines were developed by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), following extensive stakeholder consultations, expert engagements, and several discussion documents on the appropriate approach for poverty measurement in South Africa.
- ✓ The national poverty lines used by South Africa to measure poverty are the: Food poverty line (FPL); Lower-bound poverty line (LBPL); and Upper-bound poverty line (UBPL).
- ✓ The Food poverty line in April 2022 was pegged at R663 per person per month. This is the amount of money that an individual will need to afford the minimum required daily energy intake.
- ✓ The Lower-bound poverty line in April 2022 was pegged at R945 per person per month. This refers to the food poverty line plus the average amount derived from non-food items of households whose total expenditure is equal to the food poverty line; and
- ✓ The Upper-bound poverty line in April 2022 was pegged at R1 417 per person per month. This refers to the food poverty line plus the average amount derived from non-food items of households whose food expenditure is equal to the food poverty line.

¹ <http://spii.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/The-Measurement-of-Poverty-in-South-Africa-Project-Key-Issues-Working-Paper-No-1.pdf>

² <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC164841#:~:text=Poverty%20is%20defined%20as%20the,acceptable%20minimum%20standard%20of%20living.>

³ Section 7(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.



Poverty Statistics: Who is most vulnerable?

- ✓ South Africa is one of the most unequal countries when it comes to income inequality.⁴ Income inequality has a correlation with poverty. According to Stats SA, in 2015 approximately 13,8 million South Africans were living below the food poverty line.⁵
- ✓ Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have consistently remained the poorest provinces in the country.⁶
- ✓ Females remain more disadvantaged than males when it comes to poverty.⁷ Poverty has a correlation with unemployment. The levels of unemployment are high at 32,9%, with the youth particularly affected as 46,5% of the youth are unemployed.⁸



Positive examples from Communities

- ✓ Food insecurity is linked to poverty. Poverty directly impacts on the realisation to the right to food. Most rural households and those in peri-urban settings experience greater levels of material deprivation due to myriad factors such as geographic location. The KwaZulu-Natal province is amongst the provinces with the highest prevalence of poverty-stricken communities.
- ✓ As a result, some rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal have established agricultural projects, such as community gardens, wherein communities share resources, pool together knowledge, and labour and in the process grow food, improve nutrition, and generate income through the sale of surplus produce. One such example is the Siyaphambili Women's Club in Umgababa in KwaZulu-Natal.¹⁰ The Siyaphambili Women's Club comprises a group of mothers and grandmothers who in partnership with the food retail group Shoprite, grow vegetables both for own consumption and for selling to communities.
- ✓ Some communities in KwaZulu-Natal have embraced tourism to address poverty and promote sustainable development through showcasing their cultural heritages and traditional practices. For example, in the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal, there is the Umzumbe River Trails which is set in the heart of the Ugu district, between the coastal Umzumbe village and the Mhlabatshane Dam at KwaPhungashe. This tourist destination showcases the local cultural heritage, customs and cuisines. The project unlocks rural tourism and benefits the rural economy.

⁴ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=ZA>
⁵ https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/Pages/2020/october/06-10-2020_sectoral_parliament_planning_session/day1_session1/A_Poverty_Mapping_Overview_of_the_Poorest_Provinces_Metros_Districts_and_Localities_in_SA.pdf
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16312#:~:text=South%20Africa's%20unemployment%20rate%20in,the%20fourth%20quarter%20of%202022.>
⁹ http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1682-58532022000300003
¹⁰ <https://www.foodformzansi.co.za/in-pictures-siyaphambili-food-garden-lifts-community/>

