

# Review of Research Evidence on Child Poverty in South Africa

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The first version of the review was undertaken in 2011 by Barnes, Hall and Wright. With the PSPPD's and the authors' permission the first version has now been updated to incorporate more recent studies.



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# 1 Introduction

The importance of addressing child poverty is widely recognised, and numerous efforts have been made, both globally and within individual countries, to monitor the situation of children and take steps towards improving the living conditions of the poorest. UNICEF has highlighted the importance of tackling child poverty not only because of the impact a childhood spent in poverty can have on future outcomes, but also because the period of childhood itself should be a positive experience.<sup>1</sup>

Following the development and ratification by most countries of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), rights-based monitoring of children has emerged in many countries.<sup>2,3</sup> Through the CRC, national governments have committed to protect and ensure children's rights, to develop and undertake all actions and policies with the best interests of the child in mind, and they have agreed to hold themselves accountable to the international community.<sup>4</sup> Child rights increasingly form a backdrop for studies of child poverty, and a child rights framework has sometimes been used to inform the selection of indicators.

In this review we present research evidence on child poverty in South Africa. The focus of the review is on studies which have had a specific focus on child poverty, rather than more general poverty studies where child poverty has been examined as a subset. However, child poverty should be regarded as part of a broader poverty discourse which provides important context. This broader poverty discourse is itself varied: much poverty work revolves around the measurement of various poverty outcomes, and it is in this area that much of the explicitly child-oriented work is located. However, there is another much-needed and emergent discourse which attempts to look more deeply at the underlying causes of poverty and inequality.

There is an important role for measurement of child poverty, and it is widely recognised that the measurement of child poverty should be undertaken from a child-focused perspective, using approaches that focus on children specifically and not just the household in which they live. The recently relaunched initiative to promote 'A World Free from Child Poverty' highlights five key milestones for addressing child poverty in each country (UNICEF and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, 2017) (see Figure 1). The first milestone entails building a pathway to end child poverty and this can be informed by the CRC and other national and international commitments. The second entails measuring poverty, which, as will be highlighted in this review, can be undertaken in many different ways. The third milestone involves promoting the issue of child poverty through advocacy. It is hoped that this review will help to raise the profile of the many studies that are highlighted in this report, and in so doing will raise the profile of the challenge of child poverty in South Africa and the need to address it. The intention is to help researchers and policy makers to promote initiatives that tackle child poverty, in such a way that progress can be monitored effectively over time so that South African can end child poverty.

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<sup>1</sup>UNICEF (2004)

<sup>2</sup>Bray and Dawes (2007); Proudlock (2014)

<sup>3</sup>The CRC has been ratified by the Republic of South Africa, and by all other countries in the world with the exception of the United States of America (see [https://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30225.html](https://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30225.html)).

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.unicef.org/crc/index\\_30160.html](http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html)

**Figure 1. Indicative milestones on a pathway to address child poverty**



Source: UNICEF and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty (2017) page i.

This review focuses on quantitative and qualitative research where child poverty has been defined and measured, or which can inform our understanding of child poverty. While the review does not focus on general child poverty alleviation efforts, it does include research on the impact of social security, in particular the Child Support Grant (CSG) which is designed to alleviate income poverty for children. The review includes a large number of studies that have been undertaken on child poverty since the beginning of democracy; it differs from and complements a recent report on the situation of children in South Africa (SAHRC and UNICEF, 2016).

Chapter 2 of this report provides the context for the review by introducing key concepts that are used in child poverty research, and by highlighting some of the main overarching issues that have influenced the South African situation in relation to child poverty. In Chapter 3, quantitative studies about child poverty in South Africa are reviewed, including money-metric measures of child poverty (Section 3.1) and indicators of deprivation (Section 3.2). As South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world, the lived experience of inequality is very prominent in children's lives and Chapter 4 highlights some of the key issues about children and inequality. Chapter 5 reviews the main qualitative studies about child poverty in South Africa. Chapter 6 contains a review of key studies about the Child Support Grant as a poverty alleviating policy, and Chapter 7 highlights recent work on transitions out of poverty. The final chapter (Chapter 8) summarises some of the main emerging findings.

## 2 Scope and context

### 2.1 Introduction to studies of child poverty

When examining child poverty in a quantitative way it is useful to distinguish between concepts, definitions and measurements of poverty. *Concepts* of poverty are ‘the theoretical framework out of which definitions are developed’;<sup>5</sup> *definitions* distinguish the poor from the non-poor, and *measurements* are the ways in which definitions of poverty are operationalized (i.e. identifying the poor).

There are two main concepts of poverty – absolute and relative – which can be summarised as follows:

*Absolute poverty is based solely on the needs of the poor and not on the needs of the non poor, that is, it purportedly exists independently of any reference group and does not depend on the living standards of society. It is concerned with survival, subsistence or meeting basic needs, and the minimum resources needed to achieve this. Relative poverty on the other hand is based on a comparison of the standard of living of the poor and the non poor.*<sup>6</sup>

Although a distinction is made between absolute and relative poverty, most approaches involve a combination of the two. As has been pointed out, “absolute definitions of poverty necessarily involve relative judgements to apply them to any particular society; and relative definitions require some absolute core in order to distinguish them from broader inequalities”.<sup>7</sup> This is the approach taken by Sen who regarded poverty as absolute in the space of ‘capabilities’, but relative in the space of ‘commodities’.<sup>8</sup> Capabilities are universal human needs (e.g. nutrition or education), while commodities are the resources required to meet or undertake capabilities, which are different in each society. Further exploration of these concepts can be found in a discussion document on the measurement of poverty produced by the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII).<sup>9</sup>

In terms of the definition process, it has been argued that four main decisions have to be made:<sup>10</sup>

- **Deciding who should define poverty.** Two possibilities are definition by researchers (‘experts’) or by the general population.
- **Deciding whether to use an *indirect* or *direct* definition.** A direct definition looks at the living conditions of persons and households, whereas an indirect definition examines the monetary resources (income) of the individual or household<sup>11</sup>. The indirect approach identifies individuals or households who are *unable* to meet a minimum standard of living,

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<sup>5</sup>Noble et al. (2007) p.54.

<sup>6</sup>Barnes (2009a) p.3.

<sup>7</sup>Alcock (2006) p.68.

<sup>8</sup>For example, Sen (1983).

<sup>9</sup>SPiI (2007)

<sup>10</sup>For example, Barnes and Wright (2010).

<sup>11</sup>Ringen (1988)

while the direct approach identifies those who *fail* to do so.<sup>12</sup>

- **Deciding whether to take a uni-or multi-dimensional approach and what the dimensions should be.** An indirect definition involves a single measure of income poverty and is thus uni-dimensional. A direct definition, on the other hand, is multidimensional in that different indicators are usually selected to represent particular aspects of living conditions (or deprivations).
- **Deciding on the actual threshold that separates the poor from the non poor.** There are many different ways of constructing a threshold, which can broadly be divided into two groups: those which represent the value of a basket of goods or services regarded as necessary, and those which relate to the distribution of income/expenditure.<sup>13</sup>

In Chapter 3 quantitative studies of child poverty in South Africa are discussed in terms of the definition of poverty employed and the results from the measurement process. As per the grid below (Figure 2), the studies can be categorised as having a definition drawn up by either the researcher or the general population, and employing either an income or deprivation approach.

**Figure 2. Approaches to defining poverty**

	RESEARCHER (‘expert’)	GENERAL POPULATION
INCOME (‘indirect’)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                     Different thresholds of adequacy                 </div>	
DEPRIVATION (‘direct’)		

Quantitative poverty analyses are traditionally dominated by income poverty indicators, although a number of child-centred projects have explicitly expanded the dimensions of poverty to include other measures of deprivation, or statistically explore the associations between money and human outcomes. Qualitative studies can expand and deepen our understanding of poverty in many ways, in order to explore what poverty means for people’s lives. They enable a range of important questions to be asked:

- How do people experience poverty and in what ways?
- How do people perceive the causes of poverty?
- How do people conceptualise the barriers to breaking poverty traps?
- How do people cope with poverty on a daily basis?
- What conscious strategies do households adopt to invest in a better future for their

<sup>12</sup>Woolard and Leibbrandt (2006)

<sup>13</sup>See SPII (2007) for further discussion of the approaches.

children?

Qualitative studies can also be used to inform definitions of child poverty. However, there is little research that investigates child poverty in qualitative ways. For example, Devereux commented: “I am struck at how policy debates are driven by quantitative data and large-scale datasets, and how little textured empirical findings on the experience of living in poverty are available in the literature that I have seen”.<sup>14</sup> Much of the qualitative work on child poverty is in areas that are related to poverty, but are not explicitly about poverty. These include the fields of education, child health, social consequences of HIV and orphaning, child labour, child abuse and protection, maternal and child psychology, and so on. These sector-or discipline-specific areas of work have not been included in the review. It would be a massive undertaking to conduct a more comprehensive review that spans the array of child-focused qualitative research indirectly linked to poverty. Such a review may be of benefit to the child poverty discourse, although there would still be important gaps that would need to be addressed through primary research.

In the same way that we have classified quantitative studies, it is possible to distinguish between different types of qualitative studies:

- Research on children versus research into poverty dynamics and livelihood strategies in households in which children are situated.
- Research where children are participants versus research which investigates child poverty from the perspective of others (e.g. caregivers).
- Research with an explicit poverty focus versus research on specific dimensions of deprivation (e.g. health, education).

As noted above, it is not possible in the scope of this review to examine the wider literature on poverty or specific sectoral discourses on issues relating to poverty. The main qualitative component of the review, in Chapter 4, focuses on a few child-specific studies that have investigated children’s (or their caregivers’) understanding and experiences of child poverty. To start with, however, we set the scene by briefly referring to some more general work on poverty in South Africa.

## **2.2 Child poverty in context: setting the scene with qualitative research**

Much of the qualitative work on poverty is not explicitly child-focused, but offers insights into poverty dynamics where the child is situated in context, or describes macro causes which are relevant to an understanding of child poverty. This contextual literature is an important basis for understanding child poverty and inequality, as contemporary dynamics of child poverty are located within an historical framework of social, political and economic inequality. This body of work therefore provides a valuable counterpoint to quantitative analyses in which the child is the unit of analysis, and sets the scene for the child-focused qualitative work.

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<sup>14</sup>Personal communication, November 2011.

## 2.2.1 Chronic poverty and vulnerability

The short qualitative chapter in this review (Chapter 5) summarises literature on the non-income and experiential aspects of child poverty. Emerging from this work is a strong theme of vulnerability, including the inability to cope with unpredictable events and economic shocks, exposure to violence and sexual abuse, the susceptibility of children to illness, and fear of crime or harassment by police. While specific descriptions of vulnerability are often linked to acute events or temporary states, a feature of vulnerability is that it is a perpetual condition which persists while the underlying threats remain. In a seminal paper on chronic poverty Aliber<sup>15</sup> distinguishes two ways in which vulnerability contributes to chronic poverty:

First, being vulnerable is an aspect of poverty in and of itself, and can lead to feelings of resignation which in turn discourage people from taking steps to escape their present state: “Resignation is perhaps the most succinct subjective correlate to the notion of chronic poverty: it is the assumption that poverty will endure”.<sup>16</sup> This is in contrast to the notion of resilience which permeates some of the literature (for instance, Ramphele’s *Steering by the Stars*, in which she remarks on the optimism and feelings of “hope” expressed by children and their caregivers<sup>17</sup>).

Second, poor people develop multiple livelihood strategies to mitigate risk. While this may reduce vulnerability to potential future shocks, it also reduces the chances of escaping poverty if it means that people are inhibited from investing in a single, more lucrative, enterprise.<sup>18</sup> These livelihood strategies include what du Toit and Neves refer to as “informal strategies for social protection”, which are dependent on spatially extended networks that support reciprocal exchange. While these networks can alleviate poverty, they also erode resources and can transmit the economic effects of shocks.<sup>19</sup>

An array of poverty analyses show gradually declining poverty rates in South Africa, yet it is clear that a large proportion of households continue to live in conditions of extreme deprivation, and inequality has not been substantially reduced.<sup>20</sup> While many of the underlying causes of poverty and inequality may be specific to South Africa’s apartheid legacy, the trend is not unique – many countries, in both the developed and developing world have high (and in some cases increasing) rates of poverty and inequality. Inequality is not only about the unequal distribution of income and resources, but also unequal distribution of risk. In South Africa and other places, large sections of the population are increasingly vulnerable and marginalised. Amongst other factors, du Toit points to processes of de-agrarianisation as central to vulnerability, particularly when the labour market fails to provide alternatives: crucially, this process of de-agrarianisation is “not part of an ‘agrarian transition’ from rural to urban, non-farm livelihoods: rather, tens of millions of people find themselves reduced to the status of a ‘surplus’ population: not only landless, but also

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<sup>15</sup>Aliber (2001)

<sup>16</sup>Aliber (2001)

<sup>17</sup>Ramphele (2002)

<sup>18</sup>Aliber (2001) p.22.

<sup>19</sup>Du Toit and Neves (2009) p.2.

<sup>20</sup>Leibbrandt et al. (2010); Hall & Budlender (2013); Jansen et al (2015)

unemployed and redundant to the needs of the global economy.”<sup>21</sup>

When asked to compare their perceptions about the quality of children’s lives with their own experiences of childhood, some rural caregivers felt that livelihoods had become less secure over time, and that they now experienced poverty more deeply.<sup>22</sup> This was not necessarily because they had less cash (on the contrary, most households received social grants of some kind), but because they were more dependent on the cash economy. Of course nostalgia and childhood ignorance may play a role here, but there were also strong perceptions of the declining role of subsistence agriculture and a greater dependence on manufactured goods. In the context of small and erratic earnings and remittances, households found it difficult to budget. Income from social grants not only substantially boosted household income, but in many cases provided the only reliable source of regular income. In the absence of social grants targeted to working-age adults, many households relied solely on the grant income for young children and old people. This inversion of dependency (where, in the absence of employment, working-age adults have to depend on grants targeted to those too young or old to work) is well established in both the quantitative and qualitative literature.

It is within this context that decisions about children’s residence are made: many children live in rural households which, although they may have the human resources to provide care, are largely dependent on social grants for survival. Urban areas, for decades one of the nodes in oscillating patterns of migration, may offer more opportunities for income generation, albeit precarious. The double vulnerability of children is that they are dependants within the marginalised ‘surplus’ population referred to by du Toit.

### **2.2.2 Child care arrangements, labour migration and the role of women**

An important theme in the poverty discourse is the enduring nature and effect of the migrant labour system, of which one of the important consequences for children is a large number of female-headed households, particularly in rural areas. Aliber describes the ambiguous space that female household heads inhabit when their men are absent: they bear an enormous burden of responsibility as providers, carers and maintainers of the household, yet their authority and autonomy is constrained by cultural norms which, for instance, limit their rights to land and their ability to make independent economic decisions.<sup>23</sup> This tension is heightened in instances where migrant male partners fail to remit money – either because they do not have enough to remit, or because they spend it elsewhere – so that the female head bears the entire burden of providing financially for the household’s needs while also caring for children and undertaking the many chores that constitute ‘women’s work’. Increased participation of women in the migrant labour force deepens the burden of child care on grandmothers or other family members, who may similarly need to supplement meagre remittances with their own pensions.

The themes of circular migration and household roles are dealt with in greater detail by a number of researchers, including Spiegel, Watson et al., Bak, Ramphela and Wilson, and more recently

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<sup>21</sup>Du Toit (2011) p.2.

<sup>22</sup>Hall et al. (2009)

<sup>23</sup>Aliber (2001)

Posel and Casale, Collinson, Ntshongwana, Hall and others. For example, Bak, building on the work of Ziehl, Russell, Walker and others, explores gendered divisions of care and family formation in the context of poverty. Underlying the analysis is an acknowledgement that indigenous patriarchal power structures have been “moulded and reconstructed” through colonial and apartheid systems, and particularly the labour system which separated black men from their families for extended periods of time<sup>24</sup>. This arrangement rendered men absent providers yet yielded extremely low income returns, entrenching a situation where men were simultaneously dominant and dependent. In a post-apartheid township with high levels of unemployment, the consequences of these established gendered roles were found in intra-household relations where women occupied multiple roles in supporting families (including financial support either through earnings or pensions) and in the provision of care and household labour. Women are described as ‘resources’ as they share the burden of labour and care, while men are described as ‘burdens’. The burden of support on older women has been exacerbated by the lack of employment for both the middle and younger generations, as well as the effects of HIV, so that caring often extends to young adults and household dependants span a few generations – frequently including both young children and sick parents. Declining marriage rates (in part associated with poverty and unemployment, and men’s inability to pay *lobola*) reflect an “uncoupling of marriage and motherhood both as practice and as social identity”<sup>25</sup> and have been accompanied by an increase in the number of children with absent fathers, and a decline in households built on a co-habiting male-female partnership.<sup>26</sup>

The role of women in child care is an important part of the context for understanding child poverty and coping strategies. Case studies illustrate the marginalizing effects of being ‘unskilled’, rural and female,<sup>27</sup> and the way in which this influences choices about where to live and how to access income. Moving from a rural village to a city may be a necessary strategy to improve employment opportunities, but can further marginalize women and their children by removing them from established chains of care. A lack of child care options can in turn limit women’s freedom to seek work and earn income. Without the support of co-resident adults, mothers may face impossible choices: for instance a single mother may have to choose between retaining her job (but ‘abandoning’ her child), and leaving her job to care for the child, but not having enough money to eat.<sup>28</sup>

Drawing on various local and international studies, Ward et al (2015) examine the relationship between poverty and parenting, the role of family structures, teen parenting and support structures needed for parents in South Africa. Poverty is seen as a major factor in the fragmentation of families in South Africa; it is not unusual for adults to migrate in search of employment, leaving children with either the other parent, or in many cases with other relatives.<sup>29</sup> Research points to a higher likelihood of poverty for children born into and living in single parent homes, especially in cases where the adults themselves are already dealing with

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<sup>24</sup>Bak (2008) p.258.

<sup>25</sup>Bak (2008) p.265.

<sup>26</sup>Ntshongwana et al. (2016)

<sup>27</sup>Du Toit and Neves (2009)

<sup>28</sup>Ntshongwana (2010) p.4.

<sup>29</sup>Ward et al (2015); Hall (2017)

multiple forms of poverty. Ward et al (2015) also highlight how poverty undermines parenting, and also has an impact on teenage parents who may experience difficulties in carrying out their parenting roles: they may be unable to provide financially for their children, and may have to navigate between parenting and completing their schooling. Some young parents may choose to leave the education system and seek employment in order to support their children. This in turn may require leaving children in the care of other relatives.

An ethnographic study on child care in the context of poverty investigated the complex care arrangements adopted by households in an urban setting.<sup>30</sup> The researchers argue that “a contextual account of care that moves beyond conventional and narrow notions of child care is essential to understand the relationship between poverty and child-care practices”.<sup>31</sup> A number of themes emerge from their detailed work in Masiphumelele, a relatively new Cape Town settlement with a poor population and strong ties to the Eastern Cape through patterns of labour migration. Like other studies into poverty and household formation, they find that men were frequently absent while women, who bear both economic and household responsibilities, share these responsibilities within networks that span generations and geographic space. They argue that men, while not necessarily present in the lives of children and their caregivers, occupy a particular role in which the expected support from them is material, and that when they are unable to provide economic support (due to unemployment, for example), their role in child care and household engagement is diminished. This suggests that unemployment has adverse effects not only on household income through earnings or remittances, but also on paternal involvement in the lives of poor children. Despite high rates of mobility, the need for adequate housing and secure tenure featured strongly in caregivers’ explanations of the basic conditions needed for child care, and indeed for their own confidence in their capacity as caregivers.

Numerous stories of personal challenge, sacrifice and difficulty emerge from the literature. But there are also stories of kindness, mutual assistance and support. Ntshongwana notes that “in the context of high unemployment rates and low wages *ubuntu* has, in effect, translated to high reliance on community and relatives to provide social welfare, including child care, for low income lone mothers.”<sup>32</sup>

### 2.2.3. Intra-household allocation of resources

The issue of intra-household allocation of resources often crops up in quantitative poverty measurement. Can the researcher simply assume that household income is divided equally between household members, or does some kind of formula need to be used, in which household members are differently weighted? And does it matter, since either method of allocation is likely to be arbitrary, unless based on empirical evidence? While child poverty is generally a manifestation of a macro context reproduced over generations, micro level problems such as the intra-household distribution of resources can contribute to child poverty.<sup>33</sup>

This is illustrated in a case study by du Toit and Neves, who describe a complex system of child

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<sup>30</sup>Bray and Brandt (2007)

<sup>31</sup>Bray and Brandt (2007) p.2.

<sup>32</sup>Ntshongwana (2010) p.7.

<sup>33</sup>Fenny and Boyden (2003) p.16.

care and income pooling across two generations of women, where the transfer of a grant to one child (to pay for education) came at the expense of a younger child, who was found by researchers to be malnourished. The authors describe this as “a Hobson’s choice of gambling for long-term security at the expense of the long-term health and development of the toddler”.<sup>34</sup> Intra-household allocation of resources is an issue which cannot easily be understood through analysis of household surveys, and where qualitative research is needed to describe allocations and explain choices. In this instance the decision for skewed allocation was not malicious, but rather “the conscious deprivation of the toddler reflects more generally the economic marginality, limited prospects and insecurity of the household”.<sup>35</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Child labour in the context of poverty

One of the manifestations and consequences of household poverty is the participation of children in labour. Child labour is not highly prevalent in South Africa, where it is illegal for children under the age of 15 to work for money, and where school attendance rates are fairly high even amongst teenagers. However, the issue is worthy of some attention in a qualitative review of child poverty as child labour persists in various forms, is not easily defined or discernible through survey data<sup>36</sup>, and is related to poverty in complex ways. Drawing on her work in the Worcester area, Levine explores the political economy of child labour and identifies three types: migrant child labour, children's unwaged family based labour, and children's independent wage labour.<sup>37</sup> All these forms of labour have strong historical roots – dating back to South Africa’s colonial history of child slavery. Children have traditionally shared many of the household roles usually designated as ‘women’s work’ – such as cleaning, child care and fetching water. While debates about social reproduction have emphasized the role of women, this has had “the unintentional effect of deepening the invisibility of children by de-emphasizing age as a dynamic social variable”.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, children living on commercial farms have historically been an important part of the agricultural labour force. Levine argues that while the number of children working in agriculture has declined, it has not decreased proportionately with the laws that make child labour illegal. Citing Wolpe, she argues that “human rights legislation cannot protect children from harm when the political economy of the country is rooted in structural inequality, which is not the necessary legacy of apartheid, but of racial capitalism that underpinned apartheid relations”.<sup>39</sup> Levine observes shifts towards informal or illegal forms of labour by children (for example prostitution and drug dealing), which may be brought about by new tensions arising from the laws designed to protect children: child labour is illegal and farmers and other employers face legal penalties if they are discovered to be employing under-age children – yet extreme household poverty persists in and around farming areas, creating a need to supplement income. Another possible shift is from farm labour to informal domestic work. In a study of 500 children in the Worcester area, 50% of girls reported doing domestic labour in households other than their own.

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<sup>34</sup>Du Toit and Neves (2009) p.19.

<sup>35</sup>Du Toit and Neves (2009) p.19.

<sup>36</sup>Bray (2003)

<sup>37</sup>Levine (2006)

<sup>38</sup>Levine (2006) p.122.

<sup>39</sup>Levine (2006) p.122.

A study on the causes, nature and impact of child work was conducted in three provincial sites where there is a large amount of commercial and/or subsistence agriculture. Nearly half of all children aged 12-16 had done agricultural work in the year preceding the research, with boys being more likely than girls to have worked in commercial agriculture. Again, child labour was closely related to household poverty – the surveys found that households with working children had “significantly fewer assets, more hunger, high parental unemployment and lower education status” than those where no child labour was reported.<sup>40</sup> However, qualitative investigations revealed quite different understandings of why children work: farmers attributed child labour to ‘cultural practice’ where children have a role in supporting livelihoods. Parents described children’s participation in labour as a duty, and also saw it as a way of keeping children busy (and out of mischief) in the absence of any other entertainment or recreational facilities. Children themselves explained their labour in relation to poverty, portraying their labour decisions as necessary and voluntary (for example: “we are pushed by the situation, not by our parents”).<sup>41</sup>

An underlying issue in the political economy of child labour and, indeed, in the reproduction of child poverty, is the differential educational systems for black and white people under apartheid. Inferior education for the black majority was a deliberate strategy to “groom black children for lives of servitude,”<sup>42</sup> to reinforce class oppression and maintain capitalist social relations. An array of work on inequities in educational funding, provision and outcomes suggests that the differentials in education – although no longer racially defined on paper – have not been effectively reversed post-democracy. This is partly because of persistent spatial segregation, and its counterpart in the inequality of social infrastructure, including schools and health services. One of the explanations for child labour was that schools were hard to reach, over-subscribed or under-resourced. Two main drivers therefore seem to underlie children’s explanations of why they work: the poverty of their families, coupled with the relatively easy decision to drop out of schools that are inaccessible and under-performing.<sup>43</sup> This suggests multiple strategies to address child labour, but also suggests that the strategies may not be substantially different from those designed to address poverty, adult unemployment and deficiencies in the education system.

### 2.2.5. Living environments and safety

The bulk of the existing child-centred research on children’s experience of the built environment has been qualitative. Within South Africa, a few studies with children were undertaken as part of the ‘Growing Up In Cities’ (GUIC) programme. GUIC is an international initiative and is essentially about involving children in “evaluating their own environments and planning how to improve the conditions of their lives. With the ultimate goal of influencing municipal policies through the inclusion of children’s perspectives, it seeks to build broad alliances of people committed to taking action on children’s behalf in community-based and non-governmental organisations, and across different sectors of government.”<sup>44</sup> The Johannesburg Metropolitan Council commissioned research which would enable children to “speak out” on their living conditions, and

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<sup>40</sup>Streak et al. (2007) p.11.

<sup>41</sup>Streak et al. (2007) p.49.

<sup>42</sup>Levine (2006) p.129.

<sup>43</sup>Streak et al. (2007)

<sup>44</sup>Swart-Kruger and Chawla (2002) p.85-86.

this was undertaken in four diverse sites around greater Johannesburg. The research used a combination of methods – drawing, mapping and group discussions, followed by workshops.

Children identified physical areas in which they felt safe or unsafe, and made specific recommendations for improving them. These included the need for recreational facilities, clean and safe parks, street lighting, waste removal and better transport. The recommendations were shared with parents, organisations and the mayor’s office, and it was envisaged that the report would influence the development of a ‘Municipal Plan of Action for Children’. However, it is unclear how it influenced local-level planning, if at all.

In research on poverty and social exclusion, undertaken by the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP), safety and security emerged as a key issue for focus groups. “Fear of crime was perceived as directly impacting on social inclusion”, with people reporting that they were becoming less inclined to leave the safety of their homes, or to allow children out on their own.<sup>45</sup> The issue of safety emerges as a strong theme in children’s experience of poverty (see Chapter 5 below).

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<sup>45</sup>Cluver, Magasela et al. (2006) p.16.

### 3 Quantitative research about child poverty

Due to a lack of historical studies of child poverty in South Africa, at least those where the situation of all children was examined, this review of quantitative studies focuses only on the post 1994 period.

In the studies reviewed, children are defined as 0 to 17 years old inclusive, except where stated otherwise. Various acronyms are used throughout this section to refer to the surveys with which child poverty has been measured:

CS	Community Survey
GHS	General Household Survey
IES	Income and Expenditure Survey
LCS	Living Conditions Survey
NIDS	National Income Dynamics Study
OHS	October Household Survey
PSLSD	Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
SASAS	South African Social Attitudes Survey

#### 3.1 Income poverty studies

Income based approaches to child poverty have often been used, both in South Africa and internationally, but it is increasingly argued that these are unsuitable as they are not child specific and do not take into account intra-household allocation of resources<sup>46</sup>. However, it is recognised that income based approaches do have a place in a multi-dimensional framework of child poverty, and in some of the studies reviewed here, the income poverty measure is just one of a number of indicators of child poverty.

Key issues for consideration when reviewing studies about child poverty that use income measures include the need to specify the poverty threshold; clarity about which equivalence scale (if any) has been used to take into account variations in household size and composition; whether individual or household monetary resources have been used and whether this has been measured using income or expenditure data; and whether the study reveals the number of poor households with children or the number of children in poor households. These are discussed in detail by Barnes<sup>47</sup> (and see also Streak et al. for further information about equivalence scales<sup>48</sup>).

The following three sub-sections focus on three different types of income poverty lines: national poverty lines that have been derived using data on the cost of basic needs which is often derived using a basket of goods (section 3.1.1); internationally comparable poverty lines (section 3.1.2); and poverty lines that take into account the overall income distribution in South Africa (section 3.1.3).

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<sup>46</sup>For example, Feeny and Boyden (2003); Gordon et al. (2003); White et al. (2002).

<sup>47</sup>Barnes (2009a)

<sup>48</sup>Streak et al. (2008)

### 3.1.1. Basket of goods approaches to derive national poverty lines

Early studies of child poverty used a range of different poverty lines, each derived in a different way. For example, as one of several indicators included in a study of the living conditions of South Africa's children, Haarmann included an income poverty indicator where a child was defined as poor if the equivalised expenditure for their household was less than R319 per month.<sup>49</sup> This threshold was based on Potgieter's research on the subsistence level of income required for a person living in Cape Town.

Woolard was commissioned to produce estimates of child poverty by the Children's Budget Unit at the Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA).<sup>50</sup> Two poverty lines of R400 and R200 per month per capita (in 1999 prices) were selected for measuring child poverty. The R400 poverty line was based on the threshold recommended in the report of the Taylor Committee into a comprehensive social security system. The R200 poverty line was chosen to shed light on the number of children that have far less than the estimate of minimum income required for basic needs.

The Children's Budget Unit again commissioned Woolard to produce a measure of income poverty for children, to complement qualitative child poverty information for a report on monitoring child socio-economic rights.<sup>51</sup> Poverty lines of R430 and R215 per month per capita were selected (presumably the R400 and R200 lines inflated to 2000 prices).

The Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town has monitored the situation of children in South Africa since 2005 through the *Children Count* indicator and advocacy project.<sup>52</sup> Various income poverty lines have been used over time. First, children living in households with a total household expenditure of less than R1,200 per month were defined as poor.<sup>53</sup> This was based on a threshold of R1,100 used by the Treasury and the Department of Provincial and Local Government to determine funding for poverty alleviation programmes. More recently, lower bound (at a R322 per month per capita at 2000 values) and upper bound (at R593 per month per capita) poverty lines were used,<sup>54</sup> based on the influential work of Hoozevee and Özler (2006). In 2016 the poverty lines used for the project were revised to reflect the three rebased poverty lines proposed by Statistics South Africa which are described below.

Child poverty has also been measured at small area level using updated versions of the same Hoozevee and Özler (2006) poverty lines, with data obtained from the 2011 Census.<sup>55</sup>

In 2008, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) published its proposed absolute poverty lines for the country. These were generated using data from 2000 Income and Expenditure Survey (IES). Stats SA used the Cost of Basic Needs approach to derive three poverty lines: a food line, and lower

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<sup>49</sup>Haarmann (1999)

<sup>50</sup>Woolard (2002)

<sup>51</sup>Woolard (2003)

<sup>52</sup>[www.childrencount.uct.ac.za](http://www.childrencount.uct.ac.za)

<sup>53</sup>For example, Meintjes et al. (2008).

<sup>54</sup>For example Chennells and Hall (2011)

<sup>55</sup>Noble et al. (2016)

bound and upper bound poverty lines. The food poverty line was developed by determining the cost of a reference food basket that was consumed by households, taking into account the daily (minimum) per capita energy requirement of 2,261 kilocalories. This yielded a food poverty line of R148 (in 2000 prices). To generate the upper bound poverty line, the average non-food expenditure of households whose expenditure on food was equal or close to the food poverty line was computed and added to the value of the food poverty line. The average cost of non-food expenditure amounted to R175, which when combined with the food poverty line value, gave an upper bound poverty line of R323. The lower poverty line was generated in a similar way, except that the average non-food expenditure was computed for households whose *total* expenditure was equal or near to the food poverty line. A non-food expenditure value of R71 was estimated, then added to the food poverty line to give a lower bound poverty line of R219. The poverty lines proposed by Stats SA were therefore considerably lower than those proposed by Hoogeveen and Özler (2006).

In 2015, Stats SA rebased the pilot poverty lines using the 2010/2011 IES which contained more up-to-date data on households' consumption and had made use of an improved sampling frame and data collection methods.<sup>56</sup> The survey collected data from a nationally representative sample of 25,328 households and used a combination of recall and diary methods to collect expenditure data; a total of 752 different goods and services were reported, of which 329 different food items could be identified, up from 133 that was identified in the 2000 IES. To generate poverty lines, Stats SA followed a very similar approach to that the Stats SA (2008) study, applying the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach.<sup>57</sup> This resulted in a food poverty line at R335 per person per month in 2011 prices, an upper bound poverty line of R779, and a lower bound poverty line of R501 per person per month. In addition to the national poverty line, Stats SA also piloted provincial poverty lines, following the same methodology but applying province-specific prices for food items in the reference food baskets. These pilot provincial poverty lines do not seem to have been used to estimate the extent of child poverty.

More recently, Budlender et al. (2015) used the same 2010/2011 IES dataset to calculate two alternative poverty lines, also based on the Cost of Basic Needs approach, and applying a methodology similar to that used by Stats SA in 2008 and 2015. However, their computations differed from Stats SA's by including various items into the consumption aggregate (e.g. health expenditure, accommodation services, cigarettes and alcohol), which were excluded by Stats SA. To derive the food poverty rate, the study used WHO's minimum caloric intake per person per day of 2,100 Kilocalories (also used by Stats SA in 2015), on the basis that it was more suitable for South Africa since it was created for developing countries, unlike the US Food and Nutrition Board guidelines (used in 2008 by Stats SA) which were specifically developed for the American population. This study did not derive a reference food basket, and instead opted to include all

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<sup>56</sup>Statistics South Africa (2015)

<sup>57</sup>First, a reference food basket and reference households were identified, then the cost of the food basket was computed using food expenditure data and minimum per capita caloric requirements in order to generate the food poverty line. The costs of basic non-food items were then added to the food poverty lines to produce the lower and upper bound poverty lines. There were, however, a few changes from the work undertaken previously: the reference food basket consisted of food items whose share of expenditure was at least 0.5% (as opposed to 0.6% in 2008) of total household food expenditure. Stats SA used a minimum per capita caloric intake of 2,100 kilocalories per day in 2015, instead of 2,261 used in 2008.

food items in the computation of the food poverty line. The study produced a food poverty line at R337 per person per month and lower bound and upper bound poverty lines at R534 and R1,042 respectively.

Table 1 (below) summarises the main differences between the cost of basic needs methodologies that were implemented by Stats SA (2008, 2015) and Budlender et al (2015).

**Table 1. Summary of three different applications of the Cost of Basic Needs approach using South Africa’s Income and Expenditure Surveys in order to produce poverty lines**

	<b>Stats SA (2008)</b>	<b>Stats SA (2015)</b>	<b>Budlender, Leibbrandt &amp; Woolard (2015)</b>
Data source	Income and Expenditure Survey (2000)	Income and Expenditure Survey (2010/2011)	Income and Expenditure Survey (2010/2011)
Minimum food energy requirements (caloric value)	2,261	2,100	2,100
Source of caloric intake information	Medical Research Council (based on 2001 census data)	Management of Nutrition in Emergencies (WHO)	Management of Nutrition in Emergencies (WHO)
Food basket	Reference food basket: Food item must constitute 0.6% of household food expenditure and must be consumed by at least 10% of households	Reference food basket: Food item must constitute 0.5% of household food expenditure and must be consumed by at least 10% of households	Included all food items, for which price data was available (226 out of 331 food items contained in the 2011 IES)
Reference households (food)	Expenditure decile 2 -4	Expenditure decile 2 -4	Expenditure decile 3 -5
Cost per calorie	0.2186	0.5313	0.5282
Deriving cost of non-food expenditure (upper bound poverty line)	Mean of the median non-food expenditure for households within the food poverty line (intervals of 1% to 5%, above or below the food poverty line)	Mean of the median non-food expenditure for households within the food poverty line (intervals of 1% to 5%, above or below the food poverty line)	Median of all non-food expenditure for households in the interval of 5% above or below the food poverty line
Year of estimation – poverty lines	2000	2011	2011
Food Poverty line	R321	R335	R337
Lower bound poverty line	R443	R501	R534
Upper bound food poverty line	R620	R779	R1042

The Children Count project has in recent years made use of the Stats SA poverty lines, published in 2015, to update child poverty estimates for the country. No studies could be identified that have yet used the Budlender et.al (2015) poverty lines in order to produce child poverty

estimates, but to do so would help shed light on the impact of nuanced methodological decisions on the results that are obtained.

### 3.1.2 International poverty lines

The \$1-a-day international poverty line (actually \$1.02 a day at 1985 purchasing power parity (PPP)<sup>58</sup>) was originally chosen as representative of the poverty lines in use in low income countries.<sup>59</sup> It was updated in 1993 using an expanded set of PPP price comparisons to give a poverty line of \$1.08-a-day at 1993 PPP which continued to be labelled as \$1-a-day.<sup>60</sup> The line was later revised again due to under-estimation of the cost of living in poor countries in the price surveys used to estimate the PPP exchange rates for currency conversions. A new set of national poverty lines for low and middle income countries was used to give a new international poverty line of \$1.25 in 2005 prices, and this was the line used for monitoring progress against the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>61</sup> A \$2 a day line has also been used instead of, or in addition to, the \$1 line.

It has been argued that the international poverty lines are useful for international comparability, but they are otherwise not particularly appropriate as they are very minimalist (as based on poverty lines from low income countries) and are not anchored in a country specific basket of goods, so it is difficult to know exactly what goods such an income would allow an individual to buy in South Africa.<sup>62</sup> Indeed Ravallion states that: “The international measure [the \$1 a day poverty line] is not intended to replace national poverty lines. When measuring poverty and discussing appropriate policies in a specific country one should naturally use a poverty line considered appropriate to that country, which need not accord with our international poverty line”.<sup>63</sup> Dieden and Gustafsson used the \$1 a day definition of poverty, referring to children meeting the definition as “extremely poor”.<sup>64</sup> It has also been used by Hall and Wright,<sup>65</sup> and Hall and Sambu.<sup>66</sup> The \$2 a day line has been used by Barnes,<sup>67</sup> Hall and Wright,<sup>68</sup> Hall and Chennells.<sup>69</sup> The Children Count project tracks child poverty rates against the \$1.25 international poverty line (as well as the Stats SA proposed upper bound, lower bound and food poverty lines described above).

The \$1.25 a day poverty line has been used to monitor global progress in eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 which is central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a post-2015

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<sup>58</sup>The conversion rate for a given currency into a reference currency (invariably the US dollar) with the aim of assuring parity in purchasing power over commodities

<sup>59</sup>Ravallion et al. (1991)

<sup>60</sup>Chen and Ravallion (2001)

<sup>61</sup>Chen and Ravallion (2008)

<sup>62</sup>SPII (2008)

<sup>63</sup><http://go.worldbank.org/C9GR27WRJ0>

<sup>64</sup>Dieden and Gustafsson (2003)

<sup>65</sup>Hall and Wright (2010; 2011)

<sup>66</sup>Hall and Sambu (2016)

<sup>67</sup>Barnes (2009a)

<sup>68</sup>Hall and Wright (2010; 2011)

<sup>69</sup>Hall and Chennells (2011)

agenda that replaced the Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs are more comprehensive than the MDGs, and include 17 goals and 169 targets.<sup>70</sup> Goal 1 (*End poverty in all its forms everywhere*) has 7 targets and 11 indicators. The \$1.25 a day poverty line has been updated to \$1.90 per person per day using 2011 United States PPP. In addition to this line, two other indicators are used to monitor poverty rates: the proportion of a population living below a national poverty line and the proportion of men, women and children living in all forms (dimensions) of poverty according to national definitions.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.1.3 Income/expenditure distribution approaches

With regard to definitions based on the income/expenditure distribution, one of the most common approaches has been to look at children in the poorest 40% of households when ranked on adult equivalent income or expenditure (i.e. a poverty line of the equivalised income/expenditure of the household at the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile). It has been argued that this poverty line is not particularly useful for monitoring progress in addressing poverty 'as there will always be a bottom 40 (or any other) per cent in any society and so poverty, using this definition, could never be eradicated, except in an unlikely situation of equal incomes'.<sup>72</sup>

The first official post-apartheid study of poverty conducted by the World Bank<sup>73</sup> used two definitions of poverty: people living in the poorest 40% of households ('poor') and people living in the poorest 20% of households ('ultra poor').<sup>74</sup> The estimates of children in poverty according to the 40% threshold were used in a study carried out by the National Institute of Economic Policy (NIEP)<sup>75</sup>. The 40% threshold was also adopted by Woolard<sup>76</sup>, Streak et al<sup>77</sup> (and concomitant studies<sup>78</sup>), Hall<sup>79</sup> and, more recently, by Hall et al.<sup>80</sup>

A fairly commonly used measure of poverty internationally is to select a fraction of the income distribution within a society. For example, those below a specified percentage (commonly 40, 50 or 60 per cent) of mean or median equivalised household income are classified as poor. Mean equivalent income is more sensitive to outliers (very high and very low incomes) than median equivalent income. However, median equivalent income usually gives lower values for the poverty line. In the South African context, the median may be less as the distribution is skewed towards the lower end, resulting in a low median and low percentage of median poverty line.<sup>81</sup>

Both mean and median equivalent income have been used in studies of child poverty in South

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<sup>70</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

<sup>71</sup> More detailed information on the SDGs can be found on [sustainabledevelopment.un.org](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org).

<sup>72</sup> Barnes (2009a) p.6.

<sup>73</sup> World Bank (1995)

<sup>74</sup> Other definitions were also used.

<sup>75</sup> NIEP/UNICEF (1996)

<sup>76</sup> Woolard (2001)

<sup>77</sup> Streak et al. (2008)

<sup>78</sup> Streak et al. (2009); UNICEF South Africa/Financial and Fiscal Commission of South Africa (2010)

<sup>79</sup> Hall (2012)

<sup>80</sup> Hall et al. (2016)

<sup>81</sup> See Barnes (2009a) for a demonstration of this.

Africa, including Dieden and Gustafsson,<sup>82</sup> Barnes,<sup>83</sup> and Hall and Wright.<sup>84</sup> Sometimes a per capita equivalisation has been employed, and sometimes the modified OECD equivalence scale. Various percentages have been used also, most commonly 40 or 50%.

**3.1.4 Findings: national poverty rates, trends and counts**

**Terminology**

*Poverty rate or headcount index:* a measure of the proportion of the child population whose welfare (measured by income or expenditure, usually equivalised in some way) falls below the poverty line. The poverty headcount is a useful measure for assessing the extent of poverty using a given measure. However, it does not take into account the depth of poverty that people experience, that people may be classified as 'non-poor' even though they are only just above the selected threshold (the choice of which is often fairly arbitrary), and that people may move in and out of poverty.

Three further measures of poverty have been employed in some studies: depth, severity and share.

- *Poverty depth:* a measure of how far households or individuals are from the poverty line.
- *Poverty severity:* another measure of how far households or individuals are from the poverty line, with greater weight given to those observations that fall far below the poverty line.
- *Poverty share:* a measure of the proportion of the total poor a particular group comprises.

*Poverty trends* enable change over time to be considered. Lastly, *counts of children in poverty* are essential when designing and budgeting for policies to eradicate child poverty.

Table 2 shows poverty rates from a number of recent studies that have all measured child poverty in terms of the percentage of children, rather than the percentage of households containing children. The poverty estimates are grouped by the definition of child poverty used. The estimates of child poverty vary considerably depending on the definition: at the extremes, Hall and Budlender found 12% of children in poverty using the \$1 a day poverty line (2011 data), while Barnes found 81% of children in poverty using an upper bound poverty line (2007 data). Recent studies may be of most interest as these tend to use more up-to-date data and so give an indication of the current situation.

**Table 2. Child poverty rates in South Africa – by poverty line type**

Study: author (date)	Data source	Poverty line in Rand in year of poverty estimate	Percentage of children in poverty
<i>\$1 a day and \$1.25 a day</i>			

<sup>82</sup>Dieden and Gustafsson (2003)  
<sup>83</sup>Barnes (2009a)  
<sup>84</sup>Hall and Wright (2010)

Dieden & Gustafsson (2003)	IES 1995 & OHS 1995 (Income)	R123 per month per capita	(0-14 yrs) 28
Hall & Wright (2010; 2011)	NIDS 2008 (Income)	R130 per month per capita	17
Hall & Budlender (2013)	GHS 2011 (Income)	R194 per month per capita	12
Hall & Sambu (2016)	GHS 2014 (Income)	R227 per month per capita	13
<b>\$2 a day</b>			
Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 (Income)	R245 per month per capita	40
Hall & Wright (2010; 2011)	NIDS 2008 (Income)	R260 per month per capita	40
Hall & Chennells (2011)	GHS 2009 (Income)	R278 per month per capita	37
Hall & Budlender (2013)	GHS 2011 (Income)	R310 per month per capita	27
<b>Hoogeveen and Özler lower bound (R322 per month per capita in 2000 prices)</b>			
Chennells & Hall (2011)	GHS 2003 (Income)	Not reported	73
Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 (Income)	R444 per month per capita	66
Hall & Wright (2010; 2011)	NIDS 2008 (Income)	R515 per month per capita	67
Chennells & Hall (2011); Hall & Chennells (2011)	GHS 2009 (Income)	R552 per month per capita	61
Von Fintel & Zoch (2015)	NIDS 2008 (balanced sample)	R575 per month per capita in 2010 values	62
Von Fintel & Zoch (2015)	NIDS 2010 (balanced sample)	R575 per month per capita in 2010 values	59
Von Fintel & Zoch (2015)	NIDS 2012 (balanced sample)	R575 per month per capita in 2010 values	51
Hall & Budlender (2013)	GHS 2011 (Income)	R604 per month per capita	56
Noble et al (2016)	Census 2011	R604 per month per capita	(under 5 yrs) 65
<b>Hoogeveen and Özler upper bound (R593 per month per capita in 2000 prices)</b>			
Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 (Income)	R818 per month per capita	81
Hall & Wright (2010; 2011)	NIDS 2008 (Income)	R949 per month per capita	80
Hall & Chennells (2011)	GHS 2009 (Income)	R1,016 per month per capita	76
Hall & Budlender (2013)	GHS 2011 (Income)	R1,113 per month per capita	75
Noble et al (2016)	Census 2011	R1,113 per month per capita	(under 5 yrs) 77
<b>Statistics South Africa pilot poverty lines (2008). Food poverty (R305 per month per capita in 2009 prices)</b>			
Stats SA (2013)	Living conditions survey (2008/2009)	R305 per month per capita	35
<b>Statistics South Africa pilot poverty lines (2008). Lower bound poverty (R416 per month per capita in 2009 prices)</b>			
Stats SA (2013)	Living conditions survey (2008/2009)	R416 per month per capita	50
<b>Statistics South Africa pilot poverty lines (2008). Upper bound poverty line (R577 per month per capita in 2009 prices)</b>			
Stats SA (2014)	IES (2005/2006)	R413 per month per capita	70

Stats SA (2014)	Living conditions survey (2008/2009)	R577 per month per capita	69
Stats SA (2014)	IES (2010/2011)	R620 per month per capita	56
Stats SA (2013)	Living conditions survey (2008/2009)	R577 per month per capita	64 <sup>85</sup>
<b>Statistics South Africa rebased poverty lines (2015). Food poverty line (R335 per month per capita in 2011 prices)</b>			
Hall et al. (2016)	GHS 2014 (Income)	R397 per month per capita	(0 – 6 yrs) 31
Hall & Sambu (2016)	GHS 2014 (Income)	R397 per month per capita	30
SAHCR & UNICEF (2016)	NIDS (2014/2015)	R335 per month per capita <sup>86</sup>	37
<b>Statistics South Africa rebased poverty lines (2015). Lower bound poverty line (501 per month per capita in 2011 prices)</b>			
Hall & Sambu (2016)	GHS 2014 (Income)	R594 per month per capita	46
<b>Statistics South Africa rebased poverty lines (2015). Upper bound poverty line (779 per month per capita in 2011 prices)</b>			
Hall et al. (2016)	GHS 2014 (Income)	R923 per month per capita	(0 – 6 yrs) 63
Hall & Sambu (2016) **	GHS 2014 (Income)	R923 per month per capita	63
SAHCR & UNICEF (2016)	NIDS (2014/2015)	R779 per month per capita <sup>87</sup>	69
<b>Other</b>			
Haarmann (1999)	PSLSD 1993 (Expenditure)	R319 per month per adult equivalent - (household size) 0.9	(0-6 yrs) 72
Woolard (2002)	OHS 1995 (Income)	R200 per month per capita	39
Woolard (2002)	OHS 1999 (Income)	R200 per month per capita*	58
Woolard (2003)	IES 2000 (Income)	R215 per month per capita	54
Woolard (2002)	OHS 1995 (Income)	R400 per month per capita	76
Woolard (2002)	OHS 1999 (Income)	R400 per month per capita*	65
Woolard (2003)	IES 2000 (Income)	R430 per month per capita	75
Meintjes et al. (2008)**	GHS 2006 (Expenditure)	R1200 per month per household	68
Hall (2010)**	GHS 2008 (Income)	R569 per month per capita (R350 in 2000)	64

Notes:

Adapted from Barnes (2009a) for studies pre-dating 2009.

Year of poverty estimate (and poverty line) is the same as the data source, unless otherwise specified.

\* The same poverty line is reported for 1999 as 1995.

\*\* These are examples of Child Gauge reports where these poverty lines have been used.

<sup>85</sup> Note that this is lower than the figure provided in Stats SA (2014) using the same dataset and threshold.

<sup>86</sup> Poverty lines were adjusted for inflation but the real value at time of analysis is not specified.

<sup>87</sup> Poverty lines were adjusted for inflation but the real value at time of analysis is not specified.

Table 3 shows poverty rates from studies that have used poverty lines which relate to the income/expenditure distribution, grouped by the definition of child poverty. Again, there is variation in the percentage of children in poverty, the lowest estimate being 21%, reported by Hall and Wright (using 2008 data and a 40% of median per capita poverty line). The highest estimate is 84%, reported by Barnes (using 2007 data and a 50% of mean per capita income poverty line).

**Table 3. Child poverty rates in studies using income/expenditure distribution approaches**

Study: author (date)	Data source	Equivalisation	Poverty line (Rand per month)	Percentage of children in poverty
<b>Bottom 40% of households</b>				
NIEP (1996)	PSLSD 1993 expenditure	adult equivalents*	R301	(0-5 yrs) 60 (6-15 yrs) 61
Woolard (2001)	OHS 1999 Income	(adults + 0.6 children) <sup>0.9</sup>	not reported	59
Streak et al. (2008); Streak et al. (2009); UNICEF South Africa/the Financial and Fiscal Commission of South Africa (2010)	IES 2005 Income	per capita	not reported in 2005 prices	66
Hall & Sambu (2016)	GHS 2014	per capita	not reported	63
Hall et al. (2016)	GHS 2014	per capita	not reported	(0 – 6 yrs) 63
<b>Percentage of median – 40%</b>				
Hall & Wright (2010; 2011)	NIDS 2008 Income	per capita	R154	21
<b>Percentage of median – 50%</b>				
Dieden & Gustafsson (2003)	IES 1995 & OHS 1995 Income	per capita adjusted for economies of scale**	not reported	(0-14 yrs) 45
Dieden & Gustafsson (2003)	IES 1995 & OHS 1995 income	per capita	R1,761***	(0-14 yrs) 49
Hall & Wright (2010; 2011)	NIDS 2008 income	per capita	R233	35
<b>Percentage of mean – 40%</b>				
Barnes, Wright et al. (2007) Barnes et al. (2009) Wright, Barnes et al. (2009)	Census 2001 income	modified OECD	R850	81
Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 income	modified OECD	R1,151	75
Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 income	per capita	R802	81
Wright, Noble et al. (2009)	CS 2007 income	modified OECD	R1,003	78
<b>Percentage of mean – 50%</b>				

Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 income	modified OECD	R1,439	80
Barnes (2009a)	CS 2007 income	per capita	R1,003	84
<b>Percentage of mean – 70%</b>				
Bradshaw and Holmes (2010)	SASAS 2005 income	square root of household size	R843	66

Notes:

Table adapted from Barnes (2009a), for studies pre-dating 2009.

Year of poverty estimate (and poverty line) is the same as the data source.

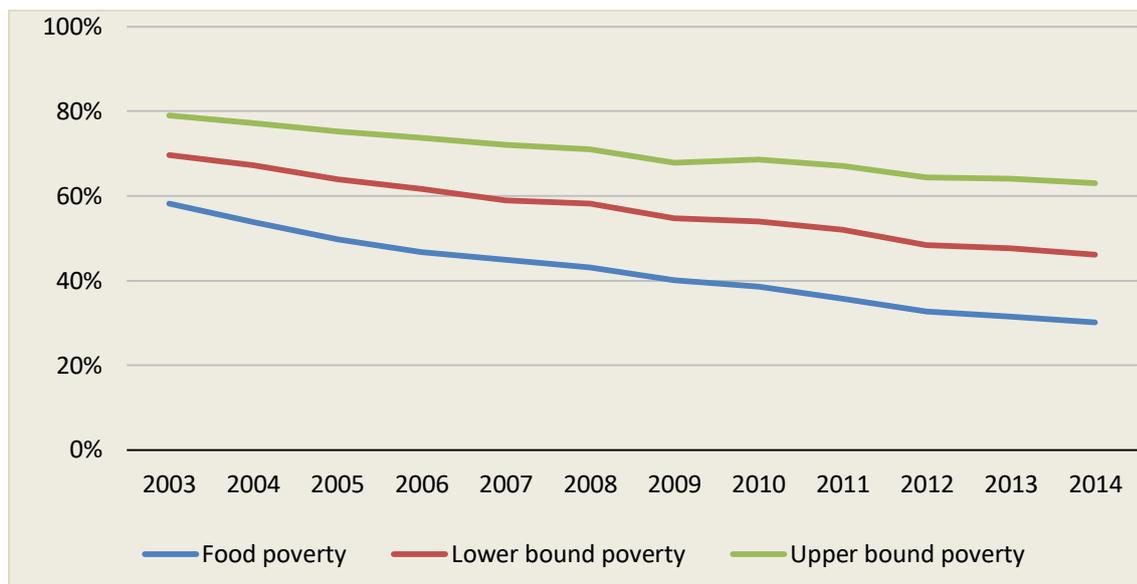
\* Reported as 'total consumption was divided by the number of 'adult equivalents' (which was calculated using the consumption requirements of children and adults) and adjusted to take into account economies of scale' (World Bank, 1995 p.5).

\*\* Exact adjustment not reported.

\*\*\* It is likely that this is per year rather than per month, however other poverty lines in the paper are reported as a per month value.

Given the use of a variety of poverty lines, data sources and time-points, it is difficult to compare the above results and determine an overall trend in child poverty. However, Hall and Sambu present findings for 2003 to 2014 using the GHS and the food, upper and lower bound Stats SA rebased poverty lines (see Figure 3). At a national level, for all three poverty lines, there is a clear trend of declining rates of child poverty over time. For example, using the upper bound poverty line, child poverty decreases from 79% to 63%, a decrease of 16 percentage points. The Children's Institute has also measured child poverty on the GHS for the years 2003 to 2014 using the \$1.25 a day measure. These results are presented on the Children Count website ([www.childrencount.uct.ac.za](http://www.childrencount.uct.ac.za)).

**Figure 3. Child poverty rates (2003 - 2014)**



Source: General Household Survey, 2003 -2014. Analysis by K Hall and W Sambu, Children's Institute (2016).

Hall and Budlender (2013) estimated the incidence, depth and severity of child poverty between 1993 and 2011, applying the Hoogeveen and Özler lower bound poverty line (R515 per person per

month in 2011 prices) to data from PSLSD (1993), NIDS (2008) and the GHS (2011). Child poverty rates were found to be significantly higher than adult poverty rates throughout the period, even though the headcount poverty rates reduced for both groups between 1993 and 2011. The child poverty headcount hardly changed between 1993 (68%) and 2008 (67%), but reduced to 56% in 2011. There was also a reduction in the poverty gap and severity, from 41% and 29% respectively in 1993, to 37% and 24% respectively in 2008, and 26% and 15% respectively in 2011.

In 2014, Stats SA published poverty trends for the period spanning 2006 and 2011, using data from the IES (2005/2006 and 2010/2011) and the LCS (2008/2009). The report used the pilot poverty lines (food, lower and upper bound) published in 2008 by Stats SA, deflating to 2006 prices and inflating to 2011 prices in order to allow for comparisons of poverty rates across the three years under consideration. Overall population poverty rates (measured using the upper bound poverty line) were estimated at 57.2% in 2006, 56.8% in 2009 and 45.5% in 2011. Those living in extreme poverty (below the food poverty line) were found to comprise 26.6% of the population in 2006, 15.8% in 2009 and 10.2% in 2011. The poverty gap (upper bound poverty line) increased slightly from 26.7% in 2006 to 27.9% in 2009 but reduced to 19.6% in 2011. When poverty levels are disaggregated by age, the highest poverty rates were found amongst children (0-17 years). Upper bound poverty rates were consistently higher in children (as opposed to older age groups) across the three periods, 68.9% in 2006, 68.5% in 2009 and 55.7% in 2011. The poverty gap was also greater among children, compared to other age groups, increasing from 33.9% in 2006 to 35.2 % in 2009 and then dropping to 24.8% in 2011.

Although useful for monitoring child poverty over time, the poverty rates do not give any sense of the number of children in poverty. The most recent estimates are those made by Hall and Sambu on the GHS 2014.<sup>88</sup> They report that 11.7 million children were poor in 2014 when using the upper bound measure. The figures for the lower bound and food poverty measures are 8.5 and 5.6 million respectively.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, although child poverty is decreasing over time, there are still large numbers of children experiencing poverty.

Early childhood development is increasingly on the agenda of researchers and policy makers. Just over a million children are born each year, and they all have rights to survival, health, protection and development. Given the conditions of poverty into which many children are born, and the importance of the early years for physical and mental development, an essential package of services has been proposed,<sup>90</sup> which should reach every pregnant woman and child. The package includes maternal and child health services, nutrition, support for primary caregivers, social services including birth registration and access to grants, and stimulation for early learning. These now form part of a package of services specified in the National ECD Policy, adopted by Cabinet in 2015.

In 2016, Hall et al. published a review on early childhood development.<sup>91</sup> The review contained statistics on over 40 indicators used to monitor service delivery on essential components of the comprehensive package of ECD services in the country. Using data from Stats SA's General

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<sup>88</sup>Hall and Sambu (2016)

<sup>89</sup><http://childrencount.org.za/indicator.php?id=2&indicator=14>

<sup>90</sup>Berry et al. (2013)

<sup>91</sup>Hall et al. (2016)

Household Survey (2014), the review published estimates of income poverty, measured in absolute and relative terms, for children aged 0 – 6 years. Two absolute poverty lines were used: a food poverty (R397 per person per month), and an upper bound poverty line (R923 per person per month). Children were defined as living in relative poverty if they belonged to the poorest 40% of households. Out of the 6.3 million children in the 0 -6 year old age group, 63% of them lived below the upper bound poverty line. KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, which had a significant share of the young child population, also had the highest poverty rates. Close to 2 million young children (31%) lived below the food poverty line. In some provinces such as Eastern Cape and Limpopo, food poverty rates were worrying high (46% and 42% respectively); a comparison of poverty rates across the two poverty lines showed that the proportion of children suffering from food poverty in some provinces was higher than the proportion of children living below the upper bound poverty in others. For example, 46% of young children in the Eastern Cape lived below the food poverty line while in Gauteng, 14% lived below the food poverty line and 39% below the Upper bound poverty line. In total, 1.7 million children lived in households where no one was employed.

**Table 4. Children aged 0 - 6 years living in poverty, by province (2014)**

	<b>Child population (0 – 6 year olds)</b>	<b>Food poverty (R397 per person per month)</b>	<b>Upper poverty (R923 per person per month)</b>
Eastern Cape	881 000	46%	78%
Free State	297 000	31%	66%
Gauteng	1 245 000	14%	39%
KwaZulu-Natal	1 321 000	37%	75%
Limpopo	784 000	42%	74%
Mpumalanga	529 000	33%	64%
North West	445 000	33%	71%
Northern Cape	141 000	31%	63%
Western Cape	668 000	11%	42%
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>6 311 000</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>63%</b>

Source: GHS 2014. Analysis by Hall et al (2014).

As part of a study on estimating need for key services in the Department of Social Development, and using Stats SA's 10% sample of the 2011 Census, Noble et.al (2016) produced counts of children under five living in low income families<sup>92</sup>. Using household per capita incomes and two poverty lines (derived from Hoogenveen and Özler) which were inflated to 2011 amounts using the Consumer Price Index (yielding an upper bound poverty line of R1,113 per capita per month and a lower bound poverty line of R604 per capita per month) counts of children under five in low income families were calculated at national, provincial, local municipality and ward levels for the whole of South Africa. The Census 2011 data was then reweighted using demographic projections supplied by Stats SA, and new weights were created for the years 2015 to 2019. For 2015, using

<sup>92</sup> Noble et al (2016)

the 2011 upper bound poverty line of R1,113 per capita per month (and having inflated both the income data and the poverty line to 2015 prices using the CPI), the results showed that:

- Of the 5.8 million children aged under five, 4.5 million were in poor households (78%)
- Of the 2.3 million children aged under two, 1.8 million were in poor households (77%)
- Of the 3.5 million children aged 2-4, 2.7 million were in poor households (78%)
- Almost 9 out of 10 children aged under five in the Eastern Cape lived in poor households (87%)
- Almost a quarter of children in low income households lived in KwaZulu-Natal (24%)
- Over a fifth of children in low income households lived in metropolitan areas (28%)

In terms of analysis of child poverty by area type, studies that have found higher rates of child poverty in rural areas, for example Dieden and Gustafsson<sup>93</sup> reported child poverty in rural areas to be 40%, compared to 12% in urban areas, while Streak et al.<sup>94</sup> reported child poverty to be 83% and 49% respectively. Streak et al. also report that poverty is deeper and more severe in rural areas.

However, when disaggregated further into different types of urban and rural areas, different patterns emerge. In each study where this is investigated (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), the lowest levels of child poverty are in urban formal areas, and the highest in either urban informal or rural informal/tribal authority areas.

**Table 5. Child poverty rates by area type**

Study	Urban formal	Urban informal	Rural formal	Rural informal/tribal authority
Bradshaw & Holmes (2010) – income poverty	42	86	74	85
Hall & Wright (2010) – upper bound	61	91	92	95
Hall & Wright (2010) - \$1 a day	8	16	11	25

Various studies have also highlighted the disparities that exist in child poverty rates across provinces: Hall and Budlender (2013) found that between 1993 and 2011, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal had the highest rates of poverty,<sup>95</sup> while the Western Cape and Gauteng consistently had the lowest rates of poverty. In 2011, the share of children living in poverty in Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal was 74%, 73% and 65% respectively compared to 33% in Gauteng and 32% in Western Cape. The rural/urban analysis showed that poverty rates have been falling across both geographical locations; however poverty rates and shares were consistently higher in the rural areas than in the urban ones. While poverty rates reduced, the actual number of poor children in urban areas increased from 2.7 million in 1993 to 3.9 million children in 2011. The study points out that it is important to note that urban/rural disaggregation

<sup>93</sup>Dieden and Gustafsson (2003)

<sup>94</sup>Streak et al. (2008)

<sup>95</sup>Hall and Budlender (2013)

masks structural key societal patterns; urban areas contain formal and informal areas, while rural areas contain both commercial farms and former homelands.

## 3.2 Deprivation studies

In this section, studies are divided into those that comprise the compilation of a set of stand-alone indicators of deprivation, and those where the indicators are grouped into some form of overall index. The majority of studies have used a researcher derived definition of child poverty, but there is one example of an approach which uses a definition elicited from the general population. As will be seen, just as with the income poverty measures in Section 3.1, the results of studies depend a great deal on the different dimensions of deprivation that have been identified; the selection of appropriate indicators and thresholds for each indicator or dimension; and the methodology used (if applicable) to combine the components into a dimension of deprivation or overall composite measure.

Before commencing the review, however, it is worth mentioning two related studies which have set out frameworks for measuring child poverty or well-being in a multi-dimensional way in the South African context. Using a rights-based framework, Dawes et al. present a set of indicators and recommend data sources for measurement.<sup>96</sup> The indicators cover a range of areas of well-being including income poverty, health and disability, early child development and education, quality of children's neighbourhoods and home environments, and child protection. Flowing from this work, Noble et al. proposed a child-focused, multi-dimensional model of child poverty with both absolute and relative poverty components.<sup>97</sup> Dimensions included: material deprivation, human capital deprivation, social capital deprivation, living environment deprivation, adequate care deprivation, abuse, physical safety deprivation and health deprivation. The absolute core of this model draws from the Copenhagen Declaration and includes basic needs such as food and shelter, while the relative component again uses a multi-dimensional conceptualisation of poverty, and is based on a child's ability to participate fully in South African society. The final element of the model, located between the absolute and relative components, is a ring of indicators relating to access to good quality services.

### 3.2.1 Deprivation indicators

In a project to monitor the government's performance in reducing child poverty, the Budget Information Service at the Institute for Democracy in Africa proposed a set of indicators for measuring child poverty and used some of these to compile a report card of child poverty outcomes at province level.<sup>98</sup> Indicators of income poverty, health status, education status, physical insecurity and economic insecurity were included.

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<sup>96</sup>Dawes et al. (2007)

<sup>97</sup>Noble et al. (2006; 2007)

<sup>98</sup>Streak (2000)

As noted above, the Children’s Institute is engaged in a project to monitor the situation of children in South Africa by defining and measuring socio-economic indicators specific to children through a framework of child rights. These indicators cover a range of aspects of a child’s life, including care arrangements, income poverty and social security, health status, access to housing and basic services, and access to education. The data sources include surveys and administrative records. The website<sup>99</sup> contains a wealth of data, disaggregated by age, sex, race, province and income quintiles, and time series data to track trends over time.

A precursor to this was the 2003 report produced by the Children’s Institute providing an overview of the situation of children in South Africa, with a focus on the non-fulfilment and violation of children’s rights.<sup>100</sup> Using evidence from available literature and from key actors in the field of child rights, the report examines children’s right to an adequate standard of living, to the enjoyment of a high standard of health, to education, to protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, to special care, special protection and assistance, to a safe environment, and to participation. This work has been updated with an extensive review of South Africa’s progress in realising children’s rights.<sup>101</sup>

Some examples of indicators from the Children Count study include:

1. Percentage of children living in overcrowded dwellings (defined as a ratio of more than two people per room, excluding bathrooms but including kitchen and living room). In 2014, 18% of children lived in an overcrowded dwelling.
2. Percentage of children who live far from their nearest health facility. In 2014, 21% of children lived more than 30 minutes away from the health facility they normally attended.
3. Percentage of children who live in households where there are no employed adults (includes formally employed adults who earn wages, and those generating income through informal and self-employment). In 2014 30% of children lived in households without an employed adult.

The Children Count website is a useful source of information on trends over time. As one example, Figure 4 shows the share of children living in households where children were reported to go hungry ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ or ‘always’ because there was not enough food. There is an overall decline in the proportion of children living in households where there is child hunger between 2002 and 2014, with a slight increase between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 (although note the overlapping 95% confidence intervals).

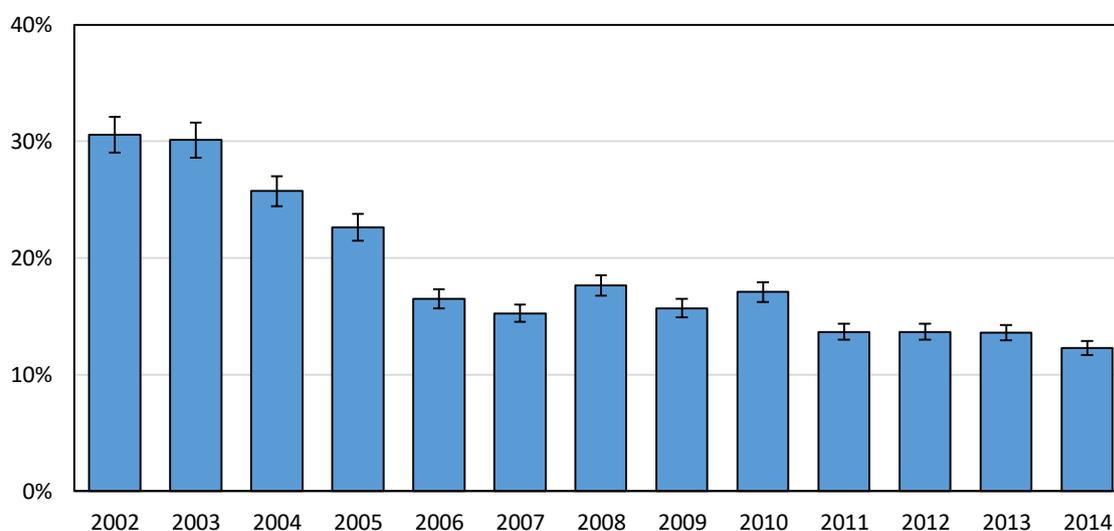
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<sup>99</sup>[www.childrencount.uct.ac.za](http://www.childrencount.uct.ac.za)

<sup>100</sup>Berry and Guthrie (2003)

<sup>101</sup>Proudlock (2014)

**Figure 4. Children living in households where there is reported child hunger**



Source: Underlying data obtained from <http://childrencount.org.za/indicator.php?id=4&indicator=32>

In 2010 Hall and Wright undertook an analysis of the situation of children in South Africa, along the same lines as the Children’s Institute’s work using NIDS 2008 data. The indicators selected included child demography and care arrangements (parental co-residence and orphanhood), children’s living environments (housing conditions, access to services and household assets), and child poverty (adult employment, income deprivation, eligibility and take up of social grants).

**Table 6. Indicators of living environment deprivation for children and adults**

Indicator of deprivation	Percentage of children	Percentage of adults
Traditional dwelling	19	12
Informal dwelling	15	19
Overcrowded dwelling	27	16
No piped / borehole water on site	37	26
No access to flush/chemical toilet	56	40
No electricity in the household	22	17

Source: Hall and Wright (2010) using NIDS 2008 data

The study highlighted the inequalities in levels of living environment deprivation when comparing the child and adult populations. As shown in the table, children are substantially more likely than adults to live in overcrowded dwellings and without basic household services. Children are over-represented in traditional dwellings when compared with adults, while adults are more likely to live in informal dwellings. Given the ongoing release of new waves of NIDS there is scope for this work to be updated.

Statistics South Africa also undertook extensive analysis of indicators of child poverty and deprivation using the Living Conditions Survey 2008/09.<sup>102</sup> Now that the 2015 LCS has been released there is also scope for this work to be updated, and for comparisons across surveys to be undertaken where there are common variables (for example across the GHS, LCS, Census, Community Survey, IES and NIDS).

Also using a rights based framework, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and UNICEF undertook an analysis in 2011 to assess the fulfilment of children's rights, using the GHS and other survey data and also administrative data published in departmental annual reports.<sup>103</sup> The analysis covers children's rights to an adequate standard of living, to life and basic health, to early childhood development (ECD) and education, to a family environment and alternative care, to special protection, and also civil rights and freedoms. This work was updated in 2016 and includes an extensive account of socio-demographic profile of children, data on social inclusion, nutrition, health and HIV, education, water and sanitation, and child protection.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.2.2 Deprivation indices

A number of child-focused indices of child deprivation have been produced in South Africa, and this section summarises some of the main approaches and findings.

Haarmann<sup>105</sup> constructed a composite index comprising nine indicators in four categories (expenditure, housing, health and employment opportunities). Each indicator was divided into five deprivation groupings (ranging from being extremely poor to being well off). For each indicator, children in the bottom two groupings are considered poor. The final score, which determines the overall ranking group, is the average of each mean of the four categories. The poverty line was set at just below an average score of 3.

Bradshaw and Holmes measured the extent to which children live in households that lack deprivation items relating to household amenities<sup>106</sup>. Indicators included in the different domains of exclusion relate to water, sanitation and electricity provision (service exclusion), landline or cellphone access (communications exclusion), and weather resistant walls and roof (housing exclusion). The nine items were combined into an overall index and the number of children lacking zero, one, two, three etc of these items was measured. Their overall measure of deprivation is lacking two or more items.

In a report on status of men, women and children, Stats SA used data from the 2008/2009 Living Conditions Survey to produce estimates of child multi-dimensional poverty,<sup>107</sup> based on the "Bristol method", and derived by combining eight dimensions.<sup>108</sup> The eight dimensions that were combined, in equal weight, to form a multi-dimensional poverty index were shelter,

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<sup>102</sup>Statistics South Africa (2013)

<sup>103</sup>SAHRC and UNICEF (2011)

<sup>104</sup>SAHRC and UNICEF (2016)

<sup>105</sup>Harmann (1999)

<sup>106</sup>Bradshaw and Holmes (2010)

<sup>107</sup>Statistics South Africa (2013)

<sup>108</sup>Stats SA drew on the Bristol method, published by Gordon et al in 2003 for this analysis – for more information, see Stats SA (2013).

sanitation, water, energy, information, education, food and health. Two indices of deprivation were then generated, relating to severe deprivation and less severe deprivation. The severe index is based on the original Bristol measures, while the less severe one is based on MDG indicator standards. The number of deprived dimensions were then calculated for each child. The proportion of children who were found to be deprived in at least one dimension was 35% (severe index) and 71% (less severe index). Those who were deprived in two or more dimensions were 13% and 49% for severe and less severe indexes respectively. Children were defined as living in multi-dimensional poverty if they had two or more deprivations, based on the less severe index. Analysis showed that multi-dimensional poverty rates were highest for children in the oldest age group (12 – 17 year olds - 53%) and for females (48%). Black African children had the highest rates of multi-dimensional poverty rates (56%), compared to less than 2% of White children. While 72% of children in the poorest per capita expenditure quintile were multi-dimensionally poor, the proportion reduced to 2% for children in the richest per capita expenditure.

A more recent report, published by the SAHRC and UNICEF<sup>109</sup> explores child poverty traps using the Child Multidimensional Poverty Indices (MPI) which are calculated using a methodological approach developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and the UNDP's Human Development Report Office.<sup>110</sup> Acknowledging the limitations of a purely money-metric approach to poverty analysis, the report focuses on five dimensions which are related to children: health, education, living standards, employment, and life satisfaction. The authors measured child multidimensional poverty over time from 2008-2012, presented in three MPIs. Several indicators comprise each dimension. For example, the education dimension has the following indicators: Schooling: 5 years (no household member has at least 5 years of completed education), Schooling: 7 years (no household member has at least 7 years of completed education), Enrolment (at least one child of school-going age (7-15 years) does not attend school, and School quality (at least one child of school-going age (7-15 years) attends a quintile 1, 2, or 3 school). The report points out that although the indicators are derived and measured at household level, the child remains the unit of analysis. Trends in multidimensional poverty from 2008-2012 were analysed by first estimating the poverty incidence or headcount (H) of children who are deprived in 1/3 or more of the indicators, the poverty intensity (A) which is the mean deprivation level for children identified as poor in the headcount calculation, and the MPI (H\*A) indices.

The report further points out some of the intersections between the dimensions, which can serve to reinforce poverty traps. It is careful to acknowledge improvements and successes in some areas, and it identifies two main areas of weakness or inadequate progress: the first is poor learning foundations in the education system; and the second relates to weak social structures, and associated social ills such as violence and abuse, which put children at great risk. The MPI methodology has also been applied to data from the General Household Survey to produce a child-specific MPI for 2002 and 2014.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>SAHRC and UNICEF (2014)

<sup>110</sup>See for example Alkire et al. (2015).

<sup>111</sup>Omotso and Koch (2017)

In addition to national profiles of multiple deprivation or multi-dimensional poverty, a number of studies have been undertaken to explore child deprivation at a small area level across South Africa. A local municipality-level South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children (SAIMDC) was constructed using the 2001 Census by the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP) and the Human Sciences Research Council.<sup>112</sup> A set of child-focused indicators were grouped into five dimensions or 'domains' of deprivation: income and material deprivation, employment deprivation, education deprivation, parental deprivation and living environment deprivation and the domains were combined to give a deprivation score for each municipality as well as a multiple deprivation score and rank. A more fine-grained version of the SAIMDC was then produced at datazone level index (also using the 2001 Census) which profiled child deprivation at sub-ward level<sup>113</sup>. While the overall pattern shows that the areas with the highest levels of deprivation are in the former homeland areas, small areas of deprivation can be picked up in otherwise affluent areas. So for example, within metropolitan areas such as Cape Town or Johannesburg, the datazone index revealed pockets of deprivation in the townships, which are masked when looking at deprivation at higher levels of aggregation.

The municipality level index was updated using the CS 2007 in a study for the Department of Social Development, although due to data constraints, two of the indicators from the SAIMDC 2001 could not be included in the SAIMDC 2007.<sup>114</sup> This analysis revealed that the spatial distribution of child poverty and deprivation had not changed noticeably, with the most deprived areas being in former homelands.

More recently, the local municipality-level SAIMDC was updated to a 2011 time-point by SASPRI and the Children's Institute using the published 10% sample of the 2011 Census.<sup>115</sup> The SAIMDC 2011 is made up of five domains and 11 indicators (**Error! Reference source not found.**). While some of the domains have changed, the methodology has remained the same. The domain score for each municipality is calculated by combining the indicators within a domain. Through ranking the municipalities, domain scores are standardised and transformed to an exponential distribution. Finally, the overall SAIMDC score for each municipality is calculated by combining the equally weighted transformed domain scores.

Based on the domains shown in Figure 5 the following levels of deprivation were identified for children under the age of 18 using 2011 Census data:

- 33% of children lived in households that were materially deprived;
- 46% of children lived in households where there were no employed adults;
- 57% of children were living environment deprived, in that their homes lacked either piped water into the dwelling or yard, or a flush toilet, or electricity for lighting, or they lived in a shack.
- 62% of children lived in households at risk of food insecurity.

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<sup>112</sup>Barnes, Wright et al. (2007); Barnes et al. (2009)

<sup>113</sup>Wright, Barnes et al. (2009)

<sup>114</sup>Wright, Noble et al. (2009)

<sup>115</sup>SASPRI and UCT Children's Institute (2015)

**Figure 5. South African Index of Multiple Deprivation 2011: Domains and Indicators**

MATERIAL DEPRIVATION DOMAIN	EMPLOYMENT DEPRIVATION DOMAIN	EDUCATION DEPRIVATION DOMAIN	LIVING ENVIRONMENT DEPRIVATION DOMAIN	FOOD INSECURITY DOMAIN
% of children living in a household <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• without a refrigerator</li> <li>• with neither a TV nor radio</li> <li>• without a telephone</li> </ul>	% of children living in a household <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• where no adults aged 18 or over are in employment</li> </ul>	% of children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who are in the wrong grade for their age (children aged 9 and 4 months-16 and 3 months)</li> <li>• who are not in school (children aged 7-15)</li> </ul>	% of children living in a household <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• without piped water inside the dwelling or yard</li> <li>• without electricity for lighting</li> <li>• without a flush toilet</li> <li>• that is a shack</li> </ul>	% of children living in a household <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with a per capita household income below the mean per capita household income of households where adults and/or children went hungry, as recorded in the LCS 2008/2009</li> </ul>

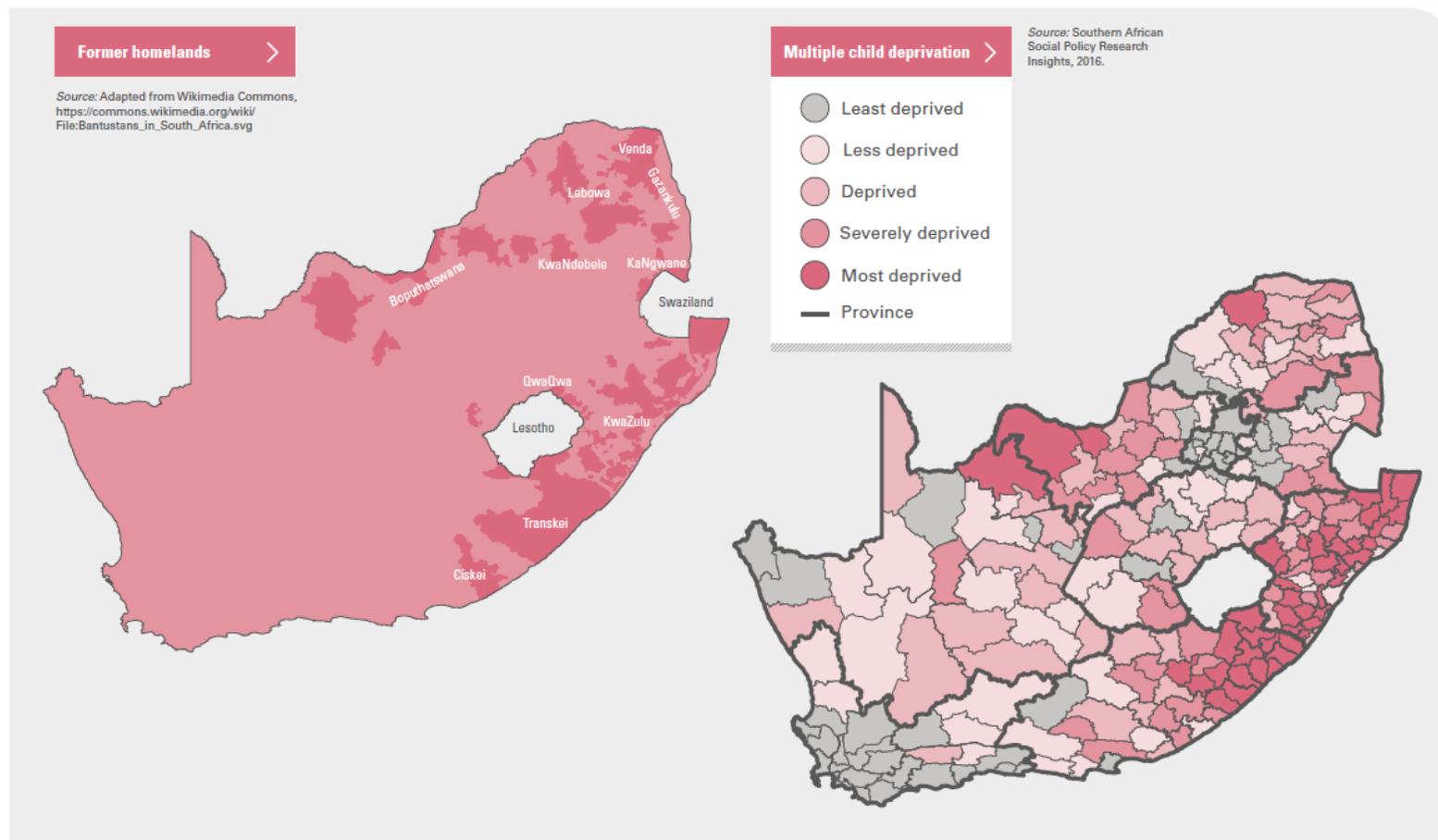
Source: SASPRI and CI, using 10% Sample of 2011 Census.

At municipality level, Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape was found to be the most deprived municipality in South Africa, with Drakenstein municipality in the Western Cape being the least deprived municipality. The two most deprived provinces based on the SAIMDC 2011 were KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. In Kwa-Zulu Natal, 59% of its municipalities were in the most deprived quintile in South Africa, and a third of the Eastern Cape's local municipalities were in the most deprived quintile in South Africa. The map in Figure 6 presents the SAIMDC 2011 at local municipality, alongside a map of the former homelands, in order to demonstrate that municipalities with high levels of child deprivation are mostly located in former homeland areas.

**Figure 6. The South African Index of Multiple Deprivation for Children 2011**

The spatial distribution of multiple child deprivation still overlaps with the location of the former homelands

South African Index of Multiple Child Deprivation at municipal level, 2011



Source: SAHRC and UNICEF (2016) page 25.

### 3.2.3 Socially perceived necessities for children

This final subsection provides an example of using the views of people across society to determine thresholds of adequacy. In this particular example, Barnes used the socially perceived necessities approach to derive a general population derived definition of child poverty.<sup>116</sup> This approach was conceived in Britain in the mid-1990s<sup>117</sup> and involves surveying a representative sample of the general population to ascertain what they consider to be the requirements for full participation in society.

In a specially designed module in the HSRC's nationally representative South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) 2007, adults were asked which of a list of 25 items they considered to be essential for children in South Africa to have an acceptable standard of living at that point in time (a relative measure).<sup>118</sup> The items on the list were derived from focus group work with adults<sup>119</sup> and children,<sup>120</sup> as well as an element of researcher judgement. Eleven of the items were regarded as essential by a majority of respondents. The aim of the module was to capture a list of items that would be representative at the national level, which the majority of South Africans define as essential for children to have an acceptable standard of living. Such a list would enable a democratically derived definition of child poverty based on the lack of such items. The extent to which caregivers were unable to afford to provide at least one of these 'socially perceived necessities' was examined as a proxy for child poverty.

The 2007 module was repeated in 2012 with identical wording to the 2007 module, to enable analysis of change over time to be measured in terms of which items were regarded as necessities for children. Wright et al<sup>121</sup> compared the 2007 and 2012 modules on socially perceived necessities for children.

In the SASAS 2007 and 2012 modules, for each item or activity respondents were asked whether it was essential for every parent or caregiver to be able to afford that item or activity for the children they care for in order for them to enjoy an acceptable standard of living in South Africa today. Responses from adults regarding items were grouped as either "essential" if respondents regarded an item or activity as essential, "desirable" if they regarded it as desirable but not essential or "neither" if it was neither essential nor desirable, or "don't know".

A comparison of results from the SASAS 2007 and SASAS 2012 modules reveals a slight shift over time in how people define necessities for children (Table 7).

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<sup>116</sup>Barnes (2009b)

<sup>117</sup>Mack and Lansley (1985)

<sup>118</sup>The list is comprised of additional items that a household with children would require (i.e. child-specific items), rather than general household items.

<sup>119</sup>Barnes and Wright (2007); Barnes, Cluver et al. (2007)

<sup>120</sup>Barnes (2009c)

<sup>121</sup>Wright et al.(2011), under review for publication.

**Table 7. Necessities for children: the percentage of adults defining an item as essential, 2007 and 2012**

Item	Percentage saying Essential in 2007	Percentage saying Essential in 2012
Three meals a day	91	90
Toiletries to be able to wash every day	90	87
All fees, uniform and equipment required for school	88	84
A visit to the doctor when ill and all medicines required	88	86
Clothing sufficient to keep warm and dry	85	80
Shoes for different activities	79	63*
Bus/taxi fare or other transport to get to school	75	73
Some new clothes	67	46*
Own bed	62	60
Pocket money/allowance for school aged children	59	38*
Story books	50	40
A desk and chair for homework for school aged children	49	54
Educational toys/games	46	43
A school trip once a term for school aged children	45	30*
Presents at birthdays, Christmas	40	26*
Own room for children over 10	40	47*
Leisure/sports equipment	33	23
Toys or materials for a hobby	33	21*
A computer in the home for school aged children	32	32
Some fashionable clothes for secondary school aged children	32	19*
A birthday party each year	30	15*
Own cell phone for secondary school aged children	22	22
A hi-fi/CD player and some tapes/CDs for school aged children	14	9*
A PlayStation/Xbox for school aged children	13	9*
An MP3 player/iPod for secondary school aged children	9	Not applicable

Source: Authors' analysis of SASAS 2007 and 2012.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup>This takes into account the survey weights (i.e. it represents the total population aged 16 and over in 2007 and 2012). Unless otherwise stated, throughout this chapter the results presented from SASAS are weighted in this way.

\*items for which the 95% confidence interval (CI) does not overlap with the 95% CI of the 2007 percentages, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference between the two periods.

For the 24 common items in the two modules, responses in 2007 and in 2012 correlate highly (0.948). Just as in 2007, the four highest ranking items in 2012 were: children having three meals a day (90 per cent), toiletries to be able to wash every day (87 per cent), a visit to the doctor when ill and all medicines required (86 per cent) and all fees, uniform and equipment required for school (84 per cent).

In 2012, nine out of the 24 items included in the module were regarded as essential by more than 50 percent of the respondents (referred to as 'socially perceived necessities'). The two items that fell from the list of the 2007 socially perceived necessities by the time of the 2012 module were story books (39 per cent of respondents) and pocket money/allowance for school age children (37 per cent of respondents).

However, the three items that were exclusively about clothing (clothing sufficient to keep warm and dry, shoes for different activities and some new clothes) each suffered a fall in the percentage of respondents identifying them as essential in 2012. For example, in 2012, 46 per cent of adults defined some new clothes as essential for children, compared to 67 per cent in 2007. Similarly, items such as presents at birthdays, and pocket money had far fewer respondents identifying them as essential in 2012 compared to 2007. This may be a reflection of the economic recession that affected most countries following the global financial crisis which started in 2007/8. By 2012 many South Africans will have been experiencing the effects of the recession, and this might have shaped, in important ways, people's views about necessities.

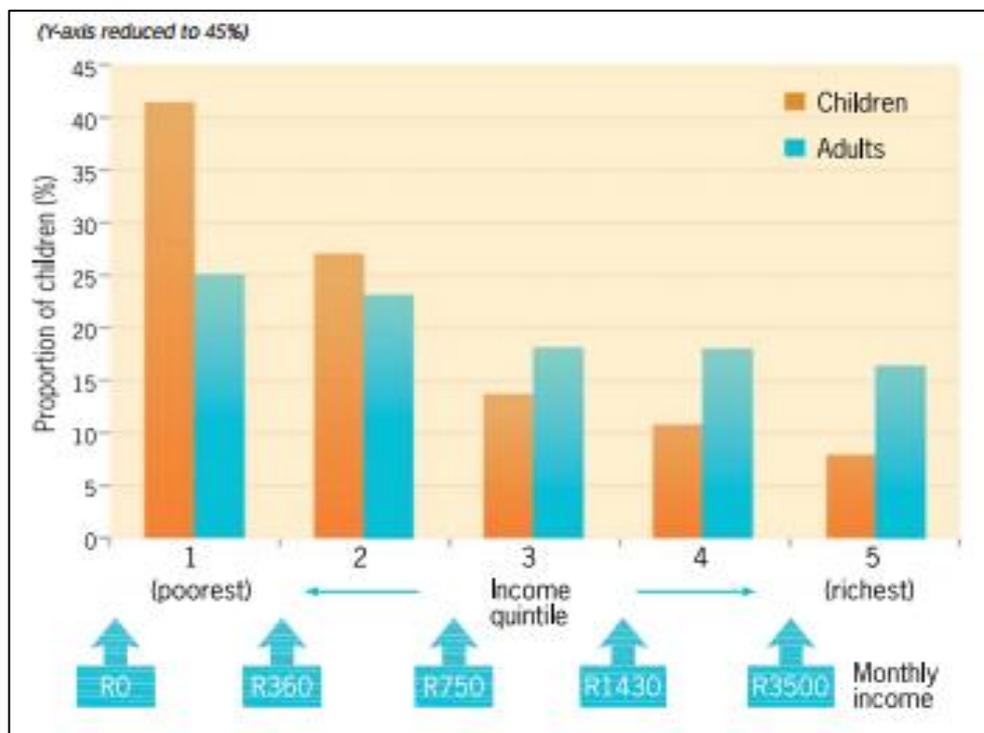
## 4. Children and Inequality

Multiple studies have shown that the contexts into which children are born are very unequal: there are vast disparities in the material status of households in South Africa; there are disparities in household form, in the size and shape of households, and who cares for children; and the physical location of households has a huge influence on access to opportunities, services and resources. All of these contexts are interrelated and they define the circumstances in which children grow up.

They also have direct consequences for children's development and prospects in life – including their poverty status and material well-being, their health and nutrition, their cognitive development and education.

The Children's Institute publishes the South African Child Gauge each year. The publication gives a snapshot of the situation of children in the country, focusing on different themes every year and the 2012 edition focused on children and inequality. In the introductory essay,<sup>123</sup> Hall and Woolard list three main reasons for looking at inequality from a child perspective: first, inequality patterns differ for adults and children. Previous research has shown that inequality is higher amongst children compared to adults, and that children are more likely to live in poor households than adults. Second, inequality has particular consequences for children. Third, inequality within a generation is an indicator of the likelihood of the inequality persisting to the next generation.

**Figure 7. Child and adult distribution across income quintiles**



Source: Hall and Woolard (2012). Children and inequality: An introduction and overview.

<sup>123</sup>Hall et al. (2012)

A number of other studies have highlighted the inequalities between children and adults by comparing poverty rates for the two age groups. Some of these are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8. Income poverty rates for adults and children**

Study	Child poverty rate (%)	Adult poverty rate (%)
Dieden & Gustafsson (2003) -\$1 a day	28	*19
Streak et al. (2008) – bottom 40%	66	45
Hall & Chennells (2011) – \$2 a day	37	24
Hall & Chennells (2011) – lower bound	61	42
Hall & Chennells (2011) – upper bound	76	60

To understand the dimension and extent of inequality, Children Count statistics were disaggregated across five income quintiles derived from per capita income, where data allowed; quintile 1 representing the poorest 20% of households and quintile 5 the richest 20%. Data from the 2010 General Household Survey, which had a nationally representative sample of 25,653 households,<sup>124</sup> was used for this analysis and to update various indicators that are monitored on an annual basis. Table 9 below gives some of the indicators with disaggregations by income quintile.

In 2010, there were 18.5 million children in the country. Children were disproportionately located in poor households; 68% of children lived in the poorest 40% of households (quintile 1 and 2), while only 8% of children lived in the richest 20% of households. The majority of children (67%) in quintile 1 lived in rural areas, compared to only 10% of children in quintile 5. When household formation was analysed across income quintiles, results show children in higher income groups are more likely to live with both parents; 73% of children in quintile 5 lived with both parents, compared to 19% of children in quintile 1. In contrast, 6% of children in quintile 5 lived with neither parent, compared to 28% of children in quintile 1.

Unemployment rates were found to be highest in quintile 1 (67%), reducing significantly in higher income groups. Only 2% of children in quintile 5 lived in households where no adult was employed; this is equivalent to a 65% point difference between unemployment rates in quintile 5 and 1. Similarly, access to nearest health facility was lowest in quintiles 1 and 2, where 45% and 34% of children respectively lived far away from the nearest health facility. Child hunger rates were also higher among lower income groups, and so was the proportion of children living in overcrowded conditions. Analyses also showed the existence of stark inequalities in access to basic services; while 46% and 54% of children lived in households with basic water and sanitation, this proportion increased significantly to 97% (both water and sanitation) in the highest income group.

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<sup>124</sup>Statistics South Africa (2012)

No significant differences were observed in school attendance rates across the five income groups. However, the number and proportion of school going children who lived far away from the nearest primary or secondary school differed across income levels, and were significantly higher in quintile 1, compared to quintile 5.

**Table 9. Children Count indicators disaggregated by income quintiles**

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
<b>Number of children across quintiles</b>	7 643 000 (41.3%)	4 981 000 (26.9%)	2 501 000 (13.5%)	1 982 000 (10.7%)	1 417 000 (7.7%)
<b>Children living in urban areas</b>	33.0%	52.4%	69.0%	81.0%	90.5%
<b>Children living in rural areas</b>	67.0%	47.6%	31.0%	19.0%	9.5%
<b>Children living with biological parents</b>					
• Both parents	19.1%	31.0%	43.0%	54.9%	73.1%
• Mother only	50.3%	36.8%	33.0%	27.3%	16.6%
• Father only	2.4%	3.6%	4.2%	4.5%	4.0%
• Neither parent	28.1%	28.6%	19.8%	13.3%	6.3%
<b>Orphans</b>					
• Maternal orphan	3.8%	4.2%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
• Paternal orphan	16.9%	12.1%	9.0%	6.8%	3.0%
• Double orphan	4.9%	6.5%	5.1%	2.4%	0.8%
<b>Children living in child-headed households</b>	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%
<b>Children living in households without an employed adult</b>	66.7%	24.0%	5.0%	2.9%	2.1%
<b>Children living far away from nearest health facility</b>	45.4%	33.9%	28.5%	20.3%	19.2%
<b>Children living in households where there is reported child hunger</b>	26.1%	17.9%	8.8%	3.3%	0.2%
<b>Children living in adequate housing</b>					
• Formal	63.2%	72.4%	77.4%	89.6%	96.7%
• Informal	8.7%	12.8%	15.9%	7.7%	2.9%
• Traditional	28.1%	14.8%	6.7%	2.8%	0.4%
<b>Children living in overcrowded conditions</b>	31.0%	24.5%	21.3%	7.3%	2.4%
<b>Children with access to basic water</b>	46.2%	64.3%	77.5%	90.4%	97.0%
<b>Children with access to basic sanitation</b>	54.1%	64.0%	75.5%	89.3%	96.6%
<b>Number of children of school going age attending an educational institution</b>	4 457 000 (96.4%)	2 928 000 (96.8%)	1 472 000 (97.1%)	1 224 000 (97.7%)	868 000 (98.1%)
<b>Number of children living far from school</b>					
• Primary	526 000 (18.2%)	299 000 (15.5%)	120 000 (12.7%)	97 000 (12.4%)	57 000 (10.6%)
• Secondary	457 000 (26.5%)	231 000 (21.2%)	105 000 (18.2%)	88 000 (18.9%)	50 000 (14.4%)

Source: Hall et al. (2012), using GHS 2010.

More recently, Hall and Budlender<sup>125</sup> examined inequality (measured using the gini coefficient) across three study years; 1993, 2008 and 2011. Data from the 1993 PSLSD, 2008 NIDS and 2011 GHS were used for the analysis. Results revealed a high gini coefficient for overall population and for the child age group. In 1993, the gini coefficient for children was 0.64, this increased slightly to 0.68 in 2008 but reduced in 2011 to 0.65. A similar pattern was observed for the adult gini coefficient. Striking inequalities were observed when income and population shares were analysed across population groups. In 1993, black African children constituted 82% of the child population, but held only 43% of the income share, and had a poverty share of 95% (i.e. 95% of children in low income households were black African). In 2008, these rates increased to 85%, 58% and 94% respectively, while in 2011 the rates were 85%, 61% and 96% respectively. In contrast the population share of white children was 8.3% in 1993, while the income and poverty shares were 42% and 0.7% respectively. By 2011, this had reduced to 5.1% (population share), 24% (income share) and 0.1% (poverty share).

Many other studies have shown that racial disparities exist in child poverty, and that access to basic services is highly unequal across population groups. These studies have overwhelmingly shown that black African children have the highest levels of child poverty: they comprise a high proportion of the total poor children and the depth and severity of poverty is much higher for this group than any other. A large proportion of coloured children are also found to experience poverty. The SAHRC/UNICEF report presents various findings on racial disparities.<sup>126</sup> Compared to a white child, a black African child is reported to be:

- 1.5 times less likely to be exposed to early childhood development programmes
- 1.6 times less likely to have access to adequate water
- 1.4 times less likely to have access to adequate sanitation
- 2 times less likely to complete secondary education

Statistics from the Children Count project also show that Black African children, compared to White children, are 23 times more likely to live in income poverty (using the Stats SA upper bound poverty line) and 20 times more likely to live in households where there is child hunger.<sup>127</sup>

Stats SA examined poverty trends between 2006 and 2011.<sup>128</sup> As with other studies that compared adult and child poverty rates, the highest poverty rates were found among children (0-17 years). Upper bound poverty rates were consistently higher in children (as opposed to other age groups) across the three periods (2006, 2009 and 2011). The poverty gap and severity were also higher among children, compared to older age groups. While poverty rates showed reduction over time, levels of inequality remain exceedingly high. Using both income and expenditure per capita data, analysis showed that inequality rates had only changed slightly since 2006. Using income per capita (considering salaries, wages and social grants) and per capita expenditure (which excludes taxes), the rates were found to be 0.72, 0.70 and 0.69 in 2006, 2009 and 2011

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<sup>125</sup>Hall and Budlender (2013)

<sup>126</sup>SAHRC & UNICEF (2016)

<sup>127</sup>[www.childrencount.uct.ac.za](http://www.childrencount.uct.ac.za)

<sup>128</sup>Statistics South Africa (2014)

(per capita income) and 0.67, 0.65 and 0.65 in 2006, 2009 and 2011 respectively using expenditure data.

More recent analysis published in the South African Early Childhood Review shows that four million young children, aged 0 – 6 years, lived in the poorest 40% of households in 2014.<sup>129</sup> With a population of 6.3 million young children aged 0-6 years, this means that 63% of them lived in the bottom two quintiles, down from 67% in 2003. Inequalities were also observed in education indicators, specifically stimulation for early learning domain, where children in the poorest income group (quintile 1) were worse off than those in the richest group (quintile 5). Eighty four percent of 3 -5 year old children in the richest 20% of households were attending early learning programmes/groups, compared to 57% of children in the poorest 20% of households.

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<sup>129</sup>Hall et al. (2016)

## 5 Qualitative research about child poverty

### 5.1 Introduction

While quantitative studies of poverty tend to focus on money-metric headcounts and indicators of deprivation, qualitative studies that seek to understand how children experience poverty, yield some quite different insights. Children experience the effects of poverty in many direct ways: in physical hunger, in exclusion of various forms, in the time and effort of getting to places, and in personal risk and anxiety about their own safety or that of their siblings. Poor children draw particular attention to issues of safety – in the home, at school and in the neighbourhood.

Across the world there is increasing interest in, and attention to, children's participation.<sup>130</sup> The concept of participation itself has many meanings, depending on the context and goals of the participatory processes. Participation can refer to children's involvement in adult-initiated programmes, to adults consulting children, to children's civic participation, to self-organising or children's independent decision-making.<sup>131</sup> Qualitative research is by nature more participatory as an open framing allows research participants to articulate their own experiences and construct meaning. In the quantitative literature, we have distinguished between 'expert defined' and 'population defined' measures of poverty. Similarly, qualitative research with children can enable children to formulate their own understandings and experiences of poverty. This is important, as childhood is "fundamentally influenced by the economic, social and political conditions that constitute the context in which [children] live".<sup>132</sup> Rather than imposing expert or adult defined understandings of poverty on children, participatory approaches acknowledge children's agency and competency to frame poverty in their own terms, and to define their needs.

Subjective definitions of poverty are valuable contributors to the poverty literature. They can complement and inform quantitative analyses by providing guidance in the development of poverty indicators that are alternatives to money-metric measures and articulate with people's experiences of poverty. Allowing for children's agency in poverty analysis "entails a paradigm shift in attitudes towards children in stressing their existence as social actors shaping – as well as being shaped by – their circumstances or social 'structure'".<sup>133</sup> Seven participatory studies are summarised here. They are presented in chronological order, with a brief discussion at the end.

### 5.2 Summary of key studies

**Bonn, M., Earle, D., Lea, S. and Webley, P. (1999) 'South African children's views of wealth, poverty, inequality and unemployment', *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 20: 593-612.**

This investigation into children's views of the linked concepts of wealth, poverty, inequality and unemployment takes, as its point of departure, a critique of the neo-Piagetian life stages view. It

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<sup>130</sup>For example, Jones and Sumner (2011).

<sup>131</sup>Moses (2008)

<sup>132</sup>Moses (2008) p.330.

<sup>133</sup>Feeny and Boyden (2003) p.1.

is argued that the process of economic socialization is not purely one of cognitive development but is informed by social and cultural influences. The building of knowledge can therefore be seen as “a socio-cognitive process which relies significantly on the culture and circumstances in which the child lives. This does not mean that the child is a passive recipient of cultural values or norms, but that through direct experience and in communication with others in society, the child actively constructs his or her own knowledge of the world” [p.594]. If the construction of meaning were purely a cognitive function, then one would expect no class differences in children’s understandings of inequality provided age remained constant. However, a less functional, more ‘dialectical’ approach would anticipate considerable differences in children’s knowledge and understanding of inequality, as social environments and experiences shaped children’s perceptions.

The researchers deliberately chose South Africa (as “a society where there are enormous and entrenched differences in wealth based on racial grounds and where, in the past, social mobility for the poorer groups has been extremely limited”) to test a hypothesis that younger children would view poverty in a more fatalistic and simplistic way than older children, who would have more complex explanations for poverty and be more likely to attribute inequality to the socio-economic system. The research was undertaken in rural, urban and semi-urban settings. Children aged 7, 9, 11 and 14 were interviewed, and 225 individual interviews were conducted. Responses were recorded, transcribed and coded. Each child was asked the following questions:

- What does it mean to be rich?
- Who are the rich people?
- What does it mean to be poor?
- Why are there poor people?
- Why are some people poor while others are rich?
- Can everybody become rich?
- What does unemployment mean?
- Why are people unemployed?
- What should a person do to get employment?

Children’s definitions of “what it means to be rich” were broadly divided into three categories: to have money / to have luxuries / to be ‘adequate’ or not to be in need. A fourth category with fewer mentions was to own cattle. The paper suggests that children perceive cattle as similar to money in that they are both a form of financial capital – in other words, an important definition of wealth is resources (money / cattle). The two other categories refer to the level of lifestyle this financial capital supports, and hold an important distinction: on the one hand wealth is seen as the absence of deprivation (to have the things you need / to have enough). On the other hand, it is described as having more than you need – to live in luxury. When asked who was rich, many of the responses were tautological: rich people are those who have money, or who can afford luxury goods. Categories of wealthy people included white people, the president or politicians, and a range of professions (doctors, musicians, teachers and lawyers).

Being poor was similarly described as the absence of money or to “have nothing”. But outcomes

also featured in children's responses: poverty was described as experiencing hunger or "to be starving" and as suffering. Poverty was linked to unemployment, which was in turn linked to a lack of jobs. Some children attributed poverty to "God's will" or to lack of education. A few referred to poverty as a legacy of apartheid servitude, where "our forefathers used to be servants to the whites" and did not earn enough money to educate their children. In this way, poverty was transmitted across generations.

Explanations for inequality included unemployment and poor/variable education. Understandings of unemployment suggest a virtuous circle: poor people are unable to get work, and unemployment causes poverty. Similarly, rich (or white) parents are able to send their children to school, and these children in turn become literate and educated and are able to get good jobs. Illiterate people, on the other hand, remain poor. Some children held fatalistic views (along the lines of Jesus made the poor and the rich), or blamed poverty on the poor – who ran away from school before completing their education, or were lazy, or insufficiently enterprising. This range of opinions also explained the common perception that not everybody can become rich: unemployment, poor education, individual differences in attitude and aptitude and a divine plan limited opportunities for the poor to become rich. Those who believed that anyone could become rich referred to the same constraints, with the removal of these constraints as a condition for transcending poverty: if people got employment, or a good education, or worked hard and performed well, or 'God willing'.

Unemployment, an issue which featured throughout the discussions of poverty, wealth and inequality, was perceived mainly in two ways: the absence of work or inability to get work – issues of over-supply in the labour market; and lack of individual effort (for example, "*mokodue go itsosa a itsosang*": Setswana for "only a person who tries can be helped"). Children were asked what people should do to get employment. The question itself limits possible responses to individual action rather than opening the discussion to structural issues underlying high unemployment rates, even though many of the children had alluded to issues of disparity in access to and quality of education, and the shortage of jobs. Suggestions for improving individual employment opportunities were to take responsibility, get educated, seek assistance from others, prepare documentation or fill in forms.

After scoring responses for complexity (a five-point scale, ranging from 'no coherent explanation' to 'integrated explanation' which includes both multiple and causally linked reasoning), the researchers used statistical tests to measure the extent to which age and geographical location (urban / semi-urban / rural) could predict the distribution of categories of explanation. They found that the complexity of explanation was better predicted by age than by the area where children lived, although some differences were associated with what the authors term 'social milieu'. For instance, children from a homogeneously poor rural site were more likely to express resignation to poverty as a God-ordained condition. The paper concludes that "children's capacity to make inferences and integrate information about these concepts is more influenced by their age than by their social milieu". Given their initial proposition that knowledge building is a socio-cognitive process, it is a pity that there is no reflection on the usefulness of three area 'types' (urban, semi-urban and rural) as proxies for 'social milieu' in South Africa – particularly given the complexities of household form, the interrelatedness of urban and rural nodes and the mobility

of children across these terrains.

**Clacherty, G. (2002) *Children Speak Out on Poverty: Report on the ACCESS Child Participation Process*, Cape Town: Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security.**

This explicitly child-participation project was undertaken by the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), at a time when the Taylor Commission was gathering information for its enquiry into a comprehensive social security system. Nine two-day workshops were held with children (one in each province), to engage children on issues of poverty, survival and social security. This was followed by a national workshop, which included government policy-makers.

In the workshops, children pointed to gaps in the social security system. Children highlighted concerns about the effects of exclusion on older children, who experienced hunger and struggled to access schooling. Particular vulnerabilities for certain categories of children were defined: children living on the street, orphaned children and disabled children. Children were acutely aware of the poverty of their families, and the ways in which small social grants needed to be carefully allocated into the household budget. They were also aware of the administrative difficulties faced by caregivers who applied for grants.

The workshops were undertaken at a time when the CSG was narrowly targeted to children of pre-school age, when the amount was very small, and prior to the no-fee schools policy. School-going children's accounts of accessing education reveal the many ways in which poverty is humiliating or disabling. Children talked of not being able to afford uniforms and stationery, of having to attend school without shoes. Some were excluded from school if they did not have the correct uniform, and some were cold in winter. Schools worsened the situation by requiring expensive uniforms such as customised tracksuits. Failure to pay fees resulted in punitive action by teachers and schools, for example, text books and reports were withheld, teachers publicly abused children and did not allow them to sit on chairs if their fees were outstanding. The sense from these accounts, although not explicitly addressed in the report, is that children are made to feel personally accountable for their poverty, and for honouring contracts which are ostensibly between parents and institutions – despite the fact that children have little control over household income or expenditure. Transport was raised as an issue when schools were far from children's homes. Quite apart from the burden of having to walk long distances, children had to traverse dangerous routes and therefore walked in fear.

In the home context, children described a considerable burden of work, which sometimes got in the way of school work. Food insecurity was discussed, and linked to hunger during the school day. Some children lived in households that lacked basic services, or where services were disconnected due to non-payment. Children were then tasked with approaching other households to ask for water, and to carry it home. Children talked of social problems at home and in their communities. Alcohol and substance abuse amongst both children and adults were linked to crime and abuse.

In an effort to understand what makes children resilient, the facilitators asked children to talk about their existing support structures and strategies for coping with difficulty. Individual

relationships emerged as an important source of strength – a grandmother, a friend, or someone else who understands and loves unconditionally. Despite the many accounts of punitive treatment at school, schools were also described as places which provided support, either through encouragement and advice, or by providing children with essential things like food, toothpaste and sanitary pads. Children suggested that, in addition to cash grants, the state should provide other goods such as food, free basic services, uniforms, school transport. Some of these have indeed been addressed subsequently.

**Streak, J. (2004) 'Child poverty in South Africa and implications for policy: Using indicators and children's views to gain perspective', in E. Coetzee and J. Streak (eds.) *Monitoring Child Socio-economic Rights in South Africa: Achievements and Challenges*, Cape Town: Idasa.**

The first chapter of this book draws on commissioned work by Deborah Ewing, who undertook participatory research with children to elicit their perspectives (and that of their carers) on child poverty and appropriate government responses. The study targeted four groups of children who were marginalized or vulnerable in particular ways. These consisted of children living in traditional rural areas with little infrastructure and a predominance of female-headed households; orphaned children living in households headed by children or youth under 21 years; children of farm workers who lived on farms; and girls living in an urban shelter. Methods included workshops, questionnaires, focus group discussions, individual and household interviews, drawings, games and participant observation. The findings are organized under the typology of groups.

*Traditional/rural children (Msinga, KwaZulu-Natal):* A picture emerges of communities in which it is difficult to provide for children's basic needs and realize their entitlements – even when programmes to do so are ostensibly in place. This is related to limited income-earning opportunities for adults in the area. The main difficulty identified by children and caregivers was shortage of food which, unlike water and firewood, could not be collected from the environment. Relations of reciprocity provided some security as households could borrow from each other in desperate times, but children and adults still had to go without food at times. Health services – although in principle free to all children under six – were difficult to access, particularly when a mobile clinic was discontinued, and were, in effect, not 'free' to rural villagers as they had to spend considerable amounts of money reaching the nearest hospital. Bureaucratic difficulties made it difficult for carers to obtain social grants for children and themselves, although an outreach service connected to a PMTCT pilot programme was assisting in grant application. Low school attendance was linked to the great distances that children had to walk to reach school, and to the need for child labour to supplement income. In this context, education was regarded by some as a luxury, rather than a basic good. School non-attendance meant that children could not benefit from the school feeding scheme, which in any case was described as erratic.

*Child/youth-headed households (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal):* accounts from these children provided a similar picture to the rural group: poor living conditions, low access to services and food insecurity were among the main forms of poverty. Again, there were relatively low levels of school attendance, though these were linked to the direct and associated costs of schooling, and to stigma or discrimination experienced at school. Access to grants was poor, forcing children to rely on casual work, donations and loans. In this group, the loss of parents exacerbated the

experience of poverty, as children also had to cope with sadness and loneliness.

*Farm children (Stellenbosch, Western Cape):* Researchers observed conditions of extreme deprivation, but the children on farms were reluctant to talk directly about poverty. There was a sense that they did not want to be defined as poor (“we are spiritually rich”) despite their obviously poor living environments, few possessions and lack of services. This may have been related to children’s awareness of being different to non-farm children. They experienced stigma and discrimination, including at school. Part of this may have been related to the behaviour of adult farm dwellers. The farm children spoke of alcohol dependency among their parents, and the consequences which included fights and neglect of children.

*Girls in a shelter (Cape Town, Western Cape):* These girls did not define themselves as poor, but rather as having come from ‘problem’ homes. They described the indignity of receiving donations of cast-off clothes and unwanted food, and emphasized that they did not come ‘from the streets’ but from proper houses. In discussions of poverty, they – like other groups – described poverty as multi-faceted, referring to income, basic services, insufficient clothing and food. However they also highlighted non-material dimensions of poverty such as loneliness and unhappiness.

In general the discussions revealed children’s experience and awareness of the interrelatedness of deprivations. Prioritised across the groups generally was the need for education, which was linked to the fulfilment of other needs such as income and nutrition. Children also highlighted the need for broader interventions to address the precarious situation of households and improve the economic situations of adults who are in turn responsible for children. This “highlights the need to view the violation of child rights... through a broad lens.... Children experience their poverty not in isolation, but as members of a household and society” [p.37].

**Barnes, H., Cluver, L. and Wright, G. (2007) *Findings from the Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion Project: Children, Key Report 5*, Pretoria: Department of Social Development, Republic of South Africa.**

This research set out to broaden notions and definitions of poverty by identifying appropriate ‘consensual’ alternatives to money-metric definitions. The paper starts with a review of the quantitative data on an array of domains related to child poverty and social exclusion. The second part reports on research aimed at eliciting adult perceptions of necessities for children. These are drawn from 48 adult focus groups which, among other things, discussed necessities for children.

Under the domain of material goods, adults perceived adequate clothing as essential both to their health and protection from the elements, and for social acceptability and inclusion. Toys were considered important, particularly if they were educational and kept children busy so that they “do not roam the streets”. On the other hand, toys were not necessarily considered essential for play. There appeared to be greater consensus on the need for recreational spaces such as playgrounds and sports facilities, as well as organized sporting and cultural activities where children’s talents could be identified and nurtured. Adults regarded pocket money as important, even when households lacked disposable income. Independent control of money by children was seen as beneficial in that it taught them about how to use, spend and save money, and there were references to children learning to work (do chores) in order to earn money. Possible

downsides were that children might spend the money on undesirable or harmful goods such as drugs. Phones were regarded as important for keeping in contact, particularly in emergencies, and where TVs were defined as necessary this was because of their educational function, and the perception that TV encouraged children to stay at home, out of harm's way.

The second theme or domain of child necessities discussed by adults was a less tangible good: social capital. Within this theme, necessary 'goods' included things like love, care and support – from parents, friends and within the community. Social exclusion was discussed in relation to orphans and adopted children, who were perceived as having less access to love and care.

Linked to this is the area of adequate care, in which discussions revolved around the family and a 'stable family life' – an environment where there is an adult presence at home, a loving and caring atmosphere, communication, discipline and guidance.

In relation to living environments, adequate housing was considered essential for adults and, by extension, for children. Adequacy was related to the number of rooms, and the need for separate bedrooms for adults and children. Neighbourhood essentials related to child health and safety included a clean environment, refuse removal, street lighting, safe play areas and the absence of crime and drugs. The risks associated with informality and poor service provision included paraffin poisoning, burns, flooding and the danger of children falling into pit latrines, and suggested the need to raise the minimum level of basic service delivery. Adults called for measures to improve road safety, including scholar patrols, speed humps and traffic lights. In addition, the provision / improvement of public transport was described as essential in contexts where children have to walk long distances or are unsafe walking.

Concerns about child abuse and rape led to discussions about the need for appropriate child protection services, the importance of educating children about their rights and ensuring that they know how to contact help lines. Discussions about child health centred on parental responsibility and access to effective and affordable health services. Nutrition was important for children to grow up 'strong', and to have the energy to concentrate at school. Sufficient food at home was also linked to child safety, in that they were less likely to 'roam the street' looking for food or to turn to crime. Poverty prevented children from eating well. Sufficient food was described as three meals a day, and included porridge or cereal, vegetables, fruit and enough fluid.

The findings of the focus groups informed the development of a module in the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) which later elicited responses to a list of items and generated a ranked list of socially perceived necessities (see above).

**Barnes, H. (2009) *Children's Views of an Acceptable Standard of Living for Children in South Africa*, Measures of Child Poverty Project Key Report 3, Pretoria: Department of Social Development, Republic of South Africa.**

In this paper, Barnes summarises children's views on a range of 'necessities' and 'luxuries' suggested by children in order to achieve an acceptable standard of living. The paper is the third in a series on child poverty, as part of the 'Measures of Child Poverty Project'. The first two

papers respectively explore money-metric measures of child poverty, and adult perspectives on child poverty. The study included large and small focus groups with children, recruited through schools in the Western and Eastern Cape. The purpose of the 15 'large' groups was to generate an initial set of perceived necessities, so that these could be incorporated into the HSRC's South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). The necessities recorded in these initial groups were later discussed in 13 'small' groups, with particular focus on exploring what constituted luxury or necessity.

The report compares children's views with those of adults, and finds that children have well-informed opinions about the necessities of life, and that their opinions differ from those of adults in certain ways. It seems that children define necessities in the context of deprivation, either drawing on their own experience or, among wealthier groups, their perceptions about deprivations that others experience. The defined necessities emerging from the focus groups are organized into six domains in the report: Health, Education, Personal things, the Home, Safety, and the Neighbourhood. These domains were defined *a priori*.

Discussions about health focused on the availability, affordability and quality of health care services, including doctors, dentists and primary health care facilities (clinics). With regards to healthy living, children highlighted both issues of practice and of household resources in relation to personal hygiene (and the associated material goods such as toiletries), nutrition (including access to sufficient healthy food and safe water), and individual health behaviours (including sufficient sleep, relaxation and exercise, and avoidance of harmful substances).

Discussions about education focused on resources, both at school and in the home. At the school level, 'necessary' items included learning materials (books and stationery), facilities such as libraries and playing fields, and human resources (qualifications, competency and attitude of teachers). Important features of the physical learning context included the provision of basic school infrastructure such as addressing shortages of desks and chairs, reducing classroom overcrowding and improving the comfort of the classroom environment by regulating temperature (e.g. heating in winter). In the home context, children emphasized the need for suitable spaces to do homework without distraction, and the importance of support from parents and household members. School safety was highlighted, with suggestion about ways to secure school grounds against external risks and deal with security risks such as gangsters, bullying and vandalism within schools. Children were aware of the financial costs of schooling, raising concerns about affordability of school fees, uniform requirements and transport costs.

Discussion of 'personal things' seems to revolve around two main themes: the living domain and personal possessions. With respect to the former, children talked of the importance of privacy and space, of having a separate bedroom with a bed, a cupboard and a desk. Personal items of importance to children included shoes and clothing, things to do (toys, games, books, sports equipment), and sentimental items such as photographs. More high-end audio-visual items such as CD players and DVDs received mention too – though more commonly in the discussions of 'the home', suggesting that these are considered household rather than personal assets.

Children described an adequate home environment in terms of three main characteristics: warmth, cleanliness and safety. Basic services were considered essential, as were basic furniture

(particularly beds) and appliances such as fridges and stoves. Safety requirements included gates and security alarm systems. Within the household, privacy (for instance, one's own room) was considered important – especially for teenagers – though not always a necessity. TVs and other audio-visual equipment were considered important household and/or personal items, along with cell phones which were considered necessary for emergencies.

The paper concludes that the children were modest in their definitions and arguments for essential items. While the children mentioned a similar array of necessary items to those identified by adults, the discussions to distinguish necessities from luxuries suggest that children's definition of necessities is pitched at a more basic level. Essential items, in the children's definition, are those which are necessary for survival and development.

**September, R. and Savahl, S. (2009) 'Children's perspectives on child well-being', *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 21(1).**

This short paper reports on qualitative research into children's understandings of wellbeing. Two hundred children, aged between 9 and 16, were interviewed in 16 focus groups, held in the Western Cape (urban) and Eastern Cape (rural). Emerging themes identified by the researchers fitted the "traditional domains of child well-being identified in the literature on this subject... namely, protection and safety, basic needs, community resources, and psychosocial issues." [p.28]

Household poverty was a recurring theme, and was explicitly linked to unemployment. In children's lives, income poverty was experienced as lack of basic needs – food, clothing and shelter, and difficulty in getting to school. Children expressed concern for homeless children that they observed, attributing their situation to poverty. At the level of community, children highlighted the difficulties associated with living in places with poor infrastructure – the absence of tarred roads, street lights, rubbish collection, running water and flush toilets. In both urban and rural sites, poor infrastructure and inadequate services were experienced as contributing to 'dirty' environments and threats to children's health and safety. Adequate street lighting, safe parks and visible policing were regarded as essential for reducing risk. Children described threats to their personal safety as exposure to violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse (including being forced to do housework) and substance abuse, which is in turn linked to violence. Children described personal experience of violence or knowledge of others who were abused, although worry about violence also featured in the discussions. The experience of being at risk, of fearing for personal safety, is linked to living in contexts where violence is common and inhibits children's sense of freedom to fully inhabit their neighbourhoods, or even their homes. Thus the effect of violence on well-being may be both physical (where violence is perpetrated against children) and emotional (where the possibility of violence reduces trust in the social and/or domestic realm, leaving children in a state of anxiety).

**Department of Social Development and UNICEF (2010) *Vulnerability of Children and Poor Families to the Economic Recession of 2008-2009*, Pretoria: UNICEF South Africa.**

As a complementary report to a statistical investigation on the impact of global recession on child

poverty,<sup>134</sup> UNICEF and other partners undertook a qualitative assessment which is contained in a separate report, consisting of four main content chapters:

- Nature of shocks faced by population and dimensions of the recession in affected areas/sectors
- Nature of impacts among affected individuals
- Coping strategies
- Effectiveness of state support systems in affected areas

The research targeted households where children had definitely been affected by recession. It did this first through geographical targeting (all the research was located in areas associated with the worst-affected sectors), and then selecting only participants who were directly affected by recession by losing their job or having working hours reduced, AND who were poor, AND had child dependants.

The study found that the recession particularly affected those households which did not have access to state support (grants). Children's welfare was dependent on their caregivers receiving constant income through earnings or social grants or unemployment insurance. This finding supports the quantitative analyses conducted by van der Berg et al in the quantitative report.

Coping strategies included starting small businesses and attempting food production, but only a small proportion of households tried these. Lack of knowledge and skills for enterprise left households exposed to financial shocks, with little ability to mitigate the effects through their own efforts. The report highlights possible negative social consequences of recession, which include reported increases in unlawful and anti-social behaviour such as prostitution, crime and drug use among youth.

Public services were not meeting the standard or extent of delivery required. These include 'issues' related to schooling (free schooling was not being implemented correctly), health impacts and child abuse. Where public services failed to meet the need, it was necessary for complementary private services to fill the gap. A recommendation emerging from these findings is that the quantity and quality of public service delivery needs to be boosted in order to cushion the poorest households from the adverse effects of economic shocks.

### **5.3 Key themes from qualitative research on children and poverty**

In children's definitions, poverty (and wealth) are described in terms of resources and also in terms of outcomes. Poverty is described in both modest and extreme terms (to struggle or not have enough, versus to starve / have nothing). A comparison of children's and adults' definitions of basic needs suggests that children from across the income spectrum have a more modest conception of the resources and material goods that would constitute an adequate standard of living.

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<sup>134</sup>UNICEF South Africa/Finance and Fiscal Commission of South Africa (2010)

Children from an array of contexts identify particular categories of children as being particularly vulnerable: street children, orphans and disabled children. These are also categories where there is specific research and policy focus, and where there may be opportunities to link evidence on specific forms of vulnerability to more general understandings of poverty. While child labour is not a widespread problem – certainly in terms of illegal employment of under-age children -the qualitative research establishes strong links between household poverty and child labour which could be addressed by improving employment opportunities for adults and education for children.

Poor children are strikingly aware of the financial resources and constraints of their households. They appear familiar with social grants, including the amounts, intended expenditure and difficulties in access. They are sometimes subjected to feeling personally accountable for their poverty, for instance, when school staff demand payment from pupils rather than dealing with their parents.

Children's subjective accounts of poverty support the view that poverty analysis needs to broaden its scope from a socio-economic focus to include non-material dimensions. A critical feature emerging from the qualitative work on poverty with children is the issue of safety. This is an under-researched issue, particularly in relation to poverty, and children's accounts point to a range of possible areas of articulation: school contexts, the built environment and human settlement design issues, the need for demarcated safe spaces and recreational facilities, physical security of the household, alcoholism in parents and other adults. Another 'non-material' issue strongly associated with poverty is the destabilisation of households and families – this includes migration and high rates of mobility for both children and adult caregivers for a variety of strategic reasons linked to housing, employment, social infrastructure and care.

Themes emerging from children's discussions of the reasons for poverty and inequality include structural issues such as inequities in education and employment opportunities, individual attributes or effort, and fate or omniscient decisions by God. This spectrum of explanations implies a parallel range of possibilities for dealing with poverty: if the distribution of poverty and inequality is part of a divine plan, then there is nothing much that can be done and the poor need to resign themselves to poverty and make do as best they can. This perspective, articulated by children, may appear naïve but in fact is paralleled in the broader poverty discourse (see section 2) where resignation is identified as a contributor to chronic poverty. Similarly the broad theme of resilience and effort resonates with the children's description of poverty being linked to individual characteristics (such as laziness or voluntary school drop-out), and their less negatively inflected assumptions that attending to education, working hard and making an effort can bring people out of poverty. Some of the few available case studies seem to support this, yet it is clear that trajectories are changed through a combination of circumstances, events or interventions, and individual actions – not by individual agency alone. Finally, the children's conception of poverty as both manifestation and consequence of structural inequalities in access to education and employment opportunities fits well with current thinking on poverty and inequality more generally. Children who participated in qualitative research articulated links between poverty and education, with directional causation going both ways (poor people cannot access good education, and poor education precludes the poor from moving out of poverty).

Qualitative research supports existing quantitative work that shows social grants not only provide necessary regular income support, but also help to support entire households (to the benefit of children) and buffer households against financial shocks. There are implementation issues to be addressed in order to include more eligible children, particularly young babies.

## 6. Child poverty alleviation programmes: the case of the Child Support Grant

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights some of the many ways in which the Child Support Grant – a means-tested benefit for children in low income households – has been found to alleviate poverty. By way of context, this introductory section provides a brief overview of a major study on child poverty alleviation programmes. .

Some years ago the Children’s Institute undertook a study of poverty alleviation programmes for children, with a focus on targeting mechanisms. Entitled “The Means to Live”, the purpose of the research was to investigate the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, at the levels of policy (design) and practice (implementation), and to consider the intersections between poverty alleviation programmes. Six programmes were investigated , namely the child support grant (CSG), the school fee exemption, the national school nutrition programme, free health care and health fee waivers, free basic water and the housing subsidy scheme. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2005 and 2006, starting with representative surveys of households with children in an urban setting (Western Cape) and three rural villages (Eastern Cape). A number of caregivers who participated in the survey were later re-interviewed as part of the qualitative component of the study. The qualitative study examined implementation procedures and obstacles to programme access.<sup>135</sup> The study identified the following cross cutting themes:

- It was the very poorest households that often encountered the greatest barriers to accessing poverty alleviation programmes, in part because of difficulties in complying with the range of administrative requirements to claim their entitlements. These obstacles existed both in programme design, and at the level of local implementation.
- Financial and opportunity costs were often high, and sometimes constituted barriers to programme access, particularly when service delivery points such as government offices, clinics and schools, were situated far away;
- There were frequent problems with identity and other documents, where the inefficiencies of Home Affairs delayed or prevented access to poverty alleviation programmes offered by other departments. Documents, invariably in paper form, were easily lost through shack fires, water damage and theft, and not easily replaced.
- Targeting mechanisms failed to take into account the complexities of household structure and family life in a number of ways, and frequently lacked the flexibility or integrated systems needed to accommodate mobility of children in the context of adult unemployment, labour migration and HIV/AIDS. Means tests did not take into account the number of people supported on an income source; there were difficulties in sustaining access to social grants as caregivers or addresses changed, and provincial transfers were almost impossible (to the extent that when urban mothers sent their children to live in the rural home, it was easier for

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<sup>135</sup>Hall, Leatt and Rosa (2009)

the mother to continue receiving the grant and send money to the rural caregiver than to transfer the grant to the place where the child lived – thereby putting beneficiaries in a position where they were in violation of the regulations); referrals in the health system were not working; schools withheld transfer letters if fees were outstanding; unpaid municipal service bills had accumulated over years despite moratoriums on disconnection and promises to write off arrears – yet houses could not be sold formally while accounts were in arrears.

- Implementing officials were sometimes punitive or over-zealous in their requirements of applicants, in some cases demanding supporting documentation not listed in the regulations – these instances were in contravention of principles of administrative justice, and unlawful. At implementation level, an emphasis on preventing fraud and keeping ineligible people out resulted in errors of exclusion.
- Programmes administered through schools (fee exemptions and the nutrition programme) were characterized by variability and subjectivity in the way they were targeted. For instance, teachers sometimes made subjective assessments about who was needy; parents had to endure the humiliation of revealing their poverty and begging for fee waivers; food was sometimes withheld as punishment.
- Physical access to an institution did not necessarily constitute service access. People experienced long queues and limits on numbers at social development offices and clinics; health facilities ran out of medication; children attending school did not receive education if teachers were absent or had to juggle multiple classes.
- The project reviewed and critiqued the design of targeting mechanisms at policy level, and was able to estimate eligibility and access to determine programme uptake. An important outcome of the qualitative research related to mismatches between policy and practice. Service delivery failures frequently prevented poor children from realizing their entitlements and accessing the programmes that targeted them. While policies may look good on paper, there was a need to attend to implementation at local level.

## 6.2 The Child Support Grant

In recent decades, cash transfers have emerged as a popular instrument for addressing childhood poverty in low and middle income countries. In South Africa this interest is buoyed by the country's implementation of the largest cash transfer programme in the continent, the Child Support Grant (CSG).

The CSG was implemented in 1998 as a cash transfer targeting children from poor households. It has grown significantly since then, both in terms of its reach, the benefit level, and the income thresholds used for targeting: from its initial age limit of children up to 7 years old to encompassing children under 18; from reaching under a million children to beneficiaries in excess of 12 million; from R70 a month per beneficiary to R380 per month;<sup>136</sup> and from low income thresholds that were differentiated by geography (urban vs rural), to a single income

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<sup>136</sup>As at 1 April 2017.

means-tested threshold that is 10 times the amount of the CSG for unmarried caregivers, and twice that for the joint income of married caregivers and their spouses.

The CSG has attracted wide research interest. Many studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have reported on low-take up rates (especially amongst young children) and barriers to access.<sup>137</sup> In spite of the grant's extensive reach, it has been estimated that in 2015 an additional three million children were eligible children for the CSG and yet were not receiving it, and so the estimated take-up rate of the CSG at that time point was 79%.<sup>138</sup> The most recent study on barriers to take up of the CSG has tracked the progress of a number of government initiatives to promote take up of the grant and highlighted ways in which it can be improved.<sup>139</sup> A major reason for the research interest is to explore and monitor the positive impacts of the grant, as well as to investigate ways in which the grant's design could be improved and its impact increased.

### 6.2.1 Many positive impacts of the CSG

Seven years after the grant was introduced, the first paper investigating the CSG's impact on child nutrition was published. Aguero et al<sup>140</sup> used the Kwazulu-Natal Income Dynamics (KIDS) panel dataset and showed that early doses of the CSG were associated with improved height-for-age for children under 3 years (contributing an average 3.5 cm increase in height), as well higher rates of productivity and economic return in adulthood. Since then, quantitative studies assessing the impact of the CSG on child poverty, particularly as this relates to the three proxies of hunger, child nutrition and food security, have reported mixed evidence.

In 2008 Samson et al<sup>141</sup> conducted a quantitative analysis of the impact of the CSG on a range of outcomes and found that the grant reduced persistent hunger and child labour, increased school attendance and household employment rates, and improved agricultural smallholder resilience. In 2011, the second study to investigate the impact of the CSG, commissioned by the National Department of Social Development (DSD), UNICEF and SASSA, used a propensity score matching approach and divided a sample of CSG recipients into two groups: (1) children who received the CSG in the first two years of life; and (2) children who only first received the CSG when they were two years of age or older. The study findings confirmed the 2006 Aguero et al results regarding the importance of early enrollment in substantially strengthening the impact of the CSG on child poverty. The findings suggested that early receipt of the CSG increased height-for-age z-score of children whose mothers have more than 8 grades of schooling by 0.19 standard deviations.<sup>142</sup>

In 2013 an analysis of the first wave NIDS panel data which was similar to that which had been performed by Aguero et al (2006), found that while the CSG had a statistically significant positive impact on child height-for-age with a one centimeter increase in height (4% of a standard

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<sup>137</sup>For example, Delaney et al. (2008); DSD, UNICEF and SASSA (2012); Kola et al. (2000); Noble et al. (2005).

<sup>138</sup>Wright et al. (2016)

<sup>139</sup>DSD et al. (2016)

<sup>140</sup>Aguero et al. (2006)

<sup>141</sup>Samson et al. (2008)

<sup>142</sup>DSD, UNICEF and SASSA (2012)

deviation) and an increase in household expenditure on food of 3% per person,<sup>143</sup> these improvements were modest and much smaller than what had been observed in the 2006 study. The authors posited the dilution of the CSG among "multiple users and multiple uses"<sup>144</sup> as one possible reason for the reduced impact.

Another study in 2015 reported results from the analysis of longitudinal data which was collected as part of a large randomised controlled trial at the South African Medical Research Council on CSG receipt and a range of child poverty proxy indicators, including child growth, and reported different results. Zembe-Mkabile et al<sup>145</sup> used a backward regression model to determine the predictors of stunting in 746 children under 2 (median age 22 months) from Umlazi township in Kwazulu Natal, peri-urban Paarl in the Western Cape, and rural Rietvlei in Kwazulu-Natal (formerly under the Eastern Cape administration). High rates of stunting were observed in all three sites (Umlazi 28%, Rietvlei 20% and Paarl 17%) despite CSG receipt. Further, the duration of CSG receipt (whether a child received it for a longer or shorter period of time) had no effect on stunting. Increasingly, the consensus on the effect of the CSG on child nutritional status, particularly stunting, is that it has a limited impact on stunting because of the small value of the grant which is not linked to inflation, soaring food prices, dilution of the grant on other needs and other members of the household who are unemployed, and lack of coordination between the grant and other child poverty alleviation strategies.<sup>146</sup>

In an essay for the 2016 edition of the South African Child Gauge which focused on children and social assistance,<sup>147</sup> Grinspun elaborates on the impacts of the CSG on children, drawing from a wide range of literature published over the years.<sup>148</sup> The essay focuses on the important role that the grant has played in improving the welfare of young children, those of school going age, and adolescents. It also examined evidence on the positive impacts that the grant has had on caregivers and households in general. For young children, the impacts were particularly felt in improved birth registration rates in the country which has increased massively over the years; in 2014, Stats SA reported that 76% of births registered in that year were for the preceding year, up from 33% in 2001.<sup>149</sup> As Grinspun argues, the requirement for birth documentation during the CSG application process led to a steep rise in the number of birth registrations, which is particularly important given that birth documentation is needed when accessing other basic services.

Grinspun highlights how in some studies a reduction in the likelihood of ill health has been observed for children who received the CSG early, within the first or second year of birth. One reason for this was that such children were more likely to have their growth monitored. The essay also cites another study that showed that girls were less likely to start school late if they had received the CSG soon after birth. For school-going children, Grinspun also highlights the role the CSG has played in increasing household expenditure on schooling, improving schooling

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<sup>143</sup>Coetzee et al. (2013)

<sup>144</sup>Devereux and Waidler (2017)

<sup>145</sup>Zembe-Mkabile et al. (2015)

<sup>146</sup>Devereux and Waidler (2017); Zembe-Mkabile (2015)

<sup>147</sup>Delany, Jehoma & Lake (2016)

<sup>148</sup>Grinspun (2016)

<sup>149</sup>Hall et al. (2016)

enrollment and learning. Contrary to myths claiming that CSG has led to a reduction in labour force participation, the essays draws on literature to argue that the grant has instead led to an increase in labour force participation, particularly for women who are the main recipients of the grant (on behalf of their children).

Qualitative studies focusing on the CSG and child poverty have looked at the lived experiences of poverty by caregivers in receipt of the grant on behalf of their children. For example, Zembe-Mkabile et al<sup>150</sup> conducted 41 in-depth interviews with CSG recipients and non-recipients in rural Rietvlei, Kwazulu-Natal, Khayelitsha in Cape Town and peri-urban Paarl in the Western Cape, and Umlazi township in Kwazulu-Natal, to explore their experiences of raising children on the CSG. Findings showed that caregivers were continuing to face barriers in accessing the grant for children under 2, particularly as this pertained to documentation problems, long queues, waiting times, and the lack of coordination between the different departments responsible for the documents necessary for applying for the CSG. The study further revealed that while caregivers appreciated the CSG -often the only source of income in households -they also emphasised its inadequacy in meeting the needs of the children who received it. Recipients were vulnerable to regular periods of food insecurity. Caregivers used their reciprocal networks to supplement the grant by borrowing money on high rate interest from loan sharks, borrowing food from neighbours and relying on relatives and friends for food and other essential items such as money when a child fell ill, or when they needed help with school-related needs.

A review of the CSG's uses, implementation and obstacles was conducted in 2008 by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry.<sup>151</sup> The qualitative component of this project consisted of interviews with social security officials and focus group discussions with adult recipients and non-recipients of the CSG. While numerous analyses have established associations between receipt of the CSG and desirable child outcomes (in education, health and nutrition, for example), an ongoing concern is that the grant is not spent on the child for whom it is intended. This CASE study is one of a number which explores grant expenditure and confirms that the CSG is indeed used to support the household in general. In focus groups, adult recipients described the CSG as an important source of family income, particularly in the context of unemployment. The CSG enabled households to buy food and to pay municipal bills and other expenses, although households had to manage the money carefully to ensure that children's essential needs were also covered. The authors observe that "pooling of the grant income does benefit the child indirectly because it contributes to the improved functioning of poor households" (p.34). For this reason, participants argued that the CSG should be called a family grant.

A recent qualitative study explored ways in which CSG recipients (primary caregivers in receipt of the grant on behalf of their children) experienced the grant in relation to their sense of dignity<sup>152</sup>. The findings of the study showed that recipients experienced the CSG as protective of dignity in a number of ways: by alleviating poverty, by helping caregivers who had no other forms of income to perform their role of looking after and providing for their children, and by allowing caregivers to engage in reciprocal exchanges within their social networks in times of need. Recipients also

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<sup>150</sup>Zembe-Mkabile et al. (2014)

<sup>151</sup>Delany et al. (2008)

<sup>152</sup>Wright et al. (2015)

reported dignity-erosive aspects of the CSG in relation to the sometimes onerous application process, negative societal perceptions of CSG recipients, and the small amount of the grant.

### 6.2.1 The CSG and income poverty reduction – asking too much of the little CSG?

To what extent does the CSG actually reduce levels of income poverty? The answer depends to a certain extent on the poverty line selected. In Hall and Budlender's analysis of child poverty trends between 1993 and 2011 they used the 2011 GHS to examine impacts of the CSG on child poverty rates. In 2011, 69% of children lived in households that received at least one CSG, while 57% of children were reported to be receiving the CSG. Twenty three percent of children lived in households that received one or more state old age grant. To estimate the impacts of removing the CSG on child welfare, the study included a simulation (similar to that done by Hall and Wright using NIDS wave 1 data<sup>153</sup>) where the CSG amount was removed from household income. The effects varied across the poverty lines: the difference was marginal for upper bound poverty rates but much larger impacts were evident when the lower bound poverty line was used. When all social grants were removed from household income, then the effects on child poverty rates was substantial across the H&Ö lower bound and upper bound poverty lines, Stats SA lower and upper bound poverty lines, and \$2 and \$1.25 poverty lines. Using the H&Ö poverty line, it was observed that excluding all grants from household income increased child poverty from 56.4% to 65.8% in 2011.

Grinspun also highlights the role that CSG has played in reducing child poverty and inequality, citing various studies that have shown that poverty (headcount) and inequality (measured using the gini coefficient) would have been higher in the absence of the CSG. He argues that it is the poorest children who have benefited the most, highlighting the significant reduction (by half) in food poverty rates amongst children between 2003 and 2014, published by Hall & Sambu.<sup>154</sup> While emphasizing the role that CSG has played in reducing child poverty and improving child welfare, Grinspun acknowledges the grant's limitation in reducing malnutrition rates amongst children under 5 years. He underscores the low value of the CSG, which other studies (aforementioned) have also highlighted.<sup>155</sup> In the 2016 PACSA publication on the Food Price Barometer, which monitors the cost of a nutritionally adequate food basket for children in Pietemarienburg, Smith & Abrahams argue that the CSG amount is too low, and that even if a caregiver was to spend the entire amount of the CSG (R350 as at time of publication) to feed a child, she would still be underspending on the child's nutritional needs by 35%.<sup>156</sup>

There are a number of ways in which the impact of the CSG on child poverty could be augmented.<sup>157</sup> First, the amount of the grant could be increased: for example one recent study demonstrated the positive impact on reducing child poverty if the grant was to be increased to

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<sup>153</sup>Hall and Wright (2010)

<sup>154</sup>Hall & Sambu (2016)

<sup>155</sup>Devereux and Waidler (2017); Zembe-Mkabile (2015)

<sup>156</sup>Smith & Abrahams (2016)

<sup>157</sup>For a detailed consideration of the policy trade-offs of different options for amending the design of the CSG see Delaney et al. (2016).

R500 per child per month<sup>158</sup> and another study explored increasing the CSG to R442 in 2016 prices.<sup>159</sup> Using the South African tax-benefit microsimulation model – SAMOD - Wilkinson undertook an extensive analysis of the impact of all individual tax and benefit policies on child poverty, and argued that the size of tax rebates could be reduced so that the additional amount of income tax generated could be redirected towards the financing of a larger CSG.<sup>160</sup> Second, the point has increasingly been made that the CSG on its own can never be expected to eliminate child poverty: the size of the grant is too small, and in any event unless the material needs of low income adults are met (especially for those who live in households with children) the CSG will always be diluted to cover the needs of others within the household. Thus, the positive impact of the CSG in reducing child poverty (both in terms of income poverty and the many of the indicators of deprivation referred to above) will thus also be diluted. The material needs of adults in low income households that contain children could be met by increasing employment opportunities, providing affordable and accessible childcare for those who wish to make use of it, and comprehensive social security for adults. So for example, and again using the tax-benefit microsimulation model 'SAMOD', Ntshongwana et al demonstrated that child poverty would be significantly reduced if a caregiver's grant were to be introduced<sup>161</sup> and Wright et al demonstrated that a grant for low income adults of working age (irrespective of caregiver status) would also significantly reduce levels of child poverty.<sup>162</sup>

In summary, the CSG plays a vital role in the reduction of child poverty. However it does so in a complex terrain that demands multiple policy responses, and these must consider not only the needs of children but also of the adults amongst whom children live.

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<sup>158</sup>See for example Beukes et al. (2015).

<sup>159</sup>Budlender (2016)

<sup>160</sup>Wilkinson (2011)

<sup>161</sup>Ntshongwana et al. (2010)

<sup>162</sup>Wright et al. (2011)

## 7. Transitions out of poverty

There is very little literature that explores the life paths of children born into poverty – either quantitatively or qualitatively. The concept of poverty as being dynamic is based on the idea that poverty is not static, but rather some of the poor are not poor all of the time, and move in and out of poverty. The study of poverty dynamics therefore tracks people over a long period of time, producing longitudinal data that can be used to analyse how the poor move in and out of poverty.

In 2015 Von Fintel and Zoch<sup>163</sup> released a seminal report which investigated the dynamics of child poverty in South Africa. In particular the report sought to examine the extent to which children are caught in a poverty trap in South Africa -that is "the self-reinforcing mechanism which causes poverty to persist"<sup>164</sup> – and the extent of their exclusion from important aspects of economic and political life.

The study used data from the first three waves of the NIDS (2008, 2010, 2012) to examine and decompose the dynamics of child poverty over the period 2008-2012. From the balanced sample, and using the H&Ö lower bound poverty line, they found that 41% of children were always poor across the period 2008-2012, while 12% moved into poverty, 21% moved out of poverty and 27% were never poor. The study also used a framework developed by Carter and May<sup>165</sup> of an asset poverty line to identify children who are in households which are 'trapped' in structural poverty with an asset base that is too low for them to escape their poverty status in the long term.

While the study results showed that social grants were effective in reducing child poverty and hunger, they also reported that 40% of the children in the study sample were stuck in structural poverty between 2008 and 2012. The poverty traps were a result of low initial levels of education, low asset holdings, low initial employment and 'adverse household formation'. At a broader adult-level, the study showed that the child poverty traps were driven by economic growth that was too low and as such excluded many unemployed working-age adults from the labour market. The study further revealed that although the poor had more income in the social grants era than before, they still had few assets and remained vulnerable.

Another study on children's poverty traps, commissioned by the South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF,<sup>166</sup> adds to the existing evidence by patterning children's poverty status across the country, delineating those who are structurally poor (nearly 40% of all children), and identifying transitions or movement – in or out of poverty. Those who do not move and whose households do not have the productive assets to do so, are stuck in a poverty trap. Multiple factors or deficits contribute to this, an important one being the education and employment profile of co-resident adults and caregivers, especially mothers.

There are also some (mostly dated) examples of 'success' stories where people have managed to transcend the constraints of poverty inherited at birth.<sup>167</sup> Such success stories reveal a range of

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<sup>163</sup>Von Fintel and Zoch (2015)

<sup>164</sup>Von Fintel and Zoch (2015) footnote 2, citing Azariadis and Stachurski (2015).

<sup>165</sup>Carter and May 2012

<sup>166</sup>South African Human Rights Commission and UNICEF (2014)

<sup>167</sup>See for example, Ramphele (2003); du Toit and Neves (2009).

factors and events that have changed the life chances of children born into poverty. Many of these are challenging for policy, as they combine individual attributes (such as resilience, determination, initiative, self-confidence) with unique events or interventions by committed enabling individuals, often on the basis of personal relationships. In other words, the success stories documented in the literature contain features that are anomalous to the vast majority of poor children's lives.

A detailed study of children growing up in Cape Town concludes that "the post-apartheid environment is one characterised by an opening of possibilities for all young people to achieve educational, social and material success. In practice, this operates more as an idea than a reality."<sup>168</sup> Social limitations identified in this qualitative work include disempowering relationships with adults and peers, disabling neighbourhoods where what might be termed downward social capital holds people back from achieving their aspirations, lack of solidarity among the young, and difficulties in cultivating networks beyond the neighbourhood.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, the 'success' stories invariably point to events or interventions where children, growing up, have been able to access support from beyond their immediate environment and ignore social pressures, even if it is at some cost to themselves. While the state is not well placed to intervene directly in the social realm of household and neighbourhood dynamics, it is relatively well-equipped to develop policies and programmes that reduce the physical, infrastructural dimensions of poverty which exaggerate and reproduce spatial inequalities, to address unemployment, to increase coverage of social grants and to improve services such as health and education that support the development of human capital.

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<sup>168</sup>Bray et al. (2010) p.328

<sup>169</sup>Bray et al. (2010)

## 8. Summary

A range of quantitative approaches have been used to examine child poverty in South Africa. Both income poverty and deprivation approaches have been employed, and within these groupings a variety of definitions have been explored. The different approaches all contribute important insights into the extent and nature of child poverty in South Africa. The studies also raise interesting questions about which are the most important dimensions of child poverty, where the threshold of adequacy should be set, and who should decide on the dimensions and thresholds.

Qualitative research with children, caregivers and other adults gives important insights into perceptions and experiences of poverty. Yet there is a shortage of textured qualitative research on the experience of living in poverty, and very little that focuses on child poverty in South Africa. This review has included some qualitative studies conducted with children, in which children were able to express and discuss their own understandings of poverty and their conceptions of what constitutes an acceptable standard of living. It has also included some qualitative work which focuses either on aspects of childhood and care (if not explicitly on poverty), or on poverty and inequality (if not explicitly on children).

The findings can be summarised as follows:

- Child poverty is multi-faceted and is not only about a lack of income, but also what this means for children's lives.
- A lack of income and adult employment are key factors in deprivation experienced by children.
- There are high rates of child poverty, although the extent depends on the measure used.
- Child poverty rates are decreasing over time, but even so, there are large numbers of children in poverty.
- Child poverty is spatially and racially distributed. On the majority of measures child poverty is highest in rural and former homeland areas, and for black African children.
- A higher proportion of children are in poverty compared to adults.
- One of the features of poverty is vulnerability to shocks, and vulnerability in turn contributes to chronic poverty.
- Children experience poverty in a range of ways. Frequently mentioned is the issue of threats to personal safety, both in the home and in the community. Whether or not children personally experience violence or abuse, anxiety about it is an important feature of childhood experience in the context of poverty. This is an under-researched issue.
- Migration remains an important livelihood strategy and also results in child mobility and disconnected or sequential relationships of care.
- The burden of care falls on women and their networks, but in the context of high unemployment and declining marriage rates women also bear financial responsibility for their households. In the absence of child care centres, women are faced with difficult

decisions about how to juggle child care and income generation.

- Poverty alleviation programmes can be well conceptualised but difficult to access because of implementation problems, highlighting the need for attention to service delivery.
- The time and effort (and risk) for children to reach service delivery points (health services, schools, etc.) is an important facet of poverty experienced by children, and a consequence of living in resource-poor environments.
- Children are acutely aware of poverty, and of the cost of things. At its extreme, children's sense of responsibility to the household takes the form of voluntary decisions to enter labour and generate income, even if this is illegal.
- Despite the fact that children have little control over household income or expenditure, poor children sometimes are made to feel accountable for their poverty, for instance being identified and excluded at school if fees are unpaid.
- Children are modest in their descriptions of 'basic needs', more so than adults.
- Basic needs identified by children include personal and household items, but also community resources as a great deal of time is spent outside the home. The recurrent mention of safe public spaces (including demarcated recreational places for children) has implications for settlement planning.
- Children (and older children in particular) understand the causes of poverty to be historically rooted, and perpetuated through virtuous circles of poor education and poor employment opportunities. There is a strong belief that persisting at school and getting a good education will increase chances of employment and transition out of poverty.
- Although many schools no longer charge fees, the associated costs of schooling (uniforms, books, stationery, transport) are a great drain on the resources of poor households and a source of concern for children.

Numerous studies have been undertaken in South Africa about child poverty. As well as highlighting the extent of child poverty that continues to exist in South Africa, using a range of different definitions, the review prompts three further observations. First, there is a rich resource of datasets which can be analysed to help build an understanding of child poverty and deprivation: these include the Censuses, the Community Surveys, the General Household Surveys, the Income and Expenditure and Living Conditions Surveys, and the National Income Dynamics Study. Second, the comparison of findings across datasets for common time points has been under-explored and would benefit from further scrutiny in order to help build an understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of different data sources. Third, when quantifying child poverty it is important to be able to report additionally on trends over time, and to determine the factors that lead to reductions in child poverty. This requires analytical rigour in terms of ensuring that definitions are clear and consistently applied across different time points, and also that the datasets' strengths and weaknesses are well documented. Failure to do so risks confusion and a lack of accountability. However, by continuing to promote the study of child poverty, the systems of monitoring of progress towards eliminating child poverty in South African will only be strengthened.

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