

Youth: An opportunity to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty

The current status of youth

- Just under 50% of South Africa's population are under 25, and 10.2 million (20%) are youth aged 15 – 24.¹



Poverty affects youth disproportionately

- Six out of 10 young people live in households with a per capita income of less than R620 per month.¹
- Income poverty remains strongly associated with race: 65% of African youth live below the poverty line, compared to just over 4% of White young people.¹
- Poverty levels among youth remain strikingly similar to those of their parents' generation, suggesting that post-apartheid policies have not yet levelled the playing field.¹

YOUTH
59% of youth live in poverty

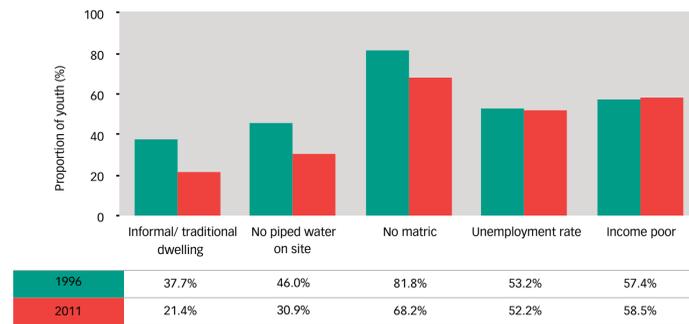
Access to education, housing and basic services

- There has been some progress in **access to housing and basic services**. Yet, in 2011, one in five young people still lived in traditional/informal housing; nearly a third did not have access to piped water on site, and one in six did not have access to electricity.¹
- Access to education** has improved significantly, but this has not resulted in increased employment.

Education outcomes and employment

- Schooling outcomes** remain poor with high drop-out rates and low levels of skills: Just over one million learners started grade 1 in 2003 and of these only 49% made it to matric in 2014, 37% passed and 14% qualified for university entrance.²
- Post-school education** increases young people's employment chances and earning potential; yet only 8% of youth aged 18 – 24 attend college or university. Those who manage to secure a place in an institute of higher learning are faced with a range of expenses that may push them back out of the system. First-year university tuition fees can be as high as R65,000.³
- The **official unemployment rate** for youth aged 15 – 34 rose from 33% in 2008 to 37% in 2015 – this rate increases to 45% if discouraged work-seekers are included.⁴

Patterns of deprivation in the youth population, 1996 and 2011



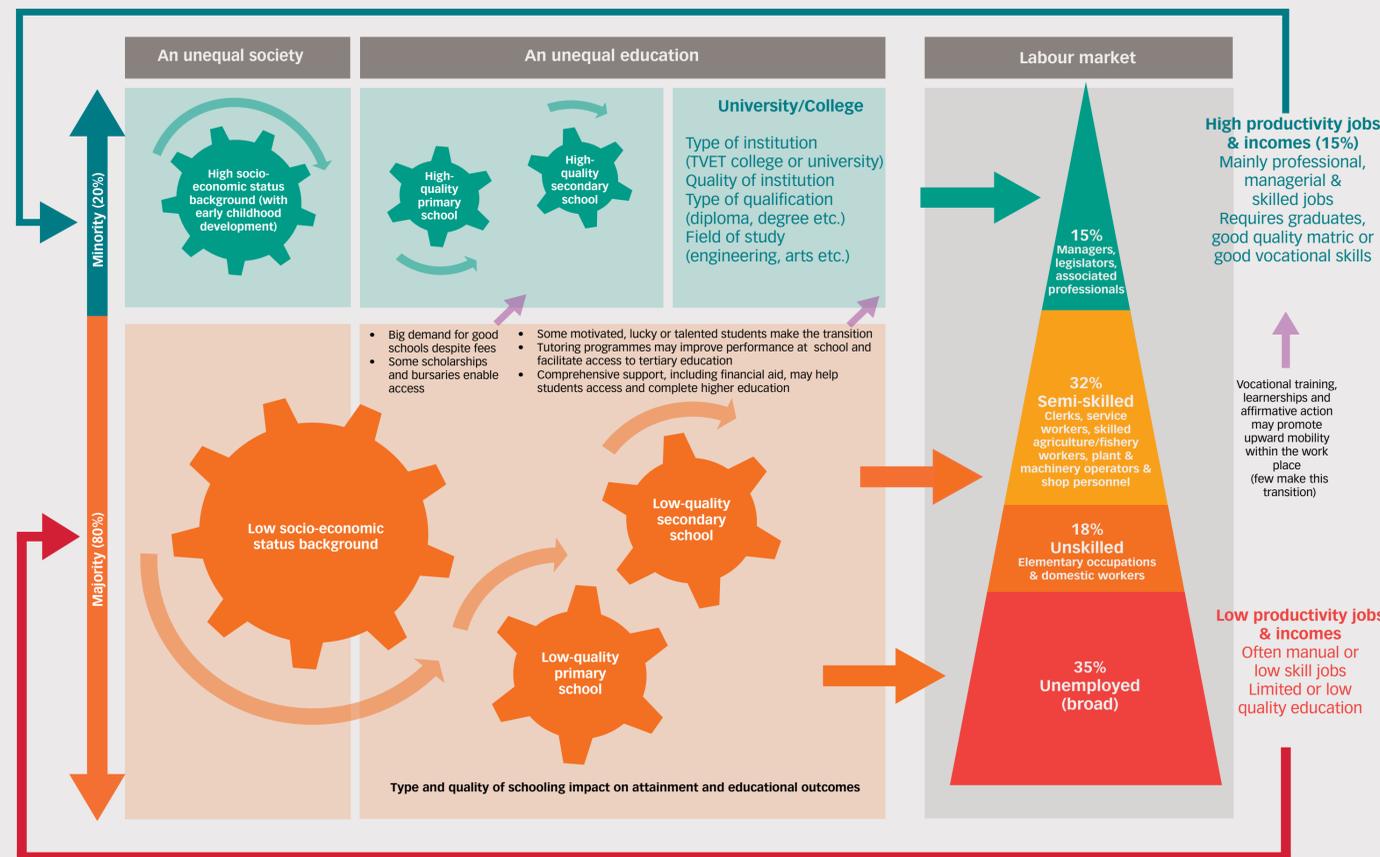
Source: Statistics South Africa (2011) Census. Pretoria: Stats SA. Analysis by Emily Frame, SALDRU & PII, UCT.

- These high levels of school drop-out, unemployment and poor living conditions compromise the well-being of the current generation of young people. If left unchecked, they will continue to drive the **intergenerational transmission of poverty** and also affect the next generation of children.¹

References

1 De Lannoy A, Leibbrandt M & Frame E (2015) A focus on Youth: An opportunity to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT. 2 Spaul N (2015) *Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap*. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT. 3 Branson N, Hofmeyr C, Papier J & Needham S (2015) *Post-school education: Broadening alternative pathways from school to work*. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT. 4 Graham L & Mlatsheni C (2015) *Youth unemployment in South Africa: Understanding the challenge and working on solutions*. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT. 5 Cooper D, De Lannoy A & Rule C (2015) *Youth health and wellbeing: Why it matters*. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT. 6 Burris J, Jobson J & Zuma B (2015) *Youth identity, belonging and citizenship: Strengthening our democratic future*. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT. 7 De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.

How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap



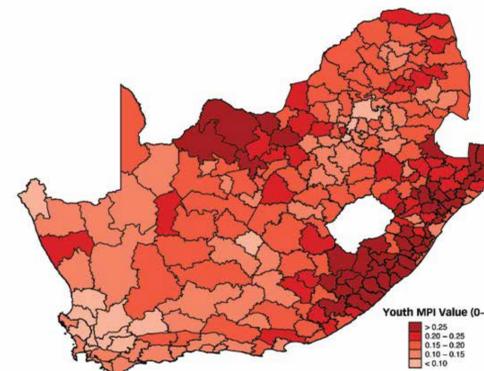
Adapted from: Spaul N (2015) *Schooling in South Africa: How low-quality education becomes a poverty trap*. In: De Lannoy A, Swartz S, Lake L & Smith C (eds) *South African Child Gauge 2015*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.

- Children in South Africa continue to be born into an unequal society. Their socio-economic status (parental occupation, wealth and education) affects their education and employment prospects.
- The majority of poor young people do not have access to high-quality preschool, primary and secondary schools. They face high drop-out rates and poor educational outcomes, and are therefore most likely to end up working as semi- or unskilled labour or to become unemployed.
- A minority of young people grow up in better resourced households, attend at least one year of quality preschool education and enter grade 1 mostly ready to learn. They can afford to attend functional (fee-paying) primary and secondary schools and most complete some form of post-school education or training and occupy the upper part of the labour market.
- In this way, South Africa's unequal education system helps reproduce an unequal society.

Multiple dimensions of deprivation

- Poor young people tend to experience **multiple forms of deprivation** simultaneously – with limited economic opportunities and limited access to quality education, health care, housing and basic services.¹
- Spatial inequalities** persist with young people in the former homeland areas continuing to experience the highest levels of poverty and deprivation.¹
- Poverty is often associated with experiences of social exclusion, heightened stress, violence and trauma, which may increase risks of mental illness, substance abuse and risk-taking behaviour.⁵
- Yet, despite these challenges, many young people maintain high aspirations and are actively involved in social and religious groups, volunteer work and social media.⁶

Multidimensional Youth Poverty Index, by municipality, 2011



Source: Calculations by Emily Frame, SALDRU & PII, UCT, based on weighted data from the Census 2011 10% sample.

Opportunities to break the cycle

The *South African Child Gauge 2015* highlights a number of cross-cutting strategies that have the potential to improve outcomes for today's youth and disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty. More research is needed to inform practical implementation, evaluate effectiveness, exploit potential synergies and then take interventions to scale.

School

- Make **quality education accessible for everyone**, starting with the foundation phase.
- Find ways to **remediate the learning 'backlog'** that has accumulated by the time learners reach high school.
- Decrease drop-out rates** by offering comprehensive support, including financial and psychosocial support, health care, family support, etc.

Post-school education

- Provide clear **career guidance** – starting early to guide subject choices in high school and highlight the post-school learning pathways.
- Create a **viable alternative** route for those failing in mainstream schools.
- Provide **comprehensive support** to enable students to access and complete post-school education.

Labour market

- Make young people more employable** by investing in skills programmes and learnerships.
- Motivate employers to **increase their demand for youth employees**.
- Explore how the social grant system, travel vouchers, saving schemes and better access to clear information can **help young people access jobs**.
- Create more jobs** that suit the skills levels of young people.

Health

- Monitor the implementation of **youth-friendly clinics** and the Integrated School Health Policy to ensure welcoming, confidential, quality and easy-to-access health care services.
- Adopt an **integrated approach** that addresses the links between poverty, mental health and risk behaviour.

Parenting

- Provide **support for parents** – including those of teenagers and slightly older youth.
- Prioritise **support services for teen parents** including early antenatal care, social assistance, parenting programmes and child care services so teen mothers can complete their education.

Mobility

- Develop "**youth-friendly cities**" with easy, affordable transport, an appropriate range of social and rental housing options, improved digital access, and safe public spaces for recreation and socialising.

Belonging

- Take youth seriously** and recognise them as legitimate stakeholders with an equal voice in society.
- Provide **bridging relationships and structural support** including mentoring, career guidance, skills development programmes and access to sporting and cultural activities.
- Evaluate, support and scale up **dedicated youth programmes** that encourage active citizenship and facilitate employment.