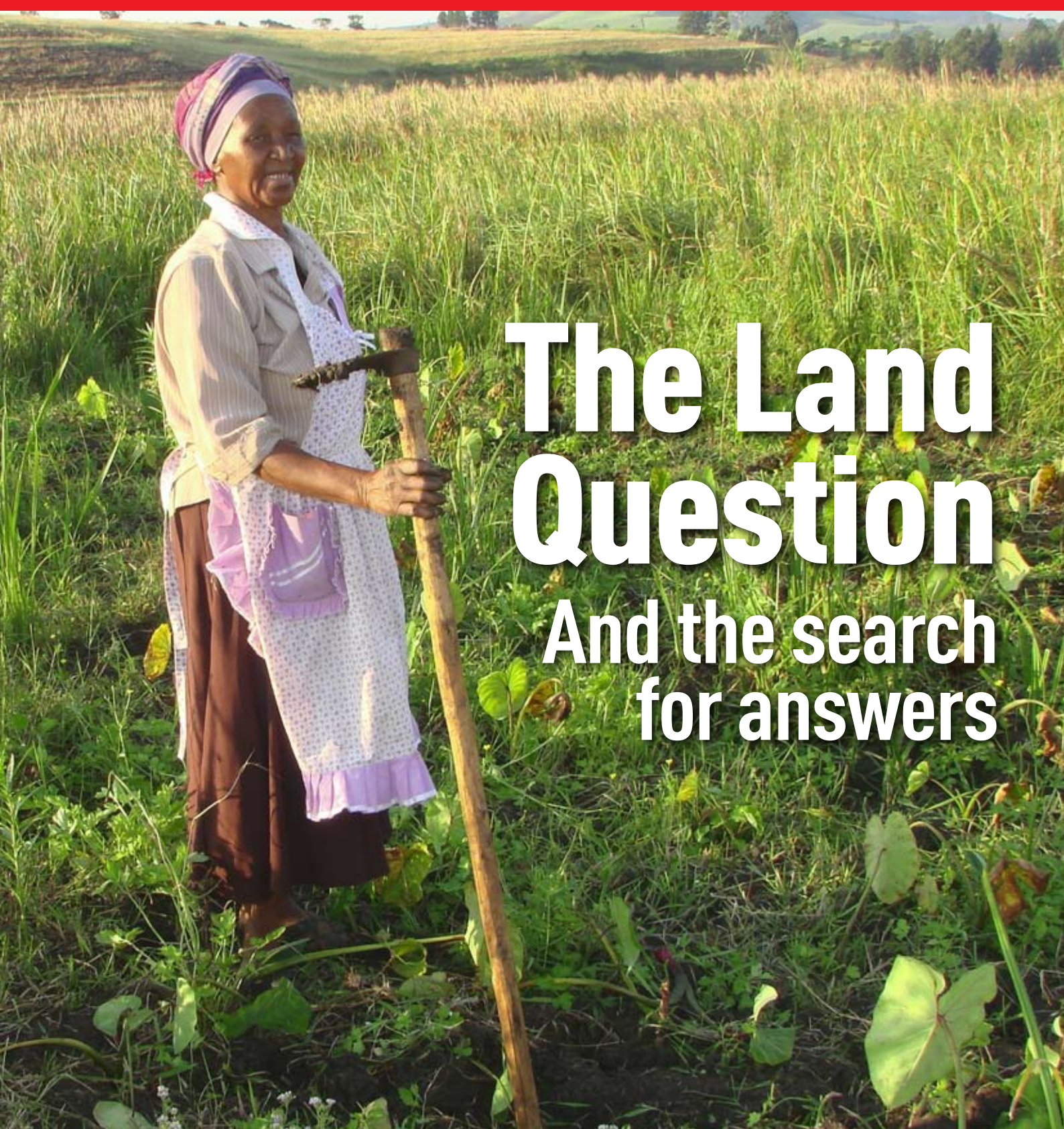


VAT – Why we're fighting the increase

April 2018

Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi



The Land Question

And the search for answers

LAND

High Level Panel reports on the land question

Zenande Booï outlines the structures set up to address the land question – and the challenges that face them – in the first part of a two-part Umsebenzi series on the land question



The Preamble of the Constitution briefly sets out the type of society envisioned through the creation of a post-apartheid democratic state. To comply with obligations imposed by the Constitution, the state has, since 1994, passed hundreds of laws that have significantly affected the lives of all South Africans.

In 2015 the Speaker's Forum (the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly; the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces; the Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the nine provincial legislatures) established the High Level Panel (HLP) on the assessment of key legislation and the acceleration of fundamental change. The HLP, chaired by former President Kgalema Motlanthe, included a panel of eminent South Africans to assess the content and implementation of legislation passed since 1994. The HLP considered the effectiveness and possible unintended consequences of these laws. Its mandate included reviewing existing legislation, assessing implementation, identifying gaps and proposing ways forward to identify laws that require strengthening, amending, or changing.

One of the main thematic areas the HLP was required to look into was land reform: redistribution, restitution, and security of tenure. Part one of the series on the land question focuses on the key findings and recommendations in HLP's final report, and on land restitution particularly. The panel held public hearings across all nine provinces and accepted



Farmer in Gallawater in the Eastern Cape

Pic: Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies

written submissions from individuals and organisations. It also commissioned reports from experts and senior researchers from various fields.

In assessing legislation the HLP considered the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the goals and objectives of the legislation, and outcomes and trends since 1994. The reports it commissioned and submissions it received were also crucial, as was testimony from ordinary South Africans about their experiences and concerns.

Section 25(7) of the Constitution deals with land restitution and provides that where a person or community was

dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of racially discriminatory laws or practices they are entitled to restitution or equitable redress. The Restitution of Land Rights Act of 1994 is the law adopted by Parliament to give effect to this right in the Constitution. The Land Claims Commission and Land Claims Court were set up to implement the programme of land restitution.

The HLP report identified a number of problems institutions tasked with giving achieving land restitution have to contend with. These include the fact that the Land Claims Commission was not set up to deal with the number of claims that have been lodged. To try to deal with the backlog, the commission was given the capacity in 1999 to settle claims administratively and out of court, with disastrous consequences. The process of dealing with claims became 'personality driven', ad hoc, and susceptible to corruption. During the HLP public hearings, people raised the corruption of officials as a significant concern. This included officials combining claims by clustering them, and creating artificial and largely dysfunctional community property associations. These practices also ignore the definition of 'community' in the Restitution Act.

The commission is extremely poorly capacitated: staff do not have the necessary legal and historical skills to deal with claims; the filing and database system is in complete disarray; and high staff turnover contributes to poor institutional memory. Claims are not properly researched and are settled with no credible investigation. As a result there are many unresolved and overlapping



Carting sand from the Letaba River to Nkomo village, Limpopo.

Pic: Elizabeth Vibert & Todd Hatfield

claims. Most are still referred to court, so the Land Claims Court is overwhelmed with cases that relate to the validity of claims, and the nature of just and equitable compensation. Although the Court has this mammoth task, it does not have any permanent judges.

The recommendations made by the HLP included ensuring that all old order claims are settled before new ones; appropriately capacitating the commission; appointing permanent judges to the court; reinstating its role of scrutinsing and approving settlements; and amending the Restitution Act to respond to issues raised, including updated and clearer definitions of important terms such as 'community'. ●

Cde Boo is a researcher at the Land and Accountability Research Centre at UCT



And still we wait ...

The HLP considered the current state of affairs in the implementation of the land restitution programme. It found there are still more than 7 000 unsettled land claims and 19 000-plus unfinalised 'old order claims' – claims made before the initial cut-off date of 1998. Currently, claims are settled at a rate of 560 claims a year – it would take 35 years to finalise all the pending old order claims. New claims, lodged after the now repealed amendment of the Land Restitution Act in 2014, could take 143 years to settle. Should land claims be re-opened, an additional 397 000 claims are expected. These could take more than 700 years to finalise at the current completion rate.

LAND

Land reform – a much-needed debate

Zuko Mndayi reports on a dialogue on the land question hosted by the Centre for Conflict Resolution



The Centre for Conflict Resolution convened a dialogue session recently in Cape Town on land reform, under the theme “Land reform in South Africa and Zimbabwe”. The session was facilitated by the 1st Deputy General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP), Cde Solly Mapaila, with Professor Ben Cousins (chair of Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies in University of the Western Cape’s Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences) and Dr Prosper Matodi (executive director of Ruzivo Trust in Zimbabwe) as speakers.

The theme itself and the speakers gave participants an opportunity to take discussions on the realities of land reform beyond media driven perceptions, particularly as the so-called “Zimbabwean land grabs” have been used to stifle debate on land reform in South Africa.

Given the range of responses to Parliament’s recent resolution on the expropriation of land without compensation, the dialogue was valuable. The debate in the South African context is sensitive, due to South Africa’s diversity and the fact that land dispossession was a result of both race segregation and class exploitation by the previous regime.

The audience was diverse in both race and class terms, giving discussions an emotive flavour. Given the central role of agriculture in the economy of the country, speakers encouraged people to approach the debate and the land question with caution and not to compromise the economy in search of transformation of land ownership.

People were encouraged to not only approach the land question narrowly as an agrarian issue only, but rather recog-



Above: Pampanani informal settlement outside Grahamstown. Pic: Jon Pienaar, Groundup
Below: Harvesting amadumbe (cocoyam or taro) in the Mbongolwane wetland, northern KZN. Pic: SA Water Research Commission



nise it as a means of transforming the national economy.

The presentation on Zimbabwe included an account of events relating to land reform and how each had economic and legislative effects there. This was important for the South African public, as the country is now at the legislative phase of land reform with the parliamentary constitutional review committee currently considering the constitutional implications of expropriating land with-

out compensation.

Dr Matodi argued for broad consultation with the public to avoid unprecedented challenges and frustrations, which led to aggressive legislative changes in Zimbabwe to realise the reform – and how these had a wide range of unintended consequences. What was evident in the conclusion of the dialogue was the frustration and impatience of the general South African public on land, particularly the youth, who made up the majority in the audience.

This presented a challenge on how the governing party manages land reform and imposes a responsibility on the SACP in particular, in our role in leading the working class and the poor in this debate; and most importantly, our vanguard role in how the Alliance approaches the debate, informed by the need to transform land ownership in South Africa. ●

Cde Mndayi is the SACP Western Cape Provincial Spokesperson



Who owns South African land?

(Drawn from Dept of Rural Development and Land Reform Land Audit Report)

Total land surface area and registered land

- Total surface area of South Africa is 122-million hectares (ha) = 100%
- 94% (114,2-million ha) of total surface area of South Africa is land registered in the Deeds Office
- 14% (17-million ha) of registered land is owned by the state; 79% (96,5-million ha) of registered land is privately owned and 7% (8,4-million ha) of registered land is unaccounted for.
- 6% (7,7-million ha) of total surface area of South Africa is unregistered trust state land in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo

Ownership of registered land

- 90% (89,5-million ha) of registered land is owned by individuals, companies, and trusts:
- 39% (37,8-million ha) is owned by individuals
- 31% (29,3-million ha) is owned by trusts
- 25% (23,2-million ha) is owned by companies
- 4% (3,5-million ha) is owned by community-based organisations CBOs
- 1% (883 000 ha) is co-owned.
- The same individuals own most of these companies, trusts and CBOs.

Land in farms & agricultural holdings and erven

(erven – urban land demarcated for building purposes)

- Land is demarcated into land parcels – 6% (469 000 parcels) of land parcels are for farming and agriculture; 94% (6,8-million) of land parcels are erven in urban areas.
- Farms and agricultural holdings cover 97% of the total land (111-million ha) and are owned by 7% (588 000) of

total landowners.

- Erven in urban areas cover only 3% (3,2-million ha) of the total land and are owned by 93% (8,4-million) of the total owners of land, with an average of 0,4 ha per owner.
- 65% of the total population (56-million people) are found in these tiny urban land parcels or erven.

Farms and agricultural holdings I (by race)

- Whites own 72% (26,6-million ha) of the total 37-million ha of farms and agricultural holdings by individual landowners;
- Coloureds own 15% (5,3-million ha)
- Indians own 5% (2-million ha)
- Africans own 4% (1,3-million ha)
- Other categories own 3% (1,2-million ha)
- Co-owners own 1% (400 000 ha)

Farm and agricultural holdings II (by gender)

- Males own 72% (26,2-million ha) of the total farms and agricultural holdings owned by individual owners;
- Individual females own 13% (4,8-million ha)
- Male-female jointly own 11% (4-million ha)
- Co-owners own 2% (655 000 ha) or 2%
- Other categories own 3% (1,4-million ha)

Farm and agricultural holdings III (by nationality)

- Individual South Africans own 92% (34-million ha) of the total farms and agricultural holdings
- Foreign individuals own 2% (769 000 ha)
- Co-ownership at 2% (934 000 ha)
- Other categories at 4% (1,4-million ha)

VAT

Making the poor poorer – and pushing more into poverty

The SACP Organising Department calculates the real cost of the increase in VAT to millions of South Africans

The 2018 Budget speech included announcement of the first increase in VAT (value-added tax) since the democratic breakthrough – pushing it up from 14% to 15% as from 1 April.

Although VAT has only increased by 1%, the practical effect on consumers is likely to be significantly higher.

Firstly, the increase in revenues to the state of a 1% increase in VAT isn't 1%, it is 7% (calculated by dividing one by 14, not one by 100). Theoretically, the immediate increase in consumer prices is just under 1% - 0,877%. That, in any event, is what supporters of the increase argue. In practice, because VAT applies to a whole range of inputs to consumer products (fuel, transport, packaging and so on), the impact on consumer prices is multiplied throughout the production and distribution chain. It eventually lands in the consumers' hands, costing well over the theoretical 1%.

As a result, we should not dismiss the increase in the VAT rate as "just" a 1% increase. Nor should we accept that the increase in the VAT rate is "too small" to have an impact on the economy.

International literature is generally relatively positive towards VAT as a tax measure. This is because VAT is essentially a tax on consumption. In theory VAT does not have a direct impact on investment. If the government had instead chosen to increase the corporate tax rate, this is likely to have had a direct impact on investment – companies typically use their retained earnings as the basis for new investment and if these retained earnings were subjected to a higher corporate tax rate, fewer funds would be available for new investment.

The key weakness of VAT as a tax measure is that it is by definition a regressive tax: it is the same for everyone,

so poor people (who earn less but pay the same VAT rate) spend a far higher proportion of their total income on VAT than middle class or wealthy consumers. The extent of regression is partly mitigated by VAT zero-rating a basket of products consumed by poor people. But this is not sufficient to completely neutralise VAT's inherently regressive character. It should also be highlighted that the basket of zero-rated products has not been updated for many years and the basket itself is relatively small.

Given that poor consumers spend 20-30% of their income on food (only partly VAT zero-rated) and another 20-30% on transport to their places of work (full VAT payable), there can be no doubt that poor consumers will be financially worse off because of the VAT increase. It is beyond dispute that households currently just above the poverty-line will fall into poverty as a result. We cannot say precisely how many people will have fallen into poverty but we can predict that the impact will be biased towards black households and female-headed households given South Africa's highly skewed poverty profile.

To make matters worse, because South Africa demonstrates significant inter-generational poverty (the child/grandchild of a poor parent is almost certain to also be poor), the impact of any household falling into poverty will be felt within that household for potentially

multiple generations.

The VAT increase will certainly dampen consumer demand. This is likely to lead to a slowing of consumer spending. And because poor households cannot easily reduce expenditure on food, the likely impact will be felt in durable and semi-durable products – cars, furniture, appliances and some services. These sectors are relatively labour-intensive and there is therefore a moderate risk of job losses, especially in those industries facing fierce import competition.

This may not present a serious challenge to the manufacturing sectors, that supply both the domestic and export markets. But the challenge will certainly arise in sectors where firms are primarily providing goods and services to the domestic market and where consumers are likely to postpone durable and semi-durable purchases while they absorb the impact of the higher VAT rate.

In addition, the cost of complying with Sars' requirements is disproportionately higher for SMMEs than for large firms. There is therefore a small risk that the increase in VAT will lead to even more SMMEs who – for various reasons – cannot comply with Sars' requirements.

Some will argue that Government had no choice but to raise VAT to fill the funding gap for tertiary education. This view is highly problematic, especially given the World Bank's recent study which shows that the top 1% in South Africa own 70% of our country's wealth, making this country the most unequal of the 149 countries the World Bank assessed.

Given this shocking statistic, it is exceptionally hard to understand why the government would choose a tax measure which will affect poor South Africans disproportionately. What then were the alternatives?

**VAT's key weakness
is that it is a regressive tax
– it's the same for everyone,
rich or poor**



Policymakers have for years discussed the possibility of a “wealth tax” which targets precisely the top 1% of South Africans owning 70% of South Africa’s wealth. Some in government will argue that the individuals who fall into this category will refuse to invest in South Africa. This would be relevant had the country not already liberalised its financial controls. This top 1% internationalised its wealth decades ago (as confirmed by the *Panama Papers*’ leak in which a number of South Africans were listed). Consequently, government’s reticence in implementing a wealth tax is simply illogical. Carefully implemented, a wealth tax would have raised significantly more tax revenue than the regressive increase in VAT.

Another alternative which many other countries use is to set the VAT rate at different levels for different products. For example, government could implement VAT at:

- 10% for all food products and public transport;
- 25% for all luxury goods (such as alcohol, cars with a value of R1-million or more, e-commerce transactions, and financial services; and
- 15% for all other goods and services.

This system would target the luxury consumers who can afford an increase in the tax burden rather than increasing an already significant tax burden for the poor and middle-class households. National Treasury will argue that such

a system will introduce complexity into the tax system. It must be noted that income tax, customs and excise taxes, and transfer duties on property transactions all **already** include different tax rates (some with sliding scales). It is not clear how we can justify increasing poverty because the state does not want to further complicate South Africa’s tax system. Many other countries with financial and tax systems comparable to South Africa are readily able to deal with the additional “complexity”.

VAT is a regressive tax and the increase in the VAT rate will increase poverty in South Africa. This cannot be disputed. The only aspect that can be disputed is **how many** people or households will be affected. It is possible that only a few thousand people will be affected but,

given a number of ready alternatives, the question must be asked of government why it has chosen a tax measure which disproportionately affects the poor and working-classes.

In addition, the short and medium-term impact of the increase in VAT will have important consequences for the productive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. With consumer demand relatively weak at present, the increase in VAT is likely to have a dampening effect on consumers. This will inevitably lead to lower demand for consumer goods produced locally – including clothing, furniture, appliances and cars. This in turn will have a dampening effect on production and may lead to some firms delaying new investments or retrenching workers. ●

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POVERTY

Providing free basic services to the poor

Cumbersome municipal systems are denying thousands – and possibly millions – of poor South Africans access to their Constitutional right to water, sanitation and electricity

Two in every 10 households in South Africa are classified as indigent.¹ This raises a question: nearly 20 years after the introduction of the free basic services policy, how are South African municipalities faring in providing free basic services to those households?

At the turn of the millennium, former President Thabo Mbeki announced the government's intention to provide free basic services to indigent households to redress widespread poverty and inequality. This announcement gave rise to what is commonly known as the "free basic services policy". The policy calls for local government to provide at least a basic level of water, sanitation and electricity services to households that cannot afford to pay for them. The Constitution places the obligation to provide basic services on local government.

Each municipality is charged with developing its own indigent policy as stipulated in the Municipal Systems Act. Although there has been substantial post-apartheid growth in the number of people able to access basic services, research shows that access to adequate free basic services by poor communities is seriously undermined by the widespread use of indigent registers by South African municipalities.²

Municipalities can target poor households using a range of approaches. *Universal provision* means that everyone below a certain consumption threshold or receiving a particular level of service can access free basic services. This is the most effective approach, because it ensures maximum inclusion of poor households. But most municipalities use indigent registers, also known as *poverty*

registers. To successfully register to receive benefits, indigent households have to undergo an application process where indigent status is determined through a targeting method called *means testing* or *household income testing* based on a municipally-defined threshold, usually the equivalent of double the state pension per household per month.

Means testing is among the narrowest and most ineffective methods to target benefits to indigent households as it inevitably excludes many poor and vulnerable people. To "pass" a means test, indigent households often have to go through a particularly burdensome process to "prove their poverty". Some municipalities require extensive documentation to register including a South African ID, or permanent residence permit, proof of income and municipal bill statements. The registration criteria usually exclude the undocumented poor. This is problematic because the Constitution states that *everyone* living in the country has the right to free basic services.

Ironically, proving poverty comes at a high cost. Applicants bear costs like transportation costs and costs of collecting and photocopying the required documentation. The time spent registering is time spent not earning an income. It is not uncommon that applicants are

sent back because they do not have the correct or all of the documents, further increasing costs. Additionally, publicly identifying as being poor comes with a social stigma: society regards presenting oneself as poor as undignified. Further, policies can sometimes be inadvertently demeaning to beneficiaries by violating their privacy and treating indigent households as administrative cases rather than as people. This discourages many potential beneficiaries from registering.

Not only are indigent registers through means testing ineffective, they are also expensive to run and open to fraud. Indigent registers introduce a number of administrative hurdles that result in the exclusion of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of indigent households across South Africa.

Deciding which targeting method to adopt is no easy task and requires careful consideration. Municipalities can learn from the experience of eThekweni Municipality in its administration of free basic water services. The municipality rejected the use of an indigent register, opting instead for property value targeting. Here, property values are used to determine indigence – all properties under the municipally-defined threshold qualify for free basic water. Though not without limitations, the advantage with this method is that it is less exclusionary and has low administrative costs because property values are obtained in-house from the municipality's Rates Department. In 2014, 487 062 households were beneficiaries of free basic water in eThekweni – many more than on most municipal indigent registers, which officials admit are grossly under-representative

Means tests are not only ineffective, but also expensive to run and open to fraud



In 2014, 487 062 households were beneficiaries of free basic water in eThekweni – many more than on most municipal indigent registers

Pic: SA Water Research Commission

of those who qualify and would benefit from free basic services.³

South Africa's municipalities are not faring well in providing free basic services to indigent households. This calls for the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, responsible for overseeing and guiding municipal indigent policies, to reconsider the use of the indigent register as a targeting method in order to ensure that low income households receive the intended benefits of free basic services, and so make meaningful inroads into reducing poverty. ●

The writer, who requested anonymity, is a researcher interested in issues of gender, social justice and community building

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2 Moeti, "How South Africa is faring in the provision of free basic services", GroundUp (May 2014), available at: https://www.groundup.org.za/article/how-south-africa-faring-provision-free-basic-services_1816/. Also see Tissington, "Targeting the Poor? An Analysis of free basic services and municipal indigent policies in South Africa", Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) Research Report (2013) and Tissington et al, "Water services fault lines: an assessment of South Africa's water and sanitation provision across 15 municipalities", Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Centre for Housing

Rights and Evictions and Norwegian Centre for Human Rights Research Report (2008).

3 Pollution Research Group, "City partnerships for urban sanitation services in eThekweni Municipality South Africa: Institutional analysis of the eThekweni Municipality" University of KwaZulu-Natal (June 2014), available at: <http://prg.ukzn.ac.za/docs/default-source/projects/institutional-analysis.pdf?sfvrsn=2>, p. 20. Also see Tissington et al, "Water services fault lines: an assessment of South Africa's water and sanitation provision across 15 municipalities", Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions and Norwegian Centre for Human Rights Research Report (2008), p. 36.

NORTH WEST

The ANC urgently needs rescuing – from itself

ANC leaders in North West are not only hostile to the SACP and Cosatu, writes Dloze Matookane, but also misunderstand the organisation they claim to lead in the province



At a time of economic difficulty and political fluidity within South Africa, a critical debate is taking place on how to reconfigure the Congress Alliance to advance the second more radical phase of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR), which itself relies on consolidating the first phase. Those who have engaged on the NDR in abstract, have not appreciated, firstly, that the first phase of the NDR is not complete, and secondly, that the NDR is not a class-neutral phenomenon – a reality particularly relevant in the context of a broad church. The motive force of the NDR is the working class, not, as some have argued, everybody who believes in revolution (although those who believe in the course of this revolution are regarded as active participants).

Policy measures aimed at deepening the NDR should be driven by a perspective of redirecting the massive resources that are in the hands of the capitalist class towards a developmental agenda. But development for who? Such development cannot obviously be in the interest of capital, whether competitive or monopoly, because capital won't change oppressive and exploitative relations; it will not tamper with the colonial social and economic structure.

Considering the NDR as a class neutral phenomenon, as the 1996 Class Project did, is problematic. In such a case, the capitalist class is also considered a motive force, evidenced in how Class Project members have hugely benefited from the project of transformation since the 1994



The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon; material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But, for man, the root is man himself

– Karl Marx
*Critique of Hegel's
Philosophy of Right*

democratic transition.

A key question is whether the ANC, in its current state, is able to champion the project of development for the benefit of all, particularly the formerly oppressed and marginalised. The current situation in North West province opens room for such engagement, but this should be done without the pettiness and malicious utterances of lumpen proletarians, members of an underclass devoid of class consciousness. It is worrisome that elements of an organisation entrusted with leading a revolutionary cause would engage in such phenomena in abstract as demonstrated by a recent press brief-

ing, apparently convened by leaders of various regions of the ANC in the North West. This did not reflect an organisation capable of leading the NDR in the province, but was rather characterised by traits of excessive wordiness, repetitiveness, irrationality and schizophrenic and nonsensical utterances.

The leadership of some North West regions and some PEC members seem to be unaware that Cosatu and the SACP are working class organisations. Moreover, if you accuse the SACP and Cosatu of the obvious, of serving a working class agenda, defining it as if it is reactionary simply means that the you do not serve the interests of the NDR. If not, then it actually means that those leaders who convened the press conference do not understand the ANC and therefore lack capacity to lead the ANC. This reflects an organisation in crisis.

The current situation in North West not only reflects the social distance between the ANC and the communities, but worse, an organisation in opposition to those communities – the antithesis of the ANC's values and history. Firstly, emphasising that communities are just tools used for intra-Alliance battles, as articulated in the press conference, is a definite insult to those communities. Such utterances suggest that communities are not capable of having the logic of organising themselves against injustice – and particularly against the injustices brought about by the current leadership of the North West ANC in government. Secondly, protecting a leader who publicly insults communities by saying that he is not afraid of anyone, indicates that in the North West the ANC has to be res-



North West Premier Supra Mahumapelo

cued from itself.

The North West ANC press conference negates the role that ANC as the leader of the Alliance must play, among other things, to cater for the interests of Alliance partners. The inability to recognise the Alliance as a voice within the ANC means the ANC is actually in opposition to the Alliance. Probably one of the reasons for such decay is the lack of political education within the ANC. The ANC in the North West has become an antithesis of what it should be,

These ANC leaders made reference to Mao Tse-tung to dismiss the role of the SACP and Cosatu, even suggesting that the SACP and Cosatu are reactionary for advancing the class struggle. Mao Tse-tung clearly states the opposite: "If there is to be revolution, there must be a revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party, without a party built on the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and in

the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary style, it is impossible to lead the working class and the broad masses of the people in defeating imperialism and its running dogs". (Mao *Selected Works*, Volume IV, p. 284) However, this article is not intended to provide political education for the ANC leadership in the North West.

The ANC has the opportunity of responding positively to the masses in their quest for proper leadership, but equally it has been afforded a chance to renew itself and bringing the masses into confidence. The recall of Supra Mahumapelo will not only be a clear message that no deployed cadre of the ANC is above the movement itself, but also that the movement is committed to combating corruption and confronting decisively ill-discipline within its ranks. ●

Cde Matooane is a DEC member of the Vaal District of the YCLSA



Looking down on division

Photographer and documentary maker Johnny Miller (above), who took the photograph on the back cover of this issue of *Umsebenzi*, specialises in issues of urbanisation and development.

He's filmed and shot still photographs in half-a-dozen countries and in more than a dozen South African residential areas in Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg, on the ground and using a remote-controlled aerial drone. He began his drone-filmed series *Unequal Scenes* at Masiphumelele informal settlement near Fish Hoek, Cape Town, home to 38 000 people, a third of them with HIV or TB, but just one clinic to serve them (and no police station), using his drone to demonstrate the physical barrier between Masiphumelele and the lavish Lake Michelle estate – 200m of wetland and a high electric fence.

He initially published his pictures as a Facebook post, but has since expanded his focus to demonstrate the vast contrast between massively affluent communities and their informal settlement neighbours in South Africa's biggest metros and beyond South Africa's borders.

Early this year he launched *africaDRONES*, a non-profit project "to support and empower African drone pilots and storytellers", providing grants and production support.

● Miller's *Slumscapes* series is available at <https://www.millefoto.com/thomson-reuters-1>

CHRIS HANI ANNIVERSARY

25 years on: Cde Chris and the struggle for socialism

This is a shortened version of an address by Reneva Fourie to the YCLSA, at the University of Johannesburg, 25 April 2018



Every year we commemorate the life of Cde Chris Martin Thembesile Hani, our former General Secretary who was brutally assassinated on 10 April 1993. We do this to honour his contribution to South Africa's democracy. The commemorations present opportunities to recall his values and qualities of discipline, integrity, warmth and compassion in the hope that they will be emulated. The commemorations also serve to remind us to focus on building a non-racial, non-sexist, united South Africa, and a better life for all, as history erodes the bitter memories of apartheid.

Aged 15, Cde Chris joined the ANC Youth League in response to the political conditions at the time – like intense racism, pervasive poverty, poor quality bantu education and severe state repression, including the Rivonia Trial. In 1959 he commenced his studies at the University of Fort Hare where he read Marx, Engels and Lenin, confirming to him that economic exploitation was immoral and criminal. He joined the banned SACP in 1961, with a determination to work towards the ideal of a classless society in which no individual would profit from the labour of another. He stated: “My road to the SACP, in my own view, was a logical one. In our country, capitalism and apartheid had fused. They had meshed. Industry, without exception, supported the oppressive policies of the apartheid regime. They were a partner in the oppression of our people”.

The dialectical relationship between race and capital in South Africa necessitated an alliance and joint membership



Chris Hani and Winnie Mandela

between the ANC, the SACP and organised workers as represented by Sactu at the time. Conditions under apartheid were hostile and repressive. Our struggle for socialism was based on an assumption that conditions under a progressive, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic government would be more favourable for advancing socialism, and that class consciousness could best be infused through the championing of a national consciousness, hence the notion of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) being the most direct route to socialism.

Cde Chris's views were in line with the

Cde Chris joined the banned SACP in 1961, determined to work towards the ideal of a classless society in South Africa

SACP position as expressed in the *Road to South African Freedom* (1962), which states, “As its immediate and foremost task, the South African Communist Party works for a united front of national liberation. It strives to unite all sections and classes of oppressed and democratic people for a national democratic revolution to destroy colonialism ... The destruction of colonialism and the winning of national freedom is the essential condition and the key for future advancement to the supreme aim of the Communist Party: the establishment of a socialist South Africa, laying the foundations of a classless, communist society”.

Joining Umkhonto weSizwe in 1962, Cde Chris skipped the country in 1963 and, after a brief stay in Tanzania, left for military training in the Soviet Union. Soon after completing this, he participated in the Wankie Campaign with the intention to eventually infiltrate South Africa. This journey south was filled with set-backs; battles with the Rhodesian enemy; detention in Botswana; frustrations within the camps; but from 1974, based in Lesotho, he moved in and out of South Africa, setting up underground cells and actively overseeing the operations of the four pillars of struggle – namely the armed struggle, the mobilisation of international solidarity, the underground struggle and mass mobilisation.

Cde Chris firmly believed the actions and sacrifices of our people through the four pillars forced the apartheid regime to the negotiating table: “The four pillars underpinning our struggle had brought the present crisis of the apartheid regime... In the current political situation, the decision by our organisation to suspend armed action is correct and is an



Chris Hanu outside Winnie Mandela's home in 1991

important contribution in maintaining the momentum of negotiations.”

At our 8th Congress in December 1991, Cde Chris was elected General Secretary, succeeding Cde Joe Slovo. He emphasised the importance of building the SACP and unity in the Alliance: “We must never forget that the SACP champions the interests of the workers and the poor. Therefore our role has become, in my own view, even more critical. As we see unfolding before our eyes a clear tendency by the National Party government to isolate our Party, it is clear that the major strategic objective of the ruling class is to render the African National Congress weak ... the ANC, despite being a multi-class organisation, must still retain that element which has made it appealing to the majority of our people, namely the radical element, the element of addressing some, not all, of the aspirations of the working class. But the ultimate victory of the national liberation movement of this country, depends on the maintenance of this alliance.”

Cde Chris demonstrates here how he envisaged our road to socialism. He highlights the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of his approach to our revolution to emphasise the astute analysis that informed his thinking processes and, accordingly, his actions. Cde Chris was militant, but his militancy was not emotional. It was directed. It was scientific. It was informed by analyses of the international and domestic objective and subjective material conditions and the tactical interventions required in pursuit of the strategic objectives, Cde Chris, at the time of his death, believed that the Alliance was a necessary and relevant

**His militancy was directed,
scientific and informed
by analyses of international
and domestic material
conditions**

tool in our struggle for socialism.

In our current conjecture, some argue that, given the high degree of unemployment, poverty, and inequality in the country, the class contradictions have heightened to such levels that the time to more aggressively advance the struggle for socialism has arrived. Others argue that the ANC has a bias towards the workers and the poor and provides sufficient space for the left to advance progressive policies and that given the intensified onslaught by imperialist forces on progressive parties internationally and the continued efforts to divide the working class and to nullify the ANC domestically, breaking the Alliance would be a strategic error and a set-back for the National Democratic Revolution.

We can only wonder what Cde Chris's thoughts on the matter would be today. ●

Reneva Fourie is a member of the SACP Central Committee and heads the Office of the Secretariat in the SACP Head Office

YCLA

How young communists are going back to school!

Precious Banda explains how the YCL is taking its Joe Slovo Right to Learn Campaign into high schools across the country



In January this year, the Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA) embarked on its annual **Joe Slovo Right to Learn Campaign**, which is a year-long campaign named after Joe Slovo, a great leader and former General Secretary of the SACP, a man whose love for education and reading was unsurpassed. Comrade Joe Slovo's passion not only for formal education but also for political education is what inspired the YCLSA to name this important campaign after him.

We use this campaign to remind young people to value education and we use it to expose the existing limitations in South Africa's education system. In our implementation of the campaign, we have registered many victories to ensure the doors of learning for the youth and the poorest of the poor are opened. Advancing access and success for the working-class youth and interrogating the slow pace of transformation in our education system in general.

Our campaign champions the call for young people to make education fashionable and for political education among young people to be heightened. We advocate all forms of learning, including formal and informal education. To be like Joe Slovo, a leading theoretician of the liberation movement, young people need to read, analyse and debate. It is only those who read that can contribute theoretically, make contributions to contemporary debates, and use this understanding to shape our organisational practice. In our **Read to Lead** campaign, we argue that it is only readers who can lead by example – hence the campaign title.

The 2018 campaign has a special fo-

cus on high schools and TVETs (technical, vocational, educational and training colleges). This is done to bridge the gap between secondary schools and TVETs by making the learners understand that colleges too are institutions of first choice, against the common narrative that portrays our TVETs as second-class, substandard institutions compared to universities. We focus on high schools to make learners appreciate the role TVETs must continue to play in skills development. We want to give the learners enough information about tertiary education especially those in deep rural

YCLSA structures, from the National Committee to branches, have visited different schools across the country. Our national officials have been leading the visits. We enquire on the conditions of the schools we visit, the state of the infrastructure, how teaching and learning are being facilitated, the family background of learners and the nature of the communities the schools are located in. We assess the wellbeing of learners, and, where there are limitations and challenges, we assist in holding those responsible accountable. We do this by instilling and encouraging stakeholder involvement in the running of the affairs of the schools.

We had humbling experiences in the high schools we visited. The sometimes horrible state of affairs of some schools prompted our structures to adopt them,

Learners don't have access to sanitary towels in rural schools – they use old pieces of cloth and newspaper

with YCL structures forming partnerships with other social actors to transform schools. We introduced study groups in schools where pass rates were low, we fundraised for some schools to donate sanitary towels, school shoes, and so on, to paint classrooms and in some schools we have mentored learners, especially those in matric. We went to schools that are forgotten, schools that are far away and in deep rural villages. We wanted to understand their plight by experiencing for ourselves their school environments. On our part, we strengthened accountability on the campaign by tracking commitments we have made and monitoring their implementation. The YCLSA will ensure the results of our campaign are substantively felt by learners in their different schools because our interventions positively affect their performance with results to show at the end of the year.

We experienced how girls don't have access to sanitary towels in rural schools, becoming a luxury of a very few whose families can afford to buy pads monthly. The young girls are using old pieces of cloth and newspaper, and it has become normal for them to do so. We will intensify our long-standing call for government to make sanitary towels free and accessible for poor girls and women. Just as food is distributed by feeding schemes in public schools, there should be a system that avails sanitary towels free at all schools, but especially at deep rural schools. Girls sometimes miss school when on their periods, to avoid humiliation. This is unfortunate and the departments of health, social development and basic education must urgently establish an appropriately budgeted intervention to address the plight of these girls and young women in schools.

In some schools, we noticed that the



NCOP chair Thandi Modise hands out free sanitary pads to pupils at a rural school in Dryharts near Taung in 2013 (at the time she was North West premier)
Pic: Taung Daily News

food served to learners was of dehumanising levels, lacking the necessary quality. The problem is putting feeding schemes out to tender, where service providers look to save every cent they can to maximise their profit. We reiterate our call on the detenderisation of basic services. School feeding schemes must be detenderised and communities, through cooperatives, must be given the opportunity to cook quality food for their children. The introduction of cooperatives owned by community members will create jobs for our people, and will increase accountability for provision of quality food because the community itself will be preparing food for the learners and may improve the menu within the limits of the available resources. Currently, learners are subjected to stamp, tinned pilchards and beans as main daily meals.

Our campaign across the country shows that rural schools have no play areas for the learners, no libraries, no computer labs, no laboratories and many are housed in dilapidated buildings that are rarely maintained. This affects the competitiveness of the learners when they go to institutions of higher learning. Those who come from secondary schools with good facilities don't have to begin from scratch, as do students from poor and/or

rural communities with none. These are future scientists who have never been in a laboratory their whole high school career and only visualise the experiments in their minds. Sometimes provincial education departments deliver text books late – a typical case being Limpopo. The learners not only lack facilities, but also receive their books late and are taught by discouraged teachers who are demoralised by the environment in their schools. This combines to systemically channel the learners for failure.

We realised how the release of matric results from IEB (Independent Examinations Board) schools before the public schools represents a systematic exclusion of those who matriculate from government schools because institutions of higher learning accept students on a first-come, first-served basis due to limited space. Every year, those from pri-

vate schools get to register before those from public schools. The Department of Basic Education must address this and prescribe to IEB on when they can issue results and preferably after the department itself has announced and released results of public schools. This is because those from public schools are mostly the poorest of the poor who find it difficult to acquire space in institutions while those from IEB get their results first and register first, leaving limited space for the poor. These are deliberate measures we can aspire to, so poor students from public school don't continue being held back.

We will use different strategies to ensure we reach out to the youth in this year's campaign. At the end of this academic year, we want to look back and say we did try to make education fashionable and we will build strong foundations for the YCLSA's 2019 Joe Slovo campaign. Let's strive for accelerated transformation of our education system towards socialism in our lifetime! ●

Cde Banda, also known as 'Dora Tamana' on social media, is a YCLSA National Committee member and YCLSA National Convenor of the Higher Education Commission

Rural schools without play areas, libraries, computer labs or laboratories, housed in dilapidated buildings

DIVIDED LAND



Looking down on our cities' class barriers

Cape Town photographer Johnny Miller used a drone (a small remote controlled aircraft) with his camera attached to demonstrate the “the racial divide” and the “wealth gap” are real, physical barriers dividing residents – by class and (in South Africa) by race.

The picture, of the densely populated Makause informal settlement and the leafy Germiston suburb of Primrose confronting each other across a narrow highway, is from Miller’s photographic and video series “Unequal Scenes”.

The series includes images from Gauteng, Western Cape, KZN, Mexico, Kenya, Pakistan, India and Tanzania – all showing the stark contrast between the living spaces

of poor, landless majorities and the homes of the affluent minorities – they’re available on <http://unequalscenes.com>

“Differences in how people live are hard to see from the ground. The beauty of being able to fly is to see things as they really are,” says Miller. “Looking straight down from a height of several hundred meters, incredible scenes of inequality emerge” – the physical divides that separate some ultra-rich neighbourhoods from informal settlements. Sometimes that gap is a strip of road; sometimes it includes and electric fence and guardhouse.

Miller’s photos show the remnants of apartheid policies from 25 years ago. ●

● SEE PAGE 11