



**Contemporary
Issues in South
Africa:
a toolkit for journalists**
by
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INTRODUCTION

In today's climate in the media industry, reporters are expected to cover a broad range of issues. They no longer have the luxury of concentrating on a small piece of a larger puzzle, and at times, they may feel as if they need a better understanding of the background information before moving forward.

Covering eight different topics, this book is not intended to provide reporters with in-depth information on any single topic. It is, instead, intended to provide the necessary *building blocks* on a variety of themes, and to assist journalists in seeing each story they tackle through a variety of 'lenses'.

This book is also based on a belief that a holistic approach to reporting is important in today's media industry. The links between the economic recession, poverty, food insecurity, water issues, rural issues, xenophobia, gender issues and children's issues cannot be emphasised enough.

Lastly, but most importantly, this book is meant to inspire journalists to generate high quality media content on a range of crucial topics that are part of South African society.

Tanya Farber

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In no way is this book meant to replace the research that journalists conduct for their stories. It is a starting point – to open doors in the mind, stimulate story ideas, develop a network of contacts, and build up a body of knowledge.

Each chapter provides the following tools for journalists:

- **An overview** which provides a brief summary of the topic's place in the media as a whole
- **A description of the theme in a global context** so that reporters can understand the broader issues as well as common trends in the international media
- **A description of the local context** so that reporters can understand the most crucial issues affecting South African society and how those could be handled in the media
- **A section on measurements** so that reporters can find ways to source statistics and analyse them appropriately
- **Helpful websites** so that journalists can conduct research and build up their contacts (note: the websites listed are intended to serve as a starting point for computer-based research, but reporters should not limit themselves to those listed)
- **Useful terminology** so that journalists can ask the right questions in interviews and use the correct terms when writing stories
- **More handy tips** so that journalists can apply some critical thinking to whatever topic they are covering and produce high quality content as a result
- **Flashpoints** so those journalists are pointed in the right direction for further reading.

CHAPTER 1: ECONOMIC RECESSION

OVERVIEW

Economic reporting has traditionally been a 'beat' unto itself, with dedicated reporters covering trends and news in the field of economics and business. Recently, however, with the massive recession that has swept across the globe, it has become a cross-cutting topic making front page news. This means that:

- **Economics reporters** need to **expand their view** of what they are writing about.
- **General assignment reporters** need to **familiarise themselves** with economic concepts as economics-related stories make their way into the mainstream.
- Other **beat reporters** need to explore their usual themes in reporting through the **lens of the recession**.

Definition

It is important for journalists to understand exactly what is meant by an 'economic recession'.

- A 'recession' is normally regarded as a period of **general decline** in economic activity.
- Short periods of decline are not considered to be recessions. Most commentators regard a **recession** as a **more prolonged slowdown** and normally regard two consecutive quarters of decline in a country's real output as warranting the term 'recession'.
- The economic welfare of a country is normally measured by its **Gross Domestic Product** (GDP). This refers to the monetary value of goods and services produced in a country in a given period of time (a quarter, or a year).
- These **estimates are then compared** to establish whether the country's economy is growing or whether the size of the economy is shrinking over that period of time.
- The measure attempts to incorporate all the new output produced in a country during this time period, and the estimates are adjusted for inflation, thus **yielding a 'real' measure** of activity at constant prices.

- While the focus on a measure such as GDP alone can be considered too restrictive, there are **other measures of economic activity** (manufacturing production, consumer confidence, unemployment, company profits/losses, liquidations and bankruptcies, asset, commodity and stock market prices, property and housing prices), that can be used to assess the extent and duration of an economic slowdown.

THE ECONOMIC RECESSION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Since 2008, much of the world has been in recession, and this has become a prominent theme in the global media.

- The **initial cause** of the ongoing recession was the financial crisis brought on by **irresponsible lending and credit practices** by banks, predominantly in the USA and Europe.
- In the USA in particular, the economic crisis was triggered by a **housing crisis**: when too many people had been given bonds on houses they couldn't afford, the banks were badly affected by those who defaulted on their bond repayments. Houses were then sold cheaply, but this did not cover the outstanding debts.
- As indebtedness to these institutions increased, the **public had to sell off their real estate and stock market assets**, resulting in waning trust in these financial institutions.
- Panic set in, and the banks had to be **bailed out** by governments.
- The **impact** of this recession was massive, and as it spread across the globe, it was soon regarded as the **most severe slowdown since the Great Depression** of the late 1920s.
- The current recession has highlighted several important linkages.
 - One is the **integrated nature of the global economy**. This means that most countries in the world have been adversely affected by the same recession.
 - The other important linkage refers to **the financial sector** (banks, financial institutions and monetary authorities) and **the real economy**. The estimates are very negative, not only for the advanced economies but those for emerging and developing economies as well.

- Because the world economy is so interlinked, the **ramifications of the recessions are widespread**. The principle factors are:
 - the drastic reduction in the volume of **world trade** (imports and exports)
 - a drop in world **travel and tourism**
 - a fall in levels of foreign and domestic investment
 - dramatic **increases** in levels of **unemployment**
 - substantial **company losses**
 - **cut-backs** in government expenditure (for example, on health, education and infrastructure) as the principal sources of government revenues shrink
- Another hot topic of debate has been the way in which respective **governments** have responded to the crisis by bailing out banks and key industries (for example, automobile and clothing industries).
- Debates in the media have focused on:
 - increased **protectionism** impinging negatively on the future revival of world trade
 - Unprecedented increased **government deficits** being unsustainable as they have to be financed for generations to come.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

- Initial commentary on the impact of the global recession on South Africa was that the country would **withstand** the economic meltdown because of:
 - our **financial system** being highly regulated
 - the **infrastructural preparations** and expected tourism bonanza associated with the 2010 soccer world cup
- More recent evidence on the slowdown, however, shows that South Africa has **felt the impact** as the following have dipped substantially:
 - industrial (manufacturing) production
 - exports
 - levels of mining and agricultural production
 - corporate profit levels
 - levels of domestic and foreign investment
 - expected tourism influx

- retail sales
- stock market prices

- **Bankruptcies**, shutdowns and liquidations have escalated, and job retrenchments are becoming more frequent.
- In a country already steeped in **unemployment and poverty**, the short- and long-term impacts of an economic recession are exponential.
- The Reserve Bank has a mandate to **keep inflation rates down** by adjusting interest rates accordingly (in other words, they use the interest rate as a tool to keep inflation rates in check). However, with the **economy in recession**, the government has had to introduce **stimulus packages** (see below) to bolster the economy, and this could have the **adverse effect** of increasing the rate of inflation. This poses a quandary for the monetary authorities.

MEASUREMENTS

- **Useful statistics** for the local context can be found on the Stats SA and South African Reserve Bank websites (see below).
- It is useful to **place local recession statistics within the global context**. For example, the impact of the recession in the major industrialised countries has been quite dramatic, and can make an interesting backdrop for a local story:
 - In the fourth quarter of 2008, so-called **advanced economies**, on average, experienced a contraction of 7,5% in GDP.
 - The **United States** contracted by 6,2% and 6,1% in the last quarter of 2008 and first quarter of 2009 respectively.
 - Over the same period, the **UK** economy contracted by 6,1% and 7,4% while **Japan's** contraction was even more marked, at a rate of 12,1%.
 - The **outlook for the global economy in 2009** remains very gloomy and forecasts by the IMF, World Bank and the OECD all predict negative growth rates for the world economy (-1,3%) for the year as a whole.
 - The International Monetary Fund and World Bank websites (see below) have useful **analytical and statistical data** on the origins of the crisis and current trends and responses.
 - **Stats SA** has estimated that the economic growth for the first quarter of 2009 decreased by 6,4% compared with the fourth quarter of 2008. This,

after a slowdown of 1,8% in the last quarter of 2008, justifies classifying South Africa as being in a recession at present.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Statistics South Africa: <http://www.statssa.gov.za>

The Reserve Bank: <http://www.reservebank.co.za>

Department of Trade and Industry: <http://www.dti.gov.za>

International Monetary Fund: <http://www.imf.org/external/index.htm>

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** the value of all the goods and services produced in an economy during a set accounting period, usually a year;
- **Development economics:** a sub-discipline within economics specialising in the processes of long term growth and change, especially in the case of the less developed economies;
- **Disposable income:** the income a person or household has left to dispose of after income tax has been deducted from personal income; disposable income may either be spent on consumption or saved;
- **Fiscal policy:** the use by a government of its expenditures on goods and services and/or tax collections to influence the level of national income;
- **Macro-economics:** the branch of economic theory concerned with the economy as a whole; it deals with large aggregates such as total output, rather than with the behaviour of individual consumers and firms;
- **Economic stimulus package:** a government policy or programme specifically designed to stimulate the economy in a bid to turn the economic recession around;
- **Contagion:** the spill-over effect of an economic recession from one location (or country) to the next; in recent times the media has used this word specifically to refer to the domino effect of the American economic downturn on other countries globally.

MORE HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- The impact of the recession can be **widespread**, affecting society in a number of **complex** ways. Journalists across beats should explore such themes together.
- The recession has brought economics into the **mainstream** in reporting. This means it needs to be examined **holistically**, using facts, figures, hard news angles and human interest stories in conjunction to create a sense of the full picture.
- Reporting should not only explore the recession as a new phenomenon but also how it affects **pre-existing problems** such as poverty, unemployment, and crime.
- Reporting should keep abreast of **policy developments**, as well as the extent to which policies are being implemented.
- Worldwide trends indicate a **worsening in xenophobia** in the face of increasing unemployment. In the wake of the May 2008 xenophobia attacks, this is an important concern that journalists need to monitor.
- **Promises by politicians** in positions of power should be measured against the feasibility of such promises in the current financial and fiscal climate.
- Reporting should also focus on the impact of the economic slowdown on the **environment**, focusing on the 'hot' topics of global warming, environmental degradation, and related issues.
- Across every **beat**, whether it is the arts, sport, crime, environmental reporting etc, there are stories to be written relating to the recession, and beat reporters need to think out of the box to come up with relevant story ideas.

FLASHPOINTS

- South Africa Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in conjunction with NEDLAC, developed a **policy response** document to the economic crisis on 19 February 2009. Visit the DTI website (see above) for the full document.
- A speech (19 May 2009) by the former Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Tito Mboweni, shows **the concerns of the bank relating to the economic crisis**. Entitled *The Implications of the Global Crisis for South Africa and Policy Responses*, it can be found in the speeches section of South African Reserve Bank's website (see above)
- Much of the discussion and debate on the nature of the present recession focuses on whether the present crisis can be equated to that of 1929-1933, the so-called **Great Depression**. This has evoked an interest in some of the earlier writings alluding to that period, including John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, and JK Galbraith's *The Great Crash*. There is also a renewed interest in the writings and life and times of John Maynard Keynes.

CHAPTER 2: FOOD SECURITY

OVERVIEW

Unlike the age-old themes in newspapers, like crime or politics, food security is a relatively new area of public interest. The concept itself is not new (see below), but over the past few years, it has become more important for journalists to understand its complexity and significance because of the impact it now has on so many people across the globe. It is also of special interest in South Africa because of the enormous problem of poverty, and within the field of food security, it is the 'food price crisis' that has taken centre stage.

Definition

There are varying definitions of what food security really is, but the commonly accepted one in South Africa is as follows:

Physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life (National Development Agency, 2002)

FOOD SECURITY IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA

- Food security is **not a new concept**. Since the 1970s, it has been an important topic on the global agenda.
- The focus areas have shifted from the **availability** of food across the globe, to the **accessibility** of food across the globe. In other words, the question is no longer 'is there enough food?' but more 'is everyone able to access that food?'
- Recently, food security issues have become far **more present** in the international media.
- A specific focus has been on the **increase in food prices across the globe**, and the riots that have taken place because of this.
- Even with food being available, many so-called **third world countries** have been devastated by the price hikes.
- International media houses have also done extensive coverage on the topics of **genetically-modified organisms** (GMOs) and the corporatisation of the food industry (a process by which corporations are legally allowed to patent genes

not only of genetically-modified crops produced in laboratories, but those which have been found naturally).

World food prices

The causes, and the resulting problems, of food price hikes are all interlinked and should not be reported on in isolation.

The price of grain, for example, went up dramatically because of:

- Increased farming for use in biofuels (see below)
- A dramatic rise in world oil prices
- Global population growth
- Climate changes
- Loss of agricultural land due to urbanisation
- Growing consumer demand in China and India

Biofuels

The use of biofuels has been a topic of much debate in the press, and journalists need to be familiar with it.

Understanding biofuels:

- **Biofuels** are fuels obtained from living biological material (or recently lifeless material).
- **Examples:** Crops high in sugar, starch or vegetable oil can be used to produce biofuels.
- They are different from **fossil fuels** which are derived from biological material that has been dead for a long time.
- **Examples:** Coal and crude oil are drawn from the earth and used as fuels.

Some of the basic arguments 'against' and 'for' biofuels have been as follows:

- **Against:** Non-food biofuels replace food crops to produce oil for the North, and this means there is less land available for maize and cereal crops. The result is that less food is available to the South.

Note: The South African government put a moratorium on using maize for biofuels for this exact reason.

- **For:** Biofuels reinvigorate the agricultural market and thus make growing more food crops easier as farmers can now earn more for their produce. The increasing market for biofuels also means that land not utilised for food crops would also then become profitable, with positive spin-offs such as increased job opportunities.

FOOD SECURITY IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

In South Africa, the most pressing issues to do with food security are:

- Poverty and food prices
- Food distribution
- Food security and transformation

Poverty and food prices

- South Africa is a net producer of food. This means it is not the **availability of food that is the problem**, but the fact that for many, accessing that food is difficult. Unemployment is estimated at 40%, and about 14 million people are vulnerable to food insecurity.
- In this context, one cannot **view food insecurity in isolation**. Those vulnerable to it are made more so by other poverty-related factors such as lack of access to transport, health care, education and employment.
- In recent months, global forces have acted on local conditions, and a sharp rise in **food prices** has had a crippling effect on those already mired in poverty.

Food distribution¹

- At a **national level**, South Africa is food secure owing to a combination of domestic production and trade.
- At the **local level** in marginal parts of the country, however, this is not the case. Very poorly-resourced rural and urban areas – which exist as a direct result of apartheid policy – face crises related to access to food.
- Even at the **household level**, those without effective command over resources may be food insecure even in areas where there is local-level security.

¹ This information originates from the work of researcher Stephen Greenberg, an expert in food systems, land agriculture and rural development.

- In this light, food security is a significant **measure of the well-being** of an individual, household or group in society.

Food security and transformation

- In 2002, government formulated the **Integrated Food Security Strategy** as a policy to tackle the issue of food security and accessibility in the country.
- While some have argued that it is a leap forward, others have argued that government lacks the capacity and institutional arrangements needed to respond to the poverty crisis in South Africa, and that the **three levels of government** – national, provincial and local – are too dislocated from one another to make a real impact.
- The media will now have to keep an eye on the new leadership and ministries and the government's pledge to **wage a war on poverty**, to see if transformation takes place in the arena of food security.

Other food security issues requiring media attention:

- **water shortages** and the pending water crisis
- **land reform policies** and how effectively they are being implemented
- decreasing **subsidies** for farming
- the unrecognised **role of women** as producers
- the long-term effects of **HIV** on food production
- the successes and failures of **urban agriculture** (for example, the 'Starter Pack Programme' implemented by government in 2003, and backyard garden projects initiated by a variety of non-government organisations)
- genetically-modified organisms (**GMOs**)
- food **monopolies** and price fixing, whereby chain stores may collude, unchecked, to inflate prices beyond the standard rate of inflation

MEASUREMENTS

- **Measurements** of food security/insecurity for South Africa are difficult to find.
- **Related statistics** – such as measurements of agricultural production and measurements of poverty – do shed light on food security studies and can be included to enhance media coverage of it.

- For up-to-date **production statistics**, contact the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (see website below)
- Another **useful source** for statistics is the Food Insecurity Vulnerability Information Management System (see website below)
- For **global figures**, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is a helpful source for statistics. Visit their website (see website below) and click on the statistics link.
- Also contact the **International Food Policy Research Institute** (IFPRI) (see website below) for statistics.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

1. International Food Policy Research Institute: www.ifpri.org
2. Southern African Regional Poverty Network: www.sarpn.org.za
3. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: www.fao.org
4. Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: www.daff.gov.za
5. Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System: www.agis.agric.za/agisweb/FIVIMS_ZA
6. Official links page of the National Department of Agriculture, the Provincial Departments of Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) in South Africa: www.agric.za
7. The African Centre for Food Security (at the University of KwaZulu Natal): <http://acfs.ukzn.ac.za/HomePage800.aspx>
8. United Nations Millennium Development Goals: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Food availability:** sufficient quantities of appropriate and necessary types of food on account of domestic production, commercial imports and donors;
- **Food access:** this is the primary measure of food security and refers to access to food at the household level;
- **Food distribution:** the provision of food at the right time and place;
- **Food reliability:** the nutrition and safety of food.

MORE HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- While actual food security **statistics** are difficult to come by for South Africa, related statistics should be sought to substantiate media coverage.
- Alongside facts and related figures, **anecdotal evidence** is of great importance in food security coverage. Beyond the numbers, there are countless human interest stories to be told.
- Find **Strategic Research Sites** – households or individuals whose personal lives are indicative of a broader theme across communities.
- Emphasise the **finer details** of food security issues but place them in the **broader context** for the reader in an accessible way.
- In your coverage of food security, actively explore the **complexity** of the issues at hand. It is not a topic that exists in isolation.
- Examine stories from a **variety of angles**: for example, how does an issue affect children as opposed to just adults, or women as opposed to men?
- Weigh up and shed light on the **pros and cons** of all topics to do with food security, rather than simply following media trends.
- Keep an eye on food security at **policy level** and any changes taking place.
- Critically assess the **implementation** of such policies.
- Stay abreast of **changes in the global arena** to do with food security.

FLASHPOINTS

- Do an internet search on the **Integrated Food Security Strategy (2002)**
- Do an internet search on **'food price riots'** for a fuller media picture of demonstrations that have rocked the globe in many different areas.
- Explore the **UN Millennium Development Goals** (see website above), particularly those discussed in the link to the **World Food Programme**.

CHAPTER 3: RURAL ISSUES

OVERVIEW

Because media houses are located within the metropolitan areas, rural areas often receive little attention from journalists. In South Africa, where rural areas often represent the most impoverished sectors of society, the lack of coverage in the media plays a role in perpetuating the cycle of marginalisation.

At the same time, rural-urban migration happens on a large scale in South Africa, and also requires media attention in terms of the changes it brings on in the 'bigger picture' as well as in the lives of those who have migrated.

RURAL ISSUES IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA

- Across the globe, because mass media coverage is closely tied to the sale of advertising space, topics with the biggest audience appeal receive most of the coverage. As long as the **majority of consumers are urban**, rural topics do not get much coverage.
- Urban dwellers therefore **remain unaware** of issues affecting rural dwellers, or how rural issues affect them as urban dwellers.

RURAL ISSUES IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

When reporting on rural communities in South Africa or the Southern African region, it is important to be aware of two **overlapping communities**:

- Rural dwellers involved in agriculture and farming
- Rural dwellers whose lives are linked to all aspects of rural living but who are not personally involved in agriculture and farming

All rural dwellers

- Rural issues involve **every aspect of life**, and the dominant theme in South Africa is a dire lack of access. This includes lack of access to adequate healthcare, education, transport, courts, recreational facilities, and many other services.
- The **unequal relationship** between the rural and the urban areas in many African countries is rooted in colonial rule.

- In South Africa, there is the **added component of apartheid policies** which pushed people of colour into radically under-resourced areas (and often environmentally barren landscapes) where they were denied South African citizenship but were utilised as a mass cheap labour source.
- The fallout of colonial and apartheid governments not **investing in rural areas** or providing services as they did in urban areas still characterises these settlements.
- **Urban-rural migration** receives far less attention than migration from other parts of Africa into South Africa, yet it happens on a large scale with social, economic and political consequences.

Rural dwellers involved in agriculture

- Issues of **land ownership and tenure** security are ongoing and timeless, but shift from one generation to the next.
- Because of a **colonial past**, coupled with apartheid in the South African context, claims to land are multi layered.
- The environment and **sustainability** are important issues, and key concepts include drought, access to water, and access to seeds and fertilizers.
- Those involved in farming also face issues related to **markets**, and some key concepts include access to value chains and infrastructure.
- Inequality and **uneven access** are part of any rural theme, and this has a massive impact on economics for those involved in agriculture.
- Government **support to small scale farmers** is lacking but the issue receives little attention from researchers and journalists.

Rural issues and transformation²

- Of the country's population of 48-million, **rural citizens** account for 47% and carry a heavy load of those said to be living in 'extreme poverty'.
- The post-apartheid development agenda, however, has had a far more **urban than rural focus**.
- Statistics on the welfare of South Africa's rural population point to a **widening gap of inequality** between urban masses and rural people.

- In 2001, Stats SA published a baseline study that tracked development in 13 rural areas said to be experiencing 'extreme poverty'. The study was initiated to inform the government's **Integrated Rural Development Strategy** (IRDS).
- All key indicators came **far below the national average**. These included: employment, household income, dwellings, education, and water and energy supply. A direct comparison between these areas and the country's major economic centres emphasised the disparities.
- Between 2004 and 2008, **land redistribution** rose by 0,5% to a total of 4,7%, a pace considered to be too slow for true transformation.

MEASUREMENTS

- A useful starting point for rural reporting is to consider the **percentages** of those living in rural areas.
- In 2007, Stats SA found that the **urbanisation level** of approximately 56% is heavily weighted in Gauteng and the Western Cape. Northern Cape and Free State, which together make up less than 10% of the entire population, are also more urbanised than rural. The other provinces – Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and North West Province are more rural than urban. The least urbanised is Limpopo at only 10%.
- One cannot ignore **racial statistics** in coverage of country issues because rural poverty is heavily racialised, with more than half of the black population still living in rural areas.
- Because **all aspects of life** are influenced by the urban-rural divide, any statistics which take this divide into consideration are useful for reporting on rural issues.
- Statistics focusing on **rural-urban migration** are also important as they shed light on communities as being dynamic rather than static.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (at the University of the Western Cape): www.plaas.org.za
- Women on Farms Project: www.wfp.org.za
- The Black Sash: www.blackssash.org.za

² This information is from Sibonelo Radebe's article 'The Poor Cousin', Financial Mail, February 27 2009

- Legal Resources Centre: www.lrc.org.za
- Africare: www.africare.org
- Nkuzi Development Organisation: www.nkuzi.org.za
- Rural Health Initiative: www.rhi.org.za
- South African NGO network: www.ngopulse.org

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Agrarian reform:** redistribution of the agricultural resources of a country;
- **Rural development:** policy and programmes intended to improve the economy and quality of life in rural areas;
- **Dualism in rural and urban economies:** automatically opposed urban modernity and rural traditionalism.

MORE HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- **Access to land** and tenure security are pressing issues requiring more coverage in the media.
- **Critically assess** the issue of land reform, focusing on both positive and negative examples.
- Rural issues should be reported on **in relation to urban** areas too. Although they are often geographically isolated, they are part of the same political economy.
- Production levels and employment are very low in rural areas. Poor, unemployed landless rural people leave the country in search of work in city slums. **Rural-urban migration** patterns need to be taken into account by journalists as such factors affect a vast number of people, including those who migrate, those who are left behind, and those already living in areas where a high influx of domestic migrants takes place.
- **Traditional leadership** carries weight in rural areas and cannot be ignored in any analysis of rural lives and the rural economy.
- **Gender inequality** is a major feature of rural life, and all rural reporting should explore the gender dimension as men and women's experiences are often wholly different.

- Coverage of the **economic recession** tends to focus on its impact on urban communities. Its effect on rural communities requires more exploration.
- With South Africa under **new leadership**, journalists need to look out for the extent to which land reform is linked to rural development.
- This means keeping an eye on **policy**, but also critically assessing the extent to which, and speed at which, it is implemented.
- Since journalists are mainly located in the metropolises, it is difficult to **build relations** with contacts. It is useful, therefore, to engage non-government organisations as a point of access as their field workers already have established ties with rural dwellers.
- It is also helpful to build ties with **community leaders** as an access point.
- Statistics alone cannot tell the story, and neither can the stories of individuals. It is important to **combine** the two so that the human interest angle is placed in a broader context.
- Avoid one-dimensional stories of rural dwellers as **victims**. Despite the harshness of life in rural areas, there are also stories of innovation to be told.
- Keep in mind that rural dwellers are sometimes not able to speak the same language as you. It is useful to take a fellow reporter, photographer or friend who can help with **translation** both ways.

FLASHPOINTS

The following are useful starting points for an internet search on important developments in the field of rural issues:

- The 2005 Land Summit
- White Paper on ANC Polokwane Resolution on Rural Development, Land Reform and Agrarian Change
- Extension of Security of Tenure Act
- Communal Land Rights Act
- White Paper on South African Land Policy
- UN Millennium Development Goals, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development
- Declaration on World Food Security (signed at the Food and Agriculture Organisation's High Level Conference on World Food Security in Rome on 3-5 June 2008).

CHAPTER 4: WATER ISSUES

OVERVIEW

Water security is declining rapidly across many parts of the globe. As a result, it has become a topical issue in the international media. It is linked to population growth, drought, climate changes, urbanisation, pollution, and other many topics covered by the media. It does not exist in isolation.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

- We are **all dependent on water** – not only for drinking, cooking and bathing purposes, but also to grow food, drive industries and generate electricity.
- Water is finite; it **cannot be produced or manufactured**. In world terms, fresh water is also extremely scarce: most of the Earth's water (97%) is found in the ocean. Another 2% is stored in glaciers, ice caps and snowy mountain ranges. That leaves only 1% of all the water on earth for humankind to use.

Water quantity

- There are many **big issues** in the world water sector today. The first one is water quantity: there is only so much to go around (in some parts of the world more than others) and yet the world population keeps growing, more people are migrating to the cities and, as people develop, their demands keep growing. This means we have to **find more efficient ways of using water** and developing 'alternative' sources of supply, such as recycling and reusing wastewater, and desalinating seawater.

Water quality

- Another topical issue is water quality: as humans **use more water**, more water gets polluted, destroying the very sources of water we depend on and precious aquatic ecosystems in the process. For example, more than 50% of the world's **wetlands have already been lost**, and most of the world's large rivers have been dammed, which disturbs the natural ecological process.

Access

- Another very important issue is access. **More than a billion people** in the world still do not have access to safe drinking water. This means they are still

dependent on unprotected sources, such as rivers, streams and springs. One of the UN Millennium Development Goals is to **halve the number of people without access** to safe water by 2015, but at this stage many countries will not make the target, and access is particularly poor in African states.

Climate changes

- A relatively new issue which is receiving more and more attention is the potential **impact of climate change** on the world's water resources. At present, projections are that some areas will get wetter, while others will get drier. There are also bound to be more **ecological disasters** (floods and droughts) in certain parts of the world.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Water is linked to many other topical issues in South Africa (such as health, unemployment, housing, urbanisation and poverty), but it is often not explicitly addressed, and journalists may lack an understanding of the key issues.

- South Africa shares many of the global issues to do with water (see above).
- It is among the 30 **driest** countries in the world. Our average annual rainfall is less than 500mm a year compared with the world average of about 860mm.
- In addition, our climate is very **erratic** and the country is prone to droughts and floods.
- The country also has a low **runoff** rate (see terminology below). On average, only 9% of rainfall reaches the rivers as runoff.
- Apart from the erratic rainfall and low ratio runoff which affect the reliability and variability of river flow, the average annual potential evaporation is higher than the rainfall in all but a few isolated areas where rainfall exceeds 1400mm a year.
- Most of South Africa's present water requirements are provided by **surface water supplies** (see terminology below). Generally, these surface water resources are highly developed over the country, with about 320 major dams having a total capacity of more than 32 400 million cubic metres, which is 66% of the total mean annual runoff of the country.
- With more people **migrating to South Africa's cities**, water demand in urban centres especially is expected to grow.
- Further strong growth is also expected in the **mining and power generation** sectors.

- While **irrigation** is still the biggest water user in SA (60%), much has been done in the last few years to conserve water in the agricultural sector, and although irrigated areas have increased, the demand has remained constant.
- According to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's (DEAT) South African Environment Outlook³ published in 2006, **water quality** in the country is **variable**, with an overall deterioration since the last state of the environment report (released in 1999).
- The health of South Africa's **river ecosystems** is generally declining, with **effluent** pollution continuing to grow. Rivers running through urban areas are in especially poor condition. South Africa has a dual challenge where water is concerned: there is a need to grow the economy (which cannot be done without water) and decrease poverty, while at the same time safeguarding what is left of the country's freshwater resources.
- This requires **careful management** of the entire catchment to ensure efficient use while controlling pollution (this is known as **integrated water resource management**).

HELPFUL WEBSITES

1. Statistics South Africa: www.statssa.co.za
2. Water Information Network South Africa: www.win-sa.org.za
3. Water Research Commission: www.wrc.org.za
4. African Water Issues Research Unit: www.awiru.co.za
5. Institute for Water Research (Rhodes University): www.ru.ac.za/iwr

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Runoff:** the water that does not become absorbed by the earth after, for example, a rain storm, but flows across the surface into a river or stream;
- **Surface water supplies:** rivers and dams;
- **Effluent:** sewage or other liquid waste that is discharged into a body of water;
- **Catchment:** a catching or collecting of water, especially rainwater, in a structure used for this purpose (such as a reservoir).

MORE HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- When reporting across beats, be aware of **water as a complex** issue related to many others.
- While South Africa has many water challenges, it is considered to be **very progressive** as far as water is concerned. South African water legislation is highly regarded in the international arena. Stories should balance the positives with the negatives.
- While there are severe skills shortages, especially at local level, South Africa is home to some of the top **water experts**. It is useful to build a professional relationship with them as they can provide much insight.
- It is useful for journalists to understand how **South Africa's water legislation** works. It is important to remember that the national department (now Department of Water and Environmental Affairs) is the custodian of the country's water resources and regulator of the sector, but that municipalities are responsible for water (and sanitation) services, for example.

FLASHPOINTS

- A major breakthrough of recent times in South Africa regarding water issues was the passing of the **National Water Act** in 1998 (NWA). Before this, some sources of water, such as groundwater, were considered 'private'. This meant that people could effectively do with these resources what they wanted. Now, however, all of South Africa's water resources are under the custodianship of the departmental minister, which encourages improved protection and management.
- Access to water also became a '**basic human right**' under this legislation. Through the NWA the environment also has the right to water, and a portion of all water resources has to be protected to enable the survival of the aquatic environment. This environmental right to water is unique in the world.
- Look at the **UN Millennium Development Goals**, particularly Goal 7, Target 3.
- Stay abreast of developments at the three-yearly **World Water Forum** which is organised by the World Water Council.

³ The publication can be accessed from www.deat.gov.za or ordered free of charge

CHAPTER 5: POVERTY

OVERVIEW

Poverty is a massive problem in South Africa, and affects every aspect of life. Because of South Africa's large socio-economic gap, and because of the complicated nature of poverty with its inter-connected causes, symptoms and consequences, it is important for journalists to develop a holistic understanding of it, regardless of their 'beat' in the newsroom.

Definition/s

- The South African government is currently finalising a long awaited **National Anti-Poverty Strategy Framework Document**, which can be found on www.presidentcy.gov.za. This document provides a flexible definition of poverty as follows:

“The definition and measurement of poverty, the world over, remain a contested terrain. It seems, however, generally accepted that poverty implies a deficiency in an individual’s socio-economic capabilities. Its dimensions include factors such as income, access to basic services, access to assets and human capital, and social capital. This broad approach to poverty allows for engagement with the reality of poverty and the combination of interventions that should be implemented to deal with it.”

- ‘Absolute poverty’ is a state aligned to subsistence existence.
- ‘Relative poverty’ is a measure of equality within a specific society.

POVERTY IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA

The following have been identified as some of the trends to do with poverty in the international media:

- Stories that tackle poverty head-on often do not make it into **mainstream media**.
- The poor are often portrayed as **‘the other’** living a separate and foreign existence to those with adequate money.
- The way it is **racialised and gendered** is too simplistic.

- Poverty only gets coverage when there is something **cataclysmic** like the Great Depression or Hurricane Katrina.
- The corollary is that if it is steadily reported on, it loses its **‘shock value’** and people tune out.
- Poverty coverage tends to rely on two **stereotypical portrayals**: sentimentalism and sensationalism. The former might concentrate on a ‘victim’, usually a woman, who is a hero and can do nothing wrong as she ekes out her existence trying to feed her children. The latter involves portrayals of a poor person – usually a man – as a dangerous criminal involved in an underworld of drugs and violence.
- Because poverty is a **slow and grinding topic**, editors do not pressurise reporters to write on it. It is not ‘eventful’.
- Poverty is **never a dedicated section** or ‘beat’ in a newspaper. This might be because it overlaps with so many issues, or because there is lack of interest in it from the readership.
- The media is **‘fatalistic’** about poverty and sees it as something that can never be solved. This decreases the impetus to write about it.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

South Africa is a middle income developing country not deemed to be a poor country by world standards. However, poverty is a crippling reality faced by the majority of South Africans, and therefore should be explicitly and implicitly addressed in the media.

The cycle of poverty

- When analysts refer to the ‘inter-generational aspect or legacy of poverty’, they are referring to the fact that growing up in a household of **poverty often binds people into the same state of existence** for their own lives.
- **For example:** Poverty in childhood can result in malnutrition, which restricts one’s ability to fully develop mentally or physically and which therefore lessens one’s ability to perform in school. **Money for transport to school** might be lacking, or **time that should be allocated to homework** given by a teacher is instead used up for household work such as gathering firewood or water. Lack of **access to social networks** means that the jobs that other people get through word of mouth, or family, or other networks are not available.

- Growing up in a household without any employed members means that you have **no role model** for getting to work on time, seeking promotions, and furthering yourself as an employee.
- The links between **poor health** and poverty also mean that working-age people often have disabled or sick dependents that they have to stay home to care for.
- These are just **some of the ways** in which people not only live in poverty, but get ‘stuck’ in poverty as a self-perpetuating cycle.
- **Tip:** *Reporters need to explore poverty holistically, and the ways in which it is cyclical. Reports should assess the legacy of poverty, and avoid one-dimensional reporting on ‘quick fixes’.*

Inequality⁴

- South Africa, Botswana and Namibia are the three **most unequal countries** in the world in terms of income inequality.
- Studies have shown that inequality, especially **income inequality**, has risen steadily since 1994 in South Africa.
- This **retards economic growth** because only those who have access to resources are able to participate in the mainstream economy.
- According to the World Bank 2006 World Development Report (Equity and Development), in countries that have high income inequality to begin with, the **potential of any programmes or state spending** to eradicate or reduce poverty is extremely low, given that the structural nature of exclusion will not allow people to move out of poverty and into sustainable livelihoods.
- The **top 10% of South African earners** earn **50%** of the income, while the lowest two deciles (see definition below) access 1.5% of the total national income. The top decile’s mean income is 94 times that of the lowest decile.
- **Tip:** *Media reports on poverty need to place it within the broader context of the national society as a whole. This does not mean over-simplified reporting on the haves versus the have-nots. It means critically analysing the plight of the poor against a backdrop of the society at large.*

New drivers of poverty

- The **lasting legacy of apartheid**, namely that of deliberate underdevelopment, illegal removals and evictions from land and businesses, poor ‘Bantu Education’, and the myriad other laws of dispossession and disenfranchisement, is worsened by **new drivers of poverty** and inequality, such as HIV/AIDS and the economic recession.
- The prevalence of **HIV and related opportunistic diseases** has crippled many communities in South Africa with poor people and communities being affected disproportionately.
- The **economic recession and food price hikes** are the latest drivers of poverty.
- **Tip:** *For media to engage readers with **cutting-edge reports**, stories need to combine past factors with present or new factors when it comes to poverty. Simply blaming apartheid without looking at new drivers of poverty is one-dimensional reporting. Likewise, it is wholly inaccurate to portray a post-1994 society as being on an equal footing.*

Unemployment and low wages

- The triangulation between **poverty, unemployment and inequality** is seldom so starkly visible anywhere else in the world, and the reach of racist apartheid ideology continues to be reproduced within these domains.
- Regardless of the **measurement tools** that one uses to assess the number of poor in South Africa, the numbers are always **extremely high**, even for a developing country.
- Income from **wages and self-employment** clearly constitutes the largest single source of revenue into households across all population groups. Accordingly, in order to understand levels of well-being or destitution better, it is important to understand levels of employment and unemployment, as well as levels of wages that accrue to workers.
- Employment is also **no guarantee against poverty**: Seventy-six percent of all employees in both the formal and informal economies earn R2 500 per month or less. Ninety-five percent of workers in the informal economy and 99% of domestic workers earn less than R2 500 per month. A staggering 66% of workers in the formal economy however also earn less than R2 500 per month.

⁴ These statistics were supplied by the Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute

- **Tip:** *Because unemployed members of society, as well as those who live a hand-to-mouth existence on low wages, hold little power in society, they are often rendered **voiceless**. Their invisibility in the media perpetuates this situation. Journalists should actively seek out these members of society so that a human face can go with the statistics.*
- **Tip:** *Experiential writing is also important when it comes to themes of poverty. Merely interviewing a poverty-stricken person is unlikely to give a reporter a sense of their daily struggles or innovations. It is better to spend time with the interview subject, and **'experience'** their day rather than just hear about it.*

Racial bias

- Poverty in South Africa has a very clear **racial bias** as a result of colonialism and apartheid.
- For example, between 1996 and 2001, whites as a total share of the population fell from 11% to 9%, but their share of the **total income** increased from 47% to 48%. During this same period, the share of black Africans as a total share of the population rose from 78% to 80%, but the total share of income to black Africans remained at 38% of total income.
- **Tip:** *While race in post-apartheid South Africa is sometimes a taboo topic in news stories and features, in their role as **'watchdogs'** in society journalists should explicitly address the issues affecting that society. If a racial bias still plays an enormous role in inequality, it cannot be ignored.*
- **Tip:** *This does not mean resorting to **stereotypes**. It means finding a broad range of interview subjects, and coupling human interest angles with statistics and facts.*

Government response to poverty

- The **social grant programme** is deemed by many to be the most successful government anti-poverty programme. Through this programme, social grants (child support grants, old age pension and disability grants) are made available to just over 13-million people in South Africa each month.
- Social grants are a form of **social security**. Other forms of assistance are access to housing, subsidised school fees, school feeding schemes, healthcare, and Expanded Public Works Programmes.
- Because social grants provide money to poor people from tax payers, they are

also **redistributive** and reduce the high levels of income inequality faced by South Africans.

- The problem, however, is that for **able-bodied people** between the ages of 16 and 59, there are **no grants available** regardless of one's level of poverty. This has led to calls for a universal Basic Income Grant in terms of which a minimum amount of money (for example, R100) could be paid to everybody every month. This would be claimed back from wealthier people through the income tax system, and although small it would ensure that at least people could afford **basic food**.

MEASUREMENTS

- The **most frequently used measurement** of poverty continues to be a poverty line. This enables one to measure at a single moment in time how many people can be said to live below a certain threshold, and so they are deemed poor.
- The **risk of a severe cut-off measurement** is that someone who might fall just outside of that measurement, and who still has very little, is seen as not being poor and is therefore excluded from state assistance or other poverty alleviation measures.
- It is also important to remember that a poverty line just gives you two figures – those who are above the line and those below it. **Poverty lines cannot tell you the depth of poverty** – i.e. how far different people lie below the poverty line. In other words, you cannot tell if someone is living in destitution, close to starvation, or whether they lie just below the poverty line.
- **Stats SA** (see website below) provides access to the quarterly Labour Force Survey results, the National Census (every ten years), the five yearly Income and Expenditure Survey (the last one still used was 2005/06) and other surveys such as the Community Survey.
- Statistics need to be **read in context**. For example, recent research suggests that while the total rate of South Africans living below the poverty line has dropped with the social grants, the proportion of people living in destitution (defined as living on less than 1US\$ per day) more than doubled between 1996 and 2005, and the total number of people living in this category rose from 1.9 million people to 4.2 million people.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- Economic Policy Research Institute: www.epri.org.za
- Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (Saldru) www.saldru.uct.ac.za
- The national presidency: www.presidency.gov.za
- Department of Social Development: www.dsd.gov.za
- Statistics South Africa: www.statssa.gov.za
- World Bank: www.worldbank.org
- International Labour Organisation: www.ilo.org
- Development Policy Research Unit (at University of Cape Town): www.dpru.uct.ac.za
- Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy: www.casasp.ox.ac.uk
- Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute: www.spii.org.za
- Black Sash: www.blacksash.org.za

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Poverty alleviation:** programmes that seek to lessen people's poverty by providing some of the things that they cannot afford; this enables people to use what little they have for other purposes; such programmes include social grants (income), state/public health care, subsidised transport, free schooling and food schemes, for example;
- **Poverty eradication:** ways in which poverty can be structurally ended, such as through the creation of jobs or secure and decent income strategies; it defines a longer term goal than poverty alleviation which tends to be more immediate in nature;
- **Poverty reduction:** this is a broad term that refers to both of the above initiatives (meeting immediate needs, as well as ending poverty over time);
- **Pro-poor Programmes:** these have a deliberate bias towards poor people – e.g. means tested cash transfers;
- **Anti-Poverty:** This is a broad term that covers many initiatives that seek to reduce poverty and prevent future impoverishment of people or the deepening of current levels of poverty;
- **Decile:** This refers to one tenth when a whole has been divided into ten segments; one decile of the population means 10% of the population;

- **Poverty line (or 'bread line'):** a level of personal income defining the state of poverty;
- **Social safety net:** A system of available payments in cash or in kind which will keep people's incomes from falling below some socially accepted minimum level.

HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- **Mainstreaming poverty in the media:** Reporting on poverty can be explicit and implicit. In other words, it can be the main focus and obvious angle of a story. It can also be combined as an element or theme in a story that is mainly about something else.
- **Poverty in beat reporting:** It is useful to look through the 'lens' of poverty on whatever beat you are responsible for. It is a cross-cutting theme.
- **Race and gender:** Reports should recognise that poverty is a gendered and racialised problem, but should not oversimplify these notions.
- **The right to dignity:** Avoid portraying the poor as the 'other' living a separate existence to the rest of society. Reporting should acknowledge the problem of poverty in the society as a whole, and put a human face on it.
- **Event reporting:** Journalists should think critically about their coverage of events that affect the poor. This means taking a short-term and long-term view of causes and effects.
- **Steady reporting:** Poverty is a perennial and pervasive issue in society. It should not only be reported on when a cataclysmic event has occurred. In other words, there should be issue-based reporting and not just event-based reporting when it comes to poverty.
- **Policy:** How poverty is being tackled by government, especially with the start of a new leadership, is critical in the media. This also means following through with critical assessment of how and if those policies are being implemented in a practical way.
- **Poverty stereotyping:** Avoid the stereotyping identified in the global media (see Global Context above).
- **Seeking solutions:** Avoid 'fatalistic' reporting which implies that poverty can never be solved. Actively seek sources who offer potential solutions and not just the doom and gloom on poverty.

- **Combining two methods for poverty news-gathering:**
 - Poverty research falls roughly into two main approaches – quantitative research that looks at data from large surveys and is more statistical in nature, and qualitative studies that seek to explore poverty dynamics by having one-on-one interviews or focus group discussions.
 - Qualitative research focuses on how poverty affects people or it can seek to understand what obstacles people face in ordinary life in trying to move out of poverty and into sustainable livelihood strategies.
- **Reporting on poverty alongside wealth:** ‘The wealthier one sector of society is, the poorer another must be’. Investigating the decline in real terms of wages paid by a company compared to a rise in profits posted by the same company over time is an interesting way of approaching this idea.
- **Avoiding prototypes of the ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’:** There is an old-fashioned notion that the poor are responsible for their own poverty and historically, the notions of the ‘deserving’ and ‘non-deserving’ poor came about. This has been perpetuated in media stereotyping: Non-deserving poor are associated with women and children and the disabled, while working-age poor men are implicitly seen as being lazy and responsible for their own plight. In the context of South Africa, this type of stereotyping is absurd, and journalists should do their utmost to avoid it.

FLASHPOINTS

‘How poverty, inequality, wealth and individual aspirations are portrayed by the media is critical to the way in which the eradication of poverty is viewed. Poverty should be seen as being everybody’s problem.’ – Isobel Frye, Director of SPII (Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute)

- Look at the **UN Millennium Development Goals** as many relate to poverty.
- Other **useful documents** to research include:
 - Draft National Anti-Poverty Strategy Framework
 - Transforming the Present – Protecting the Future – Consolidated Report of the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security for South Africa, March 2002.
- **Useful experts** to search on the internet:
 - Charles Meth
 - Sampie Terreblanche
 - Anna McCord
 - Julian May
 - Haroon Borat
 - Murray Leibbrandt
 - Patrick Bond
 - Ravi Kanbur
 - Ashwin Desai
 - Isobel Frye

CHAPTER 6: BEYOND XENOPHOBIA

OVERVIEW

Xenophobia is a complex topic, and when it was thrust into the media spotlight in May 2008 during the violent attacks against foreign African nationals, journalists responded with varying degrees of understanding and sensitivity. Extreme prejudice of this nature, however, is part of a more complex whole to do with history, policy, migration patterns, governance and a myriad other issues – including the media's own role in inciting intolerance and violence.

The onus is now on the media to keep the debates and coverage alive beyond the sensationalism of the attacks because foreign nationals form part of South African society.

Definition:

The word 'xenophobia' comes from the Greek words *xenos* and *phobos* meaning 'foreign' and 'fear' respectively. Its literal meaning is, therefore, a fear of what is foreign. Its socially-constructed meaning is a hatred (or fear) of foreign people (in other words, people from a country other than one's own).

XENOPHOBIA IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA

Some of the debates that have emerged about xenophobia in the global media pertain to, amongst others:

- improving reporting **standards and accountability** of journalists
- **self-regulation** policies
- the **ethics** and **impact** of media reports on minorities
- deliberate or inadvertent **stereotyping**
- recruitment practices in the media industry
- **balancing** freedom of expression with protection from hate speech
- making better use of **expertise and experience** of civil society

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Violence against non-nationals⁵

- The xenophobia attacks of May 2008 reflected **fundamental tensions and dysfunctions** in contemporary South African society and politics.
- A common theme in the media was that the **violence resulted directly** from poor border control, rising food and commodity prices, poor service delivery and joblessness.
- Researchers, however, have stated that the violence was fundamentally the result of **institutional marginalisation** of some poor and non-citizen residents, and of local government failures.
- While the **humanitarian response** from civil society to the attacks was impressive, many have argued that **government lacked a co-ordinated response** to the emergency.
- In the wake of the attacks, a theme of **peaceful reintegration** filtered through public opinion. Again, researchers have argued that this is a **falsehood** and that those returning to communities where attacks took place faced – and still face – threats and actual experiences of further violence.
- It is clear that, while the shock value of the attacks provided countless story ideas for the media, there are **still many questions** that need to be explored.

Arrest, detention and deportation

- Research has found that individual police stations and officers often decide for themselves how to treat suspected 'illegal migrants', leading to multiple **irregularities and human rights abuses**. Perhaps the most obvious and long-term problem has been police officers' extortion of migrants for bribes.
- In many cases, the police **detain and deport people without due process** and in violation of the Immigration Act.

Refugee Reception Offices (RROs)

- Despite capacity-building efforts, there are still **problems with how the RROs operate** and in their ability to protect those in need. Published procedures are often not adhered to.

⁵ The information on the 'local context' comes from the June 2009 report released by Cormsa. To see the full report, visit their website: www.cormsa.org.za

- Despite some improvements, asylum-seekers **still struggle to access the offices and secure adequate services** once inside. After many failed attempts to access the reception offices to renew their permits, asylum-seekers are regularly arrested and detained.

Problems of access

- **Healthcare:** Refugees and asylum-seekers continue to have negative interactions with, and treatment by, public healthcare providers. Ambiguity persists within the public system on refugees' and asylum-seekers' rights to access healthcare in general and anti-retroviral therapy in particular.
- **Education:** While relatively few migrant families have children of school-going age in South Africa, severe obstacles remain for migrant children to access education. These include: securing a place when schools are full, an inability to pay school fees, being without documents, and being unable to afford transport, uniforms or books.
- **Employment:** Most migrants are economically active and do not require social assistance in finding work. Twenty percent of refugees and asylum-seekers have at some point employed someone else, in many cases, a South African citizen. Also, non-nationals regularly report being rejected as job applicants because of being a foreign national – regardless of their legal status and right to work.
- **Financial services:** Access to credit and banking services remains a challenge for non-South Africans, reducing their physical and financial security. Part of this is due to the challenge of providing proof of address. Also, in many cases, banks have refused to allow those with expired permits to access their own money, despite the enormous difficulties they face in renewing permits.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

- A significant number of **cross-border migrant women and girls** from Zimbabwe continue to be **exposed to rape** by informal cross-border transporters, smugglers and criminals while trying to enter SA through clandestine channels due to lack of legal entry options.
- During the May 2008 attacks, **sexual violence was used as a weapon to displace** migrant women and girls from their homes. Such acts included attempted, threatened and real incidents of rape.
- Migrant women face many **difficulties seeking assistance** after exposure to cases of gender-based violence.

MEASUREMENTS

- Media stories require statistics as substantiation, but in the case of foreign African nationals in South Africa, numbers are **hard to come by**.
- The Department of Home Affairs has statistics of who has applied for various forms of documentation, but **not who crosses the border informally**.
- Analysis of stats in the media often ignores the fact that non-nationals are **also leaving South Africa**. This means that migration is seen as being about people coming into the country and then wanting to stay for good.
- Many of the commonly quoted 'statistics' on illegal migrants – particularly Zimbabweans – are not based on any **solid supporting evidence**.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa: www.cormsa.org.za
- Forced Migration Studies Programme (at Wits University): <http://migration.org.za>
- Lawyers for Human Rights: www.lhr.org.za
- Forced Migration Online (at the University of Oxford): www.forcedmigration.org
- Relief Web: www.reliefweb.int
- Southern African Migration Project: www.queensu.ca/samp
- Media Monitoring Africa: www.mediamonitoringafrica.org
- International Organisation for Migration: <http://iom.org.za>

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Migrant:** any person who currently resides at a different place from where they were born; or any person who has recently moved from their habitual place of residence;
- **Internal migrant:** a local person who moves within the country, often from a rural to an urban area (note: by far the largest numbers of migrants in South Africa are internal migrants);
- **Refugee:** a person who has been granted asylum and given refugee status by their host state. Under South African law, this is something done only by the Department of Home Affairs;

- **Asylum-seeker:** a person who has lodged a formal claim for asylum with the Department of Home Affairs and is waiting for the claim to be processed and a decision on her/his refugee status to be made;
- **Non-citizen or non-national:** a person who does not have South African citizenship but who is in South Africa regardless of legal status;
- **Foreigner:** a person who is originally from another country. This term is very vague and does not have any legal meaning, since many people who were born outside South Africa and have been in the country for many years now have citizenship;
- **Economic migrant:** a person who has come to South Africa mainly for economic reasons. Many economic migrants have legal documents to be in the country, with work permits, corporate permits, or as traders or shoppers;
- **Undocumented migrant:** a person who is in South Africa without legal documentation. Some people (see above) are undocumented because they have not yet been able to lodge an application for asylum with the Department of Home Affairs, due to administrative delays at the DHA. They are not illegally in the country, since they have a right to apply for asylum. Undocumented migrants are often mistakenly presumed to be illegal migrants;
- **Illegal immigrant:** a person who is in South Africa without legal permission according to the Immigration Act or Refugees Act. Many undocumented migrants are economic migrants and so do not qualify for asylum or do not wish to apply;
- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDP):** According to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, IDPs are “persons who have been forced ...to flee ... their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.” IDPs can be citizens or non-citizens, as long as they are forcibly displaced from the places of habitual residence.
- **Including nationality unnecessarily:** The best way to test if your reporting is prejudiced or might incite intolerance is to substitute a description of someone’s nationality for a description of race, and then see how racist it sounds. For example: Many journalists may write, “A Malawian man has been arrested for stealing copper wire.” They may not see how this is unacceptable until they imagine it read as follows: “A black man has been arrested for stealing copper wire.”
- **Lack of clarity in crime statistics reporting:** Crime statistics reports are often used as bases for stories by reporters. Listing arrests for murder, rape and theft are sometimes juxtaposed with statistics to do with illegal immigration, thus creating a link in people’s minds between criminal activities and the presence of foreigners. Make sure there is enough clarity in your reporting to break that link and keep them as separate topics.
- **Sensationalism in border-crossing stories:** Avoid using words like *flock*, *flood*, *pour*, and *tsunami* when describing border crossings. While they do highlight the newsworthiness of a story, they can create panic and are untrue.
- **Inciting violence and prejudice:** Avoid using words like *alien*⁶, *makwerekwere*, and *nyampane*. They foster a culture of intolerance and violence.
- **Revealing people’s identity:** Xenophobic tensions remain high and details about people can lead to further violence and intimidation. Women are more vulnerable than men to this, but it applies to everyone.
- **Naming refugees:** There can be major consequences for those seeking refuge in South Africa if their name and whereabouts are revealed in the newspaper.
- **Shallow reporting:** While stories on xenophobia provide much material for hard news stories, history and context are important in all issues to do with migration. Analytical stories on policy, implementation and governance are just as important as those to do with incidents related to foreign nationals.
- **Perpetuating the ‘victim’ status:** Attacks and other forms of prejudice committed against foreign nationals are, rightly so, highlighted in the media. There are, however, also many stories of innovation, strength and ingenuity arising from migrant communities. Journalists should also seek out stories which move beyond the ‘victim’ stereotyping of foreign African nationals.

HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- **Quoting government sources:** Government spokespeople often mention people’s nationality or suspected nationality to the media, and are then quoted verbatim. If these statements reflect xenophobic attitudes, passively repeating them makes them seem acceptable.

⁶ Media Monitoring Africa and the Daily Sun (a tabloid) reached a settlement after the former took the latter to the South African Press Ombudsman claiming that the terms ‘alien’ and ‘evil aliens’ had contributed to the violent xenophobia attacks of 2008. To find out more go to the website: http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/index.php/news/entry/xenophobic_newspaper_promises_improvement/

- **Policy:** It is important not only to keep an eye on policy and changes in policy, but the extent to which these are being implemented and the effect they are or aren't having.

FLASHPOINTS

- One of the most contentious issues is the South African government's response to **Zimbabwean migrants** seeking documentation to be in South Africa. In April 2009, the government announced a new migration management regime in relation to Zimbabweans, including a moratorium on deportations, a 90-day free visa for Zimbabweans entering South Africa, and a 12-month special dispensation permit for undocumented Zimbabweans already in the country. To read more about this, see the June 2009 report released by Cormsa (Consortium of Refugees and Migrants South Africa) which can be found on their website (see website list).
- **Media Monitoring Africa** has brought out a resource called *Shades of Prejudice* which provides journalists with guidelines on issues to do with xenophobia (see website list above).
- **The International Organization for Migration (IOM)** recently published a research paper entitled *Towards Tolerance, Law and Dignity: Addressing Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa*. This can be found on their website (see website list).
- On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. The document, which can now be found on the internet, is a useful starting point for any critical assessment of issues around the rights of immigrants.

CHAPTER 7: GENDER ISSUES

OVERVIEW

'Gender' should not be viewed as a 'topic' in the media. Everything has a gender component, whether one is reporting on the economic crisis, education, crime, employment, or anything else. This means that 'gender' is not an add-on.

Therefore, one needs to work on the premise that everything is gendered, and that men and women are experiencing anything being reported on in the news and analysis in different ways.

The word 'gender' has come to be synonymous with women, but this is a problem perpetuated by the media itself. Gender does not refer to women. It refers to men and women.

Definition

- The biological distinction between males and females is commonly referred to as their 'sex'.
- 'Gender', on the other hand, refers to the socially-constructed identities and roles associated with the different sexes.

GENDER IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Extensive research by the Global Media Monitoring Project found the following trends in the global media⁷:

- **Marginalisation of women's views and voices:** Women constitute 52% of the world's population yet make up only 21% of people featured in the news.
- **Men's stories dominate in hard news:** Men are the majority of news subjects in all story topics, particularly when it comes to hard news. When women do feature in the news, they are more likely to be found in 'soft' stories.
- **Men dominate as spokespersons and experts:** Eighty-six percent of all people featured in new stories as spokespeople are men. Men also make up 83% of all experts. Women are much less likely to be considered experts in media coverage. Instead they are more often present as voices expressing personal experience (31%) or popular opinion (34%).

⁷ This is abridged information from the report. To see the full report, visit www.whomakesthenews.org.

- **Women are more than twice as likely as men to be portrayed as victims:** Female and male victims are present in a high portion of news reports. However, women are disproportionately represented in this way with 19% of women being portrayed as victims compared with 8% of men.
- **Female reporters are more likely to cover 'soft' news:** Men tend to cover the 'hard' topics – news that is perceived as 'serious'. Only 32% of stories on politics and government are reported on by female journalists as compared with 40% of stories on social issues such as education, family relations, entertainment and culture.
- **Women are very unlikely to be the central focus of a story:** Only 10% of news stories worldwide have women as a central focus. The proportion of these stories varies widely across different topics. Women are central to the news story in 17% of 'soft' topics such as celebrity news, sports or social issues. Only 3% of stories on economics and 8% of stories on politics and government have women as a central focus.
- **News stories are more likely to reinforce than challenge gender stereotypes:** Only 3% of stories challenge stereotypes compared with 6% of stories that reinforce gender stereotypes. More generally though, news content reinforces gender stereotypes by depicting a world in which women are relatively invisible.
- **Gender (in)equality is not considered newsworthy:** 96% of news stories worldwide do not highlight issues of gender equality or inequality. The stories that do highlight gender equality or inequality make up only 4% of news stories.
- In its role of holding government to account, and enabling citizens to make informed decisions, it is essential for media to **give voice to the concerns and circumstances** of those perceived to be voiceless in society. South African women, particularly black African rural women, are still marginalised, and this is exacerbated by their invisibility in the media. Reporters have a key role to play in ensuring that women's voices are heard.
- Media should be addressing the following, amongst others, within a gender framework:
 - **gender-based violence**, including security, the justice system and treatment of survivors
 - female poverty, in particular **African rural females** who make up one of the most marginalised populations in South Africa
 - **education attainment** and training
 - **public service delivery**, in particular, access to public utilities, welfare and appropriate health services including HIV/Aids testing, counselling and treatment
 - **access** to land, housing and credit
 - affirmative Action and **employment conditions**, including wage inequity and lack of maternity leave for many forms of employment
 - the **economic recession** and its particular impact on women

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Visibility in the media⁸

- It is clear that issues around **gender equality**, women's poverty and health are of primary importance to South Africa. Women form a greater proportion of South Africa's population and a greater proportion of the rural population (which is also the most poorly serviced), head a greater number of households (which are more likely to be poor and earn less than male-headed households), are affected by HIV/Aids the most, and suffer alarming levels of gender-based violence.

⁸ This is an excerpt from a report by Media Monitoring Africa entitled *Women?! What women? How media contributes to the disempowerment of women*. It can be viewed on the following website: http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/index.php/resources/entry/women_what_women_-_media_contributes_to_the_disempowerment_of_women/

MEASUREMENTS

Overview

- **Statistics** are a vital part of any story with a gender component as they shed light on the extent of gendered experiences.
- **Anecdotal evidence** of individuals' stories are placed in context through the use of statistics, either in the story or included in a sidebar or fact box.
- Problems that have reached '**epidemic**' proportions in South Africa, like gender-based violence and intimate femicide, are brought to light through the use of statistics coupled with human interest stories.
- Because **every story is gendered**, and because gender is most often included as a category in quantitative techniques, there is no shortage of facts and figures to bolster reporting that includes a gender component.

- Sometimes the statistics **fall short** of providing an indication of the full extent of an issue. For example, statistics on all forms of gender-based violence are conservative because many cases go unreported.

Snapshots

The following are examples of statistics which would make a useful starting point for an investigation, or which could substantiate a hard news story or an in-depth feature⁹:

- **Media:** During the 2009 general election, gender as a topic received 0.6% of election coverage attention, and gender-based violence received such little attention that it was apportioned 0%.
- **Gender gap:** According to the Global Gender Gap Report, 2008, South Africa ranks number 93 in terms of economic participation and opportunity.
- **Labour:** Women's labour force participation is only just over half that for men's participation rate (49% versus 82%, pre-economic slowdown). The participation rates are even lower for higher positions, with women making up only 19% of the total work force for these positions. On average, women are also paid less than half that of men.
- **Government:** While South Africa boasts a high number of women in ministerial positions, the number of women in parliament is still less than half that of men.
- **Female-headed households:** These account for a greater proportion of all South African households, and – with little or no income – are up to double as likely as male-headed households to be poor. A 2008 Stats SA survey estimated that at least three quarters (75.6%) of total household income was earned by male-headed households.
- **Rural areas:** Gender inequality across the general population is even greater in rural areas, with households being more likely to be headed by a female and poor (rural households account for the majority of poor households). The unemployment rate for South African women in total is marginally higher than that for men. However, this differential grows for rural women, with an unemployment rate of more than 50%, while for men it is under 40%.
- **Racialised and gendered poverty:** Almost half of South African females live in non-urban/rural areas, and more than half of this group are African.
- **Hunger:** Over the period 2002 to 2006, Stats SA estimate the percentage of children that went hungry was substantially higher in female-headed households than in male-headed households.
- **Welfare:** Despite social grants being a major source of income for the poor and thus playing an important role in reducing inequality, African female-headed households obtain the lowest levels of welfare.
- **HIV:** The HIV infection rate for the general population over the age of 2 years is estimated at 10.8%, though women in the 15-49 year age group are believed to be almost double that. According to a 2006 study by the Department of Health, 29.1% of pregnant women were HIV-positive.
- **Gender-based violence (GBV):** It is estimated that one in two South African women might be raped in their lifetime, and one in four girls are sexually abused, including at school. Recent studies by the Medical Research Council (MRC) claim that one in four South African men have admitted to committing rape. The high incidence of GBV in South Africa is also a contributor to the high HIV infection rate.
- **Intimate femicide using a gun:** An average of one woman per day is shot and killed by an intimate partner.
- **Safety in childbirth:** A 2008 report, published by a partnership for maternal, new-born and child health (MNCH), noted that the level of maternal mortality for South Africa was 'high', with 400 deaths per 100 000 live births.
- **Child morbidity:** The rates for rural African child morbidity under the age of one are 40% higher than for urban African infants, while almost 500% higher than for white infants.
- **Cervical cancer:** This is the second most common form of cancer for South African women in general and the most common for African women. One in 41 women will develop this cancer, and though not all result in fatality, there is a greater risk of infertility. Pap smears for detection of abnormalities are the best form of secondary prevention, but are not available at even a third of rural clinics, and are only available at just over two thirds of urban clinics.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- Gender Links: www.genderlinks.org.za
- Fatherhood Project (at the Human Sciences Research Council): www.hsrc.ac.za/RPP-Fatherhood-29.phtml

⁹ These statistics come from the Media Monitoring Africa report listed in footnote 7.

- African Gender Institute: <http://web.uct.ac.za/org/agi/links.htm>
- Commission for Gender Equality: <http://www.cge.org.za>
- Gender Advocacy Programme: www.gender.co.za
- Sonke Gender Justice Network: www.genderjustice.org.za
- Gender and Health Research Unit (at the Medical Research Council): www.mrc.ac.za/gender/gender.htm
- Gender and Media Southern Africa: www.gemsa.org.za
- South African Gender-based Violence and Health Initiative (at the Human Sciences Research Council): www.mrc.ac.za/gender/sagbvhi.htm
- Media Monitoring Africa: www.mediamonitoringafrica.org
- Unesco's guidelines on gender-neutral language: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001149/114950Mo.pdf>
- Global Media Monitoring Project: www.whomakesthenews.org
- African Fathers Initiative: <http://www.africanfathers.org>

USEFUL TERMINOLOGY

- **Gender mainstreaming:** methodical ways to set standards, outcomes and patterns of behaviour which will promote gender equality in public and private organisations;
- **Gender competence:** the ability to lead and manage the human resources of an organisation in a gender-sensitive and gender-fair manner;
- **Gender Justice:** the ending of, and if necessary the provision of redress for, inequalities between women and men that result in women's subordination to men
- **Femicide:** the systematic killing of women for a variety of reasons;
- **Intimate femicide:** the systematic killing of a woman/women by an intimate partner;
- **Gender-based violence:** a broad term that includes a wide range of violations of women's human rights, including trafficking in women and girls, rape, wife abuse, sexual abuse of children, and harmful cultural practices and traditions that irreparably damage girls' and women's reproductive and sexual health.

MORE HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

- Because men and women are affected differently by everyday factors, think of ways to **'mainstream' gender** in your reporting, rather than seeing it as a 'separate issue'.
- **Finding gaps** to do with gender in other journalists' reporting is a useful way to come up with new story ideas and angles. For example, a story on housing might generate an idea for a story on housing in relation to the high prevalence of households headed by single mothers.
- **Avoid stereotyping.** While most journalists know better than to use deliberate stereotypes in a story, critically assess your own work to make sure it isn't implicit in your writing.
- A key concept to introduce gender angles in a story is the word **'access'**. Very often, women have lower access to resources than men. In some instances, it might be the other way around.
- **Focus on issues** which have become a **crisis** in South Africa, such as intimate femicide and other forms of gender-based violence.
- In political reporting, **move beyond the head counts of women in parliament** and critically assess the extent to which gender issues, such as gender justice, are being addressed. Also, critically assess the number of women in decision-making roles in government (such as the executive and cabinet), and not simply how many are in parliament.
- Examine what is happening at **policy** level and make the information more user-friendly for the reader.
- Critically assess the extent to which those **policies** are being properly **implemented**.
- Many of the issues that came out in the **Global Media Monitoring Project** (see above) pertain to South Africa. Critically assess these and find ways to counteract them in your own reporting. For example, do you actively seek female voices and experts?
- **Avoid treating gender issues as women's issues only.** Gender-specific stories, such as reporting on gender-based violence, are often treated like women's issues, written by female journalists, not as societal issues that affect everyone. In this way, it transforms 'gender issues' to women's issues.
- **Link up with** non-government organisations and other field workers. Those working at community level are more in touch with what is happening and

have built up trust with your potential sources.

- Be in touch with **real people**. Those with power can provide useful comment but not experiential information.
- Remember to include **components of class** in reporting. Realities faced by middle class women differ vastly from those in other socio-economic groups.
- Be aware of the large **urban-rural divide** as issues affecting both men and women in rural areas are often very different from those in urban areas.
- **Do not homogenise women's experiences** as several contrasting factors play a role in personal experiences.
- Think in terms of the **region** (South Africa, Southern Africa and Africa). Gender issues are not universal across the continents.
- Avoid only writing stories that portray women as victims. Balance these against **stories of innovation, strength and survival**.

Reporting on abuse and gender-based violence:

- When reporting on abuse, make sure **not to over-sensationalise** the story. Consider the survivor's feelings and emotions when thinking of your story angle, conducting interviews, and writing your story.
- Be sure **not to cross-examine** those who have encountered abuse merely for the purpose of getting information for your story.
- Avoiding reinforcing **stereotypes of women as victims**. While many stories should highlight the plight of women in South Africa, journalists should actively seek stories of innovation, survival, entrepreneurship and strength. Even in stories of abuse and rape, the word 'survivor' is preferable to the word 'victim'.
- Make sure that stories on murder, rape and abuse avoid the stereotypical facts which imply that the victim/survivor **asked for it**.
- Critically assess **health issues** (such as HIV and sexually-transmitted infections) associated with gender-based violence.
- Explore gender-based violence in its **broader context**. Critically assess common themes such as the myth that 'GBV is a form of love', and the role of GBV in economic power imbalances across the genders.

FLASHPOINTS

- Media Monitoring Africa conducted an **analysis of media coverage** of gender issues in South Africa's 2009 general elections. The full report is on their website (see website list).
- In August 2008 leaders of the Southern African Community Development signed the **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development**. Do an internet search to read the document and the analysis that followed.
- Find out more about the **Sixteen Days of Activism** campaign, and the more recent **365 Days of Activism** campaign resulting from it.
- Look at Unesco's document on the use of **gender-neutral language** (see website above). Examples include: use of the word 'photographer' rather than 'cameraman', 'ancestors' rather than 'forefathers', and 'humankind' instead of 'mankind'.
- Look at Goal 3 of the **UN Millennium Development Goals**.
- For latest studies, see **Agenda Journal** (a publication of Agenda, a feminist media organisation based in Africa), and **Feminist Africa** (a publication of the Africa Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town).

CHAPTER 8: CHILDREN'S ISSUES

OVERVIEW

Coverage of children in South African newspapers is not a new topic of discussion, and many resources providing guidelines for journalists already exist. It has been included in this booklet, however, as it is a topic which requires constant critical assessment.

As journalists, we need to think of children as a 'lens' through which any newspaper story can be filtered, rather than as a separate 'topic' that a newspaper covers. This is because children are affected by any issues in their communities – in ways that are similar to adults and in ways which are unique to them as children.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

When the World Association of Newspapers conducted a global content study of children in newspapers (involving 70 classes of 10-12-year-olds from 24 different countries across five continents), the following were some of the findings that came to light:

- Children are as **diverse** as their adult counterparts, and the newspapers should reflect this.
- Children believe that bad news about children should be balanced with examples of **improvements** in children's lives.
- The children categorized 31.03% of the stories into the category "**Children as Victims**". They expressed sadness on behalf of those who had suffered, but noted the importance of being informed of such events.
- Children from all countries enjoyed reading about the **successes** and achievements of others.
- Children feel that stories categorized as '**Children as Wrong-doers**' tend to focus on boys' behaviour rather than that of girls.
- Children found difficulties in associating a particular gender with a story as many articles were about **children in general**.
- Children expressed sincere **happiness when finding good news** about children whose lives have been improved and when reading about adults' awareness of children's problems.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Snapshot of children in South Africa¹⁰

In our country there are seven million girls and seven million boys under 14 years of age, which means children of this age make up 29.2% of the total population. These are some of the issues affecting them:

- The **literacy-rate** in South Africa amounts to 86.4%, which means that 13.6% of our children can't read or write properly. This excludes them from a lot of different opportunities and activities.
- The average South African young person goes to **school** for 13 years, which means he/she does not receive further education after high school.
- Ninety-six percent of children between the ages of 0 and 17 attend an **education facility**. What are the other 4% of them doing? It should be 100%.
- Three in every five children younger than 17 are living in **poor households** with a total income of less than R1 200, mostly in rural areas. Every fifth child in SA suffers from hunger and under-nutrition.
- Four out of 10 children have to travel more than 30 minutes to the nearest available **clinic**, which can jeopardise their life in an emergency.
- One in 20 Infants **dies before their first birthday**.
- Half of our children younger than 17 do not have access to a **clean, reliable water** supply in their house or yard.
- One in every three children younger than 17 lives in **informal housing**.
- South Africa was ranked the country with the second highest crime rate in the world by the United Nations. Within that, the proportion of **violent crimes** (including physical and sexual abuse) perpetrated against children is high. Child labour and child trafficking are also prevalent.
- Every day **three children get killed**, mostly by perpetrators in their close social environment.

Children in the media in South Africa

The Children's Media Monitoring Project (a project of Media Monitoring Africa) offers the following observations and recommendations for journalists based on their workshops carried out with children:

¹⁰ This information comes from the Children's Movement website: www.childrensmovement.org

- Stories about children are considerably weaker when they do not include the **voices of children**. Include voices and opinions of children to make stories stronger, believable and authentic.
- Names should always be changed and **identities not revealed** in order to protect vulnerable children.
- Sometimes it is clear to audiences that children have not been asked **permission for their photographs to be taken or published**. Children should always be consulted about if and how they would like to be portrayed.
- **Gender sensitivity** needs to be incorporated into reporting on children. The ‘girls as victims’ and ‘boys as heroes or wrong-doers’ stereotypes should be avoided.
- Just because children are often vulnerable, this does **not mean they are always helpless victims**. They are also strong and resilient. A balance needs to be struck between reporting their vulnerability and not stereotyping them in the ‘victim’ role.
- **Photographs** that are visually sound but ethical at the same time are entirely possible – the one does not preclude the other. In fact, it seems that the challenge to take images sensitively can enhance the creativity of the shot.
- **Generic photographs** from the archive should be avoided. They raise ethical issues around informed consent for the particular story they accompany.
- Make sure you are aware of the most recent developments in **law, ethics and rights** around reporting on children.
- Journalists can benefit greatly from **interacting with children** through schools, non-government organisations and other focus groups.
- Sometimes headlines, captions, blurbs and generic photographs compromise the integrity of a good story. **Sub-editors** should be engaged on the issue of reporting on children to ensure this is addressed.
- Editors can and should be drawn into the process. With **editorial commitment**, coverage of children improves significantly.
- Statistics on children can be found in **less obvious places** since many sources of statistics might include children as a category even though children are not their focus. For example, research reports on the refugee camps that sprang up after the May 2008 xenophobia attacks cited numbers of children in their statistical analysis.
- Statistics on children should always be **placed in context** and analysed accordingly in terms of other cross-cutters such as socio-economic groups, racial divides and the rural-urban divide to mention but a few.
- Statistics on children are very useful as they shed **light on the magnitude** of an issue across the society. Individual stories can be viewed as ‘strategic research sites’ which point to issues faced by a great number of children.
- The **disadvantage** is that the media can make the statistics the focus of an article without including a human interest angle.
- Another challenge of statistics on children is that they are sometimes too conservative as social contexts and fears of reprisal often **prevent children from sharing the ‘full picture’** with researchers.
- **Crime statistics** to do with children are often skewed as many cases are not reported.
- A great **resource for statistics** related to children is on the Children’s Institute website (see website list below). Click on ‘indicators on children’ tab.

MEASUREMENTS

- South African children are amongst the **most vulnerable** in the world and it is therefore important to place any local statistics within the global context so that comparisons are possible.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

- Children’s Institute (at the University of Cape Town): www.ci.org.za
- Rapcan (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect): www.rapcan.org.za
- Children’s Movement South Africa: www.childrensmovement.org.za
- Centre for Early Childhood Development: www.cecd.org.za
- Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Southern Africa (CAPFSA): www.childsafe.org.za
- Child, Youth, Family and Social Development (at the Human Sciences Research Council): www.hsrc.ac.za/CYFSD.phtml
- Unicef (United Nations Children’s Fund): <http://www.unicef.org/>
- Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund: www.nelsonmandelachildrensfund.com

MORE HANDY TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

As media professionals, we should always ask ourselves the following questions:

- Do we keep the **interests of the child** as a priority in the way we represent stories?
- Do we make sure we do not **violate the rights** of children when we cover stories about them?
- Do we write stories which **overtly tackle issues** facing children?
- Do we also **implicitly include children** in most reporting that we do, since children are affected by every aspect of life?
- Do we include children's **'voices'** in our reporting?
- Do we maintain a high degree of **sensitivity** when interviewing and photographing children?
- Are we aware of, and adhering to, the **laws and ethics** that pertain to children in the media?

Other points to remember include:

- **Stories about children should not be de-contextualised:** Families (parents and caregivers) and their circumstances should always be amplified in stories to give them context and provide indication of where social policy and services are inadequate.
- **Putting policy frameworks into practice:** National policy frameworks are developed regarding the protection and safeguarding of the well-being of children, but journalists need to critically assess how these translate into local programmes and services, and what effect these have on children's well-being. A useful question related to many child-centered stories or stories including children should be: how have provinces and districts gone about implementing the different frameworks which address children's needs and interests?
- **Children across newspaper beats:** Whether you are a general assignment reporter or a beat reporter, how children are affected by an issue you are covering should be included in your story angles. For example, a transport reporter needs to include child-centered stories in his or her coverage of transport services, considering, for example:
 - How transport services for children affect their participation in the

mainstream culture of society

- Unsafe vehicles which transport children to schools
- Bus and train services which may not take into account minors' travel needs to participate in after-school activities
- *(Note: this is just an example of using children as a 'lens' for a transport reporter. Any beat or story, if brainstormed in this way, should produce a multitude of child-focused issues within a broader issue).*
- **Early childhood development:** Early childhood development has been found to be critical to any society's development. Journalists should inform society about government and civil society partnerships as well as community efforts in this area. Explore, for example, what services exist, the standards of such services, and the challenges they face.
- **Child health:** While stories are frequently written about the situation of health care services in the country, journalists need to develop the child 'lens' to see how children are affected directly and indirectly knowing that they are a vulnerable group and that their well-being can be negatively affected by maternal ill-health.
- **HIV:** While coverage of children affected and infected by HIV and AIDS has improved, there are still aspects of care and treatment which can be covered to educate the population about the challenges which families encounter on a daily basis. A major issue is child-headed households which have risen dramatically in numbers since the scourge of HIV began.
- **Solution-based reporting:** Prevention of the different adversities which affect children cuts across many themes, and make for interesting reporting. Stories, however, tend to focus on negative results. For example, there will be much coverage on the outbreak of an illness but not on immunisation and immunisation campaigns or existing programmes which support vulnerable children and families.

FLASHPOINTS

- There has been much **legislative reform** (see South African Child Gauge on the Children's Institute website above) pertaining to children. It is important for journalists to find out more about these and to critically assess the extent to which legislative changes have had – or will potentially have – an impact:
 - Children's Act (2005)
 - Children's Amendment Act (2007)
 - Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act
 - Education Laws Amendment Act (2007)
 - Child Justice Act (2008)
 - Criminal Law (Sentencing) Amendment Act (2007)
- Do an internet search on Goal 4 of the **UN Millennium Development Goals**.
- Do an internet search on the **Children's Charter of South Africa** (1992) and the **African Children's Charter** (1999).
- In 1989, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** became the first legally-binding international convention to affirm human rights for all children.