

Reverse Empowerment in Post South Africa's Anti-poverty Strategy

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this paper is to report the results of a study centred on the concept of "reverse empowerment" in the context of state policy and planning. South Africa's Anti-Poverty Strategy (APS) is analysed in terms of specific indicators to identify evidence that the APS provides empowerment opportunities for the poor. A ground survey of individual sites provided information for comparison with the documentary analysis of the APS itself. Results indicate a mismatch between the strategy and the actual programme delivery, too many poverty programmes with no central governance, problems of management coordination, failure to integrate the APS into the integrated development planning and, the vagueness of the strategy in situating the poor at the centre of the intervention. The relevance of the APS is questioned and, the findings indicate government policy failure in focusing on those input factors likely to have the greatest impact.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains of critical concern not only in South Africa but across the developing countries in Asia, Africa and the America's. The country's anti-poverty strategy, the latest in a string of state sponsored interventions is intended to generate a set of programmes that should make a major attack on the roots of poverty. Underlain by policy statements on education, public health, land, infrastructure, services, urban development, economic growth and sustainable development, planning was built on a situational analysis that captured the socio-economic and environmental context of poverty in the country in the period 1995-2008. Since 1995, South Africa has made significant progress in tackling poverty and in addressing some of the shocking social inequalities that trace back to the apartheid era. Yet, there is little doubt that poverty is widespread, and that it is concentrated in, although not exclusive to, the rural areas, especially among the African population, as a direct

result of apartheid (Aliber 2003). Since 1994, several policy frameworks and programmes have been launched in the country with a definite poverty alleviation objective, including the reconstruction and development programme (ANC 1994), the rural development framework (RSA 1997), the integrated sustainable rural development programme (RSA 2000); war on poverty (RSA 2008a) in the early part of the year which eventually developed into the anti-poverty discussion document (RSA 2008b) and strategy-hereafter shortened to APS (RSA 2009a; RSA 2009b), the comprehensive rural development programme (RSA 2009c) and the Green Paper on land reform (RSA 2011). South Africa's history introduces a number of context specific causes of poverty. These include the impact of apartheid which stripped people of their assets, especially land, distorted economic markets and social institutions through racial discrimination, and resulted in violence and destabilisation, the undermining of the asset base of individuals, households and communities through ill health, over-crowding, environmental degradation, the mismatch of resources and opportunities, race and gender discrimination and social isolation. The impact of a disabling state, which included the behaviour and attitudes of government officials, the absence of information on rights, roles and responsibilities, and the lack of accountability by all levels of government (Hunter et al. 2003) all had a negative effect on the poor. By 2000, at least 70% of South Africa's poor lived in

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rural areas. Some 5% of rural households report no cash incomes whatsoever, while for 12%, state pensions are their only source of cash income and 26% rely on remittances from urban centres. Almost one million Africans in rural areas have no access to demarcated arable lands (Shackleton et al. 2003).

Poverty is a deficiency in an individual's socio-economic capabilities as manifested through factors like income, access to basic services, and access to assets, information, social networks or social capital (RSA 2008a). African poverty is multifaceted. It is characterized by a lack of purchasing power, rural predominance, exposure to environmental risk, insufficient access to social and economic services, and few opportunities for formal sector income generation – the primary source of income earning opportunities (World Bank 1994). In addition, there are other influential dimensions such as poor health, malnutrition, lack of shelter, lack of political rights and illiteracy (Handley et al. 2004). A significant volume of literature reports poverty in the context of empowerment (Sen 1976, 1995; Dijkstra and Hanmer 2000; Wilkinson 1998; Thomas and Velthouse 1990; UNO 2009; Parmar 2003; Deneulin and Shahani 2009). This literature acknowledges the multiplicity of definitions of empowerment and the place of the individual and the community in the nexus of changing power relations. In this paper, the focus of reverse empowerment is on the poor as a social class and on the extent to which the strategy represents a deployment and coordination of inputs and activities that can genuinely create opportunities for the poor to participate directly as key drivers of their own development.

The strategy that evolved out of the anti-poverty framework, which is a set of guiding principles indicating how government understands poverty and wishes to engage with it is the concern of this paper. By accepting that poverty is a multidimensional entity in time and space, the strategy recognises the need to appreciate this in all facets of its structure. A strategy however, is designed in a manner that allows for backward (planning, policy) and forward (programmes, governance, delivery, monitoring, evaluation) linkages which have to be maintained within a revolving yet flexible management system. The key components of the strategy need to be broken down in order to establish whether this strategy could actually

lead to a reduction in poverty on a scale so far not achieved by other interventions. As recognized by the World Bank (1996), poverty reduction is both good economics and good politics. It must, therefore, be at the forefront of any economic and social development strategy in the individual countries in the Africa region. This should therefore be the guiding principle of poverty reduction policies in Africa (Hope 2004). The incidence of poverty has fallen in most regions of the world since 1945. However, in Africa, poverty continues to be a significant and deepening socio-economic problem despite the gains in economic progress and growth in some countries since embarking on the process of economic liberalization (Hope 2004).

Research Problem

While existing literature in South Africa has been essentially critical of the Anti-Poverty strategy (APS), the concept of reverse empowerment has not been applied before in assessing the impact potential of any government programme and or strategy. Empowerment is generally understood to refer to actions, policies, strategies, programmes or projects that positively enable communities to take control of their destiny. Empowerment is positive because it increases the cumulative capabilities of communities in playing a direct and active in their own development. Reverse empowerment, as a concept is used to refer to a set of conditions triggered by policy interventions where the outcomes are contrary to the stated objectives of such interventions. In this paper, it is used in a narrow sense to focus on the plight of the masses of the poor caught in a scenario where a specific anti-poverty strategy is in theory implemented to enable such people to escape from poverty.

The main purpose of the study is to test the application of reverse empowerment in the anti-poverty strategy-launched in 2009. To this end, three objectives are advanced: to provide a brief about the state of poverty in South Africa in the period 1995-2010, to evaluate the internal design, impact and integration limitations of the strategy and, finally, and to test particular evidence of potential reverse empowerment. The rest of the section on introduction presents a cross section of sources on of poverty and trends. Part two addresses the methodology followed in part three by results and analysis.

Discussion takes up part four while conclusion and recommendations appear in part five and six, respectively.

Literature

According to Narayan (2002:14), empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold institutions that affect their lives accountable. Successful efforts to empower poor people often share four elements: access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability, and local organisational capacity. Capabilities are inherent in people and enable them to use their assets in different ways to increase their well-being. For poor people, the capacity to organise and mobilise to solve problems is a critical collective capability that helps them overcome problems of limited resources and marginalisation in society. As will be seen later, in practice, isolating feasible indicators for capabilities is problematic. In addition, there also exist many theoretical and methodological perspectives on poverty that purport to explain what poverty is, what is at its root, and/or how best to really understand it. These would include for example the 'capabilities approach,' the 'multiple livelihoods framework,' and the 'entitlements approach, (Kaplan 2004) or the sustainable livelihoods model. The reality of poverty is projected by reference to hunger, thirst, living without decent shelter, not being able to read, chronic sickness and not finding any opportunities for you or your children (ECA 2005). In its report, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA 2002) provides several perspectives on poverty, showing that income is the common way of measuring poverty, though poverty has many dimensions. The poor are deprived of services, resources and opportunities as well as money. Their limited resources are inefficiently deployed. Energy, water, and food all cost more per unit consumed, paradoxically, poverty is expensive for the poor. People's health, education, gender relations and degree of social inclusion all promote or diminish their wellbeing and help to determine the prevalence of poverty. Escaping poverty depends on improving personal capacities and increasing access to a variety of resources, institutions and support mechanisms. Accordingly, economic growth will not by itself end poverty. Ending extreme poverty

calls for commitment to the task, and specific action directed to it. A further dimension of poverty highlighted in this report is the distinction between lack of income and lack of capacity. Poor people acutely feel their powerlessness and insecurity, their vulnerability and lack of dignity. Rather than taking decisions for themselves, they are subject to the decisions of others in nearly all aspects of their lives. Poor health may mean that employment is erratic and low-paid. Their very poverty excludes them from the means of escaping it. Their attempts even to supply basic needs meet persistent obstacles.

In South Africa, the redistribution of assets has been an important component in poverty reduction programmes since 1997. Key elements of redistributive policies in South Africa include land reform and low-cost housing delivery. The APS identifies the poor as older people, the unemployed-especially the youth, children, women, people with disability and people living in poor areas who are disadvantaged by location. The social conditions in the former township and homeland areas of South Africa present a sharp contrast to the expectations of a middle income country. At US \$10 700 per annum as of January (CIA 2011), South Africa's per capita GDP places it as one of the 50 wealthiest nations, while the strikingly poor social indicators of the country with a human development index HDI of 0.597 result in South Africa being ranked 9th in Africa and 110 out of 173 countries in the world (UNDP 2010). At the time of the transition in 1993, South Africa was described by the World Bank as among the world's most unequal economies, with a Gini co-efficient measuring 0.58. Analysis using the 1996 Population Census data put the Gini co-efficient as high as 0.68, worse than that of Brazil and of 33 other developing countries (Marais 1998: 106). Leibbrandt et al. (1999) show that 6 percent of South Africa's population captures over 40 percent of income. This experience of income inequality carries over to the social indicators as well as revealing the significant spatial and racial differences within South Africa (Hunter et al. 2003b).

The public service commission (PSC 2007) recommends that the term 'poverty reduction' be used to describe programmes and projects that have a focus on 'improving the livelihoods or quality of life of individuals and households with no income, with an income below the standard of living or who are unable to meet their

basic human needs. To achieve the objective of halving poverty by 2014 as stipulated in the Ten Year Review, released in October 2003 (RSA 2003), and in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it is essential to improve the performance of government. The Public Service Commission's State of the Public Service Report of 2004 (PSC 2004) highlights the need for Government to accelerate social development and address poverty more effectively to ensure that the above objective is achieved. Research undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) has pointed out that poverty cannot be reduced by improving performance of Government *per se*. The prevailing *pro-poor* conditions need to be identified and the available natural, human and economic resources utilised to bring about the kind of economic growth where the poor share equally in the proceeds (Aliber and Nhlapo-Hlope 2005). Improving road access to economic centres where people can find employment, raising the standard of education and improving access to health facilities are all factors that need to be considered when implementing programmes and projects aimed at improving the standard of living of people in South Africa.

The overall objective of the APS is to eradicate poverty through creation of economic opportunities and enabling or empowering communities and individuals to access these opportunities. It targets the ending of intergenerational poverty through improving the economic situation of households. It aims at human resource development through education, and skills training. It has a focus on rural development and agricultural support for families. The APS aims to reinforce partnerships at all levels of government departments, agencies, business, organised labour and other civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGO's). The key strategies to address poverty are economic interventions to expand opportunities for employment, provision of quality education, skills and health care, promotion of access to assets including social capital, and, promotion of social cohesion, in line with the multidimensional nature of poverty, the strategy is anchored on nine pillars (RSA 2009a, 2009b). These include the ECONOMY – which includes the creation of economic opportunities for poor households to earn improved incomes and, HUMAN CAPITAL which covers investment in human capital

through health care, education and training and, SAFETY NET which refers to social security provided primarily for the most vulnerable. SERVICES deal with basic services and nonfinancial transfers, housing, water, electricity, refuse removal, sanitation, as well as a raft of minimum free basic services to vulnerable sectors of the population. HEALTH deals with improving health care, preventative and curative care. INFRASTRUCTURE includes housing, land and capital. SOCIAL CAPITAL deals with the development of integrated structures across ethnic, class and community solidarity while SUSTAINABILITY includes environmental resources, protection of ecosystems, rehabilitation and regeneration. Finally, GOVERNANCE is concerned with structures, information access, facilitation, *pro-poor* policies and sound macro-economic management (RSA 2009a, 2009b).

The government's response to concerns about the viability of the APS is that it uses most of the existing government programmes as key instruments. What is different is that the APS identifies the most deprived wards (administrative unit) using the Provincial Indices of Multiple Deprivation (STATSA 2001) which mapped such areas for all the provinces. The APS develops a community profile of households in these areas; has collected and stored such profiles into a national database and uses a referral system through which information is provided to provincial departments and social partners for intervention. The APS provides advice on how to develop service delivery plans that should include IDP's and, monitors and verifies the impact of service delivery. In theory, the thrust of the strategy appears to present a fresh approach in government thinking.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The first phase of the study involved a ground survey of the eight individual sites in the study area to gather first hand information on developments on the ground which were captured on an observation schedule. The APS is broken down into its constituent parts as indicated earlier in the problem statement. For each of the components-assumptions, principles, objectives, implementation mechanism, governance and outcomes, a brief on the *status-quo* is presented followed by a comment on inherent limitations. In phase 2 - indicators - of empower-

ment, after Narayan (2002) and PSC (2007) are specified. In phase three, the specified indicators are matched with the nine different pillars of the strategy to test for evidence of empowerment embedded in the strategy. While this approach is not meant to be an evaluation of the performance of the strategy through its programmes and projects, it essentially attempts to analyse the most likely outcomes of interventions even before they are implemented. Interest is placed on the potential impact of the strategy specifically in the context of the extent to which it unleashes forces that lead to genuine empowerment. The section on results and analysis presents these three phases. In section four, the implications of the findings are discussed. The focus of the discussion is on whether anticipated changes are engineered to be aligned to the outcome behaviour and in the process, identify from document analysis and literature review a synthesis of findings that talk to the concept- reverse empowerment.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Current Profile

The current distribution of the poorest provinces indicate that these are concentrated in areas of the former apartheid based homelands- Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo- areas that were set aside for African people in the name of separate development showing that the distribution of poverty is both geographical and ethnic. According to the Public Service Commission (PSC 2007) poverty relief projects are concentrated in these same provinces. It is noted that areas in distress are once again in particular provinces. This is not to say that outside of the former homelands, poverty is not a national concern. Increasing urbanisation, especially since the mid- 1980's, has seen the mushrooming of urban squatter settlements and what amounts to a transfer of rural poverty to the cities. Data from Van Berg et al.(2007) on poverty head count rates for the period 1993-2006 show that from 1993-1996, there was an increase followed generally by improving conditions from 53% in 1996 down to 44% in 2006. In Table 1, the ethnic variation in average annual household income in rand values per population group of household head is presented based on data from Statistics South Africa (2012).

Changes in income per capita for the different population groups show that there has been an impressive improvement across all groups when 2011 values are compared to those of 2001. However, as was the case in 1993 (Van Berg et al. 2007), the African majority remains at the bottom of the income ladder. Note also that apart from the white group, the 2011 scores shows a more than doubling of 2001 incomes.

Table 1: Average annual household income per population group of household head

Year	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White	Total
2001	22 522	51 440	102 606	193 820	48 385
2011	60 613	112 172	251 541	365 134	103 204

Source: Statistics South Africa 2012. Statistical Release (Revised) P0301.4

Assumptions of the Strategy

The APS is built on the standard neoliberal economic model (Kotz 2007). Accordingly, poverty will be addressed through economic growth and development through which there will be an increase in employment, support services and infrastructure and an improvement in the capabilities of individuals and households. The second assumption is that even without a radical and parallel increase in resource access for the masses of the people, these developments should provide opportunities for income generation, employment and a reduction in poverty levels. The third assumption is that poverty is essentially tied to employment and low income or no income: the best way to address it is to increase income generating opportunities by absorbing people either as employees or self-employed in the mainstream economy.

Principles

These assumptions have not changed much since 2000 following a radical shift in government thinking from its initial toying with socialist economic theory. In the absence of a review of the underlying economic model, there is little to indicate that the APS can be repackaged to generate interventions that will radically alter the status quo in poverty and inequality.

The APS is built around nine pillars covering the economy, human capital, social security,

services, public health, infrastructure, social capital, sustainability and improved governance structures. These principles capture government thinking and are in line with the assumptions earlier raised, they indicate the multidimensional perspective. Unfortunately, there just seems to be too many principles pumped into the strategy such that there is an obvious danger of the strategy becoming simply no more than a re-expression of the country's economic development policy. In any case, the large number of parallel developments that the government wishes to carry along in the fight against poverty call into question the critical role of coordination, something the government is still struggling to manage properly.

Objectives

The principal aim of the APS is to eradicate poverty through the creation of economic opportunities and enabling or empowering communities and individuals to access these opportunities. It emphasizes the need for a community empowerment paradigm which sees the role of government as 'deliverer' and that of communities as 'driver' of processes for integrated development. The objective is in line with government economic policy since at least 2000. It is also in agreement with the basic assumption, which is that poverty as a multidimension-

al phenomena can only be effectively tackled through boosting economic growth and development backed by state investments in service provision and infrastructure.

Figure 1 shows fluctuations in the performance of the country's economy with the year 2009 when the APS was launched being the worst period since 2007. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in South Africa expanded 1.4 percent in the third quarter of 2011 over the previous quarter. Historically, from 1993 until 2011, South Africa's average quarterly GDP Growth was 3.32 percent reaching an historical high of 7.60 percent in December of 1994 and a record low of -5.90 percent in March of 2009. The mean GDP annual rate at 3.32% puts the country low compared to other African economies and raises the issue of the sustainability of the APS.

The present scenario is unlikely to change in the near future because the basic structure of the economy has not changed. There has been a decline in foreign direct investments (FDI) the competitiveness of the country as a destination for investment remains lower than for perhaps all middle income emergent economies -India, Russia, Brazil and Mexico. If the country is unable to register higher growth rates, the negative implications for the labour market and employment in general are severe. No radical increases in formal employment are predicted in the near future; this casts doubts on the economic-growth-route to poverty eradication.

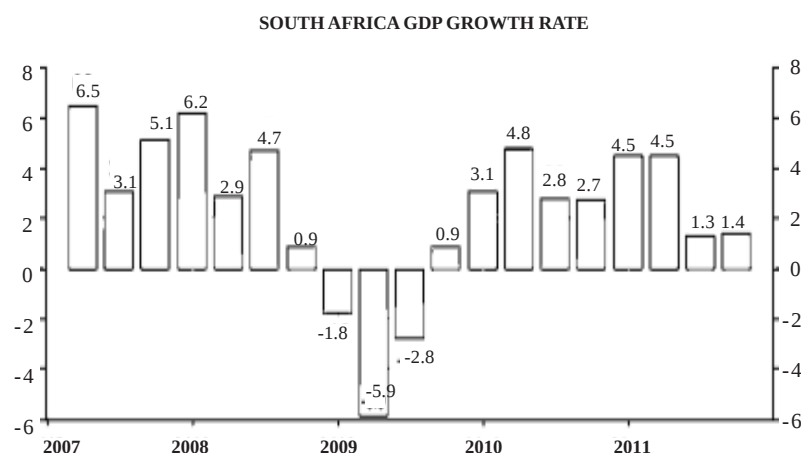


Fig. 1. South Africa GDP Growth patterns 2007-2012
Source: www.tradingeconomics.com, Statistics South Africa

Implementation Mechanism

The Presidency, helped by a national council on poverty, is directly responsible for the overall coordination of the strategy. It is not so far indicated whether this includes existing poverty programmes run by national departments, provincial departments and municipalities. According to the PSC (2007), the distribution of poverty projects indicates the Eastern Cape with (6781), the Free State (4606), Gauteng (3057), KwaZulu-Natal (4179), Limpopo (2568), Mpumalanga (3093), North west (2496), Northern Cape (356), Western Cape (1141) and, unspecified (673) providing a total for all the provinces of 29966. At present, each of these state organs is engaged as an autonomous entity in delivering poverty programmes as its own mandate dictates. Poverty programmes remain fragmented to such an extent that even at the level of local municipalities, there is no linkage between poverty programmes across sector departments. There are no mechanisms for joint planning. In spite of proclamations since 2002, programmes are still delivered outside of the gambit of municipal administrations. They do not constitute a recognised element in the individual integrated development plans (IDP's). Apart from the periodic audits of the Public Service Commission, no standard protocols are in place for project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) across these programmes. The result is that there exists a lack of coherent information at the three levels of government about the totality of these programmes. This amounts to a failure from the beginning on the part of government to instil discipline in government departments and to amalgamate all poverty programmes of each government department and agency under one central governance structure. The state of anti-poverty programmes for the 1995-2011 period can therefore only be reported with caution because of the absence of a reliable centralised data base. Therefore these results point at problems of not just implementation but also those related to planning and policy.

One immediate problem that arises out of this proposed approach is related to the question of capacity and coordination. This is not just a national problem, it afflicts all provincial governments and their departments and all municipalities. It is unlikely that given already serious problems of delivering the thousands of poverty programmes across the provinces, the Presidency will do better. What is more likely to hap-

pen will be the creation of yet another bureaucratic monster. Internal management and delivery problems centre on parallel programmes run by different departments, lack of linkages with the local IDP's, overlapping responsibilities between national and provincial departments, capacity and fiscal discipline. Nowhere in this delivery mechanism is there a central role for the poor at whom the strategy is targeted. This is in spite of a significant volume of literature on local economic development (Rogerson 2005; Nel and Rogerson 2005; DPLG 2006; McKibbin et al. 2012) that consistently indicate the role of local efforts in tackling poverty. The initial ground survey carried out at individual sites indicated a persistent disconnect between the community and government officials as to what ultimately the projects aim to achieve.

Projected Outcomes

The APS proposes to have created by 2014 vibrant communities actively engaged in a diverse range of income generating activities and access to permanent decent jobs ensuring high standards of living, a high score on the HDI and a decreasing dependence on social security payments. Available statistics on government spending on social welfare shows a drastic increase since 2000 and as of early 2012, there is no evidence that dependence on social security receipts by households is on the decline. Instead, social security has become a form of a wage for the poor. The rural countryside, at least in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, Northern Cape and Mpumalanga show evidence of net population migrations to the urban areas. Yet, the strategy talks of rural areas with no regard to the demographic implications of these changes and potential impact on the apportionment of the anti-poverty funding formula between urban and rural areas. The greatest growth in government spending in the period 1995-2000 is in respect of housing (206%), clinics (194%) and social grants (40.5%) respectively (Van Berg et al. 2007). Since then, government spending on social services has remained impressive and substantial but only housing directly talks to increasing the material asset base of the poor.

Empowerment Possibilities

In Table 2, the elements of column 2 are specifically the focus of this paper, which is, reverse empowerment. Given that poverty pro-

Table 2: Matching the principles of the strategy with empowerment possibilities.

<i>Principles</i> ¹	<i>Indicators</i> ^{1,2}	<i>Empowerment Possibilities</i> ³
1 <i>Economic Growth</i>	*Expansion of assets through provision of low cost housing, amount of land transferred to individual households *Increasing their freedom of choice expansion of the labour market, % increase in entrepreneurship, access to liberalized financial markets *Inclusion in the mainstream economy extent of proposed changes in economic structure to widen participation	(1) Accelerated tenure reform, (2) Increased access to land at household and community level, (3) Increased level of household participation in production for the market, (4) Increased levels of employment in mainstream formal economy, (5) Change in annual GDP growth figures, (6) changes in the % of households below the US \$2 per day
2 <i>Human Capital Development</i>	*Basic, adult and tertiary education *Outputs of artisans and graduates	(1) % projected increase in adult literacy rates, (2) school enrolment for basic education, (3) school enrolment at tertiary level, (4) changes in output of qualified technical artisans and graduates
3 <i>Social Security Safety Net</i>	*Access to social security of the masses of the poor	(1) Extent of access of the masses of the people to old age pension, child support grant, disability benefits, (2) changes in the annual budget for social security (3) changes in the population of beneficiaries
4 <i>Services</i>	*Provision of water, sanitation, electricity, refuse collection, housing, communications	(1) changes in % access figures for water, sanitation, electricity, postal services and housing
5 <i>Public Health</i>	*Building of new clinics, hospitals, *HIV-AIDS programmes *Improvement in public health delivery	(1) % increase in the provision of clinics, (2) % increase in the provision of medical facilities included in the HIV-AIDS roll out treatment programme, (3) changes in the public health status of the people, (4) projected changes in life expectancy
6 <i>Infrastructure</i>	*Investments in roads, railways, power stations, bulk water supply, ports, harbours, dams,	(1) budget allocation for targeted allocations for infrastructure 2009-2015
7 <i>Social Capital</i>	*Expansion of in local organizational capacity *Evidence that the strategy facilitates the growth of CBO with a stake in poverty reduction	(2) % changes in the number of registered CBO's as a response to the strategy a distinction is made between civil society structures of the 'elite' and mass community structures outside the system of political patronage
8 <i>Sustainability</i>	*Participation in planning, community structures, budgeting and project delivery	(1) creation of a <i>centralised</i> control structure for all poverty programmes (autonomous from current government departments)
9 <i>Governance</i>	* Coordination of anti-poverty programmes at municipal-provincial and national government *Better planning, budgeting, financing, monitoring, evaluation and systems for accountability	

Source: *RSA (2008b), ²Narayan (2002) for principles and indicators and author..for empowerment possibilities

grammes have been running since 1995, it is not possible in practice to separate the impacts of the current anti-poverty strategy (APS) from that of earlier work. Column 3 however has been generated by isolating variables that could be observed, measured and analysed in the search for certain common potential outputs of APS through programmes and projects-planned, initiated or running. These items are therefore specific to the APS proper and are tied to the indicators identified in column 2. In short, the results appear to cast doubt about whether the assumptions of the strategy, its principles, objectives,

implementation and projected outcomes reflect evidence that the government has learnt anything from the mistakes of the past. Policy makers appear to pursue prepositions most of which are inappropriate in tackling the harsh realities of poverty. Apart from providing a comprehensive state of the socio-economic environment of South Africa as of 2009, the multidimensional focus of the APS misses the real issue, which is poverty eradication. The analysis shows that there is in practice nothing new in the strategy that hopefully will alter the current status in the state of poverty. Indeed, it is not obvious that

this is a strategy, in the conventional understanding of the concept. Against these results, it becomes necessary to pose the question: 'Does this strategy reveal evidence of empowerment'? The next section briefly addresses this.

DISCUSSION

The focus of the discussion is on whether anticipated changes are engineered to generate the projected outcome and in the process, identify from the results a synthesis of findings relevant to the concept, reverse empowerment. Each of the principles in Table 2, related to the corresponding results and comment on the likelihood that it will contribute significantly to empowerment. Empowerment through economic growth and the creation of opportunities presupposes the accelerated delivery of tenure reform to support the access of the masses of the poor to land resources. Given that the issue of land access is not prominent in the APS, it is unlikely that the strategy has triggered or will initiate a higher intensity in household participation in production for the market. This is because land remains a resource that has been locked away from the poor who have no means of accessing it. The PSC, itself a government institution reported that poverty reduction projects are many times very modest in scale and do not change the local economic dynamics to have significant impact (PSC 2009). Since 2009, there has been no noticeable increase in on-land and off-land income generating activities to report. In terms of changes in GDP, the economy has since 1993-2011 been struggling to attain even a mere 3.2% growth rate (Fig. 1). Without a higher level of growth figures, it is unlikely that there will be a significant increase in formal employment. Instead, an increasing percent of labour is being absorbed into the informal sector, a development typical of most of Sub-Saharan Africa. These conditions indicate that the masses of the poor will remain essentially outside of the operations of the mainstream economy other than as consumers. In terms of the intensity of poverty, national data since 2007 indicate a slight improvement in the % of people living below the poverty line. But this cannot be credited to the impact of APS in particular. Overall therefore, there is at present no evidence that the economy is growing fast enough to generate the type of opportunities that the APS talks about.

In terms of human capital development, the APS proposes a radical increase in investments in education in order to improve human capital development, not just for the poor, but for all citizens. There is no doubt that national statistics indicate a steady increase at all levels of education since 1995. It is not possible to isolate the potential contribution since 2009 of the APS to this increase. What is noted, however, is that problems of restructuring since 1995 still bedevil the education systems, characterised by underperformance at all levels, serious capacity constraints and a questionable quality. While there has been a general increase in enrolment at basic, college and university level, there is no indication of a corresponding restructuring of the system to ensure a steady stream of graduates in scarce skills in the technical, business and science fields that the country suffers from. It is not clear how the APS will address this.

With reference to social security, this is perhaps one area in which the government has since 1995 been consistent in ensuring progress that the masses of the poor are reached through a massive campaign to register old age pensioners, people with disabilities and children so that in terms of social security. Today, the system reports a total of 15 million social grant recipients- according to the President's state of the nation address (RSA 2012). But these developments are independent of the APS and date back to the early 1990's. There is little that the APS can deliver which the Department of Social Development is not already doing. In this case, the empowerment possibilities are positively in place. In terms of services and infrastructure, the government has since 1995 followed an aggressive intervention through which impressive figures can be reported. Other than increasing the budget allocation for these two, there is little that the APS proposes to do which is not being done already, a view that confirms work by Farred (2009). Indeed, the massive infrastructure investments announced in February 2012 by government (RSA 2012) covering new railroads, roads, power stations and dams do not seem to be a coordinated extension of the APS.

The provision of low cost housing, for example, has shifted from the main urban centres into small rural and also in rural towns. The problem here seems to relate to serious poor workmanship in the quality of houses and a combination of both red tape, abuse of office and

sheer incompetence within municipal administrations that create bottlenecks in the actual hand over of such houses to registered beneficiaries. The system has been abused, exploited and reports of occasional illegal occupations appear in the press now and then. With reference to public health, the government has been generally aggressive in building clinics since 1997. The issue appears to be occasional disruptions in medical supplies to these clinics and the quality of service to the public. Parallel to this development has been increased investments by the state in fighting the AIDS pandemic. Current statistics indicate that the country has not yet gone through the apex of the AIDS pandemic causing doubts about arresting the declining life expectancy.

In terms of the development of social capital as a platform for protecting the poor and vulnerable, the APS does not indicate how it hopes to facilitate this. No noticeable interventions are reported since 2009 at national, provincial or municipal level interventions aimed at supporting the creation and registration of formal community based organisations (CBO) among the poor through which part of the development process would be channelled and managed. Instead, civil society structures have since 1995 been active in the NGO sector, which, in the absence of CBO's have successfully projected themselves as the voice of the masses of the poor. This denies the masses of the people the opportunity to develop organisational capacity, a critical prerequisite if they are to have a voice, a say, and an active engagement in programmes that claim to be targeted at them. There is hence at present no significant involvement by APS related programmes whose aim is the facilitation of this development. Thus, communities are not being enabled to take control of the fight against poverty.

There is a direct link between social capital and sustainability (UNO 2009). The issue of sustainability with reference to poverty alleviation is used in a restricted context. Communities that are actively engaged in searching for solutions, in planning and in the delivery of poverty projects that affect them directly are likely to feel empowered because they will see their participation as critical. They eventually acquire an interest in the very success of such projects because in transferring responsibilities for such projects from municipal and provincial officials

to the local level, they quickly see benefits for individuals, households and the community. This creates a sense of ownership without which there can never be sustainability. This position is in line with work on the APS by Farred (2009) who reports that anti-poverty initiatives are workable and effective when social mobilisation is at the centre of planning and implementation, where forms of no-state representation are respected; where multi-stakeholder involvement at all levels is not merely tolerated or seen as necessary.

The issue of governance was reported indirectly in the results with reference to implementation. The findings indicate serious problems in this respect long before the APS was launched in 2009. Problems of governance revolve around the absence of a recognised governance structures to manage the APS and all other related poverty programmes in the country. This absence has negative implications for planning, accountability, mechanisms for implementation, delivery of poverty projects, monitoring of performance and periodic evaluations. There are just too many government departments, agencies and NGO's involved in anti-poverty programmes often with overlapping jurisdictions. It is not possible to establish who is doing what and where at any given time. This position is in agreement with Delius and Schirmer (2001) who suggest that government should concentrate on building institutional capacity rather than on projects. The PSC (2009) reports, for example, indicate that basic administrative records on poverty projects from which useful data can be gleaned are incomplete, grossly inadequate or do not exist at all. Paulus (2008) criticises the pillars on which the APS is based as lacking in clarity, direction and firm commitment. These programmes are neither part of the IDP at the local municipality level; they are not in any way controlled by local municipalities; they often operate outside of the Provincial Economic Development Strategy; they are not linked at the local municipality level in order to achieve impact in terms of multipliers (Nhlapo et al. 2011). Municipalities, provincial government, provincial sector departments, national government departments, NGO all independently operate such programmes and projects. We note obvious problems of integration on the ground and of coordination in planning-funding-management and monitoring. It is not surprising therefore that little is known about their performance.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the APS is a poorly designed intervention unlikely to change the current status quo in the fight against poverty. It has been shown that the strategy fails in terms of its founding assumptions, the proposed mechanism for implementation, how to situate the poor at the centre of poverty programmes, how to genuinely empower the poor to take control of their destiny and on how to structure a governance entity to take control of all poverty programmes in the country. It would appear that given developments in anti-poverty programmes since 1995, the APS would be expected to show evidence of the lessons learnt by planners and policy makers and the inclusion of corrective measures to guard against earlier limitations. As it is, the APS does not offer anything new from what already exists on the ground. It shies away from confronting the historical inequality especially with reference to access to land resources. Through its pre-occupation with the delivery of projects at all costs, it stifles opportunities for the poor to participate, engage and drive changes aimed at poverty alleviation. In its reluctance to specify the mechanism for increasing the access of the poor to land resources, it fails to link the creation of economic opportunities with the entry of the poor into the mainstream economy through production. It is in this respect that there is justification in using the term 'reverse empowerment' for the masses of the poor are not being enabled to escape from poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an urgent need for a complete paradigm change in policy making with regard to poverty alleviation. Such a change will have to incorporate current local economic development efforts which remain fragmented. Government should opt for a long-term poverty strategy that generates a few manageable programmes instead of its pre-occupation with attempting to deliver thousands of projects simultaneously. This calls for a review of methods of assessing performance away from financial commitment to actual outcomes. Finally, every anti-poverty programme should be governed by the need to place the poor themselves at the centre of planning and actual delivery.

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