



MACRO-SOCIAL REPORT

PRESS RELEASE

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Johannesburg | Monday, 03 April 2023

The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ) release the [2022 Macro-Social Report \(MSR\)](#) providing high-level reflection on successes and challenges encountered in the nation's evolving democratisation process.

In 2006, the Policy Coordination and Advisory Services (PCAS) of the Presidency published the Macro-Social Report (MSR). This document discussed major macro-social trends in South Africa, with a specific focus on core nation-building pillars such as social identity, social cohesion and socio-economic transformation. These themes were explored within the overall context of the political economy that shaped the country's development from 1994–2005.

Overall, the findings pointed to significant progress in improving macro-social conditions in South Africa, especially in the areas of basic human rights, civil liberties and nation building. It equally found that socio-economic policies had transformed South Africans' livelihoods, but did not fundamentally alter the long-standing structural inequalities and exclusion embedded in the structural make-up of society.

The 2022 MSR is a timely intervention since the last iteration was published 16 years ago, and the country has experienced significant socio-economic and political changes.

Findings in the 2022 MSR point to insights for strengthening democracy over the next years, especially in the areas of governance, social cohesion and socio-economic development. The report also draws attention to the major domestic and global contextual shifts that continue to shape macro-social trends in South Africa.



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The overall macro-social trends illuminate a decline in essential socio-economic indicators since the 2006 MSR publication. South Africa's political economy has not performed well in measures such as economic growth, employment, inequality and competitiveness. Poverty rates have increased since 2011 after significant reduction in earlier periods, and the quality of basic public services in communities is poor. These trends have led to persistent social instability, which is exemplified in the social unrest taking place in the economy, local state and other social institutions such as households.

A case for economic restructuring and for social redistribution to address long-standing societal inequalities is developed from the report's findings. South Africa needs a negotiated social compact framework, anchored in altering the production, investment, labour market and resource allocation patterns in the economy.

Poor economic performance and weak governance threaten to undermine the gains of the first decades of South Africa's democracy and have exacerbated the adverse socio-economic conditions. The decline of good governance, which is not confined only to public institutions, has often led to unethical leadership, corruption, institutional decay and low levels of trust.

The findings from the report highlight the centrality of transparent, accountable and responsive governance in reorienting South Africa's development path. Legitimacy for public and political institutions at national and local state levels is imperative, as it attracts economic investment, improves public services and fosters active citizenship.

The evidence presented throughout the report shows that poor governance and unethical behaviour are intricately linked to systemic socio-economic inequality. The race and class inequality themes were also explored in sections examining racial power relations, social mobility, social identity and national reconciliation. These findings reveal that racial inequalities persist in all essential human development areas such as education, household income, employment, skills development and wealth. In addition, institutional racism remains persistent in varied social institutions. It is exemplified in disputes over organisational culture, language, and demographics in the make-up of institutions.



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Data cited in the 2022 MSR report illustrates that the country needs additional national reconciliation programmes, which are aimed at strengthening social cohesion and nation building. These programmes should focus on the following core drivers of social division cited in the report as language, structural inequality, political party discourse and personal experiences of racism.

The intersectional analysis in the report goes beyond race and class dynamics. Gender, age, and disability trends are examined to determine how they impact on social cohesion. Gender inequalities remain prevalent in labour markets, household income, access to basic services and assets. But some noticeable improvements in areas such as education (especially secondary and tertiary enrolment), and health have been recorded over the past 16 years.

An additional finding from the report's gender analysis is the prevalence of gender-based violence in communities. This phenomenon takes place in different social institutions, and is linked to socio-economic factors, psychological disorders and gender socialisation in society. These underlying causes of gender-based violence require coordinated interventions from both state and non-state sections of society, as illustrated by the report's discussion of the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF).

The report's discussion on youth cuts across varied human development areas. It goes beyond the prominent policy challenge of youth unemployment, and draws in political, cultural and sociological insights from youth experiences in the past 16 years. Youth experiences draw attention to intergenerational differences in society, especially in the areas of politics, culture and economic participation.

Young South Africans have expressed their discontent with their overall marginalisation in society, yet they still find ways to engage politically and participate in survivalist economic activity. These actions often take place outside established political institutions and formal markets, but they are important for understanding youth-led citizenship and livelihood practices.





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The report encourages policy stakeholders to study this youth agency when reforming the nation's youth development policy. It provides a basis for introducing different approaches to youth-focused socio-economic, political and cultural development programmes.

The report factors central themes which emerged out of the [25 Years of Democracy Conference](#) hosted by MISTRA, The Presidency and UJ Humanities which include citizenship and identity, socio-economic transformation, governance and leadership and global dynamics.

The main aim of this report is to facilitate nationwide dialogues on the state of democracy in South Africa and help inform government's assessment of the efficacy or appropriateness of its social programmes.

The MSR is based on relevant primary and secondary literature obtained from academic publications, reports from reputable institutes, government-led macro reviews and international institutions that specialise in socio-economic development policy. Some primary examples of the literature sources include the World Bank, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) and Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Social Surveys.

Additionally, the report makes use of qualitative and quantitative data to develop a comprehensive understanding of macro-social trends in South Africa. The findings from different quantitative surveys are complemented by a qualitative literature analysis. Several sections of the report draw on literature sources that developed findings using interviews with South African citizens. This is important for ensuring that the 2022 MSR reflects the nuances of citizens' democratic experiences over the past 28 years, especially those related to the social trends described in this report.

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Jointly issued by **Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA)** and the Faculty of Humanities, **University of Johannesburg (UJ)**



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Special thanks to Anglo American for its support of this project

