

Children and inequality

Did you know? 6 in every 10 children live in homes with a monthly income of less than R575 per person.



South African Child Gauge 2012

Summary written by André Viviers (UNICEF South Africa) and Lori Lake (Children's Institute, University of Cape Town)



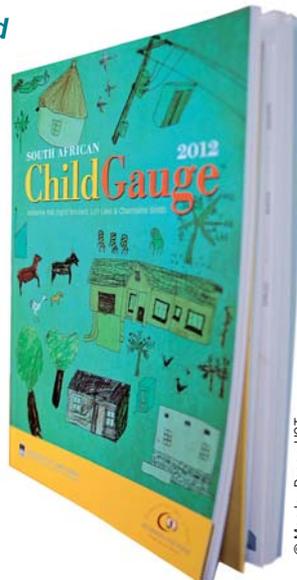
The *South African Child Gauge* is a special book about children in South Africa. It is put together every year by the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town, and helps people understand what needs to be done to improve the lives of all children in South Africa.

The book is divided into three parts:

Part 1 looks at laws and policies that affect children.

Part 2 takes a closer look at a particular topic, such as health or education.

Part 3 looks at numbers on children's access to schools, clinics, social grants and other services.



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Introduction

The seventh issue of the *South African Child Gauge* looks at income inequality and shows how rich and poor children lead very different lives. Where children are born and who they live with affect their opportunities and quality of life. For example: children in poor communities are more likely to get sick and struggle at school than children from wealthy homes. But there are things that we can do to narrow the gap between rich and poor, and make sure that all children in South Africa have a good start in life.

We have written this summary to help children and teens understand some of the important ideas in the book. If you want to read the whole book, you can visit our website at www.ci.org.za, or call 021 689 5404, or email info@ci.org.za.

Worlds apart in the same country.

The stories of Thandeka and Mabel

Thandeka and Mabel are two teenagers living in South Africa. They are both in grade 9 and they both have dreams and hopes for the future. But even though they have these things in common, Thandeka and Mabel live in very different worlds.

Thandeka lives in a three-room house made of tin (zinc) with her grandmother, two sisters and her baby brother in a rural area. Her mother has gone to look for work far away in the city. There is one tap outside the house in the street where Thandeka goes to fetch water for cooking and for bathing. Thandeka and her sisters walk for 30 minutes to school in the mornings.

Thandeka's house has electricity only when her mother sends money to pay for an electricity voucher from the municipality. Most of the time they use a paraffin stove to cook and to warm up water for washing. Thandeka helps her grandmother to clean the house, fetch water, and look after her baby brother. Luckily the family has a paraffin lamp which Thandeka uses when she does her homework in the evenings.

Thandeka's grandmother cooks for them and tries her best to make sure there is enough food for everybody. It is a simple meal, but Thandeka knows her grandmother has prepared it with lots of love. Sometimes there is just enough food for one meal a day, which means that Thandeka and her sisters go to school feeling hungry. Thandeka's grandmother tries very hard for this not to happen, but it is not always possible.

At Thandeka's school, many children struggle to do well because they do not have enough books, and there is no library. It takes a long time to walk to school and back home again, and Thandeka often struggles to do her homework at night.

Mabel is an only child and lives with her parents in a nice three-bedroom house in one of the leafy green suburbs of the city. Their house has a small lawn in front and clean running water in the kitchen and bathroom, and it takes Mabel's mother only five minutes to drive her to school.

Mabel's house has electricity, so they have hot water, can cook food well, and have light when it's dark in the evenings or early winter mornings. This helps a lot when she has lots of homework to do in the evenings.

Mabel and her family always have enough to eat and her mom makes sure that there are always a vegetable with main meals. Sometimes they go out for an ice cream or to see a movie.

Mabel is in grade 9 and her school has all the resources that children need to learn and perform well. This helps Mabel to get good grades.

The *South African Child Gauge 2012* shows that children in South Africa live in very different worlds. There are 18.5 million children in South Africa and 11 million of these children are poor like Thandeka. These children don't get an equal start in life and may struggle to grow, learn and develop their full potential. We need to find ways to make sure that all children in South Africa have access to good education; good health care; good living conditions; enough food; and opportunities to grow and develop.



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Did you know?

Here are a few facts to help you understand how inequality affects children in South Africa:

Living conditions

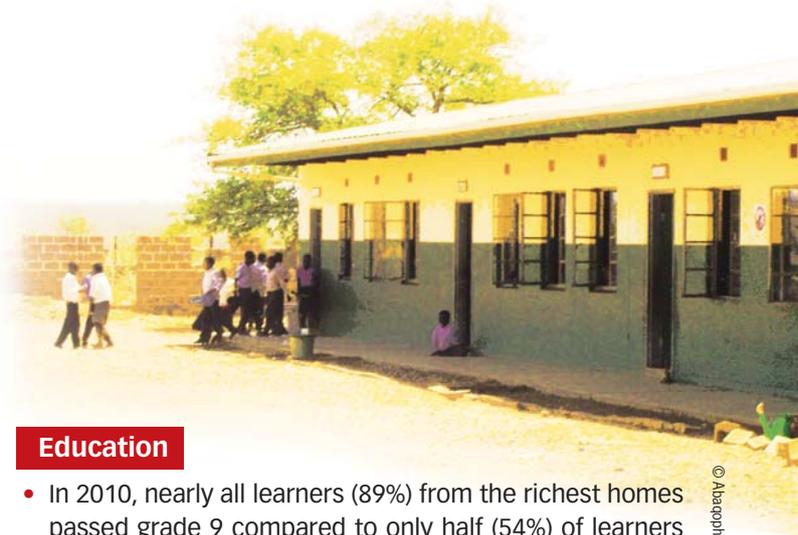
- 6 in every 10 children live in homes with a monthly income of less than R575 per person.
- Most of the poorest children live in the former homelands. These areas were poor long ago and are still poor today.
- Children of the richest families almost all live in urban areas.
- Rich children are most likely to live with both parents, while poor children are more likely to live with their mother or with an adult who is not their parent.
- Many children from very poor homes live with their relatives in rural areas while their parents look for work in the cities.
- 1 in 3 children in South Africa (36%) do not have clean water to drink at home.
- 1 in 6 children (17%) have no electricity in their houses.
- 1 in 3 children (33%) don't have safe and healthy toilets at home. (All children should have access to a flush toilet or ventilated pit latrine to protect them from germs.)

Health

- Babies born in the poorest households are four times more likely to die before their first birthday than babies in the richest households.
- More than half (65%) of young children who die in hospital suffer from malnutrition.
- 1 in 6 children (17%) experience hunger.
- Children whose parents have enough money get good medical treatment in private hospitals. There are far less doctors and nurses to help poorer children who go to public hospitals. Very few doctors and nurses work in rural areas where the poorest people live.
- Far more babies in cities (60%) are tested for HIV at the right time than babies in rural areas (41%).

Support

- Over 11 million children get the Child Support Grant. This small amount of money (R280 per month in 2012) helps families to feed their children and send them to school.

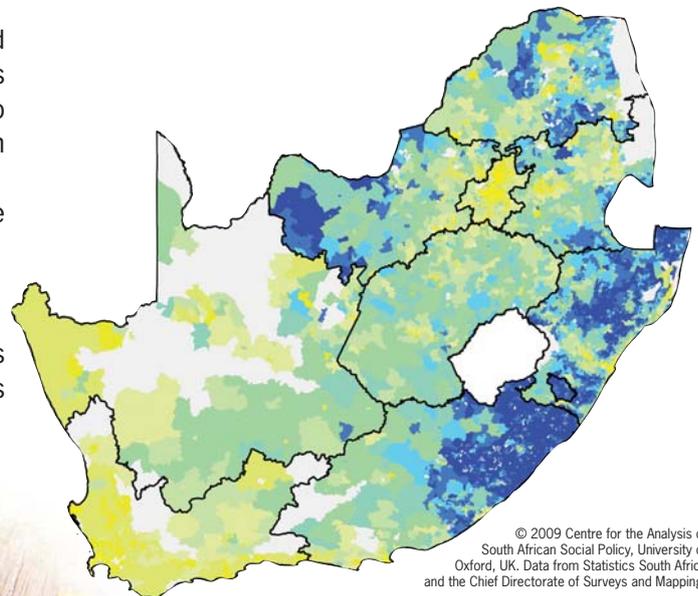


Education

- In 2010, nearly all learners (89%) from the richest homes passed grade 9 compared to only half (54%) of learners from the poorest homes.
- 1 in 6 primary school learners (16%) and 1 in 5 high school learners (22%) travel more than 30 minutes to reach school.
- Many children in South Africa cannot read, write or do maths properly. In 2011 tests, grade 3 learners scored 35% for literacy and 28% for numeracy (doing maths).
- The government plans to help very young children to learn. Many children now go to grade R before they start school. There are also programmes for very young children to help prepare them for school. These are called early childhood development programmes, but many poor families cannot afford to pay the fees.

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This map shows how children in different parts of the country live very different lives.



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Most deprived

Least deprived

The dark blue areas of the map show where children are most deprived. The yellow areas show where children are better off, and the green shows a situation in-between. As you can see children living in the rural areas (like Thandeka) are worse off, while rich children (like Mabel) are more likely to live in the cities. But not all children living in cities are rich like Mabel, some are poor and live in backyard shacks and informal settlements.



Taking Action

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The Constitution says that everyone has the right to equality – including children. This means that we need to make sure that all children have clean water, enough food to eat, good health care and a better education.

- We should start from the very beginning and make sure that pregnant women and young babies have everything that they need to grow and develop.
- Special attention should be given to improving services for children who live in poverty and children living in rural areas and informal settlements.
- Children with special needs, such as children with disabilities, also need extra help and attention.
- All children who need the Child Support Grant should get it from birth until they turn 18.
- All children should have access to health care services so that they can stay healthy and strong.
- All children need a good education with text books, well-trained teachers and good school buildings. A good education will give children a better start in life and help close the gap between rich and poor.
- Children need to be asked what is important to them and their ideas need to be taken seriously. This will help make sure that the government does what is best for children.

The Way Forward



The government has put together a BIG Plan for South Africa called the *National Development Plan* which describes how it plans to reduce poverty and inequality by the year 2030. This plan aims to decrease poverty and create more

jobs, improve children's health and education and make sure our communities are safe to live in.

Please share this information with your friends, family and teachers and talk about what we can do to improve children's lives.

If you want more information, contact us to help you.

Contact details

Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

46 Sawkins Road, Rondebosch, Cape Town, 7700

Tel: 021 689 5404 Fax: 021 689 8330

Email: info@ci.org.za

Contact person: Charmaine Smith (Communications Manager)

UNICEF

PO Box 4884, Pretoria, 0001

Tel: 012 354 8201 Fax: 012 354 8293

Email: aviviers@unicef.org

Contact person: André Viviers (Senior Social Policy Specialist)

Words and meanings

Some of the words in this summary might be new to you or have a specific meaning. These are explained below. If there are other words that are new to you, look them up in a dictionary or ask your teacher.

Child: anyone younger than 18 years.

Law: rules made by the government and which everybody should follow.

Gauge: to measure or weigh. The *South African Child Gauge* measures how the country is doing in meeting children's rights.

Government: a group of people who have the power to make laws and who have the responsibility to put laws into action and deliver services to the country's people.

Policy: a written document that describes how things need to be done. A policy can be written by an organisation, a group or the government.

Deprived: when children don't get what they need to grow and develop. This includes enough money for their basic needs, a safe and caring home, and access to school, health care and basic services.

Equality: being treated the same as others.

Income inequality: the gap between the rich and the poor.

Rights: those things that every child should be able to do or should have for their survival, protection, development and participation.

Malnutrition: when children don't get the food they need to grow and stay healthy.

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