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Women and Poverty: The South African Experience

By Johanna Kehler

Introduction

A lot has been said, done and published on the topic of women and poverty. This article will first provide a short introductory outline of poverty and the feminisation thereof. Secondly, the article will explore the problems regarding women and poverty in the South African context. Emphasis will be given to rural women and women on farms, as two of the most marginalised groups of women in South Africa¹.

South Africa, in the midst of transformation, is struggling to overcome the burden of race, class and gender-based inequality inherited during the periods of colonialism and Apartheid. The main goals of the transformation process include the facilitation of socio-economic development and growth, the enhancement of the standard of living, and the empowerment of the historically disadvantaged people, particularly women and the poor.

However, women's realities in South Africa are still determined by race, class, and gender-based access to resources and opportunities. This further suggests that race, class and gender are the determinants for the prevailing political, social, and economic inequalities. Thus poor black women's access to resources, opportunities and education, as well as their access to growth and wealth of the country is severely limited. Black rural women are the ones faced with an even greater lack of access to resources and prosperity and therefore live under immense poverty.

Poverty and Inequality

Poverty and inequality are conceptualised and measured in different ways. On one level, objective social indicators such as income levels, consumption expenditures, and housing standards, together with subjective indicators, such as attitudes, needs and perception of social conditions, can be used to determine levels of poverty and inequality. (May et al, 2000:21). On another level, poverty can be conceptualised and measured by determinants of well-being, or alternatively by the access people have to those determinants of well-being (Dasgupta & Wealer, 1992:119). In other words, factors such as health, welfare and human rights are determinants of well-being, whereas the availability of shelter, health care, education facilities and income are factors that define access to those determinants of well-being. (May et al, 2000:21)

The level of poverty is generally defined as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living, which according to the World Bank, is measured in terms of basic consumption needs or income required to satisfy those needs. Therefore, poverty, in its narrow definition, can be understood as a reflection of the 'inability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living' (May, 2000:5). It can be argued, that the inclusion of further indicators of well-being, such as low achievement in education and a severe minimised health standards, as well as people's vulnerability, voicelessness and powerlessness are necessary to measure all facets of poverty as it is experienced by poor people². This is underlined by the understanding that poverty is a reflection of 'pronounced deprivation of well-being'³.

However, the societal and individual understanding of a socially acceptable minimum standard of living, as well as indicators of well-being, differ from country to

country and is not a static definition. Modification of this understanding can be influenced through changes within the country's broad socio-economic environment, as well as on an individual level through special circumstances, such as death, illness and loss of employment.

In the South African context, standard of living, and therefore poverty and inequality, are among other things, closely related to race, class and gender⁴. Employment and income generation are the main determinants for people living below or above the poverty line. The unemployment rate in South Africa increased from 33% in 1996 to 36.2% in 1999. In 1999 56% of the unemployed were women and 44% were men. Of the total number of unemployed, 44% are amongst the African population group⁵ as compared to 6.8% amongst Whites. In addition, the number of employment opportunities in the formal sector declined from 5.2 million in 1996 to 4.8 million in 1999, while the informal sector increased drastically during that period. In 1999 a total of 1.9 million people were employed in the informal sector⁶ as compared to 996 000 in 1996⁷.

Another critical indicator for standard of living and poverty is access to basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation. According to the 1994 World Development Report (1994:20) the poor are defined as

Those who are unable to consume a basic quantity of clean water, and who are subject to unsanitary surroundings...lack the minimum energy requirements and...have extremely limited mobility or communications beyond their immediate settlements.⁸

In the South African context, as Kehler (2000a: 39) argues, the above definition of the poor would suggest that limiting the access to basic services through current trends that include part-privatisation of infrastructure, will further increase poverty levels. Even though building infrastructure for service delivery is closely linked to economic growth and therefore poverty reduction, it does not necessarily translate into equality. According to the 1996 South African Population Census, only 45% of all households had indoor water supply and a further 17% had a tap inside the yard while 13% of households are still using dams/rivers/streams for their water needs. The Census further revealed wide disparities between the poorer and more affluent provinces. For example, 23% of households in the Eastern Cape had indoor water supply as compared to 76% in the Western Cape.

Kehler (2000a:39) concludes in her study concerning the accessibility versus affordability of basic services in poor communities of South Africa that:

...the current trends of 'budgetary constraints' translating into decreased socio-economic development in poor communities, seems destined to further entrench inequality rather than promote equal access to services.

Six years after South Africa's first democratic election, the majority of people still live in poverty and under living conditions that permanently threaten their well-being. And even though equal access to resources and opportunities, as well as socio-economic rights are provided for and protected by South Africa's constitutional and legislative dispensation, it is still far from reality.

The Constitution of South Africa guarantees the delivery of socio-economic rights. These include access to adequate housing, as well as the right of access to health care, sufficient food and water, and social security. This places a constitutional obligation on government to take action to ensure access to such social goods. However, the realisation of these socio-economic rights, as well as their enforcement,

remain limited due to lack of capacity and the remaining inaccessibility of these rights. Government is obligated to take all 'reasonable' measures, but only 'within its available resources', to achieve the progressive realisation of these rights⁹. This translates into the fact that access to socio-economic rights, including the access to basic services, is limited by government's allocation of its available resources. It is government's prerogative, through its budgetary process, to determine the priority of social expenditure and poverty alleviation. However, the limited resources and 'fiscal constraints' as outlined in South Africa's macro-economic strategy (GEAR)¹⁰ provide the rationale for cuts in social spending which justifies the limitation of access to socio-economic rights¹¹, including social insurance, such as unemployment and maternity benefits, and social assistance, such as poverty relief funds.

Welfare and social security measures, rightfully and adequately distributed to those eligible, could alleviate poverty to a certain extent and as a short-term measure, at least for the most vulnerable of the poor. In order to alleviate poverty in a more comprehensive way, opportunities need to be created for all people to have a share of the country's wealth, growth and prosperity. Education, skills training and job creation are only a few of the 'tools' which need to be provided to the poor in order for them to uplift themselves from poverty.

However, the above-mentioned social indicators, while they do measure standard of living and level of poverty, fail to adequately express people's experiences of their lives in poverty, their need to improve their living conditions, their attitudes toward and perceptions of their living circumstances. To portray a broader spectrum and an in-depth understanding of poverty issues, as well as to provide subjective indicators of poverty and inequality, a participatory approach is needed.

Feminisation of Poverty

The disadvantaged position in any given society is based on the relations of class, race and gender-based access to social resources and opportunities defining as well women's unequal access to resources and opportunities.

In this context, class should be understood as social relations premised on access to resources as well as the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services (Bradley, 1998). The concept of gender includes social roles, attitudes and expectations as they describe social and cultural beliefs relating to the interactions between women and men in society. In other words, gender covers 'both the sexual division of labour *and* cultural definitions and ascriptions concerning femininity and masculinity' (Bradley, 1998:22).

Race and ethnicity are, besides class and gender, other factors that define individuals' socio-economic status in society. Much has been written about how the term race is often simplified to racist physiology whereas ethnicity refers to the complexity of socio-economic, political and cultural influences defining ethnic identity and therefore subject to change over time. Epstein (1998:51) suggests:

...that ethnicity should be regarded as a set of processes through which relational differences between groups are constructed and held in place...they will differ over time and in relation to socio-economic and political change, and will also carry varying salience for different (groups of) people at different times. Ethnic groups do not, therefore, depend on ties, which go back into the far distant... Ethnic groups are formed and exist through economic, political and cultural practices and material

relations of power. No ethnic group is monolithic... there are many differences within any ethnic group, alongside lines of gender, religion, language, caste or class.

It can therefore be argued that race and gender are not static concepts but relational concepts defining social, economic and political roles and functions in society. They are subject to change over time as well as influenced by change within the socio-economic and political environment that defines them. Or as Bradley (1998:21) concludes:

Relationships change as constructs change, but constructs also change in response to relational change. The link between constructs and relationships is dialectical and it is pointless to speculate on which precedes which.

It is a known fact that women's position in society is determined both by 'their access to, role and status in paid employment, and the status accorded to their reproductive and domestic role' (Hakim, 1996:5). However, the gender-based definition of social roles and responsibilities constitute the basis for inequality that women experience in both these spheres. The prevailing cultural and social norms regard women as less 'valuable' members of society, which is not only reflected in the attitudes and behaviours they experience daily, but also within policy-making and legislative structures. Society and culture define women's social role primarily as the caregiver and caretaker and in relation to women's 'reproductive function', whereas men are regarded as the 'breadwinners' and are defined by their productive role. Alongside this division of responsibilities within social structures goes the prevailing belief that women's contributions to the sustainability of the family are much less 'valuable' than men's.

Studies¹² have shown that current trends of globalisation, economic reforms, the World Bank's policy to privatise public services, and the global cut in social spending are only a few of the determining factors which will decrease women's participation in the workforce and increase their poverty. Since women are the most vulnerable in the workforce, retrenchments will affect them long before their male counterparts will be affected by it. The privatisation of public services has a greater impact on women, since they are – defined through their multiple reproductive and caretaker roles – the greater recipients of those services. Women have to rely more on social services, which means that cuts in spending on social services will have tremendous impact on women's multiple roles. This will impact women as 'breadwinners', as caretakers, as well as in their reproductive roles. Decreased social spending and the concomitant decrease of state-provided services will increase women's reproductive and care-taking tasks. This translates into the feminisation of poverty rather than women's socio-economic empowerment and upliftment.

This means that black working class women's class, race and gender-based access to resources and opportunities, combined with current economic changes, perpetuate inequality and poverty as a whole, while simultaneously decreasing women's socio-economic status. Or as Date-Bah (1997:1) concludes on current trends in economic development:

...it cannot altogether be termed an enabling environment for the promotion of the quantity and quality of women's employment, and also for gender equality, unless conscious and deliberate strategies and interventions are implemented.

Within the South African context, the above indicates clearly why African rural women are the poorest of the poor, why these women experience poverty and inequality differently to men, and why socio-economic changes impact differently on them. African rural women's lack of access to resources and basic services are combined with unequal rights in family structures, as well as unequal access to family resources, such as land and livestock. This explains further why African rural women are not only poorer in society as a whole but also in their own families, and defines why their level and kind of poverty is experienced differently and more intensely than that of men. This translates into reality where African rural women are not only burdened with multiple roles concerning productive and reproductive responsibilities, but also subjected to discrimination and subjugation both in and out of their homes¹³.

In summary, as long as access to resources and opportunities remain determined by race, class and gender, women will experience the brunt of the burden of poverty and inequality. Or, in the words of Geisler and Hansen (1994:96):

...as long as men control productive resources (e.g. land, labour, tools, credit, and housing), women's prospects are likely to differ from men's, the more so under conditions of economic pressure.

As a result, effective policies related to gender equalities, as well as poverty alleviation, have to acknowledge women's multiple roles in society and the importance of women's social, economic and informal contributions to the country's growth. Only then, will the cycle of poverty break, and women's socio-economic empowerment and upliftment be able to begin.

Women and Poverty in South Africa

South Africa's progressive constitution and legislature certainly provide the legal framework for equality and non-discrimination, but the challenge remains to implement these measures to their fullest potential in order to improve the standard of living of the historically disadvantaged, especially women and the poor.

The following will explore the realities of rural women as well as women working and living on farms showing the increasing feminisation of poverty amongst these groups of women. Firstly, rural women's realities in relation to service delivery or lack thereof, as well as its impact upon families' well-being and quality of life will be explored. Secondly, working and living conditions for women on farms as they relate to the accessibility of socio-economic rights (i.e., employment-related social security) will be analysed.

Women's realities in rural areas¹⁴

Statistics¹⁵ show that 52% of South Africa's total population are women. Of those, almost half (47%) are living in non-urban/rural areas. However, the number of rural women differs drastically between the population groups. 57% of African¹⁶ women live in rural areas as compared to only 17% of 'Coloured' women and 8% of White women.

South Africa's unemployment rate, as mentioned earlier, increased in 1999 to 36.2%, with a higher unemployment rate of 45% in non-urban/rural areas as compared to 32% in urban areas. The unemployment rate amongst rural women amounts to 53%

for all population groups as compared to 37% amongst rural men. In addition, amongst rural African women the unemployment rate amounts to 56% as compared to 21% amongst rural 'Coloured' women and only 5% amongst rural White women.

The above statistics indicate that the majority of black women continue to live under extremely poor conditions in rural areas. These areas are characterised by lack of socio-economic development and infrastructure, lack of opportunities for employment and income generation. Additionally, rural women are faced with limited access to education and skills training, which further contributes to a life below the poverty line.

Furthermore, these areas are defined by the lack of access to basic services, such as water, electricity and sanitation. This lack of basic services not only causes health and safety hazards for women, it also defines the situation where women have to spend many hours a day walking long distances in order to fetch water and fire wood. In addition, women are the *de facto* heads of households and 'breadwinners' due to the men's absence, based primarily on urban migration phenomena, as well as the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in rural areas.

Rural women and service delivery

Service delivery, or lack thereof, impacts not only on standards of living, health status and well being, but also affects the overall socio-political and socio-economic conditions of communities, and therefore impacts on the overall quality of life.

Socio-economic development and the level of services are closely interlinked with gender. Women are the ones who constitute the majority of the poor and who live mostly in rural areas and informal settlements, which have little or no provision of services. Since women, based on their reproductive and care-taking roles, are the main consumers of services, women are mostly affected when services are inadequate. Women carry the brunt of the burden of finding alternatives for lack of service provision or when services are inaccessible due to costs. In other words, the provision of basic services is not only 'fundamental to women's health and well-being' (Abrahams, 1999:14) but also impacts on the quality of life of their family and therefore the community as a whole.

The latest statistics¹⁷ on service delivery in South Africa reveal that in 1999 only 27% of non-urban African-headed households had access to running water inside the dwelling or in the yard as compared to 83% of urban African households. These figures clearly indicate that access to clean and safe water is still not the reality for rural women. Rural women still spend hours every day collecting water. This task is not only time-consuming and physical strenuous, but in most cases the water collected is not even safe to drink.

In September 2000 the lack of access to clean water led to a cholera outbreak in KwaZulu Natal¹⁸. This demonstrates the horrific impact on rural poor communities of the government's failure to provide affordable basic services. In addition, it was women who have to take care of the sick which is just one of the numerous examples where women's care-giving tasks are increasing based on insufficient service delivery. This is only one example of how the inadequate access to clean and safe water directly impacts upon the quality of life and well-being of the entire community.

Furthermore, the gender aspect of service delivery however implies that the provision of water will be of special benefit to women. Women will save time,

improve their physical health, decrease their care-taking activities, ease their domestic tasks, and increase productivity in other spheres (Hurt & Budlender, 2000).

A recent South African study¹⁹ has shown that access to services, such as water is also closely linked to the socio-economic status of a household. This translates into the fact that many South African households, who have, according to statistics, access to clean water, can in reality not afford to access the water services. In other words, even though clean and safe water is theoretically available, it remains practically inaccessible for the majority of poor South African communities. As a result, many households are faced with disconnection of water services due to non-payment of water bills, which impacts greatly on family's standard of living and well-being. The study, asking the question of affordability of water services delivered by municipalities, revealed further that water remains inaccessible. An overwhelming 81% of the research participants (total sample 185) perceived access to water as not affordable. The non-affordability not only limits the access to water it is also, as Kehler (2000a:31) argues, contrary to South African

...service delivery policies and strategies which mandate that those services are to be delivered at an affordable level. It does however coincide with the sustainability and efficiency factor of service delivery, which is emphasised in the same documents. (...) For community members this antagonism translates into the fact that as long as access to water is not determined on need but on available resources then water will remain inaccessible to the majority of communities.

In addition, the study identified the enormous psycho-social impact water disconnection had on women and their families. Families' well-being and quality of life are deteriorating due to the disconnection of water services, while children, the elderly and sick were the ones mostly affected. The lack of access to clean and safe water not only causes a health and safety hazard and affects children's school attendance and performance, it also results in families feeling isolated from their friends and neighbours. Study participants further described the impact upon their families as 'frustrating', 'humiliating', 'degrading', 'dehumanising', 'embarrassing', and 'traumatic' since 'everything begins and ends with water there is no dignity without it'.²⁰

As stated earlier, one of the fundamental criteria for social development is access to infrastructure, including access to clean and safe water. One could therefore argue that the level of access to basic services for rural communities is not only a predictor of the level of socio-economic development but also of the level of poverty. The study concludes that the continuing lack of socio-economic development combined with current trends of privatisation of public services, as well as cut-backs in social spending will increase rather than decrease the level of poverty and the feminisation thereof. Public-private partnerships in service delivery limit access to services instead of creating universal access. It also decreases the standard of living and quality of life and further entrenches inequality. As a result, rural women continue to be the poorest of the poor, remain excluded from socio-economic development and growth and are denied access to basic services.

In order to achieve social development that empowers rural women, services, such as water, not only need to be accessible but also affordable. In addition, socio-economic development has to be linked not only to poverty alleviation but also has to aim at the reduction of existing political and socio-economic inequality.

Women on farms²¹

Employment in South Africa's 'formal' agricultural sector increased from 759,000 in 1996 to 1,099,000 in 1999. Of those, 34% are female and 66% are male workers. Africans (71%) and 'Coloureds' (20%) are the two main population groups employed in this sector. In 1999, an additional 296,000 workers (46% female and 54% male) were employed in the 'informal' agricultural sector²².

These figures clearly indicate that a greater percentage of women (46%) on the farms are employed in the informal sector of the industry as compared to the women (34%) that are employed in the formal sector.

The main burdens women on farms in South Africa are faced with are extreme discrimination and unequal treatment in the workplace, as well as unfair labour practices. They are mostly only employed as casual or temporary labourers during times of harvest or other labour intensive farm work. Even in cases where women work as seasonal workers for the entire year on the farm they are not granted the rights of permanent workers. These employment patterns lead as well to the majority of women working on farms not being covered by social insurance schemes such as pension fund, medical benefits or maternity benefits.

Women farm workers often receive lower pay in comparison with their male counterparts. Women who are 'permanent seasonal workers' receive no bonuses or any benefits, unlike their male counterparts in the same category of work. The weekly wage discrepancies between women and men working on the farms sometimes range between R50 and R100. Even though women perform the same kind of work, particularly at harvest time, their pay is lower.

Women on farms work ten hours a day with only a one-hour break for lunch and no tea breaks. They are required to perform physically strenuous work in all weather conditions, without any shelter being provided when it rains, nor any extra breaks in the extreme heat. If women leave the fields during times of heavy rain, the farmer deducts the time from their pay. Women are obliged to handle chemicals with their bare hands, since the farmer does not provide workers with protective gear.

Another problem that mainly confronts women on farms in the Western Cape is that women farm workers are only regarded as an extension to their male counterparts,²³ and not as 'valuable' categories of workers by themselves. They are only on the farms because the farmer employs their male counterparts. Women often have no independent contract, nor an independent right to tenure or housing. The rules regarding housing allocation of workers on farms in the Western Cape do not cater for women workers. This results in the incidence of single women working and living on farms in the Western Cape²⁴ being extremely rare. Only the widows of farm workers are able to remain living on the farm.

In most cases there are no arrangements between farmers and their workers with regard to maternity benefits, leave or work task adjustments during pregnancy and breast-feeding. This results in women working on the farms right up to one to two weeks before the birth of the child due to economic necessities and fear of losing the only source of income they have. Women do not have any guarantee that their jobs will be kept for them while on maternity leave. Very often women have no choice but to handle chemicals, such as pesticides and fertilisers, throughout their pregnancy and the period of nursing their babies.

The fear of losing their jobs and the economic necessity to keep on working as long as possible before the birth of a child places women on farms in situations that endanger their health as well as the health of the unborn. The tasks performed by women on farms are physically very strenuous and most of the times there are no

arrangements that would allow women to do lighter tasks during pregnancy. In addition, women are scared to ask for special treatment. 'I had to be strong and not show any pain because I was scared the farmer would fire me'²⁵ explained a woman who worked until the onset of labour.

Another woman stated:

I gave birth during my working period. I never took any leave or break. I gave birth on Saturday while I was at work the previous day. Then I stayed home for six months with no pay because I had to look after the baby²⁶.

In the few instances where maternity protective arrangements are in place, these often not include benefits paid by the farmer. Women farm workers can go on maternity leave for the stipulated duration of three months following childbirth without fear of being replaced and losing their job, but the maternity leave is unpaid which explains why most women cannot afford to take this leave²⁷.

As a result, women are faced with being obliged to return to work as early as a week after the birth of their child due to a lack of sufficient income. But since there are no childcare facilities on farms, women are forced to stay at home to take care of their children until the older siblings are able to take care of the baby. This places women in the situation where they need to go back to work as soon as possible in order to ensure the livelihood of the family but the lack of childcare facilities forces women to remain without employment and income.

Another issue highlighted in the study is the lack of special work arrangements during times of pregnancy and breast-feeding. During those times women should be relieved from heavy duties like hoeing the fields and lifting heavy farm equipment. 'We need to be treated well and shouldn't work in the fields -- suggested a woman farm worker'²⁸ while another woman²⁹ mentioned that 'pregnant women need special treatment and a safe surrounding, not spraying poison or cutting trees'.

Furthermore the study argues that women farm workers, as any other women worker, are entitled to the benefits of South Africa's protective labour legislation such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)³⁰, the Employment Equity Act (EEA)³¹, and the Labour Relations Act (LRA)³². All these legislative measures aim at eliminating inequality and discrimination on the grounds of gender in the workplace and prohibiting unfair labour practices. It can be further argued that the condition, women are faced with while working and living on farms, not only constitute a violation of these rights, but also constitute a violation of the constitutional guarantees of non-discrimination, non-sexism, and equality. Or as a woman working with female farm labourers formulates it:

The laws are there and they are very progressive and good but the problems now seem to be the monitoring and implementation of those laws. In reality women still bear the brunt of unfair discrimination practices on farms. For instance, the Employment Equity Act states equal pay for equal work, but reality on farms disregards this³³.

Women on farms face enormous difficulties in enforcing their rights, since they are not only dependant on their short-term employment, as limited and as 'bad' it may be but also on the farmer and life on the farm. 'They can oppress you and keep you down even though you know your rights' stated a woman farm worker³⁴. Their survival depends on being 'allowed' to remain and work on that farm and for that reason women often endure the abusive and discriminatory conditions. A common

explanation given by women on farms for their failure to attempt enforcing their rights 'you don't bite the hand which feeds you'³⁵. Another woman explained the situation on the farm where she works and lives as not very promising for changes in the near future by saying: 'Now we have rights and we know our rights but if we try and assert our rights the farmer threatens us'³⁶.

The lack of knowledge amongst women on farms about these laws is as of much concern as their lack of self-esteem and assertiveness. The study argues that education and awareness raising is the right strategy to give women the tools of knowledge regarding their rights. However, a representative from the Women on Farms project argues that:

What is important is rights-based education in combination with capacity building. The former will not lead anywhere by itself. Women have to learn to become assertive, to raise the self-esteem and to speak up for their rights. ... But farmers are not used to being questioned in their rulings either. So it will take time and education on both sides³⁷.

The above illustrates that the reality for women working and living on farms in South Africa has not changed and is still characterised by unfair labour practices, wage discrepancies, discriminatory behaviour and an enormous degree of dependency.

Conclusion

For the majority of women in South Africa existing socio-economic rights, as guaranteed in the constitution, remain inaccessible resulting in the perpetuation and increase, as well as the feminisation of poverty. Furthermore, especially for rural women and women on farms the constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination remain merely theoretical rights that lack practical implementation. What remains is women's day-to-day realities marked by the struggle for pure survival that is additionally determined by deteriorating socio-economic conditions and lack of development.

In summary it can be argued that only the effectiveness of the translation from the theory of equality and non-discrimination into the practice of empowerment and socio-economic upliftment of women and the poor will be one of the main criteria determining success or failure of South Africa's transformation process.

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The article is based on findings of two research studies conducted in 2000 by Nadel Human Rights Research and Advocacy Project in Cape Town, South Africa, concerning the accessibility of constitutionally guaranteed socio-economic rights.

² See also World Development Report 2000/2001.

³ World Development Report 2000/2001, 2000:15.

⁴ According to the UN Human Development Report 2000 South Africa's rate of poverty is 45%, whereby 57.2% of Africans live below the poverty threshold, compared to 2.1% of whites. In addition, the poorest 49% of South Africans are African rural women.

⁵ The terminology is used in official South African statistical documents.

⁶ These figures regarding the employment rate in the informal sector exclude employment in the domestic service (e.g., domestic workers). In 1999 an additional 799 000 people were employed in the domestic service.

⁷ Figures are taken from the South African October Household Survey (OHS) 1999. The OHS also shows that even though the overall unemployment rate is increasing, it slightly decreased from 37.5% in 1998 to 36.2% in 1999.

⁸ As cited in Stavrou 2000:142.

⁹ See also the Constitution of South Africa, Section 26 and Section 27.

¹⁰ GEAR, South Africa's macro-economic strategy (1996), based on concerns over fiscal constraints strongly supports the need for partnerships between the public and private sector in infrastructure development, aims at encouraging foreign investment, and emphasises cut back on social spending. (see also ILRIG, 1999)

¹¹ The progressive realisation of socio-economic rights is a much-debated issue of concern in South Africa. Recent court cases such as the Grootboom case (access to adequate housing) and the Soobramoney case (access to health care) are only few illustrations of the state being challenged to fulfil its obligation to provide socio-economic rights.

¹² See also Ghorashy & Belanger (1996), Nyman (1997), Budlender (1999) and Kehler (2000).

¹³ See also Mhone 1997.

¹⁴ Rural areas refer to remote underdeveloped settlements, which are located in the former Bantustans areas. This chapter is based on findings of a recent research study conducted in rural areas in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape, two of the South African provinces, concerning the accessibility versus affordability of basic service. See also Kehler [2000a].

¹⁵ South African October Household Survey 1999.

¹⁶ The terms 'African', 'White', and 'Coloured' are the official terminology used in South African statistics.

¹⁷ Figures are taken from the South African October Household Survey 1999.

¹⁸ KwaZulu Natal is one of the provinces in the northern parts of South Africa. The cholera outbreak is now spreading to other northern provinces as well.

¹⁹ See also Kehler (2000a).

²⁰ As cited in Kehler, 2000a:32.

²¹ The term 'women on farms' refers to black women who are employed and living on predominantly white-owned farms. This chapter is based on findings of a research study into the accessibility of employment-related social security benefits for women workers in four different employment sectors South Africa's. See also Kehler (2000b).

²² The statistics are taken the South Africa October Household Survey 1999.

²³ Interview on 11 May 2000 with a representative of Women on Farms project based in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa.

²⁴ For further discussion on this issue see Kehler (2000b).

²⁵ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:31.

²⁶ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:31.

²⁷ The different kinds of arrangements are often a strong reflection of organised labour movement's involvement in the bargaining process. For instance, at few farms in the Eastern Cape union agreements secured two weeks maternity leave paid for by the farmer, compared to other farms (with no union representation) where there are no arrangements in place.

²⁸ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:33.

²⁹ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:33.

³⁰ The BCEA (1997) stipulates that an employee is entitled to at least four consecutive months' maternity leave and three days paternity leave. It further allows for the protection of women from performing tasks that may potentially endanger the health of the women and child during the period of pregnancy and breast-feeding.

³¹ The EEE (1998) guarantees the right not to be discriminated against, directly or indirectly, on the grounds of pregnancy, family responsibility and/or birth.

³² The LRA (1995) guarantees the right not to be unfairly dismissed. It further states that a dismissal based on pregnancy, intended pregnancy, or any reason related to pregnancy is automatically unfair.

³³ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:33.

³⁴ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:33.

³⁵ Women farm workers frequently mentioned this phrase.

³⁶ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:33.

³⁷ As cited in Kehler, 2000b:33.