Transition Series

VOICES OF A NEW DEMOCRACY:

African expectations in the new South Africa

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PREFACE

Hearing those who are spoken for

The study whose findings are discussed in this publication was born out of a deep frustration with our political, economic and development policy debates which began to crystallise around 18 months ago.

As the prospect of democratic government drew near, and debate on the policy approaches which a new South African democracy might require became more heated, a careful listener – at conferences, to the media or on the political hustings – could not fail to notice the extent to which debate was underpinned by an assumption which had become so deep-rooted that to challenge it was to consign oneself inevitably to the lunatic fringe. This was the assumption that 'blacks harbour very high (socio-economic) expectations'.

At first glance (and none of the participants in the debate seemed interested in taking a second one), this seemed logical enough. Surely people who had been denied the social and economic conditions which a privileged minority enjoyed because of a deliberate policy of racial advantage would insist that, once racial domination ended, racial economic privilege should too? Didn't that inevitably mean that the 35 million-strong majority would demand that the extremely high socio-economic standards which apartheid had delivered to its 5 million favoured whites be extended to them? And since it was clearly impossible to keep 40 million people in the style to which 5 million were accustomed by deliberate racial protection, that a new government would face an insoluble crisis of expectations which would ensure either its or democracy's downfall?

Yet a second glance, a moment's reflection, and a look at the way the majority of South Africans behaved, suggested that the logic might not be as watertight as it seemed – an impression which grew as the transition proceeded.

The reflection suggested firstly that the assumption might be far cruder than it seemed, because it assumed that some 35 million people, because they happened to share similar racial origins and a common experience of discrimination, would all want the same things and harbour the same expectations. This seemed highly unlikely, for two reasons. Firstly, it seemed implausible to insist that so many people would harbour similar or identical aspirations. It also seemed highly patronising, for it denied the possibility that black South Africans might, like Swedes or Americans or Finns, be individuals, who formed independent opinions on what was possible and what not – or that, like these other groups, they might form themselves into differing and competing interests with differing collective needs and desires. Secondly, analysis of two decades of 'reform apartheid' suggested that black South Africans were more socially and economically differentiated than the assumption suggested. The fact that black people at conferences and rallies were articulating high expectations did not mean that these were shared by other black people whose circumstances or interests might lead them to a more pragmatic approach.

Similarly, the assumption seemed based on theories about the attitudes and behaviour of people subjected to disadvantage and discrimination which had been sharply questioned by a persuasive body of research and analysis in other societies. This suggested that it was hardly self-evident that people relegated to the bottom of society's pile by a discriminatory system would inevitably demand to rise to its top the moment the system ended and the opportunity seemed to arise. They were equally, or more likely, to judge political change by whether it improved their lives modestly and opened avenues for further improvement. Nor did comparative evidence seem automatically to support another assumption on which the conventional wisdom was based - that the poor and those who lacked formal education were incapable of making rational and pragmatic calculations about what was possible rather than what was desirable. Indeed, some of the evidence suggested that they are more capable of making those judgments: the daily struggle for economic survival may instil a much more realistic assessment of what can be done and what cannot than the rarefied atmosphere of the conference hall.

The assumption also did not seem to square with people's observed behaviour. Those who insisted that 'the people' would accept nothing less than ownership of suburban houses never explained why those same people often did everything in their power to obtain a site at site-and-service settlements. Those who told us that 'the masses' unanimously rejected migrant worker hostels were caught unawares when some of those 'masses' killed to remain in those hostels. There are many other examples. None of them suggested that, for example, the homeless loved site and service or that migrants loved hostels: but they did suggest that there was a gap between how those in conference halls expected people to choose, and how they actually chose in the harsh world where the poor have to live with their choices.

But finally, and most importantly, the assumption was worrying and frustrating because it seemed to be based on an almost majestic lack of evidence. None of the people who based entire theories or proposals on 'the masses' high expectations' seemed to have made any considered attempt to investigate whether those expectations really existed. Either they were the product of abstract deductions, or based on the very dubious proposition that particular organisations or individuals had an automatic insight into the minds of people with whom they might share a common detestation of apartheid, but whose world they rarely shared and to whose opinions they rarely if ever had the opportunity to listen.

It became increasingly possible that there were two South Africas - the one in which elites, black and white, exchanged ideas and cut deals (in English, as the report presented here points out), and another in which the 'masses' lived their lives, made and debated their choices (almost invariably not in English). And it also became increasingly likely that the second South Africa did not necessarily conform with the stereotypes so cherished by the first one. If that were so, the problem seemed likely to be not so much that the elites were manufacturing grass-roots expectations because it suited their interests (the 'high expectations' assumptions does serve the interests of some who tout it, but by no means of all who do), but that the logical theories which seem so neat when they are framed so far away from the shack settlement or 'homeland' might turn out to be fatally flawed when they were compared to reality on the ground. After all, there would be no need for social research if people always behaved the way they are meant to do in theories.

This suspicion hardened as we witnessed the 1994 election. Elites at the Kempton Park negotiations, in the 'liberation' movements as well as the old establishment, planned and debated on the assumption that the new black electorate comprised people who would have to be thoroughly educated in the virtue of democracy, and painstakingly taught how to place a cross on a piece of paper. We found out that 'the masses' about whom these assumptions were made understood the merits of the franchise better than many of their leaders, and were quite capable of indicating their preferences on a ballot paper without the ministrations of hordes of voter educators. If elite assumptions about political attitudes and capacities were so wrong, why should their assumptions about their social and economic equivalents be any less so?

If the assumption was questionable, the need to question it – and to investigate it by taking 'the masses' seriously enough to listen to and analyse what they have to say – was urgent. The 'high expectations' assumption is, of course, anything but an academic issue: if political and economic strategies are being devised on the basis of a fantasy or an oversimplification, then the country is doomed to choose policies and strategies which are fantastical or over-simple. If our society at the grass roots is not as polarised as our policy-makers believe, and if the socio-economic expectations they believe they have to meet turn out to be those of an articulate elite rather than the 'masses' for whom they speak, we will run up unaffordable political and economic costs to solve a problem which does not exist.

CPS thus became increasingly convinced that there was a pressing need for research on the socio-economic expectations of the people at the grass roots about whom so much was said, but who rarely if ever spoke themselves. We attempted to raise funds for such a study, but were unsuccessful. From late 1993 through much of 1994, however, the need we had identified seemed to have been met, as several institutions conducted surveys on the social and economic attitudes of black South Africans. These surveys made an important contribution to our understanding of the preferences of the majority of our citizens, particularly as many asked people to rank their social and economic priorities in order: this went some way towards showing that the priorities of the elites were not necessarily those of the people.

However, we still believed that a vital gap remained. Important as these surveys were, all asked people what they wanted, not what they expected to get. There is an important difference between the two. Any of us, if asked what we want, are likely to trot out a far more ambitious list than we would if asked to detail what we expect. In the first case, we are not asked to measure our desires against what we believe to be possible; in the second we are. Nor did the surveys seek to explore whether people were aware that what they wanted might not be possible, whether they accepted that the society faced hard choices between delivering much to only a few people or less to many more, and whether they accepted that social policies had costs as well as benefits. In sum, they did not tell us (for that was not their function) how aware people at the grass roots were of the tradeoffs, compromises and constraints which face a society with limited resources seeking to meet very great needs.

The surveys seemed, therefore, to increase the need for such a study. Fortunately, by this time funding – supplied by the Centre's core donors – was available, and we determined to use it to commission and implement the study. Craig Charney, an able researcher with

significant experience in attitude studies, was commissioned to conduct the study, assisted by Gardner Khumalo, a highly competent CPS researcher who participated actively in the project as a researcher and who offered valuable advice and comment, but who, because of other research commitments, is not responsible for the analytical conclusions reached in the report. Markinor was commissioned to conduct the interviews on which the study is based.

As the report indicates, we decided against the survey research method used by the other studies, and opted instead for the focus group approach which is described in the report. We were aware that this method does not have the same statistical validity as a survey, but chose it because we were not primarily interested in statistical validity: we did not want to add to the debate by producing our own account of 'what the people of South Africa want'. Rather, we were concerned to investigate the conventional wisdom not by asking people to list their wants and expectations, but by exploring how they approached, and thought about, policy choices and constraints. Only the focus group method, which allows researchers to capture the nuance of how people respond to dilemmas and choices, seemed equipped to do that.

Therefore, the report that follows is not primarily an attempt to describe which specific policies voters want the government to follow. Nor does it claim to compete with survey research by indicating what statistical proportion of the electorate favour or reject particular policies, although it does mention and discuss specific preferences where this seems necessary for its central purpose. It is, rather, an attempt to provide for the first time an insight into how important sections of our newly enfranchised population approach the policy dilemmas and debates which until now have been the preserve of the elites alone.

We firmly believe that the report has achieved its goal more than adequately. Not only does it present a unique insight into the second South African debate, but it analyses it with rare insight and perception.

There is no need for this preface to summarise the report's findings and analysis. But, while many of the specifics reported and analysed by Charney surprised us (as any research project worth its salt should do), the report shows conclusively that the first debate – at our conferences and in our media – is indeed based on faulty assumptions. The 'masses' indeed prove to be more nuanced and more pragmatic than the elite debate suggests.

If these are bad tidings for some pundits, the news is potentially good for our new democracy. We are not nearly as polarised as we think, and our voters – in any event, those who participated in the focus groups – are as, if not more, sober, sophisticated and nuanced in their approach to socio-economic issues as those in mature democracies. Grass-roots attitudes reflected in the survey are not monolithic: there are real differences in attitude and interest, as there must be if a democracy is to survive. If our policy-makers, public and private, listen carefully to the voices from the grass roots, they will learn that it may be far easier to sustain our new democracy without courting economic ruin or social upheaval than they believe.

But the good news is only potential. For if our study shows that grass-roots expectations are realistic and limited, it shows too that voters have real expectations on which they expect the new order to deliver. And ironically, the modest, incremental changes most of them want risk being ignored in the quest for more ambitious, less immediately realisable, programmes, which they are assumed to want because the elite debate says they want them. If policy

makers continue to listen only to the first debate rather than the one reflected in this study, the pessimistic prophets may yet be proved right – but not because policy-makers failed to meet the high expectations of the grass roots, but because they were so concerned to meet the expectations the 'masses' were assumed to have that they neglected to address those they really *do* have.

It is always politically and logistically easier to listen to the views and concerns of articulate, accessible and organised elites than to those at the grass roots. But this study shows that policy-makers who choose to listen to the citizenry as well as the elites will find the results rewarding – to themselves as well as the society. This report is a first, modest, contribution to encouraging that change in approach.

Steven Friedman

Director, CPS

INTRODUCTION

> **'The person who is disappointed is the person who is in a hurry.' – *Man living in a backyard shack in Soweto, age 25–34, std 4 or less.***

Responses to South Africa's transition to majority rule among many 'sophisticated' observers here and overseas offer something of a paradox: they describe it as a near-miracle, yet regard it with considerable scepticism. They heap praise on president Nelson Mandela and his predecessor, current deputy president F W de Klerk, for their stewardship of the process. Yet they deride the belief that the new government will be able to manage or meet popular aspirations. Many politicians, journalists, business people and academics think the expectations of the deprived black majority are so high that government cannot satisfy them, with mass discontent and serious instability the likely results. Similar attitudes are expressed by movements and intellectuals advocating radical policies, who argue that 'the masses' will accept nothing less.

This report, which presents the findings of 13 focus groups[1] conducted among urban and rural Africans during November 1994, challenges the pessimism reigning in those quarters: it is not, however, optimistic without qualification, for it finds that there are indeed expectations of change which the new democracy will have to meet. There definitely is disappointment with the pace of change since the April elections, but this has not produced widespread discontent with government. Rather, the findings suggest that the public is considerably more aware of the limits facing the new government, more realistic in its expectations, and more patient and hopeful about the future than conventional wisdom holds. The people want to make the system work for them, not bring it down. They are also more favourably disposed towards to policies which are incremental, egalitarian, and involve popular contributions, than is often supposed. The results reveal a sense of priorities that places the concrete and immediate – jobs, houses and water – ahead of the symbolic or ideological, such as land. On these issues, the group discussions reveal clear and attainable goals, and pragmatism about means. They also highlight limited awareness of some important policy initiatives, such as the RDP and housing policies, and point to the emergence of considerable tension around immigration. But in general, they point to a political culture of inclusion, not one of polarisation.

The findings of this project, which was relatively small-scale but allowed in-depth assessments of opinions, are broadly consistent with the results of recent national polls. They suggest a need for step-by-step, broadly based and visible change, supported by more effective policy communication, greater options for and participation by citizens, and attention to popular priorities. If this does not occur, the outcome is less likely to be a crisis of expectations than a crisis of cynicism, of the sort that has eroded the quality of political and social life in other new democracies.

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1 For a description of the focus group method, see the Methodological Appendix.

This report consists of two parts and an appendix. The first part deals with political issues, including attitudes towards national affairs and the government, popular wants and expectations, and aspects of the political culture. The second is more policy-oriented, covering the RDP, priorities, housing, education, land, water, and immigration. The methodological appendix contains an explanation of the focus group technique, a list of the groups and their profiles, and the discussion guide used with them.

Thanks are due to six people who played important roles in this study. At the Centre for Policy Studies, Steven Friedman initiated the project and sharpened the analysis and text, while Gardner Khumalo provided helpful research assistance at all stages and helped to draft the sections on housing, water, and land. Sibongile Rahube and Cinna Kunene of Markinor expertly conducted and translated the focus groups discussions. Finally, American pollsters Celinda Lake and Bill Dalbec offered useful advice on the discussion guide and analysis of data.

I EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATIONS: FASHIONABLE PESSIMISM AND SURPRISING REALITIES

Despite the success of the April elections and the installation of a democratic government, considerable doubt is often expressed about the prospects for success of the new South Africa. The same refrain is heard in Johannesburg, Cape Town, New York and London. The newly enfranchised black majority is said to expect more than the government can deliver, causing growing disillusionment now and portending trouble in the future. The suggestion that the Mandela government might substantially meet popular aspirations and retain public support is regarded as naive. This fashionable pessimism about the 'crisis of expectations' is variously offered as a reason for being sceptical about the country's stability, hesitating about investment, or embracing populist policies. Indeed, the notion that moderation cannot satisfy the masses is a curious point of convergence between conservatives, who say that therefore not much should be done, and radicals, who use it to argue for drastic change.

The conventional wisdom can be boiled down to the following propositions:

- The African majority is unaware of the constraints under which the new government operates, and ignorant of political realities.
- Because of their severe deprivation and/or self-interestedness, African voters are also unwilling to make tradeoffs among their priorities, or between their interests and those of others.
- The consequence is excessive and unrealistic expectations, which the government cannot hope to meet.
- Because high expectations have not been met, the African 'masses' perceive no change in their lot since the election.

- Extensive and growing social discontent will inevitably result.
- Discontent is certain to be most concentrated in the poorest and most deprived sectors (the unemployed, squatters, youth).
- There is thus a potential for instability, manifest in strike and squatter activity and likely to worsen.
- The crisis of expectations is aggravated by a culture of entitlement, reflected in an attitude that 'government must provide', and a persisting failure to pay rent and service charges.
- The lines of discontent and conflict are accurately described by elite ideology, which opposes militants to moderates and stresses symbolic issues such as land.
- The bottom line is all-or-nothing politics: the present policies of national reconciliation and gradual change are likely to lead to discontent and disorder.

The argument seems unassailably logical - but its sources and premises are questionable. Many of the claims of 'excessive expectations' suffer from a serious methodological flaw. These views are often based on surveys asking what blacks *want*, and assume what they want is what they *expect*. (At times there seems to be an implicitly racist assumption that black South Africans are childlike beings who cannot accept delayed gratification of their wants.) Another factor promoting belief in high expectations has been declarations to that effect by some black political and intellectual leaders. Yet there are two separate circuits for political discourse in South Africa: one is expressed in English at conferences, in the press and at dinner parties; the other's medium is African languages, and it is to be found in township houses, factories, and rural homesteads. It cannot be assumed that the preoccupations of the former accurately reflect those of the latter.

This study attempts to come to grips with these problems - and its findings challenge the conventional wisdom on every point. Because it is qualitative rather than quantitative, it is the first study capable of teasing out the difference between wants and expectations, unlike the polls which have preceded it. The central hypothesis of this research is that *wants* may be infinite, but *expectations* are finite and generally reasonable. Because it omits the elites (those with tertiary education, white-collar workers and union shop stewards are excluded), it focuses specifically on the opinions of the social sectors usually thought to comprise 'the masses'. The political attitudes which emerge, presented in this part of the report, can be summed up as follows:

- There is a keen awareness of the constraints on government among the African public, as well as a striking political sophistication.
- People are prepared to accept less to spread benefits more widely and equally.
- African expectations of the new government are generally realistic and rational.
- Change is recognised, but it is seen as primarily political rather than socio-economic.
- There is significant disappointment with the rate and extent of social change, but this is counter-balanced by patience, hope, and the new regime's legitimacy.

- Consequently, satisfaction with the government remains widespread, despite disappointment with change.
- The people want to prod the system, not to smash it.
- Contrary to the claims of those who posit a 'culture of entitlement', there is considerable desire for self-reliance and willingness to contribute to development efforts, at least when it will make a difference.
- Compared to elite thinking, the mass outlook is more pluralistic, less ideological and more concretely oriented.
- The bottom line is a need for visible, widespread, incremental, change, failing which the likely danger is a crisis of cynicism and a drop in participation.

In other words, the focus group findings suggest that black South Africans do have expectations of change, but they are also hopeful, and prepared to be patient. Their patience is not unlimited, and they will judge the new political system by the extent to which they see change in their own lives. However, the changes they are asking for are based on a clear assessment of the constraints, and well within the realm of the possible. Their expectations and assessments also vary with their diverse backgrounds, outlooks, and interests, forming a socially pluralistic community rather than a militant monolith.

1 A keen awareness of constraints on government

> **'At the moment I'm deeply sad, because I'm old and have no proper home. Yet when I think realistically I can see that I can't fix many things overnight; therefore, our government cannot fix everything overnight. We are not the only ones looking for houses. Many people out there want houses.'** – ***Woman squatting on West Rand, age over 35.***

The focus group discussions show a clear consciousness of the constraints on change facing the Mandela government. This holds across the board, including the poorly educated, squatters, and rural people. When group members were asked to identify the constraints to achieving progress on the issues which they think were most important, the same obstacles kept on coming up: demands, funds, time, and economics. There is a clear awareness that these factors make it unlikely that the government of national unity will solve the major problems in its five-year lifespan.

The constraint which figures most often in the group discussions is the magnitude of demand for services and aid. The participants know that the number of people needing help is very large, and that they are all competing for resources.

> 'The government will not be able to provide houses for all of us in five years because it is confronted with many other problems.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, age over 35, less than std 4.*

'Personally, I do not think it will meet its target [on job creation] because we've been struggling far too long. It has to satisfy too many people who have different priorities like housing, etc.' – *Soweto housewife, age 25–34, std 5-7.*

'There are too many homeless people who want houses. For instance, we have backyard squatters, squatter camps, even people who own houses still need more homes.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

'South Africa is a big country, so changes will start there and there. I don't know when they will be implemented this side.' – *Man living in rural area of Taung, Northwest, 18–24, std 5–7.*

'The black population and areas that are in need of change are too large. It [government] will not satisfy all our needs.' – *Woman living in rural area of Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal, std 4 or less.*

There is also a sharp awareness of the limited funds and time available to the government, and how they restrict its ability to respond to popular needs.

'Our present government does not have enough funds [to give houses to all in five years]. Everything in life needs money, so they don't have money.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

'The RDP budget is lacking [enough money] as far as I'm concerned.' – *Man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

'I think the present government has been given a very short term and may not satisfy all of us in meeting our needs.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

'We do not have water in the rural areas. The problem is that there are no funds to introduce such development projects.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

' I wish the new government's period of office could be extended to eight or nine years.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24-35, std 5– 7.*

Finally, African people at the grass roots recognise the economic barriers to progress. Factors such as the lack of investment and training are identified as stumbling blocks. Our participants are also aware of the connections between unemployment, poverty, and other economic issues, such as homelessness.

'If they don't get investment, they won't come right [on jobs]. We are dependent on outsiders, since they are financially secure.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

'Another factor that will hinder the government [in decreasing employment] is uneducated people.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5– 7.*

> 'Lack of investment [will limit progress on jobs]. It will be caused by a wait-and-see attitude by their fellow investors. Pepsi's progress will not be visible soon enough for the foreign investors to show progress after five years.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*
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> 'There are many people that I know who are still seeking jobs. There is no hope that these people will get jobs, because they are unskilled.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*
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> 'Many people are unemployed, thus government will have a problem with payments. These houses that have been built require that people pay R200 to R300 per month, and most people who have moved to these houses are unemployed' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Contrary to claims that African people at the grass roots are 'politically unsophisticated', then, the responses show a considered awareness of the constraints on and aims of government. This appears to be related to the extent to which the electronic media, along with word of mouth, have spread awareness of political issues and problems. The forests of antennae over every township and squatter camp, along with the battery-powered radios dotting the countryside, are clearly important sources of information about politics and policy, which then penetrates further through the 'bush telegraph'.

> 'When you watch TV, you see many squatter camps. Some of them are still being built, while others have been there for a long time. So they can try to solve the problem for some people but not for all of us.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*
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> 'On TV it was reported that a certain number of houses will be built per year.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, less than std 4.*
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> 'I heard about it on radio that they are going to introduce development schemes for us, for instance, introduce feeding schemes at school.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*
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> 'We heard through the grapevine that children will no longer pay school fees; they will get free education.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*
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> 'I have not even heard on the radio that the government we have voted in is doing something positive. They talk about five years of change and tell us a lot of things, talking about equal education and living conditions, but nothing has been done so far.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

It would almost certainly be an overstatement to insist that the forces and issues of modern politics are the sole influence on the public mind: in even the most 'sophisticated' societies, traditional and symbolic issues play a role in the public consciousness. Here, ancestors, witchcraft, tradition, ethnicity and generation undoubtedly continue to help shape political views in ways little explored in this research, and may in certain circumstances prove decisive. But it would be a mistake to ignore the extent to which 'modern' political concerns

are alive at the grass roots. Two highly politicised decades of participation in or discussion of mass struggle has overlaid these factors with an awareness of politics on a vast scale, and the media, especially broadcasting, helps to sustain it. A leading American pollster who has read the focus group transcripts, Celinda Lake, says the discussions are more sophisticated than those in many American focus groups. The awareness of the limitations and problems confronting the new democratic state is accompanied by a profound concern for the country itself, symbolised by the Soweto backyard shack dweller who declared, 'In the new South Africa we must listen and do the thing that we feel is going to be right.'

2 People are prepared to accept less, to spread benefits more widely and equally

> **'In Tswana we say, "Siblings share the herd of locusts." I can't be happy that I earn a lot of money when my sister there has no job and is hungry, with nothing. Let us share.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, unemployed, over 35.***

In line with their awareness of the constraints on government, the group members are willing to confront tradeoffs between competing policy alternatives, and choose those which will share benefits more widely even if the amount received is smaller. On the issues of employment, education, and (in urban groups) housing, this study offered a choice between a populist[2] option of high wages or benefits, but only for some, and an egalitarian option of lower pay or services spread more widely. Though some group members – particularly in the less educated groups – initially had trouble grasping that they were being offered two *competing* goods, virtually all were willing and able to choose between them after clarification by the moderator. Judging by their responses, Africans in the groups generally prefer policies that reach all, even if offering lower rewards, to those which provide high-quality benefits to part of the community. Various reasons, positive (a belief in egalitarianism as a value) and negative (fear of the consequence if some receive benefits while others receive none), are offered for opposing the elitist alternative. This must however be qualified: on jobs and schools, minorities with particularly strong self-interest on those issues dissent from the general consensus.

Participants are willing to sacrifice higher wages for more jobs, above all due to a belief in solidarity, or sharing within the community. The alternatives offered were pressing for the highest possible wages, based on skill and experience, and accepting lower increases so that more people can get jobs. Members of both rural and urban groups, including the unemployed, non-unionised workers and some union members, clearly prefer the second option.

> 'Increments should be low so that the ones on the outside can get in.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 25–34.*

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[2] **The term 'populist' is discussed in greater detail in Part 2.**

'The second option [on the jobs/wages tradeoff]] will be more acceptable in that we share a loaf of bread.' – *Soweto housewife, 25-34, unemployed.*

'Lower increases are all right but they should be calculated in line with prices at the shops. In that way we will accept low increments.' – *Man living on East Rand, non-unionised blue-collar worker, 25–34.*

'Let wages be low so that more people can also get jobs.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24.*

'Creation of more jobs will bring about peace and stability in our country. I cannot work while my fellow citizen starves.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35.*

'I support the second statement that there should be more jobs for people. We have to thank of one another's problems as long as we have many people in unemployment.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35.*

Higher wages received preference over job creation only among most trade unionists and some formal township dwellers, particularly better-educated youth. They argued that the highest possible wages are the fairest, both to reward skill and experience and to reduce poverty. If wages are held down, it should be those of whites, not blacks.

'I'm for the first one. Black people must earn a lot of money. Whites should try to earn less, because black people earn little money anyway. If they lower the little that they earn, *how much are they going to earn?*' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

'The first idea is ideal because you can develop your skills to earn more money. Your earnings are based on your experience' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

'I prefer the first option, because I feel businesses make large profits. The second one [lower increases in hope of more jobs] is another way of oppressing us further.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8– 10.*

These attitudes may well reflect the interests and capacities of the groups concerned. Union members are best equipped to press for higher wages, while the better-educated, younger, and formal township groups are those most confident of their skills and most established in the urban setting.

On education, participants favour making a financial contribution if this will ensure that educational opportunity is available to all. They were presented with a tradeoff which opposed free education, but only open to some, against schools with fees, but open to all. Here, the second option, offering lower gains to greater numbers, was very broadly preferred. Some advocate keeping fees low or using a means test to exempt children of unemployed or very poor parents from school fees. This is a significant response, since it recognises the existence of socio-economic differences within black society, a reality not always recognised by conventional wisdom. Education shows the egalitarian tendency clearly: unless they are

indigent, people feel they should be ready to reach into their pockets to make schooling available to all.

> 'Let parents pay fees so all kids can attend school.' – *Man living in rural area of Taung, Northwest, 18– 24, Std 5– 7.*

> 'I think the second one is better. It's not everyone that is going to get into the first one. The ones who have money will pay money and give bribes just to get their children into the schools.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'We should pay [school fees] but not high fees, because all children must be at school.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5– 7.*

> 'I prefer the second idea, because if there is no money, the least we can do is to meet the government halfway. But it does not mean if you don't have money you can't go to school. Those who can afford must pay.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

A few dissenters, mostly trade unionists and people from the depressed rural area of Taung, called for free schooling, even at the risk of excluding some pupils. They argued that many people could not afford any fees at all, or that government had promised free schools during the election campaign and should deliver them now.

> 'The second idea is out because most parents are unemployed, so they do not have money to pay for the fees.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

> 'We should have free education. They promised us that that is what we would have when we voted for them. Why do they now toss us around?' – Man living in Taung, *18–24, std 5–7.*

The egalitarian trend was confirmed in responses to housing policy tradeoffs: incremental housing is preferred to formal brick housing, out of a mix of fear of jealousy and a desire to accommodate all. Here, the alternatives were brick houses for some, or land and part of a house for all. Support for the second option is virtually unanimous. This approach would let those who can afford better housing buy it, while providing basic shelter to all. It would also, participants argued, avoid anger at a policy that privileged some and ignored others, which could easily explode into violence.

> 'If they build [houses] for some and not for me, I call my brother and say, "Hey, here are bricks. Why don't they build for us too?" And then we demolish them, then something else starts. So it's better for them to give [all of] you land [instead].' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34.*

> 'Many people should have [partial] houses, because there are many people who need houses. If they are going to only give them to a few, it will be like they haven't done anything.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24.*

> '[Government] should give us [all] money for land so that, according to one's earnings, we're able to build a house we can afford. There are many people in South Africa, so if it gives us money [for brick houses], all of us will not get it, and this may bring violence.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34.*

> 'The first option of giving [some] money to everyone [for housing] is a better one, because everyone will have been accommodated.' – *Woman living in township house on the East Rand, blue-collar worker, 18–24.*

Thus, concern for solidarity, opportunity, and fear of jealousy all combine to create preferences for policies which spread less more widely, over those which provide high standards to only some. Particularly noteworthy is the acceptance of options on education and housing similar to government's policies of continuing school fees until free education is phased in, and offering incremental housing to those unable to afford brick homes. On the higher wages versus more jobs tradeoff, the consensus in favour of the more inclusive option was broken only among trade unionists and better-educated township dwellers, who stand to gain the most from a higher-wage policy. The wages issue is one where strategically located minorities can wield considerable power, and the hostility among unionists to an incomes policy suggests that considerable persuasion will be necessary if one is to win acceptance among union members. However, the key point is that overall, the group results run strongly against populist claims that 'the masses' will only accept policies immediately offering high wages levels, brick houses, or free schooling. Rather, the general desire appears to be for the equitable sharing of resources in a broadly based process of incremental change.

3 Expectations are limited and realistic

> **'The government is really trying hard, although I do not believe it will achieve all [that it plans] within five years.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.***

In line with an awareness of constraints and a willingness to accept step-by-step change, the group results suggest that the African public has strikingly realistic expectations. To separate out participants' wants from expectations, the focus groups in this study were first asked which are the most important problems with which the new government must deal. Then each group was separately asked about the progress they expected on each of the three most important ones, along with the constraints that would hinder progress, which have been discussed above. When the exercise was complete, expectations proved far from utopian. Participants are most optimistic about progress on education, fairly optimistic about housing and water supply, pessimistic about job creation, and uncertain about rural electrification. Notably absent is the blind faith in receiving a job, house, and car soon – if not immediately – that has worried the exponents of the 'excess expectations' idea.

Education

There is considerable hope that the schooling crisis will be resolved over the next five years among both urban and rural Africans. In all the groups that listed this as one of the top priorities, the general expectation was for substantial progress. The view is that the necessary facilities are already in large part available; the task is to put them in good order, and expand them. Most see this as a feasible task.

> 'The way I see it, in five years education will be all right.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'Education is moving in the right direction. Five years will be enough.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*
>
> 'It will manage a big chunk of this issue, because there are so many schools in the township.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, 5–7.*
>
> 'I believe that [Mandela] will provide us with schools before five years are over.' – *Man living in rural area of Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

However, some think more time may be needed.

> 'It might manage one school, and we will see that our government tried but didn't have enough time [to improve all those in our area]. Some of us feel five years is too little. – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

Housing

Urban Africans in the groups are relatively optimistic about housing, but while they expect substantial progress by 1999, few expect the housing backlog to disappear by then. Their most frequent response is that government will solve the problem 'halfway' in five years. This probably represents more the impression that an appreciable dent will be made in the problem than a specific numerical target. There are some pessimistic voices who expect little to happen, but they are relatively few. In all but one of the groups that placed housing among the three most important problems, the general expectation is for significant progress.

> 'About half the houses [promised] will have been built in five years.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*
>
> '[In five years Mandela] would have solved the problem halfway.' – *Housewife living in township house in Soweto, 25–34, std 5–7.*
>
> 'I personally think the problem of housing will be better, because the government promised that in five years Joe Slovo will have built houses.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 8–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'The government will be able to address the problem partly. In everything one does, it can't be 100% perfect.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, 25–34, std 5–7.*

The only dissent came from members of one of the two trade union groups.

> 'Not in a million years. Since 1969 the housing departments did not build houses. So Slovo too came with newly built houses, but how many people could afford a house worth R90 000?' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35.*

It is particularly instructive to note that shack-dwellers – the most deprived urban population in terms of housing – generally did not expect their housing to change in the immediate future. While they are aware of constraints and are willing to wait, they display neither pessimism or unlimited patience. When they are asked when they expect their housing circumstances to improve, the most common reply is 'in five years'. Some expect it will take even longer, while only a few say it will take much less. Some typical examples:

> 'Five years.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35.*

> 'It will be five years plus, because there are lots of people waiting for houses. The government also says it has little funds.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35.*

> 'Maybe in the next new government.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 18–24.*

> 'After ten years.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 18–24.*

> 'I'd like it to be next year, because many people are moving away from Soweto. There is a chance that you can get a cash house.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 18–24.*

> 'I say in two years, because there are many homeless people.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, 25–34.*

Water

Rural Africans in the groups are fairly optimistic that their need for clean water will be addressed, though there are some exceptions. In all but one of the groups that rated this issue as a priority, the expectation is that major progress will be made in the next five years.

> 'They have already started with piping, so there is hope that things will turn for a brighter future. We will eventually get enough water to serve all the village.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24.*

> 'I believe we will be having running water from the taps. They have already erected water taps in our streets.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35.*

> 'As the new government has promised us electricity and water, it will be done.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35.*

'The water problem is an old one, so I don't see how they think they'll be able to solve it in such a short period of time'. – *Man living in Taung, 8–24.*

Jobs

The one priority which both the urban and rural groups most emphatically share, reducing unemployment, is also the one about which both are rather pessimistic. Although joblessness was listed as a major government priority by 12 of the groups, substantial progress was expected by only three. As noted above, there is a clear appreciation of the magnitude of the problem, and the need for investment if it is to be resolved. The result is the recognition by most study participants that progress in job creation is likely to be limited in the next five years, although there are varying degrees of hope about the prospects.

'Five years is too short, because there are many companies that are scared to invest in South Africa because of strikes.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

'I do not think the government can make jobs available for the majority of the unemployed in five years' time'. – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

'I want to believe that half of us [blacks] will definitely get jobs within five years.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

'If the owners of factories do not co-operate with the government, there won't be jobs. However, if these two co-operate, jobs will be created.' – *Man living on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

'We will get employed, because certain companies from overseas have come back.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5–7.*

'Some people will be able to get employment, but many of them will not, because the black population is too large for the government to satisfy its needs.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

'We are likely to get jobs, but only a few people will benefit from this.' – Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.

Electricity

Electrification is a high priority in rural areas, but the rural people in this study disagree over how much progress to expect. Only one of the rural groups which mentioned this issue was clearly optimistic.

'For the mere fact that there are people in some areas who enjoy the privilege of having facilities such as electricity, our turn will definitely come for us to enjoy these too'. – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'I do not think the new government will cope [with the demand for electricity] , because it has to address many things within its five-year period.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

What is noteworthy about how group members describe their expectations is not how high or excessive these are, but rather how limited and realistic. They are hardly looking forward to a social upheaval in which the last become first. They expect significant progress in the easier-to-manage fields of education, housing, and water, and rather less in the more intractable area of jobs. On the whole, popular expectations correspond to the assessments of likely progress on major issues made by journalistic and academic specialists. [This is not so surprising when one reflects that much of the black public has probably heard their views on TV and radio.] Thus, the focus group findings provide considerable support for the basic hypothesis of this project: that however large wants may be, expectations are rational and related to reality.

4 Change is recognised but as political, not socio-economic

> **'If it wasn't for the new South Africa, we wouldn't be here in these offices sitting and talking to you! Now we can talk politics freely.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, age 25–34.***

Almost all participants acknowledge that the new South Africa has brought changes, but these are perceived as mostly political rather than socio-economic. Readiness to acknowledge change varies: trade unionists are the most reluctant, rural people the most willing. Prompting is often necessary to bring out references to change that do not come up spontaneously. But changes are mentioned, including freedom, dignity, empowerment, declining political violence,[3] improved white attitudes, better police behaviour, and free health care, though many of these areas are controversial. However, crime is widely seen as getting worse, while on jobs and wages no change is perceived.

Changes for the better perceived by group members focus largely on the various aspects of political liberation from apartheid. There is broad agreement on the attainment of political power, the decline of political violence and, surprisingly, improved police behaviour. Yet freedom and dignity are more elusive: while the end of statutory discrimination, political empowerment and changing attitudes have brought them to many, others say those values cannot be attained while poverty and inequality persist on their current scale. Everyday racism seems to be waning, but suspicion of whites remains, and several groups sensed a white backlash in the workplace. Government's efforts to improve access to health care, while recognised and supported, are also controversial, as will be seen.

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[3] No focus groups were conducted in KwaZulu-Natal; it is probable that groups in this province would express concern about continuing political violence.

Empowerment

A sense of political power is one of the clearest perceived gains for Africans in the new South Africa.

> 'What I like is that if, for instance, something is happening in Soweto, we can now say that we don't want it that way, but we want it this way. Previously we used to say, 'Whites say this is what is going to happen. There is nothing that we can do.' Now we can say no.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'We now communicate more with our local administration, and we are able to express our grievances freely.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

Political violence

There is also widespread recognition of the drop in political violence since the April election, at least outside KwaZulu-Natal.

> 'I think it is going down, because there are no more killings in commuter trains and buses.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'The political violence has calmed down, because before there was political intolerance in the country.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

Police Behaviour

Less expectedly, along with political change, improved police behaviour is also noted – unprompted – by young men in the Gauteng groups. Drawn from the age group used to feeling the hard edge of the law, many of them perceive that the police in the country's largest metropolis have become less brutal and more responsive to the community.

> 'The police are changing. It's not as it was before. What we know is that before a policeman arrests you, he must first beat you up. They have also come to realise that it's not the same as before. Even when they arrest you, you first talk and they arrest you with dignity, without beating you up first.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'We can see that the police have changed towards us. They want to live harmoniously with the people and be accepted as our friends, so that we must support them all the time.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 24-35, std 4 or less.*

However, some are still concerned over the persistence of perceived corruption in the police force.

> 'The old policemen still believe in the system of apartheid. They want to be bribed.' – Man squatting in *Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

Freedom

Whether black South Africans have attained freedom remains a subject of debate, despite the abolition of legal apartheid and the 'liberation election' of April 1994. Many say they are free, pointing to the rights of full citizenship, free expression, and freedom of movement they now enjoy. But others disagree, noting that the social conditions they live under remain unchanged and that the transfer of political power has not been matched by that of economic power. The better educated are less likely to say they feel free, while rural people are the most likely to do so.

> 'Yes, we can sense freedom. In town we all use the same entrance, unlike when blacks had a separate entrance door.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'We are not free yet.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*
>
> 'I feel free in the sense that I can go anywhere I could not go to before, but this freedom is limited in the sense that I do not have financial freedom. So I can't go to such places because I can't afford to.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*
>
> 'Never mind that jobs are still scarce and other things, the fact is that you are free now because there is nobody who is going to do something that you don't want.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'I feel there is freedom because the old system of government used to oppress us, but now we can vote for our rights in the country and choose our own leaders.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'I have freedom, but in this freedom I have suspicions.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35 yrs, std 5–7.*

Dignity

Similarly, feelings are mixed in the groups as to whether the new South Africa has brought greater personal dignity. Most members feel that it has, in both public and private terms.

> 'Yes, when we speak about personal dignity, it's there. I'm proud. Previously, when you were walking and you bumped against a white man it would be a serious matter. The blame would be on you. Now they know, "This is a human being." Now if you bump against him, you both ask each other's pardon.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*
>
> 'I do feel dignified now that I have the vote.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

Yet a substantial if smaller number feel that the continuance of depressed living conditions still denies them human dignity.

'I haven't felt that freedom to be proud about my being black, because my dreams have not yet been fulfilled. The things that I wished I could get, like being educated, having my own car at the age of 18. I'm now 22 and I don't have anything. I still live with my mother, I'm still being supported, and I still have to beg a white man for a wage.' – Man squatting in *Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

'If you use candlelight you really feel you are primitive. We are starving. We can't feel we have dignity if we live under such conditions.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

White attitudes

In general, Africans perceive substantial improvements in white views and treatment of blacks. Overt white racism has diminished sharply; whites treat blacks with courtesy, and the races mix more freely for business and social purposes. Whites are more willing to communicate with blacks, even learning black languages, and no longer insist on privileged treatment.

'They respect us now.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

'They used to call us kaffirs, but now they know that we are equal. Their attitude has changed for the better.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

'Even the name bobbejaan is now dead.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

'The communication between whites and blacks has increased a lot. In the past they never shared their adventures and problems with us.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

This sense of change recalls the findings of the recent Markinor poll of urban Africans, which reported that 61% see race relations as improving.

However, there are some important qualifications to the perceived changes among whites. Racism is still seen as rife outside the big cities, particularly in the smaller towns and farming areas dominated by Afrikaans-speaking whites.

'Afrikaners on the farms are still treating black people the way they were treating them before. It's only in urban areas where there is a little change.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

Many group members doubt the sincerity of the whites' change of heart.

'Are you saying that they've stopped being racist just because Mandela is now president, when they've been racist all the time? Whites are still racist.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

In particular, in work-related contexts, racial tension is seen to be worsening, as competition for jobs intensifies between black and white.

> 'It is worse than before. Even those we regarded as liberals are coming out of their shells. They are more racist, because they are afraid we are going to take their jobs.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

> 'When our children go job-hunting, the whites tell them to go to Mandela.' – *Unemployed woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

This last comment, which suggested that white employers had hardened their attitudes to black worker concerns, was repeated in a number of groups in virtually identical language, suggesting that it points either to an attitude common among white employers or a perception common among blacks.

Health care

The first major social policy change instituted by the new government, the decision to give free medical treatment to pregnant women and children under six announced by president Mandela in May, is generally favoured by Africans. Many mention it spontaneously, and most of those who were prompted to discuss it also support it. Support is strongest among women – who along with the children in their care are the most direct beneficiaries of the measure – and in rural areas, which are impoverished and underserved by the health care system.

> 'How many years have the Boers been ruling us – 48? Have they ever offered free health services to children, senior citizens or pregnant women? It is hardly three years that Mandela is out of jail, but he has achieved all that.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'Personally, I'm happy that I can get free medical care as a pregnant mother'. – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

However, there are worries that the measure has led to overcrowding and a deterioration of services in clinics.

> 'The services are no longer as good as before the new system was introduced'. – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

And men harbour patriarchal concerns over the control of women's fertility, fearing that it encourages teenage pregnancy.

> 'It is all right, but it should have some limits. Clinics and hospitals are full of teenage pregnant girls, because they now get free medical care.' – Man squatting on *East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Besides health care, several other social changes are noted, particularly by rural people. These include the establishment of feeding schemes for school children from poor families, the payment of social pensions on a monthly rather than bi-monthly basis, and the reduction of levies and exactions paid to chiefs. However, either singly or together, none of these

measures are big or widespread enough in their impact to give the impression of major change in the socio-economic conditions of the African majority in the new South Africa.

Indeed, while politics is seen as an area of change for the better, participants do not detect an equivalent trend in progress towards solving the society's major social and economic problems. Crime heads the list of changes for the worse, while no change is perceived on the key issues of jobs and wages.

Crime is perceived as increasing across the board in both urban and rural African groups. The breadth of concern is striking: while it was rarely mentioned as one of participants' three top priority issues, it came up as a concern in 12 of the 13 groups, more often than any other change, positive or negative. When Soweto housewives were asked what was changing for the worse in South Africa, three replied at once, in unison: 'Crime!' Similar scenes occurred in several other groups. There is concern about every type of criminal activity: murder, robbery, carjacking, burglary, white-collar crime and witchcraft are all seen as worsening.

> 'The problem is the escalating number of criminals. Imagine being robbed of your car and your life. These people are merciless.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'Crime seems to be getting worse. Whites and blacks now club together to commit office crimes.' – *Man living on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'I feel burglary or house-breaking is getting worse.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5-7.*

> 'In the town they are able to rob you of your money by changing it into paper, by pouring powder on top of you.' – *Rural man, Taung, 18–24, std 5–7.*

A related problem, also seen as worsening, is taxi violence. With the involvement of long-distance taxi associations, the issue has stretched from the cities to the countryside.

> 'The other thing that is escalating is violence in the taxi fraternity.' – *Man living in Soweto, 18–4, std 8-10.*

> 'The taxi war [is a change for the worse]. For instance, we are scared to go for Christmas shopping [as a result].' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35 std 5–7.*

Other changes for the worse, mentioned spontaneously in one or two groups, include strikes, the legalisation of abortion, the increasing cost of living, and land invasions.

On the principal economic issues, jobs and wages, no progress is perceived by most participants, whether in town or country. The views expressed on unemployment are blunt.

> 'Unemployment is still the same.' – Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.

> 'They must do the thing they promised – to give people jobs. As you'll remember, before the elections, they wrote on the placards, 'Vote for Jobs.' I think that is not happening now.' – *Man living in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'I'd say that it's worse than before the new South Africa.' – Man living in Soweto, *18–24, blue-collar worker, std 4 or less.*

> 'There are no jobs.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

Likewise, no improvements in wages are perceived.

> 'We are waiting for the new South Africa to offer us better pay.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5-7.*

> 'We still earn low salaries; whites earn more than us.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5–7.*

> 'My salary is disgraceful.' – *Woman living in township house on the East Rand, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5–7.*

> 'The wages are still the same.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

Here, too, the findings are similar to those of the surveys: Markinor found that just 31% of urban Africans felt their economic situation had improved since the election.

In sum, the focus group findings suggest that those who believe the African 'masses' have perceived no change since the election are at most partially right. Political change is widely noted and appreciated – but it is already largely taken for granted (hence the tendency for participants to mention it only when prompted). The modest social changes to date, such as the health care reforms, are also present in public consciousness. However, the findings do show that there is no impression of clear progress on social and economic issues, particularly when no gains are perceived on jobs and wages, and crime is seen as worsening.

5 Disappointment with change is significant, but is balanced by patience, hope and legitimacy

> **'You'd think that things are moving in a new direction, but we as people who looked forward to the new South Africa tend to be in a hurry for change to take place. For instance, we expect change to happen, but we do not give our leaders a chance.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.***

Although the group members have no wild expectations of change, many feel disappointed with the limited changes thus far under the new government. Disappointment is greatest among men, squatters, formal sector workers and the better educated. However, saying that one is disappointed because change has not been quicker does not necessarily mean that one blames the government or feels betrayed by it. The problems the government confronts are seen as inherited, and the constraints upon it are understood. For many, the disappointment is therefore countered by the new government's legitimacy, and a corresponding patience with it

and hope for improvements. The fact that their wants have not yet been satisfied does not mean that their expectations have been dashed.

The sense of disappointment emerged often in the group discussions. In seven of the 13 groups, the majority either do not think things in the country are moving in the right direction or have divided views. Sometimes this reflects an impression that things are getting worse, particularly among the poorest of the poor. More often, it is associated with a sense they are standing still or moving too slowly in the right direction, particularly on the key social and economic priorities. Mention is made of hopes raised in the election campaign about needs which would be met and of promises which have not been kept.

> 'Nothing is right, completely. We were promised jobs which haven't appeared up to now. Instead there are no jobs, we are unemployed, we are hungry. Our children don't attend school because of lack of money. They used to remove refuse, now our refuse is no longer collected; the area is filthy'. – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'Things are moving in the right direction, but my main concern is that people are becoming a little impatient.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*
>
> 'I don't think things are moving in the right direction. People were promised jobs, but they are not getting them. Many people are poor; they've cut off the electricity and many other things in the township.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8–10.*
>
> 'I think things are standing still. Many children can't go back to school. because they are short of bursaries.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'Things aren't moving in the right direction. I can see changes, but I'm not satisfied.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5-7.*
>
> 'We are looking to our new government for help, but things aren't moving according to our expectations. Progress is taking time.' – *Man living in Taung, 18–24, std 5–7.*
>
> 'Some matters are moving in the right direction and others not. For example, it seems we've been forgotten as regards creating jobs for us.' – *Man living in Taung, 18–24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'I'm not satisfied, because I have not seen any improvement.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

But dissatisfaction with changes thus far is not universal. Far from it: a substantial share of the focus group members are happy with what they have seen thus far. In six of the 13 groups, the prevailing feeling was that things were moving in the right direction. While they were not devoid of criticism of the pace of change, they were also marked by comments like these:

> 'The new South Africa is the land of milk and honey, where Moses took the Israelites from the land of poverty.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'I agree that there is some change, because we now have free schooling and free education.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar member, 18–24, std 5–7.*
>
> 'I have already seen a change in the new government. It will move in the right direction even though it's a very new government.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*
>
> 'I think there is hope that things will be moving in the right direction, because there is already a free health service for babies and expectant mothers.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24-35, std 5–7.*

These findings are not inconsistent with those of recent surveys that most Africans think things are moving in the right direction, but they do suggest some qualifications to their results. A Markinor poll conducted in September and October found that 77% of urban Africans said the country was moving in the right direction, while a survey for the International Republican Institute in August and September found that 91% of all Africans felt that way. By focusing exclusively on the direction of change, such surveys do not necessarily measure attitudes towards its speed, which the focus group results suggest is the crucial dimension of judgement among discontented Africans today. It should also be remembered that the groups were not intended to offer a statistically representative portrait of the population; indeed, they were deliberately chosen to focus on groups thought likeliest to be discontented, so the proportion of groups unhappy with the process of change do not necessarily reflect sentiment in the general population.

Discontent with the rate and direction of change is strongest among:

- **Men**: Most participants in five of the seven male groups think things are moving in the wrong direction or are mixed, while four of the six female groups think things are going in the right direction (perhaps reflecting the health and school nutrition changes, which particularly affect them and their children).
- **Squatters**: Urban shack dwellers are likely to think things are not going in the right direction, while formal housing groups split.
- **The secondary educated**: Those with std 8–10 education are likeliest to be disappointed, while less educated people are split.
- **Formal sector blue-collar workers**: Those employed in blue collar positions are likely to feel disappointed with the pace or direction of change, while those unemployed or informally employed are split.
- **Gauteng and Taung residents**: Disappointment is expressed by the majority of the urban groups in Gauteng and both groups in the depressed Taung area, while the majority of all three Sekhukuni groups feel things are moving in the right direction.

Perceptions of whether the country is moving in the right direction are associated with evaluations of the extent of change to date. In the seven groups where majorities feel the country is going in the wrong direction or had mixed feelings, members, when asked to mention changes spontaneously, mentioned *no* positive changes. When prompted about six possible changes for the better – freedom, dignity, empowerment, violence, white attitudes

and health care – most replied that only three or fewer had occurred. By contrast, of the six groups where the majority think things are headed in the right direction, most said that at least five of the six positive changes they were prompted about had taken place, and positive changes also came up spontaneously.

Yet if it is dissatisfaction with the extent and speed of change that lies behind the disappointment, this does not translate into disillusionment with the new government. Surprisingly, there is almost no connection between satisfaction with government's performance thus far and the belief that things are moving in the right direction in the country. The groups where most people are satisfied split evenly in terms of right direction or wrong direction. The same is true of the groups where most people had mixed feelings, or were not satisfied with the government. This is quite unusual in public opinion research.

Despite the disappointment that change has not moved faster, there is still considerable patience among group members. They do not hold the Mandela government responsible for the country's problems, and say it needs more time to resolve the problems facing it. However, they do say that others are impatient, which may reflect either media reports to that effect or personal contact with people in a hurry for change.

> 'We should give them a chance and wait, because it's the first time for this new government to rule people. Even in the coming election, if they haven't managed to give houses to all of us we must give them a chance.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'Black people have been oppressed for over 48 years, hence blacks are so impatient. You cannot build a house overnight, or solve the problems that were created by the apartheid government.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'The things that are happening now have been happening before when it was the National Party government. So I think that we as a nation can give the new government that chance. We shouldn't be impatient and expect the new government to rectify a lot of things they found in a bad state anyway.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'We in the rural areas have not seen much, there is no difference. But we need to give them more time to be able to work out things.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

Discontent with the delivery of change is tempered by a hope that improvements are still to come, even in most of the groups where strong complaints are voiced about current conditions.

> 'Gradually, people do get employed. It is a process, so not all of us should expect to be employed at once. I believe that, in the end, blacks will be on top. We predicted that one day Mandela will be president, and through God's mercy, today Mandela is president. Therefore, slowly, employment will be better.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

'Although they haven't been in power for a long time, we have to wait and see what will have happened by the end of the five years. I think things will get better.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8–10.*

'If we say we are going to give them a chance for five years, I think that by the end of these five years they will have done something better.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 18–24, blue-collar worker, std 4 or less.*

'I believe Mandela will change a lot of things. He and his government have not been long in power. They need to be given time.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

Finally, disappointment is allayed by a sense of the legitimacy of the government, an asset the previous regime could not draw upon among Africans. It has been elected by all the people, and the belief that it is 'on our side' or doing its best for the people pervades the discussions.

'The government is us, the people. I'd say that a government is a government because of the people. I'd say that there is a change, because now if you complain about something, you go somewhere and lodge your complaint.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

'I can't say how far they'll get [in five years], but they'll do their best.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

'The new government is trying hard to meet our needs.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5-6.*

'The government is really trying hard, although I do not believe it will achieve all [it plans] within five years.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

'They are trying.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, under std 4.*

Thus, there is significant disappointment in many parts of the African population with the extent and speed of change since the election. Dissatisfaction with current conditions is strongest among men, squatters, those with secondary education, workers, and residents of big cities and depressed rural areas. But, contrary to the conventional wisdom, while this discontent is closely linked to the perceived presence or absence of change, it does not appear to be linked to discontent with the government itself. Nor has it generated a high degree of cynicism with the new regime. Rather, it is tempered by patience, hope, and the legitimacy of the Mandela government.

6 Satisfaction with government is widespread, despite disappointment with change

> **'I'm satisfied. We must just be patient, and wait.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, age 25-34, std 4 or less.***

Although they grumble about the pace of change, group members are generally contented with the government. They feel it is actively trying to address their concerns, and offer more praise than criticism for its national unity structure. The groups least satisfied with the government are not necessarily those discontented with the pace of change. Satisfaction with the government is linked to optimism that it will make significant progress on the top priority problems it faces.

In general, the impression that emerges from most of the urban and rural groups is one of satisfaction with the new regime. When asked why, members most often mention the government's efforts to do something about problems of concern to black people, or that blacks are now treated more fairly by the government. (The government is frequently personified by Mandela.)

> 'I'm satisfied. The government is trying very hard to invite overseas countries to come here to start up firms, so that jobs can be created.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> '[It's doing] a good job, because two days ago I read something about a farmer who was fined R50 000 for killing a black man on a farm. This is something that showed me that the government is doing something for us.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'It pleases me too, because I've seen lots of changes.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'The new government has brought about a very big change in the country.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'We are proud that our black president, Nelson Mandela, has already started to implement changes.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5-7.*

The inclusion of other parties in the government also receives some praise, because it is seen to promote national reconciliation and progress. These participants do not see co-operation with minority interests as a 'sellout', which at least raises doubts about claims made by some black journalists and intellectuals that blacks are disenchanted with racial reconciliation.

> 'We are happy with Mandela. We do not want De Klerk. The new government has people of all races and political parties sitting down together to resolve our problems.[4] – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24-35, std 5-7.*

> 'I think the government is doing a good job. It is a very good idea to work together with the enemy and prove that you are not a bad person, like he has been to you.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

However, there are some reminders that the support expressed for government is conditional, and that as time goes by it will be held to higher standards of account.

> 'So far we have no complaints, as it has been in office for a short time. We will start watching out from next year.' – *Man living in Taung, 18–24, std 5–7.*

Disillusionment with the government is fairly limited in the group discussions, prevailing in only five of the groups. When expressed, it usually centres on a failure to act or deliver faster. Direct criticism of Mandela is extremely rare.

> 'The question of satisfaction stems from the fact that we've got a government that we black people wanted. They are now in power. We still have expectations for the things that they promised, like "Vote for this party, and you'll get this and this."' – *Man squatting on West Rand, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

> 'All they do is attend the parliamentary sessions, as we see on TV. Some of them even enjoy a good sleep there!' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

> 'They are doing a bad job, because they promise people things, yet they do not fulfil their promises.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

> 'We have seen nothing of this new government you are telling us about. We are still in darkness.' – *Woman living in Taung, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

There is also sometimes criticism of the role of whites or other parties in the government or the civil service, although this is nowhere near as strong among the participants as the claims of widespread disenchantment mentioned earlier would suggest.

> 'I wouldn't say they are coming on okay. When you look around, there are still those Afrikaners that were working there when they were working for the National Party. Whenever the government starts doing something, they oppose it.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

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[4] **The statement 'We do not want De Klerk' appears at first glance to indicate rejection of unity government. Read with the next sentence, however, it appears to indicate a rejection of De Klerk *as president* but an endorsement of the inclusion of minority parties in the cabinet.**

The findings of broad satisfaction in this study appear to parallel those of the recent Markinor survey. Markinor reported that among urban Africans, 83% say that Mandela is leading the country well.

Dissatisfaction with the government was found among:

- **Formal township residents**: All the urban groups discontented with government are drawn from the formal townships, though not all the township groups are unhappy.
- **Those with secondary education**: The two urban groups with std 8–10 are also among those where the majority is unhappy.
- **Union members**: Both union groups are dissatisfied with the government.
- **Under 25s and over 35s**: The younger and older group members appear to be the most impatient with the new government.

As noted earlier, there is little relationship between dissatisfaction with the rate of change, and discontent with government performance. Of the seven groups where most members say things are not going in the right direction, those in four are still satisfied with the government. Of the six groups where the majority said they are going in the right direction, two were not satisfied with government. In other words, satisfaction with government does not appear to be a direct result of assessments of change to date (which is probably why it is still holding up).

Thus, while shack dwellers are the likeliest to be unhappy about where things in the country are going, squatters and backyard shack groups were supportive of the government. Although two of the unemployed groups were unhappy with the rate of change, all four were satisfied with the government. Conversely, while the unionist groups were split on where things were going, they were the most disillusioned with the new government. While Gauteng and Taung residents are likeliest to be unhappy about the rate of change, there was no relation between area and satisfaction with government. While men are prominent among those disappointed by change, there is no gender difference in attitudes towards the government. On the other hand, although age had no clear connection to assessments of change, the data does suggest that it affects satisfaction with government – the young and the old being the least patient. The one factor that does appear clearly linked to discontentment with both the condition of the country and the conduct of the government is secondary education.

Rather than reflecting retrospective assessment of performance to date, as is usually the case with public opinion in established democracies, satisfaction with the government is associated with expectations that it will make *future* progress on key issues. All the groups who expect significant progress on two of the three main issues they say government must deal with are satisfied with it. Of those where the prevailing outlook is pessimistic on two of the three major issues, in all but one the majority of members are also dissatisfied with government.

The focus group findings thus shatter perhaps the most important claim of the currently fashionable pessimism: that 'the masses' are unhappy with the government because of its failure to meet their expectations of change. The group results, like recent polls, underline the substantial approval the Mandela government receives. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with government is linked to expectations of future performance, not to assessments of its results to date. Group members most dissatisfied with the new regime tend to belong to relatively small,

better organised, housed, and educated constituencies.[5] However, while these minorities are the groups best poised to articulate their views publicly and undertake collective action, it is an error to assume that they speak for 'the masses.'

7 People want to prod the system, not smash it

> **'They are doing a good job. It's just that they are slow. So we people on the ground need to exert pressure on them, so that they can speed up the process.'**
> ***– Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.***

Together, disappointment with the pace of change and acceptance of the new regime make group members want to push for faster movement, not to overthrow the government or revolutionise the society. This is clear both from what is said and what is not said in the focus group discussions. While there is a desire to prod the system, there is no evidence of a wish to foment instability – or of a degree of blind anger sufficient to do so – and a good deal to the contrary. This is particularly clear in comments on the post-election strike wave. They centre on whether it is a fair and effective way of advancing workers' rights, not on how it can serve as a vehicle for radical change. Protest which seeks to highlight and resolve perceived injustices can be functional to democracy, not dangerous to it.

The discussions about the country's situation reflect a desire for more rapid social and economic change, but the tone is hardly radical. Rather, it reflects frustration, impatience and cynicism.

> 'Things are moving in the right direction, but my main concern is that people are becoming a little impatient.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'Things haven't moved in the right direction. They are only starting.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8-10.*

> 'I think the change is only for those on the gravy train, and not for people on the ground.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

Noteworthy by its absence is sentiment in favour of militant action. There is no mention of overthrowing the regime, taking up arms, going back to the bush, insurrectionary general strikes, etc. The sort of bitter rage which used to be expressed towards the former regime is

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[5] It must be stressed that a simple calculation of the number of focus groups who express a particular attitude is used here for illustrative purposes [eg eight are satisfied, five dissatisfied], but does not, as noted above, necessarily tell us anything about how many voters adopt these attitudes. The profile of a particular group [eg employed, unionised, formally educated] may correspond to that of a relatively small section of the population. That of another [eg unemployed, shack dwellers] may correspond to that of many more people. If these two groups adopt contrasting attitudes on an issue, it does not necessarily mean that voters are evenly split on that question.

missing. Nor is there resentment of capitalism, or a desire to get rid of it. A demand is expressed to make the system work better, not to get rid of it.

This is particularly evident in the discussion on strikes: urban opinion is divided on the subject, but the discussion turns around community responsibility and workers rights, not around finding a vehicle for revolution. Indeed, *both* sides are concerned that industrial action should not damage the economy. Considerable hostility is directed at the strikes, particularly by unemployed people and shack dwellers, who see them as damaging to the economy and embarrassing to the government. In particular, there is worry that they reduce employment by pushing up wages and discouraging investment. Thus, participants hostile to strikes quite explicitly express their concern for the well-being of companies and the proper functioning of the capitalist system.

> 'They are destructive, because as companies grow so our government will gain; however strikes disturb company growth, thus our country loses. People should stop striking, because if they do so, they will give room for growth.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, over 35, unemployed, std 4 or less.*

> 'If they continue striking like this, saying they want more money, the government will say, "Okay, here is the money." What is then going to happen to us who are not working? When you go looking for a job, the white man will say, "Do you know how much I pay that person? There is nothing I can do."' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, unemployed, std 5–7.*

> 'Large companies are watching the situation closely, because during strikes there's no production; thus they lose, and so does the government. We want free education for our kids, but where will the money come from if we keep on striking?' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'This striking is destructive – we are putting our government to shame by such acts.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, unemployed, under std 4.*

> 'I think there are too many strikes. When whites see these strikes on TV, they will be reluctant to invest their money. They will think that if they employ us, we will strike.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

Those endorsing the strike action argue that it is necessary to defend the rights and advance the interests of African workers. This is the view of the employed, formal township residents and, above all, union members. However, there is no vocal anti-capitalist sentiment or call to bring the bosses to their knees. Rather, the argument is that collective action is the only way for blacks to get a fair shake within the existing economic system, or to redress employer racism.

> 'For you to get a living wage, you have to strike first. That is why there are so many strikes. People don't strike because they want to strike or because they don't want to work.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'We have an increase in strikes, because employers don't want to give us better wages.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5–7.*

> 'Yes [the strikes are justified]. People do have grievances which are not met. They will tell you this is a non-racist company, but they would retrench today and hire more whites the next day.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

Most of those in favour of strikes argue that such action will not deter investment, indicating, significantly, that no one says, 'To hell with the investors': the need for them is generally accepted. (These views are particularly striking in view of the socialist rhetoric which has emanated from substantial parts of the trade union and Communist Party leadership in recent years.)

> 'Genuine investors will not be hindered by strikes. They will investigate circumstances that brought about strikes, because some are justified and some are not.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

> 'Strikes will not stop them [foreign investors], because they understand that we are striking for real issues and that before striking, negotiations were held.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5–7.*

Thus, while pessimistic analysis believe there is widespread grass-roots radicalism that threatens the stability of South Africa's new dispensation, the grass-roots mood as reflected in the group discussions is far more sober, demanding greater benefits without desiring to endanger a system whose legitimacy is now accepted. The most marginalised groups, the squatters and jobless, are the most cautious about militant action such as strikes that could rock the economy. Even the groups more favourable to such action justify it as making the system work for them, not bringing it down. Protests, marches, demonstrations, or strikes to advance the interests of specific groups may occur, as in other democracies, but not revolt. The 'second stage of the revolution,' so feared by some and beloved of others, seems to be on indefinite hold.

8 There is a willingness to be self-reliant, and to contribute to development efforts

> **'For the RDP to succeed, the community should also contribute. For example, in housing we have people who know how to manufacture bricks, etc. We must also do something. The community must work with the government.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.***

Rather than demanding that 'Pretoria must provide,'[6] our participants are anxious to contribute to development efforts themselves. The desire to pitch in is a general one, running

[6] A paraphrase of the title of a recent book by Clem Sunter.

across various policy areas. It is reflected in a willingness to contribute labour, pay for housing or services, and an interest in starting small businesses. Even on the most controversial topic – paying rents and service charges on township houses – there is a surprisingly wide stated willingness in principle to pay, provided that value is received in return (see below).

Recognition of the constraints upon government underlies the readiness of the group members to try to be self-reliant in development activities. Since they know official funds and capacity are limited, group members are willing to assist with housing and job creation through their own efforts. But what most seek is not a simple free market approach: the desire is for government to act as a facilitator for development efforts in which people can participate.

> 'We need to assist our government in some way [in building homes]. Our government doesn't have enough money to build houses for all the homeless people.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'I don't think there is still that necessity for us to wait for the government to do something for us in terms of job creation or employment. Now is my time to operate my own business. I've heard of people who are teaching young people how to start their own businesses. So we need not wait for the government to do something for us.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*
>
> 'My improvement [of my housing] will depend on my diligence. I can't wait for the government for everything.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'The government should use the little funds they have in their coffers to develop people and offer them training and skills, to be able to occupy jobs they did not work on in the past.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

In the rural groups, the desire to contribute is manifest in readiness to help dig holes and lay pipes for water projects – the top priority in their areas. It is particularly strong among women, while some men are reluctant to do unpaid work.

> 'We would participate, because we have already joined hands in other community projects.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'We would be willing to do so, because this is to our own benefit.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*
>
> 'Even if I'm not paid, it's OK.' – *Rural woman, Taung, 35–64, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'I'm not prepared to work for free.' – *Rural man, Taung, 18–24, std 5-7.*

Awareness that government lacks funds to provide services and infrastructure to all also makes many rural group members ready to pay user fees for education, electrification and water.

'I feel parents have to pay school fees, because the government has to produce books for the kids. Apart from that, there are many basic problems that the government has to address, and to achieve all this you need finance.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

'We are prepared to pay [for electrification], because we are aware that this is a costly measure.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*

'[Mandela] should allocate money towards this project [water supply], and the community should be charged levies to recover the costs.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

'The government should construct the water project, then we will buy our own taps.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

In the urban groups, the question of paying rents and service charges generates more controversy, but both sides in the debate are ready in principle to pay if the benefits they receive justify the costs. Support for paying both rents and service charges is stronger among shack dwellers than township house residents,[7] with some exceptions: they regard rents and charges as necessary to cover the costs of building houses and providing services. While boycotts had a point as part of the struggle against apartheid local government bodies, that rationale no longer holds, they suggest. Significantly, these views are expressed by the unemployed as well as those in work, despite the greater hardship such payments would impose upon them.

'Rent must be paid so that houses can be built.' – Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.

'Yes, people should pay. Things like lights should be paid for. These things don't just happen naturally.' – Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34.

'We had a reason for non-payment, as we wanted to have our own government. Now we have our government, we must pay for services and rent. In this way the government will be able to have money and to start building houses for us.' – Unemployed woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, unemployed, std 4 or less.

However, some people hold contrary views.

'I understand about electricity. I'm talking about rent. Everyone was happy that rent shouldn't be paid. They said that we don't pay rent because we don't have money; we earn very little. Why should it be paid now?' – Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, unemployed.

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[7] **A partial explanation may lie in the fact that shack dwellers during the apartheid era sometimes welcomed the opportunity to pay for services when it was offered since this signalled a recognition of their right to continue living in the area where they had erected shacks.**

Those already living in township houses have mixed views on ending rent boycotts, although most support paying for services. Some see paying rent as a contribution to development.

> 'I feel bad because we are creating a problem for the government, because there is nothing for free. So we need to try and pay out the little we have, to show that we are really co-operating with the government.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

Others see it as pointless, particularly for older houses that have already been amortised.

> 'They should not pay rent on the old houses. They can just pay service charges.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

There is more support for paying for services (rather than rent), because residents believe they get something in return.

> 'There is no need for rent to be paid. It's like asking if the people that they are going to give a piece of land to, and meet them to build these houses, will pay rent. They won't pay rent. They will only pay for services. It's like when you buy a house in the suburbs, you don't pay rent. You only pay for services.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.*

Those who do not wish to pay say this is because services have broken down in their areas.

> 'I support people who do not pay rent or service charges, because we no longer have our houses serviced or repaired. I would pay electricity'. – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Thus, rather than revealing the 'culture of entitlement' supposed both by the conventional wisdom of pessimists and the rhetoric of activists, the focus group discussions display Africans attracted to the ideal of self-reliance and ready to contribute to development efforts. They do not want something for nothing; rather, they seek a reciprocal relation between citizens and government. The contributions they can make may take various forms, both in cash and in kind. The key seems to be that the benefits individuals receive from participation must outweigh their sacrifices. This principle justifies willingness to contribute to job creation, housing, schooling, water projects and electricity. It leads to differing views on paying rents on township houses, depending on whether or not people already have houses, and the quality of services they receive. (It also raises the possibility that rent boycotts endure in part because of free-rider problems, to be discussed in more detail in Part 2.) In general, what stands out from the group discussions is not a despair or dependency, but a willingness to get stuck in.

9 'Mass' thinking is more pluralistic and concretely oriented than elite ideologies suppose

The image of militant black masses who form a united, radical, bloc, the nightmare or dream of various observers of the new South Africa, is wildly at variance with the image of African public opinion which emerges from the focus groups. The research results underline the existence of considerable pluralism within the African community. None of the groups expressed consistently militant opinions, and oppositions between social interests among Africans were evident in many of the discussions. The overall tone was concrete rather than ideological. There was a stress on a desire for improved living conditions, without an ideological label or absolute benchmark to be met. That the reality is so far from the imagination is an indication of the distance between the English-speaking, media-oriented elites, white and black, which seek to interpret South African politics, and the vernacular communities and social relations into which political demands and ideas are articulated at the grass roots.

Not a single group could be pigeonholed as militant or moderate, left or right, across all the issues discussed. For example, the group of male trade unionists over 35, who took by far the harshest view of government performance and were extremely supportive of strikes, could not have been more moderate on the rent boycott: rents must be paid, they said, full stop. By contrast, the Soweto housewives group, aged 25–34, who were among the most positive on the changes in the country and disliked strikes, were strong supporters of the rent boycott. Likewise, the two groups which should have contained angry young men, the Soweto groups of secondary-educated, unemployed 18-24 year olds and of poorly educated, working shack dwellers of the same age, also belied the conventional wisdom in important respects. While they were discontented with current conditions, both were generally satisfied with the government, positive in their expectations, and particularly unsympathetic towards the continuance of youth protest in the schools. In the transcripts, one cannot establish the linkage between dissatisfaction with change, discontent with government, frustrated expectations, and predisposition to militant action supposed by assessments of South Africa claiming a potential for instability. Rather, one finds that the real-life masses have one foot in the militant camp and the other in the moderate one, depending upon the issue.

It is equally clear that viewing the African community as a homogeneous whole misses important oppositions of interest within it, several of which are evident in the focus group results. Most glaring is the tension between trade unionists and others on the wages-versus-jobs tradeoff, which points to a potentially important future cleavage. Similarly, though hardly surprisingly, the views of the employed and unemployed on strike action differ. Likewise, shack dwellers and township house residents have divergent attitudes towards rent boycotts, reflecting the opposing interests of those who need houses and those who already have them. And men and women differ in such things as their attitudes to free health care and voluntary labour on water projects. In other words, while there is a broad consensus on what the most important problems are among group members, there is also considerable pluralism among them in terms of interests and attitudes.

In addition to lacking the consistency and uniformity presumed by elite ideologies, mass political attitudes among Africans also lack the ideological labels or goals such discourses depend upon. Aside from apartheid, globalising concepts such as capitalism, socialism, the system, exploitation, nationalisation and the like are absent from the group discussions. Nor is there much evidence of ideology in the weaker sense of expressing ideological goals while not placing labels on them. White domination is resented, for instance, but no one in any of the groups regards immediate equality with the standards apartheid created for whites in work or housing as feasible. Likewise, there is no demand for improvements which meet some abstract and arbitrarily determined standard. (The demand for R25 000 brick houses for all, mentioned by activists and officials claiming to be oracles of popular sentiment, never came up.) Rather, the emphasis is on specific, concrete, gains in living conditions generally, such as more houses, better schools, the availability of jobs, etc.

Far from confirming the elite image of a militant black monolith, then, the research results point to the existence of a political culture which is marked by diversity and oriented towards concrete material improvements. The world of the township and shantytown is far away from the conference halls, TV studios, and dinner parties where speeches, pronouncements, and gossip help to shape elite perceptions of 'the masses'. While grass-roots Africans are media-conscious and quite aware of political developments, they assimilate the information they receive in terms of their own interests, values and outlooks. Moreover, even setting aside the subjective factor, the structure of those interests is far more complex than the western right–left or boss–worker oppositions allows for, since running right through that axis is a system of authority and values based on gender, age and tradition. This was manifest in such findings as the gender differences on health care and development project participation reported above, and the data on the authority of chiefs in Part 2 below.

These findings take on particular significance, given the view of many democratic theorists (echoed in a garbled way by some of the fashionable pessimists) that ideological and social pluralism are prerequisites for a successful democracy. They hold that a set of cross-cutting loyalties in individual minds ensures that their commitments to specific positions or groups does not become too extreme, and that the clash of opposing interests in shifting coalitions prevents excessive polarisation. In South Africa, although racial identity has played an important role in creating the prevailing party alignment, there is nonetheless a considerable degree of ideological and social pluralism, as the focus group findings show. Racial identification at the party-political level, illustrated by largely race-based voting patterns in the 1994 election, does not preclude substantial differences within social groups, which can be expressed in cross-racial alliances in non-partisan settings or intra-racial and intra-party debates.

The combination of objective and subjective differentiation means that African political views involve cross-cutting loyalties, both within the African community and within individual minds. If pluralism is the stuff of which democracy is made, as political science often holds, black South Africa has a plentiful supply.

Conclusion

The focus group results dealt with thus far therefore reveal political attitudes and a political culture very different from those imagined by the conventional wisdom. Far from having unlimited expectations and no awareness of constraints, the group members have expectations that reflect reality and a clear consciousness of limits pressing on the government. Rather than cursing the new regime and all its works for not meeting their demands for rapid social change, they distinguish between progress on politics and stagnation or regression on socio-economic issues, while giving the new government the benefit of the doubt because of its efforts on their behalf. There is no evidence of revolutionary sentiment; indeed, concern is expressed that protest action should not damage the delicate workings of the economy. And the way in which they approach political issues reflects a plurality of often conflicting interests rather than the ideological image of monolithic blocs. On these findings, what appears remarkable is not that grass-roots Africans display maturity, pragmatism and reasonableness in their political attitudes, but rather the fact that so many on the right and left have convinced themselves without solid evidence that 'the masses' do not do so.

II PRIORITIES AND POLICIES: POPULIST ASSUMPTIONS VS POPULAR ASPIRATIONS

Policy discussions in the new South Africa often display a populist slant: the desire for dramatic change on symbolic issues is the premiss, while the ability of the government to deliver it is assumed. This all-or-nothing approach is quite different from the more-or-less nature of political debate in most mature democracies. Likewise, the confidence displayed in the state's ability to implement or convince contrasts with the urgency with which the issue of governmental capacity is debated in most other modernising societies. These populist viewpoints are usually associated with the left, urging radical policies, while the claim of excessive expectations is most often voiced by conservatives to justify their scepticism of the new regime. Ironically, however, both rest on similar beliefs, in particular that there are extremely high expectations of government among the African majority, which have a symbolic focus on rapid equality with the standards apartheid delivered to whites. They also share a near-total lack of empirical supporting evidence.

The populist assumptions can be summarised as follows:

- The public is solidly behind the RDP.
- Negotiated tripartite arrangements between business, labour, and government will represent only those interests at the expense of the majority; civics should be represented as well, since they represent 'the excluded masses'.
- Public priorities emphasise racial symbolism and immediate equality in standards of services and jobs.
- On housing, 'the masses' will settle for nothing less than owning good-quality brick houses.
- Payment for rents and services can be secured by appealing to collective responsibility.
- The emphasis in education should be on equalising expenditures and access to Model C Schools.
- Land is the key rural priority.
- Water is a comparatively unimportant issue.
- Immigration is not a burning popular concern.

It is not claimed that everyone with populist ideas holds all these positions exactly as stated, but rather that these typify the sorts of claims made in the debates.

These populist positions, while taken seriously in some of the new ministries, think-tanks and published argument, contrast rather sharply with popular aspirations and perceptions, as revealed in the focus groups in this study. The group discussions let grass-roots Africans display their feelings about policy issues, reveal their own priorities, and indicate the aspects

of issues they consider important. They also let them explore policy alternatives, assess their options, and indicate how well policies are understood or supported. The tenor of the discussions, in terms of issues, emphases and implementation, is very different from those among the populist policy elite.

- The findings of the focus groups on public priorities and policy attitudes can be summed up as follows:
- The public knows little about the RDP.
- Tripartism is favoured, but civics are controversial, and rural representation is problematic.
- There is a large degree of agreement about concrete material priorities – jobs, housing, schools, water and electricity – rather than symbolic or ideological ones.
- On housing, there is a desire for various options, including rental and self-built housing as well as state-aided purchase.
- Ending rent boycotts may require enforcing individual responsibility as well as appeals to collective consciousness.
- The message on education is 'bring back discipline', not instant desegregation or equal spending.
- The land question is a relatively low priority, and there is little consensus about it in rural areas.
- Rural people see water as nothing less than the staff of life.
- Immigration is becoming a powerful and potentially divisive issue.

Thus, the political views of the Africans in the focus groups appear more practically and substantively oriented than populist policy-makers assume, and do not share the latters' confidence in the state to implement radical measures. Specific short-term changes are sought in areas such as education and water, which are unglamorous but of considerable and immediate significance to people. The focus is not on symbolic issues, such as land, Model C or affirmative action,[8] but on specific and incremental improvements in living conditions. A desire for the right to choose in areas such as housing is expressed that planners will ignore at their peril. Finally, among group members there is limited awareness of important policies, and support for individually as well as collectively oriented efforts to encourage payment for housing.

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[8] This does not, of course, mean that participants do not favour change in these areas: but the group discussions indicated that these are not uppermost in their minds.

1 The public knows little of the RDP

> **'I've heard about it, but I don't understand.'** – ***Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.***

Although the initials 'RDP' are known to many of the Africans who participated in this study, what they stand for is not. At most, the group members are aware of one or another of the concrete aspects of the programme's activities – which they support. There is also an impression that it is about creating opportunity. But hardly anyone has a sense that the RDP is an integrated programme of development, or involves different social actors working together. While there is a lack of awareness about the RDP, there is no opposition to its goals or means. Only a few have negative things to say, mostly about the lack of delivery thus far.

Little has been communicated about the substance of the RDP to the group members in this study. Most of those in the urban groups have heard of it but know little about its contents, while most of the rural group members have never even heard of the document. The following are typical comments:

> 'I don't know about RDP. Does it work for the government?' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

> 'RDP is the one that is trying to oppress the new government.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

> 'I've heard people talk about it on the radio, but I do not understand what it is all about.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'I don't know anything about RDP. I just hear about it.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'I've always thought it was another organisation like ANC.' – *Blue-collar East Rand woman, unionised, 18–24, std 5–7.*

> 'I do not know what this RDP is and what its role is.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'I've not heard them explain it.' – *Man living in Taung, 18–24, std 5-7.*

Of those who have heard of the RDP, many have only vague notions of what it involves, although their view of it is positive.

> 'RDP is to bring change in everything, like the few changes we are seeing now.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'RDP is working. Most of the things are going to be done by it. They are the ones that are going to do a lot of things, because they are restructuring the country anew.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

> 'The way I understand RDP is that it is trying to give us the opportunities that we didn't have in the past. That is the thing that I think is good about it.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'It is a good thing, because it's directed towards growth and progress.' – *Woman living in Taung, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

At most, group members could cite one of the projects associated with the programme: housing, jobs, or other benefits. The most frequently mentioned is building or rebuilding houses.

> 'It's collecting money to try and help us in building houses and all the things that people are struggling with. For that reason, it's helpful.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8-10.*

East Rand residents in particular know that the RDP is responsible for reconstructing houses damaged in violence in the Katorus area.[9]

> 'I heard that they were going to sign for some monies, and in January RDP is starting in Katlehong.' – Man squatting on *East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'It has revamped these houses in Natalspruit that were destroyed during violence.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, non-unionised blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Jobs also figure prominently in hopes for the RDP.

> 'I'm told it creates job opportunities.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'It's a beautiful idea, and the way Mandela is touring to try to get that money, it is going to progress. They've convinced us to pay rent so that we can get jobs. So RDP is a very good thing. RDP is going to help me personally.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 18–24, blue-collar, std 4 or less.*

For some, the RDP is associated with opportunities to help themselves by creating their own businesses or through self-help projects.

> 'I believe they sponsor us with equipment to start our own business.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

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[9] Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus on the East Rand, where rebuilding schools and homes damaged in political conflict is a top-priority RDP presidential project.

> 'I think RDP is a good idea because so far, when I look at the grass roots, there is an organisation which they call ANC self-help. They are going to create jobs for those people. For instance, you will find some women doing gardens, sowing tomatoes. When these vegetables are ripe, they take them and sell them. They also try to bake bread and cakes, and they sell them at a price that can be afforded by everybody. – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

In rural areas, the few who have an idea what the RDP involves see it as providing services and infrastructure.

> 'I heard about it on radio that they are going to introduce development schemes for us – for instance, introduce feeding schemes at school.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24–35, std 5–7.*
>
> 'They've promised us water.' – *Woman living in Taung, 35–64, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'And houses and electricity.' – *Woman living in Taung, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

The focus group findings fit in fairly neatly with recent survey results on the RDP. The Idasa post-election survey, conducted in August and September, found that a large proportion of Africans – 87% – had heard of the RDP. On the other hand, the IRI poll found that a much smaller proportion – 41%– said they felt they knew something about it. Both those results are consistent with those of the groups, suggesting that although many members have heard of the RDP, few know much about it.

Negative comments about the RDP are fairly rare, and primarily concern a lack of delivery perceived to date.

> 'So far I haven't seen anything.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8–10.*
>
> 'I haven't seen even 10 houses that have been built. They are still talking about it, but money is coming in.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'It has a very good intention, but it will be lip-service. I have no hope that there will be action on the ground.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

Occasionally, fears of corruption surface:

> 'RDP is all right, but I'm scared because I think the money is going to go missing.' – *Man living in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

Thus, the RDP's image in the minds of the focus group members remains vague at best. Many of those in the rural areas are unaware of it, while for urbanites it is a set of initials that signifies either general aspirations for progress, or specific projects to provide houses, jobs and schools. There is also an impression that the programme is intended to create opportunities and promote self-help, which differs from the rather statist views of its drafters but fits in fairly well with the approach currently emphasised by the RDP ministry. But how all those

things will be done, or how the programme is intended to generate a dynamic process to rebuild the economy, remains a mystery to the Africans in the groups. Public awareness of the RDP is 'a mile wide, but only an inch deep'.

2 Tripartism is favoured, but civics are controversial, and rural representation problematic

> **'This move will actually convince most people that there is action being taken on the ground. This will give us more hope that things will turn for the better.'** – ***Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.***

When the basic idea of the RDP, as well as its tripartite approach – which seeks co-operation among government, business and labour – was explained to focus group members, they reacted enthusiastically. Exposure to these ideas promotes confidence that action is on the way on the socio-economic front. The notion of consulting the three social partners, and that of participation in RDP decision-making more generally, receives strong support, the only exceptions being some trade unionists. Including civics in the decision-making process receives significant but by no means unanimous support in the Gauteng groups. Finding representatives of civil society able to participate seems much more problematic in rural areas, group members there say. In general, however, there is no great urge to engage in adversarial politics or exclude former opponents; rather, there is a longing for incorporation and the accommodation of interests. (Interestingly, even unorganised people endorse the concept of concertation among organised interests.)

When the RDP is explained as government's plan to rebuild the economy through joint action by business, labour and government, the response in most of the groups is a combination of reassurance and vocal support. Explaining the RDP reassures group members that change is indeed on the way. Most say joint decision-making and action by the social partners is not only appropriate, but the most effective way to realise progress.

> 'I think that it is very good, if that is what it is going to do.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

> 'It is a good effort by government to address our problems, eg unemployment.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7].*

> 'I like it particularly because it involves trade unions.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'If they could get together and discuss things, they could succeed in doing it.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'It would be a good thing for the unions, business and government to come together on RDP, but it has to be seen to be practical.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

> 'The way you explain it, it is a tremendous move by the government and those involved, because they are going to create jobs for us.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, 35–64, std 4 or less.*

Significantly – in a country convulsed by conflict for two decades, which many thought headed towards civil conflict less than a year ago – these attitudes do not point to a race or class war. Rather, they suggest a readiness to work with yesterday's 'enemy,' and a willingness to accommodate divergent interests.

While most of the participants in the study – including those in the trade union groups – support tripartism, there are some unionists who fear it could lead to the selling out of worker interests. They insist that the interests of capital and labour are irreconcilable, and prefer the adversarial and militant bargaining of the pre-election era.

> 'It is impractical for the trade unions to work together with business. Rather have business with government. Unions have to protect the rights of the worker. Look at what they have done with the once vigorous Sam Shilowa! He is quiet now.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

Some of the people who feel this way believe that the participation of former unionists in government represents a poor precedent for this type of concertation.

> 'Our [trade union] leaders who are in government sold us out.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

However, this view is challenged by most people in the union groups.

> 'True unionists won't sell you out, unless the leader is there for his personal interest.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

It is perhaps significant that most of the purported 'victims' of corporatist arrangements in this study appear to welcome them.

The suggestion that civic organisations should also participate in RDP decisions receives a favourable response from most members of the Reef groups, particularly unionists, youths and East Rand squatters. They say civics can articulate local needs and problems, and represent a reality that cannot be ignored.

> 'They are responsible for the community, and know what needs immediate attention.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'They will be able to discuss with RDP that people are complaining about this and that. It will be better if they are going to work with civic associations.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

> 'We feel that we will be represented by our civics.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'Civic associations speak on behalf of township dwellers.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10].*

Some stress that civics can represent interests, such as the informal sector, which trade unions do not include.

> 'The reason why I want civic associations to be included is because trade unions speak on behalf of people who are working in the formal sector. In the township, there are people who work in coalyards, in taverns, whom no one thinks about. So if the civic association is there, they will be able to speak on their behalf.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

Others mentioned the realities of power in the townships as a reason for involving civics in the RDP.

> 'Civic associations are the ones in power in the townships. There is nothing that is done without the civic association being consulted.' – *Man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

On the other hand, there was opposition to bringing civics into the process in several Gauteng groups, particularly in the squatter and township housewife groups of the West Rand. Opponents complained of a lack of representativity and corruption in the civics.

> 'When I look at the civic associations in Soweto, they don't represent 100% of the Sowetans.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'There is too much corruption in the civic association. So if they go to the RDP, they are going to get these millions. They'll be millionaires after a week.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'We have lost confidence in these people. There is a lot of corruption and favouritism among them. They cannot resolve problems amicably'. – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*

While these results suggest that there may be a role for the civics in RDP decision-making, they also suggest that the issue should be approached with caution. The group discussions clearly indicate significant support for civics among urban people. But it also seems clear that there are variations in civic support in different social groups and areas, and the comparatively well-organised and politicised townships of Gauteng may score at the high end of the scale. (A 1992 survey by Market and Opinion Surveys found that, on average, 25% of Africans in different urban areas felt close to the civic organisations in their townships; this could suggest that the support which the study found in Gauteng is high compared to other urban areas.) And significant sections of the urban population in the groups say they do not feel represented by the civics. These people may well be in the minority – in Gauteng at least. But there is a difference between a finding that civics have significant support and the claim, often made in populist rhetoric, that they represent 'the community'. In practical policy terms,

the group discussions suggest that, while there is support for the inclusion of civics in principle, in practice their inclusion in decision-making structures in a given area should depend on evidence of representativeness.[10]

In the rural areas, the notion of tripartism evokes not just co-operation among the three partners but a sense that the RDP will offer an open, participatory process, which will also give country people a say in development decisions.

> 'We welcome such action. For instance, you are already toeing the same line as the RDP because you came to ask us about our needs, and that's very good.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'The idea is good, if I could be part of it.' – *Man living in Taung, 18–24, std 5-7.*

However, in the rural areas in Northern Transvaal and Northwest where the groups were convened, an obstacle to participation is that there appear to be no organisations in 'civil society' which enjoy significant support and could therefore represent people. Development planners have suggested that the RDP could liaise with rural civics, but in the areas studied they appear to be thin on the ground. After one Sekhukuni woman said that civics could explain popular views, she was asked whether such a group existed locally. She replied, 'No, it is at Jane Furse, but they will not represent our community.' Another, asked which group could speak for the people, replied, 'We can't think of any.' In the rural groups, participants who were asked who could represent their development needs to the authorities mentioned only local chiefs and local ANC branches. (Interestingly, both groups were named by both young and old, despite the assumption that youths would favour ANC and older people the chiefs.) However, neither group is autonomous from political or administrative roles, nor is normally thought of under the rubric of 'civil society.' But, due to the greater strength of traditional structures in rural areas, there is far less of the separation of civil, political, and religious society there than in the urban areas. This does not indicate a flourishing civil society in rural areas, an issue which needs to be addressed in the long term. For the moment, chiefs and political party branches appear to be the most credible interlocutors for development efforts in the former homeland areas.

In sum, the premise of tripartism and the promise of participatory development which the RDP contains can generate strong support at grass-roots level, if they are better publicised than they are now. However, a number of practical problems need to be resolved to make that participation a reality. These include generating consensus among union members in favour of tripartism, defining a role for civics which respects both their strengths and their limitations, and working out viable approaches to rural input into the process. Yet the specific attitudes or problems of particular segments of the population may be less important than what the general attitudes towards participation and consultation expressed in the focus groups signify. Rather

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[10] **It should also be noted that respondents were asked about their attitude to 'civics', not to national or regional civic co-ordinating bodies. The findings say nothing positive or negative about support for the South African National Civic Organisation, which has sought inclusion in national RDP structures.**

than a rejection of an inclusive approach to development planning as a compromise with the 'other side', they point to an image of society as an entity where all elements need to be incorporated: the emphasis is on accommodation and co-operation between all competing and contending interests.

3 Considerable agreement on concrete priorities: jobs, houses, schools, water and electricity

> **'I say they must build houses and hospitals, because those are the things that are in short supply.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.***

The focus group members have a clear sense of their priorities, which, as noted above, focus on concrete improvements in living conditions, not the conflicts of the past or ideological and symbolic questions. Jobs top the list of problems for the new government to act on among both urban and rural dwellers. After that, the priorities of the two differ: in urban groups, housing and education are the next most important issues, while in the country, water and electricity follow. Notably absent from the list are issues related to the struggle against apartheid, which figured prominently in public concerns reflected in surveys conducted before the election, or the ideological questions that have exercised the political elites since then. The immediate, concrete, priorities are so important that most group members say a substantial part of the resources now spent on the military should be shifted to such civilian purposes.

The finding that stands out most strongly in the group members' assessments of priorities for the new government is the stress on reducing unemployment. In 12 of the 13 groups, unemployment is agreed to be one of the three most important issues for government to deal with. (The only exception, surprisingly enough, is a group of unemployed men from Soweto, aged 25–34.) In other words, jobs rank as a high priority across the board, in town as well as country, for young and old, men and women, working people and unemployed. This finding is consistent with the studies published before last April's election, both quantitative and qualitative, which ranked jobs as the number one issue in the African public's mind.

In the urban groups there is also clarity on the next two priorities for government: housing and education. Housing is mentioned in seven of the eight groups as one of the top three priorities, and education in five. By contrast, other issues – health, crime, strikes, and immigration – rank in the top three in only one group each. (Other issues mentioned as requiring government action by one or two members of a group include transport, crèches, child abuse, street children, pensions, drug use and racism.) In other words, there is a remarkably clear consensus among city people in the groups about the issues government needs to tackle.

The focus groups in the rural areas also agree on what government needs to address, but their priorities are different from those in the towns. The need for an adequate water supply rates as highly as that for more jobs: both place in the top three in every rural group. After them comes electricity, which four out of the five rural groups say should be one of government's

top priorities. Interestingly, only one of the five rural groups rated education as one of the three most important problems for the new government to handle. Again, the degree of unanimity among the different groups on their needs is striking. While there is considerable pluralism in attitudes to how problems should be tackled, there is a remarkably broad consensus on the issues requiring action.

Another notable aspect of the priorities revealed in the study is what is missing from them. Ending apartheid and political violence simply do not figure among the issues mentioned. This is a noteworthy shift from the situation before the election, when both figured prominently in the 'jobs/peace/freedom' triad of issues which research showed to be uppermost in most Africans voters' minds. Clearly, with the coming of the new democracy and the winding down of political killings outside KwaZulu-Natal, discrimination and violence have dropped way down in the ranking of public concerns. Group members remain concerned with dignity issues, as the evidence cited in Part 1 shows, but other issues have overtaken them. Equally significant is the absence of many of the ideological issues over which political and journalistic elites have spilt rivers of ink. Prominent among these are the land question, affirmative action, and government intervention in the economy; while they may have mass support in principle, they are not high priorities. The desire to turn the tables on whites enjoys little urgency among the grass-roots Africans in the groups. The group results suggest that a substantial part of elite political debate simply fails to address the concerns that move the bulk of grass-roots Africans.

How urgently they feel the need to address these practical concerns was underlined by the results on the 'guns vs butter' tradeoff. This question asked whether they felt the country needed a large army, to defend it and to integrate the different statutory and non-statutory forces, or whether there should be a substantial shift of funds from the military to civilian purposes such as creating jobs, houses and schools. Most of the group members prefer butter to guns. They feel the country has no enemies at present, and would prefer to cut military spending in favour of social programmes. This runs across gender, age and urban/rural lines.

> 'I propose that money be used to build schools and hospitals. South Africa has no enemies outside its borders.' – Woman squatting on *East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'Even if we had some enemies, Tata [Mandela] would always strive for a peaceful relationship with neighbouring countries.' – *Soweto housewife, 25–34, std 5–7.*
>
> 'The money they would spend to buy ammunition, they should spend building hospitals, schools and houses.' – *Man living in Soweto, unemployed, 18–24, std 8–10.*
>
> 'The army's budget should be reduced by 50%. The other 50% should be used for building schools, hospitals, etc.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, non-unionised blue-collar worker, std 5–7.*
>
> 'We need an army to defend us, but not a big army. That money should be sent on necessities such as schools and hospitals. In fact, the present army is so big that they should be retrenching. We have APLA, the BC Army, the SADF, the homelands armies – it

> is too big.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker 35–64, std 8–10.*

> 'I'd prefer that they spend some of the money on improving conditions such as school buildings, hospitals, etc. But they should make sure that there is enough funding for the army, to keep it going.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

Certain comments point to a serious image problem for the National Defence Force. Some group members see it as undisciplined or incompetent.

> 'We still have a problem in the army. They are still complaining. So if they make it bigger, it means that there will be more complaints.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.*

> 'I don't see any need to take money and put it in the army, unite SADF, ANC, PAC, because they've failed. They've been proved wrong. Right now they were trying to build the force and give them blue uniforms. We saw them on TV, but they could not keep the peace among us residents.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

The military did have some defenders, though in only one of the groups (young urban men) did they form the majority. This group's general feeling was that, while the country may appear secure for the moment, this may not always be the case.

> 'I say that they must put more money into the army, because an army is important for a country. In South Africa we cannot say how many enemies we have and how many friends we have. Right now Mandela is meddling in the affairs of Angola and he takes their side, but he doesn't know what Jonas Savimbi's retaliation is going to be like.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'South Africa needs a big army to prepare itself for the future. Being under a black president does not mean we don't need to protect ourselves.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, non-unionised blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Not all the reasons offered why military spending should be kept up reflect well on the army. Some people fear soldiers will turn to crime if discharged.

> 'I think they must put money in the army so that Umkhonto weSizwe and APLA can get jobs in the army, because if they are not in the army, they are going to resort to crime.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

Thus, the focus groups reveal a clear set of public priorities: these centre on the desire for material improvements in members' lives. Jobs come first for everyone, followed by housing and schools in the urban groups, and water and electricity in the rural areas. These civilian priorities come before further military spending for most group members. It is noteworthy that for a population so diverse, the degree of agreement on priorities facing the new regime is remarkably high.

4 Housing: a desire for options

> **'There should be options. Those who can build their own houses should do so. Those who can't afford to, the government should build them houses. And it should not offer them for free, because this will encourage laziness. People should pay, they should either buy or rent it.' – *Man living in a township house in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8–10.***

While people in the focus groups say housing is important, they see the housing question quite differently from those operating on populist assumptions. Rather than pointing to a single solution to the housing crisis that enjoys universal support, the results of this research suggest that there is a desire for options to suit people of differing means and tastes. Many group members favour renting houses from government (an option rarely if ever mentioned in current housing policy debates), while others prefer houses built incrementally by their owners or bought from government or privately. Quite a few explicitly recognise a need for choices. Almost none of the group members is aware of the government's housing subsidy scheme, but almost all are willing in principle to pay for housing. These findings run directly counter to the assumptions of populist policy-makers in the housing field, who think 'the masses' will settle for nothing less than *owning* formal brick houses, reject rental or incremental housing strategies, and assume a general need for government assistance.

There is surprisingly strong support in the urban groups for retaining the traditional township system of housing, in which the government builds houses and rents them out. This position is predominant among squatters, and enjoys some support among township house dwellers. The principal reason cited is that this makes houses affordable to people who could not afford mortgage bonds. Almost none of the Gauteng residents in the groups appear to be aware of the new government subsidy scheme, which is intended to bring home ownership within reach of a far wider range of people than in the past. Significantly, however, there is a high level of willingness to pay, even among the unemployed.

> 'I think they should use the old strategy of building houses and then people pay rent. If they are going to say that people must buy houses for cash, they are going to suffer. You have to pay R18 000, and you don't have that kind of money.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'They must build houses, and we should continue [to rent] like our grannies did.' – Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, *18–24, std 8–10.*

> 'People can afford that, as opposed to buying a house.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 4 or less.*

> 'If the government could build houses that people can occupy and rent, then many people will afford it. Paying R45 per month is manageable, even for the unemployed.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, non-unionised blue-collar worker, 25–34, std 5–7.*

> 'I'd build the old four-roomed houses, and people should pay rent.' – Woman living in township house on the East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, *18–24, std 5–7.*

On the other hand, there are also many people in the study who support home ownership, either through incremental housing or buying completed homes from government or private contractors. This view is prevalent among those already living in township houses, and enjoys some support among shack dwellers as well. Those who call for the purchase of homes advocate a mixture of private and state initiative. Those who need no help should house themselves through the market; government should help the rest by selling them houses at reasonable prices.

> 'They should allocate people sites. Those who can build can put up their own structures, those who can't, the government must build houses for them. They should build affordable houses, like R19 000. People can improve on these houses.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, 35–64, std 8–10.*

> 'I do not believe we will ever occupy houses for free. The last batch of such houses was during the era of Mpanza [the 1940s Soweto squatter leader]. If they make these houses available, they should sell them at an affordable price.' – *Soweto housewife living in township house, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Some advocate combining a rental option for the poor with the chance to buy for those better off.

> 'People who are unemployed should occupy the four-roomed houses that will be built, and pay rent. Those who are employed have an option of taking a bond.' – *Woman living in township house on the East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18–24, std 5–7.*

Others, particularly squatters, favour incremental housing schemes. They say self-build approaches would ensure that they would own a shelter they could improve over time, while offering them some security against rising rents.

> 'I prefer that we build our own houses, because each one will progress according to her pocket. I think in this way many people will be able to have houses.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'People should build for themselves, because if they build for us, with time the rent will go up.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, 25–34, std 5–7.*

Thus, the image of popular wishes regarding housing that emerges from the focus group members is one of diversity. Some want rental accommodation, others self-built homes, yet others houses to buy. The responses also indicate a recognition of diversity - an insistence that there is no single housing solution for all black people, and that solutions must recognise differing economic circumstances. Little information has reached participants thus far about the government's planned subsidy scheme, and greater awareness of it might shift preferences among these categories, but none would be likely to disappear.

Probably the most important finding on housing, however, is one that is common to all those categories: all participants recognise the constraints on delivery, and no one expects to get something for nothing. People expect to pay for their homes. Thus, rather than finding the across-the-board demand for owning 'nice brick houses,' opposition to incremental housing, or demand for government handouts which populist proposals presume, the group discussions suggest a desire for choices to suit people with varying preferences and resources, but who all expect to contribute as much as reasonably possible to the cost of their housing.

5 Paying rent: collective appeals and individual responsibility

> **'If the majority pays, the few that don't pay will realise that they have no chance, so it's better for them to pay.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25–34, std 4 or less.***

Although the group members agree that housing should be paid for, they disagree on the best way to end the current rent boycotts. When it comes to measures suggested thus far to end the boycott, attitudes towards them seem to be determined by attitudes towards the boycott itself. However, the group responses also suggest that individuals' rational choice as well as collective responsibility are seen as relevant to a solution. Government responses thus far focus on the collective approach, but the group responses suggest that a response may be needed at individual level to change cost-benefit calculations about payment. This could involve either effective sanctions for non-payment, or incentives to pay.

Thus far, the collectively oriented measures proposed by government have included leadership campaigns, development fund cutoffs, and involving civic organisations in door-to-door payment drives in areas where the boycott persists. Reactions from group members run along the same lines as attitudes to the boycotts: those supportive of the action are also sceptical of the means suggested by government to end them. Consequently, township house dwellers in the groups are split on the effectiveness of the proposed measures, as on the boycotts, while squatters are more favourably disposed towards them.

These divisions are clearly evident in responses to suggestions that popular leaders should campaign for an end to the boycotts.

> 'Personally, I'd listen to the leaders and co-operate, but I doubt if everybody would do that.' – *Soweto housewife, township house dweller, 25–34, std 5-7.*

> 'Yes, we will listen to them, as we listened to the civic when it told us not to pay.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'These people invited us once to the stadiums to address us on this issue. We are talking about people like Mandela who once appealed to us to write off the arrears, and start paying rent. Orlando residents did not heed this call.' – *Soweto housewife, township house dweller, 25-4, std 5-7.*

> 'Who will have sent them to come and tell the people to pay rent? It will be as if they are turning against us.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker 18-24, std 4 or less.*

Of course, claims that the leaders' calls would be heard should be taken with a grain of salt, since abysmal repayment rates have persisted despite repeated calls by national and local Gauteng leaders for residents to pay rates and service charges.

Similar divisions are seen in response to another proposed measure: cutting off development funds or services to entire areas that have failed to reach an adequate level of payment.

> 'We have to pay when it gets to that stage.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, 18-24, blue-collar worker, std 4 or less.*

> 'They will see that nothing is done, then they'll go and pay.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25-34, std 4 or less.*

> 'Now immediately they cut off the water supply, people will do more damage, because it will be at night and it will be nice. We'll all meet in one place. We will cause damage.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

The most widely supported option to encourage payment is involving the civic organisations, but there is dissent here too. People who feel civics are useful and representative tend to think they can play a useful role in this area.

> 'The civic association route would work because they are the people who know all our problems.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

> 'The civic must tell the people to pay. In this way, the government will be able to have money to start building houses for us.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

In some cases, the civics are seen as closer to the people and more credible in urging payment than the top leaders, who are seen to have distanced themselves from the community.

> 'The civics are better [than campaigns by the leaders] because we don't stay with the Mandelas.' – *Woman living in township house on the East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 5-7.*

People who are sceptical of the civics or the wisdom of involving them in the RDP are likely to be doubtful whether they can do much to encourage payment.

> 'We have lost trust in civics, because they are the ones who are behind the eviction of pensioners. Some of them sell the pensioners' houses without them knowing.' – *Soweto housewife, 25-34, std 5-7.*

> 'I don't really like the civics, because they always ask for money from us. They have asked us to pay R2,50 for water and toilets. They should not participate.' – *Woman living in township house on the East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 5-7.*

When asked what other ideas they could suggest to encourage payment, some in the groups suggested that services or infrastructure should be improved. In this way, they argued, residents would see a return on their money, and would therefore be willing to resume payments.

> 'If we see some action being taken to construct roads, renovate houses, etc, we will start paying rent.' – *Soweto housewife living in township house, 25-34, std 5-7.*

Others argued that non-payment would be eased if jobs were created, increasing the ability to pay.

> 'The main thing is that jobs should be created so that these people can pay.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25-4, std 4 or less.*

These are collective measures to change the balance of costs and benefits of payment to whole areas or social strata: improving services would increase the benefits, while increasing employment would reduce the costs.

A contrasting theme that runs through much of the discussion on ending boycotts is that of individual rational choice. While some of the group members speak of responding to collective appeals, such as those by popular leaders or civic groups, others are concerned with creating incentives that make it in the interests of individuals to choose to pay. Essentially this involves overcoming the so-called 'free-rider problem': if most people aren't paying it is irrational for a single individual to do so, while if most are it is tempting not to do so if defaulting will not prevent one from receiving the same benefits. As a Soweto housewife put it, 'You lose out if you do that individually.' Those focusing on individual responsibility argue that, just as attitudes towards the boycott turn on receiving value for money, so ending non-payment turns on either denying value to non-payers, or offering benefits to those who pay.

Solutions responding to the free-rider problem focus on making individuals, not groups, accountable for their own actions in respect of payment. This means isolating, and if necessary imposing sanctions on, those who do not pay, and providing side benefits to those who do. The goal is to make the costs of compliance less than the costs of non-payment. One example cited was that of Eskom, which now meters (and cuts off) electricity to individual homes instead of doing it to whole areas.

> 'When Eskom first took over electricity, people responded badly. They responded with 40%, 50%, 60%. Now there are many people who are paying for electricity, because Eskom switches it off.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

Another participant argued that cutting subsidies to individuals will have the desired effect.

> '[Cutting subsidies to individuals] will work ,because I know that if you were paying R50, and the government was subsidising you with R200, you know you'll now pay a debt of R250, which will strangle you. You will prefer to pay the R50.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

It is also suggested that appeals to collective actors, such as civics, and the imposition of individual responsibility can be combined in appeals to the spirit of community with individual-level sanctions.

> 'The [government housing] committee should liaise with the civic association. If the civic agrees, then they should advertise that they are going to evict these people. They should advertise it throughout the community: "If you don't [illegible] electricity."' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

The prime focus of this study was to examine expectations, not to explore attitudes to the boycotts. Limited time was therefore devoted to this issue, and no attempt was made to weigh the relative merits of individual and collective solutions. Nevertheless, there are clear indications from this research that there is an individual as well as a collective dimension that must be taken into account in attempts to encourage the payment of rents, service charges and the like. Similarly, the study did not provide definitive evidence of the social groups hostile to the pro-payment campaign, beyond noting that they are largely those supportive of the boycott, and that they are stronger among township house dwellers than among squatters. But it does seem clear that collective appeals have decided problems in reaching precisely those groups who support the boycott. By contrast, approaches oriented at promoting individual responsibility are suggested by some group members. These may involve measures to make evictions or service cutoffs of non-payers effective, or offering incentives to those who pay, such as the accelerated transfer of township house titles. Certainly it would seem that policy-makers should consider adding such measures to the arsenal of collective appeals on which they have relied until now – with limited success.

6 Education: bring back discipline

> **'Schoolchildren should stop toyi-toying; they should study. They have no reason to toyi-toyi.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.***

The main preoccupation in the focus groups regarding the school system can be summed up in one word: indiscipline. After discipline, facilities and teacher qualifications are the most frequently mentioned concerns. Two issues which have been at the centre of elite debate, access to Model C schools and school fees, hardly figure in the discussions. These results come as a rebuke to both populist policy-makers and conservative pessimists. In the case of the former, they suggest that many of the education activists and politicians who claim to be responding to 'what the people demand' are not addressing the issues uppermost in the public

mind. As to the latter, the group results show why nightmares of suburban schools being overrun by hordes of pupils from the townships were mere fantasy.

In most of the groups, when members are asked what concerns them about the schools, the discussion focuses on questions of discipline. Although it is recognised that students made an important contribution to the struggle against apartheid, all groups see scholars as overly politicised and out of control.

> 'School children are too politicised. They are involved in everything that is happening in the country.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*
>
> 'Children supported us with strikes, but now they aren't going back to class. This is my major concern. They don't wear uniforms now, thus there's no guarantee that they attend class.' – *Man living on East Rand, blue-collar worker, 25-34, std 5-7.*
>
> 'Politicising education [is the problem in the schools]. Children are now uncontrollable. They know too much. They do not want to go to school.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8-10.*
>
> 'Children control teachers, and their say is final. Since 1976, children are just out of order.' – *Man living in township house in Soweto, blue-collar worker and union member, over 35, std 8-10.*

Significantly, these views are shared by people of all ages, including those under 35 who were personally involved in the anti-apartheid campaigns of the past. Even (or perhaps especially) the participants in yesterday's struggles think it is time for the schools to calm down.

> 'Order is very bad. You find them going to school at 9:15. Another one tells himself, "I don't like this subject, I'll go at 11." Others smoke dagga at school. They also gamble.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 25-34, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'There is no order among schoolchildren.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 25-34, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'I am not happy, because they go to school but at noon they are already back home. When you check their books you find that they are clean. Their homework is never signed. We as parents are not satisfied.' – *Woman living on East Rand, blue-collar worker and union member, 18-24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'Scholars don't respect teachers.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

Again, the strong feelings of younger people on these subjects are noteworthy – perhaps because they are experiencing the consequences of poorly functioning schools in their own careers or attempts to find jobs.

Teachers are also seen as contributing to the indiscipline by their own misbehaviour. Group members complain that teachers sleep with students and are drunk at school.

'The other thing that is a problem are these teachers who have affairs with schoolchildren. I think action must be taken against them.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

'Teachers drink during school hours.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

'They send children to shebeens to buy them liquor.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

However, some group members say teachers may not be the only ones at fault when they stray.

'Our daughters wear mini-dresses, and when they sit down they sit carelessly.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

After discipline, the issue around which concern is most often expressed is the poor facilities and conditions in black schools. In both urban and rural areas, group members say their local schools are poorly equipped and maintained.

'It's still not right. Classrooms are still overcrowded. There are no classrooms in which to do experiments in schools.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

'Primary schools for blacks and primary schools for whites are not the same. You find that a small white child can operate a computer, and you find that a black child in the same standard doesn't know anything about it.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

'They have no sports day, no debate day, the school has no equipment.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 5-7.*

'The windows are broken, as there are no caretakers to monitor vandalism.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

'We need libraries.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

Another concern frequently voiced is the poor quality of instruction. Group members say this is due to teachers' limited competence in English, their poor training, and the large class sizes prevalent in African schools.

'In the township our English is still bad. We can't get the English that we expect to get so that we can communicate with whites. The English that we learn is like textbooks.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

'Teachers' standard of education is very low. They should upgrade themselves. Children shouldn't be forced, but taught properly.' – *Man squatting on East Rand, blue-collar worker, non-unionised, 25-34, std 5-7.*

> 'The ratio of children to teachers is too high. Our children do not get the best kind of education, as the teachers cannot cope. We lack schools in our villages.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

A few group members blame the teachers' problems on inadequate support from the minister of Education.

> 'Teachers, too, have a problem with [Dr Sibusiso] Bhengu. He does not consult with them. Each time the teachers approach Bhengu, he suffers a stroke.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8-10.*[11]

In other words, on education, as on other issues, the focus group results suggest that the African public's concerns differ substantially from those that have preoccupied elites and the press. Restoring discipline is the overriding issue. The sorts of comments made by African participants on this subject are little different from what might be heard around dinner tables in Bryanston or Norwood. (They are in line with evidence from other surveys, which point to a generally conservative consensus among blacks as well as whites in South Africa on socio-cultural issues.) The other main concerns involve school facilities and teacher qualifications. The notion that blacks demand the immediate, wholesale transformation of the educational system cannot be squared with the group discussions. Elite concerns about access to white schools or debates about free schooling hardly figure in these discussions at the grass roots. Indeed, the optimism on education noted in Part I may well reflect the fact that the educational goals of group members are quite modest.

7 Land: low priority and little consensus

> **'I do not think Mandela needs more land, because he is the king of the world.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal, 18-24, std 4 or less.***

Land is one of the policy areas on which the focus group results most sharply diverge from the populist attitudes frequent in public debate. There is some support for land redistribution among group members in rural areas, mostly men. But when they are asked to rate it against other priorities, even most of those who want land rank it below jobs, schools, or water. In other words, for the present, at least, when confronted with tradeoffs between land and other high-priority issues, the rural group members *do not* choose land. There is also no agreement on how land reform should occur, but attitudes towards how to redistribute are often cautious, emphasising the need not to antagonise white commercial farmers. Rather than launching a

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[11] **This criticism of the Education Ministry highlights another noteworthy trend in the discussions: on several occassions, respondents responded to questions on government performance by noting that particular departments were performing well, others badly. Urban group members are, therefore, evaluating departmental performance selectively rather than taking an undifferentiated view to the government as a whole.**

crusade to retake the land, most prefer peaceably accommodating established interests. Land itself is wanted for a variety of purposes besides agriculture, including industry, schools, and commerce. These views contrast sharply with the populist positions that the struggle for the land is foremost in the minds of rural Africans, that its aim is land for farming, and that a burgeoning peasant movement is waiting in the wings.

There is significant support for some form of land redistribution among focus groups in the former homelands, but the land question is perceived differently by men and women. Men, the landholders in traditional society, are usually more militant on the issue.

> 'Land must come back to us, because many blacks are poor when whites are managing through agriculture. When we work at their farms, we earn very little.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

> 'When you look at Bophuthatswana, it is full of whites who are concerned with their personal interests. We want our land back.' – *Man living in Taung, 8-24, std 5-7.*

Some women are also keen on land reform.

> 'The government has to extend land ownership to black people.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

However, most rural women in the groups do not see obtaining more land as an urgent priority.

> 'Land was taken away from blacks a very long time ago. Now [whites] are used to where they are staying, and we are also used to the small areas we occupy.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'We do not need more land.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24-35, std 5-7.*

> 'The government can allocate land that is in the cities to build houses for urban people. We do not need more land.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 24-35, std 5-7.*

> 'Matters should be left as they are.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*

More important than these differing views on land wants is the fact that when both men and women in the rural groups are asked to rate land against other basic needs, land does not rate highly. If they are asked whether land or jobs are more important, jobs come out higher.

> 'We need jobs in order to survive, not land.' – Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 25-34, std 5-7.

> 'We need jobs, so the government should focus on that [rather than land].' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'Let's forget the land issue.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*

The same happens when groups are asked about land versus schools.

> 'Let's leave land matters and attend to schools.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'The land we currently have is enough. Let education proceed, so thereafter we will be able to develop ourselves. When we are educated we'll start our own businesses.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'Schools are more important [than land]. The more educated we are, then we can fight for the rights to own our land.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

The rural group members are most emphatic of all about the priority of water over land.

> 'Water needs to be provided in abundance. Nothing can survive without water.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'I choose water [over land]. There's no life without water.' – *Man living in Taung, 8-24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'Water is the basic need.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

The few dissenters on these questions who give priority to land are almost all men. In general, even for those who *want* land, it cannot be rated a high priority *expectation* compared to other, much more urgently felt needs.

Those who would like to see land redistribution do not agree on how it should occur. The largest part want this to be done gradually. Discussions between white farmers and the government are seen as the best way of reaching agreement on the land problem.

> 'I'd suggest that [Mandela] should consult with the [white] farmers.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*
>
> 'The government should buy back those farms.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

Many fear that wholesale repossession will destroy the economy, and lead to an armed uprising by white farmers.

> 'If [the government] doesn't pay, there'll be war.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'Both parties should come to an agreement to avoid any war that will affect the economy.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*
>
> 'The government will have to buy the land.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

Nonetheless, a significant minority of men and women does favour expropriating white farmers, feeling it a righting of historical injustice.

> 'The government should repossess the land because it was occupied by whites without our consent' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 25-34, std 5-7.*

> 'The Boers did not buy this land. They took it over from us without having to pay. So we might as well do the same – repossess the land.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 7 or less..*

> 'I demand from Mandela an undertaking that he will deport all whites from this country, because this is our land.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

But those who disagree are ready to challenge them directly, in the name of a shared South Africanness.

> 'I do not think this would be possible, because we now have reunited with the white people and regard them as fellow South Africans.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

Contrary to much of the policy debate to date, possible uses for redistributed land are not limited to agriculture. Rather, land is also wanted to promote employment through the development of industry, to provide homes, and to allow the building of schools. All these are at variance with the image of peasants keen to return to the land dear to populist thinking.

> 'We need more land that will be used to build factories to provide people with employment.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

> 'To have our own farms and to build.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

> 'We'll build schools, universities, high schools and game reserves.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

> 'We need more land for farming, building schools, and other facilities.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

Some, however, take a strictly traditional view.

> 'I'd use it for farming.' – *Man living in Sekhukuniland, over 35, std 4 or less.*

In short, the focus group members' view of the land question is an eye-opener. There is a big gender gap on land reform, with most women leery and many men eager. For both, however, land is a fairly low priority compared to other needs, and it is desired for many purposes besides farming. Nor is there consensus on how land reform should be conducted, although the larger part of opinion in the groups studied seems to favour one based on gradual purchase and negotiations.

At present, an accommodationist approach which takes account of the existing balance of rural power is preferred to one which seeks land at all costs. It should be noted that these results concern land redistribution, not the restitution of land to people removed from it under

apartheid or after 1913, which may well seem a more urgent priority to those directly affected. However, specifically concerning redistribution, the group discussions offer little evidence of a groundswell for immediate, large-scale transfers of land. Rather, there appears to be a constituency potentially sympathetic to the government's policy of experimenting with land reform models and attempting to negotiate a consensus on the issue among affected interests, while giving precedence to restitution. On this subject, as on many others, populist policy discussions appear to have significantly misread popular expectations.

8 Water: the staff of rural life

> **'We need water, because this is a basic need. You cannot live on land without water.' – *Woman living in rural area of Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal, 25-34 yrs, std 5-7.***

Overwhelmingly, people in the former homeland groups say that water is the most important priority, along with jobs, for the new government. Although the issue has traditionally been an unglamorous, low-profile one, in the lives of people in the former homelands, it looms very large indeed. And thus far, few rural group members have seen action on it.

By and large, rural group members agree that the water supply in their areas in inadequate. It is insufficient in quantity and often poor in quality.

> 'We are not getting sufficient water. We use only one borehole for water supply, and this is not sufficient for such a big population.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

> 'The problem is that they use the tap once a month. The tap runs for the whole day. As a result we have to fetch water from the tap from 6 o'clock in the morning until 6 o'clock in the evening the whole day, so that this can last you for a month. However, after all the work is done, you still run short of water.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

> 'We have to pay for water. We pay R7 for a 750-litre tank.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

> 'We are struggling for water.' – *Woman living in Sekhukuniland, 25-34, std 5-7.*

> 'When they've cleaned the pipes, it has a Jik-like taste and smell.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*

Out of all five groups, only one person reports a recent improvement in water supply.

> 'The smell, however, is not as strong as it used to be.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*

Thus, while discussions of rural policy and priorities have tended to focus on the land question, the rural focus groups suggest that the need for more and better water cannot be overemphasised. It runs through page after page of the transcripts. This is in line with pre-election polling, which found that water, after jobs, was the item highest on the agenda of rural people. Urban-based people assured of good quality water supplies find it difficult to imagine what it is like to live without it. The simplest explanation came from the old man in Sekhukuniland who, when asked by the group moderator how the local water was, replied, 'You would not wish to drink it.'

9 Immigration: the sleeper issue

> **'I want the foreigners to go back to where they came from. We are tired of them saying that they helped the ANC in exile.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.***

One of the most striking findings documented by the urban focus groups is the strength of public sentiment on a little-heralded policy issue: immigration. While none of the questions in the discussion guide specifically concerned immigration from other African countries, group after group brings it up spontaneously. It is raised with a vigour, insistence and frequency that signals the rise of an important new question on the public agenda – one that has begun to establish its place on the agenda of elite discussions of post-apartheid politics.

In the urban areas, Africans who participated in the research project blame immigrants for a variety of the social ills afflicting the townships. Above all, there is concern that they worsen unemployment. It is argued that people from poorer African countries undercut the wage claims of South Africans.

> 'Just look at how many we are and there are many foreigners here, and they are the people who take jobs because they will work for any money they can get. We have pride. I won't work for a whole week for R50, when I've still got to support my mother.' – *Man squatting in Soweto, blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 4 or less.*

> 'If they could enforce the law that if an employer is found with such a person in his employ, he will be fined, it might be better.' – *Unemployed man living in Soweto, 25-34, std 4 or less.*

> 'The government should minimise the problem of unemployment by deporting these foreigners.' – *Soweto housewife, 25-34, std 5-7.*

> 'These non-South Africans are happy to work for R40 per week and we do not agree to those wages, hence people are unemployed.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 5-7.*

Some also lay the housing shortage at their door.

> 'The problem is that the shacks are occupied by foreigners. They are the people who were responsible for shacks.' – *Unemployed man living in backyard shack in Soweto, 25-34, std 4 or less.*

> 'If they could deal with those people, I think the housing problem can be solved.' – *Unemployed man living in township house in Soweto, 18-24, std 8-10.*

And immigrants are generally seen as agents of crime and social decay.

> 'The government has to do something about these immigrants. They have taken our jobs and create overcrowding in our country. I need not mention the hazardous lifestyle they bring about. They smuggle drugs into our country, especially the Nigerians. They even go further to impregnate our sisters.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8-10.*

It is worth noting that the essence of these claims is instrumental: immigrants are denying South Africans certain benefits. This sort of argument is typical of nativist movements in other polyglot societies, particularly the United States. It is different from the sort of anti-immigrant sentiment expressed in Europe, where immigrants are seen as diluting the national body of Britain, Germany or France: such feelings arise in societies where the concept of the nation is a much more all-encompassing identity than is the case in South Africa.

In sum, immigrants from other African countries have become a major worry for urban Africans, according to the focus group participants. It is significant that black South Africans now seem to be targeting their frustrations not on whites, the local 'other', but on immigrants, the foreign 'other' directly competing with them. While this is not the place to explore the immigration debate in detail, policy-makers should know that there are tensions between regional friendship and anti-immigration politics. There are important political dangers that follow from the spread of this sentiment, whether or not it is justified in the facts. One is the risk of West African-style anti-immigrant disturbances. Another is the risk of nativist political pressure along the lines of the recently passed Proposition 187 in California. Before the election immigration was officially a non-issue, and since, efforts have been made to dismiss it as the concern of a few bigots or as justified recompense for foreigners' aid to the ANC in exile. The group results underline the fact that concern about immigration is not limited to a few malcontents, but a genuine popular sentiment that needs to be managed.

If there is a general impression that emerges from the group discussions on policy issues analysed in this second part of the study, it is a pragmatism that belies many of the claims and assumptions involved in the populist themes, and pessimist plaints that have dominated much of the post-election policy debate. In a variety of issue areas, ranging from reconstruction planning to land reform, there is clear support for attempts to incorporate the views of varying interests concerned. Contrary to the belief of the populists and the fears of the pessimists, there is little evidence of a desire for racial revenge, or a will to plough under the established interests. Across the major substantive issues areas, including housing, schooling, land, and water, the sorts of changes desired are comparatively modest and strikingly realistic. Social upheaval is not sought, but feared: whether speaking of the schools, the

economy or the land, the greatest desire is for change with order. While change is definitely sought, it is imagined on an incremental basis, not a cataclysmic one. This flows from another important, if usually implicit, theme in the discussions: the acceptance that South Africa forms a community in which the fate of each group is bound up with the fate of all.

CONCLUSION: THE BOTTOM LINE IS A NEED FOR VISIBLE, WIDESPREAD, INCREMENTAL CHANGE

> **'Had I known, I wouldn't have voted. If I knew I was voting for nothing, I would not have voted. I was expecting the best type of life, but now it is worse.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 5-7.***

As this woman suggests, the real risk facing South Africa's new political system is a crisis of cynicism, not a crisis of expectations. While there is considerable hope about the new government among our participants, there is also widespread demand for faster, tangible social and economic change, though not necessarily radical change. The most important implication for government is that it needs to try to ensure that modest, achievable and incremental change is felt as widely as possible. Another is that it needs to think carefully about what balance to strike between popular participation and payment for services in its development planning. If this does not happen, South Africa risks the fate of other new democracies which have not delivered the goods, where cynicism has soared and participation plummeted.[12] The question, however, is not one of meeting specific numerical targets, but rather of spreading step-by-step progress on a large scale.

The desire for change is the pivot around which African views of South African government and society turn. Those satisfied with the way things are going feel that way because they perceive changes. Those positive towards the government are so because they expect it will bring changes. Discontent with the new regime, thus far limited primarily to the most politicised in town and the most deprived in the country, is also expressed in terms of lack of change.

> 'I have not seen any change. Instead, I see more suffering because people are homeless, unemployed and apartheid is still rife. I have seen no change.' – *Woman living on East Rand, unionised blue-collar worker, 18-24, std 5-7.*

> 'My observation is that only the faces have changed. They promised to build houses before they were voted into parliament, and forgot about them. All the time it appeared they had all the money yet they forget to come back to us to explain why they claim the government has

[12] **Sharply declining percentage polls in Eastern European elections are one example.**

> no funds. Instead, they are enjoying the privileges of travelling overseas and living in luxury.' – *Man living in Soweto, unionised blue-collar worker, over 35, std 8-10.*
>
> 'As you see us here, we have the same problems [as before the elections]. Nothing better comes our way; no changes seem to be coming.' – *Woman living in Taung, over 35, std 4 or less.*

If the desire for change is taken together with the limitations under which the government is operating, in policy terms this suggests the need to spread small changes as widely as possible, rather than to undertake a few big projects. The focus group members are aware of the constraints facing the government, and pragmatically prefer measures where fewer benefits are equitably shared to those where a few gain 'proper' standards. This argues for measures such as the current incremental reform of health care, which has already received wide and favourable notice from the public. Similarly arguments could be made in favour of the incremental policies that have been elaborated regarding housing and the establishment of free and universal education, and the experimental approach under way to land reform – or, indeed, to modest and mundane attempts to ensure more efficient delivery of urban services such as refuse removal. To maintain public support, more people need to feel the results of change in their own living conditions.

In view of the nature of public demands on the major policy issues revealed in the focus groups, meeting the expectations of the African majority may well prove far more achievable than is generally realised. Rather than expecting row upon row of suburban-style brick homes, the participants want a variety of housing options to fit their wallets and lifestyles. Far from demanding a Model C school for all or the instant abolition of school fees, the group members want to see discipline restored in African schools, and facilities and instruction improved. Instead of demanding vast tracts of rural land which would require enormous expenditure or social dislocation to obtain, the rural Africans in the study prioritise boreholes, pipes, and spigots for a steady supply of clean water. In other words, the sorts of changes sought by the public are far more attainable than either the conventional wisdom of the new pessimists or the exaggerated claims of the populists would lead one to believe.

Another issue the findings point to is the respective roles of popular participation, individual or collective initiative, and wage employment in reconstruction activity. Clearly, there is considerably energy and interest waiting to be tapped in implementing the incremental delivery of housing, water supply, and the like on a large scale. The cost per unit built in this fashion is much lower, and many more people can be reached, but in a more rudimentary fashion than when trained people are employed to do the work – moreover, the permanent job creation effects of policies oriented towards self-help are obviously less.

The difficulty of finding appropriate forms of interest representation, both to permit proper consultation of all those affected in planning development projects and to unlock popular energies in their implementation, is another issue to which the group findings point. While there is enthusiasm for a participatory approach to development, there are varying degrees of dissensus over the roles groups such as unions and civics should play. Rural areas have a particular problem in the lack of autonomous representatives of civil society. These issues

have not yet been fully thought through, and deserve more consideration in development planning.

Although the question of payment for services is not the main focus of this study, there is also a need to look more fully into the issues raised by the findings on individual and collective responsibility in ending the rent boycotts. The group discussions suggested that many of those who support the boycotts may be fairly impervious to the sorts of collective measures on which government has focused to date in its efforts to encourage payment. Instead, many group members stressed the need for individual sanctions and incentives to encourage compliance. This may have important implications, not just for housing but for other areas of infrastructural development as well, and merits further examination.

Moreover, if the wide media penetration of political thinking among group members in both urban and rural areas revealed in the group discussions is striking, so is the limited degree to which this has been used to communicate some key policies of the new government. The group transcripts are littered with references to the mass media, particularly radio and TV. There is also a high degree of awareness of concrete policy changes that have already touched people's lives, such as the new health care and school feeding schemes. However, the global nature of the government's development approach, the RDP, has not been successfully communicated, even in general or lay terms. Nor have some of the key policy debates and initiatives, such as those around the new housing subsidy scheme, registered in the consciousness of the group members. Given the importance of expectations in maintaining support for the government at present, efforts to build public awareness of these initiatives can only help to build confidence in the new regime.

In the end, however, what will determine whether South Africa's new democracy is viewed as successful is not whether it achieves the specific goals it has set for itself, but whether limited but tangible progress occurs over a broad front. When they speak of how they would assess the government, the Africans in the groups speak not of the precise figures of the RDP, but of seeing the new government make a difference.

> 'At least, if they've built half the number of houses they are presently promising, we will bear with them.' – *Woman squatting on East Rand, over 35, std 4 or less.*

> 'We will give it, say, three years to see progress. After this period, we will be able to see whether they've delivered.' – *Man living in Taung, 18-24, std 5-7.*

If their expectations are disappointed and their patience exhausted, the experience of other new democracies, as well as some of the focus group discussions, suggests the likeliest results

are depoliticisation, cynicism, and anomie. Rather than rebellion, a turning away from politics is likely, marked by declining electoral participation, a less vigorous political system, and an increase in disorganised social protest, crime and violence. Ultimately, the test the new government is likely to face in the public's mind will be a paraphrase of the one proposed by an American presidential candidate a few years back: 'Are you better off than you were at the last election?'

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

This study presents the results of 13 focus groups of Africans conducted, in vernacular languages, for CPS by Markinor between 11 and 26 November 1994. The objective was to find out what 'average' Africans – those typically thought of as 'the masses' – feel about the changes since the April elections and what they want and expect over the next five years. The study includes eight urban groups in Gauteng province (composed of residents of Soweto and the East Rand), and five rural groups in Northwest province (Taung) and the Northern Transvaal (Sekhukuniland). These are, respectively, the country's largest and richest urban area, a depressed area of rural homesteads in the former homeland of Bophuthatswana, and a more dynamic homestead area in the former Lebowa.

The research includes groups which were homogeneous on the basis of:

- gender
- age (8–24, 25–34, 35–64)
- education (under std 4, std 5–7, std 8–10)
- employment (unemployed/informal, formal blue collar)
- union membership
- residential area (squatters, backyard shacks, formal township houses)

Elites (white-collar workers, the post-secondary educated, trade union shop stewards) are deliberately excluded from the research. These are fairly small minorities whose views are widely reported in the media, but not necessarily representative of the majority of Africans. Those too young to vote (under 18) and too old to be classified as part of the active population (over 65) are also excluded.

Focus group work is a technique used, in South Africa and internationally, in social, political, and market research to understand the attitudes and opinions of particular subgroups of the population. A focus group is a small group (6–10 people) who talk about the issues listed in a questionnaire or 'discussion guide.' The group is homogeneous in social terms: for example, African men, 18–24, with std 8–10 education. The discussion is conducted in the group members' own language, and led by a trained moderator from a market research firm with a similar social background. The discussions are recorded, translated and transcribed, and analysed. The results are qualitative, not quantitative; that is, words, feelings and ideas rather than numbers, as in a poll.

Groups are useful for teasing out feelings in depth. This is particularly true for those whose members might be reluctant to express their views to a survey interviewer or other stranger, because the group's homogeneity helps to make members feel comfortable. Groups can also highlight the similarities and differences between the views of different categories of people (young and old, men and women, etc), though they cannot do so with the same precision as a poll.

Unlike a survey, whose claim to reliability is based on the representativeness of its sample, focus group results are useful because they reflect the views of typical individuals in specific social groups. The members are chosen by the market research firm conducting the groups as if it was conducting a survey to ensure there is no bias in the selection process, but they are picked on the basis of the specified group criteria (age, education, etc). The number of people who participate in a focus group project is much smaller than those touched by a survey, but the results are meaningful because they offer far more detail and nuance on the views of average members of particular groups of interest than a poll might.

Focus group results cannot be proportionately linked to the national population, as survey results can, but they do offer a general impression of the attitudes of the populace as a whole and of particular subgroups within it. When opinion is strong in most or all groups on a particular viewpoint, or when certain groups (male and female, for instance) have sharply opposing standpoints, these are likely to represent real differences within the broader population. The point of the different selection criteria is to ensure that the groups differ in terms of characteristics, such as gender, age, education and the like, which may prove related to differences in opinion, as well as to give group members the feeling that they are surrounded by people like themselves.

A word is also in order about the representativeness of groups conducted in just three areas in terms of the whole country. Previous survey and focus group work countrywide has shown that on national issues (as opposed to regional or local ones) the views of the African populations in different cities and regions are fairly similar. Thus the urban groups drawn from parts of Gauteng, the country's largest urban centre, are likely to point to feelings and attitudes prevalent in other cities as well. Likewise, the rural groups conducted in the Northwest and Northern Transvaal are likely to illustrate differences between rural moods and concerns and those of the urban areas, and offer some sense of thinking in the former homelands that house half the country's African population. Obviously, however, precise numerical results on the questions raised here could only be obtained by means of large-scale survey research.

GROUPS CONDUCTED FOR THIS STUDY

Urban groups

1. Women, 25-34, housewife/informally employed, Soweto township house, std 5-7.
2. Men, 18-24, unemployed/informally employed, Soweto township house, std 8-10.
3. Men, 35-64, formally employed/blue collar, unionised, Soweto township house, Std 8-10.
4. Men, 25-34 years, unemployed/informally employed, Soweto township backyard shack, Std 4 or less.
5. Women, 35-64 years, unemployed/informally employed, East Rand squatter shack.
6. Men, 18-24, formally employed/blue collar, non-union, Soweto squatter shack.
7. Women, 18-24, formally employed/blue collar, unionised, East Rand township house, Std 5-7.
8. Men, 25-34, formally employed/blue collar, non-union, East Rand squatter shack, Std 5-7.

Rural groups

9. Men, 18-24 years, Taung, North West/Ex-Bophuthatswana, homestead, std 5-7.
10. Women, 35-64 years, Taung, North West/Ex-Bophuthatswana, homestead, std 4 or less.
11. Women, 25-34 years, Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal/Ex-Lebowa, homestead, std 5-7.
12. Men, 35-64 years, Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal/Ex-Lebowa, homestead, std 4 or less.
13. Women, 18-24 years, Sekhukuniland, Northern Transvaal/Ex-Lebowa, homestead, std 4 or less.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Total time: 2 hours 15 minutes

Introductions [5 minutes] Starting time 0:00

Section I: Mood [15 minutes] 0:05

1. Generally speaking, do you think that things in South Africa today are moving in the right direction, or moving in the wrong direction? [Probe for reasons in each direction]

Section II: Wants and expectations [20 minutes] 0:20

2. What do you think is the most important problem for the new government in South Africa to deal with?

   [Write responses on flip chart. If you get less than three, ask, 'Are there any other problems?' until you have three. Let the group briefly discuss which is the most important, and then vote on which is most, second-most and third-most important.]

3. For each of the three most important problems, *only* ask: Realistically, do you expect that government will do much about this problem in the next five years? And what do you think will get in the way of government doing something about it?

Section III: Perceptions of change [25 minutes] 0:40

4. People say we are now living in a new South Africa. What do you think is changing for the good?

   [If not mentioned, probe for:

   more freedom

   personal dignity

   power to decide or change things

   level of political violence]

   [If health care is not mentioned, add: Some people in other groups have mentioned that government has started offering free health care in state hospitals for children and pregnant women. Do you know anyone who's used this as a result?]

5. And what's changing for the worse?

   [If not mentioned, probe for: crime]

6. And what hasn't changed at all?

   [If not mentioned, probe for:

   unemployment/wages

   attitudes of white people/racism]

Section IV: Satisfaction with government [5 minutes] 1:05

7. How good or bad a job do you think the national government has been doing since the election in April?

Section V: Workers, RDP and tripartism [20 minutes] 1:10

8. Urban groups only (rural groups skip this item)

   There have been a lot of strikes lately. What do you think about that?

   (If not mentioned, probe for: are they justified?

   Will they make business decide not to build more factories here?)

9. Some people have been talking about something called the Reconstruction and Development Programme, or RDP. Have you heard anything about it?

   If so: Is there anything good or bad in it, to you?

   If not: What does it sound like it is, and does it sound like a good idea to you?

10. The RDP is the new government's plan to rebuild South Africa's economy. One of the things it says is that business, trade unions, and government should make decisions about economic issues together. What do you think of this, and why?

    Probe: Should civics be included?

    [Unionised groups: if not mentioned, probe: Some people say workers will be sold out if union leaders co-operate with bosses and government. What do you think?]

Section VI: Tradeoffs [25 minutes] 1:30

11. Now I'd like to ask your opinions on some of the choices facing South Africa today. Let's start with jobs and wages. (Show chart with statements.) Some people say,

'Workers should try to get the highest wages they can, based on their skills and experience.' Others say, 'Workers should be willing to accept lower increases so that more people can get work.' What do you think?

12. Now let's talk about schools.

    a) What concerns you about the schools here? Or are you happy with them?

    b) The government says it doesn't have enough money to give free schools to all children now, as well as to meet all the country's other needs. Do you believe that?

    c) (Show next chart.) Suppose it turns out there isn't enough money for free schools for everyone. Then which would you prefer: 'A system where schools are free, but not everyone can attend,' or 'A system open to all children, but where parents have to pay fees for their kids?'

13. Now let's talk about the army. (Show next chart.) Some people say, 'South Africa needs a big army. It needs to defend itself and to give places to soldiers from the old army, the homelands, and the liberation movements.' Other people say, 'South Africa has no enemies now. We should take a lot of money away from the army and spend it on homes, schools and hospitals.' What do you think?

URBAN GROUPS ONLY

Section VII: Housing [20 minutes] 1:55

14. Now let's talk about housing. How do you think people who need new homes should get them?

    (Probe: Should it be the government, or should people build their own?

    Should they pay for and own their houses, or get them for free and rent them?)

15 a) Do you think the government has enough money to give a good brick house to everyone now and meet all the other needs?

    b) (Show next chart.) Suppose the government doesn't have enough money to do that. Then which would you rather government did: 'Give everyone enough money to get land or build part of a house,' or 'Give some people money for brick houses and tell the rest to wait five or 10 years.'

16. Many people in the townships are not paying the rents and service charges for their houses. How do you feel about this?

    (If not mentioned, probe: why is this?

    Is it justified?)

17. Let's pretend this group is the government's Housing Commission. Suppose you had to decide: how will we get people to pay for rents and services. What would you advise?

    (Probe the following, if not spontaneously raised:

    A publicity campaign with popular leaders urging people to pay;

    Government cutting off money to an area to build houses and improvements if most people there don't pay;

    The local civic association visiting people to tell them to pay.)

18. Squatter/backyard shack groups: Hand out card, ask each to write down how soon they personally expect their housing to improve. Then go round the table and ask people their answers and why they think that.

RURAL GROUPS ONLY

Section VII: Land and water [20 minutes] 1:55

14. Talk to me about the question of land. Is getting more land very important to like you? If so, what do you need it for?

15. a) Suppose government says it could give you more land to farm and live on – but only if it gives you less of something else, like jobs, or schools, or water. Would you believe this?

    b) Is getting more land more important to you than getting more jobs for people from this area?

    c) Is it more important than more schools?

    d) Is it more important than more piped water?

16. What should be done about the land problem?

    (f not mentioned, probe: Should government just take away land white farmers are farming without paying anything, and give it to blacks?)

17. Let's talk about the water in this area.

    a) Does your family have enough water, and how good is it?

    b) Is anything happening to improve the water supply?

    c) Do you think most people in the community would be willing to help dig and lay pipes themselves to provide it?

18. If someone wants to find out what the people in your area want, who should they talk to?