James Mason Lindgren
Marshalltown High School
Marshalltown, IA
South Africa, Factor 17

The Real South Africa in the Spotlight

Few look beyond the national media spotlight. The World Cup is no exception to this claim. When peoples from all across the world tuned in to see countries battle it out for soccer prestige in the summer of 2010, international acclaim arrived for South Africa. People only knew South Africa for their hosting of the World Cup, while the world was blind to the abominations in the streets. The real country was littered with crime and unruly outlaws. The real South Africa is filled with starving citizens and parent-deprived children. The real South Africa has an adult prevalence of HIV/AIDS at 18.1%—the fourth highest rate in the world (The CIA World Factbook). The world has become too focused on the problems in the middle east or Darfur to see the abominations occurring behind the World Cup. South Africa in the spotlight is deceiving. It is about time to see the real South Africa. The problem is multi-fold; therefore, the solutions must be just as complex.

The family unit in South Africa is a complicated cultural mix. In a population of approximately forty-nine million people, 61% of the population lives in the urban areas of South Africa (USAID). The rate of urbanization is seeing no relief either—at 1.6% growth per year (The CIA Factbook). African countries suffering with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, like South Africa, will experience shifting population dynamics. These shifting dynamics will have substantial implications for family structure and the place of the elderly in the household. The role of grandparents as primary caregivers of children may be more pronounced in the future. In South Africa, more than the half of the people aged 80 or more are still heading the household were they reside. The typical family in South Africa is often divided. Only 25.1% of South Africans are actually married and another 7% live together. Only 43% of South African live in a nuclear family setting compared to currently in the United States 64% live in a nuclear household (Noumissi and Zuberi).

The diet of South Africans consists of the traditionally simple fare of starches and meats characteristic of a farming and frontier society. Early Afrikaner pioneer farmers sometimes survived entirely on meat when conditions for trade of cereals were not favorable. A specialized cuisine exists only in the Cape, with its blend of Dutch, English, and Southeast Asian cooking. Food plays a central role in the family and community life of all groups (Coplan).

The condition of healthcare in South Africa surprisingly exceeds their neighbors. A high mortality rate causes the loss of adults and children; therefore fortunately, primary healthcare is free for pregnant women and children under the age of six (Coplan). But often it seems that the healthcare is not enough considering 18.1% of adults are currently living with HIV/AIDS (The CIA World Factbook).The latest UN figures estimate that one in 250 women dies during pregnancy or childbirth. HIV/AIDS-related diseases account for 23% of all maternal deaths, followed by complications of pregnancy-related hypertension. Pregnant women are dying despite high coverage of antenatal care and the fact that 95% of women give birth in hospitals and other medical facilities. Around 38% of maternal deaths could be avoided by providing better health services (UNICEF).

Education is another aspect of the South African daily urban life that is unique in its own. The poorest children are exempt from paying school fees, a policy that aims to increase enrollment and retention of children who would otherwise be destined for a bleak future. The government spends huge resources on the education sector – around 5.4% of its gross domestic product in 2008-09 (The CIA World Factbook). However, this significant level of investment is not matched by results. Students' academic achievements

are poor and South Africa consistently scores low on international literacy, reading, and numeracy assessments (USAID).

Employment in urban South Africa is hard to come by with unemployment lurking at 24%. Industry is a major supplier of urban jobs. Industry includes mining (world's largest producer of platinum, gold, chromium), automobile assembly, metalworking, machinery, textiles, iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizer, foodstuffs, commercial ship repair. Unfortunately again, industry's growth rate is 7.2% per year (The CIA World Factbook). This means urban jobs are continuing to drop off. In 2000, the percentage of South Africans under the poverty line was at 50% due to unemployment rates. Because of the level of citizens in poverty, the access to food and nourishment has become a critical issue, like any modern civilization. Approximately one in every four urban residents in South Africa reported that they do not have enough food in their household. The problem in South Africa is not where the food is , but rather how the citizens afford the costs (Davids).

In South Africa there are a few common barriers preventing social improvement. Education is a major barrier in any society. The availability of good education is too low; without a strong eduction system, social mobility becomes impossible. Even in advanced societies, social mobility is extreme difficult due mainly to the lack of sufficient education in certain society groups. With more education, the social mobility of South Africa's population would increase and livelihood would increase. As Maslow's hierarchy shows, physiological needs are essential to any growth. So in South Africa, self improvement is almost impossible because basic needs are not being satisfied ("Changing Minds"). In addition to this, post-apartheid racism is a major barrier to growth and improvement. Black groups are consistently discriminated again in the daily world in South Africa. Steps to betterment are blocked of because of racist bias (CIA World Factbook). Barriers to social improvement must be torn down to a lot for progress.

One of the major limiting factors to food availability is demand. This simple economic philosophy defines the root issue behind food limitation. If there is x amount of food available in South Africa through farming and international imports, then x food can provide basic nutrition for y people. Currently in South Africa due to urbanization and over-population, x amount of food is being unequally distributed to over 2y people. The supply of food is not sufficient for the population, including the "typical" family. In South Africa today, urbanization and over-population is at critical mass. It is possible that levels could deepen and get worse, but current levels should raise alarm. The impacts of the environment are also deepening. Urban-sprawl is a new issue in South Africa. New housing and businesses are sprouting up in the outskirts of towns without proper environmental consideration. Waterways are being polluted by runoff, and water quality is quickly deteriorating to detrimental levels. In fact, hurting disadvantaged populations even more, the cost of water is multiplying due to national privatization. Large amounts of humanitarian relief comes via the United States based World Bank. Funds from the bank are distributed if and only if certain requirements are satisfied. One contract the government of South Africa chose to agree to was the privatization of water supplies in exchange for millions of dollar in new trade and low-interest loans—a deal no one could turn down. The World Bank would finance the conversion to private water sources and give the government additional funding for any other actions they desire. This seems to be a no brainer to a government officials. They save money on water supplying, and they received more money with the contract to do with as they wish. The problem they do not initially see is the impact the new water companies will have on South Africans. These are businesses with two basic goals: profits and more profits. These greedy companies would set up local meters to measure and limit local withdrawal. A few years after the privatization of water, the companies said they had no reason to not increase costs. The cost of water increased more than threefold in the course of a few weeks. A larger slice of a South African family's budget was funneling into their water bills. Often the company would remotely shut off the supply, creating areas of third-world existence. The trends of urbanization and over-population are increasing overall. These can be measured in simple census studies. Birth and mortality rates can show the rates of over-population, and urbanization indexes show the movement to or from urban centers.

These numbers suggest that urbanization and over-population are worsening consistently at a constant rate. If the levels of population and urbanization were controlled or lowered, then more food supplies would be readily available to the people of South Africa. With less people, there would be more food available per person.

Major issues such as climate change, water scarcity, energy demand, and pollution can and will affect the food supply greatly. With ever increasing global temperatures, only certain species of crops will be able to withstand subtle and extreme climate variation. This will only further injure the population of South Africa, because not only will the population still be increasing, but the food supply will begin to wane—leaving more and more people starving and bringing down the quality of life. In confronting climate change, the needs of the "typical" South African should be valued highly. Without these people, the government can not improve in any sector—private or public. When determining any plan of action, the average South African's needs should be weighed in the decision. Also, water scarcity is just as frightening as lurking global climate change. Water scarcity will not only deplete South Africans of a basic need of life, but also food yields will be diminished without an adequate supply of fresh water. As the amount of water available is decreasing and the demand remains the same, following the economic philosophy of supply and demand, the price of water to South Africans will sharply increase. This will make the access to water limited even further. In the confrontation with a water shortage, any issues or needs the farmers—the primary supplier of food to the urban populations—have should be valued highly. Without supplies of food to urban areas, life will not be sustainable. As the demand of energy is positively correlating with high and increasing population rates, prices will continue to increase and availability will severely wane—leaving thousands without power. Pollution will also affect the population of South Africa heavily. Both water and air pollution will become a major issue in years to come and without comprehensive solutions the value of land and life will decrease. All stakeholders should be considered in the tackling of these aggressive issues.

To solve the growing over-population and urbanization crisis, a multi-pronged approach is critical and essential. The first aspect to be tackled is over-population. The first prong in the solution is the distribution of birth control materials. Numerous types of birth control will be made available to the citizens of South Africa: condoms, pills, and abstinence programs will be the cornerstone. Cheap or reduced-cost birth control options must be made available to decease the birthrate and spread of STDs. These products will be made available to all people in South Africa. Education is the second prong in this solution, because any solution is obsolete without complementary education programs. Implementation and distribution will be completely ineffective if the public is not educated about the plans and products. PreK-12 education must be more adequately funded with additional aggressive and appropriate sexual education programs. In the new school systems, students will be required to undergo this aggressive program to teach them the impacts that sex can have on their life and the life of their children. Students will be taught and shown ways to decrease the spread of STDs through the use of effective birth control and safe-sex practices. In addition, the funding of the overall education will be increased. The plan will also create a relations task force with the sole purpose to reach to certain groups. They will negotiate with church-based schools to implement a specifically negotiated and integrated plan. This new plan will achieve two things, better education about STDs and safe-sex practices and overall better-rounded education. This rounded education system will open up opportunities to the new generations of South Africa to show them that they can change the current trends and overcome the status quo. Funding will be addressed in the next section. Even though many of the problems of urbanization are taken care of with proposed over-population solutions, another prong must be introduced in the second aspect, urbanization. Urbanization causes a large decrease in the availability of food and the quality of living. To offset the 1.4% rate of urbanization, a comprehensive educational outreach will be implemented specifically to show the potential movers the negative impacts of crowed urban life. Pamphlets and town-hall meetings will be distributed and held to convince many rural dwellers to stay in their locations. The clear message

will portray the feeling that the jobs of rural dwellers are essential to continuance of South Africa as well as explain the negatives of current urban dwellings.

In a solution it is important to acknowledge and discuss the funding and roles involved, because the government of South Africa is having its own financial hardships due to the downturn of global trade markets. Funding for these programs would come though humanitarian donation and education grants. These programs would rely heavily on the generous philanthropic tendencies of the wealthy world and the availability of education grants. The United Nations would be asked to oversee and help fund these overhaul programs in South Africa. The local urban communities would be used to distribute the given supplies and work beside international volunteers. The communities' interests would be held extremely high throughout this process to make sure these programs are not hurting more than helping. The plan cannot cause an sort of harm or burden to the nation of South Africa. This solution would ask the federal government to allow international experts to be the executives of these programs until local and national officials are educated enough to handle the programs. They would be asked to stand by and learn. National and international companies would be asked to help the cause by donation resources, but if they choose to not participate then the proposed program is not responsible for any impacts that they experience. They are not a required participant but their participation is encouraged. The World Bank will be used solely as financial resource if the funds are needed. The World Bank would be used solely as a fall back if philanthropic donations are insufficient. All other organizations will be welcomed into this program in any respected area.

In conclusion, the food problems of South Africa lurk behind urbanization and over-population. It is important to understand how these problems are occurring across the World, and to realize that they can be solved. These problems cannot be solved by just one person. It takes a world to solve these complicated issues. South Africa's true problems may have been masked by the World Cup hype, but now the cloak has been removed. Solutions are not easy to come by. The convoluted problems of over-population and inadequate food availability seem to never end, but with collective minds and research the problems can be solved. The new plan of action to correct the problems in South Africa is birth control distribution, a complementary education programs, and an educating outreach program. This plan of action will decrease urban population by curbing urbanization rates and restore South Africa to a healthy nation for years to come. Problems may continue and persist, but as long as humans can stand united behind this cause, then any obstacle can be triumphed.

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