

# Poverty and Inequality Initiative

## Research Report 2015

**Pro Vice-Chancellor: Professor Murray Leibbrandt**

## Initiative Profile

At UCT, researchers across a wide variety of academic disciplines – from engineers, environmental scientists to economists, geographical scientists to sociologists, occupational therapists to political scientists – have a long history of documenting, analysing and tracking poverty and inequality.

Launched late in 2013 as the fourth of the Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Initiatives, the Poverty and Inequality Initiative (PII) was established to raise the profile of this research, strengthen it and encourage a co-ordinated, coherent response across the university to these enduring challenges, partnering with key stakeholders from government and civil society to deepen our impact. The PII convenes a similar set of stakeholders in a national inquiry that seeks to share information and develop strategies to tackle the twin challenges of poverty and inequality.

At UCT, the PII has initiated inter-disciplinary research and collaboration focused on two cross-cutting themes: youth development and social cohesion. The focus on youth development was launched at a multi-disciplinary colloquium on 'Youth in South Africa: Uncertain Transitions in a Context of Deprivation' in September 2014. A follow-up workshop on the youth unemployment took place at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in February 2015, which resulted in a now ongoing, multi-disciplinary collaboration between UCT and UJ to systematically map the existing research, policies and interventions regarding Youth Unemployment. The work is supported by the National Treasury, the Jobs Fund and the Research Project on Employment, Income Distribution and Inclusive Growth (REDI3x3). Further in February 2015, the PII worked with the Human Sciences Research Council to convene a national dialogue on the draft National Youth Policy 2014 – 2019. Consolidated comments were submitted to government and the work has been the basis for continued engagements with the Youth Desk within the Presidency. Also in 2015, the PII partnered with

the Children's Institute to produce the first-ever youth-focused edition of the annual South African Child Gauge®, which aims to provide an overview of the status of older children and youth and to identify evidence-based programmes to break the cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty. The PII is furthermore partnering with the Western Cape Provincial Government, the City of Cape Town and Statistics South Africa on a pioneering project to develop indicators that can track youth well-being at a local level and to provide a strong evidence base to inform policies and interventions aimed at young people. A report on multidimensional poverty among young people in South Africa will be released in the second half of 2016 and an interactive map will be designed to make the ward-level data publically available. Finally, the PII partners with the DG Murray Trust, Ikamva Youth and the Children's Institute to create an online information portal that aims to provide young people with the information and support they need to successfully pass through the education system and into the labour market. A series of Research and Policy Dialogues on issues facing young people will continue to run alongside the research programme.

In respect of Social Cohesion, a series of national and local workshops were convened during 2014/15 to surface the key gaps in this area, and to initiate collaborative research engagements. The key themes to emerge through this process were (a) The measurement and definition of social cohesion; (b) the role of corporates in promoting social cohesion; (c) Economic welfare and social cohesion as substitutes or complements; (d) Human capital and social cohesion; and (e) Evidence on policies and programmes that support social cohesion.

Subsequent roundtable engagements organized according to theme have provided the opportunity for researchers and practitioners to engage with one another on these ideas, with a view to producing collaborative research papers and policy briefs. A key focus area has been the construction of a social cohesion index for South Africa. The impetus for this work arises from a recognition that until social cohesion is quantified in some tractable way, it is very difficult to assess whether or not policy initiatives aimed at improving social cohesion have yielded any success or not. This work has incorporated reflections on the philosophical foundations of such an index to inform the quantitative work that conceptualizes social cohesion as comprising three pillars: trust (both inter-personal and institutional), identity (sense of belonging) and economic equality (relative economic standing). Using both Afrobarometer data and NIDS data, the team has constructed a social cohesion index for South Africa and mapped it at the provincial level. This work will

continue in collaboration with colleagues in France and Paris, interested in similar issues, with next steps including the use of economic experiments to validate the index, as well as use of the index to predict outcomes such as poverty rates, GDP growth rates, and incidence of violence and crime over time.

The PII runs a regular monthly seminar programme, and convenes topical workshops and colloquia to share knowledge and stimulate debate. Some of these seminars have focussed on curriculum reforms and have led to engagements over interdisciplinary graduate degrees in the area.

## Initiative Statistics

### Permanent and Long-Term Contract Staff

Professor	2
Senior Researchers	1
Research Officers	1
Administrative and Clerical Staff	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

### Honorary Staff

Distinguished Visitors	1
------------------------	---

## Research Fields and Staff

### Permanent Staff

#### PROFESSOR MURRAY LEIBBRANDT

Pro Vice Chancellor for Poverty and Inequality, Professor in School of Economics, Director SALDRU:  
Labour; rural development; income distribution and poverty; survey econometrics

### Research Associates

#### PROFESSOR JUSTINE BURNS

Poverty and Inequality Initiative, Professor, School of Economics:  
Social cohesion; microeconomics; labour; poverty and income distribution; rural development; institutional economics

#### DR ARIANE DE LANNOY

Senior Researcher, Poverty and Inequality Initiative, Lecturer, Sociology Department:  
Youth; poverty and inequality; transformation; urban studies; urban sociology

#### EMILY FRAME

Research Officer, Poverty and Inequality Initiative:  
Poverty; cash transfers; youth well-being indicators

### Distinguished Visitors

#### PROFESSOR HIROYUKI HINO

Visiting Professor, Kobe University, Japan  
Social cohesion; labour economics; African development

## Contact Details

Postal Address: Poverty and Inequality Initiative, SALDRU, University of Cape Town, Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701  
Telephone: +27 21 650 5715  
Fax: +27 21 650 5715  
Email: [Haajirah.Esau@uct.ac.za](mailto:Haajirah.Esau@uct.ac.za)  
Website: <http://www.povertyandinequality.uct.ac.za/>