



Assessing the need for a poverty information service

Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development

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1 Background to the brief

The Programme for Support to Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD) is a partnership between the Presidency, Republic of South Africa, and the European Union. It aims to improve evidence-based policy making in South Africa. To date its focus has been on building capacity around the understanding of poverty and inequality. In the process a challenge has been identified as to where to find reliable and up to date information around poverty and inequality in South Africa. PSPPD has created some information resources on its website, but since the demise of the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) there has been no clear point of contact and source of information in South Africa around poverty and inequality. In Phase 2 of PSPPD programme consideration is being given to how PSPPD could support the establishment or resuscitation of such a service.

This assignment is to undertake a pre-feasibility study for a poverty information service, to identify what information people want and to set out some options for such a service. The assignment has involved:

- Design and testing of a PDF survey form with checkbox selection and text fields as the basic instrument for surveying needs and the use of current poverty information sources
- Purposive selection of organisations to receive the survey form
- Distribution of auto return survey forms, together with follow ups and reminders
- Processing the data from the returned forms and analysing the results
- Conducting selected supplementary telephonic interviews with stakeholders in and outside government on their information needs around poverty and inequality, and the forms of support and functionality that they would value (including on-line collaboration, events, publications, open data etc).
- Identification of current local and international providers of information and research reports on poverty and inequality
- Conducting a rapid scan of what full text information is currently available either through restricted access or open sources.
- Researching possible options for the establishment of such a service which includes
 - supporting an existing service in South Africa to develop an information portal
 - supporting an existing international service as ELDIS to expand its offering on South Africa,
 - the PSPPD establishing such a service itself (possibly in partnership with others),
 - the PSPPD helping to assist partners to create a new service.

2 Methodology

The principal means of surveying needs has been through the design of an email auto return survey form and its distribution to a wide range of government and non government actors active in the poverty arena. This has been followed up with short telephonic interviews with key informants including former staff from SARPN and selected current providers of poverty information via local websites. Tight time frames have meant that the primary assessment of needs has been through the survey with limited follow up of respondents.

2.1 Email auto return survey.

The questionnaire contained 10 questions:

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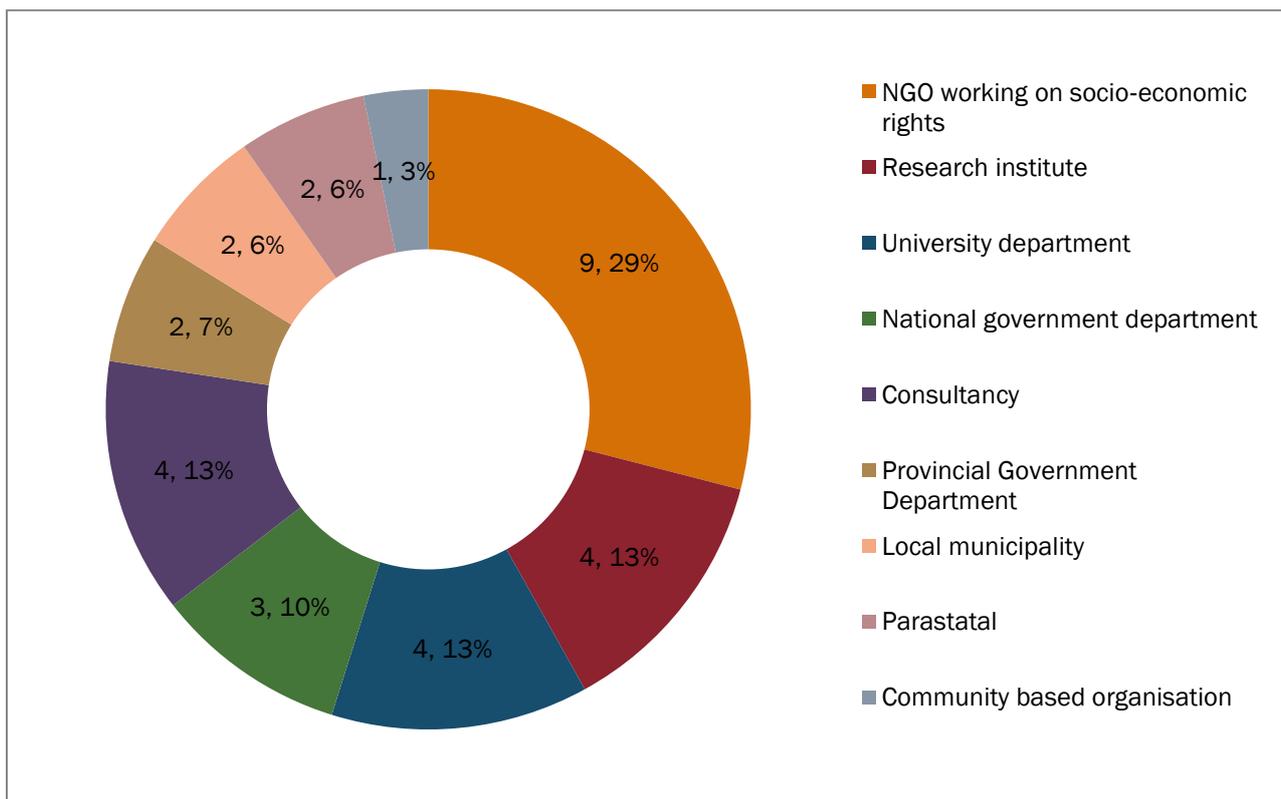
- Question 1 set out to identify the different categories of responding organisations.
- Question 2 establishes the relationship of the polled organisations to poverty research.
- Question 3 examines the different ways in which organisations access poverty research currently.
- Question 4 polls organisations on their use of poverty research on selected websites.
- Question 5 identifies additional sources of poverty research not listed in Question 4.
- Question 6 polls organisations on their assessment of the need for a poverty information service.
- Question 7 polls organisations on the preferred scope of the poverty information service.
- Question 8 explore preferences for different types of data to be provided by the service.
- Question 9 examines preferences on how access to data should be facilitated.
- Question 10 polls organisations on the different content categories which should be included in the data repository.

See Annex 1 for the listing of the responding organisations

See Annex 2 for a copy of the questionnaire

3 Survey results

The survey results below are based on 31 surveys completed and returned by the due date. The chart below highlights the spread of organisations polled.



3.1 Question 1: Which category best describes your organisation?

NGO working on socio-economic rights	9	32%
Research institute	4	14%
University department	4	14%
National government department	3	11%

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Consultancy	4	14%
Provincial Government Department	2	7%
Local municipality	2	7%
Community based organisation	1	4%
Parastatal	2	7%
Metro	0	0%
District Municipality	0	0%
Trade Union	0	0%
	31	

As can be seen from the table and chart above the largest grouping of respondents was from NGOs - both urban and rural working on socio-economic rights. An equivalent number of respondents were polled from different spheres of government and parastatals. Independent research institutes and university departments were not far behind while consultancies and CBOs made up a minority of the sample.

3.2 Question 2: Which statement/s best describes your relationship to poverty research?

We carry out research	16	57%
We use research for programme planning	13	46%
We analyse data	13	46%
We publish research	10	36%
We interpret research findings to make and review policy	11	39%
We use research for impact monitoring	8	29%
We commission research	8	29%
We disseminate research findings to others	8	29%
We make use of research to expand our knowledge	8	29%
Other	2	7%

More than half of those polled carry out research themselves while almost 50% draw on research carried out by others for programme planning. Almost 40% of organisations polled draw on research for policy development and almost 30% for impact monitoring. Only 29% report actively disseminating research findings to others.

3.3 Question 3: What are the different ways in which you find poverty research?

General internet searches	23	82%
Internet searches for full text documents	18	64%
Following up references recommended by word of mouth	18	64%
Searching references and bibliographies of published papers	16	57%
Print copies through libraries, bookshops etc	13	46%
Internet searches using Google Scholar	11	39%
Searching online subscription journals and databases	12	43%
Searching online repositories and portals	10	36%
Other	6	21%

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Following up references through social media (e.g. Twitter, Google+ or FriendFeed)	3	11%
Following up references through social bookmarking tools (e.g. Delicious, CiteULike, Connotea)	0	0%

The responses to Question 3 highlight the dominance of simple internet searches using search engines as a tool for finding research. Just over a third of those polled reported visiting online repositories and portals. This could be a reflection that currently there is no South African one stop portal for poverty research. It is also an indication that any service or portal that may be established will need a very active marketing and promotion strategy to develop a broad user base.

3.4 Question 4: Which of the following portals, websites or repositories do you visit?

PLAAS http://www.plaas.org.za/	23	82%
StatsSA http://www.statssa.gov.za/	22	79%
Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute http://www.spii.org.za/ ¹	16	57%
UN Agencies	13	46%
SARPN http://www.sarpn.org/	13	46%
National Planning Commission http://www.npconline.co.za/	12	43%
World Bank Poverty http://web.worldbank.org	12	43%
Other sites	12	43%
Eldis http://www.eldis.org/	10	36%
IDS http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/home	9	32%
NIDS http://www.nids.uct.ac.za/home/	9	32%
Chronic Poverty Research Centre http://www.chronicpoverty.org/	9	32%
International Development NGOs	8	29%
African Centre for Cities http://africancentreforcities.net/	6	21%
TIPS http://www.tips.org.za/	7	25%
CASASP http://www.casasp.ox.ac.uk/	5	18%
R4D Research for Development http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/	5	18%
Wahenga http://www.wahenga.net/	4	14%
Development Gateway http://www.developmentgateway.org/	4	14%
LSE Research online http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/	3	11%
South African University Research repositories	4	14%
Society, Work and Development Institute http://www.swopinstitute.org.za/	3	11%
ROAR – Register of Open Access Repositories http://roar.eprints.org/	2	7%
OpenDOAR http://www.opendoar.org/	0	0%

The rankings rate selected South African sites highly. The selection of PLAAS as the leading site is probably indicative both of the quality and extent of its research output and the energy with which PLAAS disseminates both its own and other research information. The high ranking given to StatsSA is to be expected, given its role. If StatsSA could redesign and create a more intuitive website it would be more likely to expand its user base beyond professional and business users. Overall there appears to be a very limited awareness of South African University Open Access Repositories and other international

¹ On the questionnaire which was distributed there was an error where the StatSA website address was given for SPII. There is a possibility that this could have influenced the selection of this as an option

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open access repositories more generally. Of the international websites and portals individual UN agencies, the World Bank and ELDIS featured most highly.

The continued high ranking given to SARPAN as a source of information is also noteworthy and is despite the fact that SARPAN has been closed for several years. The breadth and extent of data collected in the SARPAN repository gives it enduring value as a site for researchers and activists in the poverty arena.

3.5 Question 5: How else do you access poverty research?

Organisations accessing other sources	17	61%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Networks • University of KZN • Data base • Referral Studies • Books on Theory • Seminars, Conferences and Meetings follow ups • Research centre website and mailing list • Conference Papers • Policy Action Network mailing list • Academic Interest Group mailing list • Subscriptions: Journal, Other media • Google Alerts, other alerts • Circulation of Draft papers • Networks Good Governance Learning Network and the LANDfirst network • IDASA • Libraries • Urban Land Mark • Finmark Trust • FCR • DBSA • National Treasury • COGTA • Government – PGDS • IDP and LED documents of Province and local authorities • Various surveys and databases that can be linked to poverty research, e.g. Afrobarometer, household and income surveys etc • Through our day to day community work, reflecting on what we do, evaluating to levels and impact of poverty in our community and finding ways of overcoming poverty • JSTOR • Conduct local survey • Municipal reports and plans • Community engagements • Carry out own Research 		

Just over 60% of the organisations polled contributed other poverty research sources which they use. These included PA>N, the Good Governance and LandFirst Learning Networks, IDASA, DBSA, FCR, Urban LandMark, UKZN and Finmark Trust.

3.6 Question 6: Which of these statements best fits your views on the need for a poverty information service?

It could be a useful resource provided if it is well resourced and kept up to date	24	86%
It would meet an important need	5	18%
I am already overwhelmed with information	3	11%
It is unnecessary – the information is out there already	0	0%

Not a single respondent indicated that such a service was unnecessary. Although a few respondents indicated that they were already overwhelmed with information, an overwhelming majority indicated that such a service would be a useful provided it was well resourced and kept up to date. Clearly this is a key indicator of a successful poverty information service and portal

3.7 Question 7: If you see a need for a Poverty Information Service what scope would be most useful?

A one stop portal which gathers links to global poverty related sites	2	7%
A repository of research on poverty in South Africa	8	29%
A combination of the above	19	68%

An overwhelming majority seek access to a combination of South African and global poverty research which suggests the development of a more comprehensive poverty information portal and associated services.

3.8 Question 8: Which of the following data sources are important to you?

Full text resources	25	89%
Spatial information	20	71%
Primary research data	17	61%
Images	3	11%
Other	1	4%

Full text resource as well as spatial information and primary research data figure highly in respondent selections. The emphasis of spatial data and open data sets indicates an important demand by researchers and planners.

3.9 Question 9: What is your preferred delivery format?

Web based	25	89%
Print	4	14%
Non web based (e.g. CD)	4	14%
Suitable for mobile devices (e.g. phone, tablet)	2	7%

As expected web based resource access is the key delivery mode. Suitability for mobile devices was not picked up as an important issue by respondents, but given the rapidly rising numbers of smartphones in use in South Africa (already over 8 million) this is an important factor to build in to the design and delivery of any new Poverty Information Service.

3.10 Question 10: If you see a need for a Poverty Information Service which of the following content areas would be useful to you?

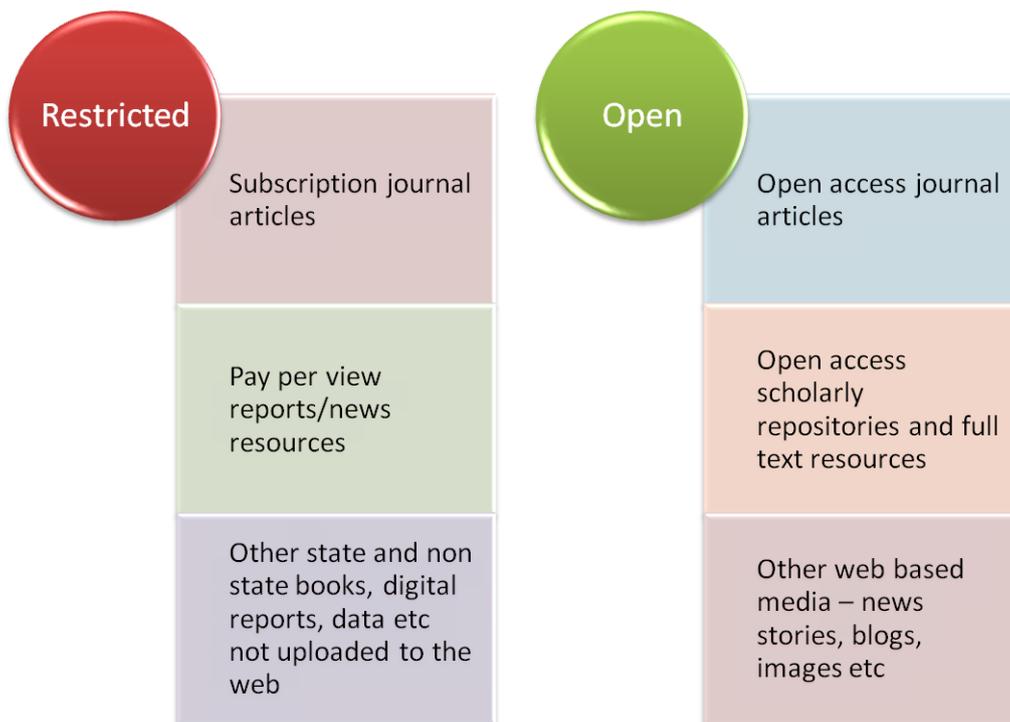
Housing	21	75%
Livelihoods and vulnerability	21	75%
Economics	21	75%
Food security	21	75%
Land reform and rural development	21	75%
Spatial planning	21	75%
Income and wages	18	64%
Inequality	18	64%
Urbanisation	17	61%
Environment	16	57%
Farm workers	16	57%
Agriculture	16	57%
Informal settlements	15	54%
Social policy	15	54%
Gender	15	54%
Social movements	14	50%
Children	14	50%
Social protection	13	46%
Education	13	46%
Population	12	43%
Health	11	39%
Aging	8	29%
Industrial policy	8	29%
Millennium Development Goals	8	29%
Disability	7	25%
Open datasets	7	25%
Other	3	11%

As can be seen from Question 10 there is a wide range of information and topic categories which the respondents scored heavily. This is indicative of the crosscutting significance of poverty across different development settings and disciplinary domains.

4 Restricted and open access resources on poverty in South Africa

Any assessment of the need for a poverty information service in South Africa has to take into account two different categories of poverty information and resources – restricted and open access.

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If one enters the search term <poverty “South Africa” filetype:pdf> into Google Scholar within two subject categories:

- business, finance and economics,
- social sciences, arts and humanities,

more than 21,000 results are recorded. These combine both restricted and open access sources of information.

The screenshot shows a Google Scholar search results page for the query "poverty South Africa filetype:pdf". The search results are displayed in a list format, showing the title of the article, the author, the year, and the source. The first result is "Poverty and inequality in South Africa" by J May, published in 1998, with a PDF link from info.gov.za. The second result is "Poverty, inequality and deprivation in South Africa: An analysis of the 1993 SALDRU survey" by S Klasen, published in 1997, with a PDF link from sarpn.org. The third result is "An overview of poverty and inequality in South Africa" by I Woolard, published in 2002, with a PDF link from sarpn.org. The fourth result is "The structure and composition of rural poverty and livelihoods in South Africa" by J May, published in 2000, with a PDF link from plaas.org.za. The fifth result is "Empty stomachs, empty pockets: poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa" by B Roberts, published in 2004, with a PDF link from plaas.org.za. The search results are sorted by relevance, and the page shows 100 results out of approximately 21,400 total results.

4.1 Restricted access resources

Much peer reviewed poverty research is published in journals for which an expensive subscription is required. An internet search turn up streams of interesting articles that provide a link to encourage one to download the PDF. But click on the link for 20 page journal article and one is invited to buy it online at the price of a medium sized textbook.

<p>The screenshot shows the SpringerLink interface for the article 'A Difficult Life: The Perceptions and Experience of Poverty in South Africa'. The article title and authors (Julian May and Andy Norton) are visible. A prominent red button labeled 'Download PDF (4.8 MB)' is located below the article title. The page also shows a 'Purchase Options' section with a 'Buy Now' button.</p>	<p>This screenshot shows the same article page but with the 'Purchase Options' section expanded. It displays the price for the 'Individual Article (Electronic Only)' as 'EUR 34.95'. A yellow banner above the price states 'Access to this Content is Restricted' and 'This content is secured to subscribers. Options for obtaining access to this content are indicated below.' The 'Buy Now' button is clearly visible.</p>
<p>Download the PDF...</p>	<p>...for €34.95 (R394.27)</p>

These resources are only available to academics and the staff of research institutes which can afford the subscription fees. Most policy makers in government departments do not have automatic access to subscription journals or to the reports which are produced by private think tanks. Staff of NGOs and small research consultancies are excluded from accessing these important but prohibitively expensive resources.

There is a third category of information where access is restricted. This includes printed books as well as myriad reports and so called 'grey literature' which are digital in format but which are not available on the internet. These include thousands of government documents which are either embargoed or simply have not been tagged with metadata and made discoverable through their archiving in a publicly accessible web based repository.

4.2 Open access poverty resources

While much knowledge still remains locked up and privatised there is a rapidly growing momentum towards open access research and knowledge dissemination (Czerniewicz, 2011). As indicated in the survey there are a number of websites which make poverty related research and information free to access and download.

Currently it remains very difficult to do an accurate comparative analysis of the relative scope and relevance of resources offered by individual sites. Initially a comparative assessment was attempted by keying in the identical search term to selected sites. However this approach is ineffective as sites do not share common standards for meta-tagging. They make use different content management systems and search engines which require searches to be formulated in particular ways. If one searches the sites below using the phrase <poverty "South Africa" filetype:pdf> as entered into Google Scholar above some of the sites provide a nil return to this query – not because they lack data but because their search engines use different conventions and search algorithms which incompatible with this way of framing the query.

The content of the sites profiled in the survey listing is briefly profiled below. These sites should be regarded as a preliminary listing which could be included as start-ups for a basic poverty information service portal.

4.2.1 Selected South African websites and repositories

The summary descriptions of the organisations and their poverty research related programmes listed alphabetically below are extracted directly from their websites and edited for brevity where necessary.

African Centre for Cities

Website: <http://africancentreforcities.net/>

The African Centre Cities (ACC) was established in response to the growing recognition world-wide of the importance of cities, and particularly cities in the developing world. In South Africa this is reflected in the increasingly urban emphasis in policy documents at both national and provincial level.

The central objective of the African Centre for Cities is to provide a base from which critique and alternatives in relation to urban issues can be launched. The aims of the Centre are to partner closely with policy-making centres in the public sector in South Africa (national, provincial, local) and to provide an alternative perspective on dealing with critical urban issues.

From a poverty perspective ACC's programme of applied urban research has a focus on informal urban economies with six focal areas:

- Documenting organisational policy and practice
- Informal economy budget analysis
- Mega events and the urban working poor
- Observatory of laws and policies that impact on the working poor
- The global economic crisis and the urban informal economy
- Urban informal economy statistics

National Planning Commission

Website: <http://www.npconline.co.za/>

The National Planning Commission (NPC) is a new initiative of government. Chaired by the Minister in the Presidency for National Planning, the NPC is responsible for developing a long term vision and strategic plan for South Africa. The process of developing this strategic plan will include discussion and engagement across our country and also provide opportunities for people to come forward with ideas and suggestions. The plan will be considered by Cabinet. The Commission will also advise on cross-cutting issues that impact on South Africa's long term development.

Poverty related diagnostic reports include:

- Material conditions
- Human conditions
- Economy

The Commission has recently published a National Development Plan.

National Income Dynamics Study

Website: <http://www.nids.uct.ac.za/home/>

The South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) based at the School of Economics at UCT is responsible for the National Income Dynamic Study (NIDS) which was conceived in 2006 and is the first national panel study in South Africa. NIDS is a longitudinal study of 7305 households with data collected on household members in three waves: 2008, 2010 and 2012. The study sets out to track changes in the well-being of South Africans by closely following about 28 000 people - young and old, rich and poor - over a period of years. A key feature of the panel study is its ability to follow people as they move out of their original 7 305 households. In doing this, the movement of household members as they leave and/or return to the household or set up their own households will be captured in subsequent waves.

The website makes available the data from the different waves for researchers who must first register and agree to terms of data use. It also provides a range of background, discussion and technical papers. The discussion papers provide thematic analysis of NIDS Wave 1 data while the technical papers reflect on methodology used in data analysis.

The Policy > Action Network

Website:

The Policy > Action Network (P>AN) is hosted by the Research Use and Impact Assessment Unit (RIA) at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and is supported by the Department of Science and Technology.

P>AN supports the policy community by sourcing information on social policy with the aim of contributing to rigour in policy making and greater participation in policy processes. This site contains a range of resources including case studies, policy briefs, research reports, events info and 'how-to' info on getting research into policy, and getting policy into action. The poverty document collection aims to provide information on policies for poverty reduction, one of the key areas in the area of social policy development with a focus on evidence-based policy development

The Institute for Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies

Website: <http://www.plaas.org.za/>

The Institute for Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) based at the University of the Western Cape has a well maintained and regularly updated website. PLAAS also makes extensive use of social media to push information on its research outputs and related events and issues to researchers, activists and policy makers.

PLAAS has four principal research areas:

- Land and agrarian reform
- Natural resources management
- Chronic poverty
- Fishing rights and marine resources

PLAAS's research on poverty and chronic poverty intends to inform policymaking by grounding debate in a detailed understanding of the livelihood activities and strategies of poor and vulnerable people, and the ways in which those livelihoods are embedded in the broader political economy of South Africa.

PLAAS produces a wide range of publications including books, research reports, working papers, occasional papers and policy briefs.

The Southern African Regional Poverty Network

Website: <http://www.sarpn.org/>

The Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) was launched in February 2001 under the auspices of the Human Sciences Research Council within their Integrated Rural and Regional Development Programme (IRRD). SARPN was funded largely by DFID and sought to connect people, ideas, and information to fight poverty in Southern Africa. During this period the SARPN website attracted more than 300 000 hits in most months. In April 2003 a decision was made to transform SARPN into an independent body with its own constitution and Board of Governors who were drawn from almost every country in the Southern African Development Community.

The new venture experienced a variety of management problems which resulted in the loss of key staff and the eventual closure of the service in 2007. Its website continues to report that SARPN “is undergoing a strategic reorientation following a decision by its Board to redefine its status and focus as an independent NGO. Discussions with various partner organisations are ongoing, aimed at repositioning SARPN within the regional context in which it operates”.

Apparently there was a brief period after the when HSRC negotiated to take back SARPN which saw it operate for a few months before closing once more.

As will be examined in more detail below SARPN continues to be a resource which is used by poverty researchers despite the fact that its content has not been updated for some time. News feeds on the front page from www.trademarksa.org give the impression that the site is still active.

At its peak SARPN was much more than a poverty information service. It seems to have been successful at creating dialogue and facilitating communities of practice through the various events that it organised. What sets the SARPN site apart from most of the other sites in this selection was that, like ELDIS it was an aggregator of poverty related research and information. Currently most of the sites discussed here restrict their outputs to that of host organisation, rather than bring together resources and organised into defined categories and repositories.

South African Open Access Research Repositories

There are numerous Open Access Research Repositories which have been established in South Africa. The information below is sourced from DRIVER: The Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research (2011).

These searchable repositories include:

- [CSIR ResearchSpace](#) - Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
- [Digital Knowledge](#) - Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- [DUT IR](#) - Durban University of Technology
- [Boloka Research Repository](#) - North-West University
- [Rhodes eResearch Repository](#) - Rhodes University
- [SUNeTD](#) - Stellenbosch University
- [UCT CS Archive](#) - University of Cape Town
- [UCT LawSpace](#) - University of Cape Town
- [UJDigiSpace](#) - University of Johannesburg
- [ResearchSpace@UKZN](#) - University of KwaZulu-Natal
- [UPSpace](#) - University of Pretoria
- [UPeTD](#) - University of Pretoria
- [UnisaETD](#) - University of South Africa
- [UNISA Institutional Repository](#) - University of South Africa
- [UFS ETD](#) - University of the Free State
- [UWC Theses and Dissertations](#) - University of the Western Cape

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- [AHERO](#) - University of the Western Cape
- [UWC Research Repository](#) - University of the Western Cape
- [WITS Institutional Repository](#) - University of the Witwatersrand
- [University of Zululand Repository](#) - University of Zululand

Society, Work and Development Institute

Website: <http://www.swopinstitute.org.za/>

SWOP is a research institute based the University of the Witwatersrand with a focus on four research clusters:

- Changing livelihoods in South and Southern Africa,
- Comparative labour movements,
- Labour and socio-economic development in a globalising Southern Africa,
- Restructuring of work.

These clusters act as working networks, networks that go beyond the mere sharing of information to the active exchange of ideas and the planning of activities sometimes with other institutions - locally and globally – including joint workshops and joint research projects. SWOP research contextualises poverty and inequality in South Africa with a strong focus on labour and globalisation. Publications span 1999 – 2011.

Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute

Website <http://www.spii.org.za/>

Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) is an independent not -for -profit trust based in Johannesburg, South Africa, established in 2006 which aims to “interrogate the development and implementation of effective evidence -based anti-poverty policies necessary to address the growing levels of economic, social and political exclusions and inequalities in South Africa in particular, as well as the Southern Africa region more broadly”.

SPII aims to bring together different actors and share “information about poverty and inequality research and policy processes in order to stimulate new areas of collaboration” with a joint emphasis on content knowledge and participatory process.

SPII research focuses on:

- Basic needs basket programme
- Socio economic rights programme
- Poverty and inequality social dialogue programme

The bulk of SPII’s research output is linked to its socio-economic rights programme.

StatsSA

Website: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/>

Statistics South Africa produces a wide range of official statistical reports including:

- Agricultural Statistics
- Community survey
- Consumer Price Index Review
- Living conditions survey

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- Quarterly Labour Force Survey
- Income and expenditure survey
- Census data
- A wide range of economic data including the Production Price Index, Gross Domestic Product etc

UKZN School of Development Studies

Website: <http://www.sds.ukzn.ac.za>

SDS engages in research to support policy development which focuses on civil society, globalisation, industry and urban development, macroeconomics and finance, poverty and inequality, social policy, labour markets and the informal economy. SDS publishes a range of research reports and working papers.

TIPS

Website: <http://www.tips.org.za/>

TIPS is an independent, non-profit economic research institution active in South Africa and the region. The organisation facilitates policy development and dialogue in pursuit of sustainable and equitable growth in Africa. TIPS works across six theme areas or policy pillars: Trade, African Economic Integration, Industrial Development, Inequality and Economic Marginalisation, Sustainable Growth and Rural Development. Its working model integrates research, policy development, advice, disseminating information, capacity building, technical support and programme design and management.

TIPS publishes working papers which span from 1997 to the present day and policy briefs. In the last couple of years it has had a programmatic focus on inequality and economic marginalisation and was active in the second economy strategy project. It has a current research focus on the community work programme.

4.2.2 Other African sites

Afrobarometer

Website: <http://www.afrobarometer.org/>

Afrobarometer conducts regular surveys are conducted in more than a dozen African countries which are repeated on a regular cycle. Surveys repeat a standard set of questions to enable inter country comparisons. Survey topics include a focus on livelihoods and social capital. Afrobarometer produces working papers, briefing papers and books.

Wahenga

Website: <http://www.wahenga.net/>

This website originally operated by the Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme has recently been taken over by the Africa Platform for Social Protection. The website publishes social protection briefs and case studies. Key tags include cash transfers, social protection, poverty alleviation and social transfers.

4.2.3 International sites

There are numerous international sites which feature South African related research on poverty and inequality. The selection below should not be regarded as representative.

Centre for Analysis of South African Social Policy

Website: <http://www.casasp.ox.ac.uk/>

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CASASP is based within the Oxford Institute of Social Policy at the University of Oxford. CASASP aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based social policy in South Africa through:

- provide training and human resource development in social policy analysis and research methods for both academics and government officials.
- research programmes established by CASASP in collaboration with the South African Government and academic institutions to develop evidence-based social policy formulation in South Africa.

CASASP offers an extensive range of publications on its website including reports, working papers, journal articles, book chapters and other publications.

Reports focus on:

- Indices of multiple deprivation
- Measures of child poverty
- Employment and social security
- Indicators of poverty and social exclusion
- Take up of social grants

Chronic Poverty Research Centre

Website: <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/>

This website provides a repository of the research outputs from the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) which closed earlier in 2011. CPRC was an international partnership of universities, research institutes and NGOs, which conducted research into the causes of chronic poverty and provided analysis and policy guidance on the reduction of chronic poverty.

The CPRC produced a wide range of publications over its ten year life span including the Chronic Poverty Reports, policy briefs, background papers and research summaries.

Development Gateway

Website <http://www.developmentgateway.org/>

Although Development Gateway (DG) does not have an explicit poverty function its work in the area of Transparency and Accountability provides useful monitoring tools for:

- Tracking development finance – collecting and standardizing information on aid-funded projects and programs
- Mapping, visualizing, and publishing aid information – geocoding aid activities, creating data visualizations, and making aid information publicly accessible

DG is also developing mobile apps to enable better monitoring of aid delivery. Its recently-developed Aid Management Platform (AMP) mobile app allows users to access data and report progress on aid-funded projects from remote locations.

The ZUNIA knowledge exchange page on DG <http://zunia.org/cat/poverty/> contains a poverty focus and makes available a wide range of publications and reports.

Eldis

Website: <http://www.eldis.org/>

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The aim of Eldis is to:

- support the documentation, exchange and use of evidence-based development knowledge
- communicate this knowledge effectively through a range of appropriately designed services, using the Internet (web and email) as the main communication medium for delivery
- reach audiences of researchers, development practitioners and policy formers at national and international levels
- play a role in the processes of evidence-based policy formation
- provide this information and services free of charge at point of use

Eldis offers

- 26,000 full text documents free to download
- full-text, online documents selected from more than 7,500 different publishers
- Eldis resource guides offering quick access to key documents, organisations, research themes, discussions and other key resources
- country profiles

Eldis poverty resources include materials on child poverty, health poverty and vulnerability, household poverty, growth and poverty, inequality, poverty analysis, rural poverty and livelihoods, social protection and urban poverty.

Institute for Development Studies – University of Sussex

Website: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/home>

IDS aims to develop research and analysis for an improved understanding of the causes of poverty and vulnerability, and produce effective remedies towards poverty reduction. IDS aims to shift thinking, policy and practice towards dynamic and multi-dimensional perspectives on vulnerability and poverty.

The poverty page contains listings of news, events, the latest publications on poverty and poverty projects at IDS

LSE Research online

Website: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/>

LSE Research Online is the institutional repository for the London School of Economics and Political Science. LSE Research Online contains research produced by LSE staff, including journal articles, book search for repositories or search repository contents.

OpenDOAR

Website: <http://www.opendoar.org/>

OpenDOAR is a project to list and categorise academic open access research repositories. Currently it lists 2144 such repositories worldwide. OpenDOAR was developed by the University of Nottingham and the Lund University, Sweden. The projects aims to provide a comprehensive and authoritative list of such repositories for end-users who wish to find particular archives or who wish to break down repositories by locale, content or other measures.

R4D Research for Development

Website: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/>

R4D is a free access on-line database containing information about research programmes supported by DFID. The database contains over 30,000 project and document records.

Entering the search term 'poverty, inequality South Africa' yielded over 2300 results.

ROAR – Register of Open Access Repositories

Website: <http://roar.eprints.org/>

ROAR is hosted by the University of Southampton. It provides a portal for open access repositories. The register contains links to:

- 1637 Research departments or institutions
- 15 repositories which are multi institutional
- 202 repositories which are cross institutional
- 118 e-journals
- 193 e-thesis repositories

UN Agencies

Food and Agriculture Organisation

The agreement between South Africa and FAO was signed on 21st August 1997 in Pretoria

Website: <http://www.fao.org/world/southafrica>

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The ILO Office for Pretoria covers the countries of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. The Office implements the mandate of the ILO within the sub region, including the delivery of technical cooperation in collaboration with other ILO technical departments

Website: <http://www.ilo.org>

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.

Website: <http://www.iom.org.za>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP Country Office promotes the achievement of South Africa's Vision 2014 and the Millennium Development Goals

Website: <http://www.undp.org.za>

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

Website: <http://www.unfpa.org>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR opened its in office in South Africa in 1991, to assist with the return of South African exiles The Refugees Act was passed into law by Parliament in December 1998, thus paving the way for the national implementation of South Africa's obligation to protect and assist refugees.

Website: <http://www.unhcr.org>

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF is on the ground in 155 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence.

Website <http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/>

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) helps developing countries and countries with economies in transition in their fight against poverty and marginalization in today's globalized world. South Africa joined UNIDO as a member state in 2002. The UNIDO regional office was established in June 2006 in Pretoria.

Website <http://www.unido.org>

The World Bank

The data and research page on the World Bank site provides access to research and reports of poverty in South Africa. The site also contains a dedicated poverty topic page with linked resources for download. The World Bank is undergoing a transformation towards more 'Open Development', where data and knowledge will become open and freely available which it argues "is changing the entire development paradigm" (World Bank, 2011).

Website: <http://go.worldbank.org/45B5H2ONVO>

5 Towards a poverty information repository and portal service

Respondents to the survey clearly articulate a need for a poverty information service with the proviso that it be well resourced and continually updated. In thinking about the options it is important to distinguish between:

- a **poverty information website** which combines links and a repository of poverty information
- a more sophisticated **content management poverty portal**.

Key differences between these two approaches are explored below.

5.1 Information portals

Information portals consolidate "many different types of information from a multitude of sources onto a single screen or user experience". Information portals involve a one way movement of information. People who use an Information Portal typically...do not publish to it - or put another way - they are the **consumers of the information** prepared and published by others" (Williams, 2011).

5.2 Content management portals

Content management portals differ in that they enable **two way flows of information and collaboration** and "are designed to improve the access to and sharing of information...(integrating) self-service

publishing features (which) allow end users to post and share any kind of document, digital asset, record or Web content with other users, even those geographically dispersed” (Williams, 2011).

Content management portals are built around software applications which provide the basis for ‘one stop shop’ poverty information research. This in its most sophisticated form recognises personal preferences. “Personalisation allows a portal gateway or window to be modified so that the information presented to a user is tailored to their profile, chosen interests or clicking behaviour” (Williams, 2011). It also allows for “federated searching” – enabling the simultaneous search of a coherent preconfigured set of resources to find appropriate resources (Arms, 2010)

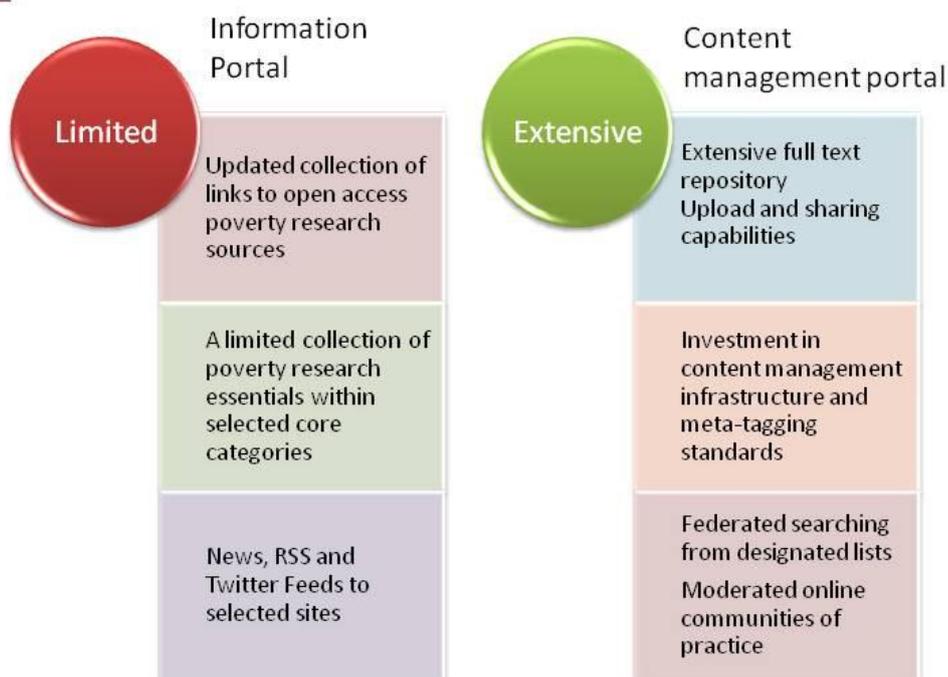
5.3 Options and sustainability considerations

The sustainability of a poverty information service irrespective of the form which it takes will be a key concern for PSPPD. The internet is littered with websites and portals of different kinds which were set up under the auspices of a programme or project and which are then closed and archived once the programme ends.

This raises important questions about the choice of portal options of any proposed service and the choice of service provider. Two options are suggested below which do not have to be seen as mutually exclusive. It may be more useful rather to view them as phases where Phase 1 involves the consolidation of an existing website as an information portal – the Limited Option in the graphic below. Phase 1 could also include an in depth technical scoping and investigation of the business models, specifications and technologies required to put in place the extensive content management option which could usher in a more sophisticated and Extensive Phase 2 service.



Poverty Portal Options



5.3.1 The Limited Option

The Limited Option Poverty Information Portal would involve investing in enhancing the offerings of an existing website or resuscitating a service like SARPN which still has a strong brand and a sound architecture.

The basic information portal would:

- Organise and collate links to readable and downloadable open access resource repositories;
- Scan, select and curate key research papers within selected core categories in association with a panel of subject specialists in key areas;
- Keep the site fresh with news, RSS and Twitter feeds from selected sources.

This option would be relatively simple to set up if it built on an existing South Africa site like PLAAS or P>AN. It could also be possible to develop a partnership between an existing site and an external site like ELDIS. Working with an existing local institution to expand an already functioning site would improve the likelihood of providing a sustainable poverty information service.

5.3.2 The Extensive Option

If an Information Portal “is essentially a 'read only' experience”(Williams, 2011) a Content Management Portal allows its users a much wider range of functionalities within the portal 'window'. Depending on the resources available through the PSPPD programme in Phase 2 the Extensive Option could invest in improved portal technologies which enable managed sharing and online collaboration.

The Extensive Option would require investment in improved and interoperable meta-tagging standards and applications which could enable customised, simultaneous “federated searches” (Arms, 2010) from selected checklists of data sources. However perhaps the most important component of an extended option would be to provide support for online communities of practice and the promotion of evidence led policy appraisal and review based on research led monitoring and evaluation.

5.4 Supporting the move to open education resources

The Extensive Option could also provide significant impetus towards wider goals of open scholarship and research. It could also support the exploration of practical alternatives and business models to enable knowledge assets currently cocooned in restricted access journals to become publicly accessible. In this regard it could connect with open learning initiatives and form part of the growing movement towards open data and open educational resources initiatives currently underway within international and South African Universities. This as Gray and Hodgkinson Williams (2009) observe is based on “the philosophical view of knowledge as a collective social product and the desirability of making it a social property (Prasad & Ambedkar cited in Downes 2007:1).

5.5 Implementation

This would require the development of a Terms of Reference (TOR) which would invite existing poverty information service providers to put in a bid showing:

- their orientation towards open knowledge sharing and collaboration
- their current digital and web information management capabilities
- their extent of their current repository of poverty resources
- their website/portal visitor statistics
- how they would set about updating and expanding their existing services
- what this would entail with respect to associated human resource and infrastructure investment costs

Once a provider is selected and the information service is up and running a second TOR could be issued for a service provider to investigate the feasibility, benefits and costs of upgrading the system to a two way content management portal with enhanced search, personalisation and collaboration capabilities. Depending on the outcome of this study and the extent of its projected user base PSPPD will choose whether to retain the Limited Option Portal or to upgrade it to the Extensive Option.

6 Recommendations

This rapid scan clearly indicates that:

1. There is a demand and need for a poverty information service.
2. Such a service would be best provided by expanding and capacitating an existing local poverty information service provider.
3. Such a service should follow a two phase development process involving:
 - a. initial modest investment into the provision of the limited 'read only' information portal model outlined above,
 - b. investigating and assessing the feasibility of an extensive content management option which would allow for personalisation, federated searching, online sharing and collaboration and ways to open up resources which are currently closed to all but academic researchers.
4. Depending on the outcome of the above investigation PSPPD could consider investment in a more extensive option which could contribute to:
 - a. building communities of practice,
 - b. promoting open scholarship and open access research,
 - c. strengthening dialogue between researchers, policy makers and programme implementers.

7 Conclusion

ICTs continue to evolve at unprecedented speed. These developments coupled with a vibrant research community, the communicative potential of social media and new forms of open scholarship provide a fertile context for the development of a poverty information service which can effectively harness new open access opportunities to contribute to strengthened research, improved policy and more reflexive practice.

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