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Revitalizing the role of the Church in Socio-Economic Development

A Presentation to Church Leaders

Victory Ministries International,

Stanford Road,

Port Elizabeth

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Revitalizing the role of the Church in Socio-Economic Development

Why are we here?

- To prepare the ground for strategic action by churches to become effectively involved in community development

How did we get here?

Biographical

- Work of the past 30 years (1983-2013) in Sociology, Socio-Economic Analysis and Research.
- UPE / NMMU, Development Partners
- UP, UNISA, UPE, PhD University of Warwick; Margaret Archer; Social Systems and Change
- Theory to practice; engagement; more to be gained from linking theory to practice than not.
- Transformation of HE, FET and GET. Institutional Change
- University of Washington

Recent Work

- Work in the Metro: Demographics, Planning, Industrial Development Strategy, Urban Agriculture Policy, Poverty Alleviation, various community level socio-economic development projects. Data on communities.
- 10 year pre-occupation – Information for Development.
- Work with StatsSA.
- Systems to bring vital information like Census closer to community for planning purposes.

Recent Discussions and Presentations

- Discussions with Trevor Jennings about role of church in social transformation and how to become more relevant in local community context
- Meeting of Church leaders to speak about how the church could become more effective in contribution to social transformation. To enable individual churches to engage effectively; from an informed position with the communities; information is the key.
- Gill Bowman of Anglican Diocese. Meetings and three presentation, a process that has started and is like a pilot project showing the direction

Overview:

- The role of the church in social transformation
- A strategic planning approaching to transformation
- Development as a process in time
- The importance of data and information ; making the Census and other information work at a community level
- The role of social media in making it work for development

First, important to understand: I am a sociologist and at best a socio-economic multi-disciplinarian

- I have no authority to make theological statements.
- However, this does not mean that I don't understand a few things about the role of religion in society; in fact, I taught sociology of religion (which has come in surprisingly handy).
- Generally, I talk the language of planning, social analysis, community and organizational development. Unapologetically and stubbornly, not trying to sound religiously correct.

As a sociologist I am pre-occupied with asking certain questions

- How does society exist or remain relatively stable over time (**order**)?
- What threatens the social order?
- What causes **conflict**?
- Why does society **change**? How does it change? Can we change it to **become better**?
- Which are the **vital structures and processes** of society?
- How **should these structures function**? How should these processes occur?

For our immediate purposes we can ask questions on similar lines but only more specific to our context. For us key questions then are:

1. What are the role / functions of church with regard to development? What is, what could and what should?
2. Is there a coherent process or framework for church development towards optimizing its role in society?

Question 1: What are the roles / functions of the church with regard to development? What is, what could and what should?

- Institutions
 - Social scientists refer to social institutions as **relative enduring features of social life that reproduce themselves over time**.
 - Complex / set of **positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures** that organise human activity into relatively **stable patterns** with respect to fundamental problems *in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment*
- Examples: state / government / polity, family, religion / church, education / school / university, hospitals, economy / business corporations / shops, law / legal systems, post offices, police force , prisons, asylums, sport, etc. .
- Exist, survived, thrive, struggle, disappear or changes over time because they are valued or not in society, they are functional [relevant] or not 'functional' to the people and the society.

- The real issue has to do with the tendency of social institutions to have more than one function or purpose.
- For our ends I will distinguish between:

Primary	Secondary
Essential	General
Main	Other
Manifest	Latent

- Differentiation of functions:
 - Main, primary or “manifest” functions:
 - *through a set of beliefs / doctrines define people’s relationship to a deity,*
 - *rituals that symbolize these beliefs are performed to remind people of these;*
 - *and a serious of norms for behaviour that are consistent with these beliefs*
 - What we are interested in is a set of functions that can be referred the secondary, general, other of latent.

Both from **individual and social point** of view religion perform the following functions:

1. *Provides a higher purpose and **meaning** to human life, one that transcends limited self-interest;*
2. *Provides **mental peace** amidst uncertainties, insecurities and dangers.*
3. *Consoles and encourages in time of crisis.*
4. *Provides emotional support and encourages people to face life and its problems.*
5. *Inculcates social **values and virtues** like truth, honesty, non-violence, service, love, discipline etc. It provides a **moral structure** in which human beings act.*
6. **Counter-balance the disruptive tendencies of politics and economics** with shared values to hold society together. Emile **Durkheim** viewed that religion strengthens social solidarity and integrates society. Common belief, common sentiment, common worship, participation in common rituals etc. are the significant cementing factors which strengthen unity and solidarity
7. **Parsons** viewed religion as one of the most important **agents of socialization and social control**.
8. Religion informs the **ethos many schools, is part of the curricular content and many schools are owned by churches**.
9. Religion plays a role in providing **recreation** to the people. Religious rites give **relief** to the people from mental exertion. Similarly religious singing and the utterance of hymns etc. gives much more **pleasure** to the people and provides eternal recreation.
10. Religion **influences economy**: Sociologists like Max Weber established the relationship of religion with economic system. Weber observed the influence of Protestant ethics in the development of capitalism.
11. Religion influences political system: Religion has played a significant role in political system in the ancient and medieval society. During ancient and medieval period, the monarchs were

treating themselves as the representatives of the God or ruling the society in the name of God. Even today, political leaders take oath in the name of God.

12. Promotes **welfare**, teaches to the people to attend to needs of the poor and to promote their welfare by conveying the message that "the service to humanity is service to God". With the influence of religious beliefs different religious organisations engage in various welfare activities.
13. Last but not least, **religion supports liberation from oppression**. Churches stand up for and protect those who are marginalized and oppressed within the usual power schemes. Churches over the centuries have been part of and or led **social transformation processes**.....

Now, for me, there is no question about the social and socio-economic role of religion and the church but what do you make of these roles and functions in our contemporary society?

- Is this regarded as important?
- Some churches were at some times in our country's political history very active in society in terms of some these functions
- General decline.
- What does the "religious theory and doctrine" say? Interesting reactions ...
- Our society needs churches to perform this role as much as it was needed in the apartheid era ...

Different paradigms [use university as an example]

- The purist / essentialist
 - Over-emphasis of primary role; high value in very concentrated / exclusive sense
 - High risk of losing contact with context
 - Sustainability threatened
 - Same as university Ivory Tower
- The populist
 - Over-emphasis of secondary role; become a development agency or a business
 - Loses authority;
 - Becomes an NGO, compete with too many; not specific / special
 - People's University. Open to all. Can't be sustained
- The engaged / inclusive
 - Retain essence and integrity but reflect on what that means in context; may have to make compromises
 - Engagement and **reciprocity**; evolves all the time; modified and elaborated
 - Engaged University: engage on basis of strengths, mix theory and practice, value created on both sides

Institutions in context of contemporary South African society – socio-economic failure and institutional confusion

- Struggling to achieve the important goals set to improve the quality of life of the majority of people.

- Under-performing in virtually all socio-economic areas.
- However, not difficult to appreciate that due to our history the political sphere has acquired a disproportional amount of importance.
 - Not only does **the political over-power the administrative, technical and ethical** nature of government itself.
 - **Politicians have an 'excessive' concept of the importance of politics** relative to other spheres of society.
 - **Political calling / deployment trumps all other callings.**
 - The **worst of this syndrome is that ordinary citizens** - members of the ANC or not – have all bought into the over-politicized idea of a society.
- **This is a high dysfunctional situation.**
 - Not only does it result in **overload and excessive expectations** of what a government and political party is capable of but it also **marginalizes the other sectors of society.**
 - Or to put it a bit stronger: it lets them **off the hook.**
 - If the church starts fail to take up these other roles it will become irrelevant.

Suggestion for churches in general:

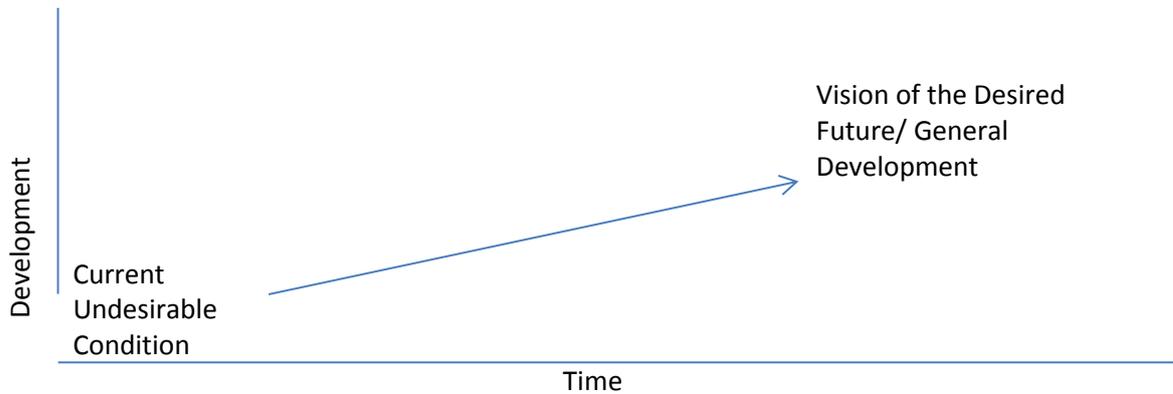
- Current challenges facing local government both a results of failure of government and failure of other sectors of society to fill their space and to take up their role in society
- **Embrace an Inclusive / Engagement / Reciprocity Paradigm.**
- Greater involvement, relevance and responsiveness will be rewarded
- **Transformation** programme not to take over the role of local government but to become more assertive in terms of your role in society
- Not as an isolated exercise but you should encourage the other sectors the Corporate Sector, Civil Society, Education etc. to become more assertive.
- This does not mean that there need be animosity with local government.
- To achieve that you need a Strategic Approach: it involves a Strategic Development Plan

Confined to organizations, strategy, the mediating force between an organization and its environment; how it relates to its environment in achieving its aims

- **Graphic on the "fit" [See Graphic]**

The logic of development

I work with a simple graph to explain almost everything that I do.



However, that simple graph becomes complex to make it more practical for planning and implementing development. I introduce the concepts of conditions or CONTEXT and ACTION into it.

						Context 4
					Action 3	
				Context 3		
			Action 2			
		Context 2				
	Action 1					
Context 1						

What this graph says is:

- What is possible in terms of the action that we can take in the context of the church relationship to community **depend both on what is possible in the context and on the quality of our agency / action.**
- Not all and any action is possible because of the constraints of the context or at least some actions are more challenging than others; each context **constrains but also enables action** but differently at different times
- This has to do with many things among others the **nature and quality of the people, groups and their skills, resources, and capacity**
- If there is no **plan that is based on the relationship between context and agency and between stages we step into the trap of attempting to choose between on-going management and achieving our long-term and higher goals. False choice**
- Reality is:

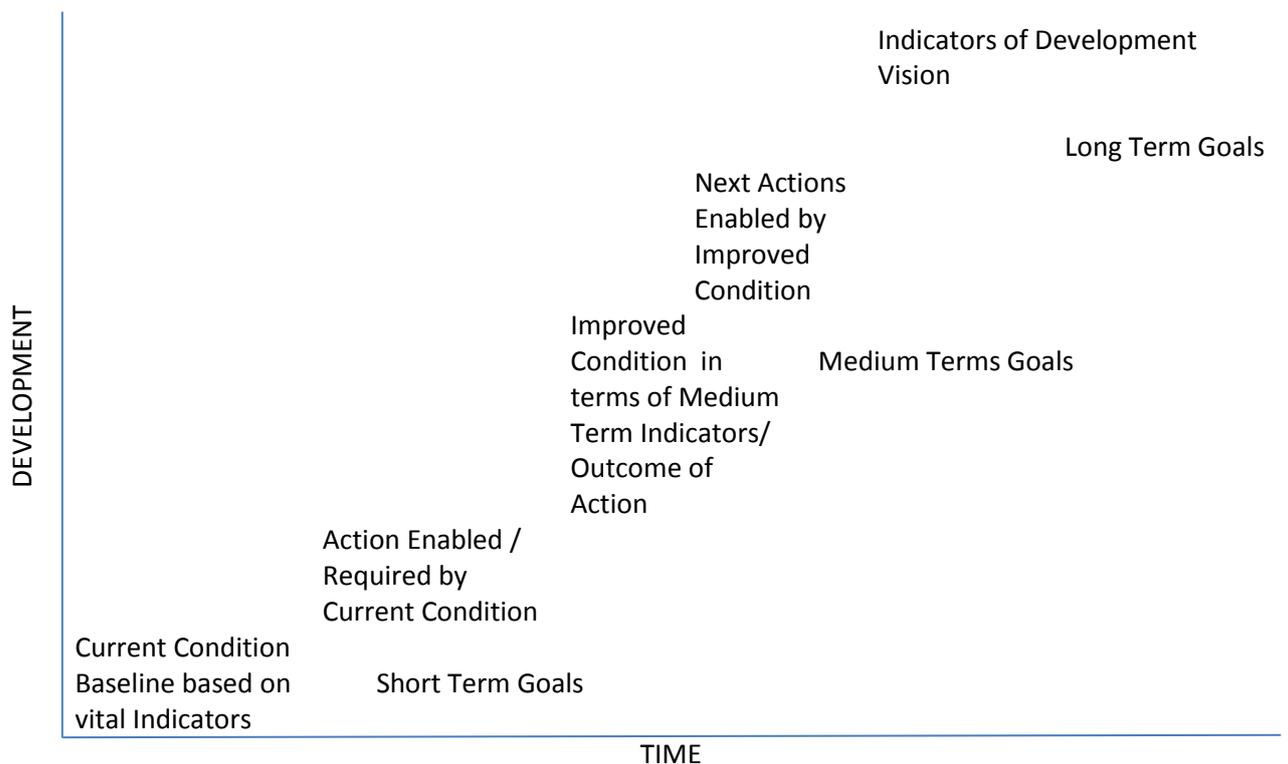
- That **we have to deal with the immediate challenges** but can do than in any number of ways. What is the best way? Answer: the one that takes us to the desired future. What does that mean?
- Also **if we think that we can pursue the desired future without working through the first two phases we will be disappointed.**
- It is **not a matter of the one stage of development must be completed before you can start with the next**; rather a matter of priority. They can also overlap to a certain extent. No need to stop pursuing international competitiveness and growth in areas where we are endowed with good assets (like tourism, sport, selected industries)

To be able to put this process in motion we need to do a few things. Among these:

1. State the Development Vision by way of **statistical development indicators.**

What is the desired future (15 – 20 years from now?)

2. Determine the current undesirable condition in terms of the same **statistical development indicators. Work out the gap and set interim - short term and medium term - goals**



3. Form a Social Compact that commits all parties to work towards the same vision according to the basic plan.
4. Such a plan should contain specific indicators to indicate what must be achieved over time.

5. More specifically these goals must be translated into a strategic development plan that must indicate:
 - a. How the plan will be implemented,
 - b. The organization that is required, that is, who will be responsible and who are capable of making it work and what will be their roles and responsibilities.

This is typically presented in what is called a Logical Framework which could become very complex. Much simplified, one would need something like this **template**:

Community XYZ					
General Development Goal					
Specific Goal 1	Actions	Indicators	Resources	Responsible Parties	Timelines
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Specific Goal 2	-				
	-				
	-				
Etc.					

Key questions:

1. What is the **overall goal** that our actions should achieve?
2. Who will benefit if we achieve our goal? How?
3. How is the desired future different from now?
4. How will we know if we have achieved the goal? Evidence?
5. What is our understanding of context? What is there in our context that enables and or constrains us in relation to achieving this / these goals?
6. What capacity do we have to act? What do we need?
7. What is the nature of our current problems? Can we unpack our problem in terms of causes and symptoms and in terms of types and levels of problems? Is there a primary and secondary problem?
8. What are the different solutions to these problems? Which is best and why?
9. What can we do as interim actions towards the goal?
10. Who is part of this process? And what do we expect from them?

The importance of data and information; making the Census and other information work at a community level

- Selective portfolio and selected comments and notes
- Metro Ward Summary

1. Population Size:

- At a Ward level we will typically look at population sizes of 10 000 to 25 000 people.
- Can disaggregate to the Census Enumeration level (which means 100 to 200 people) for very accurate profiles.
- Detailed profiles will contain growth, fertility, mortality and life expectancy.
- South Africa's population is estimated to have grown to just under 53 million by the middle of this year, with an inflow of migrants behind much of the 1.2 million population increase since the 2011.
- Without an inflow of migrants, the country would not have grown by much in recent years.
- The population growth is slowed down because of largely two factors: modernization and HIV/AIDS.
 - New-comers from outside the country is a significant factor.
 - Even more than newcomers from the rural areas.

Slow growth of the Metro - issues to take note of:

- Limited urbanization does not take place
- Limited growth of middle class.
- High number of exits / low retention
- Limited economic growth
- What drives the patterns of growth in a particular area? And what does it tell us about the development challenges facing that area?
- Dangers of assumptions about trends on lower levels

Life expectancy

- Life expectancy has increased from 52 years in 2004 to 58 years in 2011 and is estimated to have increased further, to just under 60 years (or 59.4 years) in the 2013 estimates - with life expectancy of women at 61 years and men at 58 years.

HIV

- Some information cannot be obtained directly from Census data. We have to make use of other sources to estimate HIV prevalence

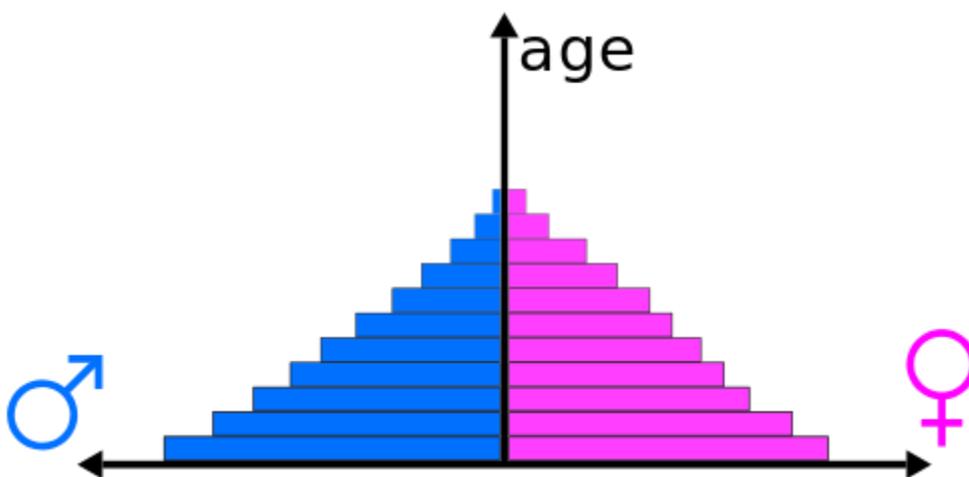
- The HIV prevalence rate has crept up from 8.7% in 2002 to 10% in 2013, or just under 5.3 million people.
- The prevalence rate for those between 15 and 49 years stands at 16%. The mid-year estimates for 2013 reveals that 51% of the population is female and 49% male.

Gender and household heads

- Females are usually slightly more than men but when the percentage becomes more than 3% it is significant.
- This means that mortality among men may be high or that they leave the area perhaps to find work elsewhere.
- In both instances it influences the structure of the family; makes it vulnerable and places a greater burden on single mothers / female household heads.
- If we have a high frequency of single parent, female household heads it should highlight questions about community structures of support to enable to be effective in meeting the demand and challenges facing them.

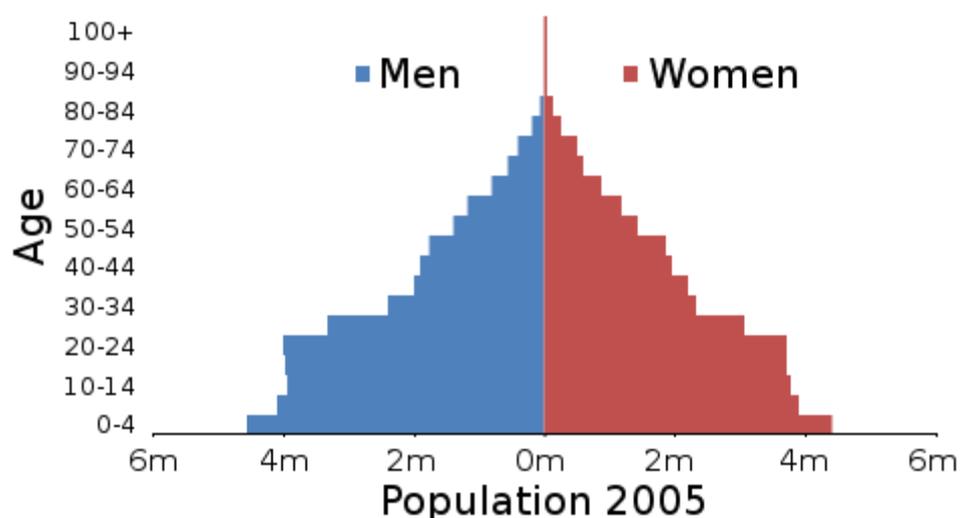
Age

- This is a very significant variable in a developing country. The first three variables: population size, gender and age of a population is portrayed by a population distribution pyramid

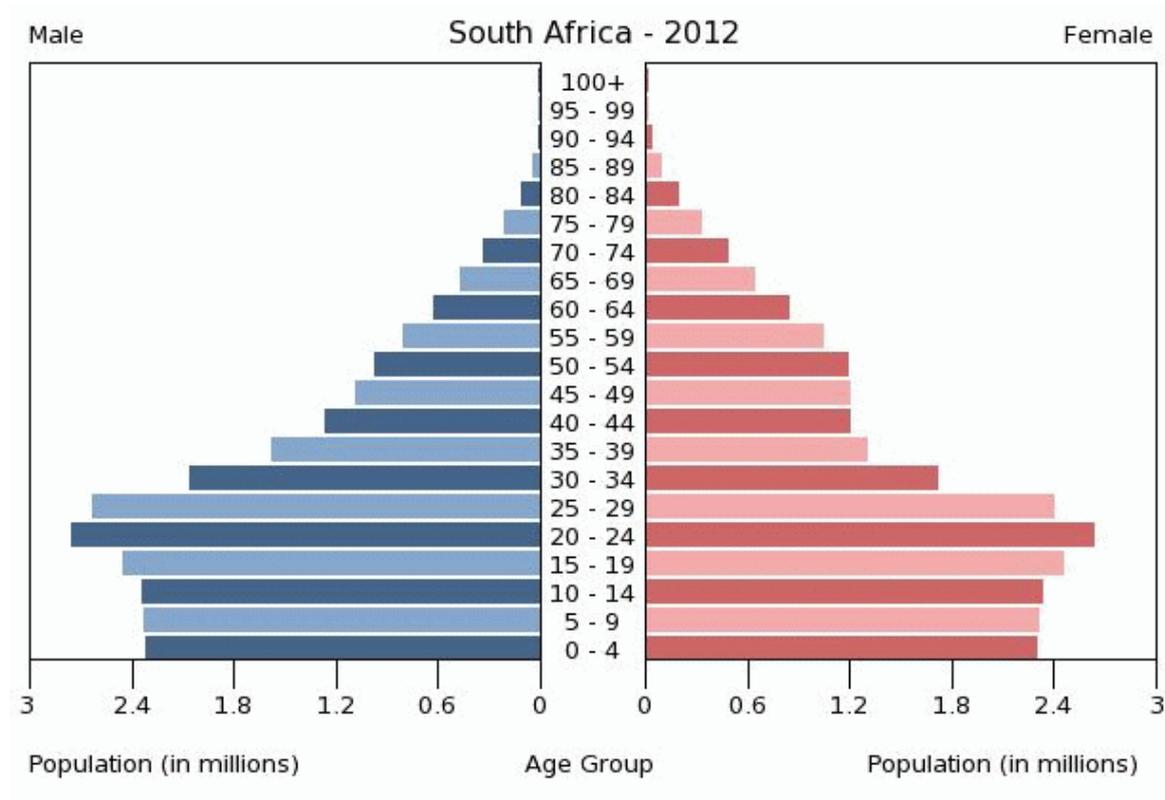


- Four general types have been identified by the fertility and mortality rates of a country.
 - **Stable pyramid:** A population pyramid showing an unchanging pattern of fertility and mortality.

- **Stationary pyramid:** A population pyramid typical of countries with low fertility and low mortality, very similar to a constrictive pyramid.
 - **Expansive pyramid:** A population pyramid that is very wide at the base, indicating high birth and death rates.
 - **Constrictive pyramid:** A population pyramid that comes in at the bottom. The population is generally older on average, as the country has long life expectancy, a low death rate, but also a low birth rate. This pyramid is becoming more common, especially when immigrants are factored out, and is a typical pattern for a very developed country, a high level of education, easy access to and incentive to use birth control, good health care, and few negative environmental factors.
- We are particularly interested in the **expansive pyramid** and even more in the phenomenon that is described as the **youth bulge**.
 - A large population of young people entering the labour force is generally positive for an economy.
 - We often hear this opportunity for growth being described as the **demographic dividend**.
 - However, if the young people **lack education and the economy cannot absorb** them it creates unemployment and alienation.
 - The **16-30 age range** is associated with risk-taking, especially among males. In general, youth bulges in developing countries are associated with higher unemployment and, as a result, a heightened risk of violence and political instability.
 - Even worse is a situation where young people are **educated but they can't find work**. The Egyptian situation is an example; the population pyramid reveals a pronounced youth bulge. Analysts suggest that there is a relationship between the Youth Bulge and the Egyptian Spring.



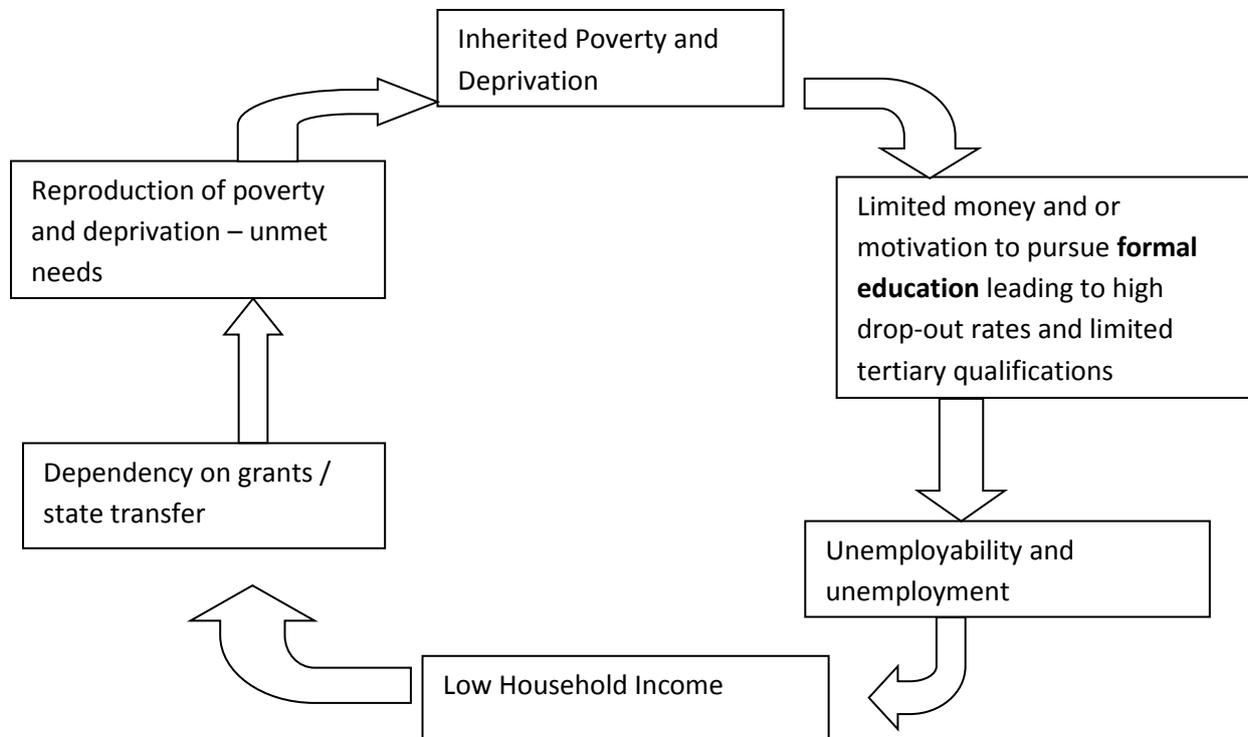
See the South African population pyramid below.



- Of course there is so much more that we can learn out of this information that is of relevance to the development of our own communities.
- The point is that if a particular demographic feature is out of proportion we have to reflect on the implications for the community / society.
- In our poorer communities we typically have to prioritize the youth - we need to understand them and to ask how we can best include them productively in our society and community - and in more affluent communities it is often the aged that require more attention.

South African 'Achilles heel'; education and skills!

- The critical role of education and training in either perpetuating or breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation. Recent research in Uitenhage / Despatch



- Our, generally uneven and **under-performing education and training system. Failure of township schools.**
- Overall low **literacy levels** which are also part of the legacy of the past.
- Low levels of interest of parents in education for themselves and their children.
- **Low school completion and early drop-out.**
- **Limited post school training and skills for high un-employability.**
- Low performance in areas like **maths and science**

Unemployment

- What are the issues?
 - Income.
 - Poverty vs. Deprivation
 - Narrowly-speaking poverty means not having enough money to meet ones basic needs but deprivation comprises many dimensions.
 - It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity.

- Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.
- The need to use a multi-indicator definition of poverty
- **The role of state grants**

The role of social media in making it work for development

- Busy developing an online knowledge management system for facilitating local community development.
- The general aim is to provide access to information to enable local communities, organizations, individuals and leaders to take more informed strategic action towards improving the quality of life of local communities, to address local issues or to embark on local community projects and or programmes.
- The overall process is similar to regular strategic planning processes but it is different in the sense that it is information-driven.
- Good data and information forms the basis for understanding local communities, their strengths, weaknesses, needs and the opportunities open to them.
- The emphasis is on making Census data and other high level data more accessible to communities and to complement basic demographic and socio-economic data with developmental interpretation and analysis to enable informed local development decision-making at a local community level.
- An online guided and facilitated process that would enable community champions to lead a process in their own communities / organizations.