

Democracy and Governance

In his often-quoted "two nations" speech, Pres. Thabo Mbeki entered the debate on the impact of South Africa's transformation on the lives of those who had been historically disenfranchised, and the poor in particular. The debate centres on the extent to which governments, markets and civil society can empower the poor and reduce inequality in the context of the rapid global integration of financial systems and world markets.

Since the 1994 democratic elections the South African government has implemented programmes aimed at improving the access of the poor to health, education, water and housing, thereby also seeking to empower them. The government has committed itself to enhancing performance in all major service delivery sectors. The effects of government policies accordingly require closer monitoring to ensure that policy outcomes match the stated objectives.

The Democracy and Governance NPA (New Priority Area) focuses primarily on governance – notably, local and provincial government institutional development, and local and provincial government service delivery.


Empowerment and transition in South Africa received continued attention. Following public demand, two books published in early 2000 were reprinted (one entitled *Empowerment through service delivery* and the other *Infrastructure mandates for change, 1994-1999*).

The report of a study on empowerment prospects through the transformation of the South African economy will be released in July 2001. The report cites far-reaching political and policy changes, but maintains that the outcome of these changes is still largely unknown. It concludes that the daunting task of redressing inequalities is being undermined by the legacy of the past, massive unemployment, limited human and technical capacity, and the negative consequences of globalisation.

Other contributions were published under the generic theme of **democracy and governance**.

Written by leading scholars in the field under the editorship of three HSRC staff members, *Democracy and governance review: Mandela's legacy, 1994-1999* offers an independent assessment of the country's transition to democracy. The book examines the institutional forms and capacities that underpin South Africa's new democratic order, and argues that a new culture of participatory governance is emerging. It is clearly pointed out that democracy will, however, not be consolidated while inequality coincides with race.





*We have left the past and ... are moving to a future
founded on the recognition of human rights,
democracy and peaceful co-existence.*

– Desmond Tutu, Archbishop emeritus

A second major highlight was the official launch on the eve of National Women's Day (9 August) of *Women marching into the 21st century*, a book commissioned by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology and compiled by HSRC researchers. It is the first in a series of publications to celebrate the achievements of South African women, as far back as the turn of the 19th century. The volume provides information on more than 500 women in politics, the arts, science, the humanities and business. Of special interest is the inclusion of some of the pioneers who participated in the Women Defiance Campaign of 1956.

Raymond Mhlaba's personal memoirs: Reminiscing from Rwanda and Uganda, was published jointly by the HSRC and the Robben Island Museum in March 2001. "Oom Ray" was a stalwart of the liberation movement and his life story (narrated to an HSRC researcher) provides insight into the democratic consolidation process in South Africa, and is a significant addition to the people's history of South Africa.

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The NPA researched the role of **public participation** in democratic governance in South Africa. The report (including case studies at national, local and sectoral levels) will be published in July 2001. A contract project for the North West province on public participation in decision-making processes in the provincial legislature was also undertaken.

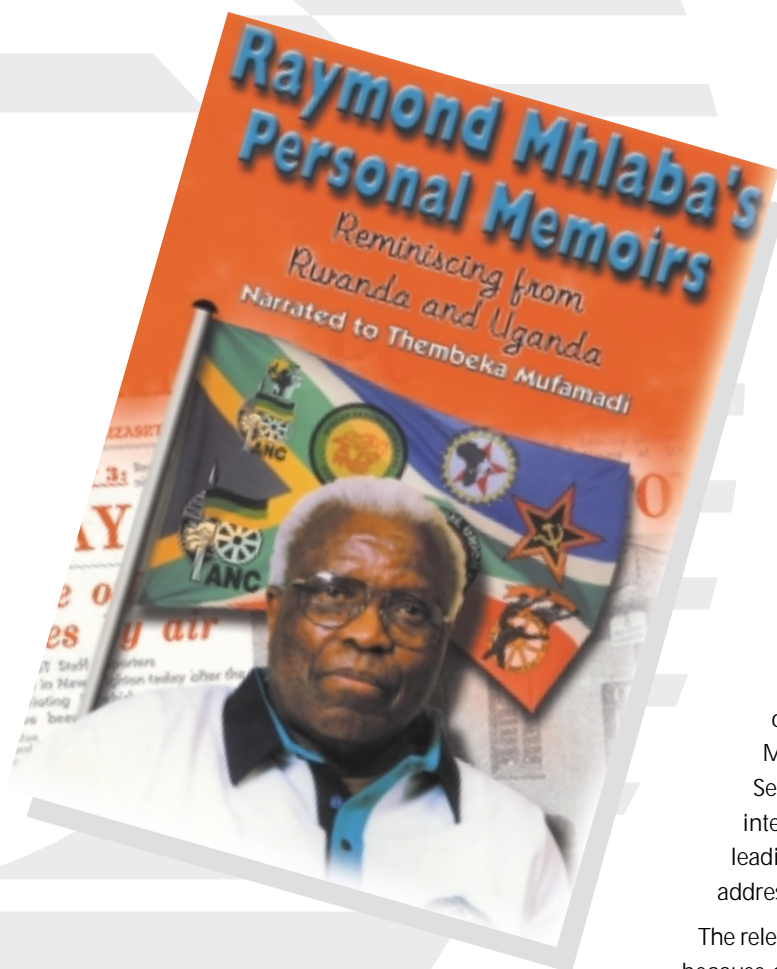
Other completed projects include a book entitled *Socio-economic rights in the South African Constitution: Theory and practice*, and a forthcoming publication on democracy and state formation in Africa. The latter – to be co-published by Heinemann Publishers (USA) and the HSRC – is the culmination of a five-year study in collaboration with the Free University of Amsterdam and includes case studies by political and social scientists from across the world.

The HSRC is a key partner in the "Road to democracy" project carried out under the auspices of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), which was launched by Pres. Thabo Mbeki on 21 March 2001. A senior HSRC researcher has been seconded to SADET to document the history of the liberation movements in Gauteng and to help provide strategic research leadership to the national project.

The major impact of the NPA during the 2000/01 financial year was its heightened visibility as a leading role player in the analysis and interpretation of information in the fields of political and economic empowerment, social change and transition. The NPA's work assisted decision making at all levels, and also helped forge partnerships and networks with local experts and international associates from the USA, India, Canada and France. In turn, these research outputs and networks enabled the HSRC to access local and international funders and to participate more widely at international conferences.



Pres. Thabo Mbeki at the launch of the "Road to democracy" project.



To encourage research excellence, stimulate public debate and promote interaction with stakeholders in government departments, the diplomatic corps and research institutions, the NPA continued to organise the prestigious Sam Nolutshungu Memorial Lecture Series and the Public Policy Seminar Series. Several high-profile international speakers, cabinet ministers and leading civil society members delivered keynote addresses at the well-attended lectures/seminars.

The relevance of the NPA's **future** research is assured because of its focus on matters of national as well as individual interest. Ongoing research themes include empowerment and transition; urban development and renewal; experiences and perceptions of service delivery in different sectors, and district councils and local governance in South Africa. A collaborative research project on the transformation of the local government sector, for example, has been scheduled for the next financial year.

ENQUIRIES

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