

# Chapter 16

## Conclusion

South Africa faces a continuing challenge of alleviating poverty and meeting basic needs. The Government has committed itself to reducing inequalities through providing basic services to poor households. Progress has been made in terms of delivering some of the services. Severe challenges remain, however. There is no income support programme for children between 7-18 years, adults between 18-59 years and no general assistance for households where no one is employed. Over 13 million people live below the poverty line and have no access to social security. As such, South Africa's social security system is neither comprehensive nor adequate.

The Committee has found that much of what we refer to as "social security" derives from the European concept, which took as its basic assumption that social security would develop around formal sector employment. The reality is that in the developing world formal sector employment may never become the norm that it is in Europe. As a result, the Committee has found that the development paths of African economies, and third world countries in general, require a fresh look at social protection systems more appropriate to their environments and needs.

In this regard, the Committee has found that a lack of policy to address income poverty has been a constraining feature of South Africa's socio-economic programmes. The Committee therefore recommends that an appropriate social security concept for South Africa must prioritise the needs of people without any incomes, with insufficient incomes or who are engaged in informal activities.

In addressing this gap, the Committee has formulated a comprehensive social protection system that enables the attainment of "positive-sum" policy interventions, rather than narrow policy trade-offs between social and economic policy objectives. The Committee is of the view that by creating greater income security the poor, who are currently trapped in survivalist and low-income informal work, become empowered to risk pursuing higher-return activities that can break their cycle of poverty.

In addressing the full spectrum of social protection policy, the Committee paid considerable attention to matters concerning health, retirement, unemployment, children, disability, constitutional and legal requirements, and institutional and financial feasibility. Detailed research analysis has informed the Committee's recommendations in these areas.

To address income poverty, and underpin the Comprehensive Social Protection framework as a whole, the Committee has recommended a comprehensive and integrated medium- to long-term framework for income support. The Committee is of the view that such a Comprehensive Social Protection framework would simultaneously address the constitutional and socio-economic imperatives through emphasising two aspects:

- Ensuring that all citizens have a minimum acceptable standard of living through a social protection package, enabling them to participate and advance in social and economic life, thus reducing socio-economic constraints to sustainable growth in South Africa.
- Providing people with their socio-economic rights, thus enabling them to enjoy their democratic rights. As such comprehensive social protection, by providing universal coverage, thus embeds an important form of social citizenship – and could be seen to form a central component of the democratic State's "contract with the people".

Finally, the Committee recommends that an implementation phase for the Comprehensive Social Protection framework be designed with officials from the various Social Cluster Departments, a core group of Committee members and two international experts.