

The Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf),  
in partnership with the  
South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) Chair in Social Policy  
at the University of South Africa (UNISA),  
cordially invites you to the webinar

## What must be done if the state is to be capable of poverty and inequality reduction?

*In the context of weak state capacity and widespread concerns with poor quality of spending and corruption, what needs to be done to improve the state's capacity? What needs to change in how the state 'thinks' that would enhance the state's capacity to reduce poverty and inequality?*

**Date:** 22 July 2021  
**Time:** 1:00pm – 3:00pm  
**Venue:** Zoom (link to be provided to registered persons)  
**RSVP:** [Click here](#)

The Standing Committee on the Science for the Reduction of Poverty and Inequality (SCSfRPI) is a committee of the acclaimed Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). In July 2020, the ASSAf Council mandated the committee to focus on poverty and inequality concerning the pandemic and consult interdisciplinary science on reducing poverty and inequality.

In response, the SCSfRPI conceptualised a webinar series that will delve into the following themes:

1. What to do to reduce poverty and inequality?
2. How to fund interventions to reduce poverty?
3. What must be done if the state is to be capable of poverty and inequality reduction?

The first webinar, on what to do to reduce poverty and inequality, explored the findings from the first three waves of the NIDS/CRAM survey to address the question of the role of social grants in reducing poverty. Furthermore, the impact of public works programmes on reducing or eradicating poverty in South Africa was examined. The Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) co-hosted the webinar with the Director, Ms Isobel Frye, as the moderator of the webinar. The webinar recording can be accessed [here](#).

The second webinar focused on mechanisms to generate funding for interventions to reduce poverty. The webinar set as its backdrop the challenges of prevailing poverty levels in South Africa, deepened by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the fiscal constraints that the state faces. Speakers of the webinar explored the feasibility of a wealth tax, consumption taxes on luxury consumer goods, increases in sin taxes, increase in the deficit, and cooperation with the civil society and the private sector. The webinar was co-hosted by Prof Johann Kirsten of the Bureau of Economic Research at Stellenbosch University and moderated by Judge Dennis Davis. The webinar recording can be accessed [here](#).

This third and final webinar is concerned with addressing the state's capacity to reduce poverty and inequality in South Africa. Historically, evidence suggests that left to its own devices, the process of economic development and growth generates increased inequality: the "trickle up" effect. The moderation of income inequality involved significant public interventions in a progressive system of taxation and economic and social policy instruments that engender fairer redistribution of the proceeds of economic activities.

The webinar seeks to reflect on the type of state that is capable of addressing the twin challenges of poverty and inequality. Whether the South African state, in its current configuration, is capable of the types of public interventions that reducing poverty and inequality will require. In the context of weak state capacity and widespread concerns with poor quality of spending and corruption, what needs to be done to improve the state's capacity? Fundamentally, state capacity is not simply technical; it is also about the philosophical underpinning of the state and the elite network within society. For instance, a neoliberal state 'thinks' differently about its citizens and the issues of poverty and inequality compared with a social democratic state. What needs to change in how the state 'thinks' that would enhance the state's capacity to reduce poverty and inequality? What would be the roles of civil society and the private sector in South Africa's efforts to reduce poverty and inequality?

The webinar will be co-hosted by **Prof Jimi Adesina**, the SARChI Chair in Social Policy, and moderated by **Prof Steven Friedman**, Centre for the Study of Democracy at Rhodes University and the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

The speakers are:  
**Adj/Prof (UTC) Andrew Borraine**  
Western Cape Economic Partnership

**Prof Haroon Borat**  
Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town

**Adj/Prof (Wits) Busani Ngcaweni**  
National School of Government

**Mr Mazibuko Jara**  
Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda and Oxfam

**Prof Fiona Tregenna**  
SARChI in Industrial Development, UJ

Following an introduction and opening remarks by the co-hosts (ASSAf and the SARChI Chair in Social Policy), the webinar will take the format of 10 minute opening statements by each speaker, followed by a period of responses and answers amongst the speakers. Thereafter, the discussion will open up to the webinar audience for questions facilitated by Prof Friedman.