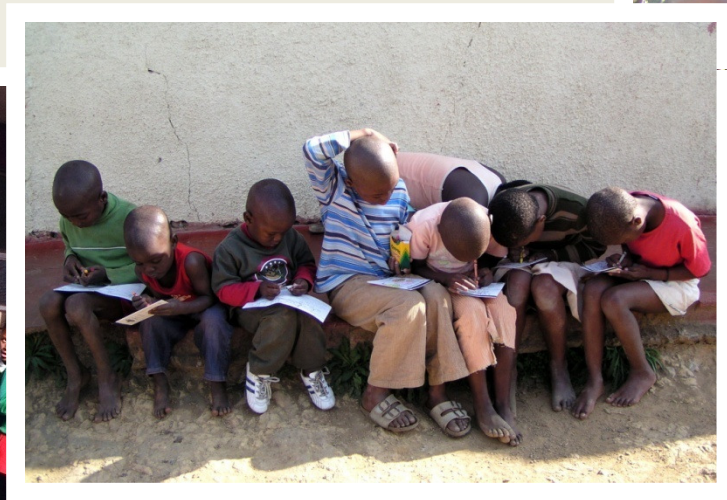


# The Challenge for Literacy



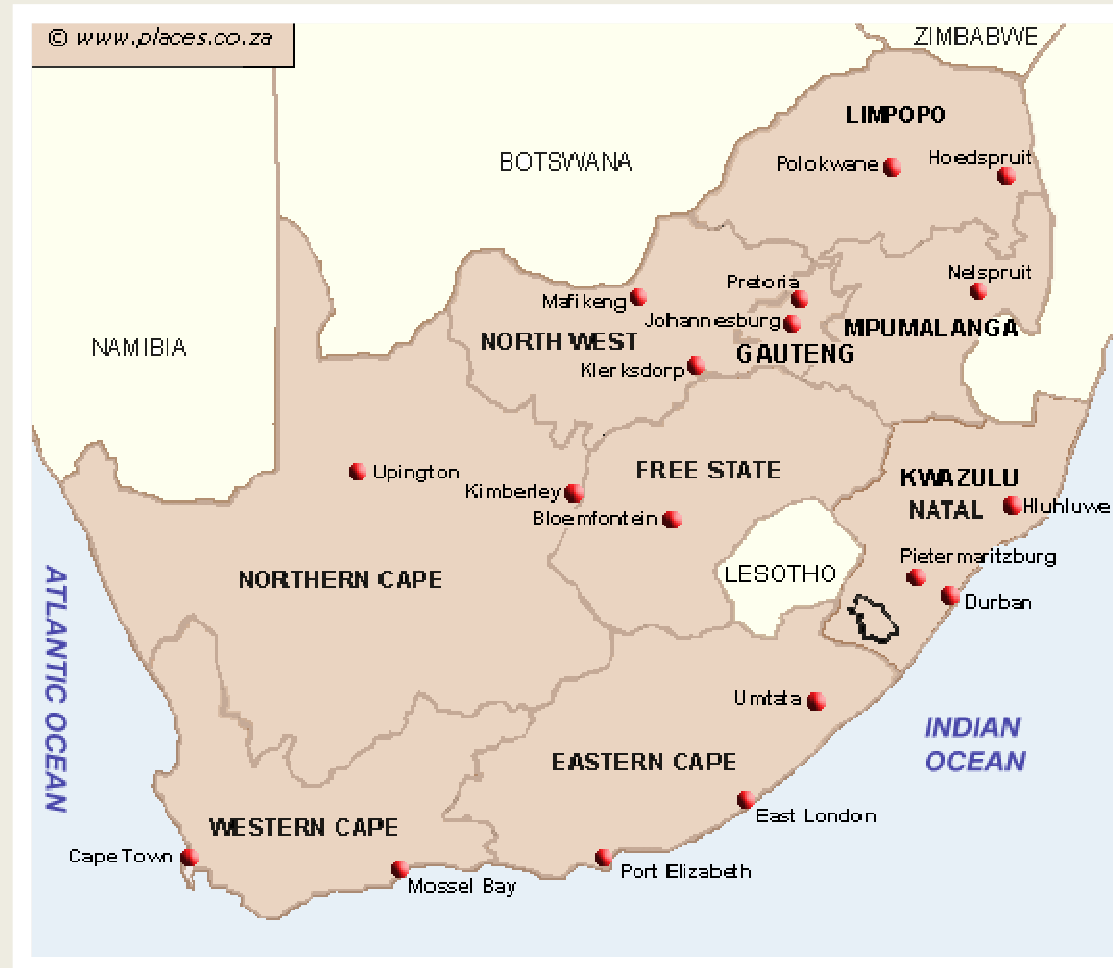
SOUTH AFRICA



UFV Educators without Borders Speakers Series  
Colleen Bell, Information Literacy & Web Services Librarian

April 2, 2009

# South Africa at a Glance



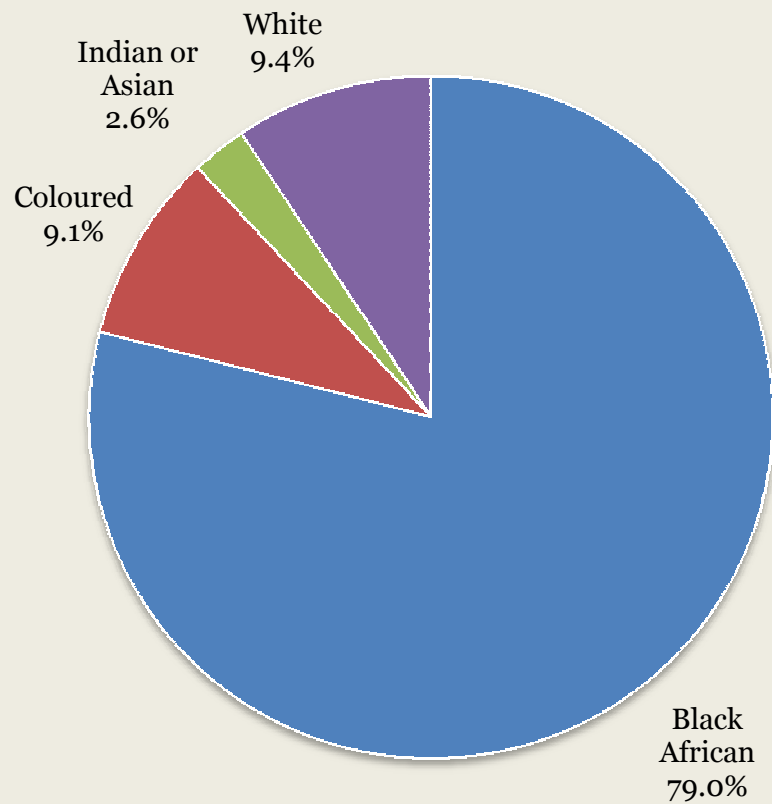
# South Africa at a Glance



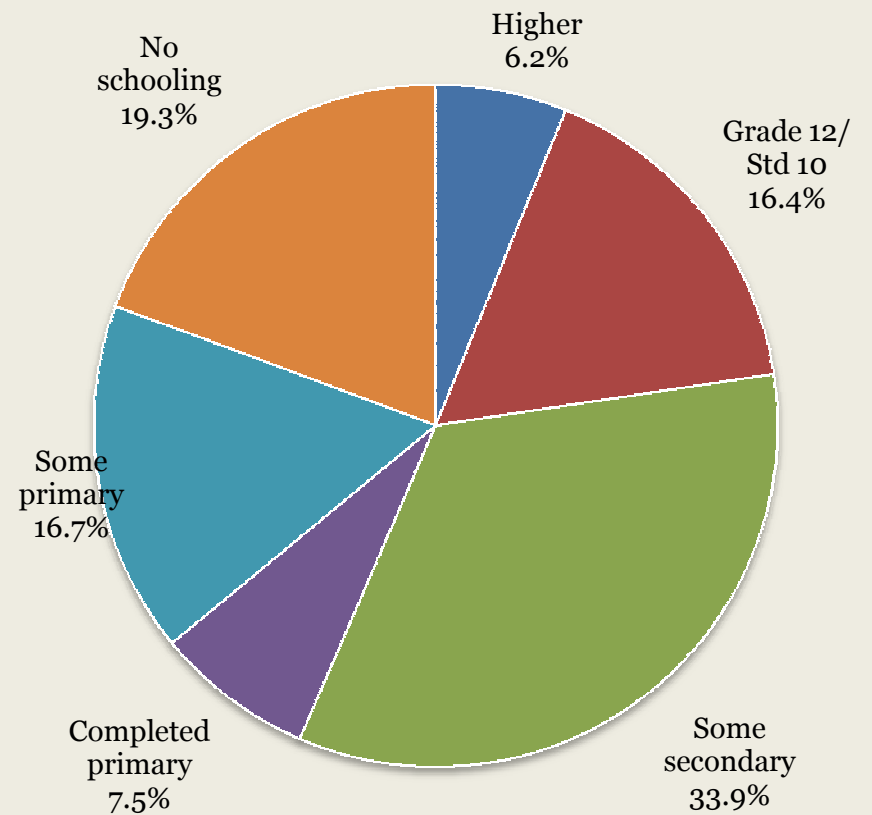
Total Population	48.6 million <sup>1</sup>
Population aged 15-49	26.1 million <sup>2</sup>
Population in urban areas	60% <sup>2</sup>
Life expectancy at birth	51 years <sup>2</sup>
Gross national income per capita (Int.\$)	\$8,900 <sup>3</sup>
Population earning <US\$1 a day	11%
Human Poverty Index ranking	55 <sup>2</sup>
Number of people living with HIV	5.7 million <sup>2</sup>
Adults aged 15 to 49 HIV/AIDS prevalence	18.1% <sup>2</sup>
Women aged 15+ living with HIV/AIDS	3.2 million <sup>2</sup>
Orphans due to AIDS aged 0 to 17	1.4 million <sup>2</sup>
Adult literacy aged 15+, both sexes	87% <sup>2</sup>

# South Africa at a Glance

## Population Group<sup>4</sup>

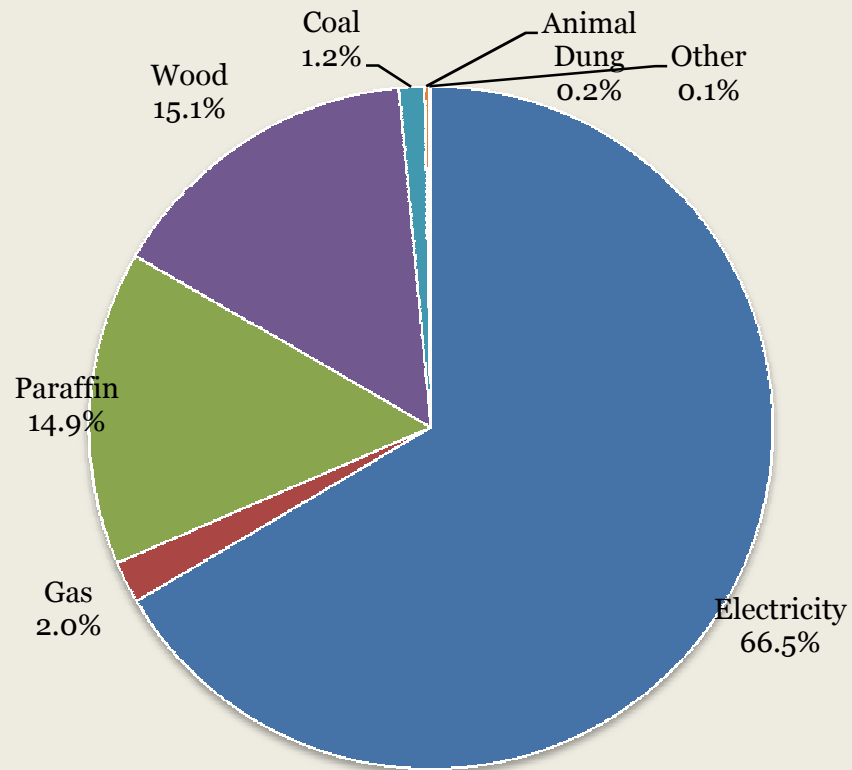


## Level of Education<sup>1</sup>

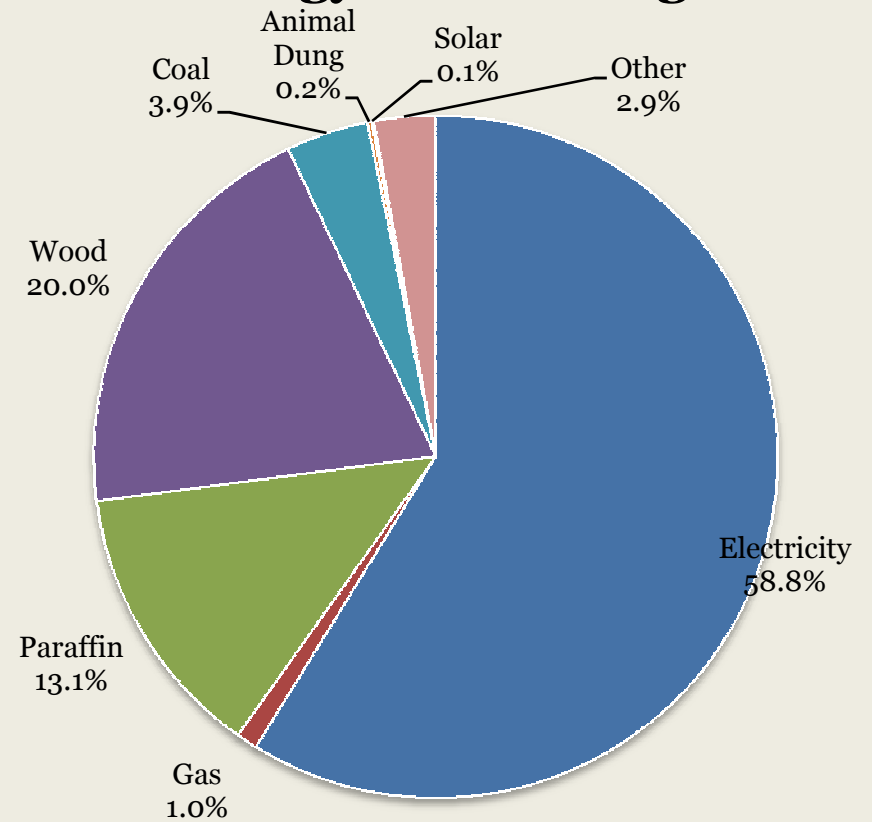


# South Africa at a Glance

## Energy for Cooking<sup>1</sup>

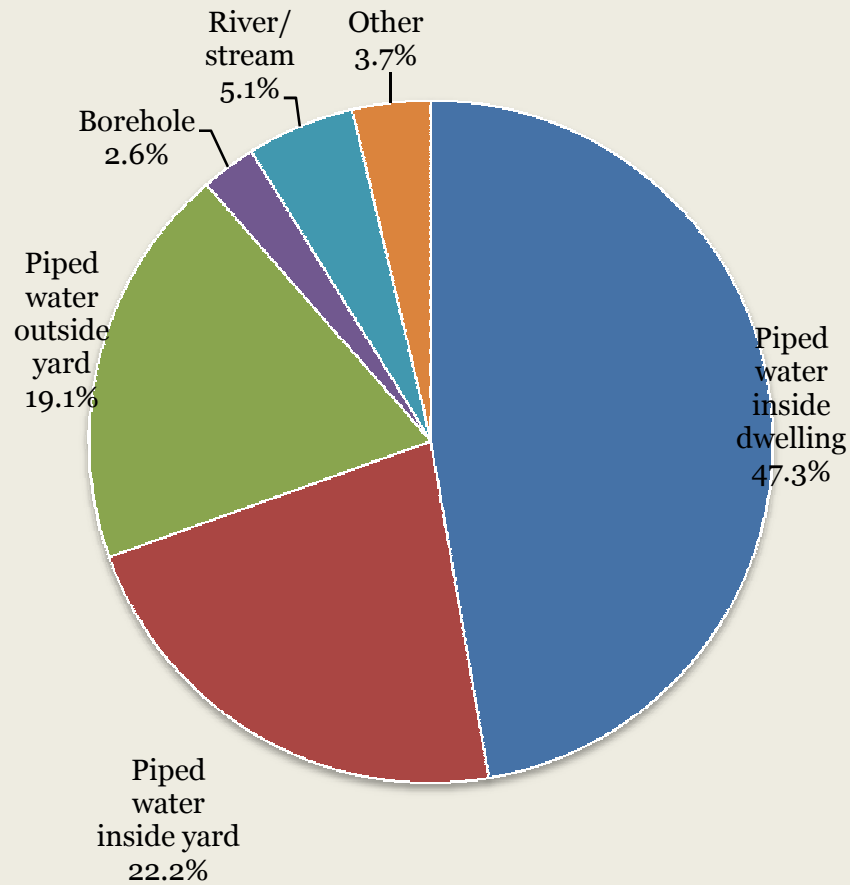


## Energy for Heating<sup>1</sup>

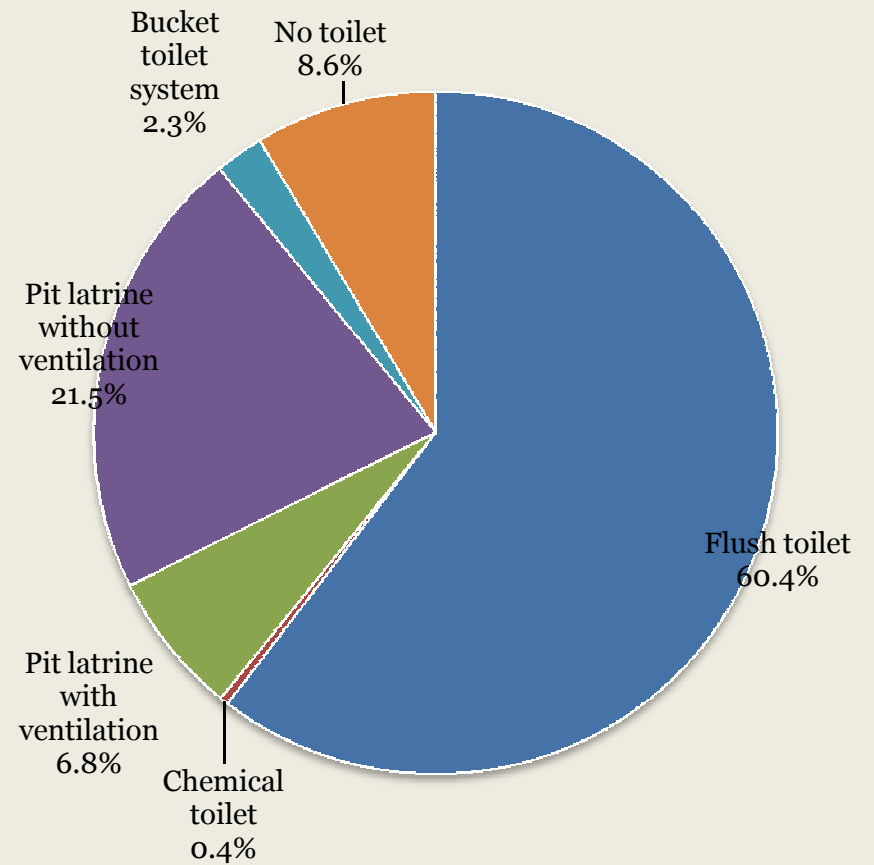


# South Africa at a Glance

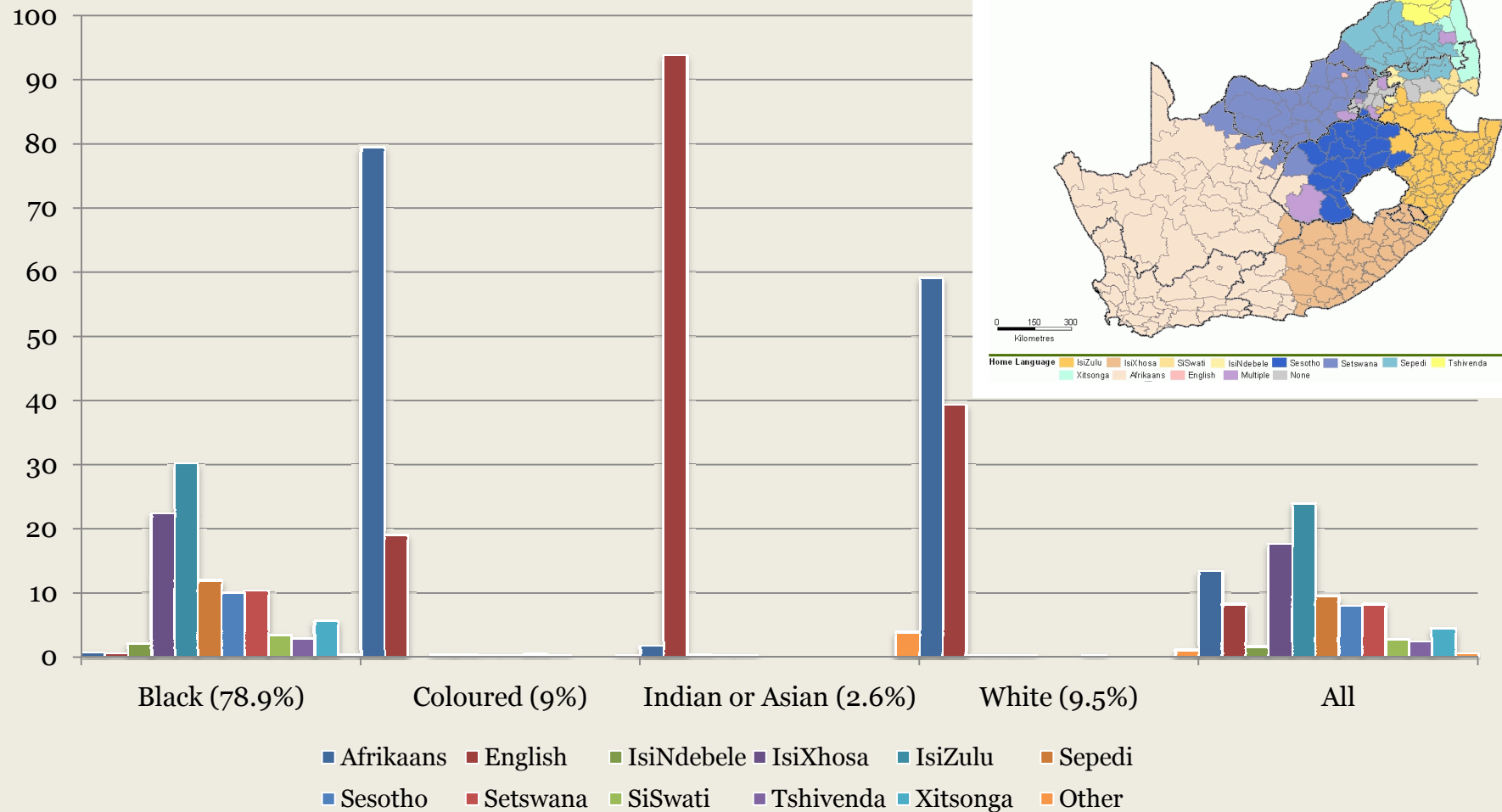
## Source of Water<sup>1</sup>



## Sanitation<sup>1</sup>



# Home Language (“Mother Tongue”), 2001<sup>5</sup>



“If you can’t read, you can’t learn.”

-Lydia Abel

# Lydia Abel



- Science teacher, 1980s
  - Students' skills at expressing themselves lacking: affected ability to say what they mean, prove what they know
- Western Cape province
  - not enough students coming out of the system with acceptable reading/writing skills
    - ✦ 30% of sample population passed literacy tests
    - ✦ by comparison, least poor schools achieved pass rate of 80%
  - huge dropout rates grade 8 and up
    - ✦ children "sorted" at early stages
    - ✦ no reading taught after grade 3
    - ✦ students promoted (to next grade) in spite of poor literacy skills (leads to higher dropout rates)
  - literacy testing in 3 languages: English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa
    - ✦ students in grades 4,5,6 given same test (2 cohorts of schools)
      - achievement rates lower on some items by third year
      - no numeracy skills
- Government solution: introduce mother tongue literacy education up to grade 6

# Liz



This progression is not happening -- many high school learners are very slow readers, use foundation-phase techniques (following with finger or ruler, vocalizing, sub-vocalizing)

- The slower the reading, the slower the comprehension
  - cannot retain information from longer passages
  - difficulty sustaining attention over even short passages
  - universities note that large numbers of students are ill-equipped for tertiary learning
- Reading and viewing are closely related
  - learners unable to “read” a picture at secondary levels
  - higher order questions cause problems
- Not a 2<sup>nd</sup> language problem
  - teachers are reading to students, rather than encouraging students to read for themselves
  - if teachers are not themselves readers, cannot inspire children to read

“To have creative writers, we  
need to have creative thinkers.”

- Karen Daniels

# Karen Daniels: Reading in South Africa



- Encourages creative writing
  - children write and illustrate the books
  - employs strategies based on Bloom's Taxonomy
    - ✦ develop higher order thinking
- Example: What would happen if Goldilocks made a different choice/chose a different path?
  - children write the story based on 3 paths
  - “choose your own adventure” model
    - ✦ at various points throughout story, reader presented with 3 choices
    - ✦ readers chooses path, is directed to specific page in book
    - ✦ turns to appropriate page to continue story

# Maurita Weissenberg: Shine Centre



- Focuses on early literacy (grades 2-3)
- Pairs children with adult learning partners (volunteers)
  - engage in reading, writing, making books
- Use games and fun activities
- Found that children do much better when paired with teacher-trained volunteers

“Most teachers in the schools were trained pre-1994 (under apartheid); there is a tremendous need for retraining of coloured and black teachers.”

# Reading/Writing Connection



(notes from small group discussion)

- Outcomes based K-12 curriculum
- 6 learning outcomes
  - reading
  - writing
  - listening
  - speaking
  - thinking & reasoning
  - language structure
- Shift from monolingual → multicultural environments
- Tremendous need for retraining of coloured and black teachers
- Desire to move from standardized testing to diagnostic testing

# Anatjie Hanekom



- In-service program for teachers at University of Stellenbosch
  - teacher training
  - teachers need to focus on reading as a form of communication
  - focus on providing best possible opportunity for students in early literacy learning, including preschool literacy development
  - teachers attend during school holidays, focus on teaching literacy
    - ✦ 1<sup>st</sup> round: preschool literacy
    - ✦ 2<sup>nd</sup> round: primary/foundation (gr. 1-3)
    - ✦ 3<sup>rd</sup> round: middle/intermediate/senior
  - instruction in both English and isiXhosa
  - goal: put a reading specialist in every school in South Africa

# Andrew Kruger



- Cape Teaching Institute, offered 3x/year for 3 weeks
  - teachers relieved from their schools to attend
  - focus on math, science, arts, literacy, life skills
  - holistic view of teacher training/in-service training
    - ✦ what's going on in the teachers' communities
- Challenges for teachers
  - multilingualism
  - large class sizes, small classrooms (40-70 learners)
  - school culture: teachers return to same chaos they left before attending CTI
  - access to resources when they return to schools is limited (computers, books, supplies)
  - teachers are not readers
  - no books in classrooms
  - children moving from illiteracy to computer literacy without first becoming literate
  - Afrikaans speaking children do not want to read or communicate in their home language
  - Grade 6 are worst performers when compared to other grades in their schools (they were in Grade 1 when the new national curriculum was implemented)
  - need for reading across the curriculum
- New strategy:
  - Gr. R-3: instruction in primary ("home") language (mother tongue)
  - Gr. 4-5: learning second language
  - Gr. 6-9: learning third language

“To speak a foreign language, one must first master the mother tongue.”

- Julius

# Pan South-African Language Board



- Established by legislative mandate in 1995
  - independent oversight
  - promote & protect South Africa's 11 official languages
    - ✦ South African constitution guarantees people the right to use their own language
    - ✦ very difficult in practice to provide equal services in multiple languages
    - ✦ 11 language bodies codify the official languages
  - promote literacy & numeracy in schools (minimal resources, of course)
- Social stratification and globalization → difficulty in seeing the value of African languages
  - division of population by language/ethnicity during apartheid has created situation where those who have suffered because of their language are unlikely to want to promote it to their children
  - parents ask: What economic prospects does my child have if she only speaks isiXhosa?
  - betrayal of the language and culture by the African people who speak the language and live within the culture
- Publishers don't see translation of books into African languages as profitable

“We need to decolonize our minds to believe that what we can do in another language we can do in our own.”

- Lorato Trok

# Harvey Daniels: Literature Circles



- involve native isiXhosa speaking students at English schools and English speakers from same schools
- practice reading English, discuss together
- English represents a better education
  - native English speakers are seen to be better educated, more accomplished, academically stronger, more desirable
- learning about grammar is a necessary part of learning about language, but would never be mistaken for reading

# Lorato Trok: First Words in Print



- How do you create literate children when they do not see their parents, their uncles, or their neighbours reading?
- Public libraries in South Africa are about studying, not reading for pleasure
  - collections are often irrelevant to the communities they serve (language, content, etc.)
  - not familiar to people growing up in townships and rural areas because they haven't grown up with them, don't understand the purpose, procedures, possibilities
- First Words in Print (Isiqalo)
  - program developed by South Africa's Centre for the Book
  - distributes packages of books in mother tongue to families so children can have their own books
  - illustrated books
    - ✦ pictures have meanings/contexts depending on environment in which children grow up (rural vs urban vs suburban)
    - ✦ careful about portraying stereotypes (women as domestics, etc.)
  - provide strategies for parents who don't read to share the books with their children

“By end of the third year, teachers began to see the value of reading to the children.”

- Xholisa

# Xholisa



- Providing mother tongue instruction in foundation phase (pre-school to grade 3)
  - 3-year program
    - ✦ introduced students to writing for pleasure
      - students wrote journals/letters to the teacher in isiXhosa or English
      - teacher responded in same language
    - ✦ teachers initially resisted reading to classes, practicing writing, & training other teachers
      - first year, Xholisa was only one reading to the children, but by end of third year, teachers were able to see the value of the program
      - no behaviour problems when students engaged in reading & writing
      - students did better at developing literacy/fluency in both languages
        - students who did not have isiXhosa in the classroom did not do well in either language
    - ✦ took books into the schools, but found errors in the translated books; worked with publishers to correct the errors
    - ✦ few books in mother tongue for foundation learners; started developing appropriate books themselves (board books, etc.)
- 2006-07: Year of African Language
  - collected stories of Africa and wrote in original language for children
    - ✦ English, Portuguese, French, Swahili, Arabic, Sesotho, Setswana (languages of African Union and cross-border languages)
    - ✦ 3 anthologies of stories that have literary merit
    - ✦ stories of life, adventure, magic, and folk tales with an African perspective

Rosie serves porridge for breakfast. The children tell her how much they hate it, but she continues to serve it because it's good for them.

# Rosie's Kitchen



- She calls it WARMTH: War on Malnutrition, Tuberculosis and Hunger
- Khyelitsha township (near Cape Town)
- Since 1980
  - 3 meals a day to local children and their parents
  - only time off was when she was recovering from burns (1985) when the neighbour's house caught on fire and destroyed hers
  - tourist heard her story and donated money to rebuild her house, including a new kitchen
  - breakfast: porridge
  - lunch (take to school): bread with peanut butter
    - ✦ used to buy 15 crates of bread every day from the same bakery
    - ✦ one day asked the owner of the bakery for a discount – he offered to give her 40 crates of bread for free every day, for as long as she runs her kitchen
    - ✦ on weekends, bakery often includes doughnuts, cake and other treats in the delivery
  - dinner: stew with soy and vegetables
    - ✦ serves chicken at least once per week
    - ✦ local butcher provides chicken twice a week in winter, once a week in summer – free
- Saturdays, she works with teenagers (age 10+) to educate them about HIV/AIDS
  - encourages abstinence, but is realistic and also teaches them to protect themselves
  - condoms are distributed for free by the government

“If you start with literacy, math  
and geography will follow.”

- National School Library Policy

# Val McCarry: ELITS



- ELITS = Education, Libraries, Information & Technology Services (KwaZulu-Natal)
- 6,560 schools in KwaZulu-Natal (less than 10% of country's land area, but largest number of schools)
- KwaZulu-Natal developed provincial school library policy
  - allowed them to start lobbying for funds; raised R6 million in first year
  - created “starter pack” library for schools
    - ✦ started with smallest schools (200-300 students)
    - ✦ UNESCO standard: 10-11 books/child
    - ✦ encyclopedias, atlases, other reference and non-fiction, and “lots and lots” of fiction
    - ✦ chose books appropriate for each school
    - ✦ books are processed centrally and distributed to schools (no professional librarians in schools)
  - lobbied for funding to train teachers at University of Natal
    - ✦ teacher librarians have dual qualifications
    - ✦ developed modules for an advanced certificate in education – school library specialist
    - ✦ 2-year program
    - ✦ May 2006 – first 84 graduates
  - Royal Netherland Embassy funded 12 major education centres (1 central + 11 satellite centres, 1 in each district)
    - ✦ provide teacher support, libraries
- Need for mother tongue instruction varies by geography; in rural areas, where English is rarely spoken, mother tongue is more important

“Take this children’s book and  
read it with your children.”

- Snoeks Desmond

# Snoeks Desmond: Family Literacy Project



- Started in 1999/2000 in KwaZulu-Natal
- Focuses on early childhood development
- Works with parents to support at home what children do in school
  - makes parents feel that their knowledge is of value
  - focuses on issues of importance:
    - ✦ AIDS
    - ✦ parenting
    - ✦ child protection
    - ✦ children's rights
    - ✦ health care
  - teaches parents in mother tongue, also teaches them to speak English
  - parents read to their children, then discuss and extend what they read about
  - encourages mothers and families to write their own stories (stories of strength/survival, family tree)
  - members go out to educate their neighbours about early childhood development and health issues
    - ✦ take books, puzzles, games
- Also working in 5 primary schools
  - programs for fun: children read, write, and draw
- School age children visit the library, but secondary students don't, so also started offering single-gender sexuality classes

# Farm Literacy Project



- Farm workers in rural areas
  - lacking education and literacy skills
  - unaware of worker's rights
- Schools are not close
- Several farm owners in Drakensburg Mountains region banded together, created school
  - Children study during the day, parents study after school day is over
  - Workers learn to read and write, plus
    - ✦ basic rights
    - ✦ computer skills
    - ✦ life skills

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# Thank You



Student choir at Tetelo High School,  
Soweto, 2004

Orphaned children near Stepmore, 2006



Children at Phelani Nutrition Centre,  
Khyelitsha, 2003

