INDICATORS OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL
EXCLUSION PROJECT

Findings from the Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion Project: Housing

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Indicators of Poverty and Social Exclusion Project

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Contents

# 1.	Introduction

This project is being carried out by the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP), which is based in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of Oxford. The project is part of the South African Department of Social Development's (DSD's) Social Policy Analysis Programme which is itself part of a wider programme sponsored by DFID Southern Africa – 'Strengthening Analytical Capacity for Evidence-Based Decision-Making' (SACED).

Poverty research in developing countries has traditionally focused narrowly on income, and often on subsistence income. This conventional approach which is based on money-metric definitions and measurement of poverty, whilst relevant, does not capture the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. Research in developed countries had a similar focus until the 1970's when a paradigm shift occurred towards concepts such as multiple deprivation and, later, social exclusion. Policy makers in South Africa, a country categorised as a middle income developing country and still suffering from deep poverty and inequality resulting from the legacy of apartheid, still tend to define poverty in narrow income terms. The wider goal of this project is to build a strong conceptual and evidence base upon which a more complete understanding of the nature of poverty and deprivation in South Africa can be built.

The IPSE project addresses the following issues:

- What definitions of poverty and social exclusion are appropriate in contemporary South Africa?
- How can such definitions be operationalised so as to create measures and indicators that will usefully inform policy-making?
- What is the extent of poverty and social exclusion in South Africa using a consensual definition?
- What does a consensual definition of poverty/social exclusion imply for policies to alleviate poverty and generate a more inclusive society?
- How does a consensual definition of poverty/social exclusion relate to subsistence-based income poverty lines?

The IPSE project has three broad stages. These are:

Qualitative Stage: A detailed description of the qualitative stage of this project is available in Ratcliffe *et al.* (2005). In brief, though, fifty focus groups were conducted as part of the IPSE project. They were held in nine of South Africa's eleven official languages; six of the nine provinces; with groups covering a range of incomes; and each of the Black African, Coloured, Indian and White population groups. A full list of places where the focus groups took place is included in **Appendix 1**. Participants discussed what they considered essential or necessities that everyone in South Africa should have, be able to do or have access to; what they thought about exclusion for certain spheres of society, and who, if anyone, was excluded; their views on poverty and the poor in South

Africa; and their aspirations for the future. The question schedule for the focus groups is contained in Ratcliffe *et al.* (2005). The aim of the qualitative phase of the project was, first, to inform the survey stage and second, to provide a valuable data set in its own right for analysis of people's views about necessities.

Survey Stage: Building on the insights coming out of the qualitative stage of the project a module was designed and incorporated into the 2005 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) – a nationally representative sample survey. The module was devised primarily to define poverty and social exclusion democratically. Questions included in SASAS have been used to generate a list of 'Socially Perceived Necessities' (Mack and Lansley, 1985) which are the basis for a set of poverty/social exclusion indicators. Additional survey questions will be incorporated into SASAS 2006 to measure the extent of poverty and social exclusion in terms of this set of democratically defined indicators.

The IPSE module in SASAS 2005 comprised 56 questions: 37 about possessions, 4 about activities, 9 about the neighbourhood and 6 about relationships with friends and family. The quantitative analysis therefore focuses on these 56 items which were all asked about in a similar way. People were asked to say whether they think each item or activity *is essential for everyone to have in order to enjoy an acceptable standard of living in South Africa today*. They were given four options as responses: 'essential' if they regarded the item or activity as essential in this way; 'desirable' if they regarded the item or activity as desirable but not essential; and 'neither' if they regarded the item or activity as neither essential nor desirable. A fourth and final category was 'don't know'. The first two of the four possible responses enable the respondents to distinguish between items that they think everyone should have, and those which they think it would be merely nice (but not essential) for everyone to have. The third category 'neither' allows respondents to state that the item or activity falls into neither of these categories (i.e. it is neither essential nor desirable).

The items in the IPSE component of the module were specifically selected to relate to a range of different standards of living. So, for example, some items were included that, though not essential for survival, might be seen by some groups as essential 'badges of inclusion'. For practical reasons, the list of 56 items was shorter than it could have been and the findings are therefore indicative rather than exhaustive. Thus for example a flush toilet was included, as was a bath and shower, but piped water to the dwelling was not included as this would be covered by default by the other two items. It was also necessary not to repeat issues that were covered elsewhere in the Survey and hence there was no question in the IPSE module as to whether having a job was a necessity as this was already prominent in other parts of the survey. A list of the responses to the 56 items is shown in **Appendix 2**.

Analysis Stage: The data generated by the SASAS module are being analysed to provide a detailed, multidimensional picture of poverty and social exclusion in South Africa. This stage of the project is ongoing.

Aim of this report

A number of themed reports are currently in preparation which arise mainly from the analysis of the qualitative phase of the project. Where information is available this qualitative material is supplemented with analysis of the IPSE module contained within SASAS 2005. This report is one of the themed reports and focuses on housing.

This report begins with a brief overview of the housing policy context and the housing situation in South Africa, based on the 2001 Census. Subsequent sections are devoted to the analysis of findings from the focus groups and the module in SASAS 2005, which relate specifically to housing in South Africa.

2.   Housing in South Africa

2.1   Housing in South Africa: a brief overview of housing policy since 1994

In order to best understand and locate the views expressed and held by participants in the various focus groups conducted, a brief overview of the South African housing policy since 1994 is important and relevant. It should be noted as well that the specific views expressed in the focus groups will relate to participants' backgrounds and experiences depending on whether they reside in informal settlements, RDP housing developments, farm labour compounds, rural villages, black townships with four room houses, or up-market suburbs.

During the apartheid period, provision of housing, especially to Black African people, was not seen as a key priority by the government. Many townships were built across the country by the apartheid government. Houses for families and single-sex hostels for migrant workers were provided during this period. Some of the houses built by the apartheid government have since been transferred to occupants. According to the *Towards a Ten Year Review* (October 2003: 25) over 481,000 of these houses were transferred through the discount benefit scheme since 1994. However, when the democratic government came into power in 1994 there were serious housing backlogs that the new government had to face and deal with. The first post-apartheid housing policy document *A New Housing Policy for South Africa* acknowledged that:

> *'Housing the nation is one of the greatest challenges facing the Government of National Unity. The extent of the challenge derives not only from the enormous size of the housing backlog and the desperation and impatience of the homeless, but stems also from the extremely complicated bureaucratic, administrative, financial and institutional framework inherited from the previous government.'*
> (Department of Housing, 1994)

In 1994, 1.5 million families in urban and rural areas had no access to adequate housing (Department of Housing, 2004a). This was approximately 13.5% of all South African households (Department of Housing, 1994). In the Reconstruction and Development Progamme (ANC, 1994) this lack of housing was seen to have reached 'crisis proportions'.

When the African National Congress (ANC) contested the 1994 democratic elections, one of its main slogans was *'Housing for all'*. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which was the election manifesto for the ANC and its alliance partners (Congress of South African Trade Unions and South African Communist Party), set a specific target for the provision of housing. A minimum of a million houses were to be built in five years as part of meeting basic needs objectives contained in the RDP.

Importantly there was a clear indication of the requirements to be met by houses that were to be provided. On housing standards:

> '*As a minimum, all housing must provide protection from weather, a durable structure, and reasonable living space and privacy. A house must include sanitary facilities, storm-water drainage, a household energy supply (whether linked to grid electricity supply or derived from other sources, such as solar energy), and convenient access to clean water. Moreover, it must provide for secure tenure in a variety of forms. Upgrading of existing housing must be accomplished with these minimum standards in mind.*' (ANC, 1994: 2.5.7).

It was with these over-arching objectives and plans in mind that the democratic government set out to create a new housing policy environment for the country. The first instalment in this regard was *A New Housing Policy for South Africa* (1994) produced after a Housing Summit held in Botshabelo on the 27th October 1994 which involved stakeholders and various actors in housing provision. This document set out the commitment of the national government with an emphasis on meeting basic needs and ensuring that all South Africans have access to basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity and socio-cultural amenities. The goal of establishing 'viable, socially and economically integrated communities with access to economic opportunities as well as health, educational and social amenities' was expressed.

It is important to note that during this time the notion of housing as a basic human right, coupled with the issue of human dignity, moved from being a political aspiration to being included and entrenched in key state documents. The RDP endorsed the principle that 'all South Africans have a right to a secure place in which to live in peace and dignity' and housing was seen as a human right. The document *A New Housing Policy for South Africa* (1994) followed suit. Of critical relevance though was the recognition of housing as a right and the inclusion of this right within the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. In South Africa 'everyone has a right to have access to adequate housing' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa). This right to have access to adequate housing forms one of the main principles around which the National Department of Housing in South Africa formulates its programmes and interventions. 'Restoring and furthering human dignity and citizenship' is cited as one of the key principles guiding housing policy and strategy (Department of Housing, 2003). The South African government has also committed itself to the United Nations Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). Two of the MDGs are relevant to housing in South Africa. The one is the commitment to 'halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation'. The indicator for this goal is the 'proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source', and the 'proportion of population with access to improved sanitation' in urban and rural areas. The second relevant MDG is 'by 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers with the indicator being the 'proportion of households with access to secure tenure'.

Within this policy framework, the next question to ask is how far, and to what effect, has the post-1994 democratic South African government gone in meeting the housing

challenge and fulfilling the right of access to housing? Again the views of focus group participants considered in the next section are obviously linked to state intervention on housing. This calls for a brief overview of developments on provision of housing to date.

Access to housing is seen as part of the state's response towards poverty reduction and improving the quality of life of South African citizens ((Department of Housing, 2004a: 26). Different types of houses have been built in South Africa by provincial governments and these units have been handed over to those in need of housing. Almost 2.5 million subsidies[1] have been approved since the subsidy scheme was started, and just over 1.5 million housing units have been completed or under construction since 1994 ((Department of Housing, 2004a: 12,14). This has seen 6 million citizens benefiting from housing provision between 1994 and 2003 (Presidency, 2003: 25,26). These figures have continued to grow: between 1994 and June 2005, 1.7 million housing units were provided to more than seven million people (Burger, 2005, p.404). Special categories of people in need such as female headed households and people with disabilities have been targeted in the Department of Housing's programmes resulting in 49% of subsidies being allocated to women (Presidency, 2003) and 51% of subsidies going to the same group according to the Department's 2004 Annual Report.

Housing institutions which are also aligned to the Department of Housing and accountable to parliament have been created. One of these is the South African Housing Fund which aims to 'provide adequate funds for provincial governments to establish and maintain habitable, stable and sustainable residential environments' (Department of Housing, 2004a: 19). Others include the National Home-Builders Registration Council, the National Housing Finance Corporation, the National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency, Servcon Housing Solutions, Thubelisha Homes, Social Housing Foundation, People's Housing Process, and the Rural Housing Loan Fund. And there continues to be a firm commitment to produce more housing. For example, President Mbeki stated that 'in the next three years we will spend R14.2 billion to help our people to have access to basic shelter' (Mbeki, 2004). However, the challenge still remains enormous, partly because the average household size is continuing to decrease (Presidency, 2003; Hemson and O'Donovan, 2006). It is estimated that the housing backlog will be around 1.8 million in 2008/9, i.e. 1.8 million households will be living in slums (Hemson and O'Donovan, 2006, p.25).

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[1] The Department of Housing provides different types of housing subsidies (individual, project linked, consolidation, institutional, relocation assistance, discount benefit, rural subsidy and peoples housing process). See **www.housing.gov.za** .

In spite of the many achievements, a number of problems have been identified in addition to the ongoing housing shortage. Issues of the pace of provision, the build quality, the amount of the housing subsidy and the size of the housing units have come under scrutiny and have been commented on by a number of researchers in South Africa. It is important to note that some of the participants in the focus groups expressed the same concerns. As Hemson and Owusu-Ampomah observe:

> *'There are concerted efforts to improve the quality of lives of all living in South Africa. These efforts have yielded modest gains in terms of access to services such as housing, water and sanitation, education, electricity and health. However, several questions remain unresolved, most of which revolve around the sustainability and adequacy of service delivery to the poor, particularly with the provision of free basic services.'* (HSRC, 2004: 532)

Terreblanche states that 'many of the houses built are of poor quality' (Terreblanche, 2002:4). This same point is raised in UNDP's South African Human Development Report (2003) as many of the completed housing units have problems of size (too small), inferior design, have poor thermal performance and a low resistance to damp. The issue of quality and what passes for and is defined as formal housing is also raised by Bhorat, Poswell and Naidoo in *Dimensions of Poverty in Post-Apartheid South Africa: 1996-2001*. Looking at Limpopo the authors, in a footnote, note that:

> *'The structure of formal homes in Limpopo is such that 71% of these dwellings have walls made of brick with the remainder made of cement blocks or concrete. Eighty six percent of the roofs are constructed of corrugated iron or zinc. These structures are defined as formal according to the materials with which they are built. It should be noted that even though they are more durable than traditional homes, the structures are often simple shells which will scarcely be found with, for example, a flush or chemical toilet.'* (Bhorat, Poswell and Naidoo, 2004:5)

There has been acknowledgement of these problems from the Department of Housing. As stated in the Department's 2003/4 annual report and in *South Africa's Progress Report: Human Settlements (2004)* there is a need to improve the quality of housing construction which is seen as 'uneven and requires further attention'. The *South Africa's Progress Report: Human Settlements* (2004) cites what it refers to as 'the generally poor quality and peripheral location of low-income housing projects'. According to the same report, South Africa 'does not have a policy to address the needs and priorities of people living in informal settlements'. Hemson and Owusu-Ampomah, referring to people living in informal settlements state that:

> *'... there is a warning to government contained in the high levels of dissatisfaction on all fronts expressed by those living in the informal settlements. Caught on the urban periphery, this sizeable grouping lives in deep poverty without secure education for children, and with insecure access to health and the illusive promise of housing.'* (HSRC, 2004: 533),

The concerns on the developments in housing provision in South Africa have seen the Department of Housing undergoing a policy shift 'from just the provision of houses and moved towards the creation of more sustainable human settlements' (Department of Housing, 2004b), in the form of a Comprehensive Housing Plan for the Development of Integrated Sustainable Human Settlements (2004). The concern is now with quality rather than quantity (Department of Housing, 2004b). The same view is expressed in the Department of Housing's annual report as funds are now provided to build, among others, community halls, play facilities for children and parks for recreational purposes. These were some of the facilities for communities that were raised in the focus groups. According to the UNDP's South African Human Development Report 'a lack of understanding about what constitutes adequate housing, together with insufficient funding (heightened by inflation), resulted in the building of substandard houses.' (UNDP, 2003: 35). The new Comprehensive Housing Plan 'includes the development of low-cost housing, medium-density accommodation and rental housing; stronger partnerships with the private sector; social infrastructure; and amenities. The plan also aims to change spatial settlement patterns, informed by the need to build multicultural communities in a non-racial society' (Burger, 2006, p404; see also Skweyiya, 2006). This is complemented by the Special Integrated Presidential Project for Urban Renewal which has been initiated in 31 communities with the aim 'to ensure an integrated approach to the provision of infrastructure, housing, community and recreation facilities, and job opportunities [..and..] to transform previously disadvantaged communities and create sustainable and habitable living environments' (Burger, 2006, p.413).

2.2   Housing in South Africa: the 2001 Census

To further enrich the discussion on housing policy and state intervention in the provision of housing, this section looks at housing in South Africa with figures from the 2001 Census. The following tables, derived from the 2001 Census Community Profiles, provide figures on proportions of South Africans in different types of dwellings with a breakdown by population group and ownership status. As Table 2 illustrates, the majority of South Africans lived in a 'house or brick structure on a separate stand or yard'. However, this is clearly a very broad category which conceals a high degree of variation in housing quality, size and overcrowding. Just over 15% of households lived in informal dwellings of one type or another in 2001 and a similar proportion of households live in traditional dwellings.

Table 2: Numbers and Proportions of South African Households by Dwelling Type

Housing Type	Number of Households	Percentage of all households
House or brick structure on a separate stand or yard	6,238,458	53.00
Traditional dwelling/hut/structure made of traditional materials	1,654,790	14.06
Flat in block of flats	589,112	5.01
Town/cluster/semi-detached house (simplex; duplex; triplex)	319,869	2.72
House/flat/room in back yard	412,376	3.50
Informal dwelling/shack in back yard	459,528	3.90
Informal dwelling/shack NOT in back yard	1,376,707	11.70
Room/flatlet not in back yard but on shared property	120,606	1.02
Caravan or tent	30,603	0.26
Private ship/boat	3656	0.03
Not applicable (living quarters is not housing unit)	564,569	4.80
Total	**11,770,274**	**100.00**

Table 3 below shows that a substantially lower proportion of Black African households[2] live in a 'house or brick structure on a separate stand or yard' compared with other population groups. One in five Black African households live in informal types of dwelling compared with tiny proportions of White or Indian/Asian households. Just under one in five Black African households live in traditional dwellings.

Table 3: Proportion of Households Living in each Dwelling Type by Population Group

Dwelling Type	Population Group			
	Black African	*Coloured*	*Indian or Asian*	*White*
House or brick structure on a separate stand or yard	48	72	65	71
Traditional dwelling/hut/structure made of traditional materials	18	3	1	1
Flat in block of flats	4	7	14	11
Town/cluster/semi-detached house (simplex; duplex; triplex)	1	6	12	10
House/flat/room in back yard	4	3	4	2
Informal dwelling/shack in back yard	5	3	0	0
Informal dwelling/shack NOT in back yard	15	4	1	0
Room/flatlet not in back yard but on shared property	1	1	1	1
Caravan or tent	0	0	0	0
Private ship/boat	0	0	0	0
Not applicable (living quarters is not housing unit)	5	2	1	4
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

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[2] The population group of a household is defined by reference to the population group of the head of household.

Table 4 shows the patterns of ownership versus renting for the different population groups. Black African households are seen to have higher rates of both ownership and rent-free occupation than other population groups. However, it must again be borne in mind that these categories are very broad and that higher ownership levels for Black Africans may be partly explained by their relative concentration in informal settlements or difficulties with accessing mortgage credit.

Table 4: **Ownership Status: Proportions of Households by Population Group**

Ownership Status	Population Group			
	Black African	*Coloured*	*Indian or Asian*	*White*
Owned and fully paid off	41	34	33	35
Owned but not yet paid off	9	23	36	35
Rented	16	24	27	24
Occupied rent-free	28	17	2	3
Not applicable	5	2	1	4
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

3.   Project findings in relation to housing

Given the relatively unstructured, but controlled nature of focus group discussions based on 'a predetermined set of discussion topics' (Morgan 1998), issues are not always neatly separated from one and other. To illustrate this point, housing was often discussed in the context of wider issues such as neighbourhood, community and general living environment concerns including state provision of electricity, water, proper roads, safety and social amenities. Therefore for the purpose of analysis it is necessary to define the scope and limits of what is to be covered under the theme of 'housing'. For the purposes of this report, housing is narrowly defined to include only issues and things directly related to the physical structure of the house, what constitutes an acceptable standard for a house, and why a house is considered essential. As far as is practicable, issues pertaining to neighbourhood level provision are not covered here as it was felt that they warranted a detailed analysis in their own right. This distinction sometimes feels artificial but it is maintained as far as possible, for clarity.

The issue of housing, a house or shelter was raised in the focus groups in the first section (see 2.2 Focus group topics and questions) as an essential without prompting, as well as in the later sections. Participants also had their views on aspects of housing such as the types of materials a proper house must be built with; minimum number of divided rooms a house must have; protection from the elements; and types of dwellings, such as shacks, that are not acceptable for South Africans to live in. Important to note is the fact that a house, housing or shelter was mentioned the most by participants as one of the 'essentials that each and every South African should have and that no one should have to do without'. Turning to the SASAS survey – 'a house that is strong enough to stand up to the weather e.g. rain, wind' was regarded by 91% of respondents to be 'essential' – the second most highly rated in the inventory included in the Survey (see **Appendix 2** for the full list of items).

Some of the direct comments from participants regarding shelter, a house and housing are presented below.

3.1   Acceptability/decency

Those who participated in the focus groups had a very clear idea of what was acceptable when it came to housing. Different terms were used, such as: 'acceptable', 'decent', 'minimum standard', 'respectable', and so on, but the idea that there was a cut-off point between what was an acceptable standard of housing and what was not, came through with great clarity.

There was a common terminological shift that occurred in the focus groups that bears on the notion of acceptability. When asked to list essentials focus group participants tended to mention 'shelter' very early in the discussion (usually immediately after food, clothing, and water). The term 'shelter' brought with it quite minimal implications. However, once the idea of shelter was probed for further details, discussion tended to turn quickly to 'housing', moving beyond the mere availability of shelter, and an adequate standard of housing was then described by people in detail. This difference between shelter and housing illustrates an important conceptual and methodological point for the discussion of 'essentials' and 'necessities'. When initially asked 'what are the essentials, that each and every south African should have access to and which no-one should have to do without?' participants tended to treat the question in quite abstract terms and gave minimal and sparse responses such as food, water, clothing, shelter. However, on probing it was clear that the participants had more than basic shelter in mind and frequently commented on the minimum quality of housing acceptable.

Many participants seemed to think of housing in terms of a clear hierarchy of acceptability: with informal settlements ('shacks') at the bottom and representing unacceptable shelter; rising through hostels, and through state provided RDP housing; four room houses typical in black townships; to large suburban houses. Hostels and traditional dwellings were generally placed above shacks but below or approximately level with RDP housing on this scale.

In all focus groups, regardless of the type of housing in which the participants themselves lived, informal dwellings were considered a completely unacceptable form of housing. Many problems with informal dwellings were identified. These will be discussed in greater detail below, but the main concerns were: safety, permanence, keeping out the weather, hygiene and health. The views of some participants are shown below to illustrate some of the more commonly expressed views.

> *'That house must be secure, it must be a house like this one that we are in now, a well-built one, not a house that is erected with zincs* [i.e. corrugated iron sheets] *...I mean mekhukhu* [i.e. shacks in informal settlements]*...it must be an appropriate house which one can safely sleep in.'* (Black African low income urban)

> *'Housing needs. We have been living in these shacks for a long time. These shacks leak water. This is not an ideal for a human being to stay.* (Black African low income urban)

> *'You don't get respect if you don't have a house especially if you are living with children. You are not secure if you are living in a shack.'* (Black African low income urban)

> *'You get different houses, but my dream is just to have a brick house. I am so tired of "plank houses".'* (Coloured low income urban)

> *'I see poor as people that live in a "pondokkie" and you see that inside the house they use candles. There is no electricity. That is poor. The people sleep in one bed and cannot afford another bed. There is no water or tap in the house, but it is outside and there are no candles. They cook on a prima stove and there are also no curtains. That is a person that cannot provide for his family.'* (Coloured high income urban)

The consensus on the acceptability or otherwise of state housing provision was less strong. Some participants considered that RDP housing provided a basic but acceptable minimum standard…

> *'Every family must at least have an RDP house'* (Black African low income rural)

> '[On the government's responsibilities with respect to housing] *To assist us to have a comfortable house, even if it's a 2 room brick house with electricity and a flush toilet.'* (Coloured low income urban)

> '[On whether RDP houses are of an acceptable standard] *Yes, I think that's acceptable because coming from nothing I think it's essential that you have a house. It might vary depending on what your job is and how much you're earning but the essential is to have a house.'* (Indian high income urban)

Others, however, thought that some RDP houses had major short-comings and did not constitute an adequate standard of housing (provision can vary considerably from province to province and area to area). Particular problems included: the fact that RDP houses are sometimes not divided into rooms, children and parents having to share a bedroom, sub-standard building, and hygiene issues.

> *'There are some RDP houses that I think are not properly built. They are single rooms and on top of that have a toilet inside … when the toilet gets blocked the whole house smells. That type of RDP house is not alright.'* (Black African low income rural)

'... you've got a case where the thing is literally 3 metres by 3 metres, even smaller than this class that we're standing in. And that's for a family. That's provided by the government.' (Coloured high income urban)

The conditions in some RDP housing are so bad that as one member of an African urban focus group put it: *'Some RDP house owners return to their shacks.'*

The following exchange, which took place in a focus group with high income Indian women in Durban is quoted in full, as it illustrates many of the important issues and debates surrounding the quality of RDP housing:

D: *'Across the board? I think its essential for my life. But if I'm looking at a house I'm talking about South Africa as a place, an economy, a country then when someone says I need a house they need a roof over their head where they can stay away from the wind, the rain, the heat. It can be one bedroom and a toilet and a bathroom and I will be happy because I have got something over my head. I don't need a car, I don't need a garage, I don't need a lounge, as long as I can be clean, I can be in my house and I am free. That's good enough for me.'*

N: *'I disagree with that. If you look at all those houses that have been built up at Pavillion. […] They were built with just a toilet and one room but you find that the moment people take ownership of the house the blocks go up. Because I don't think people can really live in a one room, one kitchen place.'*

D: *'But they move people from shacks, they're moving people in from places of instability and to them its luxury and if they want to expand that's fine, but you're giving them a basic necessity... What they do with it afterwards is purely their decision which is based on their lifestyle.'*

N: *'So, you're talking about luxuries and essentials and what's essential in a persons life. To give them just a little block room, no human being, maybe an animal would live like that, but no human being.'*

D: *'That's not true, they've come from shacks, they have one room.'*

N: *'Have you been inside a shack?'*

P: *'But we're talking about bare necessities, that's what I would call an essential. Otherwise, how would you define essential?'*

D: *'The difference is that a shack is a temporary structure but the government is trying to offer them a permanent structure.'*

C: *'Exactly.'*

N: *'But I think they are falling short there, they should never do that. They should think about the needs of people. In the past when they had built little structures for people they never ever built them that way.'*

Facilitator: *'So, with these government structures, what is it about them that you think is not good enough?'*

M: *'They don't have rooms. You can't live like that with everyone in one room.'*

P: *'But compare it to the shacks, at least it's a building that won't fall down. In a shack if you have a strong wind you're left with nothing.'*

N: *'The government should provide them with healthy living environments. Don't give them something where the husband, wife, children all sleep in the same room.'*

M: *'But then living in the shack they were doing the same thing. What's essential is to have a home that is stable.'*

N: *'Home is where you can live healthily, where you don't have to have the parents and the children all living in the same room.'*

C: *'Not everybody can afford a two bedroom house. Look at it this way, with the inequality in our country, should you give one person a three bedroom house or make ten people happy, give ten people the essentials in life.'*

N: *'I think if the government did things properly and planned things carefully they could build better things for people.'*

As well as having a clear idea of what type of house, in general, is acceptable, participants were often able to elucidate a very detailed picture of an acceptable house. This picture went right down to the household goods that they would expect to see in the house, and the idea of a cut-off between what is acceptable and what is not seemed to inform participant's comments on many aspects of the housing issue.

3.2   The benefits a house brings

One of the great advantages of using a focus group methodology is that the *reasons* behind a respondent's beliefs and attitudes can be explored. So, as well as being asked about what they thought was the minimum necessary standard for housing in South Africa, participants were also asked *why* they thought a particular thing was necessary. This applied to specific items, for example for those who said that electricity was an essential for the home were asked why, and to what uses they put electricity. It also

applied to more general issues. So, participants were asked what it was that having a house brought them, what benefits and advantages made having a house so important.

Although it may be very obvious that everyone needs a house in which to live, respondents were still able to give reasons for the importance of having a house. Foremost among these, was the sense of security that having a house can bring. The following quotes across all population groups and income levels illustrate the point:

> *'A house is important because you get security. We were not born in the jungle and a person has a right to stay in a house. You also get warmth.'*

> *'When you have a house you have a place to sleep, rest, feel safe and do all our things'*

> *'Ok must have. If you want to be basic then you can say a roof over your head. That you have security and a place to go to, a place of origin that you know you can go to and be safe, you don't have to worry about where you are going to tomorrow and what you have to do.'*

> '[on shacks] *It is a house not a home; you can never feel 100% secure in a shack'*

These qualitative findings are reinforced by the quantitative data where general issues relating to safety were defined as essential by a high percentage of the population: burglar bars (64%); safe places for children to play outside the house (78%); a police presence in the neighbourhood all featured as socially perceived necessities (77%). Security was a persistent theme in regard to housing and is dealt with in more depth in a later section.

Another important benefit that a house brings, according to the focus group participants, was respect. Whether it is self-respect or the respect of others.

> *'You don't get respect if you don't have a house especially if you are living with children. You are not secure if you are living in a shack.'* (Black African low income urban)

> *'House is home, without a home you do not feel like a human being'* (Black African low income urban)

Linked to both the sense of security a house can bring, and the sense of respect one can derive from it, was the importance of *owning* one's own house. Many focus group participants showed an extremely strong sense of the importance of owning one's own house, as opposed to renting a house or sharing with others. The sense of security that comes from owning your home was mentioned in this regard, but, more widely, 'having something of your own' was viewed by many participants as an end in itself.

> *'You must have your own piece of land, house and must be able to work your way up at work to get a good salary.'* (Coloured low income urban)

The final, but in some ways the most important, benefit that a house was said to bring was that it served as a foundation for the home. A number of participants drew the distinction between the house as a building, and the home which was centred around the family. A widely held view was that a secure and decent house was a necessary, but of course not sufficient, condition for a good family life.

> *'A house allows your family to be together'* (Black African middle income urban)
> *'You cannot have a family if you do not have a house...'* (Black African middle income urban)

3.3 Physical structure: size, structure and materials, keeping out the elements, permanence and security

Size

When asked to describe the necessities when it comes to housing, many participants began by discussing the size and physical structure of the house. Some of the main issues raised by participants with regard to the physical size and structure of a house included: overall size; number of rooms; building materials; keeping out the weather; and the permanence of the structure.

The importance of having a house that was of an adequate size, and which was not overcrowded, was mentioned repeatedly in the focus groups. The fact that a house must be of an appropriate size for the family that lived there was particularly stressed. Some participants went into greater detail and stated the number of rooms they thought a house should have. The following quotes give a flavour of some of the more commonly expressed views:

> *'You must have a house so that if you have a large family, you can all live in the same house. You can be free and not in a small house where you're all squashed in.'* (Indian low income urban)

> '[the standard should be] *A four roomed house with two bedrooms, a dining room and a kitchen'* (Black African low income rural)

> '[the standard should be] *Maybe a house with 2 sleeping rooms, kitchen, lounge and a toilet.'* (Coloured low income urban)

When it came to the structure of the house it was not only the overall size that seemed to matter but also the division into rooms, and the number of bedrooms. Government-built 'RDP' houses were criticised by participants because they were often built without being

divided into separate rooms (see previous section on government provision). This was seen to be a major problem, particularly because many participants did not consider it acceptable for parents and children to sleep in the same bedroom.

> *'I don't agree that a house should have one sleeping room, at least two it's important that children should have their own space'* (Coloured middle income urban)

Again this is reflected in the SASAS findings: 85% of the nationally representative sample felt that separate bedrooms for adults and children are a necessity in contemporary South Africa.

Structure and materials

Participants in the focus groups also showed concern about the strength of the physical structure of the house, and what materials it is made of:

> *'I long to live in a brick house with my children. I'm sick of this dripping, smelling shack.'* (Black African low income urban)

> *'You get different houses, but my dream is just to have a brick house. I am so tired of "planke houses".'* (Coloured low income urban)

> *'Every person must have a house that is a home. A properly built house which is big enough with a plan, built with blocks.'* (Black African middle income urban)

The idea that a 'proper' house must be built from bricks or blocks came through clearly in a number of focus groups. Often, this point was made in contrast to the inadequacy of informal settlements or shacks. Participants who lived in informal settlements themselves made this point very strongly.

Keeping out the elements

Another aspect of the structure of the house that was considered important by many participants was that it 'keeps out the weather'. Rain coming into the house, and damp being a problem were mentioned repeatedly as problems for houses that were not properly built. Again, these problems were particularly relevant for those living in informal settlements but when asked whether '*a house that keeps out the weather*' or '*A house that can keep the rain and wind away'*. was regarded as an essential, over 95% of focus group participants agreed that it was. As already seen, the quantitative study also showed that a very high percentage of the overall population (91%) thought that a weatherproof house was an essential.

Housing that let the rain in was linked by participants to the problem of poor housing impacting on health. Participants said that damp housing caused many health problems, particularly for babies and young children. Similarly, poor sanitation was raised as a

serious health issue. Problems included: poor or non-existent sewage systems within the house, inadequate facilities for washing, inadequate or non-existent systems for refuse removal.

> *'Municipality don't go into squatter camps, people in squatter camps dump their waste just next to where they live. They can easily be infected with diseases because of the rubbish'* (Black African low income urban)

Permanence

A more general issue relating to the physical structure of housing was the need for the building to provide a feeling of permanence (the sense of stability and security is discussed in greater detail above). Participants repeatedly mentioned the fact that informal housing is easily destroyed. The vulnerability of such housing to completely collapse when faced with heavy rain or strong winds was a major concern. As was the high risk of fire in informal settlements.

> *'I do not think the ones built with corrugated iron are alright. Its better when built with blocks. The ones built with corrugated iron get blown away by the wind'*(Black African low income rural)

> *'Yes, it must be built with bricks because when it is built with bricks it is rare that it can attract fire just like it is the case with those that are built with tents and plastics.'* (Black African low income urban)

Security

As well as keeping out the weather, a structurally solid house was considered essential by many participants because it helped prevent crime and ensured security. In a number of focus groups the importance of having a strong, lockable, secure house was mentioned. Security (personal safety and safety of belongings and possessions) was raised and highlighted by participants under Necessities for South African society (Section A - Focus Group Questionnaire), Exclusion, Inclusion and Participation (Section B - Focus Group Questionnaire) and Aspirations (Section D - Focus Group Questionnaire). The personal safety of family members was mentioned and in particular, participants felt that it was important that they could feel secure when leaving their house that their property would be safe inside. Similarly, some participants were worried about leaving their children alone in their houses when it was relatively easy for criminals to gain entry. When discussing personal safety a range of actions and ways of preventing crime were mentioned by participants. The importance of household items such as installing burglar alarms, erecting fences, and burglar bars on doors and windows and keeping watch dogs were mentioned regularly and participants with varied social and income backgrounds were well aware of these. In particular, the importance of having a fence around one's property as a security measure and precaution was raised repeatedly in the focus group discussions.

'A well-fenced home with fence … stop-nonsense (high security wall) with security gate'. (Black African middle income urban)

'A mesh wire fence which is protective, you also need a gate, big one, burglar proofs, stop nonsense fence'. (Black African low income rural)

This is also echoed in the SASAS module: 71% of people said they thought it was essential to have a fence or wall around the property.

When one considers and analyses the discussions and responses from participants it is evident that the issue of personal safety and security of possessions is a concern that cuts across all social groups. Participants from rural and urban areas, formal and informal neighbourhoods, all income groups and race groups were concerned about security, except for the fact that those who can afford were seen as being in a better position to take steps to ensure their safety and security. The following were all raised, on many occasions and in different focus groups as things needed to maintain personal security: *'Keep dogs and build high fences'; 'Burglar guards and alarms'; 'Alarms'; 'If you go on holiday let someone stay at your house. Others would say you must have a gun'; 'Dogs'; 'Burglar bars' ;'Armed response'.*

Poor people in general, and people living in squatter settlements in particular, were identified as those who were excluded from personal safety and security. It was an established view that income plays a significant role in ensuring personal safety and security. When participants were asked to mention aspects of life they would like to see improve for South Africans in the future (Aspirations – Section D of Focus Group Questionnaire), the prevention of crime featured prominently. Most participants felt that in order to improve the quality of life of South Africans, the government must, among other things, tackle crime and reduce crimes such as rape, car jacking and burglaries. The incarceration of criminals and offenders was highlighted and the granting of bail to suspects held for serious crimes was raised and criticized by some participants.

3.4   Inside the house: household goods and possessions

As well as discussing the physical structure of the 'essential' or 'acceptable' house, participants were also asked to describe what such a house contained. What, they were asked, are the minimum possessions that each South African should be able to have in their house? There was a broad consensus on a number of these items.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, having running water and electricity in the home, whilst not possessions per se, were generally the first items to come up when participants were asked to discuss 'the inside of the house'. Again, this is reflected in the quantitative analysis where 90% of people identified mains electricity in the home as essential. Interestingly, when asked to give reasons why they considered electricity an essential, participants listed safety concerns alongside the more direct uses of electricity such as powering appliances and lighting homes. The importance of electricity from a safety

standpoint had two main aspects. First, electric lighting made people feel safer and reduced the risk of crime. Second, electrification reduces the need to use other, more dangerous, fuel sources, such as paraffin.

> *'We live in informal settlements where you may find fuel like paraffin. A child may drink paraffin or even get burnt from the stove.'* . (Black African low income urban)

In addition, the importance of a flush toilet was emphasised across the groups (84% of the nationally representative sample identified a flush toilet as essential – see **Appendix 2**).

The importance of having a bath or shower, as opposed to a wash basin or outside tap, for washing oneself was another priority - 67% of those surveyed in the SASAS identified a bath/shower as a necessity.

> *'I would time and again take a bath in my own bath. I am currently using a bin.'* . (Coloured low income urban)

> *'Every person on the farm must have an inside toilet and shower.'* (Coloured low income urban)

After these basic provisions, the most commonly mentioned in the focus groups as household essentials were: a stove, a refrigerator, a television and a radio. For example, in relation to a fridge:

> *'A fridge saves money because you do not have to buy and cook everyday'* (Black African low income rural)

> *'If a person does not have a fridge their food gets spoilt'* (Black African middle income urban)

In the SASAS module, the following additional items were defined as essential: fridge (89%), a radio (77%), electric cooker (74%), a landline phone (64%), a cell phone (63%), a sofa/lounge suite (52%).

Participants of the focus groups gave examples of why certain items - that would not be classified as 'essential' in relation to meeting basic needs - could nevertheless be classified as 'essential' if one was, as in this project, assessing what people need in order to be able to participate fully in society. Some people argued that a television should be classified as an essential in this respect, while others argued that if one had a radio then a television was a non-essential luxury item.

> *'TV shows us events that are happening far away from us. If a person doesn't want to go to a stadium to watch soccer, he can watch at home if he has a TV.'*

and *'TV also provides entertainment, especially movies and stories'* (Black African low income urban)

'The news is important, but most of the time a TV is just for luxury. People just watch to pass the time when they could be doing other things.' (Indian low income urban)

'If you have a radio then I don't think a TV is a real necessity, maybe one of the two. Because if you are looking at a TV you want information, you want to be up-to-date with everything, and a radio does the same thing... Watching movies and stuff like that, that I would say is a luxury. But you need to be informed about what's going on around you.' (Indian middle income urban)

'A TV, I regard it as an essential nowadays, you need it to keep in touch with the world.' (Indian high income urban)

A TV was even posited as an 'essential' as it contributes towards children's safety:
'It is important that in a house there is a TV set and videocassette recorder, so that children can stay at home and not get hurt outside.' (Black African low income urban)

In the SASAS module, 72% of respondents defined a television as essential.

Interestingly, a number of more 'social' items were mentioned in the focus groups. These were items which did not seem to serve any particularly useful purpose *per se*, but which were considered to be part of what a 'decent' house should have. So, for example, room dividers were mentioned as being important items in a number of groups. What the appropriate social items were seemed to vary somewhat from group to group but there was an overall impression that such items featured in many participants' 'picture' of what a decent home should look like. In particular, these items were associated with the importance of how one's home appeared to others, which was tied-in with the idea of having a 'respectable home'. Thus for a low income Black African it was essential to have : *'House furniture, to decorate our houses to look stylish'*.

In the SASAS module, other items were not defined as essential by the majority of the population. For example the following items had a much lower vote: burglar alarm system (42%), washing machine (38%), DVD player (29%), computer in the home (28%) and satellite television/DSTV (19%). This demonstrates that people were not defining household goods as essential in a sweeping manner: respondents were making a conscious choice between items that they thought each and every South African should have, and those which they did not regard as being essentials.

4.   Concluding remarks

One crucial question facing the IPSE research project is to what extent, if any, there is a consensus amongst the South African population around what constitute the essentials. The strongest point which emerged across the focus groups, was the apparently clear idea within each group about what they considered to be the housing essentials. Given the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of the people who participated in the groups this was a quite striking feature. There were, however, some possible divergences between different groups which come out of the qualitative data. These are discussed below, but it must be borne in mind that these areas of difference seemed relatively insubstantial in comparison to the wider agreement which was observed. Appendix 2, deriving as it does from the quantitative survey, details people's responses in a nationally representative way. Though a total consensus was not achieved with any of the items (when 100% of people defined an item as essential), a number of items nevertheless scored very highly for the population overall.

Whilst the qualitative phase of the project, by its very nature, is not able to produce definitive, statistically robust, conclusions about the differences in responses of different groups of people, they did yield some interesting points which could then be further explored in the quantitative stage.

There was broad overall agreement between SASAS respondents in rural and urban areas: of the 38 items defined as essential overall (i.e. being defined as essential by 50% or more of the population), 37 of them were defined as essential by both sub-groups. Nevertheless, there were differences. The two greatest differences when urban people defined items as more essential than rural people were for a bath/shower in the house (defined as essential by 77% of people in urban areas compared with 54% in rural areas); and having a neighbourhood without rubbish/refuse/garbage in the streets (79% urban, 65% rural). The two items showing the greatest differences when rural people defined an item as more essential were a wheelbarrow (28% urban and 63% rural) and a cell phone (58% urban and 71% rural). The wheelbarrow can be seen as an example of a 'transitional necessity'. These are items which are essential for someone given their lifestyle at the time, but which might cease to be given the provision of other goods. So, in the poor rural areas where focus groups took place, a wheelbarrow was considered an essential because it was needed to collect water. However, for those areas where running water was the norm, the wheelbarrow was no longer raised as an essential, and this is supported by the SASAS module.

In the focus groups, there were some items which were raised as 'housing related' essentials which would only apply in one type of area. So, for instance, a strong, and reiterated, view put forward by plantation workers was that burial land was crucial. This issue was very close to their hearts because of their personal situations, namely that they did not, and could not, own the land on which they lived. The issue of burial land did not come across as a key issue in other focus groups where the problems of burial land were perhaps not as pressing. Also, land for cultivation or for keeping livestock was raised as a

concern in some rural groups but not in urban ones. Likewise, tractors, water for fields, and agricultural tools were raised in some rural groups. There was also some evidence from the qualitative data that those from rural areas considered rural areas worst off and those from urban areas considered urban areas worst off. However, whilst it is not surprising that people would put greatest emphasis on the problems most directly affecting their own lives, there was also evidence that participants were aware of the problems for people from other types of area.

Racial differences in focus group responses when it came to essentials were not pronounced, although there was evidence of some cultural differences regarding items within the home. So, for instance, 'room dividers' were not considered essentials, or even mentioned, in non- Black African focus groups. A fuller account of the differences between the population groups is provided in Wright *et al.* (forthcoming). However, of the 38 items that were defined as essential by 50% or more of the population overall, 28 of these items were defined as essential by 50% or more of each of the population groups (including the 21 that ranked the highest overall see **Table A2** in **Appendix 2**).

Table 6 shows the correlations between responses to the 56 items (in terms of percentages defining an item as 'essential') by population group. Black African responses correlate highest to all responses (0.986), as would be expected given the profile of the country. The lowest correlation is between White and Black African respondents (0.832) and the highest is between Indian/Asian and White (0.913).

Table 6: Spearman's Rank Correlation for all respondents and the four main population groups

	All	Black African	Coloured	Indian/Asian	White
All	1	0.986	0.903	0.899	0.896
Black African	0.986	1	0.840	0.840	0.832
Coloured	0.903	0.840	1	0.913	0.923
Indian/Asian	0.899	0.840	0.913	1	0.931
White	0.896	0.832	0.923	0.931	1

All correlations shown are significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

Finally, though there were some differences in the viewpoints of men and women these differences were negligible in the SASAS module. The greatest percentage point difference was for the DVD player (defined as essential by 23% of women and 34% of men).

It is difficult to summarise the main themes emerging from a wealth of data without the danger of losing much of the nuance and subtlety of participants' views. However, there were some issues that were so prominent throughout the groups that they are worth reiterating here.

The first issue that came out strongly in the discussion of housing by participants was how clear their idea of the 'decent' or 'acceptable' house was. Participants tended to have

strong and detailed views on all aspects of housing. Furthermore, there seemed to be a high degree of consensus around the concept of an adequate house, and around a hierarchy of housing standards.

A second important point emerging from the groups was that the minimum standards expressed by participants, including those participants who were extremely poor, were higher than simply meeting the basic need of shelter. So, for example, a radio was considered an essential item to have in the house by a sizeable majority of participants. Similarly, the importance of having at least some items in the home that are considered 'badges of respectability' was a prominent theme.

The next themed report will focus on people's definitions of necessities in terms of health and a safe environment.

Appendix 1: The focus group locations and profiles

A total of 52 focus groups were undertaken, four of which were eliminated during the quality control process. The remaining 48 focus groups took place in the following places in South Africa:
Gauteng - Melville, Winnie Mandela, Diepsloot, Braam Fischerville (Soweto), Chiawelo (Soweto).
Eastern Cape - Mzomhle (Gonubie), Mdantsane, Umthatha, Fort Beaufort.
Western Cape - Scottsville, Phillipi, Malibu (Eersteriver), Heideveld, Ocean View, Milnerton, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu.
KwaZulu-Natal - Phoenix, Chatsworth, Dududu (Port Shepstone), Seven Oaks (Greytown), Clermont, Luganda, Umlazi.
Limpopo - Thohoyandou, Duthini (Thohoyandou), iTsani (Thohoyandou), Mavambe (Giyani), Mchipisi (Giyani).
North West - Lokaleng (Mafikeng)

Table A1: Profile of the 48 focus groups

Description of FG	Number of FGs
Urban	35
Rural	13
Female	21
Male	25
Mixed	2
African	34
Coloured	7
Indian	5
White	2
High Income	5
Middle Income	11
Low Income	32
IsiZulu	8
Venda	4
Tsonga	2
Xhosa	12
Afrikaans	8
English	6
Tswana	2
Sepedi	2
Sesotho	4
Total	**48**

Appendix 2: Summary of SASAS 2005 results

In the table below, the 38 items that were defined as 'essential' by more than half of the respondents are highlighted in bold.

Table A2: Percentage of people defining an item as 'essential'

Item	% of All saying essential
Someone to look after you if you are very ill	**91**
A house that is strong enough to stand up to the weather e.g. rain, wind etc.	**91**
Street lighting	**90**
Mains electricity in the house	**90**
A fridge	**89**
Clothing sufficient to keep you warm and dry	**85**
Separate bedrooms for adults and children	**85**
Tarred roads close to the house	**85**
A flush toilet in the house	**84**
For parents or other carers to be able to buy complete school uniform for children without hardship	**83**
Having an adult from the household at home at all times when children under ten from the household are at home	**83**
Ability to pay or contribute to funerals/funeral insurance/burial society	**81**
A place of worship (church/mosque/synagogue) in the local area	**81**
People who are sick are able to afford all medicines prescribed by their doctor	**81**
Somewhere for children to play safely outside of the house	**78**
A radio	**77**
Having police on the streets in the local area	**77**
Regular savings for emergencies	**74**
A neighbourhood without rubbish/refuse/garbage in the streets	**74**
Being able to visit friends and family in hospital or other institutions	**74**
Electric cooker	**74**
Television/ TV	**72**
Someone to transport you in a vehicle if you needed to travel in an emergency	**72**
Someone to talk to if you are feeling upset or depressed	**72**
A fence or wall around the property	**71**
A bath or shower in the house	**69**
A large supermarket in the local area	**67**
A neighbourhood without smoke or smog in the air	**65**
Burglar bars in the house	**64**
A landline phone	**64**
Some new (not second-hand or handed-down) clothes	**63**
A cell phone	**63**
Someone who you think could find you paid employment if you were	**61**

without it	
Someone to lend you money in an emergency	**59**
Meat or fish or vegetarian equivalent every day	**59**
A garden	**56**
A car	**56**
A sofa/lounge suite	**52**
Special meal at Christmas or equivalent festival	49
A lock-up garage for vehicles	47
A small amount of money to spend on yourself not on your family each week	46
Going to town/to a large supermarket for the day	45
For parents or other carers to be able to afford toys for children to play with	45
A burglar alarm system for the house	42
Having enough money to give presents on special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, funerals	42
A wheelbarrow	41
Washing machine	38
A family take-away or bring-home meal once a month	38
A holiday away from home for one week a year, not visiting relatives	37
An armed response service for the house	31
A cinema in the local area	30
A DVD player	29
A computer in the home	28
Money to buy a magazine	20
Satellite Television/DSTV	19
A domestic worker	18

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