

Module # 3 – Component # 2



Discover the People – South Africa

Introduction

South Africa is a **microcosm of the world** being simultaneously a **developed** and **developing country**. The country offers the **very best, most up to date and modern** infrastructure, technology, health care, transportation, banking, military and leisure activities **alongside** poverty and squatter camps.

The **current picture** that is South Africa today is a **result of its history**. It is tempting to say that South Africa's history is unique, but really each country can claim a unique history and heritage. However there are **many features** that set South Africa apart from the rest of Africa, and these are far **more pronounced** than its physical and biological characteristics.

South Africa is by a wide margin the **richest** African nation. It is the most **developed** African nation, the most **powerful**, the most **educated**, the most **technologically advanced**, most **infrastructurally** developed and the most **diverse** but perhaps the least integrated in terms of its society. These major **advantages** and **drawbacks**, and the reasons for them will be explained as you navigate through the remainder of this Component.

A Brief History of South Africa

10,000 BC to 1600: The Indigenous People

South Africa has had a **difficult history** marked by ethnic conflicts and struggle. For most of the past 100 000 years, the region has been **occupied by small mobile groups of hunter-gatherers** who learned to adapt to the harsh environment. They expressed their beliefs and rituals, outlook and activities in richly **abundant rock art**, and were only gradually displaced by pastoralists whose presence goes back hardly more than **2 000 years**. Whether it is accurate to describe the former as **San** and the latter as **Khoi-Khoi** (terms now favoured above Bushmen and Hottentots), two distinct cultural groups, has been debated.

About **1 500 years** ago, **immigrant Bantu-speakers** began to work the soil. Techniques **first learnt much further north**, came to be applied to the **growing of edible crops** such as millet and gourds.

The **domestication of cattle** from approximately **1 000 years ago**, created new possibilities of **societal development** beyond the attainments of Khoisan society. Political systems arose, not on the same scale as the 14th-century kingdoms between the Limpopo and the Zambezi, but as chief-dominated communities, the size of which was determined by the extent to which the chiefs could expand their power through control of their womenfolk as producers, and the youth as workers and soldiers. **Wealth in cattle** made patronage possible.

1600 – 1836 : European Colonisation

The **Portuguese** came first, and later the **Dutch, English and French**, all of whom saw the value of the **Cape as a strategic outpost** on the route to empires in the East. Only the **Dutch set up a mainland base** for their East India Company (**VOC**), in **1652**, to **provide passing ships with food, water and hospitalisation** for sick sailors.

The VOC's need for labour was so urgent that they also **brought in slaves** from their eastern empire, and from regions on both sides of Africa, within the first decade of settlement. This controversial decision cast a long shadow. A slave had no legal rights, and, **unlike slaves in America, almost no chance of liberation through conversion to Christianity**

The **British** took **possession of the Cape** during the French revolutionary wars, and held it as a colony from **1795**, save for a brief return of Dutch rule in 1803 to 1806. These new settlers, arriving mainly in **1820**. Through the 'charter of liberties' in 1828, **slaves were freed** after a four-year period of 'apprenticeship'.

1836 – 1961 The Voortrekkers, The British and the South African Wars

From 1836 to 1838, tensions on the frontier led to emigration from the Cape Colony, known as the **Great Trek**. The **Voortrekker** (decedents of the original Dutch settlers) parties **moved northwards** in protest against British frontier policy and the liberal aspects of British rule, to **set up republics** of their own in what was reputedly empty land. But the **land was not empty**, and in any case these Voortrekkers needed land already settled, where there was water and a potential supply of labour.

By 1841, when Cape Town came under British control, the other Afrikaner (Voortrekkers) republics (the **Orange Free State** and the **Transvaal**) did not. The **discovery of rich diamond mines and gold** in these areas generated great interest among the British which led to Boer rebellions. Full-fledged war erupted in **1881-1882**. Originally called the **Boers Wars**, they are now more correctly known as the **South Africa Wars**, as the role of the indigenous populations is credited.

The first war was inconclusive and a second conflict arose in 1899-1902. The **British defeated the Boers** and gained **complete control of the country**. The **Union of South Africa** was formed in 1910, with the country becoming a **self-governing** part of the British empire 24 years later.

1961 – 1989 : Apartheid

In **1961**, **South Africa became a republic** and the next decades were characterized by growing strife over the government's racial policies and **worldwide condemnation** and sanctions. Created by Hendrik Verwoerd, the racist policy of Apartheid had as its ideals **separate development**.

Firstly through separate amenities and then by horrific laws that forbade intermarriage (The **Immorality Act**), the **Group Areas Act** and the creation of **Homelands**, that restricted 85 % of the population to 13 % of the land, the **Pass Laws**, that made it compulsory for all blacks to carry identification and restricted their movements. The **Public Safety Act** which empowered the government to declare stringent states of emergency and increased penalties for protest action. The **State of Emergency** which empowered the police to detain people without trial. And on top of this the banning of black political parties, notably the African National Congress and obviously restricting voting rights to whites only.

The policy of Apartheid certainly **achieved many of its goals**. A white, powerful affluent minority ruling over a black, poor majority.

The following table briefly demonstrates some of these results of Apartheid.

The Effects of Apartheid (1978)		
	Blacks	Whites
Population	19 million	4.5 million
Land Allocation	13 %	87 %
Share of National Income	<20 %	75 %
Doctors / Population ratio	1: 44,000	1:400
Infant mortality rate (urban)	20 %	2.7 %
Annual expenditure on education per pupil	\$ 45	\$ 696
Teacher / pupil ratio	1: 60	1: 22

1989 - :Modern Democratic South Africa

By the mid 1980's South Africa was well on the road to yet **another African civil war**. Large scale **unrest and protest** met with increased restrictive and heavy-handed counter-action. This prompted hundreds of thousands of wealthy **white South Africans** to **emigrate** to Canada, The United States, England and mainland Australia.

In **1989 President De Klerk** came to power and immediately set about the dismantling of Apartheid. Firstly **Nelson Mandela**, leader of the African National Congress, who had spent 27 years in prison for his anti-government and anti-apartheid stances, was **released**, and the **ANC unbanned**. Then after a **whites-only referendum** concerning the path the white nationalist government was taking (which overwhelmingly favoured the trend), South Africa held its **first ever democratic election**. In 1994 the ANC was elected into power with Nelson Mandela as its first president.

1996 saw the drawing up of a **new constitution**, which is one of the most liberal in the world. Since then South Africa has enjoyed a **renaissance** with **wide acceptance** by the rest of the world, the **influx of foreign visitors** and the hosting of major world events. However its **history has left its mark**. The economic, welfare and social gap between black and white remains wide but is slowly closing.

Today South Africa is a success story.

South African Cultures

Numerous population groups with **different languages, cultural backgrounds** and **origins** all coexist in South Africa. These groups are the

- Zulus (21 %)
- Xhosas (17 %)
- Sotho (15%)
- Tswana
- Venda
- Ndebele
- Swazi
- Pedi
- Shangaan
- Khoi-San.

With the exception of the Khoi-San, all the other **nine groups** have had their indigenous **language** incorporated into the **11 official languages** that South Africa lists. The other two are **Afrikaans** and English. **English** is however the real official language of the country and is **spoken almost everywhere**.

The province of **Kwazulu-Natal** is home to about **one million Indians**, whose forefathers came to South Africa to work on the sugarcane plantations. This population in addition to similar smaller communities have created a complete sub-culture of society and they maintain a reasonably **close society** (under Apartheid, Indians did have proportional representation in government).

And there are **three million people** of mixed race, the so-called "**coloureds**," mainly living in the **Cape region**. They are **descendants of the first Dutch settlers** and the native population of the Cape (Khoi-Khoi) or the **Malays**, who were taken to South Africa as slaves from East India in the 18th century. The "coloureds" have a cultural heritage of their own. Their predominant language is **Afrikaans**, they do not consider themselves part of the black population and have **traditionally always supported the white nationalist government**, largely due to the token representation that they were given under Apartheid..

The white residents of South Africa amounts to **11 %** (\pm 5 million people) of the national population. Most of them **derive from Dutch**, German or French immigrants. They are divided up into two groups, the Afrikaners who speak Afrikaans (which is **closely related to the Dutch** language) and the English. The **proportions** of these two groups is probably in the region of 50/50. South African **school children** are all required to take **English and another official language** as part of their normal curriculum. Up until relatively recently, **Afrikaans was the other compulsory choice**, but now many South Africans from across the colour and ethnic bar are taking either **Xhosa** or **Zulu** as their other second language course.

South Africa is still far from the **ideal of a multi-cultural society**. There is still a deep trench going through the population. Black and white people **lead largely separate lives** with few points of contact.

Modern South Africa

South Africa's population of 43.5 million is **three-quarters black** (African) and about **15% white** (European), with the remaining 10% comprised of people of mixed white, Malayan, and black descent and people of Asian (mostly Indian) descent. The African majority is composed of **many different ethnic groups**, the largest of which are **Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana**, and **Bapedi**.

Until very recently (1994), the country's racial divisions were harshly enforced as part of the **government's official policy of Apartheid**, or apartness. Although apartheid, after prolonged resistance, protest, and international economic sanctions has been **completely dismantled** and a democratic government installed, **racial inequality remains pronounced**.

Fact File

Population	48.5 million
Capital	Pretoria
Currency	Rand (ZAR) (\$ 1= ± 7 Rand) [Dec 2007]
Official Languages	English and 10 others
HIV / AIDS	10 % of adult population
Life Expectancy	48 years
Literacy rate	82 %
Internet Users	± 3 million
Total land area	1,219,912 sq km's
Religions	Christian: 68% Indigenous beliefs :28.5% Muslim: 2 % Hindu: 1.5 % Jewish: 0.2 %
Cellular / Mobile phone coverage	All cities, towns and major road networks
Road conditions	298,843 Km untarred, 59,753 km tarred
Airports	741 (including private airstrips)
International disputes	none
US Embassy	Physical: 877 Pretorius Street, Pretoria Postal: P. O. Box 9536, Pretoria 0001 Telephone: [27] (12) 342-1048 Fax: [27] (12) 342-2244 Consulate(s) general: Cape Town, Durban Johannesburg