

SPITALK

ILO'S DECENT WORK AGENDA

—
Lindi-K Khumalo
Social Policy Researcher

FROM SPII TO SPI

—
Isobel Frye
Executive Director

ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT & THE BIG ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

—
Khutso Makobela
Research Intern



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Find out more about SPI.

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NO. 1

DIRECTORS CUT: FROM SPII TO SPI

BY ISOBEL FRYE

In 2006, we registered Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute. This was an act of faith, with the wisdom of experience, possibly rather reckless given the reduction in funding to NGOs at the time. However, we were drawn together around SPII's core mission because we all felt that something very wrong was happening around levels of poverty and inequality in South Africa. But at the same time, we knew that without data we could not begin to understand this thing in and of itself, and without understanding the nature of the problem, we could not contribute to finding solutions. At this stage, South Africa did not have any measurement of poverty like the three national poverty lines we have now, which to an extent were a response to SPII's early work.

Our very first project was to explore how poverty could be described in a way that looked for a far deeper level of knowledge than the superficial money-metric poverty lines that were then being considered by Statistics South Africa. That first project developed the values that subsequently became our highly successful Decent Standard of Living project. That first project announced our presence in the policy world of poverty and inequality, and our commitment to working inclusively with a variety of partners who did not ordinarily work together. Our reference team was made up of organized labour, civil society and academia, as well as Social Development, StatsSA National Treasury and the Presidency.

This inclusive way of working dovetails with our years of working with social partners in NEDLAC as part of the Community Constituency.

In the next decade of working as SPII we included some really rich community work on LED and participatory action research into the reality of human rights in communities that were spatially very peripheral to the economic and social core of urban Johannesburg. We set up the SADC Basic Income Grant campaign, linking financing of the regional cash grant to the undertaxed profits of the extractive industries in

our region. The other great achievement in this period was the development of our Measurement of Progressive Realisation of Socio-Economic Rights (SER) methodology and the incredible work in development baseline studies of each line department's policies and budget allocations to enable the tracking of progressive realisation. This led us to our budget advocacy which led to our contribution in the establishment of the Budget Justice Coalition which continues to do great work.

We also began to provide more frequent analysis in the general media of the conditions of poverty, inequality and unemployment, and around our constant call for a decent universal basic income grant.

Fastforwarding to the last two years since the outbreak of Covid-19, SPII has devoted most of our research time between social security policy and the multidimensional poverty project of the Decent Standard of Living. We have registered two stand alone websites – www.dslnow.net and www.basicincomegrantsouthafrica.co.za with key partners and published some outstanding publications, most recently the three papers on a BIG written by SPII staff and Duma Gqubule, a virtual SPII research associate. We have also spent time working alongside community partners,

even virtually throughout Covid-19, to ensure that the nexus between our analysis of data and our recommendations were rooted in the core conditions of the poor.

In immersing our resources in understanding the dynamics driving unemployment in South Africa, the interplay with poverty and inequality and in trying to understand what unique contribution we as a very small but passionate feminist think tank can make, the answer always came back to income guarantees or income replacement or income redistribution through social security policy. Instead of seeing social security as a constant add-on – gender and social security, unemployment and social security, working age adults and social security, just transitions and social security, we have turned that on its head. We start from looking at the possibilities that would flow in a society where decent levels of income are a reality for all, and then seek to build policy alternatives with regard to job creation, economic activity, gendered equality, access to land, inclusive democratic participation, around that. We are creating new partnerships around the gendered dynamics of care, around social security and labour market activation policies, understanding the multiplier of social spending and how all of these tie in to the money, through Gender Responsive Budget training. And we look forward to how universal basic income can provide a positive guarantee for people whose lives will change forever through the climate change mitigation adaptations that must happen, particularly the coal mines and other energy-based industries.



And to signal or mark this focal shift through a change in name and branding, we are transitioning from Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute to the Social Policy Initiative. And we are also expanding the scope of our work. This year we have started to operationalize our commitment to work internationally. Our primary place of work will be the African continent, but also through the family of the UN including our long-standing partner UNICEF, and with our new partner the ILO and the UN CESCR.

We are proud to announce our newly acquired Observer Status at the African Commission for People and Human Rights,

OUR FIVE PROJECTS THIS YEAR ARE:

1. DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING – We undertake an income survey to provide the updated data on how many people in South Africa can afford a Decent Standard of Life.

2. MEASURING THE PROGRESSIVE REALISATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA – We are revisiting our previous two studies and updated the Indicators of Enjoyment with the ILO's international team to create dynamic dashboards for ease of use.

3. INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SECURITY AND LABOUR MARKET ACTIVATION POLICIES IN A POST-COVID WORLD – We are tracking case studies for learnings in South Africa from different regions in the world.

4. THE MULTIPLIER PROJECT – We take further our 2021 Multiplier research to ask how much each rand really buys if used intentionally.

5. GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGET TRAINING – We pilot our Gender Responsive Budget training in SADC.

Our model of being a not for profit research think tank provides us with the freedom to explore our own research questions within a human rights and social justice framing, but this freedom does come at a price, and that is the need to constantly raise resources to attract and retain researchers of quality. This year we are seeking to forge multi-year partnerships with funders that see our work as an investment in a fair, stable and prosperous South Africa where the potential of all is unleashed, located in a real empathy for the humanity of all.

Our rebranding will be reflected in a new website www.spi.net.za and new physical offices in Braamfontein, **87 De Korte Street, South Point Corner, Office 401, Johannesburg, 2001**. We are very grateful to Foundation for Human Rights and more recently Institute for Economic Justice or sharing their offices through the uncertainties of Covid-19 and its impact on the World of Work.

We are so pleased that you have chosen to walk this journey with us, and we will see you on the other side.

IN THIS EDITION:

This is the transitional edition of SPI/I Talk. It ties in with the imminent launch of our new website presence which will be marked through a social security infographic campaign in coming weeks.

For us social security is an enabler that locates all people in an active and inclusive economy. Too often naysayers create a false binary between social security and employment. In this edition we explore the notion of decent work from the ILO's foundational approach to it, through social security to the interlinkages with universal basic income.

Our coming editions will provide further deep dives into aspects of social security and our larger research projects.

Finally we are committed to showcasing more than just words. In this edition we are fortunate to have some images of artist Camryn Hunter, currently studying at Stellenbosch University. If you would like us to showcase your visual art or poetry, please contact Chris Vermeulen at chris@spii.org.za

MEET THE TEAM



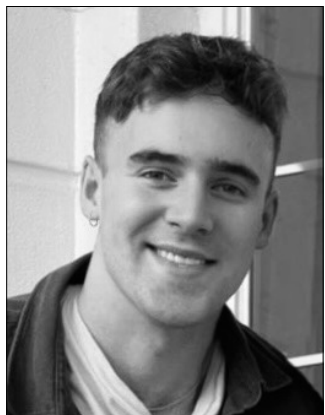
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CALL FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME GRANT

The key aspects of how the Basic Income Grant would assist South Africans is highlighted within the infographic, showcasing pivotal areas of economic and social empowerment and potential.



UNPACKING THE FOUR PILLARS

NO.2

ILO'S DECENT WORK

BY LINDI-K KHUMALO
SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCHER

PEOPLE'S
ASPIRATIONS IN
THEIR WORKING
LIVES ARE
SUMMED UP BY
DECENT WORK.

WHAT IS THE ILO?

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is a United Nations (UN) agency which was founded in 1919 under the League of Nations, the ILO is the first and oldest specialised agency of the UN. It is mandated to advance social and economic justice by **setting international labour standards**. * ILO member countries are bound to respect these standards by virtue of their membership in the ILO even if they have not ratified the underlying conventions

The ILO globally remains the leading global expert on the concept of full employment and decent work. In 1999, the ILO launched the Decent Work Agenda, a soft-law initiative, which aims to outline the objectives of full and productive employment and decent work for all at a global, regional, national, sectoral and local level. The agenda proposes to focus the ILO's (1999) work around four strategic pillars namely: (a) rights at work, (b) fostering employment, (c) social protection, and (d) social dialogue. The ILO explains each of these four pillars as follows:

RIGHTS AT WORK



The ILO outlines four core labour standards on various ILO conventions namely (a) freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, (b) the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, (c) the abolition of child labour, and (d) the elimination of discrimination in employment (ILO, 1999).

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



This pillar requires members to support tripartite consultation, negotiation, and agreements between workers and their employers at every level of society from the workplace up to national level consultation as a means to include worker voices and resolve conflicts peacefully (ILO, 1999).

SOCIAL PROTECTION



This pillar requires ILO member countries to establish national policies for the prevention of work-related injuries and illnesses, prevention of oppressive working conditions, such as overly long work hours. It also requires paid holidays and protection in the form of social security for persons who are sick, elderly, disabled, unemployed, pregnant and other conditions that may limit the ability to work (ILO, 1999).

FOSTERING EMPLOYMENT



This pillar requires that ILO (1999) member countries establish national policy goals and strategies to achieve full employment and appropriate pay for work as a key method to alleviate poverty.



NO.3

DECENT WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY NDUDUZO DLAMINI
RESEARCH INTERN

DEFINED BY THE WORKING POPULATION

The term decent work can be defined as job opportunities and dignified working conditions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as “Work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”

In trying to get a sense of what regular South African view as decent work, I interviewed 10 working adults. I spoke to them to find out what they felt decent work meant and the importance of having decent work in South Africa.

What I gathered from my conversations was that the majority of adults defined decent work as work that is based on sustainable income that meets their needs. One interviewee

stated that decent work needs to be stable and earn enough to meet the needs of the individual. Another interviewee explained it as a type of work where the earner earns an income that is above the poverty line, which will enable them to have a decent meal and job security is secured. The interviewee further noted that people from job-secure households have more opportunities to succeed in life than those from less fortunate backgrounds. Furthermore, the interviewee emphasized that everyone deserves to have a decent job due to the rising cost of living, with many interviewees noting that even though the cost-of-living increases, salaries seldom increase to accommodate workers.

Interviewees viewed decent work as being employed and getting paid what is equivalent to the value you add to that entity and also being able to have enough to take care of your basic needs and afford leisure activities.

In looking at the perspectives of both employer and employee, it was noted that for employees, to qualify as decent work, the work needs to be in line with the qualifications of the person, meet the salary expectations, and there should be adequate working conditions. From the employer's perspective, the

¹ <https://yusapuy.ca/decent-and-stable-work/what-does-decent-work-mean/>



participant noted that the employer needs to meet company laws and compliance. The aspect of human rights continued to resurface throughout the interviews, one participant stated that for one to have decent work, the income needs to be adequate, a good working environment needs to be provided, and the work that ensures human rights are respected.

From these interviews, one can gather that decent work is important in our society. People want decent jobs that will allow them to live a life of dignity. Furthermore, it was gathered that decent work goes hand in hand with having an income that is reliable which allows one to meet their basic needs.

The concept of decent work really looks at allowing people to meet both needs and some wants, which is rare nowadays due to economic constraints.

Decent work is important for all South Africans and it plays a role in reducing poverty and ensuring dignity.

EVERYONE DESERVES TO HAVE A DECENT JOB DUE TO THE RISING COST OF LIVING



NO.4

ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE **BIG** ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

BY KHUTSO MAKOBELA
RESEARCH INTERN

Without a clear solution, youth unemployment has continued to climb in South Africa. According to the SPII's quarterly labor force survey, unemployment² in South Africa is currently at 46,6 % and despite this, there is a big gap in the system in terms of coverage of unemployed able-bodied persons between the ages of 18 and 59. High rates of unemployment also have to do with discouraged work seekers. This category is found to have a lack of interest and hope in engaging the labour market despite having all the qualifications. The rising unemployment rate can be attributed to several factors including an increase in access to higher education while dealing with an unstable economic climate, leaving a growing number of South African graduates unemployed.

The SPII SER Monitoring Tool project is a methodology that uses a combination of policy and budget analyses, as well as statistical indicators, to track and analyze the rate, pace, and direction of social-economic rights realization. This is an SPII initiative that was endorsed by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC). Our monitoring clearly shows that the progressive realisation of the right to social security came to a stop after the children's grant was expanded to the age of 18. The temporary Social Relief of Distress grant should not be included as the state has refused to see this as permanent relief.

According to Section 27 of the Constitution, "Everyone has the right to have access to...(c) social security, including adequate social assistance if they are unable to maintain themselves and their dependents." However, social assistance for people aged 18 to 59 has yet to be realized, and despite the progressive nature of South Africa's Constitution, inequality in

² Long-term unemployment – This category includes persons among the unemployed who were without work and trying to find a job or start a business for one year or more. SPII. (2021). Analysis of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey P0211 Q3:2021. Johannesburg.
³ Discouraged work seekers have several reasons why they choose to not seek employment. The reasons could include that there are no jobs available, or individuals do not have the necessary skills needed to enter the market. SPII. (2021). Analysis of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey P0211 Q3:2021. Johannesburg.
⁴ Unemployment In South Africa. Van Lill, R., & Bakker, T. M. (2022). Life at a stop sign: Narrative plots of the transition to adulthood during unemployment among South African graduates. Emerging Adulthood, 10(1), 124-134.



the country continues to rise. . As a result, it is critical to find progressive solutions to ensure that all people have access to their right to social security.

In the face of economic and social exclusion, social security is widely acknowledged as an efficient measure of redistributive justice. The Basic Income Grant is a universal vital social security mechanism for enhancing income security for all through the redistribution of wealth generated by everyone. The Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the continual reorganization of organizations, jobs, and economies, inevitably provided more cause for the Basic Income Grant as a social safety net.

According to the most recent Quarterly Labour Force statistics⁵, businesses are constantly struggling to commit to compensation packages that they may not be able to meet. These figures suggest the shifting nature of employment contracts along with businesses' failure to offer fixed employment agreements. Furthermore, unrelenting fuel price increases have hit South African consumers hard in recent months, with motorists now paying more than R23 per litre of fuel for the first time. In addition to the 2 million jobs lost during the South African lockdown, the issue of unemployment appears

⁵ SPII. (2021). Analysis of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey Po211 Q3:2021. Johannesburg.

⁶ African Dialogue Podcast – High price to pay for the rising cost of living. <https://omny.fm/shows/african-dialogue/high-price-to-pay-for-the-rising-cost-of-living>.

to be one that will not be resolved anytime soon, particularly considering the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which continues to affect the clearly integrated global economies.

Theminkosi Dlamini, Senior Lead at Oxfam in South Africa, has shed light on the unending challenge of accessing global markets. Ukraine, Russia, and other countries are among the 6% of countries to which our produced commodities should be sent, and the conflict has resulted in reduced fertilizer production. As a result, South Africa has experienced a spike in inflation and increased unemployment. While globalization has resulted in a more prosperous society and the integration of ideas from various parts of the world, it has also exacerbated income inequalities, and it is up to South Africa as a developing country to prioritize its citizens' social security.

The Basic Income Grant (BIG) should result in a material expansion of economic opportunity for the many, as well as an expansion of human capabilities and a reduction in the daily burden of poverty and hunger. In the context of risky agricultural sector transformations, some form of basic income support may be a relatively efficient way to protect the most vulnerable and bring a sense of justice to the transition. Broadening the grants system is likely to support livelihood strategies and enabling business doors for low-income households, hence why addressing the BIG is essential in South Africa today.

Visit the website www.basicincomegrantsouthafrica.co.za to see current research of SPII and other institutions, and to hear testimonies of people who were asked what they would do with a BIG.

IT IS UP TO SOUTH AFRICA AS A DEVELOPING COUNTRY TO PRIORITIZE ITS CITIZENS' SOCIAL SECURITY.

NO.5

ARTIST SHOWCASE

CAMRYN HUNTER, 21
HARARE, ZIMBABWE

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Harare, Zimbabwe, visual artist Camryn hunter is in her fourth year of study at Stellenbosch University in South Africa. Her upbringing being surrounded by corruption and economic ruin from the Zimbabwean government, making politics a regular conversation in her adolescent life. Exposure to local artists, such as Mischeck Masamvu and Portia Zvavahera are inspirations to Hunter in the way which they are able to tackle such politics, inner struggles as well as patriarchal pride through their artworks. The influence of these two artists is ever present in her work.



PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS IN THEIR WORKING LIVES ARE SUMMED UP BY DECENT WORK.

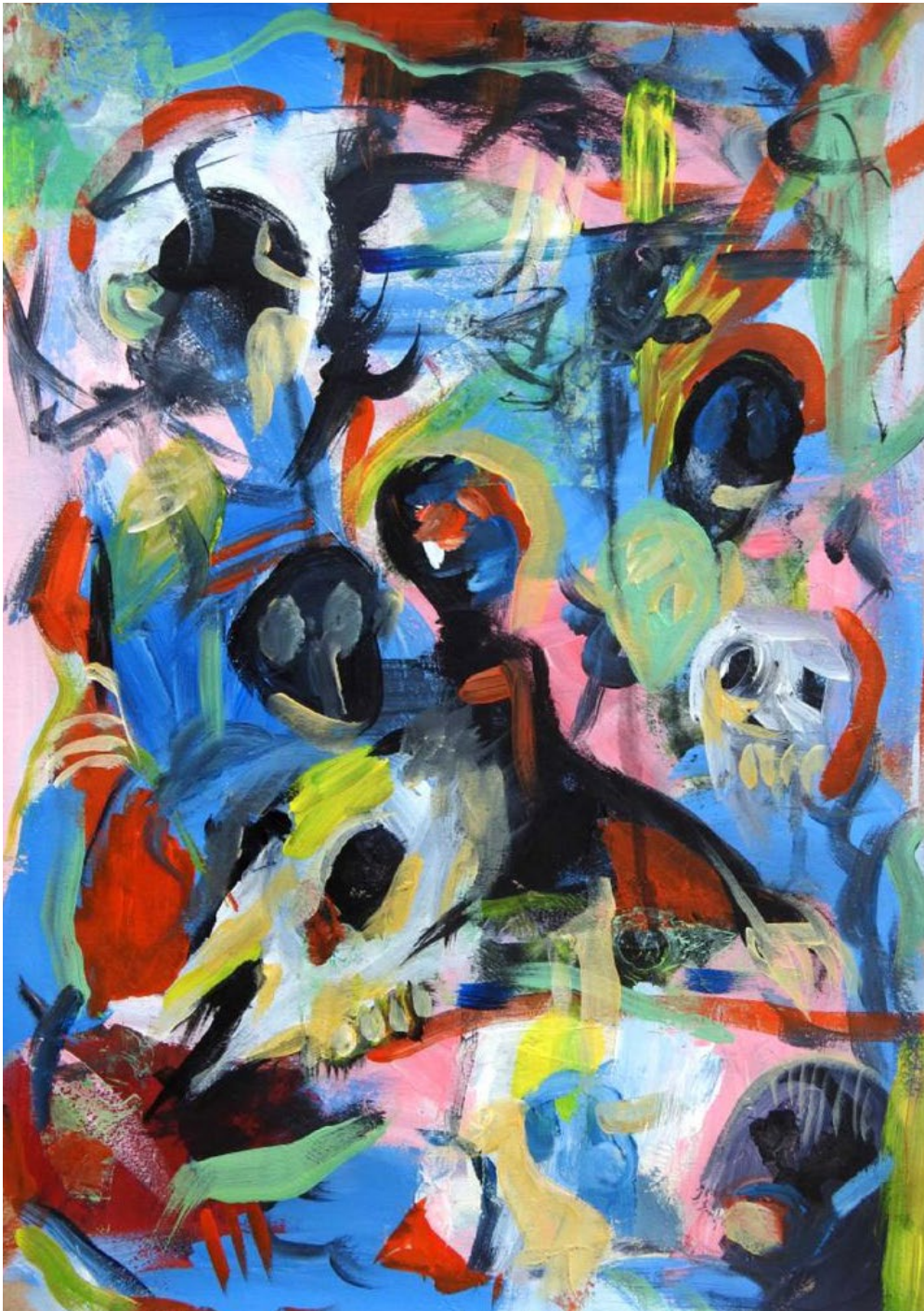
‘THE LOST &
THE LEAVING’



The Lost &
The Leaving
A3
Acrylic on Card

The paintings consist of acts of layering—the removal and covering up of paint—this action alludes to some of the nation's politics and the government's activity in society. Acts by our government can occur seemingly unnoticed through media censorship yet affect millions nationwide.

This leaves the narrative of the lived experience in Zimbabwe as well as the narrative represented by the government in terms of the global media setting, as being worlds apart.



Connections
A3
Acrylic on Card

‘CONNECTIONS’

INTERVIEW: HUNTERS OPINION ON ZIMBABWE & SOCIAL SECURITY

QUESTION:
WHAT IS THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION LIKE NOW, IN ZIMBABWE?

ANSWER:
In 2021, the unemployment rate of Zimbabwe was 6%, although incredibly low, our government includes most activities such as subsistence farming, and all informal activities that do not sustain one financially as economic activity. In reality, the majority of our population does not have access to adequate work.

QUESTION:
DO YOU FEEL THAT CURRENTLY, THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE IN ZIMBABWE ALLOWS CITIZENS TO FIND DECENT WORK?

ANSWER:
Alongside the affects of Covid-19, the conversation around decent work as of late, can fall onto that of the currency situation, which is not widely spoken about in relation to the economic climate and financial stability for working Zimbabweans. The implementation of the Bond note in 2017 was a way for the government to cover up the mass theft of the US Dollar from the Zimbabwean Reserve Bank and used as a way to avoid yet further hyperinflation. The Bond note is accepted in Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe only and has increased the difficulty for those living in impoverished conditions to find a stable footing within the local and national economy. Therefore local, working people who only earn in bond, have no prospects in major private sectors nor outside of the country in terms of investment, immigration and spending. So, I would say the economic climate, although poor throughout most of our contemporary history, has especially negatively affected Zimbabweans in finding decent work as of late.

QUESTION:
DO YOU THINK SOCIAL SECURITY (IN TERMS OF FINANCIAL GRANTS) WOULD HELP ASSIST ZIMBABWEANS GET OUT OF AND STAY OUT OF POVERTY?

ANSWER:
A tricky question, I think to an extent, external grants could help exponentially with poverty in Zimbabwe but any foreign currency or any viable currency that comes through the government would either be exchanged into bond, rendering it somewhat worthless outside of the country or possibly not granted at all within private business. After Mugabe stepped down, there was a false sense of hope for the future with Mnangagwa as president, but nothing in fact changed under the very same National Party. I remember a news reporter comparing the situation to a snake shedding it's own skin. Optimistically I would say the social security from an external source, and not government operated, would indeed help. However in the turn of events of the last 22 years which I have lived in the country, it has proved otherwise in terms of optimism based on the antics and corruption of ZANU-PF, which remain unchanged.



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Policy support and analysis

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SPI MATTERS

