Adressing Wealth Inequality
Through School Partnerships

Christel House South Africa is a non-profit school with a single mission: to break the cycle of poverty. It offers no-fee scholarships to students from twenty of the most marginalised communities in Cape Town where poverty, unemployment, crime, abuse, and drugs are rife. The main criterion for admission is not evidence of talent — but evidence of poverty. Key aspects of the school’s model include a character-based, career-focused teaching approach and poverty mitigation services in the form of daily transport to school and back, professional health care, nutritious meals, psychosocial counselling, family assistance as well as career planning and support.

Whilst Christel House is a strong advocate of quality education for the most underprivileged, it also encompasses a broader strategy to address wealth inequality in South Africa — one of the most unequal countries in the world. The frontline solution to building a more equal society is to enable the most underprivileged citizens access to the economic strata ‘owned’ by the wealthiest 10% of citizens. This allows them to participate in the economy, reinforcing a virtuous circle towards a more equal society. The underlying key is the recognition of social capital across the economic divide.

The Julius Baer Foundation supports Christel House in forging partnerships with other schools, establishing meaningful activity exchange programmes with South African youth who attend privileged schools. The annual Derby Day will provide an opportunity for children to meet on equal ground, laying the foundation for future respect and minimising the development of unconscious bias. The long-term aim of the programme is to foster more equal relationships across the economic divide to enable healthy, diverse workplaces, communities and to build a strong economy.

13 Million
South African children currently live in poverty. ¹

0.63
Gini coefficient
The Gini coefficient is a measure of wealth distribution where 0 means perfect equality and 1 means one individual owns all the nations wealth.

Related UN Sustainable Development Goal
More information: un.org

¹ www.statssa.gov.za/?p=10334
Creating Access to Economic Opportunity

Christel House has over 4782 annual beneficiaries, of which 987 are children and young adults (731 students from grade ‘R’ to grade 12, plus 256 post-matric graduates). Further 3795 beneficiaries are parents and other members of the served communities. With only 60 students per grade and 30 students per class, a high-quality learning environment is ensured. Through its College and Careers programme, the school builds career aspirations starting from Grade ‘R’ until 5 years after completing the ‘matric’ (South Africa’s high school diploma). Through the exposure of students to the economy and to privileged students who inherited economic access, the school can assist in bridging the inequality gap. The students’ academic results support the impact of the programme:

• 93% of matriculants are placed into tertiary education or their first job.
• 99% average matric pass rate
• 97% school attendance from Grade R-12
• Standard benchmarking results for Grades 3, 6 and 9 in Mathematics and English outstrip the results of schools the children would have attended by 400%.

Facts and figures: South Africa

With a Gini coefficient of 0.63, South Africa is the most unequal country in the world. The richest 10% of South Africans own 90% of national wealth. 13 million children live in poverty. The youth unemployment rate of 53% and general unemployment rate of 29% are key driving forces behind the inequality rating. Children who are born into poverty remain trapped unless significant intervention occurs. Even with development measures in place, it is expected to still take up to three generations for social mobility to be considered stable and predictable, allowing for agency to blossom.

• In 2019, only 52% of children who started school 13 years ago reached Grade 12, leaving thousands of young people with only the most basic education.
• Fewer than 3 of the 56 million residents in South Africa pay 97% of all personal income tax.
• 60% of households depend on social grants.
• Today, one third of affluent households in SA (with a net income over R40 000 a month) are black. A significant shift from 1994 when virtually all wealth was white owned.
• Black communities are drivers for innovation: 2019 two young black entrepreneurs founded a company that uses recycled plastic shopping bags and transforms them into solar-powered school bags that can also be used as a light source when studying at night.

Despite its troubled past, South Africa has produced eleven Nobel Laureates, including Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. The country has seen a strong emerging black emerging middle, spearheaded by Patrice Motsepe and President Cyril Ramaphosa who are among the top 20 wealthiest people in the country.

For more information about Christel House South Africa: www.sa.christelhouse.org

“Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.”

Desmond Tutu, Nobel Prize Winner