Press Release
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South Africa's living standards on the rise – IRR

Living standards in South Africa have shown a remarkable degree of improvement over the past 20 years, according to the *South Africa Survey 2016* released by the IRR this month.

The IRR report showed that on all possible measures of access to housing, electricity, clean water, and sanitation services, living conditions for South Africans were much higher than two decades ago:

- The number of households residing in formal dwellings increased from 5.8 million in 1996 to 12.4 million in 2014, or by 114%. Over the same period, the proportion of households living in formal dwellings increased from 64% to 79% while the proportion living in informal dwellings fell from 16% to 13%.

- The number of households using electricity for lighting increased from 5.2 million in 1996 to 14.1 million in 2014, or by 171%. Over the same period, the proportion of households using electricity for lighting rose from 58% to 91%.

- The number of households with piped water increased from 7.2 million to 14 million, or by 94%.

- The number of households with access to flush or chemical lavatories increased from 4.6 million to 9.9 million, or by 118%.

IRR analyst Kerwin Lebone said: "The data shows the relative success of the government's service delivery efforts. This is despite continuing backlogs, and the fact that in many cases the quality of services delivered should have been higher. On balance, however, there can be no doubt that living standards are much higher in South Africa today than was the case in 1994."

He added that "another conclusion is that state-driven delivery efforts have probably gone as far as they can conceivably go and future improvements in living standards will be driven more by labour market access, new business development, increased private investment, and levels of economic growth than by the efforts of State planners".

Ends.