

SUMMARY REPORT

The RAI TH Foundation Review 2010-2020



THE RAI TH
FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

A 10-YEAR REVIEW

OVERALL RESULTS AND FINDINGS

THE FUTURE OF FUNDING

CONCLUSION

Cover image: Second-hand clothes market. De Villiers Street, Johannesburg



Johannesburg, seen from Village Main mine dump



INTRODUCTION

The RAITH Foundation was registered as a Trust in March 2001. It is a Non-Profit Organisation (NGO) and has tax-exempt status. The Foundation is privately funded, not politically affiliated and does not raise funds from the public.

The RAITH Foundation is concerned that systemic injustice and unfairness prevail in South Africa and seeks effective and lasting solutions which address this at its roots.

Since 2010, the Foundation has been implementing a programme of social justice grantmaking.

The RAITH programme has supported projects that empower and provide access to justice for marginalised people, improve governance (especially at a local level) and promote transparency through the media and citizen participation. We believe government and the corporate sector have a role to play in advancing social justice and should be held accountable when they fail to do so.

The RAITH Foundation is currently in a spend-down phase and aims to close its doors in 2036.

Drieziek 10, where the Rural Democracy Trust assists people who have occupied land to campaign for services.



'In order to shape the final period of our grantmaking we felt it was timely to do an in-depth review of the past decade. We wanted to evaluate whether our strategy and funding were contributing to the achievement of social justice and to inform our grantmaking approach in the final phase of our lifespan.'

- Audrey Elster, RAITH Executive Director

This report provides an overview of the main findings of the *10-Year RAITH Foundation Review*.

Our overarching aim over these last 10 years has been to contribute to a culture in which the South African Constitution is respected, promoted and fulfilled.

Staff at Bench Marks Foundation measure toxicity levels of the water from the mine dump in Snake Park.





A 10-YEAR REVIEW

The overall focus of The RAITH Foundation's 10-year review was to:

- Learn more about the impact of the social justice work we have supported.
- Assess The RAITH Foundation's grantmaking processes.
- Reflect on issues that might influence or inform RAITH grantmaking going forward.

The review process was conducted by an independent external consultant, with management support from the The RAITH Foundation staff. Uniquely, grantees were invited to give extensive feedback on their experiences of working with the Foundation.

Grantmaking rapidly increased from R7 million in 2010 to R60 million in 2016.

People collect water at a communal water point in Gauteng



'Our objective in the social justice sector is to influence positive change. We have a dream about a socially just world, but the path to that goal is never simple. It is complex. For example, we want to contribute to an eradication of gender-based violence. But it is not straightforward and the context changes all the time. As donors it is important to pause and reflect on what we are doing and the decisions we are making. This 10-year review allowed us to step back from the detail and see if we are on the right track.'

- Fatima Shabodien, RAITH Strategy Director

The impact of COVID-19

In March 2020, COVID-19 impacted South African society in general, but most especially the vulnerable and marginalised. The harsh restrictions that were imposed in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus, laid bare the structural inequalities that still define South Africa. In overcrowded townships, social distancing was impossible; people had no means of income and no food. There was also an increase in domestic violence. The public was made more aware of the struggles of vulnerable communities and the important role that social justice groups play in highlighting inequality and injustice in our society.

These restrictions also interrupted the RAITH review process. In-person consultations and discussions, although an essential part of the process, were put on hold or had to be held online. Despite the daunting circumstances, we managed to implement all the required components of the review process.

The review process

Six questions were developed by The RAITH Foundation to guide the review. They defined the focus and scope of the review process.

The questions we asked

1. What did RAITH spend its grant funding on during the period under review?
2. What difference has the Foundation's grantmaking made to social justice?
3. Is RAITH employing the most effective grantmaking and management processes?
4. Where are The RAITH Foundation and its grantees positioned in the social justice sector?
5. What is The RAITH Foundation's position within the social justice funding sector?
6. What changes are needed in the Foundation's staffing and governance arrangements for optimal social justice grantmaking?

An in-depth process

The review was an extensive and in-depth process, including both qualitative and quantitative interventions. These included:

1. **Desktop research.**
2. **An online survey** of all current and past grantees.
3. **Focus Group Discussions** with current grantees.
4. **Interviews** with key stakeholders involved in funding and social justice issues.
5. **A significantly relevant random sample analysis** of current and past RAITH Foundation grants.

In addition, other **supplementary reports** that needed to be done, were identified. Each of these produced a detailed report.

Reports resulting from the review process

An enormous amount of feedback was generated from the different reports. Below is a list of the various reports that were developed.

- **Online Survey**
This covers the results of the grantee survey. It includes information on:
 - Respondents' experience of working with The RAITH Foundation in general.
 - RAITH's grantmaking process.
 - The areas in the social justice system that RAITH had chosen to focus on.
- **Focus Group Discussions**
This captures the feedback that was generated in the seven Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) that were held with grantees. Issues that emerged from the Grantee Survey as well as those related to the overall objectives of the review were discussed.
- **Stakeholder Interviews**
A report on the interviews that were conducted with seven highly respected individuals involved in funding and social justice issues in South Africa.

- **Random Sample Grant Data Analysis**

This provides an analysis of the data collected via a web-based platform for the internal review of grants over the past 10 years. It includes a detailed overview of the methodology used for the analysis, the findings that emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data, and the conclusions reached from the analysis.

Supplementary reports that were developed include:

- **Grantmaking Workflow**
This gives a detailed breakdown of all phases of The RAITH Foundation's grantmaking process, from concept-note registration to the post-contract period.
- **Open-Door Analysis**
This is an overview of The RAITH Foundation's grant application and review processes, an analysis of all applications received from 2015 to 2020, when the system was instituted, and recommendations for improving the overall grantmaking process.
- **Analysis of Unsuccessful Grants and Lessons Learnt**
This provides a summary of and recommendations based on lessons learnt from 13 grants deemed unsuccessful, because they had largely or completely not realised their intended objective.
- **Donor Learning Session**
This covers the key issues discussed during a vibrant learning exchange between The RAITH Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Foundation South Africa (OSF-SA).



OVERALL RESULTS AND FINDINGS

What RAITH spent its grant funding on

Between 2010 and the end of 2019, The RAITH Foundation contributed R364 million through 187 grants to organisations in the social justice sector.

The RAITH Foundation awarded different kinds of grants. A *Regular Grant* provided up to 3 years overall programme or specific project support. *Emergency Grants* were normally shorter-term project grants awarded in response to unforeseen or urgent events. *Discretionary Grants* were also awarded for small amounts to tackle issues in an emergency.

Types of grants

- 137 Regular Grants: 73.3%
- 37 Emergency Grants: 19.8%
- 13 Discretionary Grants: 7%

These grants were evenly balanced between project and programme funding (52% and 48% respectively).

Of the grants made between 2020 to 2019, 46.5% were based in Johannesburg, 43.9% in Cape Town and 9.6% in the rest of South Africa, though grantees based in the main urban centres often had a programme reach outside of cities and in other provinces.

Ermelo coal fields, where the Legal Resources Centre engages with and supports artisanal miners.

Grants varied in size from R30 000 (Discretionary Grants) to over R2 million, but most grants were over R800 000 per annum. While funding from The RAITH Foundation was significant to all its grantees and constituted on average 22% of grantees’ annual budgets, their survival was not contingent on RAITH grants alone.

Interventions funded

National reach: 60%
Provincial reach: 24%

While RAITH could not support Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) directly, these were reached through funding channelled to intermediary organisations, such as the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT) and Hlanganisa Institute for Development in Southern Africa (HIDSA).

The duration of RAITH’s funding partnership with organisations varied as well. But findings showed that RAITH consistently supported organisations over longer periods. Many organisations were given consecutive grants, and at the same time new grantees were brought in.

Duration of Funding Partnerships

2–5 years: 37.5%
5–7 years: 16.67%
7–10 years: 20.83%
More than 10 years: 6.25%

Most grantees who participated in the review received funding from The RAITH Foundation for a cumulative period. The majority of grantees said they preferred grants of 3 to 5 years or more, since social justice work requires a sustained effort over a long period to address systemic issues. Longer grants also helped address the issue of financial stability in the sector.

During this period, The RAITH Foundation also refined its funding focus areas to better reflect the work of its grantees and its priorities.

Grant focus areas 2010–2013

- Governance and accountability: 41.1%
- Justice and human rights: 41.1%
- Innovations for social justice: 17.8%

Grant focus areas 2014–2020

- Voice rights and agency: 47.3%
- Accountability and transparency: 31.3%
- Building a capable state: 21.4 %

Have we made a difference?

While it is not possible to conclude exactly where South Africa would have been at this point without an active social justice sector, there is a broad recognition of the crucial role the social justice sector has played in holding political parties, the different arms of the state – and to a lesser extent – corporate entities, accountable. And in doing so, the sector has pulled South Africa back from the precipice with regards to corruption and state capture. (Social Justice Sector Review Report 2020)¹

¹ The *Social Justice Sector Review* was commissioned to provide an overview of the social justice sector in South Africa from 1994 to 2020, as the democratic South Africa celebrated its first 25 years of existence. The aim of the *Review* was to stimulate discussion and debate and to record current movements within the sector, as well as to identify the sector’s victories and strategies and tactics that have been used. *The Social Justice Sector Review* was undertaken concurrently with the *RAITH Review*, and its findings reinforce those of the *RAITH Review*.

Feedback from grantees and stakeholders in the social justice sector acknowledged the vital role that RAITH played in supporting social justice work in South Africa. The RAITH Foundation is one of the few South African funders that focuses solely on social justice issues. Without RAITH's support, many of our grantees noted that they would not have been in a position to continue their work or reach the desired scale and impact they envisioned.

During this period under review, RAITH provided reliable and consistent funding support to grantees.

A combined 89.58% of current grantees rated The RAITH Foundation's impact on the social justice sector as 'significant positive impact' or 'massive positive impact'.

Below are some of the key areas where grantee organisations impacted on South African society.

- ***Access to legal services***

The marginalised in our society can only realise their rights if they are aware of them and have access to legal services. RAITH's support was critical in removing barriers that limit access to legal recourse, often holding corporations and government accountable for human rights violations.

Abdul Chuma. In 2016, the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) organised and facilitated the relocation of people from the Chung Hua hijacked building in Jeppe Street to the Wembley facility in Turffontein





Spring Valley, eMalahleni, where Planact works with the local community to hold government accountable for the delivery of clean water.

- ***Advancing children's rights***

Grantees contributed to realising children's rights in a number of ways. These included, amongst others, bringing about change in a range of policies, laws and regulations that shaped grants for children and the child protection system, such as challenging corporal punishment through the courts, and stopping the exclusion from schools of children with special needs.

- ***Contributing to transformation in society***

- RAITH supported its grantees to actively contribute to the transformation of the social justice sector at both a staffing and Board level.
- Recognising that social justice impact often results from efforts by many different actors over a sustained period, RAITH supported a group of influential and often mutually supportive organisations, each a specialist in their fields of work.

- ***Building the power of marginalised groups***

Through awareness raising, media profiling of issues, and interventions such as community radio, RAITH encouraged marginalised groups to have a sense of agency and a voice, and to contribute to change in their communities.

Strategies of individual organisations around social justice reinforce the strategies and aims of other organisations, so it becomes this amazing ecosystem of working together.

(Karabo Rajuili, Social Justice Sector Review Report 2020)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to rising levels of poverty and inequality, there was already a need for closer cooperation, partnerships and coalitions between social justice organisations, and with affected communities. Resources were needed to maximise their work and impact. RAITH's grantmaking has strengthened these collaborations and broken down the silos in which many grantees previously operated.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was used to assess the success and impact of 40 randomly sampled RAITH Foundation grants.

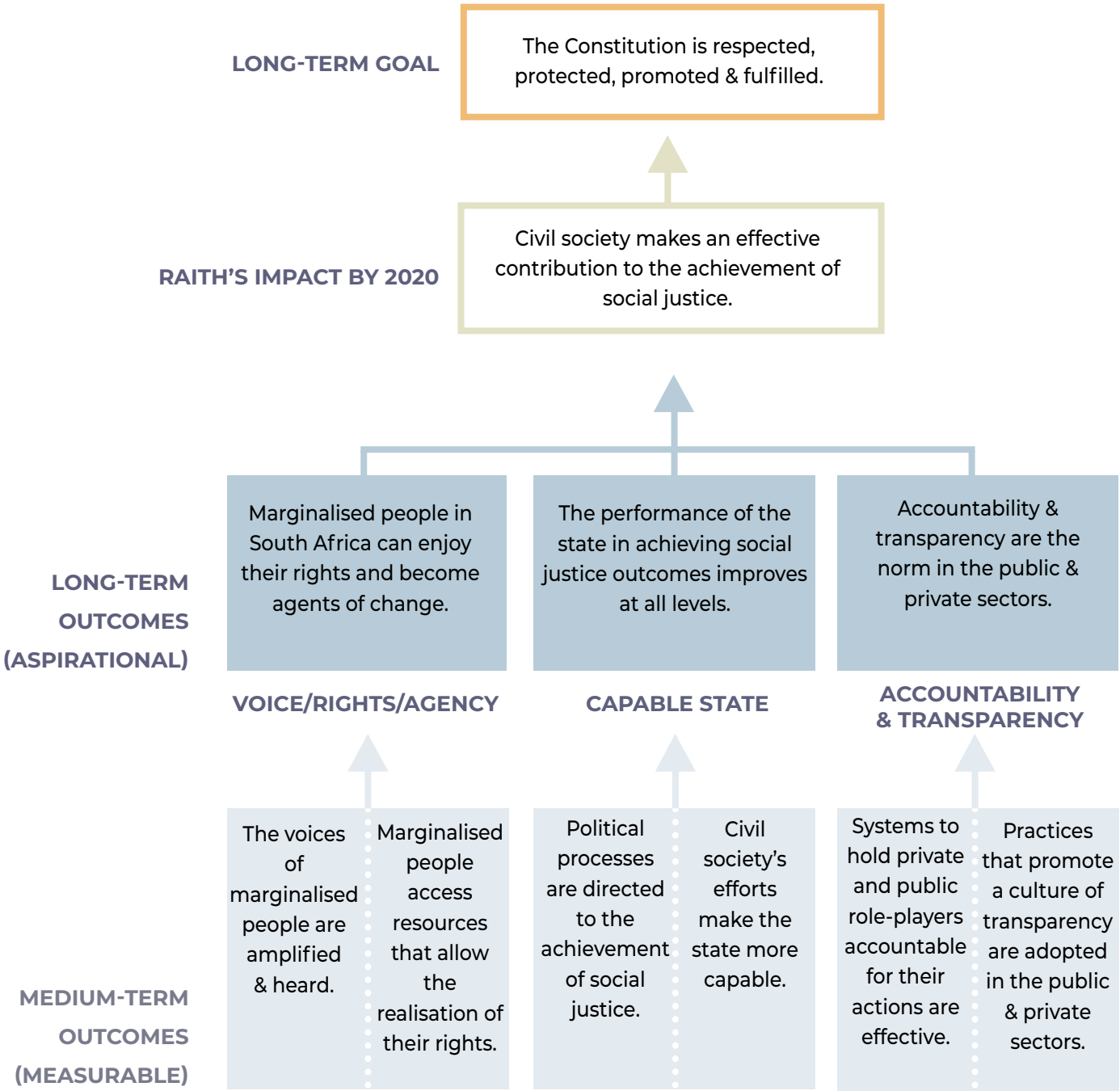
Most grantees met the objectives of their grants (68%) and reached their key deliverables by the end of the grant period. Specific social justice indicators were used in the assessment of grants.

These included whether grantees had influenced:

- A change in policies relevant to social justice.
- A change in state allocation of resources to problem areas.
- Those in power being more accountable.
- A positive change in social justice legal rulings.
- An increase in media profiling of issues.
- Building power of marginalised groups.
- Awareness-raising of social justice issues.

RAITH encouraged grantees to be more strategic in their work by helping them refine their strategies.

The success of grants was assessed against the grantees and RAITH's Theory of Change. Grantees were supported and encouraged to develop their own Theory of Change in order to both measure and manage their interventions.



Many of our grantees have been involved in some of the most decisive victories achieved by the social justice sector, before and since the start of The RAITH Foundation’s grantmaking activities.

RAITH as a funder

Social justice sector stakeholders viewed The RAITH Foundation programmes as well-crafted. They believed we were supporting a group of grantees at the forefront of social justice work in South Africa.

Findings from the Online Survey and Focus Group Discussions highlighted a number of positive viewpoints about RAITH from grantee organisations. These included that RAITH is:

- A progressive funder.
- Committed to long-term support of social justice work.
- Very responsive compared to other funders.
- Keen to engage about long-term strategy.
- Singular in involving grantees in the review process.
- Willing to listen and learn.
- Focused on issues beyond project work, e.g. transformation.

Some grantees perceived The RAITH Foundation to have a bias towards funding public interest litigation organisations at the expense of other social justice initiatives.

As part of the review process, a selection of RAITH Foundation grantees participated in Focus Group Discussions, with each grantee allocated to one of six thematic areas linked to their focus of work. These included:

- Media Accountability
- Membership Organisations
- Community Local Governance/Participation
- Strengthening State Response
- Public Interest Litigation
- Land and Extractives



Community meeting facilitated by the LRC in Mthatha.



Corruption Watch builds campaigns that mobilise people to take a stand against corruption.

Grantees expressed the need for more cooperation between organisations, as well as with other organisations working in the social justice sector. They highlighted that RAITH can contribute to this by identifying groups that are able to work together, by funding joint projects, and by making fewer but larger grants to a cluster of organisations that are working on a specific issue.

Grantees also stressed the impact that COVID-19 had had on social justice organisations, such as loss of funding, changing work arrangements, and negative impacts on the well-being of staff. The RAITH Foundation needed to reflect and offer specific funding and related support to this where possible.

Supplementary reports: Some findings

As previously stated, the review was an extensive and in-depth process, including both qualitative and quantitative interventions. In addition, other **supplementary reports** that needed to be done, were identified. Below are some key findings from these reports.

Factors that contributed to successful grants

During Focus Group Discussions, grantees attributed successful interventions to well-conceptualised initiatives based on expert knowledge and robust research. Innovative projects which maximised the organisation's existing strengths were also important, as were strong networks and partnerships with government and other funders. Grantees that operated within the communities they were working with, and were aware of local needs, had more impact. Successful grantees also employed tools and strategies such as research, community mobilisation (training and awareness-raising), advocacy, strategic litigation, and mass protests and strikes.



SECTION27 is representing 44 of the bereaved families who lost loved ones in the Life Esidimeni tragedy

Factors that contributed to unsuccessful grants

Both internal and external factors led to the failure of the 13 grants deemed unsuccessful. Some of the external factors were beyond the organisations' control.

The main internal factors contributing to the failure of grants were ineffective management and lack of technical expertise. Issues such as overly ambitious objectives, logistical constraints, lack of communication and advocacy skills, bad management of finances and HR also contributed to grants that were deemed unsuccessful.

Other factors included:

- Inappropriate choice of partners intended to add value to the project.
- Organisational instability.
- Challenges of working in a coalition.

The 'open-door' approach

One of the supplementary reports dealt with RAITH's 'open-door' approach to grantmaking, which RAITH adopted in 2015.

This approach meant that calls for proposals were not issued. Instead, applications were received online on a rolling open-door basis. During this period, any qualifying organisation could apply for funding at any time, regardless of their focus or location.

During the period under review, The RAITH Foundation staff formally reviewed new concept notes (pre-application) each month. Emergency grant applications were assessed within 48 hours of concept-note submission. As RAITH enters the final phase of its grantmaking work, it was vital that the effectiveness of the 'open-door' approach was assessed.

Between 2015 and 2020, The RAITH Foundation received 428 funding requests. Of these:

- 128 were invited to submit full concept notes.
- 60 concept notes (47%) resulted in full funding applications.
- 45 of 428 (11%) were ultimately approved for a grant.
- 80% of applications for regrants were successful.

A high percentage of applications were grants to previous grantees, which limited the Foundation's ability to take on new grantees.

What the review suggested is that the 'open door' was not achieving maximum impact. Regardless of the number of grants that the Board approved, every concept note and application required a high level of attention. This approach did not optimise the time and expertise of the already limited staffing. The Foundation remains committed to the 'open-door' policy and will be revising it to ensure that it achieves its intended impact. That is, to give as many potential grantees as possible access to the application process, within the constraints of a small office team.



THE FUTURE OF FUNDING

Of all the themes explored, the issue of funding, and the uncertainty of future funding, featured most prominently in interviews. There are high levels of anxiety about the possibility of more funders closing their doors or changing their funding strategies, and who they fund. Donors who are able to do so could do well with making their strategy periods and future plans known. There is a need for open and frank discussion between donors and organisations in the social justice sector to address some of the dynamics at play. There must be more coordination amongst donors to understand which issues are being underfunded and where the important social justice work is located.

(Social Justice Sector Review Report 2020)

Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) protest march, 2016

Funding uncertainty

Our grantees and stakeholders were deeply concerned about future funding for social justice work and its sustainability. There are a multitude of social justice issues to tackle, but only a small number of funders currently focusing on social justice work, especially local funders like The RAITH Foundation. Although The RAITH Foundation was viewed as a very influential and credible role player in the social justice sector, it plans to wind down its work and exit in 2036. This will leave a significant gap in the sector, as it is one of the few funders that focuses specifically on social justice issues. In this final phase of its grant-making life, the Foundation will focus more of its efforts on the sustainability of the sector, including how to expand and diversify funding flows.

CONCLUSION

The overall review process generated a wealth of information that The RAITH Foundation will consider in planning the final phase of its work. It was a timely process given the Foundation's decision to wind down its activities in 2036.

RAITH is entering its spend-down period of funding, and will need to use its unique position to make strategic investments in organisations and issues that will continue to define the social justice sector over the next 15 years and beyond.

RAITH will endeavour to play a key role in facilitating closer cooperation between social justice funders to maximise the impact of available funding.

RAITH will also aim to identify new sources of funding for social justice work and experiment with innovative approaches to funding this work in South Africa. The Funding Flows Study, that The RAITH Foundation co-commissioned with Elma Philanthropies to better understand funding to the sector, will also be vital to the development and implementation of any new funding mechanisms.

Beyond strengthening and refining its grantmaking and implementing the outcomes of the review process, the *RAITH Foundation Review* will ultimately also contribute to The RAITH Foundation's legacy and vision for realising a socially just South Africa.

Credits

This *Summary Report* is based on *The RAITH Foundation Review: 2010–2020* conducted and written by David Barnard.

Editorial: Harriet Perlman, Sharon Cort, Tracy Murinik

Design: Rene de Wet

Photographs: © Mark Lewis

All images © Mark Lewis except page 24 and 28 © SECTION27

