



Graduate School  
of **BUSINESS**  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

## Working Paper Series<sup>1</sup>

# An Investigation into the Evolution of Sustainability Reporting among the JSE Top 10 Socially-Responsible Companies

by

Melody Memela  
Farai Kapfudzaruwa

No DEFWPS160009/September, 2016

---

<sup>1</sup> **Note:** The findings from this working paper does not in any way reflect the views of the Development Finance Centre (DEFIC). The views are only representative of the authors.





Graduate School  
of **BUSINESS**  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

©Development Finance Centre (DEFIC), GSB, UCT – 2016

#### **Editorial Board**

Dr Sean Gossel	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Dr Latif Alhassan	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Ms Ailie Charteris	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Dr Mundia Kabinga	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Dr Steven Rogers	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Lungelo Gumede	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT

#### **Advisory Board**

Professor Nicholas Biekpe	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Professor John M. Luiz	–	Graduate School of Business, UCT
Professor Joshua Abor	–	University of Ghana Business School, UG
Professor Charles Adjasi	–	University of Stellenbosch Business School, SU
Professor Matthew Ocran	–	University of Western Cape

#### **Published by:**

The Development Finance Centre (DEFIC),  
Graduation School of Business, University of Cape Town,  
9 Portwood Rd, V & A Waterfront, Cape Town, 8002  
Centre webpage: <http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/s.asp?p=791>

All rights reserved. Any reproduction, publication and reprint in the form of a different publication, whether printed or produced electronically, in whole or in part, is permitted only with the explicit written authorisation of the DEFIC or the authors.

# **An Investigation into the Evolution of Sustainability Reporting among the JSE Top 10 Socially-Responsible Companies**

Melody Memela and Farai Kapfudzaruwa

## **Abstract**

Corporate sustainability reporting is an important part of corporate reporting, and also an important part of creating a visibility about the sustainable agenda of corporates. Motivated by a lack of in-depth information about how this practise has evolved in South Africa; the objectives of this study are to shed more light into this evolution, as well as the quality of the content that is part of that evolution in the research period of 2002 – 2012.

Segmenting the decade into through anchor points for the research, the methodology of content analysis was employed in order to read and interpret sample reports and conduct scoring across own developed evaluation criteria of six reporting categories, which was made up of a total of 62 assessment items. Reporting performance was determined, coded, summarized and aggregated where required, for the different levels of analysis to be carried out.

The findings revealed a rising growth trend in the evolution of sustainability reporting in South Africa, with the highest growth taking place in the middle section of the research period, and significantly lower growth in the last section. This is both in terms of overall reporting as well as content coverage of the different reporting categories included in the research.

The Social Performance category is the most reported on category through the decade. The highest percentage increase is found to be in the Context & Commitment and Quality of Management reporting categories through the decade. The industrial sector is the top performer and Telecoms the bottom performer in terms of overall reporting performance for the decade. Sustainability reporting in South Africa seems to have experienced an overall growth trend like the global trend. However, the evolution of that growth has highlighted certain country specific nuances through the reporting period

**Keywords:** Sustainability Reporting | Reporting Performance | JSE | South Africa |