

Media release

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Government and civil society organizations collaborate on anti-poverty strategy in South Africa

Supported by the Southern Africa Trust, a series of anti-poverty workshops in all nine provinces in South Africa will begin on Thursday 8th October 2009 in the Eastern Cape.

The workshops are organized by a civil society task team, set up by civil society organizations during a roundtable dialogue with the government's anti-poverty strategy task team under the leadership of the Presidency, held at the Union Buildings in Pretoria on 22 July, 2009. The aim of these workshops is to generate input from civil society organizations on the draft national anti-poverty strategy. In addition, the workshops will be used to solicit the views of civil society organizations in the provinces on a mechanism and model for civil society engagement with the government on the strategies to reduce poverty.

"This is an important process as it will bring to the fore the voices of the poor on a subject that directly affects them, while also consolidating meaningful engagement between government and civil society on the eradication of poverty," said Dr Themba Mhlongo, Head of Programmes at the Southern Africa Trust.

Civil society representatives from different sectors, including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), trade unions, business, social movements, research organizations, youth organizations and traditional leaders will be present at the workshops.

The outcomes and recommendations emanating from the different provincial workshops will be collated into a single report articulating a coherent civil society position on the anti-poverty strategy and proposed mechanisms for engagement. This report will then be presented by the Civil Society Task Team at the second roundtable dialogue with government which will be held in November 2009.

The provincial workshops will also serve as a way of reporting back to community organizations on the how the outcomes of provincial poverty hearings that were held in 2008 with the support of the Trust, under the banner of the African Monitor and a broad coalition of other civil society organizations. The outcomes of the poverty hearings informed the development of the draft national anti-poverty strategy.

The details of the workshops including dates and venues can be obtained from the Southern Africa Trust. The first workshop is scheduled to be held in Port Elizabeth on Thursday, 8 October, 2009.

The Southern Africa Trust is an independent non-profit agency that supports deeper and wider regional engagement to overcome poverty in southern Africa.

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