



**Media release
For immediate release
Tuesday, 13 July 2010**

The Needs of Vulnerable Youth must be Addressed with Urgency!

Young people become vulnerable to risky behavior such as being involved in bullying or political, systemic, domestic and sexual violence if they are not able to access positive social capital or empowering social networks. This is confirmed in *Ending the Age of the Marginal Majority*, a research report commissioned by the Southern Africa Trust which explores strategies to overcome youth exclusion, vulnerability and violence in southern Africa.

Southern Africa's population is made up mostly of young people. The report highlights that transitions in society, inequality, poverty and unemployment, legacies of violence, conflict situations and the normalisation of violence all heighten youth exposure to violence in the southern Africa region, both as victims and perpetrators. This results in an alarming level of insecurity among the region's youth.

"Identity is quite important for youth as that is the time that young people need to feel like they belong somewhere. Marginalisation at that point drives vulnerable young people to gangsterism and mob violence that reinforces negativity. Adding to that, there is a growing tendency to normalize violence using statements like 'they deserve it'. Society needs to act with urgency to address youth violence and to create conducive conditions for young people to be integrated in their societies both at national and regional levels," said Themba Mhlongo, Head of Programmes at the Southern Africa Trust.

According to the report, unless young people's needs are foregrounded in public policy across all sectors such as economic development, education, health, and social development, the systemic factors driving youth vulnerability will not be adequately addressed. It therefore calls for policies that prioritise the development of young people through education, skills training, livelihoods and civic engagement.

A mainstream policy approach to youth needs and assets will help connect young people more fully with the social, economic and political lives of their communities and countries, and ultimately build their resilience. For this to happen, regional leadership and support is needed. Youth violence should be seen as a priority by southern African countries.

Currently, the private sector is not playing a major role in youth development. The report articulates the need for an inclusive and developmental role for government, civil society organizations and the private sector to overcome young people's exposure to crime and violence, both as victims and perpetrators.

Members of the media and the public are invited to attend the launch of the *Ending the Age of the Marginal Majority* report on 20 July 2010 at Atlas Studios in Johannesburg, South Africa, starting at 18h00. The launch will take place during a "Critical Thinking Forum" public dialogue where a panel including Clayton Peters of South Africa's National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Muzwakhe Sigudhla of the Southern Africa Youth Movement

(SAYM), Helene Perold of Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA), and other informed representatives of youth and youth-focused organisations will debate whether we are tapping our region's youthfulness or failing future generations. The debate will be facilitated by Metro FM's Criselda Kananda.

Copies of the summary of the research report are available from the Southern Africa Trust.

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

<ENDS>

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Mpho Kgosidintsi

Tel: +27 11 318 1012

Mobile: +27 78 459 0152

Email: communications@southernafricatrust.org