



Media Release
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How can microfinance benefit the poor?

The Southern Africa Trust, in partnership with the Association of Microfinance Institutions of Zambia (AMIZ), will be holding a southern African regional workshop on microfinance and policy development in southern Africa at the Protea Hotel in Lusaka, Zambia, 13 – 14 May 2009.

More than a 100 million people in southern Africa live in deep poverty. Microfinance provides a range of benefits to poor households, including long term increases in income and consumption.

This type of credit is often used by poor people to secure assets such as land and other fixed property which gives them future security, as a cornerstone for sustained development and poverty eradication. It also assists poor families to manage sudden set-backs such as the sickness of a wage earner or natural disasters.

Key players in the microfinance sector in southern Africa will attend the workshop, including national microfinance associations from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, civil society organisations and regional networks of researchers and microfinance practitioners.

The Southern Africa Trust will present findings from the research study which the organisation commissioned in 2008 to examine the nature of the micro-finance sector and its impact on poverty eradication.

Through this workshop, the Trust hopes to create a regional platform for voices of poor people who are active in microfinance initiatives to be raised and heard in the implementation of the SADC finance and investment protocol.

The workshop will identify key policy and strategic constraints facing the micro-finance sector in the region as well as recommend policies and strategies to assist the region's policymakers in enhancing the contribution of the microfinance sector to poverty eradication.

The workshop is being held as part of the Southern Africa Trust's contribution to cooperation in the region to implement the outcomes of the SADC International Conference on Poverty and Development that was held in Mauritius in April 2008. The conference recommended that all stakeholders cooperate with SADC and national governments in the development of the financial sector, including microfinance and small and medium enterprises.

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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