

New Southern Africa Trust launched

Barry Smith

SAGA (the Southern African Grantmakers' Association) – in collaboration with the UK Department for International Development – Southern Africa (DFID-SA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) – has announced the formation of a new regional funding and policy resource, provisionally called the Southern African Trust.

The new Trust, to be established in the second half of 2004, will aim to reduce poverty and inequality in Southern Africa by strengthening the voice of poor people in public policy processes. It will support policy innovation, collaboration and learning which connects work on pro-poor economic and social development throughout the region.

SAGA, DFID and SIDA are acting as co-facilitators for the launch

of the Trust (through a Joint Steering Committee made up of representatives from all three organizations). However, once established the Trust will be an independent entity.

According to its founders, this initiative is a response to the current regional context in which both governments and regional organizations (such as the African Union, NEPAD and SADC) are showing high levels of formal commitment to poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is now widely acknowledged that reducing poverty is a key requirement for the consolidation of democracy in the region.

To realize the MDGs, most governments in Southern Africa are engaged in the development and implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Policies to promote growth, good governance, and social and economic justice are central to these poverty reduction agendas. But to be effective, argue the Trust's founders, many of these policies require more integrated regional approaches as well as enhanced engagement by civil society and the private sector. The Trust will work particularly to ensure that the voices of the poor are taken into account in both the design and the implementation of public policy.

Governed by eminent Southern Africans drawn from a broad spectrum of civil society (including business, labour, faith-based organizations, and academic institutions), the Trust will provide funding and

institutional support in the following focus areas:

- ▶ improving the capacity of civil society to engage and influence public policy on poverty and inequality reduction;
- ▶ strengthening dialogue and engagement between civil society, the state and the private sector for pro-poor change;
- ▶ advancing aspects of the poverty reduction agenda identified by poor and marginalized constituencies;
- ▶ promoting an enabling environment and strengthening the infrastructure of civil society to play a more effective role in influencing poverty reduction.

The Trust will operate through two linked mechanisms. The *Regional Public Policy Learning Facility* will bring together a wide range of stakeholders to promote dialogue on public policy issues. It will also commission relevant research and analysis. The *Grantmaking Facility* will give support to networks, alliances and activities that contribute to achieving the Trust's goals. In the work of both, priority will be given to building regional civil society linkages and a regional anti-poverty agenda.

DFID will provide up to £10 million towards the work of the Trust over its first five years of operation, and SIDA has also committed financial support. Other donors and the private sector are being invited to contribute, to secure the sustainability of the Trust as a Southern African resource into the future.

For more information, contact Pinky Moshigo at pinkyabm@ndc.org.za or see the SAGA website at: www.donors.org.za

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FORD FOUNDATION – DOING MORE AND BETTER IN AFRICA

In November 2001, The Ford Foundation capped its nearly 50-year presence in Africa with a new programme, the Special Initiative for Africa. In the two and a half years since then, the initiative has conducted four Africa-wide consultations with 200 scholars, activists, artists, NGO leaders and public officials. It has also developed a growing portfolio of pilot projects to advance peace processes, regional integration, and inclusive policies on citizenship and identity in Africa. The initiative now has a new name – *Trust Africa*. It will be permanently relocated to Africa in December 2005, when it will start a new life as an independent and self-sustaining African foundation that supports creative ideas and intra-African partnerships for addressing critical African problems. Ultimately, the unique role of *Trust Africa* will be to help align philanthropic resources more closely with distinctly African initiatives that advance a freer, safer and more integrated Africa.

For more information, contact Akwasi Aidoo at a.aidoo@fordfound.org

The September issue of *Alliance* will include a longer article on *Trust Africa*.