

## **Report on Social Movements and Poverty Workshops in South Africa**

The workshops were held in Durban (July 30 2008), Johannesburg (August 31 2008) and Cape Town (August 13 2008). They were meant to solicit feedback from the interviewees and invited people. The decision to hold three workshops was related primarily to the recognition that movement activities have a strong city focus. National politics is important but so are provincial and city politics. Reflecting South Africa's past apartheid policies, there are also very different identity politics in each of the three cities. A further consideration was the opportunity to maximize participation. Diana Mitlin attended the workshops in Durban and Johannesburg.

### **Participants:**

All of those interviewed plus some other key informants that were not available for interview were invited to the workshops. People present at the workshops were movement participants, NGO activists and interested academics. There was a good spread in each of the three workshops.

### **Attendance:**

The Cape Town has more people invited reflecting the weight of interviewing. In all cases more people confirmed attendance than were able to make the meeting. This reflects the informality in the lives of social movement leaders. In Cape Town, 22 people confirmed that they will attend but 14 people attended. In Durban, 18 people confirmed attendance but 13 people attended. Lastly in Johannesburg, 13 people confirmed attendance but 8 people attended. Lists of attendees are provided at the end of this report. In total, 19 movements or professionals working closely with specific movements attended with another five key informants who work with a number of movements.

### **Contribution of the workshops to the research:**

- The Durban workshop reflected on both the conceptualization and praxis of social movements. The discussions were divided between two plenary sessions and two working groups. There was an emphasis on the relationship between movements and the government (it includes African National Congress/ South African Communist Party/ Congress of South African Trade Unions – as it is called tripartite alliance). Participants were critical of both social movements and government. Social movements were criticized especially in the areas of leadership, objectives, strategies as well as representation of constituencies. On the other hand, the government was charged for failure of service delivery and silencing (or co-opting) leaders of social movements. Particular attention was drawn to the development of a more populist strand to ANC politics in efforts to maintain grassroots support and pre-empt movement activities. For poverty, there was the suggestion that movements are ill-equipped to tackle poverty but rather can maximize their contribution through being a commentator on the successes or failures of state policies and programmes. There was not much reported on our estimation of movements' achievements or successes; however, there were concerns about how success can be measured. Emphasis was placed in the comments reform of electoral processes, as well as the need to influence state policies more directly.
- Discussions at the Johannesburg workshop were intellectual and academic in form reflecting both the individuals in attendance and higher levels of politicization within the movements present. The concepts used to categorize movements were hotly interrogated. There was a sense that the conceptual categories are failing to describe network movements like Anti-Privatization Forum. There was also discussion on methodology and ethics of research like getting permission from interviewees for publicizing their data and pictures. The issue of defining the concept, social movement was highly contested in such a way that it was felt that a

study that brings different movements together is unlikely to do justice to them all. There were concerns that the mapping process would not be at a sufficient depth to reflect the complexity of movements in South Africa. History and ideology seem to be distinguishing points helping to define particular movements. There was, in a general, a feeling that the ideology adopted by movements was a critical part of their own identity and that this should be taken into consideration in the mapping process. There were dissatisfaction with categorization of movements into identity, asset dispossession and contestation of the returns to labour categories. In particular, there was a strong feeling expressed that identity could not be separately considered in the South African context but was merged into other movement groupings. In contrast with Durban and Cape Town workshops in which working group discussions took place, the small size of the Johannesburg workshop meant that there was simply one discussion throughout the period of the workshop. It did nonetheless shed light on the problematic of conceptualizing social movements in a political society which is characterized by ruptures and continuities with the past.

- The Cape Town workshop was the last to take place. It was quite balanced in terms of reflecting on the mapping paper with participants raising concerns on definition of concepts like system, hostile policies, transformatory and reformatory. The measurement of the movements' successes was also questioned and some suggested that it goes beyond immediate victories like court rulings. They also suggested other factors that impact on social movements like religion and race – in part this reflects the composition of citizens in the Western Cape. The issue of independence of social movements was raised as well especially in the area of funding. By and large there was an agreement with the conclusions of the mapping paper, and a suggestion that it can benefit from the minor comments that were made.

#### **Contribution of the research to movement activities:**

- In Durban, there was a genuine interest in the study among those attending the workshop. There a particular recognition that movements would benefit from greater reflection about their strategies towards the state, and the state's strategies towards them.
- In Johannesburg, there was considerable recognition of the value of the mapping process. There was an acknowledgement that previous theorizing of the social movements may not be accurate in the case of South Africa. Moreover, views were expressed that there needed to be more reflection among movements of the sector, its activities and preferences, in order to sharpen its effectiveness. There was a request for a deeper research process to enable the mapping process to be refined. A number of those presented expressed their interest in the second phase of the research
- In Cape Town, there was much concurrence with the contents of the provisional mapping paper. The comments deepened rather than challenged the analysis. There was an interest in making the conceptualisation more comprehensive by adding religious movements. There was also an interest in the second phase of the study.

#### **Conclusion:**

The three workshops provided a diverse set of reactions to the mapping document. To summarise, in Durban the weight of analysis was statist, Johannesburg it was conceptual and in Cape Town it was orientated to the pragmatics and practicalities of social movements existence.

#### **List of attendance at workshops Durban (July 30 2008),**

Malungisa Youth Development  
Philani Ngcobo

Bongisipho Phewa (Chairperson)  
Khaya Gumede (Secretary)

Sinothando Gardening Group  
Zamekile Dlamini  
Sphesihle Phewa

Umzinyathi Concerned Resident Group  
Sipho Dlamini  
Thandeka Mkhwanazi (Secretary)  
Sphamandla Dlamini

Democracy Development Programme  
Dr. Rama Naidu (Director)

Abahlali ba se mJondolo  
Lindela Figlan (Vice President)  
System Cele (Member)

School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu/Natal  
Dr. Richard Ballard (senior lecturer)

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance  
Bongani Mthembu (chairperson)

eThekweni Ecopeace  
Alan Murphy

Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu/Natal  
Ntokozo Mthembu (Researcher)

**Johannesburg (August 01 2008)**

Coalition Against Water Privatisation  
Dr. Dale McKinley (former coordinator)

Soweto Concerned Residents  
Mr. Mthembu (Chairperson)

Reproductive Rights Alliance  
Maria van Driel (National Chairperson)

General Industries Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA)  
Jon Appolis (General Secretary)

University of Johannesburg  
Marcelle Dawson

Centre for Applied Legal Studies (University of the Witwatersrand)  
Jackie Dugard

Khanya College  
Mhlobo

Inner City Resource Centre  
Lebohang Matete

**Cape Town (August 13 2008)**

Community Law Centre (University of the Western Cape)  
Lillian Chenwi (Senior Researcher)  
Siyambonga Heleba (Researcher)  
Renchia DuPlessis (Administrator)  
Rebecca Amollo

Institute of Democracy in South Africa (idasa)  
Muza Zamisa (Researcher)

Delft Housing and Job Creation Campaign  
F. Hendricks  
Mary Paulse  
Sodah James  
Albert Nel

Youth With Vision  
Bonyani Ngonzo (Chairperson)

Community Organization Urban Resource Centre  
Stefano Marmorato

New Women's Movement  
Bridgette Magqasa (Media Convener)

Triangle Project  
Asanda and Cheryl