

WORKING DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

The majority of the Swazi population live under poverty. *“Past studies indicate that about 66% of the whole population live below the poverty line with an average per capita income of E71.00 per month”*

Budget Speech, 2001

As an average estimate, in reality, some people live with a per capita income of less than E20.00 per month. The people of Swaziland are faced with a national crisis at all sectors of society, which are at unprecedented levels. Poverty rates are escalating, unemployment and job crisis are escalating, crime and violence are extremely high, women and child abuse and violence is unavoidable high and inclining, basic services are only available for a few rich, the economy is stagnant while development is accelerating at a negative rate, the provision and affordability of social services such as water, housing, education and health are at contraction basis. The environment is under pressure to meet the basic requirements and needs of the population and continues to degenerate. These are major concerns to all the poor people of the country, not only as current crisis but of major importance even on their future and their children.

As members of the broader array of civic organizations, we are not only concerned, but we wish to assert our commitment to stand up and confront these realities and lay a firm basis for the creation of a new and just society. We are determined to build the capacity of our people to fight and resist poverty that has resulted from economic injustices, humiliation and exploitation in all its form.

We commit ourselves to build unity in action around all issues affecting our people, in communities, areas of employment, education, churches etc, for the realization of our goal of fighting all forms of poverty for a society of self reliance and dignity.

Objectives

- ❖ To mobilize and unite communities and all the poor people of the country against poverty, economic injustice and social inequality in all its forms.
- ❖ To build an economic justice movement challenging the imbalances from their historical foundation for an effective strategy of fighting poverty.
- ❖ To deepen popular consciousness about the effects of economic policies/ neo-liberal policies to the majority poor people of the country and their role at the current crisis and the future of our society.
- ❖ To mobilize the people around the demand for a People's Budget based on the priorities and interests of the poor, and fight for a progressive economic system oriented towards serving the interest of the people.
- ❖ To fight against economic and gender disparities in all sectors of society for socio-economic transformation of our society in the fight against feminisation of poverty.
- ❖ To build co-operatives as vehicles for empowerment of the poor people without exposing them to the risk of the global economic onslaught of individualistic competition against themselves.
- ❖ To participate fully and effectively in the world network of organizations in fight against poverty and advocacy for an alternative economic system.

Character of SCAPEI

- ☼ SCAPEI is a social movement committed to the advancement of the interest of the poor for social equality and economic justice for all
- ☼ Women, the unemployed, rural masses and workers are central to the character of SCAPEI and their mobilization is key to the purpose of struggle against poverty and economic inequality.
- ☼ The network shall work to strengthen and build community organizations and initiatives in order to build the capacity of the people to seek alternatives to their own problems.
- ☼ SCAPEI shall respect the independence and autonomy of all its working sector organizations in order to build unity in action around common issues.
- ☼ It is a network at the centre of all organizations in pursue of the fight against poverty and economic inequalities in the country, coordinating the mass activities at all levels of the struggle against poverty.

- ☼ SCAPEI shall be the core of the working class consciousness, working to building solidarity and unity among workers and all poor people's struggles that no one face through education and mass action for independence and self-organizations of the poor.
- ☼ SCAPEI believes that the struggle for economic justice in Swaziland is an integral part of the global movement for the new world economic order based on the respect for human dignity and equality.

Socio-Economic Challenges Facing the People of Swaziland

The key problem facing the people of Swaziland remains poverty and the massive inequalities brought about and consolidated by neo-colonial system and its preceding systems. The massive inequalities in income and wealth translated into extensive poverty.

The colonial regime and its creation- the Tinkhundla neo-colonial and semi-feudal regime have pursued discriminatory social, political and economic policies which; amongst other things, have led to: extreme levels of poverty and disease in the rural places; the creation of urban ghettos where people have been denied even the most basic means of survival as a result of severely limited access to decent homes, electricity, clean water, access roads, health facilities and recreational facilities; an education system preparing the majority of the Swazi people for lives of inferiority and low wage jobs; a social security geared almost entirely to fulfilling the needs of the royal minority and their immediate friends and allies, a health system that has seriously neglected the well-being of most Swazi people; the social and political marginalization of the majority of the people, through their exclusion from public life, economic benefit and decision-making, as well as the distortion and abuse of culture by the ruling royal regime.

Gender discrimination has either excluded or subordinated women participation in all socio-economic and political institutions. Combined with Tinkhundla patriarchy, this has resulted in women, rural women in particular, being the most exploited and poverty-stricken section of the Swazi population. Both the political system of Tinkhundla and the pattern of economic development in our country have been responsible for these developments. The royal minority and their capitalist friends have used their exclusive access to political and economic power to promote their own interests at the expense of the majority of the Swazi people and the country's natural resources. The majority of the Swazi people have been systematically excluded and disadvantaged economically with the result that Swaziland has one of

the most unequal patterns of income and wealth distribution in the world, a gini coefficient of 0.6.

The alienation of land from the indigenous people and the denial of the majority of our people's rights to land and political power in our country are ultimately connected. The agricultural sector is experiencing a deep-seated structural crisis of the Tinkhundla system as a whole.

These problems have led to the arbitrary eviction of people from their land, unemployment and a serious decline in living standards. Furthermore they have deprived the youth and women of opportunities to realise their talents and contribute of to the development of all our people.

This campaign seeks to highlight the major problems and crisis of the system and to respond to these areas of social and economic spheres, and is structured so as to highlight the strong relationship between the creation of political democracy, economic freedom and equality.

There are many factors that form the basis of economic crisis in Swaziland:

- There is a high level of disinvestments, companies are closing down
- High levels of inflation
- Low and declining level of economic growth
- High levels of economic inequality
- Lack of fairness in the distribution of the wealth of the country
- There are an inheritance of the world capitalist crisis

The need for the transformation of the Swazi economy

The transformation of the whole economy from saving the narrow, selfish interests of the democratic majority. At the centre of this massive process, is the need for a transformed developmental state.

This state must drive a growth strategy that focuses on providing effective support in the protection and creation of quality jobs, meeting basic needs for the poor and expanding its involvement in directing economic activities for the benefit of the poor.

The state must also provide a social wage that sets a floor under living standards for all Swazi, particularly the poor most of whom are women, unemployed youth and the rural masses. These social wage comprises government services and grants provided to households in addition to rimed income. It should ensure that no one faces absolute poverty. This may include; welfare grants, education and health care for all pension, skills , training unemployed, benefit living wage, etc.

The state must also transform itself to strengthen democracy and the public sector in general through the creation of system allow greater participation by the masses who have been denied access to poor and the delivery of sluices for all. Finally; the state must build and support alternative centres of economic power. All the other strategies can contribute to this aim. In particular of the three farms of capital;

- Monopoly capital
- state capital and
- social capital

The state must deliberately work to promote the latter-social capital, which has the potential to empower the overwhelming majority of historically oppressed majority, as opposed to a tiny elite, amongst the oppressed masses. This may include; co-operation, community banks etc.

The transformation of the state budget from being a royal budget prioritising exclusive interests of the ruling elite, to being a people's budget, sluicing the broad interests of the people of Swaziland in general. The core principles of such a budget may include;

- Giving priority to the basic needs of the poor, especially, through the requisite public services and social spending.
- Create an environment for the retention and creation of quality jobs, as well as economic growth and development.
- Empowering the historically disadvantaged majority, by giving them ware assets and skills.
- Broadening democratic and participatory governance in all spheres of society.
- Protecting the environment and ensuring development throughout the country, rural as well urban areas.

Global crisis and our Struggle for a just World charge

Globalisation weakens, in the main, the developmental role of the state in the economy and its capacity to satisfy the basic social needs for the poor, whilst at the same time strengthened in order to deal with such resistance. This goes together with giving priority to the interests of profit-maximisation over those of the social needs of the poor majority. Therefore, globalisation is not a neutral process, it is a deliberate and ideologically dined process of profit maximisation for a few transactional companies and not to meet basic needs of the poor.

Conclusion

Our commitment to the struggle against poverty and economic injustice is centred on the belief that we seek to create a society which guarantees a better and secure life, formed on the basis of dignity for all. We seek to fight for:

- ❖ Better wages and working conditions
- ❖ An end to privatisation, out-sourcing, casualisation and all the brutal effects of the whole system of neo-liberalism and economic crisis
- ❖ Community participation inn the ownership and distribution of the country's wealth.