

**CONSOLIDATING THE CHURCHES WORK FOR  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

Annual report of the  
**Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation**  
for the period January – December 2005

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

***“Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings.” (Ben Okri, Birds of Heaven, 1995)***

The uppermost question among stakeholders of the Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET) at the beginning of 2005 was whether ESSET was still a relevant and needed organisation. The question was necessitated by a number of factors. Among these were:

- ✓ the operational leadership vacuum created in the previous year after the director, programme coordinator and research coordinator had left the organisation;
- ✓ the changing global donor climate and the hostility with which economic justice initiatives are received in the country;
- ✓ increased implementation of socio-economic justice programmes by other ecumenical agencies in the country

While this might have paralysed many, the board of trustees of ESSET continued convinced of the need for ESSET. The board continually prayerfully sought to find the right strategy for taking the process forward. The unprecedented global focus on the dehumanising scandal poverty was a major affirmation of the huge task that lay ahead and a reason for the continued existence of, among others, a church based movement for socio-economic justice. For it will only be when poverty has been eradicated off the face of the earth that ESSET and its kin and kith will cease to have a reason to exist. ESSET continued to locate itself within this global ecumenical movement for socio-economic justice; deepen its roots therein and sought to find strengthen.

As this report attests, it can confidently be stated that through God's Grace ESSET was and is being transformed and strengthened into an effective instrument for God's broader mission of transforming the world. This 2005 annual report of ESSET is therefore a story of internal reflection on the work the organisation done in pursuit of its mission. It is also a telling of the story of reality the poor and marginalised people in whose name the struggle for socio-economic justice is waged. It is a story told, we believe, in honesty and frankness; so that readers those who read it can help ESSET become better in what it is meant to be through their comments, criticisms and further sharing.

The stories of ESSET and of poverty cannot be told without the attendant story of the South African government's responses to poverty in the year. The report is therefore divided into three broad areas. It starts with a brief analysis of the socio-economic context within which ESSET operated and recalling the organisations' mandate which was set to respond to the context. The next section looks at the actual programmes and activities undertaken to fulfil this mandate. We then make an assessment of the programmes and activities as well the organisational ability to this end.

## 2. 2005 IN REVIEW

***“We will continue to intensify our offensive on this front [corruption], fully aware of the fact that much that happens in our society encourages the entrenchment of a value system based on personal acquisition of wealth by all means and at all cost.” (Thabo Mbeki, State of the Nation Address, 2006)***

### 2.1 The state of the nation

#### 2.1.1 A political overview: the story of Jacob Zuma

The story of the year 2005 in South Africa was the story of Mr Jacob Zuma, one time Deputy President of the country and of the ruling political party, the African National Congress (ANC). Jacob Zuma was accused of having tried to bribe a French arms company through a third party, Mr Shabir Shaik. Shaik was charged and convicted of what the judge in the case said was a “generally corrupt relationship”.

While for many Zuma’s dismissal as Deputy President was a clear case of making a statement against corruption for others, within the ruling party itself, the trade union movement and large sectors of civil society, it raised deeper issues?

The unfolding saga forced South Africa to have a conversation with itself on the rule of law, specifically the upholding of the principle of innocent until proven guilty and the nature and power of political authority. It was argued that the saga had much to do with the impending election of a new leader of the ruling party which played itself in the abuse of state machinery to advance political objectives while at the same time silencing alternative voices within the ruling party<sup>1</sup>.

The matter is, even to South Africans, complex and multifaceted with each of the points raised worthy of careful scrutiny. While the outcome of the saga cannot as yet be predicted there are lessons to be learnt; some positive, some scary.

- ✓ The fact that a very popular Deputy President of the country could be dismissed, be charged for corruption and have the institutions of the state remain intact is an indication of the maturity of our democracy, growing constitutional stability and solid governance processes
- ✓ The saga further moves South Africa away from the struggle days when politics was about fighting for the liberation of the majority or the protections of the supremacy of a few. Politics is now a contestation over ideas and strategies for socio-economic transformation, with those who can best sell their ideas and credentials winning the minds and hearts of the public. In a sense the days of the ANC as a liberation movement are over. It is now a political party in the modern (western) sense subject to the power struggles inherent in nature of political parties the world over.
- ✗ The nature of the debate has seen a quick labelling of pro-Zuma views as populist or outright dangerous and pro-Mbeki views as Machiavellian by the opposing camps. This

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<sup>1</sup> The latter observation arises from the association of Zuma with formations that are ideologically left of the ANC centre.

polarised debate has also permeated the mainstream media such that it has itself become part of the problem. It has also limited open responses from other sectors of society, such as the church. This is a direct threat on the ability of the country to have a frank talk with itself over important issues!

- ✘ While institutions of the state set to sustain our democracy have to date maintained their independence and authority the ongoing attacks they are facing may yet jeopardise their independence. Some of the more implicated institutions are the intelligence and prosecution authorities of the country. This is a direct threat to the country's ability to protect itself.
- ✘ Constant political in-fighting has the potential to paralyse key sections of the civil service since civil servants will not remain immune to the human desire to back the winning side so that jobs may be secured, in the least.

These observations should however not detract from the fact that in 2005 South Africans from all corners acknowledged that corruption is a cancer which if not exorcised from society can destroy the country. In the words of Molefe Tsele this corruption is driven by a "a ritual acquisitive spirit" which makes some people "willing to trade their souls for anything, even what they stood for, their past and their values and their ideals – just for the sake of acquisition of wealth"<sup>2</sup>.

### **2.1.2 The socio-economic context: a brief overview**

South Africa continued to make strides in overcoming the social service deficits created by the apartheid system within disadvantaged communities. The African National Congress (ANC) government has become responsive to the challenges raised by non-governmental agencies such as ESSET. Small, but significant shifts in socio-economic policies have been noted. The Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment programme sought to address the elitist tendencies of the Black Economic Empowerment initiative; the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) seeks to respond to the reality of jobless growth and the revision of government's housing provision programme has been replaced by a more integrated human settlement and community building programmes.

Despite the achievements, the country remains one with major socio-economic needs in the areas of provision of adequate health services compounded by the HIV/Aids pandemic; low income housing; residential water and electricity energy supplies; access to land for agrarian reform and qualify employment.

The situation is exacerbated by a number of factors including;

- ✓ Rapid migration from rural communities to the urban centres resulting in pressure on resources
- ✓ Further migration from other African countries adds onto this pressure on internal resources
- ✓ Mushrooming of shack developments on the fringes of centres of economic development which are in themselves not worthy to be called communities
- ✓ Fast tracked housing development which build houses without the required community amenities thus increasing potential slums around big cities

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<sup>2</sup> Molefe Tsele, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, interviewed by Ben Turok in 'New Agenda' Issue 20, Fourth Quarter, 2005

- ✓ Isolation of rural communities resulting in desolate outposts often completely forgotten in the development planning for the country

Many recipients of services such as water, electricity and telecommunications have not been able to pay for the maintenance of such services because of worsening poverty and increasing unemployment. This simply means some the service provision gains are lost by service disconnections. Even where government provides basic water and electricity for free to the poor communities, these remain out of reach of those communities without the infrastructure to provide those services, such as in outlying rural communities.

Other than infrastructure deficiencies highlighted above, the country has been beset by a growing crisis of morals and values. This is manifested in increasing levels of violent abuse of women and children; rampant corruption in all sectors and at all levels of society, high rates of criminal activity and society's latent acquiescence with these developments.

### **2.1.3 South Africa's Economic Outlook**

The South African economy has been growing steadily at around 3% per annum over since 1994. This impressive growth reported to 5.5% in 2005 is however clouded by worsening poverty levels, increasing inequality and low employment levels. It is argued here that an economy which grows without addressing the key questions of poverty and unemployment that affects the majority cannot be said to be performing well. Further an economy that increases inequalities is surely serving the interest of the few.

#### **Poverty<sup>3</sup>**

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) show that the proportion of people living in poverty in South Africa has not changed significantly between 1996 and 2001. However, those households living in poverty have sunk deeper into poverty and the gap between rich and poor has widened (HSRC Report, 2004). The number of poor people in South Africa is between 48.5% and 57% of the population<sup>4</sup>.

However, when using the international poverty lines, this declines to between 10.5% (US\$1 per day) and 23.8% (US\$2 per day). Even though there has been a slight decline in the number of poor people, there has been an increase in the number of people who are chronically poor. In 1995, 9.4% of people lived on less than US\$1 per day, but this increased to 10.5% in 2002.

South Africa appears not to be having "coherent, comprehensive" poverty eradication strategy<sup>5</sup>. This means that while the state is spending money on attempting to eradicate poverty, this is being done in a piece meal fashion which undermines the probability of successful comprehensive poverty eradication.

#### **Inequality**

South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world. It is clear that there needs to be greater consensus around the measurement of inequality if we are to take the indicator seriously, as well as the value that can rationally be accorded to social spending on reducing a per capita inequality measure.

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<sup>3</sup> Sources: **Civil society Speaks**: South African Civil society review of the MDG, 2005

<sup>4</sup> Based on the 2004 reports of the UNDP and HSRC

<sup>5</sup> The Development Report 2005 published by the development Bank of Southern Africa

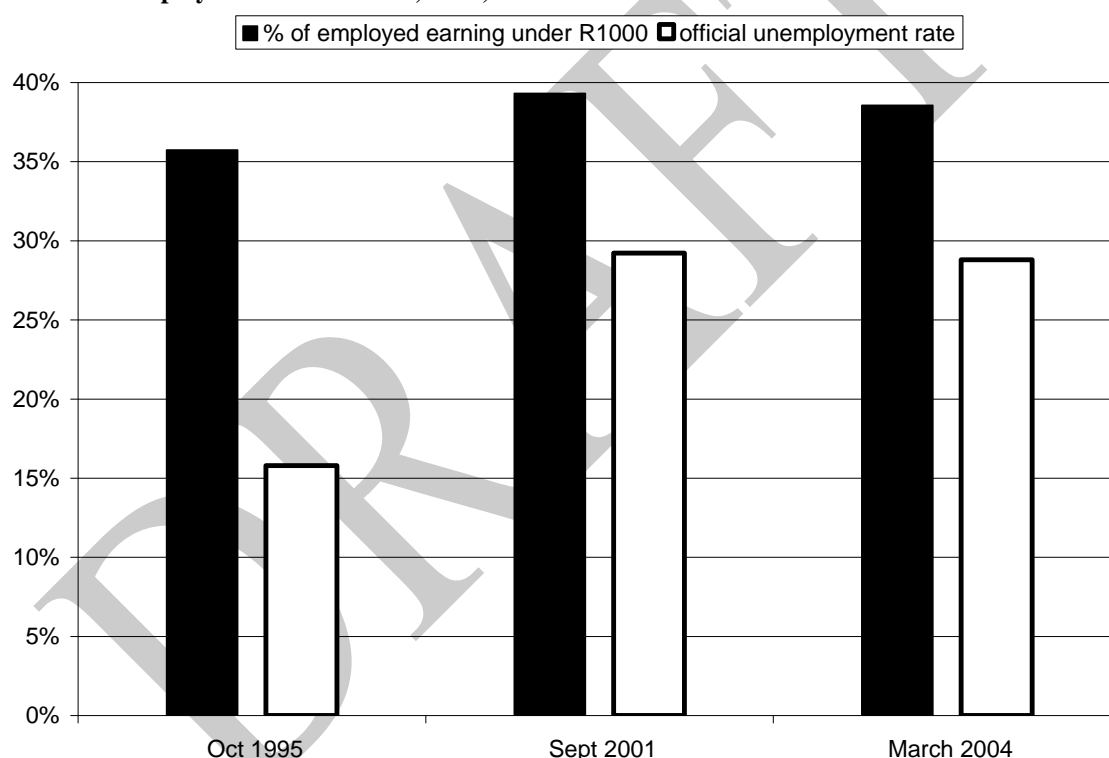
Like unemployment and poverty measurement levels indicators, this is a contested indicator. Government's Draft MDG report indicated that in 2000, the Gini coefficient was 0.59, falling down to 0.35 if social transfers<sup>6</sup>. It is clear that there is no clear consensus about the direction in which the indicator of inequality is directed, in other words, whether our society is getting more or less equal.

Inequality in South Africa remains morally unacceptable and, in perpetuating a barrier for poor people's participation in the economy, erodes the democratic values and gains the nation has made over the past twelve years. Moreover, there is compelling evidence that reducing levels of inequality supports more robust economic growth<sup>7</sup>.

### **Employment and Poverty**

For historical reasons that sought to ensure a constant supply of cheap African labour, South Africa is a cash-based society. Wages still represent the largest source of income for South Africans.

**Chart 1: Unemployment and incomes, 1995, 2001 and 2004<sup>8</sup>**



**Note:** The official definition of unemployment, used here, classes workers who want paid jobs but are too discouraged to seek it as "economically inactive," rather than as unemployed.

Whilst unemployment has risen, wages have declined. In 2004, 39% of the population earned under R1000 a month, virtually the same number as ten years earlier. Yet in this period, the

<sup>6</sup> These include child grants, disability grants and old-age pensions which have been rolled to previously unserved communities and now reach about 70% of intended beneficiaries

<sup>7</sup> This argument has a long history in poverty eradication strategies. This includes the 2006 World Development Report and the 2003 Human Development Report for South Africa.

<sup>8</sup> Source: Figures calculated from Statistics South Africa, *South Africa in Transition* (Pretoria: 2001) for 1995; and from Statistics South Africa, *Labour Force Survey*, September 2001 and March 2004, downloaded from [www.statssa.gov.za](http://www.statssa.gov.za)

purchasing power of R1000 fell by well over half. Both of these factors have increased the poverty levels of the working poor. There has also been increased pressure on the disposable income of the poor – these include school fees and increased transportation costs, effectively diminishing the potential for capital accumulation and savings. This has had the effect of entrenching earning patterns and income disparities.

Table 1 demonstrates that poverty continues along the lines shaped by apartheid. Africans, especially African women and especially in the former homeland areas, experience higher unemployment and lower incomes. Joblessness for African women in the former homelands stood at 51% in 2003, the highest for any of the groups we looked at in our analysis.

#### **2.1.4 The State of Civil Society**

It would not be too far fetched to suggest that 2005 will be noted by historians as a watershed year in the regrouping and strengthening of South Africa's civil society.

We observed major shifts in the state of the labour movement. Notable has been COSATU's public advocacy on what some may define narrowly as non-worker issues. Among these issues were the crisis in Zimbabwe, the Jacob Zuma saga and the Aids treatment demands. Some of these pronouncements invited a battering from the ruling party and the federation, to its credit, remained resilient.

The announcement of an intention to merge by two of remaining worker federations, NACTU and FEDUSA is set to completely change the labour scenario.

The South African NGO Coalition has seemingly overcome its operational and funding challenges and emerged in 2005 with a clearer focus and willingness to work with other formations.

Spontaneous protests around the country on service delivery issues and community rejection of government's decisions such as in Khutsong over demarcation processes further lends a hand to the notion that South Africans are increasingly seeking to have their stake in the democratic processes.

The government's reaction to protests and disagreement mostly smacked of attempts to pacify voices from below or suppress them through the use of force and intimidation. It is probable that the year ended with more people in jail for social unrest than at any other time since 1994.

We also continued to see the schism between sections of civil society formation growing. The division is broadly between formations labelled as 'social movements' and 'traditional civil society movements'. At the centre is an ideological drift centred on whether being working for socio-economic justice means being anti-ANC / anti-government. The questions further asks whether transformation of society should be driven by a quest for a new political order left of the ANC or that civil society movements should remain apolitical in the sense that they should not have any aspirations for political power. On the surface these divisions are seen on positions taken around issues such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Global Call for Action Against Poverty (GCAP),

## **2.4 ESSET's intervention**

While we could not foretell all these developments at the beginning of the year, the key issues we had identified as challenges in our proposal for 2005 remained at the centre stage. These included inequalities, unemployment, economic refugees, ideological and class division, and local municipal governance and service delivery.

ESSET's plans for 2005 "took into cognisance previous years' plans and the demands for strategic review and planning expressed in recent years. At the core of this plan was the task of redefining the strategy of the organisation for the future given the changed and changing socio-economic context nationally and globally. Further ESSET had to revive relations with South African churches who remain key stakeholders, programme partners and donor partners. It was also planned that long standing partnership programmes should be sustained albeit at a lower key while a new strategy is being developed." (2005 Programme Proposal)

The implementation of the plan was to be done through five key programmes areas. These were:

### **2.4.1 Building ESSET**

With the objective of enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of ESSET to fulfil its mandate

### **2.4.2 Coordinating Campaigns and Networks**

With the objective of encouraging churches to participate in networks and campaigns promoting socio-economic justice locally and internationally

### **2.4.3 Promoting Public Dialogue**

With the objective of promoting public discussions on major socio-economic themes from an ethical and theological perspective

### **2.4.4 Capacity Building**

With the objective of developing the capacity of the churches at local and national level to participate meaningfully in socio-economic transformation processes

### **2.4.5 Generating Resources**

With the objective of producing well researched and accessible resource materials on socio-economic justice for use by churches and communities in advocacy and socio-economic justice campaigns

### 3. REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

***“We must, constrained by and yet regardless of the accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny.” (Nelson Mandela, 1994 State of the Nation Address)***

ESSET’s programmes and activities were aimed at bringing fundamental change to systems and processes that sustains and perpetuates poverty and inequality and marginalisation was motivated by a desire to contribute towards the transformation of South Africa into a just society where the worth of every human being counts. There was and there is no illusion that these changes can happen overnight or that they can be brought about by churches alone. ESSET’s programmes and activities are best understood a few bricks and mortar in the overall building project of a just and sustainable world for all.

We give here an overview of the activities under each programme is given below.

#### 3.1 Programme Area: **Building ESSET**

Realised activities undertaken in the quest to enhance ESSET’s effectiveness included the following:

##### **Briefings and consultations**

##### **3.1.1 Ecumenical agencies**

ESSET met other ecumenical agencies to explore ways of improving working relations. These were Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Action (PACSA), Church Community Leadership Trust (CCLT), the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT), Benchmarks Foundation for Southern Africa for Corporate Social Responsibility (BeFSA CSR) and Economic Justice Network (EJN).

##### **3.1.2 SACC consultations**

Meetings were held with national programme officers of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), including the General Secretary.

Briefings were also held with Provincial Offices of the SACC in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng and the Free State.

We participated in the core group and Central Committee meetings of SACC.

##### **3.1.3 Donor-partners engagements**

ESSET hosted Dr Bishop Christian Krause, chairperson of EED. We also hosted Dr Peter White, moderator of the United Church of Canada.

Meetings were held with Jo Jeans and Rob Cunningham of Christian Aid for mutual briefings. We met with Diakonia staff in Pretoria and attended their partner consultation.

ESSET participated in partner / stakeholder workshops and meetings of Diakonia Sweden / Norwegian Church Aid and a consultation of Christian Aid.

### **3.1.4 Training / Exposure**

The Director was invited to join the US International Visitor Programme aimed at exposing civil society leaders from various parts of the world to community based poverty eradication initiatives.

## **Governance**

### **3.1.5 Board of Trustees**

ESSET continued to be governed by a committed board. The board consisted of:

1. **Bishop Ivan Abrahams** **Bishop Ivan Abrahams (Chairperson)**  
*Bishop Ivan is the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and current chairperson of the Church Leaders Forum in South Africa;*
2. **Dr Molefe Tsele**  
*Dr Tsele is the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches*
3. **Ms Puleng LenkaBula**  
*Ms LenkaBula is a Senior lecturer in Ethics at the University of South Africa*
4. **Rev Mautji Pataki**  
*Rev Pataki is the Ecumenical Secretary of the SACC in the Limpopo Province*
5. **Rev Bafana Khumalo**  
*Rev Khumalo is the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission on Gender Equality*
6. **Dr Graham Philpot**  
*Dr Philpot is the Director of the Church Land Project*
7. **Rev Ebenezer Ntlali**  
*Rev Ntlali is an Archdeacon in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and Chairperson of the SACC in the Eastern Cape*

## **Strategic Planning**

### **3.1.6 Strategic Planning**

As per the board's mandate a strategic planning process culminating in a two day strategic planning workshop was held. The workshop followed on the outcomes of interactions with key stakeholders as reported. 30 people drawn from the ESSET Board of Trustees, provincial councils of churches and ecumenical service agencies and strategic civil society partner organisations attended the workshop.

### **3.1.7 ESSET Strategy**

The strategic planning workshop recommended a future strategy that builds on successes of the past, minimises acknowledged weaknesses and positions ESSET as a learning organisation responsive to changing conditions and dynamics.

A three year strategy with programme and operational plans were drawn out of this process. Key outcomes of the strategy are a restated vision and mission statement with a redefinition of the role that ESSET sees for itself. These were stated as follows:

#### ***Vision:***

ESSET envisages a transformed society promoting a just economic system that prioritizes the needs of the poor.

**Mission:**

ESSET is an independent ecumenical service agency that enables and challenges the church and other social formations to work for socio-economic justice.

**Role:** ESSET understands its role as being to:

**Facilitating** socio-economic justice engagement processes

**Capacitating** leaders in the church and society

**Linking** the church and society with resources and information

**Coordinating** church based socio-economic justice campaign

**Advocating** for alternative policies and practices

**Creating** spaces for the voice of the poor to be heard

### **3.2 Programme Area: Campaigns and Networks**

ESSET participated in initiatives with and of other partner organisations in line with our mission. Part of this networking involved representing the voice of the ecumenical movement on the mandate of the SACC and maintaining constant liaison with the SACC on such campaigns. These initiatives included the following:

#### **3.2.1 Global Action for Trade Justice**

ESSET facilitated a discussion with PACSA, DIAKONIA, SACBC Justice and Peace, ISB, SACC and EJN. The following activities took place. This meeting agreed on a strategy that mandated ESSET to facilitate processes in Gauteng with PACSA continuing work in KwaZulu Natal and EJN organising in Cape Town

In Johannesburg ESSET organised with the SACC –Gauteng office and the Trade Desk of the SACBC, a service attended by about 200 people held in the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Braamfontein. A petition on trade justice targeted at the G8 countries was launched at the service

#### **3.2.2 Millennium Development Goals / Global Call for Action Against Poverty**

The Director participated in a continental workshop aimed at developing a strategy of enhancing African civil society's participation in the GCAP process held in Nairobi, Kenya. It was agreed at the meeting that the GCAP process should be linked with the MDG campaign processes.

Briefings were held with Ms Helen Wangusa (UNDP's Africa Coordinator of the MDG) and Mr Phillip Brown (UNDP's South Africa's MDG Coordinator) to develop a strategy for the churches' engagement. Out of these meetings and in line with its strategy, ESSET met and agreed with the Poverty Eradication Programme of the SACC and the Justice and Peace Department of the SACBC to convene a churches consultation on GCAP with particular focus on MDG's and Trade Justice.

Further ESSET participated in an ongoing broad South African civil society initiative around the GCAP and MDGs being coordinated by SANGOCO with support from CIVICUS. This initiative facilitated white band action days in South Africa.

#### **3.2.3 People's Budget Campaign (PBC)**

ESSET got involved at the tail end of the drafting of the 2006/7 People's Budget Campaign document. We were also involved in the drafting the PBC response to the 2005/06 national budget presented in February this year.

Our role in PBC was that of helping to facilitate the participation of SACC and providing technical support for such participation. In this regard ESSET sat on the steering committee of the PBC.

It is worth noting that the PBC steering met with the Minister of Finance, Mr Trevor Manuel for the first time to discuss the campaign. At that meeting the minister acknowledged that the importance of the campaign to the extent that departmental officials are instructed to read the people's budget during preparations of the national budget.

#### **3.2.4 Regional Engagements**

ESSET attended two southern African consultations convened by the Economic Justice Network on Food Security and Ecological Debt. We also participated in a an Africa Round Table meeting to evaluate the behaviour of South African Corporations when they expand into the continent.

#### **3.2.5 Other engagements**

- ✓ As a member of the Basic Income Grant Coalition, we participated in BIG's poverty summit and their annual general meeting.
- ✓ We made a presentation at the launch of the South African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI)
- ✓ We sat in the planning team for a Southern African labour workshop on the interlinkages between Trade and Development hosted by the Solidarity Centre
- ✓ The director attended a three day consultation organised by Kairos Europa aimed at preparing European churches understanding of current global socio-economic challenges ahead of the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

### **3.3 Programme Area: Promoting Dialogue**

#### **3.3.1 Provincial Consultations**

Church consultations on provincial economic strategies were held in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West provinces. These consultations attended by 40 delegates drawn from church structures in the provinces. They were aimed at helping the church to:

- Understand their provincial Growth and Development Strategy;
- Assess the likely impact of the strategy on the lives of the poor; and
- Develop strategies of enhancing the church's (and civil society) participation in key areas of the strategy, focusing on the trade, skills development and financing strategies and the role of local government in the process

ESSET ran one day workshop within the SACC Free State's annual conference. The workshop sought to sensitize church leaders to the challenges of economic justice and help conference develop appropriate programmatic response to the challenges.

#### **3.3.2 National Consultations**

ESSET convened a national consultation to:

1. discern the nature of the South African economy in the current global context
2. sensitise churches about socio-economic justice challenges of the times
3. deepen the theological /ethical grounding of the churches social and economic justice work

Participants at the consultation were drawn from churches, ecumenical agencies, labour, youth groups and civil society organisations. This helped to broaden discussions and deepen analysis.

### **3.4 Programme Area: Capacity Building**

#### **3.4.1 Economic Literacy Course**

ESSET ran a joint Economic Literacy Course for socio-economic justice in Pietermaritzburg with PACSA. The course entails three modules, two at the basic level and one at an advanced level. The course was facilitated by Fairshare.

The course was conceptualised as a pilot programme. The partner organisations have made a committed to use this course as the basis for a national roll out of the training.

## **4. ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE**

### **4.1 Administration**

#### **4.2.1 Staff Matters**

##### **4.2.1.1 Appointments**

Rev Desmond Lesejane was appointed as Director of ESSET with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005 following the resignation of Rev Dr Guma.

Ms Busi Thabane was appointed administrator at ESSET with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2005. This position was created out of a merger of previous positions of secretary and bookkeeper in an effort to free resources for programme staff.

##### **4.2.1.2 Termination of employment**

Ms Kholiwe Mogotsi was released from the employment of ESSET with effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2005 after her position had become redundant. She had been with ESSET for eight years and the organisation remains very grateful for the work she did in maintaining ESSET even in very difficult circumstances.

##### **4.2.1.3 Managing staff shortages**

In order to deliver on its mandate, creative ways had to be found to carry out responsibilities. The Director undertook most of the programme coordination work. Other staff also took responsibilities outside their normal job descriptions. We also drew on human capital from partner organisations, especially the SACC and BeFSA for assistance. Ms Sonto Mthimkhulu volunteered to help ESSET with programme coordination between November and December.

#### **4.2.2 Computer Upgrades**

Local Area Network (LAN) infrastructure was laid in the office to connect office equipments and central internet connectivity.

#### **4.2.3 Website**

The ESSET website was disconnected as it had become redundant. A framework for a new site was developed and service providers were solicited in this regard. This work could only commence towards the end of the year as the organisational strategy had to be finalised first.

## 5. IS IT WORKING?

Attendant to the question posed in the title of this report “what must we do?”, is the question whether what we are doing is achieving the desired objectives. While the state of the organisation at the beginning of the year did not allow for proper planning and hence appropriate definition of indicators to assess this impact, we can draw general conclusions in responding to the question.

### 5.1 Objective 1: Enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of ESSET

#### Achievements:

- ✓ Endorsement of the relevance of ESSET by the SACC and other ecumenical agencies as seen by increased cooperation.
- ✓ Increased levels of long standing donors as seen by continued financial and other support
- ✓ Resolution of some outstanding administrative and legal disputes personnel queries
- ✓ Laying of ICT infrastructure as a major step towards the maximisation of information technology in the work of ESSET
- ✓ Development of a long term strategy ensuring clarity of vision and mission and creating a enabling environment for effective programme implementation

#### Weaknesses:

- ◇ Not enough financial and human resources were mobilised to meet the organisational demands for the year
- ◇ Outstanding tax disputes for the period 2001 – 2003 were not finalised in the period under review
- ◇ Human Resource, Governance and Financial policies were not developed or updated as planned

### 5.1 Objective 2: Encouraging churches to participate in networks and campaigns promoting socio-economic justice locally and internationally

#### Achievements:

- ✓ Resumed participation in broad civil society based campaigns such as the People’s Budget Campaign, with ESSET becoming the facilitator of the churches participation in the campaign. We have, over the years seen an inclusion of the core proposals of people's budget in the national budget albeit in a limited but effective way. Expenditure on social security has increased, more money is being voted for infrastructure development, the budget deficit is is being increased to

allow for more spending, privatization of parastatals has in some cases been completely stopped.

- ✓ Strengthened participation in regional and international campaigns as part of the effort to globalise resistance to socio-economic injustice.

**Weaknesses:**

- ◇ Socio-economic justice issues are still not a priority on the formal agenda of churches and the ecumenical movement
- ◇ Women and youth not sufficiently mobilised for socio-economic justice activism

**5.2 Objective 3: Promoting public discussions on major socio-economic themes from an ethical and theological perspective**

**Achievements:**

- ✓ Increased awareness of provincial growth strategies in four provinces as a result of provincial dialogue forums
- ✓ Identification of critical questions for ESSET's socio-economic justice agenda and strategy through the strategic planning workshop and the national forum

**Weaknesses:**

- ◇ None of the dialogues was published for a broader audience as had been anticipated due minimal human resources

**5.3 Objective 4: Developing the capacity of the churches at local and national level to participate meaningfully in socio-economic transformation processes**

**Achievements:**

- ✓ Increased interest in and demand for economic literacy course piloted with PACSA in Pietermaritzburg

**Weaknesses:**

- ◇ Relevant / updated training material not produced as planned
- ◇ The intended expansion of the course to other provinces was not realised due to lack of resources

**5.4 Objective 5: Producing well researched and accessible resource materials on socio-economic justice for use by churches and communities in advocacy and socio-economic justice campaigns**

**Weaknesses:**

- ◇ No research was undertaken in this period due to the need to first develop a strategy and limited funding.

## **6. QUO VADIS ESSET?**

ESSET understands itself as a learning organisation that continually seeks to remain relevant. The strategic planning process undertaken in 2005 developed specific ideas of how this could be done.

At the top is a self understanding that re-affirms ESSET's home as primarily within the ecumenical movement which in South Africa is led by the South African Council of Churches. This means that we will continue to work primarily with and through the Council churches and its provincial structures.

The work ESSET does remains premised on a commitment to poverty eradication as a key objective of the quest for socio-economic justice. ESSET does not seek to project itself as a voice of the poor, but it will consciously create spaces for the voices and experiences of the poor and marginalised communities to be heard and to influence policy through its programmes and activities.

While remaining a national organisation that will engage with national issues, ESSET will increasingly locate its programmes in local communities where people's struggles are waged. It will attempt to link these local struggles with national processes. An example in this regard is that we continue to work on the People's Budget Campaign at national level and develop stronger capacity building and advocacy at municipal level where experiences at local level will influence the proposals for the national PBC.

## **7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

A special word of thanks goes to the Board of ESSET for continued dedication and selflessness to its mission and activities amidst their own professional and vocational demanding responsibilities.

We are also appreciative of the support for the staff, Ms Kholi Mogotsi and Ms Busi Thabane, who were often called on to take extra responsibilities at times outside their normal day to day jobs.

ESSET is also grateful to all its partners and donors who continue to believe in the struggle for economic justice and continue to walk with us we refocused, reshaped, and renewed into a more effective ministry.