



MEDIA STATEMENT

RE: IS THE WORLD CUP ABOUT FIFA, THE GLITZ, GLAMOUR AND LUCRATIVE BUSINESS, NEVER ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE POOR?

DATE: 19/03/2010

The Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET) and Hope Africa met with church leaders, gender and ecumenical organisations at a Colloquium held from the 18th -19th March 2010 to reflect and discuss critical issues about the socio-economic injustices and deviants effects of the 2010 FIFA World Cup on vulnerable groups.

The Colloquium took place under theme "Outside the stadium", with participants realizing the importance of making commitments to work towards justice and righteousness as well as identifying with the Ministry of Jesus by joining the struggles of those marginalized and excluded during the World Cup.

In addressing the gathering, Mr Mandla Seleokane of LCM Labour Relations Consultancy noted that: "The 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament is not concerned with developmental issues and plight of the poor. The game of football has become one of the lucrative businesses in the world. The fact that Local Organizing Committee was never hesitant to commit 423 million dollars to deliver the World Cup bears testimony to this. FIFA also does not compromise when it comes to making profit; it stands to generate an income of 3, 5 billion dollars at the end of the tournament here in our home soil. This is despite the fact that millions across the country don't only struggle to put bread on the table but many still lack basic amenities such as shelter, clean water, electricity, proper health care, sanitation. The promise that the marginalized groups like informal traders may stand to benefit from the World Cup only if they sell at fan parks is misleading. It is clear that trading will be allowed only within rules set and that informal trading will be regulated rather than excluded. In reality, these regulations serve under a false pretence to show that informal traders are equally afforded space to trade. Becoming a business affiliate or being a sponsor of FIFA is the only means to earn the right to sell wares at 'exclusion zones', something informal traders cannot meet. World Cup host cities followed instructions only to protect FIFA's commercial affiliates and sponsors to remain main beneficiaries".

He provoked thoughts: "The World Cup has historically and structurally been dominated by the North (Europeans). It has always been organized in a manner that bears the scars of its authors. For instance, the World Cup is never held in winter in the northern

hemisphere. But in the South (Africa), June and July fall in the middle of winter yet it was insisted that the World Cup should still be held during this period”.

During the discussions and debates these concerns emerged;

- That contrary to the expectations that the World Cup might potentially contribute towards social cohesion and development, quite the opposite has happened; the event is organized on a way that it marginalizes and excludes certain sectors of society (informal traders, landless people, shack dwellers).
- That the complex system used to sell the World Cup tickets was not pro-poor but instead favoured the middle class.
- That even the new transport system introduced was meant to exclude the taxi industry from benefiting during the World Cup. That big business and the middle class were always going to be the main beneficiaries because most of the poor are not situated where the infrastructure upgrading was effected.
- That millions of tax-payers’ money has been spent on upgrading the infrastructure for an event which will only last but for a month and it is doubtful whether such expenditure will bring any significant improvement on the lives of the poorest of poor.
- That local SMMEs are impeded from making profit during the World Cup. (Restaurants and taverns being asked to fork out R50 000 if the plan selling liquor when using their outlets are public viewing area).
- That the World Cup is a breeding ground for social ills in society that has bearing on vulnerable groups particularly women, children, street traders.
- That Government had gone at length and breadth to ensure the success of the World Cup constructions even going as far as demolishing a school and evicting informal settlements dwellers from their residences yet such effort and commitment is not transferred to bettering the lives of the poorest.
- Grave concern about punitive measures adopted by government to silence unhappy residents embarking on genuine service delivery protests that portrays the country negatively in the eyes of the international communities.
- That government should develop sensible and efficient strategies to deal with the risk of spreading HIV/AIDS and human trafficking of women and children through legislation.
- That the church leaders, gender and ecumenical activists will garner support for ‘Outside the camp’ campaign in an endeavor to put pressure on FIFA and big business to desist from exploiting economic opportunities that should have instead been given to the poor.

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Issued by;
Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET)