

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

Media Contacts: Mienke Steytler Tel: 011-482-7221 ext. 2003 Email: mienke@sairr.org.za

Few benefit from South Africa's empowerment policies

A report published by the IRR today notes that very few South Africans benefit from current empowerment policies. Since these policies have failed to benefit the poor and disadvantaged, few people support them either. The IRR report calls on lawmakers to take their responsibility to empower the poor more seriously and to adopt new empowerment policies that will be far more effective.

The report is based on a field survey on transformation and empowerment commissioned by the IRR and released today in *@Liberty*, the IRR's policy bulletin. The field survey canvassed the views of a carefully balanced sample of 2 245 people, all of whom were interviewed in their languages of choice by experienced field teams.

According to IRR policy head Dr Anthea Jeffery, "current empowerment policies benefit only a relatively small elite. They offer nothing to poor people".

She added: "Field survey results show, for example, that only 16.6% of black respondents agree that affirmative action in employment has helped them personally. By contrast, 83.3% of blacks disagree. Only approximately one in ten people has benefited from BEE."

South Africa cannot hope to expand opportunities for the disadvantaged without much faster economic growth, millions of new jobs, and schools that are effective in imparting essential knowledge and skills.

According to the IRR, current policies need to be replaced with 'Economic Empowerment for the Disadvantaged' or 'EED'. EED is a solution to the empowerment challenge that has been developed within the IRR to address the failure of current policies.

EED is specifically focused on ensuring that empowerment policy attracts new investment, ensures job creation, and reaches large numbers of poor and disadvantaged people. By contrast, if current policies are retained, this will further reduce investment, growth, and jobs and bring about even more harmful political, social, and economic consequences.

Says Dr Jeffery: "Current empowerment policies have so little popular support and have had such limited success that the Government has very little to fear – and very much to gain – from shifting to the EED alternative."

Further details of the field survey results are set out in the latest issue of @Liberty, available on the IRR website by clicking [here](#).

Ends.
