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Poverty Reduction in Africa Investigated

Representatives of 22 African science academies will gather next week to deliberate on poverty reduction on the continent.

The challenges faced by Africa due to extreme poverty will be scrutinised at the 12th Annual Meeting of African Science Academies (AMASA) to be jointly hosted by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC).

Poverty eradication has been identified as the first Sustainable Development Goal as it remains one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. Globally, more than 800 million people are lacking access to adequate food, clean drinking water and sanitation.

Although economic growth in countries such as China and India has contributed to the alleviation of poverty, progress has been slow in regions such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The latter accounts for 80 per cent of people living in extreme poverty. Women are also more likely to be subjected to poverty than men due to unequal access to paid work,

education and property. Africa faces the additional threats of climate change, conflict and food insecurity.

The two-day scientific conference will focus on the sub-themes:

- Gender and Poverty
- Food Security
- Water, Energy & Poverty
- Social Determinants of Health
- Agricultural Innovation & Sustainable Agriculture in Africa

A policymakers' booklet on *Social Protection in Africa* will also be launched at AMASA. The booklet provides an overview of social protection in Africa, with a primary focus on non-contributory social protection, which includes cash and in-kind assistance and public works programmes. It highlights the key issues in social protection in Africa and provides several case studies to illustrate the diversity of programmes, which seek to address the overarching goal of reducing poverty and inequality.

Social protection aims to ensure a basic level of well-being, enabling people to live with dignity. Governments introduce social protection policies to meet social, economic and political objectives. These include addressing poverty and inequality, the promotion of economic growth and social stability, and political legitimacy.

Ten key messages stipulating the benefits of social protection are highlighted. Among these are that social protection should be seen not as a narrow social sector concern, but as part of an overall development strategy, to be designed and implemented in synergy with complementary investments in health, education, nutrition, livelihoods support, agriculture and other productive sectors.

It concludes that social protection policies are most effective when they are combined with other social and economic policies to sustainably address poverty and inequality.

The South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) in collaboration with ASSAf, the Nigerian Academy of Science (NAS) and the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) will also host a two-day workshop on social determinants of health (SDH) from 6 - 8 November, 2016. This workshop seeks to deliberate on various policy engagements on SDH in Africa and interrogate shortfalls thereof.

SDH are defined as the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems; development agendas; social norms and policies; and political systems.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

The policymakers' booklet, *Social Protection in Africa*, will be available on www.assaf.org.za on 8 November 2016 at 14:00.



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Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) celebrates its 20th year as official academy of South Africa this year.

ASSAf was inaugurated in May 1996. It was formed in response to the need for an Academy of Science consonant with the dawn of democracy in South Africa: activist in its mission of using science and scholarship for the benefit of society, with a mandate encompassing all scholarly disciplines that use an open-minded and evidence-based approach to build knowledge.

ASSAf thus adopted in its name the term 'science' in the singular as reflecting a common way of enquiring rather than an aggregation of different disciplines. Its Members are elected on the basis of a combination of two principal criteria, academic excellence and significant contributions to society.