

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all attending the re-launch of the South African Social Attitude Surveys (SASAS) programme. SASAS has been conducted annually by the HSRC since 2003 and enters its 8th round this year. The aim of the project is to deepen our understanding of public attitudes, document how these have been changing, and determine the nature and extent of attitudinal differences across our diverse society. This seminar will reflect on the value of national and cross-national attitudinal data, provide an overview of the political, socio-economic and societal values of our citizens and discuss important developments in relation to the survey series.

This project provides attitudinal information on a wide range of socio-economic issues affecting South Africans such as service delivery, poverty, health, education, governance, and community and family dynamics. A great deal of SASAS information has been disseminated through the HSRC Review news magazine, presentations at conferences, books, articles, dissertations and other publications. Our stakeholders, comprising of government departments and agencies, research institutions, institutions of higher learning and community organisation have found the information useful in policy development and implementation.

At this re-launch of SASAS, the HSRC intends to further position SASAS as a flagship survey. The HSRC has recently appointed a SASAS Steering Committee, consisting of eminent social scientists and other selected stakeholders. The Steering Committee members, in now particular order are: Prof Sakhela Buhlungu (chairperson); Prof. Valerie Moller (vice-chair), Dr. Mark Orkin, Dr. Puleng Lenka Bula, Prof. Thokozilo Mayekiso, Prof. Belinda Bozzoli, Dr. Meshack Khoza and our patron Reverend Dr.Thabo Cecil Makgoba. We are also particularly honoured that Sir Roger Jowell has agreed to be a special advisor to the SASAS project. In 2002 Sir Jowell visited the HSRC and helped design SASAS. Ever since then he has been an ardent supporter of SASAS and we are extremely honoured to have him as a special advisor on the project.

As part of the proceedings today, we will also be launching the SASAS website. The website: www.hsrc.ac.za/sasas will be a platform where academics scholars and other stakeholders get can SASAS related information and it will also be the platform where the SASAS data will be make publically available. Also, today, the second South African Social Attitudes Report: *Reflections on the Age of Hope* will also be made public. Hard copies of the book are available in all the centres.

Let me again extend a warm welcome and we look forward to interesting presentations and a rigorous debate.