

# UK trust targets poverty in Africa

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CAPE TOWN — The ComMark Trust, an independent body funded by Britain's international development department, plans to spend at least £50m over the next five years in southern African to promote certain commodity and service sectors that will help reduce poverty.

Paul Zille, the executive director of the poverty-alleviation trust, said yesterday these sectors included the garment industry, tourism sector, mining and the service sector, where there was demand for locating call centres in this region.

It was also looking at veld products, such as herbal remedies, which had the potential to uplift remote communities.

Zille said the trust could accommodate new donors, and was holding discussions with potential parties, including USAid, which shared the development objectives that the trust espoused.

The launch of ComMark Trust's garment sector project in Cape Town yesterday initiated discussions about the industry's needs with representatives, who included listed clothing manufacturers.

The trust has completed a study of the rapid growth of the garment

industry in Lesotho, where it plans to embark on industrial relations projects. It will be launching a virtual-productivity institute, bringing together training professionals and Lesotho industrialists.

Andy Salm, the trust's regional textile and apparel specialist, said SA's garment industry had significant growth potential, and one of its strengths was that it was well integrated compared with other countries, having the skill to research fashion and produce ranges.

Major constraints were the supply of local textiles, cost of labour, cost of and access to finance for smaller companies and HIV/AIDS.