



## COMMUNIQUÉ

### Regional Dialogue for Non-State Actors on the SADC RISDP 2020-30 and its Draft Implementation Plan

29th to 30th June 2021 (virtual)

#### *'Building Back Better – Ensuring Social Accountability in Southern Africa's Development'*

## 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

**1.1 Whereas** a virtual regional dialogue for non-state actors (NSAs) on the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Revised Regional Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) for 2020-2030 and its Draft Implementation Plan was held on 29th and 30th of June 2021, under the theme of **Building Back Better - Ensuring Social Accountability in Southern Africa's Development**, co-convened by Southern Africa Trust, Economic Justice Network (EJN) of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN), Southern Africa Coordination Council (SATUCC), GenderLinks, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Alliance (a consortium of ActionAid International (AAI), Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) of Rhodes University, Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) and SAfAIDS.

**1.2** Over 250 people, from 13 of the 16<sup>1</sup> SADC member states, joined the dialogue, representing various non-state actors, including civil society organisations (CSOs), smallholder farmers' associations, workers' organisations, trade unions, youth organisations, people's movements, faith-based organisations, private sector associations and chambers of commerce and media outlets, as well as SADC Secretariat, SADC National Committees, SADC National Contact Points and other government departments.

**1.3 Noting** that the SADC RISDP 2020-2030 (hereinafter RISDP) and Vision 2050 were approved at the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in August 2020. The SADC Council of Ministers is due to adopt the RISDP Implementation Plan before

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<sup>1</sup> Dialogue participants were from the following 13 of 16 SADC member states: Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

August 2021, which will lay out the various actions to be taken by SADC and its member states. The 10-year regional strategy envisions “a peaceful, inclusive, middle to high income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom”.

**1.4 Cognisant** that the RISDP comes online amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which has restricted broad public consultation. The Covid-19 pandemic has placed before the region both additional hurdles as well as opportunities. Existing economic challenges have been further deepened by the global downturn caused by Covid-19. Both formal and informal employment have decreased, resulting in less income for many households, particularly in urban areas. Diversion of national budgets and personnel to respond to the crisis, as well as the impact of the restrictions themselves, has affected the delivery of public services in many sectors. The effects of climate change – persistent drought, flooding and pests – compounded by economic challenges, poverty, inequality, conflict and the negative impact of natural resource extraction have all contributed to food insecurity. The gendered nature and impact of Covid-19 has increased the vulnerability of women and girls and exacerbated gender-based violence (GBV). Additionally, governance challenges in many countries of the region, including a lack of transparency and social accountability, as well as restrictions on human rights and freedoms of expression, assembly and association, limit the ability of NSAs, and people more generally, to fully engage in democratic processes.

**1.5 Welcomed and appreciated** that SADC has highlighted in the RISDP the importance of engaging and forming strategic partnerships with NSAs to ensure the successful implementation of regional policies and programmes.

**1.6 Reiterating** the importance of African Union (AU) and SADC regional instruments such as the **(i)** African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1996), and its Protocol on the Rights of Women (2003); **(ii)** African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); **(iii)** African Youth Charter (2006); **(iv)** AU Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods (2014); **(v)** AU Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases (2001); **(vii)** SADC Protocol on Gender and Development; **(vii)** SADC Protocol on Labour and Employment; **(viii)** Dar es Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security (2004); **(ix)** Strategy for SRHR in the SADC Region (2019 – 2030); **(x)** SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) (2013) and Investment Plan (RAIP) (2017 – 2022); **(xi)** SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS) (2015-2025); **(xii)** SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063; and **(xiii)** SADC Model Law on Gender and Development.

**1.6 Noting** the importance of social accountability for effective delivery of quality, affordable, accessible and gender-responsive public services to all our people, and ultimately to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and regional

commitments, as mentioned above, in the areas of climate change and agriculture, health, trade, gender, Covid-19 vaccines, labour, youth and NSA engagement.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO *CLIMATE CHANGE and AGRICULTURE***

*Noting the need to ensure widespread adoption of sustainable agricultural practices to assist smallholder farmers to adapt to the effects of climate change and to accelerate agricultural growth as a means of fighting hunger and poverty, we therefore;*

**2.1 Call** upon SADC and member states to strengthen or establish joint agriculture sector reviews (JASR) and smallholder farmer and CSO-inclusive food and nutrition councils at district and sub-district levels to guide, monitor and oversee food and nutrition strategies, plans, programmes and budgets.

**2.2 Encourage** SADC to develop and implement a robust regional agriculture development and advisory extension services strategy that supports rural agriculture production clusters to promote agroecology, farmer-managed seed systems and gender-responsive public services, and, additionally, to avoid imposition of GMOs.

**2.3 Urge** SADC and member states to increase funding to the agriculture sector and rapidly operationalise and finance the stalled SADC Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

## **3. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO *HEALTH***

*Noting the need to improve SADC citizens' health, in general, and to promote HIV testing and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for adolescents and young people in particular, we therefore;*

**3.1 Call** upon SADC member states to expand the transparency and sharing of public resources management-related information in order to enhance the participation of citizens in social accountability monitoring of HIV/SRH public services

**3.2 Urge** members of parliament to bring government line ministries and enterprises to account for any compromises on management of public resources meant for public health service delivery; including accountability for implementation of resolutions raised in reports by auditor generals and/or offices of ombudsman. This will contribute towards reducing the loss of resources meant for HIV/SRH services through corruption and abuse.

**3.3 Call upon** the government to review or develop new laws and legal frameworks that reduce the cost of essential HIV/SRH life-saving commodities.

**3.4 Encourage** the governments to revisit existing tax frameworks and architecture for the purpose of creating a sustainable flow of resources for health care provision, and incentivising private sector investments in HIV/SRH services provision

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO *TRADE***

*Noting the need to expand support for women small-scale cross-border traders, especially as they have been the most negatively affected by border closures and travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, we therefore;*

**4.1 Call** upon SADC and COMESA and their member states to put in place mechanisms to strengthen data collection on the contribution of small-scale cross-border trade, in order to inform the adoption of appropriate policy responses and infrastructure.

**4.2 Urge** SADC to ensure the SADC Simplified Trade Regime creates an enabling business environment through facilitating the economic activity of cross-border traders. With the new environment due to Covid-19, this should include the provision of adequate soft infrastructure at borders to harness the full potential of cross-border traders - i.e. reducing the costs and complexity of documentation required for small-scale or low-value consignment customs procedures and trade transactions.

**4.3 Encourage** SADC and member states to educate and build capacity among traders on the use of electronic payment and online safe trading platforms to facilitate and ease trade and protect traders from contracting Covid-19. For example, customs and border management facilities should provide support desks to assist small-scale traders to comply with the new digital and online system. Governments are encouraged to subsidise the costs of obtaining a Covid-19 test and certificate for cross-border traders. Vaccine inoculation should be prioritised for cross-border traders.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO *GENDER***

*Noting the need for increased protection, monitoring and strategies to tackle the exacerbated gender-based violence and other negative impacts of Covid-19 in the region, we therefore;*

**5.1 Call** upon SADC member states to review penal codes and specific criminalising laws that continue to impact the most marginalised and vulnerable in society; in particular, women, girls, the elderly and disabled persons.

**5.2 Recommend** that there be gender-disaggregated data collection that ensures clear communications, in light of Covid-19; and vaccine justice as it relates to gender equality

**5.3 Encourage** SADC member states to initiate discussion and implementation of the gender-based violence (GBV) model law and the synergies with the child marriage model law national commitments and roll-out.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO COVID-19 VACCINES**

*Noting the need for improved equity and access to Covid-19 vaccinations among SADC citizens, we therefore;*

**6.1 Call** upon SADC and its member states to improve communication about the science of vaccines, including collaborating with NSAs to develop country specific strategies for addressing fears and misconceptions.

**6.2 Urge** SADC Secretariat and member states to play a prominent and unified role, led by the AU, in negotiating for vaccines at the global level; and ensure they plan and finance the roll-out adequately to meet the needs of their people without delay, to prevent even further and more disastrous waves of infection.

**6.3 Implore** SADC and member states to recognise the chronic failures of the region's public health systems, infrastructure and policy, and build upon the current attention to inequality and availability to increased funding for public health to ensure that they create more accountable and effective systems that meets our ongoing needs and ensures we are prepared for any future pandemics.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO LABOUR**

*Noting increased decent work deficits, combined with the growth of violence and harassment in the world of work and other negative impacts of Covid-19 in the region, we therefore;*

**7.1 Call** upon SADC member states to strengthen the quality of social dialogue in the region at both national and regional level, thus, ensuring an inclusive approach to development, especially in the labour market.

**7.2 Recommend** that governments ratify and domesticate ILO Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

**7.3 Encourage** governments to develop and strengthen universal and inclusive national social protection systems, including social protection floors, and establish social security and labour agreements for the enhancement of social protection, as SATUCC research has shown that countries that have "institutionalised social

assistance, rely on domestic resources, and follow a rights/justice-based approach, were swift to provide emergency assistance” in response to Covid-19.<sup>2</sup>

**7.4 Urgently call** upon governments to address issues related to informality and to reduce decent work deficits in the informal economy and facilitate transition to formality – in light of ILO Recommendation 204, concerning the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

**7.5 Urge** the SADC member states to recognise and respect workers and trade union rights, and to also ensure that all migrant workers and their families have access to health care and income protection; suitable working and living conditions, including compliance with occupational safety and health standards; and relevant information on Covid-19. Trade unions and all other stakeholders in different sectors of the economy must be actively involved in the national Covid-19 response teams/task forces and participate in the roll-out and distribution of the vaccine and personal protective equipment (PPE).

**7.6 Further urge** SADC to develop indicators in relation to job creation and safeguard existing jobs, by developing and implementing macro-economic (fiscal and monetary) policies that direct public expenditure towards providing hiring subsidies or youth guarantees as well as investment in economic sectors with potential to absorb young job seekers. Governments must ensure unemployment insurance benefits cover all young people who have lost jobs, and everyone affected by retrenchments, in order to avoid even greater losses in income. Additionally, access to benefits for those actively looking for a job should be improved.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO *YOUTH***

*Noting the need to facilitate the full and informed participation of young people in the formulation and implementation of the RISDP, we therefore;*

**8.1 Call** upon SADC leaders to increase access to information for young people to enable them to be actively engaged in all RISDP processes, including through the use of social media and other accessible platforms for youth.

**8.2 Recommend** that there be a structural transformation of SADC to create democratic spaces for young people – to not only participate in decision making, but to also exercise their democratic right to vote for, or veto, development plans adopted at SADC level.

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<sup>2</sup> SATUCC (2020) *SATUCC Regional Research on Covid-19. The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Working People in Southern Africa: The Role of Trade Unions – Final Report.*  
<https://rosalux.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SATUCC-COVID-19-STUDY-REPORT-2020.pdf>

**8.3 Encourage** SADC leaders to stimulate youth participation in regional development processes from the bottom-up by adopting common standards for youth inclusion and participation at national and local levels.

## **9. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, and in pursuit of advancing SADC's stated objectives as contained in the RISDP, Vision 2050 and regional instruments listed in 1.5 above, we finally wish to:

**9.1 Welcome and express support** for the provisions and spirit of the SADC Treaty (specifically in Article 5 (2b), 16A and Articles 23 of the SADC Treaty) and multiple protocols that recognise NSAs as important stakeholders in the implementation of the SADC agenda.

**9.2 Implore** SADC Secretariat and member states to establish platforms and processes, including publicly sharing plans and reports, at regional and national levels to ensure NSAs (inclusive of women, youth, workers and smallholder producers) are able to engage substantively in the implementation and monitoring of the RISDP, built upon the principles of social accountability.

**9.3 Urge** the SADC Secretariat and member states to establish, strengthen and operationalise the NSA Engagement Mechanism at regional level and the SNCs in each member states, within the timeframes stipulated in the RISDP implementation plan.

**9.4 Further urge** SADC member states to strengthen social accountability through safeguarding human rights, including the freedoms of expression, assembly and association, and empowering state integrity and oversight mechanisms, to ensure all people of the region can fully and substantively engage in democratic processes.

**9.5 Encourage** NSAs to be actively involved at national and regional levels in government and NSA-led processes on the implementation and monitoring of the RISDP, so that they can formalise the social compact between states and people and ensure social accountability.

**9.6 Commit**, as co-conveners, to host annual dialogues to reflect on the progress of implementation of the RISDP.

**9.7 Call upon** SADC national parliaments to provide effective oversight through ensuring the interests and priorities of the public and non-state actors are represented in the development, monitoring and implementation of the RISDP at regional and national levels.

**9.8 Further call upon** SADC and its member states to support the transformation of the SADC Parliamentary Forum into a full regional parliament and empower it to adequately perform the required full range of legislative, representational and oversight functions.

**9.9 Express** our profound appreciation to all our donors for their commitment to strengthening social accountability in the SADC region, in particular the regional office of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the British High Commission in South Africa, for their support of this dialogue.

Finally, this communiqué is hereby submitted to the SADC Secretariat, as well as each SADC member state through their National Contact Points. NSAs at regional level and in each member state are also encouraged to make use of this communiqué and its recommendations in their own engagements.