

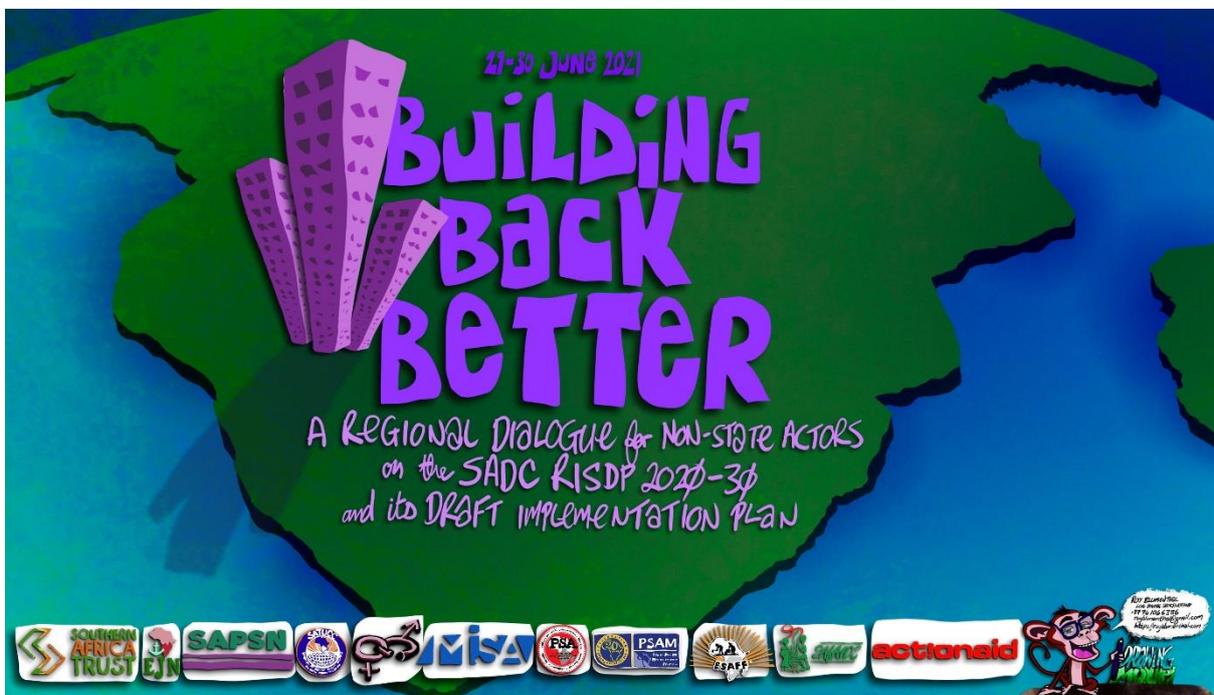


***Building Back Better – Ensuring Social Accountability in Southern Africa’s Development:***

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

**29-30 June 2021 (Virtual)**

**Meeting Summary and Recommendations**



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## Acronyms

AAI	ActionAid International
AU	African Union
COVAX	COVAX facility
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSOs	civil society organisations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DTAs	double taxation agreements
EJN of FOCCISA	Economic Justice Network of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa
ESAFF	Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GMO	genetically modified organisms
ICT	information and communication technology
IFFs	illicit financial flows
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IP	intellectual property
JASR	joint agriculture sector reviews
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
NCPs	SADC National Contact Points
NDPs	national development plans
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
NSA	non-state actor
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PRM	public resource management
PSA Alliance	Partnership for Social Accountability Alliance
PSAM	Public Service Accountability Monitor of Rhodes University
PVA	Peoples Vaccine Alliance
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAfAIDS	SAfAIDS
SAPSN	Southern African People's Solidarity Network
SATUCC	Southern Africa Coordination Council
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNCs	SADC National Committees
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
SRHR	reproductive health and rights
STR	SADC Simplified Trade Regime
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organisation

## Executive Summary

The regional non-state actors (NSA) dialogue, held virtually on 29 and 30 June 2021, focused on the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 and its draft Implementation Plan, under the theme of *Building Back Better - Ensuring Social Accountability in Southern Africa's Development*. The dialogue raised much needed awareness among non-state actors (NSAs) about the commitments contained in the RISDP 2020-2030 and its draft Implementation Plan. It provided NSAs an opportunity to exchange ideas and formulate recommendations to bring about sustained recovery in the region, amid the overlapping crises of Covid-19, climate change, poverty and inequality, through the provision of resilient, accountable and gender-responsive social services. Equally important was the firm commitment by stakeholders to facilitate ongoing regional and national dialogues to support NSAs to adapt and share the recommendations through country-level engagements to inform the development of national RISDP implementation plans.

Key recommendations were made to SADC and its member states across each of the crosscutting issues, as detailed below:

- Establish, strengthen and operationalise SADC National Committees (SNCs) in each member state and a formal SADC Non-State Actors Engagement Mechanism at regional level, within the timeframes stipulated in the implementation plan to facilitate the:
  - implementation of effective and targeted communication strategies;
  - establishment of effective engagement frameworks and strategies that provide space for dialogue, joint planning and sharing of information between state actors and NSAs on areas of mutual interest; and
  - active involvement of NSAs at national and regional levels in government-led processes for effective implementation and monitoring of the RISDP to formalise the social compact between states and people and ensure social accountability.
- Prioritise the implementation of the SADC Simplified Trade Regime (STR), driven by the outcome of reviews of current trade frameworks and arrangements, by providing heightened advocacy, capacity building initiatives, and training and support for small-scale traders.
- Develop and implement a robust regional agriculture development and advisory extension service strategy that supports rural agriculture production clusters to promote agroecology, farmer-managed seed systems and gender-responsive public services, and additionally, avoids imposition of GMOs. Critical to the above is the strengthening or establishment of national joint agriculture sector reviews that have

all-inclusive food and nutrition councils at district and sub-district levels to guide, monitor and oversee food and nutrition strategies, plans, programmes and budgets.

- Increase protection and monitoring, and develop strategies such as the review of penal codes and criminalising laws to tackle gender-based violence and other negative impacts of Covid-19 that continue to impact on the most marginalised and vulnerable in society; in particular, women, girls and disabled persons.
- Encourage active and prominent advocacy and involvement by member states, led by the African Union, in the procurement of the Covid-19 vaccine and negotiations at the global level in order to finance the roll-out to meet the needs of the people. Vaccine justice and its effects on gender equality must be understood.
- Develop a sustainable framework for generating revenue to fund the health sector through more sustainable ways, such as tax incentives and closing loopholes that lead to revenue losses, in order to increase the domestic pocket allocated to priority health services.
- Implement strong universal and inclusive national social protection systems, invest in economic sectors and support the effective transitioning from the informal to the formal economy, to innovate, revitalise and reorganise labour in the SADC region.
- Transform engagement of youth through creating spaces for youth to actively participate in decision making and RISDP implementation, and to access information through social media and other youth-friendly platforms.
- National parliaments should provide effective oversight by ensuring the interests and priorities of the public and NSAs are represented in the development, monitoring and implementation of the RISDP at regional and national levels.
- 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.
- Strengthen social accountability through safeguarding human rights, including 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.

## **1 Introduction and context**

Over 250 people, from 13 of the 16 SADC member states,<sup>1</sup> joined a regional dialogue on the role of NSAs in implementing the SADC RISDP 2020-2030 (hereinafter RISDP) and its draft Implementation Plan. Represented were various non-state actors (NSAs), 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 and national government officials, including SADC National Contact Points (NCPs) and SADC National Committees (SNCs). The dialogue aimed to raise awareness among NSAs on commitments contained in the regional strategy as well as provide an opportunity for NSAs to exchange ideas and formulate recommendations towards ensuring a sustained recovery through the provision of resilient, accountable and gender-responsive social services.

The dialogue was convened within the context of the finalisation of the implementation plan for the RISDP, scheduled for adoption by the SADC Council of Ministers in August 2021. The RISDP implementation plan lays out the various actions to be taken by SADC and its member states up until 2030 to meet the agreed regional strategic goals. The RISDP explicitly acknowledges the importance of engaging and forming strategic partnerships with NSAs for successful implementation of regional policies and programmes.

The action plan comes online amid the Covid-19 pandemic, which has restricted broad public consultation, presenting the region with both additional hurdles and opportunities and further deepening existing economic challenges caused by the global downturn. If it is to be effectively implemented, the RISDP should take into consideration the importance of social accountability for effective delivery of quality, affordable, accessible and gender-responsive public services to all people, and ultimately to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and regional commitments in the areas of climate change and agriculture, health, trade, gender, Covid-19 vaccines, labour, youth and non-state actor engagement.

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 the public to fully engage in democratic processes.

The dialogue was 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), Gender Links, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA)

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

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)).

## **2 Key deliberations and recommendations**

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

SADC's key frameworks provide guidance and strategic direction to all stakeholders, both state and non-state actors, in understanding the context and their role in the implementation of the RISDP in the region's development. The RISDP is therefore both a commitment and tool for the development of SADC. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about challenges and opportunities that require the implementation approach to reflect on past learnings and effectively engage both state and non-state actors towards building the best possible future. People should be placed squarely at the centre in the development of alternative, resilient and accountable solutions for both the implementation and monitoring of gender-responsive public services in the region.

Key regional implementation challenges and barriers, such as the absence of formalised engagement mechanisms and the lack of an agreed approach for NSAs to support the implementation of the RISDP, need a strategy that allows for the restructuring of existing spaces or the utilisation of alternative platforms. The current approach of ad hoc engagements has proven ineffective as, in most cases, the adoption of NSA inputs into SADC plans and programmes is low.

Effective implementation of the RISDP calls for formalised mechanisms to engage NSAs at regional and national levels with clearly defined roles and approaches, rules of engagement and meaningful partnerships and support, to ensure the inclusive rollout of a regional recovery plan. Additionally, the implementation should be people-centric and ensure the needs of the region's most vulnerable people are prioritised and the public's understanding is built to allow for collective ownership of the regional plan.

### ***2.2 Deconstructing the SADC RISDP & Implementation Plan (2020 – 2030)***

The RISDP is a 10-year strategic plan that guides SADC's regional integration agenda and encompasses national, regional and global arrangements that provide a mechanism for achieving the SADC Vision 2050. Premised on a foundation of peace, security and good

governance, the RISDP is driven by six strategic priorities covering three pillars,<sup>2</sup> key crosscutting issues<sup>3</sup> and mechanisms for the strategic management of the RISDP. Through inclusive implementation arrangements, the RISDP is set to contribute to the realisation of a high quality and standard of life for all SADC citizens.

The RISDP comes at a watershed moment when radical transformation is required. The plan's elevation of NSAs to implementing partners recognises their different roles in business, advocacy, research, capacity building, monitoring and oversight. The RISDP outlines priorities and interventions for effective involvement of NSAs; such engagement, if done within the mandate of their operations, ensures that diverse stakeholders can work closely with state actors. There is evident commitment by NSAs to engage formally with state actors at both national and regional levels.

The absence of a formal engagement arrangement for participation of NSAs in regional and national programmes has meant that inputs from NSAs are not horizontally integrated, and there is inadequate funding available to support their involvement. State actors are therefore falling short in adequately addressing a number of key challenges that include illicit financial outflows (approximately US\$8.8 billion annually); massive debt; inadequate social security nets; food insecurity; undernourishment; degrading pension funds; inadequate housing; poor sanitation; high illiteracy levels; increased energy poverty; extreme levels of unemployment, including youth employment; inaccessible healthcare (and more recently—access to Covid-19 vaccines); environmental degradation in mining economies and exclusion of the majority of people in mainstream economies. Furthermore, migration mechanisms need a rethink, so they focus more on the movement of people rather than goods and ensure social security protection for migrants.

To effectively implement the RISDP, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Establish, strengthen and operationalise the SADC National Committees (SNCs) in each member state and the NSA Engagement Mechanism at regional level, within the timeframes stipulated in the RISDP implementation plan.
- 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.
- Entrench meaningful and mutually beneficial donor funding approaches as well as effective monitoring and accountability frameworks, driven by metrics that measure

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<sup>2</sup> Industrial development and market integration, infrastructure development in support of regional integration, social and human capital development

<sup>3</sup> Gender, youth, environment, climate change and disaster risk management

SADC's aspiration of becoming a middle-income region that focuses on social development for marginalised groups.

- Re-examine and promote the free movement of people with all labour rights and social protections. Furthermore, strengthen the quality of social dialogue in the region at both national and regional level; thus, ensuring an inclusive approach to development in the labour market.
- Re-thinking job creation and unpacking activities at both national and regional levels.

### ***2.3 Implementation of the RISDP at national level and integration into national processes***

Effective implementation and integration of previous RISDPs at national level has been marred by challenges that include conflicts of interest between national and regional priorities; lack of institutional capacity for implementation at national level; overlapping membership of countries in other regional economic communities; inadequate alignment between the RISDP and national development plans; ineffective communication strategies; lack of cohesion between various sectoral plans and monitoring frameworks and the unwillingness of member states to transfer sovereignty to regional bodies.

The RISDP provides a relatable template with clear implementation rules designed to facilitate alignment between national and regional initiatives. SADC member countries have made slow but encouraging progress and are at various levels of identifying and costing national level interventions.

Key recommendations on involving NSAs in the rollout of the RISDP at national level can be drawn from the cases of Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, including:

- Revitalise SNCs and enhance their capacity to share lessons and input on domesticating activities.
- Ensure joint planning is driven by regional and continental frameworks and commitments.
- Domesticating and ensure institutional alignment of RISDP programmes and arrangements with national development agendas.
- Provide mechanisms for extensive consultations at both formative and implementation stages, in the absence of a specific or separate process for implementing RISDP.
- Recognise the roles of NSAs in the institutional frameworks of national development plans (NDPs) and provide for clear and comprehensive engagement and involvement models in SNCs. The operationalisation of SNCs should embrace both conventional NGOs as well as acknowledge the reorganisation of NSAs and the shifting of space due

to Covid-19. The rules of engagement must change, with technology-led approaches put in place to popularise and demystify the RISDP in an inclusive manner.

- Generate political will to drive implementation and push for a mindset change towards facilitating inclusive engagement.
- Create a funding model that recognises and provides support for marginalised groups to participate in SNCs.
- Effectively use ICT to address untimely and non-interactive information sharing by state actors and the lag in communication by regional institutions when announcing plans.
- Other key enablers for effective implementation include: effective governance, a dynamic private sector, conducive economic infrastructure, human capital development, creation of public awareness and inclusive peer review mechanisms.

### **3 Ensuring social accountability in the RISDP roll-out – understanding the RISDP through selected themes**

#### **3.1 Effective implementation of SADC’s Simplified Trade Regime in support of small-scale traders**

Cross-border trade has become an important economic activity in the region, creating value within communities and ensuring livelihoods and growth of many families. However, in some member states informal cross-border trade is not officially recognised as work, posing serious barriers for those involved. The proposed SADC Simplified Trade Regime in support of small-scale traders is progressive and yet the implementation of such a regional policy at national level may be difficult.

The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified existing trade barriers. Whilst all economic sectors have been impacted, Covid-19 has put additional pressure on cross-border traders, forcing them to change the focus of their business, resulting in the loss of capital and even business collapse. The third wave currently being experienced across the region has brought back hard lockdowns and again halted cross-border trading activities. This requires traders to consider alternative businesses and explore new products in the face of inadequate available capital. Unlike previous waves of Covid-19, cross-border traders are now exercising more caution and heightened compliance to Covid-19 protocols as they have seen more and more close relatives, colleagues and friends impacted.

The experiences of Zambia, Malawi and South Africa highlight key trade barriers and challenges but also provide alternative proposals for consideration in the RISDP rollout. Challenges and issues identified also reflect the findings from four studies commissioned by Southern Africa Trust on the impact of Covid-19 in Southern Africa.<sup>4</sup> The challenges include:

- Non-recognition of informal cross-border trade as work by some SADC member states.
- Unequal and uneven treatment of countries across the region.
- Absence of strategies to remove trade barriers and introduce trade incentives; an example being the harmful tax incentives given for foreign direct investment but not extended to cross-border traders, forcing small traders to pay bribes at borders and/or smuggle goods.
- Lack of targeted economic relief for small-scale traders in the face of the pandemic. Moreover, most government economic models lack focus on small traders, creating

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<sup>4</sup> Southern Africa Trust (2020-2021). Various reports on the impact of Covid-19 in Southern Africa available at <https://knowledgehub.southernaficatrust.org/covid-19/>

further barriers and missed opportunities for small-scale traders that could be easily accrued on the basis of trade arrangements in the region.

- Limited access to Covid-19 testing, certificates and vaccination. Testing to get certificates is costly for small-scale traders, resulting in the use of fake certificates, further exposing traders. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is not readily available despite efforts to provide some PPE at border posts. Governments must address the limited supply of vaccinations, slow decentralisation of vaccination centres and conflicting priorities. Increasingly, cross-border traders are showing willingness to be vaccinated, considering that eventually vaccination will be a prerequisite for travel. Unfortunately, small traders are yet to be prioritised for vaccination.
- Increased expenses from using alternative means to access goods for trading, such as using commercial transportation.

To respond to the above challenges, the following proposals were shared, directed towards SADC and its member states:

- Prioritise implementation of the SADC Simplified Trade Regime to create 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.
- Rethink access to social insurance in the face of the pandemic. Alternative approaches such as use of subsidies, diversification and recapitalisation of business and relief packages need to be considered. Governments must prioritise and provide clear processes for small-scale traders to access stimulus packages and enhance their financial inclusion, such as through improving access to banking.
- 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.
- Establish effective engagement frameworks and strategies that provide space for dialogues between state actors and NSAs at both national and regional levels. This could include participation of small-scale traders in national trading committees, collaboration between associations and relevant ministries and recognition of cross-border trading as work by governments. Such actions could draw attention to the challenges faced by cross-border traders while also amplifying their massive contribution to the African economy.
- Educate traders on the use of electronic payment and online safe trading platforms to facilitate and ease trade and to 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 new digital and online systems.

- Governments are encouraged to subsidise the costs of obtaining Covid-19 tests and certificates for cross-border traders. Additionally, vaccine inoculation should be prioritised for cross-border traders.

### **3.2 Ensuring resilient and sustainable agricultural development through supporting smallholder farmers**

Widespread adoption of sustainable agricultural practices enhances smallholder farmers' adaptation to the effects of climate change and results in accelerated agricultural growth. Agriculture contributes 20% of the region's gross domestic product (GDP) with approximately 70% of the SADC population relying on it for their livelihoods. Over the years, the agriculture sector has, however, seen a decline in funding yet food insecurity continues to increase, affecting 50.8 million people. It is therefore applauded that the RISDP recognises and has made a commitment to realise the SDGs relating to this pillar by 2030.

In the past two years, SADC has not made significant strides to reduce hunger. Major hindrances have been: misalignment between regional and national policies and programmes, limited government support and funding for smallholder farmers and lack of recognition of women smallholder farmers. Placing agriculture as key in the RISDP's pillar on industrial development is therefore welcomed. NSAs in this sector support the RISDP's objectives to transform agricultural practices, increase productivity, facilitate market access, promote innovative agriculture production, establish effective early warning systems and ensure sustainable management of the environment and its natural resources, in order to achieve access to food security by vulnerable groups.

The implementation of the RISDP's pillar one, industrial development and market integration, by SADC and its member states should be underpinned by the following actions:

- Strengthening or establishment of national joint agriculture sector reviews (JASR) that have all-inclusive food and nutrition councils at district and sub-district levels to guide, monitor and oversee food and nutrition strategies, plans, programmes and budgets.
- Development and implementation of a robust regional agriculture development and advisory extension service 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 genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
- Increase in targeted advocacy, engagement and awareness of RISDP with all key stakeholders including state and non-state actors, including at the grassroots level where the farmers should own the agenda. Platforms of engagement should be effectively mapped to avoid parallel and disjointed efforts. Similarly, the organisation

of smallholder farmers into associations would enhance effective engagement and recognition with government.

- Rapid operationalisation of the stalled SADC Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) through the SADC Development Fund. The ADF should be driven by advocacy at all levels, from grassroots to regional, to ensure the implementation of the agreements as per agreed shares. Proper partnerships with SADC Member States will ensure a legally binding ADF is operationalised to realise the SADC RISDP implementation by 2030.
- The impact of Covid-19 has further reduced member states' national budget allocations to the agriculture sector (as per the Malabo Declaration they should be allocating 10%). In response, CSOs and farmer organisations should campaign for international financial institutions to reschedule debt payments while pushing SADC countries to widen their tax base to reduce erratic external funding from donors to the sector.

### **3.3 Implementing the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in the times of Covid-19**

Gender inequality challenges in the region were a concern even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Little progress has been recorded in terms of political representation and economic empowerment for women, yet women's political participation is key to attaining gender equality in the region. Increased protection, as well as monitoring and strategies to tackle gender-based violence (GBV) and other negative impacts of Covid-19 in the region are required.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated key sexual and reproductive health (SRH) inequalities and vulnerabilities. Close to 75 million learners are out of school, 24% of pregnancies are ending in abortion, new HIV infections are increasing among young women and border closures have led to limited supply of contraceptives (which may have led to an increase in teenage pregnancies). Where there is no social protection, evidence shows that there is a 20% surge in GBV, decrease in access to health care for the LGBTI community and increase in violence.<sup>5</sup>

Limited decision making and access to healthcare make women more vulnerable. Vaccine roll-out processes must not replicate the gender inequalities already in societies. While the pandemic has contributed to these vulnerabilities, little is still known about the long-term consequences of its impact. Whether Covid-19 impacts women and men differently, both biologically and socio-economically, is yet to be determined. What has been recorded is a

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<sup>5</sup> UNAIDS (2021) UNAIDS Evidence Review: Implementation of the 2016-2021 UNAIDS Strategy on the Fasttrack to End AIDS, UNAIDS Strategy beyond DATA.  
[https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/PCB47\\_CRP3\\_Evidence\\_Review\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/PCB47_CRP3_Evidence_Review_EN.pdf)

lower infection and mortality rate for women although women are more affected by gender inequalities.

There are still very limited data on the side effects of the vaccines. Gender equality approaches adopted must be driven by gender disaggregated data collection to ensure clear communications around Covid-19. Vaccine justice must be understood in terms of its effects on gender equality. In the absence of a systematic and comprehensive communication strategy on vaccines the most vulnerable groups continue to have no or limited access to information on vaccines, leading to hesitancy and incorrect and irresponsible messages on social media.

The following are recommended strategies for SADC and its member states to adopt to mitigate gender inequalities, reduce GBV and lessen the negative impacts of Covid-19 in the region:

- Review penal codes and specific criminalising laws that continue to impact the most marginalised and vulnerable in society; in particular, women, girls and disabled persons. The Mozambique experience provides a good reference point.
- Ensure availability of gender disaggregated data collection with clear communications considering Covid-19 and vaccine justice, as it affects gender equality
- SADC member states are encouraged to implement the GBV model law and build synergies with the child marriage model law national commitments and roll-out.

### **3.4 Addressing vaccine access, equity and challenges in Africa**

No country in the region has achieved the Abuja Declaration's goal of allocating 15% of their national budget towards the public health sector.<sup>6</sup> This has obviously impacted the region's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Being an inequality virus, Covid-19 has tested Africa's ability to acquire the vaccines. Countries with the least ability to cope have been affected, and those without resources are not able to vaccinate their people. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 9 in 10 African countries will miss the Covid-19 vaccination goal to vaccinate at least 10% of the population by September 2021.<sup>7</sup> For every vaccine dosage given in Africa, 20 are given in Europe and North America. So long as African countries lack vaccines there will continue to be lockdowns, stalled economic development and health systems will deteriorate further.

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<sup>6</sup> African Union (2001) *Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases*. <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32894-file-2001-abuja-declaration.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> WHO (2021) *Nine in 10 African countries set to miss urgent COVID-19 vaccination goal*. 10 June 2021. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/nine-10-african-countries-set-miss-urgent-covid-19-vaccination-goal>

Efforts to deliver vaccines to Africa and other developed countries – through advocating for free and equal distribution, sharing of vaccine technology and a global manufacturing distribution plan for at-cost vaccines – have not borne fruit. Pressure groups such as Peoples Vaccine Alliance (PVA) have urged intellectual property (IP) rights to be waived through the proposed World Trade Organisation’s Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), however, this has not received support by a sufficient number of countries. Additionally, COVAX, the global coalition set up by WHO and other NGOs to distribute vaccines to developing countries has only delivered 20% of the promised vaccines and low- and medium-income countries have not received any assistance. The impact is most felt by marginalised populations, including women and girls, students without resources for online study, those unable to social distance and those without health insurance.

The lack of transparency in the administration of vaccine roll-out in the region and inadequate dissemination of correct information, to counter the incorrect, has led to vaccine hesitancy. There is skimpy knowledge on the vaccine production process, timelines for clinical trials, science of the vaccine, its effectiveness and its side effects. Vaccine hesitancy and logistical issues in getting the vaccines to the people has led to the expiry of vaccines.

As the pandemic continues there is urgent need for SADC and its member states to act decisively in response to vaccine access challenges. Such actions include the following:

- Take control of vaccine procurement and avoid the dependency on donations. As the push for patent-free vaccines continues at global level, governments must utilise their national budgets to procure vaccines. SADC member states, led by the AU, must be seen to play a prominent role 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.
- Develop effective communication strategies to ensure sharing of accurate information about the science of vaccines, including collaborating with NSAs to develop country-specific strategies for addressing fears and misconceptions and combatting vaccine hesitancy.
- Recognise the chronic failures of our public health systems, infrastructure and policy, and build upon the current attention to inequality and availability of increased funding for public health to build more accountable and effective systems that meet our ongoing needs and ensure we are prepared for future pandemics. The responses to Covid-19 must not be treated as a single event but provide an opportunity to identify mechanisms to invest in public health, community surveillance for pandemics and infrastructure for building healthcare systems.
- Clearly formulate the role of NSAs in the Covid-19 response, including provision of alternative policy responses, effective intervention strategies and better communication to remove fear and hesitancy .

### 3.5 Ensuring reliable domestic resourcing of comprehensive healthcare services

Access to healthcare is a critical to improving SADC citizens' health and wellbeing, specifically access to HIV testing and SRH services for young people. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest unintended pregnancy rate globally, at 91 per 1,000 women<sup>8</sup> and this is an important underlying factor behind unsafe abortions. Unmet need for contraception is high in SADC member states. For instance, the unmet need for contraception among young women (15-19) is 55% in Zambia; 57% in Tanzania; 73% in DRC and 58% in Mozambique. Among young women, it is estimated that 110,000 in DRC; 27,000 in Zambia; 100,000 in Tanzania; and 63,000 in Mozambique do not deliver in a health facility.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there is a significant gap between the need for and actual utilisation of maternal and newborn health services in the region. As a result, the maternal mortality rate (MMR) is very high in some SADC countries. As an illustration 330,000; 700,000 and 88,000 women (15-49 years) in Mozambique, DRC and Zimbabwe respectively do not deliver in a health facility each year.<sup>10</sup>

It has been 21 years since AU member states, through the Abuja Declaration, agreed to commit 15% of their national budgets towards healthcare. Meeting this goal requires governments to commit adequate public resources and be more transparent in sharing these resources, as well as communicate any challenges. Creating sustainable methods for resourcing the delivery of public services in order to realise targets is critical for the implementation and success of RISDP; recognising that 15% has already been a mammoth target for many SADC member states that are faced with multiple challenges.

Limited domestic funds, declining aid flows and the absence of regional or global funds to support quicker deployment of response mechanisms is a challenge to health financing in the region. Health financing in many SADC countries is not resilient to shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic, where funds have had to be diverted from other important programmes, i.e., malaria and tuberculosis. In addition, most SADC countries are grappling with unsustainable public debt at the expense of public health service financing through domestic resource mobilisation. Corruption in the health financing value chain also poses a risk to achieving universal health coverage.

Managing resources to achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) has not guaranteed achievement of its intended outcomes due to public resource management challenges. These challenges cut across the social accountability system. Planning and budgeting are affected by limited consultation in SRH decisions, lack of fiscal transparency

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<sup>8</sup> Bankole A, Remez L, Owolabi O, et al (2020) *From Unsafe to Safe Abortion in Sub-Saharan Africa: Slow but Steady Progress*: Guttmacher Institute. <https://www.guttmacher.org/>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

and poor management of expenditure, performance management and public integrity processes.

Hindrances to improved domestic resource mobilisation include double taxation agreements, illicit financial flows (IFFs) and technological tax. Double taxation agreements (DTAs) lead to loss in tax treaties and this primarily affects developing countries. IFFs through corruption by public officials, commercial tax dodging and criminal proceeds need to be reversed. The SADC region losses US\$8.8 billion annually in illicit financial flows.<sup>11</sup>

The following solutions were proposed for SADC and its member states to adopt to mitigate these challenges:

- Gender-responsive public services are a strong weapon against economic inequality and have the power to create equal societies. Good examples are improved SRH services, neonatal and post-natal services.
- SADC countries need to provide a sustainable framework for generating revenue to fund the health sector, such as raising revenue through tax incentives because they are predictable and sustainable and do not come with conditions. It is also important for governments to close loopholes that lead to revenue losses, in order to expand the domestic pocket allocated to priority health services.
- There is a need to update double taxation agreements (DTAs) to make use of the United Nations (UN) tax treaty model, which gives taxing rights to developing countries and the SADC model treaty, which provides a model to raise revenue.
- SADC countries must make holistic efforts to fight IFFs by reviewing and enacting legislation that provides for investigation and prosecution of cross-border financial crimes, facilitating review of regressive tax treaties and promoting information sharing to mitigate IFF-related information asymmetry.
- SADC must actively participate in the development of international tax rules, especially on technological tax, as well as implement tax incentive protocols and adoption of model DTAs.
- SADC member states should facilitate transparency in public resource management (PRM), information sharing and effective social accountability systems as well as ensure the implementation of recommendations by supreme audit institutions with respect to mismanagement and irregularities in PRM to ensure better SRH outcomes.
- Members of parliament should 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 from the auditor general and/or office of ombudsman. This will

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<sup>11</sup> ActSA (2019) *The Money Drain: How Trade Misinvoicing and Unjust Debt Undermine Economic and Social Rights in Southern Africa* [https://actsa.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2019/08/ACTSA-The-Money-Drain-FINAL.pdf](https://actsa.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2019/08/ACTSA-The-Money-Drain-FINAL.pdf)

contribute towards reducing loss of resources meant for HIV/SRH services through corruption and abuse

- Corruption issues relating to PRM must not be left to legislators to implement; citizens and civil society organisations must lobby their governments to act on the implementation of corruption laws.
- SRHR and HIV/AIDS programmes have crosscutting issues; investing in the more affordable investment outlay of SRHR programmes will reap disproportionately large health benefits for both.
- SADC and its member states should establish a regional health fund, as well as easily accessible social health insurance schemes and public-private partnerships to fund healthcare.

### **3.6 Ensuring inclusive employment and labour policies in SADC**

SADC must reduce decent work deficits and growing violence and harassment in the world of work, as well as address the negative impacts of Covid-19. These challenges are presented against the overall backdrop of low implementation rates of existing SADC programmes and fragmentation of key NSAs in the region, including civil society and labour unions. As a result, the social dialogue is not inclusive of all stakeholders, especially those in the labour market. Regional and national programmes are not holistic and do not facilitate the implementation of policies agreed and adopted by trade unions. The RISDP should be inclusive and not leave anyone behind, so that all voices are catered for in decision- and policy-making processes.

The missing voice of the working class, particularly vulnerable casual and migrant workers, in regional dialogues on labour policies begs the question of who has the mandate to speak to SADC on behalf of the working class. The focus of most trade unions is permanent workers, driven by the need for sustainable funding, yet most workers are now found in the informal sector.

Existing social security systems still fall short of addressing the portability of accrued social security benefits; the inclusion of migrant workers; nationalisation of social systems; recognition of all workers, including informal workers, by law; and the misalignment in the definition of social security coverage, where laws provide that everyone is covered yet discriminate on who can contribute.

On a positive note, the implementation of the new Labour Migration Action Plan LMAP (2020-2030) is supported by an implementation matrix and committee to oversee the new programme. All programmes selected for implementation are funded and prioritised and there is provision for increased engagement with stakeholders. The conversation on social security has been resuscitated in the plan; however, it is not supported by the relevant

indicators around increasing decent work. Many jobs have been lost in the wake of the pandemic, resulting in the proliferation of the informal sector. With the informal rapidly becoming the dominant sector of employment, fewer people now have access to social security.

There is need to return to basics and question the power dynamics in order to rethink, innovate, revitalise and reorganise labour in the SADC region, built upon the following:

- Quality inclusive social dialogue at both national and regional levels that provide for key economic decision-making, Covid-19 response mechanisms and inclusive participation.
- Strong universal and inclusive national social protection systems, including social protection floors, and social security and labour agreements that enhance social protection premised on the knowledge that countries that have “institutionalised social assistance, rely on domestic resources, and follow a rights/justice-based approach, are swift to provide emergency assistance”.<sup>12</sup>
- Ratification and domestication of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work by all SADC member states.
- Addressing of 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.
- Recognition and respect of workers and trade union rights, ensuring that all migrant workers and their families have access to healthcare and income protection; suitable working and living conditions, including compliance with occupational safety and health standards; and relevant information on Covid-19.
- Active involvement of trade unions and all other stakeholders in different sectors of the economy in national Covid-19 response teams/task forces, including their participation in the roll-out and distribution of the vaccine and PPEs.
- SADC should 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 jobs should be improved.

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<sup>12</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>

### **3.7 Effective engagement of NSAs in the SADC RISDP implementation**

NSAs including civil society organisations, smallholder farmers associations, workers organisations, trade unions, youth organisations and private sector associations, amongst others, remain committed to meaningful engagement with SADC member states in order to give a voice to the constituencies they represent and to meet the SADC Treaty objectives. SADC is not an entity that is supposed to implement the RISDP, but it provides a coordinating mechanism for member states to pursue integration and cooperation. Rights to expression, access to information and media freedom are underlying enablers in the management of a responsive society in terms of transparency and accountability at regional and national levels.

The absence of formal NSA engagement mechanisms has resulted in very low awareness of the benefits of SADC regional integration among stakeholders and limited NSA involvement in SADC affairs. Together with other interventions, the adoption and implementation of a formal regional NSA engagement mechanism and the establishment and strengthening of SADC National Committees (SNCs) (which include NSAs) are key interventions in the RISDP.

SNCs provide input to formulate policies, strategies and programs of action, implement SADC programmes, initiate projects and provide input into the RISDP. The structure of the SNCs include a national steering committee (NSC), sub-committees and technical committees, which operate at ministerial level and a national secretariat. Key stakeholders in the SNCs include government, private sector, civil society, workers and employers' organisations. Key examples of model SNCs in the region include CONSADC in Mozambique and the eSwatini SNC Operating Model Blueprint. Pre-existing guidelines for the establishment of SNCs are based on the provisions of the SADC Treaty.

Key recommendations for effective involvement of NSAs in the implementation of the RISDP include the following:

- SADC Secretariat and member states should 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.
- SADC Secretariat and member states should establish, strengthen and operationalise a NSA engagement mechanism at regional level and the SNCs in each member state, within the timeframes stipulated in the RISDP implementation plan.
- SADC member states should 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.

- NSAs should 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.
- Governments should tap into the diverse reserves of skills and knowledge within NSAs to provide training for members of SNCs.
- National plans should be aligned with the RISDP, with NSAs involved in the planning and budgeting processes at member state level.
- SADC should promote proactive information disclosure through the use of multiple communication channels, ensure cyber laws and regulations are democratic and develop a guide on promoting internet access, accountability and availability.
- There is need to review the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport (2001) to reflect contemporary media developments for accountability as well as review the SADC Declaration on Information and Communication Technology (2001) to be in tandem with the principles of the International Telecommunications Union.
- Countries should enact freedom of information laws, in line with the SDGs, so that citizens are aware of how they are governed.

### **3.8 Enhancing informed youth participation in RISDP processes**

SADC must undertake a structural transformation to ensure youth can contribute to RISDP processes and participate in regional decision-making. Youth, as the next generation, must inform the SADC agenda. Political systems determine policies for young people; therefore, it is crucial for young people to be part of these systems. However, a radical shift in the political system is required for youth to participate effectively. The generational gap means SADC and its member states must create youth-friendly engagement mechanisms to ensure participation by youth civil society.

Youth participation in peace and security discussions and platforms in SADC is limited. Young people lack understanding of complex systems that relate to peace, governance and security (i.e., legal systems, which are usually inaccessible). The African Union (AU), however, has established an intergenerational dialogue initiative, Silencing the Guns, which has been extended by 10 years to encourage young people to be involved through dialogues with past and current leaders, and to solicit youth perspectives on the challenges they experience. Youth-led peace and security starts at the local level and in communities before cascading to the national and regional level.

Barriers for youth involvement in regional and national processes should be resolved to effectively include youth in RISDP implementation. International migration trends among young people, resulting in loss of skills and brain drain, are a major cause of concern for SADC member states as young people are lost to developed nations. The perception amongst youth is that SADC systems are not friendly when it comes to human and capital development and do not teach self-sufficiency and independence.

Youth participation in implementation of the RISDP can be facilitated through a number of approaches across the thematic areas. The following solutions are proposed:

- Effective use of technology as an engagement strategy. SADC and member states should utilise platforms such as social media, webinars and other accessible and youth-friendly platforms.
- As part of establishing formal engagement mechanisms, advocacy groups can create space for youth participation and allow for the capturing of young people's ideas. For example, youth parliaments are available and if implemented these can be linked into national parliamentary deliberations. For example, peace zones can be created to encourage peace in communities, and these can be extended to entire nations (i.e., for anti-terrorism). SADC youth meetings can also be effectively utilised within a formal engagement process.
- Youth in the region must outgrow their dependency on governments and venture into entrepreneurship and self-development, as well as emancipate other young people through job creation.
- Agriculture must be understood by youth in order to appreciate their role. Current strategies for youth inclusion in agriculture are not considered 'cool and fashionable' by youth and appreciation must start in the school curriculum. In addition, governments should offer youth-focused loan systems to encourage them to venture into agricultural projects to create employment and food security.
- SADC leaders should 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.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The dialogue identified critical crosscutting challenges to SADC's 10-year strategy, as articulated in the RISDP 2020-2030, across the key issues of trade, climate change and agriculture, gender, vaccines, health, youth and labour. These challenges include, among others: weak engagement between SADC, its member states and NSAs; lack of alignment between regional and national programmes and inadequate capacity and political will for implementation and monitoring of SADC initiatives. The discussions produced key recommendations for the implementation of RISDP, as highlighted in this report and the event communiqué.<sup>13</sup>

The dialogue called for the establishment of formal structures for the involvement of NSAs at regional and national levels, including through SNCs and the planned regional NSA engagement mechanism, to facilitate joint planning, alignment and the utilisation of capacity and resources among NSAs. The effective use of technology was also highlighted as key for facilitating engagement and implementation given the impact of Covid-19.

The co-conveners and participating NSAs committed to support the implementation and monitoring of the RISDP through continuous regional and national dialogues, innovative NSA collaboration, production of policy briefs on key issues, provision of resources and expertise and undertaking evidence-based advocacy driven by social accountability principles.

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<sup>13</sup> The dialogue communiqué is available at: <https://southernafricatrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RISDP-Dialogue-COMMUNIQUE.pdf>