

DARIRO 1.0 SCENARIO SKILLS LABS REPORT

*Futures of Human Rights Defence,
Feminist Organising & Youth Climate
Leadership in Southern Africa*



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*Futures of Human Rights Defence, Feminist Organising & Youth
Climate Leadership in Southern Africa*

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1. Executive Insight

Southern Africa's civic, feminist, and youth climate ecosystems are entering a decade defined by profound disruption, rising authoritarianism, intensifying backlash against gender justice, shrinking funding landscapes, deepening climate shocks, and rapidly shifting digital and economic conditions. These pressures are reshaping how movements organise, how activists protect themselves, how youth navigate a volatile future, and how communities imagine what is possible.

Against this complexity, the Dariro Scenario Skills Labs created a rare and necessary space: a space where civic actors could pause, reflect, and collectively explore the futures they want to build. Through RIAHSAH Co.'s Systems Informed Foresight methodology, participants moved beyond crisis-response thinking and into deeper systems analysis, future-oriented imagination, and practical pathway design. Across Human Rights Defence, Feminist Organising, and Youth & Climate Futures, the Labs revealed a striking convergence in the aspirations, frustrations, and strategic priorities of the region's civic ecosystem.

Across all three Labs, participants described systems that are **constrained, unequal, and often hostile**, yet simultaneously filled with **resilience, creativity, and emergent leadership**. Human rights defenders continue their work despite repression; feminist movements resist despite limited resources and intensifying backlash; youth climate leaders innovate despite exclusion from governance and finance. These actors are not waiting for permission to lead; they are already shaping new forms of solidarity, narrative power, ecological intelligence, and community-driven innovation.

What emerged across the Labs is a shared vision:

“A future where power is distributed, not siloed; where justice and dignity guide governance; and where youth, women, and human rights defenders are recognised as co-creators of policy, innovation, and societal transformation.”

Participants did not call for incremental reforms. They imagined structural shifts, from punitive laws to protective ones; from donor dependency to community-rooted financing; from symbolic participation to institutionalised leadership; from siloed activism to coordinated regional ecosystems; from extraction to ecological justice.

The Labs also surfaced a deeper truth: **transformation is only possible through collective, anticipatory, systems-based action**. No single sector, whether government, civil society, or philanthropy, can navigate the uncertainties of the next decade alone. The civic future requires shared vision, shared intelligence, and shared responsibility.

For the Southern Africa Trust, this moment presents both challenge and opportunity. The Trust is uniquely positioned to champion regional foresight, strengthen ecosystems of collaboration, elevate youth and feminist leadership, influence policy agendas, and model anticipatory governance across the region. With ongoing methodological partnership, Dariro can evolve into

a flagship regional foresight programme, one that continually tracks signals, revisits scenarios, strengthens coalitions, and supports civic actors to navigate complexity with clarity and courage.

The Dariro Labs have demonstrated both the urgency and the possibility of this work. They reveal a civic ecosystem ready to imagine boldly, act collectively, and shape futures rooted in justice, dignity, and shared power. The opportunities ahead are not only to respond to change but to **design the systems and futures that Southern Africa deserves.**

2. Background & Purpose of the Dariro Scenario Skills Labs

The **Dariro 1.0 Scenario Skills Labs** were convened by the Southern Africa Trust as part of a broader regional effort to strengthen civic resilience, movement-building, and anticipatory capacity across Southern Africa. Against a backdrop of rising authoritarianism, shrinking civic space, gendered repression, economic precarity, and escalating climate instability, the Trust sought to create a participatory space where diverse civic actors could step back from immediate pressures and engage in structured, systemic futures thinking.

The Labs were designed and facilitated by **RIAHTSAH Co.**, the appointed Lead Methodology Partner, whose work integrates foresight and systems thinking to support organisations and networks navigate complexity and design adaptive strategies. Consistent with the original methodology proposal submitted to the Trust, the Labs applied the **Systems Informed Foresight (SIF) Framework**, enabling participants to examine current realities, explore alternative futures, and design forward-looking pathways grounded in collective intelligence.

Three thematic Labs were convened:

- **Lab A: Future of Human Rights Defence** – exploring civic resilience, safety, and the protection of defenders under increasingly constrained civic space.
- **Lab B: Future of Women’s Rights & Feminist Organising** – examining power, sustainability, and the future of feminist movements, navigating backlash and underfunding.
- **Lab C: Youth & Climate Futures** – envisioning youth-led pathways for climate innovation, green skills, ecological justice, and governance reform.

Each Lab consisted of activists, organisers, movement leaders, youth networks, and civil society representatives from across the region, including promising young leaders. In alignment with RIAHTSAH Co.’s principles of **youth leadership**, the Youth & Climate Futures Lab was **co-facilitated by a young woman participant**, modelling inclusion and demonstrating the value of lived expertise in shaping strategic foresight processes.

Additionally, insights from the **Day 1 Climate Justice & Just Transition Panel** (“Accelerating the Future”) were integrated into the Youth & Climate Futures Lab, enriching the analysis with perspectives on youth agency in green skills, feminist climate leadership, decentralised technology, and regional connectivity. Similarly, insights from the previous day’s thematic discussions were captured and carried forward into the **Human Rights Defence** and **Women’s Rights & Feminist Organising** Labs, ensuring that each Lab was grounded in the lived realities, emerging tensions, and strategic reflections shared across the broader Dariro convening.

The overarching purpose of the Labs was threefold:

1. Build Awareness of Systemic Realities

Using Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to surface the visible symptoms, structural drivers, political logics, cultural narratives, and deep stories shaping each thematic space. This created a shared, multi-layered understanding of why current challenges persist and what holds them in place.

2. Explore Alternative Futures

Through STEEPLE horizon scanning and scenario development, participants examined a range of possible, probable, and preferred futures. This step allowed civic actors to imagine beyond current constraints and explore where the system could evolve under different conditions.

3. Design Pathways for Adaptive Action

Using Backcasting, each Lab generated a structured pathway from the preferred future back to the present, defining what must be true by 2030, what enabling changes should be visible by 2027, and what practical, immediate actions can begin in 2025.

Across all Labs, the goal was not to predict the future but to **build anticipatory capacity**: the ability to read signals, navigate uncertainty, challenge assumptions, and collectively design futures that are just, inclusive, and resilient.

3. Methodology Overview - Systems Informed Foresight (SIF)

The Dariro Scenario Skills Labs applied **Systems Informed Foresight (SIF)**, RIAHSAH Co.’s signature methodology for helping organisations, networks, and movements navigate complexity. SIF integrates systems thinking, anticipatory intelligence, and participatory design to support actors working in rapidly changing civic, political, social, and ecological contexts.

The framework is built on the understanding that **today's challenges are systemic, interconnected, layered, and shaped by deeper forces**, and therefore require tools that enable both deep analysis and imaginative, future-oriented strategy. Through SIF, participants moved from diagnosing the present to exploring what could emerge to designing practical actions that can shape more just and resilient futures.

The methodology unfolds in three interconnected stages: **Awareness** → **Application** → **Adaptation**.

3.1 Awareness – Seeing the System Before Acting

In the first stage, participants examined the complex systems surrounding each theme using **Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)**. CLA guided each Lab to go beyond surface-level symptoms and uncover:

- **The Litany** - visible pressures, crises, and lived experiences.
- **Systemic Causes** - structures, policies, incentives, economic dynamics, and institutional drivers.
- **Worldviews** - beliefs, political logics, and cultural assumptions sustaining those structures.
- **Myths & Metaphors** - deep narratives and symbolic stories that shape identity, legitimacy, and behaviour.

This multi-layered approach created a shared understanding of why current challenges persist and exposed the deeper conditions that must shift for transformation to be possible.

3.2 Application – Exploring Alternative Futures

With a systemic foundation established, participants moved into futures exploration using **STEEPLE Horizon Scanning**, examining how **Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal, and Ethical** forces may shape the next decade.

This stage helped participants:

- Identify weak signals and emerging issues
- recognise long-term drivers of change
- explore potential disruptions
- question assumptions about what is “likely”
- consider how trends may converge, reinforce, or destabilise each other

The STEEPLE scan provided the building blocks for three types of scenarios:

- **Possible futures** – plausible changes that could unfold.
- **Probable futures** – what may occur if current trajectories continue.
- **Preferred futures** – the desired future states participants wish to move toward.

This stage expanded the strategic imagination of participants and created clarity around what future they want to intentionally shape.

3.3 Adaptation – Designing Pathways for Systemic Impact

In the final stage, participants converted their preferred futures into actionable strategies through **Backcasting**.

Backcasting began with the question:

“If this is the future we want, what must be true by 2030?”

Participants then worked backwards through:

- **2030 Milestones** – the systemic conditions that must exist.
- **2027 Enablers** – the early shifts and foundations required to move toward those milestones.
- **2025 Actions** – practical, immediate interventions that can begin now.

This structured approach ensured that each Lab produced **actionable, strategically coherent pathways** that link long-term aspirations with near-term work.

3.4 Participatory & Visual Methods

The Labs incorporated:

- **graphic recording** to visually synthesise insights and enhance collective sense-making
- **co-facilitation models**, including youth co-facilitation in Lab C, to demonstrate inclusive leadership
- **movement-based dialogue**, ensuring insights remained grounded in lived experience
- **real-time documentation**, enabling rapid synthesis and post-Lab analysis

These participatory and visual elements strengthened engagement, supported cross-learning, and ensured that the outputs remained practical, memorable, and rooted in participant voices.

3.5 Why Systems-Informed Foresight for Civic Actors?

The SIF methodology is well-suited to actors working in contested and fast-changing civic environments because it helps them:

- make sense of complexity rather than react to it
- see deeper drivers behind present challenges
- anticipate potential risks and opportunities
- explore futures beyond current constraints
- strengthen shared vision and collective strategy
- design adaptive pathways aligned with systemic change

4. Insights From the Three Scenario Labs

4.1 Future of Human Rights Defence

Theme: Civic resilience, protection, and solidarity under constrained civic space

Guiding Question: *How might protection systems evolve when states and civil society collaborate rather than collide?*

4.1.1 Overview & Context

Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) across Southern Africa are operating in increasingly volatile environments. Participants described a civic landscape marked by:

- harassment, arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and killings
- repressive legal instruments and partisan state institutions
- shrinking civic space and the normalisation of impunity
- disinformation, xenophobia, and harmful political narratives
- weakened judicial independence and bureaucratic obstruction

These pressures disproportionately affect women defenders, youth activists, LGBTQ+ defenders, and frontline community organisers. Yet participants also highlighted ongoing sources of resilience: solidarity networks, digital safety practices, community organising, regional alliances, and the moral courage of defenders who persist despite high personal risk.

The Lab applied CLA, STEEPLE, and Backcasting to envision a future where HRDs are protected, recognised, and able to collaborate with state and society to safeguard civic freedoms.

4.1.2 Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

A. Litany: What is visible today

Participants surfaced an urgent set of lived realities:

- harassment and surveillance of HRDs
- restrictive laws limiting protests, organising, media, and movement
- politicised policing and intimidation
- silencing of youth activists and women defenders
- xenophobia used to deflect state failures
- online harassment and misinformation
- shrinking spaces for dissent and political participation

These visible symptoms reflect the breadth of repression and the rapid deterioration of civic space across the region.

B. Systemic Causes: Structural drivers

Participants identified deeper systemic forces sustaining these challenges:

- unharmonised legislation and institutionalised impunity
- militarised, partisan, and unaccountable state institutions
- donor conditionalities shaping advocacy agendas
- anti-rights movements gaining power and coordination
- “government within government” dynamics and opaque decision-making
- extractive political economies influencing legislation and civic legitimacy
- funding inequities, privileging certain activists while others remain unsupported

Structural power, not individual actors, emerged as the core barrier.

C. Worldviews: Beliefs shaping the system

Dominant beliefs included:

- “HRDs are troublemakers or enemies of the state.”
- “Security equals control.”
- “Civic activism is foreign-funded, unpatriotic, or destabilising.”
- “Power must be protected, not shared.”
- “The judiciary must defer to executive authority.”

These beliefs reinforce repression and justify the criminalisation of civic action.

D. Myths & Metaphors: Deep narratives

Participants highlighted myths that distort public understanding:

- “Refugees and migrants are criminals.”
- “HRDs are puppets of foreign interests.”
- “Human rights are Western constructs.”
- “Surveillance keeps us safe.”
- “Activists disrupt peace.”

E. Flipped Headline: Preferred future orientation

“Human rights defenders are protected, recognised, and able to collaborate with state and society to safeguard civic freedoms.”

This reframing opened the doorway to futures exploration.

4.1.3 Horizon Scanning (STEEPLE)

Participants scanned across seven domains to identify signals and drivers shaping civic space over the next decade.

Key insights included:

Social

- shifting norms toward solidarity and dignity
- potential for collective care and community-based protection
- growing public distrust in institutions

Technological

- rising surveillance, spyware, and digital repression
- opportunities for African-led tech tools and ethical digital ecosystems
- need for digital safety literacy and legal protections

Economic

- funding precarity for HRDs
- need for decriminalising informal economies
- fairer resource distribution and sustainable protection financing

Environmental

- environmental defenders at heightened risk
- climate shocks generating new rights violations

Political

- resurgence of authoritarian governance
- shrinking institutional accountability
- potential for co-created policies and inclusive governance models

Legal

- discriminatory laws, weak enforcement, and selective justice
- need for harmonised HRD protection laws and impartial oversight bodies

Ethical

- reclaiming African values such as Ubuntu
- embedding justice, inclusion, and dignity into civic ecosystems

The STEEPLE analysis revealed that technological repression, authoritarian politics, and economic marginalisation are major drivers of shrinking civic space, but also that alternative pathways exist through solidarity, regional cooperation, and rights-based governance.

4.1.4 Scenarios: Possible, Probable, Preferred Futures

Possible Future

Fragmented protection systems emerge across the region. Some states improve conditions, while others intensify repression. Progress is uneven, innovation exists, but vulnerability persists.

Probable Future

If current trajectories continue, HRDs remain at high risk. Surveillance expands, restrictive legislation grows, funding declines, and public trust weakens. Protection remains reactive and insufficient.

Preferred Future

“HRDs are protected, recognised, and able to collaborate with state and society to safeguard civic freedoms.”

In this future:

- HRDs are seen as partners in democratic development
- protection systems become proactive, co-created, and holistic
- legal safeguards exist and are enforced
- cross-border solidarity strengthens regional defence ecosystems
- digital safety and mental health support are embedded in HRD work

The preferred future signals a shift from adversarial to collaborative civic governance.

4.1.5 Backcasting Pathway — 2030 → 2027 → 2025

2030 Milestones (What must be true)

- national HRD protection laws enacted and enforced
- independent oversight bodies operational and trusted
- community-based early warning and rapid response systems

- HRDs represented in policymaking and parliamentary committees
- regional protection networks coordinating cross-border solidarity
- digital safety and mental health integrated into HRD support structures

2027 Enablers (What foundations must be visible)

- draft protection bills tabled in parliaments
- minimum protection standards agreed with civil society
- government–CSO dialogue forums piloted
- targeted training for police and judiciary
- local rapid response networks emerging in high-risk zones
- HRD digital hubs piloted across 2–3 countries

2025 Actions (Start Now)

- convene risk-mapping roundtables
- document violations safely and consistently
- establish short-term solidarity funds
- train HRDs on digital security and trauma support
- brief parliamentarians on HRD priority issues
- strengthen coalitions connecting youth, women, and HRDs

These actions anchor the transformation from current repression toward systemic protection.

4.1.6 Summary Insight

The Human Rights Defence Lab revealed a region confronting intensified repression but also holding the seeds of transformation. While the civic environment is marked by fear, fragmentation, and shrinking space, participants articulated a compelling vision of a future where protection is collective, institutionalised, and grounded in dignity and collaboration.

Across discussions, one insight stood out: **the future of civic space cannot be built by defenders alone; it must be co-created by communities, states, institutions, and regional networks, anchored in values that centre justice, solidarity, and shared humanity.**

4.2 Lab B – Future of Women’s Rights & Feminist Organising

Theme: Power, Sustainability, and Inclusion within Feminist Movements

Guiding Question: How can feminist organising adapt and sustain power in the face of backlash and underfunding?

4.2.1 Overview & Context

The Lab on the Future of Women’s Rights & Feminist Organising took place against a backdrop of intensifying anti-gender backlash, economic instability, weakening protection frameworks, and increasingly sophisticated political and digital repression targeting women, LGBTQI+ persons, and feminist leaders.

Participants described a feminist ecosystem that is:

- chronically underfunded and constrained by donor-driven agendas
- targeted by anti-rights actors, conservative religious movements, and populist narratives
- weakened by organisational silos, generational divides, and limited coordination
- experiencing escalating burnout, mental health pressures, and care burdens
- misrepresented in mainstream media and distorted by misogynistic narratives

Yet the same landscape is also marked by resilience, creativity, and pockets of innovation. Youth feminist collectives are emerging, community-based organising is strengthening, diaspora networks are investing in local initiatives, and feminist digital storytelling is gaining visibility.

The Lab applied CLA, STEEPLE, and Backcasting to explore how feminist movements can build power, secure sustainable resources, and shape more just and transformative gender futures.

4.2.2 Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

A. Litany: What we see on the surface

Participants surfaced visible, everyday challenges affecting feminist organising:

- backlash from conservative actors and anti-gender movements
- trivialisation and misrepresentation of feminism
- burnout, exhaustion, and mental health strain
- co-option of feminist spaces by men or institutions
- weak media coverage and gendered misinformation
- public perceptions framing feminists as aggressive, anti-family, or “too loud”

This litany reflects a contested political and cultural moment where organising requires navigating hostility, misunderstanding, and resource scarcity.

B. Systemic Causes: Structural drivers shaping the crisis

Participants identified deep systemic causes, including:

- patriarchy embedded across institutions, law, and culture
- nepotism and politicisation influencing funding distribution
- fragmented movement infrastructure and organisational silos
- rigid donor structures imposing narrow priorities
- economic precarity, limiting participation for many activists
- lack of gender-responsive implementation of laws and policies
- misinformation ecosystems amplifying anti-feminist narratives

These systemic drivers reinforce inequality, fuel backlash, and weaken collective power.

C. Worldviews: Beliefs and assumptions that sustain the system

Participants surfaced harmful beliefs that shape both public and institutional responses to feminist organising:

- “Women are emotional and unfit for leadership.”
- “Feminism is anti-men or seeks female domination.”
- “Gender equality is a foreign, Western idea.”
- “Power imbalance is natural.”
- “Gender justice threatens culture or religion.”
- “Feminists are destabilising society.”

These worldviews show how gender norms, moral panics, and cultural narratives are weaponised to delegitimise feminist agendas.

D. Myths & Metaphors: The deep stories shaping gender power

Participants surfaced powerful myths and metaphors that continue to distort public understanding of feminism and reinforce gendered power imbalances. These deep cultural narratives shape how communities perceive feminist work, often undermining legitimacy and discouraging participation.

Key myths and metaphors included:

- **“Feminists do not help men”** – positioning feminism as exclusionary or hostile rather than justice-oriented.
- **“You want to destroy our families”** – a common backlash narrative portraying feminist organising as anti-family or disruptive to cultural norms.
- **“Feminists are loud and aggressive”** – reducing feminist advocacy to inappropriate behaviour rather than principled resistance.
- **“Feminists are evil people”** – moralistic framing that demonises feminist leaders and justifies hostility or violence.
- **“Women cannot be leaders”** – a belief that reinforces patriarchal norms and delegitimises women’s leadership in public life.
- **“Feminism will never be achieved”** – a fatalistic metaphor suggesting that gender equality is impossible, discouraging collective action and long-term commitment.

Together, these myths and metaphors illustrate the cultural and moral battleground in which feminist organising takes place. They reveal how deeply embedded narratives are used to contain feminist power, restrict women’s agency, and maintain structural inequality, underscoring the need for stronger narrative strategies, community engagement, and transformative storytelling in feminist futures.

E. Flipped Headline: Preferred Future Orientation

“Feminist movements are powerful, well-resourced, and shaping transformative gender justice across the region.”

This became the anchor for futures exploration.

4.2.3 Horizon Scanning (STEEPLE)

The STEEPLE analysis revealed the larger forces shaping feminist futures:

Social

- entrenchment of patriarchal norms
- rising anti-gender rhetoric
- growing visibility of LGBTQI+ rights activism
- burnout and care burdens limiting participation
- emerging youth-led collectives challenging norms

Technological

- technology-facilitated GBV and cyberbullying
- AI-driven misinformation and moral panic
- opportunities for feminist digital storytelling
- encrypted organising and digital archiving

Economic

- donor withdrawal and unpredictable resourcing
- economic insecurity increasing vulnerability
- emerging feminist social enterprises
- diasporic support networks and alternative philanthropy

Environmental

- climate impacts deepening care burdens on women
- feminist mobilisation around climate justice
- extractive economies threatening women’s livelihoods

Political

- conservative political rhetoric and anti-rights legislation
- weak implementation of gender laws
- exclusion of feminists from key policy spaces
- potential openings through regional feminist coalitions

Legal

- criminalisation of LGBTQI+ identities
- weak judicial independence
- regulatory environments restricting CSO operations
- gender-based violence laws poorly enforced

Ethical

- funding ethics (e.g., rejecting “dirty money”)
- accountability within movements and donor ecosystems
- debates around representation, voice, and legitimacy
- community expectations vs. feminist values

Across all domains, participants recognised that systemic change requires shifting power, narrative, funding models, and institutional behaviour, not only protecting feminist spaces but transforming them.

4.2.4 Scenarios: Possible, Probable, Preferred Futures

Possible Future

Feminist movements grow in pockets: some achieve visibility and innovative organising models while others remain under-resourced and isolated. Gains are fragile and easily reversed.

Probable Future

If current trajectories continue, backlash intensifies, funding continues to decline, and feminist movements remain fragmented, overstretched, and largely absent from formal governance spaces.

Preferred Future

“Feminist movements are well-resourced, interconnected, and influential, shaping policy, shifting power, and advancing gender justice across communities and regions.”

In this future:

- diversified, sustainable, ethical funding models exist
- movements collaborate across borders, sectors, and generations
- feminist leadership shapes governance and development agendas
- care work is recognised and embedded in policy and economic systems
- digital and narrative power is used to counter backlash and reclaim voice

This is a future of power, sustainability, and collective influence.

4.2.5 Backcasting Pathway — 2030 → 2027 → 2025

2030 Milestones

Participants envisioned a feminist ecosystem with:

- sustainable and community-owned funding models
- feminist leaders in public institutions and governance
- regional feminist coalitions influencing AU/SADC agendas
- laws aligned with gender justice principles
- decolonised and gender-transformative education
- care work recognised as economic labour
- feminist-aligned mental health, safety, and accountability systems

2027 Enablers

Key enabling shifts included:

- early community revenue models
- narrative power-building initiatives
- pilot safety networks and digital protection systems
- donor advocacy for new funding modalities
- alignment of government commitments to regional gender charters
- expanded representation of marginalised women in leadership
- increased feminist research and indigenous knowledge production

2025 Immediate Actions

Participants identified practical, near-term priorities:

- strengthen regional feminist collaboration platforms
- decolonise narratives through storytelling and media
- map the feminist ecosystem to identify gaps and leverage points
- develop solidarity funds and emergency care support

- engage governments and donors with new partnership models
- host convenings on backlash response and leadership development
- support youth feminist leadership and intergenerational circles

These steps form the foundation for long-term movement power and sustainability.

4.2.6 Summary Insight

The Feminist Organising Lab revealed a movement standing at a crossroads: facing significant backlash yet demonstrating profound resilience, creativity, and strategic clarity. The conversations made clear that feminist futures cannot rely on traditional funding systems, fragmented organising, or reactive strategies.

A strategic shift toward collective power, feminist economies, narrative transformation, and intergenerational leadership is essential. Above all, participants affirmed that sustainable gender justice requires not only resisting backlash but building feminist governance, feminist financing, and feminist political imagination.

4.3 Lab C – Youth & Climate Futures

Theme: Youth Leadership in Climate Innovation, Justice, and Regional Transition

Guiding Question: How can young people lead Africa’s climate transition through innovation, networks, and ecological justice when current systems limit their access, recognition, and power?

4.3.1 Overview & Context

The Youth & Climate Futures Lab examined the widening gap between the scale of climate impacts experienced by young people and their limited influence in climate decision-making across Southern Africa. Participants described an ecosystem where youth face:

- exclusion from policy spaces and climate negotiations
- symbolic or tokenistic participation rather than substantive influence
- limited access to climate information, data, and technical training
- restricted access to climate finance and green livelihood opportunities
- digital divides that marginalise rural youth and young women
- climate shocks that deepen gendered burdens, displacement, and unemployment

At the same time, the Lab revealed powerful signs of **youth resilience, creativity, and leadership**, from solar micro-grids to agroecology, climate-tech pilots, diaspora-supported innovations, and growing cross-border organising.

RIAHSAH Co.’s commitment to **youth-led foresight** was made real through the co-facilitation of this Lab by a young woman participant, modelling inclusive power-sharing and validating lived experience as expertise.

Insights from the Day 1 panel, *Accelerating the Future: Green Skills, Feminist Justice and Youth-Led Transition*, further enriched the Lab by spotlighting youth agency across green livelihoods, decentralised technology, feminist climate leadership, and regional connectivity.

Together, these inputs created a strong foundation for exploring systemic barriers, future possibilities, and pathways toward a just, youth-led climate transition.

4.3.2 Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

A. Litany: What is happening now

Participants surfaced an extensive list of visible challenges:

- youth excluded from climate decision-making
- information and data inaccessible, technical, or unavailable in local languages
- youth participation treated as symbolic or quota-filling
- climate policies exist, but are not implemented
- limited access to funding for youth-led innovation
- skills gap: youth lack technical, financial, and climate literacy training
- rural youth are most impacted yet least included
- older leaders resist youth innovation (“Gen Z wants to take our jobs”)
- youth are confined to small events while decisions are made elsewhere

These experiences highlight deep frustrations around voice, power, and recognition.

B. Systemic Causes: What structures create these conditions

Participants identified systemic drivers, including:

- lack of political will to include youth meaningfully
- climate policies drafted without youth consultation
- capitalism and unequal resource distribution silencing young voices
- governance opacity and lack of transparency
- structural barriers to climate finance access
- inadequate frameworks for youth engagement during climate disasters
- extractive political economies prioritising profit over justice
- disorganised or inconsistent youth engagement strategies
- digital and language barriers in climate information

These systemic drivers expose the architecture of exclusion.

C. Worldviews: The beliefs underpinning the system

Harmful assumptions were surfaced:

- “Youth are inexperienced and lack capacity.”
- “Leaders are elders; youth leadership is premature.”
- “Policy is for experts; youth slow things down.”
- “Economic growth justifies extraction; justice can come later.”
- “Rural youth are too far behind to contribute.”
- “Climate change is real but not urgent.”
- “Nothing has happened yet, so why worry?”

These beliefs undermine youth credibility and delay urgent climate action.

D. Myths & Metaphors: The deeper stories shaping climate power

Participants identified cultural narratives that reinforce exclusion:

- “Young people are passengers, not drivers.”
- “Climate change is a hoax.”
- “Decision-making is for elders.”
- “The earth will fix itself, don’t worry.”
- “Climate is a Western agenda.”
- “Youth lack focus.”
- “Rural youth don’t understand climate issues.”
- “Youth need guidance; they cannot lead independently.”

These deep narratives actively restrict youth influence and deny their agency.

E. Flipped Headline: Preferred Future Orientation

“Young people lead Africa’s climate transition through innovation, networks, and ecological justice.”

This became the north star for futures exploration.

4.3.3 Horizon Scanning (STEEPLE)

Participants scanned signals and drivers across seven domains:

Social

- demographic youth bulge
- rising youth climate anxiety and activism
- need for traditional leaders to support youth visibility
- social resistance to change in some communities
- gendered burdens on young women are increasing

Technological

- unequal access to digital tools and connectivity
- potential for AI and tech hubs to democratise climate innovation
- youth-led climate tech emerging in micro-grids, mapping, water tech
- need for contextualised, local-language climate tools

Economic

- structural youth unemployment
- limited access to climate finance
- green jobs emerging but inaccessible to most
- young women's unpaid care work is expanding due to climate impacts
- need for financial literacy and youth-friendly loan systems

Environmental

- intensifying droughts, floods, cyclones
- rural livelihoods are collapsing under climate stress
- ecological degradation affecting youth futures
- need to integrate indigenous knowledge as innovation

Political

- weak political will to include youth meaningfully
- shrinking civic space for climate activism
- opportunities through youth quotas, AU policy processes
- need to constitutionalise youth participation

Legal

- fragmented environmental regulation
- limited youth access to legal remedies or environmental courts
- unclear frameworks for youth participation in climate governance
- policies unknown to most citizens

Ethical

- debates around rejecting polluter-linked funding
- safeguarding youth in policy spaces
- need to centre justice, inclusion, empathy, intergenerational fairness
- ensuring rural and young women are not marginalised

The STEEPLE analysis revealed that the future of climate justice depends on whether political, technological, financial, and legal systems transform to include youth as legitimate actors with authority, not merely presence.

4.3.4 Scenarios: Possible, Probable, Preferred Futures

Possible Future

Youth-led innovation expands in some regions, but benefits remain uneven. Urban youth progress; rural youth remain excluded. A mixed, inequitable trajectory.

Probable Future

If current systems persist, youth remain marginal. Extractive industries dominate, climate finance bypasses youth, and unemployment deepens, particularly for young women.

Preferred Future

“Young people lead Africa’s climate transition through inclusive innovation, ethical financing, and powerful regional networks advancing ecological justice.”

This future includes:

- accessible green skills training
- AI and digital tools available in local languages
- youth-led climate finance pathways
- youth quotas in climate decision-making
- strong regional youth climate networks
- gender-responsive and justice-based governance

This is a future of leadership, innovation, and ecological responsibility.

4.3.5 Backcasting Pathway — 2030 → 2027 → 2025

2030 Milestones

Participants envisioned:

- youth representation institutionalised in climate councils and AU structures
- youth-centred green financing systems operational
- AI and climate tools translated into major regional languages
- climate skills programmes accessible across rural and urban regions
- regional youth networks influencing AU, SADC, AfCFTA agendas
- gendered climate impacts formally integrated into national plans
- benefit-sharing frameworks recognising youth and women as stakeholders

2027 Enablers

Early shifts required:

- climate-tech innovation hubs launched across countries
- micro-grant schemes and diaspora-supported funds piloted
- youth representation formalised in national climate committees
- cross-border youth knowledge exchanges
- environmental courts or legal pathways accessible to youth

- community benefit-sharing pilots
- gendered climate analysis adopted in national strategies

2025 Actions – Start Now

Participants identified practical, immediate steps:

- map youth climate actors and innovation ecosystems
- host youth-led climate dialogues with governments and private sector
- develop policy briefs and a Youth Climate Position Paper
- pilot micro-trainings (AI for climate, climate finance access, agroecology)
- create early-stage youth climate micro-grants
- partner with women’s rights groups on gendered climate impacts
- document grassroots climate impacts through storytelling
- secure initial youth observer seats in environmental councils
- build youth coalitions linking rural and urban actors

These actions form the enabling conditions for a just and youth-led transition.

4.3.6 Summary Insight

The Youth & Climate Futures Lab revealed a powerful insight: **youth are not merely stakeholders in the climate transition; they are indispensable leaders whose innovation, lived experience, and moral urgency can reshape Africa’s climate trajectory.**

But the region’s systems are not yet designed for youth leadership. Without structural transformation in policy, financing, technology, and governance, youth agency will remain symbolic.

Participants imagined a future where youth lead, from solar fields to policy rooms, anchored in justice, ecological stewardship, feminist leadership, and intergenerational collaboration. The Lab affirmed a simple but profound truth: **A just transition cannot happen without youth power.**

5. Cross-Lab Synthesis: What the Civic Ecosystem Is Saying About the Future

Across the three Scenario Skills Labs, *Human Rights Defence*, *Women’s Rights & Feminist Organising*, and *Youth & Climate Futures*, participants articulated a shared recognition: Southern Africa’s civic ecosystem is undergoing profound disruption marked by shrinking civic space, economic precarity, demographic shifts, technological transformation, and climate instability. Yet across every Lab, participants also surfaced a strong appetite for coordination, imagination, and long-term systemic change.

This section synthesises the patterns, tensions, and connective thread that cut across all three Labs, revealing a composite picture of the region's civic future.

5.1 Emerging Cross-Cutting Patterns

Despite the thematic differences, three overarching patterns appeared consistently:

A. A shift from individual struggle to *collective ecosystems*

Participants in every Lab emphasised that surviving the current environment requires moving beyond individual organisations or sectors. The future must be built through **networks, coalitions, cross-border solidarity, and multi-actor partnerships**.

- HRDs envisioned regional protection networks.
- Feminist actors emphasised cross-movement collaboration.
- Youth called for continental climate networks influencing AU and SADC processes.

Across all themes, the future is **collective**, not isolated.

B. A desire for new governance models that are participatory, inclusive, and justice-centred

Across Labs, participants envisioned governance systems that:

- include HRDs in policy processes
- embed feminist and gender justice principles
- institutionalise youth participation in climate governance
- adopt transparent, accountable, decentralised models of decision-making

This reflects a cross-cutting call for **shared power**, replacing winner-takes-all, opaque systems with participatory and democratic ones.

C. Structural transformation, not temporary reform

Participants did not imagine superficial fixes. They described futures where:

- HRD protection is embedded in law, not discretionary
- feminist organising is sustainably funded through community-owned models
- youth climate leadership is backed by legal quotas, financing systems, and local-language technology

The shared pattern: **lasting systemic reforms, not piecemeal projects**.

5.2 Shared Systemic Tensions Across All Labs

Each Lab surfaced critical tensions that shape the civic ecosystem's trajectory. Strikingly, many were identical across the three themes.

A. Control vs. Collaboration

Across Labs, states often treat civic actors as adversaries, yet the preferred futures across all groups require **co-created governance**. The tension between repression and cooperation is central to Southern Africa's future.

B. Scarcity vs. Sustainability

Feminist movements face shrinking funding; HRDs operate under resource strain; youth climate innovators cannot access finance. The tension between **donor dependency** and **community-owned, ethical, sustainable financing** was universal.

C. Participation vs. Tokenism

Whether it is feminist leaders, HRDs, or youth, all groups identified **symbolic inclusion**, being invited but not heard, as a major barrier. Real futures require **meaningful, structural participation**.

D. Digital empowerment vs. digital repression

Technology emerged as both a threat and an opportunity across Labs:

- HRDs face surveillance.
- Feminists face cyberbullying and AI-powered misinformation.
- Youth face digital divides but also lead climate-tech innovation.

The digital future could empower or entrench exclusion, depending on governance and access.

E. Justice vs. extraction

Extractive economics harm HRDs, deepen gender inequality, and drive climate injustices. All Labs called for models rooted in **ecological justice, feminist justice, and community benefit-sharing**.

5.3 Convergence of Aspirations: The Regional Narrative Emerging

When combining insights across the three Labs, a coherent narrative emerges:

Southern Africa's civic future depends on shifting from constrained, hierarchical systems to inclusive, justice-driven ecosystems that recognise HRDs, feminist leaders, and youth as co-creators of policy, governance, and innovation.

Across groups, the desired future is built on:

- **legitimacy** (recognition of HRDs, feminist movements, youth leaders)
- **safety** (physical, digital, institutional)
- **voice and power** (meaningful participation in policy and resource governance)
- **solidarity** (cross-sector and cross-border)
- **sustainable resourcing** (ethical, community-rooted funding models)
- **innovation and imagination** (new technologies, new narratives, new governance models)

This is a future where civic actors are no longer reacting to shrinking space but **actively shaping resilient, empowered, interconnected civic ecosystems.**

5.4 Implications Across Themes

For Human Rights Defence

The transformation of civic space requires embedding rights protection into governance systems, not relying on individual courage or external pressure.

For Feminist Organising

Movement sustainability hinges on shifting power, narratives, and funding models while expanding regional feminist cooperation.

For Youth Climate Leadership

A just transition requires structural reform in climate skills, financing, governance, and digital access, recognising youth as leaders, not beneficiaries.

5.5 The Core Insight Across All Labs

The most powerful insight running through all three Labs was this:

The future must be co-created. No single actor, not HRDs, not women’s rights movements, not youth, and certainly not governments, can navigate the coming decade alone.

The region’s civic transformation depends on systems that:

- share power
- institutionalise participation
- centre justice
- enable innovation
- and build resilient, interconnected ecosystems

6. Strategic Implications for the Trust

The collective insights emerging from the three Labs reveal powerful messages about the evolving civic, feminist, and youth climate ecosystems in Southern Africa. These insights carry **strategic implications** for how the Southern Africa Trust positions itself, allocates its influence, strengthens its programming, and shapes the long-term trajectory of the Dariro initiative.

The Trust stands at a critical moment: the region is entering a decade defined by climate turbulence, democratic backsliding, shifting funding landscapes, rising anti-rights movements, and intensifying economic pressures. Yet the Labs also surfaced an appetite for collaboration, structural reform, and imaginative civic futures that are justice-driven, youth-led, feminist, and participatory. Against this context, several strategic implications for the Trust become clear.

6.1 Positioning the Trust as a Regional Foresight Convenor

The Trust has a unique opportunity to position itself as a regional hub for *foresight-led civic innovation*, enabling civic actors, feminist movements, and youth networks to anticipate change rather than react to crisis.

Across Labs, actors expressed a desire for long-term visioning, safe spaces for reflection, and methods that allow them to imagine beyond immediate pressures. Futures thinking gave participants renewed clarity, agency, and strategic coherence.

What this implies for the Trust:

- Embed foresight processes into the broader Dariro programme and annual convenings.
- Develop a repository of regional scenarios, insights, and trend intelligence.
- Support partners to adopt foresight tools in their organisational planning.
- Convene cross-border foresight dialogues on emerging risks (e.g., climate finance, digital repression, shrinking civic space).

6.2 Strengthening SAT's Role in Civic Ecosystem Coordination

The Labs indicated a deep need for regional coordination:

- HRDs require cross-border protection networks.
- Feminist movements require regional solidarity platforms.
- Youth climate activists require continental networks influencing AU/SADC processes.

What this implies for the Trust:

- Serve as a connector of networks rather than a siloed programme implementer.
- Facilitate regional learning exchanges and thematic coalitions (HRD, Feminist, Youth-Climate).
- Act as a neutral convenor where political tensions can be explored safely.
- Strengthen links between grassroots groups, policy institutions, and regional bodies.

6.3 Rethinking Funding Models to Support Sustainable Movements

Funding scarcity emerged across all Labs as a threat to feminist organising, HRD protection, and youth climate innovation. Participants emphasised the need for **diversified, ethical, community-owned, and movement-driven** resourcing models.

What this implies for SAT:

- Explore alternative financing mechanisms (solidarity funds, pooled resources, feminist funds, youth micro-grants).
- Advocate for ethical funding practices and transparency in donor ecosystems.
- Support partners to develop income-generating models where appropriate.
- Fund long-term, flexible programming rather than short project cycles.

6.4 Embedding Justice-Centred Approaches Across Programmes

Gender justice, climate justice, ecological justice, and economic justice were consistent themes across Labs. These are not “add-ons” but core structures shaping future stability.

What this implies for the Trust:

- Integrate justice lenses across all Dariro thematic tracks.
- Strengthen partnerships with feminist thinkers, climate justice leaders, and rights-based organisations.
- Ensure programme designs recognise the gendered and generational impacts of climate change, civic repression, and economic shifts.

- Leverage SAT's SERITI Strategy to foreground dignity and power as organising principles.

6.5 Supporting Meaningful Youth Leadership, Not Tokenism

Youth articulated the difference between symbolic presence and *real power*. The co-facilitation by a young woman in Lab C demonstrated what meaningful leadership could look like.

What this implies for the Trust:

- Institutionalise youth co-leadership models across Dariro spaces.
- Support youth-led research, advocacy, and policy design.
- Ensure youth representation in climate governance dialogues hosted or supported by SAT.
- Channel resources to youth-led groups, not just youth-serving organisations.

6.6 Advancing Digital Rights & Protection in a High-Risk Region

Digital repression, misinformation, cyber harassment, and surveillance were raised across all Labs. Technology represents both a risk and a transformative opportunity.

What this implies for the Trust:

- Strengthen digital safety programming across all thematic areas.
- Support regional advocacy on data protection, anti-surveillance regulation, and platform accountability.
- Invest in youth-led and community-led digital literacy and safety initiatives.
- Integrate digital rights into climate, feminist, and HRD programme streams.

6.7 Catalysing Policy Influence Through Foresight-Informed Evidence

Participants across all Labs signalled the importance of influencing policy at multiple levels (local, national, regional) through evidence that reflects lived experience and systemic analysis.

What this implies for the Trust:

- Use Lab outputs to shape future policy briefs, scenarios, and advocacy messages.
- Build foresight-derived evidence into strategic engagements with SADC, AU, AfCFTA, and national policy bodies.
- Convene multi-stakeholder dialogues using Lab insights as starting points.

6.8 Integrating the Labs into a Long-Term Regional Knowledge Product

The Labs generated rich, multi-layered qualitative data that should be preserved, analysed, and institutionalised.

What this implies for SAT:

- Turn the Lab outputs into a recurring publication (e.g., *The Dariro Foresight Annual*).
- Build a digital knowledge hub housing scenarios, system maps, and insights.
- Leverage the graphic canvases as visual evidence for learning and advocacy.
- Use the findings to guide thematic priorities for future Dariro cycles.

6.9 Reframing SAT's Value Proposition

Overall, the Labs point toward an expanded role for the Trust:

SAT is not only a funder or convenor, it is a regional systems enabler, futures partner, and ecosystem connector.

This reframing allows the Trust to:

- demonstrate leadership in systems-informed civic development
- attract new partners aligned to foresight and transformation
- strengthen legitimacy as a regional actor shaping long-term civic futures

This shift opens a new strategic horizon for the Trust and the Dariro Initiative.

7. Priority Action Areas (2025 – 2030)

Cross-Thematic Roadmap for Advancing Civic, Feminist & Youth-Led Climate Futures in Southern Africa

Across the three Labs, participants designed pathways to move from current systemic constraints toward preferred futures grounded in protection, justice, sustainability, feminist power, and youth leadership. This section synthesises these into a **unified action framework** that the Trust and its partners can use to guide programming, collaborations, and ecosystem strengthening over the next five years.

7.1 Vision for 2030 (Preferred Future Conditions)

By 2030, civic, feminist, and youth climate ecosystems across Southern Africa collectively envision systems that are:

A. Safe & Protected (Human Rights Futures)

- HRDs recognised as partners in democratic governance
- HRD protection laws enacted and enforced
- Independent oversight bodies operational and trusted
- Community-led early warning and rapid response systems in place
- Cross-border solidarity networks functioning at regional level

B. Powerful & Sustainable (Feminist Futures)

- Feminist movements financially stable through ethical, diversified, community-rooted funding
- Women and LGBTQI+ leaders hold institutional and policy-making roles
- Care work recognised within economic and governance models
- Gender-transformative and decolonised education systems
- Regional feminist coalitions shaping AU and SADC agendas

C. Youth-Led & Justice-Centred (Climate Futures)

- Youth institutionalised in climate governance (national climate councils, AU bodies, SADC forums)
- Youth-led green financing mechanisms accessible and ethical
- Climate skills programmes widely available (urban + rural)
- AI and climate tools available in local languages
- Climate justice principles embedded in national and regional frameworks

In combination, these signal a future built on **shared power, ecological responsibility, feminist justice, and human dignity.**

7.2 Enabling Milestones for 2027

To reach the 2030 vision, foundational shifts need to be visible by 2027. Across all three Labs, these fall into five categories:

Institutional Pathways

- Draft HRD protection bills tabled in parliaments
- Youth quotas and feminist leadership pathways integrated into climate and civic governance
- Government–civil society dialogue forums functioning at national and regional levels
- Judicial and oversight institutions undergoing reform toward accountability

Network & Coalition Strengthening

- Regional feminist coalitions active and coordinated
- Youth climate coalitions established in multiple countries
- Cross-border HRD solidarity networks operational
- Shared advocacy calendars and coordinated campaigns emerging

Financing & Resourcing

- Feminist social enterprises and revenue models piloted
- Youth micro-grant schemes and diaspora-funded initiatives launched
- HRD solidarity funds available for emergencies
- Donor advocacy for flexible, ethical, long-term funding gaining traction

Digital, Data & Skills Infrastructure

- Digital safety hubs for HRDs and feminist activists piloted
- Climate-tech and green-skills bootcamps running in multiple countries
- Local-language climate AI tools piloted
- Feminist digital storytelling and data projects visible across the region

Narrative & Knowledge Transformation

- Gender-transformative and ecological justice narratives mainstreamed
- Decolonised curricula and community learning programmes underway
- Indigenous knowledge systems integrated into climate and feminist movements
- Counter-misinformation campaigns active in civic and digital spaces

By 2027, the ecosystem should show **early structural reform**, not just project-level activity.

7.3 Immediate Priority Actions for 2025 (Start Now)

The Labs identified a set of *practical, near-term actions* that can be initiated immediately to build momentum. These actions are grouped across the three themes but intentionally aligned so the Trust can coordinate them across the Dariro programme.

A. Strengthen Collective Voice & Coordination

Human Rights Defence

- Convene HRD roundtables to map risks and protection gaps
- Strengthen coalitions connecting youth, women, and HRDs
- Increase parliamentary briefings on HRD challenges

Feminist Organising

- Map feminist ecosystems (actors, gaps, power centres, funding streams)
- Establish regional feminist collaboration platforms
- Host convenings focused on backlash response and care-centred organising

Youth & Climate Futures

- Map youth climate actors (urban + rural)
- Create a “Youth Climate Position Paper” for national and AU processes
- Initiate national and regional youth climate dialogues

B. Build Skills, Capacities & Knowledge

Human Rights Defence

- Expand digital safety and trauma-informed training for HRDs
- Build institutional literacy for defenders (policy, legal, governance skills)

Feminist Organising

- Develop intergenerational feminist leadership circles
- Establish feminist knowledge labs to document indigenous feminist histories

Youth & Climate Futures

- Run micro-trainings on climate finance access, AI tools, and green entrepreneurship
- Pilot rural youth innovation hubs

C. Create Early Finance Pathways

Human Rights Defence

- Establish short-term solidarity and emergency protection funds

Feminist Organising

- Set up small feminist solidarity and care funds
- Begin exploring feminist-aligned social enterprises

Youth & Climate Futures

- Pilot youth green micro-grants
- Engage diaspora networks to support climate innovation funds

D. Influence Policy Windows (2025–2026)

Human Rights Defence

- Revise restrictive laws through advocacy
- Push for HRD representation in policy committees

Feminist Organising

- Advocate for the implementation of gender equality charters
- Engage governments and regional bodies on feminist-aligned policy reforms

Youth & Climate Futures

- Secure youth observer seats in environmental councils
- Identify active policy windows (NDC reviews, mining hearings, climate bills)
- Draft policy briefs integrating gendered and youth-climate insights

E. Shift Public Narratives & Digital Ecosystems

Human Rights Defence

- Document rights violations through safe, secure storytelling
- Counter anti-HRD misinformation

Feminist Organising

- Launch collaborative feminist narrative campaigns
- Challenge harmful myths about feminism at community level

Youth & Climate Futures

- Use digital platforms to document community climate impacts
- Support youth-led digital advocacy for ecological justice

7.4 Summary of the Cross-Thematic Roadmap

The scenario work across all three Labs revealed that **real transformation requires acting on multiple fronts simultaneously**:

2025	2027	2030
Build foundations	Establish enabling systems	Realise preferred futures

Coalitions, micro-grants, policy briefs	mapping, training,	Institutional financing models, digital hubs	pathways, networks,	Protection ecosystems, feminist governance, youth-led climate transition
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This roadmap positions the Trust and its partners to drive **coherent, systemic progress** across three interconnected domains.

8. Recommendations & Next Steps

Strategic guidance for strengthening the Dariro Initiative and supporting civic, feminist, and youth-led transitions across Southern Africa.

The insights and futures pathways developed through the three Scenario Skills Labs point toward a decisive opportunity for the Southern Africa Trust to strengthen its role as a regional systems enabler. The recommendations below translate the Labs’ findings into strategic and organisational next steps for the Trust and outline how RIAHSAH Co. can continue to support the long-term evolution of Dariro as a foresight-driven programme.

8.1 Strengthen Dariro as a Regional Foresight Programme (Not a One-Off Event)

Recommendation: Institutionalise foresight as a *core feature* of the Dariro Initiative.

Next Steps:

- Establish Dariro as an annual foresight cycle focused on scenario development, trend tracking, and strategic adaptation.
- Integrate foresight methods into all thematic tracks, civic space, feminist organising, youth and climate, migration, digital rights, and economic justice.
- Develop a Dariro “Futures Portfolio” containing updated scenarios, signals, milestones, and pathways.

Strategic Value: Positions SAT as the leading regional convener of anticipatory governance and civic-futures work.

8.2 Develop a Multi-Year Partnership with RIAHSAH Co. as Lead Methodology Partner

Recommendation: Consolidate RIAHSAH’s methodological role beyond the 2025 Labs.

Next Steps:

- Formalise a 2–3 year collaboration for continued scenario refinement, foresight facilitation, and systems analysis.
- Commission RIAHSAH to lead annual Systems Informed Foresight® updates, monitoring of milestones, and cross-country synthesis.
- Establish a “Dariro Futures Unit” supported by RIAHSAH to coordinate learning, tools, and insights across the ecosystem.

Strategic Value: Ensures continuity, methodological coherence, and high-quality foresight leadership within Dariro.

8.3 Build Thematic Pathways into Programmes and Grantmaking

Recommendation: Use the preferred futures and backcasting pathways to shape SAT’s future programming.

Next Steps:

- Translate the 2025–2027–2030 milestones into thematic workplans.
- Align grant criteria with the action areas surfaced in the Labs (e.g., youth climate hubs, feminist funds, HRD protection mechanisms).
- Support partners to design projects that reflect futures thinking rather than reactive programming.

Strategic Value: Ensures that SAT-supported work aligns with long-term systemic transformation.

8.4 Strengthen Regional Ecosystem Coordination

Recommendation: Leverage the Trust’s convening power to facilitate multi-actor collaboration.

Next Steps:

- Coordinate cross-border HRD networks and solidarity mechanisms.
- Support regional feminist coalitions and shared advocacy calendars.
- Facilitate youth climate networks influencing AU, SADC, and AfCFTA processes.
- Host multi-stakeholder dialogues based on the scenario insights.

Strategic Value: Reduces fragmentation and builds unified regional positions on civic, feminist, and climate issues.

8.5 Embed Justice-Led Approaches Across All Themes

Recommendation: Place gender, ecological justice, and youth leadership at the centre of SAT’s programmes.

Next Steps:

- Integrate gender-transformative and climate-justice lenses into programme design.
- Elevate women’s and LGBTQI+ leadership in governance dialogues.
- Institutionalise meaningful youth representation in all climate and civic spaces convened by the Trust.

Strategic Value: Strengthens alignment with SERITI’s principles (Dignity, Power, Justice) and the region’s emerging demands.

8.6 Advance Digital Rights, Safety, and Ethical Technology

Recommendation: Position the Trust as a champion of digital justice.

Next Steps:

- Support HRDs, feminist organisers, and youth with digital rights training, digital safety hubs, and advocacy on anti-surveillance legislation.
- Promote ethical governance of AI in climate and civic processes.
- Commission regional research on digital repression and opportunities.

Strategic Value: Addresses one of the fastest-growing threats to civic and feminist spaces.

8.7 Convert Lab Outputs into High-Value Knowledge Products

Recommendation: Ensure the Lab material becomes long-term intellectual capital.

Next Steps:

- Publish an annual *Dariro Foresight Report* or “Civic Futures Index.”
- Develop a digital knowledge hub containing tools, canvases, scenarios, and cross-lab insights.
- Produce shorter thematic briefing notes for advocacy, fundraising, and stakeholder engagement.

Strategic Value: Increases SAT’s visibility, credibility, and influence as a thought leader.

8.8 Integrate Learning into SAT's Organisational Strategy

Recommendation: Use scenario insights to inform the Trust's internal planning.

Next Steps:

- Facilitate internal strategic sessions using the scenarios developed in the Labs.
- Build staff capacity in foresight and systems thinking (RIASHAH-led training).
- Establish signpost monitoring rhythms to track change between 2025–2030.

Strategic Value: Makes the Trust future-ready and adaptive in a rapidly shifting regional context.

8.9 Anchor Dariro as a Regional Public Good

Recommendation: Expand Dariro's legitimacy beyond the Trust and its partners.

Next Steps:

- Invite regional institutions (SADC, AU, AfCFTA) to join future foresight cycles.
- Position Dariro as a platform for civic imagination and long-term planning across Southern Africa.
- Encourage participating networks to integrate Dariro insights into national strategies.

Strategic Value: Establishes Dariro as a long-term regional empowerment platform, not a short-term programme.

9. Annexes

These are the final visual outputs generated during the Dariro Scenario Skills Labs. These scenario canvases synthesise key insights and were developed in real time by the graphic recorder based on participant contributions.

Annex 1: Scenario Canvas – Future of Human Rights Defence



Annex 2: Scenario Canvas – Future of Women’s Rights & Feminist Organising



Annex 3: Scenario Canvas – Youth & Climate Futures

