



COMMUNIQUÉ

Strengthening social accountability in public resource management for sustained economic growth and development in Southern Africa

4th REGIONAL DIALOGUE FOR NON-STATE ACTORS ON THE SADC RISDP 2020-2030

14-15 August 2024

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Whereas a regional dialogue for non-state actors (NSAs) on the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) for 2020-2030 was held on 14 and 15 August 2024, under the theme **Strengthening social accountability in public resource management for sustained economic growth and development in Southern Africa**, 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), Southern African Council of NGOs, CARE International, Global Campaign for Education, Trust Africa, SADC Youth Forum (SAYoF), Agenda 2063 Media Network, GenderLinks, and the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Alliance (a consortium of ActionAid International (AAI), Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) of Rhodes University, Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) and SAfAIDS).

1.2 Over 200 people, from ten¹ of SADC's 16 Member States, joined the dialogue virtually and from meetings in three locations (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Lusaka, Zambia; and Harare, Zimbabwe), representing various non-state actors (NSAs), including civil society organisations (CSOs), smallholder farmers' associations, trade unions, youth organisations, people's movements, faith-based organisations and media outlets, as well as SADC Secretariat, SADC Parliamentary Forum (PF), SADC National Committees, SADC National Contact Points, the Strengthening National Regional Linkages programme of GIZ, and other government departments.

1.3 Noting that the SADC RISDP 2020-2030 (hereafter RISDP) and Vision 2050 were approved at the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in August 2020,

¹ Dialogue participants were from the following ten SADC Member States: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

and its regional and national implementation plans were adopted by the SADC Council of Ministers in August 2021 and 2022, respectively. The SADC Council of Ministers then approved the revised, reprioritised, regional implementation plan in March 2023 and the regional investment plan in August 2023. The 10-year regional strategy envisions “a peaceful, inclusive, middle to high income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom”. At almost its halfway point, the RISDP will undergo an independent mid-term review in 2024-2025.

1.5 Emphasising the importance of effective multi-stakeholder accountability mechanisms in realising regional development commitments through equitable, gender-responsive, and people-centred public service delivery systems.

1.6 Cognisant that SADC Member States also share common development and governance challenges, exacerbated by the growing burdens of public debt and climate change. The impact of multiple natural and man-made disasters, including the ongoing El Nino-induced food crisis, is further amplified by pervasive poverty and inequalities, including gender disparities.

1.8 Appreciating that the SADC Council of Ministers approved the NSA Accreditation Guidelines in March 2024 and directed the SADC Secretariat to establish the NSA Liaison Office in SADC Secretariat, as well as the NSA Forum, which it has initiated together with a Technical Working Group of regional NSAs.

1.9 Applauding that the required two-thirds of SADC Member States have signed the Agreement Amending the SADC Treaty, setting the scene for the development of a Protocol defining the operations and functions of the SADC Parliament.

1.10 Recalling the importance of the African Union (AU) and SADC regional instruments, particularly the SADC Vision 2050 and AU Agenda 2063.²

1.11 Acknowledging the theme of the 44th SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government (2024) *Promoting innovation to unlock opportunities for sustained economic growth and development towards an industrialised SADC.*

² Other instruments include: (i) African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1996), and its Protocol on the Rights of Women (2003); (ii) African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); (iii) African Youth Charter (2006); (iv) AU Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods (2014); (v) AU Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases (2001); (vi) SADC Protocol on Gender and Development; (vii) Dar es Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security (2004); (viii) SADC Strategy for SRHR in the SADC Region (2019 – 2030); (ix) SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) (2013) and Investment Plan (RAIP) (2017 – 2022); (x) SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS) (2015-2025); (xi) SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2015-2063; (xii) SADC Model Law on Elections; (xiii) SADC Model Law on Gender-Based Violence; (xiv) SADC Model Law on PFM; and (xv) SADC Model Law on HIV in Southern Africa; and (xvi) SADC Model Law on Eradicating Children Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage.

1.12 Recognised the achievements realised by SADC and its Member States in implementing the RISDP 2020-2030, as reflected in official SADC reports and other external sources, while also raising concerns on persistent challenges and impediments.

1.12.1 In health: Marked progress was **noted** in reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence, with cases dropping from 868,000 in 2010 to 413,600 in 2022, and all Member States developing national strategies for HIV prevention among key populations and adolescent girls and young women (AGYW). The SADC HIV Fund continues to aid the regional response, and SADC succeeded in establishing the SADC Regional Health Financing Hub. **Concern** was raised, however, that despite SADC member states' commitments to the Abuja Declaration to allocate at least 15% of the budget to the health sector, there are still gaps in healthcare financing, worsened by low expenditure due to persistent public finance system inefficiencies.

1.12.2 In agriculture: Set against the CAADP and Malabo Declaration target of 6% annual growth rate of agriculture value addition to gross domestic product (GDP), it was **recognised** that the implementation of the Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) surpassed targets. Additionally, agricultural investment grew by 2% by 2024. The 2023 Regional Synthesis Report, however, estimated that, **alarmingly**, regional food insecurity had worsened by 3%, rising from 15% in 2022 to 18% in 2023.

1.12.3 In education: Progress in more than 80% of Member States aligning their national qualifications frameworks with the SADC Qualifications Framework was **applauded**, although challenges in infrastructure and qualified teacher shortages persist. Budgetary allocations towards education also, **concerningly**, remain below the international benchmark target of 15-20%, and there is inadequate commitment to regional norms and standards for education information management systems.

1.12.4 In employment and youth: The drafting of the SADC Youth Empowerment Policy Framework was **recognised**. **Concern** was noted about continued youth unemployment, with the industrial employment share far below targets. SADC is not on track to meet the employment-related targets set in the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (SISR) (2015-2063). The industrial employment share has stagnated at around 11%, far below the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap 2030 target of 40%.

1.12.5 In climate change: SADC Secretariat's efforts to enhance Member States' capacity on climate change resilience under the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) were **recognised**. However, it was also noted with **concern** that SADC and Member States continue to face challenges in accessing fair climate change adaptation financing. It was further noted that climate-induced disasters have become more prevalent, exceeding states' capacity to respond and disproportionately affecting

marginalised communities especially young women and girls, exacerbating existing inequalities.

1.12.6 In gender: Member States efforts to address gender-based violence by implementing multi-sectoral approaches, and legislative and criminal justice responses, including the existence of gender-based violence laws in 14 countries³ was **recognised**. Despite the laudable publishing of progress reports on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and women's representation in decision-making, **concerns** were raised about gaps in implementation and compliance.

1.12.7 In trade: **Recognised progress** in regional trade initiatives, including the introduction of a simplified trade regime between Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania, while emphasising the need for SADC countries to better prepare for African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) implementation through capacity building, policy harmonisation, and infrastructure development to ensure widespread benefits across the region.

1.13 **Raised concern** with the persistent lack of progress reporting by Member States on their SADC commitments, despite the existence of a regional online monitoring and evaluation system and provision of training by the SADC Secretariat, while **acknowledging** the potential of the newly introduced balance scorecard to improve monitoring.

1.14 **Raised further concern** with continued low public and NSA awareness and understanding of SADC planning, implementation, and reporting processes at both the regional and national levels, while **recognising** the ongoing efforts of SADC Secretariat to provide timeous and full access to public information, and the potential of the SADC NSA Liaison Office to facilitate effective communication with NSAs.

1.15 While **recognising** that 12 SADC Member States have established SADC national coordination structures, only eight of these are functional SADC National Committees as required by the SADC Treaty. It was **noted** that SNCs are yet to be established in Madagascar, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.⁴

1.16 **Expressed alarm** at the slow progress towards the operationalisation of the Regional Development Fund, which includes the Agricultural Development Fund, with only nine Member States having signed the Agreement (only Angola has deposited an instrument of ratification), despite the urgent need for development finance across the region.

³ GBV laws are not yet in place in DRC and Tanzania.

⁴ Efforts are underway to support the establishment of SNCs in Madagascar, United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

1.17 Acknowledged that while the Dialogue focused on the social sectors of health, agriculture, and education; cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, climate change; and role of industrialisation and trade in financing development, the RISDP also covers many other vital areas of regional integration and that each of these issues intersect in how they are experienced by the people of the region.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The Dialogue, therefore, makes the following overall recommendations to strengthen the implementation of the RISDP in key thematic areas. We:

Health

2.1.1 Encourage Member States to implement comprehensive digital health monitoring tools and explore online social accountability mechanisms, particularly for sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as increase national health spending (to at least 15% of national budgets as per the Abuja Declaration).

2.1.2 Call for strengthening of SADC Special Committees for young people at regional level and national level to allow them to track national domestic budget allocation for health and SRHR.

2.1.3 Remind Member States to implement the commitments on SRHR for adolescents and young people as per the SADC SRHR Strategy (2019 - 2030) and strengthen reporting on the SADC SRHR Scorecard.

Agriculture

2.1.4 Remind SADC to prioritise the integration of agroecology and farmer-managed seed systems in the new SADC Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) 2025-2030, with a focus on financing (allocating at least 50% of agriculture budget for agroecology), as well as increased support for rural transformation focusing on climate proofed infrastructure (ICT, electricity, irrigation, rural roads) and services (education, health). Additional instruments, as committed to in the RISDP implementation plan, must also be implemented, including the Agricultural Development Fund, Irrigation Strategy, and Crop Value Chain, as well as the development of the Agricultural Extension Services Strategy, Rural Clustering, and Repository of Indigenous Seeds.

Education

2.1.5 Urge SADC Member States to increase the share of budgets spent on education to meet the higher end of recommended international benchmarks (20% of national budgets, 6% of GDP), and for these resources to be raised and utilised in ways that equitably address education inequalities.

2.1.6 Remind SADC Member states to take progressive policy legislative and financing measures to end the teacher shortage at all levels (from preschool to tertiary) and ensure that every child in the region is taught by qualified, motivated teachers with decent salaries and working conditions.

2.1.7 Encourage all member states to operationalise the SADC Qualification Framework (SADCQF), which benefits the youth in educational exchange and finding hassle-free employment.

Employment and youth:

2.1.8 Call for the development of a SADC-wide strategy on harnessing artificial intelligence and digital technologies for sustainable development, while addressing associated challenges such as youth unemployment.

2.1.9 Call for Member States to develop and implement policies that support young entrepreneurs and ensure cyber protection in the context of growing digital economies.

Climate change

2.1.10 Call for the establishment of a SADC climate action debt swap mechanism and a Regional Climate Adaptation Resilience Fund to address climate change challenges in the region.

2.1.11 Encourage SADC PF to develop a model law that will propel Member States to align their climate and environmental laws to best practices.

2.1.12 Urge Member States to take a proactive approach to disaster response, ensuring early warning and response mechanisms anchored in supporting community-led initiatives that prevent protection risks for vulnerable communities.

Gender

2.1.13 Promote transparency, inclusivity, and transformative change by increasing awareness of official regional and national monitoring tools, ensuring effective gender-responsive policy implementation, and involving communities and women's rights organisations in the monitoring and gathering of qualitative data to measure transformation in systems, structures, and power dynamics.

2.1.14 Operationalise gender-based violence (GBV) laws by **providing** mechanisms for redress of GBV and empower communities through legal assistance, ensuring affordable access to justice, and improving the quality of legal outcomes.

Trade

2.1.15 Encourage Member States to simplify trade rules for cross-border traders and medium/small-scale enterprises to harness the benefits of the AfCFTA.

2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

2.2.1 Call upon all SADC Member States to strengthen their SADC National Committees (SNCs), ensuring they are inclusive of diverse NSAs, well-resourced, and effectively linked to national planning and budgeting processes. Madagascar, United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa, and Zimbabwe are urged to establish SNCs with urgency.

2.2.2 Encourage SADC Secretariat to expedite the operationalisation of the Regional NSA Engagement Mechanism, including the online NSA accreditation system, and piloting and establishment of an inclusive, diverse, and representative NSA forum.

2.2.3 Urge SADC Secretariat and Member States to proactively facilitate timely access to publicly available information, to promote NSA awareness and understanding of SADC planning, implementation, and reporting processes at both the regional and national levels, including through the swift establishment of an NSA Liaison Office, and ensuring a comprehensive, consultative, and inclusive RISDP mid-term review process (starting in late 2024). We further **call** on the SADC Secretariat to engage NSAs fully in the RISDP mid-term review process, as well as the development of other agreements, including the anticipated RAIP 2025-2030.

2.2.4 Urge SADC Secretariat to facilitate the financing of sustainable development through operationalisation of regional mechanisms, such as the SADC Regional Development Fund and Agricultural Development Fund, while taking decisive action on capital flight, corruption, illicit financial flows and sustainable debt management to increase available funds for social services and development.

2.2.5 Implore all SADC Member States to heed the call by SADC to engage NSAs in decision-making by facilitating and broadening participation of citizens, including repealing all laws that threaten the existence of a diverse and pluralistic civil society.

2.2.6 Remind SADC Member States to timeously submit annual progress reports on their implementation of RISDP commitments and compliance with regional agreements, in accordance with the SADC reporting requirements, to ensure comprehensive information is available to inform regional decision making.

2.2.7 Recommend that all SADC Member States review their laws and, if necessary, amend them to be in line with the SADC PF Model Laws on GBV and PFM. Such reviews should be conducted using recently developed model law scorecards.

2.2.8 We express our profound appreciation to all our donors for their commitment to strengthening social accountability in the SADC region, in particular the regional

office of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for their support of this Dialogue.

Finally, this Communiqué is hereby submitted to the SADC Secretariat, SADC Parliamentary Forum, as well as to each SADC Member State through their National Contact Points.

NSAs at regional level and in each Member State are also encouraged to make use of this Communiqué and its recommendations in their own engagements.

Issued on 15th August 2024 in Harare, Zimbabwe. For more information, please contact psaalliance@actionaid.org.