

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

A Regional Dialogue for  
Non-State Actors (NSAs) on the  
**SADC RISDP 2020-30 and its  
draft Implementation Plan**

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

Concept Note

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## Background

The Southern African Development Community (SADC)'s Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020 to 2030, and its Vision 2050 were approved at the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit in August 2020. The SADC Council of Ministers is due to adopt the RISDP Implementation Plan before August 2021, which will lay out the various actions to be taken by SADC and its member states. The 10-year regional strategy – which envisions “a peaceful, inclusive, middle to high income industrialised region, where all citizens enjoy sustainable economic well-being, justice and freedom” – comes online amid the Covid-19 pandemic, placing before the region both additional hurdles as well as opportunities.

As predicted for the rest of the world, a significant recession is likely to hit the SADC region as it faces the economic cost of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Diversion of budgets and personnel to respond to the crisis, as well as the impact of the restrictions themselves, has affected the delivery of public services in many sectors. The media has already reported widely on allegations of and investigations into corruption and misuse of public funds related to emergency public procurement.

The economic challenges being experienced by many countries in the region are being further deepened by the global downturn caused by Covid-19. Foreign direct investment in Africa, which had experienced a decline in 2019, contracted further in 2020 with new announcements down by 56%.<sup>[1]</sup> Countries heavily burdened by debt such as Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe are warning of the pandemic's potential to push them further into default, debt crisis and resultant broader financial collapse. The impact of these multi-layered crises will be felt not only now, but will be long-lasting, necessitating national austerity budgets for many years to come.

Weak public health systems have been compromised as already meagre resources have been redirected to curbing the pandemic. The diversion of human resources, infrastructure and commodities has meant that basic services, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, have been scaled down and access by those who need them has been limited.

The gendered nature and impact of Covid-19 has increased the vulnerability of women and girls and exacerbated gender-based violence (GBV). According to an UNFPA report, “The pandemic and measures put in place by governments to halt its spread have impacted women, men, girls and boys differently in the region. For instance, we have seen a significant increase in reports of gender-based violence, giving rise to the GBV ‘shadow pandemic’, while anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of child marriages and other harmful practices against girls, as well as teen pregnancies, has risen”. <sup>[3]</sup>



The pandemic comes on the heels of 2019's Cyclones Idai and Kenneth, which exposed the region's lack of disaster preparedness. Ongoing national conflicts, including political tensions in multiple countries and insurgency in Mozambique, worsen the region's vulnerability. The effects of climate change – persistent drought, flooding and pests – compounded by economic challenges, poverty, conflict and gaps in social accountability, have all contributed to food insecurity. The devastating impact of climate challenges move from affecting agriculture and food security to impacting healthcare across the SADC region. Growing evidence proves that climate change issues are not gender neutral; however, there remain considerable gaps in gender-disaggregated data and gender analyses in this space. [4]

Lockdown restrictions have affected both formal and informal employment, resulting in decreased incomes for many households, particularly in urban areas.[4] A recent report by the UNDP highlights that the pandemic has directly reduced average household income and increased poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. [5] These disturbances have created household instability and, in turn, have also contributed to a rise in GBV.

Southern SADC's strategic goals articulated in the RISDP 2020 - 2030, as well as those contained in global and continental frameworks to which it is aligned – such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The pandemic, however, also offers opportunities for SADC and its member states to build back better and create more resilient, inclusive and socially accountable nations and communities in the wake of the disaster.

How the RISDP, through its implementation plan, is articulated in national policies and state programmes will determine whether and to what extent its goals are realised. SADC member states have a responsibility to define, establish and finance policies and programmes which prioritise and protect the most vulnerable and, ultimately, ensure all their people benefit from sustained social and economic well-being, justice and freedom. SADC has highlighted in the RISDP the importance of engaging and forming strategic partnerships with non-state actors (NSAs) to ensure the successful implementation of regional policies and programmes. To ensure social accountability in the roll out of the RISDP, member states must explain its objectives and contents to their people and involve them in the development, implementation and assessment of associated national and local level initiatives.



## The SADC RISDP 2020-2030

The SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Plan (RISDP) 2020-30 is informed by the SADC Vision 2050. The RISDP covers strategic priority areas, namely:

The Foundation: Peace, Security, and Good Governance – Enhancement of conflict prevention, management, and resolution mechanisms, with an effective early warning system capable of tracking and monitoring political, security and socio-economic threats.

Pillar I: Industrial Development and Market Integration – Promotion of an industrialised regional economy that sustainably utilises its natural resources. The sectors of agro-processing, mineral beneficiation and pharmaceuticals are prioritised, alongside enhancing regional technological capability and capacity through science technology and innovation. Transformation of the agricultural sector to promote sustainable management of the environment and its natural resources, while ensuring productivity and improved market access for agro products.

Pillar II: Infrastructure Development in support of Regional Integration – Interconnected, integrated, and quality seamless infrastructure and networks, including cross-border infrastructure that facilitates the movement of people, goods, services and knowledge. The prioritisation of harmonised policies, strategies and initiatives in support of cross-border infrastructure and services.

Pillar III: Social and Human Capital Development – Achievement of socio-economic development in a human-centred, inclusive and sustainable manner. Creation of an enabling environment by fostering a link between economic growth and human wellbeing through holistic interventions that leave no one behind and end poverty. Development of modern and well-resourced health systems that are accessible and responsive in addressing the burden of disease and emergencies.

Cross-cutting issues: Gender, Youth, Environment and Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management – Ensuring the formulation, deliberation, adoption and implementation of regional protocols, strategies, policies and programmes, underpinned by critical existing instruments, are undertaken in an inclusive manner.

## A Regional Dialogue for Non-State Actors (NSAs)

The regional NSA dialogue is being held under the theme of Building Back Better – Ensuring Social Accountability in Southern Africa's Development. The event will raise awareness about the commitments contained in the SADC RISDP 2020-2030 and its draft Implementation Plan, 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 public services. Following the regional dialogue, the co-convening organisations will support NSAs to adapt and share the recommendations with relevant government officials (ie. SADC National Contact Points) to ensure national RISDP implementation plans reflect the needs and priorities of the people.



The co-conveners of the regional dialogue include: Southern Africa Trust, Economic Justice Network (EJN) of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN), Southern Africa Coordination Council (SATUCC), GenderLinks, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Alliance (a consortium of organisations including ActionAid International (AAI), Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) of Rhodes University, Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) and SAfAIDS).

## Objectives

- Raise awareness among non-state actors (NSAs) of the adopted SADC Vision 2050, and the SADC RISDP 2020-2030 and its draft Implementation Plan.
- Convene space for NSAs to exchange ideas on the implementation of the RISDP, in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and post-pandemic recovery.
- Support NSAs to develop recommendations and actively engage their governments to inform national RISDP implementation plans, with a focus on ensuring the SADC region can build back better through strengthening resilience, social accountability and gender responsiveness.

**Dates:** 29-30 June 2021

**Venue:** Virtual – Zoom sessions

## Outputs

- Meeting communiqué
- Meeting report
- Policy briefs, either shared during the dialogue or developed afterwards, to inform national RISDP implementation plans.

## Participants

- Regional and national civil society organisations
- Regional and national smallholder farmers associations
- Regional and national private sector associations, including chambers of commerce
- Regional and national workers' organisations
- Regional and national level media outlets
- SADC Secretariat
- SADC National Contact Points
- SADC Parliamentary Forum



[1] Qiang, Christine Zhenwei. 'The Road to Recovery in Sub-Saharan Africa: Capitalizing on transformative opportunities from shifting FDI patterns.' World Bank Blogs. 27 May 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/road-recovery-sub-saharan-africa-capitalizing-transformative-opportunities-shifting-fdi>

[2] The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19. UNWOMEN. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>

[3] The Impact of COVID-19 on women and men. UN Women and UNFPA, East and Southern Africa Regional Offices. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/abridged\\_-\\_impact\\_of\\_covid-19\\_on\\_gender\\_equality\\_and\\_women\\_empowerment\\_in\\_east\\_and\\_southern\\_africa.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/abridged_-_impact_of_covid-19_on_gender_equality_and_women_empowerment_in_east_and_southern_africa.pdf)

[4] The Link between Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights - An Evidence Review. Women Deliver. January 2021. <https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Climate-Change-Report-1.pdf>

[5] Key message update - Southern Africa Food Security Outlook, March to September 2021. FEWS NET. 31 March 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/southern-africa-food-security-outlook-march-september-2021>

[6] Long-Term Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in African Contexts. UNDP. 11 March 2021. <https://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/-long-term-socio-economic-impacts-of-covid-19-in-african-context.html>