



Fellowship of Christian
Councils in Southern Africa



FINAL CONCEPT NOTE

11th Southern Africa Civil Society Forum

Hosted in Gaborone Botswana

11th - 14th August 2015

THEME

TOGETHER MAKING SADC BETTER :-

**ACHIEVING JUSTICE, PEACE & EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR
ALL**

A RE IKAGENG SESHA! LET US RENEW OURSELVES!

Introduction

The Southern Africa Civil Society Forum (CSF) will be hosted for the 11th consecutive year in Gaborone, Botswana. The CSF is a platform for civil society to dialogue and reflect on issues affecting the regional community, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), and the constituencies, organisations and movements of civil society at regional and national level.

The CSF has been held since 2005 under different themes relevant to the emerging issues and key perspectives, which are identified by stakeholders to be of particular importance for civil society.

The Forum has been convened by the Regional Apex Alliance, i.e. Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA); Southern Africa Trade Unions Coordinating Council (SATUCC) and SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO). As co-conveners of the CSF, the Regional Apex Alliance works with relevant networks and organisations at the regional level to receive input and contributions as the key themes and issues for deliberation.

The 11th CSF follows in the tradition and practice of the previous forums which have defined themselves as creative, reflective and action-orientated spaces for the broad spectrum of civil society formations in the region, including faith-based organisations, trade unions, campaigns, special interest groups, progressive academics and local peoples formations and peoples movements in Southern Africa. This tradition, which participants are rightly proud of, has over the years developed distinct value-adding dimensions that are unique, including that:

- The CSF builds consensus and unity on the burning issues facing CSO in the region and addresses itself in particular to the challenges and opportunities facing regional integration.
- The CSF contributes towards a common and shared plan of action on agreed priorities for CSO in Southern Africa.
- The CSF benchmarks best practice for CSO and fosters the highest standards of efficiency, sustainability and ethical conduct amongst participating organisations.
- The CSF fosters solidarity and unity amongst the diverse communities of interest and facilitates cross-sectoral unity and understanding amongst CSO.
- The CSF holds the organisations of civil society in Southern Africa accountable for the mutual and agreed actions and inculcates a culture of transparency in the affairs of CSO in Southern Africa.

At the same time it is a space for civil society to:

- Analyze, reflect and dialogue on the critical issues facing the region;
- Contribute to and create synergy with the agenda of SADC;
- Impact on the Summit of Heads of State and Governments;
- Plan and develop independent actions and priorities for regional civil society for the coming year, including identifying key campaigns, movement building and areas of collaboration.

The 11th CSF will be a turning point in the history of civil society in the region for a number of reasons. Firstly the co-conveners recognize that the incoming Chairperson of SADC, the government of the Republic of Botswana, was a leading member of the Frontline State, the precursor to SADC and has played host to the SADC Secretariat since its inception. In many ways, this Summit marks a return for SADC to its institutional and political birthplace. A critical reflection of the SADC as a Regional Economic Community is necessary as Member States prepare to locate their role in the AU Agenda 2063 as well as the SADC Vision 2050.

In short, the implications of these developments are that both the short-term trajectory of SADC, as contained and reflected in the reprioritized RISDP, as well as the long term vision of SADC is currently being defined. Civil society's contribution to these processes is essential for its success.

In confronting its many and varied challenges SADC is also addressing key programmatic and institutional reforms. These include:

- The industrialization roadmap currently being developed;

- The regional agricultural policy, implementation framework and agricultural development fund;
- The prioritization of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2015 - 2020);
- The review of the Gender and Development Protocol;
- The role out of the Regional Poverty Observatory and the development of the SADC definition of poverty, multi-dimensional poverty indicators and the SADC Poverty Status Report;
- The engagement with and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- The development of regional responses to Climate Change and common positions on the UNFCCC COP21;
- The review of the SADC Guidelines on Elections; and
- The guidelines and agreed modalities for engagement with non-state actors.

These reflect the ongoing challenges confronted by SADC as an intergovernmental body as well as the critical hurdles faced by the regions citizens. Industrialization, agricultural and agrarian reform, climate change, gender justice and poverty reduction are inter-linked challenges which necessitate coherent and well considered responses from national governments and the regional community. The nexus between governance reform and democratization as meaningful participation by people within a legally guaranteed framework with recourse to the courts and institutions of justice is well established as a critical precondition for sustainable socio-economic development.

Rationale of the 11th CSF

How SADC responds to these challenges is in many ways dependent on the influence and impact non-state actors can have on SADC as independent actors. Critical to exercising influence and exerting pressure, which results in positive outcomes, requires a greater awareness and capacity on the part of non-state actors, particularly civil society formations.

In preparing for the 11th CSF the Regional and National Steering Committees believe a deeper and more critical reflection of the role of non-state actors in the workings of SADC, the efficacy of the Civil Society Forum and the mechanisms and modalities for effective engagement must constitute a central plank of its work. Having hosted the CSF for 11 consecutive years, and having resolved at the 10th CSF to establish clear accountability and monitoring mechanism for the decisions and declarations of the CSF, this year will review our collective impact and make critical determinations as to the ongoing role of the Civil Society Forum itself.

While recognizing that the CSF, which is held alongside the SADC Heads of State & Government Summit (HOSG), is a vital space to foster and enhance civil society capacity to influence the official SADC processes by creating a bridge between the official and governmental regional leadership and civil society, its overall impact must be improved by simplifying the amount issues dealt with and unifying civil society in time-bound actions for more defined outcomes. For this reason the 11th CSF will also work very close and share common spaces with the Peoples Summit, Peoples Dialogue and Gender Summit – all

related movement operating at the national and regional level seeking positive change and improvement in SADC and its Member States.

The 11th CSF is critical for mobilization of civil society in the region to confront and overcome the real challenges facing the citizens and people of the region. The region, though largely peaceful, experience a range of development and governance obstacles which prevent the full realization of the SADC Treaty and hamper peoples efforts at achieving economic and human security for themselves and their children. Some of these issues, which the CSF will address, include:

- Xenophobia/Afro-phobia;
- Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, job creation and economic activity;
- Free movement of people ;
- Access to water;
- Rights of Migrant Workers;
- Corruption;
- Rights of LGBTI community;
- Land grabs and agrarian reform;
- Social protection and security;
- Access to quality public services.

The CSF will attempt to focus on these key identified issues, without excluding any sector or constituency in its deliberations. Many and varied vulnerabilities are experienced by communities and all these concerns and points of action must also be integrated in the 11th CSF.

Objectives of the 11th Civil Society Forum

It is a necessary condition of peace; justice and sustainable development that people are active change agents and role-players. The seeming disconnect between citizens and states, let alone people and SADC as a multi-lateral inter-governmental institution must be understood and appropriately addressed. SADC, while it is a product of governments, is an institution of all citizens, stakeholders and actors in the region. As citizens and civil society organisations we are therefore also going to carefully review and assess our own role, our own accountability levels and mechanisms for achieving people-centred development.

It is against this that the 11th CSF aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To amplify the voice of a unified civil society towards the realisation of the SADC agenda on regional integration;
2. To build consensus on issues affecting the region and develop concrete strategies for moving forward;

3. To foster the spirit of solidarity among the people of the region and provide an information sharing platform for civil society working in different areas of regional development;
4. To nurture the interface between civil society, SADC institutions and political leadership in the SADC region in order to foster common appreciation of our challenges as a region and continent;

The 11th CSF will deal with the following core issue in plenary session:

- a) Review the impact of non-state actors and define the role of Civil Society in Revisioning SADC-CNGO – including the role of the CSF itself, the proposed engagement mechanism with SADC and linkages between the local, national and regional level
- b) Address the root causes – governance, socio-economic, cultural, etc – contributing to xenophobia in Southern Africa and determine a common plan of action
- c) Develop a common and rights based approach towards the LGBTI community

The key thematic sessions for the 11th CSF are:

- i) Governance & Accountability
 - Anti-corruption;
 - Promoting accountable quality service delivery
 - Promoting effective and transparent governance of the private sector
- ii) Inclusive & Sustainable Development
 - Social protection meeting peoples needs;
 - Promoting effective & sustainable livelihoods;
 - Promoting migration and free movement of persons
- iii) Rights & Justice for All
 - Gender justice & equity
 - Tax Justice
 - Climate, food & land Justice

A series of side-events and parrellal sessions have thus far been proposed by organisations:

- 1) Childrens Rights
- 2) The Rights of Elderly Persons
- 3) Indigenous Persons
- 4) NGO Sustainability

- 5) Climate Justice – Womens Justice
- 6) Extractive Industries
- 7) Regional Anti-Corruption Team of Experts side event
- 8) Media & Digital Freedom

The 11th CSF will be co-ordinated in tandem to key events which will also be hosted by civil society during the time of the Summit, namely:

- The Peoples Summit
- The Gender Summit

The attached co-ordination mechanism has also been agreed and improved to enhance the efficacy of implementation towards and beyond the 11th CSF.

The Road map to the 11th Civil Society Forum

The 11th CSF will be held between 10 – 17th August 2015 in Gaborone, Botswana . Exact dates will be determined in consultation with partners and the Government of Botswana as host of the official HOSG.

Participation

In order to facilitate the engagement with partners and networks, in addition to the current Regional and National Steering Committee, the following networks will be invited to participate:

1. SADC Business Community (ASCCI)
2. Traditional Leaders (Contralesa)
3. Disability Sector (SAFOD)
4. Indigenous Persons (WIMSA)
5. Cross boarder Traders (SACBTA)
6. The elderly (HelpAge)
7. Children’s Rights sector (CRNSA)
8. LGBTI sector
9. Political parties
10. The Government of Botswana
11. SADC Secretariat
12. The SADC Parliamentary Forum
13. The SADC Electoral Support Network
14. Southern African Research & Documentation Centre
15. The African Union & related institutions
16. The Southern African Gender & Development Protocol Alliance (Gender Alliance)

17. Small Scale Farmers & Pastoralists, particularly women farmers (ESAFF/Rural Womens Assembly)
18. Land, food & climate justice sector (Southern African Food & Climate Justice Coalition)
19. The Southern African Social Protection Network
20. The Southern African Peoples Summit
21. In addition, we will invite other regions of the African union, such as East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, including continental Labour and Faith-based to amplify and consolidate coordinated engagement at regional and continental levels.

Process Leading to the Forum

Several processes will culminate in the civil society forum:

1. **Steering Committee Meeting:** A Steering Committee to prepare for the forum and lay a concrete foundation for collaboration among apex organisations and some regional thematic organisations especially in the content of the forum.
2. **National Steering Committee established in Botswana** as a host country to ensure local logistical and strategic planning and execution of key strategic priority plans. These include on consultative (national preparatory) meeting to develop key local civil society positions as their contribution towards the Civil society Forum.
3. **Pre-forum strategy and programme** Engagement with a variety of SADC Member States and Secretariat, including host government Botswana, SADC Parliamentary Forum, Political parties, SADC business forum to consult and discuss appropriate strategies and approaches towards the forum, including push towards institutionalizing and recognizing the strategic role of civil society participation and involvement in SADC processes.
4. **Hold Civil Society Forum:** The Forum will be held in Gaborone, Botswana in August 2015. The consensus from civil society will be fed into SADC ministerial and technical processes by a select advocacy team of civil society delegates
5. **Organised and coordinated advocacy during the Summit, where a delegation from the Forum will be tasked to engage effectively with the Summit processes.**
6. **Post Forum review meeting:** A post forum meeting will be held in September to evaluate the forum and its processes. This evaluation will inform future action for civil society regarding implementation of the resolutions from the forum.

Conclusion

The 11th CSF will provide a dynamic and active space for civil society in Botswana and from the entire SADC region to collectively reflect and plan for coming year. The 11th CSF will also provide an engagement platform for learning and knowledge sharing across the various sectors of civil society.

The main objective of the 11th CSF will be to build awareness and common action on a burning issue in the region, namely xenophobia. It will also address the key opportunities and challenges in respect of justice for the LGBTI community, women and small scale producers, enabling movement building and promoting awareness of the rights of these communities.

Finally the 11th CSF will enable more dynamic engagement with SADC and its institutions, building on the experiences of the past and innovating civil society practice post-2015 and beyond. The future mechanism, spaces and forms of engagement with SADC will be shaped through the deliberations and decisions of the 11th CSF, making conscious and deliberate decisions on the collective way forward for 2015 and beyond.

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