

# Southern Africa

## Regional perspectives for the White Paper on Peacebuilding

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### Introduction

In July 2014, Southern Africa is less violent than any other region on the African continent. With the exception of the protracted conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the recent low-intensity, localised conflict in Mozambique, the region has generally been stable. As such, unlike other regions in Africa, the major threats to Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries are principally from sources other than widespread civil conflict. Despite this, these countries are highly vulnerable to conflict as a result of deep-seated structural issues, governance challenges and a lack of national political consensus on the strategic direction of certain countries in areas ranging from economic policy to the governance agenda. However, the realities and characteristics of SADC countries vary and different context-specific factors pose ongoing risks to peace. Against this backdrop, four main typologies of countries can be identified in the region, as discussed below.

The first category of countries is made up of those in prolonged political crisis. The DRC best illustrates this as a country caught in vicious cycles of violence and insecurity. The DRC government lacks the political will to address the root causes of instability, particularly in its eastern territories; community-level grievances, such as those around land resource management, remain unheeded; and recidivism among armed groups threatens ongoing peace talks.

A second category comprises countries in post-conflict or political transitions. This includes Madagascar, with a freshly concluded democratic transition that faces an uncertain future because of the country's political history of coups and insecurity. Mozambique, where a long-term, stagnant 'post-conflict' context prevails, falls into this category as a country unable to fully exit from post-conflict circumstances. It also faces the threat of insecurity ahead of its presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2014. Angola, Africa's second-largest oil producer, has similar post-conflict statebuilding challenges.

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is a joint project of four institutions:



The country is still defined as 'failed but successful', against the backdrop of good economic performance entrenched in a culture of corruption and government opaqueness.

The third group of countries is made up of those with deteriorating governance or rising conflict risk. This includes donor-dependent Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique, where both political will and institutional capacity pose serious challenges to development. Lesotho, for instance, has been hamstrung by an ineffective governing coalition for the last two years that is currently on the brink of collapse.

The fourth category comprises those countries going through a gradual process of reform. These include Tanzania, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and the Seychelles. These countries exhibit high levels of regime legitimacy, but are variously challenged by low government effectiveness and its associated grievances among the population.

Southern Africa is also one of the most unequal regions on the planet. Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Angola are all counted among the world's top 12 most unequal countries as measured by the Gini coefficient. In South Africa, the region's economic giant, inequality and the legacy of apartheid have resulted in high levels of violent crime and increasing levels of violent protest. Coupled with large populations of young unemployed people, these countries are further challenged by a number of socio-economic problems, including: mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS; poverty alleviation, particularly where linear approaches in the form of social grants (particularly in Namibia and South Africa) are failing; and absorbing the negative impacts of resource booms to service delivery (in countries such as Angola and Mozambique).<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the region's rich natural resource endowments, SADC countries also grapple with the resource curse. Despite fomenting rapid economic growth in many countries in the region, natural resource abundance has also fostered various governance challenges, including corruption, criminality and income inequality, particularly in South Africa. The latter presents a challenging case of a post-resource-fuelled economy struggling to diversify and strike a balance between mining industry viability and labour market stability. This is illustrated in particular by the vicious cycle of labour unrest in the past two years.<sup>2</sup> The DRC and Angola are two key examples of the effects of the resource curse in the region, reflected in the insularity of the ruling elite, opaque decision-making processes and widespread corruption. Newly resource-rich countries like Mozambique face the daunting and pressing task of building transparent institutions that manage their resource wealth better and meet the demands of local populations. Similarly, the debate about the management of natural resources in Tanzania is increasingly raising important questions about the nature and stability of the union between the country's mainland and Zanzibar. This is one issue that, if not well managed, could cause instability in the country.

Another important element of the region's political equation is that, owing to the legacy of the liberation wars, former liberation movements that became political parties rule a large number of Southern African countries. Although this has allowed a measure of continuity in political organisation, the resulting problem has been an entrenchment of dominant parties that have

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<sup>1</sup> As discussed in D. Motsamai and J. Cilliers, 'Challenges and prospects for democratic governance in Southern Africa', 4 October 2013. See:

<http://isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=170048> (accessed 30 April 2014).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of labour sector volatility and the challenges faced by the mining industry in South Africa, see Deloitte & Touche, *Tough choices facing the South African mining industry*, (Johannesburg: Deloitte & Touche, 2013).

largely weakened political opposition and stunted the maturation of political pluralism. The dominant parties – the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) in Angola; FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) in Mozambique; SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) in Namibia; the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa; and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) – have not comprehensively adapted to the demands of competitive politics internally.<sup>3</sup> In the states that these dominant parties rule, democratic governance has regressed because of a weakening of the effectiveness of institutional checks and balances, often against the backdrop of weak and sometimes ineffective opposition parties. Where ruling parties have maintained strong links to state institutions, opposition parties have faced hurdles in gaining political traction. While splinter groups have emerged in some of the ruling parties, such divisions have not made much difference to ruling parties' hegemonic control. This situation underlines the importance of building effective, accountable and participatory states that are able to manage political change, foster equitable socioeconomic development, and institutionalise a culture of government effectiveness in both their political and economic administrations.

## Challenges to building peace in Southern Africa

Sustained commitment to reform is generally less advanced in most SADC countries. This is largely attributable to the following factors:

**Weak statebuilding processes.** In most SADC countries, state capacity to address common sources of insecurity such as political and economic marginalisation has remained fairly modest and is reflected in growing poverty, underdevelopment, youth alienation, class differentiation, and ethno-regional and racial cleavages. Statebuilding, which relies on political leadership that does not consider national institutions and resources as enclaves for personal enrichment, is arguably not manifest in SADC. The state-formation process is thus distinctly incomplete and where progress has been made in the area of institution building, existing institutions are weak and overshadowed by strong personalities. Corruption – one of the major drivers of weak state capacity – is pervasive in most SADC countries, although countries such as Botswana, the Seychelles and Namibia are recorded better than their peers in this regard.<sup>4</sup>

**Low government effectiveness.** Government effectiveness is measured by the capacity and ability of administrative institutions to implement policies crafted by the legislative and executive branches of government. SADC member states have continually faced capacity deficits in their administrative institutions as a result of weak institutions, inadequate investment in education and low professionalism due to poor recruitment practices that are not based on merit. Bureaucratic constraints are further magnified by weak legislatures, strong executives with overbearing leaders, weakened opposition, and the ability of ruling parties to command significant policy discretion.

**Weak links between (democratic) electoral events and better governance.** The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority by elected governments has mostly resulted in damage to democratic institutions and the centralisation of power in SADC countries. Notwithstanding the regular holding of elections, more recently in Zambia (2011), the DRC

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<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the historical and current trajectories of liberation movements-cum-ruling-parties in SADC, see R. Southall, *Liberation movements in power: party and state in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> See also KPMG South Africa, *Unpacking anti-corruption in Southern Africa*, 17 September 2009. See <http://www.sablog.kpmg.co.za/2013/09/unpacking-anti-corruption-in-southern-africa> (accessed 25 April 2014).

(2011), Mozambique (2009), Lesotho (2012), Angola (2012), Swaziland (2013), South Africa (2014) and Zimbabwe (2008 and 2013), this situation has persisted. This state of affairs can generally be attributed to the existence of dominant parties and weak political opposition in the region. Promises of better governance by newly elected governments in the above countries have not been kept, as reflected in these countries' socioeconomic profiles that continue to be characterised by very limited progress in terms of the Human Development Index, the composite indicator of life expectancy, education attainment and income indices published annually by the United Nations Development Programme.

**Decline of personal safety and the rule of law.**<sup>5</sup> The 2013 Mo Ibrahim report noted the decline of personal safety and the rule of law in Southern African countries.<sup>6</sup> The report suggests that even though the region has few regional conflicts, it might experience an increase in domestic and social unrest due to the deterioration of justice and safety. This is largely a factor of rising crime trends, which are also the result of historical factors and high youth unemployment.

**Inefficient natural resource management.** The significance of 'new' sources of conflict, such as land, forests, tourism and marine resources, is on the rise in the SADC region. This includes the ongoing dispute between Malawi and Tanzania about border demarcation in Lake Malawi; the management of the shared water resources of the Zambezi river system, which affects eight countries (Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe); and secessionism involving land-related disputes in Zambia, Tanzania and Namibia.

**Socioeconomic marginalisation.** This is both a cause and consequence of fragility and bad governance. In all SADC countries, skewed resource allocation and distribution have widened the gap between political elites and the masses, while increasing the political disempowerment of the majority of the populations. The high unemployment rate in SADC has created a growing concern that in conjunction with high levels of poverty and inequality, these pressures will translate into economic grievance - related social unrest and political insecurity.

**Food insecurity.** This continues to be a chronic problem, particularly in Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland. The July 2013 *SADC Food Security Update* reported that the regional vulnerability assessment showed an increase in the number of people that are food insecure, rising from 12 million in 2012 to 14 million in one year.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that 95 million people in SADC are undernourished, with the largest numbers being in the DRC, Madagascar, Zambia, Angola and Mozambique. The problem of food insecurity is a product of a number of complex factors that include: decades of lack of investment in the agricultural sector; unfair trade practices; high levels of post-harvest losses; poor governance; the lack of access to productive resources such as land and water; the deterioration of rural infrastructure; unsustainable land management practices; social inequalities (gender, ethnic

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<sup>5</sup> The rule of law is a principle intended to be a safeguard against arbitrary governance by insisting that government authority is legitimately exercised only in accordance with written, publicly disclosed laws that are adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedures.

<sup>6</sup> The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance is a composite annual barometer assessing African countries' development and governance progress. It scores and ranks countries' performance in terms of four main categories: safety and the rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunities and human development. For the 2013 report, see Mo Ibrahim Foundation, *2013 Ibrahim Index of African Governance – Summary*, 2013. See: [http://www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/2013\\_Ibrahim\\_Index\\_of\\_African\\_Governance](http://www.wikiprogress.org/index.php/2013_Ibrahim_Index_of_African_Governance) (accessed 25 April 2013).

<sup>7</sup> See, SADC (Southern African Development Community), *SADC Food Security Early Warning System Update*, 1 (July 2013).

and others); and structural inadequacies in the agricultural and macroeconomic policy frameworks, among others.

The regional response to tackle these challenges by the SADC Secretariat has been hampered by a lack of traction on policy implementation, despite progress in the adoption of policy frameworks. Two such policy frameworks – the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and the Strategic Indicative Plan of the Organ (SIPO) – act as the main anchors for regional peacebuilding in the secretariat.<sup>8</sup> The RISDP is the socioeconomic development ‘interventionist’ framework for SADC member states. It strongly emphasises tackling the challenges of uneven development among countries, ubiquitous poverty and inequality, among other issues. The SIPO, on the other hand, is SADC’s political and security counterpart directed at promoting good governance and democracy in the organisation’s member states. Both the SIPO and RISDP serve as relatively comprehensive frameworks for strengthening governance and development in the region. However, the implementation of these frameworks lags in SADC member states – it is uneven in some cases and non-existent in others. The SIPO – SADC’s political governance framework – is probably the least implemented by member states, since it impinges more directly on domestic politics, which is the domain of which member states are most protective. In the broader scheme of human security in the region, the inadequate implementation of both the SIPO and RISDP leads to failures in the regional response to human security challenges.

## **Opportunities for building peace in Southern Africa**

Political and governance analysis strongly shapes peacebuilding programmes. The challenge to development organisations and those involved in peacebuilding in any environment is to sufficiently capture key aspects of state vulnerability that adequately reflect underlying ‘cultures of power’ (i.e. informal power hierarchies) and the ‘rules of the game’. Highlighting the key objectives of their interventions is related to such analyses. Furthermore, if the engagement is to address both a lack of political will and a lack of capacity, a clearer understanding of the reasons for state failure or vulnerability is needed, which will vary from country to country. Furthermore, there is growing recognition of the need to understand the political incentives and institutions that affect the prospects for reform. These interventions ideally seek to directly address the underlying causes of conflict and fragility, support inclusive political settlements, help build state capacity for service delivery, and assist states to meet the expectations of marginalised groups, including women and children.

However, opportunities for supporting government capacity in peacebuilding activities hinge on the openness to the engagement of the governments in question. As discussed, the majority of SADC member states have strong executives and weak parliaments. Some have hobbled parliamentary capacity and are completely unable to change undemocratic *status quo*. This dynamic replicates itself at the SADC policy and institutional levels. For instance, SADC’s decision-making processes are centralised in its annual Summits of Heads of State, to which its security and political governance institution – the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation – is also accountable. As such, the predominance of heads of state in SADC has reinforced positions aimed at preserving national sovereignty. Additionally, the principle of solidarity that guided Southern Africa’s national liberation struggles has placed a premium on

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<sup>8</sup> See SADC (Southern African Development Community), Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (2003 & 2008) and SADC Strategic Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (2010).

the autonomy of states rather than using SADC instruments for genuine peer review. Historical loyalties forged among national liberation movements, which have become ruling parties in countries across the sub-region, including in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Angola and Mozambique, can often also lead to empathetic diplomatic postures instead of criticism where it is warranted. Where there are disagreements between these states, they are resolved informally on the sidelines of SADC meetings rather than in the sub-regional body's open sessions, which consequently radically reduces the SADC's governance oversight role.

At the SADC institutional level, many problems persist with regard to the financial and human resources capacity of the secretariat. The difficult relationships the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation has with its donors – referred to as international cooperating partners (ICPs) – when it comes to the financing of political and security initiatives aimed at strengthening peacebuilding in the region are particularly sensitive. Normally, such ICP funding is equated with foreign interference in the domestic affairs of SADC states, despite the SADC Organ being the interlocutor of the relationship. The sensitivity over ICP partnerships is also linked to the foreign policy posture of the particular SADC member state that holds the rotating chairmanship of the institution. This may therefore be a stronger factor with Zimbabwe's chairing of the SADC institution for a year from August 2014.

## **Required support for building peace and the role of the UN**

**Nurturing relevant partnerships within SADC.** While SADC can be labelled as a 'difficult' partner in terms of the peace and security affairs of its member states, ways should be sought to strengthen the SADC Secretariat's framework for enhancing member states' peacebuilding capacities. This remains a constant challenge. The areas of specific importance include the following:<sup>9</sup>

- *Early warning.* Arguably, SADC's early warning culture is underdeveloped, secretive, and tainted by an overriding security and intelligence posture. There is therefore the urgent need for the region to develop a non-military framework for a comprehensive early warning system of the kind currently operated by the Economic Community of West African States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. This is because non-military early warning issues generally focus on initiatives best suited to peacebuilding purposes. Possible cross-cutting themes that might be suitable for a non-military SADC early warning mechanism are in the areas of governance and public administration, disaster-risk minimisation, food security and climate-change impacts. A regional early warning mechanism should also encourage NGOs based in member states to support these mechanisms. Ways should also be sought to involve NGOs in policy development and response processes by virtue of the fact that they are most directly affected by government actions.
- *Elections and democratic governance.* The SADC Secretariat has an under-profiled institution called the Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) established to promote common values in election management, democracy, good governance and the observance of human rights in the region. SEAC's role in promoting good democratic governance during electoral cycles is embryonic, however, as demonstrated by its limited impact in the five

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<sup>9</sup> These are old challenges, as discussed in L. Giuffrida and H. Müller-Glodde, 'Strengthening SADC institutional structures: capacity development is the key to the SADC Secretariat's effectiveness', *Monitoring Regional Integration in Southern Africa Yearbook 2008*, 2008, <http://www.tralac.org/publications/article/4639-monitoring-regional-integration-in-southern-africa-yearbook-2008.html> (accessed 25 April 2014).

SADC member states' elections in 2014.<sup>10</sup> SEAC's interface with civil society organisations could also be improved. Indeed, the improved institutionalisation and implementation of SADC election codes as advocated by SEAC, and the treatment of civil society as a partner in the democratisation process before and after elections, could assist significantly with the strengthening of election-linked democracy.

- *Public administration and good governance.* In addition to the above, the interaction of the SADC Secretariat with member states should foster institutional and policy development that promotes economic growth, the effective management of resource, institution building and the rule of law in member states. This dynamic is not yet manifest.

**Working with in-country institutions and peacebuilding structures.** This would be similar to what is called the 'drivers of change' approach. Its key elements include the need to understand (1) a country's history and people; (2) who the holders of power are and how power is brokered and used; (3) the informal 'rules of the game' (e.g. how patronage networks operate in government and business); and (4) the relationship between the latter and formal institutions (e.g. appointments to the executive and judiciary). The approach should be geared to assisting SADC governments in embracing reforms that improve public administration and institutionalise good governance as part of peacebuilding interventions. The reform of government institutions, particularly those responsible for the rule of law, core social services and food security, should be given priority. There should also be space to support reformers outside government, particularly those advocating improvements in security, human rights, core services, food security, natural resource management and anti-corruption activities.

**Identifying strategic priorities and programming.** While peacebuilding approaches should emphasise political, economic, social and security factors, these priorities have to be seen as interrelated and not mutually exclusive. From this perspective, key considerations that govern engagement would include the ability of any assistance that is offered to affect constructive change; the underlying sources of vulnerability – the governing arrangements that lack effectiveness and legitimacy – rather than the symptoms; and whether short-term impacts can be linked to longer-term structural reforms.

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<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of SADC's election governance architecture, see D. Motsamai, SADC's 2013 Review of its Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections: need for civil society inputs? Institute for Global Dialogue Policy Brief 102, October 2013.

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**About this Paper:** This paper is part of a series providing regional peacebuilding perspectives for the White Paper on Peacebuilding. The authors' task was to provide an authentic, original and honest analysis about three questions: (1) What are the main challenges for building peace in your region? (2) What are the key opportunities for building peace in your region over the next one or two years? (3) What would be the key support necessary to build peace in your region over the next one or two years? Is there any specific role for the UN?

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**About the White Paper on Peacebuilding:** The White Paper on Peacebuilding is a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process initiated by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. It has the objective to situate UN peacebuilding within the broader peacebuilding universe and to articulate visions for the future for building peace in violent and fragile contexts. The White Paper places peacebuilding within the changing characteristics of armed violence and security, and within the practical evidence of engagements in peacebuilding contexts emanating from a diversity of fields. Ensuring a better relationship between UN peacebuilding and the broader peacebuilding field is a complementary effort to the existing work surrounding the 10-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture and an effort to take stock of the nature and evolution of the broader peacebuilding universe.

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