

## **A note on the FOPRISA countdown from the Coordinator**

Visitors familiar with this website will be aware that the Formative Process Research on Integration in Southern Africa (FOPRISA) programme was designed to run for four years, from 01 May 2005 to 30 April 2009. During this time, FOPRISA has benefited from generous sponsorship by the Royal Norwegian Government. Whereas the official closing date is the last day of April, actual programme winding up activities will be completed by 31 December 2009. By that date, all the activities will have been finalized, and the final audit and completion reports submitted to the sponsors and discussed.

There is consensus among stakeholders that the extensive and dedicated regional policy research network that we have built should continue to exist. The purposes for which FOPRISA was conceived are as valid now as they were before, because the SADC regional integration project is on-going. The research and monitoring of regional political, security and economic cooperation and integration are as crucial today as they were at the launch of the FOPRISA programme.

FOPRISA stakeholders have therefore indicated a desire to strengthen the network, and to maintain the positive relationship that it has established with the SADC Secretariat. FOPRISA can celebrate a number of accomplishments, which may be summarized as follows: -

- FOPRISA has established a committed and productive SADC-wide network of researchers on the critical aspects of the regional cooperation and integration project, covering the political, peace and security, trade and economic spheres.
- The relationship with the SADC Secretariat is well-established, cordial, and cooperative.
- FOPRISA research outputs have made significant contributions to policy deliberations at high level SADC meetings. The SADC Executive Secretary and the Head of Policy and Strategic Planning have formally acknowledged the usefulness of FOPRISA to SADC.

Although stakeholders acknowledge that FOPRISA's original goal and objectives may have been over-ambitious, valuable lessons have been learnt from trying to achieve them. Stakeholders also acknowledge that the nature of interactions, consultations, communications, and some aspects of the management of the programme require improvements. The FOPRISA Secretariat welcomes the criticisms, comments and suggestions made in the mid-term review of FOPRISA. The Secretariat is also committed to take on board the constructive guidance of the FOPRISA Steering Committee and other stakeholders.

The year of our countdown has coincided with significant, if not profound, changes in the international financial and economic dynamics that may have huge implications on the SADC region. As we contemplate the future direction of the collaborative research programme, we intend to build the next phase on the positive achievements, while learning from the mistakes of the past. We recognize that to move forward and progress, FOPRISA will require the solid endorsement of the SADC Secretariat and continued administrative infrastructure provided by the Botswana institute for Development Policy Analysis. Also crucial will be the sustained interest, enthusiasm and diligence of the researchers, and the participation and

support from strategic partners and other stakeholders. Last, but not least, we will count upon the financial support of our current and other potential sponsors.

*Jonathan Mayuyuka Kaunda, FOPRISA Coordinator.*