

FOPRISA Research for Regional
Integration and Development

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Formative Process Research on Integration in Southern Africa

Report of the Coordinator to the 2009 FOPRISA Annual Conference

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Introduction

The Formative Process Research on Integration in Southern Africa (FOPRISA) programme commenced in 2005 and is concluding the first phase during 2009. FOPRISA's overarching objective is to provide inputs that can assist SADC to advance regional co-operation and integration in Southern Africa, through research that provides information, data and analysis that can be used for organisational learning, for example, for the improvement of SADC Secretariat's operational approaches, procedures and performance.

The core members of the network are the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis (BIDPA), Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI) of Norway, Centre for Defence and Security Management (CDSM) at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, Economic and Social Research Foundation of (ESRF) of Tanzania, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Botswana, and Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU).

Altogether, the research network has involved over 120 participants that have researched and monitored the critical aspects of southern African regional cooperation and integration. The research network has covered various topics related to poverty alleviation, social and economic development, the political, diplomatic, peace and security aspects, as well as SADC-international cooperating partner relationships. In addition, members of the network have produced on-demand policy studies for the SADC Secretariat, including the majority of the background papers for the SADC International Consultative Conference on Poverty and Development (ICCPD) that was held in Mauritius in April 2008.

After four years of operations, FOPRISA can celebrate a number of accomplishments, especially the creation of a committed and productive SADC-wide network of researchers, and the establishment of a useful, cordial and cooperative relationship with the SADC Secretariat.

The FOPRISA stakeholders desire to strengthen the network, and to maintain the positive relationship that it has established with the SADC Secretariat. While accepting that the original goal and objectives of FOPRISA may have been over-ambitious, the first phase provided valuable lessons. One such lesson is that policy relevant research requires constant, continual, and close functional interactions, consultations and communications amongst researchers and the client entities. Another is that it requires open and critical commentary, suggestions, constructive guidance, and commitment from all stakeholders for it to succeed.

This brief report presents the highlights of FOPRISA operations from 2005 to 2009. Each year's activities are presented in three dimensions: research and monitoring; capacity building; and assessment.

2005-06

Research and Monitoring

The research activities started at a slow pace. The original proposal had envisioned that there would be the simultaneous commencement of all the research projects under each theme, but such expectation proved to be over-ambitious. Firstly, all the teams had to re-schedule and/or alter the sequence of project start-ups, and there were delays in updating and revising the research projects. The updates and revisions were essential because there had been an almost two-year time lag between the initial application for FOPRISA funding in September 2003 and the actual start-up in July 2005. Secondly, some research teams had taken on other commitments, and even changed in composition, which affected the deployment of research capacity. Thirdly, some teams had

experienced leadership problems that led to re-definition of functions and responsibilities amongst team members, and even the change of leadership. Lastly, capacity constraints faced by the SADC Secretariat made it difficult for some research teams, especially those dealing with SIPO and Finance, to take off as planned.

Capacity building

Capacity building activities involving the SADC Secretariat and the member states did not commence as planned. However, research team building continued steadily, hence contributing to the growth of the FOPRISA research network. The FOPRISA Secretariat was enhanced by the recruitment of the FOPRISA-SADC Research Fellow, who started work on 15 May 2006. The research fellow was supposed to be a link person who would inform FOPRISA researchers of SADC needs, requirements and demands on the one hand, and ensure that research and monitoring results from the researchers were communicated and fed into SADC's policy agenda and actions, on the other.

Capacity building, in the form of attachments and seminars for the SADC and member country officers did not commence because of several reasons. One was the late start-up of the FOPRISA activities in general. There was also the need for careful identification of skills gaps in the SADC Secretariat and the member states, before the relevant and appropriate short courses and seminars could be designed.

Assessment

The FOPRISA programme started rather slowly because of organisational constraints. Apart from undertaking requisite updates and revisions of research projects by all the teams, the relationships of the FOPRISA Secretariat and researchers with the SADC Secretariat officers had to be established. Meanwhile the SADC Secretariat was being restructured and reorganised, which also involved the recruitment of key staff in the Directorates. Consequently, the first year of FOPRISA operations did not attain all the goals and objectives of the programme. Notably, the scope of activities was also narrower than had been expected.

2006-07

Research and Monitoring

During 2006-07, there was a significant pick up of momentum in the research and monitoring activities, and increased activity with regard to the on-demand policy papers that had been requested by the SADC Secretariat. There was also a marked improvement in the interactions between FOPRISA researchers and the SADC Secretariat, which was thus actively involved in consultations for the determination of the research agendas of the various teams. The productiveness of the programme was manifest in various outputs, including 17 research and monitoring papers that were completed and presented at the 2006 FOPRISA Annual Conference.

There was very positive demand from SADC for inputs to important policy processes, as evidenced in the production of the on-demand papers. There were three on-demand policy studies that were completed for the SADC Secretariat during the year. In December 2007, the SADC Secretariat requested FOPRISA's assistance in the organisation of documentation for the International Consultative Conference on Poverty and Development (ICCPD) that was held in Mauritius in April 2008. FOPRISA utilised the On-demand Policy studies budget to commission nine of the thirteen background research papers for the conference. The FOPRISA-SADC Research Fellow was deployed to assist in the preparations and the actual conduct of the conference.

Capacity Building

Due to the necessity for conducting needs assessments prior to conceptualisation and implementation of capacity building for the SADC Secretariat and the member states, this activity did not commence. The SADC Secretariat was still restructuring, which involved filling the positions of Directors and other staff. In the circumstances, there was a lot of flux and uncertainty, and capacity needs assessments could not be done unless the directors had settled in and determined their directorates' actual requirements. There was, therefore, no request from SADC Secretariat and member states for these activities during 2006/7.

Assessment

The persistence of capacity constraints in the SADC Secretariat continued to pose difficulties in accessing and interacting with the SADC staff. The research teams were limited in their activities by problems of obtaining adequate, accurate and timely information and data from SADC. The access to and consultation with staff in the SADC Directorates and Units, which had somewhat improved over the past year, still required significant improvement.

Nevertheless, the commitments of the researchers in the FOPRISA programme had been amply demonstrated. Their outputs from research and monitoring activities were very encouraging. However, the FOPRISA programme faced a challenge of making the research outputs policy-oriented, realistic, and problem-oriented and practical, which would assist the SADC organisation attain its broad objectives. The production of on-demand policy papers, which specifically addressed the issues that were deemed important and critical by the SADC Secretariat, were positive evidence that the SADC Secretariat saw them as crucial background inputs into their deliberations.

2007-08

Research and Monitoring

There was a consolidation of activities in the third year of FOPRISA operations (2007-08). All the research teams were active, and presented 18 research papers and monitoring reports at the 2007 FOPRISA Annual Conference.

Capacity Building

Capacity building activities were more evident amongst the research teams than in the SADC Secretariat and the member states. The SADC Secretariat had undertaken a capacity audit, and in March 2008 completed a Capacity Development Framework. In addition, a reorganisation of the Directorates had also been approved. These two developments promised a clearer determination of the role that FOPRISA could play in the SADC capacity development endeavours.

Mid-term Review

A mid-term review of FOPRISA, which was jointly commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and FOPRISA, was conducted by two consultants. One was from the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the other from the Institute for Global Dialogue, South Africa. The consultants' report did not recommend any substantive changes to the principles, objectives, content, and orientation of the FOPRISA programme. However, the report concluded that there was need for improved dialogue between FOPRISA and the SADC Secretariat, and development of a strategy for that.

Assessment

The commitment of the researchers in the FOPRISA programme was demonstrated in their enthusiastic participation in the programme's activities. FOPRISA research and monitoring outputs were during 2007-08 being produced at a sustained level. The qualities of the outputs were steadily improving due to effective quality controls. There were also sustained efforts to improve the policy-orientation of the findings and recommendations of the research outputs. The aim was to make the research papers and monitoring reports more realistic and better designed to assist SADC to attain the broad objectives of regional cooperation and integration. There was evidence that the SADC Secretariat had utilised the on-demand policy studies in addressing pressing concerns and critical issues, as evidenced in their utilisation at SADC deliberations and at the poverty conference.

The relationship of FOPRISA and the SADC Secretariat had become more functional during 2007-08. The SADC requests for assistance manifested recognition of the value and importance of FOPRISA to the attainment of SADC regional objectives. It showed that the SADC Secretariat had confidence in FOPRISA's capabilities, and was a major endorsement of the value, appropriateness, and validity of the programme in relation to the attainment of SADC regional integration objectives.

The FOPRISA Steering Committee and Secretariat recognised that due processes, including a capacity audit and needs assessment, had to be completed before the capacity building activities could be meaningfully conceptualised and designed for implementation. However, the unresolved human capacity constraints in the SADC Secretariat posed a perpetual challenge since they negatively affected access to and interactions with the SADC staff. There was still a problem of limited contacts between FOPRISA researchers and the SADC staff, which meant that the researchers still found it difficult to obtain all the information and data that they required.

Without a doubt, FOPRISA became better known to all directorates because of involvement in preparations for the SADC ICCPD. However, there persisted a general lack of understanding amongst the SADC staff of what the FOPRISA programme represented and what it could offer to the SADC Directorates. There appeared to be doubts and confusions about the functions and role of FOPRISA and the nature of assistance that it would provide. The FOPRISA Steering Committee and the Secretariat attributed this state of affairs to the lack of direct contacts between FOPRISA researchers and staff of the directorates. The implication was that access to and consultation with staff in the SADC directorates still required significant improvement.

2008-09

Research and Monitoring

This is the final year of the FOPRISA programme. The current annual conference presents and discusses the 2008-09 research and monitoring outputs, and the concept papers that will inform the proposal for a possible second phase of FOPRISA.

Capacity Building

The FOPRISA capacity building activities continued with the involvement of young and new researchers in the network. Notably, the different teams incorporated new and younger members from the region. Unfortunately, the anticipated SADC Secretariat and member state capacity building activities did not materialise. The employment contract of the FOPRISA-SADC Research Fellow expired on 14 May 2009. The contract had been linked to the existence of the FOPRISA programme and had been renewed on an annual basis.

FOPRISA Outputs

The quantifiable outputs from the FOPRISA Programme are categorised into research and monitoring reports and on-demand policy papers.

Publications

1. *Furthering Southern African Integration: Proceedings of the 2008 FOPRISA Annual Conference*, edited by Jonathan Mayuyuka Kaunda and Farai Zizhou (Report 7) (Due August 2009).
2. *Towards Political and Economic Integration in Southern Africa: Proceedings of the 2007 FOPRISA Annual Conference*, (Report 6) (ISBN 978-99912-71-42-2), Edited by Gavin Cawthra and Jonathan Mayuyuka Kaunda (March 2009)
3. *Monitoring Economic Integration in SADC, 2006/2007: Overlapping Memberships of Regional Economic Arrangements and EPA Configurations in Southern Africa*, (Report 5) (ISBN 978-99912-71-41-5), By Rehabeam Shilimela (May 2008)
4. *From Aid Effectiveness to Poverty Reduction: Is Foreign Aid Donor Support to SADC Improving?* (Report 4) (ISBN 978-99912-71-40-8), By Elling Tjønneland (May 2008)
5. *Proceedings of the 2006 FOPRISA Annual Conference* (ISBN 978-99912-71-38-5) (Report 3), Edited by Jonathan Mayuyuka Kaunda (July 2007)
6. *Monitoring Economic Integration in SADC, 2005* (ISBN 99912-71-34-1/978-99912-71-34-1) (Report 2), By Dirk Hansohm and Rehabeam Shilimela (July 2006)
7. *SADC and Donors – Ideals and Practices: From Gaborone to Paris and Back* (ISBN 99912-0-574-8) (Report 1), By Elling Tjønneland (April 2006)

On demand Policy studies

The on-demand policy papers are further sub-divided into the ones commissioned as inputs into SADC Summit meetings and background papers for the April 2008 poverty conference.

On-demand policy papers for the SADC Secretariat

1. Report on the Economic Situation of Zimbabwe and Recommendations to SADC Executive Secretary, by Haidari Amani, Chinyamata Chipeta and Angelo Mondlane, 2007
2. SADC Annual Economic Review 2007, by Happy Siphambe and A Akinkugbe, 2007
3. Issues For Consideration And Decision By The Extraordinary Summit, by Chinyamata Chipeta, 2006
4. The Status Of Regional Integration In SADC, by Chinyamata Chipeta, 2006

Background documentation for the SADC International Consultative Conference on Poverty and Development, Mauritius, April 2008

1. An assessment of poverty alleviation strategies in the SADC region, by Grayson Koyi
2. Impact of climatic change on the poverty situation in the SADC region, by Ramjee Nyirenda
3. Strengthening the role of agriculture in poverty alleviation, by Richard Masundire
4. Infrastructure support for poverty eradication, by Christopher Marck

5. Examining the role of education in improving skills technologies and innovation needed by the region to meet the Millennium Development Goals, by Haroon Borhat
6. The SADC region poverty profile, by Michele Ruiters
7. Gender and development for poverty reduction, by Zitha Mukomane
8. Mobilising development aid for Africa, by Elling Tjønneland
9. Trade liberalisation and poverty reduction in SADC, by Arne Wiig

Overall Assessment of FOPRISA 2005-09

The FOPRISA research network, annual conferences, and dissemination

The FOPRISA network building started with the call for papers for a preparatory conference that was held in July 2003. That meeting was attended by several researchers, some of whom had written the concept papers that formed the basis of the proposal that was presented to NORAD in September of that year. The interest in the formative research process was quite widespread, as the preparatory conference was attended by representatives from a number of institutions, including the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) of Norway; Centre for Defence and Security Management (CDSM) of the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) of Tanzania; Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU); Southern African Defence and Security Management (SADSEM) network; University of Botswana (UB); University of Zambia (UNZA); University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa; Zimconsult, Zimbabwe; Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa; and Southern African Institute for Economic Research (SAIER), Malawi.

The Norwegian grant to FOPRISA was approved in March 2005 and operations officially commenced in July. The first year of operations (2005/6) was characterised by the definition of the framework, procedures and guidelines for implementation by the Steering Committee, and the setting up of the management structure and functional linkages with SADC Secretariat by the FOPRISA Secretariat. The thematic research and monitoring team leaders concentrated on building and/or re-constituting the teams and updating the research proposals that had originally been written in 2003. The second year (2006/7), saw the strengthening of the network and significant pick-up of momentum, although capacity building lagged. In the third year (2007/8), FOPRISA consolidated the momentum that had been built during the previous year. All the research and monitoring teams were actively engaged. The research teams concluded their FOPRISA projects during 2008-09.

The reality is that the capacity building activities were more evident amongst the research networks than that in the SADC Secretariat and member states. In addition, the composition of the FOPRISA research teams had good gender representation, which was also reasonable in the composition of the team of researchers that were commissioned to produce the background research papers for the SADC ICCPD of April 2008.

The FOPRISA research network currently boasts of members and active participants from several institutions:

Founding institutions that were participants in the preparatory conference: BIDPA; CMI; CDSM; ESRF; NEPRU; SADSEM network; UB; UNZA; and SAIER.

Institutions that later joined the network: University of Namibia (UNAM); Centro de Estudos Africanos; Mozambique; Southern African Research & Documentation Centre (SARDC); Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD); African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS); Higher Institute for International Relations, Centre for Strategic & International Studies, Mozambique; Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique; Programa de Gestão de Defesa, Centro de Estudos Africanos, Mozambique; Centre for Defence Studies, Department of History, University of Zimbabwe; Defence

and Security Management Sub-Centre, Centre for Foreign Relations, Tanzania; Reserve Bank of Malawi; SADC Development Finance Resource Centre; University of Mauritius; Centre of Strategic Studies of Angola; University of Malawi; Centre for Strategic Studies, Mzuzu University, Malawi; University of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa; Ministry of Finance, Namibia; and UNDP Regional Service Centre, South Africa.

The annual conferences have also included participants from non-state organisations, interested individuals, international cooperating partners, and the SADC Secretariat.

The FOPRISA research and monitoring outputs are disseminated throughout the network via postal mail and the website. The dissemination is to all the researchers, as well as to over 140 other addressees in various institutions, including SADC Secretariat and all Directorates, member state National Contact Points, embassies, international cooperating partners, universities, research institutions, non-state organisations, and individuals. All the published outputs are available for free downloading at www.foprisa.net.

Capacity building

The capacity development of researchers was largely a spin-off from the research activities, especially for the junior and less experienced researchers that were engaged in the various research activities and in the annual conferences. Team (and network) building included recruitment of additional and new researchers to the various teams, which reflected the expansion of the network, as different team members were engaged in the different topics under each theme. Thus the recruitment of junior researchers and their capacity development for the participating research institutions was more visible in their increased engagement in the research teams. In brief, FOPRISA built a strong regional policy research network that actively developed the capacities of junior researchers.

The SADC Secretariat and member state capacity building activities did not materialise.

Relationship of FOPRISA with the SADC Secretariat

The relationships of the structures of FOPRISA, particularly the Steering Committee and Secretariat with SADC Secretariat and staff, have been professional, functional, and constructive. Indeed, the interactions have also become more functional over the years. Four on-demand policy studies for the SADC Secretariat were completed by FOPRISA-commissioned researchers from 2006 to 2008. Another highlight was the SADC Secretariat request of December 2007, to FOPRISA for assistance in the organisation of documentation for the International Consultative Conference on Poverty and Development (ICCPD) that was held in Mauritius in April 2008.

A mid-term review of FOPRISA that was jointly commissioned by the Royal Norwegian Embassy and FOPRISA Secretariat noted that the working relationship between the programme and the SADC secretariat had a “major constraint”, which concerned limited access by researchers to SADC staff, and in general, the less than adequate communications. However, the reasons for the problematic communications were largely due to human capacity constraints and internal dynamics within the SADC Secretariat, over which FOPRISA has no influence.

Challenges faced by the FOPRISA programme

The achievements of the FOPRISA programme, though notable, were accompanied by various challenges and limitations. The first challenge was to establish and develop the research network and make it functional. There was a delay in start-up of actual research activities because of the time lag between the submission of the programme proposal for consideration for funding in September

2003, actual approval in March 2005, and reconstitution of the research teams and revision of proposals as from July 2005.

The second challenge was the establishment of a working relationship with the SADC Secretariat and the staff. Apart from establishing the working relationship, there were other relationship limitations, such as securing the research network's access to and information from the SADC staff in the directorates.

The third challenge was that the "success" of FOPRISA was not quite apparent, especially when considering the outputs of the thematic research projects. The research projects are products of the interests of academics, whose orientations are not entirely "practical", and therefore do not necessarily, have the "policy-oriented" or "applied" dimension. FOPRISA has all along sought to make the research outputs more "policy-oriented", in the sense that the research findings should lead to recommendations that are "realistic", "do-able", and "practical". However, this was difficult to attain, perhaps because of the scholarly preferences and orientations of the researchers. This was made more difficult by the fact that the qualities of the researchers' outputs were quite variable, perhaps as would be expected from such a wide and disparate collection of researchers. Establishing and maintaining the quality of standards has, therefore, been a challenge.

Lastly, as pointed out elsewhere, the capacity building activities that had been anticipated for FOPRISA were more evident amongst junior researchers than in the SADC Secretariat and member states. Consequently the FOPRISA Steering Committee and Secretariat were concerned that by the end of the FOPRISA operations, the capacity building for SADC Secretariat and the member states had yet to commence.

These challenges and limitations were, however, mitigated by the confidence that the SADC Secretariat had shown in FOPRISA's capabilities, when FOPRISA was specially requested to carry out several on-demand studies, and to produce background papers for the ICCPD of April 2008. This was a major endorsement of the value, appropriateness, and validity of the programme in relation to the attainment of SADC regional integration objectives.

Conclusion

Overall, it is difficult to determine whether the FOPRISA research was being "formative" or has actually induced any "action learning" on the part of the client (the SADC Secretariat). It is not possible to determine FOPRISA's "policy influence"; moreover, such probable effects take a long time to be realised. A mere four years of operations is inadequate to conclusively determine the policy impact of the research programme.

The FOPRISA Secretariat is coordinating the concluding activities of FOPRISA. These include the final annual conference, editing and publishing of the proceedings thereof, dissemination, and the final audit of, and reporting on the programme. The fifth annual joint meeting of the FOPRISA Steering Committee and the Norwegian MFA representative will be held in November 2009. That meeting will be used to present to the FOPRISA Completion Report that will incorporate the final Audited Income and Expenditure Statement. This should pave the way for the signing off of the programme by 31 December 2009.

Vote of thanks

The FOPRISA Coordinator, on behalf of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat, would like to thank all the stakeholders that have been crucial to the progress made thus far. These include the sponsors, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the SADC Secretariat; the Botswana

Institute for Development Policy Analysis, which hosts the programme; the core and other participating institutions and strategic partners; thematic team leaders; participating researchers; reviewers and referees; and individual supporters. There are currently significant and profound changes happening in the international financial, economic and political environments; these dynamics may have huge implications on the SADC region. As the FOPRISA network contemplates the future direction of the collaborative research programme, the intention is to build the next phase on the positive achievements, while bearing in mind the obstacles of the past. For FOPRISA to move ahead, it will require the solid endorsement of the SADC Secretariat and the 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 sponsor, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other potential sponsors.