

**SARPN Sub-Regional Round Table
on
“Democracy, Poverty & Development:
perspectives & lessons from SADC island states”**

Introduction

As part of a series of round table dialogues on the relationship between democracy and development, SARPN will host a sub-regional roundtable to examine perspectives and lessons from the “SADC island states,” (SIS) of Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles. The meeting, to be held in Mauritius on 19-20 July 2007, will look at governance, democracy and poverty reduction trends on the islands in the context of the wider SADC region and will interrogate whether increased impact might arise from greater integration with the wider SADC region. It will also explore mechanisms for facilitating the strengthening of such integration and will come up with specific recommendations for follow up.

Objectives of the round table

The purpose of this round table is to facilitate an exchange of perspectives and lessons between stakeholders from SIS with regard to the state of democracy and poverty in the region. The round table seeks to generate recommendations towards how regional cooperation, both amongst the SADC island states and across the SADC region more broadly, can contribute more effectively to the deepening of democracy, eradication of poverty and promotion of sustainable development. In particular, the round table seeks to:

- Take stock of the impact of national and SADC-level poverty alleviation programmes on the islands;
- Evaluate the level of consolidation of democracy on the islands (understood in terms of the level of community participation in governance);
- Identify/map out a poverty policy-oriented research agenda with an emphasis on strengthening participatory governance that is relevant to the socio-economic, political and cultural landscape of the islands;
- Identify possible linkages or synergies between poverty and governance policies and research on the islands and the rest of SADC, in order to develop shared strategies and programmes for research on, and implementation of, poverty policies that maximise the participation of the poor.

Themes of the round table

The sub-themes of the conference are:

- Democracy and governance trends and impacts on poverty reduction, including the role of civil society and parliaments in participatory democracy;
- Macro-economic policy, aid, trade and regional integration: the role of SADC;
- Women’s rights and gender equality: possible benefits of greater integration with the wider women’s movement in the SADC region;
- Environment, climate change and disaster preparedness and management.

While women/gender and the environment are being addressed as stand-alone sub-themes, the conference will also seek to include them as cross-cutting issues within all of the other sub-themes.

Expected outcomes of the round table

The results of this round table will feed into SARPN's larger project on democracy and development. The project aims to contribute to the emergence of a sound and vibrant discourse on the perceived interlinkages between democracy and development, which ultimately would impact upon policy formulation and practice in the SADC region. The round table on SADC island states would contribute to:

- A better understanding of the levels of poverty and democracy on the islands;
- Examples of best practice and lessons learned in relation to poverty alleviation programmes and participatory governance in the region;
- Development of a research agenda with an emphasis on strengthening participatory governance on the islands and across the region;
- Development of strategies and programmes for research on, and implementation of, poverty policies that maximise the participation of the poor.