

**CHALLENGES OF ACHIEVING DEEPER INTEGRATION IN  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC):  
AGENDA SETTING AND DECISION MAKING**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper addressed the policy agenda setting process in the SADC in order to provide insights on the obstacles to meeting deep SADC cooperation and integration targets. The study utilized Kingdon's multiple streams framework (MSF), while accounting for the role of policy participants using the four stages of 'issue careers'. The study finds that politicians at both regional and national level dominated the agenda setting process by being at the center of issue initiation, issue specification, issue expansion, and issue entrance, while technocrats, dominated issue initiation at national level. Additionally, the media fails to influence SADC regional trade policies, due to its lower coverage of regional integration issues. The study also finds that individual member states are at liberty to divert from regional targets in order to pursue national interests, given that defaulting countries to the regional goals are not punished. Further, the study recommends for the revision of the SADC legal and institutional framework, to enhance the supranational SADC institutions and to solve the problem of inconsistent political commitment.

**Keywords:** Economic Integration, SADC, Policy making, Cooperation

**JEL Classification:** F13, F15, F55

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This study focused on the policy agenda setting process in Southern African Development Community (SADC), and addressed the obstacles to achieving deep economic cooperation and integration, for which the roadmap is elaborated in the SADC regional indicative strategic development plan (RISDP) of 2003.

The transformation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC)<sup>2</sup>

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treaty of 1980 to SADC in 1992, inaugurated a focus on achieving regional economic development, peace and security, growth, alleviate poverty and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration<sup>3</sup>. The SADC member countries adopted a linear strategy to achieving deep cooperation and integration<sup>4</sup>. The SADC members<sup>5</sup> required the establishment of institutions suitable to achieving the SADC integration agenda, and thus, after an extra ordinary SADC Summit of heads of states in 1999, a new structure with eight principal institutions and organs were constituted.

Further, apart from the Free Trade Area (FTA), which was launched in 2008, the other SADC milestones lag behind in progression as they depend on the fully implemented FTA. By 2016, only twelve of the fifteen SADC member states were part of the FTA, inevitably, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo and Seychelles remained outside. Although studies by Hartzenberg and Kalenga (2015), Mapuva (2014), Saurombe (2012), Kumo (2011), had explored the challenges of the SADC integration agenda, there is limited literature on the critical evaluation of the policy agenda setting process to highlight the role of politicians to the SADC policy making process. Hence, this paper attempted to address questions such as: Who are the trade policy participants and how do they influence the policy process in the SADC? What are the main indicators that define the problems of the SADC? What is the main source of ambiguity of the SADC policy process and how does it affect the progress of the integration agenda?

The study critically evaluated the SADC trade policy agenda setting process at national and regional level using Kingdon's (1995) Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), while accounting for the policy participants using the Cobb et al. (1976)'s four stages of 'issue careers. The study found that national interests groups, academics, and specialists (including bureaucrats) shaped the action agenda or institutional agenda. While the decision agenda was shaped by the heads of state and high level politicians. Trade policy financial resources, capacity and skills deficits at national and regional level posed as the major challenge to the SADC member states. The study further confirms the suitability of the MSF to SADC policymaking process.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature by presenting Kingdon's MSF and the four stages issue careers and their applicability to the SADC agenda

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<sup>2</sup> The Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference focused on the advancement of national political independence, and resistance of apartheid in South Africa

<sup>3</sup> See The History and Treaty of SADC at <http://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/overview/history-and-treaty/>

<sup>4</sup> SADC regional integration strategy: Implement the FTA by 2008, a customs by 2010, a common market by 2015, a monetary union by 2016, and an economic union with a single currency by 2018.

<sup>5</sup> SADC member countries are Angola, Botswana, Congo DR, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

setting and policymaking process; Section 3 elaborates the methods and data used in the study; Section 4 applies the MSF to the SADC policymaking process at national and regional level; Section 5 concludes and provides policy recommendations.

## **2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section reviews theoretical framework of policy agenda setting process that allow for the critical analysis of obstacles to the SADC regional integration agenda.

### **2.1 Policy Agenda Setting**

Key to understanding agenda setting is the term `agenda`. Kingdon (1995, 2003) defined agenda as the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time. Agenda setting is the process by which problems and alternative solutions gain or lose public and elite attention.

Studies by Ackrill et al. (2013), Meyerhofer (2009), Teodorovic (2008), Zahariadis (2008), and Princen and Rhinard (2006), successfully applied Kingdon's MSF, and/or Cobb, et al (1976) 's four stages of 'issue careers', to provide insights on how issues get to the policy agenda, how groups gain access to the policy agenda, who sets the policy agenda, and the coupling process of problems, solutions and politics. The studies agreed with Kingdon's MSF that argue that actual policymaking is often complex and irrational (unsystematic, disorderly, and politically charged), thus, discredited the applicability of traditional policy making models, rationality and bounded rationality models' in real world policy making analyses.

#### **2.1.1 Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)**

Kingdon (1995; 2003)<sup>6</sup> He argued that in the real world, policy changes are determined by hidden and visible participants inside (cabinets, Parliaments, bureaucrats) and outside governments (interest groups, researchers, media, public opinion), and the process which includes the convergences of the problem stream, policy stream and the political stream, thus opening a window of opportunity for the policy changes to happen. Important to this process are the policy entrepreneurs (policy advocates), who can be made up of visible participants (president, high level executive branch officials, prominent members of parliament, the media, political parties, and hidden participants (academics, career bureaucrats, parliament staff, lower level political

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<sup>6</sup> Kingdon's 1995 book, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public policies* introduced the concept of MSF, and his 2003 edition further, emphasized the framework, which was a reformulation of Cohen et al (1972) garbage can model.

appointees).The convergence of these streams is not always predictable, thus policy entrepreneurs are prepared to utilize any window of opportunity to drive changes in policy.

Problems stream denotes which social conditions are perceived by policy participants as problems which need to be remedied by government action. Participants redefine conditions as problems and pay attention to them when there are changes in indicators, focusing events, and feedback. Policy stream referred to as a policy ‘primeval soup’ by Kingdon, consists of policy alternatives and proposals generated by the hidden participants, mid-level government officials and administrators, policy advocates, and academics. In the Policy ‘primeval soup’ many ideas appear, float around among the participants and then fed, while both new and old ideas are assessed (through technical feasibility, value acceptability, and anticipation of future constraints), and eventually some ideas survive and are taken more seriously as important policies. Vital to the policy stream are the policy entrepreneurs, participants who invest time and energy, reputation and money for advocating policies. Politics stream consists of political events that may or may not be favorable to the policy such as, public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distribution in parliaments, and changes in administration. Sometimes consensus and conflict among the organized interest groups build environment in which political leaders have to take balance between those for and those against a given proposal or the emergence of an item to agenda prominence.

Although the MSF does not account for all aspects of the policy process (including implementation and policy evaluation), but agenda setting and decision-making, it useful to analyzing numerous real life contextual factors such as political events, bureaucratic procedures, interest groups, etc., that largely shape the future of a public policy. It enforces the roles of all interested and involved actors to the realities of policymaking and how they pragmatically act to see policies come to life. Recently, studies by Teodorovic (2008), Cairney and Zahariadis (2016), Meyerhofer (2009) highlight the notion that the MSF is a useful tool for theoretical perspective analyses of policy processes of both domestic, and also regional integration arrangements, applied frequently to the European Union policy process. They also critically highlight the limited applicability of decision making models that are based on rationality and incrementalism. One of the major criticism of the MSF by scholars like Stout and Stevens (2000), McBeth et al. (2007), and Sabatier (1999), is its failure to sufficiently acknowledge the significance of the media effects, including social media, and also questioned whether the streams are truly independent. Thus, this study accounted for the impact of the media in SADC Agenda setting process.

### **2.1.2 Agenda Setting Routes and the Four Stages of ‘Issue Careers’**

Cobb et al. (1976) `s four stages of `issue careers`, namely, issue initiation, issue specification, issue expansion, and issue entrance<sup>7</sup>, provided a useful platform on how agendas are set, how groups gain access to the policy agenda, and who sets the policy agenda between the politicians (high politics) or technocrats (low politics). Princen and Rhinard (2006), Meyerhofer (2009), and Teodorovic (2008) extended the four stages issue careers to the EU policy process according to the route taken by the issue to enter the agenda, either from below “low politics or from above “high politics”.

The issue initiation elaborates how issues get to the decision agenda. It describes whether an issue is initiated politically or professionally. Issue specification has to do with the further elaboration of a general issue into a set of specific demands (i.e. proposals). This is closely related to the process of framing, which is central in the agenda-setting studies by Cobb et al (1976), and Rochefort & Cobb (1994). Issue expansion depicts the manner in which issues are moved beyond the initial actors in specific venues to a wider set of participants. Issue entrance draws on when an issue gains access to the decision makers` common agenda.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Models**

This study investigated the obstacles to SADC regional integration by analyzing the roles of political power, media and groups in the SADC policymaking process. Although various models of policy process have been vastly applied in the EU policy process, there is no available systematic academic research using the policy agenda setting models to explain/understand the SADC regional integration policy making process. This oversight may be due to the lack of public policy researchers on SADC regional integration. Accordingly, little is known about how the SADC policy changes occurred/did not happen, or how policy actors and institutions affect policymaking.

This study follows Kingdon (1995;2003) who criticized the traditional model of policymaking<sup>8</sup> as being too rational and linear, since actual policymaking is often unsystematic, disorderly, and politically charged. This study utilizes Kingdon`s Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) of agenda

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<sup>7</sup> R. Cobb, J-K. Ross and M.H. Ross, “Agenda Building as a Comparative Political Process”, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 70, no. 1, March 1976, p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> The traditional model of policymaking considers public policy as a multi stage cycle, distinctly, starting with agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, and finally, policy evaluation.

setting and decision-making, while taking into account Cobb et al. (1976)'s four stages issue careers to analyze the participants inside and outside SADC governments (or agenda setting routes). The extension of the MSF to include the four stages issue careers are warranted to analyzing the SADC agenda setting and decision-making process, because of the complexity of the SADC agenda setting and decision making process, which involves the interactions between politicians and technocrats, and mirrors the garbage can and/or Kingdon's primeval soup. The four stages issue careers provides a platform for a logic analysis of policy participants, through issue initiation, specification, expansion and entrance.

After an evaluation of the applicability of the rationality and Incrementalism models to SADC decision-making, this study concluded that: although bounded rationality seems to be relevant in the SADC decision making process, however, due to limitations on information about the rationales of all the players in the SADC decision making process, it's impossible to draw conclusions about the rationality map of participants in the SADC decision process. Additionally, Lindblom's (1959) Incrementalism theory emphasized that changes in public policies, are outcomes of a process of interaction and mutual adaptation among several actors advocating different values, representing different interests, and processing different information. Therefore, the study concluded that incrementalism is likely to be consistent with preparatory working groups in the case of SADC decision making process. Thus, it would be limited in explaining SADC agenda setting and decision making that involve politicians as the major players.

### **3.2 Data**

In order to analyze the SADC regional integration policy agenda setting and decision making, this study used primary and secondary data collection methods. Secondary data included SADC member states governments' documents and publications, SADC secretariat documents and publications, news and events from the SADC website, newspaper articles, workshop presentations and position papers, World Bank World development indicators (World Bank 2015), International monetary fund (IMF) World economic outlook (WEO) ( IMF 2016), and other correspondences. Primary data included questionnaires and phone interviews with SADC government officials responsible for trade as well as the non-government stakeholders in trade policymaking. Articles from major newspapers by coverage in headlines and lead, from LexisNexis, were analyzed for the period 2006 to 2015, from South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### **4.0 KINGDON'S MULTIPLE STREAMS FRAMEWORK (MSF) APPLICATION TO SADC REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

This section applies Kingdon's MSF of policy agenda setting to the SADC regional integration



agenda, taking into account the four stages of issues careers.

#### **4.1. SADC Policy participants in the Four Stages of Issue Careers**

##### **4.1.1 Issue Initiation**

At regional level, Issue initiation to the SADC decision agenda is a high politics one since all SADC policies enacted by the Council of Ministers, are considered for adoption into the law by the SADC Summit of heads of state<sup>9</sup>. For instance, the decisions to install new SADC institutions that would facilitate the implementation of the regional cooperation and integration agenda, was made by the summit in 1999. Technocrats and professionals in the SADC have been vital for the institutional agenda issue initiation. For example, technocrats (SADC standing committee of senior officials) collectively, could not approve the SADC customs union technicalities on parameters, benchmarks, timelines, and its implementation modalities<sup>10</sup>. At national level, issue initiation is a technocrat one. SADC member states' governments through heads of state, cabinet ministers approves trade policies which are initiated by technocrats, with inputs by the National Working Group on Trade (NWGT). NWGT issue proposals and research papers as an input to the preparation of the RISDP (CUTS 2009).<sup>11</sup>

##### **4.1.2 Issue Specification**

Issue specification at regional level, is a political one, characterized by the Summit and the SADC Council of Ministers normally limiting itself to defining the broad outlines of the SADC common agenda, leaving the details for lower level institutions (Sectorial and Cluster Ministerial Committees and Standing Committees of Senior officials) to work out. Expert groups and working parties (such as Sectorial and Cluster Ministerial Committees and Standing Committees of Senior officials) on the other hand seek to formulate specific, technically sound proposals on a given issue before sending them out to the Council of Ministers for further decision making considerations.<sup>12</sup> However, decisions in the low politics, are subject to a consensus based, approval by the Council of Ministers, and eventually, the Summit, and thus cannot overcome the diverse interests of the high politics.

At national level, issue specification is characterized by the presidents' offices, ministries/departments of finance, and the ministries/departments in charge of trade

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<sup>9</sup> Article 10 of the SADC Treaty of 1992

<sup>10</sup> SADC 2010 Summit

<sup>11</sup> Consumer unit Trust Society (CUTS), 2009: Towards More Inclusive Trade Policy Making: Process and Role of Stakeholders in Select African Countries

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 5 of the SADC Treaty of 1992

policymaking, providing overall trade policy direction and guidance, leaving the details to be worked out by the ministries/departments that are responsible for trade policy formulation together with other line ministries/departments (including field offices), that are primarily concerned with the implementation of trade policy. In the low politics, bureaucrats, with input by NWGT, provide specific proposals on trade issues at hand for considerations by the high politics. While the media is characterized by the framing of trade issues in order to influence policy makers. In SADC the media frames are skewed towards political issues and little coverage on SADC regional integration issues, thus reducing its ability to influence regional integration decisions (see **Error! Reference source not found.1** in Appendix). Additionally, Issue specification in the low politics route reflects the sectorial biases and technical frames of the groups and working parties that form the Sectorial and Cluster Ministerial Committees and Standing Committees of Senior officials at SADC regional level, and the bureaucrats and NWGT that provide inputs to the trade policymaking process in member countries.

#### **4.1.3 Issue Expansion**

Issue expansion is also dominated by high politics at SADC regional level, typically taking place from the Council of Ministers to lower level institutions that have the power to adopt formal decisions, such as the Sectorial and Cluster Ministerial Committees and Standing Committees of Senior officials, coordinated by the Secretariat. In the low politics, issue expansion takes place from Sectorial and Cluster Ministerial Committees and Standing Committees of Senior officials to the Council of Ministers and the Summit that eventually have to decide on proposals<sup>13</sup>. However, low politics are limited in implementing decisions by the legal framework, which limits their power as well as the budget challenges. Apart from the dominance of the high politics, backed by the SADC treaty of 1992, 70 percent of the 2015-2016 SADC budget<sup>14</sup>, for example, was estimated to be from international cooperating partners, and 30% from member states, a situation which is likely to compromise the ownership and sustainability of regional programs, thus making it difficult for technocrats to successfully provides feasible solutions to the various regional integration targets.

At National level, issue expansion is dominated by the high politics, just like the issues specification. Top level officials such as directors and permanent secretaries, together with lower level technocrats are likely also influence policy by controlling the flow of information and implementation. Bureaucrats are however, constrained in expanding the trade policy agenda by deficiencies in financial resources, capacity and skills in areas of trade negotiation and trade law, thus reducing their competitiveness and acceptability by the high politics. The frequency of

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter five of the SADC treaty of 1992

<sup>14</sup> 2015 SADC Council of Ministers' Meeting



coordination between the trade ministries and other government departments is low, thus slowing the rate of finalization of trade policies. Additionally, the participation of the NWGT and other non-state actors in the trade policymaking process is occasionally, thus limiting their influence in shaping the agenda. Input from key stakeholders is limited usually either due to lack of feedback, or mistrust by government, or lack of information flows, and/or time, financial and logistical constraints. Sometimes lack of essential skills and knowledge of some trade issue, and legal limitations to fully contribute to the trade policy process limits some stakeholders from participating. Issue expansion from the media is limited when it concerns regional integration.

#### **4.1.4 Issue Entrance**

Issue entrance at SADC regional level is dominated by high politics, SADC decision are rejected or adopted to the decision agenda during the Summit of the heads of state. Low politics driven issues are likely to be blocked once they reach the high politics, where different political interests may oppose the issue, such as the suspension of the SADC Tribunal due to the unfavorable judgment passed against the Zimbabwean government. At national level, issue entrance is also dominated by the high politics, who usually reject or adopt the decision agenda at ministry boardrooms or cabinet level. Low politics driven issues depend on the input of various policymaking participants such as NWGT, and bureaucrats from other line ministries/departments that implement trade policies before they can be rejected or accepted into the decision agenda.

### **4.2 SADC Policy Process in MSF**

#### **4.2.1 Problem Stream**

Policy participants redefine conditions as problems by paying attention to them when there are changes in indicators, focusing events, and through feedback on existing policy programs.

##### **(A) Feedback on the Existing SADC Programs**

Findings from studies by Hartzenberg & Kalenga (2015), Mapuva (2014), Kalenga (2012), Saurombe (2012), and Zyuulu (2009), argued that the SADC regional cooperation and integration targets as stipulated in the RISDP were too ambitious. They pointed at a weak SADC legal and institutional framework as a major obstacle to achieving deep economic cooperation and integration. For instance: the SADC Treaty does not have provisions to make the binding decisions of the Summit part of the national legal systems in member countries; the SADC treaty provides for the SADC secretariat and the council of ministers to oversee the coordination and implementation of the SAC common agenda, however, they do not possess the real power to

enforce implementation of SADC policies and programs by member states.

The study found that there is no political willingness on the part of Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to implement the SADC FTA, but are willing to agree on bilateral basis with interested SADC member countries. Additionally, the less strict entry requirements, that lead to the expansion from the original 9 members to 15, increased the economic diversities and imbalances in the region, thus, some SADC Macroeconomic convergence (MEC) targets such as achieving inflation rates of 5% by 2012 and 3% by 2018, might be impossible for some member states to attain. Further, diversity in revenue sensitivity among SADC member states had been pointed out by analysts, Hartzenberg and Kalenga (2015), to have a major effect on the outcome of the negotiations about a common external tariff, required for the customs union, given a lack of political willingness to embrace the idea of supranational institutions.

Overlapping membership have been noted as a challenge to the prospects for deep regional integration (Kalenga 2012). Most SADC members belong to other regional trade agreements (RTAs) such as Southern African Customs Union (SACU)<sup>15</sup>, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)<sup>16</sup>, and the East African Community (EAC)<sup>17</sup> Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)<sup>18</sup>, and the Indian Ocean Community (IOC)<sup>19</sup>. Overlapping membership, or the famous “spaghetti bowl effect”, makes it difficult to complete negotiations for a customs union, which require a common external tariff given that other regional arrangements’ benchmarks are different from that of SADC. Additionally, stakeholders considered SADC rules of origin to be too complex, and contributed to the low utilization of SADC preferences in some export products, which have to pass the value addition test<sup>20</sup>, imported material content test<sup>21</sup>, and a change of tariff heading original test<sup>22</sup>. The SADC rules

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<sup>15</sup> SACU Member states: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland.

<sup>16</sup> COMESA Member states: Burundi, Comoros, D.R. Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>17</sup> Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania

<sup>18</sup> ECCAS members: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe, and Rwanda.

<sup>19</sup> IOC Members: Comoros, Reunion, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles.

<sup>20</sup> SADC value addition test required the process of production to account for at least 35 per cent of the ex-factory cost of the goods.

<sup>21</sup> SADC Imported material content test required the c.i.f. value of materials imported from third countries not to exceed 60% of the total cost of the materials used in the production of the goods.

<sup>22</sup> SADC Change of tariff heading original test required the manufacturing or processing carried out in the member States to be substantial and result in a product which falls under a heading of the HS which is

of origin had a likelihood to prevent the use of some tariff preferences due to variances in processing requirements and related rules among member states, and reduce SADC's competitiveness due to the restrictions of the choice of inputs, which increases the cost of production<sup>23</sup>.

The SADC secretariat noted that significant progress had been made in regional transport and communications systems, and other infrastructure, which are fundamental to achieving deep SADC regional cooperation and integration<sup>24</sup>. However, SADC Secretariat pointed out that the SADC region was still faced with a number of infrastructure challenges such as: Insufficient energy supply to serve increased production and to extend access; Highly priced, unpredictable transport and logistics services, especially for landlocked states; Lack of low-cost access to information and communications technologies; Inadequate meteorological services for effective and efficient planning and management of water resources, energy production, transport services and other climate-sensitive sectors. Additionally, political fragility of the SADC region is above the world average and not showing signs of significance improvements (Mainza 2015)<sup>25</sup>. Political instabilities in some SADC member countries such as Zimbabwe, Democratic republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Madagascar widely covered in the media pose as a challenge to the collective achievement of the SADC macroeconomic convergence targets for regional integration.

### **(B) Focusing Events and Indicators**

SADC RISDP guides member states to diversify their industrial structure and exports with more emphasis on value addition across all economic sectors by 2015, particularly, diversifying (increasing non-traditional exports) and sustaining exports growth rate of at least 5% annually, and to increase manufacturing as a percentage of GDP to 25% by 2015. The SADC region is clearly undiversified and the manufacturing as a percentage of GDP is still below the 25% target for 2015 on average, as shown in Table 1/1 below<sup>26</sup>, where, higher values for the index indicate lower diversification.

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different from the non-originating materials used in its manufacture.

<sup>23</sup> See 2011 audit of the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Trade by the USAID SA Trade Hub

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.sadc.int/themes/infrastructure/>

<sup>25</sup> Mainza (2015) highlighted the fragility of SADC countries, focusing on Zambia, in the Patriotic Front (PF) Government under a Competitive Political Environment: Implications for Political Instability in Zambia

<sup>26</sup> Note: SACU countries are represented by South Africa due to a Customs union.

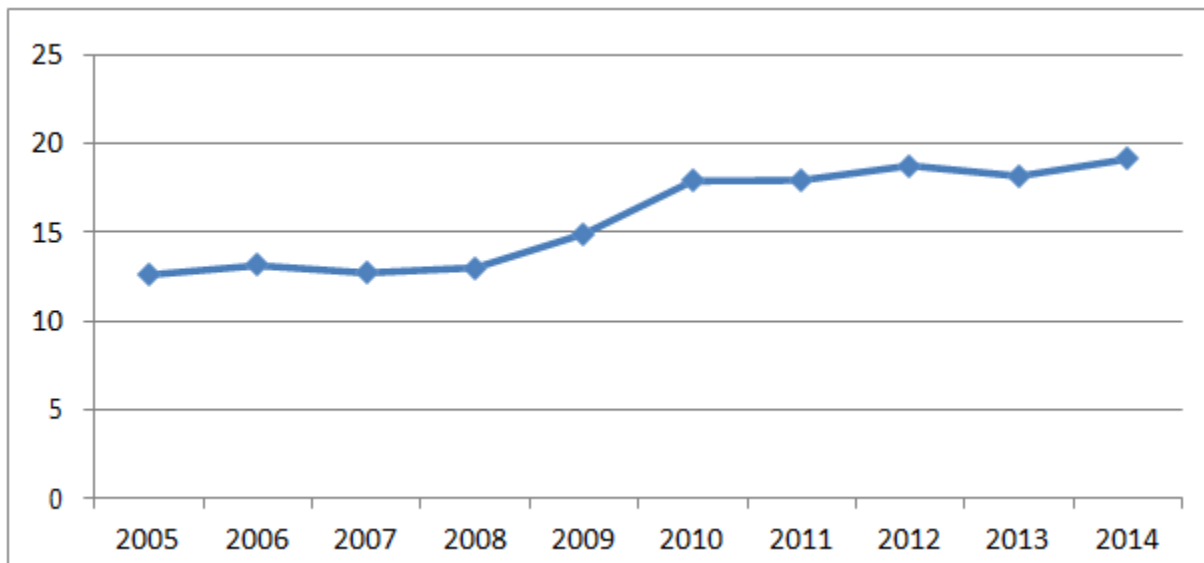
**Table 11: Export diversification index**

| Details      | Export diversification index |             |             | Manufacturing % GDP |              |              |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
|              | 2006                         | 2008        | 2010        | 2013                | 2014         | 2015         |
| Angola       | <b>6.30</b>                  | <b>6.32</b> | <b>6.34</b> | ND                  | ND           | ND           |
| Botswana     | NA                           | NA          | NA          | 6.48                | 5.99         | 6.34         |
| DRC          | <b>4.14</b>                  | <b>4.23</b> | <b>4.34</b> | 17.65               | 17.75        | 19.03        |
| Lesotho      | NA                           | NA          | NA          | 10.42               | 9.71         | ND           |
| Madagascar   | 3.86                         | 3.81        | 3.35        | 10.26               | 10.25        | 10.57        |
| Malawi       | <b>4.68</b>                  | <b>4.43</b> | <b>4.43</b> | 17.04               | 16.50        | 16.13        |
| Mauritius    | 3.23                         | 3.12        | 3.02        | 9.52                | 9.98         | 9.68         |
| Mozambique   | <b>4.89</b>                  | 3.93        | <b>4.13</b> | 11.97               | 10.65        | 9.19         |
| Seychelles   | <b>4.65</b>                  | <b>4.57</b> | <b>4.54</b> | 7.80                | 7.24         | ND           |
| South Africa | 2.08                         | 2.27        | 2.23        | 13.23               | 13.28        | 13.00        |
| Swaziland    | NA                           | NA          | NA          | 37.67               | 37.36        | 37.91        |
| Tanzania     | 2.60                         | 2.34        | 2.56        | 6.88                | 6.09         | 6.20         |
| Zambia       | <b>4.64</b>                  | <b>4.45</b> | <b>4.64</b> | 6.63                | 6.39         | 8.50         |
| Zimbabwe     | 3.19                         | 3.27        | 3.15        | 12.82               | 11.91        | 11.92        |
| <b>SADC</b>  | 4.02                         | 3.88        | 3.88        | <b>12.95</b>        | <b>12.55</b> | <b>13.50</b> |
| <b>World</b> | 3.52                         | 3.47        | 3.44        |                     |              |              |

Source: DFID-IMF diversification Toolkit: Export diversification database. Note: ND = no data; Bold entries = diversification level below SADC regional average.

The SADC RISDP required member states to increase intra-regional trade to at least 35% by 2008. At about 18% of total trade in 2014, the level of intra-SADC trade is still lower than the 2008 target (See Figure below). The UNCTAD (2009), and Yabu (2014) attributed low intra-SADC trade to the undiversified small SADC economies and inadequate and substandard transport and communication infrastructure, long customs procedures, and other logistical costs. Additionally, Chauvin and Gaulier (2002), attributed the low intra-SADC trade to the low degree of complementarity among SADC member states, pointing out the similarities in their export profiles, which are mainly based on primary commodities, as an obstacle to the growth of intra-SADC trade.

**Figure 2: Intra-SADC trade share**



Source: Authors own calculations from UN Comtrade database

The RISDP stipulated some macroeconomic convergence (MEC) targets to be met as a prerequisite to achieving deep integration in the SADC region. SADC member states were expected to meet a set of macroeconomic convergence criteria at three points in time over the period of ten years from 2008 to 2018. Table 22 below shows the primary MEC targets.

**Table 2: Primary SADC (MEC) targets as problem indicators**

| Description                   | 2008         | 2012 | 2018 |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------|------|
| Average annual Inflation rate | Single digit | 5%   | 3%   |
| Budget deficit % GDP          | ≤5%          | ≤3%  | ≤ 3% |
| Public Debt % GDP             | ≤60%         | ≤60% | ≤60% |

**Error! Reference source not found.** in the Appendix shows the SADC Primary Macroeconomic targets performance. Inflation and budget deficits are a challenge to most SADC member countries, where the majority of the countries have met the 2008 target (5%) and missed the 2012 target (3%) marginally. Countries such as Angola, Malawi and Zambia are still

struggling to satisfy the 2008 target as of 2015. SADC Countries' budget deficits satisfied the 2018 requirements by 2012 on average, however, by 2015, they deteriorated to the 2008 requirements of not more than 5% of GDP. Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia are the countries whose budget deficits have deteriorated significantly between 2012 and 2015, to even miss the 2008 requirement. On the other hand, most SADC member states satisfied the public debt targets requirements of not more than 60% of GDP, although debt levels have risen compared to 2012 levels. Only Malawi, Mozambique, and Seychelles still have public debt levels above the required level. Finally, the persistence of the problems discussed above require possible solutions, if the idea of a deeply integrated SADC is to be realized.

#### **4.2.2 Policy Stream**

The problems discussed in 4.21 above induced the search for appropriate solutions by policy entrepreneurs. The study found that SADC regional integration targets have a life of their own, and are being continuously advocated actively by interest groups or policy entrepreneurs (such as the NWGT), academics, and by policy participants within SADC governments that make up the SADC national and regional committees, and thus, the policy entrepreneurs in the SADC agenda setting and decision-making process. After the launch of the SADC FTA in 2008, the problems of overlapping membership and rules of origin, became an absolute obstacle to completing negotiations for a customs union scheduled for 2010. Thus, the SADC policy entrepreneurs proposed for the merging of the COMESA, EAC and SADC trade policies. This was aimed at harmonizing trade policies such as rules of origin, eliminating tariffs and non-tariff barriers and ensure that the three economic communities are integrated into on large market, and also solve the problem of overlapping membership.

Because of the infrastructure challenges to intra SADC trade, SADC policy entrepreneurs proposed for the implementation of cross-border infrastructure projects in energy, transport, information communications technologies (ICT), tourism, and postal services, meteorology and water, as the priority areas to improve trade facilitation and boost intra-regional trade. For instance, UNCTAD (2009), proposed for SADC transport sector to simplify and where possible standardize the documentation requirements, especially in the road transportation sector, and further recommended for the SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications, and Meteorology to be properly implemented. Additionally, SADC policy entrepreneurs acknowledged that SADC regional integration focused much on trade, and little attention was given to the industrial sector, thus, the reason for undiversified exports driven by primary products. After 2008, SADC committees heightened proposals to develop the industrial sector to accompany the regional trade policy goals.



Finally, SADC policy entrepreneurs proposals to review the SADC legal and institution framework, heightened especially, after the SADC Tribunal was suspended in 2010. They also proposed for the review of the rules of origin that were viewed to be too complex, and contributed to the low utilization of SADC preferences in some export products such as garments and textiles.

#### **4.2.3 Political Stream**

The ideological distribution in SADC institutions and changes in administration at national and regional level are the genesis of the politics in the SADC. There are several politics and paradoxes associated to the SADC decision-making process, given that SADC heads of state have to weigh the balance between the possible benefits and costs from each stage of regional integration, which reduces not only trade costs, but also reduces member states` sovereignty and even revenue losses.

Firstly, in addition to the lack of a consistent political willingness by heads of state that make up the Summit, the leadership role of the Summit (the Supreme body of the SADC) is not necessarily assumed by the persons (heads of state or Government) best qualified to guide the SADC agenda at any given period, implying that regional integration efforts may be ambiguous (weak or robust) depending on the qualities of the leader at a given period of time. Secondly, because the Summit cannot meet regularly, to address urgent binding matters, the effectiveness of the organization in achieving timely regional integration objectives is highly questionable. Thirdly, the SADC Treaty does not have provisions to make the binding decisions of the Summit part of the national legal systems in member countries. Failure by member countries to comply with the regional obligations may not have negative aftermath regarding membership status (Saurombe 2012). Therefore, regional obligations are considered as the best try policy instruments, and not rules-based policy instruments, with no negative aftermath on membership status for non-compliance<sup>27</sup>.

Additionally, the SADC Treaty does not have provisions for breaking an impasse when consensus cannot be reached for an agenda item. Thus, the use of consensus by the Summit and all the subsidiary organs to approve SADC policy makes the decision making process complex and paradoxical, since it gives a member veto on a given agenda item in order to protect its individual interests. Further, the secretariat and the council of ministers which is supposed to spearhead the implementation of the SADC agenda is incapacitated by the reluctance of member states to surrender national initiatives and embrace the idea of supra-national institutions that are very

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<sup>27</sup> Hartzenberg and Kalenga (2015): National policies and Regional Integration in the Southern African Community, WIDER Working Paper no. 056

critical to achieving deep integration.

#### **4.2.4 Policy Window**

Economic diversification, infrastructure, overlapping membership and rules of origin problems, policy proposals, and politics, opened windows of opportunity for the SADC policy entrepreneurs to merge the problems, policy proposals, and the SADC politics, to produce policy change.

The study found that the process of merging problems, policy proposals and politics in the SADC is spearheaded by the SADC national committees and the standing committees of senior officials, the sectoral, and cluster ministerial committees by influencing the SADC Council of ministers and eventually, the Summit, and thus acts as the policy entrepreneurs, who bring about a change in policy. For instance, the COMESA- EAC-SADC TFTA, was adopted in 2015 after six years of bargaining by the SADC policy entrepreneurs, especially, within SADC governments (national committees, standing committees of senior officials, the sectoral, and cluster ministerial committees), who wrote policy recommendations on the failed targets, and the way forward<sup>28</sup>. However, issues of the common external tariff among the three economic communities is still being actively advocated, thus, the window is still open for policy.

The SADC regional infrastructure development master plan has been advocated by policy entrepreneurs since 2007, who advocated for the establishment of a strategic framework to guide the development of seamless, cost-effective trans-boundary infrastructure based on six pillars consisting of energy, transport, information and communication technologies (ICT), meteorology, trans-boundary water resources and tourism (trans-frontier conservation areas). In 2012, the SADC regional infrastructure development master plan (RIDMP) was finally, adopted, and tailored for each of the six pillars<sup>29</sup>.

Further, Industrial development was recognized by SADC policy entrepreneurs as a key to solving the problem of diversification among SADC member states, and thus, through SADC national committees, standing committees of senior officials, the sectoral, and cluster ministerial committees convinced the Council of Ministers, hence, the Summit, to sign the SADC Industrial

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Hartzenberg & Kalenga (2015), Mapuva (2014), Kalenga (2012), Saurombe (2012), Ranganathan & Foster (2011), Mbao (2011), Economic Commission for Africa (2011), and Zyuulu (2009), Maleleka, D (2007), and Maleleka, D (2007).

<sup>29</sup> SADC 2012, Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan (RIDMP) and See <http://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-regional-infrastructure-development-master-plan-impleme/>

Development Policy Framework (IDPF) in 2014 (SADC 2014)<sup>30</sup>. Finally, the only attempt to review the legal and institution framework, was after the SADC Tribunal was suspended in 2010. At the 2014 SADC Summit, a new protocol was adopted and signed. Notable in the new protocol is a provision that, “the Tribunal’s jurisdictions became confined to interpreting the SADC Treaty and Protocols relating to disputes between member states” (Erasmus 2015). The rest of the legal and institutional framework and the rules of origin are still the same. Therefore, the window is still open with regards to the legal and institutional framework and the rules of origin review that could facilitate the progression of SADC regional integration agenda.

#### **4.3 Implications for Meeting the SADC Regional Integration Targets**

The problem of diversities in revenue sensitivity that has not been addressed, have a direct effect on the completion of the negotiations for a common external tariff/customs union, which depend entirely on the political willingness to embrace supranational institutions. Similarly the problem of the weak legal and institutional framework, and political fragility in the SADC region, is dependent on the political willingness. Additionally, the proposed policies on infrastructure, industrial development, and the COMESA-EAC- SADC TFTA, still require consistent political commitment in form of harmonization of regional and domestic policies, if their purpose is to be realized.

Therefore, the issue of political commitment should be addressed to overcome SADC economic cooperation and integration challenges, despite the achievements of policy entrepreneurs in pushing for the adoption of proposed policies. This can only be achieved through the review of the legal and institutional framework of the SADC, thus policy entrepreneurs should focus more on reviewing the legal and institution framework that is too weak to prompt SADC leaders to embrace supranational institutions. Hence, it is clear that the problem of inconsistent political commitment, which is linked to the rest of the problem set, is a major stumbling block to achieving deep integration in the SADC as stipulated in RISDP that required member states to meet the set targets between 2008 and 2018.

#### **5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The study addressed the policy agenda setting process in the SADC, in order to provide insights on the magnitude of the problem of inconsistent political commitment, which had been a persistent obstacle to achieving deep SADC cooperation and integration. The study utilized Kingdon’s MSF, which mirrors the garbage can and/or Kingdon’s primeval soup, while

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<sup>30</sup> See 2014, SADC industrial development policy framework at <https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/2408>.

accounting for the role policy participants using the four stages of ‘issue careers’.

The MSF, which relied on four stages issue careers to analyze the policy participants, clearly, showed that politicians at both regional and national level dominated the agenda setting process by being at the center of issue initiation, issue specification, issue expansion, and issue entrance, while technocrats, dominated issue initiation at national level, with input from the NWGT. Technocrats, have limited windows to expand trade policy issues, since the politicians can either adopt or reject the trade policy proposals. The study demonstrated that stakeholders outside government, had limited influence, due to irregular participation in trade policy-making, in addition to a lack of feedback, or mistrust by government, or lack of information flows, lack of essential skills and knowledge of some trade issue, and legal limitations, and/or time, financial and logistical constraints. Additionally, the media is also weak in influencing SADC regional trade policies, due to its lower coverage of regional integration issues. The study also found that given that member states are at liberty to divert from the adopted policies to pursue national interests, due to politicians preferences, and the fact that defaulting countries to the regional goals are not punished, achieving deep integration in the SADC is heavily dependent on the political willingness, despite the achievements of policy entrepreneurs in pushing for the adoption of the polices.

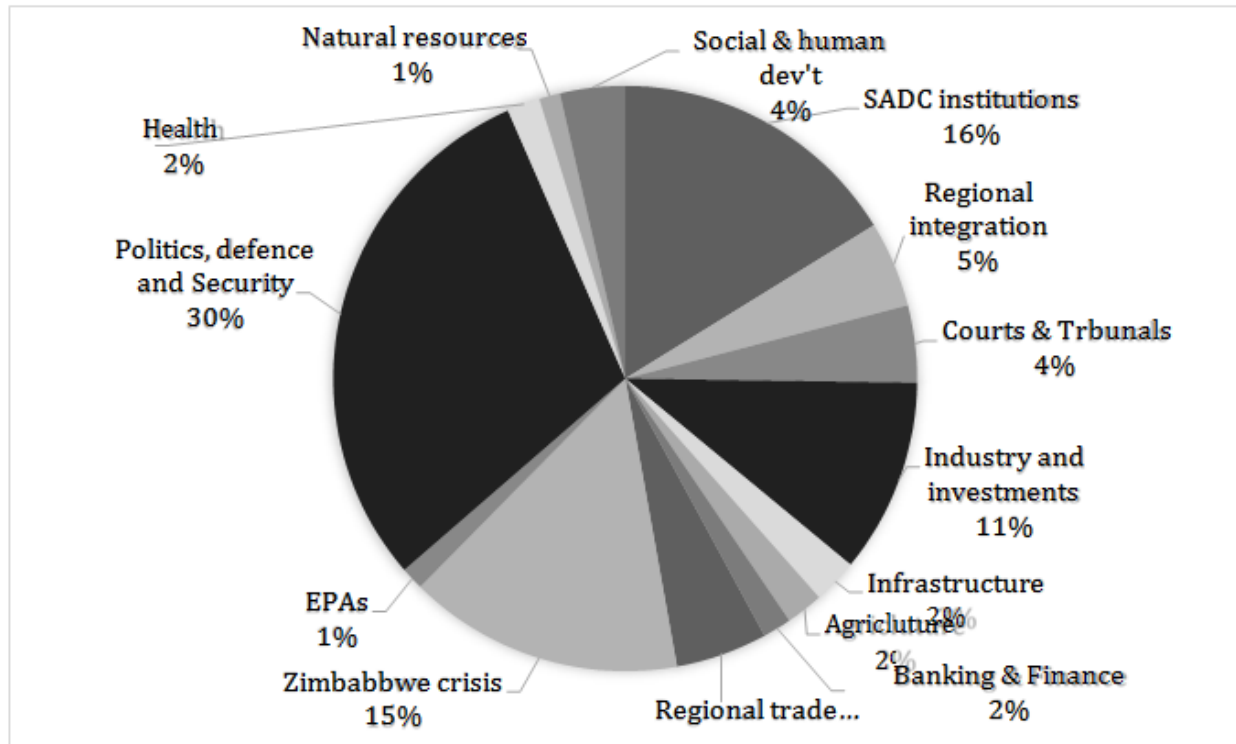
The study recommends that: the legal and institutional framework should be reviewed; SADC member states, should educate their citizens and even the politicians about the benefits of being part of the SADC club, through public discussions or SADC secretariat media; the parliamentary forum should be given legal powers to make binding decisions instead of just being a forum for discussions, so that parliamentarians can include SADC issues in their constituency developmental programs; and member states should take full responsibility of funding the secretariat and reduce the reliance on donors.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Media Coverage by Subject



Source: authors' own tabulations from newspaper articles

**Table 3: Primary SADC MEC Indicator Performance by 2012 and 2015**

| Details             | 2012                     |                |              | 2015                     |                |              |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------|
|                     | Average annual Inflation | Budget deficit | Public Debt  | Average annual Inflation | Budget deficit | Public Debt  |
| Angola              | <b>10.29</b>             | 4.59***        | 29.49***     | <b>10.28</b>             | -4.09*         | <b>62.33</b> |
| Botswana            | 7.53*                    | 0.79***        | 18.93***     | 3.04**                   | -1.55***       | 17.78***     |
| DRC                 | 2.13***                  | 1.81***        | 23.17***     | 1.05***                  | 1.91***        | 18.81***     |
| Lesotho             | 5.53*                    | 5.00***        | 40.33***     | 4.76**                   | 0.07***        | 59.97***     |
| Madagascar          | 5.71*                    | -2.61***       | 33.68***     | 7.40*                    | -3.69*         | 35.56***     |
| Malawi              | <b>21.30</b>             | -1.77***       | <b>77.49</b> | <b>21.86</b>             | <b>-5.94</b>   | <b>83.43</b> |
| Mauritius           | 3.85**                   | -1.84***       | 51.47***     | 1.29***                  | -3.42*         | 58.11***     |
| Mozambique          | 2.09***                  | -3.77*         | 39.94***     | 2.39***                  | <b>-5.97</b>   | <b>74.82</b> |
| Namibia             | 6.72*                    | -2.36***       | 24.55***     | 3.40**                   | <b>-5.89</b>   | 27.16***     |
| Seychelles          | 7.11*                    | 2.89***        | <b>82.54</b> | 4.04**                   | 1.98***        | <b>68.09</b> |
| South Africa        | 5.65*                    | -4.10*         | 40.89***     | 4.59**                   | -4.05*         | 50.06***     |
| Swaziland           | 8.94*                    | 3.39***        | 14.35***     | 4.96**                   | <b>-5.42</b>   | 17.39***     |
| Tanzania            | <b>16.00</b>             | -4.12*         | 29.15***     | 5.59*                    | -3.69*         | 40.55***     |
| Zambia              | 6.58*                    | -2.83***       | 24.91***     | <b>10.11</b>             | <b>-8.06</b>   | 52.95***     |
| Zimbabwe            | 3.72**                   | NA             | 56.73***     | -2.40***                 | NA             | 53.01***     |
| <b>SADC Average</b> | 7.54*                    | -0.35***       | 39.17***     | 5.49*                    | -3.42*         | 48.00***     |

Source: World Bank World development indicators and IMF WEO

Note: \*\*\*satisfy requirement for 2018, \*\* satisfy requirement for 2012, \* satisfy requirement for 2008, and bald text- missed the 2008 requirements. All values are in percentages.



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