



SADC REGIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

APRIL, 2020

#COVID19SADC



INTRODUCTION

Since its outbreak in December 2019, COVID-19 has spread exponentially, and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on 11 March 2020. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) recorded its first case of COVID-19 in early March, and since then, the numbers have been increasing. As of 15th April, 2020, fourteen (14) of the sixteen (16) SADC Member States have been affected by COVID-19 – Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

SADC recognises that, the effects of the coronavirus pandemic cut across many aspects of socio and economic spheres, resulting into diverse, and complex challenges, and devastating impacts.

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The impacts are across the world, and the SADC region has not been spared. The socio and economic impacts of COVID-19 in SADC may be unprecedented due to resource limitations, and inadequacies in health systems in many of the Member States.

The immediate expected impact is increased unplanned public health expenditure. Disruption of supply chains and demand side shocks, will significantly affect the commodity prices and result in weak foreign exchange, while the closures of schools, polytechnics, and universities will impact on the learners and youths in the region.

In addition to measures put in place by Member States, SADC has put, and will continue putting in place regional measures that are critical in responding to the COVID-19.

KEY ACTIONS TAKEN BY SADC MEMBER STATES AT THE NATIONAL LEVELS

- **Adoption of World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on COVID -19:** SADC Member States have adopted WHO guidelines on COVID-19, in terms of preparedness; coordination; planning and monitoring; surveillance, case investigation; infection prevention and control; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); risk communication and community engagement, as well as, guidance to schools, workplaces and institutions.
- **Implementation of national level interventions:** SADC Member States have undertaken various measures that include preparedness and response mechanisms; awareness programmes, suspension of inbound and outbound flights, suspension of business and tourism travel, set up of border and in-country testing centres; social distancing and cancellation of gatherings; adoption of self-isolation and mandatory quarantines for a minimum of 14 days; and treatment for those that test positive. Some Member States have lockdown measures, allowing only essential services to remain open.

SADC REGIONAL MEASURES

Ten (10) coordinated regional actions taken by SADC in response to COVID-19

- 1. Disaster Risk Management:** Member States have agreed to establish National Emergency Operations Centres to facilitate coordination of logistics and stockpiling for disasters at the national level, and to establish National Emergency Trust Funds and National Resource Mobilization Strategies to facilitate mobilization of resources for national disaster responses.
- 2. Suspension of regional face-to-face meetings and instead, utilizing modern technology such as Video conferences, Webinars and Skype Calls until such a time when the situation has been contained:** On 9th March 2020, SADC convened an extra-ordinary meeting of SADC Ministers of Health where existing knowledge and information on the COVID-19 outbreak was shared, and Member States were urged to put in place National Preparedness and Response Plans as well as contingency and emergency funds to address gaps in prevention, impact mitigation and other interventions. On 16 to 18th March, 2020 SADC convened the SADC Council of Ministers meeting via video conference and among others, the meeting deliberated on the implementation of SADC regional integration programmes and the region's response to the COVID-19. On 6th April, 2020 SADC convened an emergency SADC Council of Ministers meeting via video conference where the Ministers adopted regional Guidelines for the harmonisation and facilitation of movement of critical goods and services across SADC during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. Re-establishment and expansion of the Technical Committee for Coordinating and Monitoring the Implementation of the SADC Protocol on Health,** which has been meeting on a regular basis to advise the region on health and related matters, and other socio-economic matters related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4. Mobilisation of regional support towards containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, and mitigation of its socio-economic impact on the SADC region.** The regional resource mobilisation initiative builds on national initiatives, and is based on gaps identified by individual Member States to respond to the COVID-19 short to long-term needs. Immediate needs, include, resources to support SADC Member States in the acquiring of essential medicines, medical supplies and medical equipment, especially testing kits, Personal Protective Equipment and ventilators. To this effect, the SADC Secretariat is working with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).
- 5. The SADC Pooled Procurement Services for pharmaceuticals and medical supplies is being implemented** to provide sustainable availability and access to affordable and effective essential medicine and health commodities, and Member States have been encouraged to utilise this facility for the procurement of the needed supplies for prevention, treatment and control of COVID-19 and any other epidemics.
- 6. Adoption of guidelines on Harmonisation and Facilitation of Cross Border Transport Operations across the Region during the COVID-19.** The guidelines are to facilitate and ease the process of transporting essential goods and services within the region during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Member States have agreed to establish National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee (TTFC) or use similar body structures (comprising officials from the Ministries responsible for Transport, Health, Police/Army, and Trade) to coordinate the implementation of the guidelines, and resolve operational issues at borders or road blocks. In addition, a SADC Regional COVID-19 Trade and Transport Facilitation Cell (TTTFC) has been created at the SADC Secretariat to assist and coordinate Member States and Corridor Groups in implementing guidelines, and Member States can contact the TTFC Coordinator, Mr. Lovemore Bingandadi at lbingandadi@sadc.int or bingconsult@gmail.com. Telephone +267 71 828 493.

SADC REGIONAL MEASURES

7. **Partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).** To support SADC Member States in mitigating the effects of the coronavirus on education, and in ensuring the continuity of education and learning programmes, the SADC Secretariat has partnered with UNESCO on an initiative known as #LearningNeverStops. Through this partnership, the SADC Secretariat and UNESCO commit to work with SADC Member States, and other Global Coalition partners to provide support to Member States to ensure continuity of education under the hashtag #LearningNeverStops. Support will be provided to SADC countries to come up with and implement innovative and context appropriate solutions to provide education and learning remotely, while leveraging hi-tech, low-tech and no-tech approaches, and seek equitable solutions and universal access.
8. **Introduction of SADC Regional Status report on COVID 19,** which are produced and shared with Member States on a weekly basis with recommendations for consideration by Member States.
9. **Monitoring and analysing the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 on SADC economies.** The SADC Macroeconomic Subcommittee, in coordination with the SADC Secretariat, has been monitoring and analysing the impacts of the COVID-19 on SADC economies, and providing policy recommendations to Member States on a continuous basis.
10. **Daily updates on the status of COVID-19 in the region.** Daily updates on COVID-19 in the region are shared on the SADC website on: <https://www.sadc.int/issues/covid-19/> to facilitate sharing of information and experiences.

The SADC Secretariat commends the Governments of the Member States for their efforts in responding to the COVID-19, and calls upon everyone to play their part and to adhere to all measures being put in place by their Governments.

SADC Secretariat remains committed to the coordination of regional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and appeals for continued regional co-operation and solidarity in the efforts to contain and address the COVID-19 pandemic.

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1 REGION, 16 NATIONS WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE

