



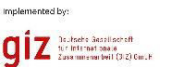
ESTABLISHING BASELINE VALUES ON SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM'S OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

DRAFT REPORT



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BACKGROUND

- The importance of the role of regional parliaments has increased in recent decades, esp. their ability to strengthen the agenda for regional econ devt & integration.
- However, they require efficient & effective admin support, research & infor services, legal & specialized technical aspects, e.g. GBV, rule of law, human rights, gender equality etc – hence the Secretariat.
- The Programme on Strengthening National-Regional Linkages in SADC (SNRL) seeks to strengthen the capacity of the SADC PF in various respects.
- Including implementation of the transformation roadmap towards a Regional Parliament.



OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The main purpose of this assignment was to establish the baselines for the following aspects of the intervention logic of the project:

(a) Impact indicator: Improvement in parliamentary effectiveness and performance by 30%.

(b) Outcome Indicator 1.1: SADC PF's operational efficiency is improved by 15%.

The baselines will be the basis for implementation capacity development measures for the SADC PF in line with its current Strategic Plan 2024-2028.



METHODOLOGY

- Mixed methods approach that utilized both quantitative & qualitative data to determine the operational efficiency & effectiveness of the SADC PF Secretariat.
- The efficiency & effectiveness of the Secretariat was partly measured in relation to the extent to which the activities implemented help in fulfilling the PF's mission.
- Adopted & deployed the IPU Guiding Framework for Developing Indicators for Democratic Parliaments.
- Performance indicators of concern in this assignment were already clearly defined as shown under the objectives section.
- Selection of key functions of the Secretariat to consider for each indicator was done consultatively with key stakeholders.



METHODOLOGY CONT'

- **Desk review** of critical documents that shed light on key functions relevant to the indicators & how they are currently being executed by the Secretariat
- **E.g.** SADC PF Strategy, 2024-2028, SOPs, HRM policies, program results frameworks, annual work plans & reports, financial mgt systems & program monitoring reports, etc.
- **In-depth KIs & FGDs** with purposively selected stakeholders to discuss the baseline values & key measurement dimensions for each of the two indicators – Vic Falls PF conference in June 2025.
- **Purposive sampling** was done to focus on respondents who have sufficient knowledge of the issues under consideration & the day-to-day operations of the SADC PF Secretariat rather than random sampling.
- **Semi-structured questionnaires** were used to gather primary data.



METHODOLOGY CONT'

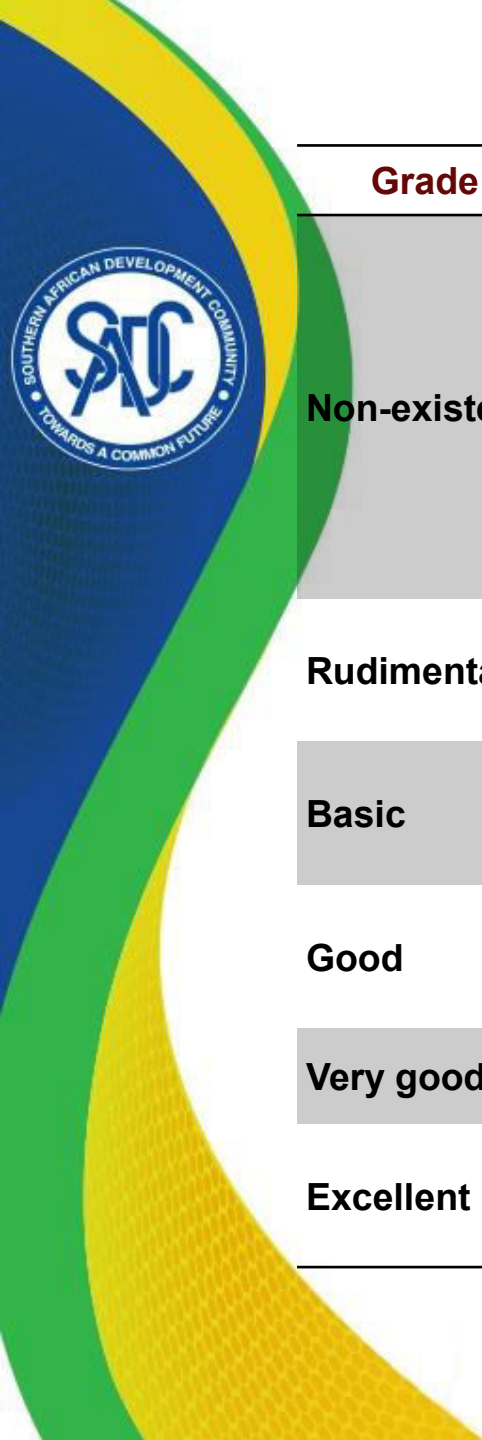
- **A total of 26 Key Stakeholders consulted, including:**
 - ✓ The SADC PF Former Executive Committee members;
 - ✓ Staff members of the Secretariat (10);
 - ✓ Members of the SADC PF Standing Committees;
 - ✓ The Regional Parliamentary Model Laws Oversight Committee;
 - ✓ The Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus;
- The full list of interviewees was agreed upon with SADC PF & SNRL – the Secretariat facilitated most of the appointments.
- Focused on determining the baseline percentages & the performance measurement dimensions for each indicator, qualitatively & quantitatively.
- Will also sought to understand the full context, challenges & successes of the SADC PF Secretariat's work that contribute to the achievement of the indicators of interest.



QUANTITATIVE SCORING



Grade	Descriptor
Non-existent	This is the lowest grade, corresponding to 0 on a scale from 0 to 5. The object of the assessment criterion simply does not exist in the organization. Note that “Non-existent” is not the same as “Not applicable”. In some rare cases, the object of an assessment criterion might be “Not applicable” because the legal framework says that this object cannot exist. In most cases, however, there will be no legal obstacle to the object described in the assessment criterion. It could exist, but does not, for instance because organization has not decided to do it or does not have the resources to do it. In this case, the organization should select “Non-existent”.
Rudimentary	This corresponds to 1 on a scale from 0 to 5. The object of the assessment criterion exists but in a rudimentary form. It is not an established part of the organization’s capacity and operational practices.
Basic	This corresponds to 2 on a scale from 0 to 5. The object of the assessment criterion exists in a basic form. It is part of the organization’s capacity and operational practices but is not yet well-developed.
Good	This corresponds to 3 on a scale from 0 to 5. The object of the assessment criterion is an established part of the organization’s capacity and operational practices and is somewhat developed.
Very good	This corresponds to 4 on a scale from 0 to 5. The object of the assessment criterion is a well-established part of the organization’s capacity and operational practices.
Excellent	This corresponds to 5 on a scale from 0 to 5. The object of the assessment criterion is a highly developed part of the organization’s capacity and operational practices, with very little obvious room for improvement.



SCORING

Grades awarded separately for each assessment criterion:

- To calculate a grade at the dimension level, added together the numerical grades for the assessment criteria within that dimension & divide by the number of assessment criteria.
- At the indicator level, add together the numerical grades for the dimensions within that indicator & divide by the number of dimensions under consideration.
- Open & constructive discussions held during KIIs leading to common agreement on grades for each dimension.
- Generated some qualitative analysis that helped in percentage-qualifying narratives & prioritizing needed capacity strengthening efforts.



FINDINGS

- Noted that the Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028 already commits it to achieve a 20% improvement in operational efficiency & transparency as measured through KPIs & Audit reports by 2028.
- The indicators for this objective include enhanced planning processes; strengthened resource management & improved governance structures.
- The Strategic Plan also seeks to increase staff engagement to 80% through professional devt programs, a supportive work env & career growth opportunities.
- Such commitments reflect the Secretariat's awareness, aspirations & priorities for improving its performance using various entry-points.
- These commitments also resonate with the objectives of the SNRL Programme, which supports regional parliamentary structures & civil society networks in various respects.



FINDINGS CONT'

- A 2019 KPMG assessment of the Secretariat's governance & internal control processes provides key insights on the Secretariat's levels of performance at that time that are also relevant to this assessment - overlapping.
- That assessment focused on seven measurement dimensions as follows:
 - ✓ Previous organisational assessments.
 - ✓ Management and organisation.
 - ✓ Risk Management.
 - ✓ Anti-corruption.
 - ✓ Audit.
 - ✓ Procurement.
 - ✓ Financial management.
- We revisited all these during the 2025 assessment.



FINDINGS CONT'

- Findings of the KPMG assessment in 2019 concluded that:
 - (a) The Secretariat had adequately documented org procedures in existing manuals & covering governance, procurement, finance & admin, HR & M&E.
 - (b) The Secretariat had a staff team with the requisite skills & competences to deliver its mandate.
 - (c) There had not been a significant turnover in employees during the previous two (2) years.
 - (d) The Secretariat met its operational costs using contributions from MS, donor funding supplemented.
- The findings by KPMG are consistent with the findings of the 2025 baseline % assessment.



FINDINGS CONT'

- The KPMG assessment also identified the need for the Secretariat to enhance its procurement procedures by aligning them to international best practices.
- Procurement procedures that were not consistently adhered to & failure to demonstrate that the org obtains value for money in its procurements.
- Lack of awareness among SADC PF staff of anti-fraud & anti-corruption policies & whistleblowing procedures, which could lead to fraud, bribery & corruption going unreported
- The Accounting Policies & Procedures not consistently adhered to, resulting in some expenditure not being adequately supported by necessary documents.
- Most of these risks have since been addressed to a satisfactory level, with more efficient & risk-mitigation measures now in place & risk-awareness has been raised among staff.
- Anti-corruption & whistleblowing policies & procedures have now been implemented & properly socialized among staff members.



FINDINGS CONT'

- At least **26 areas of strength** of the Secretariat recorded during our KIIs, e.g.:
 - It has several normative frameworks for domestication by MSs that directly feed into the regional integration agenda - *“the model laws are a game-changer, they have given the Secretariat more clout & respect among the MS”*.
 - *“The Secretariat has become a one-stop shop for MPs in the region by drafting needed documents”* e.g., commissioning research on pertinent issues & best practices.
 - The Secretariat has been stable for many years, garnering a lot of experience & expertise.
 - *“The Secretariat has enormous regional convening power which improves its legitimacy”*.
 - A robust partnership engagement matrix mandate – now the people know the Secretariat
 - Repeatedly received clean unqualified financial audits for many years.
 - Deliberately focuses on what Parliaments already seek to do – alignment of priorities.



Proposed areas of improvement

About **14 areas of improvement** raised, e.g.,

- Financial resource limitations, MS contributions insufficient & have not changed over a long time - a perennial challenge.
- Several positions vacant, which suggests that the Secretariat is not operating with an optimal number of staff - Current staff coping but they are over-worked.
- Option to apply for more donor funding & use the staff seconded by MSs to close evident staffing gaps.
- The Secretariat has relied a lot on online meetings, this is not ideal in terms of full participation.
- Some regional protocols are not binding: depend on MS decisions to implement - Lack of enforcement makes it difficult to ensure that MSs do what they promise.
- Transformation into a regional parliament will require new skills to meet new priorities. Need to prepare for the transition.



QUANTITATIVE RATINGS

- Based on the final calculations made, the overall baseline percentage for the Impact Indicator on *30% improvement in Parliamentary Effectiveness and Performance* was at **81.3%**.
- For the Outcome Indicator on *15% Improvement of SADC PF's operational efficiency*, the overall baseline percentage was at **76.9%**.
- Note that most of the measurement dimensions under consideration for both indicators were scored above 75%.
- This suggests that the Secretariat is performing well in the dimensions considered even though there is still room for improvement.



Indicator: 30% Improvement in Effectiveness & Performance



Measurement dimension	Score out of 130 points & %	Justification
Overall effectiveness of internal workings of the Secretariat, including its policies and systems	105 (80.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ SADC PF Secretariat deploys an operational model where adjustments are made as soon as a challenge is identified, with appropriate policies being promulgated and enforced. ✓ There are clear operational guidelines and systems in place, including anti-corruption policies. ✓ “The Secretariat has a small number of staff members, but they punch above their weight, most of their systems are efficient and very responsive to MP/ client demands in a timely manner”. ✓ The financial clearance system is simple and transparent – staff members know exactly who to talk to when they need something, even the Secretary General is always available – open door policy. ✓ There is strong documentation of procedures and systems. However, there is always room to improve. For example, they still need to digitize the human resources management system.



Indicator: 30% Improvement in Effectiveness & Performance

SADC PF efforts on domestication of protocols and SADC policies (model Laws) by SADC Parliaments

102
(78.5%)

- ✓ The Secretariat has done very well on this - the MPs have been capacitated fully & the communities appreciate.
- ✓ The Secretariat depends on the MPs so their achievements are significant because the MPs can be bureaucratic. But the Secretariat still gets the job done.
- ✓ Model laws were ground-breaking & a model for the whole continent rather than just SADC region. *“The MPs are not working in confusion anymore, they know exactly what to do because they have been fully capacitated”*.
- ✓ Through advocacy the Secretariat has advanced the domestication of regional protocols, with relevant debates being tabled in MS Parliaments.
- ✓ However, outcomes are mainly based on national decisions & priorities rather than the efforts of the Secretariat.
- ✓ The Secretariat expects too much from MSs, they should put more pressure, they should not expect people to be good and do what needs to be done voluntarily.
- ✓ In some instances, domestication has not happened because of cultural barriers – the law contradicts national culture and laws, e.g., LGBTQ, Abortion etc., are very sensitive untouchable topics in some countries.



Indicator: 30% Improvement in Effectiveness & Performance

Effectiveness in engaging the public, MPs and CSOs

108
(83.1%)

- ✓ The Secretariat uses a variety of outreach methods to keep stakeholders informed, good r/ships have been developed with mainstream media houses & are also used for information dissemination.
- ✓ The Secretariat takes the lead in organizing public hearings. They are very engaging through the public hearings, online webinars, capacitation of MPs and they are readily available.
- ✓ A lot of sectoral collaboration is demonstrated frequently, including bringing experts on various subject matter to come & present to the MPs.
- ✓ *“The Secretariat has performed beyond expectation – its visibility has increased through the researchers who are on the ground in different Member States”.*
- ✓ Technology has been leveraged to reach a bigger group of stakeholders.
- ✓ The Secretariat has done so well to the extent that other partners in the sector now use us to reach the MPs & MSs.
- ✓ There is room to improve public hearings – limited capacity to assist Member States who just have to act in good faith; online training and engagements are not as effective as face-to-face engagements.
- ✓ The Secretariat does not have the kind of access to the public that MPs have, this limits their platforms for consultation. Some communities in the region still do not know the Forum.



Indicator: 30% Improvement in Effectiveness & Performance

Development and dissemination of key regional policy documents and knowledge products

110
(84.6%)

- ✓ The Secretariat has done very well on this dimension, e.g. once the model laws were developed, they did an awareness campaign across the whole region. National legislation was subsequently reviewed in many Member States to align with the model laws.
- ✓ Deliberate efforts have been made to disseminate policy documents and information; it is not by chance. Public hearings provide the opportunity to disseminate information and documents as well.
- ✓ SADC PF was not known in the region for a long time, now they have a communications person and an active website with a repository of documents needed. They also work with other CSOs and resource people.
- ✓ There are areas of improvement, all knowledge-products should be shared with national parliaments. The website is accessible and contains all information so at least they are covered.





Capacity to effectively translate SADC PF Plenary resolutions into specific outputs and outcomes

104
(80%)

- ✓ The Secretariat is very good when it comes to moving Plenary resolutions towards action, they do not waste time. An implementation action matrix is made to track and follow-up MS actions.
- ✓ They have smartly created a tradition of report-backs in Plenary to explain what each MS has done to respond to the resolutions. It was a gap in the past.
- ✓ The Secretariat plans plenary meetings meticulously and ensures that MSs are named-and-shamed through the reporting back mechanism.
- ✓ There is always room for improvement, for instance, the validation of MS reports to Plenary is not done – there is need for a tracking mechanism to ascertain what is happening on the ground.
- ✓ Member States are not homogenous – there is a need to nudge those lagging behind in adoption of regional protocols and make progress – country visits and support may be more impactful rather than waiting for plenary reports – need for ongoing support to Member States.
- ✓ Some Member States embrace and implement resolutions and others disregard them because of sovereignty if it suits them. Thus, all information is provided by the Secretariat, but action depends on the Member States themselves.
- ✓ Need for follow-ups to ensure that Member States have done what they promised, with tangible up-to-date evidence being presented – current evidence.

OVERALL BASELINE % (81.3%)



Improvement of SADC PF's operational efficiency by 15%, on a scale of 0 – 5

Measurement dimension	Score out of 50 & %	Justification
Internal org structure, policies & systems	43 (86%)	✓ The Secretariat operates efficiently and effectively even though it is understaffed due to unfilled positions - this leads to overworking of the current staff members, which might also result in sub-optimal performance if the current staff members left the organization.
Adequacy of HR & technical expertise	32 (64%)	✓ Several positions are vacant at the Secretariat due to resource limitations, with some staff members serving two different standing committees. For now, TWGs and secondments have been used to augment the skills base.
Availability & use of ICTs & knowledge mgt processes	39 (78%)	✓ The IT department is currently efficient. An off-site backup facility was needed, and this has now been established. However, there is an expressed need for at least one more staff member to backstop the current IT officer.



Improvement of SADC PF's operational efficiency by 15%, on a scale of 0 – 5

Financial mgt systems	41 (82%)	✓ The Secretariat has received clean unqualified audits for many years. Policies are in place for anti-corruption and whistleblowing. The Finance Officers visit Member States to sit and discuss financial management systems, transparency and accountability.
Responsiveness to MS requests	39 (78%)	✓ The Secretariat responds to the Member State requests in a timely manner whenever they receive the requests. There have not been any documented dissatisfaction in this regard.
Procurement & HR processes	41 (82%)	<p>✓ Robust procurement and HR policies, systems and guidelines are in place. However, it would be helpful if the procurement function was separated from HR to make the workload more manageable for the staff members. For now, staff shortages affect the department.</p> <p>✓ There is a need to purchase an automated procurement system that will make the Secretariat's work easier and more efficient, currently the process is overloaded with paperwork.</p>
Audit & risk	34 (68%)	✓ An Internal Auditor has been recruited, and a Risk Register was established. External audits are conducted regularly, and all of them have been clean. The Secretariat seeks for excellence by addressing any gaps in financial management systems as soon as they are identified.
Overall baseline %	76.9%	



DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ Results show that the Secretariat has firmly establish itself in Southern Africa as a key institution that others wish to partner with when addressing regional devt issues.
- ❑ It has garnered the social capital, goodwill, technical expertise & areas of competitive adv that should continue to be leveraged to effectively drive the regional integration agenda - However, there is always room for improvement.
- ❑ Need to address perennial staffing shortages that could lead to staff burnout – consider offering short-term contracts to new staff so that the org is not tied to funding salaried positions for longer periods when the funding is not guaranteed.
- ❑ Tailored interventions for promoting meaningful work-life-balance & employee wellness are recommended.



DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

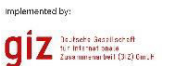
- ❑ The reputation of clean audits & financial probity should be guarded jealously & maintained - further strengthen internal financial controls, regular audits & financial oversight & ensuring adequate checks & balances within the Secretariat.
-
- ❑ Mobilizing resources in partnership with like-minded institutions to strengthen the business case & increase success rate of funding applications – A Business Devt Officer is needed.

- ❑ Advocate for increased financial support from Member Parliaments as the transformation process unfolds.



Conclusion

- ❑ The respective baseline percentages of 81.4% & 76.9% demonstrate the currently impressive operational efficiency, effectiveness & capacity of the Secretariat.
- ❑ Nevertheless, there are specific areas for improvement that were also articulated.
- ❑ It is commendable that the Secretariat addressed the gaps identified by the KPMG assessment in 2019, hence it scored very high on various dimensions in 2025.
- ❑ When the SADC PF becomes a fully-fledged Regional Parliament, there might be need to re-assess the Secretariat's institutional readiness & fitness-for-purpose.
- ❑ That will enable implementation of other appropriate capacity strengthening interventions.





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