



SADC REGIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Global and SADC regional outlook of COVID-19 Pandemic;
interactions between COVID-19, HIV/AIDS and TB, and its
Impact on Economic, Energy and Natural Resources Sectors

Bulletin No. 8

#COVID19SADC



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ABOUT SADC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is an organisation founded and maintained by countries in southern Africa that aim to further the socio-economic, political and security cooperation among its Member States and foster regional integration in order to achieve peace, stability and wealth. The Member States are: Angola, Botswana, Union of Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Bulletin 8 of the SADC Response to COVID-19 covers a number of key aspects on the COVID-19 pandemic. The report highlights some key global updates on treatment trials that are currently underway. The Bulletin further provides guidance and updates on the release of patients from isolation as well as guidance on breastfeeding for mothers who are suspected or confirmed COVID-19, which will be useful for Member States.

The report continues to place emphasis on the importance of testing, given the Continental Initiative on the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT) which Member States are urged to implement to be able to Test, Trace and Treat COVID-19 cases. Related to this, we present a case study on the interactions between COVID-19, HIV/AIDS, TB and other diseases based on data from the Western Cape Province in the Republic of South Africa whose results have been published widely to explain these disease interactions.

The region continues to take stock of the impacts posed by the pandemic on different aspects of the region's economies and how Member States can re-build and implement post COVID-19 recovery strategies. Health systems have been impacted significantly, the shortage of test kits and other supplies continue to be a challenge across the majority of Member States. In a similar vein the economies of the SADC region have suffered significantly due to the contraction in economic activity and overstretched public finances, coupled with increased public debt.

The energy sector is one sector that has been hardest hit. With reduced economic activity, the demand for energy such as electricity, gas and oil has been at its lowest, as businesses and activities in industry have ground to a halt. As a result, companies generating energy, have suffered a serious slump. The region continues to observe challenges in the transport sector, especially cross border movement of goods and services, this has continued to delay delivery of goods and services to final destination. It is encouraging to note however that, these issues are being addressed through the implementation of the SADC Guidelines on Movement of Goods and Services across the region during COVID-19. The report provides some key recommendations which Member States can consider for implementation;

Key Recommendations

Health

- Member States are being called on to coordinate, communicate, collaborate, and cooperate to support the PACT Initiative to control COVID-19 in Africa.
- Member States are urged to adapt the recommended guidelines on criteria for releasing COVID-19 patients from isolation as well as the guide on breastfeeding for mothers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 as a reference, in order to address the emerging health issues as they arise.
- Member States are urged to note the disease interactions between HIV, TB, COVID-19 and other diseases and ensure that caution is taken to ensure strengthening of health systems to ensure that patients living with these pre-existing conditions are well managed at health facilities to reduce mortality incidence.

Economic and Financial Sectors

- Member States are urged to ensure that Monetary policies remain accommodative where inflation pressures are low, in order to maintain financial sector stability.
- Member States are urged to implement structural reforms to put their fiscal positions on a path consistent with debt sustainability
- As the economies start to recover, Member States are urged to shift policy focus from broad fiscal support to more affordable, targeted policies.
- Member States are urged to increase investment in, and adopt renewable energy technologies, in keeping with the SAPP's Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy, as part of their economic stimulus and recovery plans.
- Member States are urged to use the opportunity to invest in improving their national grids.

Natural Resources and Conservation Sector

- Member States are urged to increase joint Transboundary Conservation activities to complement efforts in the region and increase effectiveness against illegal activities.



1. GLOBAL OUTLOOK

1.1 Update on hydroxychloroquine use to treat Covid-19

Based on evidence from the Solidarity trial, UK's Recovery trial and a Cochrane review of other evidence, WHO announced that the hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) arm of the Solidarity Trial to find an effective COVID-19 treatment was being stopped. "Solidarity" is an international clinical trial to help find an effective treatment for COVID-19, launched by the World Health Organization and partners.

Data from Solidarity (including the French Discovery trial data) and the recently announced results from the UK's Recovery trial both showed that **hydroxychloroquine does not result in the reduction of mortality of hospitalised COVID-19 patients, when compared with standard of care.**

Until there is sufficient evidence, WHO cautions against physicians and medical associations recommending or administering these unproven treatments to patients with COVID-19 or people self-medicating with them. **WHO is concerned by reports of individuals self-medicating with chloroquine and causing themselves serious harm.**

1.2 Treating critically ill COVID-19 patients with Dexamethasone

The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes the initial clinical trial results from the United Kingdom (UK) that show dexamethasone, a corticosteroid, can be lifesaving for patients who are critically ill with COVID-19. For patients on ventilators, the treatment was shown to reduce mortality by about one third, and for patients requiring only oxygen, mortality was cut by about one fifth, according to preliminary findings shared with WHO. The benefit was only seen in patients seriously ill with COVID-19, and was not observed in patients with milder disease.

This is the first treatment to be shown to reduce mortality in patients with COVID-19 requiring oxygen or ventilator support. "This is great news and I congratulate the Government of the UK, the University of Oxford, and the many hospitals and patients in the UK who have contributed to this lifesaving scientific breakthrough," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Dexamethasone is a steroid that has been used since the 1960s to reduce inflammation in a range of conditions, including inflammatory disorders and certain cancers. It has been listed on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines since 1977 in multiple formulations, and is currently off-patent and affordably available in most countries.

1.3 Recommendations on breastfeeding for mothers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19

WHO recommends that mothers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be encouraged to initiate or continue breast-feeding. Mothers should

be counselled that the benefits of breastfeeding substantially outweigh the potential risks for transmission.

Mother and infant should be enabled to remain together while rooming-in throughout the day and night and to practice skin-to-skin contact, including kangaroo mother care, especially immediately after birth and during establishment of breastfeeding, whether they or their infants have suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

1.4 New updated Criteria for releasing COVID-19 patients from isolation

On 27 May 2020, WHO published updated interim guidance on the clinical management of COVID-19, and provided updated recommendations on the criteria for discharging patients from isolation. The updated criteria reflect recent findings that patients whose symptoms have resolved may still test positive for the COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2) by RT-PCR for many weeks.

Despite this positive test result, these patients are not likely to be infectious and therefore are unlikely to be able to transmit the virus to another person. This scientific brief provides the rationale for the changes made to the clinical management of COVID-19 guidance, based on recent scientific evidence.

These criteria apply to all COVID-19 cases regardless of isolation location or disease severity. Criteria for discharging patients from isolation (i.e., discontinuing transmission-based precautions) without requiring retesting is as follows:

- For symptomatic patients: 10 days after symptom onset, plus at least 3 additional days without symptoms (including without fever and without respiratory symptoms)
- For asymptomatic cases: 10 days after positive test for COVID-19

For example, if a patient had symptoms for two days, then the patient could be released from isolation after 10 days + 3 = 13 days from date of symptom onset; for a patient with symptoms for 14 days, the patient can be discharged (14 days + 3 days) = 17 days after date of symptom onset; for a patient with symptoms for 30 days, the patient can be discharged (30+3=) 33 days after symptom onset).

Note: Countries may choose to continue to use testing as part of the release criteria. If so, the initial recommendation of two negative PCR tests at least 24 hours apart can be used

1.5 Global epidemiological summary by 27 June, 2020

Situation in numbers (by WHO Region)		
Total (new cases in last 24 hours)		
Globally	9 653 048 cases (179 316)	491 128 deaths (6 866)
Africa	268 102 cases (9 350)	5 673 deaths (109)
Americas	4 816 794 cases (106 867)	238 762 deaths (5 134)
Eastern Mediterranean	1 006 279 cases (18 745)	22 964 deaths (500)
Europe	2 638 903 cases (18 632)	196 169 deaths (621)
South-East Asia	710 455 cases (24 263)	20 139 deaths (488)
Western Pacific	211 774 cases (1 459)	7 408 deaths (14)



2. SADC REGION OUTLOOK

The SADC region continues to experience an increase in cases in a number of Member States. The table below provides a synopsis of the situation in the SADC Member States as at 1 July 2020.

- Being at an advanced age
- Living with diabetes, as well as living with kidney, cardiac, respiratory and liver diseases

Country	Confirmed Cases	Total Number of death	Recoveries	Active Cases	Cases per 1million population
Angola	291	15	97	179	9
Botswana	227	1	28	17	97
Comoros	303	7	200	96	349
DRC	7189	176	2317	4696	80
Eswatini	840	11	418	411	724
Lesotho	35	0	11	24	16
Madagascar	2303	22	1006	1275	83
Malawi	1265	16	260	989	66
Mauritius	341	10	326	5	268
Mozambique	903	6	248	649	29
Namibia	285	0	24	261	112
Seychelles	81	0	11	70	824
South Africa	159333	2749	76025	80559	2686
Tanzania	509	21	183	305	9
Zambia	1632	30	1348	254	89
Zimbabwe	605	7	166	432	41
TOTAL SADC	176142	3071	82668	90222	

Source : SADC Member States Data

2.1 Africa CDC launches the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT)

Testing is critically important in the response to COVID-19. In order to increase continental testing efforts and reduce COVID-19 transmission in Africa, Africa CDC has launched the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing: Test, Trace, Treat. PACT will mobilize experts, community workers, supplies and other resources to TEST, TRACE and TREAT COVID-19 cases in a timely manner to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the Africa continent. Anchored on the African Union Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak, PACT will ultimately help prevent transmission and deaths, and minimize the social and economic harm associated with COVID-19. It is recommended that Member States coordinate, communicate, collaborate, and cooperate to support the PACT Initiative to control COVID-19 in Africa.

2.2 The Interactions Between COVID-19 and HIV and TB: the case of the Western Cape Province in the RSA

When the early cases of COVID-19 were reported in South Africa, it was important to establish which populations would be at greatest risk to COVID-19 given the country's demographics and comorbidity profile which is largely HIV /AIDS and TB. Experiences in other countries had shown a number of risk factors that had previously been identified and were known, these include;

- Being overweight
- Recently diagnosed with cancer
- Undergone one or multiple organ transplants

However, South Africa has HIV and TB populations that are unique to the country and it was therefore important to collate information on how these particular risk factors were likely to play out with respect to COVID-19.

Using data from the Provincial Health Data Centre (PHDC), which collects data from across different parts of the provincial health system i.e emergency services, dispensaries and laboratories, the Western Cape Department of Health (the Western Cape is currently the most affected Province in the RSA) was able to determine whether patients suffer from any of the identified and possible (TB and HIV) comorbidities. The data set was for 3.5 million active patients in the provincial health system. The findings from the data analysis revealed the following;

- **Age:** patients at an advanced age are at an increased risk of COVID-19.
- **Non-communicable diseases:** patients living with diseases such as diabetes are at increased risk of COVID-19 and this risk increases for those who have poor control of the disease. There are also increased risks for patients with high blood pressure, as well as those with chronic kidney disease. The results show that there are greater risks associated with other comorbidities such as diabetes and high blood pressure and it can therefore be concluded that there are documented disease interactions between HIV, TB, COVID-19 and other diseases and caution should be taken to ensure that patients living with these pre-existing conditions are not



exposed to COVID-19 as well as to ensure that they are well managed at the point of care.

- Tuberculosis: Patients currently living with TB are 2.5 times likely to die of COVID-19 than those without. Patients who previously had TB are also at risk of COVID-19 death, although at a lower risk than those currently living with TB.
- HIV/AIDS: HIV-positive patients are 2.75 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than HIV negative-patients.

Given the number of risk factors that can contribute to a patient dying of COVID-19, it is incredibly difficult to pin-point one particular factor as having been the cause of a patient's susceptibility to death. In some instances, it is a combination of more than one factor i.e. a diabetic patient may also be overweight.

Source: Western Cape Provincial Health Department; RSA June 2020

3. IMPACT FROM THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

As the pandemic unfolds and the adverse effects of the restrictive measures filter through the economy, there is a global consensus that the economic downturn for 2020 will be worse off than forecasted earlier in the year. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a more negative impact on economic activity in the first half of 2020 than anticipated, and the recovery is projected to be more gradual than previously anticipated. According to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook Update for June 2020, the global economy is projected to contract by 4.9 per cent in 2020, 1.9 percentage points worse than the April, 2020 World Economic Outlook (WEO) forecast. In 2021 the global economy is projected to recover with an estimated growth of 5.4 per cent. Overall, this would leave 2021 GDP some 6.5 percentage points lower than in the pre-COVID-19 projections of January 2020.

As the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns have become more severe, many governments have stepped up their emergency lifelines to protect people, preserve jobs, and prevent bankruptcies. The steep contraction in economic activity and fiscal revenues, along with the sizable fiscal support, has further stretched public finances, with global public debt projected to reach more than 100 per cent of GDP this year.

For Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and SADC regions, the contraction in 2020 is now expected to be stronger than envisaged in April 2020 reflecting a weaker external environment and measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. The external environment less favorable associated with weak global economic growth has resulted in the collapse of global travel, and tourism flows, have grounded to a halt, remittances are expected to fall by about 20 per cent; and the external financing conditions remain tight despite some easing in recent weeks, and commodity prices remain weak.

The SSA regional economy is projected to contract by 3.2 per cent in 2020, which is 1.6 percentage points deeper than projected in April. Tourism-dependent economies, oil-exporting countries, and other commodity exporters have seen larger downward revisions. Growth in SSA is projected to recover only gradually assuming that the pandemic abates and lockdowns ease in the second half of 2020. In 2021, regional growth is projected at 3.4 per cent in 2021, which is 0.6 percentage points below the April 2020 projection.

The SADC region is also expected to recover with a projected average growth of 3.9 per cent in 2021. Three Member States, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania are forecasted to record economic growth of 1 per cent, 1.3 per cent and 1.9 per cent in 2020. On the other hand, given the pandemic and adverse climatic events that affected the SADC region, 13 Member States are projected to record economic contractions in 2020 with the following worst affected: Seychelles (13.8 per cent); Mauritius (12.2 per cent); Zimbabwe (10.4 per cent); Botswana (9.6 per cent); South Africa (7.2 per cent); Comoros (6 per cent); Namibia (6 per cent); Zambia (5.1 per cent); Lesotho (4.5 per cent); and Angola (4 per cent).

The pandemic has derailed the SADC macroeconomic convergence (MEC) programme with no Member State expected to achieve the economic growth target of 7 per cent in 2020. In 2021, only Mauritius (8.9 per cent) and Botswana (8.6 per cent) are anticipated to achieve the target, with 4 Member States estimated to post growth rates exceeding 4 per cent.

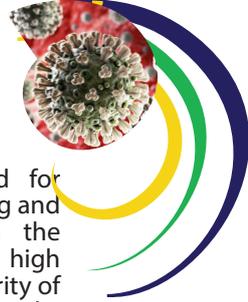
The economic outlook of a recovery in 2021 is largely premised on the continued gradual easing of restrictions that has started in recent weeks and, importantly, if the region avoids the same epidemic dynamics that have played out elsewhere in regions such as Europe, North and South America. As the lockdowns are eased, policy focus needs to shift towards facilitating recovery, although uncertainty about the containment of the pandemic remains, and elevated debt could constrain the scope and effectiveness of further fiscal support. Member States are urged to consider the following in their policies going forward:

3.1 As the economies start to recover, policy focus should shift from broad fiscal support to more affordable, targeted policies.

These policies should be targeted to the poorest households and sectors most hit by the health crisis. The high levels of informality present a serious challenge for providing economy-wide policy support and the ability to do so will become increasingly difficult, should financing conditions deteriorate further as more resources will be diverted to public health to cater for the expected increase in infections.

3.2 Monetary policies should remain accommodative in Member States where inflation pressures are low to maintain financial sector stability.

Where possible, monetary authorities should continue to provide liquidity to banking and financial institutions and ensure timely processing of all payment transactions and settlements, deposit withdrawals and remittance transfers. Banks should be allowed to use capital buffers and flexibility



provided by the macroprudential frameworks to accommodate COVID-related shocks and restructure their loan portfolios. For the Member States with floating exchange rate regimes, exchange rate flexibility can help cushion the external shocks, while some drawdown of reserves to smooth disorderly adjustment may mitigate potential financial implications from foreign exchange mismatches but it may result in more Member States remaining with reserves below the SADC macroeconomic convergence (MEC) target threshold of import cover of more than 6 months.

3.3 As the crisis wanes, Member States should implement structural reforms to put their fiscal positions on a path consistent with debt sustainability. However, care must be taken when withdrawing emergency fiscal measures to ensure that their removal does not jeopardize economic recovery. As authorities usher in the “new economic order”, reforms to raise revenue, rationalize spending, including subsidies, should help create space for public investment in education and essential infrastructure that include digitalization that promotes sustainable and inclusive growth.

4. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN THE REGIONAL ENERGY SECTOR

The Secretariat continues to oversee the situation of the COVID-19 in terms of the energy supply, demand and consumption in the Region. As observed in previous reports, the majority of SADC Member States resorted to lockdown in order to control the spread of COVID-19 and as a result, the economic activities and industrial operations that are entirely driven by energy were shut down.

4.1 Electrical Energy Subsector

In Electrical Energy subsector, there was a drastic decrease in demand of power in the region. The Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) recorded that the lowest peak demand for mainland Member States reduced to 15,000 Megawatts (MW) which is less by more than 60 percent for the same period in 2019. The low demand from the main load centres compelled some of the national power utilities to put their high-voltage transmission facilities off-line to protect them against high frequency and voltage profiles due to low loads.

On the generation side, a number of units were put on reserve mode due to low demand. The low demand of electricity also led to reduction in volumes traded in the Region. Similarly, the clearing prices from 8.6 USc/ kWh to 4.1 USc/ kWh for the Day Ahead Market as the main trading platform in the Competitive Electricity Market operated by SAPP.

In the short-term, the reopening of economic activities and businesses coupled with the cold winter seasonal demand in the Region are likely to increase the electricity demand between June and July 2020.

4.2 Petroleum and Gas Subsector

The supply of petroleum products mainly in South Africa and neighbouring countries was affected towards the end of May 2020 and the beginning of

June 2020. On the contrary, the demand for petroleum products increases during ploughing and summer months (October-February) when the movement of people and goods is relatively high across the Region. Due to this trend, the majority of oil companies in the SADC region opt to undertake scheduled maintenance during May – June because they are able to meet their market demand by importing refined products from the international oil markets.

As a result of lock down, the World recorded the lowest oil demand in April 2020 since 1998/1999. Due to low demand of petroleum products, major oil refineries especially in South Africa reduced their production outputs while others undertook unplanned and prescheduled maintenance shutdowns such that towards the end of May 2020, five (05) out of six (06) oil refineries were offline including the Transnet pipeline. However, according to the statement released by the South African Petroleum Industry Association (SAPIA) on 03rd June 2020, two refineries based in Durban, South Africa are online and the Member States sourcing fuel from South Africa refineries have sufficient diesel and petrol.

The easing of lockdown implemented through phased opening of economic activities and movement of people towards the end of May and beginning of June 2020 increased demand of petroleum products within a short time such that some of the outlets could not meet the demand especially diesel which is predominantly used by trucks.

In its analysis the Secretariat has further observed that the situation in the international oil markets is gradually normalising. The crude oil prices have been gradually recovering from the lowest level approximately US\$12 per barrel in April 2020 to around US\$38 per barrel at the beginning of June 2020 for OPEC Basket (Statista- Weekly Brent, OPEC basket, and WTI crude oil prices from December 30, 2019 to June 8, 2020). In terms of the future demand, the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasted that the annual global oil demand is expected to grow by 2 million barrels per day (mb/d) in 2021 and it will remain positive until 2025 (IEA, Oil Market Report May 2020).

4.3 The Initiatives by the SADC Secretariat and the Regional Organisations in the Regional Power Sector

The Secretariat in collaboration with the Regional Organisations in the energy pool sector namely the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), the Regional Energy Regulators Association (RERA) and the SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE) with support from the World Bank Group are developing an Assessment Note on the Impact of COVID-19 on the Regional Power Sector. The Assessment Note that will outline short, medium and long-term actions for adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of COVID-19 in the power sector including grid connected and distributed (off-grid) renewable energy-based systems in the SADC Region. The outcomes of this Assessment will be shared with Member States in future reports.

As governments within SADC begin to gradually lift lockdown restrictions and economic activity



begins to pick up again, we can expect energy demand to follow suit. The pandemic has however presented an opportunity for governments to achieve a number of things, with respect to the sector. These include;

- With approximately 24% of the region's population having access to electricity, governments can use this as an opportunity to further invest in their efforts or strategies to electrify all parts of their countries.
- With oil prices forecast to make a full recovery in mid-to-late 2021, governments can use the opportunity to invest in improving their national grids.
- Governments have an opportunity, as part of their economic stimulus and recovery plans, to ramp up investment in and adoption of renewable energy technologies, in keeping with the SAPP's Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy.

5. TRANSPORT AND TRADE FACILITATION

5.1 SADC Council approved Revised SADC Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures

The SADC Council of Ministers at its extra-ordinary meeting on 23 June 2020 approved the revised SADC Guidelines on Movement of Goods and Services across the region during COVID-19 together with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for safe and efficient trade and transport facilitation. The Council also made landmark decisions on harmonization of COVID testing protocols and mutual recognition of the test results among Member States.

5.2 Development of Tripartite Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, each of the three tripartite RECs (COMESA, EAC and SADC) came up with various responses of combating and limiting the spread of the disease in order to speedily respond to the crises. As the countries in the Tripartite region hold multiple membership in the three RECs, the need to harmonize the three guidelines with a view to adopting Tripartite-wide guidelines has become very apparent.

The Tripartite Trade and Transport Facilitation Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for safe, efficient and cost-effective movement of goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic are under development which will be the minimum uniform regulations, procedures and standards in COMESA, EAC and SADC. The Guidelines and SOP will assist Member States to address COVID-19 whilst facilitating trade and transport so as to minimize disruptions in the supply chain and to facilitate movement of goods and services across the region during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Draft Tripartite Guidelines will be considered for adoption at Tripartite level and a roadmap has been developed to ensure timely delivery of the

guidelines. In an effort to strengthen communication between transport stakeholders, a brochure has been produced as a guide during the pandemic and is attached to this report

6. NATURAL RESOURCES SECTOR

Negative Impacts on Forest and Wildlife Conservation

Tourism contributes significantly to the economies of the SADC region. Revenue streams to Governments and communities are drastically reduced due to collapse in nature-based tourism both consumptive (e.g. hunting and associated industries) and non-consumptive (game viewing, photographic safaris etc.). At the same time, most Member States financial resources are under extreme stress due to the need to protect people from COVID-19 including treating those that would get affected and other COVID-19 response measures. This implies that the forestry and wildlife sectors are likely to experience reduced funding from Governments. This situation negatively impacts conservation and anti-poaching operations and can further fuel poaching, deforestation, illicit trade and allow wildlife criminals to exploit enforcement vulnerabilities caused by the crisis.

There are strong indications that some species of wild animals are the source of the COVID-19 while others are acting as sources, reservoirs or vectors of transmission of deadly viruses for future pandemics. This has put the spotlight on wildlife trade and its potential role in the spread of human disease and led to numerous calls for widespread bans on the trade in and consumption of wildlife. Efforts to ensure legal and sustainable trade in wild species can be undermined by poorly considered and/or simplistic responses to the crisis, leading to significant loss of food security and livelihoods to many communities and damage to national economies in the continent that is already under pressure from global recession. This is a challenge to the region as most SADC Member States subscribe to principle of sustainable use, which includes legal wildlife trade, in an effort to ensure that conservation contributes to socio-economic development.

Reduced ranger activity in both forestry and wildlife sectors would, among others, result into increased Human Wildlife Conflict. As such communities might suffer much more from problematic wild animals which are not well managed due to low levels of activity in this area. Subdued ranger patrol and monitoring will motivate illegal activity targeting vulnerable iconic species already facing extinction.

Tourists provide some additional eyes when it comes to picking up illegal harvesting of forest products and poaching incidents as they transverse the forests and wildlife conservation areas. As such poachers tend to be more careful and this contributes to reduced poaching and illegal harvesting of forest and wildlife products. In this period of reduced activity in tourism, it is expected that there will be increased poaching and illegal wildlife activities which will erode the hard won gains on conservation in some Member States.



Despite the negative impacts of COVID-19 on Forest and Wildlife Conservation, there are some positive impacts. Travel restrictions on land, sea and air make it difficult for traffickers and poachers of contraband to operate. The closing of borders has also come with enhanced border patrols by law enforcement agents including the military in most Member States. The anticipated impact of this is reduced demand for illegally traded forest products and wildlife specimen. It is generally expected that trafficking of wildlife contraband will also drastically get reduced.

Conservation agencies require budgetary support from different sources so that they are able to sustain anti-poaching and anti-trafficking operations. Additionally, staff and rangers in particular require PPE over and above the equipment that is required for effective law enforcement operations. SADC Member States are also advised to consider providing minimum support to conservation during the fight against COVID-19 in order to safe guard the ecosystem and services they provide beyond the pandemic.

With a slump in tourism, the communities who derive direct benefits (dividends, services provision, employment etc.) from ecotourism are badly impacted, support is therefore required to enable them to subsidize basic necessities such as food relief, food for work programmes, etc to break the likely poverty cycle associated with loss of employment and low economic activities in this sector. These interventions can be implemented by partnering with NGOs, Private sector and Civil society organizations already working in this field as the need for support is urgent.

Member States are also urged to increase joint Transboundary Conservation activities to complement strengths and increase effectiveness against illegal activities.



1 REGION, 16 NATIONS WORKING TOWARDS A COMMON FUTURE

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