**CAPACITY BUILDING IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (ODL) PROJECT**


**An Information, Education, and Communication Strategy for Open and Distance Learning**


**SADC Secretariat**
**Directorate of Human and Social Development**
**Private Bag 0095**
**Gaborone**
**Botswana**


**Final Draft**


**March, 2009**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**(TO BE ADDED)**

# ACRONYMS

**(TO BE ADDED)**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**( TO BE ADDED)**

1. **Introduction**

This Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Strategy for the SADC Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) project has been developed to support the project and promote understanding of open and distance learning amongst a wider stakeholder group in SADC  Member States.

The Strategy document has a number of components. The first two sections provide some background information and begins with  an overview of the region in terms of key socio − economic indicators, highlights challenges related to education and training provision in the region and describes the policy context of the strategy and provides the rationale for investing in ODL. The section further describes the scope of ODL provision in the region, lists the organizations that support the development of ODL and discusses emerging trends and challenges in the provision of ODL.

The description of the SADC Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning Project constitutes the third section of the strategy, which is followed by the rationale for the IEC strategy (section 4).

Section 5 presents the IEC strategy and its main components i.e. the critical challenges that the strategy addresses, the goal of the strategy, its objectives and guiding principles, its scope and focus. The method that was employed in developing the strategy, key stakeholders or target groups and their possible interest, concerns and misconceptions about ODL, are also described in this section as well as the strategies and activities for promoting understanding of, and commitment to, ODL. Implementation plan and budget for IEC activities during the project period are also presented in this section.

2. **Background**

**2.1 Overview of the Region**

The IEC Strategy is located within the broad socio − economic context of the SADC Region in general and the education and training environment in particular. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) comprises 15 Member States, namely Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The SADC Region is diverse, with Member States varying widely in terms levels of socio − economic development (i.e. Gross Domestic Product, GDP, levels manufactured exports as percentage of  total exports, annual growth rates, Per Capita GDP, literacy levels, and population size). The total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of SADC in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) is US$751.3  billion.[1].

---

[1]         See Overview of the Review of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training p 18

Economic growth also varies across the Region, with most of the Member States recording less than 5% annual growth rate. Therefore attaining the target of a minimum of 7% annual economic growth rate, which is essential for poverty reduction, remains a serious challenge for the SADC Region.

The Per capita GDP varies from US$300 for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to US$16,106 for Seychelles. Four Member States have a relatively high per capita GDP[2], averaging US$ PPP 10146. Four Member States have a medium level per capita GDP averaging US$ PPP 3 123, and the others had lower levels of per capita GDP, averaging US$ PPP 844. (SADC Review (2007/08), SADC Country Profiles)

In all the SADC Member States represent a total population of approximately 250 million people[3], and covering an area of 9.1 million square kilometers. Three Member States account for almost two thirds of the total population (64,4%), while the six smallest members 4% of the total population. In general, SADC Member States have significant proportions of young people aged below 15 years. They therefore face the challenge of meeting the education and training needs of large numbers of young people and of expanding services to respond to the needs of the growing numbers of children.

The Human Development Index (HDI), (which is a composite measure of life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living for countries worldwide) range from 0.384 for Mozambique to 0.843 for Seychelles for 2007/08. For six Member States the HDI was below 0.5 while four others had about 0.5. The SADC region has to grapple with the challenge of HIV and AIDS, whose prevalence rate is over 20 percent in some Member States.

On the whole the region's socio – economic indicators clearly show significant developmental challenges across SADC. For many Member States, investments in education will be a critical element of the solution to the challenges, whether this be raising GDP levels by creating more skilled workforces within Member States or helping to reduce the spread of HIV through education (SADC Review (2007/08), SADC Country Profiles)

The SADC vision envisages a common future of a regional community that will ensure economic well being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice, and peace and security for the people of Southern Africa. This shared vision is anchored on the common values, principles and the historical and cultural affinities that exist between the people of Southern Africa. The purpose of SADC is to promote equitable and sustainable economic growth and socio-economic development, alleviate poverty, enhance the quality of life of the people of the Region, and support its socially disadvantageous areas through deeper regional integration.

---

[2]      See Tables 3, 4 and 5 in Appendix: Statistical Data.

[3] SADC Review (2007/08), SADC Country Profiles

To achieve its main purpose, SADC intervention is guided by the Regional Indicative Strategic Plan (RISDP), which provides strategic objectives, priorities and targets to be achieved by the Region in 2015. Since its inception, SADC has recognized that human centred development is one of the most essential means by which to achieve the objectives of the [SADC] Treaty'[4].

Education and Skills Development was identified, from the outset, as an area of regional cooperation necessary for developing knowledge, attitudes, appropriate and relevant skills and human capacities necessary to promote investment, efficiency and competitiveness as well as consolidating historical, social and cultural ties and affinities of the people of the Region. However, the education and training sector itself faces major challenges, which need to be addressed.

## 2.2 Regional Education and Training Challenges

The SADC region has made considerable progress in education and training provision especially with regard to achieving Education for All targets. In particular substantial progress has been made in the provision of free and compulsory primary education with net enrolment ratios ranging between 70% - 98% and there in no gender gap at this level.

However, survival to Grade 5 and completion rates at the end of primary is low in a number of Member States. The quality of education at all levels is a concern as the repetition rates in most SADC Member States are high especially at primary level.

The region faces the specific challenge of raising participation rates in education – particularly at secondary and tertiary levels.[5] Access to secondary education for most of the children in the Region is low with most states providing places for fewer than 25% of the secondary age cohort. Secondary education systems in the SADC region also display high levels of inefficiency, wastage and inequity.

Participation in tertiary education across the Region is very low. In most Member States higher education participation rates are lower than 5% of the eligible age group. Only three Member States achieve any sizable higher education provision.

There is a shortage of teachers in the region due to a number of factors such as the impact of HIV and AIDS, attrition from the profession and the brain circulation. A number of Member States are utilizing untrained teachers or para-teachers. Therefore upgrading of teachers' qualifications in the region is one of the immediate challenges that require priority interventions.

In summary the SADC region faces the following key challenges in the education and training sector, which need to be tackled:[6]

---

[4] SADC. 2004. *Protocol on Education and Training*. SADC Secretariat: Gaborone. p. 1.

[5] SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training

[6] SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training

- limited access to secondary, technical vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education levels;

- limited provision of early childhood education;

- inequitable access, especially by disadvantaged groups such as women, disabled and people from rural areas;

- poor quality of education at all levels;

- high inefficiency due to absenteeism and drop outs;

- inadequately trained and qualified teachers;

- irrelevant curricula and the mismatch between the supply and demand of education;

- the negative impact of HIV and AIDS on the education and training sector;

- shortage of relevant and appropriate teaching and learning materials; and

- lack of current and relevant data for planning and monitoring.

## 2.3 Policy Context

A broad policy framework governing education and development that affects SADC Member States exists at global, regional, and national levels. At the global level, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA) targets bind the SADC Member States to the achievement of key international and continent-wide education development goals.

At the continental level, an education policy framework is defined by the African Union (AU) whose Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006 – 2015) focuses on the development of Africa's human resources, and recognizes education as the primary means by which the vision may be attained, and as a critical factor whose performance directly affects and even determines the quality and magnitude of the continent's development.

The AU Plan of Action makes some specific references to open and distance learning (ODL), noting its potential, for example, in delivery of teacher education, literacy programmes, and science education.

At the Regional level, a framework guiding education projects in the SADC is provided in three main policy documents: (a) the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) (b) the SADC Protocol on Education and Training and (c) SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training (2007 – 2015). The SADC RISDP provides strategic direction and focus for future SADC programmes. The aim of the RISDP is to intensify Regional integration within the SADC and to ensure that Member States are armed with the long-term economic and social policies required for this purpose.

The objectives of the RISDP are improved trade, economic liberalisation and development, infrastructure support for regional integration, sustainable food security and human and social development. With regard to social and human development the overall goal of SADC is to contribute to the reduction of human poverty and to improve the availability of educated, well informed, skilled, healthy, flexible, culturally responsive, productive and efficient human resources for the promotion of SADC's equitable economic growth, deeper integration and its competitiveness in the global economy. The implementation of the RISDP also contribute towards the reduction of human poverty, combating of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, development and utilization of science and technology and ICT and the empowerment of women.[7]

The focus of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training is to promote a regionally integrated and harmonized education system, particularly with regard to issues pertaining to access, equity, relevance and quality of education interventions. The Protocol is based on an awareness 'that human centred development is one of the most essential means by which to achieve the objectives of the [SADC] Treaty'[8] and further notes that 'a concerted effort can only be effected through the implementation of coordinated comprehensive and integrated programmes of education and training that address the needs of the Region'.[9]

Key principles and objectives of the Protocol emphasize regional approaches to educational development through the development of common systems, specifically policy-making capacity and regional policy frameworks, information and resource pooling, harnessing of regional expertise, and avoidance of duplication. With an ultimate aim of 'harmonization, standardization and equivalence of education and training systems across the Region by 2017', the Protocol stresses that these objectives are to be achieved through equitable participation, balance and mutual benefit in regional collaborations and the involvement of key stakeholders at Member State level, including the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Specific reference is made to the important role of open and distance learning, noting that Member States agree that the objectives of open and distance learning are, (amongst others) to improve access to education and training and to reduce the inequalities in the acquisition of education and training; work towards achieving universal literacy and numeracy; and reduce the cost of education and training by maximizing on the economies of scale offered by open and distance learning.

Through the protocol Member States have committed themselves to formulating national policies on open and distance learning so as to provide a framework for cooperation, establishing distance learning institutions to cater for all levels of education and training, where no distance learning institutions exist, and

---

[7] African Development Fund. 2006. *Appraisal Report: Capacity Building For Open And Distance Learning (ODL): SADC.* African Development Fund. pp. 4-6.

[8] SADC. 2004. *Protocol on Education and Training*. SADC Secretariat: Gaborone. p. 1.

[9] SADC. 2004. *Protocol on Education and Training*. SADC Secretariat: Gaborone. p. 2.

strengthening open and distance learning and training systems in the region through collaborative efforts.

The protocol also aims at promoting cooperation among open and distance learning institutions in the Region in the design, production and dissemination of distance learning materials, in the training of distance educators and trainers and in teaching some of their programmes.

Another key Regional level policy document is the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (signed in 2008) and accompanying SADC Gender Policy. The objectives of the Protocol are to 'provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects'.[10]

Although it does not mention open and distance learning specifically, the Protocol does include requirements that signatories enact laws by 2015 that promote equal access to, and retention in, all levels of education and that they adopt and implement gender-sensitive educational policies and programmes addressing gender stereotypes and gender-based violence. The more detailed SADC Gender Policy provides guidelines for institutionalizing and operationalising gender as a key development strategy for achieving gender equality, equity, and women's empowerment within the SADC Region.

The SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training (2007 – 2015), aims at addressing some of the key challenges affecting education development in the region and takes cognizance of the priorities of the Second Decade of Education and other International Commitments such as Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). It harmonizes the provisions of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training and the African Union Second Decade of Education Plan of Action.

Open and Distance Learning is one of the priority areas of the SADC Revised Regional Implementation Plan on Education and Training. One of its goals is to improve the quality, delivery and effective deployment of ODL to improve access to quality education and training.

At the national level, there is a wide diversity of national policies and strategies pertinent to education generally and open and distance learning more specifically. In the field of open and distance learning, relevant policies relate not only to education, but also to other sectors such as telecommunications, electrification, and roads and transport, as sound national physical infrastructures are essential to effective open and distance learning delivery.[11]

---

[10] SADC. 2008. *Protocol on Gender and Development.* SADC Secretariat: Gaborone. p. 6.

[11] African Development Bank Group. 2005. *SADC Project Identification Report: Southern African Development Community (SADC) Open and Distance Learning Capacity-Building Project.* African Development Bank Group Draft July 2005. pp. 29-33.

Most Member States have well-developed, integrated policy approaches to open and distance learning. Very few have developed policies, which focus specifically on open and distance learning. However, some are in the process of developing policies specifically focused on open and distance learning.

In recognition of the important role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in supporting the development of ODL about a third of SADC Member States have developed ICT policies that explicitly support this mode of educational delivery.

## 2.4 ODL Delivery in the SADC Region

### 2.4.1 Rationale for Investing in ODL

Open and distance learning (ODL) has become an accepted and indispensable part of education systems around the world, in both developed and developing countries, and especially for the latter. Globally, ODL is considered as an important new approach in attempting to resolve the problems of access, quality and equity. The growth in interest in ODL has been driven by two factors – technological advances that have allowed for more and more subjects to be taught at a distance, and the worldwide need for ongoing skills upgrading and retraining.[12]

New opportunities with regard to access and delivery systems abound with the development of technology – such as the miniaturizing of equipment, the reduction in costs, and an increase in user flexibility, portability and integration. Internet access has grown quickly and in recent years, African governments have expressed growing commitment to the development of ICTs and the use of these for ODL. There are indications that ODL is becoming more central to education policies in many African countries.[13]

In sub-Saharan Africa, ODL has largely been used to boost access to basic education and improve the quality of conventional education, especially through the in-service training of teachers. ODL has also been a mainstay of international and national organizations for non-formal education and community development. Correspondence education has been the predominant form of education in the Region, and radio has also been used extensively, reaching over 60% of the population.

ODL provides enormous advantages to learners, governments and employers. For Governments it provides a means of increasing access to learning and training opportunity, and they have used ODL to provide increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment and to improve the cost – effectiveness of

---

[12] UNESCO. 2002. Open and Distance Learning: Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations. p3. Available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001284/128463e.pdf. Accessed 4 December 2008.

[13] UNESCO. 2002. Open and Distance Learning: Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations. p40-44. Available at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001284/128463e.pdf. Accessed 4 December 2008.

educational resources. ODL has also been used by governments to support the quality and variety of educational structures and to enhance and consolidate capacity.

ODL is attractive to the learners because it gives them more freedom of access and thereby a wider range of opportunities. It also means a more learner centred approach, allowing greater flexibility and choice of content as well as more personal organization of learning programme. It overcomes barriers imposed by geographical distance and other confining circumstances such as personal constraints, cultural barriers and lack of educational infrastructure and it is often a cheaper alternative to pursuing a course through conventional methods. ODL is convenient to many learners who cannot afford to leave their work in order to study; they can combine work with distance learning.

Employers also find ODL attractive because it offers them the possibility of organizing learning and professional development in the workplace itself, which is often more flexible and saves costs of travel, subsistence and other related costs.

## 2.4.2 Scope of ODL Delivery

ODL has been used throughout the SADC Member States for more than 50 years. Some Member States have used open and distance learning methods to implement large-scale programmes very successfully – particularly in the area of primary teacher training. There is evidence of growing ODL practice across a range of educational sub-sectors throughout the region. The main areas of operation have been in higher education, teacher education, technical and vocational education, secondary education, non formal education and adult basic education and training.[14]

Governments have found ODL to be cost-efficient with the potential to offer very high quality education and training. In 2004, the All Africa Education Ministers Conference on ODL, in South Africa, called for ODL to be applied more widely.

### 2.4.2.1 Secondary Education/Open Schools

ODL has been used for school – age children and youth who are not able to enter the formal school system at both primary and secondary school levels as well as providing school equivalency courses as a means of expanding educational opportunities to the adult population since the 1960s.

ODL is increasingly being viewed as a means to support out-of-school youth with formal open schooling in the Region. Some SADC Member States have established alternative models of secondary education provision in an attempt to deal with the estimated 20-million children in the SADC region who have not completed basic education. Namibia and Botswana have developed world renowned Open Schools, Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) and Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), which enrolled 6,176 students and 28,009 students respectively in 2008.

---

14 Project Identification Report: Southern African Development Community (SADC) Open and Distance Learning Capacity-Building Project, African Development Bank Group, Draft July 2005, p 25-27.

Five other Member States have long standing, large-scale secondary distance learning programmes, which collectively have educated hundreds of thousands of out-of-school youths.

Radio and also interactive radio instruction (IRI) have been widely used in primary and secondary schooling, in Southern Africa. IRI aims to provide instruction to students and teachers, particularly in subjects that are ineffectively taught in schools

### 2.4.2.2 Tertiary Education

ODL is increasingly being seen as a strategy to tackle the challenges of access, quality and equity. To date, the value of ODL has been felt the most in tertiary where only 5% of the population in the SADC Region (except in three Member States) has access to tertiary education.[15] Indeed, the demand for tertiary places is increasing, yet many countries do not have sufficient resources to build and operate new tertiary education institutions or to invest in upgrading existing institutions. These challenges have translated into significant open and distance learning practices in the higher education sub-sector.

In the SADC region, to date, three, public, single-mode universities have been established, namely the University of South Africa (UNISA), which had 200,000 enrolments in 2006; Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) with almost 20,000 students enrolled in 2008); and the Open University of Tanzania (OUT; 22,000 students in 2006[16]).

A significant proportion of conventional universities in the SADC Region offer at least one ODL programme. The ODL programmes in combination with the Region's many dual mode operations provide a significant number of extra higher education study places.[17] Data from, the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) show that 28% (N=303,311) of total student enrolments in public higher education institutions in the SADC Region are distance learners.

Numerous tertiary institutions in the SADC Region, have plans to offer ICT-based programming, which has the potential to expand significantly the distance learning population. However, the use of ICT in the Region is limited due to infrastructure constraints, lack of instructional materials, lack of skilled teaching staff, and also because ICT-based pedagogy is still new for many.

---

[15] Project Identification Report: Southern African Development Community (SADC) Open and Distance Learning Capacity-Building Project, African Development Bank Group, Draft July 2005, p 25-27.

[16] African Development Fund. 2006. *Appraisal Report: Capacity Building For Open And Distance Learning (ODL): SADC.* African Development Fund. p. 14.

[17] African Development Fund. 2006. Appraisal Report: Capacity Development for Open and Distance Learning (ODL): SADC. p.14.

### 2.4.3. Technical, vocational education and training (TVET)

In the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sub-sector, with the changing socio-political and economic environment, people with specialist skills and entrepreneurs are required to drive the new economy. For these reasons, ODL, with its ideal of lifelong learning, creates opportunities for those wanting knowledge and needing new skills.[18] In the workplace, the advent of new technologies is driving a paradigm shift towards lifelong learning and skills upgrading through supported self study.

Generally, however, TVET in the SADC Region is under-developed and provides education on a small-scale. This provision is fragmented, inadequately funded and lacks coordination.

### 2.4.4 Teacher Education

ODL is a highly useful method for teacher education as teachers can be trained quickly, cost effectively, and in large numbers. It has established itself as a significant and legitimate way of training teachers. ODL has been used for teacher training in the region since the 1960s, in at least eight Member States. It is widely acknowledged that teacher education is one area in which open and distance learning has been successful in Africa, in general and in the SADC Region in particular.

It has been used for initial training to meet the sudden huge demands for teachers and as a way of raising the quality of the teaching force. Many Member States have used it to provide initial training to thousands of new teachers. ODL has also been used for the continuing professional development of teachers, for upgrading, and to support curriculum change, all directed to teachers who already have a basic qualification

### 2.4.5 Non Formal Education

Non – formal education and community development are areas where ODL has been used, with a significant amount of success, since the 1960s and is increasingly being used. ODL programmes often reach substantial numbers of women, in societies where women lack equal opportunities in conventional forms of education and training.

In Africa, in general and in the SADC region in particular, ODL has been used to offer courses in literacy, basic education, health, agriculture and community/civic education, often for adults with little or no formal schooling. ODL is eminently suited to help meet the needs of adult learners and has an enormously important role to play in increasing access to non – formal education.

---

[18] Project Identification Report: Southern African Development Community (SADC) Open and Distance Learning Capacity-Building Project, African Development Bank Group, Draft July 2005, p 25-27.

Notable examples of institutions offering successful non – formal/adult education through ODL are found in the majority of SADC Member States.

## 2.5 Organizations and Associations Promoting ODL

In the SADC region, a number of organizations exist to promote ODL, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Association for Development of Education in Africa's Working Group on Distance Education and Open Learning (ADEA - WGDEOL), African Council on Distance Education (ACDE), Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA), and SADC Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE).

A number of donor agencies have supported the development of ODL in the region, over the years. The most prominent ones are the British Department for International Development (DFID), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), German International Development Agency (DSE), the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). These have worked in different areas and in different countries over a period of time.

## 2.6 Emerging Trends

As can be seen from the above, the bulk of ODL provision in the SADC Region has been in the traditional areas of tertiary education, teacher training, and secondary schooling. However, there are a number of developments in open and distance learning in the region, which show commitment and efforts of governments and institutions to diversify ODL offerings to meet the ever increasing and diverse learning needs of children, youth and adults as well as to improve the quality of programmes as a means of contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals:

### 2.6.1 Policy development

There is a steady increase in the number of countries developing ODL policies and a wide diversity of national policies and strategies pertinent to education generally and ODL more specifically. In the field of ODL, relevant policies relate not only to education, but also to other sectors such as telecommunications, electrification, and roads and transport.

Significantly therefore some Member States have begun formulating broad ICT policies to cover a number of areas in which ICTs are seen to be important in terms of general national priorities (including sectoral applications such as health, tourism, mining, education, and e-government). There are some examples of Member States that have both instituted ICT policy processes, in which education and skills development are covered as part of a broader ICT policy.

### 2.6.2 Institutional Development

There is a growing trend in Southern Africa of institutions using ODL programme designs that incorporate contact and interaction between students and educators, rather than resorting to correspondence methodologies.[19] As such, the line between face-to-face education and ODL is increasingly being blurred by the trends of open education resources, m/eLearning, and the possibilities of low-cost computers..[20]

There has been significant growth in the number of ODL programmes offered from traditionally face-to-face institutions, with such programmes now being offered by institutions across the Region

### 2.6.3 Application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Although there are comparatively few experiments in the application of new technologies in the region, there is increasing recognition of the importance of ICT in improving the efficiency and quality of ODL.

It is particularly noteworthy that several ADF countries within SADC have not yet made significant progress in harnessing ODL in response to the many educational challenges they face (although some Member States) demonstrate the significant potential for this.

### 2.6.4 Diversification of programmes

Some ODL programmes in the SADC Region are starting to focus on delivering skills development programmes such as business administration, police science, public management, marketing, and conservation.

Some institutions have taken as primary target audiences public service professionals, business managers and entrepreneurs while many more offer a wide range of courses in such areas as, health, nursing, HIV and AIDS counselling, nature conservation and agricultural management, dental surgery, fisheries resource management, and grain marketing.

### 2.6.5 Collaboration

There is a growing trend towards promoting partnerships and collaborative activities in the region in ODL, within Member States and across the region. These include joint development and delivery programmes, sharing of educational resources, exchange of staff and accreditation and quality assurance.

---

[19] Thutoetsile, T. (2005). Report of the Southern African Regional Distance Education Centre: Situational Assessment of ODL Institutions. *SADC-CDE*. Retrieved September 19, 2008, from www.sardec.org.bw/reports.htm.

[20] Louw, J. (2008, September 4). Capacity Building in Open Distance Learning.

**2.7 Challenges and Constraints in ODL Delivery**

Undoubtedly ODL has played an important role in promoting socio – economic development in the SADC region in general and improving access to, and promoting the quality of, education and training in particular. However, there are a number of issues and challenges that need to be addressed especially in the context of the SADC ODL project. The key limiting factors n the development of ODL programmes include the following:

**2.7.1 Weak support for ODL from political authorities:** Political support is an essential pre – requisite to the development and success of ODL programmes but it is lacking or poor in many Member States.

**2.7.2 Lack of comprehensive policies on ODL.** Planning ODL requires alignment to several sets of policies such as those on ICT, gender and education. Unfortunately there are very few such policies to guide the development and implementation of programmes, at national and institutional levels. In some cases there are very general statements in official policy documents. In most dual mode institutions policy is based on the needs of on-campus students and faculty, as ODL is a small, peripheral component.

**2.7.3 Underfunding:** ODL is structurally under-funded in relation to the core function it is expected to discharge. Therefore most ODL institutions in many SADC Member States, as elsewhere in developing countries, suffer from a shortage of financial resources, resulting from small, limited budgetary allocations.

**2.7.4 Limited use of ICTs:** The ability to use to its full capacity the enormous value of e-learning and associated resources in ODL across Southern Africa is challenged by poor domestic infrastructure to support ODL delivery. Many learners reside in rural locations where they have restricted access to the modern communication facilities needed for learning.

**2.7.5 Inadequate supply of professionally trained ODL personnel**: There is a need for well - qualified and experienced teams to plan and manage implementation of programmes, right from the beginning. However, institutions in Southern Africa find it difficult to recruit skilled and experienced ODL specialists and there are limited opportunities for formal training in ODL in the region.

**2.7.6 Inadequate Learner Support Services:** Many institutions have poor follow up and support programmes. Learner support services are limited, they tend to be centralized and make little use of ICTs. This raises questions about the effectiveness of programmes in developing relevant skills and imparting knowledge.

**2.7.7 Lack of monitoring and evaluation systems:** ODL institutions do not have strong monitoring and evaluation systems, which are critical elements in managing delivery of programmes. Weak understanding and knowledge about the potential and limitations of ODL can be attributed to, among other reasons,

a lack of an adequate research and evaluation base in ODL needed to support informed policy choices and to demonstrate the positive results of ODL.

**2.7.7 Lack of, or ineffective, quality assurance systems:** It has been suggested that many organizations and individuals in Southern Africa are employing ODL methods and cheap versions of resource-based learning to bolster their student numbers or income, with little regard for the impact this will have on the quality of provision. Institutions tend to use the same kind of academic verification processes that traditional contact-based institutions use in ODL quality assurance processes and therefore do not respond to the needs of ODL programmes. There is little documented evidence of systems or processes being put in place for ensuring quality in the design of curricula

**2.7.8 Negative perceptions about ODL:** Many educational policy - makers and planners are skeptical about the legitimacy and quality of ODL, on grounds that it does not, and cannot offer, the same quality as conventional, on – campus education. There is also failure of public service to recognize ODL when assessing employee qualifications. Legitimacy and public acceptance of ODL is essential for successful implementation of programmes.

**2.7.9 Absence of strategies for mainstreaming gender in ODL programmes:** Most of the ODL providers have neither clear/comprehensive policy frameworks nor human and administrative capacity to promote gender equality in ODL.

## 3. The SADC Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Project

In an effort to address the above and other, related challenges, the SADC Secretariat is implementing a Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Project, with financial support from the African Development Bank (ADB). The main purpose of the project is to contribute to the development and deployment of effective, harmonized open and distance learning (ODL), to increase access to quality education and training and support regional integration across SADC.

In order to achieve its objective, the project is expected to generate four main outputs: (i) Regional SADC ODL policy and strategy developed and agreed; (ii) Regional and national Capacity to deploy and implement ODL strengthened; (iii) Two Regional Centres of Specialisation established; (iv) Project activities effectively coordinated and implemented.

The project has two components: (i) policy development and (ii) capacity building in four sub-sectors namely secondary education, tertiary education, Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) and teacher education. The capacity building component will, however, focus on two areas namely secondary education and teacher education as agreed by the SADC Ministers of Education in July 2007.

The outcome of Component 1 of the project is increased and more strategic deployment of distance learning within and across the SADC Region. This will be achieved through, among other strategies, advocacy to develop understanding of, and

commitment to, distance learning through the development and implementation of an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategy.

This strategy has been developed to support the project and promote understanding of open and distance learning amongst a wider stakeholder group, including high level decision makers, formal and non-formal educators, Civil Society, parents, learners and employers.

## 4. Rationale for an IEC Strategy

The development of ODL in the region, in general, and the implementation of the capacity building in ODL project, in particular, is threatened by the negative perceptions about, and attitudes towards, ODL, across the region. Indeed weak understanding and knowledge about the potential and limitations of ODL has been a major challenge in most Member States. This can be attributed to, among other reasons, a lack of carefully orchestrated and effectively implemented strategies at national and regional levels to promote understanding of the concept, practice and benefits of ODL

In many Member States "real education" is considered only in terms of conventional schooling and ODL is perceived as second choice and second best type of education and training. It is therefore necessary and important to get the public, employers, especially public agencies, to accept ODL as equal to traditional education.

One important way of achieving this is through the development and effective implementation of an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Strategy, in order to create awareness, increase knowledge, change attitudes and to adopt ODL as an integral part of education and training provision. An IEC strategy is therefore an essential input in the implementation of the SADC ODL project and increased deployment of ODL methodologies across the region as it is concerned with providing information to enable all stakeholders to analyze the advantages and limitations of ODL and be educated on its benefits.

This should ultimately lead to some level of positive change of perceptions, attitudes and misconceptions about this mode of education and training delivery. Positive attitudes and perceptions may help in increasing acceptance of, and commitment to, ODL by various stakeholders, particularly the target groups identified in the strategy. Acceptance of ODL by different stakeholders is of crucial importance and will determine the success of the SADC Capacity Building in Open and Distance Learning Project.

## 5. The IEC Strategy

### 5.1 Structure

The IEC Strategy consists of the goal, specific objectives, expected outcomes and the guiding principles. The method that was employed to develop the strategy is described as well as the target groups, including their possible interest in ODL and concerns and misconceptions about ODL. The Strategy also identifies challenges in the development of ODL that are directly related to different misconceptions and proposes strategies and activities for addressing them.

## 5.2 Challenges that the IEC Strategy Addresses

The ultimate result of the IEC Strategy is to enable SADC Member States to scale up education and training provision through the increased and efficient use of ODL and more generally ensure that ODL becomes an integral part of socio – economic development in the Region. At the level of provision it is expected to increase the number of institutions and agencies committed to and actively engaged in planning, developing and implementing sustainable and well functioning ODL systems.

In order to achieve this it is essential first to identify the most critical challenges facing ODL that are directly related to the above expectations. During the process of developing the IEC strategy, which included questionnaire responses from ODL practitioners, consultative workshops and secondary research some challenges related to legitimacy and acceptance of ODL were identified as follows:

- ODL, its potential, and its applications are poorly understood by many key stakeholders.

- ODL is perceived as a lonely activity for which individual motivation is hard to sustain, with limited or no opportunities for social interaction.

- ODL is perceived as inferior and ODL systems as inefficient.

- There is an absence of or weak commitment to ODL amongst key decision-makers.

- ODL is structurally under-funded in relation to the core function it is expected to discharge.

- Some ODL programmes are of low quality and/or marginal educational relevance.

Largely as a result of these challenges there is comparatively low utilisation and generally low recognition of ODL in SADC Member States. The IEC strategy therefore focuses on the most critical challenges, with particular reference to those that can be alleviated through IEC activities in some meaningful way.

## 5.3 Goal

The main goal of the Strategy is to increase access to quality education and training across the SADC region.

## 5.4 Objectives

The specific objectives of the IEC strategy are:

- To improve commitment to the development of ODL by decision makers (Politicians, Senior Government officials and Heads of Education Institutions).

- To increase utilization of ODL by education and training providers and learners.

- To increase recognition of ODL graduates by employers and educational institutions.

- To improve the quality of ODL provision

- To increase awareness of the benefits of ODL among key stakeholders (high level decision makers, formal and non-formal educators, Civil Society, parents, learners and employers).

- To reduce prejudices and misconceptions about ODL

## 5.5 Expected Outcomes

- Improved commitment to ODL across the SADC region

- Increased awareness of the benefits of ODL among key stakeholders in the SADC region

- Increased utilization of ODL in SADC Member States

- Increased recognition of ODL qualifications

- Quality ODL programmes delivered in the SADC region

- Prejudices and misconceptions about ODL reduced in the SADC region

## 5.6 Guiding Principles

In order to achieve the above goal and objectives the implementation of IEC strategy will be underpinned and guided by the following principles:

- Equality & non discrimination

- Learner centeredness

- Flexibility

- Quality and relevance

- Cost - effectiveness

- Partnership and collaboration

- Efficiency in delivery

- Professionalism, integrity, transparency and accountability

## 5.7 Process of developing the IEC strategy

The IEC Strategy is the result of an extensive and inclusive process of consultation and research, key activities of which were as follows:

(a) A questionnaire was distributed widely amongst ODL stakeholders in Southern Africa, both via fax and email and at a meeting of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA).

(b) A literature review was conducted, both to prepare Section One of the Strategy (covering the background) and to research potential IEC activities.

.    (c) A draft report was prepared, and presented at a meeting of the SADC Technical Committee on Open and Distance Learning (TCODL),  which was also attended by ODL practitioners  responsible for marketing and gender specialists from 10  SADC Member States. The draft report was also circulated  electronically to allow for additional feedback

(d) Based on feedback received the report was finalized, and presented at a follow-up meeting of the TCODL which was also attended by marketing and gender experts, from 12 SADC Member States. During that meeting, stakeholders were provided extensive opportunity to engage with and refine the draft report  from which this IEC Strategy was developed.

(e) The final report, which was refined and the IEC strategy was developed from it.

## 5.8 Target Audiences and their possible interest in ODL

The challenge of an effective IEC strategy is to find ways to package key and relevant messages and communicate them to different target audiences in clear and simple ways. It is therefore important to segment target audiences and analyse their interests and concerns that need to be addressed.

From the research and consultations a number of stakeholders were identified as key target audiences for the IEC strategy and their possible interest in ODL and concerns about this mode of education and training provision were outlined.

### 5.8.1    Potential distance learners.

This group comprises any person of any age who is considering or might consider enrolling in an education  programme, which is being delivered through ODL. This could, for example, include school pupils considering post-secondary study options, post-secondary students considering further study, adult learners (unemployed and employed) exploring various learning options.

Their main interest in ODL could include the desire to commence or continue an education career (for a widely varying range of motives); acquire knowledge and life skills; ensure success in educational programmes (both in terms of securing certification and learning new competencies); receive certification that is acknowledged by employers and educational institutions nationally, regionally and internationally and secure a good education at the lowest possible price.

Potential learners may also be interested in ODL because personal circumstances (employment, place of dwelling, and disabilities) may demand part-time studies or flexibility in modes of participation; ODL allows learners to study at their own pace, allows people to earn an income while studying  and it  can provide access to educational opportunities without the requirement to move away from home. In `addition,  ODL can promote educational and gender equity.

### 5.8.2 Current distance learners.

This group comprises any person of any age who is currently enrolled in a programme that is being delivered using ODL methods (including learners in programmes that are not explicitly described as ODL programmes).

The main interest of this audience could be to ensure equal recognition on successful attainment of qualifications through ODL and may be looking for further educational opportunities after completion of current programme. ODL allows learners to study at their own pace, allows people to earn an income while studying and it can provide access to educational opportunities without the requirement to move away from home

### 5.8.3 Parents

The focus here is on parents of potential and current ODL learners. Their main interest in ODL could be to secure high quality education for children at lowest possible cost; use investments in education to secure better future for their children; enrol their children in ODL programmes to enable them to generate income while studying; and in the absence of other financial alternatives, use investments in education to secure income during retirement/old age from children.

### 5.8.4 Employers and Professional Associations

The focus here is on employers of potential and current ODL learners, as well as professional associations that function as gatekeepers of quality for key professions. Through the employment relationship, it may be the case that employers are responsible for employees who are potential ODL learners but are not yet actively searching for educational opportunities as they are not aware of the intention or desire of their employer to invest further in their professional development.

The main interest in ODL for this audience is to employ high quality staff and sub-contractors with skills required to perform jobs; increasingly, ensure that staff not only have skills to do a specific job, but also the ability to solve problems and to learn new skills as job demands change; ensure competition in the employment market place to keep wages – especially of skilled labour – affordable (achieved by increasing the pool of available talent in the market place).

This audience may also be interested in investing as little as possible in 'up-skilling' new recruits to enable them to perform a specific job and  have access to a relevant range of affordable professional development opportunities for staff, which generate minimal disruption to work or requirement to spend time away from the workplace. They may also have an interest in creating new professional development programmes using ODL methods to meet specific needs of business/organization

### 5.8.5 Educators and Support Staff in ODL and Mixed/Dual Mode Institutions

This target group is intended to cover all personnel employed by educational institutions offering programmes that are explicitly labelled as ODL programmes (within any of the identified educational areas of tertiary education, teacher education, TVET, and secondary schooling).

This group may have strong commitment to ODL as a mechanism for dealing with educational challenges and may be using ODL methods to overcome limitations of delivery of education purely using face-to-face education methods. ODL constitutes a livelihood, and potentially a source of reputational advantage. Involvement in ODL may present opportunities for personal/professional development and career advancement.

### 5.8.6 Decision-Makers in ODL and Mixed/Dual Mode Institutions

This audience covers all senior managers at educational institutions offering programmes that are explicitly labelled as ODL programmes (within any of the identified educational areas of tertiary education, teacher education, TVET, and secondary schooling).

This group may have strong commitment to ODL as a mechanism for dealing with educational challenges; may be encouraging use of ODL methods within institutions to overcome limitations of delivery of education purely using face-to-face education methods. Use of ODL methods could be perceived as a mechanism to contain costs and increase revenue. Acquisition of large numbers of students may be a useful strategy for becoming socially/politically influential and for increasing institutional revenue; growth in numbers of enrolments in ODL programmes may be seen as a key indicator of success of ODL systems. Other areas of interest are that ODL constitutes a livelihood, and potentially a source of reputational advantage and involvement in ODL may present opportunities for personal/professional development and career advancement.

### 5.8.7 Educators and Career Counsellors in Face-to-Face Institutions/ Programmes.

This covers all educators and career counsellors in institutions that are not offering any programmes labelled as ODL programmes. Thus, it could, for example, include teachers in schools, academics in universities, or lecturers in TVET Colleges. With or without being aware of it, some of these educators may already be using ODL methods in their teaching. Focus on these educators may be at different levels: deconstructing myths about ODL; encouraging use of ODL methods; or facilitating these educators introducing their students to further learning opportunities offered by distance learning.

For this audience growth of part-time studies and student enrolments increasingly demands integration and use ODL (either implicitly or explicitly) in traditionally face-to-face programmes; may be exploring use of ODL methods to overcome limitations of delivery of education purely using face-to-face education methods; and

may be looking for a range of educational opportunities to present to their students to encourage further studies

**5.8.8 Decision-makers in conventional, face-to-face institutions**

This covers all senior managers in institutions that are not offering any programmes labelled as ODL programmes. The main interest of this audience could be that educational demands outstrip available capacity in institutions; ODL presents cost-effective alternative to face-to-face education and its use could be perceived as a mechanism to contain costs and increase revenue.

For this audience ODL can also be used to scale up delivery in ways that face-to-face education systems will not be able to; and the growth of part-time studies and student enrolments increasingly demands integration and use of ODL methods (either implicitly or explicitly) in traditionally face-to-face programmes.

**5.8.9 Civic Organizations, including Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Faith-Based Organizations, and Trade Unions)**

This group has been included in recognition of the important role that civic organizations play in supporting development in the SADC region and they can be important conduits for promoting ODL and for identifying educational needs of communities.

The interest of this target group could be that educational demands outstrip available capacity in institutions and that ODL presents a cost-effective alternative to face-to-face education, which can be used to scale up delivery in ways that face-to-face education systems will not be able to. ODL programmes could potentially meet educational needs of civic organizations and can promote educational and gender equity.

**5.8.10 Government Decision-Makers**

For the purpose of the IEC strategy this group includes parliamentarians and other senior government decision-makers within government ministries and departments (excluding ministers, who are included in the next group). This will typically comprise permanent/principal secretaries/directors-general, as well as the next level of decision-makers within the government bureaucracy (who may be titled deputy directors-general, senior directors, directors, or some equivalent).

Depending on the structure of a department or ministry, it may be necessary to include a third level of management in order to include all people responsible for ODL management in this group. The primary focus is, of course, on education ministries/departments, but there are also other relevant ministries/departments that might be included in this group. These could include, for example those ministries/departments responsible for finance, telecommunications, physical infrastructure, human resource planning, gender, agriculture and health.

The main possible interest of this group is that educational demands outstrip available capacity in institutions and that ODL presents a cost-effective alternative to face-to-face education, which can be used to scale up delivery in ways that face-to-face

education systems will not be able to. Launch of ODL initiative, programme, or institution may constitute an opportunity to enhance reputation or public profile and ODL can promote educational and gender equity.

### 5.8.11 Political Leaders

This group refers to elected officials responsible for running government. This will include presidents and deputy/vice presidents, prime ministers (where applicable), and government ministers and deputy ministers.

As in the case of decision makers the  main interest of political leaders in ODL could be that educational demands outstrip available capacity in institutions and that ODL presents cost-effective alternative to face-to-face education, which  can be used to scale up delivery in ways that face-to-face education systems will not be able to. Launch of ODL initiative, programme, or institution may constitute an opportunity to enhance reputation or public profile and ODL can promote educational and gender equity.

### 5.8.12 Educational Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs).

Although they are quite distinct, NGOs and IGOs have been grouped together for purposes of message analysis. The group would thus incorporate any NGOs involved in delivery of ODL programmes or in provision of support services (planning, research and evaluation, capacity-building, materials development, and other related activities) to the broader ODL community (including any of the above target audiences). In the context of this strategy, the key IGOs would be the SADC Secretariat itself, Development Banks, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), amongst others.

The interest of this target audience is that ODL may constitute a livelihood, and potentially a source of reputational advantage, and that educational demands outstrip available capacity in institutions. ODL presents a cost-effective alternative to face-to-face education, which can be used to scale up delivery in ways that face-to-face education systems will not be able to. In addition the launch of ODL initiative or programme may constitute an opportunity to enhance reputation or public profile. This group may also see ODL as a strategy to advance a specific organizational mission/agenda and to promote educational and gender equity.

### 5.8.13 Donors/Funders.

The focus here is on any organization that distributes grant funding for educational purposes in Southern Africa. This could include bi-lateral government funders, specialized government funds and parastatals focused on providing funding, Foundations, private Corporate Social Investment funds, Development Banks, and IGOs.

The interest of this group is that educational demands outstrip available capacity in institutions and ODL presents cost-effective alternative to face-to-face education, which can be used to scale up delivery in ways that face-to-face education systems

will not be able to. Launch of ODL initiative, programme, or institution may constitute an opportunity to enhance reputation or public profile. Donors/funders may also see ODL as a strategy to advance a specific organizational mission/agenda and to promote educational and gender equity.

**5.9 Possible Concerns and Misconceptions about ODL**

An analysis of the above target audiences and their connection to, and possible interest in ODL, shows that there are common concerns and misconceptions about ODL that need to be addressed across different target groups while some concerns and misconceptions are group specific. The following are the most common concerns and misconceptions about ODL, that cut across all the identified target groups in this Strategy:

• ODL is inferior to face-to-face education
• ODL is primarily for people who have not 'made the grade' in prior levels of learning
• ODL is a  cheap alternative to face – to – face teaching
• Available ODL programmes do not cater for (diverse)  learning interests/needs
• It is not possible to learn practical/'hard' skills in ODL programmes
• Assumptions about 'good' education may be based on prior experience and social myths, rather than grounded insight.

In addition to the above there are some concerns and misconceptions that are associated with the specific target groups as Table 2 shows.

**Table 2: Concerns/Misconceptions Associated with Specific Target Groups**

| Target Group | Concerns/Misconceptions |
|---|---|
| Potential ODL Learners | • Staying motivated while studying at a distance is difficult<br>• Will feel isolated/lonely during their studies<br>• Will struggle to balance demands of study with other aspects of life successfully |
| Current ODL Learners | • Given negative social perceptions, may be concerned that completion of their ODL programme may not yield expected personal benefits<br>• May be struggling to balance demands of study with other aspects of life successfully |
| Parents | • Available ODL programmes do not cater for learning needs of children |
| Employers and Professional Associations | • This group, may be unwilling to invest money in professional development programmes using ODL methods |
| Educators and Support Staff in ODL and Mixed Mode Institutions | • Lack of investment in design and ongoing improvement of programmes, courses, and materials prevents attainment of necessary quality in ODL programmes<br>• Engagement in ODL activities does not contribute to career advancement in traditional education systems, especially for academics |
| Decision-Makers in ODL and Mixed-Mode Institutions | • Average age of student enrolments is declining or will decline in face of growing demand for education that cannot be met by face-to-face education systems<br>• Key constituency of growing demand is young, full-time students, and ODL may be unsuitable for such students<br>• Lack of investment in design and ongoing improvement of programmes, courses, and materials prevents attainment of necessary quality in ODL programmes<br>• Engagement in ODL activities does not contribute to career advancement in traditional education systems, especially for academics |
| Decision-Makers, Educators and Career Counsellors in Face-to-Face Institutions/ Programmes | • ODL demands more rigorous assurance of quality than face-to-face programmes<br>• Key constituency of growing demand is young, full-time students, and ODL may be unsuitable for such students<br>• ODL programmes may constitute a threat either to individuals' jobs or to the institutions by which they are employed<br>• Engagement in ODL activities does not contribute to career advancement in traditional education systems, especially for academics |
| Government Decision-Makers | • ODL demands more rigorous assurance of quality than face-to-face programmes<br>• Key constituency of growing demand is young, full-time students, and ODL may be unsuitable for such students<br>• Unregulated growth of ODL will strain national education budgets |
| Political Leaders | • Key constituency of growing demand is young, full-time students, and ODL may be unsuitable for such students<br>• Unregulated growth of ODL will strain national education budgets |
| Donors/Funders | • Given all of above concerns and misperceptions (for all target audiences), may see ODL grants as a waste of money |

## 5.10 Focus and Scope of the IEC Strategy

The IEC strategy has been developed to promote the development of ODL in the whole SADC region. Therefore although the focus of the IEC strategy implementation will be on those (nine) least developed countries within SADC that qualify for assistance from the African Development Fund (ADF), it is anticipated that the

project will produce a series of generic products that will also be made available for use in other SADC countries (known as ADB countries).

In addition, where Regional activities allow it, invitations to attend meetings/workshops or participate in processes, during the implementation of the SADC ODL project, will be extended to ADB countries, although they will be expected to cover their own costs of participation.

The IEC Strategy has a critical role to play in raising awareness about the potential and promise of ODL, deepening knowledge about the requirements for implementing effective ODL, correcting misperceptions about ODL, and dispelling myths about it.

Therefore the purpose of IEC activities is to raise awareness about ODL and the conditions for its successful implementation, advocate its merits, and lobby for its effective growth. IEC activities are not intended to build either institutional or human capacity to implement ODL, nor will they serve to deepen knowledge about ODL. This has largely been informed by the challenges that need to be addressed, and the possible interests, possible concerns and misconceptions of the identified target groups.

## 5. 11 Challenges, Strategies and Activities

The main challenges faced by Member States in the development of ODL are directly related to legitimacy and acceptance of this mode of education and training provision. These include poor understanding, by many key stakeholders, of the potential and applications of ODL, perception that it is inferior and ODL systems are inefficient and that it is a lonely activity for which individual motivation is hard to sustain, with limited or no opportunities for social interaction.

Other challenges are that there is an absence of or weak commitment to ODL amongst key decision-makers, ODL is structurally under-funded in relation to the core function it is expected to discharge and some ODL programmes are of low quality and/or marginal educational relevance. Related to these are challenges of increasing utilisation and recognition of ODL in the region.

In order to address these challenges and to, generally, raise awareness and greater understanding of potential and practice of ODL, improve commitment to and promote increased utilisation of ODL some strategies and activities are presented for each of the major challenges.

### 5.11.1 Understanding the potential, benefits and application of ODL.

The low levels of acceptance of ODL as a viable and credible mode of educational delivery can be attributed to the poor understanding of its potential and benefits. This will be addressed through the following strategies and activities.

### 5.11.1.1 Strategy

Develop greater awareness about the potential, benefits and promise of ODL, together with the requirements for successful implementation of ODL programmes.

### 5.11.1.1.1 Activities

a) Produce and disseminate gender sensitive IEC materials (booklets, leaflets, brochures, fliers, pamphlets and posters) on the potential and benefits of ODL and requirements for effective ODL delivery

- Engage key stake holders through meetings, conferences and advocacy workshops and on line discussion forums.

- Arrange visits to examplar ODL institutions.

- Disseminate evaluation results of successful ODL programmes

### 5.11.2 Addressing Prejudices and Misconceptions about ODL

There are many prejudices and misconceptions about ODL. In general it is considered to be cheap, inferior to face – to – face education and its systems inefficient. ODL is also considered to be for people who fail at lower levels of the education system and that it does not cater to the diverse needs of learners and cannot teach practical or hard skills. There are also perceptions that it is a lonely activity for which individual motivation is hard to sustain, with limited or no opportunities for social interaction.

### 5.11.2.1 Strategy

Provide information on the benefits and advantages of ODL including emphasis on how well-designed ODL programmes can provide excellent opportunities for interaction with both educators and other students, while continuing to allow students to study at their own pace.

### 5.11.2.1.1 Activities
- Develop a booklet of messages to dispel myths, negative perceptions and misconceptions about ODL targeting key stakeholders such as potential and current learners, policy and decision makers in government and in both conventional and ODL institutions, parents, employers and professional association.

- Produce and disseminate print, audio and video materials on examples of best practices in ODL in the region and elsewhere, and profiles of personalities in ODL (high-profile role models in society, business, and politics who graduated through ODL and personalities involved in delivery of ODL programmes both within and beyond Southern Africa)

- Conduct "Open days" in ODL institutions to show case their products and achievements.

### 5.11.3 Promoting commitment to ODL amongst key stakeholders.

One of the greatest challenges in the development of ODL is an absence of, or weak, commitment to ODL amongst key stakeholders especially decision-makers in government and educational institutions. This is partly manifest in the lack of effective policies to provide a clear, simple rationale for investment in ODL and

target specific national priorities to be tackled through use of distance education methods

### 5.11.3.1 Strategies

- Provide firm policy ODL frameworks at regional and national levels

- Undertake ODL advocacy activities

### 5.11.3.1.1 Activities

- Facilitate development of regional and national ODL policies.

- Support the development of ODL strategic plans at institutional level

- Conduct regional advocacy meetings with key stakeholders for increased support to ODL
- Conduct national advocacy meetings with key stakeholders for increased support to ODL.

- Develop gender sensitive IEC Materials (Booklets, posters leaflets brochures, fliers, stickers) on the potential of ODL.

### 5.11.4. Increasing budgetary allocation to ODL

One of the major constraints in the development of ODL is that it is structurally under-funded in relation to the core function it is expected to discharge. The focus on ODL as a cheap alternative to face-to-face education is counter-productive, as both modes of education are − in general − structurally under-funded for what they are required.

### 5.11.4.1 Strategy

Advocate increased funding to ODL at regional, national, and institutional levels.

### 5.11.4.2 Activities

- Conduct meetings with decision makers in government and educational institutions to discuss the need for, and benefits of investing in ODL.

- Produce and disseminate information on the cost effectiveness of ODL from successful institutions within and outside the region

- Provide training opportunities for training in financing, costing and resource mobilization in ODL.

### 5.11.5 Improving the quality and relevance of ODL programmes

Negative perceptions about the ODL could be attributed to the fact that some ODL programmes are of low quality and/or marginal educational relevance. Many institutions do not provide conditions for real success (in terms of programme,

relevance, programme completion, and life of students after studying) and in general lack quality assurance/ accreditation systems.

### 5.11.5.1  Strategies

- Support the institutionalisation of Quality Assurance in ODL institutions

- Sensitise key stakeholders on the  importance and necessity of quality and relevance in ODL

### 5.11.5.1.1 Activities

- Conduct group and one – on – one meetings with decision makers and staff in both ODL  and face – to – face – institutions on the necessity of, and requirements for, developing and delivering, successful, quality ODL programmes

- Produce and disseminate gender sensitive IEC materials (booklets, leaflets, brochures, fliers, and posters)  on the necessity of, and requirements, for developing and delivering, successful, quality ODL programmes

- Distribute Guidelines on developing and delivering relevant and quality ODL programmes that cater to the needs of diverse learners including women, people with disabilities and other marginalized segments of society.

### 5.11.6. Increasing utilization of ODL in SADC Member States

Largely as a result of negative perceptions and misunderstanding about its potential and benefits ODL is not fully utilized in the SADC region.

### 5.11.6.1 Strategy

Promote increased utilization of ODL in SADC Member States

### 5.11.6.1.1 Activities

- Conduct awareness meetings with parents, community leaders, learners and career guidance teachers on the benefits of, and opportunities for ODL

- Conduct three regional awareness workshops for media practitioners, civil society  organizations, employers and Trade Unions on the benefits of, and opportunities for ODL

- Conduct two national  awareness workshops for media practitioners, civil society  organizations, employers and Trade Unions on the benefits of, and opportunities for ODL

### 5.11.7 Increasing recognition of ODL qualifications

Negative perceptions about the credibility and viability of ODL are largely responsible for low levels of acceptance and legitimacy of this mode of educational delivery. Consequently, ODL qualifications are not highly recognized compared to formal school qualifications.

### *5.11.7.1 Strategy*

Advocate for increased recognition of ODL qualifications by key stakeholders.

### 5.11.7.1.1 Activities

- Convene sensitization meetings with employers and professional Associations, educators support career counsellors and decision-makers in face-to-face institutions/programmes, civic organizations, Government Decision-Makers and Political Leaders on the benefits of ODL.

- Showcase ODL success stories, with particular focus on new ODL developments in the Region

## 6. Implementation Plan for the IEC Strategy

### 6.1 Focus and Scope of Implementation the IEC Strategy in the Context of the SADC ODL Project

The IEC strategy is a regional framework, with a limited ceiling budget. This places clear constraints on its scope and scale of activities and outputs. Consequently, the Implementation Plan will seek to complement, rather than replacing or duplicating, advocacy efforts that might be taking place at national or institutional levels.

Given the obvious expenses associated with some approaches such as mass media campaigns the selection will be done carefully to ensure that only approaches and methods that can yield maximum benefit with the given budget are adopted.

Similarly due to the potential size of the audience, the Implementation of the IEC strategy may not seek to target directly all the target audiences at the same time, in all the Member States.

However, the IEC strategy will contribute to constructing appropriate media packages and messages aimed at these target audiences for use in national or institutional campaigns, during the SADC project period and beyond. In addition, as the SADC Secretariat mobilizes additional funding, it will expand the scope of the IEC strategy implementation to include additional activities and outputs as shown in the Logical Framework.

### 6.2 Institutional Arrangements

The SADC IEC Strategy for ODL will require implementation at regional, national, and institutional levels, with specific plans being developed at the relevant level within this planning framework.

It is expected that all SADC Member States will use the IEC Strategy framework presented in this document to prepare their own national implementation plans for advocacy and marketing of ODL within their countries. This work will be coordinated by the SADC Secretariat through the TCODL. Each Member State will therefore be expected to set up a national ODL Coordinating Committee comprised of all the

relevant stakeholders to coordinate implementation of IEC  and other project activities at national level.

It is anticipated that institution-specific IEC implementation plans will be included in the broader national plan. In this way, the communication structures will serve to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts across the three levels, and that national and institutional implementation plans can benefit from access to outputs from Regional activities as appropriate.

The implementation of the IEC Strategy will operate within the broader organizational structures for supervision and decision-making defined for the overall SADC Capacity-Building in ODL Project.

## 6.3 Roles and Responsibilities

A variety of methods will be used and associated activities undertaken by specified structures at institutional, national and regional levels as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Roles and Responsibilities**

| Institutional Structure | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| **Ministries of Education** | • Support and oversee the activities of the national ODL committees |
| **SADC Secretariat** | • Support the development of policy frameworks and mainstreaming gender in ODL<br>• Overall coordination of the implementation of the IEC Strategy<br>• One-on-one meetings with Decision-makers in ODL, mixed-mode and face-to-face institutions, Government decision-makers, political leaders, IGOs and donors/funders.<br>• Facilitating regional advocacy workshops for representatives of key stakeholders.<br>• Organising regional conferences and presenting papers at continental, regional and national conferences.<br>• Facilitating study visits to examplar institutions<br>• Production of Booklets and a series of Video/Audio Programmes<br>• Managing Websites (and associated search engine optimization), Online Forums/ Electronic Discussion Lists, Electronic Newsletters/ RSS Feeds.<br>• Participate in monitoring ODL activities |
| **National ODL Committees** | • Arranging one – on – one meetings with key stakeholders , facilitated by SADC ODL Project office<br>• Arranging national advocacy workshops<br>• Presenting papers at conferences<br>• Selecting and organising teams for study visits to examplar institutions<br>• Coordinating student recruitment drives (visits to schools, universities, places of employment, agricultural shows, etc) in conjunction with ODL providers<br>• Arranging Radio/ Television/ Journalist Interviews and Media Conferences.<br>• Coordinating production of Press Releases and Education Columns in Newspapers<br>• Coordinating Mass Media/ Advertising Campaign (Radio, Television, Newspapers, Magazines, Outdoor Signage, etc)<br>• Coordinating integration of ODL themes into mass media platforms (soap operas, comic strips, magazines, etc)<br>• Producing and distributing Flyers/ Brochures/ Pamphlets /Posters<br>• Distributing IEC materials produced by the SADC ODL Project office<br>• Producing/managing Electronic Newsletters/RSS Feeds<br>• Coordinating mobile marketing strategies (including competitions using mobile telephones)<br>• Organise "Open" days |
| **ODL institutions/Providers** | • Arranging one – on – one meetings with decision makers, facilitated by SADC ODL Project office<br>• Distributing IEC materials produced by the SADC ODL Project office and national committees<br>• Participating in Mass Media/ Advertising Campaign (Radio, Television, Newspapers, Magazines, Outdoor Signage, etc)<br>• Contributing to Press Releases and Education Columns in Newspapers, and Radio/ Television/ Journalist Interviews and Media Conferences<br>• Presenting papers at conferences<br>• Participating in student recruitment drives (visits to schools, universities, places of employment, agricultural shows, etc<br>• Producing IEC materials (Flyers/ Brochures/ Pamphlets, Posters, Prospectuses/ Course Catalogues)<br>• Producing/managing electronic Newsletters/ RSS Feeds<br>• Undertaking mobile marketing |
| **Professional Associations** | • Distributing IEC materials produced by the SADC ODL Project office and national committees<br>• Organising conferences and presenting papers |

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on the IEC Strategy will be part of the overall monitoring, evaluation, and reporting strategies of the SADC Capacity Building in ODL Project. This will be guided by the SADC ODL project Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

## 8. Budget

### 8.1 Assumptions

In preparing budgets for the IEC Strategy, the following assumptions have been made:

- An annual inflation rate of 8% has been assumed in preparing the budgets.
- The costs of all personnel from the SADC Project Office (Project Coordinator, ODL Adviser, Gender Specialist, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Finance Manager, Procurement Agent, and Secretary) have not been included in the budget below. However, important roles are assumed for these personnel in terms of:
- Securing sub-contracted human resources as required, and in terms of procurement requirements of the African Development Bank;
- Attending engagement meetings with Ministers of Education and Permanent Secretaries;
- Participating in the various Regional and national workshops;
- Completing logistical arrangements for meetings and workshops (organizing venues, arranging travel and accommodation, and so on).
- No provision has been made for any web development, as it is assumed the related costs of this will be covered separately by the SADC Secretariat as part of procurement of web services for the Project.
- Costs of reporting and monitoring/evaluation have not been included in this budget, as these are separate, budgeted activities in the Project.
- Provision has been made for an ODL Specialist to participate in all engagement meetings, organize study visits, facilitate all workshops, and run online discussion forums. Provision has been made for such a specialist to design workshop agendas and materials, as well as to produce workshop reports.
- Travel and accommodation provisions for participation in all Regional workshops have been included for participants from ADF and ADB countries.

### 8.2 Overall Budget

| Expenditure Item | Amount (US$) |
|---|---|
| Personnel | 168 830.20 |
| Travel & Workshops | 530 032.42 |
| Printing and Consumables | 13 276.50 |
| | 712 139.12 |
| **TOTAL** | **712 139.12** |

**LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SADC ODL IEC STRATEGY**

| NARRATIVE SUMMARY | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS | MEANS OF VERIFICATION | KEY ASSUMPTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| **GOAL**<br><br>Access to quality education and training across the SADC region increased. | Net enrolment rates by sex<br><br><br>Retention rates by sex | Educational Statistics Bulletins<br><br><br>Annual reports | There is demand for ODL programmes<br><br><br>Nine ADF countries are collecting requisite data |
| **OUTCOMES** | | | |
| 1. Improved commitment to ODL across the SADC region. | 1.1    Proportion of ODL budget to overall education sector budget<br><br>1.2    Proportion of institutional | Ministry of Education and Institutional budgets | Education and institutional budgets clearly indicate allocations to different activities and sub sectors |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | budget allocated to ODL | | |
| 2. Increased utilization of ODL in SADC Member States | 2.1 No. of institutions offering ODL programmes<br><br><br>2.2 No. of institutions with new ODL | Annual reports<br><br>Educational Statistics Bulletins | Ministries and institutions are collecting relevant information<br><br>There is demand for ODL programmes |

|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | programmes | | |
|  | 2.3 No. of learners enrolled by level and according to sex | | |
| 3. Increased recognition of ODL qualifications | 3.1 Perceptions of key stakeholders on the value of ODL qualifications | Baseline and Endline surveys | That resources will be available to undertake Baseline and Endline surveys |
| 4.  Quality ODL programmes delivered in the SADC region | 4.1 No. of ODL institutions with functional quality assurance systems | ODL Project Monitoring and Evaluation reports | |
| 5. Increased awareness of the benefits of ODL among key stakeholders in the SADC region | 5.1 No of applicants for ODL programmes | ODL Institutional records | ODL institutions keep records of applications and source of funding for the learners |
| | 5.2 No. of ODL learners supported by employers by level and sex | | |
| 6. Prejudices and misconceptions about ODL reduced in the SADC region | 6.1a  Percent of respondents who report | Baseline and Endline surveys | That resources will be available to undertake |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | that ODL is not inferior | | Baseline and Endline surveys |
| | 6.1b Percent of respondents who believe that ODL is suitable for young people | | |
| | 6.1c Percent of respondents who feel that completion of ODL studies does yield personal benefits | | |
| | 6.1d   Percent of respondents who believe that ODL is not only for failures in the formal education systems. | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 Increased levels of gender equality in ODL programmes. | 6.1 Number of ODL institutions reporting increased levels of gender equality. | Institutional enrolment records | Institutions will recognize the need to adopt gender mainstreaming strategies. |
| **ACTIVITIES** | | | |
| **Outcome 1: Improved commitment to ODL across the SADC region.** | | | |
| 1.1     Facilitate development of national ODL policies. | 1.1.1 No. of Member States with ODL Policies | National ODL Policy Documents | Budget available to support facilitation of National ODL Policy development.<br><br>Member States allocate resources for ODL Policy development. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.2 | Conduct four Regional advocacy meetings with key stakeholders for increased support to ODL | 1.2.1 No. of regional advocacy meetings conducted | Annual Project Reports | |
| 1.3 | Conduct three National advocacy meetings with key stakeholders for increased support to ODL | 1.3.1 No. of national advocacy meetings conducted | | Stakeholders willing to participate in mmetings |
| 1.4 | Develop gender sensitive IEC Materials (Booklets, posters leaflets brochures, fliers, stickers) on the potential of ODL | 1.4.1No. of IEC materials produced by type<br><br>and gender sensitivity | Bi annual Progress reports from Member States | |

| | | IEC materials | |
|---|---|---|---|

**Outcome 2: Increased utilization of ODL in SADC Member States**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.1 Conduct awareness meetings with parents, community leaders, learners and career guidance teachers on the benefits of, and opportunities for ODL | 2.1.1 No. of awareness meetings conducted | Member States Biannual Report | Stakeholders willing to participate in mmetings |
| | 2.1.2 No. of people exposed to the campaigns by categories and sex | | |
| 2.2 Conduct three regional awareness workshops for media practitioners, civil society  organizations, employers and Trade | 2.2.1 No. of people by categories and sex participating in | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unions on the benefits of, and opportunities for ODL | awareness workshops | | |
| 2.3 Conduct two national awareness workshops for media practitioners, civil society organizations, employers and Trade Unions on the benefits of, and opportunities for ODL | 2.3.1 No. of people by categories and sex participating in awareness workshops<br><br>2.3.2 No. of awareness workshops conducted | Project Reports<br><br><br>Member States Biannual Report | |
| **Outcome 3. Increased recognition of ODL qualifications** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1 Convene sensitization meetings (one regional and one national, in each Member State per year), with employers and professional Associations, educators support career counsellors and decision-makers in face-to-face institutions/programmes, civic organizations, Government Decision-Makers and Political Leaders on the benefits of ODL. | 3.1.1 Number. of people by categories and sex participating in sensitization meetings | Project monitoring and Evaluation Reports | Stakeholders willing to participate in mmetings |
| | 3.1.2 Number of sensitization meetings convened. | Booklet on best practices. | National structures have the capacity to organize meetings |
| 3.2 Showcase ODL success stories, with particular focus on new ODL developments in the Region | Number of best practices best practices documented and shared. | | |
| 3.3 Produce and distribute print and electronic based publicity and marketing materials (i.e. fliers, posters, booklets, video and audio tapes and radio and television interviews) targeting key stakeholders and show casing ODL success stories and profiling role models (including prominent women) who are graduates of ODL programmes | 3.2.1 Quantities of different types of materials produced and distributed<br><br>3.2.2 Number of people by categories and sex receiving different types of materials | Member States Biannual Report | |

| | 3.2.3 Number of employers and organizations sponsoring people for distance learning courses/programmes<br><br>3.2.4 Number of ODL graduates employed or upgraded in their jobs. | Project monitoring and Evaluation Reports | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Outcome 4. Quality ODL programmes delivered in the SADC region** | | | |
| 4.1 Conduct meetings with decision makers and staff in both ODL and face – to – face – institutions on the necessity and importance of integrating quality assurance strategies and mechanisms in ODL programmes | 4.1.1 Number of meetings<br><br>4.1.2 Number of people by category and sex participating in the meetings<br><br>4.1.2 Number of institutions participating in meetings.. | Member States Biannual Report | Stakeholders willing to participate in meetings |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Project monitoring and Evaluation Reports | |
| 4.2 Produce and disseminate gender sensitive IEC materials (booklets, leaflets, brochures, fliers, and posters)  on the necessity of, and requirements, for developing and delivering, successful, quality ODL programmes. | 4.2.1 Quantities of  IEC materials produced by type. | Member States Biannual Report | |
| 4.3  Distribute  Guidelines  on  developing  and  **delivering** relevant and quality ODL programmes that cater to the needs of diverse learners including women | 4.3.1 Number of institutions receive  and are using the Guidelines | Member States Biannual Report | |
| **Outcome 5. Increased awareness of the potential, benefits and  promise  of  ODL  among   key  stakeholders  in  the SADC region** | | | |
| 5.1 Produce  and  disseminate  gender  sensitive  IEC  materials (booklets,  poster,  fliers,  and  video  tapes  describing  the potential,,   benefits of , and requirements for effective ODL programmes. | 5.1.1 Two generic booklets, one generic flyer and on 10 minute video tape produced  5.1.2 Number of people | Project monitoring and Evaluation Reports  Member States Biannual | |

| | by category and sex receiving the materials and using the materials | Report | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.3 Conduct national advocacy meetings for all key stakeholders | 5.3.1 Number of advocacy meetings<br><br>5.3.2  Number of people participating in advocacy meetings | Project reports<br><br><br>Member States Biannual Report | |
| **Outcome 6: Prejudices and misconceptions about ODL reduced in the SADC region** | | | |
| 6.1 Develop a booklet of messages to dispel myths, negative perceptions and misconceptions about ODL targeting key stakeholders such as potential and current learners, policy and decision makers in government and in both conventional and ODL institutions, parents, employers and professional association.<br><br>6.2 Produce and disseminate print, audio and video materials on examples of best practices in ODL in the region and elsewhere, and profiles of personalities in ODL (high-profile role models in society, business, and politics who | 6.1.1Perecntage of people who receive and are using copies of the booklet | Member States Biannual Report | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| graduated through ODL and personalities involved in delivery of ODL programmes both within and beyond Southern Africa).<br><br>6.3 Conduct "Open days" in ODL institutions to show case their products and achievements.<br><br>. | 6.2.1 Number and types of materials distributed | Member States Biannual Report | |
| | 6.3.1Number of institutions that conduct "Open" Days | Member States Biannual Report | |
| **Outcome 7. Increased levels of gender equality in ODL programmes.** | | | |
| 7.1 Conduct gender sensitization/awareness campaigns with ODL practitioners. | 7.1.1Number of people sensitized by category by sex. | Project reports | Member States willing to integrate ODL work. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7.2 Facilitate creation of coordinating mechanisms for gender issues in ODL programmes. | 7.2.1 Number of Member States with Gender Focal Points for ODL programmes<br><br>7.2.2 Number of Member States promoting gender issues in ODL programmes. | Project Reports<br><br><br>Member States biannual reports. | |
| 7.3 Facilitate information sharing on gender issues in ODL | 7.3.1 Number of Member States reached with relevant gender instruments. | Member States biannual reports. | |