



Southern Africa Trust: Embarking on a Sustainability Journey

In May 2020, working from her home office just over one month into a nationwide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Masego Madzwamuse, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Southern Africa Trust (the Trust), knew that it could once again be at a crossroads. In 2015, the Trust had found itself in a quandary when its primary donor gave notification of its intention to withdraw its funding. The Trust had responded by making changes to its structure and strategy. Now, with uncertainty rife throughout South Africa, she knew that she had to consider whether the changes that had been implemented over the past five years had prepared the Trust not only to respond to, but also to survive the pandemic and continue its vital work long into the future.

Background on the Trust

The Trust, an independent, non-profit organisation based in Midrand, Gauteng, was founded in 2005 in response to the high levels of poverty and inequality in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region^{a,1} (See **Exhibit 1** for a map illustrating these countries.) Neville Gabriel (see **Exhibit 2** for a brief biography) was the founding executive director.² Gabriel served until August 2013, after which Bhekinkosi Moyo (see **Exhibit 3** for a brief biography) took over, first as director of the Trust and then as CEO from June 2014 to May 2018. (This change in title was due to the new strategy and resultant changes in structure in 2014.) Madzwamuse (see **Exhibit 4** for a brief biography) took over as CEO in October 2018.

The Trust's purpose was to contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality in southern Africa. Its activities included those related to public policy, official poverty reduction processes, human rights, stakeholder engagement, human and economic development, research, training, and capacity building.³ The Trust's projects had resulted in stronger engagement with civil society and the private sector at both national and regional levels.⁴ It was committed to making an impact on the lives of the poor by facilitating philanthropic initiatives and influencing policy through public-private-civil society collaborations.⁵

Its primary aim was to influence policy makers to create policies that would alleviate the suffering of the poor.⁶ To do this, the Trust focused on six key areas:

1. *knowledge*: sharing strategic information, from research and facilitation, with the policy community through the Trust's Knowledge Hub;

^a This region consisted of Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. [Source: SADC (n.d.), "Member States", available at: www.sadc.int/member-states (accessed 4 April 2021).]

This case was prepared by Dr Bhekinkosi Moyo with research associate Angie Urban. It is intended for classroom use only. It is not intended to demonstrate effective or ineffective handling of a business situation.