



Southern Africa Migration Network (SAMIN)

Proposal for the Annual SAMIN Refugee Day Lecture

1. Background & Introduction

Migration flows have been and continue to be important vectors of social, economic, and cultural change. There are few if any, countries in the world that are not affected by migration; Migration is an essential, inevitable, and beneficial component of the economic and social life of every state and every region including the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). However, in many countries' members of SADC, migration is not managed effectively nor do countries adhere to immigrants' rights as per international law.

Migration involves various elements of management and policy consideration at various stages which is why members of Civil society, migrant organisations and those who advocate for migrants met in 2019 for a consultative meeting to discuss issues of migration in SADC; taking into account that most SADC member States see migration as a threat not as an opportunity thus making the response to this complex issue inadequate. This is how the Southern Africa Migration Network (SAMIN) was started to collectively advocate for the rights of refugees and migrants in Southern Africa. It is a forum that comprises members of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Faith-based Organisations, academia, refugee and migrant rights organisations (MROs) and human rights defenders and activists.

SAMIN's mission is to collectively advocate for the rights of refugees and migrants in Southern Africa. We are guided by the objectives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which, among others, are to achieve economic development, peace and security, growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration.

2. Annual lecture on Refugee day/Month

Building on the successful three editions of SAMIN annual policy conferences that took place in 2019, 2021 and recently 2022, SAMIN would like to introduce an annual refugee month lecture with the aim to raise awareness, promote understanding, and facilitate discussions on the challenges, experiences, and rights of refugees in Southern Africa.

This annual lecture will delve into the causes of forced displacement, the experiences of refugees in different regions and countries, the legal frameworks and policies governing refugee protection, the humanitarian response, and the role of various stakeholders in addressing the needs of refugees.

3. Proposed Activities

The annual lecture will be a flagship event during Refugee Month in Southern Africa. The following activities are envisaged:



- Keynote Address: SAMIN will be inviting a distinguished speaker with expertise in refugee rights, humanitarian work, or migration-related issues to deliver a thought-provoking keynote address, addressing the issues of xenophobia, social cohesion, and their impact on refugee and migrant communities.
- Panel Discussions: after the keynote speech we will be having a panel discussion with diverse experts, including representatives from CSOs, academia, SADC, MROs, and refugee communities, to explore various dimensions of refugee rights, challenges, xenophobia, and social cohesion. These discussions will aim to promote dialogue, understanding, and strategies to foster social cohesion and combat xenophobia in Southern Africa.
- Knowledge Sharing: Facilitate the sharing of research findings, case studies, and innovative approaches related to addressing xenophobia, promoting social cohesion, and creating inclusive communities. Presentations can focus on initiatives that have successfully fostered social cohesion and combat xenophobia, providing practical insights for attendees.
- Networking and Collaboration: This lecture will provide opportunities for networking, collaboration, and partnerships among participants to strengthen joint efforts in promoting social cohesion, combating xenophobia, and protecting the rights of refugees and migrants. This will encourage dialogue and exchange of best practices to enhance social integration and create inclusive societies.

By bringing together experts, stakeholders, and the general public, lectures on refugees contribute to the dissemination of information, the exploration of solutions, and the promotion of advocacy efforts to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugees globally.

4. The Inaugural Refugee Lecture 2023

The inaugural lecture will take place on 28 June 2023, virtually from 14h00 – 16h00 (SAT). The Topic/theme of the inaugural lecture is "**Beyond Stereotypes: Recognizing the Positive Contributions of Refugees and Overcoming Negative Perceptions**". With this theme, we hope that the inaugural lecture will help address among others prevalent negative narratives and biases surrounding refugees in Southern Africa, with specific examples from countries like Malawi and South Africa.

It will explore the following sub-topics:

- Highlighting the need to move beyond stereotypes and misconceptions about refugees, emphasizing their resilience, skills, and potential contributions to host communities and local economies.
- Showcasing examples of how refugees, when given the opportunity, have made positive economic contributions through entrepreneurship, job creation, and filling critical skills gaps. This can include success stories and case studies from different sectors.



- The cultural diversity and social and cultural enrichment such as exploring social benefits that refugees bring to their host communities, including the exchange of knowledge, traditions, and ideas that contribute to the enrichment of local culture.
- It will also discuss among others the importance of upholding human rights and providing adequate protection for refugees, highlighting the obligations of host countries in accordance with international legal frameworks and regional agreements and finally it will address the issue of xenophobia advocating for strategies to combat prejudice, discrimination, and violence.

We hope this lecture will offer alternative narratives that emphasize their positive contributions, hence start reshaping public perceptions and fostering a more compassionate and inclusive approach towards refugees in Southern Africa.

We are proposing to run this in partnership with the Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub at the University of Cape Town (UCT).