



SARUA

1<sup>st</sup> Southern African Regional  
Universities Association

# CONFERENCE

Innovating Higher Education for  
Sustainable Development across  
the SADC: Innovation for Impact

21-23 May 2025 | Radisson Blu Lusaka | Zambia

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT





You are invited to the **First Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) Conference** taking place from 21–23 May 2025, in Lusaka, Zambia.  
This conference represents a critical moment for higher education in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

## Context

The conference theme, **‘Innovating Higher Education for Sustainable Development across the SADC: Innovation for Impact’**, reflects the urgency of adapting education systems to support economic growth, regional integration and sustainable development. In a rapidly changing global environment, higher education institutions must respond proactively to economic, technological and social shifts. The conference will address these challenges and foster collaboration among university leaders, academics, policymakers, industry players and civil society organisations, ensuring that higher education in SADC evolves to meet future needs.

A key theme of the conference is the need for collaboration across sectors, i.e. that universities, governments, industries and civil society organisations must work together to address complex societal challenges through innovation. SADC universities must move beyond siloed approaches and build multi-disciplinary and cross-border partnerships. Collaborative efforts enhance research impact, improve policy relevance and ensure that higher education serves its mission towards regional social and economic empowerment. Partnerships with the private sector are especially crucial to bridge the gap between academe and the society into which it is embedded.

## Why the conference is critical

- Addressing multiple regional challenges through higher education to facilitate dialogue on how to transform these limitations into opportunities, ensuring that higher education becomes a driver of social change, economic development, and geo-political regional cohesion.
- Promoting regional integration and cooperation as a cohesive higher education system is critical to regional integration, a priority for the SADC.
- Innovation as a key to sustainable development rethinking traditional models of education to ensure expansion, accessibility, relevance, and quality and thus repositioning higher education as hubs of innovation.
- Fostering leadership and governance in higher education to face increasingly complex demands, balancing academic excellence with financial sustainability and community engagement.
- Aligning higher education with the SDGs and regional priorities through showcasing good practices and promoting knowledge exchange, the event will demonstrate how universities can integrate sustainability principles into their operations and curricula.



## Expected outcomes of the conference

The SARUA Conference aims to produce actionable outcomes that will guide the transformation of higher education in the SADC region:

- Best-practice models for curriculum innovation, leadership development, and regional collaboration
- Frameworks for quality assurance and digital transformation in education
- Recommendations for aligning higher education strategies with SDGs
- Strengthened regional partnerships to promote teaching, learning, research, engagement and innovation
- Policy suggestions for government officials and education ministries to support higher education reform

The conference will also inform SARUA's future initiatives and contribute to building a sustainable higher education ecosystem in Southern Africa. These recommendations will be further discussed and formalized during SARUA's Annual General Meeting (AGM), held on the final day of the conference.







## Key note speakers

Renowned international speakers in the field of higher education innovation will offer valuable perspectives on key topics.

## Pre-conference workshops

- Academic scholarship (open to the public)
- Interregional webinar on deploying participatory approaches in higher education towards community engagement and SDG implementation (open to public)
- Leading higher education in Africa: Navigating with impact (open to public)

Universities are invited to participate in the special poster event about university showcasing on the conference themes.

## Call for abstracts and posters

Provide:

- a title, all authors' details and affiliations
- an abstract of not more than 500 words comprising a brief background, the methodology and the intended outcomes
- not more than four key words
- an English translation if the abstract is in French or Portuguese (abstracts may be in English, French or Portuguese but the conference will be held in English)

Email your abstract to **conference@sarua.africa** by 28 February 2025.

# Conference proceedings

Qualifying papers will be published in conference proceedings.

## Important dates

**Abstract submissions**

**28 February 2025**

**Poster event submissions**

**28 February 2025**

**Notification of acceptance**

**31 March 2025**

**Final submission of paper** (edited and in final form)

**30 April 2025**

**SARUA pre-conference workshops**

**19–20 May 2025**

**SARUA conference**

**21–23 May 2025**





# Programme

## PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

### Day 1: 19 May 2025

Time	Activity	Participants	Venue	Responsible
10:00–12:00	EngageSDG PMC meeting	Consortium members only	Unicaf University	Prof. René Pellissier
13:00–17:00	Workshop: The ART of Academic Scholarship	Open to the public - fee required (USD100)	Unicaf University	Prof. René Pellissier

### Day 2: 20 May 2025

Time	Activity	Participants	Venue	Responsible
9:00–16:00	Interregional webinar on deploying participatory approaches in higher education towards community engagement and SDG implementation	Open to the public	Unicaf University	Prof. René Pellissier
13:00 – 17:00	Leading Higher Education in Africa: Navigating the Impact	Open to the public – fee required (USD100)	Radisson Blu	Prof. Birgit Schreiber and Prof. Stephen Simukanga



# Programme

## CONFERENCE

The conference programme will be finalised with all speaker details and topics by the end of April.

### Day 1: 21 May 2025

<b>Registration</b>
<b>Official opening</b>
<b>Keynote address</b>
<b>Official photo session</b>
<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>SESSION 1:</b> The role of higher education in advancing regional integration, economic development and social cohesion
<b>SESSION 2:</b> Innovation and transformation of higher education institutions in the SADC region
<b>Lunch break</b>
<b>SESSION 3:</b> Best practices and successful models of higher education transformation from within the region and beyond
<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>SESSION 4:</b> Collaboration and partnerships towards impact in SADC higher education
<b>Closing session</b>
<b>Cocktail function</b>





# Programme

## CONFERENCE

### Day 2: 22 May 2025

<b>Recap of Day 1</b>
<b>Keynote speaker</b>
<b>SESSION 5:</b> Digital transformation in higher education
<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>SESSION 6:</b> Higher education leadership as agents for change
<b>SESSION 7:</b> Knowledge co-production for regional development
<b>Lunch break</b>
<b>SESSION 8:</b> Quality assurance to support higher education innovation

### Day 3: 23 May 2025

<b>Recap of Day 2</b>
<b>SESSION 9:</b> Sharing experiences from universities in SADC region on some subthemes (poster session) - 15 minutes each. Slots for 8 universities
<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>Closing</b>
<b>Visit to some universities</b>
<b>SARUA AGM</b>

# Registration and fees

Registration for the workshops and conference will be open upon payment of the appropriate fee as follows:  
For more information, **visit our website:** <https://sarua.africa/sarua-conference-2025/>

## 1. Pre-conference Workshop fees:

			In-person	Online
19 May 2025	13:00–17:00	The ART of academic scholarship	<b>USD100</b>	<b>USD40</b>
20 May 2025	13:00–17:00	Leading higher education in Africa: Navigating with impact	<b>USD100</b>	<b>USD40</b>
20 May 2025	09:00–16:00	Interregional webinar on deploying participatory approaches in higher education towards community engagement and SDG implementation	<b>NO FEE</b>	<b>NO FEE</b>

## 2. Conference fee (includes tea and lunch):

Conference fee: non-SARUA members	<b>USD500</b>
Conference fee: SARUA members	<b>USD400</b>
Early bird discount for non-SARUA members (payment before 31 March 2025)	<b>USD450</b>
Online participation fee	<b>USD150</b>

## Accommodation

The conference will be held at the Radisson Blu Lusaka. We have negotiated a preferential rate for conference delegates.

**For more information:** [www.radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-lusaka](http://www.radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-lusaka)

**There is alternative accommodation available within walking distance from the conference venue at the Radisson Blu:**

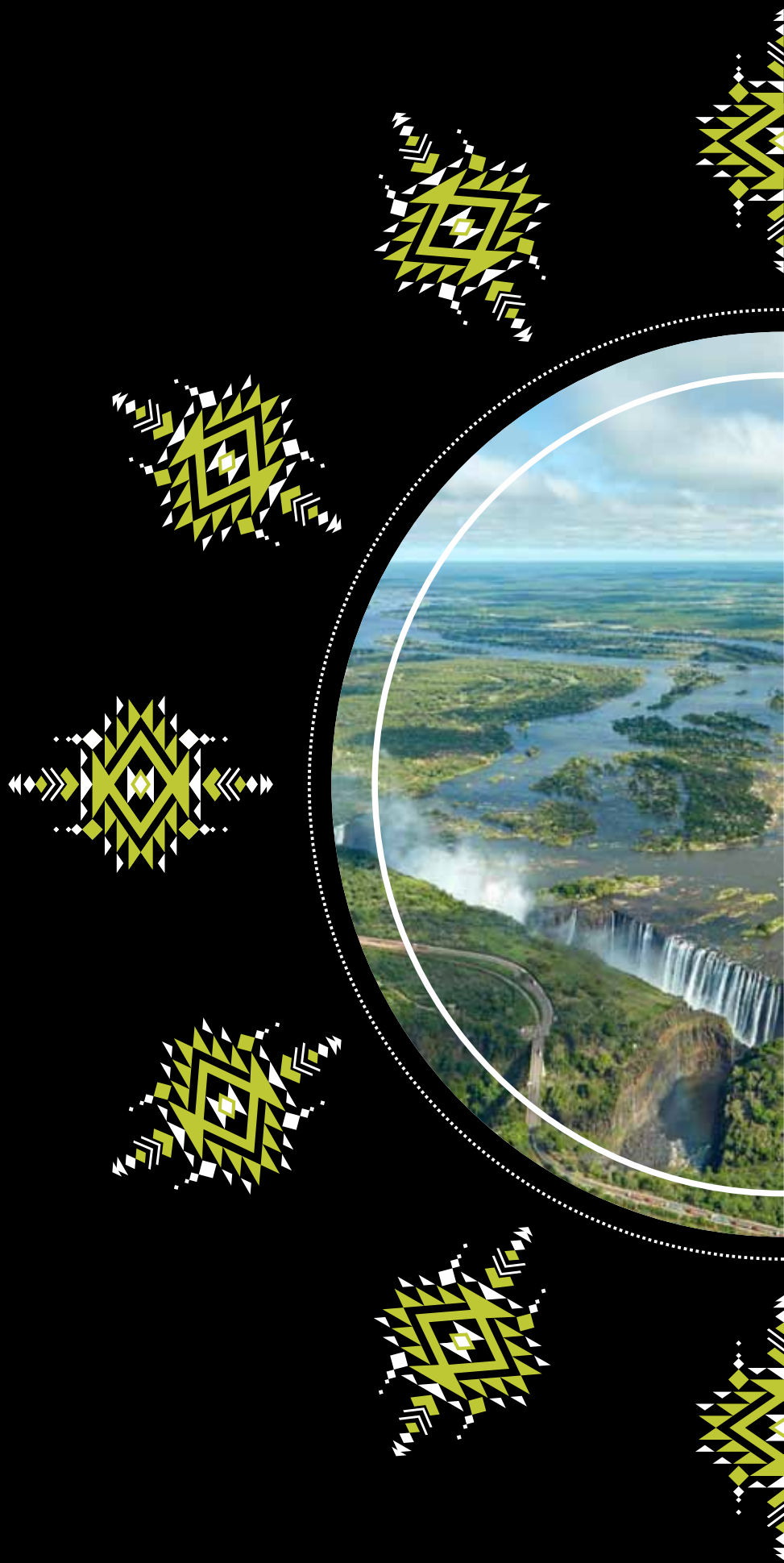
- Asmara Hotel <https://asmarahotelzm.com/>
- Protea Hotel Lusaka Tower <https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/luntw-protea-hotel-lusaka-tower/>
- Protea Hotel Lusaka <https://www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/lunls-protea-hotel-lusaka/>
- Grand Palace Hotel <https://grandpalace.co.zm/>
- The Venice Hotel and Casino <https://ms.hotels.com/en/ho2979814144/the-venice-hotel-lusaka-zambia/>
- Cargo88 Hotel <https://www.cargo88-hotel.com/>
- Le Elementos Hotel <https://leelementos.com/>


## Conclusion

The SARUA Conference comes at a critical time for the SADC region. As the world becomes more interconnected and social-economic spaces increasingly reliant on knowledge and innovation, higher education must play a central role in shaping the future of Southern Africa. This event will catalyse new ideas, foster collaboration, and embolden the universities to transform into engines of economic growth, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

By engaging university leaders, policymakers, academics, and industry representatives, the conference aims to unlock the potential of higher education to contribute to a more equitable, integrated, and sustainable future for the SADC region. The discussions and partnerships that emerge from this event will have lasting implications for how universities operate and collaborate across borders, ensuring that higher education systems remain relevant and resilient in the face of future challenge.





 [conference@sarua.africa](mailto:conference@sarua.africa)

 [www.sarua.africa](http://www.sarua.africa)