Enhancing Regional Cooperation and identifying flagship projects for sustainable energy in LLDCs

By: Kudakwashe Ndhlukula
Executive Director, SACREEE

Regional collaboration in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in infrastructure is a long-standing objective of the integration paradigm. In the power sector, SADC established the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) in 1995 as a forum for the coordination of the development of a world class, robust, safe, efficient, reliable and stable interconnected electrical system in the southern African region.

The Regional Electricity Regulators Association of Southern Africa (RERA) was established by the SADC Ministers responsible for energy in 2002, as formal association of electricity regulators to facilitate the harmonisation of regulatory policies, legislation, standards and practices and to be a platform for effective cooperation among energy regulators within the SADC region.

Realizing the low energy access challenges faced by the region, the barriers and opportunities faced by renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and services, the SADC Ministers responsible for energy decided to establish a centre dedicated to addressing these barriers and challenges in an integrated way. The SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE) was therefore established with the primary objective to promote:

- renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and the development of markets, through the dissemination of information and best practices; and
- the development of sound policy, regulatory, and legal frameworks, and capacity building within SADC member states for renewable energy and energy efficiency.

SADC has just developed a regional Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan (REEESAP), which presents a SADC-wide long-term vision on achieving sufficient, reliable, least cost, sustainable, clean modern energy services for SADC by 2030 through acceleration of scaling up of renewable energy and energy efficiency uptake. SACREEE has been mandated by the Member States to coordinate the implementation by Member States of REEESAP. Amongst key activities and initiatives to coordinate at regional level include the INDCs and SE4ALL.

In collaboration with other SADC agencies, SACREEE will work to ensure enabling regulatory frameworks are developed and enforced by RERA to develop the huge renewable energy resource in the region and use the SAPP grid to wheel this electricity to load centres through an interconnected grid. The LLDCs in SADC have huge renewable energy resources such as Botswana (solar), Lesotho (hydro and wind), Malawi (hydro and geothermal), Swaziland (biomass
and hydro), Zambia (geothermal, hydro and solar) and Zimbabwe (solar and wind). The integration of the region through grid interconnection can be used to develop large scale renewable power as well as manage the intermittence of the resource.