

## **SADCAS CONDUCTS TRAINING ON ISO/IEC 17025:2017 TRAINING UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE SADC EU EDF 11 PROJECT**

The Southern African Development Community Accreditation Service (SADCAS) SADCAS secured funding from SADC EDF 11 for the capacity building of testing and calibration laboratories from the key development sectors in 16 SADC Member States namely: Angola, Botswana, Comoros, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The training was commissioned through the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP) and the European Union, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) hence SADC EU EDF 11. The programme is designed to assist with effecting regional integration in the economic and trade sectors. The Programme focuses its support on Key Result Areas that include the SADC Protocol on Trade and Trade in Services. One of the activities in this result area, activity is enhancement of recognition of competence of conformity assessment bodies in the region. This activity includes capacity building of testing and calibration laboratories with priority to those that are servicing the key development sectors as identified in the SADC Industrial Policy in the 16 SADC Member States.

The overall objective of this assignment was to contribute to the increase in intra-regional trade through increasing market access and enhancing compliance to ISO/IEC 17025:2017. The assignment was also aimed at training SADC TBT, SPS and Private Sector institutions on SQAM and SPS principles in order to facilitate interpretation and implementation of the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and to capacitate the trainees with necessary auxiliary skills on SQAM and SPS principles.

A total of seven (7) training sessions were conducted via SADCAS Online Zoom platform and SADCAS Training Portal over a period of three (3) weeks in May and June 2021. The training courses were conducted by registered SADCAS Trainers in the three (3) official SADC languages of English, French and Portuguese. The National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs) in each Member State were responsible for identifying the participating laboratories using a predetermined criteria and guidelines.

The training included One-day Awareness course and Five-day Requirements, Implementation and Internal Auditing Course. The one-day awareness training on ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 gives an overview of accreditation, benefits of accreditation, the global accreditation infrastructure, worldwide trends in accreditation and outlines the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025:2017 and gives an insight into the SADCAS accreditation process and related costs. This course is aimed at top management/and or support staff i.e., HR, Finance etc who support laboratory activities to make them appreciate the need for accreditation and what their role is in the process. A certificate of attendance was awarded to participants that attended this course fully. A total of 236 participants from 87 laboratories in 16 SADC Member States attended the one- day awareness course.

The five days' course on the requirements, implementation and internal auditing in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 is an intensive course aimed at management and staff involved in the implementation and maintenance of testing laboratories systems as well as those involved in monitoring system compliance through internal audits. A total of 236 participants from 87 laboratories in 16 SADC Member States attended the one-day awareness course.

This project has managed to create awareness on the need and importance of accreditation and to impart the necessary knowledge and skills to laboratory staff from key development sectors for them to implement ISO/IEC 17025 in their laboratories and to monitor compliance thereof. As a follow up to the project and 12 months after the training, it is recommended that a survey be undertaken amongst the participating laboratories. The main objective of this exercise is to determine progress in implementation of ISO/IEC 17025 thus confirm the outcomes of the project activities; to document challenges and lessons learned from the project; and to determine further actions to be taken.

It is recommended that the training on key accreditation standards be extended to other conformity assessment bodies such as inspection bodies (ISO/IEC 17020), product certification bodies (ISO/IEC 17065) and management systems certification bodies where uptake has been rather slow

SADCAS would like to thank the SADC Secretariat and its supporting partners, the National Accreditation Focal Points (NAFPs), SADCAS Trainers, SADCAS Staff, and the participating testing/calibration laboratories for a successful training.

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