

9TH EDITION
RESEARCH
SEMINAR



Agenda
2063
The Africa we Want

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) 2030 AND AFRICAN UNION (AU) AGENDA 2063

THEME:

State resilience to shocks and disasters – The role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions

27 - 29 May 2025

Co-hosted by:

University of South Africa - The Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs
and Stellenbosch University.



the dpsa

Department:
Public Service and Administration
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND
MANAGEMENT (AAPAM)



ASSOCIATION AFRICAINE POUR
L'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE
ET LE MANAGEMENT (AAAPM)

UNISA



Stellenbosch
UNIVERSITY
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SPL

School of Public Leadership
iSikolo sobuNkokheli boLuntu
Skool vir Publieke Leierskap



INTRODUCTION

1. State capacity and capability building undoubtedly remain central to the attainment of the Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); particularly as it relates to Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3 on governance, and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions. There is evidently a link between the SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, and AU 2063 Aspiration 3 on governance, suggesting that strong institutions and good governance are essential for African countries to achieve their development goals, which are necessary for political and economic stability.
2. Good governance and strong institutions that have legitimacy and are trusted by communities are consequently key factors in mitigating state fragility and contribute to the strengthening of state resilience to exogenous shocks and disasters. Equally, good governance and strong institutions provide a critical platform for the imperatives of sustainability, growth, and development for the resilient states in Africa. Hence the role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions is critical given the limited resources at the disposal of the states in Africa.
3. The addition of the APRM fifth thematic area in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process demonstrates the emerging importance of “state resilience to shocks and disasters” as a key component of good governance. As a founder member of the (APRM) in March 2003, South Africa remains committed to the success of the mechanism, including issues relating to “state resilience to shocks and disasters”. Hence South Africa would like to get more active involvement of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions.
4. In the context of governance dimension, the Continental APRM questionnaire (2021) comprehensively describes state resilience as follows:

“... State resilience and preparedness refer to the readiness of the political leadership and public institutions to mobilise, organise, coordinate, and manage disasters within the framework of public-private partnerships and international cooperation. Thus, an adequate level of preparedness implies dynamic responsive systems at the intersection of societies, ecosystems, natural hazards, regional and global risks. This includes the enhancement of early warning systems and promotion of adaptive capacity at local and national government level. Establishing the capability to contain and curb extreme events by building and strengthening infrastructure, critical economic sectors, governance, and social systems. The availability of resources for disaster risk preparedness and management is critical in building a resilient state in a globalising world. Guided by the international and regional frameworks on disaster risk reduction, this thematic area seeks to assess the level of preparedness and capacity to bounce back after shocks in member states by looking at:

- a) The policy, legislative and institutional frameworks being implemented or domesticated at national level to enhance state capacity to respond to shocks, infectious diseases and disasters;

- b) Mechanisms adopted by countries to enhance knowledge management and a system for early detection and warning during shocks, infectious diseases and disasters;
- c) Measures in place for increasing investment (financial, critical infrastructure and human) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR);
- d) Steps members states are taking to build an effective response system to enable them build better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction”.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

5. Consequently, the theme’s focus on the role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions, in relation to state resilience to shocks and disasters, has been brought into sharp focus with researchers and practitioners alike keen to understand the implications of state resilience and how African countries can leverage the role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions and mitigating shocks and disasters that arise from global incidents, from a multi-dimensional viewpoint.
6. The theme of the 9th Edition Research Seminar is thus a follow-up to the discussions that took place at the 8th Edition Research Seminar but has a specific focus on the role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions.
7. Ultimately, the focus on the role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions within the sphere of public administration and governance is a multifaceted and proactive endeavour that necessitates a holistic view of governance, one that embraces among others risk management, adaptability, collaborative networks, leadership, technological empowerment, and workforce well-being.
8. Such an endeavour would include the readiness of political leadership and public institutions to mobilise, organise, coordinate, and manage disasters within the framework of public-private partnerships and international cooperation. This integrated approach is foundational for public institutions aiming not only to navigate the complexities of contemporary crises but also to emerge from these challenges more fortified, innovative, and aligned with their core mission and values, thereby ensuring the sustained delivery of public services in an evolving global context.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE THEME

9. Amidst the backdrop of increasingly complex global crises, the theme titled: “*State resilience to shocks and disasters – The role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions*”, emerges at the appropriate time within the sphere of governance and public administration.

10. It underscores an urgent need to transcend conventional, compartmentalized disaster management strategies in favour of a more holistic, collaborative approach, and the realisation that the capacity of the state cannot by itself effectively address all the issues related to various shocks and disasters.
11. This theme thus advocates for the infusion of innovative governance strategies that capitalise on the collective efficacy of communities, especially higher education and non-governmental institutions, as a way of fostering a governance ecosystem that leads into a sustainable growth and development trajectory of countries, and the effective use of emerging technological tools such as artificial intelligence.
12. By locating this seminar around such a critical theme, the aim is to make a substantive contribution to strengthening the capability of state resilience and preparedness of countries in various dimensions including:
 - 12.1 The policy, legislative and institutional frameworks being developed and implemented to leverage the expertise of non-state actors to enhance state capacity to respond to shocks, infectious diseases and disasters.
 - 12.2 The mechanisms adopted by countries to enhance knowledge management and a system for early detection and warning during shocks, infectious diseases and disasters,
 - 12.3 The measures in place for increasing investment (financial, critical infrastructure and human) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).
 - 12.4 The steps that countries are taking, in collaboration with non-state actors such as higher education institutions, to build an effective response system to enable them to build better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.
 - 12.5 The measures that countries are taking to build and strengthen infrastructure, critical economic sectors, governance, and social systems, in collaboration with the private sector, and
 - 12.6 The measures that countries are taking to continuously strengthen the institutions that are capable to deliver on their mandates.
 - 12.7 The measures that higher education institutions are taking to use data science and computational thinking in bringing about solutions to the pressing challenges confronting the Continent.

SEMINAR SUB-THEMES

13. Within the context of definition of state resilience to shocks and disasters the seminar's sub-themes are strategically designed to address the multi-faceted aspects of state resilience to shocks and disasters through the governance lens as outlined below:

13.1 *Policy, legislative and institutional frameworks for resilient societies:*

This sub-theme seeks to focus on and explore what policies, legislative and institutional frameworks are implemented or domesticated in different countries to enhance state capacity to respond to shocks, infectious diseases. The sub-theme will engage in discussions on how to improve the implementing of frameworks that enable the state to better respond to shocks and disasters, and those that enhance community engagement in governance processes.

13.2 Mechanisms adopted by countries to enhance knowledge management and a system for early detection and warning during shocks, infectious diseases, and disasters:

This sub-theme includes exploring the role of social capital in governance as one of the ways of enhancing governance for a crisis response. Through connecting communities with those in positions of authority, social capital is essential for accessing external resources and support, thereby strengthening the governance framework for crisis resilience.

13.3 Measures in place for increasing investment (financial, critical infrastructure and human) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):

This sub-theme explores strategies and plans that countries have put in place to mobilise and increase investment that address financial, infrastructure and human resources aspects for Disaster Risk Reduction; with a view to ensuring sustainability, growth, and development.

13.4 Steps that countries are taking in building and strengthening infrastructure, critical economic sectors, governance, and social systems:

The impact of floods on the infrastructure, among others, manifest itself in damaged buildings, bridges, internal displacement of communities which requires a response from the state. This sub-theme explores strategies that the states have put in place to mitigate impact of shocks and disasters on infrastructure, critical economic sectors, governance, and social system. This includes steps that countries are taking to build an effective response system to enable them to build better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

13.5 Steps that non-governmental organisations are taking to complement the capacity of state institutions:

This sub-theme includes understanding the critical role that non-governmental organisations play in complementing the capacity and capability of the state institutions, and by extension strengthen state resilience. This endeavour also seeks to explore various ways in which partnerships between the non-governmental organisations and the state institutions can be enhanced to bring about more active community involvement in strengthening state resilience.

13.6 Specific innovative ways and approaches that higher education institutions have adopted to bring about solutions to the pressing challenges confronting the Continent:

This sub-theme explores strategies and interventions that higher education institutions have put in place to mobilise and increase the capacity and capability of state institutions to confront challenges that confront the Continent.

For instance, Stellenbosch University launched the School for Data Science and Computational Thinking in July 2019, which is driving impactful work in Africa and beyond.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

- 14.** The main objective of the 9th Edition Research Seminar is to continue the dialogue established at the eight (8) previous Research Seminars namely, in the main, bringing together African practitioners and academics, and to encourage them to undertake research on selected topical, cross cutting inter-disciplinary issues, dialogue and inform policy propositions in building state capacity and capability for the actualization of the goals of Agendas 2030 and 2063.

In line with the functions of the APRM, Article 6 (1)(d) of the APRM Statute (2020), the 9th Edition Research Seminar seeks to also “serve as a platform for sharing best practices at national, regional and continental level” in line with the theme.

Other objectives are to:

- 14.1 *Deepen Governance Insights*, by enhancing the comprehension among public administrators, policymakers, and governance professionals fostering collective resilience within public institutions and communities, especially in navigating through crises.
- 14.2 *Exchange Governance Models and Practices*, by providing a platform for the dissemination and exchange of governance insights, experiences, and best practices, spotlighting innovative and effective public administration strategies across diverse contexts that have bolstered societal resilience.
- 14.3 *Cultivate Collaborative Networks*, by promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and networking among a spectrum of governance stakeholders, including academia, public sector practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders, to champion a cohesive governance approach to resilience.
- 14.4 *Unearth Innovative Governance Approaches and Human Resource Management Strategies*, by delving into and spotlight groundbreaking human resource management and community engagement strategies within the public sector that contribute to the robustness and sustainability of collective resilience, fostering adaptive governance systems.
- 14.5 *Enhance Institutional and Community Resilience Capacities*, by providing a platform to engage in substantive dialogue aimed at formulating and advocating for policy reforms and administrative strategies that bolster

resilience at various governance levels, from local, provincial to national levels. This includes empowering participants with the necessary governance tools, knowledge, and networks to initiate and sustain resilience-enhancing practices within their respective public institutions and communities.

- 14.6 *Foster Governance Research and Inquiry*, by encouraging and stimulating ongoing research and academic inquiry into the dynamics of social capital, human resource management innovations, and resilience within the governance and public administration sphere, identifying both challenges and opportunities.
- 14.7 *Activate Governance-led Resilience Initiatives*, by inspiring and galvanizing seminar attendees to undertake actionable, governance-led initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience at the individual, organizational, and community levels within the public administration domain, which will eventually lead to the mitigating of state fragility and resilience.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

15. In line with the objectives outlined above, the 9th Edition Research Seminar will enrich the dialogue around the context of multi-faceted aspects of state resilience to shocks and disasters, with the specific focus on the role of higher education and non-governmental organisations in strengthening state institutions. The expected outcomes are tailored to provide practical frameworks, encourage strategic partnerships, and drive initiatives aimed at fostering a more adaptable and resilient public sector, equipped to face future uncertainties with enhanced preparedness and strategic insight.

The seminar will among others:

- 15.1 *Broaden Governance Competence*, by equipping public administrators, policymakers, and governance professionals with an in-depth understanding of collective resilience, social capital, and community-centric strategies, enriching both their theoretical acumen and practical application skills in public sector crisis management.
- 15.2 *Disseminate Governance Innovations*, which serve as a conduit for sharing pioneering governance strategies and practices, drawn from diverse administrative contexts, that have successfully bolstered public sector and community resilience, offering adaptable models for seminar participants.
- 15.3 *Forge Strategic Alliances*, by establishing a dynamic network of governance practitioners, scholars, policymakers, and community advocates, aimed at fostering collaborative endeavours and knowledge exchange that could pave the way for innovative resilience-building projects and research within the realm of public administration.

- 15.4 *Cultivate Policy and Administrative Innovations*, which encourage the ideation and development of novel governance approaches that enhance the resilience capacity of public institutions and civil society, contributing novel insights to the resilience discourse.
- 15.5 *Formulate Resilient Policy Frameworks and* conclude with actionable policy recommendations and governance strategies designed to augment the resilient infrastructure of public entities and communities, informed by the seminar's deliberations and insights. This will include:
- Empowering participants with concrete governance action plans and strategies, specifically tailored to bolster resilience within their respective public sector organizations or community settings.
 - Documenting and disseminating of knowledge by producing a comprehensive report encapsulating the seminar's key discussions, findings, and policy suggestions, aimed at providing a valuable resource for a wider audience interested in governance, public administration, and resilience strategies.
 - Elevating resilience awareness by amplifying the recognition of the critical role of collective resilience, underpinned by robust governance and strategic public sector human resource management.

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

16. The 9th Edition Research Seminar is designed to engage a diverse and dynamic group of participants who are at the forefront of the building and strengthening of resilient institutions efforts across various sectors which include:
- **Academia:** Masters and PhD students from public and private universities across the continent, whose participation is specifically prioritised by arranging a PhD Colloquium as part of the Research Seminar.
 - **Practitioners:** Professionals from both public and private sectors, which includes technocrats, government functionaries and diplomatic corps.
 - **Scholars/ Researchers:** Academics with interests in state resilience, governance and public administration and human resource management.
 - **Non-Governmental Organisations:** Representatives from non-governmental organizations working in related fields.

SEMINAR METHODOLOGY

17. The methodology is thoughtfully designed to maximize participant engagement and knowledge exchange through a flexible and inclusive physical format. The seminar will feature expert-led plenary presentations, vibrant discussions, and

interactive sessions that encourage a lively and productive discourse among participants.

This will entail:

- An in-person format participation which will include breakaways sessions.
- Mainly consisting of plenary presentations and discussions led by experts and speakers.
- Interactive sessions allowing for active engagement and dialogue among participants.

CONFERENCE VENUE AND DATES

18. The 9th Edition Research Seminar will be held at the University of South Africa (UNISA), ZK Matthews Hall, located at the Unisa Muckleneuk Campus, 330 Preller St, Groenkloof, Pretoria.

Breakaways sessions and other related activities will be held at the Kgorong Centre which is located within the Unisa Muckleneuk Campus.

WORKING LANGUAGE

19. The working language shall be **English**.

CONTENT FOR THE CONFERENCE

20. Speakers and presenters will be identified and briefed in collaboration with partnering institutions.

RESEARCH SEMINAR CONTACTS

21. Further information and inquiry on the Research Seminar may be directed to:

Dr. Patrick Sokhela

Chief Director:

International Cooperation & Stakeholder Relations

Email: patrick@dpesa.gov.za

Prof. Edith Phaswana

Acting Executive Dean: TM School

Email: phaswed@unisa.ac.za

Registration and Visas:

The Secretary-General:

C/o Ms Julie Muia

Email: aapam@aapam.org

ABOUT THE HOSTING INSTITUTIONS

22. The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM)

The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) is an international professional organization that promotes best practice, excellence and professionalism in public administration and management in Africa through research, publications, training, seminars, consultancy, conferences, and awards. AAPAM draws its membership from sectors including governments, corporate bodies, private sector, civil society, international organizations, individual members, and students.

The Association provides its members with a platform for articulation and dissemination of ideas on capacity building and development of Africa. AAPAM operates mainly but not exclusively in Africa.

23. Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) - South Africa

The mission of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) is to establish norms and standards to ensure that the state machinery functions optimally, and that such norms and standards are adhered to; implement interventions to maintain a compliant and functioning public service; promote an ethical public service through programs, systems, frameworks and structures that detect, prevent and combat corruption; and contribute towards improved public administration in Africa and internationally through dialogue and sharing of best practices.

The Department is required to facilitate and support efforts that seek to, among others, improve service delivery quality and access; human resource management and development; business processes; systems and accountability management; anti-corruption and integrity; and effective public participation.

24. University of Pretoria

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest research universities in South Africa. UP has transformed into a dynamic university community of staff and students who come from a range of diverse backgrounds and cultures showcasing South African and global societies. The University was born from a vision to create a space for quality education and for new ideas to flourish. Over the course of its existence, and through different phases of political power and social change, UP has been resilient in its commitment to academic quality.

This has allowed us to establish a presence among the top 1,9% of universities worldwide. Our vision has always been to look forward, provide the best possible education for our students, and encourage them to go on to do great things. As a research-intensive university we transform the corporate and research landscape through innovative thinking and the high calibre of our graduates. More than a quarter of a million alumni have passed through our doors. Many are on the path

to success, while others have already become leaders in their fields both locally and internationally.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International awarded the EMS Faculty its prestigious international business education accreditation. EMS is now part of an elite group of 6% of institutions worldwide accredited by the AACSB. The School of Public Management and Administration (SPMA) is anchored in the EMS. The SPMA pursues academic excellence through quality contact and online undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Staff members find their research foci in the three broad research areas of hybridity and governance, leadership and innovation, and training and education. More info available at: <https://www.up.ac.za>. [Follow our activities on our LinkedIn at https://www.linkedin.com/company/83059631/admin/feed/posts/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/83059631/admin/feed/posts/)

25. Stellenbosch University

Stellenbosch University (SU) is a research-intensive university, which attracts outstanding students, employs talented staff, and provides a world-class environment; a place connected to the world, while enriching and transforming local, continental, and global communities. SU is firmly committed to the pursuit of knowledge, research, and innovation, in service of society.

We provide a world-class centre for learning and development, which is globally relevant, yet rooted in the upliftment and transformation of our local communities. Our actions are guided by key values and attributes, and enabled by outstanding staff and students, sound operating systems and a deep sense of purpose. SU is home to an academic community of more than 32 500 students, including more than 3 700 international students from 104 countries. SU has 4 658 permanent and fixed-term contract staff members, including 1 393 academics.

Our ten faculties (AgriSciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine and Health Sciences, Military Science, Science, and Theology) as well as the School for Climate Studies, the School for Data Science and Computational Thinking and the Stellenbosch Business School are located across five campuses in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

According to official figures of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) released in 2022, SU is among South Africa's top three research-intensive universities, both per capita and in terms of total research output.

SU is cementing its reputation as a world-class institution. According to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, SU is one of the top 300 universities in the world, and among the top 20 in BRICS countries.

SU hosting role of the 9th Edition Research Seminar is anchored by the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (School of Public Leadership) at: <https://www.sun.ac.za> and the School for Data Science and Computational Thinking at: [The School for Data Science and Computational Thinking](#)

26. University of South Africa

The University of South Africa (Unisa), the only higher education institution to carry the name of the country, is the people's university in every sense of the word. Throughout its history, spanning 15 decades, Unisa has responded to the developments brought about by changing times, the needs of a developing country and society at large, and an ever-evolving higher education environment. This was achieved through ongoing and dynamic transitioning. Unisa's journey has been one of continuous growth and transformation, aimed at shaping tomorrow through education.

Unisa's roots (and indeed that of higher education in South Africa) date back to 1873 when the University of the Cape of Good Hope was founded, initially functioning as an examining body for higher education.

In 1916, the university changed its name to the University of South Africa and in 1918 it relocated to Pretoria. In 1946, it became one of the first public universities in the world to teach exclusively by means of distance education. Today, Unisa is widely recognised as a leading comprehensive, open, distance and e-Learning (CODeL) university. The university has more than 370 000 students and is the largest university in South Africa and on the African continent, and one of the world's mega-universities.

With offices across South Africa and students from 109 countries, Unisa has an extensive geographical footprint and global reach. Located at the southern tip of Africa, Unisa takes pride in its identity and has the interests of the continent at heart.

Through its teaching and learning, relevant research and innovation, and community engagement initiatives, the university acknowledges its African roots and acts on the needs of South Africa and the continent.

Unisa's hosting role of the 9th Edition Research Seminar is anchored by the The Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs (TM-School) at: <http://www.unisa.ac.za/tmschool>. The TM-School is envisioned as a premier graduate school to advance public sector education in public and international affairs. The TM-School seeks to be a magnet of excellence in education, experiential learning, and research.

At the launch of the TM-School in September 2020, His Excellency Thabo Mbeki, Chancellor of Unisa, said that the purpose of education was to learn to question everything and that our aim in teaching should be to produce men and women who are both critical and creative.

In this respect, he emphasised, "Our students should be encouraged to be thinkers and doers rather than accumulators of facts and receivers of knowledge. This must be so if they are to be instruments of change, working towards the realisation of a just and, consequently, a stable society".

27. South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM)

The vision of SAAPAM is to contribute towards the development of good governance and effective service delivery. The objectives of SAAPAM are to promote excellence in the theory and practice of Public Administration and Management by: Promoting the basic values and principles underlying economic, efficient and effective democratic Public Administration and Management as explained in subsection 195(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

The mission of SAAPAM is to encourage and promote good governance and effective service delivery through the advancement of professionalism, scholarship and practice in public administration and management.

More information on SAAPAM is available at: <https://saapam.co.za/>

Visa Requirements

Delegates are expected to make their Visa arrangements early enough for more information kindly see the information sheet on <https://www.aapam.co.za>

Venue: University South Africa – Pretoria

Registration Fees: *Local delegates: USD 500*

International delegates: USD 600

AAPAM A/C FCY 1103297694

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Those paying by bank transfer are expected to show evidence of payment on the day of the conference. Delegates may pay the equivalent of the participation fees indicated above in other convertible currencies such as the Euro, British Pound Sterling (GBP), Canadian Dollar (CND), and South African Rand. The equivalents of the participation fees in these currencies shall be indicated in a schedule that will be available at the registration desk.

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