

Abbreviated Strategic Implementation Plan 2008 - 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) has been in existence since 2005. In 2008, the organisation conducted a strategic review in order to focus its activities. This document provides an outline of the key principles adopted in this focusing process. This also serves to inform the membership and other interested parties of SARUA's intentions for the period 2009 – 2012.

2. BACKGROUND

SARUA is a membership-based organisation which is open to the public universities in the 15 SADC states of the southern African region. At the time of its establishment, SARUA undertook to do two things:

- The first was to address the capacity and research needs of SADC higher education institutions
- The second was, through higher education, to address the social, cultural and economic development priorities of the region

These broad aims serve to establish the fundamental modus operandi of SARUA, and provide SARUA's strap-line:

'To enhance regional higher education and its role in regional development.'

3. THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF SARUA

3.1 The Mandate of SARUA

SARUA was established to assist in the revitalisation and development of the leadership and institutions of higher education in the southern African region, thus assisting the regional higher education sector to meaningfully respond to the developmental challenges facing the region.

3.2 The Purpose of SARUA

SARUA exists to strengthen the leadership and institutions of higher education in the southern African region, thereby consolidating a southern African agenda for higher education which results in a significant contribution by higher education to national and regional development.

3.3 SARUA's Vision

SARUA aims, over time, to provide an effective platform which enables key regional higher education leadership players to engage and contribute meaningfully to regional development.

3.4 SARUA's Mission

SARUA endeavours to provide a platform for regional higher education leadership dialogue and collaboration by:

- Developing a regional identity for higher education that is representative of the diversity of the region
- Convening strategic fora to enhance collaboration, linkages and partnerships across the sector
- Identifying key areas for strategic research and analysis
- Enhancing the knowledge and capacity of higher education leadership
- Acting as a respected voice (and advocate) to speak on behalf of the higher education sector in the region

thereby informing a southern African higher education agenda and, in so doing, making a significant contribution to national and regional development.

3.5 SARUA's Strategic Objectives

SARUA aims:

1. To be recognised as an expert organisation on higher education in southern Africa, informed by solid research and evidence.
2. To promote and strengthen regional and institutional capacity building initiatives through the provision of an informed platform for regional dialogue and collaboration.
3. To collectively champion the needs of higher education regionally and within Africa and increase the international competitiveness of the regional system of higher education.

3.6 SARUA's Strategic Options

The following strategic framing principles guide SARUA in terms of its role:

- To enhance the leadership of higher education institutions in the

region and to develop this leadership in the context of a regional higher education agenda.

- SARUA focuses on capacity building of higher education leadership at three levels: individual, institutional and environmental.
- SARUA seeks to promote and convene high-level leadership exchange and dialogic events and networks: ie the convening of discussions of different types (which might include round tables, information sharing sessions, targeted discussions with policy makers, discussions which promote broader social dialogue and mobilisation, and discussions with international peers).

Given the enormity of the potential demands that may be placed on SARUA, decisions regarding specific activities will be guided by the SARUA Decision Making Funnel.

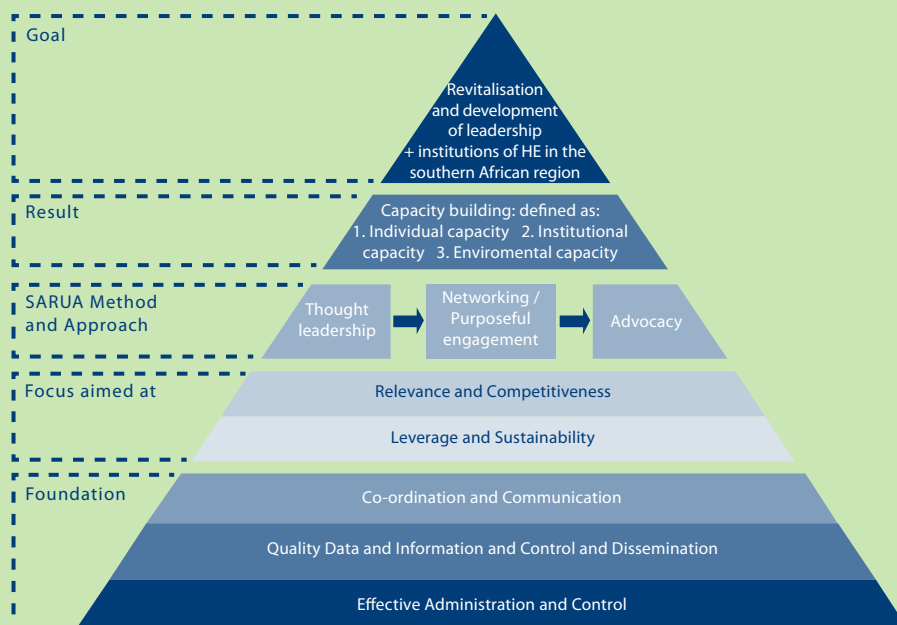
The SARUA decision making ‘funnel’



1. Does the project have a cross regional impact?
2. Does the project cut across broad higher education issues in the region?
3. Does the project involve the development of leadership capacity in higher education in the region?
4. Is the project someone else’s primary mandate?
5. Does the project support the SARUA mandate?
6. Does SARUA have the capacity and resources (time, money, expertise) to do the job well?

3.7 Framework

The following framework depicts the overall strategy:



4. THE KEY ACTIVITIES FOR SARUA 2009 - 2012

In light of this strategy, SARUA's key roles over the period 2009 – 2012 will be directed at fulfilling three functions:

1. Policy analysis and strategic research
2. Dialogue, exchange and networking
3. Advocacy and stakeholder influence

While the three roles are distinct and focus on specific and targeted outputs, they are inter-dependent. In particular, the 'policy analysis and strategic research' role informs the 'dialogue, exchange and networking' role, which in turn, informs the 'advocacy and stakeholder influence' role. The cycle is understood to be dynamic and iterative.

SARUA's focus during the first 24 months of its existence (January 2007 to December 2008) has been on the establishment of key internal systems and structures and on the production of key research papers (policy analysis and strategic research).

It is therefore envisaged that as SARUA moves forward in the short to medium term (2009 – 2010), the focus will shift to the shaping of the research data for various audiences, and to an emphasis on dialogue, exchange and networking.

The advocacy role is seen as largely dependent on a level of credibility, which will arise from sound dialogue and exchange, and is therefore envisaged as a longer term (five years or more) objective (advocacy and stakeholder influence).

5. CONCLUSION

SARUA has made considerable progress since its formation. It is hoped that the revised strategy presented above will help the organisation to focus its activities for the next period, and that it will ultimately strengthen the leadership and institutions of higher education in the southern African region.

