

Concept Note: 2025 SAMIN Refugee Lecture

Title: *Understanding Refugee Challenges in Southern Africa Amid Increasing Conflicts and Reductions in Aid*

Virtual, Thursday, 14 August 2025

1. Background

The Southern Africa Migration Network (SAMIN), alongside its partners, has long championed the rights and dignity of refugees and migrants in the region. Our network brings together civil society organisations (CSOs), religious and traditional leaders, academics, migrant and refugee-led organisations, and individual advocates committed to building a just and inclusive society. Our work is aligned with the broader objectives of SADC, the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), and the African Union's Agenda 2063, all of which underscore the importance of regional integration, free movement, peace, and protection for vulnerable groups.

Southern Africa has experienced over 150 years of population mobility, shaped by colonial histories, economic shifts, political instability, and environmental changes. Today, the region remains a destination and transit point for thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, fleeing crises across the continent. However, the challenges facing refugees are intensifying.

2. Current Context

The 2025 Refugee Lecture takes place amid growing global and regional pressures that significantly affect refugees:

- Rising global conflicts, from the war in Sudan and instability in the DRC, to crises in the Horn of Africa, are forcing more people to flee, increasing the burden on already stretched host countries (UNHCR, 2024).
- Nationalism and xenophobia are on the rise in many Southern African countries, leading to discrimination, violence, and exclusion of refugees from basic services and local communities (Amnesty International, 2024; ACMS, 2023).
- Cuts in humanitarian aid are worsening refugee conditions. Major donor reallocation, such as the redirection of U.S. funding to the Ukraine crisis—has resulted in ration cuts and underfunded services in camps across Malawi, Tanzania, and Botswana (WFP, 2023; CGD, 2023).
- SAMIN's recent research in Botswana, based on surveys and focus group discussions, shows that many refugees live in precarious conditions with limited access to livelihoods, healthcare, and education—conditions worsened by underfunding and policy restrictions (SAMIN, 2024).

3. Aim & Objectives of the Annual Refugee Month Lecture

Building on the success of previous SAMIN-led initiatives—including the 2023 and 2024 Refugee Lectures and earlier policy conferences—the 2025 Annual Refugee Lecture provides a platform for meaningful engagement. The lecture aims to:

- Amplify the voices of refugees and displaced persons in Southern Africa
- Foster public understanding of the complex drivers and realities of displacement
- Promote inclusive policies and rights-based approaches across the region.

The objectives of the 2025 Lecture include among others to:

- Humanise the refugee experience through direct testimonies
- Raise awareness of structural and emerging challenges, conflicts, xenophobia, aid cuts
- Strengthen regional dialogue and coordination among key actors
- Support collaborative solutions that uphold the dignity, rights, and contributions of refugees.

4. Key Components

▪ Keynote Address

Theme: "Building Empathy and Solidarity: A Call to Action for Refugee Support"

A prominent advocate of Human Rights will share reflections on the global and regional migration context, emphasising empathy, accountability, and the need for cross-sectoral action.

▪ Panel Discussion: Contextualising Refugee Challenges in Southern Africa

Topics include:

- Overview of current displacement trends in the region
- Legal and policy gaps in refugee protection
- Humanitarian responses amid donor fatigue and reduced funding
- The role of civil society, regional institutions, and refugee-led organisations

5. Expectations of the Event

The 2025 SAMIN Refugee Lecture is expected to:

- Bring together stakeholders virtually, including policymakers, civil society actors, academics, refugee leaders, and media representatives
- Provide a platform for refugee voices and experiences
- Influence policy conversations at regional and national levels by highlighting urgent protection and service delivery needs
- Enable cross-sector collaboration, fostering new partnerships and reinforcing existing networks in refugee support
- Reach a wider public audience, with live streaming and social media engagement to enhance awareness and advocacy, celebrating Refugees.

6. Date & Access Information

Date of Event:

Wednesday, 14 August 2025

11:30 AM – 2:00 PM (SAT)

Format:

Online via Zoom : [Register Here](#)

Conclusion

The 2025 Refugee Month Lecture is not just another event—it's a space to listen, to learn, and to stand with those who are often unheard. Every testimony, every poem, every statistic shared is a reminder that behind every refugee label is a human being with dreams, pain, resilience, and potential. As conflicts continue to rise and support systems grow thinner, it's easy for compassion to fade. This lecture calls us to resist that drift—to lean in, to connect, and to act.

Whether you are a policymaker, an activist, a researcher, or simply someone who cares, your presence matters. Together, let's make sure that refugees in Southern Africa, and across the continent, are not only protected but truly seen, heard, and valued.

Let this gathering be a spark for new ideas, deeper empathy, and real change.

References

- Amnesty International. (2024). *Southern Africa: Regional Overview*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/southern-africa/>
- UNHCR. (2024). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2024*. <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2024/>
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- UNHCR. (2023). *Operational Updates: Southern Africa*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/southern-africa.html>