



10th Edition Research Seminar

on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and African Union (AU) Agenda 2063

Theme:

Governing for Impact: Translating Africa's Commitments into Resilient State Institutions and Communities

Date: 05 - 07 May 2026

Venue: Stellenbosch University, School of Public Leadership
(Bellville, Cape Town – South Africa)



Introduction

1. State capacity and capability building remain the fundamental pillars for realizing the aspirations of AU Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, this theme aligns with Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3, which envisions an Africa of good governance, democracy, and respect for human rights, and SDG 16, which focuses on peace, justice, and strong institutions. Translating high-level commitments into tangible action is a prerequisite for the political and economic stability vital to Africa's development. Consequently, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is designed as a critical catalyst in this process, ensuring that continental governance commitments are invigorated and transformed into measurable results.
2. Integrity and good governance are the primary mechanisms for mitigating state fragility. While high-level commitments provide the necessary frameworks, success depends on the legitimacy and trust fostered at the local level. Building state resilience to exogenous shocks and disasters demands not just policy formulation, but the practical strengthening of state institutions to ensure they are responsive to the needs of communities.
3. The 10th edition emphasizes the localization of governance, recognizing that the impact of continental and international frameworks is ultimately measured by their effect on local communities. In line with the APRM, South Africa and its partners remain committed to evaluating the level of preparedness and the capacity of member states to "bounce back " from crises by domesticating policy into actionable local legislative and institutional frameworks.
4. Ultimately, translating commitments into action necessitates a holistic view of governance. It requires a proactive endeavour that embraces collaborative networks, ethical leadership, and technological empowerment to ensure the sustained delivery of public services in an ever-evolving global context.

Background and Context

5. The 10th Edition Research Seminar builds upon the critical foundations established during the 9th Edition, which focused on the role of higher education and non-governmental organizations in strengthening state resilience. The 9th seminar underscored the reality that while high-level commitments to AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs exist, state capacity remains the primary hurdle to their realization.
- 5.1 The Shift from Theory to Action:** The 9th edition highlighted a growing consensus that state resilience is not merely a technical or bureaucratic function, but a multi-dimensional endeavour involving risk management, adaptability, and collaborative

networks. Discussions revealed, nonetheless, a persistent gap between continental policy frameworks and their practical execution at the local level. Consequently, the edition focuses on *"Translating Commitments into Action,"* moving beyond the "what" of governance to the "how" of impactful implementation.

- 5.2 Resilience and Integrity as Dual Pillars:** The outcomes of the 9th seminar established that strong, trusted institutions are essential for mitigating state fragility. A key takeaway was that resilience cannot be achieved without **integrity**; institutions must be grounded in transparency and ethical leadership to effectively manage disasters and exogenous shocks. The 10th edition integrates these themes, recognizing that corruption and administrative inefficiencies directly undermine a state's ability to "build back better" during recovery and reconstruction.
- 5.3 Local Impact and Community-Centricity:** A significant focus at the 9th Research Seminar was on the role of social capital. Delegates expressed the view that connecting communities with authority figures is essential for crisis resilience. This 10th edition adopts a "local impact" lens, exploring how decentralized governance can foster a governance ecosystem that leverages collective community efficacy and local government responsiveness.
- 5.4 Leveraging Innovation for Development:** Building on the successful exploration of data science and computational thinking, highlighted by initiatives like Stellenbosch University's School for Data Science, the 10th edition continues to seek innovative solutions for continental challenges. The seminar aims to determine how emerging technologies and innovative human resource management can be harnessed to ensure that African governance commitments result in tangible improvements in the quality of life for all citizens.

Justification for the Theme

- 6.** The selection of this theme for the 10th Edition of the Research Seminar is driven by the urgent need to move beyond the adoption of continental policies toward a results-oriented implementation phase that directly benefits African citizens. This justification is rooted in several critical dimensions:
 - 6.1 Closing the Implementation Gap:** While Africa has established robust frameworks, such as Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3 on governance and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), there remains a persistent disconnect between these high-level commitments and their practical execution. In focusing on "translating commitments into action," this seminar seeks to identify the specific institutional bottlenecks that prevent policy from becoming reality at the grassroots level.
 - 6.2 Integrity as a Prerequisite for Resilience:** The 9th Seminar established that state resilience to shocks and disasters depends on the legitimacy of public institutions.

Ultimately, resilience cannot be sustained in an environment where integrity is compromised. Integrating "integrity" into this year's theme acknowledges that ethical public service and anti-corruption measures are the bedrock of strong, trusted institutions capable of managing crises.

- 6.3 Localization of Global and Regional Goals:** State capacity is often measured by its ability to deliver services under pressure. This theme advocates for a community-centric approach, recognizing that the realization of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) occurs at the local level. Leveraging "local impact" ensures that governance strategies capitalize on the collective efficacy of communities and social capital to foster a sustainable growth trajectory.
- 6.4 Holistic and Collaborative Governance:** Modern crises are too complex for the state to manage in isolation. There is a critical need to transcend compartmentalized disaster management in favour of a holistic, collaborative ecosystem. This theme justifies the continued involvement of non-state actors, including higher education and NGOs, to complement state capacity through data science, computational thinking, and innovative human resource management.
- 6.5 Institutionalizing "Building Back Better":** As African nations face increasing climate-related disasters and economic shocks, the ability to respond effectively through recovery and reconstruction is paramount. This theme justifies a shift toward proactive investment in critical infrastructure and human resource development, ensuring that state institutions are not just reactive, but are built to be innovatively fortified and aligned with their core missions.

Seminar Sub-Themes

- 7.** The 10th Edition Research Seminar sub-themes are strategically designed to address the multi-faceted aspects of state resilience and governance through a lens of actionable implementation and ethical leadership. These thematic tracks explore the intersection of policy frameworks, technological innovation, and community-centric strategies to ensure that African governance commitments translate into tangible socio-economic justice and local impact.
- 7.1 Sub-theme 1: Strengthening State Resilience to Shocks and Disasters: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach:** This sub-theme builds on the 9th Edition's findings that state capacity cannot effectively address various shocks and disasters in isolation. It explores the "multi-dimensional viewpoint" of resilience, emphasizing the readiness of political leadership and public institutions to coordinate disasters within frameworks of public-private partnerships and international cooperation. The focus is on moving from theoretical preparedness to active community engagement and

leveraging the expertise of non-state actors, such as higher education and NGOs, to enhance state response systems.

- 7.2 Sub-Theme 2: Mitigating Inequality: Promoting Socio-Economic Justice through Integrated Service Delivery:** Building on the SDG 16 and Agenda 2063 Aspiration 3 mandates for governance and development, this sub-theme examines how integrated service delivery can act as a tool for socio-economic justice. This sub-theme examines how integrated service delivery frameworks can be harnessed to dismantle systemic barriers to equity, ensuring that the impact of shocks, such as floods, does not disproportionately disadvantage vulnerable communities. It shifts the focus from fragmented interventions to a holistic service delivery model that reinforces socio-economic justice and builds long-term community resilience."
- 7.3 Sub-Theme 3: Uprooting Corruption: Professionalisation and Ethical Leadership in Public Administration:** This sub-theme addresses the "emerging importance" of good governance as a prerequisite for resilience. It aligns with the mission of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) to promote an ethical public service through systems that detect, prevent, and combat corruption. Discussions will focus on the professionalisation of the public sector and the cultivation of "thinkers and doers" who act as instruments of change to realize a stable and just society.
- 7.4 Sub-theme 4: Digital Transformation for Responsive Governance: Beyond Infrastructure to Service Delivery Impact:** "This sub-theme seeks to transcend the mere installation of digital infrastructure to explore the strategic deployment of e-governance as a catalyst for transparent and responsive administration. The sub-theme interrogates how African states can move beyond digital 'presence' to digital 'impact,' leveraging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Science to modernize public service delivery. Prioritizing the intersection of technology and socio-economic justice enables the administration to identify pathways for deploying digital tools to close the accountability gap, enhance disaster preparedness, and ensure that the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are felt at the local level.
- 7.5 Sub-theme 5: Collaborative Governance: Enhancing Civic Space and Public Accountability for Local Impact:** Building on the 9th Seminar's focus on state resilience amid exogenous shocks, this sub-theme argues that institutional durability depends fundamentally on the quality of the relationship between the state and its citizens. It advances from theory to practice, directly engaging AU Agenda 2063 (Aspiration 3) and UN SDG 16, which call for good governance, inclusive decision-making, and representative institutions. Responding to prior findings on the risks of fragmented governance, the session positions Collaborative Governance as a strategic mechanism to expand civic space and embed public accountability. The sub-theme examines how multi-stakeholder partnerships, can and should, co-design solutions

that make governance responsive to grassroots realities. In anchoring local participation in continental frameworks, the sub-theme seeks to operationalise the social contract as a tool for tangible local impact. Ultimately, the conversation asserts that the "Africa We Want" must be built on a foundation of transparency, administrative justice, and active citizenship.

7.6 Sub-theme 6: Financing for Impact (Fiscal resilience, development finance and value for money):

This new sub-theme will foreground financing as the “engine room” of implementation, arguing that Africa’s commitments to resilience, equity and improved service delivery will remain aspirational unless public resources are mobilised, allocated and managed for measurable impact. It will engage the practical realities of fiscal stress, competing priorities and uneven capacity across spheres of government, with specific attention to how public financial management (PFM) reforms can strengthen institutional performance and rebuild citizen trust. The sub-theme will interrogate intergovernmental fiscal relations and the adequacy of funding models for local government mandates, especially in rural and underserved communities where service backlogs persist. It will further examine climate and disaster financing, access pathways, financing instruments, and the accountability architecture needed to ensure funds reach vulnerable communities and translate into risk reduction and recovery outcomes.

7.7 Sub-theme 7: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for Implementation (Translating commitments into measurable results):

This sub-theme will position Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) as the bridge between political commitments and real-world outcomes, asserting that resilient institutions are built not only through sound policies, but through measurable progress, continuous learning and adaptive implementation. It will advance a results-based management orientation that privileges clarity of outcomes, credible indicators and implementation discipline, while recognising that African governance contexts are complex and require adaptive strategies rather than rigid compliance-driven approaches. The track will explore how continental and global commitments, such as the AU Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, can be localised into workable indicators that reflect community-level realities, including informal settlements, constraints in rural service delivery, and multi-dimensional vulnerability. *whom*, and *under what conditions*. It will also create space for learning and accountability mechanisms, such as APRM processes, peer learning platforms, and reform uptake pathways, focusing on how evidence and peer review can translate into institutional change. Ultimately, the track emphasises knowledge translation, turning evaluation findings into policy decisions, budget adjustments, service delivery improvements and organisational

learning, so that “governing for impact” becomes visible in the lived experiences of communities.

Objectives of the Seminar

8. The primary objective of the 10th Edition of the Research Seminar is to bridge the gap between continental governance commitments (such as AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs) and their practical implementation at the local level. The seminar seeks to facilitate a collaborative platform for academics, practitioners, and civil society to develop actionable strategies that enhance state resilience, institutional integrity, and socio-economic justice across the African continent:

Specific Objectives

- 8.1 **To Strengthen Public Service Resilience through Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Establish institutionalised frameworks that bring together government, higher education, and civil society to co-design and sustain inclusive service delivery models, capable of adapting to shocks while maintaining quality levels of access to education, health, justice, and social services.
- 8.2 **To Drive Socio-Economic Justice through Integrated Service Delivery:** Evaluate and implement innovative models for integrated service delivery that dismantle departmental silos to reduce systemic inequality and ensure public services remain inclusive and accessible during crises.
- 8.3 **To Embed Ethical Leadership and Institutional Integrity:** Formulate actionable strategies for professionalizing the public sector, ensuring that ethical standards and accountability are deeply embedded in administrative culture to uproot corruption and rebuild the social contract.
- 8.4 **To Harness Digital Transformation for Responsive Governance:** Strategically leverage emerging technologies, including AI and data science, not merely as infrastructure, but as tools for enhancing transparency, streamlining citizen engagement, and modernizing the delivery of the "Africa We Want."
- 8.5 **Develop a Seminar Report:** To distil key seminar insights into a Synthesis Report and Framework for Action—translating collective deliberations into actionable recommendations that guide policy, practice, and partnership.

Expected Outcomes

9. By the conclusion of the 10th Edition Research Seminar, participants will have co-created the following tangible deliverables and strategic commitments:
 - 9.1 **Strengthened Multi-Sectoral Resilience Protocols:** A collaborative model for disaster response that formalizes the roles of Higher Education and NGOs in supporting state institutions, ensuring a coordinated "multi-stakeholder" approach to service delivery developed.
 - 9.2 **Integrated Service Delivery Blueprints:** Case studies and policy briefs that demonstrate how integrated public services can effectively reduce socio-economic inequality and quality service delivery is maintained even during periods of state fragility are shared and disseminated.
 - 9.3 **Professionalisation and Ethics Roadmap:** A comprehensive set of recommendations for the professionalisation of public administration, including a "Leadership Integrity Code" aimed at uprooting corruption and fostering ethical leadership across all levels of government.
 - 9.4 **Professionalisation and Ethics in Practice:** A Peer-Learning Dialogue on Building Integrity Systems. A conversation among public service leaders, anti-corruption agencies, and professional bodies to exchange experiences on institutionalising ethics facilitated.
 - 9.5 **Technical Proposals for Data Integration:** A set of actionable recommendations for integrating high-frequency, grassroots-level data into national reports to reduce the "paper-based" accountability gap.
 - 9.6 **e-Governance Implementation Strategy:** The seminar will deliver a Strategic Framework for Digital Governance, providing a roadmap for integrating AI and Data Science into public administration.
 - 9.7 **Knowledge Repository and Seminar Communiqué:** Publication of a formal Seminar Communiqué and a compendium of research papers that serve as a knowledge hub for African practitioners and policymakers seeking to translate governance theory into sustainable action.

Target Participants

10. Drawing from the 9th Seminar and the strategic direction of the 10th edition, the target participants include a diverse group of stakeholders positioned to translate

high-level governance commitments into local action. The seminar is designed to engage the following key groups:

- 10.1 Public Sector Leadership and Practitioners:** This includes government ministers, technocrats, and public service functionaries responsible for policy implementation and service delivery.
- 10.2 Academia and Researchers:** A strong focus is placed on scholars and university representatives, particularly Masters and PhD students, who can provide evidence-based solutions and interdisciplinary research.
- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** Representatives from NGOs and community-based organizations are critical for ensuring "local impact" and fostering collaborative governance.
- 10.5 Diplomatic Corps and International Partners:** Participation includes the diplomatic community and international organizations like the African Union (AU) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to ensure continental alignment.
- 10.6 Oversight and Accountability Bodies:** Members of legislatures, audit institutions, Public Service Commission and civic oversight bodies who are essential for maintaining institutional integrity and ethical leadership.
- 10.7 Private Sector Partners:** Professionals and institutions interested in public-private partnerships, particularly those specializing in technological tools and critical infrastructure development.

Seminar Methodology

- 11.** Building on the successful precedents of previous editions and prioritizing the shift toward action-oriented governance, the 10th Seminar employs an inclusive, interdisciplinary, and highly interactive methodology. This multifaceted approach is specifically designed to bridge the gap between high-level continental commitments and tangible local impacts, utilizing the following strategic pillars:
 - 11.1 Expert-Led Plenary Sessions:** These high-level presentations and keynote addresses by renowned academics, government leaders, and practitioners serve to provide the strategic and intellectual grounding for each sub-theme.
 - 11.2 Interactive Panel Discussions:** These facilitated dialogues engage diverse stakeholders to explore "African solutions to African challenges," fostering cross-sectoral synergy and peer-to-peer learning.
 - 11.3 Breakaway Working Groups:** In these structured thematic sessions, participants conduct deep-dive analyses of the seven sub-themes to identify systemic gaps and formulate specific, actionable policy recommendations.

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

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About the Hosting Institutions

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.

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.

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 10th Edition Research Seminar is anchored by the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (School of Public Leadership) at: <https://www.sun.ac.za>

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.

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/>

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. 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.

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: South Africa: Stellenbosch School of Public Leadership - Bellville Park Campus,
Van der Horst Building Carl Cronje Drive, Bellville, Cape Town

Registration Fees: Local delegates: USD 500

International delegates: USD 600

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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.

Working language

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