

**The role played by Southern African Customs Union (SACU) in promoting
development within its member states. 1994-2013**

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Submitted in Fulfilment of the Degree of a Masters of Arts in African Studies Degree

(MAAS)

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2015

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Abstract

Regional integration in Southern Africa dates back to the formation of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) on the 29th of June 1910. The Union is regarded as the oldest organisation in Africa. It was formed, in order to bring meaningful development to its member states. Over the years, until 2004, the organisation was based on an unequal relationship in which South Africa's hegemonic power in the group benefitted it at the expense of other Southern Africa nation states. This unequal relationship created varied developmental disparities among the members of SACU. Most Southern African Development Community (SADC) states are largely underdeveloped and poverty still persists in many of these states. This research looked at some factors which are responsible for development in the SADC states. The dawn of a new political dispensation in South Africa signalled the beginning of discussions on the democratisation of SACU as an organisation in the 20th and 21st century. Thus, over the years, since 1994, SACU has witnessed a lot of structural and hierarchical changes which have positioned it as a leader of economic integration and prosperity in Southern Africa. The study focused on the need to examine the role of SACU in promoting development among its member states. The study used qualitative methodology approaches to collect data. To operationalise the data collection exercise, the research utilised purposive sampling to select participants with knowledge to the topic under review. The data was analysed using the thematic method of data analysis.

Key words: Development, Economic Integration, Poverty, SACU, SADC