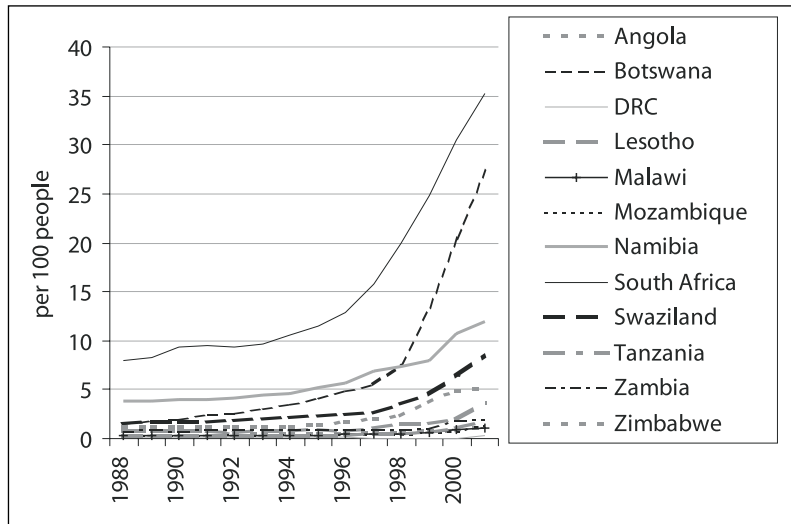


Figure 14: Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population



Source: UNDP (2002)

Conclusion

The purpose of this profile has been to highlight the salient political, economic and social conditions in the region, as well as to inform relevant actors about the current opportunities and challenges that can either strengthen or reverse regional integration. To this end, the profile has provided a broad-brush and sometimes impressionistic picture of selective developments within the region, while other important issues may not have received attention at all.

In spite of these shortcomings, the profile has nonetheless drawn attention to the fact that the subcontinent is still a long way from consolidating a regional identity or achieving full regional integration. Recent developments within the region suggest that the political, institutional and socioeconomic environment remains heterogeneous in the extreme, converging in policies but not necessarily in outcomes. Member countries' multiple memberships of regional integration

arrangements, notwithstanding the question of sovereignty, are posing particular problems for regional cooperation and integration, and no less for development partners' support for integration in the region. Underlying the latter are other internal contradictions, beset the region. The HIV/AIDS pandemic coupled with acute poverty, armed conflict, barriers to cross-border trade, income inequality, corruption, inadequate infrastructure and a relatively small market have also set at risk the consolidation of regional integration.

From a political perspective, there is still the unfinished business of democratic consolidation, which is aggravated by uneven political development in the region. While the formal definition of democracy is evident in most southern African countries, there is little in the way of the substantive consolidation of democracy as a system of government, especially in the realm of social justice. Consequently, a more in-depth study is needed to investigate the state of the region in the 21st century. In fact, as continental leaders begin to move toward the ratification and implementation of Pan-African institutions like the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), serious questions can be raised about the readiness of the region to adopt such policies. These considerations are important not only for the future economic and social sustainability of the region, but also for the subcontinent's future in terms of the African Renaissance.