

Youth Communique

- **Youth Participation**

Context: Although youth represent more than 70% of the SADC population and are often the agents and drivers of social progress, they are structurally and systemically excluded from socio-economic and political processes that shape the trajectory and outcomes of development at the national and regional levels.

Recommendations:

- 1.0 Governments should enact Youth Acts of Parliament to strengthen and frame youth inclusion and meaningful participation in social, economic, and political spaces.
- 2.0 Governments should strengthen the institutional, operational and financial capacity of youth-serving bodies at national and regional levels to enable them to deliver on their mandate.

- **Shrinking Civic Space**

Context: SADC countries have enacted constitutional and legislative frameworks that guarantee civic and political rights for citizens. However, these instruments are not upheld, resulting in an increasingly shrinking civic space characterized by violations of these rights, harassment of civil society actors, and enactment of repressive laws with unclear, overbearing, overstepping, or outright brutal enforcement parameters by state security agencies.

Recommendations:

- 3.0 Governments should align legislative frameworks, policy and practice to constitutional provisions that guarantee civic and political rights.
- 4.0 SADC should create a mechanism for peer accountability on civic and political rights.

On Early Childhood Development

Context: Early Childhood Development is not included in the Education and Training Protocol and is only mentioned without any detail in the current Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). As the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (AU CESA-16-25) document states that ECD is the foundation for all learning and that it has benefits spanning social, cultural and economic spaces for all nations, there is need to include and prioritise ECDE in SADC.

Recommendations:

- 5.0 Take ownership of ECD in their countries by strengthening and or establishing structures and systems for ECD to thrive especially for providing leadership, infrastructure and training of teachers for this level
- 6.0 Allocate no less than 5% of national budgets to ECD and Increase access to quality inclusive universal ECD by 2030 as expected in Sustainable Development Goal Number 4 Target 2 (SDG 4.2).