

CSO's Position Paper Presented to the SADC Ministers of Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation, during their meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi, 13th -17th June, 2022

Introduction

In view of the joint meeting of SADC Ministers of Education and Training and Science, Technology and Innovation, 13th -17th June, 2022, hosted by the Republic of Malawi, we, as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in the education sector in the region, hereby present few key areas for the Education Ministers' consideration and action. We are aware that agenda for such short meetings cannot be exhaustive, hence, while commenting on issues which directly align to the meeting agenda, we also take this opportunity to raise some pertinent issues for the regional consideration in the quest to enhance quality, equitable and sustainable education. Therefore, this paper essentially builds upon SADC Protocol on Education and Development and the global commitments on education, which set out a universal rights-based agenda for a new social contract for education around lifelong learning for all through all strands of education.

1.0 Education and Skills Development - Teacher education and training

We, as CSOs working in the education sector, note that the achievement of SDG 4 and the transformation of education within the SADC region will depend heavily on teachers and education personnel from pre-school that are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. Teachers, trainers and other education personnel are generally considered the single most influential variable in an education system for achieving learning outcomes. Based on our assessments in the region, currently teachers and education personnel are confronted by four major challenges:

- I. Teacher shortages across the board especially at pre-school and for special needs and inclusive education
- II. Difficulties in assuring the qualifications and professional development needs of teaching personnel
- III. Low status and working conditions, and
- IV. lack of capacity to develop teacher leadership, autonomy and innovation.

We are aware that these are issues which the SADC Protocol on Education and Training had set out to collaboratively achieve through various co-operation, institutional arrangements and joint resourcing.

Noting, with great concern, that some of these issues remain key to the attainment of quality, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education for all in the region, we demand an empowered education workforce, professionalized, trained, motivated and supported:

Recommended Action Area 1: Ensure adequate number of qualified teachers

Our SADC country education systems need to recruit **adequate numbers of teachers** across the board starting (Pre-school and SNE and Inclusive education) and other relevant personnel with the minimum required qualifications to meet learners' needs. Since teacher attrition is highest in the first few years of teaching, hence more needs to be explored to deal with the issue. Measures to incentivize high-achieving graduates and those already teaching (but lacking qualifications) to look to teaching as an attractive career option in the region have to be explored. In the longer term, countries in the region need to invest heavily in improving teachers' salaries and working conditions and provide teachers with opportunities to grow and develop. Most of the SADC countries still lag behind in terms of the teacher to students' ratio, in some

countries one teacher having over 100 students, especially at primary level. Further, we have noted that in most member states we have a lot of trained teachers who are not recruited, thus:

- there is need for coordinated planning among sectorial education departments to balance the supply and demand for teachers
- there is need for recruitment and deployment of more female teachers especially in the rural areas.
- we strongly recommend that even though we talk about inclusive education there is still a need for specialized teachers in all the schools

Recommended Action Area 2: Ensure that all teachers have quality initial training and continuous professional development throughout their careers

We are of the view that educational processes should comprise identifying, developing, experimenting, assessing, evidencing, problem solving, critical thinking, versatility, competence based and scaling-up the most effective teaching process that combine in-person and distance online/offline provisions to ensure that all learners (inclusivity), regardless of age, gender, disability and location, can learn through blended pedagogies. We, as CSOs, opine that teacher development needs to innovate and transition from course-based training to a continuum of collaboration and exchange among teachers, schools, and education systems within the SADC region and beyond. Teacher involvement in the identification of training needs and in the design of training delivery is essential. Country budgets would need to clearly spell out allocations for teacher training and development. Specifically:

- there is need for concerted efforts to train teachers in competence based teaching process and assessment.
- there is need for inclusion of a comprehensive inclusive education in teacher training curriculum so that the new graduates have adequate skill to support learners with diverse learning needs.

Recommended Action Area 3: Improve the status and working conditions of teaching personnel

Based on our joint experiences as CSOs working in the education sector within the SADC region, we are of the view that to ensure quality education, and to make the teaching profession more attractive for younger generations, decision makers need to ensure decent working conditions and an enhanced status of the profession. This ought to entail wages comparable with professions requiring similar levels of qualifications, so that teachers can assume an active role in the transformation of education processes. Therefore, teacher motivation and retention need to be more consistently taken into consideration at policy level. For instance, there is urgent need to improve the living conditions and environments for teachers in the rural areas, making them conducive and attractive. As CSO's we believe that as a region we need to learn from others like Zambia and South Africa where teachers are paid no less than \$360 and \$ 763 respectively per month. Thus,

- there is a need to have a minimum benchmark for teachers (including pre-school) salaries in the region.
- member states should ensure decent housing for teachers especially those in deep rural areas
- member states should ensure that teachers working in hard to reach areas are provided with a minimum of 20% of their salaries as a hard to reach allowance adjustable annually to inflation.
- there is a need to invest in inclusive school infrastructure including pre-school classrooms, outdoor play centers and resource centers to ensure that teachers have better working environment.
- for member states that do not have pre-schools and do not pay their ECDE educators there is a need to establish these ECDEs and budget for ECDE educators' payments.

- there is need for promotions based on competence and experience with a higher weighting on competence.

Recommended Action Area 4: Involve teachers in leadership and decision making

There is need to reshape the teaching profession to accommodate a career pathway, beginning with opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles as part of their professional development. We feel teachers’ capacity for innovation is one of the keys to building resilient education systems. Since teachers are best placed to assess the conditions of their own classrooms and communities, governments need to promote their leadership to generate meaningful transformations. We urge our governments to:

- develop comprehensive national policies for teacher and teaching personnel
- develop standards and competency frameworks for teachers, including the integration of ICT into teacher education and practice.
- design certification mechanisms and continuous professional upgrading programs for leadership and decision making of in-service teaching personnel.
- promote robust social dialogue and teacher participation in educational decision making.
- Integrated a rights based approach in teacher leadership program and decision making processes.

2.0 Digital learning and transformation

We, CSOs working in the education sector in the SADC region, would like to illuminate how technology can play a role as a part of the larger systemic efforts to transform education, making it more inclusive, equitable, effective, relevant and sustainable. We are convinced that technology alone cannot achieve our education goals, but it can be a catalytic component of education reforms that will prepare children, young people, as well as adults, to lead needed transformations. Therefore, we posit to the SADC Education leadership that technology can – and must – help advance our aspirations for quality inclusive education (From Pre-School) based on principles of social and economic justice, equity, and respect for human rights. We are aware that digital technologies in education can contribute to wider systemic efforts to improve learning for all by: leveraging technology that is fit to the country context, and foster parental engagement in the child learning process and noting the considerable promise of digital technologies to support positive change and transformations in education, its potential is regularly stymied by several interrelated challenges including insufficient access to electricity and internet connectivity especially among the rural communities as sited in the <https://www.dw.com/en/can-africa-achieve-universal-internet-access-by-2030/a-59729090> and <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=ZG> . Thus we urge our governments to ensure that:

- appropriate governance and regulation are in place to protect education as a basic human right and a public good while also leveraging the capacities of the private sector to accelerate and improve digital learning.
- member states invest in having electricity accessible to all schools and communities in rural areas; the region has untapped potential for solar power in areas not connected to the main grid
- member states should provide friendly and inclusive sensitive hardware to enable teaching and learning processes.
- member states must build and maintain robust, free public learning content and platforms that catalyze human-centered learning experiences.
- stronger effort is made to develop trusted online spaces that share quality-controlled, free, curriculum-aligned, easy-to-access, and contextually relevant digital learning resources.
- member states establish mechanisms to increase access to connectivity to schools.

- member states remove or subsidized teaching and learning hardware and assistive devices from the tax regimes.

3.0 Education Care and Support

Under education care and support we pay attention to the following critical issues: the environment, safe spaces for girls and boys in the school, gender based violence; sexual reproductive health rights issues, including menstrual hygiene management, disaster responses (i.e. Covid-19), nutrition, health assessments and early identification of developmental delays and disabilities.

Within the region, in some countries like Malawi, 30% of adolescent girls' report that their first sexual experience is forced. GBV is the least attended form of human rights violation. GBV is predominantly not reported as it happens in intimate spaces victims may not know where to report. Studies (<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/child-marriage-atlas/atlas/>) have shown that some countries in the region have notoriously high rates of child marriage before the age 18 with Zambia 42%, Zimbabwe 34%, Mozambique 54% Malawi 42% and 17% before the age of 15, teen age pregnancies, low contraceptive use, and limited menstrual hygiene support. As CSO's we believe governments should ensure that there is a need for supportive re-entry policies <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/16/africa-make-girls-access-education-reality>. Within the region, as it is globally, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in massive disruptive to the education delivery and a steep increase of violence against women and girls. Data within the region show that the numbers of student drop out, child marriages and rapes of very young girls went high at the peak of the pandemic.

On education care and support, we make the following recommendations:

- There is need for harmonization of laws and policies in education and health. For instance, the age of prohibitive marriage in the region varies, in some countries it is under 18 years, while others 16 years. This is not even harmonized with the age of sexual consent.
- Develop and implement policies and strategies for creation of an enabling environment to work towards the reduction and eventual elimination of constraints to better and freer access to good quality education and training opportunities within the region.
- SADC Ministers of Education in collaboration with their disaster management departments invest accordingly in making schools/education institutions disaster ready, put enough contingency measures for responses and create credible systems for timely data capturing, processing and sharing when disasters hit.
- On responding to the Covid- 19 pandemic we recommend the following:
 - ✓ Reduce transmission in schools by prioritizing teachers and age appropriate learner for the Covid-19 vaccination, providing, and using masks and hand sanitizers where appropriate, and improving ventilation.
 - ✓ Member states should promote and enforce the school re-admission policy to recover the learners that drop out due to disasters including Covid-19 or unplanned early pregnancies.
 - ✓ Governments should ensure that the protective gears are disability friendly to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning processes.
 - ✓ There is a need for continuous early identification and assessment of learners especially in pre-schools and for learners with diverse needs.
 - ✓ Member states where school feeding program is not factored in their national budget they should ensure there is a clear budget line for the program.

4.0 Financing Education as a cross cutting issue

We, as CSOs working in the education sector in the region, have sadly observed that despite significant increases in education spending over the last 15 years, reaching the SDG 4 targets will require significantly increased financial resources. Government are the largest funders of education in all country income groups. However, funding for education as a share of national income has not changed significantly over the last decade for our countries in the region. While some countries have attained the 20% of the annual budget and 6% of the GDP allocated to education, some countries continue to straddle behind this target. Implementation of the protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation, Education and Skills Development, Care and Support for teaching and Learning, Establishment of Centres of Excellence, Development of School Feeding Programmes, Strengthening of Higher Education, realization of inclusive education, response to disasters, such as the Covid- 19 pandemic, among others key areas of concern, all depend on the resource basket allocated to the education sector.

We make the following calls to our governments:

- Member states should mobilize more resources towards education. Increase fiscal space for spending on education. We implore governments to adhere to the 15-20% of the national budget or 4-6% of the country's GDP allocation to education.
- Ensure inclusivity, equity and efficiency of allocations and spending on education. Members states are called upon to allocate not less than 5% of the education budget towards special needs and inclusive education.
- We recommend that Governments allocate a minimum of 10% education budget to ECDE
- We recommend that in every country, Ministries of education and Ministries of Finance must be supported to identify and address inefficiency and inequity in existing and new spending, which will ensure inclusive education, thus, leaving no one behind.
- Member states should ensure fair and progressive tax, with the emphasis on corporate tax.
- The CSO's in the region note that Increasing tax-to-GDP ratios by 5% point by 2030 is ambitious but reasonable target in many countries, enabling a doubling of spending on education and health. Domestic tax reforms need to be progressive and gender responsive.
- Member states should focus more on domestic resource mobilization by adopting proven and innovative financing models such as Cooperate Social Responsibility, Education Levy, Public to Public Partnership, Education bonds, Diaspora Fund.
- Member countries should ensure that finance data is available for informed and accountable decisions
- Member states should ensure stronger emphasis on decisive action for accountable and transparent public finance management for improved learning outcomes.
- SADC governments must continue to invest in gender-responsive public resource management practices (which incorporate Gender Responsive Budgeting-GRB).
- Member states should ensure that there is no lackluster approach to dealing with abuses, misuse, and misappropriation of limited public resources meant for education.
- There is a need to update double taxation agreements (DTAs) to make use of the United Nations (UN) tax treaty model, which gives taxing rights to developing countries and the SADC model treaty, which provides a model to raise revenue.

5.0 Education and Training Protocol

We recognize that as a region, member states have prioritized education and training. However, the protocol is silent on ECD and inclusive education which are the foundation or the cornerstone for quality, equitable, lifelong learning for all. Hence, as CSO we believe that Early Child Development and Education

(ECDE) is a human right in addition to being an enabling right. ECDE positively contributes to adult outcomes such as educational attainment, health, work productivity, and incomes.

Cognizance of the realization that ECDE and inclusive education was not on the agenda, we Nevertheless, as CSOs from the SADC region, note with concern the following:

- While most SADC countries have integrated ECDE strategies and policies with some countries having costed implementation strategies with a few having none (Zambia and Zimbabwe), at SADC level there is neither policy nor implementation strategy for ECDE while the sector is monitored through Education Information Management Systems.
- Very few countries have ECDE Directorates (exception of Zambia) as ownership of most ECD is in private hands with very few governments controlled (14.4%) despite member states being the custodians resulting in low ECD funding averaging 1.57% of the education budgets regionally with more than 70% of the budgets go towards salaries of staff with little left for infrastructure and learners needs provision.
- There is a large deficit of age appropriate and standard classrooms, outdoor play centres and teaching materials in all countries with consequent very low access to ECDE (i.e. Mozambique 6%, Zambia 25%, Eswatini 28%, Zimbabwe 46%, Malawi 47% and South Africa 59%) compared to primary and Secondary education

Having reflected on this status quo, we make the following recommendations:

- There is need for inclusion of ECDE and inclusive education in the SADC Education and Training Protocol and development of an implementation strategy which includes inclusivity issues or additional protocol for ECDE.
- There is need for establishing ECDE directorates at SADC Secretariat and country levels to take leadership in ECDE planning, financing, curriculum, regulatory and supervision and including establishing and or integrating ECDE in EMIS at country and regional levels.
- Member states need to increase and include ECDE and inclusive education budget lines into national public and education budgets with a threshold between 5-10% as recommended by UNICEF.
- There is need for governments to take affirmative action to make huge investments in ECDE infrastructure and facilities to comply with recommended 20:1 learner teacher ratio.

Submitted this 16th day of June, in the year 2022





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