

# Policy Brief

## *Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region: Reviewing the Region's Progress in Reaching the Goals of the Second Decade of Education for Africa*



### Introduction

*The African continent is undergoing an economic transformation. Growth estimates for Sub-Saharan Africa stand at 5.2 per cent in 2014. Much of this growth is underpinned by foreign investments with Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania exploiting new oil and gas discoveries, Zambia and Botswana achieving high agricultural and mining yields and Mauritius diversifying its knowledge economy. South Africa continues to be a power house of economic growth not only for the region but with significant global reach. Growth of this nature presents enormous potential for the continent's population and young people in particular. A workforce that is appropriately skilled with a reasonable level of earnings significantly stabilises society and mitigates the effects of corruption, illiteracy, poverty and disease. African Heads of State recognising this have made education and training a priority of the African Union's Plan of Action for Education in the Second Decade. This brief explores the SADC region's progress of member states in achieving the goals set by the continental strategy which stretches from 2006 to 2015.*

### Scope of the Challenge

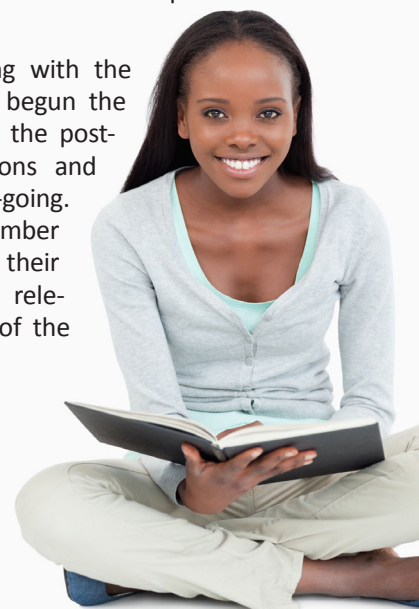
The SADC region has made significant gains in achieving universal primary education access, with over 80 per cent of appropriately aged children enrolled in school. However, on average only 50 per cent of children are in lower secondary education and 33 per cent in upper secondary education, indicating a sizeable gap in human resource development that will mitigate the region's opportunities in the global market and its economic trajectory. More telling is, however, the wide variation across member's states grade 6 learner achievement scores. According to data from the Southern and Eastern Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), less than 10 per cent of children in Malawian schools achieve the basic targets, whereas in Mauritius, it is over 70 per cent, showing wide variations in achievement. Schooling that does not improve cognitive skills, measured here by comparable international tests of mathematics, science, and reading, has limited impact on economic outcomes and development. SADC countries need to seriously address the fundamentals of schooling - increase post-primary access and ensure quality teaching and learning - if the region is to realize its potential and address the other priority objectives of the AU Plan of Action.

Considerable developments have, however, been undertaken by member states in introducing policy and education provision in pre-primary, technical and vocational education and higher education opportunities for learners. In recent years, the SADC Secretariat has, along with the rest of the continent, included Early Childhood Education as a priority area. A technical committee on higher education, research and development has been established and this has been given the responsibility of developing a Regional Higher Education Strategic Framework. A region-wide process of reviewing curricula has also begun. The focus is on engendering curricula and mainstreaming education for sustainable development in teacher education. A regional Open and Distance Policy Framework has also been approved by Ministers of Higher Education. With regard to developing capacity in skills development, the SADC secretariat is advocating recommendations from a recent regional assessment on its member States' capacity in technical and vocational education and training.

Other achievements include increased access to higher education in individual country instances. Teacher numbers are on the increase and children in the SADC region are less likely to suffer from wasting or be under weight. Literacy rates are also higher than the continental average. The region has successfully produced an EMIS Norms and Standards Assessment Framework used to assess two SADC countries, so far, on their EMIS capacities. Recommendations from these peer reviews will go towards strengthening the country's capabilities to produce and avail quality education statistics and information for decision making.

Key challenges facing the implementation of the AU Plan of Action include low levels of domestication of the plan in national strategies; the expectation that interventions to achieve the goals would be internally funded by countries; the poor publicity promoting the Plan nationally, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation of interventions with limited statistics available. Overall, although the region continues to improve its education and training systems, and is one of the top performing regions on the continent. However, globally it lags behind on many indicators of education performance which detracts from its economic competitiveness and ability to grow.

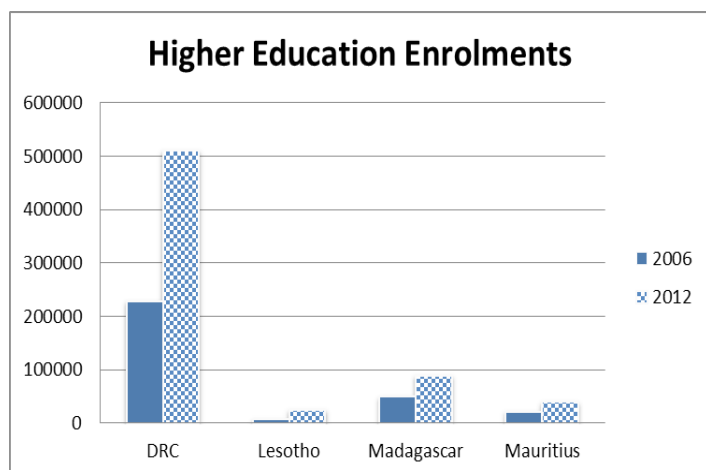
The SADC region, along with the rest of the world, has begun the process of determining the post-2015 agenda. Evaluations and consultations are on-going. In the meantime, member states are pursuing their education sector plans relevant to the objectives of the Plan of Action.





average committed at least 6.5 per cent of GDP to education compared to the world average of 4.8 per cent.

Data collection across the region on higher education in general is very poor. More than half of the region does not have any information on the required indicators. Despite this, a few countries stand out for making significant progress. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar and Mauritius tertiary enrolments have expanded rapidly since 2006. Lesotho for example has twice doubled the number of students in the higher and tertiary education sector. Similarly, enrolments in DRC have increased by 123 per cent between 2006 and 2012.



Source: AU Outlook Data 2013

Growth has not been equitable, however, and female students continue to represent the minority in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Republic of Tanzania. In Lesotho, Mauritius and Seychelles the data show marked disparities in favour of females, contrary to traditional patterns. Regionally, existing data seems to indicate a clustering of females studying education with very few learning subjects such as engineering, manufacturing, construction and science.

Southern Africa has invested in quality assurance mostly in higher and tertiary education. Several frameworks and mechanisms have been developed at this level. Of the 21 African countries that have established higher education accreditation bodies, eight are found in SADC. Regionally, the Higher Education Quality Management Initiative for Southern Africa (HEQMISA) was formed in 2003. Funding challenges have prevented the initiative from being operationalized. Similarly, an open and distance learning capacity building for the region has been established and a policy framework for this capacity-building project produced. Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) has taken a strong lead on conducting research in the higher education sector.

### Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

This subsector has gained growing recognition as a vehicle for imparting skills for employability and raises the need for more flexible education arrangements so as to absorb a diverse group of learners, particularly those that do not complete secondary schooling. In 2011, The SADC secretariat mandated by member states, realising the potential of the sector for development, undertook an assessment of the status of TVET in member states which produced the SADC TVET Strategic Framework, endorsed by Ministers in 2011.

Most TVET programmes offered by member states are concentrated in upper secondary education, addressing the need to prepare young people for the world of work in the event of an early exit from the education system. Of those countries that provided data, 30 per cent of programmes in secondary education are TVET subjects. Key examples are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Of this 30 per cent, female participation peaks at 50 per cent with some countries reporting less indicating a predominantly male student body in the TVET sector. Angola has since 2008 witnessed a massive increase in this sector with TVET programmes accounting for 45 per cent of total secondary education by 2011.

The Botswana College of Distance Education and Open Learning (BODOCOL) fuses the complementary facets of Information and Communication Technology, Technical Vocational Education and Training and Non-Formal Education into flexible higher education solutions. Lesotho has a strong non-formal education agenda and offers literacy classes to herd boys and child domestic workers through the Lesotho Association for Non-Formal Education (LANFE). Work has also been done on HIV/AIDS awareness programmes.

### Curriculum Development, Teaching and Learning Materials

Tracking the development of the curriculum development, teaching and learning materials priority area has proved very difficult. Only a few indicators have been developed to help identify the progress that has been made in this area. Evidence from external sources seems to suggest that there still exist gender stereotypes in member states curricula and approaches.

More than two children share a mathematics textbook in Malawi, Namibia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia in 2012. Similarly, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia indicated that more than one child shares a reading textbook. There is an excess of textbooks reported in Mauritius at three reading textbooks per child. This country is notable in the region for pioneering the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies as a learning subject from grade one upwards in all public schools. The provision of this is a critical subject as required learning from early grades equips learners with fundamental skills in the global knowledge economy.

### Quality Management

Available data on education expenditure suggests that spending per capita is highest in tertiary education. However, given extensive data gaps and the absence of aggregate figures, this information must be interpreted with caution.

Countries such as Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia have made some progress in reducing their out-of-school population. In contrast, South Africa reported a more than 100 per cent increase in the number of children out of school. In 2012, there were 338,416 more children out of school than in 2006, bringing the overall number of out of school children to 656,487. This is despite scrapping school fees, providing school meals and transport. An investigation into rising out of school numbers in South Africa may be necessary and is likely to produce interesting findings. Lesotho and Malawi have significantly improved survival rates, but only 31 per cent of primary pupils reach the last grade of primary education in Mozambique.

## Early Childhood Development

Several SADC countries have worked towards the establishment of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services and this has recently been added as an objective to the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan. Lesotho and Zimbabwe have increased the number of available ECD centres and made for provision for these to be attached to primary schools. Mauritius and Swaziland have established specific ECD authorities. In Swaziland however, very little regulation is taking place and a similar situation is replicated in Namibia despite the acknowledgement that the numbers of early childhood care centres are on the increase.

Health indicators show that the SADC region has made significant progress with regards to reducing infant and under-five mortality rates. In the Seychelles for example, infant deaths account for only 10 in every 1,000 live births. On the other extreme, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia report more than 100 deaths in every 1,000 children born alive. Stunting among under 5 year olds is pervasive in five SADC countries - the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

Data blanks preclude a meaningful analysis in this priority area and improving the focus on ECD is still a work in progress. No mention of Early Childhood Development is made in the SADC Protocol on Education and Training. Individual countries have up to this point been addressing the challenge of ECD at their own discretion.

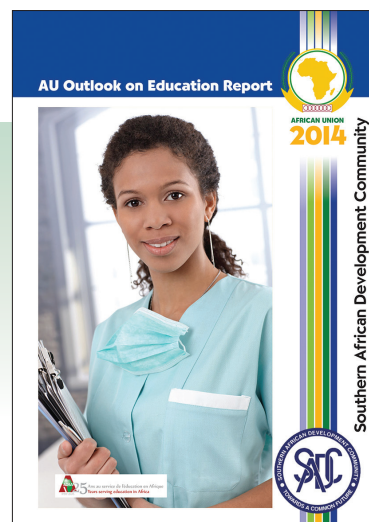
To counter this, Mauritius has recently been named the new home of the secretariat of the Inter-Country Quality Node (ICQN) on Early Childhood Education. This comes on the back of a number of progressive changes in in the Mauritian education sector. The Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, under the pre-primary education division of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, offers extensive ECD facilities. These include infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, a regulatory framework, financial support and capacity building services. The Mauritian experience will no doubt prove invaluable in light of its leadership of the ICQN on Early Childhood Development.

## Recommendations

- Access and retention of female learners is a priority particularly at the higher levels. There is a need for advocacy for girls with the right qualifications gaining entry into tertiary education. The presence of more role models in male and female teachers may also serve to improve retention.
- There is need to infuse cultural values and concepts through education. One way to do this can be through mother tongue instruction during the foundational years. Ministries of Education can lead on this by institutionalising home languages.
- The SADC region needs to fully implement the EMIS Norms and Standards. This will lead to the harmonisation of policies, statistical processes and resourcing levels across the region. Ultimately this should lead to improved availability of quality education statistics.
- Ministries of Education may want to consider technical allowances for employees in key positions so as to ensure retention and avoid losing staff who possess critical technical skills.



- Innovative approaches to training and remunerating teachers, such as the establishment of colleges in remote areas where locals are trained as teachers - currently being used in Angola, Malawi and Mozambique - need to be explored.
- Ministries of Education should consider regulating the activities of non-state players even as they continue to support expansion in higher and tertiary education.
- Governments can also use performance based spending to support areas in the education sector that are working well rather than continuing to focus resources on non-performing budget lines.
- Closer monitoring of learner outcomes needs to be prioritised if quality education is to be made available to all. Learner assessments can be used to identify gaps and improve both teaching and learning processes.
- Member states need to explore introducing Information and Communications Technologies to learners from as early as pre-primary education to allow SADC children to catch up with global technological advances. The region should also expand open and distance education platforms.
- The introduction and institutionalisation of Early Childhood Education services by attaching ECD centres to existing primary schools is a strategy that could be adopted in SADC countries that are not yet doing so.



Please refer to  
[www.adeanet.org](http://www.adeanet.org)  
for the full report.

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