

THE SADC PROTOCOL on Gender and Development IS FOR YOU

by Sister Namibia

Much of government policy and law on gender and development is grounded in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. In this piece Sister Namibia provides you with an extensive excerpt from the SADC Gender and Development Monitor 2016, giving you background information as well as informing you of the stipulations of the protocol, which you can call on in your own pursuit of achieving the advancement of women and girls' lives.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was established in 1992 with the Windhoek Declaration and Treaty. It spoke to the new circumstances emerging in the region leading to the end of institutionalised apartheid in 1994, and established a new paradigm for the participation of all of the people of the region in building a common future, including men and women. SADC was determined to end discrimination against women and shape a society based on equality and equity. This resulted in the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development in 1997 and its 1998 Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children; and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development that was approved a decade later, in 2008, and entered into force on 22 February 2013 following ratification. With this Protocol incorporating key international commitments, SADC Member States have established a framework for transformation of Southern Africa as envisaged in its founding Treaty.

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development recognises that women were historically disadvantaged in terms of meaningful participation in all spheres of development. In order to eliminate barriers faced by women, State

parties to the Protocol have agreed to adopt measures to ensure equal participation and representation of women and men.

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development commits to the integration and mainstreaming of gender issues into the SADC Programme of Action and Community Building Initiatives, as "key to the sustainable development of the SADC region", noting that the Member States undertook in the SADC Treaty, Article 6(2), not to discriminate against any person on the grounds of sex or gender. The Protocol further states the commitment of all SADC Member States to gender equality and equity as "a fundamental human right".

The Objectives of the Protocol are among others to provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects. It also seeks to harmonise the various international, continental and regional gender equality instruments that SADC Member States have subscribed to such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and its Platform of Action, The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and initially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now the Sustainable Development Goals, amongst others. Therefore, the Protocol consolidates and creates synergies between various commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment into one comprehensive regional instrument that enhances the capacity to plan, implement and monitor the SADC Gender agenda effectively.

SADC Member States focus on results, specifically on achieving global, continental and regional goals. SADC's ownership and commitment to the implementation of these international frameworks are translated into strategic roadmaps that now include commitments such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and at continental level, the AU Agenda 2063. Both of these blueprints place emphasis on women empowerment and gender equality as a key factor for sustainable development.

At SADC level, the Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) with a time frame of 2015 — 2020 is fundamental. The Revised RISDP confirms gender and

development as one of the critical crosscutting issues that all SADC programmes should consider.

SADC has identified key priority areas for Gender and Development with a view to accelerate progress in the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development has six objectives that include the empowerment of women; eliminating discrimination and achieving gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects; harmonising the implementation of various global, continental and regional instruments on gender equality and equity; and addressing emerging gender issues and concerns.

Of particular importance is Article 2 on general principles that states, for the purposes of this Protocol, the following principles shall apply: (c) States Parties shall cooperate in facilitating the development of human, technical and financial capacity for the implementation of this Protocol. 2. States Parties shall adopt the necessary policies, strategies and programmes such as affirmative action to facilitate the implementation of this Protocol. Affirmative action measures shall be put in place with particular reference to women and girls, in order to eliminate all barriers which prevent them from participating meaningfully in all spheres of life.

In the dispensation post-2015, the Protocol still aims to achieve the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and achieve gender equality by encouraging and harmonising the development and implementation of gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects. In addressing the issues around constitutional and legal rights, governance, education and training, HIV-AIDS, productive resources and employment, gender based violence, public perception through media, and conflict resolution, the Protocol aims to harmonise the implementation of various instruments which SADC Member States have subscribed to at regional, continental and international levels.

Towards the African Union's Agenda 2063, SADC has focused on efforts aimed at the ultimate goal of identifying, tackling and eradicating the feminisation of poverty. Empowered with this information, readers are encouraged to use this knowledge to the improvement of their own lives and that of their communities by holding government responsible to this commitment. ♀

Since countries had been doing so well with identifying people living with HIV and treating them, the dynamic has changed from assisting pregnant women living with HIV and their babies to now generally support vulnerable persons.