



**REPORT OF THE SADC PF REGIONAL WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS
TO THE 56TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

***THEME: "LEVERAGING THE ROLE OF THE SADC PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
IN FACILITATING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN SADC REGIONAL
INTEGRATION FOR ENHANCED ACCOUNTABILITY AND INCLUSIVE SOCIO-
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COHESION"***

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Plenary Assembly do adopt the Report of the Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus to the 56th Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, laid on the Table on 11th December 2024.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE REGIONAL WOMEN’S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS 3

2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE..... 3

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES..... 3

4.0 BACKGROUND 4

5.0 SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS FROM CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES AND PARTNERS 4

5.1 How Can Parliaments Enhance Women’s Leadership Roles in Addressing Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management? 4

5.3 What Barriers Exist to Women’s Political Participation and How Can They be Addressed? 6

5.4 How can Regional Cooperation be Strengthened to Address Gender Inequality in SADC? 8

5.5 What Policy Reforms are Needed for Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural and Informal Sectors? 9

6.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 10

7.0 CONCLUSION 12

8.0 APPENDICES..... 13

1.0 COMPOSITION OF THE REGIONAL WOMEN’S PARLIAMENTARY CAUCUS

As at the date of the meeting, on 22nd October 2024, the membership of the Regional Women’s Parliamentary Caucus (RWPC) was as follows:

1.	Hon. Shally Josepha Raymond	Tanzania (Chairperson)
2.	Hon. Rachel Zulu	Malawi (Vice Chairperson)
3.	Hon. Ruth Mendes	Angola
4.	Hon. Teresa Neto	Angola
5.	Hon. Luisa Damiao Santos	Angola
6.	Hon. Cathy Moleka Sakombi	DRC
7.	Sen. Linda Nxumalo	Eswatini
8.	Hon. Nokuthula Dlamini	Eswatini
9.	Hon. Makatleho Motsoasele	Lesotho
10.	Hon. Dr. Pinkie Manamolela	Lesotho
11.	Hon. Paula Kooper	Namibia
12.	Hon. Utaara Mootu	Namibia
13.	Hon. Regina Esparon	Seychelles
14.	Hon. Hon. Kelly Samynadin	Seychelles
15.	Hon. Hawa Mwaifunga	Tanzania
16.	Hon. Princess Kasune	Zambia
17.	Hon. Mutinta Mazoka	Zambia
18.	Hon. Julien Nyemba	Zambia
19.	Hon. Mercy Mugomo	Zimbabwe
20.	Hon. Lynette Karenyi	Zimbabwe
21.	Hon. Maybe Mbohwa	Zimbabwe

APOLOGIES

1.	Hon. Agnes Mpingana Kafula	Namibia
2.	Botswana (Parliament was dissolved pending General Elections)	
3.	DRC (Committees not constituted)	
4.	Madagascar (Committees not constituted)	
5.	Mozambique (Parliament was dissolved pending General Elections)	
6.	South Africa (Committees not constituted)	

2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the RWPC are articulated in Rule 19 of the SADC PF Rules of Procedure.

3.0 NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD AND MEETING DATES

The RWPC convened virtually on 22nd October 2024 for the Public Hearings which were conducted under the theme: “*Leveraging the Role of the SADC*”

Parliamentary Forum in Facilitating Citizen Participation in SADC Regional Integration for Enhanced Accountability and Inclusive Socio-economic Development and Cohesion.”

4.0 BACKGROUND

The SADC Parliamentary Forum has been conducting the Public Hearing Sessions since 2022. The inaugural public hearing session was held in November 2022 and a follow-up in October 2023, both of which demonstrated the importance of citizen’s voices in regional matters. It is against this backdrop that the RWPC convened to engage with citizens on a variety of issues under the theme, *“Leveraging the Role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in Facilitating Citizen Participation in SADC Regional Integration for Enhanced Accountability and Inclusive Socio-economic Development and Cohesion.”*

The engagement focused on the following thematic areas: women’s leadership in climate change and disaster risk management; gender-responsive budgeting and resource allocation; women’s political representation and participation; addressing gender inequality in the region; and economic empowerment of women in rural and informal settlements.

5.0 SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS FROM CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES AND PARTNERS

The RWPC received submissions from various citizen representatives and partners, the list of whom is at Appendix II of this Report. The presentations focused on five key thematic areas under the overarching theme of the Committee Session, *“Leveraging the Role of the SADC Parliamentary Forum for Enhanced Accountability and Inclusive Socio-economic Development and Cohesion”*. The key issues raised in the submissions and ensuing deliberations are summarized below.

5.1 How Can Parliaments Enhance Women’s Leadership Roles in Addressing Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management?

The RWPC learned that the climate crisis does not affect everyone equally, as women and girls face disproportionate impacts from climate change, largely because they make up the majority of the world’s poor, who are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. Furthermore, women’s limited access to productive resources and decision-making power hinders their ability to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. In this regard, given their position on the frontlines of the climate and disaster crisis, women are uniquely situated to be agents of change and can play a key role in finding ways to mitigate the causes of global warming and to adapt to its impacts on the ground.

The RWPC also learned that gender equality was a crucial ingredient of sustainable development. Therefore, it was essential to ensure that women took

leadership roles in addressing global challenges like climate change and disaster risk management as this could foster inclusive policy making. In this regard, parliaments have an important role to play in the achievement of gender equality by promoting women's leadership roles in addressing climate change and disaster risk management. This can be done through the following measures:

- i. Ensuring that climate change and disaster risk reduction policies are gender-responsive in addition to recognizing the different impacts of climate change and disasters in general on both women and men.
- ii. Increasing the representation of women in decision-making roles within parliaments and related bodies, especially in committees that focus on climate change and disaster risk management.
- iii. Providing training, capacity-building programmes and mentoring for women to develop leadership and managerial skills and networks in disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. This includes increasing the availability of information and resources to women and girls to reduce vulnerability. Parliaments can also build the capacity of women parliamentarians in climate change response.
- iv. Influencing national spending, laws, and policy towards women's leadership in climate change and disaster risk management. This entails legislating to integrate gender into disaster risk reduction and risk-informed development spending and existing work.
- v. Lobbying and advocating for increased budget allocations towards implementation of national disaster risk management plans and national specific disaster risk management responses.
- vi. Advocating for gender responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience policies, programmes and plans. There is need to strengthen the disaster resilience of women in all their diversity, especially for those living in high-risk situations, and to encourage women's participation in the policy and decision-making process in building national resilience to disasters and climate change.
- vii. Considering the specific vulnerabilities of women with disabilities, ensuring they are not left behind during disasters, and promoting leadership training for women with disabilities to engage meaningfully in environmental as well as economic empowerment initiatives.
- viii. Enacting policies that promote women's participation in decision-making spaces both at community and national levels.
- ix. Ensuring women's participation in local disaster risk management committees and decision-making over productive resources such as land and household income.
- x. Initiating programmes aimed at building the capacity of women in rural areas and informal settings, especially those most affected by climate change.

5.2 What Strategies can be Adopted to Ensure Gender-Responsive Budgeting in National and Regional Development Plans?

The general view presented was that for gender-responsive budgeting to work effectively, the priorities and needs of all people must be understood and included at every stage of the budget process. The primary tool and strategy for this inclusive approach was identified as the application of a gender analysis to budget formulation and implementation, as it allows for the identification and understanding of the differences between and among women and men in terms of their relative position in society.

The meeting was informed that the following strategies could be adopted to ensure gender-responsive budgeting in national and regional development plans:

- i. Ensuring that national and regional development plans allocate specific resources for programmes that support the economic empowerment of women with disabilities.
- ii. Collecting data on the economic activities of women with disabilities to inform budgetary allocations, and monitoring mechanisms to track the impact of gender-responsive budgeting on women with disabilities.
- iii. Introducing laws and policies mandating gender-responsive budgeting, along with clear guidelines and tools for implementation. This necessitates that thorough gender analyses be conducted by collecting gender data to identify gaps and using the findings from such analyses to shape and monitor budgets.
- iv. Engaging women from diverse backgrounds in the budgeting process to ensure that their needs and priorities are taken into account.
- v. Strengthening the capacity of policy makers and budget officers on gender-responsive budgeting techniques.
- vi. Monitoring and evaluating budget implementation so as to assess the performance of and to review budgets regularly to ensure that they adequately cater for women.
- vii. Allocating resources to address the specific needs of women and girls in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

5.3 What Barriers Exist to Women’s Political Participation and How Can They be Addressed?

5.3.1 The RWPC was informed that women faced political, socio-economic and cultural barriers to political participation. The political barriers included electoral violence, institutional constraints, such as political systems that did not take into consideration women’s domestic responsibilities, and lack of adequate support structures. Women frequently encountered a lack of support from political parties and exclusion from decision-making structures within these parties, which resulted into lack of visibility. There were also unfavourable electoral systems coupled with laws that discriminated against women and sometimes even when the laws were in place they were not enforced effectively.

- 5.3.2 Women with disabilities faced compounded barriers to political participation, including lack of physical access to voting and political platforms, social stigma, and lack of support. Women also lacked information on political opportunities and how to navigate the world of politics and run for office. This partly stemmed from a lack of mentors and support networks for women in politics and was linked to the lack of or a minimal number of successful women in politics who could act as role models.
- 5.3.3 Socio-economic barriers also played a significant role on the status of women. Gender roles stemming from tradition and stereotypes discouraged women's participation in public life and deterred their political ambitions. A lack of campaign funds also limited women's involvement in the political arena, as they may face tough choices such as leaving a job to pursue a career in politics. They also lacked other resources such as networks and the training required to have a successful political career. Furthermore, women often faced discrimination, violence, threats, sexual harassment, cyber bullying, objectification and negative media coverage, which created a hostile environment for women aspiring to join politics. Cultural and traditional norms such as entrenched patriarchal systems, including traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes. The traditions and cultural attitudes, especially as regards women's role and status in society, gendered traditional roles and division of labour, some taboos and cultural practices such as early marriage also hampered women's political involvement in the political space.
- 5.3.4 The RWPC was informed that to address these challenges, the following should be considered:
- i. Introduction of quotas or reserved seats for women with disabilities in parliament.
 - ii. Promotion of civic education programmes targeting women with disabilities, to encourage and equip them for political participation.
 - iii. Increasing support for women in politics through funds and training. This could empower more women to participate in decision-making processes.
 - iv. Challenging the stereotypes and norms against women's participation in politics by implementing awareness campaigns.
 - v. Political parties should also be encouraged to adopt gender quotas and to support women candidates.
 - vi. Parliamentarians, especially male parliamentarians, should serve as role models and champions for gender norms transformation. They must respond to violence in the electoral process by ensuring that all forms of violence towards women, including sexual violence, are responsibly handled before, during and after elections

5.4 How can Regional Cooperation be Strengthened to Address Gender Inequality in SADC?

- 5.4.1 The RWPC learned that regional cooperation could be strengthened by creating a SADC framework that mandates disability inclusion in all gender policies; facilitating cross-country exchange programmes for women with disabilities to share best practices in political and economic participation; and strengthening advocacy networks within SADC to hold governments accountable for gender and disability equality. There was also need for strong alliances involving non-state actors, the private sector, the media and all political actors in support of women's agency and leadership in politics. Furthermore, the women's quota system should be implemented through an evidence-based gendered policy framework founded on equality, inclusion and non-discrimination.
- 5.4.2 In relation to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), regional cooperation was vital for addressing gender inequality by harmonising legal frameworks, sharing best practices and enabling cross-border collaboration in line with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the Maputo Protocol and the SDGs, among other commitments. Such cooperation could strengthen gender equality efforts in the following ways:
- i. By aligning national policies with regional and international frameworks such as the SADC Gender Protocol, the Maputo Protocol and the SDGs, Member States could ensure consistent and equitable access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services for all adolescent girls and young women.
 - ii. Regional cooperation would facilitate cross-border health service provision and ensure that all adolescent girls and young women, regardless of their country of residence, could access essential SRHR services.
 - iii. Regional cooperation also facilitated the sharing of best practices and data among member states, allowing countries to learn from successful SRHR interventions in sister countries. It also promoted capacity building for Parliamentarians, other policymakers and diverse actors, enabling them to implement evidence-based strategies to address gender inequality and protect the SRHR of adolescent girls and young women.
 - iv. Regional platforms like the SADC-PF could play a crucial role in monitoring the progress of member States in advancing SRHR for adolescent girls and young women and in holding Member States accountable for their commitments to gender equality. Such platforms could also motivate effective implementation and monitoring of gender-responsive policies.

- 5.4.3 The RWPC was informed that to strengthen regional efforts in addressing gender inequality, the following actions should be undertaken:
- i. Parliamentarians should prioritise reviewing restrictive abortion laws to align them with regional and international frameworks, ensuring adolescent girls and young women could access to safe and legal abortion services, alongside comprehensive SRH care.
 - ii. Parliamentarians should play a critical role in advocating for gender-sensitive and youth-responsive SRHR policies. Regional cooperation should focus on building the capacity of Parliamentarians to champion these policies and ensure that SRHR was prioritised in national and regional agendas.
 - iii. SADC-PF should establish complementary mechanisms to monitor and report on Member States' progress in advancing gender equality and protecting the SRHR of adolescent girls and young women.

5.5 What Policy Reforms are Needed for Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural and Informal Sectors?

- 5.5.1 The RWPC learned from the submission that policy reforms must focus on ensuring that women with disabilities in rural and informal settings had access to vocational training and micro-financing facilities; strengthening legal protections for women with disabilities to prevent workplace discrimination; promoting inclusive access to technology and infrastructure to facilitate the economic activities of women with disabilities. Further, policy reforms that would empower women in the rural and informal sectors should be adopted to enable such women thrive economically. A stable macro-economic environment was also crucial for financial inclusion because women were the most affected by an unstable macro-economic environment.
- 5.5.2 The meeting was also informed that to empower women economically, policies must address issues such as access to both markets and financing, whether loans or grants, for women. One way to achieve this was through the formation of cooperatives where women could share skills, knowledge and any relevant information. There was also need to invest in financial protection and financial literacy programmes for women in order to ensure that they could realise their legal rights to own property and to access resources.
- 5.5.3 It was further noted that access to training and education was equally important to women, as learning skills could lead to securing jobs and running their own businesses. This had to go in tandem with the provision of social protection programmes such as maternity leave and child-care support.

5.5.4 The meeting was further informed that public debt and inflation were currently at their highest in decades, affecting the livelihoods of African women and girls disproportionately in comparison to men and boys. Furthermore, Africa's debt crisis was forcing governments to introduce regressive tax policies aimed at generating revenues to pay creditors rather than to finance social services such as social protection, health, education, food, and energy subsidies. This eroded governments' commitment to women's rights as available public resources were used to repay foreign debt. The meeting heard that the following strategies were needed to create fairer and more equitable policies that could address gender inequality and promote social justice:

- i. Promoting economies of care by developing economic frameworks aimed at addressing structural inequalities and ensuring equitable access to resources, opportunities, and benefits for women. This would call for the dismantling of the patriarchal and neocolonial structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination.
- ii. Emphasising social protection systems, investments in labour markets, and the creation of employment opportunities with robust social safety nets.
- iii. Advocating for debt cancellation and restructuring while taking into account the social and gender impacts of debt repayment, ensuring that African nations could invest in health, education, and social protection systems.

6.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from its interactions with the citizens, representatives and partners, and pursuant to its deliberations, the SADC PF Regional Women's Parliamentary Caucus:

CONCERNED that women's limited access to resources and decision-making power hinders their ability to adapt to, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

AWARE that gender equality is a crucial component of sustainable development, and that ensuring that women have leadership roles in addressing global challenges such as climate change and disaster risk management are essential for inclusive policy making.

COGNISANT of the need to build the capacity of women parliamentarians in participate in the climate change response.

ALSO COGNISANT of the need for member States to adopt strategies to ensure gender-responsive legislation and actions.

APPRECIATING the efforts made by SADC member States to implement the provisions of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

ENCOURAGING SADC member States to put in place robust mechanisms to monitor and review national progress on the domestication and implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

NOW, THEREFORE the RWPC recommends to the 56th Plenary Assembly to:

- i. URGE** SADC Member States to adopt and implement deliberate measures to promote women's participation and leadership in decision-making spaces on climate change and disaster risk management and to integrate gender into disaster risk reduction.
- ii. ALSO URGE** SADC Member States to allocate adequate financial resources to address the specific needs of women and girls in disaster reduction and climate change. In this process, the needs of women with disabilities must be explicitly addressed.
- iii. APPEAL** to SADC Member Parliaments to undertake gender impact analysis of budgets in their respective countries. SADC Member States should also develop and implement mechanisms to foster gender sensitive budgets and ensure that the budget formulation and implementation processes are engendered.
- iv. IMPLORE** SADC Member Parliaments to strengthen their oversight role on the budget process to ensure accountability and transparency in the allocation of resources.
- v. FURTHER IMPLORE** SADC Member States to institute deliberate measures to strengthen the capacity of budget officers in gender-responsive budgetary techniques and gender analysis.
- vi. ENCOURAGE** SADC Member Parliaments to implement programmes and activities to strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians to undertake effective analysis and oversight with regard to the gender responsiveness of national budgets.
- vii. CALL UPON** the SADC-PF to organise capacity building programmes for women parliamentarians to champion policies that ensure inclusive policies in national and regional agendas.
- viii. FURTHER CALL UPON** the SADC-PF to advocate for the strengthening and harmonisation of legislative frameworks that promote gender equality across the region, and also monitor Member States' compliance with the SADC Gender Policy and all gender-related policies in the region and to hold governments accountable for gender equality.

- ix. EMPHASISE** that SADC Member States should strengthen social protection systems and adopt accountable policies for sustainable development and eradication of poverty, which affects women and girls disproportionately.
- x. ENCOURAGE** SADC Member States to harmonise their legislation to encourage compliance with gender parity in their top leadership party structures, and in the nomination of candidates, and to protect women from discrimination in the political space.

7.0 CONCLUSION

As an organisation mandated to ensure regional integration, the SADC Parliamentary Forum is suitably positioned to engage its citizens on a wide range of policy and development initiatives to ensure that the perspectives of both men and women are taken into account and addressed. The Forum also provides a common arena where Member State commitments to promote the participation of women in decision-making structures and processes can be monitored to ensure compliance, insofar as women's empowerment is concerned. Therefore, the decision to convene a forum that encourages parliamentarians to engage with the citizen representatives is highly commendable.

The RWPC therefore, extends its gratitude to the Secretary General and staff of the SADC PF for facilitating its activities, including this meeting. The RWPC also wishes to place on record its appreciation to all the citizen representatives and partners for their input which enriched its deliberations and forms the basis of this report.

The RWPC implores the 56th Plenary Assembly to adopt the recommendations contained in its report without reservations.

Hon. Shally Josepha RAYMOND
CHAIRPERSON

Ms. Claire MUSONDA
COMMITTEE SECRETARY

8.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – LIST OF OFFICIALS

- i. Ms. Boemo Sekgoma, Secretary General
- ii. Mr Joseph Manzi, Director, Parliament Business and Programmes
- iii. Ms. Clare Musonda, Programme Manager (RWPC and RPMLOC) – Committee Secretary
- iv. Ms Masenate Molapo, Programme Manager (TIFI)
- v. Ms Paulina Kanguatjivi, Assistant Procedural Officer and Coordinator
- vi. Mr. Ronald Windwaai, Webmaster

APPENDIX II – LIST OF CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVES AND PARTNERS

- i. Ms. Grace Kibunja, African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC)
- ii. Ms. Sarah Ries, Gender and Youth Policy Specialist – UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office
- iii. Ms. Sylvia Chikalipo, OXFAM Malawi
- iv. Ms. Nomthandazo Mpande, Founder and Managing Director – Phoki Foundation NPC
- v. Ms. Carol Kapungwe, Member – Zambia National Association of Women with Disabilities
- vi. Ms. Mary Tiisetso Piet, Independent Expert/Independent Development Practitioner
- vii. Mr. Adolf Mavhenenke, Independent Expert – Gender, Human Rights and Policy Advocacy
- viii. Ms. Juliet Kaira Chibuta, Independent Expert – Gender, Human Rights, Women and Children’s Rights and Development
- ix. Ms. Catherine Muthia, Partnerships and Policy Assistant – African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD)
- x. Ms. Chikondi Kateta, Monitoring and Evaluation Programmes Officer – Coalition for Women Living with HIV and AIDS, Malawi
- xi. Ms. Charmaine Picado, Regional Senior Programme Officer- SRHR and Gender - SAFAIDS
- xii. Ms. Maureen Shonge, UN Women