



SADC

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT ON THE
OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATING OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8th March 2012

Southern African Development Community (SADC) joins the rest of the world in commemorating International Women’s Day in the spirit of this year’s Global theme “*Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures*’. This resonates with the SADC’s vision of a common future with a regional community that will ensure economic well- being, improvement of the standards of living and the quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security of the people of Southern Africa.

This is a reminder of our commitment as a region to advance the upliftment of women and girls through the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. This is an occasion for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that awaits future generations of women and girls. This is indeed an opportune moment for SADC to reflect on milestones, successes and challenges for gender equality and women’s empowerment over the years.

SADC also aligns itself to the United Nations International Women's Day theme, which is “Empower Rural Women – End Hunger and Poverty”. As stated by United Nations, Rural women and make up one quarter of the global population, yet routinely figure at the bottom of every economic, social and political indicator, from income and education to health to participation in decision-making.

It is quite pleasing to note that over the years, SADC has made notable progress in the promotion and protection of women and girl’s rights. There has also been greater gender equality in constitutional and legislative rights. A significant increase in women's representation in positions of leadership in SADC has been realized at various levels. Most SADC Member States have achieved gender parity in education, especially at enrollment level at primary school among other success stories.

However, a lot still needs to be done for women and girls to enjoy the full fundamental rights, freedom and dignity. Many of our communities, especially women and girls in rural areas continue to face challenges that include; early /child marriages, harmful traditional and religious practices, violation of their legal and human rights to go to school and limited access to health services. Lack of resources such as land continues to be a challenge for realizing basic livelihoods by women especially in rural areas.

Today is an important day to remind our governments of their responsibility for developing appropriate policies, enacting legislation and allocating resources towards the development; protection; empowerment and full realization of the rights of women and girls for them to live a better life and achieve a better future. It is a day to remind ourselves as leaders and parents to make decisions that will make a positive impact on the lives of our children, both boys and girls to grow and develop, thus enabling them to realize their full potential. As a region we are committed to developing more innovative programmes necessary to empower and inspire positive futures of millions of girls and make the lives of women, especially in rural areas better.