



The Southern Africa Youth Parliament (SADC Youth Parliament)

Background on the SADC Youth Parliament

The **Southern Africa Youth Parliament/SADC Youth Parliament** is a regional policy advocacy, engagement arm, and flagship program coordinated by the **Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF)** and other stakeholders. A platform for key decisions that influence policy and practice at national, regional, and international levels. Through consultative processes with young people in the region, the Southern Africa Youth Parliament adopts key policy decisions and recommendations to the policymakers, communities, and stakeholders in the Southern Africa region. The Parliament is composed of Young Leaders from diverse backgrounds not limited to Political, Health, Arts, Culture, Disability, Business, Environment, Agriculture, Religious Leaders, Academic, Media, and Sports among others. The SADC Youth Parliament is guided by values of Pan-Africanism such as Afro-centrism, Regional Integration, Ubuntu, African Unity, Respect of Diversity, durable Peace and Security, Self-determination, Patriotism, Solidarity, Promotion of Sustainable and Equitable Economic Growth and Socio-Economic Development, Sustainable Inclusion, Good Governance, Preservation of African Heritage, and Culture. The parliament prioritizes Gender Equality and Equity in all its parliamentary business. The Southern Africa Youth Parliament is in its 3rd Sitting, the 1st Parliament had its first sitting when Tanzania was hosting the SADC Heads of State and Government, and the 2nd set when Mozambique, Malawi, and DRC were hosting the SADC summits. The first SADC Youth Parliament held its inaugural sitting in 2019 in Tanzania. Since then, there has been a cohort of 80 parliamentarians representing all 16 SADC countries. There have also been more official sittings in 2020 and 2021, during the annual SADC Youth Forum and other caucus sittings.

Many former parliamentarians have been empowered through this initiative, gaining access to more regional and international leadership, and joining governments among other organizations. The parliament has also evolved into a unique youth-centered space for regional

consultation, linking regional policy issues to national implementation, advocacy, and debate on policy recommendations on issues facing the SADC region.

Why a SADC Youth Parliament?

Regional youth parliaments have become a common feature of modern international governance. The most notable examples include the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, the Global Youth Parliament, and the European Youth Parliament. A youth parliament is not an elected body like a conventional parliament but rather seeks to be a youth development platform that creates a channel through which:

- 1) Youth leaders of the region can debate and consult on regional policy issues that will affect their futures.
- 2) Youth leaders of the region can be mentored and orientated towards the values of Pan-Africanism, Democratic Regionalism, Parliamentarianism, and Public Service.
- 3) Youth leaders of the region are to be given a channel through which they might be equipped and empowered to build networks and skills relevant to entering public leadership offices in their home country, SADC, Africa, and at the international level.
- 4) Youth leaders of the region to join a community of peers and mentors through which they can initiate grassroots development projects in their country.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Southern Africa Youth Parliament.

- A representative Regional Policy Advocacy, and Engagement arm of SAYoF.
- Work with National Parliaments, Ministries of Governments, National Youth Councils, Youth Organisations, Pan-African Organisations, Young people, Regional and International Organisations to influence legislation and the implementation of national, regional, and international instruments and practices that empower and facilitate youth inclusion and participation.
- Work with the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) to bring about youth voices and sustainable participation through various committees and programs.
- A platform for key decisions that influence policies and practices at national, regional, and international levels.
- Monitor Youth Development Priorities in the region and at the national level.

- A space to deliberate issues that affect young people at community, national, regional, and global levels, to enable the proffering of solutions and recommendations for policy changes and action.
- A Leadership Mentorship platform that enables transformative leadership for the members of Parliament. (Nurture and Mentor Young Leaders).
- Engage with Policy Makers, Youth, and Stakeholders on various issues around youth inclusion, effective participation, and development.
- Complement and support the work of young people at the national and regional levels and be a bridging voice between national and regional agendas.
- Represent their countries in the official sitting of the SADC Youth Parliamentary business and various platforms in line with the Youth Development Model (YDM).
- Support, initiate, and collaborate with other SAYoF structures such as the Clusters, Sub-Committees, and Country offices in bringing out the youth voice, youth programs, and effective engagement.
- Recommend key issues to the SADC Youth Forum annual gathering among other platforms.
- Represent SAYoF at National, Regional, and International Platforms in line with SAYoF, vision, values, and objectives.

Composition of the Southern Africa Youth Parliament.

Who can become a parliamentarian?

The criteria for nomination to be eligible for nomination include the:

- Citizen of a SADC member state
- Between the ages of 18-35years
- Resident in a SADC country
- Demonstratable experience in leadership in the community, civil society, business, government, or academia

There are two youth parliamentarians selected from each SADC nation, one female and

one male, two representatives of persons with disabilities, two Speakers of Parliament, and two Clerks of Parliament, bringing the total of the cohort to 38. The SADC Youth Parliament will have no more than 10 Board of Mentors selected from people of high repute and members of Parliament in the region. The SADC Youth Parliament has a Patron selected within the region. The official sitting of the parliament is in two-year phases.

The 3rd SADC Youth Parliament is composed of the following:

- The Speakers of the SADC Youth Parliament (Male and Female from different SADC countries).
- The SADC Youth Members of Parliament from 16 SADC Member States (Males and Females and between the ages 18 to 28 years): Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kingdom of Eswatini, Kingdom of Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.
- Two (2) representatives for Persons with Disabilities (Male and Female from different SADC countries).
- The Clerks of the SADC Youth Parliament (Male and Female from different SADC countries).
- The total composition of the Southern Africa Youth Parliament is 38 Honourable Members.
- The Southern Africa Youth Parliament will have a **Patron**; a figure held with the highest regard in the region, with reputable background, probity, and youth-centric.
- The Parliament will have a maximum (10) **Board of Mentors** drawn from Parliaments from the region, and reputable SADC citizens.

Activities of SADC Youth Parliament.

The SADC Youth Parliament sits once every 3-4 months, with a total of Six Assemblies (physical and virtual) hosted throughout the duration of the cohort. The purpose of the SADC Youth Parliament is to create a space where parliamentarians will:

1) Debate and deliberate on topics and policies relevant to the future of SADC. These topics will be pre-selected and curated by SAYoF in consultation with the Board of Patrons, Parliamentarians, young people in the region's relevant partners, and with prior inputs from the parliamentarians.

- 2) Report back on consultative processes and campaigns they have hosted with youth in their country relating to issues on the parliament's agenda.
- 3) Report back on the progress of their youth development projects in their respective country.
- 4) The parliamentarians will undergo various leadership programs to enable them to execute their duties and prepare them for future responsibilities at the national, regional, or international levels.

In addition, the members of the SADC Youth Parliament are supported in conducting national youth consultation campaigns on key regional policy issues. They are responsible for complementing the planning and implementing national youth development projects during their term working with youth and youth organizations in their countries, with the support of SAYoF and its partners. Parliamentarians receive periodic training and capacity building during their term, on topics related to SADC regional structures and history; ethical and servant leadership; Parliamentarianism, democracy, and good governance; Campaign management; Project management, financial inclusion, Policy research, presentation, public speaking, diplomacy, writing among other. Finally, SADC Youth parliamentarians receive mentorship from mentors, leaders, and organizations in the region supporting the parliament to carry out their duties effectively.

The SADC Youth Parliament Hansard

The SADC Youth Parliament will have the Parliamentary Hansard – a compiled compendium after every full sitting, committee sitting or Caucus sitting. The Hansard is a record of speeches, debates, deliberations, and recommendations. The record is key to follow-ups, and access to youth and stakeholders for policy influencing and programming. The Hansard is managed by the Clerks of Parliament. The Hansard will be accessible on SAYoF and partners' websites.