



THE SASF NEWS

SADC leaders embrace MDGs

SADC GOVERNMENTS URGED TO BE ON TRACK TOWARDS FULFILLING MDGS

By *Fazilla Tembo, Ulemu Teputepu & Susan Mwape*

Southern Africa Social Forum (SASF) participants have agreed that citizens and Civil Society Organizations should stand up and join hands to ensure that their respective governments in SADC are on track towards the fulfilling of Millennium Development Goals.

At the very end of 2006 SASF in Lilongwe, delegates paraded colorful banners and donning t-shirts of all colors with different messages. Rights activists from Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Malawi all walked from Civo Stadium to the Town Hall, about five kilometers.

Participants marched in solidarity and country representatives delivered speeches calling for an end to neo-liberalism and imperialism. They observed a moment of silence of for all the late brothers and sisters that had died in the struggle against negative forces that had not been of their own making.

Participants expressed the need for government to free the media and facilitate a free access to information arguing that they were tired with dictatorship cover ups. They called for quick implementation of land reforms and other laws in the region.

“There should be less talk and more action .SADC governments must design policies and set aside adequate resources to achieve the goals, the communique said.

It said governments in the region should ensure that citizens, particularly those in rural areas, are consulted widely to ensure that national development policies on health reflect the needs and concerns.

“Governments should take the responsibility to educate, sensitize citizens on their health rights and that information should be disseminated in vernacular language,” reads the communique.

It further suggests that leaders should prioritize access to treatment like having health facilities near the communities and essential drugs like anti retroviral (ARV’s), malaria drugs, tuberculosis.

The communique added that governments should

recognize that women are critical to fighting poverty and that no poverty eradication programme or initiative can succeed without centralizing women’s rights and gender equality issues.

Current international policies rob women of livelihoods, health care and other economic rights.

On a broader level it said international and national policies are urged to consider poverty, privilege and discrimination as inter-related and therefore feminization of poverty is a reality that needs to be addressed by inequalities of trade, debt and aid within the global policy framework.

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Debt cancellation not a solution to SADC countries

BY WILLIOT BENJAMIN & Mandla Hadebi

Participants to the on-going three-day Southern African Social Forum in Lilongwe, Malawi have said debt cancellation is not a solution in itself to the problems of development and called for African countries to stop borrowing from the International Financial Institutions. It was noted that if countries stopped relying on the IFIs they would crumble as they make their money through lending.

The gathering observed that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) impose crippling conditionalities on borrower governments, which in turn affects the entire inhabitants of those particular countries.

Father Brian McGarry, chairman for the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt Development said that people should not focus only on the money it self but look forward to the outcomes.

Father MacGarry spoke about Zimbabwe’s debt which he said had ballooned about ten-fold since independence in 1980. Zimbabwe inherited its debt from the illegal regime of Ian Smith, around US\$40-55 million, which was also attributable to the fact that Rhodesia, then, had stopped paying interest on its loans, despite the fact that it was allowed to borrow although under sanctions from the rest of the world, thus rendering its debt illegitimate because the lenders should have not engaged an illegal government. Nevertheless, Zimbabwe had to start repaying these debts immediately, and although there was a great deal spent

on social spending in the early years of the government, soon the government fell prey to conditionalities and had to restructure its expenditure around the conditionalities imposed on it by the IFIs as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme that it found itself under.

This worsened the debt burden and when the Zimbabwe government stopped making repayments to the IFIs, it found itself under even more difficult conditions as they could not access any loans as a result of the signalling role of the IFIs.

Mungutiwa Sitali, the Debt and Trade Project Assistant of Jubilee Zambia said Zambia is a recent beneficiary of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) announced by the Group of 8 rich countries at the Gleneagles Meeting in 2005. He said the good news was that its debt was cancelled, falling from around US\$7,4 billion to about US\$502 million. The bad news is that a significant number of people are still poor and unemployed, while because of its new credit-worthy status, Zambia had already started borrowing fresh funds.

He added that some of Zambia’s debt can be considered illegitimate because the funds were used to bolster neighbouring nations’ aspirations to independence and counter the effects of apartheid. Nevertheless, it appeared the Zambia should look at putting in place strategies that ensure sustainable contraction and use of loans. He said Zambia would have to borrow to create growth in its industry for loans to become sustainable, a point he said other countries should follow.

Moreblessings Chidaushe, Programme Officer at the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, AFRODAD, reiterated that as debt cancellation activists have been calling for the unconditional cancellation of all debts as Africa does not owe and therefore should not have to pay anyone anything. This call was welcomed by participants at the discussion on illegitimate debt who agreed that it was indeed Africa that was owed by the West and that instead of wasting time auditing how much Africa has already paid, the West should be auditing how much is to be paid to Africans.

Other participants felt it would be necessary to have debt audits so that Africans are informed exactly how much they have been exploited through payments of debt alone at the cost of their citizens.

Malawi is also a beneficiary of the MDRI but is also in danger of falling into a similar fate to that of Zambia. The impact of the debt cancellation has filtered into the economy and has had a significant impact in people’s livelihoods. Mabvuto Bamusi, Programmes Director at Malawi Economic Justice Network (M E J N) said that Malawi as a nation should really scrutinize conditionalities in the future to ensure that loans contracted lead to development. “We need to screen their conditionalities as well as their policies towards development in (our) countries,” he said.

Bamusi also said parliaments need to play an important role in loan contraction processes so that loans really benefit the whole nation.

MAPEAMENTO DE IDEIAS NOS DEBATES DO RIMEIRO DIA DO SASF

By Nelson Manjate

Foi interessante o debates que particiei uma vez que nao seria possivel ao mesmo tempo participar em todos eles, cada vez mais e evidente que as estruturas tradicionais perdidas a seculos com a opressao do colonialismo vao sendo recuperados ou sobreviveram, apesar de nao serem reconhecidas em algumas paises isto demonstra que as sabedorias que guiam a existencia do poder tradicional que sobrevive apenas na forma de contos cada vez demonstra que nenhuma mao externa seja de quem for pode derrubar isto.

Esta evidente nos casos apresentados no debate sobre autonomias tradicionais onde os lideres tradicionais de Zambia demonstraram com diversidades que estas tem um papel na maneira como vamos construir as nossas solidariedades.

E accoes no caminho da erradicacao da pobreza e outros que fazem este continente atrazar. Outro debate interessasnte tem a ver com o facto de me recordar que a solidariedade aclamada neste forum ja

MOCAMBIQUE COMUNGANDO OS DESAFIOS REGIONAIS NO SASF

By Nelson Manjate

Este evento ocorre na sua terceira edicao, num ambiente caracteristico da sociedade civil. Malawi, data de cerca dez ou vinte anos de ditadura que torturou as mentes e exacerbou a pobreza deste pais.

Foi com muita expectativa que se debateu os assuntos a volta do solidariedade, ao menos ha um vontade na sociedade civil regional em comungar estes desafios desde as questoes ligadas a governacao, estatal, tradicional ate e questao que tea todos nos a doenca do seculo HIV SIDA.

No entanto os mocambicanos reresentantes no SASF, engajaram se com muito estilo e boa integracao nos assuntos que lhes diziam respeito, e encaixaram bem em termos de solidariedade alem fronteiras, e ainda mais comungam a ideia de no ano que vem o SASF ser em Mocambique.

Porque nao se ficarmos limitados nos corredores das nossas casas nao seremos capazes de exteriorizar os nossos assuntos e partilharmos os desafios com os outros da SADC. No que toca aos mocambicanos comecemos a construir a ideia de uniao para levarmos o secretariado do SASF que esta nas maos do MEJN, uma rede de justice economica malawiana, para o secretariado do forum social mocambicano.

Mas para isso temos que convenceremos a SASF regional de que somos capazes, da mesma forma que fomos capazes de organizar o nosso forum. Acrescendo ainda dizendo que participar nestes eventos e uma vantagem uma vez que consegue-se medir as possibilidades e ganhar forca em desfiar ao menos conhecendo a base e o ambiente, na minha versao humulide.

Ha licoes a ter sempre em conta as falhas nao sejam vistos negativamente, se queremos organizar o evento que vem, mas sim estrategias a documentar e a enfatizar no concorrencia. Ja foi uma vantagem a coerencia em sempre dizer a intensao, e mais a aparicao na arte frontal do jornal produzido e o discurso introdutorio e em linhas grande nas edicoes inicias foi marcante e temos um carrinho especial da MEJN em todos sentidos.

A delegacao mocambicana nao ta a fazer turismo ms ta ja engajada neste movimento. Ainda temos desafios que talvez a regio veja como limitante. Isto tem a ver com problemas de lingua portuguesa o que vai limitar a comunicacao no entanto ha necessidade de convence-los de que e sim importante mas nao supera o resto que forneceremos.

existiu na historia de libertacao dos povos africanos tanto pela via de violencia ou diplomacia e os mocambicanos nao sao excepcao e tem em mente isto e nao e novidade mas sim recuperar estes valores que sao fortes a nivel de Estados.

O assunto de Zimbabwe, e caminhando para outros paises com mesmas tendencias, pode sim ser superado atraves de uma solidariedade na SADC, e tambem exige multiplicar os esforcos desenvolvidos pelos Zimbabweanos, apesar de actos de intimidacao e brutalidades sim, tem dias contados e sera material de aprendizagem para as geracoes vindouras. contudo devem desistir o esirito de medo de agir ou deixar de existir por uma causa justa.

Se e uma causa justa realmente haveria mais forcas que nao esperamos a por a mao na causa.

Mocambique tambem passou por alguns desafios para superar problemas graves como guerra. concluo dizendo que solidarizo me com a questao do Zimbabwe mas primeiro devem desistir espirito de medo.

Forum Social Mocambicano faz lobby para alcolher o IV

Por : Taibo Haje

O III Forum Social da Africa Austral que esta a decorer em Malawi – Lilongwe de 13 a 15 de Outubro de 2006 sub o lema “Povos Solidarios contra a Pobreza e Opressao” esta sendo marcado por uma forte presenca de Mocambique e de varios outros paises da regio.

Representados pelo Forum Social Mocambicano, as organizacoes mocambicanas apresentaram varios temas relacionados com as diversas Campanhas de Advocacia que estao a decorrer no ambito do Ambiente e Floresta bem como o Movimento Social em Mocambique.

Estes debates tiveram uma grande participacao de diversas organizacoes dos paises da regio dando lugar a uma maior interatividade e articulacao das situacoes similares que ocorrem nos paises da regio.

O III Forum Social da Africa Austral esta sendo marcado por grandes debates em torno da problematica do acesso ao tratamento, a divida externa dos paises

da regio, a situacao do Zimbabwe, terra, privatizacoes e o desemprego.

Espera-se contudo que as organizacoes partilhem experiencias e criem mecanismos de articulacao pos SASF.

“E preciso estarmos unidos para lutarmos contra as diferencas”, foi com estas palavras que o representante do secretariado organizador do SASF Malawi apelou para o empenho e envolvimento de todos e que o Forum Social e o local apropriado para a sociedade civil da Africa Austral trocar ideias e experiencias com vista a construcao de uma Africa Austral melhor.

E neste espirito de construcao de Uma Africa Austral Melhor que decorre o III SASF.

One voice to solve common problem

By Patricia Kapulula

Southern Africa countries face common problems that call for a united voice in addressing them.

This was the feeling expressed by some delegates interviewed at the start of the three day Southern Africa Social Forum in Lilongwe Malawi arguing that a forum like this would help them (delegates) explore means of addressing the many problems haunting the region.

Agatha Ngonga of Zambia said she expects to learn more about gender, HIV/Aids, and human rights among other things.

“My expectation is to learn from other countries on how they address issues like HIV/Aids, human rights and gender among others and which I would later share with fellow Zambians when I go back home,” she said.

Morgan Jeranyama of Zimbabwe says there are many challenges that Southern Africa is facing and there is need to find strategies that would help in finding lasting solutions to the problems.

He said time has come for Africa to take action and speak with one voice.

“Time has come for Africa to speak with one voice in addressing issues as this will help us eradicate the common problems that we face,” he said adding, “a lot of talking has been done and this is the time to take action.”

Nelson Manjate of Mozambique said he expects to the forum to come up with recommendations that would address problems affecting Africa as this would empower participants to be able to share with colleagues back home what he has learnt from other countries.

Malawi Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) coordinator Peter Chinoko said the social forum should be in a position to come up with a common stand on social problems facing Africa in general, and Southern Africa in particular.

He said one of the big problems that Africa is facing is leadership.

“Leadership is a common problem that African countries face and this must be looked into if the continent is to come out of problems that come due to poor leadership,” said Chinoko.

‘Kuche Kuche’ take SASF by storm

By Susan Mwape

The Southern Africa Social Forum (SASF) participants were Saturday night entertained over night by Zambian, Zimbabwean, South African and Malawian artists who took turns. The participants looked on and could not leave the dance floor because of the beautiful African music, dances and poems that the flowed endlessly in the room.

The floor was opened by dances from Malawi, the dancers shook their flexible waists until the audience could not help but stand up and assimilate the dances.

This was followed by James Chamanyazi from Zambia who entertained the crowd and had them share the stage with him, those that couldn't manage to get on stage were made to queue up and he entertained them to a “fowardy fowardy” dance that he showed them, this took the crowd into a frenzy.

Then came hip hop artists From Zimbabwe and south Africa they were so brilliant they had the crowd singing along and even though hiphop isn't easily embraced by the older generations this time they couldn't help but raise their hands in respect too.

As all this was not enough Mlaka Maliro of Malawi came on stage and this

time he had almost the entire audience on their feet, the crowd danced as he dropped one track after another until he couldn't take it now more, he had sang over fifteen songs but the audience still wasn't ready to go home.

The audience having had been entertained that much said they were so happy and entertained because they also learnt about different social issues in the process of the entertainment which in turn became edutainment.

This exhibits that entertainment is another very good way of putting your message across for social activists.

SASF organising team would like to extend thanks to the members of the editorial team for making this publication a success

Malawians struggling for sustainable livelihood

By Zex Chikwiya

Poor people in rural and urban Malawi are struggling to sustain their livelihoods according to a study by Center for Social Concern, a faith-based organization in the country.

The study on 'Coping Mechanisms of the Poor' presented at the on-going Southern Africa Social Forum in Lilongwe, has revealed the widening gap between the cost of basic needs and their incomes, a thing that is forcing them to adopt strategies that are anti-developmental in nature.

The study focused on sectors of health, food security, housing, energy sources and water supply.

Chrissie Kafundu, research officer for Center for Social Concern said during the proceedings that poor people are adopting strategies of realignment and familiarization of resources at household level in order to maintain the existing livelihood levels and

standards.

She said people have resorted to sinking their own wells and drinking unsafe water in urban and rural areas due to high costs of accessing piped.

The study indicates that high costs for water bills have restricted access to only a small population.

She added that most average people who survive on less than US\$ 1 per day cannot afford adequate health services offered by private hospitals hence are crowded in public hospitals which have insufficient drugs to cater for them.

On coping mechanisms-responses to declining food availability and entitlements in abnormal times, she cited dietary changes, rationing system, decreasing number of people fed as some of the strategies used by different households during times of hardship.

The study presentation also revealed socio-economic, ecological and moral impacts the adjustments and coping strategies have on people's daily lives. She attributed massive deforestation, poor productivity, increase in

HIV/AIDS, massive crime rates as having roots in them and need for urgent address to them.

SASF participants applauded the research presentation but called situation 'shocking' saying that it was a reflection of the entire region and demanded for joint efforts to address the problems.

Mkhululi Zulu of Landless People Movement described the situation as a sub-regional crisis citing scavenging cases in Zambia and South Africa as some coping

strategies for the poor in the region.

However, the debate at the SASF recommended that the governments in the region should consider the social security aspect like subsidizing water and electricity including providing grants as in the case in South African.

Human trafficking on the rise in Malawi-CFSC

By Precious Sue Msosa

A Malawian human rights organization has disclosed that human trafficking has drastically increased following high demand of prostitutes in European countries.

Radek Malonwski, project officer for Centre for Social Concern disclosed this at the on going southern Africa social forum in Lilongwe Malawi.

He said the recent estimates indicate that four million people are being trafficked from Africa to Europe annually on pretext that they would find them jobs by the foreigners, describing the figure as worse than the times of slavery.

"Foreigners entice the local masses that they would find them good jobs and higher learning education but only to be found stranded at eleventh hour and be told to be bar

attendants," he said.

Malonwski added that victims can't even report to police as there are warned that they would just end up in prison as they entered the country illegally.

He warned the locals in each African country not to fall prey to these foreigners who promise the moon.

Tobias Jere, also from the same organization revealed that fourteen people from Dowa were recently rescued at western Malawi's Mchinji boarder en route to Zambia by the traffickers.

He said the victims confessed that they were only given one meal per day.

Radik said that the British authorities are currently in the country to train the Malawi police how to and track down the traffickers.

Culture fights poverty

By Madalitso Kateta

Imbawula Trust, a Johannesburg based cultural association has said culture has a great role to play in the fight of Africa's poverty.

Nqobile Lethebe, publicity officer for the Trust said in Lilongwe, Malawi that the African continent has been going through acute poverty as a result of the decline of moral values which has come as a result of the cultural social breakdowns in the continent.

Lethebe said that the African continent had great potential to develop if citizens were inspired by their cultural and social customs which he described as vital in the development of peoples mental and social stability.

He said his organisation has been organising cultural festivals which are aimed at improving people's economic and social lives through culture.

He said the continent was the home of arts and its inhabitants should address social economic ills through the provocation of dialogue that inspires thoughts.

According to Lethebe, the Imbawula Trust has been very influential in the fight against South Africa's major problems of unemployment, disease, HIV/Aids, poor education standards, poor housing and climate.

Smuggling rife in SADC as duty soars

By Mutuna Chanda

A lady cross border trader has said the high duties that countries in the southern African region impose have forced her to either smuggle her merchandise or bribe customs officers just to earn a living.

"The high import duties that governments in the region are imposing on trade are making us bribe customs officers and smuggle goods into neighboring countries", complains Zimbabwean cross border trader Dzokai Ndaradzi.

Ndaradzi who crosses into Zambia, South Africa and occasionally Botswana says though the systems vary from country to country they are all uniform in high tariff structures which do not cater for poor and small scale traders.

She says, for example, on the Zambian border which she has to cross twice a week from Karoi if she has to go through with two cases of two liters mazoze she distributes the drinks among people on the bus to escape paying duty.

If she has to pay the duty she is charged ZMK 6,000 per bottle which is equivalent to the price at which she initially buys the

drinks in her home country, Zimbabwe.

When it comes to her paying duty, she bribes the customs officers for her not to be charged for all the goods she takes into Zambia just to realize a profit.

Ndaradzi does all this to survive. She feeds for a family of four, her unemployed husband and three children, two of whom go to school.

When crossing into South Africa Ndaradzi carries art products to Cape Town. Her border encounters are also the same - of bribing customs officers.

"Though South Africa has a better standard in customs procedure the charges are too high for poor traders like me" she said.

"So what happens when crossing into South Africa is if they charge me a certain amount of money for the art products I tell them that I can't afford and I negotiate for a reduction but I give the customs officer ten rands", she added.

She bemoaned that governments in the region pretend that the poor traders and the uneducated do not exist.

"Governments pretend as though the poor and uneducated do not live among

them, they design the tariff structures for big businesses and yet they apply to even small scale traders", she complained.

"I want to pay the duty but it should be reasonable for me to make a profit", she added.

Activists urge SADC leaders to be on track towards fulfilling MDG

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collective effort.

"We call upon governments to be more transparent, participatory and accountable in producing national policies and strategies," it added.

The communique calls on SADC governments to ensure that whatever international obligations they commit are in line with promoting pro-poor development policies and in particular ensure that women's livelihoods are not adversely affected, it observed.

On social level, they appealed to religious leaders to take greater responsibility in sensitizing communities on gender equity issues and protection of women's human rights.

In the case of the mazoze trade from Zimbabwe into Zambia she said if the duties were reduced to between ZMK 1,500 and ZMK 2,000 per two litres of mazoze she would happily pay it because then she would make a profit just to survive.

It further called upon governments to acknowledge the critical role youth play in decision-making processes and as such ensure that their voices are heard in national planning processes.

However, participants endorsed the Global Call to Action against Poverty Campaign's (GCAP) calls for trade justice, more and better aid and debt cancellation as a concrete ways for world leaders to eradicate poverty by 2015.

They noted that eradication of poverty cannot succeed without equality and justice for women and therefore recommended gender equality issues to be at the heart of addressing the

Malawi formulates national legislation to reject GM maize!

By Brenda Zulu

Malawi must formulate a national legislation to reject Genetic Modification (GM) maize, until it undertakes a scientific assessment of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) on human health and biodiversity.

Presenting the food aid analysis and its effects at the Southern Africa Social Forum (SASF), Edson Musopole from Action Aid said the decision with regard to the acceptance of GM commodities as part of food aid transactions rests with recipient's country.

Musopole noted that alternative source of non GM food are usually available in local or non GM maize neighbouring countries.

He said Malawi had more and more become dependent on food aid which also comes in form of GM maize.

Musopole said the Malawian Government needs to develop policies to provide donors with a code of conduct which helps to free food aid from its negative image of being tool for rich countries to get rid of their surplus production.

He observed that food distribution by different humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and donors needs to be well coordinated by the Government to ensure that such programmes are geared towards the on going term fight against hunger.

He noted that the land distribution under

the new land policy should be encouraged to improve to land and land utilization.

He explained that food aid has been a relief to people who have had experienced drought and hunger problems. He however noted that food aid has played a significant role in the past in periods of acute food shortages it has managed to save lives.

It was observed that at national level, food aid has added to food grain availability and helped to reduce the food gap beaten food grain consumption needs and supply from domestic production.

The controversy surrounding food aid was that it was expensive and not an effective tool for combating chronic food insecurity where by the recipients of food aid becomes dependent on it.

It noted that access to food aid was a basic human right as when people are starving donors feel obliged to assist. Critics argued that donors took advantage of the hunger situation to get rid of their surplus grain.

He outlined the factors contributing to household food insecurity as access to land utilisation, access to credit, unavailability and weak Agricultural extension and technology transfer and the dependence on rain fed agriculture.

He noted that food aid had different perceptions on it was as some sections of people said it was a method of disposing of food surpluses production in industrialised countries as this was one of the policy tool for promoting economic development in recipient countries.

Food aid has a negative effect in that

it has led to the neglect of agriculture. The availability of cheap or free food aid can lead to policymakers to neglect agriculture especially under inadequate public investment in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension.

Food aid has an effect on local production as it has the ability to distort the domestic food economy. Food aid deliveries increase the food supply, thereby depressing prices received by local producers.

Food aid also creates a dependency syndrome where by communities who receive food aid for a lengthy period of time they grow accustomed to it for instance Ethiopia is a recipient food aid from 1984. Distortion of the local labour markets like provision of food for work programmes has distorted local labour markets, if the timing is poor.

Musopole argued that there was need to redefine the role of food aid in Malawi on local and regional procurement. This is because there are significant disadvantages when food aid is supplied in kind.

Need to support local procurements, provided there are surpluses in some parts of the country, support regional procurement from the neighbouring countries.

He said there was also need to for cash transfers rather than in kind transfers saying it were noted that as long as local or triangular procurements was possible, the disincentive effects of food aid on domestic production can be avoided by proving cash rather than food in kind.

There was also need for relief aid to

structural support as food aid needs to be embedded in programs that go beyond relief aid.

There was also need to look at the problem of contamination as there was a serious threat of the GM maize being planted and cross pollinating with varieties.

Milling was not seen as a viable option because it reduces the shelf life of maize increases handling costs and the risk of infestation etc.

The Malawian Government needs to develop policies to provide donors with a code of conduct which helps to free food aid from its negative image of being tool for rich countries to get rid of their surplus production.

Biotechnology is any technical application that uses biological systems, living organisms, or their derivatives to make or modify products or process.

GM allows the transfer of genetic material between unrelated organisms that allow under normal conditions never able to breed.

GMO are organisms whose genetic material has been arterially changed to enable them to perform functions that they would not naturally do.

VCTs for HIV/AIDS should be available in rural areas

Mathews Liyani

Governments in the whole Southern African Development Community (SADC) region should make Voluntary Counselling and Testing for HIV/AIDS available in all rural areas.

Speaking after the discussion on "Traditional leaders and Good Governance," which was being led by Women for Change (WfC) from Zambia, WfC Acting Executive Director, Lameck Simwanza said most rural areas in the SADC region had no VCT centres and other basic facilities.

"When you talk about HIV/AIDS, it's a health issue, which is a basic right. All human beings are entitled to this right and there is need for governments to respect it by providing facilities such as VCT centres close to people," he said.

Simwanza further urged the people that attended the Southern Africa Social Forum (SASF) to continue advocating for pro-poor policies.

He said there was need for the SADC countries to come up with their own policies aimed at empowering every human being in the region.

Simwanza also reminded governments in the region that the role of NGOs was not to provide services but to supplement on what government was doing.

"It is governments' role to provide basic things among others. So they shouldn't transfer the burden to NGOs, they should take responsibility," he said.

He said there was need for people to

unite and demand for their basic rights.

Meanwhile, traditional leaders from Zambia have urged governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to intensify the HIV/AIDS sensitisation among the youths.

Chief Nzamane from Eastern Province of Zambia said that a lot of youths were denied access to HIV/AIDS information, which was their right. "Apart from just giving them information, we should come up with new strategies that can be effective in the fight of HIV/AIDS," he said.

Chief Mushili said there was need for behavioural change if we have to combat HIV/AIDS. He said a lot of people had information on HIV/AIDS but fail to change their behaviour. He suggested that the messages on HIV/AIDS should now concentrate on behaviour change.

Speaking on the involvement of traditional leaders in governance, Chief Nalubamba said there was need to let the chiefs participate actively in politics, as they were politicians by nature of them being chiefs. Chief Nalubamba was referring to the Zambian situation, where chiefs are prohibited from participating in active politics.

He said there was also need for the chiefs and governments to work together in developing communities. He said governments in the SADC region would not develop, especially in rural areas, if chiefs were left out as they were close to the people.



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