



THE WEEKLY DIGEST

ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is home to a rich mix of cultures, diverse communities, and abundant natural resources, yet it faces significant economic inequalities. The recent SADC People's Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, under the theme "Reclaiming SADC for People's Development: Building People Power, Voice, and Agency towards Democracy and Inclusion," highlighted the urgent need for economic justice in the region.

Economic justice means ensuring a fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges in society. In Southern Africa, this issue is critical due to the complex challenges of poverty, gender inequality, a large informal economy, and environmental issues. The summit brought together over 500 delegates from various backgrounds, including mining communities, youth, women's rights advocates, and human rights defenders, all advocating for a more equitable economic system.

Progress has been made in several areas:

- Health: The reduction of HIV/AIDS cases from 868,000 in 2010 to 413,600 in 2022 reflects advances in public health initiatives.
- Agriculture: The Regional Agricultural Investment Plan (RAIP) has outperformed its targets, in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).
- Education: More than 80% of member states are working to align their educational qualifications with the SADC Qualifications Framework, though challenges in infrastructure remain.

Despite these achievements, the summit highlighted ongoing concerns, such as rising youth unemployment and the worsening effects of climate change, both of which threaten economic stability and social justice.

While the region is rich in mineral resources, these often benefit multinational corporations more than local communities. The global tax system further complicates matters, as it allows wealth to be extracted from the region, perpetuating poverty and limiting revenue generation.





Economic justice cannot thrive in environments where civic freedoms are limited. The summit emphasized the necessity for SADC nations to uphold open and constitutional democracies. Proposed actions included:

Strengthening electoral systems to improve participation from marginalized groups. Repealing laws that restrict freedoms of expression and assembly. Supporting local governments through devolution for more inclusive governance.

Recognizing the urgent need to address economic inequalities and poverty, participants made key recommendations:

- Aligning investments in social services with regional and international standards.
- Establishing social protection mechanisms for workers in the informal economy.
- Creating One-Stop Border Posts (OSBP) to enhance the movement of goods and people.

These initiatives aim to foster an environment where economic growth benefits all citizens, especially those who are often left behind.

Youth involvement is crucial for shaping the economic future of Southern Africa. Participants called for:

- Increased investments in job creation and entrepreneurship.
- A reformed education system that recognizes local talent and innovation.
- Easing movement restrictions for young people to encourage regional integration.


Empowering youth ensures they actively participate in shaping their futures rather than merely reacting to economic policies.


The communique from the SADC People's Summit serves as a call to action for economic justice in Southern Africa. The demand for inclusive policies, fair resource management, and the empowerment of marginalized communities echoes the moral imperative to "learn to do good, seek justice, defend the oppressed."

As the region faces both opportunities and challenges, it is crucial for SADC leaders to translate these aspirations into real action, creating a just, inclusive, and sustainable economic environment for all. The ongoing commitment of civil society to hold leaders accountable is essential, ensuring that the voices of the people are not only acknowledged but also acted upon in the quest for economic justice.






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