



SARSYC VI Outcomes Digest



ALIGNING FOR ACTION:

• SUSTAINING PROGRESS IN
YOUTH HEALTH AND EDUCATION

A message from the convener



As we reflect on the Sixth Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC VI) held from 5 – 7 August in Windhoek, Namibia in partnership with the University of Namibia, I am reminded of how far this journey has come and, more importantly, how far we still have to go.

For six editions, SARSYC has provided a platform where young people come together to share experiences, generate solutions, and engage decision-makers on the issues that matter most to their health, education, and wellbeing. Each conference has built upon the achievements of the last, steadily advancing our vision of a Southern Africa where every young person can meaningfully contribute to the development of their communities and countries, while fully realizing their health and education rights.

Under the theme **"Align for Action: Sustaining Progress in Youth Health and Education,"** SARSYC VI brought together 273 delegates, including 151 students and young people, alongside policymakers, researchers, development partners, and civil society actors from 14 countries across the region.

This year's conference demonstrated the power of youth leadership and youth-generated evidence. Young researchers presented findings on persistent and emerging challenges affecting young people's lives, including endometriosis,

gambling addiction, mental health, and drug abuse. Encouragingly, some presenters were subsequently invited to engage parliamentary platforms across the SADC region, highlighting the growing influence of youth-led research in shaping policy discussions and informing decision-making processes.

SARSYC VI also reaffirmed the critical role of partnerships in sustaining progress in youth health and education. Through the adoption of the **Windhoek Youth Declaration**, young people, governments, UN agencies, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and regional bodies united around a shared call to action to advance digital safety, reproductive health, and education rights for young people across Southern Africa.

Equally significant was the development of the **SARSYC VI Youth Health and Education Accountability Compact**, which received endorsement from Her Excellency Boemo Sekgoma, Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum. This endorsement signalled not only support for a structured implementation pathway for the conference resolutions but also a collective commitment to advancing the priorities identified by young people throughout the conference.

As we look ahead to SARSYC VII, we invite our partners, and the broader SARSYC community to join us in translating the aspirations emerging from SARSYC VI into meaningful action. The opportunities before us are immense, but realizing them will require continued collaboration, investment, innovation, and shared accountability. Together, let us align for action, sustain progress in youth health and education, and build generations of healthy, empowered, and resilient young people across Southern Africa.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jimmy Wilford".

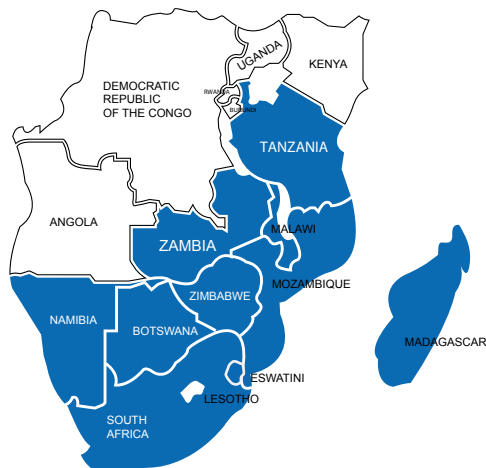
Jimmy Wilford
Executive Director, SAYWHAT

The Conference at a Glance

Delegates from 14 countries came together to advance youth health and education, strengthening regional collaboration and accountability

10
OF 16
SADC MEMBER
STATES
REPRESENTED

A PLATFORM.
A REGION.
A SHARED
COMMITMENT.



BEYOND SOUTHERN AFRICA

SARSYC VI also welcomed participants from



KENYA



NIGERIA



UGANDA



NETHERLANDS

This demonstrates the growing influence of SARSYC beyond the SADC region and its emergence as a broader African platform for youth engagement, research, and policy dialogue.

REPRESENTED AT SARSYC VI

NOT REPRESENTED AT SARSYC VI

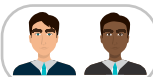
GENDER DISTRIBUTION



FEMALE (56%)

Total
Delegates:

273



MALE (44%)

STAKEHOLDER COMPOSITION

Students and Youth
151

Development Partners and
Civil Society
71

Policymakers and
Dutybearers
51

8 Regional Movements

Celebrating 5 years of the
GEAR Alliance

Student and youth represented more than half of all delegates, ensuring youth voices remained central to conference discussions and decision-making.

Abstracts submissions multiplied 13-fold since introduction of Research Indaba at SARSYC

2022
SARSYC IV
21

2024
SARSYC V
57
+171% increase
from SARSYC IV

2026
SARSYC VI
274
+381% increase
from SARSYC V

Abstract Submission Themes



12 outstanding young researchers were selected to present their work through 8 oral presentations and 4 poster presentations, advancing evidence-based solutions for youth health and education across Southern Africa.

3 Young Researchers Invited to present to the Parliaments of Malawi and Zimbabwe

Key Outputs

1. Windhoek Youth Declaration on Health and Education.

A regional youth-led call to action outlining priorities for improving health and education outcomes across Southern Africa.

2. Youth Health & Education Accountability Compact

A mechanism for tracking progress on commitments emerging from SARSYC VI



Endorsed by the Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum

Outcome #1: Youth Evidence on the Policy Table

Youth-Led research highlighted critical challenges affecting young people's health, education, and wellbeing, informing dialogue priorities, and the solutions emerging from SARSYC VI

01 · Education Rights and Equity

The Challenge

Millions of young people continue to face barriers to quality education, driven by inequality, climate disruptions, inadequate financing and limited access to comprehensive sexuality education.

What Young Researchers Presented

Comprehensive sexuality education was repositioned as a structural safeguard for school retention rather than a health add-on. Researchers highlighted the exclusion of rural and out-of-school learners from conventional delivery models.

Youth-Led Solutions

Expand access to comprehensive sexuality education through community-based and alternative learning platforms, ensuring that rural and out-of-school learners are not left behind.

02 · HIV, STIs and Sexual Health

The Challenge

Despite significant progress, HIV-related stigma, risky behaviours and unequal access to prevention services continue to threaten gains in youth health across the region.

What Young Researchers Presented

Alcohol use, smoking and sexual risk behaviours were found to cluster among university students, while off-campus students remain underserved by many existing interventions. Researchers also challenged HIV campaign messaging that disproportionately places responsibility on women.

Youth-Led Solutions

Strengthen targeted HIV prevention programmes for off-campus students and promote gender-transformative approaches that encourage shared responsibility for sexual health.

03 · NCDs and Healthy Lifestyles

The Challenge

Young people increasingly face non-communicable diseases and chronic conditions that often remain undiagnosed, under-researched and poorly funded.

What Young Researchers Presented

Endometriosis emerged as a critical policy issue, absent from national health policies with research documenting delayed diagnosis, limited provider knowledge and significant financial burdens associated with treatment and repeated hospitalisation.

Youth-Led Solutions

Increase awareness, improve provider training and strengthen policy attention to women and girls living with endometriosis.

04 · Digital Health and Safety

The Challenge

Technology is creating new opportunities for young people, but also exposing them to cyberbullying, online violence and gambling-related harms.

What Young Researchers Presented

Mobile money was identified as a key driver of 24-hour online gambling. Researchers also reframed the non-consensual sharing of intimate images as image-based sexual abuse, emphasizing that consent to create content is not consent to distribute it.

Youth-Led Solutions

Strengthen digital safety frameworks, enhance online protection mechanisms and expand awareness on image-based sexual abuse and responsible technology use.

05 · Mental Health and Substance Use

The Challenge

Mental health conditions and substance use disorders continue to rise among young people, while services remain fragmented and under-resourced.

What Young Researchers Presented

Research highlighted how young people experiencing both mental health and substance use challenges often fall between disconnected systems of care. Stigma remains a major barrier, with distress frequently dismissed as attention-seeking or attributed to spiritual causes.

Youth-Led Solutions

Promote integrated mental health and substance use services while increasing community awareness to reduce stigma and improve access to care.



Research Spotlight & Parliament Invitations

Three young researchers were invited to engage parliamentary platforms in Malawi, and Zimbabwe following presentations at SARSYC VI, demonstrating how youth-generated evidence can influence policy dialogue and decision-making beyond the conference.



Invitations were extended by Hon. Enock Phale (left), Member of Parliament of Malawi and former Deputy Minister of Health, and Hon. Collins Bajila (right), Member of Parliament of Zimbabwe, during discussions on youth-led research findings. Members of Parliament challenged young researchers to move beyond evidence generation and actively engage policy processes.

Anthony Bwalya (Zambia)



Research Topic

Leveraging Digital Technology to address online gambling risks and promote youth financial health.

Output

Invited to present findings before parliamentary platforms in Malawi.

Mitchel Chimbga (Zimbabwe)



Research Topic

Endometriosis and SRH among Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Zimbabwe: A gender-responsive wellbeing model.

Output

Invited to present findings before parliamentary platforms in Malawi and Zimbabwe

Harry Chiwoza (Malawi)



Research Topic

Repositioning Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Structural Safeguard for Education Retention.

Output

Invited to present findings before parliamentary platforms in Malawi.

Knowledge Legacy

Dr. David Parirenyatwa, former Minister of Health and Child Care of Zimbabwe, former President of the Society for AIDS in Africa, and a longstanding advocate for public health leadership on the continent, officially launched **"A SADC Regional Perspective by Young People on Emerging Issues in Health and Education"**, a publication compiling research papers presented during SARSYC V (2024).



Dr. David Parirenyatwa (centre) officially launches the SARSYC V Research Volume, accompanied by two SARSYC V young researchers whose work is featured in the publication. Also pictured are Her Excellency Ambassador Chaurura of the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Namibia and Jimmy Wilford, Executive Director of SAYWHAT.

- The launch of this second research volume builds on the foundation established through the first edition, A SADC Regional Perspective by Young People on COVID-19.
- The publication captures youth-led research generated through SARSYC V in Gaborone, Botswana and makes it accessible to policymakers, parliamentary researchers, practitioners, academics and development partners working to advance health and education outcomes across Africa.
- By documenting and disseminating youth-generated evidence beyond the conference, SARSYC is strengthening the knowledge base available for policy engagement, advocacy, programme design and future research across the region.



Key Message: For many young people, participations is limited to consultation processes. At SARSYC VI, young people generated evidence and directly engaged policymakers, parliamentarians and development partners on issues affecting their health, education and future.

Outcome #2: Transnational Advocacy for Youth-Led Solutions

Commemorating five years of the Girls Education Advocacy in the Region (GEAR) Alliance through the Alliance Labs, eight regional movements showcased proven advocacy models for advancing youth health and education priorities across Southern Africa. By sharing experiences, lessons learned and evidence of impact, the alliances helped young people move beyond identifying solutions to understanding how change is implemented and scaled into coordinated regional action, sustained advocacy and collective accountability.



Reflecting on five years of implementation, the coalition formed as a resolution of SARSYC III, the GEAR Alliance demonstrated how they have sustained regional advocacy and collective action around youth-led priorities emerging from successive SARSYC editions. Drawing on experiences from Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Alliance members shared how ten community-based organisations have collaborated to strengthen national education and health-budget advocacy, support progressive policies, including frameworks that enable adolescent mothers to return to school, and amplify young people's voices in national, regional and continental decision-making spaces such as the SADC Summit, Africa Education Summit and ICASA. Through cross-border collaboration, evidence-sharing and coordinated advocacy, the Alliance showcased practical pathways for translating youth-led priorities into sustained regional action.



Regional Alliances Present

1. Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
2. Global Campaign for Education
3. Kuyenda Collective
4. My Age Africa
5. Namibia Planned Parenthood Association
6. SHE SOARS Alliance
7. Southern Africa Youth Forum
8. Gear Alliance



Regional alliances participating in the Alliance Labs reinforced the value of transnational advocacy in advancing youth health and education priorities across Southern Africa.

- The SHE SOARS Alliance highlighted that while individual organisations can drive change locally, complex challenges such as education equity, sexual and reproductive health and digital safety require coordinated action among multiple organisations, sectors, and countries.
- Kuyenda Collective and My Age Africa demonstrated how collective advocacy campaigns and coordinated regional engagement can strengthen influence over decision-making processes and accelerate change across borders. A recurring lesson across the discussions was that sustainable progress requires strong structures, partnerships, and accountability mechanisms to maintain momentum beyond conferences and individual projects.
- The Education Coalition of Zimbabwe emphasised that meaningful change is achieved through sustained investment, collaboration, and persistence rather than one-off interventions

Key Message: SARSYC VI demonstrated that Youth-led solutions are most effective when supported by strong alliances capable of translating evidence into advocacy, coordinating action across borders and sustaining accountability over time.

Outcome #3. SADC PF dual pledge to Youth Health & Education

SARSYC VI concluded with two landmark instruments aimed at advancing youth health and education across Southern Africa.

- The Windhoek Youth Declaration which articulated the collective priorities and aspirations on education, health, and digital safety emerging from conference dialogue.
- The Youth Health and Education Accountability Compact which established a framework for tracking progress and sustaining action.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Thursday August 13, 2026



SADC PF pledges action as youth present Windhoek Declaration

Young people in Southern Africa must be treated as partners capable of generating evidence, shaping solutions and holding decision-makers accountable, speakers said in Windhoek ahead of the handover of the SARSYC VI Windhoek Declaration.

Speaking during the official closing ceremony of the Sixth Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC VI) on August 7, 2026, SAYWHAT executive director and SARSYC Convener Jimmy Wilford and SADC Parliamentary Forum secretary general Boemo Sekgoma called for a shift from declarations and dialogue to implementation, accountability and measurable results.

Held under the theme 'Align for Action: Sustaining Progress in Youth Health and Education', SARSYC VI brought together young people from 13 countries alongside parliamentarians, academics, civil society organisations and development partners.

Mr Wilford said the conference represented the latest chapter in a 12-year journey in which young people had consistently challenged the notion that decisions affecting their lives could be made without their meaningful participation. "What you have seen is a journey of young people refusing to accept that decisions about their lives should be made without them," he said.

He said what distinguished the Windhoek conference was its emphasis on "action, implementation and accountability". Mr Wilford highlighted the Regional Research Indaba, where young researchers, students and practitioners presented evidence and proposed solutions across five thematic areas: education rights and equity; HIV and sexual health; non-communicable diseases and healthy lifestyles; digital health and safety; and mental health and substance abuse.

"Young people not only identified problems, but presented evidence-based solutions," he

said and added that the deliberations demonstrated that "effective policy begins with credible evidence".

The conference also launched the second edition of the SADC Regional Perspective by Young People on emerging issues, a compilation of research papers presented during SARSYC VI.

Other platforms at SARSYC VI examined the interconnected challenges confronting girls, young women and young men.

Through the Southern African Web for Life Girls Network Symposium, young women explored barriers that push girls out of learning spaces as well as threats to their physical, mental, emotional and digital wellbeing.

The Magotsi/Isiba Young Men's Forum, meanwhile, confronted suicide, substance abuse, betting addiction and sexual health challenges affecting young men. Namibia's Deputy Minister for Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts & Culture, Hon. Dino Balloiti, encouraged participants to ensure that the boy child was not left behind.

Mr Wilford said the Alliance Building Labs demonstrated the potential of regional solidarity and cross-border partnerships, drawing lessons from initiatives including the GEAR Alliance, SHE SOARS and the Kayenda Collection.

Through the Students Talks and Engagement with Policy Makers and Partners (STEEP) platform, young people also sat alongside parliamentarians, development partners and sector leaders to explore practical approaches to wellbeing, educational equity, gender equality, digital safety and adolescent health.

Mr Wilford urged decision-makers to take the resulting recommendations seriously, arguing that the authority of young people's voices rested on evidence and lived experience.

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Mr Jimmy Wilford



Dr David Parirenyatwa represented the Society for Aids in Africa (Photo: Moses Magadza, SADC PF)



Members of Parliament pose for a photograph with Ms Sekgoma and Mr Wilford (Photo: Moses Magadza, SADC PF)



Delegates to the Sixth Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC VI) pose for a photograph in Windhoek, Namibia last week (Photo: Moses Magadza, SADC PF)

Conference ends with bold accountability compact on youth health and education

The Sixth Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SARSYC VI) ended in Windhoek last week with the signing of an ambitious regional accountability compact.

Adopted on August 6, 2026, the SARSYC VI Youth Health and Education Accountability Compact calls for stronger laws, increased domestic financing and sustained parliamentary oversight to improve the health, education, safety and wellbeing of young people.

It seeks to turn conference resolutions into measurable action over the next two years.

SADC Parliamentary Forum secretary general Boemo Sekgoma, SARSYC Convener Jimmy Wilford and SARSYC VI Youth Steering Committee chairperson Fadzai Nyamarebvu signed the Compact.

It translates priorities contained in the SARSYC VI Windhoek Declaration into specific commitments for young people, Parliaments, governments, civil society, academic institutions, development partners, the private sector and community and traditional leaders.

The Compact comes with deadlines, indicators and reporting requirements designed to prevent conference commitments from gathering dust after delegates return home.

"By signing this Compact, we affirm our shared responsibility to move beyond conference statements towards measurable action," the signatories state.



SIGNED: From left: Kunshinga Madzima, Jimmy Wilford, Boemo Sekgoma, and Fadzai Nyamarebvu with the signed Compact (Photo: Moses Magadza, SADC PF)

Among other things, the Compact calls for greater access to age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), stronger protection of pregnant and parenting learners, better mental-health and substance-use services, action on online gambling and digital abuse, and improved access to HIV, sexually transmitted infection (STI) and sexual and reproductive health services.

It recognises youth participation as a right and insists that young people must be meaningfully involved in identifying priorities, developing policies, allocating resources and monitoring implementation, including through parliamentary processes.

Youth-led research and evidence derived from lived experience should also be recognised as legitimate contributions to policymaking and parliamentary deliberations.

The Compact places national Parliaments at the centre of implementation through their law-making, budgetary, oversight and representative functions.

Participating Parliaments and parliamentarians are expected to table evidence and priorities emerging from SARSYC VI before relevant parliamentary committees responsible for health, education, gender or youth affairs.

They are also called upon to raise at least one parliamentary question, motion, statement or debate on an agreed youth health or education priority during each ordinary parliamentary session falling within the Compact period.

Parliamentarians are encouraged to push for public hearings or committee inquiries involving young people and youth-led researchers, scrutinise expenditure on youth health and education, and advocate for the enactment, amendment or effective implementation of relevant laws and policies.

Each participating country is expected to convene at least one national youth-parliamentarian accountability dialogue during the two-year implementation period.

The Compact also calls on Parliaments to scrutinise domestic and donor financing for HIV and SRHR commodities and services and review progress in domesticating and implementing the SADC Model Law and parliamentary deliberations.

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YOUR HOROSCOPE

Aries
The day will be spent towards participating in religious functions and discourses that will bring you relief. You can also observe prayers to give you satisfaction. There are chances of back and leg pain to occur. This may be due to stress. Practising meditation yoga will prove to be beneficial to the body and mind.

Taurus
The day will show up certain situations where you need to keep yourself happy and stay away from stress. The mood could be flexible in your approach. You may find it difficult to focus and concentrate on your activities. You could suffer from fungal infections on this day. Avoid consuming cold drinks.

Gemini
The efforts you put in will easily generate success for you. You will be optimistic and determined to achieve your goals. This spirit of optimism will make you scale new heights. Health will be fine. You will feel fit due to your mental satisfaction.

Cancer
You can make use of the day for leisure and relaxation. Try not to over-exhaust yourself. It will be wise to postpone some major decisions. There may be chances of contracting a headache due to mental worries. Meditation is highly advisable for you.

Leo
You will witness only moderate results for the day. Certain situations may arise where even dreams may turn into reality. Don't display your emotions, and try to remain cool and composed. You could suffer from heat and thigh pain. It will be wise to offer prayers and practice meditation to keep yourself fit.

Virgo
The day could present situations where you may have to compromise on certain comforts. This may be due to stress. Listening to music and watching movies will give you happiness. You may be affected by some nervous problems. This may be due to the stress prevailing in it. It will be good to keep such feelings, so that you can enjoy better health.

Libra
Fortune will smile on you on this day. You will be able to accomplish your goals, and this will bring lots of cheer to you. Major decisions can also be pursued at this point of time. Good health is indicated for the day. You will be able to enjoy a good level of physical fitness.

Scorpio
You will find the day to be very productive. You will also feel more fresh and determined. Entirety of new ventures will be profitable to you. You should be seen fit for the day. This will be due to the extra energy that is present in you.

Sagittarius
The day could present certain stressful situations for you. This may be due to the extra burden or responsibilities that you have to face. Don't make any major decisions. You may be seen with feelings of insecurity. You will maintain only average health. There may be chances of cough/colds to occur.

Capricorn
The day may not be suitable for fulfilment of your desires. You need to avoid taking any major decisions. Be highly positive in your mind as this is very much required for you. You will be prone to cold and dry cough. It is wise to avoid cold items.

Aquarius
The day will be filled with much activity. You will be able to prosper well by your easy and planned approach. There will be more determination and courage seen in you that could help you scale new heights. The day will see you in a fully fit physical state. This will be possible due to your positive energy levels.

Pisces
The day appears to be promising and smooth to initiate actions in the direction of your goals. Decisions taken for the day will prove to be fruitful and worthwhile. You will be also very quick in your actions. Fine health is indicated for the day. You will be able to maintain this due to your happiness.

Providing a unified youth voice on issues affecting young people, youth delegates formally presented the Windhoek Youth Declaration to Her Excellency, Secretary General to the SADC PF, Ms. Boemo Sekgoma.

Complementing the Declaration, the Youth Health and Education Accountability Compact established a mechanism for monitoring progress on conference commitments. The Compact provides a shared framework for accountability leading up to SARSYC VII and reinforces the responsibility of stakeholders to advance the priorities identified by young people. Its endorsement by Her Excellency Boemo Sekgoma, Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, signalled regional recognition of the Compact as a vehicle for sustaining accountability and advancing youth health and education priorities beyond the conference.

UNITY: Young people, Boemo Sekgoma and Members of Parliament from different SADC countries pose for souvenir photograph after the signing of the Compact in Windhoek (Photo: Moses Magadza, SADC PF)

COMPACT: Young people read a regional accountability compact calling for stronger laws, increased domestic financing and sustained parliamentary oversight to improve the health, education, safety and wellbeing of young people (Photo: Moses Magadza, SADC PF)



SADC PF pledges action as youth present Windhoek Declaration

Continued from page 6

"Let us trust the voices that have filled these rooms over the past two days. Not because they are young, but because they are informed. Not because they represent the future, but because they understand the present," he said.

He stressed that challenges such as unemployment, mental health, digital risks, gender inequality, substance abuse, social exclusion and barriers to health and education were not abstract policy questions for young people.

"They are lived experiences," he said.

Mr Wilford said the young delegates had gone beyond identifying problems by bringing research, innovation, evidence and practical recommendations to the table.

"The success of our region will not be determined by how often we speak about youth participation. It will be determined by how willing we are to trust young people's ideas, invest in their leadership, and work with them as equal partners in building the Southern Africa we all want to see," he said.

Receiving the Windhoek Declaration, Ms Sekgoma said the choice of Namibia – the "Land of the Brave" – as host was fitting because courage was required to move the region "from declaration to action, from dialogue to delivery".

"Bravery, after all, is not only found on a battlefield. It is found, too, in the willingness of young people to hold their leaders to account, and in the willingness of leaders to be so held," she said.

Ms Sekgoma recalled that two years earlier in Gaborone, young people had named the SADC PF a Declaration and asked Parliament to act.

She revealed that on the eve of the Windhoek handover, the SARSYC VI Youth Steering Committee and parliamentarians had signed an Accountability Compact containing named champions and agreed timelines.

The intention, she said, was to ensure that "no commitment made in this region should again be allowed to fade quietly between one conference and the next".

She received the Windhoek Declaration "as an instruction, once again, from young people".

Ms Sekgoma paid tribute to Mr Wilford for his role in developing SARSYC and particularly the Regional Research Indaba, which she described as having grown into "a haven of knowledge, shaped by young people, for young people, and increasingly consulted by the very policymakers it was once designed simply to inform."

She stressed, however, that responsibility for implementing the Windhoek Declaration did not rest with parliament alone.

"The progress we will account for at SARSYC VII, and the commitments we made in the Accountability Compact, rest on a partnership between this Forum, civil society allies, development partners and International NGOs, and, above all, young people themselves," she said.

Ms Sekgoma said Parliament had responsibility for legislation and appropriations, while civil society helped keep evidence honest, development partners sustained platforms where evidence was generated, and young people continually demanded accountability.

She also warned that implementation would take place against a difficult financing environment characterised by contracting traditional development aid and changing global funding priorities.

Rather than diminishing parliamentary responsibility, she argued, the funding squeeze strengthened the case for domestic resource mobilisation and rigorous parliamentary oversight.

"Where donor resources recede, it is domestic budgets, scrutinised and approved by this very institution, that must rise to meet the gap," she said.

Ms Sekgoma pledged the SADC PF's support for the undertakings flowing from the conference's thematic tracks.

"On behalf of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, I commit this Forum, formally and without qualification, to supporting the undertakings aligned to the thematic tracks that have carried this conference," she said, stressing that implementation would be pursued in partnership with young people, civil society and development partners.

She said the Windhoek Declaration would be backed by the Accountability Compact and its designated parliamentary and youth champions, who would be "side by side, each answerable to the other" until the next conference.

Invoking Namibia's founding President, Dr Sam Nujoma, and his emphasis on safeguarding opportunities for future generations, Ms Sekgoma pledged that the Forum would report honestly on progress when SARSYC reconvenes.

"Let it be recorded that in Windhoek, on this day, the SADC Parliamentary Forum took it as an entreaty to swift action, and indeed, will heed the call," she declared.

Members of Parliament also attended the conference and pledged their support. They included: Hon. Collins Bajila (Zimbabwe); Hon. Imms Nathingwe (Namibia); Hon. Tshafeni Kalala (Namibia); Hon. Lilian Brinkman (Namibia); Hon. Gatspillar Hikuama (Botswana); Hon. Enock Phile (Malawi); Hon. Sandile Nxumalo (Eswatini); and Senator Dr David Parirenyatwa (Zimbabwe).

By Moses Magadza
Media and communications
manager at the SADC PF

La première visite du Père Hans Stapel OFM aux Seychelles

Suite de la page 3

L'un des piliers fondamentaux de la méthode de la Ferme de l'Espoir, aux côtés de la spiritualité et de la vie communautaire.

Ces trois dimensions accompagnent les jeunes dans un processus de transformation qui ne se limite pas à l'arrêt de la consommation de drogues. Il s'agit aussi de reconstruire la confiance, les relations, le sens des responsabilités et la capacité à envisager un avenir différent.

« N'ayez pas peur, venez »

S'adressant directement aux jeunes confrontés à la dépendance, le Père Hans Stapel a livré un message particulièrement encourageant.

Il les a invités à « ne pas avoir peur de demander de l'aide et croire qu'il existe une voie pour sortir de l'escalade de l'addiction ».

Son appel est simple : venir, essayer et accepter de marcher avec une communauté qui croit en la possibilité d'un changement.

Pour lui, aucun jeune ne devrait considérer sa situation comme sans issue. L'expérience accumulée par la Ferme de l'Espoir au cours des décennies démontre, selon lui, qu'une nouvelle vie est possible lorsque la personne est entourée, accompagnée et encouragée.

Une expérience née il y a 43 ans

La visite du Père Hans aux Seychelles a également permis de replacer la jeune communauté seychelloise dans l'histoire internationale de la Ferme de l'Espoir.

« Il y a 43 ans, l'aventure avait commencé avec seulement quatre personnes : le Père Hans, le Frère Nelson Giovanni Rosca Dos Santos, Inaci Da Silva Leite et Lucienne Rosendo Dos Santos. Aujourd'hui, le mouvement compte environ 5 000 hommes et femmes engagés dans 108 communautés réparties dans 29 pays », a expliqué le Père Nelson.

Plus de 100 000 personnes seraient déjà passées par les différentes communautés de la Ferme de l'Espoir à travers le monde.

Pour le Père Hans, malgré cette croissance considérable, l'esprit demeure le même qu'aux débuts : celui d'une petite communauté de personnes décidées à croire qu'une personne dépendante peut changer de vie.

Des histoires qui donnent un sens au travail accompli

Parmi les témoignages qui l'ont particulièrement touché, le Père Nelson a évoqué ceux de jeunes ayant terminé leur parcours à la Ferme de l'Espoir.

Il a notamment cité l'exemple de quelques-uns dont la transformation, après une année passée dans la communauté, l'a profondément réjoui. Au-delà des changements

visibles dans leur vie, il a observé une évolution dans leur manière de penser, dans leur cœur et dans leur désir de servir les autres.

Cette volonté d'aider à leur tour ceux qui traversent les mêmes difficultés constitue pour le Père Nelson, l'un des signes les plus importants de la réussite du parcours.

Les rencontres avec les familles sont également des moments particulièrement forts. Il a raconté avoir vu des parents pleurer de joie en découvrant la transformation de leur enfant – des larmes qui ne sont plus celles de la douleur, mais celles de l'espérance retrouvée.

Un problème mondial qui exige une réponse collective

Au cours de sa visite, le fondateur a également insisté sur une réalité qui dépasse largement les frontières des Seychelles : la drogue et les addictions constituent un problème mondial.

C'est pourquoi il a lancé un appel au gouvernement, à l'Église, aux bénévoles, aux familles et à toutes les personnes de bonne volonté afin qu'ils poursuivent leur soutien à la Ferme de l'Espoir.

La lutte contre les addictions, a-t-il rappelé en substance, ne peut être menée par une seule institution. Elle nécessite une mobilisation collective et durable.

Aux Seychelles, cette solidarité est déjà visible dans le travail quotidien réalisé autour de la communauté.

Une présence qui ouvre de nouvelles perspectives

La visite du Père Hans Stapel ne représente donc pas seulement une rencontre historique pour la Ferme de l'Espoir aux Seychelles. Elle constitue également une reconnaissance du chemin parcouru durant cette première année et un encouragement à poursuivre la mission.

Son message rejoint celui porté depuis les débuts de la Ferme de l'Espoir : l'addiction ne doit pas être considérée comme une condamnation définitive.

Avec la spiritualité, la vie communautaire, le travail, l'accompagnement et la solidarité, un autre chemin est possible.

Le Père Hans Stapel entend continuer à soutenir cette mission.

Une tournée africaine placée sous le signe de l'Espérance

Après les Seychelles, le Père Hans Stapel et son équipe deviennent leur tour en Afrique avec une étape à Madagascar, où une nouvelle communauté de la Ferme de l'Espoir doit être ouverte près d'Antananarivo.

Il devait ensuite se rendre au Mozambique, où la mission africaine a commencé il y a environ 20 ans et où cinq communautés sont aujourd'hui présentes. Leur itinéraire devait également les conduire au Kenya, en Angola et au Cap-Vert.

Cette tournée illustre l'expansion continue d'une œuvre née modestement il y a plus de quatre décennies.

« Aux Seychelles comme ailleurs, le message demeure cependant le même : il y a toujours un chemin pour sortir de la dépendance, et personne ne devrait avoir peur de demander de l'aide ».

La première visite du Père Hans Stapel OFM aux Seychelles restera ainsi comme un moment symbolique pour la jeune communauté. Une messe spéciale a été célébrée à la Ferme de l'Espoir par Monseigneur Landry, et le Père Hans a également effectué des visites auprès de plusieurs institutions gouvernementales.

À propos de la Ferme de l'Espoir à Port Gland aux Seychelles

D'une vision à une réalité

Le projet de la Ferme de l'Espoir a débuté en août 2023 grâce à la collaboration des autorités publiques, du diocèse de Port Victoria et des institutions concernées. Après une année de préparation, de consultations et de recherche de financements, les travaux ont commencé en janvier 2025.

Le centre a été inauguré le 26 juillet 2025 et a accueilli ses premiers résidents le 8 septembre 2025.

Une collaboration exemplaire

La réussite du projet repose sur la solidarité entre le gouvernement des Seychelles, l'Église, l'Ordre de Malte, les entreprises, les missionnaires brésiliens, les associations et de nombreux donateurs.

Le diocèse a fourni le terrain et les bâtiments, tandis que différents partenaires ont contribué financièrement, matériellement et humainement. L'association L'EDU, créée en juin 2025, assure la gestion et le développement de la Ferme.

Les premiers résidents

Depuis son ouverture, 19 personnes ont demandé à intégrer le programme et 11 l'ont rejoint. Six ont dépassé cinq mois de parcours, tandis qu'un premier résident a terminé avec succès les douze mois du programme, devenant ainsi le premier « Ambassadeur de l'Espoir ».

L'expérience montre que la réussite dépend fortement de la motivation personnelle du jeune : ceux qui s'engagent volontairement sont généralement plus persévérants que ceux qui sont poussés principalement par leur famille.

Le centre à Port Gland est géré par Joseph Kaye, directeur de la Ferme de l'Espoir aux Seychelles.

Vidya Gappy
Photos : Vidya Gappy et contributions

Conference ends with bold accountability compact on youth health and education

Continued from page 6

on HIV in Southern Africa.

Mental health and substance abuse feature prominently, with the Compact calling for a shift away from fragmented and punitive approaches towards integrated, adequately financed, community-based and youth-friendly services.

It advocates standardised screening for mental health and substance-use conditions in primary healthcare facilities, campuses and youth-friendly service centres.

Parliaments are urged to push for adequate and ring-fenced financing for mental health and substance-use services and hold community hearings examining national mental-health budgets and service coverage for young people.

In recognition of emerging threats confronting the region's youth, the Compact specifically identifies gambling and other behavioural addictions as issues requiring attention.

It calls for stronger online gambling laws incorporating age verification, responsible advertising, mobile-money safeguards, spending controls, transaction warnings and self-exclusion mechanisms.

The document also demands stronger legislation and institutional responses to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and other forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Survivors should have access to confidential mechanisms for reporting abuse, preserving evidence, obtaining psychosocial support and seeking redress.

Technology companies, betting operators, financial institutions and telecommunications providers are expected to play their part in preventing digital harm.

The Compact goes further by invit-

ing the SADC PF to consider whether a regional Model Law or guiding provisions on digital safety and gambling-related harms affecting young people could strengthen national responses.

Another feature is the recognition of endometriosis and other neglected chronic conditions affecting young people. The Compact calls for endometriosis to be incorporated into relevant national SRHR, non-communicable diseases, gender and universal health coverage frameworks.

It advocates affordable diagnosis, treatment, pain management and essential medicines through public health systems, alongside better training for health workers and increased public awareness.

Parliaments are encouraged to scrutinise national budget allocations for the diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis and other neglected chronic conditions.

On education, the Compact treats CSE not merely as a health intervention but as a safeguard for school access, safety, retention and completion.

It calls for stronger pre-service and in-service teacher training, expanded access to sexuality education for rural and out-of-school adolescents and stronger implementation of school re-entry policies for pregnant and parenting learners.

Parliaments are urged to enact or strengthen legislation guaranteeing the re-entry and retention rights of pregnant and parenting learners and to scrutinise government financing for CSE and teacher training.

The Compact similarly demands stronger HIV and STI services in universities, colleges and surrounding communities, including condoms, testing, counselling, treatment, referrals and accurate health information.

Unlike declarations with open-ended aspirations, the Compact establishes a two-year accountability timetable leading to SARSYC VII.

Within 30 days, the final Compact must be circulated.

Within 100 days, every participating parliamentary, institutional or country delegation should have undertaken at least one initial accountability action, such as a motion, petition or public consultation.

Within six months, national or institutional youth-accountability dialogues should have taken place, including at least one engagement with a national parliamentary committee, followed by submission of initial progress reports.

After 12 months, the first regional Youth Health and Education Accountability Scorecard and interim impact report are expected to be published and presented to the relevant SADC PF Standing Committee.

At 18 months, implementation gaps will be reviewed and outstanding actions accelerated.

Finally, within 24 months and at SARSYC VII, a final scorecard and impact report will be published and presented to the SADC PF Plenary Assembly, setting the stage for another accountability cycle.

Progress will be measured partly through parliamentary questions, motions and debates; committee hearings and inquiries; movement on relevant legislation and SADC PF Model Laws; and trends in national allocations for youth health, education, mental health and digital safety.

The SADC PF will support this process by referring the Compact and Windhoek Declaration to its relevant Standing Committees, helping Member Parliaments benchmark legislation, policies and budgets, and facilitating

capacity-building and regional knowledge exchange.

Young people, meanwhile, undertake to turn youth-generated research into policy briefs, engage parliamentarians with credible country-level evidence, mobilise communities and monitor whether institutions honour their commitments.

The Compact also assigns responsibilities to governments, universities, civil society, development partners, businesses and traditional and community leaders.

Private companies are specifically called upon to ensure that commercial interests do not undermine young people's health, dignity, safety or financial wellbeing, while traditional and community leaders are encouraged to spearhead initiatives against stigma, violence, harmful practices, substance abuse and discrimination.

Ultimately, the Windhoek Compact seeks to change the relationship between young people and institutions from one of consultation alone to one of measurable accountability.

It declares that commitments affecting young people must be financed, measurable and verifiable, with responsible actors, timelines, indicators and evidence of implementation.

The Compact recognises the SADC PF as a strategic institutional partner and invites Member Parliaments that were not represented at SARSYC VI to associate themselves with it.

The conference drew participants from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, South Africa, Madagascar, Eswatini, Mozambique, Uganda and Namibia.

By Moses Magadza
Media and communications
manager at the SADC PF

Access the Full Commitments

To promote transparency, accountability and continued engagement, the full Windhoek Youth Declaration on Health and Education and the SARSYC VI Youth Health and Education Accountability Compact can be accessed at:

www.sarsyc.org

Key Message: Young people's priorities reached a regional parliamentary platform and were matched with an accountability mechanism for action. By receiving the Windhoek Youth Declaration and endorsing the Youth Health and Education Accountability Compact, the SADC Parliamentary Forum strengthened the pathway between youth priorities and regional accountability, signalling a shared commitment to advancing health and education outcomes for young people across Southern Africa.

Keynote Voices from SARSYC VI

Perspectives from keynote speakers who helped shape conversations on youth health, education and regional development throughout the conference.



Dr David Parirenyatwa

Former Minister of Health and Child Care, Zimbabwe, Former President of Society for AIDS in Africa, A longstanding advocate for public health Leadership

Platform: Research Indaba

“ Diseases, poverty, online harms and climate change do not respect borders. Therefore, the solutions we develop must also transcend borders. The research presented today has the potential to inform tomorrow's policies and shape future legislation. Yet evidence alone is not enough. Evidence requires listeners and policymakers willing to act on what the data tells them. ”



Hon. Dino Ballotti

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth Sports Arts and culture, Namibia

Platform: Southern African Young Men's Forum

“ Young men must move beyond talking about the challenges facing their generation and become part of the solution. The future will not be shaped by spectators, but by those willing to take responsibility, work with others and turn ideas into action. ”



Madame Grace Hidiuna

Programme Specialist HIV Prevention/ FP, UNFPA Namibia

Platform: Southern African Web for Life Network Symposium

“ Young women do not live single-issue lives, so they do not need single-issue solutions. The challenges they face in education, health, safety and economic opportunity are connected, and our responses must be connected too. The strongest solutions are those that improve education while strengthening health, expand opportunity while keeping young people safe, and advance wellbeing while promoting gender equality. We must therefore look beyond individual challenges and ask what partnerships are needed to address them and how we can work together to tackle their root causes ”



Ms. Martha Tholana

Strategic Advisor, Amplify Change

Platform: Alliance Building Labs

“ No movement succeeds in isolation because the challenges young people face are too interconnected for any one organisation, network or individual to solve alone. Change will happen when we come together around a common purpose and make a deliberate decision to act ”



H.E Ms. Boemo Sekgoma

Secretary General, SADC Parliamentary Forum

Platform: High-level Youth Parliamentary RoundTable

Bravery, after all, is not only found on a battlefield. It is found, too, in the willingness of young people to hold their leaders to account, and the willingness of leaders to be so held. The youth declaration is more than a speech. It is an instruction. No commitment made in this region should again be allowed to fade quietly between one conference and the next



Ms. Eunice Smith

Country Representative, UNESCO Namibia

Platform: Official Ceremony

Health and education are inseparable. Young people cannot fully benefit from education if their health and wellbeing are compromised, and positive health outcomes become difficult to achieve when access to quality education is limited. That is why aligning for action is critical. Through stronger partnerships, we can sustain progress in education, health, gender equality and youth empowerment while creating safer and more resilient learning environments for young people across Southern Africa



Hon. Wayne Sising representing Hon. Sam Nujoma

Governor of Khomas Region, Republic of Namibia

Platform: Official Ceremony

The solutions required to advance our region already exist within the creativity, leadership and determination of our young people. What started in the Khomas Region must not end in the Khomas Region. The ideas generated through this conference must travel across borders, the partnerships forged here must deliver measurable results, and the aspirations of young people must be translated into real progress in youth health and education across Southern Africa



Her Excellency Madam Chaurura

Ambassador to the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Namibia

Platform: Culture Night

Our diversity is not a barrier to regional cooperation. It is one of our greatest strengths. Culture provides the values, identity and sense of belonging that shape the solutions we create together

Through the eyes of Young People



Beyond conference halls and plenary discussions, young people took to social media to share how SARSYC VI influenced their thinking, strengthened their confidence and connected them to a growing regional movement for youth health and education.

Blessing Mubure · 2nd
Actuarial Science Student | Vice President, UoZ Actuarial ...
1mo · Edited

It was truly an honour to attend Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC VI) in Windhoek, Namibia, which brought together young people, researchers, policymakers, parliamentarians, development partners and civil society from across the region.

For three days, I found myself in rooms I once only imagined being in, surrounded by people shaping policies, influencing decisions and contributing to conversations that directly affect young people.

And honestly, I am still taking it all in. 😊

I am incredibly grateful to Young People's Network on Health and Wellbeing, with the support from National AIDS Council Zimbabwe for giving me this opportunity. I am especially grateful that someone believed in me enough to say, "You should be there."

Sometimes, an opportunity becomes a reminder that someone sees something in you, even before you fully see it in yourself.

One of my biggest highlights was the Research Indaba. I was particularly drawn to [Mitchel Chimba](#) presentation on Endometriosis and Sexual and Reproductive Health among Women and Girls in Zimbabwe. I felt that one deeply. It reminded me that there is power in research and how it brings to the table things that have been living in silence.

I was equally inspired by [Ziphokenkosi Ndlovu](#) 'research on the role of community leaders in addressing child marriages, reminding me of the power communities have in creating meaningful change.

Nomsa Matongo · 1st
Forensic Psychology & Criminology Graduate | Qualitative Researcher | You...
1mo

AHHHH... I still can't believe I'm typing this. 😊👉

I had the absolute honour of presenting my research at the Southern African Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC VI), and what an experience!

Walking into a room filled with accomplished researchers, academics, policymakers, and delegates from across Southern Africa had my heart doing the most. 😊 I was so nervous... but the moment I started presenting, those nerves turned into pure excitement. I genuinely loved every second of it.

And then... the cherry on top... I was awarded 🏆 2nd Best Oral Presenter!

Excuse me while I scream internally for the next six business days. 😊👉

A huge thank you to [Dr Blessing Takawira \(PhD\)](#) for your incredible mentorship, guidance, and belief in me throughout this journey. I truly couldn't have done it without your support. And a huge thank you to [Students and Youth Working on Reproductive Health Action Team \(SAYWHAT\)](#) for this incredible opportunity to us as young people to talk about the issues affecting us as young people.

Here's to asking bigger questions, sharing meaningful research, and saying "I actually did that!" a little more often. On to the next adventure. 💙

[#SARSYCVI](#) [#SAYWHAT](#) [#InternationalConference](#) [#SADC](#) [#YoungResearcher](#) [#EmergingResearcher](#) [#OralPresentation](#) [#ForensicPsychology](#) [#Criminology](#) [#WomenInResearch](#) [#ResearchImpact](#) [#SouthernAfrica](#) [#ScienceCommunication](#) [#AcademicJourney](#) [#ProudMoment](#)

Benegina Amadhila · 2nd
Public Health Enthusiast | UNFPA Youth Advisory Panel ...
1mo

Three days in Windhoek. A room full of young leaders from across Southern Africa. One theme running through all of it: **ARISING FOR ACTION**

I sat in the Research Indaba on day one and heard a line that has stayed with me since: "every information we seek must translate to evidence, and evidence should drive action." Not a slogan. A standard I've been holding myself to ever since.

Over the next two days, we didn't just talk about young people, we listened to young people present the research. School dropout tied to pregnancy and poverty, not just "poor choices." Online gambling creeping in through the same phones that hand us education and opportunity, a reminder that the answer was never "put the phone down," but "know what you're looking at." A study out of Zimbabwe on endometriosis stopped me in my seat, hearing how something so often dismissed as "just period pain" carries years of misdiagnosis, psychological weight, and reproductive anxiety, and realising how rarely we treat it as the SRHR issue it actually is.

By the final session, one thought kept resurfacing in different forms: a seat at the table only matters if your voice can shape what happens at that table.

I represented the UNFPA Youth Advisory Panel, Oshana Region, at SARSYC VI, organised by SAYWHAT with UNFPA and other partners. I came back convinced that youth advocacy without evidence is just noise, and evidence without youth voice is incomplete.

The future everyone keeps talking about isn't somewhere ahead of us. It's built by the decisions we make right now, and we have to be in the room when they're made.

[#SARSYCVI](#) [#UNFPA](#) [#YouthAdvisoryPanel](#) [#SRHR](#) [#PublicHealth](#) [#SADC](#)

Thelma C Tumai · 2nd
--A student at Women's University in Africa doing my Bsc ...
1mo · Edited

I had the opportunity to attend the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC VI) in Windhoek Namibia, under the theme "Aligning for Action. Sustaining Progress in Youth Health and Education," and I am honestly still trying to process everything from this whirlwind experience. Throughout the sessions, I learned so much about the deep challenges affecting young people across the SADC region from how academic stress and past trauma lead to risky coping mechanisms, to the ongoing struggles with SRHR, menstrual stigma, cyberbullying, and the barriers female students face regarding campus sexual harassment. Beyond the eye-opening presentations, the networking was truly unforgettable, especially participating in safe spaces like the Web for Life and SHE SOARS forums where we could connect and share honest regional experiences with fellow youth leaders and stakeholders. To wrap it all up, we ended with a vibrant Culture Night dinner, celebrating our diverse traditions in regional attire, which was an amazing, memorable reminder of our unity as young people even as I am left wondering how we can best bring all these big solutions back to our home campuses. [#SARSYCVI](#) [#YouthHealth](#) [#StudentWelfare](#) [#SADC](#) [#PeerEducation](#) [#Students and Youth Working on Reproductive Health Action Team \(SAYWHAT\)](#) [#Women's University in Africa](#) [#Abigail Rudorwashe Benhura \(PhD\)](#)

Visibility Impact Box

SARSYC VI extended beyond the conference venue through widespread media coverage, digital engagement and live-streamed discussions, ensuring that youth priorities reached audiences across the region. Coverage by television, print, radio and digital media platforms across SADC countries helped amplify discussions on youth health, education, research, accountability and regional collaboration beyond SARSYC VI participants

Visibility Indicator



Print Publications Reached 04



Radio Interviews Reached 04



Television Features Reached 06



Media Houses Engaged Reached 13



Online News Articles Reached 07



Live Stream Views Reached 38,900



Social Media Reach Reached 379,161



Sustaining Progress Towards SARSYC VII in Eswatini

Appreciation Panel

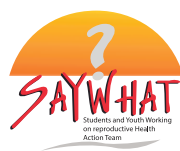
SARSYC VI was made possible through the collective support of governments, development partners, academic institutions, civil society organisations and youth-led movements committed to advancing health and education across Southern Africa



SARSYC VI demonstrated that young people are generating evidence, proposing solutions and building the partnerships necessary to drive regional change. Yet the priorities emerging from Windhoek cannot be achieved through conference commitments alone. Advancing the resolutions of SARSYC VI will require continued investment in:

- ✓ Youth-led research and evidence generation
- ✓ Regional alliances and advocacy coalitions
- ✓ Implementation of youth-led solutions
- ✓ Monitoring commitments through the Accountability Compact
- ✓ Youth participation in regional and national policy processes
- ✓ Accountability reviews leading to SARSYC VII

We invite partners, governments, civil society, academia and young people to support the GEAR Alliance in the implementation of SARSYC VI resolutions and to continue aligning for action and sustaining progress across Southern Africa.



Join the SARSYC Community

www.sarsyc.org sarsyc@saywhat.org.zw



SAYWHATOrg



Southern African Regional Students and Youth Consortium



SARSYC Consortium