

## **Session 5: Workshop 7**

**Title:** The Southern African Development Community (SADC): does it make any real impact on issues such as health and education?

**Speaker:** Professor K. Dzvimbo, Vice-Chancellor, Zimbabwe Open University

**Chair:** Professor David Rubadiri, Vice-Chancellor, University of Malawi

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SADC is a political and economic group of countries in Southern and Eastern Africa. Its *raison d'être* is to reduce poverty. However, to what length should we go to reduce poverty? Do we reduce poverty at the expense of funding education and training; agriculture and food security; transport and communication; water resources and energy; natural resources and wild life; defence and security or health management?

The economic growth of SADC countries is very poor, poverty is rife, countries are over-populated, life expectancy is under 54 years, the average GNP is only US\$169, there are not enough doctors to care for the sick, they have massive foreign debts and every 3 seconds a young African child dies, usually from an infectious disease. There are, therefore, a great many challenges facing SADC. Chief among these are: conflict resolution; maintenance of democracy and good governance; the need to strengthen the economic base to facilitate investment in people and tertiary education; foreign debt and lack of global competitiveness; and the impact of HIV/AIDS on human capital. One in five people are HIV positive and it is this disease that is removing the teaching resources that are needed today to educate the next generation.

Business is essential for economic growth in developing countries, but the growth of business depends upon a ready supply of human resources educated up to tertiary level. To meet this demand, universities need to be forging new links with private sector companies and developing such collaborations as will enable them to keep up with 'globalisation'. However with the presence of HIV/AIDS, maintaining this momentum will be very difficult because the disease is devastating the human resource capital. Teachers, in particular, will be in short supply as they are falling sick and dying in increasingly large numbers. HIV/AIDS is an issue of immense proportions in the sub-Saharan countries, and lessons need to be learnt from the Ugandan success in managing the epidemic

One outcome from this session was the recommendation of the members of the Association of African Universities' (AAU) that the AAU members in the SADC countries should come together to plan a common strategy for tackling the challenges that they are facing today.