



## **NANGO Youth Sector to engage government on ratification of ACDEG**

The Zimbabwean government has signed the Africa Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG), a positive step towards making sure the country operates within the dictates of regional instruments. Civil society in Zimbabwe, for the past years has been engaging the government to sign and domesticate several regional and international treaties and conventions, but the move faced vast resistance as it was considered a regime change agenda.

In December 2017, regional civil society organizations, national coordinating bodies of NGOs including NANGO under the roof of SADC-Council of NGOs met in South Africa to introspect, dialogue and map a way forward on challenges being faced by SADC region with regards to democratic governance, implementation of national and regional instruments and above all discussion on the progress on the Africa Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). The engagement noted the rising democratic deficit in Southern Africa, where out of 15 countries in SADC only eight had ratified and out of 55 countries in Africa, 30 had ratified the Charter (ACDEG).

Given the above articulations, National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) Youth Sector has been part of the important processes that foster democratic participation, realization of rule of law and adherence of governments to available protocols and conventions. The Youth Sector participated in a conference organized by SADC-CNGO from 14 – 16 March 2018 in Boksburg, South Africa. The Indaba was meant to foster youth engagement in the Africa Governance Architecture (AGA) and the ACDEG respectively. The youth participants drawn from several SADC countries, were equipped by Global Platform Zambia to take action towards key regional issues and advocate in their countries for the ratification of key instruments such as ACDEG among others.

Institutionalization of a democratic culture in SADC needs all stakeholders, the ACDEG if domesticated, provides for such an opportunity to the Zimbabwean body polity. Equipped with 54 Articles the ACDEG represents a holistic document that provides important answers to both Zimbabwe and SADC as a region; key issues enshrined in the Charter such as: promotion of adherence, by each state party, to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights, promotion of regular, free, fair, peaceful and credible elections which are observed by regional and international players; it also prohibits, rejects and condemns unconstitutional change of government, promotes and protects the independence of the judiciary, promotes the establishment of necessary conditions to foster citizen participation, transparency, access to information, freedom of the press and accountability in the management of public affairs; promotes gender balance, promotes political pluralism, condemnation and rejection of acts of corruption, related offenses and impunity and the Charter also fosters participation of vulnerable social groups such as youth, young women and people with disability. The Charter captures most necessary pillars that promote good governance, peace, democracy, rule of law and citizens' participation. It also goes further to support key legs with regards to respect of national constitutions and fosters peaceful-co-existence among nations, and between the governments and their citizens.

In light of these Articles in the ACDEG, NANGO Youth Sector, through its national structures will engage young people to appreciate the importance of ACDEG among other instruments, at the same time lobbying relevant authorities to domesticate and deposit it to the office of Africa Union (AU) Chairperson, as well as monitor the implementation of different provisions, especially those related to youth, corruption and gender.

Young people remain the epi-center of development in every nation. In Zimbabwe they constitute 67 percent of the total population. It is therefore mandatory for government to take a sagacious decision to reform and take action with regards to several laws and accords that hinder effective participation of young people, starting with the domestication of ACDEG, the repeal of Zimbabwe Youth Act that is in violation of the national constitution and lastly review the Youth Policy to meet current and emerging needs.

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