

REGIONAL YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE FOR EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION



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In August 2023, UN Women East and Southern African Regional Office welcomed nine (9) youth gender advocates to serve in the Regional Youth Steering Committee (RYSC). The nine advocates, who responded to a call for expression of interest to join the Committee, were selected following a rigorous screening process undertaken by UN Women Regional Office for East and Southern Africa (ESA) in collaboration with UN Women Country Offices. The members are drawn from the East and Southern Africa Region¹ and have diverse professional backgrounds with a strong orientation towards championing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The committee will serve as a strategic advisory group in integrating meaningful engagement of young women and men in implementing the UN Women ESARO's Strategic Note 2022-2025 and the attendant Youth Engagement Strategy.

During the inaugural meeting in August 2023, the committee concretely defined their motivation for a more gender equal ESA Region in their overall mission and vision:

Mission

Accelerating change towards meaningful youth participation with women at the forefront.

Vision

Building an Africa where youth have impactful voices in Gender Equality and Women Empowerment and is free to express their talents, especially women with no judgment and inspiring others along the way. A region where youth are empowered through meaningful engagement, integration of their knowledge, skills and talents as both a means and an end with clear appreciation of the impact of technology to include all young Africans digitally to leave no one behind.

The 9 driven and enthusiastic members of the Committee, will serve the region on a voluntary basis, offering their invaluable contribution towards shaping UN Women ESARO's youth engagement in the spirit of comprehensive inter-generational dialogues and knowledge generation and sharing, guided by the 2030 Agenda and Generation Equality.

OUR TEAM

Kaija Emmanuel
Country: Uganda



Area of specialty:
Integrated Sustainable Development

Aspiration: An enabling environment for women and youth in the region to thrive and realize their full potential in a positive manner that befits sustainability.

What I am looking forward to during my tenure:

I'm looking forward to continuously cultivating a mutual working relationship between UN Women and its key stakeholders including women and youth in the region towards meaningful engagement so as to effectively integrate their evolving needs and dynamics in line with UN Women's mandate geared towards delivering need-based solutions and initiatives that directly and indirectly impact over 50 million youth in the Eastern and Southern Africa region over the course leading to 2030. Together with colleagues, my

ultimate efforts during this tenure involve further fostering of an enabling environment:

1. Where youth have impactful voices in Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
2. Where youth are free to express their talents, especially women, girls and minority/marginalized groups with no judgment and inspiring others along the way
3. Establishing a region where youth are empowered through meaningful engagement, integration of their knowledge, skills, and talents as both a means and an end.

Martin Luther once said: *'We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.'*

Chanella Djamilla Habimana Uwacu
Country: Rwanda



Area of specialty: Self-Advocacy, Gender Equality & Women Empowerment

Aspiration: I aspire to see an Africa where women are not afraid to express themselves, rise and take charge of their destinies and stand up for what they believe in.

What I am looking forward to during my tenure:

During my tenure in the UN Women ESA Regional Youth Steering Committee, I look forward to working with young Africans for the betterment of our future and that of our continent.

Henry Ford once said: *Whether you think you can or can't, YOU ARE RIGHT!*

IRAKOZE Jeanne
Country: Burundi



Area of specialty: IT, Art (Slam-Poetry)

Aspiration: My aspiration as a young person, is to change this label, to aspire young people to become leaders of integrity, change makers, and making a positive contribution in our communities and breaking taboos.

What I am looking forward to during my tenure:

Opportunities to carry out projects by, for and with young people, with the active participation of young girls. To change the narrative where young people are seen as good-for-nothing.

Contribute to gender equality in areas where girls and women are discriminated against.

Advocate for the improvement of the “African Girls can Code” initiative, in order to provide Burundi with equipment such as computers that can help

Burundian girls learn digital skills from this great opportunity.

A wise person once said: Every professional person was once a beginner who never stopped fighting.

Wanjuhi Njoroge
Country: Kenya



Area of specialty: Communications, ESG & Youth

What I am looking forward to during my tenure:

To effectively engage with a wide demographic of youth in ESAR, with a particular emphasis on young women, and establish a sustainable platform that empowers and facilitates their pursuit of political leadership roles.

A wise person once said: We are the ones we've been waiting for.

Varaidzo Faith Magodo-Matimba

Country: Zimbabwe



Area of specialty: A distinguished pan-African feminist lawyer and leader with experience in human rights and development work.



Her expertise lies in young women's movement building, strategy, governance, and resource mobilization for non-profits and social enterprises. With her experience working in local and international non-profit organizations, she has gained proficiency in non-profit corporate governance and sustainable development practice. She has been an advocate for young women's leadership initiatives and youth inclusion projects in Africa and Zimbabwe. As a strategic think tank, her experience and previous engagement expands from Southern Africa to Eastern Africa. She has led and participated in key youth public inclusion advocacy initiatives and young women-focused research methodology development for enhanced youth response programming. Her aspiration is to lead the reclamation of the identities of African womxn. As chairperson of

the RYSC, she looks forward to progressive alignment and contextual responses by UN Women to young people's needs in the ESAR region during her tenure. An accomplished feminist leader with a passion for empowering young people, she enjoys imparting feminist knowledge to her eager toddler.

Malebo Sephodi once said: *The voice of a black woman should always be HERSELF... No edits - no erasure - no pressure - no expectations - no additions - no intruders.*



Stacey Mdala

Country: Malawi



Area of specialty: Women and youth rights advocate, passionate about girls' education and community development with a bachelor's degree in Social Science and Gender Studies from the University of Malawi.

Currently, she is working as a full-time Community Score Card Consultant and Data and Documentation intern at CARE International in Malawi. Over the years she has volunteered with organizations championing gender equality like the University of Malawi's Gender Justice Clinic, For Equality, and Plan International. Recently, she was inducted as a Youth Steering Committee member for the UN Women East and Southern Africa Region (ESARO), and she believes her network from youth engagements and advocacy work she has done will speak to this role and aid her in her commitment to being a voice for the marginalized (youth).

My aspiration in life is to be the voice of the voiceless, informing policies that promote people's rights. What I look forward to in my tenure is to work with youth outside the committee, understanding their challenges and taking it up with the regional office to channel our programme activities in ways that will curb those challenges and bring significant change to youth in East and Southern Africa.

Marie Curie once said: *We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, by whatever cost must be achieved.*

Justine Banda
Country: South Africa



Area of Specialty: Law, Research and Education, Policy Making

Biography: My journey as an impassioned advocate with a deep-seated dedication to the principles of generation equality and the equitable rights of disabled individuals has seen me not only lead my own organization, the African Disability Initiative on Reproductive Rights (ADIRR), but also collaborate with various social interest groups – striving relentlessly to advance the rights of women, children, youth, and persons with disabilities. Within ADIRR, I have spearheaded numerous projects aimed at promoting sexual health and reproductive rights, empowering marginalized communities, and fostering inclusivity for persons with disabilities. One of our key missions is advocating for the ratification of the African Disability Rights Protocol, the culmination of the African Union's efforts to create a framework to safeguard the human

rights of persons with disabilities on the continent, which requires 15 ratifications to come into effect. Beyond my organization, I have contributed my expertise to policy advocacy, community outreach and research and education within the legal reform framework. My passion for these critical issues is underpinned by a firm belief and recognition of the United Nations pivotal role and unparalleled potential in addressing global challenges.

I envision this role as an opportunity to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, advocate for policies that advance gender equality and inclusivity, and facilitate international collaboration for a fairer society.

Favorite Quote: “Nothing about us without us” (*Latin: Nihil de nobis, sine nobis*) is a slogan used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy.

Ahmed Ismail Ali
Country: Somalia



Expertise: I am Ahmed and as a disability advocate, safeguarding leader, gender equality and FGM advocate,

I have a comprehensive understanding of Human Development. I have a Public Administration degree with a background that helps me strategic, relationship management and effective communication. I am inspired and devoted as a young inclusive leader to humanity, and I am fully committed to closing the inclusivity gaps through the lifelong learning. As a teacher, I endeavour to stay up to date on new concepts which helps me instruct my students in the best way. The most important expectation you are bound by as a professional teacher is to teach and ensure that students learn and concentrate on the outcomes achieved in the classroom rather than seeking to evaluate how students are doing academically. These aspirations lead me to some key guiding

questions which help me determine the change I want to see and work towards. I look forward to fostering better and more inclusive education for all through my rich expertise in mentoring and coaching skills in education including literacy, teacher training, education partnership and educational policies and facilitating equitable access to education, particularly PWDs in Africa. Finally, “The more that you read, the more things you will know, the more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

Adv. Motlatsi Jonas Mofolo

Country: Lesotho



Area of specialty: Gender and human rights lawyer from the Kingdom of Lesotho.

He holds 7 years of active experience in the civil society space lobbying and advocating for gender equality and equity, through rights-based approaches for women, and other underserved populations. He holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and a Master of Laws in Human Rights Law (LLM), both from the National University of Lesotho. This is coupled with further training in Human and Civil Rights for Marginalized Communities under the International Visitor Leadership Program, and another in Leadership in Civic Engagement under the Mandela Washington Fellowship. He currently works as a Gender-Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Specialist at Sonke Gender Justice, responsible for the design, implementation and monitoring of GESI/DEI programming under the organization's various projects and across the broader scope of the organization's work.

Adv. Mofolo aspires to see Africa in which youth are at the forefront of all development efforts; especially women and girls, contributing to interventions shaping an Africa that the Africans really want.

During his tenure as the Strategy and Programming Advisor in the UN Women ESAR RYSC, he looks forward to encouraging innovative programs and strategies that will ensure sustainable and effective participation of young people in the UN Women Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) works, because when it is all said and done

A wise person once said: *Young people are just at the dawn of Africa's long anticipated future, and that future is now!*

