



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

# **EAC YOUTH POLICY**

**EAC Secretariat**

**P.O. Box 1096 Arusha-Tanzania**

**Tel: +255 270 4253/8**

**Email: [eac@eachq.org](mailto:eac@eachq.org)**

**Website: <http://www.eac.int>**

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EAC	East African Community
EAYC	East Africa Youth Council
HIV	Human Immune-deficiency Virus
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
STIs	Sexual Transmission Infections
UN	United Nations

Article 120 (c) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community

*"the Partner States undertake to closely co-operate amongst themselves in the field of social welfare with respect to, among others, "the development and adoption of a common approach towards disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including children, the youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities through rehabilitation and provision of, among others, foster homes, healthcare, education and training."*

### Definition of Youth

The youth are defined by the Constitution of each EAC Partner State. In Kenya, youth are persons in the age bracket 18 to 35 years, whilst in Burundi and Tanzania, youths are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years. Ugandan's Constitution defines youths as any male and female between the ages of 18 and 30 years, while the Rwandan National Policy defined the youth as females and males between the ages of 14 and 35 years.

For the purpose of the EAC Policy, youth are persons between the ages of 15 to 35 years.

## **The East African Community Youth Policy**

Prescribes strategic priority areas and actions to guide the implementation and address youth challenges

Articulates the need for harmonizing definitions of the youth, related legislation and programmes carried out across the region

Is based on guiding principles which underline the respect for cultural, religious and ethical values, equity and accessibility, gender inclusiveness, good governance and national unity, youth participation, youth empowerment, team work and partnerships

Is developed within the context of existing national, regional and international policy frameworks and charters including National Youth Development Policies, National development plans, the African Youth Charter and the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond among others;

### **1.0. OBJECTIVES OF THE EAC YOUTH POLICY**

#### **1.1. Vision**

"An integrated East African Community where its youth are empowered to fully participate and benefit in all facets of the region's development".

#### **1.2. Mission**

"To create an enabling environment for effective youth participation and empowerment in developing and sustaining the East African Community."

#### **1.3. Overall Objective**

To guide the East African Community on the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes to address youth issues in the region while assuring sustainable social, economic and political development.

**Specific Objectives of this policy are to:-**

- (i) Mainstream youth issues in policies, laws and programmes at the Community level;
- (ii) Sensitize national and regional policy makers on the need to identify and mainstream youth issues in the development of the Community;
- (iii) Empower the youth to develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of the Community;
- (iv) Ensure meaningful youth participation in political processes and peace building for political, social and economic stability of the East African Community;
- (v) Ensure meaningful youth participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national and regional development plans, policies and strategies;

- (vi) Mobilize resources for youth programmes and projects at all levels; and
- (vii) Promote the values and ethos outlined in this policy.

#### **1.4. Guiding Principles**

The key principles that underlie the policy are:

##### **a) Respect of Cultural Belief Systems and Ethical Values**

The policy respects the cultural, religious, customary and ethical backgrounds of the people in the region and conforms to universally recognized human rights, without discrimination based on gender, race/origin, age, ethnicity, creed, political affiliation or social status.

##### **b) Equity and Accessibility**

The policy subscribes to the principles of equal opportunities and equitable distribution of programmes, services, and resources. It also endeavours to promote access to socio-economic opportunities for the youth.

##### **c) Gender Inclusiveness**

The policy underscores the need to promote a gender-inclusive approach to the development of youth. It seeks to promote gender equity and equality, including working to eliminate gender discrimination and violence.

##### **d) Good Governance**

The policy seeks to promote the values of good governance, a just and tolerant society, promotion of transparency and accountability and a spirit of nationhood and patriotism.

##### **e) Mainstreaming Youth Issues**

The needs, opportunities and challenges facing the youth are concerns for the Community. The youth policy aims at ensuring that youth issues are reflected in all sectors of national development, on both the micro and macro levels, within the public, private sectors and civil society.

##### **f) Youth Participation**

The Policy seeks to promote youth participation in democratic and decision making processes as well as in community and civic affairs while ensuring that programmes are youth centred.

##### **g) Youth Empowerment**

The Policy advocates for creation of a supportive socio-cultural, economic and political environment that will empower the youth to be active partners in development.

##### **h) Networking and Partnership**

The Policy underscores the promotion of networking, team work and collaboration among all the stakeholders to champion the youth agenda in the integration processes.

### **1.5. Linkages with National, Regional, Global Policies, Strategies, Treaties and Protocols**

This Policy does not in any way seek to neither undermine nor challenge the various existing National, regional and Global Policies, Strategies, Treaties and Protocols, but it is consistent and complementary to inter alia the following instruments:

- a) The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (1999).
- b) The National Youth Policy 2012 of Burundi
- c) The National Youth Policy for Youth Development 2007 of Kenya
- d) The National Youth Policy of Rwanda 2008
- e) The National Youth Development Policy 2005 of Zanzibar and Tanzania 2007
- f) The National Youth Policy 2001 of Uganda
- g) The African Youth Charter, 2006
- h) International World Programme of Action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond
- i) The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- j) The Commonwealth Programme of Action for Youth Empowerment to the year 2017
- k) The Lisbon Declaration (1998)

## **2.0. YOUTH RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

This policy recognises that youth shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this policy consistent with the universal declaration of human rights;

### **2.1. RIGHTS OF THE YOUTH**

#### **2.1.1. Right to Life and security of person**

- a) Every Youth has the inalienable right to life and personal national and international security.

#### **2.1.2. Right to Non-Discrimination**

- a) Every youth shall be entitled to the enjoyments of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Policy irrespective of their race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

#### **2.1.3. Freedom of movement**

All Youth shall have the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of Partner States for purposes of education and employment and to participate in social, economic or cultural activities as provided by the laws of the respective Partner States.

#### **2.1.4. Freedom of Expression**

- a) Every Youth shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his or her religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his/her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

#### **2.1.5. Freedom of Association**

- a) Every Youth shall have the right to freedom of association and to lawful and peaceful assembly.

#### **2.1.6. Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion**

Every youth shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

#### **2.1.7. Protection of Private Life**

No youth shall be subject to the arbitrary or unlawful interference with his/her privacy, residence or correspondence, or to attacks upon his/her honour or reputation

#### **2.1.8. Right to form a Family**

Youth of full age as provided for by the law who enter into marriage shall do so based on their free consent and shall enjoy equal rights and responsibilities.

#### **2.1.9. Right to Own Property**

- a) Every Youth shall have the right to own and to inherit property and not be arbitrarily deprived of such property.

#### **2.1.10. Right to Development**

- a) Every youth shall have the right to social, economic, political and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind.

#### **2.1.11. Right to Gainful Employment**

- a) Every youth has the right to:
  - i. Freely choose a lawful occupation;
  - ii. Receive equal pay for equal work;
  - iii. Work under equitable and satisfactory conditions that respect their dignity;

### **2.1.12. Right to Participation**

The Youth shall have the right to be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national and regional development plans, policies and poverty reduction strategies

#### **a) Right to Participate in Political Processes**

The Youth shall have the right to:

- i. Take part in public affairs, directly or through their elected representatives, at the Community, and
- ii. Compete for positions in regular, free and fair elections in accordance with the appropriate laws.

#### **b) The Right to participate in Decision-making processes**

The Youth shall have the right to fully participate in the decision-making processes of their respective Partner States and at the Community level.

### **2.1.13. Right to Access Justice**

- a) The youth shall have the right to a fair trial; to be tried by tribunals, previously established by law, that are independent and impartial; not to be charged for offences that are not defined by the law and their punishments not prescribed; to legal representation.
- b) Youth detained, imprisoned or in rehabilitation centres have the right not to be subjected to torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment and to participate in programmes that will lead to reformation, social rehabilitation and re-integration.

### **2.1.14. Right to Education and Skills Development**

Every youth shall have the right to education of good quality.

### **2.1.15. Right to adequate standard of Living**

The Youth have the right to a standard of living adequate to their health and wellbeing including food, water and sanitation, and shelter/housing.

### **2.1.16. Right to Health Care**

Every youth shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and psychological/mental health.

### **2.1.17. Right to Leisure and Recreation Activities**

Every youth shall have the right to leisure and participate in recreational activities for their physical and mental wellbeing.

### 3.0. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE YOUTH

Every youth shall have responsibilities towards his or her immediate family and society, the state, the East African Community and the international community.

Every Youth shall be obliged to: Promote the fundamental principles of the East Africa Community; Have respect for parents and elders and assist them in cases of need in the spirit of positive East African values; Partake fully in citizenship duties including voting, decision making, governance and community work where relevant among many other responsibilities.

### 4.0. TARGET GROUPS

The EAC Youth Policy provides a unique opportunity for improving the quality of life for all East African Youth. However, certain categories of youth have been identified for special attention due to their vulnerability and circumstances of living. These groups therefore need special programmes. They include:

- a) The unemployed youth
- b) Orphans
- c) The female youth migrants
- d) Urban youth migrants
- e) The rural youth
- f) Youth in the informal sector
- g) The street youths
- h) Domestic servants /helpers
- i) The illiterate youth
- j) Youth in security agencies
- k) Youth with disability
- l) Youth who are terminally ill
- m) Pastoral and nomadic youth
- n) Youth in schools /training institutions
- o) Youth in situations of armed conflict and disaster areas
- p) Youth infected /affected with HIV/ AIDS
- q) School dropout and out of school youth
- r) Youth in refugee camps and internally displaced youth
- s) Youth addicted to drugs and substances
- t) Youth in-mates and those just released from prisons
- u) Employed youth below the age of 18.

### 5.0. STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

This Policy proposes actions on intervention areas which are structured around the objectives of this policy and the issues identified under section 3.0.

#### 5.1. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



To empower the youth to develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of the Community through taking all appropriate measures with a view to achieving full realisation of the right to gainful employment.

## **5.2. EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

To empower the youth and develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of the community through enhancing equal access to high quality education and training.

## **5.3. HEALTH**

To ensure the health wellbeing of youths in East Africa, able to perform to their maximum potential

## **5.4. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

To empower the youth to develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of the society through the development of their creativity, and technological competence

## **5.5. PEACE AND SECURITY**

To ensure youth participation in political processes and peace building for political, social and economic stability of the East African Community

## **5.6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

To ensure youth participation in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national and regional development plans, policies and strategies in sustainable development.

## **5.7. GENDER DIMENSIONS**

To mainstream gender in youth issues, policies, laws and programmes at the national and regional level.

## **5.8. LEISURE, RECREATION AND SPORTS**

To ensure talent and skills development for gainful employment and the healthy wellbeing of the youths in EAC

## **5.9. CULTURE**

To ensure the appreciation of cultural diversity for peace and sustainable development in the EAC region.

## **5.10. COMMUNITY SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERISM**

To promote the spirit of volunteerism and community service among the youth as a means of building a sense of responsibility for community development and regional integration

### **5.11. YOUTH IN THE DIASPORA**

To ensure meaningful participation of youth in the Diaspora in all political and economic processes for the development and stability of the Community;

### **5.12. POVERTY ERADICATION AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF THE YOUTH**

To promote economic empowerment of youth through meaningful participation in all development programmes

### **5.13. DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

To mainstream meaningful youth participation in all EAC processes

### **5.14. NETWORKING AND PARTNERSHIPS**

To promote effective youth participation in all EAC processes through well established national and regional coordination mechanisms

## **6.0. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS**

The implementation of the Policy will be the responsibility of the EAC secretariat and the Partner States. In that context, various implementation instruments will be developed to operationalise the policy. These include, an elaborate Youth Action Plan. In addition, the Partner States shall develop country specific policies, strategies, lines of action, legislation and establish institutional arrangements for addressing youth concerns in line with the EAC Youth Policy. The EAC secretariat shall work closely with relevant EAC organs and institutions and Partner States institutions in the execution of regional programs, projects and activities emanating from the Policy. This will be achieved through strengthening and mobilizing of capacities of existing relevant institutions and facilities in the region to meet pressing youth challenges.

To this end the Institutions stipulated below shall have the following obligations in the implementation of this Policy:

## **7.0. EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY ORGANS AND INSTITUTIONS**

The East African Community shall, through its institutions and organs, ensure that Partner States respect the commitments made and fulfil the duties outlined in this Policy.

### **7.1. EAC Secretariat**

- a) Coordinate and guide the overall implementation of the policy and its strategic plan
- b) Report on the implementation progress of the Policy to the Sectoral Council

## **7.2. East African Legislative Assembly**

- a) Spearhead enactment of youth friendly Legislation and Policies and ensure establishment of youth regional institutions

## **7.3. EAC Sectoral Council on Gender, Children, Youth, Social Protection and Community Development**

- a) Be responsible for the preparation of a comprehensive implementation programme and the setting out of priorities with respect to the youth;
- b) Monitor and keep under constant review the implementation of the programmes of the Community with respect to the youth;

## **8.0. EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY YOUTH COUNCIL**

This policy shall seek to establish an East African Community Youth Council within the East African Community to provide a platform and a reference body for the youth of East Africa. It will seek to effectively engage the youth in the integration process of the East African Community.

## **9.0. ROLES AND DUTIES OF STAKEHOLDERS**

### **9.1. Duties of Partner States**

- a) Partner States shall recognize the rights, freedoms and duties enshrined in this EAC Youth Policy
- b) Partner States shall undertake the necessary steps, in accordance with their Constitutional processes, to adopt such legislative or other measures that may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of this Policy

### **9.2. Role of Civil Society, Private Sector and other Interest Groups**

Acknowledging the increased role of civil society and private sector in the management and provision of social services, civil society and private sector shall ensure that the rights, freedoms and duties outlined in this Policy are upheld and respected.

### **9.3. Role of Development Partners**

Development Partners will work closely with the EAC Secretariat, the Partner States, youth focused organizations and other key stakeholders to provide technical and financial support.

