



# **POLICY, ISSUES & ACTORS:**

## **Vol 19, No4**

**Identity Crisis?  
Youth, Social and Political Identity in South Africa**

Malachia Mathoho and Kirty Ranchod

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**Policy: issues and actors**

Vol 17 no 8

**Policy: issues & actors**

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**Centre for Policy Studies**

Johannesburg

March 2006

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Paper funded by the Foundation for Human Rights (South Africa)

ISBN -1-920030-38-7

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In good part, “the consolidation of South Africa’s democracy depends on the socialisation of youth into a ‘good’ adult citizenry and their integration into society and polity”. However, in order to engage the youth more actively in political activity it is essential that we are able to understand the type of culture that has been created amongst the youth since 1990 (when the liberation movements were unbanned), and how this has shaped their identity.

The paper will centre on youth identity: but in order to do so it will have to illustrate the status of the youth and the challenges they currently face within the South African society. The paper will provide an overview of some of the organisations that have been created to assist the youth and some of the ways in which they contribute to youth development and the consolidation of South Africa’s democracy as well as their role in shaping youth identity. Youth participation in political activities and democracy and their voting patterns in the county’s elections will also be discussed.

Youth in South Africa are faced with a number of challenges such as more active participation in politics, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty, unemployment, crime and a lack of education. All of these factors influence the way in which the youth identifies itself and how it interacts within society - especially how it integrates into society. Some 80% of young people live in the developing world, and almost 40% of the South African population are between the ages of 14 and 35. In this age cohort people are subject to many changes: from school to higher education or the world of work; from being single to being married and/or supporting dependents (and therefore of necessity becoming more responsible); contributing more to the wider society through employment and other social and political activities. So their importance in the functioning and building of healthy democracies cannot be overlooked.

## 2. DEFINING YOUTH

The definition of youth varies from country to country and within South Africa, the definition even varies between different organisations and government departments. Each typically defines youth to fit into its own parameters. According to the National Youth Commission Act of 1996, youth are defined as people between the age of 14 and 35. The Primary reason (cited by many authors) for proposing such a broad definition of youth was the impact that apartheid had on postponing the transition to adulthood of many young South Africans. The high levels of unrest during the eighties and nineties, together with the high levels of unemployment has made it very difficult for youth to become financially independent, to get married or establish their own households.

The White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) defines youth as 16 to 30 year olds. The South African Constitution, the Child Care Act and the Children’s Act, define children as those persons under the age of 18 years. It can be argued, however, that within the National Youth Commission’s (NYC’s) definition of youth, there are sub-categories of youth that will have different needs and priorities. The needs of 14 to 18 year olds will be different to that of 18 to 25 year olds. The NYC definition helps to incorporate all the sub-categories of youth under one definition. For the purpose of this paper we will apply this definition of youth.

### 3. YOUTH IDENTITY

The identities of the youth cannot be separated from those of the people in the country in general: they are intertwined. Yet one can distinguish two critical moments when youth political identity has been decisively shaped. One is aligned to the past, while the other is aligned to the present. Both are rooted in the history and politics of apartheid and inequality and are described below (see Youth and Political Identity, below). Identity, for both youth and the population in general, under the apartheid regime was often imposed from above, rather than being spontaneously developed on the basis of cultural and historical connectedness. The concept of identity as imposed from above was coupled with notion of ethnicity, which was informed by apartheid ideology and underpinned by sectional interests.

Identity can be defined as the individual characteristics by which a thing or person is known. Identity theorists posit that the individual consists of a collection of identities, (such as: I am a father, a male and a worker) each of which is based on occupying a specific role. Identities can be defined as one's answer to the question "who am I?" Many of the answers lie in the roles people occupy in a society.

Youth today are seen as uninterested in politics, materialistic in nature and consumer orientated. In January 2000 the director of the hugely successful YFM radio station (a station aimed at the youth) was quoted as saying "Black youth are apolitical and extremely materialistic". According to a researcher, David Everett, youth have been transformed into the new consumption driven capitalists of South Africa. They spend only on hip, big name, and expensive brands. With the new dispensation in 1994, many former youth activists and leaders moved into big business, government and politics and so effectively the youth's role models were no longer as easily accessible as they had been during the struggle. They were not approachable and even though youth aspired to them, they no longer identified with them. They could be seen driving expensive cars, wearing designer labels, living in the suburbs and enjoying the fruits of the new democracy and black economic empowerment. It led to the creation of new identities associated with the nouveau riche. A culture and identity developed among many of these role models that were unattainable for the majority of South Africa's youth.

Instead two distinct youth identities have been formed. One is that of rich, privileged consumers, well educated and enjoying the opportunities provided by South Africa's new democracy, such as black economic empowerment and exposure to international brands and ideas. The other is that of poor, marginalized youth, with no or little education, several of whom have resorted to crime in an attempt to enjoy the consumerist lifestyle of their peers and role models or just to survive. Neither of these groups fully participates in the political life of the new South Africa. The first group takes advantage of all the opportunities available but puts back very little into the democracy in terms of social development. The second group, even if they manage to secure a tertiary qualification, often do not pursue fields of study where South Africa is lacking in skills. Often this is a result of substandard education in the areas of maths and science at school. Participation, however, is the one thing that is crucial to strengthening democracy, whether the youth are rich, middle class or poor.

The picture painted here is obviously not so clear-cut; there are a number of youth in the middle working hard to access the opportunities available. The new South Africa has made it possible for

many youth to quickly become upwardly mobile. There are also young men and women who are taking up the reigns of their own development by volunteering in various projects that affect them. The Department of Social Development estimates that South Africa has close to ten thousand volunteers providing home and community based care for HIV/AIDS affected people and close to seventy percent of these are young people.

The Young Communist League (YCL) believes that youth should be advocating for a culture and identity that all can engage in. They argue that the current culture (of consumerism) and identity is merely a means to sustain ideas of market capitalism: the major problem with this is that in a competition there have to be winners and losers, they say. "Therefore the cultural path explored, which integrates the racial and tribal diversity of our country has fallen victim to a pyramidal society." In a pyramidal society the economic classes are in a shape of a pyramid, with the wealthy at the top of the pyramid (few in number) down to the poor (who are in the majority).

Some youth have become so angered by continual marginalisation that they have resorted to violence to get their point across. Active participation in demonstrations and protests is a constitutional right, but the youth sometimes exhibit violent tendencies which undermine everything that they are fighting for and makes them seem like an aggressive group with no clear structure and bad leadership; they end up losing their audience. A typical example is the beginning of every new university year when there are at least some violent protests and vandalism by youth who fight against university registration policies.

Youth also have a shared sense of morality. Among many, there is a strong emphasise on liberation from all restraints and on a guiltless pursuit of pleasure. Youth culture is a combination of individualism (right to do their own thing) and collectivism mainly fused into a common experience; the search for identity is at the centre of all this. Black youth in the township particularly, have become more aware of their identity and many have been keen to fuse the new with the old - the contemporary with the South African traditional culture. This was displayed in the contemporary township youth music, Kwaito, with black and white artists fusing music, dance, fashion and a whole new way of interacting and learning. This has been instrumental in bringing the worlds of black and white youth closer together and creating a closer sense of cultural solidarity.

#### **4. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

One of the prizes of good governance in a democratic society is a regular participation by citizens in electing the government of their choice. Voting is often used as a barometer of the public's trust in the political process and in the government.

Involvement in youth and community organizations is regarded as an important indicator of youth civic engagement, as well as a predictor of involvement in civic and political affairs in later life.

In common with global trends, young South Africans seem to be withdrawing from political participation, including voting and registering to vote. A survey conducted by HSRC found that 66% of respondents have never participated in a community sports team, 75% have never been involved with

a community society or club, and 80% have never been a member of a civic or community organization.

There are also various indications of low rates of participation by youth in civil society organizations. For example, a study of civil society in South Africa by IDASA and CORE (2001:22) drew attention to the small number of civil society organizations involved with young people. Qualitative data from the study indicated a limited involvement of youth in civil society (including sports organizations), as well as the fragility of existing youth organizations. In a related trend, the youth, particularly those in rural areas, said that they were not getting enough support from their parents and other adults to get involved in civil society activities.

It makes sense then that the government and youth organisations should seek to connect with the youth on youth issues through a language and idiom that they are more at ease with. This does not necessarily mean using a local youth icon - it can be done by just using normal language more imaginatively and in a way that will connect with the youth. Imagine an advertising campaign with a billboard saying:

Infected with AIDS:

A - A class

I - Independent thinker

D - Dynamic

S - Super Intelligent

Or: "Unemployed? Join the national youth service".

It makes a lot more sense than jargon, which most youth do not connect with at all. The attention span of most youth is very limited and publicity aimed at them should be short and to the point.

## 5. YOUTH AND POLITICAL CHANGE

The historical development of the youth movement in South Africa was mainly characterized by political events that helped shape youth development and led to the freedom of the general population. Youth activities in the 1970s and 1980s contributed to bringing about political and social transformation and democracy in the 1990s. The 1976 political uprising - led by the youth - was a watershed event in that it helped propel the apartheid government towards the country's first democratic elections in 1994. Black youth defied the government of the day in the struggle to liberate the country. Many young people during that time assumed the identity of freedom fighters.

Young men and women were proud to identify themselves as "comrades", fighters committed to the liberation of the people. These young people developed a strong sense of moral righteousness,

which at times degenerated into less defensible ethical and moral positions in which the end justified the means. Those who disagreed with and did not participate in their popular method of struggle and activities risked being branded as informers or as serving the interests of the apartheid government.

These “comrades” became the informal leaders of the day and ruled the township streets by day and night. South African political activities made world headlines almost daily, politics became impossible to avoid and the state lost control in the townships. Consequently state structures faced massive resistance.

Because of this generation of youth’s actions, many carried this revolutionary identity forward into adulthood. Today many of those adults who during their youth seriously participated in the political activities and struggle that liberated South Africa, are among the leaders of this country.

Post-Apartheid South Africa has spawned a new youth identity that differs from that of the past. After 1990, legitimate ANC structures were established and political mobilization among youth declined sharply as the ANC returned to conventional politics.

Politics was no longer as encompassing or fashionable as in the past and activism lost its mass appeal among the youth.

## 6. ELECTIONS

Elections are considered a democratic and legitimate way of citizens choosing the government of their choice. However, the contemporary youth of South Africa face an uncertain future because of high and increasing rates of unemployment, while globalization makes new demands on them. With an unemployment rate of approximately 40%, the youth are the most vulnerable and have to contend with these global changes, so they are unlikely to put their effort into political activities - a sign of this is their declining interest in the elections processes. Convincing the youth to participate more actively in political activities requires great political leadership and will. Influencing the youth to become more involved requires a different approach to that used on older citizens, especially since older citizens have been more politicized because of the all-encompassing nature of the apartheid struggle. Young voters rely much more on serious hard issues when making an electoral choice.

The youth make voting decisions differently from their elders: an American study of youth participation in elections and political activities has indicated that because the youth are more independent and less partisan than older voters, they are less likely to base their vote on party affiliation. Although South Africa differs greatly from the United States (US), the voting behavior of youth in the US holds important lessons for us in South Africa.

The study listed three pinnacles that young voters are likely to consider in making their voting decisions:

- Election candidate’s stance on issues. The most important factor is a candidate’s stand on issues, especially as they affect their community. Like all voters, young people want

candidates to explain issues in ways relevant to their lives; otherwise a candidate could lose that vote.

- The experience and record of election candidates. A candidate's experience and record of public service are also important to young voters. Of special significance to them are candidate's non-political activities, volunteer service and community involvement. That increases the confidence of youth who are ready to vote. Even if the candidate has not been in office for long, his/her earlier volunteer service remains a touchstone for young voters.
- A candidate's character. Young voters look for a candidate who is straightforward, honest, and authentic - and who can admit to mistakes. They want candidates who can be honest about what can and cannot be accomplished, and have the self-confidence to say so.

The study also typified young voters into two groups: the likely young voters and the potential young voters. The likely young voters are regarded as more politically oriented than their peers and they trust government far more. They expect election candidates to pay attention to their concerns if they want to win their votes. They view elections as the way for people to have a voice in their communities. They understand the power of voting. They also see themselves as able to make a difference in solving problems in their communities.

The potential young voters are typically community volunteers rather than political activists. They are not likely to be campaign workers for election candidates. This is a group of young voters that takes the community involvement seriously.

## 6.1 Youth voting patterns

South Africa and the US share similar experiences on youth voting patterns. Youth participation in elections is often used as a measure of their level of participation in democracy. Electoral trends since 1994 have indicated a withdrawal of South African youth from political participation. Young people voted in large numbers in the first democratic elections in 1994, but their commitment had dissipated by the next general elections in 1999. Only about a quarter of South Africans between the age of 18 and 29 voted in the local government elections in 2000.

In the run up to the 2004 general elections, concerns were expressed about young South Africans' withdrawal from, and disenchantment with politics. The IEC voters' roll comparison showed a decrease of young participants in the elections. It indicated a handful of young people at the age of 18-19 (717 466) registered for 1999 elections, and this number dropping to (597 190) in the 2004 elections. In the 20-25 years bracket, 3,015,901 registered for the 1999 elections while only 2,921 215 registered for the 2004 elections. In contrast, registered voters in the 25-35 age cohort increased from 4,951 891 in 1999 to 5,675 440 in 2004. This indicates that those young people who are approaching adulthood are more concerned and serious about participating in elections.

It should be noted that low turnout of young voters is not a problem confined to South Africa. In the United States, for example, the participation of young people in elections has also been

declining over the years: only 50% of 18-24 year olds voted in the 1972 presidential election, and this dropped to 41% in 1984 and 32% in 2000 elections.

Prior to the 1994 general elections young South Africans seemed to be as determined as their older counterparts to participate in elections and other political activities. In the 1994 elections approximately 93% of youth voted. Compared according to race, black youth had the highest turnout in this election (only 5.7% did not vote) while white youth had the lowest rate (about 17.4% did not vote). This presumably reflects some political alienation among whites based on a perception that were losing their privileged status.

Comparing the 1994 general elections with the 1995 local government elections, some interesting and worrying patterns emerge. There are a number of issues that affected turn-out, but even after considering them, the fact remains that non-voting among youth in South Africa increased by 36% in just nineteen months: 43.5% of black youth, 42.8% of coloured youth and 35.1% of white youth did not participate in the 1995 local elections.

The high voter turnout in 1994 was the result of various factors affecting a broad spectrum of South Africans. Not least was the fact that these were the first democratic elections and in a sense voting, especially by blacks, was an act of liberation. There were also high levels of political awareness and high expectations of better living conditions. Voter turnout declined after the second elections - the 1995 local government elections.

Research by the HSRC shortly before the 1994 elections showed that about one in five eligible voters (20%) were active members of a political party at the time and prepared to take part in the elections. In the HSRC's 1998 survey, this figure declined to 10%.

The IEC's 1999 report shows that the level of registration among first-time voters (below 20 years) is significantly lower than among older persons. The relatively low level of registration by those below 20 years can be explained by the fact that these youngsters have not been socialized in a society as highly politicized as apartheid South Africa. Secondly, since apartheid was officially outlawed in 1994, the perception may be that there is now less need for them to be politically active. Thirdly, about two-thirds of first-time voters were not in possession of an ID document at the time, and consequently could not register to vote.

In 1994, African respondents recorded a high level of active political party membership (24%), followed by whites (17%). By 1998, active membership among Africans had decreased to 12%, and that of whites (the most significant decrease) to 4%. This decline amongst the general population correlates with the survey done by CASE in 1998 on the voter turnout of youth.

The outcome of the first two rounds of voter registration has highlighted an important shift in the attitude of the voting population in South Africa. There appears to be a certain degree of unwillingness among some potential voters to register, which is particularly pronounced among first-time voters - i.e. persons below the age of 20. A whole range of factors also appears to influence the likelihood of potential youth voters registering in time for an election.

Firstly, young people move from one place to the other at different times due to various reasons such as studying at tertiary level and new jobs that require them to relocate. In consequence, this

migration results in many of the youth finding themselves in voting districts, where they are not registered as voters. A survey by HSRC shows that young people (18-34 years) in South Africa form the highest percentage (14.2%) of those who moved from one place to the other, as compared to adults (35-44 years) at 9.6%, the 45-54 year cohort at 7.6%, the 55-64 year cohort at 7.2% and the 65 years and above cohort at 10.5%.

Secondly, social issues and status such as unemployment, education and dependency contribute to the voter apathy among youth. Given the high rates of unemployment among youth (peaking in 2001 at about 40% among 25-year olds and standing at about 35% in the 22-31 cohort) it is clear that many young people who participated in the first democratic elections in 1994 are now unemployed and some cannot afford to get a better education. Consequently young people are less inclined to participate in political activities or to listen to campaign promises from politicians during elections. Dependent youth rely on parents and relatives for assistance thus their participation in elections is minimal compared to independent youth. Information from Statistics South Africa shows that more than 60% of young South Africans between 14-19 years still live with their parents, while 40%-60% of those between 20-25 years do likewise. Some 20% to 40% of those in the 26-34 cohort still live with parents. This shows that the majority of young people still depend on their parents, often leaving them with a minimal interest in political activities as they tend not to be directly affected.

A high percentage of the youth is unemployed (see above) and as a result, a large number remain trapped in poverty. Although a relative majority of young people perceive an improvement in their social situation in the past ten years, particularly those who grew up under conditions of severe impoverishment and those belonging to historically disadvantaged groups, they see their financial positions as having deteriorated over time. Consequently many have lost hope in the political process as a way to bail them out of their condition.

All of these developments pose serious threats to the integration of young people into society and to the very foundations of our young democracy. The consolidation of democracy in South Africa depends, in large part, on the socialization of youth into a good adult citizenry and their integration into the society and polity. The engagement of youth and their integration into society also plays a major role in determining whether young people will develop trust in fellow citizens and the institutions of their society and will contribute to the common good, or whether they will pursue narrow self-interests or become involved in crime, violence and substance abuse.

## 7. THE SOCIAL AREA

Apart from the political challenges facing South African youth, there are some major social challenges such as unemployment, HIV/AIDS, poverty and crime facing young South Africans. It is important for the youth to identify themselves in a positive manner by taking ownership of the social challenges facing them, and adopt a stance on these. They need to fully participate in the policy-making process that seeks to address these challenges as well as be part of their resolution. Democracy has generated a platform for engaging openly with the youth about important issues affecting their lives, the apparatus to address them, and effective youth participation in the process.

## 6.1 Unemployment, HIV/AIDS, Poverty and Crime

In a survey by **Lovelife** (South Africa's national HIV prevention programme for the youth), youth were asked to identify their greatest challenges. HIV and child abuse topped the list above crime, drugs, education and teenage pregnancy. Other issues included unemployment, poverty and violence. These findings indicate that the youth are aware of the dangers of HIV and perceive that the one factor responsible for spreading HIV is child abuse. Child abuse is something that can have an effect on an individual's entire life. It can influence the way they interact with others and can lead to anti-social behaviour. The latter is not conducive to building a strong and vibrant youth that will ensure the consolidation of democracy. Government and the society more generally need to more seriously address this issue.

HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest threats to the country's developmental goals and it has a devastating effect on the youth. Apart from the high rates of infection among youth, they are also often left as orphans and many have become sole breadwinners for siblings. Many are left homeless and unwanted - a factor that practically ends their youth status as they are forced to take on the roles traditionally undertaken by adults in the society. They are thus unable to identify themselves as youth or with the issues of youth. Many young women drop out of school due to unwanted pregnancies and are unable to finish their education because of a lack of financial resources. Again, poverty and a lack of education are highlighted, because if these could be eliminated, then all youth would have a better chance of participating in the building of a thriving South African economy, developing a sense of pride, and positively identifying with the society.

Youth in the 15-30 year old cohort account for about 40% of South Africa's economically active population yet some 58% of the jobless population are in this age group. This means that they are disproportionately affected by unemployment compared to the adult population where it is 26%. Unemployment is also unequally distributed among the races and between males and females. Young economically active Africans have very low access to the labour market (60% of them are unemployed, double the unemployment rate of Indians and coloureds). Whites appear to be relatively unaffected by unemployment as less than 10% of young whites are unemployed. The Status of the Youth Report (SYR) indicates that two-thirds of its sample (18-35 year olds) have never had a job and remain financially dependent on others.

It seems then, that despite the fact that we are 10 years into the new democracy and there is legislation in place such as affirmative action and employment equity, the majority of the previously disadvantaged youth are still unable to find jobs. This has resulted in large numbers remaining trapped in poverty. Youth organisations and government youth structures need to help remedy the situation. This can be done through education, youth development and capital injection into youth projects. This capital should also be coaxed from the corporate and private sector with greater emphasis on the benefits for companies who buy into youth development initiatives.

The Young Communist League (YCL) believes that everyone has the ability to work despite being unskilled. Having skills is important, but this is useless without the means of production being owned by workers themselves, because capitalists determine when and who to employ and retrench. This is why the youth must become more involved in developing government policies and participating in community upliftment and social reconstruction of their societies.

Like unemployment, the levels of crime are high among the youth in South Africa: the highest proportion of both victims and perpetrators of crime and violence is to be found amongst the youth. The combination of poverty and circumstance, together with forced roles (such as being parents to siblings), which they take on because of circumstances, make it very difficult for them to find a better life. Their sense of self (identity) may not be too positive or very conducive to building democracy; many may be forced into gangs and criminal activity to survive.

The National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) underlines that historical marginalisation and experiences of powerlessness by many South Africans has shaped a crisis of identity by particular constituencies in South Africa. The NCPS is based on a shift in emphasis from reactive "crime control"; which deploys most resources towards responding after crimes have already been committed, towards proactive "crime prevention" aimed at preventing crime from occurring at all.

The 2005 UNDP report on "capacity building in the area of youth justice" indicates that the youth constituency has borne the brunt of social, political, economic and educational marginalisation, to the point that this group has experienced this as a rejection by the dominant culture. During the eighties, many of the youth were involved in political activities but the change to democracy created a loss of identity and they found it hard to integrate into the new society. Many turned to youth criminal gangs and this has continued to shape their ongoing integration into criminal activities.

Another very important social factor that is not mentioned very often, is the breakdown in the family structure. Authority was taken away from the parent; this has been true from the apartheid times when youth were called upon to be soldiers and this parental authority fell in the hands of youth leaders. It is important that we recognise and acknowledge the role of the parent and the community in building the youths' social and political identity. The community has to support youth initiatives and become advocates for youth development.

Youth development organisations' concern with youth marginalisation began in the eighties, and was precipitated by the mass education boycotts, the mounting prevalence of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy and the growing joblessness in the formal sector. It was during this time that the Southern African Catholics Bishop's Conference and the South African Council of Churches formed the Joint Enrichment Project (JEP) in order to address these problems and focus on youth development.

The JEP attempted to rectify the problems faced by many youth and help them overcome their circumstance. Through their youth service programme, the JEP assists youth become involved in the reconstruction and development of their own communities and in doing so, change their own lives. The JEP also assists the youth to access and create viable opportunities for themselves, mobilise communities and provide a caring, nurturing environment for youth. The JEP works with government, NGOs, community organisation and churches.

As politics became less violent and negotiation was seen as a viable substitute to achieving a democratic South Africa, the youth were needed less and less as soldiers and they were demobilised with few alternatives, resulting in their increasing marginalisation. In 1993 Everett and Orkin estimated that a third of young people were marginalized or seriously alienated from society. Only a quarter were regarded as fully engaged in society. These estimates were based on an index that the authors developed to assess the extent to which young people saw themselves as having little or no

future; were alienated from their families, jobs, and schools; described themselves as angry or violent; had never heard of AIDS; were out of touch or hostile to the changes taking place in South Africa, had low self esteem; and were not involved in any social organisation or structure.

In the post-apartheid era, black youth were labelled as ‘the lost generation’ by the media. During this time, NGOs and Civic organisations struggled to promote and implement strategies aimed at youth development. By the end of the nineties, many youth organisations had closed, failing in their mandates; these included the National Youth Development Forum, which was created by the government as the implementing body for the JEP.

In 1996 the government created the National Youth Commission (NYC) with plans to develop a comprehensive strategy on the youth. The NYC worked closely with other youth organisations but it failed to realise that the majority of the youth do not belong to youth structures. They were thus unsuccessful in engaging this section of the youth. Analyses of the social participation of South African youth show low levels of participation in organised activities with 66% of respondents never having participated in a community sports team, 75% never having been involved with a community, society or club, and 80% never having been a member of a civic community organisation.

The one exception to this trend was the high attendance at religious services. The church’s role in engaging young people should not be underestimated. This avenue needs to be explored further and where possible, exploited. Belonging to religious structures also has the added advantage of strengthening ideas regarding morality and self worth, teaching the difference between right and wrong and the creation of wholesome identities. However, a disadvantage could be overly strict religious values that discourage discussion of reproductive and health issues, such as HIV/AIDS.

It can be argued that the government was to blame for the failure of the youth structures it created because it did not provide adequate resources, both financial and human, for their operation - something which reflects badly on the government’s commitment to youth issues. The NYC, for example, did not have the power to endorse, fund or implement policies, as its task was to develop a policy platform and monitor its implementation. It developed the ‘Youth Policy 2000’ but according to David Everatt, nothing of substance has come out of it.

The youth structures also failed to make any genuine impact on: the Reconstruction and Development Programme; the creation of a separate youth ministry; or the deployment of desk officers in key ministries. Achieving these objectives could have gone a long way toward creating a separate and unique identity for the youth. These youth structures would have had the advantage of their own budgets and this would have allowed them to develop their own policies and structures with government’s full support.

In reality, we have government youth structures such as the Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF), which was created in 2001 and whose task it is to create opportunities for the youth. **Programmes such as the National Youth Service will seek to serve the interests of youth more effectively and develop their potential. The National Youth Service has three essential functions:**

1. to provide a service that benefits people other than the youth participants - such as the wider community;

2. to promote the development of a positive profile of the youth within the community benefiting from the service; and
3. to provide the young participant with an opportunity for experiential learning or on the job experience linked to structured learning and individual development.

Young people, therefore, are able to develop positive and meaningful identities within their very own communities. Their self worth is improved and they have more purpose.

The UYF has also been mandated to establish the National Youth Service Unit, which will provide administration services and support to the National Youth Service. The Fund has particularly focused on introducing programme areas that have not been targeted before. It has managed to secure partnerships with sector and employment training authorities (SETAs) for the various industries. The UYF seems to have done a better job than counterparts such as the NYC. The fund has committed R480 million to 90 projects affecting 132 000 young people.

However, both the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and the Inkatha Freedom Party's Youth Brigade (IFPYB) have called for the closure of the UYF and the NYC, claiming that they are inaccessible and ineffective. Many youth have complained that the fund's requirement of 10% collateral in order to qualify for financial assistance is a deterrent, as many young people do not have any money to start off with. Both the IFPYB and the ANCYL have argued that one of the major shortcomings of the UYF is that it operates like a conventional bank, taking limited risk and using commercialised financing instruments, thereby excluding most young people. The ANC, in its National General Council in June 2005, resolved to merge the two institutions to create an integrated Youth Development Agency that would lead the youth development agenda in a more focussed manner. **This had not occurred at the time of writing.**

The South African YMCA has been running a youth worker intern programme for a number of years which exposes trainees to various local organisations **and the programmes of the national council. Interns are expected to work in their local organisations implementing the skills gained and methodologies learned in various local programmes.** The majority of the interns are involved with their local YMC, as either as volunteers or in paid positions, and feel their positions are a direct result of them attending the youth worker intern programme. Many interns have said that the programme has empowered them on both the professional and personal levels.

Many young people offered training in various youth organisations have gone on to develop and plough back into their communities. Some have gone on to start their own youth organisations and businesses to empower more youth to achieve what they have achieved. Typical examples of youth ploughing back into communities can be found on [www.ydn.org.za](http://www.ydn.org.za).

Junior Achievement South Africa is a youth organisation that runs a programme called the Mini-Enterprise Programme which provides business and life skills training to secondary school learners, to enable them to participate in corporate and industrial employment or to start their own businesses. Learners are recruited from different cultural backgrounds in accordance with South Africa's demographic realities. This strengthens democracy in more ways than one. It provides a better

chance of finding employment, strengthens the economy, brings together young people of different races and backgrounds and provides a platform for them to interact and learn about each other and from each other.

The Youth Enterprise Development Project is yet another project aimed at assisting youth to establish their own businesses, in the hope that it will serve to improve the situation of the community in which they live. According to the small business agency, Ntsika, in 2000 SMMEs contributed about 40% to South Africa's GDP and their contribution to overall employment in the formal and informal sectors was well above 60%. So it is definitely a viable option for creating wealth.

Idasa's "children's budget" unit works specifically in partnership with children to build the capacity of children to participate in governance by monitoring budgets for realisation of their rights. They also work with children to educate them about the processes of government.

Overall, however, youth are not taking up the opportunities that exist; this may be because they are unaware of them. The youth structures of the government are not doing enough to get the message to the youth about programmes that are available that may be of assistance. Another problem may be that youth organisations do not have the capacity to deal with the large numbers of marginalized youth or those on the verge of being marginalized. There is also a huge gap in the mobilisation of more affluent youth to engage the challenges of youth development. Many of these youth are in a position to be mentors, tutors, skills trainers etc. but they have not been engaged.

## 7. DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The definition of youth varies from country to country and within South Africa, the definition even varies between different organisations and government departments. Each typically defines youth to fit into its own parameters. According to the National Youth Commission Act of 1996, youth are defined as people between the age of 14 and 35. The Primary reason (cited by many authors) for proposing such a broad definition of youth was the impact that apartheid had on postponing the transition to adulthood of many young South Africans. The high levels of unrest during the eighties and nineties, together with the high levels of unemployment has made it very difficult for youth to become financially independent, to get married or establish their own households.

The White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) defines youth as 16 to 30 year olds. The South African Constitution, the Child Care Act and the Children's Act, define children as those persons under the age of 18 years. It can be argued, however, that within the National Youth Commission's (NYC's) definition of youth, there are sub-categories of youth that will have different needs and priorities. The needs of 14 to 18 year olds will be different to that of 18 to 25 year olds. The NYC definition helps to incorporate all the sub-categories of youth under one definition. For the purpose of this paper we will apply this definition of youth.

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### **3. MIGRATION IN SADC: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Cross-border migration, particularly for employment purposes within the SADC region was prevalent long before the 1990s. In fact, international labour migration within the southern African region for wages dates back at least 150 years. The countries of southern Africa (including Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Mozambique) have been sending and receiving migrants since the mid-nineteenth century when 50 000 - 80 000 labour migrants came to work on the Kimberley diamond mines. The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand changed the entire pattern of labour migration on the subcontinent. While initially most migrants came independently, the mining industry found this unprofitable and, therefore, set up a contract labour system in collaboration with colonial governments. By 1970, there were over 260 000 male labour migrants on the South African mines.<sup>1</sup>

Other mining centres in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Tanzania also became magnets for labour migrants from other countries. The other major employer of migrants in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland, Mauritius and Tanzania were commercial farms and plantations. In the colonial period, migrants also worked in urban centres in construction, domestic service and industry.

The informal movement of people across borders for work also has a long history in southern Africa. There are a number of well documented reasons for this:

- International borders in the region are long and have never been policed well. Before the 1960s, there were no border controls between many SADC states. Many migrants found it easy to move to other countries to find work.
- The regional mining industry was the only sector to establish a formal contract labour system. Other employers hiring migrants did not have access to this labour and often hired migrants outside the law, eg commercial agriculture and domestic service.
- Colonial regulations and the formal contract system for labour migrants were gender-biased. Female migrants could not migrate legally across borders for work. They therefore had to migrate illegally, which many did.
- Employers often preferred to hire non-locals because they were cheaper and more exploitable. Employers were rarely punished for this, so there were no incentives not to break the law. Instead enforcement has focused on identifying and deporting migrants.

By definition, informal labour migration is extremely difficult to measure; no records were kept by employers or governments. There are thus no reliable numbers other than census data, which does not distinguish legal from undocumented migrants. To accurately assess the exact dimensions of the current migration within SADC is difficult for the following reasons:

- National data collection systems do not collect systematic time-series data on foreign employment in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion on migration history in Southern Africa, see Crush J, Williams V. Labour Migration in Southern Africa Unpublished Research Report commissioned by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), November 2001.

- Census data can potentially yield valuable information but census must be oriented to migration related questions.
- Clandestine migration is difficult to count since migrants and employers have no interest in making their presence known.
- Notwithstanding the lack of reliable data, all SADC member states have immigration laws and policies that are based on three fundamental principles:<sup>2</sup>
- the sovereignty of the nation-state
- the integrity of national boundaries
- the right to determine who may enter its national territory and also to impose any conditions and obligations upon such persons.

The migration laws and policies of most SADC member states date back to the colonial era and are largely ‘protectionist’ and discourage the movement of persons across borders. This places immigration laws and policies at odds with the historical reality of cross-border migration and in fact encourages undocumented (illegal) movements. By driving migration underground, it becomes more difficult to achieve what migration laws and policies intend to achieve: the regulation and management of cross-border migration to ensure that it does not disproportionately disadvantage citizens and have a negative impact on either the source or destination countries.

In terms of current institutional arrangements in most SADC member states, cross-border migration inevitably creates a ‘dilemma of jurisdiction’. At its most basic, it becomes a tug-of-war between the Ministry / Department of Home Affairs / Immigration and the Ministry / Department of Labour. In its extended form, it also involves Foreign Affairs and Social and Welfare Services. The question is: who decides on the number of people who should be allowed into a country and the purpose and conditions under which they will be allowed? Once they’ve been granted access, what social and welfare services are they entitled to? How does the movement of citizens from one country to another impact on the relationship between the governments of the host and source countries?

The ‘dilemma of jurisdiction’ at national level is compounded by the fact that there are no formal institutional arrangements at a multilateral regional level that pertain to the management and regulation of migration. If anything, such institutional arrangements are conspicuously absent. The only regional institutional arrangement that has the potential to deal with migration in the region is the SADC Employment and Labour Sector (ELS), now incorporated into the Directorate of Social and Human Development. However, the ELS has paid scant attention to questions of migration and where it has, it has been rather ad hoc and inconsistent.

In terms of data collection and statistics, the role of the SADC Statistics Committee that has the brief “...to seek to achieve the comparability, standardisation and harmonisation of data processing, and statistical systems and policies...” is potentially crucial. Equally important is the SADC project to develop common methodologies for national censuses that, if targeted appropriately, can generate significant information about cross-border population movements.

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<sup>2</sup> Crush, Williams. Labour Migration in Southern Africa.

#### 4. TOWARDS THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS

As early as July 1993, an SADC workshop on the free movement of people was held in Harare and following the SADC Council of Ministers meeting in Swaziland in July of 1994, a team of consultants was appointed to prepare an SADC protocol on free movement.<sup>3</sup>

In March 1996, the ‘Draft Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in the Southern African Development Community’ (hereafter the free movement protocol) was completed and subsequently submitted to SADC member states for their comment. The objective of this free movement protocol was to phase in, over a period of ten years, the free movement of citizens of the SADC member states, between and within countries in the region, and to regulate the movement of citizens of non-SADC countries into and within the region.

After much back and forth, the free movement protocol was dropped, mainly on the insistence of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. The argument was that the region was not ready for the free movement of people yet, given the economic disparities between the various member states. Some argued that the free movement protocol amounted to an open border policy which did not take into account the potentially negative consequences of such a policy.

In response, and as an alternative to the free movement protocol, the ‘Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in SADC’ (hereafter the facilitation protocol) emerged, sponsored by the South African government. This facilitation protocol was more readily accepted and approved in principle at the SADC Summit of August 1997. It was agreed at the summit that every member state would have the opportunity to review and make amendments to the facilitation protocol and submit amendments to it at the summit that was scheduled for September 1998. However, the summit of September 1998 effectively put all discussions related to the facilitation protocol on hold indefinitely on the basis that the provisions of the facilitation protocol, and particularly those related to ‘establishment’ went beyond the mandate that was given to its drafters.

Discussion on the facilitation protocol was revived in 2003 when questions related to the movement of persons repeatedly surfaced during the deliberations of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. The organ set in motion a plan to work towards the adoption of the facilitation protocol that consisted of national consultations in each member state, a joint workshop at which member states were to submit their amendments and proposals, after which a redrafted facilitation protocol would be submitted to the SADC Summit for adoption and subsequent ratification by member states. However, this plan was not implemented as outlined, partly because of the unevenness of the national consultative processes in member states.

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see Williams.

In July 2005, the Ministerial Committee of the Organ met in South Africa where they considered and approved the 'Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons'. The draft protocol was subsequently tabled at the SADC Summit that was held in August 2005 where it was approved and signed by six member states. In their official communiqués, both the organ and the summit refer to the protocol as a means to give effect to the SADC Treaty that calls for the promotion of sustainable economic growth and development and the elimination of the obstacles to the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services, and of people generally among member states.<sup>4</sup>

The overall objective of the facilitation protocol, as described in the communiqué issued by the Organ, is to facilitate the movement of persons, but its specific objective is to facilitate entry into Member States without the need for a visa for a maximum period of ninety days. The official communiqué issued at the end of the summit also makes reference to the provisions pertaining to 'residence' and 'establishment' as described below.

In terms of its current status, therefore, the facilitation protocol has been formally adopted at the Summit of the Heads of States and it has been signed by six member states. However, for the protocol to come into effect, at least nine member states must have both signed and ratified it; a process which may yet take some time. Once the protocol has been ratified by nine member states (and, therefore comes into effect), time-frames for its implementation will be developed. It appears, however, that steps are already being taken to give effect to some of the provisions of the facilitation protocol. For example, a proposed meeting to be held in Namibia will consider the harmonisation of immigration policies and laws of SADC member states.

Ultimately, the success or otherwise of the Facilitation of Movement Protocol will be determined by a whole range of factors, as discussed below. But first, it is useful to look at where and how the facilitation protocol is located within the overall framework of SADC and what it specifically provides for in terms of its content.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROTOCOL

Article 10.3 of the 'Treaty Establishing SADC' authorises the summit to adopt legal instruments for the implementation of the provisions of the treaty. The facilitation protocol is one such legal instrument, which, in its preamble, expresses commitment to various provisions of the treaty, including the following:

- the duty to promote the interdependence and integration of our national economies for the harmonious, balanced and equitable development of the region
- the necessity to adopt a flexible approach in order to accommodate disparities in the levels of economic development among member states
- the need to redress imbalances in large scale population movement within SADC

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<sup>4</sup> SADC Communiqué available at [www.sadc.int](http://www.sadc.int)

<sup>5</sup> All references to the SADC Protocol are based on the version dated August 2005.

- to support, assist and promote the efforts of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which is encouraging free movement of persons...[within regions]...as a stepping stone towards free movement of persons in an eventual African Economic Community.

The protocol then refers specifically to Article 5.2(d) of the SADC Treaty, which "... requires SADC to develop policies aimed at the progressive elimination of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services, and of the people of the region generally, among member states..."

## **6. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROTOCOL**

The ultimate objective of the protocol is "... to develop policies aimed at the progressive elimination of obstacles to the movement of persons of the Region generally into and within the territories of State Parties" and it aims to do this by facilitating:

- entry, for a lawful purpose and without a visa, into the territory of another State Party for a maximum period of ninety (90) days per year for bona fide visit and in accordance with the laws of the State Party concerned
- permanent and temporary residence in the territory of another State Party
- establishment of individuals in the territory of another State Party, enabling them to work there.

In terms of the timeframe for implementation, the protocol specifies that an Implementation Framework will be agreed upon within six months from the date on which at least nine member states have signed.

## **7. ‘MOVEMENT’ AS ENVISAGED BY THE PROTOCOL**

The protocol defines three types of ‘movement’ by people as follows:

### **7.1 Visa-free entry**

In terms of this, a citizen of a State Party may enter the territory of another State Party without the requirement of a visa. However, the person must enter through an official border post, possess valid travel documents and produce evidence of sufficient means of support for the duration of the visit. Furthermore, it is specified that this is limited to 90 days per year, though the visitor may apply for an extension of this period.

With regard to what the person may do during these three months, the protocol is completely silent. There is no specification as to whether the person may take up short-term employment, engage in trade or business of any sort, or attend an educational institution. Given the absence of such provisions related to visa-free entry, it can be assumed that such visits are intended to be for reasons not provided for by the other categories of movement as discussed below.

The protocol also provides for an exemption in terms of which any member state may apply in writing and for good reason to reimpose visa requirements, provided that such visas will be issued at a port of entry at no cost.

## 7.2 Residence

The second type of movement envisaged by the protocol is referred to as residence and is defined as: "... permission or authority, to live in the territory of a State Party in accordance with the legislative and administrative provisions of that State Party." The protocol also encourages member states that have signed the protocol to facilitate the issuing of residence permits so as not to cause undue delays.

## 7.3 Establishment

The third category of movement, known as establishment is defined as "permission or authority granted by a State Party in terms of its national laws, to a citizen of another State Party, for ..."

- economic and professional activity either as an employee or a self-employed person
- establishment and management of a profession, trade, business or calling.

It is not entirely clear from a reading of the text of the protocol, what the difference is between 'residence' and 'establishment', though the notion of establishment has within it, the possibility that persons who have relocated permanently will have the option of applying for and being granted citizenship in the country of destination.

## 8. GRANTING AND PROTECTION OF RIGHTS

Articles 20 - 25 of the protocol state that individuals have the right not to be removed from the territory of a member state unless there are legitimate and valid reasons for doing so. However, a very clear set of principles and procedural guidelines are specified in the event of such removal. Furthermore, the protocol clearly states that no one may be subjected to collective or group removals. In other words, no state has the right to remove an entire family or all the citizens of a particular country unless each case has been considered and determined on its own merits.

## 9. ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

Article 28 is a reaffirmation of the obligations of member-states towards asylum-seekers and refugees, but stipulates that the management of refugees shall be regulated by a specific memorandum of understanding (MOU) between State Parties.

## 10. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Article 29 specifies that the institutions responsible for the implementation of the protocol shall be the Committee of Ministers responsible for Public Security and any other committee established by the Ministerial Committee of the Organ.

## **11. COMMENTS ON THE ADOPTED VERSION OF THE PROTOCOL**

The provisions of the protocol are limited to the facilitation of the movement of persons within SADC. However, it is underpinned by the vision of an eventual African Economic Community within which the creation of regional blocs and free movement within regions are but stepping stones to free movement across the continent.

The adopted version of the protocol, however, differs significantly from the previous versions submitted to the SADC Summit, in a number of different ways.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most significant deviation from earlier versions is the complete absence of any provisions relating to actual free movement as previously envisaged. The provisions relating to visa-free entry, residence and establishment are, with some modifications, very similar to previous drafts. However, it was also envisaged that there would be a fourth category of movement which related to the abolition of border controls between SADC member states. In the adopted version of the protocol, there are no such provisions and effectively, the protocol simply formalises at a multilateral regional level, what is already a reality between many of the SADC member states in terms of bilateral arrangements.

The second significant difference lies in the specification of the institutions responsible for the implementation of the protocol. Whereas previously, it was envisaged that a Regional Standing Committee on Free Movement would be created, this draft of the protocol firmly establishes its ambit within the domain of the security establishment in the region. What the implications of this are remain uncertain, but it does reflect the fact that the movement of persons continues to be viewed (even if only in part) as a security threat.

It is clear that the movement of people, free or otherwise, is inextricably linked to the movement of capital, goods and services. In this context, the provisions of the protocol cannot be seen in isolation from existing or future trade, customs, export or any other bilateral, multilateral or regional agreements. Of particular importance are the Bilateral Labour Agreements between South Africa and various other countries in the region, the multiplicity of bilateral agreements that provide for visa-free entry, and the proposed univisa that is contained in the Tourism Protocol and which at a recent meeting of Ministers of Tourism, it was agreed that every effort should be made to have the univisa in operation by the year 2008.<sup>7</sup>

## **12. FREE MOVEMENT AND REGIONAL CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY**

In the Facilitation of Movement Protocol as well as in the SADC Treaty, emphasis is placed on the desire to create a unified and integrated community of states. The proposal to eliminate borders

<sup>6</sup> Compare for example the August 2005 version of the Protocol with the version dated March 1998 that was presented to the SADC Summit in September 1998.

<sup>7</sup> 'Single regional visa for 2010,' Business Day 14 June 2005.

between SADC member states that was contained in the previous version of the protocol was a fundamental step towards the realisation of a single community. One of the ways in which the idea of a single community has been expressed has been the notion of SADC citizenship. For example, at a seminar on regional migration, an employee of the SADC Secretariat proudly spoke of the fact that he had a SADC passport and a SADC driver's licence and referred to himself as a SADC citizen.<sup>8</sup> However, this lofty ideal of achieving a regional identity which will ultimately take the form of SADC citizenship appears to be confined to those politicians and bureaucrats who, as a result of the nature of their positions, constantly and consistently interact at a regional level.

In 2001 and 2002, the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) conducted its National Immigration Policy Surveys (NIPS) in five SADC member states. The objectives of the surveys were to assess citizen attitudes towards migration and migration policy and to compare these between various countries in the region. The surveys were conducted in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Data from a similar survey that was conducted in South Africa in 1999 was also compared with the results obtained in the above countries.<sup>9</sup>

The SAMP surveys found that the citizens of the countries in which the surveys were conducted consistently tended to overestimate and exaggerate the numbers of non-citizens in their countries. They tended to view the migration of people within the region as a problem rather than an opportunity and that they have a propensity to scapegoat non-citizens. The intensity of these feelings varies significantly from country to country with the harshest sentiments expressed by the citizens of South Africa, Namibia and, to a lesser extent, Botswana. The SAMP report states that the citizens of Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are "considerably more relaxed about the presence of non-citizens in their countries".

The results of the SAMP survey also speak indirectly to the question of regional citizenship and identity as shown by the following quote from the report:

*One of the more interesting results is the apparent absence of any sense of solidarity with other countries in the SADC. Given the longevity of the SADC as a formal institution, this is a significant finding. The absence of any real sense of 'regional consciousness' (of participation in a regional grouping whose interests are greater than the sum of its parts) has very direct implications for migration issues. Citizens of these SADC countries make very little distinction between migrants from other SADC countries and those from elsewhere in Africa and even Europe and North America. Where attitudes are negative, they are uniformly negative; where positive, uniformly positive. An urgent challenge confronting the SADC and migration-related initiatives is therefore to develop strategies to build a new regional consciousness amongst citizens and policy-makers.<sup>10</sup>*

Most citizens would prefer national governments to 'get tough' with migrants and refugees and this is perhaps not unexpected. As is stated in the SAMP report:

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<sup>8</sup> SAMP Conference on Regional Migration, July 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Crush J, Pendleton W. Regionalizing Xenophobia: Citizen Attitudes to Immigration and Refugee Policy in Southern Africa SAMP, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

*When migration is viewed as a "threat" (as it clearly is amongst significant portions of the population and amongst virtually everyone in some countries) it is not unusual for citizens to prefer harsh policy measures. Rather shocking is the degree of support for border electrification. But citizens also want to see armies at the borders, tough internal enforcement and curtailment of basic rights. There is clearly a massive job of education confronting government if policy-makers are to turn around the obsession with control and exclusion and encourage a countervailing sense of the potential positive aspects of migration and immigration.<sup>11</sup>*

The tentative and tortuous process by which the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement came into being and was eventually adopted has been described as being the result of a 'lack of political will' amongst the politicians of some countries.<sup>12</sup> This apparent reluctance to promote free movement and to do away with border controls between SADC member states may be a reflection of the desires and sentiments of citizens, but on the other hand, also showcases the lack of political leadership on, not just the issue of migration, but also in the promotion of a sense of regional identity and belonging.

### 13. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The SADC region has gone a long way towards the establishment of a Regional Economic Community and the achievement of the level of cooperation and integration as envisaged in the treaty that established the SADC. It should be noted, however, that substantively, the focus has been on economic cooperation and integration and, therefore, many of the legal instruments, protocols and memoranda of understanding that have been approved and ratified are related to developing the region as a regional economic bloc, with regional free trade being the cornerstone of these developments.

The recent restructuring of the SADC Secretariat into Directorates each of which has a specific programmatic focus, the development of a Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and several stand-alone or cross-cutting programmes at a regional level all contribute to a sense of joint purpose between governments in the region and bode well for the eventual achievement of the level of integration as envisaged in the founding treaty.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that a discussion about the need for a regional protocol on the movement of persons in SADC arose as early as 1993 was a clear recognition that migration is both an historical fact and a future inevitability. In the SADC Treaty, the free movement of persons is positively expressed as one of the desired outcomes of, and one of the factors that will contribute to integration and cooperation, not only at a regional (SADC) level, but continentally as well. However, processes towards the achievement of this goal (of free movement) has until recently been characterised by the reluctance of the countries with better developed economies (South Africa, Botswana and Namibia) to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Comment made by participants at a Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MDSA) workshop held in Maseru, Lesotho in December 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Documents available at <http://www.sadc.int>

sign on to a regional protocol that creates a framework for achieving this objective (though it is reported that South Africa is one of the six countries that signed the protocol at the recent SADC Summit). It is perhaps not coincidental that the results of the SAMP research show that it is also in these three countries that levels of anti-foreigner sentiment are at its highest.

The signing of a protocol on the movement of persons nearly ten years after the first draft appeared is in and of itself a significant achievement, even if the existing provisions do not represent any radical departure from already existing national policies and legislation or indeed, negotiated bilateral arrangements. The signing of the protocol by six countries sends an important political signal that governments (or at least some of them) are beginning to recognise that regional economic cooperation and integration is not limited to the free movement of goods, services and capital, but must necessarily include the free movement of persons.

Given the levels of hostility towards foreigners and the views of citizens that suggest that they are in favour of highly restrictive migration policies, the political act of signing a protocol on the movement of persons is not sufficient to either create or contribute to the development of a sense of regional identity and citizenship.

This in turn raises a much broader question with regard to the nature and extent of integration and the eventual development of a community in SADC, which does appear to imply the need for a better sense of identification and belonging and identification that extends beyond nationality and national borders. What is becoming more and more apparent is the fact that there is a substantial gap between the views and initiatives of the political elite on the one hand and their citizens on the other. While many political leaders proudly proclaim and foster a sense of belonging and identity that transcends national boundaries, this is not the case with citizens for whom national borders remain paramount and the distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is more often than not based on nationality and citizenship. This is of course based on the false assumption that developing a regional identity is in conflict with maintaining a national identity, which is not necessarily the case. It should be possible to encourage and promote citizens to develop a stronger sense of regional identity without having to give up or forsake their national identities, as many of their political leaders have done.

The original draft of the SADC Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons implicitly envisaged the dismantling of national boundaries and the inculcation of a sense of regional identity and belonging, not only amongst the political elite, but also amongst ordinary citizens. But there appears to be a 'chicken and egg' situation developing: Will greater freedom of movement between SADC member states contribute to a greater sense of regional identity and belonging and gradually regional citizenship, or will it lead to heightened tensions and more widespread anti-foreigner sentiments? On the other hand, is a greater sense of regional identity and belonging, and reduced hostility towards foreigners a prerequisite for the free movement of persons in the SADC region?

In its survey on xenophobia in South Africa, SAMP attempted to establish whether negative attitudes towards foreigners were based on personal experiences and interaction.<sup>14</sup> The results indicate that there is an inverse connection between levels of contact and interaction and the extent

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<sup>14</sup> Matthes, R et al Still waiting for the barbarians, Idasa/SAMP, Cape Town, 1999

of negativity and hostility towards foreigners. In other words, the less contact they have with foreigners, the more likely citizens are to have negative attitudes. To the extent that this observation is correct, it has important implications for thinking about the movement of persons since it would suggest that if there is greater freedom of movement of persons in the region (and, therefore, more contact and interaction), this could have the effect of reducing levels of xenophobia. However, this requires that attempts at achieving free movement in SADC must be driven with a high degree of political leadership that attempts to negate citizen opinion about the potential (negative) outcome of free movement.

In the Preamble to the Treaty that establishes SADC, a commitment is made to involve the people of the region centrally in all the efforts to establish an integrated community.<sup>15</sup> In all the initiatives undertaken by the SADC, this aspect to its work has been conspicuously absent. Perhaps the more strategic question to ask is: What efforts can and should be made and how can 'the people of the region' be more centrally involved in the shaping of the SADC as an integrated regional community? It is only when citizens are encouraged to think beyond their national boundaries that a true sense of regional identity and citizenship will be developed; but for now this has not been part of the overall agenda and thrust of the work undertaken by SADC through its various structures.

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<sup>15</sup> SADC Treaty, available at <http://www.sadc.int>