

The Exchange-Junction is conceived as a space dedicated to growing the field of think tanks seized with issues related to citizen-centred and pro-poor development through improved civic action and engagement. The 2026 edition will focus on ways to re-assert citizens' agency in public processes focused on inclusive economic development, domestic resource mobilisation and the broader development agenda. Furthermore, there is a sensitivity to the emerging challenges of the sustainability of the organisation engaged in this work. The Exchange is committed to moving beyond diagnosing problems to actively shaping pathways for transformation. It aims to foster a dynamic ecosystem of collaboration, innovation, and knowledge sharing among think tanks.



PEER-TO-PEER EXCHANGE

Learn from experience
and build meaningful
connections.



SHARE PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Discover tools,
strategies and
innovations that work
in our context.



DEEP, HONEST CONVERSATIONS

Engage in the real
challenges shaping our
work.



COLLABORATE FOR GREATER IMPACT

Identify opportunities to
work together across
borders.



ACTION-ORIENTED OUTCOMES

Co-create ideas and
commitments that
move us forward.

Key Themes

External: Research and knowledge generation now means producing policy-relevant insights despite shrinking resources, increased polarisation and mistrust. Africa's development and democracy deficits require new and out-of-the-box approaches. Policy refinement support (the traditional role of think-tanks) is at an all-time low, thanks to existing mistrust between officeholders and non-state actors. We have to start with a shift from "doing for" to "doing with" communities. The increased regulation of civil society across SADC demands broader collaboration (movement building) and an awareness that there is no single organisation that can comprehensively respond to the multi-dimensional crisis that defines the region. Finally, we see a need to improve credible measurement frameworks that align with community needs.

Internal: Organisational sustainability demands adaptive leadership, responsive governance, and intentional institutional transformation, while the resourcing challenge calls for smart talent strategies and innovative financing models that move beyond traditional NGO approaches toward social-entrepreneurial thinking. We note the opportunities within this particular moment, including leveraging existing technology to enhance the effectiveness of our work.

This is NOT a space for lamenting challenges
— but a marketplace of ideas and solutions
that will shape SADC's future.

Format & Approach

A two-day, highly interactive gathering of 30–35 programme officers and organisational leaders from across SADC, built around participant-driven engagement through keynotes, plenaries, and facilitated dialogues, alongside a showcase marketplace. The event is guided by principles that are solutions-oriented, participatory, practical, collaborative, and reflective.

Expected Outputs & Outcomes

How We Want to Change the World

A shared vision outlining how we can collectively contribute to inclusive development within SADC.

Institutional Transformation Framework

Recommendations on how think tanks can evolve to remain relevant, effective, and sustainable.

