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| http://www.ethiopianopinion.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/147df04a.jpg | **COMESA** | **Member Countries (19) :** \*Burundi \*Comoros \*Djibouti \*Egypt \*Eritrea \*Ethiopia \*Kenya \*Libya \*Madagascar \*Malawi \*Mauritius \*Uganda \*D. R. of Congo \*Rwanda \*Seychelles \*Sudan \*Swaziland \*Zambia \*Zimbabwe | |
| **Lusaka** | Population of COMESA  **492 706 000 inhab.** | Global budget of COMESA Members States:Non |
| Budget of COMESA: Non |

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| General Information | | | | | | | | |
| Population %[[1]](#footnote-1) | | | | |  | Budget | | |
| Age | General Distribution | | Enrolled by cycle | | School Cycle | % | |
| **M** | **F** | **M** | **F** | REC MS overview | REC |
| 0 – 3 | 18,299,988 | 17,955,543 |  |  | Pre-primary |  |  |
| 3 - 6 | 14,254,201 | 13,823,182 |  |  | Primary |  |  |
| 6 - 12 | 25,068,987 | 24,177,250 |  |  | Secondary |  |  |
| 12 - 18 | 22,083,053 | 21,380,052 |  |  | Higher |  |  |
| 18 - 25 | 20,857,488 | 22,417,968 |  |  | TVET |  |  |
| 25 - 35 | 21,295,179 | 21,923,212 |  |  | STI |  |  |

### Background of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

1. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is a Regional Economic Community comprising 19 member States. COMESA was established as a Preferential Trade Area (PTA) under the Framework of the Organization of African Union (OUA) Lagos Plan of Action (LPA). COMESA is coordinated by a Secretariat which facilitates the development and implementation of policies and programmes by Member States. The work of COMESA is guided by the COMESA Treaty signed by the 19 COMESA member States.
2. The overall goal of COMESA is to promote sustainable economic and social development through regional economic integration (Article 3 of the COMESA Treaty).
3. The COMESA Vision is to have a fully integrated internationally competitive regional economic community within which there is economic prosperity and peace as evidenced by political and social stability and high standards of living for its people.
4. The COMESA Mission is to endeavour to achieve sustainable economic and social progress in all member States through increased co-operation and integration in all fields of development particularly in trade, customs and monetary affairs, transport, communication and information, technology, industry and energy, gender and social development, agriculture, environment and natural resources.
5. The chosen path towards fulfillment of the above Vision and Mission is development integration – involving a combination of trade development and liberalization, industrialization, infrastructure development, investment promotion, and promotion of science and technology and coordination to deepen the regional integration process and sustainable economic growth.
6. To support the Member States in these endeavours, COMESA Secretariat has set up eight Programme Divisions which provide technical assistance on different aspects of regional integration and development. These Divisions include the following:
7. Trade, Customs and Monetary Affairs Division;
8. Infrastructure Development Division;
9. Agriculture, Industry and Private Sector Development Division;
10. Gender and Social Affairs Division;
11. Division of Administration and Human Resources;
12. Division of Budget and Finance;
13. Division of Information and Networking;
14. Division of Legal and Institutional Affairs.
15. In addition, several Units have been established to complement the work of the Divisions in specific areas including Agriculture, Climate Change, Insurance (Yellow Card), Aid for Trade (ComAid), Standards and Accreditation, Governance, Peace and Security, Information Resources, and Science, Technology and Innovation.
16. COMESA’s Medium Term Strategic Plans (MTSP) functions as road maps for the achievement of the goals of regional integration.
17. The MTSP assert that the ultimate goal of becoming a fully integrated and internationally competitive regional economic community is to make an improvement in peoples’ living conditions, in a secure and sustainable environment. Success in achieving this shall be measured in terms of “higher, sustainable economic growth with improved human development outcomes – healthier, better educated people that live longer productive lives in safer and sustainable environments”. This acknowledgement reaffirms the social character of the COMESA’s Vision, which is also apparent in the COMESA Social Charter.

**The COMESA Social Charter**

1. The Treaty that established COMESA includes amongst other commitments the importance of the promotion of close cooperation between member States in the social and cultural fields (Article 143) to enhance social development by adopting a Social Charter, programmes and regulations.
2. Pursuant to the above provision, the Secretariat developed the COMESA Social Charter to facilitate the integration of Social development into the COMESA regional integration Agenda. The Charter provides measures for the promotion of human and people’s rights including among others, Well-being of the Child, Education, Training, and Skills Development, Human Resource Development and Youth Mobilization, Employment and Working Conditions, Social Protection, Health Care, Sustainable Development and Protection of the Environment, Elimination of Harmful Social and Cultural Practices..

**Education, Training and Skills Development**

1. The Charter elaborates on pre-school, primary, secondary education and TVET training and this was considered specifically under **Article XII “Education, Training and Skills Development”.**

1. In this Article the Charter provides that:
2. Member States shall strive to provide quality education through formal, non-formal, informal distance learning and lifelong learning to meet the diverse needs of the individual.
3. In that respect, each member State shall promote to the full extent possible -
4. gender parity in access and quality education;
5. free Pre-school and early childhood education;
6. free primary and secondary education and reasonable access to tertiary education, including technical, vocational, education and training;
7. rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities;
8. adapted education for children with special needs and disabilities;
9. access to education scholarships;
10. adult literacy ; and
11. development of adapted science and technology programmes to cater for the socio-economic development of member States and the region.

**Youth Empowerment: Skills Development, Employment, and Health**

1. The COMESA Social Charter has also a strong provision on youth empowerment, specifically; Article V of the COMESA Social Charter stipulated the following:
   * + 1. State Parties shall promote broad-based growth in order to create productive employment opportunities, encourage volunteerism, internship and exchange programmes for all groups of people.
       2. States parties shall provide enhanced job opportunities and adequate employment, and entrepreneurship and recreational activities for the youth in order to make them economically and socially productive.

* + - 1. State Parties shall enhance job opportunities for the youth through increased investments in education and vocational training.
      2. State Parties shall promote information access for youth and create awareness on the dangers of HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted and other communicable diseases as well as the risks associated with cigarette smoking, alcohol and drugs.

**The COMESA Youth Programme**

1. The COMESA Social Charter and the COMESA Gender Policy adopted in 2002 by the 7th Summit of the COMESA Heads of State and Government give a broad-based framework and justification for the development of a COMESA Youth Programme for the empowerment of the youth in the COMESA region.
2. The 7th Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Gender and Women’s Affairs held in September 2013, in Lusaka, Zambia decided to develop a COMESA Youth Programme to ensure the integration of youth in the regional integration process. The decision was aimed at empowering youth to play an effective role in the socio-economic development of the COMESA region. This decision was endorsed by the COMESA Council of Ministers during the Summit of Heads of State and Government held in 2014 in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
3. Pursuant to the above Council Decision, the Secretariat developed the COMESA Youth Programme and three Pilot Projects on Youth Employment, Youth Environment and Youth Character and Creativity. The COMESA Youth Programme and three pilot projects were endorsed by the COMESA Council of Ministers during the Summit of Heads of States and Government held in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia in March, 2015. The COMESA Youth Programme is aligned with theAfrican Youth Charter and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

### Strategic Priority of the COMESA Youth Programme

1. The strategic areas addressed by the Youth Programme are youth empowerment and development, which should be promoted through advances in youth employment and employability, entrepreneurship, and civic and political participation.

**Objectives of the COMESA Youth Programme**

1. The Overall Goal of the COMESA Youth Programme is to empower young people in the COMESA region by promoting the creation of decent and productive work opportunities for youth in the private sector and by enhancing youth’s political participation, civic engagement and active involvement in the regional integration process.
2. The specific objective is to raise the levels of youth participation in national socio-economic development processes and regional integration, as well as their civic engagement and representation in public decision-making with at least 25% until 2020; and to increase youth employment and entrepreneurship with at least 25% until 2020.
3. Through these aims, the Youth Programme is expected to contribute to the goals of poverty reduction and maintaining social stability within the COMESA region through sustainable and inclusive development.

#### Vision of the COMESA Youth Programme

1. The vision of the COMESA Youth Programme is a future where all people in the COMESA region are able to lead active and fulfilling lives; and where youth can reach their full potential as responsible citizens and family members, productive employees, innovative business owners and upright officials, allowing them to contribute to the prosperity of their families and communities.

#### Mission of the COMESA Youth Programme

1. To be a driving force for the implementation of the African Youth Charter and the UN World Programme of Action for Youth in the region by providing policy advice and technical assistance to the Member States, and by facilitating the creation of strong partnerships for youth employment, entrepreneurship and civic and political participation between government, private sector and development partners.

**The COMESA Virtual University**

1. Recognizing the importance of capacity building for regional integration in Government, the private sector and academia, the COMESA Council of Ministers decided in 2010 that a COMESA’s University be established to inculcate the dimension of regional integration in learning in higher institutions. The idea was that with a good perspective on regional integration, the quality and expedition of the formulation and implementation of regional integration initiatives would be greatly improved.
2. On this basis, the Secretariat has worked closely with universities in the region to implement the Council decision. Following two research forums and working sessions of a committee of universities, recommendations were made and Council has decided that a COMESA’s virtual university should be established. There will be a host university and collaborating universities. There are 22 collaborating universities so far. MOUs have been concluded between the Secretariat and the host and collaborating universities. The syllabi for the courses have been developed.
3. The next step is to formally launch the virtual university, expected to take place at the October 2016 COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government. The courses will be offered starting the next academic year by the collaborating universities and the host University, which is the Kenyatta University.

1. The statistical data does not include figures for Eritrea, Comoros, DR Congo, Djibouti and Madagascar. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)