



Investing in People for Social and Economic Justice

Press Release

National Youth Day

The commemorations for the National Youth Day are coming at a time when the Government of Zimbabwe is proposing allocating 10 parliamentary seats to young people through Constitutional Amendment Number 2 of 2019, Clause 11, Subsection C. ZIMCodd would like to note that the country has an already progressive Constitution which does not call for amendment when it comes to youth representation. The major challenge lies in lack of implementation of constitutional provisions for instance Chapter 2 Section 20 (1)(b) clearly provides that youths “must have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life.” The constitution is therefore already very progressive on youth representation and empowerment and what is required is implementation and not amendment.

It is also regrettable that the commemorations are done against an unfavourable political, social, economic and environmental landscape for the young people in the country. Despite Zimbabwe being one of the most youthful countries in the region, young people are the hardest hit by the political and macroeconomic challenges. These include a high unemployment rate, insufficient political representation, lack of participation in governance and developmental issues and limited access to life opportunities. As we commemorate the National Youth Day, it is critical for the nation and duty bearers to note the following issues:

Causes for Concern

- The lack of self-representation by youth in decision making institutions and spaces for them to be able to determine the economic trajectory that improve their present living conditions and inspire the future generations for people centred development. The piecemeal amendment of the constitution as proposed by Clause 11 will not address this.
- High unemployment rate and the participation of the youth in undignified jobs in the informal economy such as the artisanal and small-scale mining which ended up having youth being involved in the violent machete wars amongst themselves and in their communities.



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- The continuous promulgation of economic blue prints such as the Vision 2030 (Upper Middle-Income Economy Agenda) without full consultation of the citizens and in particular the youth as espoused in Section 20 of the Constitution.
- The skewed nature of the economy where the ruling elites and beneficiaries of a patronage system tend to benefit from economic empowerment initiatives at the expense of the majority of the youths evidenced in Presidential scholarships, land distribution, housing, employment, business, loans and other government funded initiatives.
- The continuous churning out of graduates from colleges and universities without matching resuscitation of the industry or education that is well suited for current conditions to create entrepreneurs and jobs is also a cause for concern.
- The systematic exclusion and disenfranchisement of youth in the country's national political processes like elections for them to occupy influential positions and the continuous manipulation of youth by politicians to settle their political scores.

Recommendations

- The government must respect the Constitution and ensure active youth participation in economic policy making processes and create a conducive working environ for youth both in the formal and informal sector. This must involve consultation and inclusion of youths in policy formulation processes.
- The government must expedite the reconfiguration of the country's famed education to create an education system that provides solutions to the country's socioeconomic woes.
- The government must guarantee free and fair participation of youths in governance processes as provided for in Section 20 of the Constitution by creating a level playing field that does not systematically excludes youth from participation. The Youth quota proportional representation in Parliament as proposed in the Constitutional Amendment Bill Number 2 of 2019, Clause 11 is a piecemeal redress of the problem.
- For equal youth representation in national elections, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) must apply the progressive provisions already in the constitution to ensure a level playing field for youths to actively participate. This must include the creation of safe political spaces for youth participation especially young women.
- The Parliament of Zimbabwe must enact laws to fully operationalise and protect the Constitution so that it's not tempered with at any time.
- Zimbabwean youth must remain resolute in pursuit of their economic freedom and in demanding accountability from responsible authorities when it comes to youth representation in key national processes.
- Youth must capitalise on their demographic advantage, join forces and speak with one voice as a youth movement towards building a better Zimbabwe by shunning violence even in the face of structural provocation caused by the current economic challenges.

