



# GIVING THE SILENT MAJORITY A VOICE



Engaging the Youth in Economic Governance and Policy Formulation is Key to attaining Vision 2030



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Zimbabwe can realise an Upper Middle-Income Economy by 2030. Such youth-centric approaches to macroeconomic development can only be fostered through the active engagement and involvement of the youth in national economic blueprint and policy formulation. Hence, a decisive and deliberate policy shift to enhance the participation of the youth in national economic blueprint and policy formulation is of the essence. Such a policy is a matter of generational economic sustainability and the creation of a positive long term economic trajectory for the nation.



## INTRODUCTION

**D**espite being the largest demographic group in Zimbabwe, the youth continue to be sidelined when it comes to economic governance and the formulation of national economic blueprints. Zimbabwe is expected to achieve Upper Middle Income Society status by 2030 as forecasted by the Government of Zimbabwe in its popular vision 2030. The Second Republic under the leadership of President Emmerson Mnangagwa, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has developed several economic blueprints aimed at achieving this goal. A consistent feature in these blueprints has been the lack of youth mainstreaming and youth-centred policy flavour. The major cause of this has been the non-participation and non-engagement of the youth in the formulation of these blueprints.

Without a youth-centred approach to national economic policy formulation, the nation risks the possibility of creating a cycle of intergenerational poverty spurred on by the construction of youthful people without any savings, investments and economic safety nets to pass onto the next generation. Such a situation will see economic growth stagnate or stifle as 65% of the population will fail to contribute vehemently to the economic health of the nation. An economically unproductive, unemployed and aggrieved major demographic group is a major threat to peace and stability in the country. As it stands, Section 738 of the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) has cited an insignificant rate of youth economic participation for the year 2020 of 3.3%. The number of youth who accessed empowerment opportunities in all sectors of the economy was 16 000 in 2020. The forecast of the framework predicts a potentially exponential increase in

youth economic participation in decision making and development processes from 3.3% in 2020 to 25% by 2025. It is predicted that the number of youths that are going to access empowerment opportunities will increase from 16 000 in 2020 to 200 000 by 2025. As much as the strategy is sprinkled with a major positive forecast for youth economic wellbeing, the major misgiving of the NDS is that the path to the attainment of these positive gains for the youth is not clear. The economic trajectories and pathways for youth economic empowerment remain murky mainly due to the non – participation of the youth in the crafting of these economic blueprints.

The continued presence of weak youth economic inclusion has the potential to create negative socio-economic indicators. If the major demographic group of a country continues to be unemployed and does not have access to gainful employment, this can automatically lead to a domino effect of negative socio-economic results. With a critical mass of unemployed youth, macro tax revenues will drop. With a drop in macro tax revenues, funding for economic investment and social safety nets will also drop. As a result, critical macroeconomic indicators like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will drop significantly for consistent periods and income equality indicators will become more skewed.





## • POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If the current practice of youth blind formulation of national economic blueprints persists, the largest demographic group could continue living below the poverty datum line by 2030. Current efforts to foster the inclusion and participation of the youth in national decision making such as Junior Parliament and the proposed youth quotas remain piecemeal in orientation. The Junior Parliament is largely made up of children below 18 who have not experienced the real political, social and economic realities of adult life and are limited in their scope of participation. The proposed youth quota can simply be viewed as tokenism and the contributions of representatives under this system can be summarily dismissed by other member of parliament. This view is based on the experiences of female parliamentarians under the proportional representation system have endured acts of segregation and humiliation on their perceived non meritocratic stature in parliament. This becomes grounds for a change in the methodology of national blueprint formulation towards fostering enhanced participation of the youth during the consultation stages and implementation of such blueprints.

**In a bid to achieve this, the following policy recommendations are proffered;**

- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development must have a youth desk with the responsibility of ensuring that the youth are involved in all policy, strategy and bill consultations and the views propagated at these consultations will be mainstreamed into the final draft documents of such.

- The Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing must work towards establishing youth quotas in local government structures (down to WADCO, VIDCO level) with the responsibility of setting up youth-specific consultative meetings in different localities for various policies, strategies and bills that might affect the lives of the youth.
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should set up official youth-specific pages on various social media platforms where the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development can interact with young people as well as the use of cyber-based data collection methodologies like Google forms to collect data on economic policy issues from the youth.
- The crafting of a bill by the Ministry of Youth, Arts, Sports and Recreation which will make it mandatory for all Ministries to show evidence of ample consultation with the youth before a bill, strategy or policy in that Ministry assents into force.



## CONCLUSION

The success and realization of economic prosperity in Zimbabwe and the attainment of the objectives of various national economic policies rests with the active participation and involvement of the youth. The non or lax participation of the youth in economic policy formulation leads to the formation of youth blind economic policies. Such policies are unsustainable and will not create a tenable national economy geared for consistent positive growth. The answer lies in providing space and opportunities for youth participation in economic policy formulation.