



A CALL TO ESTABLISH A YOUTH FRIENDLY BUDGETING SYSTEM IN ZIMBABWE:

A Focus on the 2021 Budget

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Youth Policy recognizes that decent employment and participation in agricultural, industrial, commercial and services sector provides sustenance and sustainable livelihoods to the majority of youth. The 2021 National Budget Statement, titled “Building Resilience and Sustainable Economic Recovery”, recognizes the same by appreciating the youth demographic presence and attempting to address the same.

However, from a practical perspective, the budget does not seem to focus much attention on the lived realities and the needs of the youth. Hence, this policy brief pushes for a paradigm shift towards the adoption of a Youth Friendly Budgeting System in Zimbabwe as the prescribed methodology for budget formulation. This policy brief, therefore, focuses on the 2021 Budget and proffers recommendations to relevant ministries to improve youth participation in the framing of youth-friendly economic governance in Zimbabwe.



INTRODUCTION

Section 20 of Zimbabwe's Constitution is paramount to the discussion around the engagement, involvement and participation of young people in the economic governance of the country. According to section 20(1)(b), "The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take reasonable measures, including affirmative action programs, to ensure that youths have opportunities to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life." The youth are therefore recognized as an important group and are accorded relevance to this end. Out of a ZWL426.1 billion budget for 2021, the ministry only allocated ZWL3.447 billion (0.8%) towards youth empowerment. It is however, not clear as to how much capital will go towards the Empower Bank and the National Venture Fund and how the funds are going to be disbursed to the youth.

Youths had the following issues they wanted addressed and included in the national budget;

- A Youth Empowerment Fund that benefits the youth on equal terms.
- Funds that promote youth entrepreneurship by focusing on capacity building on entrepreneurship.
- Equal access to credit opportunities without barriers.
- Development of job creation strategies for the youth; particularly for young women, young people with disabilities and young people living in rural areas.
- Regulation of the informal economy to prevent unfair labour practices and exploitation of youth.
- Facilitation of greater linkages between the labour market and youth enterprises.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The continued path of “youth blind” budget formulation processes is potentially detrimental to the country as a whole. The possible effects are a major decrease in the country's economic performance based on the failure to follow a youth-centric approach to budgeting. We also forego sustainable economic growth by maintaining an economically subdued majority demographic. There is a need for a new methodology of crafting national budgets in Zimbabwe. This is the youth-friendly budgeting system. Just as we have gender budgeting and child-friendly budgeting frameworks, there is also the need for youth-friendly budgeting frameworks.

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

- The Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation should undertake a stakeholder engagement meeting aimed at crafting a Youth Friendly Budgeting Framework to be used by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in the production of national budgets.
- Just as gender budgeting focuses on ensuring that gender imperative sectors get a good amount of funding, the youth-friendly budgeting system will follow the same route and ensure that sectors that aim to address major problems affecting the youth are identified and endowed.
- The establishment of a joint budgetary tracking and monitoring body which includes players from government and civil society alike should be instituted under the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation. The mandate of the body will be to ensure that the Youth Friendly Budgeting Framework is adhered to at all times.





CONCLUSION

An inclusive growth-led budget that answers to the needs of the youth is imperative in achieving youth-friendly economic governance. There is need for collaborative participation between the relevant ministries and the young people to ensure that young people become active partners who can take self-directed actions that can influence and challenge processes and outcomes of economic governance such as the National Budget.