



THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

SOCIAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE ACTIVIST ACADEMY 2022

The 2022 instalment of the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt & Development (ZIMCODD) annual Social and Economic Justice Activists (SEJA) Academy came to life on the 26th of June 2022. The Academy is an effort to strengthen advocacy and lobbying on public finance issues by broadening the range of influential young voices. Young socio-economic justice activists capacitated on contemporary developmental issues in the country have successfully spearheaded a number of campaigns, lobby and advocacy actions that show the strategic importance of capacity building.

Zimbabwe has a youthful demography which constitutes 77% of the populace. About 4.7 million (36%) of the national population are aged between 15 and 34, a cluster which has the potential to influence policy change and good governance. Promotion of youth participation in all spheres of life in society and in decision making processes at all levels can benefit the youth and policy makers. Moreover, involving young people in decision-making processes strengthens their understanding of issues at stake while instilling a sense of responsibility towards being part of the solution to the problems haunting the country and the continent at large. It is against this background that the Academy is training youths on matters of social and economic justice and economic governance, especially as they graduate to being economically active cohorts and members of society able to effectively participate in decision-making processes. The Academy targets university graduates, youth led and youth oriented civil society organizations, journalists and human rights defenders in particular defenders of social and economic rights.

By and large, the academy is designed to increase the capacity of youth to hold duty bearers accountable and to contribute solutions to seemingly intractable public finance challenges. A dynamic learning process anchored around well researched learning modules is being presented by a mix of Academics, Development practitioners, policy makers, local leaders and other inspirational voices to enable a well-grounded and holistic appreciation of key social and economic justice questions of the day.



Academy Participants will therefore come out equipped with a variety of cutting-edge social accountability and monitoring tools including but not limited to the public expenditure monitoring tool, open budget survey reports and the fiscal transparency index.

Day 1

The first day of the academy began with introductions and a keynote speech given by ZIMCODD Programmes manager, John Maketo. In the same breath, Mr Maketo introduced participants to the organization, its ethos and the direction the Academy sets them on. Sessions led by Mr Maketo and Tashinga Zamba (ZIMCODD Movement Building) focused on introducing prospective SEJA's on the role of a social economic Justice ambassador and the qualities of a good SEJA. Further, the sessions established the connection between Public Resources Management and stewardship of public resources.

Key takeaway: A good SEJA should have integrity as a guiding principle.

Day 2

Dr Mugaviri, a renowned life coach, provided insight on the topic of the day, Activism and Transformational Leadership. A central point of departure in this session was the fact that before one can advocate for change, they need to introspect and change themselves. Only then can one achieve the necessary clarity of thought. The afternoon session of the day, led by Mr Maketo focused on Movement building and the need for collective effort. The delivery method used was that of practical exercises after which participants were given group work on the subject.

Keytake away: Peer activism will ensure participation against the persistent problem of apathy on socioeconomic justice issues amongst the youth.

Day 3

Professor Masunungure led the day with tutoring on Public Policy Making and its nexus with successful change making. Noting the importance of Policy Making to socioeconomic activism, the session sought to entrench within participants an understanding of movement building for effective change at policy level (factoring other complexities).

Key takeaway: The youth constitute 77% of the population and are thus perfectly positioned to lobby for change.

Day 4

Disability inclusion remains a key activism point in Zimbabwe. Barbara Nyangairi shared her journey in advocacy work for PWD which is born in her personal experience. Participants also engaged in activities in which they shared their thoughts and bias on the issue of disability, how it may affect their activism, and ways of circumventing this barrier for effective activism. In the afternoon session, ZIMCODD's Kudzwai Gokova (Legal and Feminist advocate), delved into the topic of gender sensitivity in practicing activism. A series of practical exercises exposed the prejudices that women and other marginalized groups continue to face. Participants then gave their contributions on how a mind-set shift can facilitate a more equal movement for change.

Key takeaways: Disability is not inability. There is need for genuine interventions to address the marginalization of People With Disability (PWD) and not token action. It is crucial that government goes beyond the quota system in getting representation for PWD's in halls of power. 90% of children under the PWD's demographic are not in school.

Day 5

Margret Mutsamvi, an avid SEJA in her own right led the session for the day. Through a conversation with the SEJA students, topics covered included Young people's role at community, national and global levels where Social accountability and Monitoring on Debt Justice is concerned. The day was concluded by a reflection and feedback session on the assignments given by Mr Maketo earlier in the week.

Key takeaways: As part of their action plan, participants created an action committee which has the task of firstly ensuring that resolutions from the academy would achieve change or effort towards it at the policy level. The SEJA's are to engage in a fact finding mission on debt and broader economic questions after which they will seek to address duty bearers at the policymaking level.

Conclusion

#SEJAAcademy22 will run till the 2nd of July, concluding with a certification ceremony for the successful graduates. This will by no means be a final engagement as SEJA's will have the responsibility to pass on the knowledge they have gathered and 'pay it forward' as it were.

"The country will never die; the young people will save it." ~ Joshua Nkomo