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ZIMCODD

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LETTER TO THE READER

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) is a pro-poor Social and Economic Justice movement concerned with the improvement of livelihood indicators for all Zimbabweans. Through our work in 2023, we witnessed an increasing debt burden, worsening inflation, increasingly shrinking civic space, high taxes, erosion of incomes and runaway cost of living. The economic outlook is bleak, especially considering the projected El Nino conditions which will reduce harvest from the agricultural sector, an anchor of our economy and livelihoods.

In the same vein, prospects for external investment are reduced by the pervasive corruption and protection of perpetrators by the political elite, juxtaposed by the persecution of human rights defenders. The picture is desolate but as a coalition, we are strengthened by the desire to see economic justice for all and the affirmation of our readers, partners and participants in our activities. 2023 was the first year of implementation for our new strategy which runs up to 2030, centered around two pillars of Fiscal and Trade Justice. 2024 is a new platform to bolster this strategy and we believe through the established partnerships in civil society, government and the media, we will achieve!

In this second issue of the 2024 BreakFree Newsletter, we detail a collection of short stories on "Women and youth inclusion in economic governance." These short stories are sourced from our coalition members and speak to their lived experiences in their communities. Our hope is you enjoy and also draw inspiration to continue in your effort to support us.

Enjoy!

WOMEN AND YOUTH INCLUSION IN **ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE**



By **Ennie Tembo**

Women and youth inclusion refers to meaningful and active participation and representation of women and young people in decision making processes. This is in relation to economic policies, practices and institutions that involve ensuring equal opportunities, promoting diversity, and integrating the unique perspectives and ensuring voices of all segments of society are heard and considered in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of economic frameworks. As underscored by Sustainable Development Goal 8, inclusion of women and youth in economic governance is essential for fostering inclusive and economic growth, employment and decent work for all. Inclusive economic governance is therefore crucial for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals related to gender equality, youth empowerment, and reducing economic disparities. Greater diversity in economic decision making and leadership results in broader representation, inclusive policies and

this can help to combat structural inequalities while promoting more equitable economic progress.

Young people and women in Zimbabwe are facing various challenges in economic governance that include discrimination in political and corporate leadership...

Young people and women in Zimbabwe are facing various challenges in economic governance that include discrimination in political and corporate leadership, lack of access to empowerment, limited representation in influencing economic decision-making bodies and disproportionate burden of unpaid care work that falls

on women, limiting their time for economic participation. Young people lack professional opportunities in economic governance for example years of experience jobs asked for affect them.

Women and young people are the ones who are disproportionately affected by the immediate and long-term challenges of climate change, unemployment, corruption and waning economies. Women also face challenges of gender-based violence, lack of access to service delivery and burden of unpaid care work that hinders them to participate in decision-making processes of matters that affect them. Therefore, the government, civil society organizations and others stakeholders must ensure that women and young people are represented in key economic governance structures such as parliaments, local councils and advisory bodies.

LIMITED WOMEN AND YOUTH INCLUSION IN CHIPINGE'S ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE: A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

By Yuna Machumi



In Chipinge, women are trying to participate in economic governance but patriarchy remains a serious barrier. In Checheche, some emancipated and empowered women are shunned and looked down upon due to this social construction. Misinformation and disinformation about women empowerment is hindering a lot of women in Checheche to participate in economic governance issues as speaking up is seen as disruptive to the social order. Research shows that from time immemorial, women are marginalized yet they play a pivotal role in the Chipinge community. By embracing women and youth, we adopt diverse perspectives, ideas and experiences to be represented in decision making processes which leads to informed and effective policies.

Constraints against women's entrepreneurial ability to participate

in economic government issues include cultural factors, lack of education and limited access to management and job opportunities as well as family responsibilities (Robson 2004).

In Chipinge, a limited number of youth are participating in economic governance issues due to limited knowledge. Some of the youth are being negatively affected by drugs and substance abuse in Checheche as well as technological barriers. How do we improve this participation?

Recommendations:

Youth inclusion in economic governance brings fresh ideas through training. Our youth in Checheche are adventurous and they spend much of their time researching. They experiment on things and if they are involved in economic governance this can bring

development. Youth are digitally literate and driving technological advancement can be of great help. We should embrace youth and women if we art to achieve sustainable development in Checheche. It cannot be over-emphasized that women are responsible for social and economic development. Women invest in education, health and family wellbeing. Women are the engine of the families in Checheche area. "Musha mukadzi", meaning that women are the corner stone of the communities. Women play a pivotal role in household finance such as burial societies and revolving funds (mukando) in Checheche area. This being said, more training for women and youth participation in economic governance is called for in Checheche.

Inclusion, the cornerstone of Economic and Social Development

By Mcebisi Phiri

Women and youth are key components of a nation's workforce yet so many times they face barriers to participation. Inclusion is very crucial if sustainable economic growth and social justice are to be achieved. Women and youth inclusion has a positive impact on economic governance in various ways. Their inclusion brings about diverse perspectives which incorporate unique experiences and insights hence leading to more informed decision making. Women involvement solves gender disparities and addresses issues that are specific to gender thereby promoting social justice. Inclusion of women in economic governance is likely to promote transparency,

ethical leadership and accountability for a nation.

When it comes to youth inclusion, young people bring fresh ideas through new perspectives, innovations and energy. Their participation addresses the demographic dividend and investing in young people capitalizes and drives economic growth. Young people can enhance economic productivity and competitiveness through their skills.

Inclusion of women and youth in economic governance has some social impacts as well. These include reduction of stigma and stereotypes thereby promoting acceptance and equal opportunities. Inclusion is also

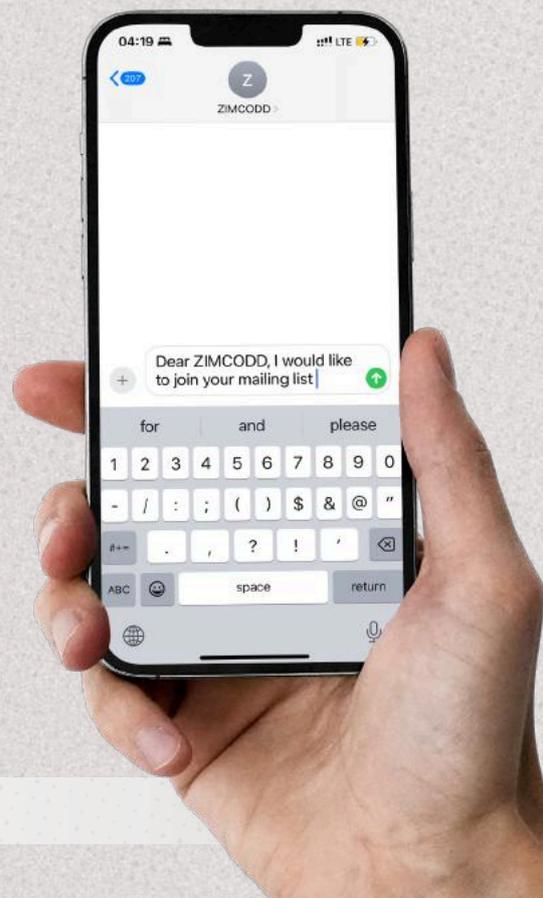
a means of empowerment as it opens up the making of choices and attainment of rights. It also fosters social cohesion and community engagement.

In conclusion, it is of paramount importance to include women and youth in economic governance, entrusting them in key positions that influence decision making. Examples of such include the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Finance, Chamber of Mines amongst others. In a nation which seeks to promote equality and empowerment as well as fighting corruption, the aforementioned measures should be put in place.

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Mutimutema Women Showcase Climate-Smart Innovation at Empowerment Hub Festival

By Ishe Tirivangani

Mutimutema community in Gokwe South is abuzz with entrepreneurial spirit as women from local empowerment hubs prepare to unveil innovative value-added products. This event serves not only to empower these women but also to showcase the potential of climate change mitigation efforts through the promotion of sustainable practices.

Building on the remarkable success of the inaugural Ideas festival held last year initiated by ZIMCODD, this year's iteration promises further progress. The empowerment hubs have implemented work plans designed to advance social and economic justice, bolstered in part by the financial support of Mai Mavima, a renowned advocate for women's empowerment. Mai Mavima's contributions have directly enabled these women to achieve financial independence, contribute meaningfully to their households and even pay taxes. This progress serves as a potent example of the festival's lasting impact on driving positive change and promoting gender equality.

"We were driven by a desire to highlight the potential of readily available resources," explained Mai Mavima. "By transforming them into something valuable, we empower women while simultaneously promoting sustainable practices that combat climate change."

Tendai Masora, a Social and Economic Justice Ambassador (SEJA), elaborated on the environmental benefits: "Mabanana trees are incredibly resilient and thrive in our climate. By utilizing the seeds instead of discarding them, we reduce waste and actively promote the growth of these valuable trees, contributing to a more sustainable future."

Tendayi Masora, who is also a Project Coordinator of the Gokwe Sengwa constituency, highlighted, "We're working with every stakeholder to initiate fully on value chains of each and every project. Gokwe needs to attain and align with vision 2030 through value chaining on all our activities here."

Mabanana are naturally abundant and require minimal resources to cultivate, making them a sustainable choice. Additionally, the bananas themselves possess unique properties that can be harnessed to create a variety of useful products from jewelry and textiles to beauty products and even cooking ingredients. This innovation not only reduces waste but also opens doors to new income opportunities for the women involved.

The hope is that this event will not only empower women but also inspire the wider community to embrace sustainable practices. "We want to demonstrate that even small changes can make a significant difference," remarked Tendai Masora. By showcasing the viability of mabanana seed products, the festival aims to inspire a shift towards a more sustainable way of life. The impact of climate change and the positive influence of this project are not merely theoretical concepts.

Speaking in an interview, Chief Nemangwe, who was also a guest at the festival, applauded the initiative and said that those interested in supporting this initiative can inquire about volunteer opportunities or explore ways to purchase the women's handcrafted products. "By directly contributing to the economic empowerment of these women, supporters can become active participants in the fight against climate change" he added.

The Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) is sounding the alarm on the urgent need for collective action to address the devastating impacts of climate change on our region. As a network of organizations and individuals committed to social and economic justice, we are deeply concerned about the disproportionate vulnerability of our communities to climate-related disasters, droughts, and other environmental crises.

Climate change is not just an environmental issue, but a matter of human rights and social justice. Rising temperatures, unpredictable weather patterns, and extreme weather events are threatening the very survival of our communities, particularly the most vulnerable among us – small-scale farmers, informal workers, and marginalized groups.

In Southern Africa, climate change is already causing a profound impact on our food security, water availability and economic livelihoods. Droughts and floods are becoming more frequent and intense, leading to crop failures, livestock deaths and displacement of communities. The consequences are far-reaching: food insecurity is on the rise, poverty levels are increasing and social cohesion is being tested.



But while climate change presents a significant challenge, it also presents an opportunity for us to build resilience and transform our societies for the better. At SAPSN, we believe that climate resilience is not just about adapting to environmental shocks but about creating sustainable livelihoods that prioritize social justice, equality and human well-being.

So what can we do?

1. Support small-scale farmers: Our region's small-scale farmers are at the forefront of climate change adaptation. We must provide them with access to climate-resilient agricultural practices, credit facilities and markets to sell their produce.

2. Protect water resources: Water scarcity is a major concern in Southern Africa. We must prioritize water conservation, efficient use of water resources, and protect water sources from pollution and over-extraction.

3. Promote renewable energy: Transitioning to renewable energy sources like solar and wind power

can reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and mitigate the effects of climate change.

4. Build inclusive disaster risk reduction: We must ensure that disaster risk reduction strategies are inclusive of all communities, particularly those that are most vulnerable to climate-related disasters.

5. Foster international cooperation: Climate change knows no borders. We must work together with neighboring countries and international organizations to share knowledge, expertise, and resources in addressing this global crisis.

In conclusion, building resilience in the face of climate change requires a collective effort from governments, social movements, businesses, and individuals. At SAPSN, we are committed to working tirelessly with our members and partners to advance a just and sustainable future for all people in Southern Africa. Join us in this critical struggle to protect our planet and our communities.

Together, we can build a more resilient future!

Unlocking the Demographic Dividend by Leveraging the Economic Power of Women and Youth

By Fortunate Chilenje

The untapped potential of women and youth represents a significant opportunity for growth and shared prosperity globally. Systemic barriers have long prevented these crucial demographics from fully participating in economic decision-making, costing the world invaluable insights, skills, and ideas. Emerging research indicates that a substantial "demographic dividend"—the financial gains from a population with a high percentage of working-age citizens—can be unlocked by empowering women and youth¹. Nations that invest in women and youth's economic inclusion, health, and education typically experience faster economic growth, higher living standards and more social stability.

Leveraging this demographic advantage could be the key to transformative economic growth in regions with rapidly growing youth populations such as South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. These nations can tap into the limitless energy, inventiveness, and problem-solving abilities of the next generation by providing access to high-quality

education and career training. Success stories like Bangladesh and Rwanda demonstrate the power of this approach. Bangladesh has significantly increased school enrolment, particularly for girls, and encouraged entrepreneurship and vocational training, leading to a 35% female workforce.² In Rwanda, women's political representation has reached 61%, the highest in the world, enabling policies that prioritize gender equality and economic development.³

Achieving this potential will require a coordinated, multi-stakeholder effort to eliminate structural obstacles. This may include gender-responsive budgeting, quotas for women in public office and corporate boardrooms, and funding for mentorship and skill-development initiatives. By fully harnessing the unbounded potential of women and youth, we can usher in a new era of inclusive, equitable, and dynamic economic growth for all.

¹World Bank. (2018). "Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, and Inclusive Growth." <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/gender-equality-poverty-reduction-and-inclusive-growth>.

²Noland, M., Moran, T., & Kotschwar, B. (2016). "Is Gender Diversity Profitable? Evidence from a Global Survey." <https://www.iie.com/publications/wp/wp16-3.pdf>.

Women and Youth Participation in Economic Governance on the National Agenda

By Alfa Bothwell Gwatidzo

Our nation's economic landscape has long been dominated by a few, with women and youth often internationally relegated to the periphery because structures in the system are not flexible to allow a smooth flow of these demographics into positions that do not just make them imposters of organizations or political parties.

Women and youth in Zimbabwe face numerous barriers to participation in economic governance. First and foremost, there is actually a problem of inter-face with those in leadership positions themselves before even mentioning limited access to education and training, gender stereotypes and biases, lack of mentorship and networking opportunities, limited representation in leadership positions, cultural and social norms perpetuating inequality as some of the challenges they encounter.

We all know why it's important to amplify the voices of women and youth in economic decision-making and we can achieve it by raising awareness about the importance of inclusivity in economic governance, inspiring and empowering them to pursue leadership opportunities, and facilitating honest dialogues and exchange of ideas on promoting gender equality and youth empowerment. I say 'we all know' because just last year we saw the electorate in Epworth choosing the youngest female mayor of our time at just 24 years before other dynamics came into play. What is

concerning is that some school of thought on social media platforms had the nerve to say, "She would have lacked experience anyways." Really? How does someone gain experience in something they are not part of?

However, we cannot overlook Government initiatives like the Quota system for instance, aimed at promoting representation. Despite its intentions, the system has been heavily criticized for tokenism, undermining meritocracy and having a limited scope. Poor implementation, patronage and stigma have further hindered its effectiveness. As a result, the quota system has failed to adequately address the deep-seated inequalities in our country and its impact has been limited or rather been less effective. The system needs revision and effective implementation to truly empower marginalized groups and promote equity. Equality can be achieved by implementing gender-sensitive economic policies and programs, establishing mentorship and training initiatives, promoting and ensuring representation and inclusion in leadership positions, encouraging dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders, and leveraging technology and social media to amplify voices and facilitate engagement.

At the end of the day, we can't deny that women and youth inclusion in economic governance is crucial for Zimbabwe's economic development and social justice at this point in time. By amplifying their voices and promoting inclusivity, we can build a more equitable and prosperous future for all. But how do we do that? How do we rethink development in our nation? I believe by creating spaces coupled by availing

supportive and enabling atmospheres for women and youths to demonstrate their skills and abilities because creating spaces is not enough, we need vertical and lateral inclusion.

We need Action!



Women and Youth Participation in the Dynamic, Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous world.

By Armando Frashishiko

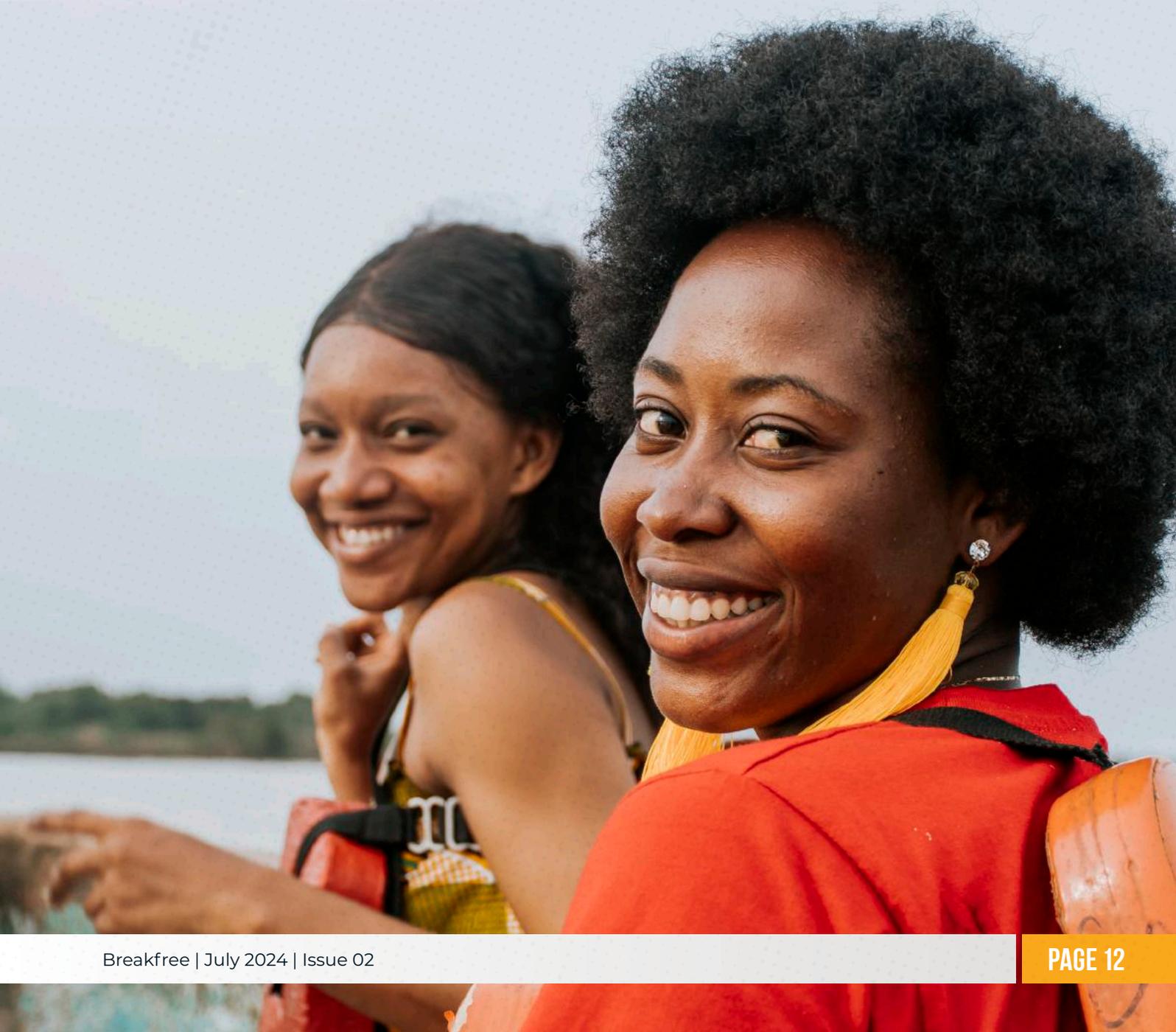
We are living in a period in human history where we are faced with uncertainty and disruptive change in the socioeconomic space. Experts from different disciplines have also indicated that we are living in the DVUCA (Dynamic, Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) world. During the same period, there are major global shifts which are taking place in the socio – economic and political spheres which necessitates the mechanisms for inclusive economic governance in the global economy. The fundamental underpinnings of inclusive economic governance include active participation, representation, and opportunities for all stakeholders, with particular attention on the marginalised groups in economic decision – making processes and resource allocation. Central to the idea of inclusive economic governance is the achievement of income inequality reduction, promotion of economic empowerment of the marginalised groups, fostering sustainable economic growth, enhancing accountability and transparency, and fostering the principles of partnership and collaboration. This aligns with the attainment of the targets of the Global Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 which seeks to increase the inclusion and participation of vulnerable and marginalised groups in the economic and leadership spheres (SDG 5).

While women and youth's inclusion and participation in the economic space is increasingly being recognised as central for the achievement of sustainable development, evidence suggests that, within the society – globally and locally – there is a growing concern on “silent suffering” which is characterised by inhuman exclusion and the regression of the quality of life of those marginalised and excluded. At the global level and within the Zimbabwean context, evidence also suggests that women and youth's underrepresentation, exclusion from the economic spaces is one of the major cause for concern in the development discourse. This is based on the realisation that, exclusion and underrepresentation of women and youth often results in the overlooking of the interest, priorities, and needs of these groups in economic policies and interventions. Consequently, due to exclusion, women and youth often lack the opportunities to define the future, contribute to economic outlook, and bring about sustainable socio – economic transformation at the micro (individuals/ household), meso (group/community), macro (institutional), and mundo (global) levels.



However, through education, empowerment and policy reforms, women and youth inclusion in the economic space holds the promises of broadening the scope for effective economic governance, the improvement of the socio – economic outlook, and economic innovation. Essentially, increased participation and inclusion of women and youth in the economic space also provides the prospects of achieving economic stability, increased economic productivity and the enhancement of economic resilience. Ensuring the inclusion of women and youth

in economic governance is critical for sustainable economic development and progress. Inclusive economic governance has also been noted to be crucial in improving allocative efficiencies – which aims to ensure the optimal distribution of resources in an economy. As a results, this builds economic resilience, addresses economic complexities and maximises the impact that the available economic resources can have.





Empowering the Marginalized: Ensuring Women and Youth Participation in Economic Decision-Making

By Zimbabwe Young People's Federation

In the pursuit of inclusive and equitable economic growth, the meaningful participation of women and youth in economic governance is a crucial, yet often overlooked imperative. Across the globe, these historically marginalized groups continue to face systemic barriers to accessing positions of power and influence within economic institutions and policymaking processes.

However, the benefits of embracing their perspectives and lived experiences are many. Studies have consistently shown that increased gender and age diversity on corporate boards and in government economic roles leads to improved financial performance, more innovative problem-solving, and better alignment of policies with the needs of the wider population.

To realize this potential, concerted efforts must be made to dismantle the entrenched patriarchal and ageist norms that perpetuate the underrepresentation of women and youth. This requires a multipronged approach, including:

1. Implementing targeted recruitment, training, and mentorship programs to cultivate a robust pipeline of qualified female and young candidates for economic leadership roles.

2. Mandating gender and age quotas for decision-making bodies, from corporate boardrooms to policymaking committees.

3. Addressing systemic biases and discrimination through anti-bias training, pay equity measures, and family-friendly workplace policies.

4. Investing in girls' and young people's access to quality education, particularly in STEM fields, to build the skills and confidence needed to thrive in economic spheres.

5. Amplifying the voices of women and youth advocates, and actively incorporating their perspectives into economic policymaking and program design.

By championing the inclusion of these marginalized groups, we can unlock a wellspring of untapped talent, innovation, and insights – ultimately creating more equitable, responsive, and prosperous economic systems that benefit all. The time is now to boldly redefine the face of economic governance and forge a more inclusive and sustainable future.

The People have Spoken.

Kenya President William Ruto on the protest against the Finance Act

Image: The Conversation

Featured picture: Kenya Finance Act Protests



Image: James Wakibia/ZUMA PRESS/ picture alliance

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