



One Composite Legal and Coordination Framework for Youth Empowerment in Zimbabwe.

Executive Summary

The job of youth empowerment in Zimbabwe is a toll order. This is because of several factors ranging from the fact that youthhood is a moving target as key actors and players eventually make it out of the youth age bracket.

The other telling factor for Zimbabwe is that the youth empowerment coordination frameworks in Zimbabwe has largely being fragmented with duplication of duties amongst stakeholders.

The laws that at least have a bearing on the welfare and wellbeing of the youth are not aligned to the new constitution.

These could be the major reasons why youth participation in economic governance has been problematic and hard to foster. Hence, there is a need for a policy shift towards one composite legal and coordination framework for youth empowerment in Zimbabwe.

Introduction

The participation of young people in economic governance is hinged on robust legal and institutional frameworks (Musarurwa 2018; YETT 2019). The legal frameworks for youth economic governance refer to the statutes, regulations and policies that oblige the governments to implement youth sensitive economic interventions from the global, regional down to the domestic level. Institutional frameworks for youth economic governance refers the as organisations with defined functions and final objectives of turning a national strategy with the resources for its implementation (Blondeau 2014). Institutional frameworks for youth economic governance are also defined as the agents performing a stipulated function that is foreseen in a public policy, programme, or project for executing a law or regulation (Dovers & Hezri, 2010).

However, the lack of youth participation in economic governance is in contrast to the several commitments and institutional frameworks established by the Government of Zimbabwe because of the continuous exclusionary tendencies in decision making and the overall development process (Gukurume 2018). Also, the legal frameworks of underpinning youth economic governance are highly fragmented and lack harmonisation as well as alignment to the current Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013 (Tinarwo et al. 2018). In addition, the policy-oriented organisations responsible for the coordination and implementation of youth economic governance in Zimbabwe are characterised by weak harmonisation, duplication of efforts and lacks adequate budgetary support from the government (Babu and Bloom 2017; YETT 2019).

Currently, The Government of Zimbabwe has committed itself to several national legislative frameworks that prioritise young people's participation in economic governance. Accordingly, these national frameworks also find reverberation in regional and international statutes, policies and covenants and they both

oblige the Zimbabwean government to ensure that youth take an active part in economic governance initiatives. The National Youth Policy of 2013 has been developed as a framework to provide common aspirations and priorities for youth development across Zimbabwe by ensuring the active involvement and contribution of young people to the socio-economic development of the country (the Republic of Zimbabwe 2013b). The policy seeks to empower young people by creating an enabling environment as well as allocating the necessary resources to improve their quality of life. The 2013 National Youth Policy is a culmination of the National Youth Policy which was formulated in the year 2000 to provide an enabling framework for the development and empowerment of youth (the Republic of Zimbabwe 2013b). The National Development Strategy 1: 2021-2025 (NDS1) has mainstreamed youth economic governance as one of its cross-cutting issues. In view with the above, the main outcomes under the NDS1 are, "increasing youth participation in decision-making and development processes from 3.3% in 2020 to 25% by 2025 as well as increasing the number of youth who accessed empowerment opportunities in all sectors of the economy from 16 000 in 2020 to 200 000 by 2025" (Republic of Zimbabwe 2020). Similarly, there are also multiple stakeholders that are or purport to be involved in youth economic governance in Zimbabwe.

These multiple policy-oriented entities, both Zimbabwean and international, cannot coordinate the implementation of the country's youth economic governance strategies to maximise the synergy between national and international government stakeholders. These institutional frameworks for youth economic governance lack coherence and coordination and characterised by a lot of duplication of efforts (Blondeau 2014).



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 government must enact a comprehensive Youth Act and revise the National Youth Council Act to ensure that the legal and policy framework responds to the socio-economic challenges youths are facing such as unemployment, lack of access to financial services and educational opportunities.
- Parliament must enact the Youth Orientation Devolution Act or Policy that ensures youth participation and representation at all tiers of government.

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.

