



Statement on the United Nations International Youth Day

The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum joins the world in commemorating the United Nations International Youth Day. Every year on 12 August since the year 2000, the world commemorates this day to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding youth. This year, the theme of International Youth Day 2019, “Transforming education”, highlights efforts to make education more relevant, equitable and inclusive for all youth, including efforts by youth themselves. Rooted in Goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” – International Youth Day 2019 is an opportunity to examine how as a nation, young people and youth-led and youth-focused organizations, as well as other stakeholders, are transforming education and how these efforts are contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This day is particularly important to Zimbabwe as our population has a bulging youth dividend. In 2012 ZIMSTATS reported that Zimbabwe has a very large demographic youth bulge, with over 75% of the population under 35 years. Despite the complex and deeply rooted economic challenges that are being faced in the country, the proactivity of the youth has been overwhelming. There has been utilisation of technology and entrepreneurship to contribute to the economic and social development of Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean Constitution provides that the State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take reasonable measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that youths have access to appropriate education and training. Education is a constitutional right which fosters a culture of development. We note with concern that despite the strides made in education, it remains out of the reach of many Zimbabweans. As a result young people are on the streets and political actors have preyed on this youth resource for perpetration of political violations. This then means that the educational curriculum should not only be accurate but it should be responsive to the global trends and demands providing transformation in the youths’ quality of life. This includes making it affordable and it being alive to technological developments. It is clear that key governance areas in Zimbabwe are not

progressing fast enough to keep up with rising demands, and more specifically to respond to the growing expectations of the youth. This in turn limits youth participation in the political and governance sector. The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum therefore urges the government of Zimbabwe to implement a youth friendly development policy that responds to the needs of the youth of Zimbabwe.

In a report conducted by the Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) it was noted that young people in Zimbabwe have no prospects and there is an urgent need for important stakeholders to come together in a structured and sustained dialogue on youth issues in Zimbabwe. We note that every Zimbabwean has a role to play in building a Zimbabwe that supports and provides for its people. We therefore call on the government and all sectors of society to commit to supporting the youth of Zimbabwe by including them in all national processes. This will contribute to the development of Zimbabwe and to an empowered youth. We also call on the young people of Zimbabwe, who many times are used by political actors to perpetrate violence on their fellow brothers, sisters and parents, to make themselves unavailable to entrepreneurs of violence, and rather commit themselves to selves to the pursuit and promotion of a just society through peaceful means.

Forum members

- Amnesty International-Zimbabwe
- Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
- CIVNET
- Counselling Services Unit
- Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
- Justice for Children
- Legal Resources Foundation
- Media Institute of Southern Africa-Zimbabwe
- Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
- Research and Advocacy Unit
- Transparency International-Zimbabwe
- VERITAS
- Women of Zimbabwe Arise
- Zimbabwe Association for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of the Offender
- Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights
- Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust
- Zimbabwe Human Rights Association
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights
- Zimbabwe Peace Project
- Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association

