



Budiriro Think Tank (BTT)

"Taking youth development, indigenization and empowerment to greater heights"

YOUTH is *a transitional phase/ period from childhood to adulthood in human development*. It is also of paramount importance that this process be guided by the definition of a youth in the African Youth Charter and adopted respectively in the national youth policies. For a nation that is committed to the development and empowerment of its future generations (which lies in youths) should make meaningful undertakings to observe and be guided by the charter and subsequent national youth policies in its formulation of developmental youth programmes and national programmes.

Currently most youths are focusing much more on socio-economic differences which have undermined the progress of national youth programmes. As youths we must focus and concentrate more on what brings us together on a developmental note. Taking aboard what concern us youths the present and future in order to leave behind a legacy of brotherhood that unites us as the citizens of a nation, this is the most important factor to the development and empowerment of youths both socially and economically. Let's be objective rather than being subjective!

Having said that we will not waste time by describing the problems and challenges already articulated and presented well in different forums both locally and internationally (though this assumption is dangerous). Taking into cognizance the fact that youths are not a homogeneous group and that there are four types of characters of people (i.e. Employee, Self Employed, Business Owner and Investor) henceforth, this article primarily focuses on recommendations as part of the solutions to the challenges and problems that we are engulfed in.

A paradigm shift is inevitable on our agenda of contributing meaningfully towards youth development. Youths being the custodians of tomorrow (the future), we must be at the epicenter of this endeavour on achieving a sustainable livelihood. Information dissemination techniques, empowerment objectives, investment opportunities, enforcement of policies [including acts, laws, and programmes activities], promotion of socio integration, transformation or retransformation of the youth mindset towards youth developmental programmes, are the key factors to consider in formulation and implementation of national policies.

With the creation of the department of youth development in the scenario of Zimbabwe, information dissemination has improved, but lets consider the fact the transformation from childhood to adulthood

is a process, henceforth the dissemination techniques of the national programmes has to be carefully considered. Games have been seen to be effective mode of information dissemination. Research has shown that the way one conducts himself/ herself when playing (or watching) a game reflects much on one's personality and character. The participant of the game (or the spectator) will easily absorb the concepts and contents of the game. Innovative as well as creative interactive and simulative games are a pinnacle to information dissemination techniques that brings results as well as behavioral changes, more particularly amongst the youths and children. Games have more effect on youths, as on adults as there have on children.

Youth empowerment policy as an indigenization and economic-empowerment initiative has to be in tandem with educational policies to succeed, for instance, the majority of youths are failing to understand the concept of national indigenization and economic-empowerment. Like the agrarian revolution, the youths were expected to take the lead and benefited, but this never happened. The educational system groom children to adults but in doing so the critical principles of national policies are generalized on the expense of the youth. The education system is in most cases producing employees but the national indigenization and economic empowerment policy emphasizing youths to get hold of the indigenize resources, empower themselves and become fully fledged entrepreneurs. The financial institutions have been in most cases put forward stringent collateral requirements for youths to secure financial resources. The majority of youths have been left with nothing productive to do but to all forms of abuse.

Most empowerment strategies and undertakings are a real mockery to the word empowerment and its meaning. Most of the empowerment efforts being said to have been and being undertaken are selective rather than objective. Developmental empowerment goes beyond, for instance telling someone that such thing(s) or project(s) is (are) paying without giving that person the power or authority or means to do (or rather) embark on such thing(s) or project(s). And this is not what is needed at this point in time. Empowerment strategies that are needed are in line and are supported with investment opportunities that are available or that can be created. A paradigm shift from a mind-set of capital being inherited to that of capital being generated becomes inevitable if we are to succeed on our agenda. Capital is not only in financial terms. In fact if you have capital you are empowered. The capital being referred to here is a combination of financial, resources and human. The current situation and status of the youths and children is of great beneficial to a selected few depending on how well connected you are.

As youths, we need to start looking at what we have. From a philosophical point of view, the answer lies within the question. We need to use what we have to the best of the abilities of those things to profitably satisfy our unique needs and wants. On the indigenization and empowerment, our primary focus as youths must be on value addition rather than being middlepersons.

Of the about 9 520 000 Zimbabwean youths, 1 332 800 have left the country to the Diaspora. 2 142 000 unemployed, 571 200 are employed, 3 094 000 are school and college going age, while 2 380 000 have passed on (approximate estimates). For the purposes of gender equality, sex distribution has been deliberately left out. The \$1 000 per youth loans are targeted to benefit the unemployed youths, however 1 713 600 youths of the targeted group are not in picture of this development. Of the 427 400 youths, 256 440 can not write bankable project plans if at all they can write one and the remainder are set to benefit directly. Of the 170 960 youths, a smaller percentage is anticipated to undertake there proposed projects successfully.

Taking into cognizance the above data, indigenization and empowerment agenda, lessons from land reform as well as the land reform itself and the resources in our motherland, Zimbabwe,

notwithstanding the socio-political dispensations; as youths and those concerned with the youth affairs in Zimbabwe, we need to undertake a process of defining a Zimbabwe we want in ten to twenty years to come. We need to take charge today and define the Zimbabwe we want followed by actually undertake actions that will enable us to turn that we desire into reality. Let's get our hands dirty!

There is need to put in place youth policies that will remain beneficial to youths. A great number of youth programmes and projects have been implemented for the youths then whom have benefited are no longer youths. The only youth policy that has been put in place and remains beneficial to youths is the education policy, but even though more needs to be done to that policy as well. On empowerment and indigenisation, the policies must ensure that the process are in the circular format rather than linear as most policies stand. (e.g. on land reform, we propose that 30% of the farms in each province be owned by the state on behalf of the youths whom will utilise them as an empowerment vehicle for a certain period before they graduate into their respective business ventures.) 25 % of the gross total revenue generated from all the mines and natural resources must be channelled toward the Youth Empowerment and Development Fund that will be administered by the Zimbabwe Youth Council (ZYC).

Taking a leaf from history of the East and West, for instance, the East provided cheap labour to the West most importantly within their land. The West set-up plants and factories in the East, hence production was done in the East on behalf of the West. This is a win-win situation for all the parties within trade agreements. As youths, we need to advocate for a situation where our backyard will never be turned into disposal sites of other states. If we are serious in the next ten to twenty years, as patriotic youths of Zimbabwe, she can take a deliberate decision that her citizens never have to labour for survival. What do we need to do?

By exploiting our resources (both natural and human), added value and dispose them for both internal and external markets. This being the spirit of the indigenisation and empowerment agenda, youths should think and act of partnering or collaborating with interested parties in setting-up ventures that brings technology and infrastructural development in her land. Seriously taking consideration of our natural resources and human capital and being patriotic enough to withstand short term pressures that cloud our goal. Rejecting being study cases for others' benefit is the mind set we need to have. Vigilance is a priority with regards to our history, present and alignment with future goals.

With the exception of the short term, we need to lobby and advocate for policies and laws that discourage exporting raw resources at the expense of value added resources. Our resources must be processed or value added locally before exportation. For us to achieve this within the short term we need to use a portion of our resources in exchange for bringing in technology and building required strategic infrastructures. Also within short term, let set our priorities right and doing the right things. Zimbabwe is a youthful nation, hence we constitute the mass. At this point, it prudent that as Zimbabwean we define what we stand for as Zimbabwean before what we believe in individually. We need to graduate from a point where our individual point of view is against our standing point as Zimbabweans; we are able to say NO! Depoliticise the youth sector, for this process to be easier, the political will by the major political players is needed. However, the process requires an all inclusive and multi-sectorial approach. It is commendable that this process is showing some signs of laying out some form of foundation within our country Zimbabwe.

At community level, as youth indigenisation and empowerment strategy Budiriro Think Tank (BTT) is lobbying and advocating for a "currency pool model". A currency pool model is a multi-sectorial interdependent business system that coordinates various economic ventures with a centralised

administration. Currency pool model operates in what can be referred to as a community youth economic hub. Characteristics of the hub encourages promotion of economic ventures of members within that community thereby ensuring that the currency circulates more within that particular community before it escape that society.

Syndicates or synergies that will be operating or using the currency pool model will be interdependent, running independently with a centralised administrative coordination. The community youth economic hub will be administered by a currency pool committee. The currency pool committee's responsibilities include acquisition of resources and supervising operations. A secretariat that has a responsibility to supervise day-to-day operation of the community youth economic hub, will be in place and under the directions of the committee. Close financial management and control will be employed as the committee will secure funding on behalf the members of the community youth economic hub. Only net profit for respective economic ventures and salaries will be given to economic venture owners and employees. Appropriate action will be taken to non-performing ones.

As BTT a local youth initiative, we strive for social and economic emancipation, empowerment, nurturing and development. BTT is a registered Trust (MA 135/2009) a membership based non-profit making, non-religious and apolitical community based organisation. We commenced our active on the ground operations in June 2007 though our history is traced to November 2003. BTT has been operating without external funding since its inception.

The mission of BTT is, *"To contribute to the advancement of our community to meet world-class standards by creating a positive change, platforms for social and economic development."* While the purpose of the programmes we are currently implementing is, *"Creating conducive platforms for youths to use their respective talents as developmental tools in sustaining their lives, socially and economically."* Our programmes are aimed addressing four areas of interest and these are (a) Individual development, (b) Community development, (c) Business and Entrepreneurship development (d) Health and Environment affairs. Currently BTT is running Youth Information Kiosk (YIK) programme (and our flagship initiative under this programme is BTT Street Youth Edutainment), Entrepreneurship Development In Action (EDIA) programme and Mukoma Sports programme.

The objective of EDIA programme is creating conducive platforms (training ground for youths) to start a project, work towards listing on the youth project stock exchange (an alternative stock exchange) with the ultimate aim to list on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE) and or any other international stock exchange.

In conclusion, we believe if we are to put more emphasis on the above mentioned areas of interest at national level that should make a strong foundation for any future policy making framework. With the right attitude, right leadership, right policies and transparent enforcement we are posed for a brighter and successful future for the present and future youth generations.

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