

STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT OF ZIMBABWE

PUBLIC MEETING REPORT

27 APRIL 2007

YWCA HOSTELS, MKOBA, GWERU

The report covers the proceedings of an SCMZ public meeting held from 1700hrs to 1900hrs on the 27th of April 2007 at the YWCA Hostels in Mkoba, Gweru. The public meeting drew seventy three participants from unemployed youth residents of Mkoba. The topic was;

The current Zimbabwean crisis: Towards a youth centred approach

Panellists

1. Lawrence Mashungu (SCMZ National Vice Chairperson)
2. Samuel Mangoma (ZINASU Finance Secretary)
3. Tedious Chimombe (MDC Midlands Province National Youth Representative)

Discussant

Tafadzwa Mukandi (SCMZ)

Meeting objectives

- ✓ To gather the level of understanding on the current crisis by the youths at the grassroots.
- ✓ To promote and conscientise young grassroots people to participate in the resolution of the current crisis.
- ✓ To raise awareness, conceptualization and understanding on contemporary national issues.
- ✓ To provide young females and males with a platform for participation without marginalization
- ✓ To strengthen solidarity links between SCMZ and other pro-democracy forces and foster the concept of a coordinated resolution to the Zimbabwean crisis.

Proceedings

The meeting started with some devotions led by Brian Matanda and Fortune both from SCMZ's Gweru branch. This was followed by presentations from panelists;

1. Samuel Mangoma

He divided the current Zimbabwean crisis into three categories;

- ✓ Political
- ✓ Economic
- ✓ Social

Political crisis

Mangoma defined the political crisis as having emanated from a political leadership that has abdicated its duties. Whilst the current national leadership can be credited with spearheading the liberation struggle which saved the nation from colonial chains, according to Mangoma they have long since detracted from the original principles of the liberation struggle. In his words it's a revolution that has lost its course. The political crisis is manifesting itself through constitutional crisis and political violence. For him there was need to really intensify pressure on the government for constitutional change. Political violence, he said is also one of the key manifestations of a political crisis. Mangoma challenged young people to

open the Pandora's Box and expose the top officials who are instigating violence and abuse of young people.

Economic crisis

On the economic front, Mangoma touched on the proposed social contract between government, labour and business. For him the contract is a non event because there was no involvement of youths and it is meant to further marginalize young people. The economic meltdown according to Mangoma was directly linked to the political crisis and as such he challenged young people to seek political change first and then economic salvation after.

Social crisis

On the social aspect he centred on the two issues of HIV and AIDS and the shrinking academic rights due to political polarization and the economic meltdown. He urged the youth to explore the link between HIV and AIDS and the structure of poverty, were he said most young people are mainly affected because of their being poverty stricken. Mangoma lamented the collapse of the education sector in the country due to the introduction of exorbitant and segregatory fees structures which has made education particularly at tertiary level a sole privilege for the rich elite.

Mangoma concluded his presentation by articulating that it is very difficult to deal with the three aspects of the crisis separately since they are interconnected and for him the greatest challenge was the political crisis which he said is the direct cause for economic and social crisis. He urged young people to take a centre stage in the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis.

2. Tedious Chimombe

Tedious Chimombe emphasized on the agenda of the MDC party in resolving the crisis in Zimbabwe which is political because of Zanu PF continued misrule. He pointed out that the current government lack seriousness in dealing with the youth issues and he gave an example of the lack of education policy and the general youth policy. He took time to give the participants an assurance that the continued harassment of the president of the party Morgan Tsvangirai and some other senior party officials like Ian Makoni, Paul Madzore, and Morgan Komichi plus civic leaders like Dr Madhuku will not deter them from continuing with the struggle for the good of the people of Zimbabwe. He raised concern over the issue that Tobaiwa Mudede is making sure that youths do no vote by denying them identity documents, but he encouraged youth to make sure that they go and vote when the MDC declares that they go into an election but under a new constitution .He also edged participants to participate fully in the save Zimbabwe campaign process.

3. Lawrence Mashungu

Mashungu's presentation was centred on explaining the role of young Christians in the resolution of the current Zimbabwean crisis. He began by demystifying the idea that is usually propelled in Christian circles that we are not of this world. He said whilst it is true that we are not of this world we should not forget that we are in the world. As such it was imperative to actively participate in issues of social justice in this world. Mashungu supported his stance by citing prominent biblical activists who acted for greater good. The acts of the biblical Esther, David and Nehemiah were particularly cited as sources of inspiration for the current young Christian social justice activists.

Mashungu agreed with Mangoma in his outline of the nature and depth of the crisis. He particularly urged young people to utilise the platform provided by the Save Zimbabwe Campaign. He emphasised the need for a new constitutional

dispensation that guarantees a free and fair electoral playing field. In particular, he advocated for the defiance of oppressive legislations like POSA and AIPPA. He articulated the need for intensive and extensive participation of young people in the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis.

Contributions from participants

Various questions and comments were raised by the participants;

1. Participants wanted panellists to explain on the possibilities of having a new constitution before the 2008 presidential elections. There was fear that the government will not cooperate on the issue of a new constitution. However, it was clarified that there was no logic in participating in a predetermined election and therefore it was the duty of responsible citizens to ensure that pressure is mounted on the regime for there is no way the government will fail to yield to people pressure.
2. Participants also commended the idea of a coordinated effort towards the resolution of the current Zimbabwean crisis. In particular they applauded the Christian community in providing a platform for young people to speak their minds without marginalisation.
3. Female participants also said that in the process of resolving the crisis young women should also be on centre stage, they should contribute side by side with men and as such be seen to represent relevance.
4. Non-student participants also pointed the need to ensure that not only academic members of the youth constituency dominate youth interventions to the crisis.

Resolutions

Participants agreed on the following resolutions

1. Young people resolved to be part of all coordinated efforts towards the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis. In particular participants resolved to participate within the Save Zimbabwe Campaign platform.
2. The meeting resolved that young people should work and put pressure on the government to give way to constitutional reform. It was resolved that no level playing field no elections and no compromise.
3. The meeting resolved that youths should centralize participation, they should be action oriented.
4. It was resolved that SCMZ should continue to capitalize on its Christian outlook and continue to provide young people with a platform to articulate their views.
5. The final resolution was that there won't be any turning back, young people should keep resilient in their struggle for social justice in Zimbabwe even if it meant paying the ultimate price of death.

3.0 Programme impact and beneficiaries

The project registered a number of impacts and in the process there were many beneficiaries beyond the participants of the meeting.

- ✓ There is no doubt that debate, articulation and interaction on youth intervention on the current crisis left a permanent mark on SCMZ's Gweru branch
- ✓ The interaction of participants with panelists from different stakeholders had a high networking impact on young people in Gweru and hence fosters the idea of a coordinated effort towards the resolution of the crisis.
- ✓ The meeting had a valued impact of introducing participants to the broader campaign of the Save Zimbabwe Campaign which meant the beginning of their direct participation within the campaign.
- ✓ The workshop also had a high impact by giving participants from different corners of Mkoba a chance to share ideas and experience thereby learning a lot from each other.

4.0 Challenges

The programme faces a number of challenges;

- ✓ **The closure of democratic space** still remains the single greatest challenge for the movement's programs. The presence of restrictive legislations like POSA which affected the publicity of the meeting no doubt meant that a number of young people who could otherwise have attended the meeting did not get the information on the meeting that was transmitted in a liberation struggle-style in terms of underground information dissemination.

5.0 Lessons Learnt

The following Lessons were learnt;

- ✓ The essence and practical relevance of networks. This was shown through the effective underground mobilisation of participants through structures of partner organisations like YWCA, ZINASU and political parties.
- ✓ Underground mobilisation plus the use of church based venues remains an important way of evading POSA.

6.0 Recommendations

- ✓ The need to continuously give young people platforms where they can articulate their issues without marginalisation.
- ✓ The need to intensify advocacy and lobby efforts on the repeal of draconian legislations in particular and the complete overhaul of the Zimbabwean constitution.
- ✓ The need for continuity, expansion (to other provinces of the country) and sustenance of this noble cause of youth public meetings.

7.0 Conclusion

The programme is a massive investment in young people. SCMZ continues to encourage and advocate for programmes which are aimed at reaching out to the grass root in the quest to democratize Zimbabwe. There is however, serious need for the continuity, expansion (to other provinces of the country) and sustenance of the programme if it is to realise its fullest impact.