

YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN WARD THREE OF CHEGUTU DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

Itai Kabonga*

ABSTRACT

Youths are the fulcrum of society. It is their innovativeness, character and will power that defines developmental trajectory. Inherently the youths are an important cog of the development matrix. This paper interrogates challenges compounding the youths with regard to development and empowerment in Chegutu district ward 3. Exclusion from resource ownership, death of youth volunteerism, politicization of the concept of youth, exclusion of women (youth) and lack of funding summarizes challenges affecting youth empowerment and development in the ward 3. These challenges are not peculiar to ward 3 only but are reminiscent of the challenges in the district. As long as these challenges remain unsolved the implication on development is stupendous and horrendous. Depoliticization of the concept of youth, adequate funding and supporting resource ownership by the youths are some of the measures to countermand challenges ravaging the youths. This study is based on qualitative in-depth interview that was conducted with a youth officer in Chegutu district ward three. In-depth interview was used to extricate data on challenges and issues affecting youth development and empowerment. The youth officer was probed on what challenges are compounding the youths in ward three. Documentary review on the discourse of youth development and empowerment was used to buttress and patronise the findings of the research.

Keywords Youths, Development, Empowerment, Funding, Volunteerism

* A Development Practitioner and a holder of Master of Arts in Development Studies from Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The paper is an exploration of challenges and issues compounding the youths with regards to development in Chegutu rural ward three. Youths are defined by the Zimbabwean National Youth Policy as individuals who are between 15 years to 35 years. The definition is in congruence with the one enshrined in the African Youth Charter of 15 to 35 years. Zimbabwe has a young population, with 77% of the 13 061239 being children and youth below the age of 35 years (Zimbabwe Country Report 2014). Youths faces a quantum of challenges that range from unemployment, diseases disenfranchisement and poverty. The Nigerian Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action conspicuously captures the challenges that faces the youths across the African continent. Inadequate parental care, non-availability of sports and recreational facilities, moral decadence in society, lack of appropriate role models, political manipulation of youth organisations, unemployment, poor education and indiscipline summarizes impediments to youth development. Mukuhlani (2014) concurs that poverty, unemployment and susceptibility to sexual abuses are some of the ignominy challenges affecting the youths in Zimbabwe. Challenges that are facing the youths are not peculiar to Chegutu district only but also reminiscent of challenges throughout the country. In interrogating the challenges and issues affecting youths with regards to development, it is important to appreciate that the youths are not a homogeneous group. This paper in discussing issues affecting the youths is cognisant of the fact that the youths are a heterogeneous group. Each group has specific development challenges and needs. Differential youth groups like young women, youths with disabilities, pupils and students, unemployed youths, out-of-school youths and youths living with HIV have different development needs. More importantly, difficulties facing each group are usually peculiar to that group.

The rationale for youth development is impeccably captured in the words of former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo who reiterates that youths are the foundation of a society. Their energy, inventiveness, character and orientation define the pace of development and the security of a nation. Through their creative talents and labour power, a nation gain strides in economic development and socio-political attainments. In their dreams and hopes a nation finds her motivation, on their energies, she builds her vitality and purpose. And because of their dreams and aspirations, the future of a nation is assured (Nigerian Youth Policy and Strategic Plan Action)

The discourse of youth development hinges unambiguously on ‘creating an enabling environment and marshalling the resources necessary for undertaking programmes to fully develop the youths’ mental, moral, social, economic, political, cultural and physical potential in order to improve their quality of life’, (National Youth Policy, 2000). Principally, in Zimbabwe, youth empowerment is anchored on strategic focus areas that are embedded in the National Youth Policy. Skills development and education forms the basis of youth empowerment. This is in recognition that skills development is a lifelong process that is relevant to the holistic and integrated development of youths. Youth employment and sustainable livelihoods is one of the strategic focus areas for development with regards to the youths. Essentially decent employment and participation in agriculture, industrial and commercial sectors provides sustenance and sustainable livelihoods to a preponderance of the youths.

Unequivocally, youth empowerment, hitherto, in Chegutu district is blatantly being spearheaded by the Ministry of Youth, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment. This is usually done by youth officers that are based in the district. The youth officers are inherently guided by the dictates of the National Youth Policy in discharge of their duty. Development being a complex phenomenon, it is myopic and simplistic to argue that it only youth officers that are spearheading youth development. Private companies, churches and NGOs are invaluable in the developmental matrix. Hitherto, in regard to the abovementioned players, their participation in youth development has been largely subdued and insignificant.

Methodology

This study is based on qualitative in-depth interview that was conducted with a youth officer in Chegutu district ward three. The in-depth interview was used to extricate data on challenges and issues affecting youth development and empowerment. The youth officer was probed on challenges compounding the youths in ward three. Documentary review on the discourse of youth development and empowerment was used to buttress and patronise the findings of the research

Overview of Chegutu Rural Ward three

Chegutu Rural Ward three is predominantly a rural area. The ward has a population of 6331, with 3034 being males and 3297 females. Major economic activities in the area include farming

and alluvial mining. The farming that is pervasive in ward three is mostly communal farming and small scale cash crop farming. Tobacco is the most important crop that is grown in Chegutu rural ward three. Sandy soils that are common in the area force the preponderance of the people to grow tobacco. Hitherto, chrome mining dominates mining activity in the area. Isolated alluvial gold mining together with chrome mining accounts for the mining activities in the area. Socio-economic challenges that are prevalent in ward three are reminiscent of challenges throughout the district. Lack of sustainable economic livelihoods is one of the challenges compounding the youths in the ward. Farming dominates economic livelihoods for the youths. Poor soils, lack of finance to drive production and rainfall unreliability has done a lot to derail agriculture as a source of livelihood for the youths. In terms of mining, youth ownership of mines is erratic, their involvement in mining is as providers of cheap labour. Pecuniary benefits emanating from provision of labour in mines is horrendous. Succinctly, it is plausible to argue that it is unsustainable. In terms of availability of social services the area is relatively well serviced. Musinami Clinic is the only health facility in the ward. Comparing with other clinics in the district the health facility is well-resourced in terms of human resources and medication. The clinic is well painted, has electricity and tap water. Most people in the ward are proud of the facility. The road network needs urgent attention. The ward is inherently dominated by dusty and bumpy roads. Accessibility is a herculean task. Chishoshe primary, Chirundazi primary, Zibowa Primary, Chishoshe Secondary and St Marks High School schools are the educational facilities in the area. The schools are well distributed throughout the ward.

Discussion of Findings

Mandate of the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment with Specific Reference to Youth Development and Empowerment.

The Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment through youth officers is mandated to train the youths on how to write superlative and bankable business proposals. This is in recognition that that youths generally in rural areas lack the capacity to write impeccable proposals that can elicit funding from the government and private players like bank and micro financiers. Youths with business concepts that they believe are realistic and fundable can get assistance from the youth officer in crafting business plans and proposals.

The Zimbabwe National Youth Policy is conspicuous on the role of skills support and development as a panacea to youth empowerment and development. The Integrated Skills Outreach Programme (ISOP) is the quintessence of the Zimbabwe National Youth Policy. Through the ISOP programme youths are capacitated with skills that they can use for sustainable livelihoods. Skills capacitation is being done through multifarious ways. Most prominently, for sustainability reasons individuals with skills in the community are being asked to mentor youths that want to master a certain skill. For example a carpenter can be requested to mentor a youth who wants to become a carpenter. Within the vicinity of ward three is Mashayamombe Training Centre which is a vocational training centre offering a plethora of skills to community members. The youth officer based in ward three is encouraging school leavers to enrol at Mashayamombe Training Centre so that they can master a certain skill that they can use to attain their livelihood.

Kaseke and Dhemba (2005) emphatically defines volunteering as giving one's time to provide services to society or community without expectation of being paid. Ministry of Indigenisation, Youth and Economic empowerment under the auspices of youth officers are engaging the youth in voluntary services. Though a herculean and tremendously insurmountable task, youths in their wards are supposed to volunteer. According to the youth officer, interviewed, a quantum of volunteer opportunities abound in ward three. As lucidly demonstrated the road network in the ward is disastrously poor requiring urgent attention. That is another superlative opportunity to volunteer. Clearing the yard and litter picking at the local health facility Musinami Clinic provides another opportunity for the youths to volunteer. Numerous schools in the ward are ample avenues for volunteering.

Encouraging the youths to partake in National Youth Service is one of the tasks of youth officers. Throughout Zimbabwe every district has a youth officer. The National Youth Service is a programme that is inherently designed to instil patriotism in the youths. Patriotism is measured using numerous indicators. Volunteering to tackle community development drawbacks is one of the indicators of patriotism amongst the youths. A quantum of critics has heaped aspersions on the National Youth Service. It has been criticised as a propaganda paraphernalia for the ruling ZANU PF party. Some critics have went further to attack graduates of the National Youth Service as a militia of ZANU PF. The National Youth Service in Zimbabwe has not been without challenges.

The Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment is cognisant of the fact that development is a multifaceted and a complex phenomenon. Therefore it is a mistake of unrivalled proportion to leave development to government. Non-Governmental Organisations, business and the church are invaluable partners in the developmental matrix. Youth officers are required to work with NGOs operating in their areas. Essentially it is about cooperating with the NGOs in the area of youth empowerment. NGOs by their very nature are also cognisant of the need to cooperate with the community that also include the youth.

Youth development is cognisant of the social and recreational needs of the youth. The role of the youth officers in this regard has been to lobby the Chegutu Rural District Council to create and develop recreational facilities for the youths. These recreational facilities include construction football stadia, basketball courts, tennis courts and cricket grounds. These facilities are lacking in rural areas. This is deplorable if one compares with urban areas. Urban areas have better recreational facilities than rural areas. The youth officer in ward three reiterated that they are encouraging the youths to register their clubs in the community with relevant affiliation associations. Even cultural clubs are encouraged to register. This is done to formalise the activities of the youths in the district.

The Ministry of Youth, Indigenization, and Economic Empowerment through youth officers based in the community are mandated with mobilizing the youths when a need arises. Impeccable examples is the outbreak of diseases like cholera. In this regard the youth will be requested to provide assistance of logistical nature. HIV and AIDS is a problem in Zimbabwe. Naturally, HIV and AIDS is also a problem to the district. Youth Officers conduct informational sessions on HIV and AIDS and similar conjectures like STIs. Youth are encouraged to adopt positive behaviour so that they do not contract HIV or any other STI.

Politicization of the concept of youth and ramifications on development

In ward three, the concept of youth has been seriously politicised and this is increasingly affecting development. Development is being put in quandary as a result of the politicization of the concept of youth. In ward three of Chegutu district, youth is seen as akin to a ZANU PF young cadre ready to enforce party instruction. In the minds of the youths and the general community is impossible to have an apolitical youth. ZANU PF being the dominant party since the attainment of independence in 1980 in Chegutu district youth is synonymous with a well-

disciplined young women and man aligned to ZANU PF. It is conspicuous that not all youths in ward three are aligned to ZANUPF. Given the blatant fact the concept of the youth has been heavily politicised, it is difficult to mobilise the youth so that they can participate in development endeavours in the ward. Not all youths in the ward are sympathisers and patronisers of ZANU PF. Consequently, the youths that support other parties or who are apolitical when any mobilizations meant for youth development are made the youths simply neglect and excuse them from participating because anything to do with youth has been politicised to mean ZANU PF youths. One inherent way through which the youth can contribute to local development is through volunteering. Volunteerism has been severely haemorrhaged by politicisation of the concept of the youth. Youth from other political parties when mobilised willingly shun volunteerism because to them anything to do with the youth is akin to ZANU PF.

Development has heavily suffered from the ignominy and cancerous politicisation of the discourse of youth. The local leadership is unaware of the implication of the politicisation of the concept of youth on development and seem to be wanting to entrench the politicisation of the youth further. This insatiable desire for political expediency will derail and plunge development in doldrums. In order to countermand this ignominy scenario, development partners that include the local leadership must agree to dismantle the entrenched politicisation of the concept of youth.

Youth Development and Gender dynamics

Youth development in ward three just as it has suffered herculean from politicisation it has serious gender dynamics at play at such micro level. As noted above the concept of youth has been heavily politicised to such an extent that a youth is seen as someone belong to ruling ZANU PF party. More so, it is also apparent that the concept of youths has gender dynamics at play. A youth in ward three according to evidence in superfluity gathered during the interview with the youth officer is largely seen as someone who is a male. To the preponderance of the people in ward three a youth is a male who belongs to ruling ZANUPF party. This has seen the exclusion of females in the development trajectory of ward three. The females youths are not excluded institutionally that is by local leadership or by the Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation, and Economic Development but on a personal level. Participation of the females in development is a herculean task if not impossible because the females exclude themselves. This is because subconsciously females believe that a youth is a young man who is aligned to ZANUPF. Given a

phalanx of these challenges youth development and empowerment has seriously suffered. Some of developmental initiatives that have been derailed by gender dynamics include volunteerism and Integrated Skills Outreach Programme (ISOP). Gender dynamics are also prevalent in the economic livelihoods that youths are undertaking in the district. As submitted earlier on, that the youths are involved in small scale mining not as owners of the mines but as purveyors of cheap labour. It is not uncommon to find out that the purveyors of cheap labour in small scale mining are virtually men. This is not only idiosyncratic to ward to 3 but reflective of the trend in Zimbabwe. It is not simplistic to argue that the position of female youths is worse than those of their male compatriots. Given the endemic and pervasive exclusion of female youths in development, ignominy poverty is not uncommon amongst the female youths. Interrogation of gender dynamics is important so as to ensure balanced youth empowerment and development.

Youth volunteerism in quandary

There is stupendous consensus amongst development practitioners and scholars that development is more sustained if the local communities are active players in the developmental matrix. Volunteerism is one of the most common ways through which communities can kick start and sustain development in their areas. Mc Bride et al grapples with the concept of volunteerism and defines it as an organised period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national or world community, recognised and valued by society with minimal monetary compensation to the participants. There are multifarious opportunities that the youths can seize through volunteerism and consequently improving the area. The poor road network is badly in need of a touch up. The health facility and a myriad of schools in ward three all provide the opportunity for youths to volunteer and consequently improving the ward. Volunteerism is in quandary in ward three lamented hysterically the youth officer during the interview. Very few youths are eager to participant in volunteerism. A quantum of reasons can be proffered to explain waning and plummeting volunteerism in the area. This is not a challenge that is essentral to ward 3 but is also reminiscent of challenges in Chegutu district. Lack of patriotism is the chief reason that was proffered by the youth officer for ineffable shunning of volunteerism by the youths in the ward. Patriotism is simply about one showing love for his or her nation. Concisely, the argument of the youth officer is anchored on the fact that the youths do not have the love of their nation at heart. When youths are mobilised to do any volunteer work in the community the youths willingly do

not show up. This because they want something monetary or pecuniary for doing volunteer work. Therefore the argument of the youth officer is credible that patriotism is lacking amongst the youths as they want to be paid for developing their area. This misdemeanour justifies patriotism amongst the youth is absent. The endemic death of volunteerism is not as idiosyncratic to ward 3, but reflect the prevailing situation throughout the district.

It is crystal-clear that since the genesis of the new millennium Zimbabwe hogged international headlines for free falling economy and generally economic hardships. Given the economic challenges that Zimbabwe is experiencing most volunteers are arguing that they must be incentivised financially or otherwise. The argument is buttressed by The Strive Times (2004) that argues that volunteers in Zimbabwe are generally vulnerable and in need of help themselves. The compatibility of volunteerism with the economic hardships in this epoch is heavily questioned. Arguments for paying volunteers are rooted in the fact that life is generally hard therefore volunteers must be motivated. Youths in ward 3 have also joined the bandwagon of those clamouring for financial gains for volunteering. This paper heavily patronises the argument of the youth officer that patriotism amongst the youth is lacking. Youths must invest in development as it will repay them later. Development is being sacrificed for financial expediency.

Exclusion from resource ownership

Chegutu district ward three is fairly endowed with resources that can be harnessed to spearhead unabated development. The greatest resource that the ward has is abundant water. The ward is located near Mupfure River which is a perennial water source. It is possible to venture into agriculture as sustainable livelihood given the abundant water resource. Chrome and alluvial gold are some of the minerals that are available in ward three. However, regrettably the preponderance of the youths are excluded from resource ownership in the ward. The youths are visible in mining as purveyors of cheap labour. The proceeds that are accruing to the youths are deplorable. The wages are dismally unsustainable. The youths are lamenting their exclusion from owning and controlling local resources. The discourse of empowerment is usually about locals benefiting from the resources that surrounds them. Clearly, the youths in ward three are disenfranchised when it comes to resources. The chrome mines that are sprouting in the ward are

owned and controlled by people from other wards and districts. The onus is on the Government of Zimbabwe to capacitate the local communities to own and control their resources. This is pertinent given the government flirtation with empowerment through the Indigenization Act. The youths in ward three distastes their exclusion from resources that surround them. As long as such diabolical exclusions are happening development will remain in doldrums and a pipeline dream.

The exclusion of the youths from owning local resources is not inherently limited to the mines but also to social services. In ward three there is a church controlled school called St Marks. The school fees are overwhelmingly exorbitant as compared to surrounding government schools. Given the stupendous exorbitant fees that are being charged by the church controlled school children surrounding the school are excluded subtly from the school. The argument of the community is that the school is located in ward three, therefore the community must be able to send their children to the school. Again, the school was built using local resources, it is therefore morally right for the community to afford the fees at St Marks. The community is arguing that this disenfranchisement and exclusion is akin to what was happening during the colonial epoch where blacks were exclusively excluded from certain social services. The youth officer argued that that these are some of the challenges that the youth and the community are facing.

Business Proposal and Plans Gathering Dusts in Chegutu

Ward three being part and parcel of Chegutu district, crafted business proposals are submitted to the Ministry of Youth, Indigenization and Economic Empowerment offices in Chegutu for possible funding. The ministry under the auspices of the youth fund, fundsproposal submitted by the youths. The youth officer that was interviewed impeccably recalled that about five proposals have been submitted but nothing has been availed to kick start projects. Cobra making, fishery, building, dress making and carpentry proposals have been hitherto submitted for funding. The proposals are gathering dust in Chegutu. No clear reasons can be tendered for the lack of funding of proposals submitted. While it is acceptable that not all submitted proposals will get funding,

however it is poignant that all five proposals never got funding. Even a response to the effect that they were not fundable. It boggles the mind.

The youth officer however has blamed the office in Chegutu for not properly doing their job. Failing to act on proposals submitted has far reaching implications. Failing to fund proposals from the youths makes the work of the youth officer difficult. This is so because it becomes difficult to mobilize the youths as they `blame him for not ensuring that their projects are funded. Funding of youths proposals is a contentious issue in the district. This is lucid in that in Chegutu Urban there are some youths whose projects were funded. The youth officer noted that there is some form of bias towards urban areas when it comes to funding of proposals. Urban areas are better funded than rural areas. To talk of youth development without funding is simplistic, funding is the fulcrum of youth empowerment and development. To countermand the lack of funding for youths projects, the government must seriously reconsider the funding models for youth project. It is unthinkable to talk of development without funding.

Conclusion

This paper has managed to interrogate the challenges compounding youth empowerment and development in Chegutu District ward three. In doing so the paper is cognisant of the fact that the youths are not a homogeneous group but a heterogeneous group. Consequently, challenges affecting the youth are multifarious but no way impregnable. There has been politicization of the concept of youth. Being a youth is akin to a ZANU PF cadre. Inherently, given a plethora of youths belonging to different political affiliations it is a mammoth task to mobilize the youths given the endemic politicization. Women in ward three are on the periphery of development as the concept of youth has gender dynamics. The general belief amongst the women subconsciously is that a youth is a male person affiliated to ZANU PF. This has further entrenched the marginalisation of women. Exclusion of the youths from resource ownership is a serious adversative to development. To ensure broad base empowerment in ward three, there is need to depoliticise the concept of the youth. Demystification of the concept of the youth and attack of gender relations that exclude the women is of paramount importance. The government must seriously consider funding the proposals of the youths to spearhead local development.

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