

# Report for Conference on Youth Eligibility for Public Office



Date: 30 March 2021

Venue: Crowne Plaza Monomotapa Hotel, Harare

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## Opening Session of the Conference



*Figure 1 Executive Director for NAYO Misheck Gondo making the opening remarks at the Conference on Youth Eligibility for Public Office*

The opening session of the Conference laid out the meetings objectives, provided for the context under which the meeting was being hosted and engaged the minds of Youth based on their inaction through a clip done by Thomas Mapfumo. In opening the Conference the Director for NAYO Mr. Misheck Gondo highlighted the universality of the challenge to Youth accessing public office and the key asks on which the Youth Eligibility for public office campaign is premised on. These include:

### Increasing representation of Youth in tiers of Government and Public Office

- Removal of discriminatory age caps within the 2013 Constitution to respect and uphold provisions of section 63 (clause 3) on eligibility for public office at all tiers of Government and for candidacy to Parliament, Senate and Presidium.
- Adoption of affirmative action measures in the short term such as introduction of quota system as a temporal measures to address historical injustice and exclusion of Youth in all tiers of Government with full consultation of Youth.
- Government of Zimbabwe to Commission a National Study on Youth access to public office at all tiers of Government and for contested public office positions as per the Constitution

### Enabling environment for Youth to access public office

- Adoption of Intra-party institutional reforms at the political party level which level the playing field for aspiring youth politicians to gain access to public office. This may include quota systems, financing for Youth candidates among other measures which Youth shall jointly set.
- Creation of a Youth caucus within the Parliament of Zimbabwe to dedicate its focus on strengthening and increasing youth representation in National Development processes.
- Reforms to the Electoral Act of Zimbabwe to level the playing field for Youth aspiring to access public office in line with section 56 (clause 6) and gain access to financing set aside for political parties
- Creation of inclusive and non-partisan mechanisms to protect youth from exploitation and all forms of abuse in political and electoral cycle related processes.

He noted the importance of Section 20 in creating a platform for Youth to engage on issues relating to youth political participation and representation and called on Youth to take advantage of the Zimbabwe Youth Bill to advocate for increased youth representation in public office.

The Conference Facilitator Mr. Nigel Nyamutumbu used a video clip from Thomas Mapfumo in which he castigates present day Youth for wasting opportunities and engaging their battles through social media platforms. The video clip invoked a deep conversation into the present day state of Youth and explored the themes of the Conference. Within the session, participants were able to introduce themselves.

## Virtual session on breaking the ceiling for Public Office

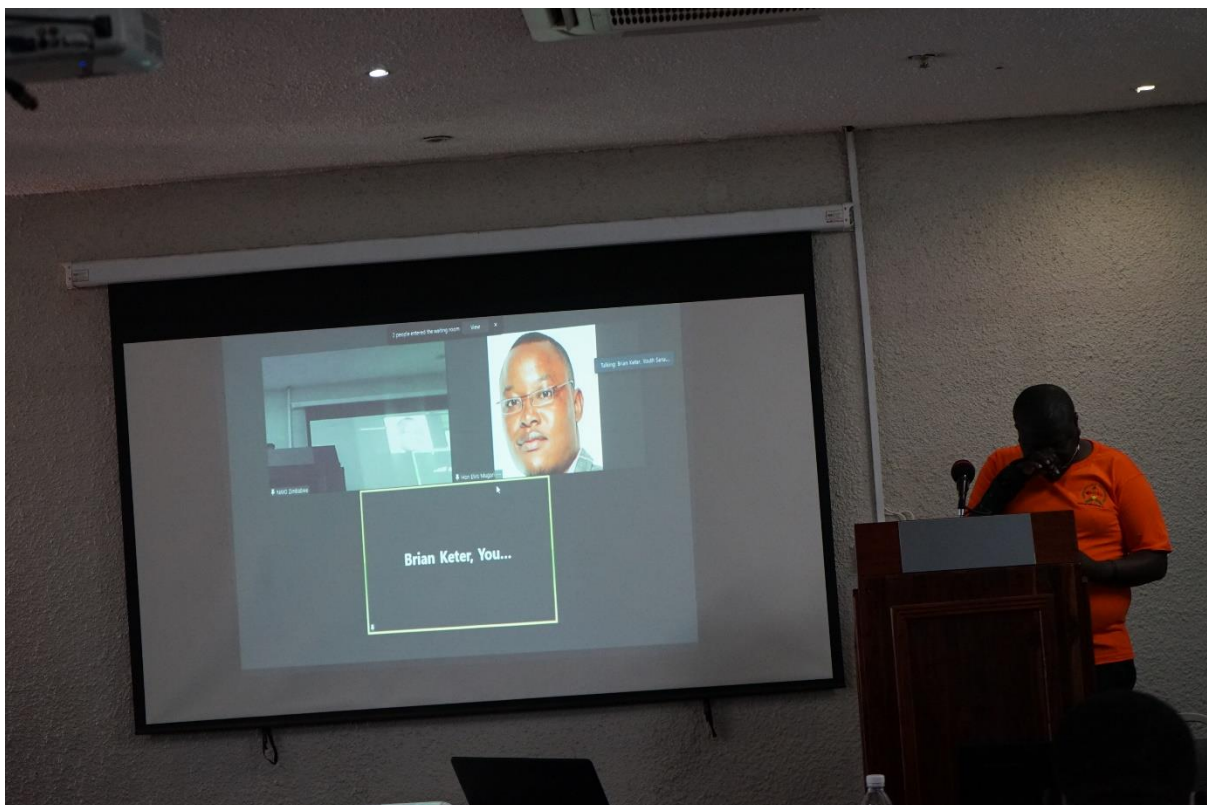
The virtual session was undertaken as a panel session with speakers drawn from Ghana, Kenya and South Africa to share experiences and inform the Zimbabwean context. The panel included Bernard Mornah – Pan Africanist who led the Ghana-Togo Solidarity Movement; a politician with previous experiencing running for public office as a Youth and development practitioner who has worked with different initiatives to fight injustice; Elvis Mugari – a Zimbabwean now based in Zimbabwe fleeing political persecution from the Government; stood as an independent candidate in the Harmonized 2018 Elections for Member of Parliament and an active advocate for justice working with different initiatives on the African Continent and Brian Keter – an active member of the Kenyan Youth Senate serving in its National Executive Board; seasoned youth development practitioner and politician. The session also had virtual attendees drawn mostly from Zimbabwe that participated in the virtual session.

Key issues informing the Conference from the session included:

- Universality of age restrictions to public office, with similar scenarios in both Kenya and Ghana. There is need for regional level solidarity to push this, and key lessons must be drawn from the Nottouyoungtorun campaign undertaken in Nigeria which successfully lowered the age for presidential candidates to 35 among other milestones. Age caps act as deterrents to Youth participation and interest in politics.
- The need for Youth to utilize their numbers as ‘political tools’ on which to turn the tide. Most African countries have a youthful population and elections are primarily about numbers.
- The need to invest in building youth interest into politics as politics defines everything that we interact with in daily lives. Apathy is a key factor across though varying in terms of its depth, for instance Youth in Kenya are more engaging than Youth in Zimbabwe on political processes.
- The importance of youth to understand how to undertake public mobilization towards public office. Youth need to utilize their ability to mobilize and lead social change for the purposes of entrance into public office.



- Power is taken and not taken – youth must thus adopt aggressive measures to gain access to public office and not rely on affirmative action in the form of youth quotas as this will largely remain tokenistic in nature and never address the structural issues to the present exclusion of youth in public office.
- Civil society organizations working on democracy must find creative ways to support the campaigns of Youth, for instance, via programming on increased citizen participation in governance processes.
- Regional or continental movement building within the Youth which creates a platform that stands with youth and amplifies their issues regards politics and access to public office. There are several initiatives at the regional and country level which can be scaled up to this level.
- Resourcing key to the success of Youth running for public office. Most revolutionary government which remain in power in most African countries are well resourced and standing against them in public office requires more than will power.
- Apathy of Youth with the majority not keen to stand for public office – the same apathy is also witnessed across different electoral cycles and this was attributed to several factors.
- The panellists also shared on the nomination process that a candidate has to undergo before standing as a candidate for public office in Ghana, Kenya and Zimbabwe. The process while rigorous, involves a lot of financing and requirements most of which tend to lock out Youth from taking active participation. This too has largely attributed to the low levels of Youth standing for public office on the Continent.



*Figure 2 Brian Keter from Kenya speaking at the Youth Conference during the virtual session on breaking the ceiling*

## The case for Youth and Public Office session

The session featured the presentation of key issues from the Policy paper on Youth Eligibility for Public Office which was developed by Mr. Lovemore Mwale and a plenary session to feed into his findings. Key issues covered within his presentation included:

- Definition of Youth and key regional instruments that advocate for Youth representation and participation in governance processes (pathway to public office).
- A regional comparative analysis into the age caps imposed by Governments across different regions.
- Internal political party policies and youth engagement.
- Bottlenecks to Youth participation in the Zimbabwean context.
- An analysis of research findings and key recommendations based on the sample which he interviewed in drafting the policy paper.



*Figure 3 Lovemore Mwale, consultant makes a presentation on the Policy Paper on Youth Eligibility for Public Office*

The plenary session allowed for a validation process of the Policy Paper and allowed for Conference delegates to engage with the findings of the paper.

## Working session on breaking the ceiling – creating a Youth utopia

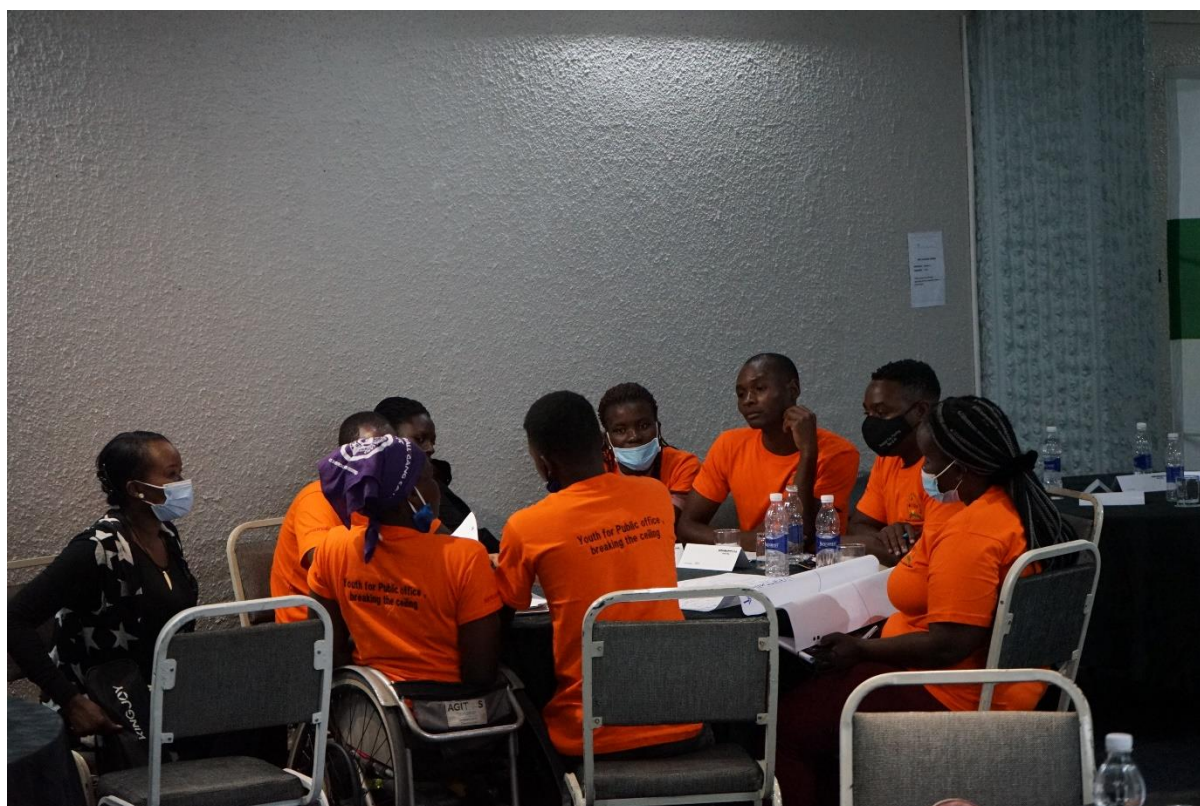


Figure 4 Group 3 representatives engaging in a group discussion during the Conference

Youth standing as Independent candidates	
Pros to running for public office	Cons to running for public office
Flexibility of the youth candidate – does not need to consult with political party structures or election manifesto. The candidate develops his or her own manifesto, structures campaign based on issues identified within community in which they are standing for public office	Limited human resources – political parties have robust structures which are at the disposal of a candidate standing for public office that aid on mobilization, campaigning and resourcing the candidate.
Can enjoy civic support from non-partisan players	Political environment and culture
Limited political harassment	
Youth standing as political party candidates	
Pros	Cons
Internal fights	Established structures, membership and supporters which are activated to rally behind campaign of selected candidate
Conflict of interests	Shared cost of campaigning resources



Candidate imposition based on seniority which disenfranchise youth	Voting patterns tend to be based on political party lines given the high polarization within communities
Issue of bureaucracy	
<b>Recommendations from session</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support youth during primary elections of their political parties</li> <li>• Have key youth reforms and agendas which can be pushed with</li> </ul>	

## How we can support youth running for public office

Resourcing is seen as critical in supporting a candidates political campaign for public office and the Electoral Act provides for financing that is targeted at political parties and cascades to support different candidates standing for public office. The same support is not availed to independent candidates. Some practical measures to support youth running for public office include:

- Relying on own social network to finance election campaign with practical example from Ghana where Bernard Mornah utilized his networks to run a successful election campaign and has used the same approach to mobilize resources towards his campaigns against injustice on the African Continent.
- Assisting with resource mobilization for instance solidarity funding
- Capacity building
- Mass youth voter mobilization – a critical question was raised within the conference on who votes for who. Youth in terms of demography constitute a sizeable number and numbers in an election can shift dynamics and influence who emerges as a winner.
- Orientation and conscientizing
- Work in multi-party setting or multi partisan activities
- Establishing by-in and consensus of political and community leaders
- Ideas on popularizing the campaign
- Identifying unifying activities
- Engage and involve youth actively in the campaign on eligibility for public office
- Use of social media platforms which have a huge appeal factor to the youth
- Use their fears to amass consensus
- Voter education
- CSO mobilization at community level
- Incentivizing youth participation
- Seeking endorsement from popular figures among the Youth
- Package the political message in a diction and language understood by the Youth

## Breaking the ceiling at the tiers of Government

The Government of Zimbabwe is structured in three different tiers which include: (1) the national government; (2) provincial and metropolitan councils; and (3) local authorities (which include urban councils and rural councils). The session thus sought to build from the evidence presented by the consultant and harvested in the conference sessions to build youth consensus on critical issues to buttress barriers. The discussion went beyond these three levels to include the judiciary and chapter 12 institutions contained in the Constitution.

*National Government - The national government is composed of national Ministers who constitute the Cabinet (the executive arm of government). These Cabinet Ministers are directly elected Members of the National*



*Assembly (MPs), Senators or non-constituency Ministers appointed by the President in terms of the new Constitution.*

There was an observation that within the National Government there is no Youth within the Cabinet as defined by section 20 of the Constitution save for the Minister for Youth, Sports, Arts and Recreation whom was appointed at the age of 36. In order to break the ceiling for Youth the following issues were identified:

- Do away with bicameral parliamentary system and remove the 40 year requirement for senatorial candidates
- Removal of the 40 year age cap for presidential candidates
- Introduction of term limits within the National Parliament to allow for renewal of Parliamentarians that serve constituencies. The old guard continues to hold onto seats at the expense of representative democracy.
- Allocation of a certain percentage of funding disbursed through the political party financing Act to the Youth – this requires lobbying at various levels as a means to capacitate youth in running for public office.

*Provincial and Metropolitan Councils - provincial and metropolitan councils - is composed of directly elected and proportional representation public representatives elected using constitutional provisions contained in chapter 14 (2:268) (for provincial councils) and chapter 14 (2:269) (for metropolitan councils).*

*Local authorities – urban and rural councils: These are the grassroots level urban councils and rural councils. These councils are composed of ward councillors directly elected using constitutional provisions contained in chapter 14 (3:277) read together with chapter 14 (3:274) (for urban councils) and chapter 14 (3:275) (for rural councils). In broad terms, rural councils are expected to represent and manage the affairs of people in rural areas within districts into which Zimbabwe's provinces are divided, while urban councils do the same in urban areas. The small size of wards from which councillors (who make up the council) are drawn enables councillors to be in continuous close contact with their constituents.*

#### *The Judiciary*

There is need to scrap the 40 year age requirement for judges for the High Court – the placement of the age restriction disenfranchises youth and assuming the bench must be on the basis of merit. The same should apply to the Supreme and Constitutional Courts

#### *Chapter 12 and 13 Independent Commissions*

There is no political will to ensure Youth representation within these commissions at the level of commissioners appointed with no Youth as defined by the Constitution through section 20 serving within any of the independent commissions. Youth are included through structures of these commissions which bring together diverse state and non-state actors to feed and contribute into the work of the commission.

- At least 50% of the composition of commissions must be Youth

## Breaking the ceiling: Roundtable session celebrating Youth leaders standing for public office

The session featured Youth representatives that ran for public office in the 2018 Harmonized Elections and explored issues related to Youth running for public office in Zimbabwe as political party and independent candidates. Panellists featured Honorable Councilor His Worship Collen Maboke Mayor for Masvingo Town Council, Honorable Councillor His Worship Lovemore Maiko Mayor for Chitungwiza Town Council, Tsitsi Mashiri an independent candidate that stood for Member of Parliament and Nhlanhla Moyo an independent candidate that stood for public office in 2018 as a Member of Parliament.



Figure 5 Panel session on breaking the ceiling with local Youth leaders sharing experiences related to standing for public office.

The 2018 Harmonized Elections provided the first opportunity for the panellists to stand for public office.

Key learnings harvested within the session for Youth and Public office include:

- The need for Youth to invest in knowledge and how communities and politics function – a broadened worldwide increases the chances for Youth standing for public office. Especially for the losing independent candidates, it provided many learning curves.
- Resourcing is key for a robust political campaign that can stretch the election process till voting day. Most of the youth candidates struggled in the later stages of the campaign as resources became very limited
- Stereotyping and labelling of woman standing for public office while not married. In the case of Tsitsi, the only female panellist she endured such harassment and labelling within her constituency by ordinary citizens.
- The need to identify youth for public office at an early stage and work with these through a political mentoring process that allows them to fully understand the demands for standing for public office.

- The need to structure political campaigns around issues peculiar to the ward or constituency in which the Election is undertaken. This has an appeal to the public and makes the election campaign relevant to the live realities of citizens.
- Zimbabweans vote along political lines, this reduces the chances of an Election victory for a candidate standing for public office. Youth thus need to join political parties and navigate the terrain. In the 2018 harmonized elections, only one independent candidate made it to Parliament and this speaks volumes regards the Zimbabwean electorate.
- You cannot run a political campaign as a candidate without financing. This gives importance to the resources availed to political parties during electoral period and the mobilization undertaken by political parties to drum up campaign and candidates.

Apart from exploring this the session also discussed key service delivery issues as all four candidates have remained active within their communities.

## Endorsement and signing of Youth Petition on Eligibility for Public Office

The Conference explored several issues relating to Youth accessing public office and as part of the Conference NAYO shared on its progress regards programming around Youth and Public Office and the campaign on youth eligibility for public office. In 2018 NAYO petitioned the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Zimbabwe on Youth Eligibility for Public office through a demonstration. The petition was not discussed in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament lapsed at the closure of the said Parliament. Youth attending the Conference noted the urgent need to petition the Parliament and track the submission with the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament given its interest on issues around Youth.



*Figure 6 Natalie Gwatirisa reads out the Petition at the Conference for endorsement and signing*

The Conference resolved on lodging the petition as Youth (opposed to NAYO submitting the petition on behalf of Youth and was signed by 25 Youth representatives present at the Conference. NAYO Secretariat lodged the petition with the Parliament of Zimbabwe on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2021.



*Figure 7 Youth representative appending his signature to the Petition on Youth Eligibility for Public Office*

## Social Media Engagement during the Conference

### Facebook

Selected sessions of the Conference were broadcast live on the NewZimbabwe.com platform via Facebook. This allowed for engagement with an online audience. The sessions on Facebook were streamed as follows:

- Opening session with Directors remarks: 810 views
- Opening session inspired by Thomas Mapfumo video and participant introductions: 1,400 views
- Virtual session on breaking the ceiling and presentation of policy paper on youth eligibility for public office: 1,200 views
- Breaking the ceiling round table discussion for youth standing for public office: 1,500 views
- Reading out of petition for endorsement and signing: 778 views

As of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 the cumulative viewership on the Facebook platform that broadcast the meeting stands at: 5,688 views.



NAYO will continue to multiply these and add onto the viewership of the broadcasts.

## Twitter

The event was covered through live twitter feeds which were popularized under the hash tags - #LeaveNoYouthBehind; #Nottooyoungtorun and #Youth4publicoffice on the official NAYO Twitter handle and other handles.

- 35,600 impressions reached on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 based on twitter analytics
- 183 retweets within the day period based on twitter analytics

## Distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials

NAYO within the Conference distributed various IEC materials related to the project and these included:

- 40 branded T-Shirts on Youth Eligibility for Public Office were distributed within the reporting period to Conference participants and strategic youth allies in advancing the petition and youth key asks around eligibility for public office. The remaining T-Shirts (25) will be utilized for activities related to the campaign and influencing on the same.
- 300 posters on the Zimbabwe Youth Bill distributed to youth from communities in Bulawayo, Mutasa, Mutoko, Gweru, Chinhoyi and Masvingo.

## Closing session

The Programs Manager for NAYO, MacDonald Munyoro gave the closing remarks in which he noted that Youth through the Conference had taken a key step in seeking engagement on matters relating to youth eligibility for public office which are universal in nature. He highlighted NAYOs commitment to coordinate and mobilize Youth on the same and saluted the courage of the 25 youth representatives whom appended their signatures on the petition to Parliament.

## Appendix

### Program for Conference on Youth Eligibility for Public Office – 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 2021

Time Allocation	Agenda Item	Responsible Person
0800 – 0830	<b>Arrival and registration</b>	NAYO Secretariat
0830 – 0930 [live stream]	<b>Opening Session</b> Prayer Opening Remarks Opening the Space for co-creation	Youth Rep Executive Director Facilitator, Nigel
0930 – 0945 [live stream]	<b>Overview of Youth Eligibility for Public office Campaign</b>	Programs Manager
0945 – 1045 [live stream]	<b>The case for Youth and Public Office session</b> Presentation of paper on Youth Eligibility for Public Office Plenary Session	Lovemore Mwale, Consultant Facilitator, Nigel
1045 – 1100 hours	<b>HEALTH BREAK</b>	ALL
1100 – 1200 hours [live stream]	<b>Virtual Session – breaking the ceiling</b> Roundtable session on breaking the ceiling	Presenters: Bernard Mornarh (Ghana); Elvis Mugari (Zimbabwe) and Kenya (TBA)
1200 – 1300 hours	<b>Working session – creating our utopia</b>  Thematic Breakaway session (all tiers of Government)	ALL
1300 – 1400 hours	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>	ALL
1400 – 1515 hours	<b>Working Session – interparty and electoral laws</b>  Thematic breakaway session Plenary Session	ALL
1515 – 1545 hours [live stream]	<b>Physical session – breaking the ceiling</b> Roundtable session celebrating local leaders for standing for public office	Mayor for Masvingo, Mayor for Chitungwiza, Nonhlanhla Moyo, Tsitis Mashiri
1545 – 1600 [live stream]	<b>Signing of Petition on Youth Eligibility for Public Office</b>	Youth participants

1600 – 1610	Closing Remarks	NAYO Board Secretary, Dr. Prolific Mataruse
1610 hours	TEA, LOGISTICS AND DEPARTURE	ALL

Petition on Youth Eligibility for Public Office

## **Petition to Parliament on Youth Eligibility for Public Office in Zimbabwe**

### **PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE**

#### **FORM OF PETITION**

**TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, IN  
PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED**

**3<sup>RD</sup> SESSION – NINTH PARLIAMENT**

**PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT ON THE 31<sup>st</sup> OF MARCH 2021**

The Petition of the Undersigned:

Being Youth and representing diverse communities in Zimbabwe and citizens of Zimbabwe:

MacDonald Kumbirai Munyoro

Abel Sibanda

Milton Gwamuri

Tsitsi P Mashiri

Respectfully show that your Petitioners:

Are supported in this petition by the young persons whose names and signatures are contained in this petition;

1. Being citizens of Zimbabwe;

**Acknowledging** that from 1980 all Zimbabweans of or above the age of 18 years have enjoyed the right to vote guaranteed by the Constitution;

**Cognisant** of the importance to social, economic and political development of the right to vote – more importantly to the youth of Zimbabwe on whom posterity lies;

**Perturbed** by the lack of adequate measures for the inclusion of the youth in governance processes including public office and young person's vis-à-vis the right to be voted for;

**NOW THEREFORE** your petitioners beseech the Parliament of Zimbabwe to exercise its constitutional role and address the following issues of public concern:

Every Zimbabwean citizen above the age of eighteen has the right to vote as enshrined in section 67 (3) of the Constitution and section 67 (3) b equivocally states that, *“any Zimbabwean citizen who is of or over the age 18 years of age has the right to stand for public office and, if elected, to hold such office.”*



It is imperative to note that section 91 (clause 1b) of the constitution limits presidential candidates to forty years of age; section 121 (clause 1b) limits Senate candidates to at least forty years and Parliamentary candidates are limited to 21 years of age as enshrined in section 125 (clause 1b) of the Constitution, which we categorically intend to challenge as it is discriminatory and inconsistent with section 56 of the constitution which is clear on equality and non-discrimination of persons.

Section 56 (clause 2) of the constitution states that women and men have the right to equal treatment including right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

Section 56 (clause 3) of the constitution states that every person has the right not to be treated in an unfairly discriminatory manner on such grounds as their nationality, race, colour, tribe, place of birth, ethnic or social origin, language, class, religious belief, political affiliation, opinion, custom, culture, sex, gender, marital status, **AGE**, pregnancy, disability or economic or social status or whether they were born in or out of wedlock.

Section 56 (clause 6) further states that the State must take reasonable legislative and other measures to promote the achievement of equality and to protect or advance people or classes of people who have been disadvantaged by unfair discrimination

We will not be discriminated from participation in elections and governance processes as elected representatives because we are youth (defined as 15-35 years). How do we participate in political spaces as enshrined in section 20 and section 63 of the constitution when they are age barriers restricting access to public office by youth? Section 20 (b) of the constitution commits government to ensure that youth 'have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life' while section 63 (3) b states that, "*any Zimbabwean citizen who is of or over the age 18 years of age has the right to stand for public office and, if elected, to hold such office.*"

HEREFORE your humble petitioner(s) Pray that the Parliament upholds section 20 (b); section 56 (clause 3 and 6) and section 67 (clause 3) b of the Constitution and inconsistent age limitations imposed on presidential candidates, parliamentary candidates, senatorial candidates and any public office with the tiers of Government be removed to ensure equality and justice to youth. Youth constitute approximately 36% of the Zimbabwean population and as such are a demographic imperative and must have equal access to public office at all tiers of Government and be eligible as candidates for Parliament, Senate and Presidential office. Further to this we pray that the age caps be removed and section 67 (clause 3) be upheld and made

applicable to all citizens for access to public office as candidate and made applicable at all tiers of the Government.

**PETITIONER’S PLEA AND PRAYER:**

The petitioners beseech the Parliament of Zimbabwe to, without any further delay; enact the necessary legislative measures to accommodate Youth aspiring for public office at all tiers of the Government; candidacy for the presidency, candidacy as Members of Parliament and candidacy as Members of the Senate, to do so without encumbrance.

**WHEREFORE**, we pray that your Honourable House will be pleased to take their case into favourable consideration, and grant any other such relief as it may deem fit in the circumstances,

**AND** your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Dated at Harare, this 30st day of MARCH, 2021

Signatures:

Name

Signature

.....

.....

Supported by the following signatories, all of whom are citizens of Zimbabwe:

**Name and ID Number**

**Signature**