



BULLETIN THE MAT. SOUTH

The Voice of CBOs in Mat. South

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Editorial

Dear Reader

Welcome to the 1st edition of the Mat. South Bullet. Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are critical players in the process of increasing marginalised groups participation in socio-political spaces. CBOs transform lives and livelihoods of these marginalised groups as they significantly push for responsible authorities to improve service provision.

Local government agencies are pressured by CBOs to deliver standard services as well as avoid misusing resources. In essence, CBOs play the middle person between resources and people's actions; CBOs want to ensure that there is no corruption in the distribution of resources as well as make sure that resources are also accessed by disadvantaged groups.

In societies that lack constitutional literacy and are heavily obedient to traditional myths as they are not aware of the constitution that guarantees their rights; CBOs, through their several programs and campaigns have helped close that gap by teaching people about the constitution.

Marginalised groups such as women and young people are now bravely holding leaders accountable for their actions. CBOs and young people are making noise on social media, demanding answers on the misuse of resources. Constitutional awareness and literacy programs conducted by CBOs have helped young people and women to be fully aware of the constitution that provides space for equal representation in Zimbabwe.

Youths are now eager to take part in the ongoing Constitution Amendment Bill 2 that seeks to set aside 10 seats for youths in parliament, a number which youths and CBOs want improved.

In sum, CBOs are the voice of the community; CBOs help create awareness on the challenges faced by people in society as well as help map a way forward by comprehensively explaining the strategies that can be adopted to remedy the situation.

They are the catalyst for community development; therefore, the role of CBOs in Mat South must be never underestimated but cherished.

Happy Reading!



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CBOs Promote Governance At The Grassroots



Community Based Organizations (CBO) which include Matobo Youth Development Initiative (MYDI), YES Trust Zimbabwe, and Community Youth Development Trust (CYDT) are playing a central role of promoting marginalised groups inclusion in local governance in Matabeleland South Province.

As stakeholders of community development, CBOs were involved, and are still involved in effective projects that seek to transform marginalised groups' lives and significantly create sustainable development.

CBOs are helping in the expansion of autonomous and democratic spaces for marginalised groups to freely participate, question decisions made by leaders as well as demand effective change.

In communities that are still traditional oriented for instance those communities that still follow social constructed gender myths, CBOs partnered to squash those myths by increasing constitutional literacy and awareness. Understanding the contents of the constitution enabled these marginalised groups in particular women to stand up against their oppressors as well as demand enough recognition in political and economic domains.

In empowering young people's voices in local governance, CBOs executed various fruitful programs in Matabeleland South.

"We have been partnering with other civil society organizations in outreach programs that are meant to enlighten youths and vulnerable groups like young women and people living with disabilities about Covid19 and how to protect themselves. The organization is utilizing social media as the main mode of communication," said Stacy Nyathi, an information officer of MYDI.

"We are still educating youths about the Constitution. CBOs are creating and executing online Constitutional Awareness programs for instance letting young people known about mining and agricultural rights as the province is rich in minerals and arable land that youths can utilize. We believe a well informed youth has a stronger voice especially about their constitutionally guaranteed rights.

CBOs created platforms for community dialogue on the issues affecting youths during this lockdown as we believe intervention begins with first identifying the issues. We have also engaged experts to orient youths with orientation on online business strategies that are more feasible during the lockdown. The organization is also assisting young entrepreneurs with information on how to access youth relief funds," said Nyathi.

CBOs are currently working to ensure that youths have access

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COVID-19 versus Democracy



Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Matabeleland South have expressed how Covid-19 affected service delivery and citizen participation in important socio-political discourses in Zimbabwe. To try and control the spread of the pandemic, the Zimbabwean government developed and executed measures that restricted the movement of people such as the national lockdown.

State security agents were deployed in public places to limit public gatherings and making sure that the public is maintaining social distancing. While these measures were necessary to control the spread of the deadly pandemic, they also inadvertently developed authoritarian spaces in which rising youth voices were extensively affected.

“The Covid-19 regulations have significantly limited the number of people that can gather and as such CBOs were not spared. Civic space thrives when citizens come together and deliberate, but the restrictions mean only a small number of people can meet at a time. This is problematic because an issue will only be discussed by a small number of people and opinions will hardly be inclusive of everyone,” said Stacy Nyathi from Matopo Youth Development Initiative.

“Covid 19 was and still is an unfortunate crisis on everyone. While the government may have put in place measures that

were meant to keep people safe, they had consequences that made life even more unbearable for young people. In a country where there is an extremely high rate of youth formal unemployment, the banning of local travel and operation of informal businesses for instance, had major negative consequences for young people who were literally surviving on hand to mouth on their informal businesses,” she said.

“Youths in Matobo are marginalized from online processes because of the digital divide. The wake of Covid19 forced the organization to employ online platforms for most programs and engagements. An example is the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Bill No2, most discussions about it are online and most youths have no access to data to participate and be informed, some areas have poor network for connectivity and also some have gadgets that cannot support some online communication platforms,” she added.

Matt South youths highlighted that at a time when youths are pushing for more representation in parliament, human rights violation cases were disturbing and affecting their participation.

“A lot has happened since the outbreak of Corona virus; cases of people being beaten, others being killed while others being abducted and tortured have been reported across social media accounts. All these disturbing events have affected us a lot. We are now afraid of speaking out with fear of being taken by state security agents. Public spaces must be democratic and equally; the youths, women and everybody should be allowed to freely communicate their ideas without fear,” one concerned youth from Gwanda said.

“We are challenging the government to improve its services by looking into the plight of marginalised groups as well as making sure that every citizen freely enjoys his or her rights as per the constitution even during this current Covid era,” the youth said.

Youths maximize on digital tools to amplify their voices on governance.

In this media saturated age, the Internet and the media have become powerful tools used to spread and raise awareness on the prevailing youth voices. This information age provides youth with social media platforms necessary in the process of questioning government decisions, sparking socio-economic and political debates.

Youth voices are difficult to shut down in this information age hence constitutional literacy and awareness campaigns have become easy to plan and execute. The media is keeping youths informed in ongoing political debates such as the constitutional amendments debates.

The youths who have shown great determination to hold leaders accountable have expressed how important social media and the Internet is in helping them deal with the challenges they are facing. For them, social media and the Internet is working to their advantage in helping them freely air out their voices without facing repression.

“Social media platforms are alternative media spaces that expand democratic spaces in the country. Through it, the interests of the poor, minority groups, youths, women or the working class can be well articulated. The media expands spaces for public opinion and create space for the working class to upload and share information in the media.

It enables people living with disabilities, the working class and minority groups to access and use media platforms a thing that is different from mainstream media that usually favour high political officials and the middle class,” a Gwanda youth said.

“Alternative media is against top-down communication model. It is against the traditional idea of political leaders being the people who influence ideas. It`s objective is to enable every citizen to practise his or her democratic rights,” another youth from Gwanda.



In a radio program at Skyz Metro FM, organized by Community Youth Development Trust, Mr. James Dube noted that people use social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to communicate and share ideas as well as expose corruption and hold leaders accountable. For instance, it is through social media that the former Minister of

Health, Obadiah Moyo lost his job as a result of mounting pressure on social media concerning embezzlement of Covid-19 funds.

“Firstly we need to engage the government regarding the challenges we are facing. Let`s make noise online. We need each and every young person making noise on all social media platforms regarding the challenges we are facing. Youth have influence for instance we pushed online to have the minister of health removed from his job because of corruption and it was successful,” said Mr James Dube.

He added that it is through alternative media that socio-political and economic movements have been successful as minority groups can now freely share ideas and act on them through social media.

The youths also pointed out that social media enabled them to freely express their views using their own native languages instead of mainstream media in which ideas are predominately articulated using the English language.

However, youths pointed out that digital divide was the only problem slowing down the process of youth constitutional awareness and youth participation in general in the province, arguing that only a few rural youths have smart phones to access these imperative messages regarding the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which could be the reason many of them are not aware of the ongoing Constitution Amendment Bill 2.

CBOs Enhance Civic education



Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Matabeleland South have been tirelessly involved in training workshops on civic education in the five districts of Matabeleland South, targeted at promoting shared learning among the youths on grassroots activism on issues of interest.

The objective of this initiative was to capacitate and empower the youths with skills, knowledge and opportunities that will enable them to serve their communities as first class citizens and engage on dialogue for sustainable solutions.

In one of the trainings that was conducted in Maphisa under Matobo district the facilitator Mr Nkululeko Khoza who is a lecturer at Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Polytechnic, emphasised on the importance of youth participation in governance and policy making processes.

He observed that “Youth should be permitted to organise around issues of their choice and get involved in local and current affairs. Young people’s engagement can benefit their skills’ development, self-perception as a citizen as well as in policy design and implementation.

Khoza said engaging youths in governance allows them to build social capital which is an important competency for the joint

action, which allows achieving objectives usually beyond one’s reach.

“Ensuring the active engagement of young men and women in advancing the open government agenda is therefore essential to mitigate the risks of political, economic and social marginalisation. It also helps in assuming agency in shaping youths’ lives and societies.

During a plenary session, participants discussed how they can ensure good governance in their communities. One participant Sizanani Ngwenya explained the need for transparency and fairness by government officials.

“There is need for equal treatment of all stakeholders which includes citizens and the youths as per understanding of human rights. Everyone should be

treated equally with services provided equally and decisions made by policy makers should reflect fairness to all stakeholders” said Ngwenya.

Another participant, Audrey Nkomazana said: “The youth are requesting authorities to give priority to the issues that will positively impact the livelihoods of young people like the allocating of land for a Vocational Training Centre in Matobo. Once there is a Vocational Training Centre in Matobo, it will help reduce crime rate, gender-based violence and other negative things that youths find themselves in.”

Nkomazana added that when young people own something, they feel empowered hence it is easy to actively take part in governance issues.

The youths welcomed the idea of having these kind of workshops where they can deliberate on issues affecting them and have a platform to have robust conversations.

Siphokuhle Moyo said, “It’s a relief that we’re given a platform to speak on issues limiting realisation of our full potential. This will definitely promote our urgency and responsibility in defining our destiny and influencing policies that speak to our needs.”

Youths call for more representation in parliament

The subject of youth representation and participation in parliament has reached all corners of the country, with the young people arguing that the proposed Constitution Amendment Bill 2 that seeks to set aside 10 seats for the youths is far from enough considering the fact that youths are the majority group.

In a radio program on Skyz Metro FM that aimed at exploring how the recent political developments are affecting rising youths voices, contributors argued that youth representation in parliament is not enough.

"I think the 10 seats provision is an insult and bribery to young people. The 10 seats will only result in young people fighting among themselves to get those seats because they not enough," said Mr James Dube a youth activist.

Another youth leader said constitutional literacy was important among the youth.

"Youth representation in decision making is limited," said Lungani Zwangobani from Zimbabwe Youth Council. Adding that "Remember 10 seats is a provision set aside for youths. At 21 years, anyone qualifies to be part of the parliament; therefore, the issue is also making the environment friendly for young people so that at 21 years they can be elected members of parliament by their communities. Constitutional literacy is imperative among youths."

Mr Zwangobani added that community must play a key role in supporting youth inclusion in decision making.

"The job to empower youths begins at the communal level. What are the communities doing to make sure they support the young people? Do they give them cattle or financial support when they run for political position during elections? Or we only support an old man with cars to lead instead of youths," he said.

Some Matabeleland South youths that spoke with Community Based Organisations argued that the government must not underestimate youth ability to participate in political issues. They highlighted that a society



that requires change, stability and is also keen on protecting its future places youth voices at the forefront.

The youths from Matabeleland South went on to escalate their advocacy by submitting a petition to parliament on the youth quota system, demanding 30% representation in parliament. The youths have also been active on social media in mobilizing other youths to support their cause.

"Placing youth in the driving seat gives the opportunity for a positive lasting change. Youths are opinionated, intelligent and educated to raise strategies for dealing with challenges that have long affected the public such as hunger and unemployment. Youths are the contemporary force to reckon with when it comes to bringing lasting change for their respective communities," one Gwanda youth said.

"The future of our communities rests on the shoulders of youths; youths cannot make decisions which they know will negatively affect them tomorrow. Besides, it is better for youths to air out their concerns to other youths involved in leadership rather than telling their concerns to a well grown up youth representative," added the youth.

In addition, youths are demanding that the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture or the National Youth Council to have time to interface with the youths, advise them on how best they can make their concerns draw maximum attention without straining relations with the leaders.

Calls for devolution of power intensify in Matabeleland South

With the help of Matabeleland South Community Based Organisations, young people have intensified calls for the devolution of power in Zimbabwe.

CBOs and young people are challenging the lack of vital departments or offices in the province which forces them to travel all the way to Harare or Bulawayo to get things they want sorted out, a process that became even harder because of the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Measures to try and control the spread of the pandemic such as the national lockdown restricted people from travelling especially on intercity travels. This resulted in many people failing to access critical services that are only offered in Harare. Matabeleland South youths believe that the devolution of power will improve service provision and youth participation at communal level.

“The devolution of power will give local people opportunities like jobs. It will promote transparency and accountability at local governance level because it will be easy to check our local budgets. It will reduce corruption cases within our local government hence promoting peace and harmony within local people. Implementation of certain projects won't take long because decisions and laws will be passed within our ministry,” said Mr Ndaniso Mpande a youth from Gwanda.

“Devolution of power is needed considering the fact that to access critical documents like Visas, one has to travel to the capital city. Further more there is need for devolution as centralization of power slows down service provision,” said Ntando Sibanda, a youth from Bulilima District.

During national lockdown, Matabeleland South was heavily affected by the centralization of power. Residents had to wait for Harare Police expects to come and retrieve bodies of two young people who drowned in Ingwizi River in Bulilima while a forensic team from Harare was called in the murder of an elderly couple in Empandeni, Plumtree. Sibanda said with the devolution of power, such problems will be eradicated.

“I am sure that the devolution of power will solve many critical challenges we have long faced. Zimbabwe has a good percentage in terms of education literacy; we have qualified people who are capable of holding positions or professions which are lacking in Matabeleland South,” said Sibanda.

The devolution of power is supported by the Constitution of Zimbabwe. Chapter 14 of the 2013 Constitution provides for provincial and local governments. The preamble of the

chapter reads: Whereas it is desirable to ensure: (a) the preservation of national unity in Zimbabwe and the prevention of all forms of disunity and secessionism; (b) the democratic participation in government by all citizens and communities of Zimbabwe; and (c) the equitable allocation of national resources and the participation of local communities in the determination of development priorities within their areas; there must be devolution of power and responsibilities to lower tiers of government in Zimbabwe.

Therefore, moving away from the over-centralized system of government is the way to go as it alleviates the challenges that are faced by citizens such as having to travel to Harare to access urgently required services; it empowers marginalised groups and improves service delivery.

CBOs Promote Governance At The Grassroots

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to information that can enable them to forge grassroots solutions by exchanging and sharing ideas, thus enabling them to speak in unison.

As a result of CBOs actions of attempting to improve marginalised groups inclusion in local governance, and making sure that they are capacitated to hold leaders accountable on areas where they are abusing their powers, young people are now better informed about local governance processes and how they can be a part of them.

During some meetings conducted by young people, observations indicated that the youths are determined to hold their duty bearers accountable as they are now well aware of what they are supposed to do.

“There is a positive change of attitude from young people; they now show interest in local governance issues. They attend meetings, participate and actively engage the organization even after meetings. Young people need to regain trust in the system (that is governance structures and facilities) and therefore, seeing them in action and providing solutions can have positive impact in improving participation. CBOs are committed to lobbying for policies that are youth sensitive and ensure youth voices are included in decision making,” noted Nyathi.

CBOs will continue educating young people about the constitution, local and national governance and their roles and responsibilities as young people. They are also making sure that the public receive correct and timely information on key issues affecting the district as well as combating misinformation especially on social media.

'Let's remain resolute and focused in these trying times' - CBOs



Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have vowed to remain resolute in their quest for community empowerment and development despite the prevailing conditions in the country.

Sharing ideas, experiences and strengthening relations during an event organised by CYDT recently, representatives of various organisations from Southern Zimbabwe stressed the need to leverage on their community rootedness to bring up community issues into the public domain.

During discussions various issues were identified as negatively impacting on the work of CBOs and this included threats by local government to withdraw MoUs, a perennial problem that has been facing CSOs in general in Zimbabwe.

It was shared that threats to withdraw, deny or cancel MoUs reflected the prevailing order characterised by the military rule and therefore CBOs were viewed as a threat or “regime change agents” due to their community empowerment work especially on issue of human rights, democracy and constitutionalism.

This also indicated a shrinking civic space creating sour relations between CBOs and the police force which CBOs say the relations were starting to improve.

Historically relations between police and development organisations (CBOs, CSOs, NGOs etc) in general have been problematic due to the abuse of power and legal systems especially the draconian AIPPA and POSA.

CBOs also decried the current economic situation characterised by high inflation and unemployment which they said was hard hitting communities as their sources of livelihood such as vending and crossborder trading has also been affected by COVID-19.

Coupled with drought, these conditions were making it hard for citizens to actively participate in important local and national democratic processes as they had to prioritise bread and butter issues.

Drought in rural communities was reported as further putting communities in dire situations as they were losing their valued assets such as livestock that were succumbing to drought as rivers and dams had dried up.

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CYDT and MYDI condemn ill treatment of Tshapho villagers.

Community Youth Development Trust (CYDT) and Matobo Youth Development Initiative (MYDI) are deeply concerned about the human rights violations and the illegal miners who, under the Mazinahue Mining Syndicate, invaded the village of Tshapo a few weeks ago.

As organisations that are at the forefront of community development, we view these illegal activities as anti-progressive, as they reverse the positive steps of unity and affirmative action exhibited by the Tshapo community.

We hope that the government and relevant authorities will continue engaging interested parties. It is important for the government to ensure that those who have been violated are compensated accordingly and the matter is dealt with. The authorities must ensure that human rights violations do not happen.

It would be the end of human rights based democratic practices if people's privacy and heritage can be illegally compromised. It is known that the mining activities in the Matobo World Heritage Site will have negative effects on the environment and wildlife in the area.

Matobo is one of the few sanctuaries with the critically endangered rhino population, so introducing mining activities will definitely lead to poaching of these animals.

The region also holds a unique habitat of the black eagle (Verraux Eagle) and according to research, 95% of this black eagle's diet consists of rock rabbits (Imbila).

The introduction of mining activities will lead to the increased poaching of the rock rabbits. People therefore, would become competitive with the black eagle for prey and this will directly affect the survival rate for the black eagle chicks, the number of active nests in the area and the numbers. Environmental degradation and deforestation are some of the effects of bringing such activities into the protected area.

Matobo District has been in the spotlight for years in the mining sector where unregulated gold mining activities have benefited a few individuals in the expense of the locals. In light of these issues, it is rather essential for those responsible to take it upon themselves to earn the people's trust, as we believe that there is more to gain by engaging with the victims through diplomacy and peace.

We want to stress the fact that the people who exercise their constitutional rights must be supported and protected. This is because we need a system where the rule of law is obeyed and followed unconditionally and without compromise.

'Let's remain resolute and focused in these trying times' - CBOs

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CBOs noted efforts by other development agencies such as International development organisations who were focused on addressing the humanitarian situation through food aid. However, they highlighted that politicians were riding on food aid to consolidate their power, a feat which has been a long time problem especially in rural areas.

The opening of schools was also discussed in length as CBOs shared their experiences from the communities they work with. It was noted that although the move was seen as positive, opening schools was expected to add financial strain to parents in terms of school fees and other needed materials.

Despite these identified issues, CBOs expressed that their work was more important and relevant now than ever hence the need to strengthen relations through partnership, riding on each other's strengths, strengthening

collaborations as well as engaging in strategic issue based advocacy.

They also emphasised the need to identify already existing community resources which they could leverage on and maximise their impact.

Highlighting one of their key strength as being community rooted, CBOs challenged each other to continue to promote people centred development through influencing processes, holding leaders accountable, empowering citizens with information and skills and raising constitutional awareness in communities.

Thirteen organisations attended the event which was held in Matabeleland South Provincial capital Gwanda. Participants included organisations as far as Midlands and Masvingo province.

CBOs: The Voice of the Voiceless

By Bongie

Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are essential organisations that play a crucial role of uplifting the sociopolitical and economic status of marginalised communities. The core value of CBOs is to generate development within a community usually guided by an asset based community driven development approach which dwells on the idea that community members through their respective talents are valuable assets of social change and development.

In Matabeleland South, CBOs have become voices of the voiceless; speaking and bringing to awareness the different challenges faced by the communities. Through various platforms including social media, CBOs have been actively providing information to communities, creating platforms where communities engage and discuss their issues as well as represent these communities in various spaces.

By bringing to awareness current affairs, CBOs have ensured that marginalised groups are not left behind on important issues at local and national levels. They are the umbilical cord that connects communities with various centres of development making it their mission to see the citizens enjoying constitutional rights.

In Matabeleland South CBOs have been actively playing a watchdog role through monitoring local government and other stakeholders activities, calling for increased transparency and accountability.

The importance of CBOs is also observed in terms of their relations with important institutions like the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission in fighting corruption in various sectors and government institutions. CBOs are discouraging corruption among local and national leaders; demanding accountability and transparency to enable the proper distribution of resources in province.

Matabeleland South CBOs understand the significance of teamwork towards achieving sustainable development in the province. They have been involved in programs that seek to ultimately uplift the lives of youths, women and children. Since the outbreak of the deadly pandemic COVID 19, Matabeleland South CBOs have pressured the government to provide

safety nets for marginalised groups who many of them are poverty stricken.

In terms of local governance, CBOs have campaigned for youth inclusion in decision making. They have carried out constitutional awareness and literacy programs to equip youths with constitutional knowledge so they can be aware of their rights as Zimbabweans. CBOs have continuously campaigned for more youth participation in parliament; seeking an increased percentage of youth representatives based on the fact that youths constitute a larger population across the country.

In a gold rich province like Matabeleland South, CBOs have raised awareness on the challenges faced by artisanal and small scale miners for instance the poor working conditions which they operate in and has resulted to some of them losing their lives prematurely.

While CBOs are critical in making sure that marginalised groups enjoy their constitutional rights, they also face several challenges in implementing their programs. CBOs still require funding and support to continue carrying out their important duties. It is important for government to show support by providing spaces in which CBOs can conduct their work, empower CBOs and treat them as critical stakeholders in development process.

Their community rootedness make them important development players as they better positioned in terms of understanding community issues, experiences are aspirations. Therefore, working with them is not only important but also crucial for the attainment of community centred development through bottom-up approaches.

As the popular global slogan inline with the Sustainable Development Goals is 'Leave No one Behind', CBOs should not be left behind either as doing so is tantamount to leaving behind communities they represent.

Bongie is the Information Officer at Community Youth Development Trust and writes at her own personal capacity.

