



STATEMENT BY ZIMBABWE GENDER COMMISSION ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Zimbabwe Gender Commission (ZGC) is an independent Commission established in terms of Section 245 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and operationalised through the Zimbabwe Gender Commission Act [Chapter 10:31]. The work of the Commission revolves around promoting, protecting and advancing gender equality as provided for in the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

The Commission joins the rest of the world in commemorating the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) which is commemorated on the 11th of October every year. This year's edition, which is running under the theme; **“my voice, our equal future”** marks the 8th anniversary of the commemorations. The International Day of the Girl Child recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. The day focuses attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote girls' empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

As aptly captured in this year's theme – “my voice, our equal future” – every girl of this world is standing up to amplify their voices which are yelling and crying for justice, equality, access to education, health care, and nutrition for a better future. As we celebrate this day, every girl child is demanding her space in their respective societies in order to determine her present and future life.

Since time immemorial, the girl child has always been treated as a second-class citizen. She has been a perpetual victim of harmful cultural practices such as virginity testing, genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, forced marriages, and child pledging among others. The educational, political and religious systems have equally failed the girl child. Many girls have failed to start let alone complete their education due to lack of financial assistance among other impediments. Further, lack of access to good quality sanitary products and poor sanitation in schools contributes to absenteeism, by girls. Lack of access to water and sanitation makes menstrual hygiene management a great burden for girls.

The Commission urges all progressive forces of our country to join hands with every girl child today to amplify their voices in demanding an inclusive society that is, tolerant and sensitive to her special needs and desires. The end to all forms of violence, discrimination and exploitation of the girl child constitute the nucleus of the demand by the girl child during this year's commemorations.

The Commission is encouraged by the fact that even though the journey towards achieving gender equality, equity and justice in Zimbabwe remains a long way, Government in conjunction with various development partners, has registered milestone achievements in promoting, protecting and advancing the rights of the girl child.

The Commission takes this opportunity to commend the Government of Zimbabwe for enacting the Education Amendment Act [Chapter 25:04] which prohibits schools from excluding girls who fall pregnant

from attending lessons. The Education Act also recognize the need for provision of sanitary wear and other menstrual health facilities such as water and sanitation in all schools.

Despite some positive achievements registered in the gender discourse in general, a lot still needs to be done to create a safe and conducive environment for the girl child. The Commission therefore calls upon Government, to:

- Implement Section 4 of the Education Act which declares that the state must ensure the provision of sanitary wear and other menstrual health facilities such as water and sanitation in all schools.
- Align/harmonize all relevant laws and policies to the legal age of consent and legal age of marriage as stipulated in the Constitution.
- Put in place punitive measures against the perpetrators of child marriages and any form of GBV.
- Scale up and resource the support systems and mechanisms for reporting and responding to all forms of violence against girls e.g. through safe shelters and legal aid
- Engage men and boys to challenge underlying attitudes, stereotypes, social norms and patriarchal power inequalities.

ZGC appeals, to all Zimbabweans to follow all health and other guidelines to fight against COVID-19.

#stayhome

#staysafe

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