

Press Statement from the Zimbabwe Gender Commission

Commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child 2024

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission joins the global community in commemorating the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11, 2024, under the theme "Girls' Vision for the Future." This theme underscores the importance of listening to and supporting the aspirations and dreams of girls while addressing the myriad challenges they face in realizing their full potential.

This annual observance highlights the challenges faced by girls worldwide, emphasizing the critical need for empowerment, education, and protection from violence and discrimination. The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides robust protections for the rights of children, containing several provisions that directly address education, healthcare, and protection from harm.

While our Constitution lays a strong foundation for the protection and empowerment of girls, the implementation of these provisions remains a challenge. We recognize ongoing efforts to ensure that girls in Zimbabwe have access to the education, healthcare, and protection they need to thrive. The recent enactment of the Criminal Laws Amendment (Protection of Children and Young Persons) Act, 2024, marks a significant legislative advancement aimed at enhancing legal protections for children, particularly girls, against sexual offenses.

The Zimbabwe Gender Commission commends the government's efforts in prioritizing and enacting the Criminal Laws Amendment (Protection of Children and Young Persons) Act, 2024. This legislative change is set to enhance awareness around children's rights, empower girls to speak out against abuses, and improve reporting mechanisms for sexual crimes. Key provisions in the Act redefine a child as any individual under the age of eighteen, criminalize indecent acts involving children, and establish stringent penalties for offenders, thereby strengthening the legal framework to protect vulnerable girls from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Furthermore, the Act includes measures to protect victims and vulnerable witnesses, facilitating accessible testimony and encouraging the reporting of offenses. By criminalizing the deliberate infection of children with sexually transmitted infections, the legislation reinforces the imperative that girls deserve protection and justice. The removal of stigmatizing terminology related to prostitution fosters a more supportive societal attitude toward those affected. Overall, this Act represents a significant step forward in safeguarding the rights and well-being of the girl child in Zimbabwe.

Call to Action

As the Commission commemorates the International Day of the Girl Child, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission emphasizes the urgent need to address critical issues affecting girls in our country:

1. **Enforce Child Protection Provisions:** Ensure effective enforcement of constitutional protections, particularly in the Marriage Bill. *Refer to Section 78 of the Zimbabwe*

Constitution, which states that every child has the right to protection from maltreatment and abuse.

2. **Criminalize Child Marriage in practice:** Implement stiffer penalties for child rights violators to deter child marriage practices. *Supported by Section 22 of the Constitution, which emphasizes the protection of children from abuse and exploitation.*
3. **Engage Community Leaders:** Collaborate with religious and traditional leaders to address and combat child protection violations. *Aligned with Section 3 of the Constitution, which calls for the involvement of communities in the protection and promotion of rights.*
4. **Eliminate Harmful Practices:** Actively work to eliminate cultural and religious practices that marginalize girls. *In line with Section 56 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination.*
5. **Harmonize Policies:** Align policies across sectors to tackle the underlying drivers of teenage pregnancy. *Supported by Section 2 of the Constitution, which mandates the State to ensure alignment of laws, customs and practices with the principle of gender equality.*
6. **Strengthen Education Funding:** Support a framework for domestic education financing to ensure girls can access education without financial barriers. *As outlined in Section 75 of the Constitution, which affirms the right to education.*

By taking these actions, we can create a safer and more equitable environment for every girl in Zimbabwe, empowering them to pursue their dreams and achieve their full potential.

For Gender Equality

For media inquiries and further information, please contact For more information, contact ZGC Chairperson, Commissioner Margaret Mukahanana Sangarwe 0712214203/ 0772869214, or Chief Executive Officer Virginia Muwanigwa 0712899543/ 0772327955