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Monograph ~ I

Generational and Gender Relations and Marginalisation in Independent Zimbabwe

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by **Rekopantswe Mate**

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Acronyms

BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CHH	Child headed households
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
DIY	Do-It-Yourself
GAD	Gender And Development
HIV & AIDS	Human Immune Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IUDs	Insertable Uterine Devices
LAMA	Legal Age of Majority Act
MCDWA	Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs
MOPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MOYSR	Ministry of Youth, Sport and Recreation
MYGEC	Ministry of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OVCs	Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health rights
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
WID	Women in Development
WYR	World Youth Report
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union – Patriotic Front
ZANLA	Zimbabwe National Liberation Army

Introduction

This monograph seeks a critical review of women and young people's experiences in selected sectors namely education, employment, politics and sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) in Zimbabwe since independence. It is based on a desk review. With the benefit of hindsight, it is fair to say that the talk of social transformation at independence (GoZ 1981) focused more on correcting colonial racial bifurcation and class inequalities and not addressing sexism (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000, Essof 2015) and gerontocracy (age domination) which affect the groups that this monograph discusses. Sexism and gerontocracy predate colonialism but were transformed in response to colonial crises. They were assimilated into customary laws. The latter became a shorthand for 'African culture' which sadly continues to be embraced as beyond reproach by political elites and cultural brokers.

The selected areas are chosen not least to focus the discussion, but also because they are increasingly among the core focus areas of policy discussions and research on the transformation of gender and generational relations especially in Agenda 2030 (Cornwall and Rivas 2016, UN 2004, Esquivel 2016). SRHRs are the new frontier in the transformation of social relations as groups seek emancipation, equity and equality and the recognition of human rights on matters to do with bodily integrity, sexuality and reproductive health issues therein. They are part of Agenda 2030. Contestations over SRHRs point to deep-seated patriarchal, gerontocratic and religious interests (Mugweni et al. 2014, Tamale 2008, van Eerdewijk 2001, UN 2004) as shown below. In Zimbabwe the failure to extend meaningful SRHRs to women and young people points to power inequalities visited on young people and women.

Demographically, 52% of the population is female and more than 50% are youth aged 24 years and below (ZimStat 2016). However, these population majorities are excluded from decision making, wage work and other sectors of the economy. In spite of the 2013 Constitution's Section 17 provisions on gender equality in all sectors and at all levels of society and Section 20 calling for youth participation, recognition of rights and budgetary allocations, as well as several international commitments and agreements on inclusive development, these groups continue to be marginalised.

Objectives and structure of the monograph

This paper's specific objectives are to

i. Discuss shifts (demographic and others) that have seen young people dominating the population while being excluded in socio-economic and political arenas

ii. Discuss dynamics of the marginalisation of women in the development arena and in governance

iii. Based on the above, discuss consequences of marginalisation and suggest policies to remedy these problems.

Since independence, Zimbabwe has been dominated by one nationalist party, the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). The ruling party has retained its militaristic, top-down power structure and mode of operation it used during the liberation struggle. Decisions are made at the top and obediently implemented by the rank and file. Its top echelons are dominated by a few men in their seventies and older, while its rank-and-file is populated by women and young people (mostly males). This androcentric system mimics what anthropologists called the lineage mode of production – a system of dominance founded on age domination (gerontocracy) and patriarchy (male privilege). The system has been hybridised after being combined with privileges linked to 'struggle credentials' (Parpart 2015). This way of conceptualising power and how it excludes women and young people is explained in the section below.

Conceptual framework: patriarchy, gerontocracy and struggle credentials- the pillars of social exclusion in Zimbabwe

Anthropologists coined the concept of a lineage mode of production in a bid to explain how kinship organised the economy, politics and social relations. Feminists referred to the same system as the patriarchal mode of production to emphasise male domination and privilege through the expropriation of women's productive and reproductive labour (Courville 1993). Although this framework was applied to traditional pre-capitalist societies, I would like to argue that its logic is useful for understanding gender and generational relations in Zimbabwe today. Among other factors, this logic is upheld under loose notions of arguments about 'culture', 'traditions' and 'African-ness' which support or fail to challenge sexism and gerontocracy (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000, Essof

2012, Shaw 2015, Ranchod-Nilsson 2006, Christiansen 2009, Parpart 2015 among others).

In the lineage mode of production there are three discernible groups with distinct interests and arranged in a hierarchy of power, differentiated opportunities and privileges. On top of the hierarchy were elders comprised of mostly older men and a few elderly women. As a group, elders had monopoly over economic, social, religious and political knowledge as well as controlled resources (land, livestock) and people (women, children) and especially young men's labour. The second layer comprised of young men. As patriarchs in waiting, young men earned their place in elderhood through obedience and labour in elders' enterprises. Those that were disobedient were cursed, ostracised and left to their own devices. Compliance was therefore extracted through patronage and/or fear of the curse. At the bottom of the ladder were women and children. Women's productive and reproductive labour was coveted for generating wealth through child-bearing and through social maintenance and caregiving. Women could be elevated if/when related to powerful men as mothers, wives or sisters or had unique skills as healers.

In present day Zimbabwe the logic of the above social relations still persists. It is bolstered by full-scale militarisation leading to former combatants and members of the military being influential in different sectors of the economy since the late 1990s (Towriss 2013, Howard-Hassman 2010, Rupiya 2005, Kamete 2006, Tendi 2013). Militarisation has institutionalised what Parpart (2015) describes as 'struggle credentials' as criteria for higher office and decision making within the ruling party and state apparatus in a bid to preserve 'the legacy' of the liberation struggle. Militarisation and struggle credentials exclude the majority of women and young people. Few women received military training during the war, while young people born after the war were simply not there to participate in it. Unless women and youths prove loyalty through patronage to and/or have kinship ties to men with struggle credentials as wives, widows or children, they are excluded from high office. Furthermore, the focus on struggle credentials entails a simplified narrative of meanings of independence thus suggesting that only versions that certain male elites approve of are legitimate (Ranger 2004).

Additionally, struggle credentials underwrite a sense of entitlement that does not lend itself to questioning, accountability and transparency.

It ignores constitutional provisions, judiciary processes and rulings (see Verhul 2013) as well as the spirit of international agreements and commitments. This sense of entitlement is seen in land redistribution, access to loans, inputs, overseas scholarships, and wanton intimidation and manipulation of the judiciary processes and personnel among others. Practices associated with these entitlements coincide with and bolster familial, kinship and gerontocratic ethos of local customs (hence the lineage or patriarchal mode of production) but stand in stark contrast to human rights in their propensity to abuse the weak seen in pervasive structural violence, opacity and corruption with impunity. Those who dare to question the entitlements are silenced through name-calling as traitors funded by foreign governments, threats, intimidation and violence (Howard-Hassman 2010, Gukurume 2017, McGregor 2007, Kriger 2005, 2008). Thus, although on paper the ruling party follows a participatory system with youth and women's wings, history shows that both women and youth are political pawns, mobilised during campaigns, they vote for the party and follow orders at the expense of the strategic interests of their groups. The reality is that as time has passed broad-based participation has remained a pipe dream and reduced to tokenism and public relations. This is at the core of why women and youth are marginalised and excluded.

Defining social exclusion

In view of the foregoing, social exclusion is multi-dimensional and multi-layered in its occurrence and impacts. It means being left out, not considered important or consulted. It exits where substantive representation of women and youth is not taken seriously in legislation and policy making as well as monitoring and evaluation. Social exclusion matters because excluded groups tend to dominate in the ranks of the poor. They are unemployed, misemployed, underemployed or in precarious forms of work where earnings are not guaranteed or are erratic (Leysens 2006). Excluded groups also benefit the least from social services. Because they lack political clout, they cannot influence policy and legislation to improve their plight. Where there is activism and advocacy, it takes times for marginalised groups' voices to be heard. Often activists and advocates are dismissed through stereotypes. In this sense, social exclusion is produced in conditions where power hierarchies such as described in the foregoing are taken for granted as the norm. Under the SDGs, the ethos of 'leave no one behind' (Stuart and Woodroffe 2016) shows that social exclusion for cultural, religious

and other reasons is no longer tolerable. To remedy social exclusion, it is important to challenge these hierarchies as well and implement changes based on a humane and rights sensitive approaches. In general, although social exclusion can cause instability, this is not always the case where the excluded are preoccupied with coping with their exclusion as is the case in southern Africa and indeed in Zimbabwe (Leysens 2006).

The pre-independence blueprints for gender and generational hierarchies

Gender and generational relations on the eve of independence

Because post-independence ministries that dealt with women and young people were staffed by the same party cadres and followed mandates as well as *mondus operandi* similar to those of respective ruling party's organs on the eve of independence (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000:134), understanding how the ruling party perceived women and young people's roles before and after independence is important. Thus, understanding the encroachment of ruling party stances into government policies and their implications for social justice and equality for social groups under discussion is important.

Despite a pre-independence election manifesto that promised gender equality, the ruling party had a sexist organisational culture and manipulated women before, during and after the first election (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 47). On the eve of independence, women's concerns were belatedly and grudgingly grafted on the militaristic, hierarchical, male-dominated structure to contain female dissent (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). The women's affairs department was staffed by wives of senior leaders in ZANLA (Sally Mugabe, Teurai Ropa [latterly Joyce Mujuru], Julia Zvobgo) and was derided as a 'club for commanders' wives', became a conduit for communicating and implementing male leaders' interests. It controlled the rank and file of women to ensure that complaints emanating from their lived realities in refugee camps did not torpedo a well-choreographed image of the party (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 45-7). The party line took precedence over women's interests. The women's affairs organ was minimally about 'descriptive representation' of women because it was staffed by *women* but never about 'substantive representation' (Josefsson 2014). The latter means representation where representatives articulate and seek redress for interests, felt needs and aspirations of their constituents. Substantive representation is transformative while descriptive

representation lends itself to window-dressing and manipulation by the powerful. Descriptive representation is increasingly a tried and tested means by which male-biased governments and institutions across Sub-Saharan Africa dodge real reforms (Josefsson 2014). In this case, the leaders were wives of top commanders, representing the single, younger rank and file whose experiences they did not seem to understand so they gagged them through blame-the-victim posturing that is typical in patriarchal and patrilineal cultures. Precisely, despite their low status women are expected to exercise restraints and be gatekeepers in matters to do with sexuality as well as being custodians of culture and customs.

On the eve of independence sexual exploitation, unavailability of contraceptives, relocation of pregnant inmates to out-of-reach camps were concerns for rank-and file inmates. Indeed Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:45-75) says that the leaders of the women's affairs department taught younger female inmates about 'self-restraint' and about 'culture' because of the understanding that they had not received any sexuality education because the war had disembedded them from their kin. Young women caught in male quarters were called names and labelled as 'prostitutes' indicating that there was little awareness of sexual exploitation as predicated on power imbalances between men and women, between the male leaders and the rank-and-file female victims and how the structural location of the latter created their vulnerability. The female inmates were still expected to be gatekeepers of sexuality and morality while men were not reprimanded for their excesses. Based on interviews with former female camp inmates, Nhongo-Simbanegavi shows that some of the female leaders aided the abuse of juniors by sending younger women to male leaders on demand without challenging the leaders' sense of entitlement. These women leaders cultivated their loyalty by doing the bidding of leaders but not standing in solidarity with other women. Younger women's demands for contraceptives fell on deaf ears because of an apparent anxiety among some of the male combatants, driven by patrilineal kinship notions of their cultures of origin, that they would die in the battlefront without children and not be venerated as ancestors. In addition, there was fear that demanding contraception from donors was anathema to the seriousness of war, it signalled frivolity. This shows that despite contraception being seen as a means to emancipation for women, this understanding had not filtered to the camps. Meanwhile, the humiliation visited on female camp

inmates who performed abortions, managed to have contraceptives such as loops and IUDs or bore children out of wedlock revealed the sexist distrust of women's bodily integrity and autonomy. These issues and their rationale continue to haunt the quest for gender equality to this day (Tamale 2008). These arguments emerged after independence as shown in the ban of injectable contraceptives in 1981 on grounds that they were based on racist 'population control' ploys of the West (see Kaler 1998).[1] As shown below, the call for women's sexual and reproductive rights has continued to divide women not just in Zimbabwe but across the world (van Eerdewijk 2001). If the promises of gender equality were strongly pursued, then access to contraception would not have attracted so much controversy. Contraception gives women control over their bodies whereas the traditional ideal was patriarchal and patrilineal controls over women's bodies (Kaler 1998).

Female camp inmates clamoured for military training, when they got it wanted to go to the battlefront rather than being interned in the apparently 'safe' rear camps where they did care-work for male combatants – mending and washing clothes, caring for the sick, etc., few received the training. The preferred camp activities were part of a distilled notion of 'self -reliance' which in some camps entailed training women in subsistence production. As if this was not enough, promotion through the party hierarchy privileged those who had seen combat action or who had military training regardless of level of education or technical skills. This meant only a small pool of women qualified while a wider field of male aspirants was open. Consequently, female inmates faced impediments by virtue of being women, through pregnancy and motherhood, their lower status and lack of military training. The more vocal female inmates were dismissed as mad (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000).

As is shown below, the foregoing is a blueprint that ZANU-PF had at independence and has held onto 40 years on. ZANU-PF proclaimed gender equality but also held on to nativism, sexism, ageism and remained suspicious of granting women rights to their bodily integrity. Furthermore, women were (and still are) divided between those loyal to leaders and enjoy male leaders' protection versus disloyal women and therefore not protected (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 73-5).

1 The controversy of injectable contraceptives is widely debated as is the idea of 'population control' as part of international relations and development.

The Women in Development (WID) era

Independence in 1980 was in the middle of the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women (1975-1984). The dominant approach to dealing with women was Women in Development (WID). 1970s research showed that comparatively few women benefited from technological advancements of the time in many sectors as well as wage employment, education and so on. WID therefore sought the *integration* of women in all sectors as a means to reverse these inequities. However, women were already integrated as home-makers, subsistence farmers, home-makers and wage-earners. The problem was their subordination seen in low wages, low status vis-à-vis their male counterparts. Furthermore, women were excluded in education and in the labour markets where they were seen as unemployable in professions and trades. The WID missed the historical, cultural, religious, political and economic factors that produced prevailing norms and practices governing men and women's fortunes in society and the economy (Rathgeber 1990).

In the case of Zimbabwe, it missed historical factors – the taken-for-granted living arrangements of 'farmer-housewives' in rural areas with 'worker-peasant' husbands in the cities (Potts 2000) and the complex social values and practices in family relations and household arrangements supported by Christianity and 'customary laws' as explained by many researchers for example Schmidt (1992) among others. Due to limitations of space these issues are not explained here. One can only indicate that relations between men and women were hugely transformed in the colonial era to suit socio-cultural and political needs of colonialisation (for example Schmidt 1992). Without challenging these colonial creations, the ruling party and government simply adopted the party's war-time organs, staff and mode of operation in the new government. This meant an adoption of male bias and sexism while claiming gender equality. These contradictions dogged the government's posturing on gender issues with negative impacts as indicated below.

Establishing the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs (MCDWA)

In the spirit of WID, the MCDWA was created as an afterthought in 1981 headed by Mrs Joyce Mujuru (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 134). MCDWA officials were also leaders of and worked closely with ruling party's Women's League. The party line took precedence over feminism.

Furthermore, as was the trend internationally, MCDWA was poorly funded and staffed by people without technical proficiency in gender activism or feminism (Rathgeber 1990). The MCDWA specialised in micro-projects which sought 'self-reliance'. The small income-generating projects (IGPs) did little to change women's circumstances. In addition, through the Women's League, women became a quasi-reception committee that danced for local and international dignitaries at the airport. The MCDWA never explained the role of the singing and dancing for changing gender relations or women's standing. Consequently, the combination of WID strategies, domination by conservative elite women following an androcentric ruling party ensured that there was not much change.

In the 1980s, the government enacted pro-women legislation which was essentially grafted on or co-existed with male-biased colonial creations. Shaw (2015) argues that like most post-conflict societies, Zimbabwe's reforms were more about public relations signalling that the new government was modernising. Furthermore, the reforms attracted votes from women and donor support. Still, compared to other African countries, Zimbabwe was an early reformer. Its reforms were well received inside and outside Zimbabwe as people lauded women's contributions in the war both as combatants and ancillary staff (Essof 2012, Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000, Shaw 2015). The reality that only five women became members of parliament (out of 57 parliamentary seats),[2] most of them wives of leaders, became an issue for analysis in later decades.

The limits of descriptive representation, fleeting commitment to women's gender interests and the shallowness of reforms were exposed within three years of independence through Operation Scorpion (in Shona, Operation *Chinyavada*). This was the first crackdown (Essof 2012) and an harbinger to how the government would respond to women and young people's livelihoods in later decades. The crackdown targeted women who were caught walking in towns without male company after sunset, a simplistic law enforcement agents' interpretation of 'single women'. The operation was a response to moral panics about women's autonomy in the face of growing reports of infanticide (then called 'baby dumping') apparently by single women (Essof 2012: 36). The operation targeted rampant prostitution too.

The government as well as MCDWA officials claimed that feminism

2 There were three more women who represented ZAPU out of the twenty seats this party won.

and 'foreign influences' were to blame. The Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) of 1982, which undermined paternal authority, was blamed. The distrust of so-called 'town women' stereotyped as of loose morals, prone to undermine the sanctity of marriage through extra-marital affairs, casual sex and so on is well documented in anthropological studies across Sub-Saharan Africa as well as in popular literature (Little 1973, Nelson 1996 among others). This distrust emerged in the colonial era with male labour migration to cities, mines and farm compounds. Women who tried to leave rural areas found that they had no legitimate means of making a living in towns. Many resorted to informal marriages and transactional sex to access accommodation. Thus, the ruling party and MCDWA embraced misogynistic thinking that originated in crises of the colonial era and failed to avail themselves critiques of these views despite abundant publications. Consequently, an estimated 6,000 women were rounded up (Essof 2012, Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000, Shaw 2015). They were schoolgirls, professional women such as nurses, elderly women, mothers with babies on their back, single and married. This motivated women to mobilise and to disabuse themselves of the belief that MCDWA and the few female MPs could take their concerns to government or influence government policies. When women challenged the government action, MCDWA officials argued that in its collaboration with the ruling party's Women's League, it had the monopoly of representing women in Zimbabwe and that the nascent women's movement represented 'foreign interests' and was therefore subversive (Essof 2012:37). Subsequently, women's NGOs emerged dealing with a range of issues from feminist consciousness, domestic violence, inheritance rights, access to education and later HIV and AIDS. These early differences also indicated fault lines of ideological differences and signs of mutual distrust between pro-government technocrats and women's movements.

Gender planning

Following the widely publicised weaknesses of WID as assessed across the world, feminists shifted a gear to gender planning (Rathgeber 1990). The turning point was the understanding that ***gender and gender relations*** are created and rationalised through cultural and religious beliefs and norms creating differences between men and women (Beneria 1979). Furthermore, these gender norms, beliefs and practices change over time and space creating variability of gender relations. In general women are

responsible for social and biological reproductive roles such as caring for domestic affairs and the domestic arena through domestic work, caring for children, the infirm and others (Beneria 1979, Folbre 2006). Women's work is generally unpaid performed under obligation as care work, as part of loving domestic relations in marriage and in kinship. However, the same obligation leads to under valuation of women's contribution to society. Often this is seen as natural and effortless and therefore lowly valued. In addition, domesticity confined women in the domestic space thereby hiding gender-based violence and other abuses visited on women such as restricted mobility outside the domestic space which in turn encroaches on employment, education and income-generating projects. Responses to gender inequalities were shaped by international activism such as the outcome of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action (BDPfA) as explained below.

International human rights treaties and commitments

In compliance with donor pressure as well as local gender activism and advocacy, the government signed and ratified international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1991 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=195&Lang=EN (accessed 21July 2020). Consequently, the government committed to take actions to eliminate all forms of discrimination (defined as any from distinction) on ground of culture, religion or other considerations and across all sectors from education, politics and within the community.

Furthermore, the government sent a delegation to the fourth women's conference in Beijing in 1995. The conference's commitment contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) has been agenda setting for women's empowerment since. It identified twelve critical areas of concern which include: unequal access to education between men and women, violence again women, unequal participation in decision-making discrimination and violation of girls' rights, discrimination in the media among others. Furthermore, it suggests courses of action by government, donors and civil society organisations. Its ethos, arguments and standards have been adopted by regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). A distilled version of the BDPfA was included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000-2015 and their sequel in the

Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) running from 2016-2030.

National legislative changes and policies

Since the 1980s, the government strategically passed pro-women (and pro-youth) legislation such as the Legal Age and Majority Act (LAMA) in 1982 and other legislative reforms that barred discrimination on grounds of sex and gender (Shaw 2015:86). However, there were mixed messages. While these legislative changes posed a challenge to cultural practices that uphold discrimination in gender and generational relations, before 2013 the constitution 'ring fenced' culture as beyond reproach thereby making it permissible to discriminate against women and young people on grounds of culture.[3] In other words, the constitution prevented the courts from litigating power inequalities of gerontocratic and patriarchal relations as far as they could be attributed to 'culture' until 2013 when a new constitution was adopted. Thus, in lived practices, although LAMA gave young people unprecedented rights such as marrying without approval of elders therefore shirking bridewealth prestations and attendant rites that uphold gerontocracy and patriarchy, few willingly embraced[4] this option (Ansell 1998). Thus, as much as gerontocracy and patriarchy inhere unequal gender and generational relations, they are also central to subjectivities of adulthood, personhood and normalcy.

Consequently, cultural beliefs that support power inequalities between men and women and the old and young persist(ed) side-by-side with legislative reforms that seek gender equality. These co-existences allow for contradictions that have seen claw-backs and withdrawal of rights to 'return to basics' seen in the passage of traditional leadership laws in the late 1990s (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006), court rulings against women's inheritance rights (Bigge and von Briesen 2000), and debates of women's rights to inherit traditional office (Lindgren 2005), clamours for the prerogatives of men in disciplining women noted in debates on the domestic violence bill in 2007 (Christiansen 2009) among others as will be explained below. The tension between rights and traditions has allowed policy makers to expeditiously swing back and forth deliberately leading to the marginalisation of women and young people.

In the 2010s following the adoption of the 2013 constitution, legislative

3 That is, section 23 of the old constitution.

4 That is, unless pressed by poverty or other impediments, few young people would choose to forego bride-wealth (Ansell 1998).

reforms are underway to ensure compliance with the constitution and in so doing with international commitments and treaties. These changes bolster gender policies that are influenced by and seek to comply with international commitments and agreements referred to above.

Generational relations

At independence there was no clear discussion of the role of generational relations, and young people's circumstances would be dealt with in nation building outside of education and work. Youthful war combatants were demobilised or assimilated into the national army without much debate. Those who joined the youth wing of ruling party followed orders without making demands. There were no youth focused policies. Occasionally, students at the University of Zimbabwe demonstrated over corruption and so on but none made demands on issues affecting young people in general. Granted, in the 1980s there was no expertise on youth issues as there was none on women and gender issues. Furthermore, there was hope and goodwill that transformation was underway as stated in GoZ (1981). Unlike women's issues, there were no guidelines by multilateral organisations for youth issues. The guidelines only emerged in the mid-1990s with the publication of the first World Youth Report (WYR) by the UN in 2004. In 2006, the African Union (AU) produced the African Youth Charter. The UN and AU therefore gave shape to what youth concerns are or should be, as is discussed below.

At independence, Zimbabwe had a Ministry of Youth, Sports and Recreation (MoYSR) headed by Ms Teurai Ropa (Mrs Mujuru) before she was moved to MCDWA in 1981. As noted by Nhongo-Simbanegavi (2000:134-5) giving her the two portfolios, serially, was perhaps an indication of what

> '… ZANU-PF leaders saw as women's speciality – *minding the children.* Also, based on what they saw as the *shared experience* of women and youth … ZANLA women carried war material *with youth*, they taught them in refugee schools in Mozambique; they looked after children in … Osibisa Camp; *they had kept 'culture' alive* among young people during displacement; and *their partnership with the youth in the election campaign had been crucial in bringing ZANU-PF to power*'. [added emphasis].

The added emphasis shows that not only were youth and generational

concerns taken as known and would follow the fate of women and gender issues in the hierarchical, patriarchal and neo-patrilineal system set up by the ruling party. Youth affairs would be subservient to the party line, and youths would be pawns directed by leaders of the party. Any actions outside these parameters would be tantamount to treason with activists subjected to violence as research in the 2010s shows (for example Gukurume 2017).

Although young men dominated among combatants, they were called *vakomana* (the boys) or *vanamukoma* (our brothers) indicating youth. They received instructions from older, more experienced commanders and chefs of the party. In other words, even in the warfront gerontocratic hierarchies prevailed.

The MOYSR had no clear policy position on the role of sport and recreation for the development of young people and for citizenship. Whereas in western countries, sports and recreational pursuits have been used to socialise young people into gender identities, class, citizenship and professional values of fair play, participation, competition, patriotism, following rules of engagement, winning and losing responsibly, etc. (for example Skelton 2000). The lack of policy focus is further demonstrated by the fact that the ministry was repeatedly reconstituted, its mandate dissected and parcelled out to other ministries such as education (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture).

The 2000s: the emergence of Ministry of Gender, Youth and Employment Creation (MYGEC)

A ministry dedicated to youth re-emerged in 2000, suggesting donor pressure seen in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) of 1995, which spawned the first World Youth Report (WYR) in which these ten issues were identified as pressing concerns for youth: education, employment, poverty, healthcare, the environment, drugs, juvenile delinquency, leisure time, participation in decision making and girls and young women as a group (UN 2004). Subsequently, it was noted that all youth were affected by internet communication technologies (ICTs), HIV and AIDS, conflict and intergenerational relations which became areas of focus too. The first WYR called for national youth policies as well as the cultivation of expertise in the study of youth (UN 2004). It defines youth as a stage between childhood and adulthood characterised by a range of rites of transition in both traditional and modern societies. In Zimbabwe

before 2000 there were no definitions of youth(s),[5] what their experiences and needs were nor was there a well-articulated position about developing them. The government's leading intervention was education as will be shown below. Before Zimbabwe's unique circumstances are discussed a note on the socio-economic and cultural context in which concerns with youth issues emerged in the international and regional arenas is important.

International attention on young people

Decades of international attention on child rights driven by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) proved that there is a segment that was not included in debates and policies. Youths are neither children nor adults (Jorgensen 2018) and not conferred the rights and protections of either group. In terms of age, the UN said youths are persons between fifteen and 24 years, years in which multiple transitions from the school system, into work and independent living take place. These periods of transition are fraught with vulnerabilities that impede the achievement of ideal social adulthoods. Whether in modern or traditional societies, there are anxieties associated with these transitions. These transitions are at the centre of social reproduction of households, communities and nations.

Social science research shows that concern over young people peaks during socio-economic crises or economic stagnation, characterised by unemployment especially of young men. The poverty that typifies such times and which impedes ideal or successful transitions to social adulthoods (Bucholtz 2002) is at issue. Across cultures, transitions to social adulthoods require resources, access to savings or livelihoods which signal ability to independently look after a new family. Consequently, when the inability to achieve social adulthoods is generalised, it is threatening at the individual, collective and national level. In this respect, the timing of the 1995 UNGASS was telling.

The 1990s were a period of deep crises across the world evinced in anti-globalisation movements, protests against inequality, unemployment, under-employment including precarious employment, issues which the 1990s UN conferences dealt with. UN 1990s conferences dealt with the environment, social development, gender, human rights, reproductive rights among others. Furthermore, it was clear that across the world young

5 As stated below, the leaders of ZANU-PFs Youth League are often in their forties and fifties.

people were increasingly marginalised in all ten areas[6] that the World Youth report (WYR) looks at and affected by the five[7] that were added later. By the 1990s the term 'youth' had lost its class, ethnic and gender bias to include all young people *per se*. Still, when we look at what spurs officials, whether local, donor or NGOs, into action vis-à-vis young people, in many cases it is the high number of unemployed young men rather than their young female counterparts (Munive 2010).

The 1995 UNGASS points to a worldwide recognition of the crisis of social reproduction under the weight of neoliberal global economic restructuring. Neoliberal policies spawned generalised unemployment and moral panics about the future emerge. Additionally, young people are blamed as somehow deficient (poor academic performance, drug addiction, lack of motivation as some of youth weaknesses leading to unemployment). This blame-the-victim approach allows officials and adults to overlook their own policy missteps or not to adjust social expectations in the face of unemployment. Furthermore, panicked responses to crises of reproduction lead to social experimentations in social policy with unpredictable result (of which more below).

The African Union's African Youth Charter (AYC)

Adopted in 2006, the AYC acknowledges the crisis visited on Africa's young people reiterating the 1995 UNGASS and the first WYR. It reiterates the aspirations of MDGs as well as the spirit of the UNCRC. It refers to wars, unemployment, illiteracy, crime, teenage pregnancy and pervasive social exclusion as ills that dogged young Africans. It calls for youth rights such as freedom of association, movement, expression and thought. It calls on state parties to ensure participation of young people in their communities and national level as well inclusion in development processes such as education, skills training, healthcare and wage work.

Since the 1990s, the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) wide visibility of young unemployed men stoked panicked reactions about their likely resort to criminality, deviance and other subversive activities such as radicalisation which has increased ever since (Munive 2010, Peters and Richards 1998). Indeed, across SSA several conflicts raged on and off in which youth were

6 Education, employment, poverty, health, environment, drugs, juvenile delinquency, leisure time, participation in decision making and girls and young women.

7 Globalisation, ICTs, HIV and AIDS, conflict and intergenerational relations.

combatants because of chronic social exclusion.[8] Furthermore, SSA was under the grip of the scourge of HIV and AIDS, with youth as the most vulnerable. The region had contended with relentless unemployment following structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s to 1990s (for example Jorgensen 2018, Frederiksen and Munive 2010). This was made worse by natural disasters such as cyclical droughts and floods which decimated whole regions' traditional livelihoods (especially in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa) but also destabilising others resulting in abject poverty.

Moral panics about 'the future' given the growing number of unemployed, frustrated young men (not women) saw a continent-wide rush to implement youth policies and programmes in a bid to prevent, contain or control the maligned activities of frustrated, unemployed young men (Di Nunzio 2012). As Di Nunzio notes, in some cases these panics presented opportunities for politicians to reassert gerontocracy controls over young people and reasserting authoritarianism to consolidate their hold on power though manipulating desperate young people by promising employment, IGPs, protection, etc. It is precisely because of these common fears – which evade a critical understanding of the worldviews and experiences of young people – that demand a clear, coherent conceptualisation of young people and their aspirations. One must identify the problems before one can find a solution. Both are crucial in informing policy making. The discussion below looks at different definitions of youth in Zimbabwe.

Explicit and implicit understandings of young people in Zimbabwe

Following the establishment of MYGEC in 2000, a youth policy document was produced in which 'youth' were defined as persons aged ten to 35 years of age. The ages of leaders of the ruling party's Youth League are in their forties and fifties. The policy was later revised although the age definition did not change. The age delineation is contrary to the UN's preferred age definition of fifteen to 24 years of age (UN 2004). The discussion below briefly unpacks how youth are defined in Zimbabwe what the definitions expose, hide or miss. This is done to point at policy blind spots that emanate from these definitions and need to be clarified in order for youth to be included in social and economic development.

8 In countries such as Mozambique, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Northern Uganda, Somali, Sudan and etc.

Is youth about age per se?

Age-based definitions as in the foregoing are loaded with assumptions about physical/bodily and cognitive development which supposedly point to ability to perform social roles and made decisions.

The breadth and depth of studies of childhood and adolescence show that in fact the socio-context shapes young people's ability to think and act autonomously and not age *per se*. In any case, age delineations are better suited to policy-making and implementing contexts where assumptions of physical and cognitive development across the life course inform provisions and incremental citizenship rights and roles for children, adolescents, youth, adults, the elderly, persons with disability etc. (Mizen 2004, Cole and Durham 2007).[9] The reality of resource scarcity and governance challenges and cultural beliefs in developing countries such as Zimbabwe impede such provisions making it is somewhat pointless to use age.

Assumptions about physical and cognitive development are based on bio-medical knowledge; they often argue that on reaching adolescence (in the teens), young people are prone to anti-social behaviour, moodiness, social withdrawal and/or acting out; the so-called 'storm-and-stress syndrome' attributed to hormonal changes that go with sexual maturation (Tyyska 2005). However, evidence from non-western and traditional societies shows that to the extent that anti-social behaviour is becoming a universal experience and marker of adolescence, it points to socio-structural dislocation due to rapid social change leaving young people with unclear roles and pathways to adulthoods (Tyyska 2005). This is because in traditional societies, where young people are given incremental responsibilities in the economy, politics are included through rites of passage, and there is no anti-social behaviour.

Thus, when social change excludes young people from playing meaningful roles in society, it is the rolelessness that defines how they behave rather than internal biological/hormonal processes. Rolelessness as seen in political, economic and socio-cultural exclusion and marginalisation is especially visible in developmental crises such as in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and in Zimbabwe. It channels young people into anti-social, anti-establishment practices, including open criminality and rebellion in some cases (Peters and Richards 1998, Munive 2010) as young people try to

9 There are overlaps too in age delineations. Children are aged 0-17 years; adolescents 10-19 years of age, youth 15-24 years of age. Thus, many teenagers are simultaneously children, adolescents and youth (Tyyska 2005).

carve niches for themselves, to forcibly show adults that they exist or resist being treated like children indefinitely.

Is youth about transitions to adulthoods?

As noted by UN (2004), 'transitions to adulthoods' mean that being young is a work-in-progress towards becoming or learning to be a functional adult in the given society. It is about moving from dependence to independent living and marked by rites of passage which include schooling and further training to acquire skills, getting a job or mastering livelihoods to live independently. Consequently, rites of passage can be traditional or modern. Either types culminate in mastering resources to establish an independent household through marriage and having children thus becoming a social adult. Social adulthoods require resources – paid work, savings or a viable livelihood. Furthermore, the movement from dependence to independence (or rites of passage) demands support from the kin, the community and the state to guide or mould viable choices for the future. Where there are no resources, unsupported transitions stoke misunderstandings and moral panics captured in academic research as 'the crisis of youth' (Schumann 2012, Shepler 2010) explain challenged social reproduction at individual and collective levels. Furthermore, unsupported transitions can sometimes lead to young people divesting in prevailing cultural beliefs. For instance, when young people are expected not to have sex until marriage, but they cannot amass resources to marry, they will have sex outside marriage with consequences such as bearing children out of wedlock, unwanted pregnancies, diseases, stigma of deviance and so on. Thus, unsupported transitions point to dissonance between social norms and reality. The dissonance also creates tensions among generations.

In Zimbabwe the education sector represents the state's support to transitions to adulthoods. However, as will be shown below, a minority of young people who pass O-levels enjoy the benefits of the education sector. This means the majority of young people experience transitions without state support. Poverty on the part of parents also means that there is limited support and guidance from parents (Grant 2003). Given a shrinking economy, unrelenting school leaver unemployment since the late 1980s (Herbst 1989) and growing graduate unemployment since the late 1990s (Gukurume 2017), the few who benefit from state support through education are finding it difficult to reap benefits from that support. In other words, transitions need to be more coherent and comprehensive.

Is youth about rolelessness – the indefinite wait to be somebody or simply exclusion?

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, rolelessness emerges on the back of rapid socio-economic change and socio-structural dislocation, which have undone traditional ways of life but without embracing sustainable alternatives. Ironically, the increase in schooling exposes young people to aspirations for lives that are different from those of their grandparents and parents (Mains 2007). However, due to endemic unemployment young people's aspirations do not materialise (Munive 2010). This lack of progress leaves young people feeling 'stuck' indefinitely in dependence on their parents/guardians as noted by Hansen (2005); or in 'waithood' a protracted period of waiting for opportunities, to get a job, to marry, for dreams to come true and/or for economic and political changes. 'Waithood' has come to define young people in SSA in general (Honwana 2012, Finn and Oldfield 2015). This phenomenon is also increasingly noted across the world. For example, in a study of northern India Jeffrey (2005) refers to young men lamenting that they are graduating to 'nowhere' because they could not get paid work, marry, live independently despite qualifications from tertiary institutions. In fact, even when they went back to tertiary institutions to earn higher degrees unemployment dogged many. This is a living critique of credentialism (the pursuit of more academic qualifications in a vain bid to get ahead in life).

The complex realities of graduating to 'nowhere', being 'stuck' or 'waithood' capture the subjectivities of graduate unemployment in Zimbabwe as seen in #ThisGown movement (Gukurume 2017). Extended stays in the education system because of credentialism (gathering more and more higher degrees) merely extend the pain of rolelessness. Rolelessness is also the defining experience for youths without work, without training and without income-generation projects or means to access the same. The notion of rolelessness is especially important when we consider that where young people create their own roles through informal sector work, they are harassed for it (Kamete 2008) as is explained below under the do-it yourself approaches (DIY).

Is youth about social generations?

Unique socio-economic and political contexts within which young people come of age, shape their collective orientation to work, education, authority, politics and other aspects hence the social generational approach (Furlong

et al. 2011:361). 'Social generation' refers to social cohorts different from chronological generations which are 30 years apart. In Zimbabwe, many young people who were born in the 1980s have never had wage work despite their good academic qualifications. Their worldviews are different from those of previous generations.

Zimbabwean leaders lament the sense of entitlement of 'born frees' referring to young people born after independence in 1980. They argue that born frees who support the opposition diminish the long suffering and sacrifice of political elites whose 'struggle credentials' entitles them to preferential treatment. What holders of struggle credentials do not see is the exclusion and suffering of the born frees for whom aspirations for independence are elusive (because of endemic unemployment, living in crowded accommodation as lodgers, hyperinflation, lack of sanitation in urban areas, etc.). In addition, as the sectoral analyses will show, the exclusion of born frees perpetuates their inferiority leaving them no choice but to take action through the DIY approach and other methods.

Generally, the notion of social generations is increasingly used across the world explain social change and to capture socio-economic experiences shaped by social-economic changes. For instance, the use of terms such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, etc. [10] denotes such changes. These terms are not products of popular culture but are concerned with social justice across social cohorts buffeted by global economic changes (for example Laslett 1993).

In Africa too, the notion of social generations is increasingly in use. For example, Sharp (2002) refers the 'sacrificed generation' referring to Malagasy youth's layered marginalisation, their coping strategies and responses to unpredictable socio-economic and political contexts. Schumann (2012) uses the term 'abandoned generation' referring to Ivorian youth's experiences of state withdrawal in education and other social sectors since the 1980s. Because of lack of tuition, many young Ivorians dropped out of school and university into lives of uncertainty. Earlier generations had enjoyed not only a state subsidised education, they were assured of lifelong employment with generous perks. Cruise O'Brien

10 Indeed, in Western societies refer to Baby Boomers (born after the Second World War), their children called Generation X and Generation Y, up to Millennials. Their fortunes in the workplace, social protection, marriage and speed of transitions from school to work and independent living are different. Social welfare is increasingly discussed in terms of generational equity.

(1996) referred to the Democratic Republic of Congo's youth, long-time survivors of corruption, unemployment and wars as 'lost generations'. Notions of 'abandonment', being 'sacrificed' or 'lost' point to squandered development opportunities by older generations. Not only do these notions shape youth action and practices in these disparate contexts, they also show that social justice is indeed tied to equity across generations. The social generational perspective is intersubjective, it shows connections between generations, contestations of entitlements, equity and generational bargains (see Rasmussen 2010, Laslett 1993). Sustainable development entails equitable access and use of resources across generations too. Therefore, stereotyping young people as born frees is diversionary. Attention should be placed on generational equity and social justice.

Is youth about the population structure, the so-called 'youth bulge'?

Media commentators and researchers use alarmist notions of a 'youth bulge' to refer to expansive population structures; that is, populations characterised by disproportionately more young people especially when endemically unemployed (Munive 2010, Finn and Oldfield 2015). The term 'youth bulge' expresses alarm and panic but offers nothing much beyond emotionally inflected descriptions and stereotypes. In this demographic sense, Zimbabwe's youth bulge is evident too. Between 2008 and 2018, 40% of the population was below fifteen years old according to ZimStat (http://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/publications/Population/population/ICDS_2017.pdf). When these quantitative and alarmist notions of population structure are linked to stereotypes about youth as socially deficient, problem bearing, subversive and blameworthy for prevailing social problems (crime, substance abuse, sex work) the youth bulge stirs moral panics about imminent social disaster (Frederiksen and Munive 2010: 249-251). Often notions of the youth bulge also lead to blaming some sections of societies for bearing more children than they can take care of. For some, the solution is population control, so reducing the birth rate. Outside demography, this definition is not of much use. There is little policy makers can do to smooth bulges of a population pyramid. It is better to focus attention on equitable access to opportunities and services to turn the bulge into a resource.

Is youth relational, contextual, shifty and elastic?

The term 'youth'/'being young' also refers to relational dynamics. The dynamics are interactional, shifty and context-specific (Rasmussen 2010,

Durham 2000, Jorgensen 2018). This definition takes cognisance of power inequalities in social interactions such that junior parties are seen as 'youth' meaning relatively young, inexperienced, clients and less powerful others (Di Nunzio 2012). In this respect, youth are seen as political labourers for their seniors (Oosterom 2019). It stretches the category of youth to include anyone in the presence of older, more powerful persons or patrons. This notion is widely used across Africa. It calls for an analysis of relational dynamics that both empower and disempower young people (Rasmussen 2010, Jorgensen 2018, Finn and Oldfield 2015:33). It calls for understanding circumstances in which some people are seen as juniors and inexperienced.

In Zimbabwe, young people, the Youth League of the ruling party seem to be treated as juniors, clients, who run errands for leaders, campaign for and praise them. When the juniors are critical of leaders they are dismissed as disrespectful or worse, accused of breaking party codes, stripped of their offices and jobs, and thrown in jail to discipline them. This is the fate that befell a number of leaders of the Youth League since the November 2017 military take over. Another illustration of this is McGregor (2013)'s study of politics in local authorities. She shows that youth who went through National Youth Service (NYS) training were recruited as militias and used to harass and torture dissenters, extort members of the public, to subvert the control of market stalls from the city council among other violations. The elites denied these activities until some lead participants in these activities confessed.

In gerontocratic societies, older persons' views and expectations dominate (Jorgensen 2018). Often older persons ignore the realities of young people as insignificant, fleeting, grasping and under foreign influence. Furthermore, 'respectability' is important. It entails not speaking truth to power, not exposing excesses of elders and patrons. The coded silence of respectability allows selfish and abusive elders to continue to take advantage of the young. When elders are challenged, the burden of proof lies with the junior person, but exposès are blamed on the whistle blower's errant ways. 'Respectability' is deep-seated in many neo-patrilineal cultures such as prevalent in Zimbabwe. Young people who do not show respect by being obedient and silent about elders' excesses risk being 'mythic felons' (Comaroff and Comaroff (2007) on whom action is taken and blamed when things go wrong to respond to the deepening crisis.

This notion and practices have contributed to the marginalisation of young people.

Is youth about neoliberal personhood and individualism?

Neoliberalism incites do-it-yourself (DIY) personhoods and modes of survival because it privileges individualism. In many instances, neoliberalism weakens social bonds, incapacitates institutions include families thereby disembedding individuals from their social ties to survive on their own devices. Young people's need for support makes them especially vulnerable to being disembedded. However, as noted by Kelly (2001) DIY modes of survival are especially fraught with risks where there is institutional incapacity. The DIY approach is both about creativity and coming of age differently when compared to previous generations' experiences.

DIY lifestyles have seen the emergency of hustling as a mode of survival and work for many unemployed youth in Sub-Saharan Africa (Jorgensen 2018, Di Nunzio 2012, Finn and Oldfield 2015). Here in Zimbabwe, Jeremy Jones (2010) refers to the cryptic '*kukiya-kiya'* as an opportunistic and emergent form of getting by. Most African countries see hustling as a nuisance, as non-work, as deviant and as subversive. Officials respond to it in a high-handed manner, reorganising it, harassing actors for flouting zoning bylaws, extracting bribes and so on (Finn and Oldfield 2015 for Sierra Leone, Jorgensen 2018 for Kenya and Kamete 2006, 2008 for Zimbabwe). Pervasive hustling is perceived as failure by officials; this is why they try to eradicate it.

The Africa-wide problem is the misrecognition of the motivation for young Africans' DIY existences. These existences are fuelled by critical attitudes to real, relative or imagined poverty which young people find intolerable and humiliating (Chant and Evans 2010, Scheld 2007). Young Africans fight poverty by taking drastic action such as joining rebel groups (Richards and Peters 1998); micro-level action to minimise or dissociate themselves from any evidence of material deprivation such as sharing clothes (Scheld 2007), transactional and intergenerational sex (Chant and Evans 2010), embarking on risky international migrations which are preceded by fantasy and high aspirations (Mains 2007, Nyamnjoh and Page 2002, Gondola 1999) and intermittent escapes through substance (ab)use which sometimes slides into addiction (Fast and Moyer 2018). These practices seek to undo exclusion even if they do not always work.

Consequently, DIY modes of survival demand analyses by researchers and policy makers in order to inform more responsive policies. Young people want to participate in local and global consumer cultures such as driving fancy cars (Fast and Moyer 2018), wear the latest fashion, have the latest electronic gadgets and eat fast foods (Cole 2007) in order to count as 'somebodies', as citizens. Officials and adult caregivers see these needs as excess to requirements. In Zimbabwe, analyses of DIY practices of youth, why youth engage in them and meanings they attach to them are currently thin. Meanwhile, politicians continue to engage in arbitrary and reactive policies that do not seem to be based on understanding what is happening.

Clearly young people are entangled in multiple crises leading to frustration, limited social mobility because of lack of employment, academic and vocational qualifications that lead nowhere and therefore unachievable social adulthoods. These conditions have produced disaffection and disenfranchisement among young people.

As shown in the foregoing, youth and generational relations in Zimbabwe are conceived in an eclectic manner, which borrows from a range of definitions and none is sustained to coherently inform policy. The UN's advocacy for youth cannot be ignored. However, the UN's areas of focus are grafted onto gerontocratic and patriarchal practices without attending to contradictions. Mamadou Diouf (2003) observed that African youth are inevitably caught in contradictory forces and conflicting messages due to globalisation, gerontocracy and patriarchy. In the case of Zimbabwe, failure to critically attend to these contradictions and conflicting messages has produced unclear conceptualisations of youth as a social category, what their problems are and how they relate to other groups. We see relationality, moral panics, interventions through the education sector such as creating employability through credentialism, and eschewing of the DIY approach that is encapsulated in the informal sector or popular economies. The 'politicisation' of youth (Oosterom 2019) within these contradictions creates opportunities for a few who are able to attach themselves to powerful leaders. However, they rise and fall with the leaders too. These unclear policies in turn have led to contradictory actions for and against youth as will be shown below. This deepens marginalisation through fear and lack role modelling.

Furthermore, as noted by Jorgensen (2018), youth has come to mean persons who find themselves unable to achieve ideal social adulthoods,

to achieve independence and autonomy because of lack of economic resources and political clout to influence decisions. This speaks to another layer of marginalisation.

Access to education

Education has long been seen as a cornerstone of development. Since independence, education together with wage work and industrialisation was seen as key to aspired for social transformation (Zvobgo 1987). Lately, education takes centre stage in SDGs as it did in MDGs as a means to achieving equity. However, the Zimbabwean experience shows that the picture is more complicated.

Education achievement and young people's marginalisation

Zimbabwe's quantitative achievements in the education sector have been the most enduring based on the speed with which new schools were established, enrolments and teacher training expanded after independence (MacKenzie 1988, Johnson 1990, Pape 1998). Because of post-independence education for all (EFA) policies, literacy rates were 94% for the national average; by gender they were 96% for men and 93% for women in 2017 (ZimStat 2018:11). The literacy levels are based on highest level of education achieved not reading and writing tests. Zimbabwe's literacy rates are among the highest in SSA. However, these achievements belie concerns about the quality of education that have dogged the education system since 1980 such as low pass rates at O-level (Abraham 2003, CSO 2001, ZimStat 2018:30-1).[11] Some researchers note that Zimbabwean education focuses more on reading competences and not critical learning (Johnson 1990). It places a premium on academic subjects at the expense of practical subjects (Pape 1998). Practical subjects are shunned because of indelible memories from the colonial era when practical subjects were offered to Africans thus channelling them to inferior manual work (Pape 1998, also Abraham 2003:77 referring to art). The two-track system then created and sustained class and racial differences. Consequently, practical subjects are not prioritised in resource allocation. The few schools that

11 On average around 20% of enrolled candidates passed their O-level, that is passed at least five subjects. Thus, a disproportionately high number failed much to the irritation of government officials. Some suggested that 'outside interference' was to blame because exams were moderated in the UK. In part, this precipitated localisation of school exams in 1994. The other reason was the inability to mobilise foreign currency for exam moderation abroad.

offer art for instance, are in urban areas and their facilities were obsolete in the late 1990s. Abraham (2003) notes that more male students passed art subjects compared to their female counterparts. Consequently, deep-seated biases towards academics create marginalisation because less gifted students are least likely to succeed. As explained below other aspects of marginalisation have to do with gender issues, rural-urban and implied class differences; with endemic unemployment, the increase in universities and graduate unemployment; young people not in education, employed or in training (NEET) and entrepreneurship education (EE).

Gender issues in access to and achievements in education

EFA policies and especially universal primary education (UPE) ensured gender parity in primary school enrolments and completion rates between 1991-2000 (CSO 2001:22). The gender parity in primary education has remained more or less constant through the first and second decades of the 2000s (ZimStat 2018: 30-1). There is neither gender disaggregated data for Grade 7 examination pass rates in the 1990s and earlier nor rural-urban differences in performance (CSO 2001). Performance in mathematics[12] and English language[13] is comparatively weaker than in vernacular languages, Shona and Ndebele. These differences are likely determine who has access to secondary education, those who fail maths and English language are unlikely to proceed. There are no tracer studies on such students to document their pathways to livelihoods and social adulthoods.

Data from 2008-2017 shows that Grade 7 pass rates have ranged between 51,5% in 2008; they plunged to 36,6% in 2014 and seem to be rising slowly to 44,8% in 2017 (ZimStat 2018: 22). Girls generally do better than boys. Performance by province shows that the two largest cities Harare and Bulawayo are the best performers. For instance, in 2017, their average pass rates were above 70% per province. In rural provinces the picture is rather sad. In Matabeleland north, 25,6% passed, In Matabeleland South 35,8% passed, in Mashonaland west 33,9% passed and in Mashonaland Central 37,8% passed (ZimStat 2018:22). The other provinces are slightly better but below 50%. This of course raises a lot of questions about what becomes of students who fail the Grade 7 exams. Precisely, in 2017 a total of 318,834 students sat the exam and only 44,8% passed. This means 175,996

12 The lowest pass rate in mathematics was 58% in 1991 and the highest rate was 73,4% in 1997.

13 The lowest past rate in the English language was 66% in 1992 and the highest was 83% in 1997.

failed. What happened to them? Is there a means for them to access further training? This is not clear.

In secondary school, gender disparities are conspicuous as girls start to disappear and yet more of them pass Grade 7. Between 1991-2000, female students constituted between 40 and 45% of total enrolment in Form 4 (CSO 2011: 34). These disparities widen as one goes up the education ladder. Because after secondary school (Form 4), promotion to pre-university classes or vocational and technical colleges is based on merit, there are many young people who do not qualify. The O-level pass rate hovers around 20% of total enrolment most years (Abraham 2003, CSO 2001). Weaker performance was recorded at 14% in 1985 and 1986 as well as 15% in 1999 (CSO 2001: 42). There is no gender disaggregated information on O-level pass rates in the 1990s and earlier. In 2017 the pass rate was 28,71% out of 16,605 candidates (ZimStat 2018: 31). This means that 46,113 passed and 114,492 failed countrywide. Except for Harare and Bulawayo provinces where there is near parity in pass rates by gender, in other provinces male students do better than their female counterparts. The same prevails in countrywide performances 30,6% males (24,051 candidates) passed compared to 26,85% females (22,062 candidates). These statistics show that the vast majority fail and leave the education ladder. As noted by Grant (2003) there are no comprehensive tracer studies that document what happens to young people who fail the O-level exams.

Of the 20% who pass O-levels, the limited spaces for A-level, in vocational and technical colleges also means some are excluded. The absence of data and tracer studies on young people's transitions to professional life and independent living makes it difficult to discern what happens to them.

In tertiary education, there are fewer female than male students. Through the 1990s, female enrolment was 35% at UZ; when the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) was established in 1991, 19% of its enrolment was female in the 1990s (CSO 2001: 44). Africa University enrolled its first students in 1994 and had 46% female enrolment while Solusi University, whose first enrolments were in 1994 enjoyed near parity. In agricultural colleges, enrolment was 35% female.

In ten years from 1997 to 2017, university enrolments grew to 92,000 in seventeen universities. Female enrolment was 5,796 out of 19,285 (30%) in 1997 and it grew to 48,673 00 out of 92,279 (53%) in 2017 (ZimStat

2018:32). However, female students dominate in the humanities and arts and few of them enrol in the natural science and engineering disciplines. This choice of subjects means that many women remain in professions that are relatively lowly paid compared to their male counterparts.

In teachers' colleges, female enrolment shot up to 54% between 1998 and 2000 (CSO 2001: 46). Since the late 1990s, morale in teaching plunged because of the relentless deterioration in working conditions. Thus, women dominated training in a profession that was in decline thereby channelling them into deeper disempowerment. Female candidates continued to dominate enrolments throughout the 2000s. In 1999, 53% of candidates were female (9,802 out of 18,157) and by 2017 68% were female (19,522 out 28,610) according to ZimStat (2018: 33-34).

In technical colleges 30% and in vocational colleges 21% of enrolments are female in the 1990s (CSO 2001). In the combined enrolments for vocational and technical colleges changed slightly from 34% (6,630 out of 19,041) in 2013 to 36,5% (8,604 out of 23,570) in 2017 (Zimtstat 2018: 35)

Notwithstanding the improvement in the enrolment of women in universities, teachers', vocational and technical colleges, there is a large number of women who drop out of the school system in secondary school. Consequently, the majority of females, not counted in the foregoing, are likely end up as home-makers where their economic contributions remain hidden. In the absence of institutions that cater for individuals who have dropped out or failed their examinations, most of these women are not catered for.

Urban-rural differences

In predominantly rural provinces of Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Matabeleland South and North there were comparatively few students enrolled in secondary school between 1990 and 2000. Compared to other provinces, each of these provinces registered less than 100,000 students per year from 1990 to 2000 (CSO 2001). Perhaps this points to relatively small populations. In the 2000s, enrolments in rural provinces had improved slightly but remained below other provinces. Several widely acknowledged rural-urban differences in access to school point to inequity and marginalisation of rural students. They include perhaps availability of facilities, inability to attract and retain trained teachers, the effects of cost-recovery in secondary education (the inability to pay tuition fees) as reasons

for differences. Rural district council and community schools, the majority of which are in rural areas perform comparatively poorly in O-level exams unlike government, mission, trust and urban council schools on grounds of the latter's superior facilities, ability to attract and retain qualified teachers (Bennell and Ncube 1994). The comparatively poor performance at O-level in rural areas likely discourages parents and students alike. These issues had not been resolved in by 2017 (ZimStat 2018: 31).

The poor performance of rural schools has implications for who has access to university education. Through the 1980s and 1990s, efforts to transform students population at the then sole university led to the University of Zimbabwe being dominated by students whose parents (fathers as proxy for background) were employed in the public sector, had attended the better and more expensive government, mission, trust and urban council schools (Bennell and Ncube 1994).[14] Children of peasants who went to rural district council and rural community schools were few. Bennell and Ncube concluded that university education served to consolidate class differences and excluded rural youth on account of attending schools with poor facilities. Whether the situation changed after 1990 when more universities were established is not discernible. Given challenges of cost recovery and low teacher morale because of deteriorating working conditions, the extent to which conditions changed is open to speculation. There are no known analyses of enrolments at university by rural or urban origins and socio-economic backgrounds since the mid-1990s. Therefore, available evidence shows that education for all eludes young people of rural backgrounds.

Poverty and effects of HIV

Due to deepening poverty throughout the 1990s and growing number of orphans due to HIV, the government introduced the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) to pay fees for orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs). The tuition did not extend to universities. BEAM was funded partly from the AIDS levy, later donors that fund children's issues also contributed to the fund. According to MOPSE (2019) statistics between 2014 and 2018 slightly over a million OVCs were in school from ECD classes to secondary school. Only half of the primary and secondary school OVCs received BEAM assistance. None of the ECD learners seems to have

14 They relied on information on university application forms, and tuition either through government grants (meaning low income) or from savings. Only students poor backgrounds got government grants. However, from personal recollections students misrepresented parents' income to qualify for grants.

received BEAM assistance. BEAM's sustainability has been challenged by mismanagement, poor community participation, poor accountability, targeting and administration challenges such as delayed disbursements of funds and eventual donor withdrawal. In the absence of tracer studies, it is difficult to tell what became of the vast number of orphaned and vulnerable child beneficiaries. Given worsening poverty, it is likely that many of them drop out of school.

The increase in universities and graduate unemployment

Since the 1990s the number of universities has increased. Graduate unemployment has also increased as the number of graduates increases. This is due to relentless deindustrialisation, shrinkage of the economy and the unresolved ZIMDEF debacle as explained above. Perhaps the expansion of university education during an economic downturn since the economic structural adjustment programme (1991-1995) seems ill advised. There are currently (August 2020) seventeen state and private universities. They produce an estimated 30,000-degree holders per year. Many students graduate to chronic unemployment (Gukurume 2017) leading to cynicism about the utility of degrees vis-à-vis employability and upward social mobility.

Relentless graduate unemployment has prompted curriculum reviews for state universities with a view to focus more attention on innovation and entrepreneurship, the so-called Education 5.0. However, the extent to which universities can produce entrepreneurs is an experiment whose efficacy is yet to be tested. Overseas, entrepreneurship does not seem dependent on university education *per se*. Rather it is spurred by hobbies, problem solving, hunches that lead to the development of technologies or lucrative enterprises in response to felt needs. Some eventually went to the university to master critical skills to improve their businesses or simply hired experts. The idea that university training does not produce entrepreneurs is also borne out of self-help and videos online (on YouTube, Ted Talks etc). Furthermore, popular cultural documentaries such as *Dragon's Den, Apprentice* and others on specific trades such as cooking, baking, home décor, gardening, tailoring, hairdressing and crafting, that test and teach both contestants and viewers about these trades also speak to entrepreneurship as not dependent on university education. These programmes are facilitated and assessed by experts in the trades. Some contestants and viewers have since opened successful businesses as a

result of critical information, skills they mastered and networks they accessed. These examples are mentioned here to challenge the idea that universities can drive entrepreneurship. They were not designed to develop entrepreneurship. In knowledge economies where information is shared through multi-media platforms on the internet, universities no longer have a monopoly of knowledge and teaching. If anything, social media will likely displace universities through open learning driven by individual needs and curiosities. Thus, one can say graduates who end up chronically unemployed are marginalised because they bought into the idea that their education would improve employability. Now a new class of graduates will likely face disappointment because they have been told that they are being trained in entrepreneurship.

Endemic unemployment: is the problem an out-dated curriculum or limited skills training?

EFA stoked aspirations for upward social mobility through wage work as well as transformation from peasants to skilled workers and professionals (Johnson 1990, Zvobgo 1987). However, the aspirations were impeded by relentless school-leaver unemployment from the mid-1980s (Herbst 1989). This was worsened by economic structural adjustment policies which unleashed deindustrialisation which continued in the 2000s on the back poor international relations, and misgovernance. The search for solutions is on-going but is mostly debated with few practical solutions. Still, the education system is blamed for using an inappropriate, out-dated, irrelevant or Eurocentric curriculum (Grant 2003).

The idea that there is need to change or revamp the schools and university curriculum to meet changing labour market demands dates back to the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999. This idea assumes that education is an independent variable in national development. The skills it spawns are used by different sectors of the economy thereby driving development. The reality is more complicated, and the curriculum could well be a dependent variable. Examples from other countries show that changes in industry and other sectors can influence curricular changes or enhancements by either influencing training needs or by training school leavers to better meet demands of different economic sectors. This can take place through apprenticeships run by the sectors, companies or by guilds of trades. In Zimbabwe, policies on apprenticeships became scrambled in the late 1980s as the post-independence government tried to gain control

of manpower development by sometimes barring sectors from certifying skills or interfering in their training programmes. The contestation pitting the government and the private sector seems to have sowed mutual distrust rather than resolving manpower needs. For instance, in the mining sector, the government sought to intervene in order to reduce skills differences when the sector sought control (Dansereau 2000). Eventually training was entrusted to the ministry of higher and tertiary education with the University of Zimbabwe as the lead institution through the department of mining engineering. Personality clashes and deteriorating working conditions eventually compromised staffing.

Firstly, Zimbabweans have a negative attitude against a two-track secondary education (one for academics and another for practical subjects for less academically gifted students). The negative attitude originates in the colonial era when non-academic subjects were offered to Africans. Thus, people perceived practical subjects as channelling Africans to inferior, manual work which was also comparatively lowly paid (Pape 1998). Practical subjects prime young people for a range of trades making it easier for tradesmen and women to be entrepreneurs. Although after independence there were efforts to introduce 'education with production' it fizzled out probably because of lack of support and the weight of deep-seated distrust. Furthermore, limited funds or budgetary allocations seem to have impeded it (Abraham 2003).

In a study of Bulawayo, Grant (2003) noted that young people who failed their O-levels found themselves stuck at home unable to get work, to access guidance about finding work or training. Their parents too were frustrated; because they did have tuition for the young people to repeat secondary school education in order to get into vocational or technical colleges and/or lacked advice about how to help their children. The local authority's youth centres ran programmes but had long waiting lists and could not expand enrolments nor increase courses, and were generally underfunded. There are no institutions within the ministries of education or outside that provide training and/or education needs of youth who dropped out of school or failed their school leaving exams. Thus, since independence the 70 to 80% without O-levels are not catered for because of lack of ramps to the labour market.

Secondly, in the 1990s, Zimbabwe experimented with apprenticeship programme modelled on the UK. However, the programmes did not succeed

because of mutual distrust between the government and employers. The programme was funded through the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (ZIMDEF), funded from a surcharge of the wage bill in the private sector. Employers in selected sectors could get a subsidy if they employed and trained school leavers over a three-year period (Nyazema 2010). The government shared training costs with employers at 3:1, 1:1 and 1:3 from the first year to the third year respectively. The fund was beset with lack of transparency, bickering and festering mutual distrust between employers and the government. Eventually, the Ministry of Higher Education was tasked with skills training leading to current biases that present universities as the solution to skills training and developmental challenges of the country. In reality, as the foregoing shows, universities, vocational and technical colleges cater for a small minority of young people who pass O- and A-levels. The rest are neglected. Still, few of these relatively academically capable get wage employment after graduating. There is little talk about expanding vocational training.

Thirdly, in the 2000s when in response to political and economic crises of the 1990s (including factors that led to fast track land reform, losing the vote in the constitutional reform process in 2000), the government unilaterally and hastily developed a curriculum review called National Strategic Studies (NSS). It was meant as an antidote against supporting the opposition; and a fear that young people who were derogatively labelled as 'born frees' did not fully appreciate the cost and meaning of the liberation struggle. Among other things, the NSS saw the introduction of National Youth Services (NYS) whose successful trainees would get preferential access in vocational and technical colleges as well as entry-level employment in the civil service. This did not entail thoroughgoing changes to the economy to expand employment opportunities, it was more about rewarding obedience. It also led to hastily put together reforms in the secondary school history curriculum. Barnes (2007) argues the 2000 reforms led to a simplification by paring down the content of the history syllabus especially on the liberation struggle and its heroes. In addition, there has been simplification of assessments seen in short answer questions whereas, hitherto, essay type exams were preferred. The impact of these changes was a reduction in critical analyses, originality in composing arguments and diminishing debate among learners (Barnes 2002, Matereke 2012). The extent to which this creates competences usable in the labour

market is open to speculation.

Furthermore, Matereke (2012:93) argues that the 2000 emergence of what Terence Ranger describes as 'patriotic history' referring to a narrow and simplistic version of the liberation struggle that focused attention on ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe's exploits and sacrifices at the instigation of pro-ruling party historians, produced a divisive, simplistic and intolerant form of citizenship education. Patriotic history assumes that 'patriots' – those who uncritically follow the ruling party's instructions and sentiments – are pitted against 'traitors'/sellouts who question policies through debate and activism. The latter are dismissed, ridiculed, subjected to physical abuse and vitriol as well as violation of their human rights at the hands of patriots often incited by ruling party elites.[15] In the latter, youth militias from the NYS have come in handy. The exploits of youth militias are denied as they do not belong to formal organisational structures of the ruling party or state (McGregor 2013). Thus, rather than citizenship education underwritten by patriotic history ending violence, moral decadence, division and indiscipline it seems to have misled compliant young people into intolerance and rewarding them for it. It has weakened academic critique and in turn academic quality. Schools now have 'national pledges' to honour the sacrifice of fallen heroes.[16] These recitals are performed at the flag pole while the low quality of education in the majority of rural schools festers. The long term implications of this indoctrination for manpower development is yet to be assessed.

Fourthly, if the problem is a Eurocentric curriculum, elite flight to trust schools whose exams are still moderated abroad points to a desire for genuinely global and transferable achievements. This perhaps points the spotlight on local incapacitation rather than to an outdated and Eurocentric curriculum. The number of unemployed young people from trust schools is not known. In 2020, interdicts on international travel including for academic purposes due to the COVID-19 pandemic likely curtailed emigration of trust schools matriculants. It is necessary to compare localised and international education in order to critically respond to the idea that the Eurocentric curriculum is to blame for unemployment.

15 Since 2000, Zimbabwe's produced many traitors and sellouts who suffered human rights violations including migrants to the UK, artisanal miners, informal sector workers selling their wares in undesignated spaces, opposition party members asking for election reforms, civil servants demanding better working conditions and wages. Anyone who displeases the ruling party is a sellout.

16 The pledge is based on the preamble of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Fifthly, another hastily put together review of primary and secondary school curriculum was implemented in 2016. It also seems to be an extension of patriotic history than the need to resolve unemployment. It is based on 'the spirit of *unhu/ubuntu/vumunhu*' (MOPSE 2015). Notwithstanding the controversy of its launch without adequate training for teachers, textbooks and teaching aids, its impact on employability is yet to be seen. The politicisation of education, used as it is for indoctrination of young people, seems to have further compromised the quality of education. Time will tell.

Sixthly, there is another myth that internships and attachments of students make them more employable. This begs the question of available vacancies in the face of deindustrialisation. To the extent that attachments and internships become institutionalised, they are a form of voluntary work which is increasingly seen as signalling commitment to work (Farrugia 2019). Employers like attachments and internships for subsidising their wage bills while some university students believe that through internships they establish networks with employers. These programmes are yet to be evaluated for effectiveness vis-à-vis employability.

What of young people who are not in education, employed or in training (NEET)?

With the education sector privileging academic subjects neglecting non-academic disciplines in sports and trades, and given the low pass rates in academic subjects (ZimStat 2018, CSO 2001), a lot of young people (about 80% at O-level) who fail exams or drop out are marginalised by the education system. Many more fall off the education ladder from after Grade 7 and throughout secondary school on account of poverty and other factors such as pregnancy. When unemployed, such young people are treated with suspicion. A critical assessment of available training services shows that those without academic achievements are not catered for in available forms of training. There are no ramps to enable access to training for the less academically inclined. Many resort to Do It Yourself (DIY) survival strategies' such as hustling (Jones 2010, Kamete 2008) or the performing arts again without training or support. For the vast majority who follow the DIY approach, acceptance by the mainstream remains challenged. They are seen as subversive for not obeying city bylaws on zoning, noise levels and others. The creative arts are seen as inferior careers of the last resort. Forty years into independence there are no schools to train young people in

acting, script writing, film production, dancing and playing different types of music instruments and composing music. The National Arts Council is poorly funded as is the Sports Commission.

If we think about the story of Nollywood, the expansive Nigerian film and entertainment industry and its origins among unemployed youth during the depth of economic crisis in the 1980s (Ezeonu 2013), it is clear that there is a lot of talent and creativity among young people. In the 1980s Nigerian young people improvised sets, wardrobe, script writing, editing and distribution but created a blueprint for a multimillion-dollar cultural industry that Nollywood is today. The industry today includes television, film, music, fashion and popular culture.[17] It has created millions of jobs in studios and among local entrepreneurs in fashion, culinary arts and others. Furthermore, universities are capitalising on its growing success by offering training in different disciplines that Nollywood needs. This shows that there is scope for the DIY approach to offer a solution where decision makers are sensitive, open to persuasion and do not assume that youth know nothing or that the education sector drives economic development. In Zimbabwe the entertainment industry is neglected because of academic biases. In Nigeria today, the creative arts count among their top five foreign currency earnings. The Minister of Finance includes Nollywood in his/her budget speech as a source of national income! The potential for Nollywood to grow is yet to be fully explored. Nollywood has been touted as a model for Africa's development strategies because it originated, developed and was driven by ordinary people without external expertise and resources (i.e. local technocrats and donors), becoming an export industry and jobs creator (Ezeonu 2013). Sadly, across Africa including Zimbabwe, strategies that do not originate in government planning or have donors' blessing are frowned upon as seen in how governments respond to hustling.

Entrepreneurship education (EE): the missing component?

Across Africa, there are donor-led entrepreneurship training programmes for young people, many also endorsed by African governments panicked by alarmist discourses of 'youth bulges' and 'crisis of youth' . (Frederiksen and Munive 2010). Young people are trained in business planning, budgeting and management only to find that they cannot get loans to start businesses,

17 Evidence is seen in the number of channels on DSTV. In addition, there are million-dollar Nollywood movies on Netflix. There are many Nollywood related channels on YouTube too.

they have no mentors or markets for viable businesses. Many also find that they still have to deal with corrupt and high-handed local authority officials (Finn and Oldfield 2015). Thus, entrepreneurship training *per se* is not a solution, it is one of many social experiments whose success demands a holistic shift in how social institutions and generational relations are arranged.

In Zambia, the youth lamented business ventures which are not only insecure, they have low returns, and are sensitive to adversities such as accidents and natural disasters forcing entrepreneurs to start over many times (Gough et al. 2016). Many Zambian youths aspired for secure employment with perks, if only they had connections. That is, they attributed failure to get paid work to nepotism and corruption. In Ethiopia, the ruling party of the late President Meles Zenawi decided to pay attention to marginalised, unemployed and uneducated youth by offering them entrepreneurship training through party structures using donor resources (Di Nunzio 2015). After training some groups of young people receive contracts to do trades (installing electricity, tiles etc in government buildings). The training comes with discourses of entrepreneurial success as intertwined with national prosperity. The government and some officials argue that poverty is due to lack of dreams, laziness, wrong attitudes and expectations of as well as dependence on government assistance. Thus, young people are blamed for failure. Young people blame the government for not giving them loans or nurturing their enterprises. They would rather have skills training and get wage employment rather than being self-employed. Officials counter that failure needs no explanation and that youth's arguments are typical of non-achieving cultures. These examples show that entrepreneurship education is not a panacea for unemployment. Young people want jobs – decent forms of work not self-employment. Those in self-employment need support (in money, knowledge, markets, etc).

The foregoing has tried to highlight the deep-seated biases in the education sector as a leading skills development sector. The sector has been driven by academic biases and therefore catered to a small minority that pass school exams and can pay tuition. The vast majority who fail or drop off are not catered for but left to live with their sense of failure alone. The challenge then is for governments to be sensitive to diverse needs and circumstances of young people especially those with no academic qualifications.

Wage work and employment

At different times 'employment creation' has been housed in ministries that deal with women and/or youth. Perhaps this is an official admission that these two groups' need for wage work, and employment are not catered for in the mainstream labour markets. However, what is not clear are the modalities of creating employment. Furthermore, the meaning of employment in Zimbabwe has not been explained especially given prevailing global economic restructuring. Experiences elsewhere show that across the globe governments are grappling with changing meanings of work especially how they encroach on social adulthoods (Farrugia 2019).

Worldwide, employment increasingly comes with qualifiers such as 'casual', 'decent', 'shifty', 'precarious', etc. because of changes in the global economy. Increasingly, production is no longer about tangible artefacts but sensory experiences[18] of consumers such as enjoyment and other affective aspects, as well as followers on the internet, etc. Thus, production demands qualities like hospitability which are personal, relational and go beyond certificates conferred by institutions. These changes are spawned by the knowledge economy and its technologies. In Africa, 'employment' includes income-generating projects, livelihoods, entrepreneurship or modes of survival because of deindustrialisation (Gough et al. 2016). Each of these concepts demands different approaches and sets of policies. Empirical studies show that young people largely get by on several income-generating activities, concurrently or serially, as well as modes of survival that do not shy away from the illicit ranging from petty crime, scams and drug dealing (Gough et al. 2016, Fast and Moyer 2015, Jones 2010, Jorgensen 2018 among many others). Hustling, a mode of survival that is based on creativity and improvisation, is also on the increase. These are poor-friendly forms of getting by.

Zimbabwe has a pre-occupation with 'orderly development' (Kamete 2013) characterised by formal planning, zoning, licenses, paperwork and without room for informal, or not 'poor friendly', unlicensed ways of doing things. The latter are purged, disciplined through military interventions because they are seen as backward, disorganised and intrude on aspirations for modernity and its technocratic ways. In many cases, planners make arbitrary policies to respond to unplanned needs that threaten their interests

18 Seeing something (tourism), eating certain foods, wearing certain clothes or fabrics; walking, living somewhere; hearing or understanding something, etc.

or point to police failures (Jenkins 1987, Rupiya 2005, Howard-Hassman 2010, McGregor 2013). Thus, the preoccupation with planning also has a dark side of *ad hoc* purging and disciplining which in recent years has left Zimbabwe in indefinite crisis mode. There is tension between 'orderly' technical plans and purging of apparently disorderly ways of the poor characterises the physical and structural violence visited on the informal sector to which many unemployed young people and women resort. Crackdowns announced overnight in the 2000s against artisanal mining, foreign currency traders, informal sector workers, etc. are a case in point. Many informal sector workers live and work in a state of fear because of surveillance on their activities, crackdowns or a perpetual state of illegality. Officials see harassment as a remedy to or prevention of subversive activities. Some are described as the 'return to sanity' in the city which in fact entailed relocations and hastily organised removals of informal sector workers from sites in cities' outskirts. The loss of property and injury to humans is yet to be quantified. These purges lock many unemployed young people and women in cycles of poverty, and they destabilise economic activities of the poor. Furthermore, the well planned and formal alternatives take a long time to materialise, and when they do, they do not work well because of a lack of consultation. It is increasingly clear that with the opposition controlling urban councils while the ruling party is in charge of the parent ministry, the physical and structural violence visited on informal sector workers is also about contestations for control of cities between the ruling party and the opposition (McGregor 2013). In this context, clarifying the meaning of employment creation in a non-partisan manner is even more urgent.

Women and work

In wage work men dominate at all levels. Women constitute 4,6% of the armed forces, 27,6% of managers in the private sector, 34% of technicians and 19,8% in the crafts and 55% of clerical services. Women dominate the ranks of unpaid and paid domestic work. The latter is among the lowest paid forms of work (ZimStat 2016: 43-48). In the rural economy, women are conspicuous as farmers but with limited access to the means of production. Despite several waves of land redistribution, women's access to land is below that of men. Access to assets and resources is important for gender equality and empowerment (Sen and Mukherjee 2016:191).

Table 1: Women and men's access to agricultural land and loans

	Large scale	Small scale	A1	A2	Communal Areas	Resettle-ment Areas
Male	86,1%	82,4%	83,7%	96,5%	65,5%	74,2%
Female	13,9%	17,6%	16,3%	3,5%	34,5%	25,8%
Access to loans						
Male	9,2%	10,4%	11,3%	23,0%	9,6%	12,1%
Female	0,3%	1,1%	1,8%	2,1%	2,0%	3,8%

Adapted from ZimStat (2016:38-41)

The foregoing shows that women are marginalised in the economy in both urban and rural areas. Regardless of size of land, few women have access to land in own right and yet their livelihoods are predominantly based on agriculture. This lack of control over resources, undermines decision making at personal, household, community and national levels (Sen and Mukherjee 2014). The lack of resources undermines the ability for women to act on their aspirations such including basic concerns such as healthcare, education and managing abusive partners.

Leisure time and recreation

There is no leisure and recreation for women in general because of their social roles in domestic and community work. In many cases, women carve out leisure activities within their homes and communities with very few studies documenting such activities to-date. Many attend church and related activities. There is very little policy planning and budgetary allocation for leisure activities for adult women outside church. There are no sporting facilities or clubs to develop hobbies, crafts, or for fitness. For those in party politics, perhaps political activities are recreational. However, sometimes people are forced to attend so they cease to be pastimes.

For unemployed young people (males) there are no facilities, investments and policies in leisure activities by central or local governments. (Young women's fate is the same as that of women above.) One can surmise that based on the foregoing, the lack of investment in leisure and recreational activities is borne out of insensitivity, lack of an emic view of young people, high-handedness and lack of resources. In the absence of formal provisions, young people get by on their own creativity

most of which revolves around the illicit for example Jones (2010) including the (ab)use of substances (Mains 2017 for Addis Ababa, Gough et al. 2016 for Lusaka, Fast and Moyer 2015 for Dar es Salaam, Carrier 2005 for Kenya). In some cases, these activities go hand-in-hand with transgressive sexual activity all meant to temporarily numb and manage challenges of life on the street or living on one's wits. Some young people slip into dependence on the substances and become more stigmatised and marginalised by peers and adult alike. Where this happens, provision of services to rehabilitate them tends to be scant. Addicts are reduced to lives of destitution on the periphery of society where their fate is ignored. In Zimbabwe, the number of such young people is not known

Leisure activities of unemployed young men are generally stigmatised for diverting energy away from what adults see as more meaningful pursuits of looking for work or studying (Masquelier 2013, Tournadre 2019, Riley et al. 2010 among others). Whether it is street corner tea drinking, partying, playing card games, nightclubbing, alcohol consumption, sharing stimulants and drugs, etc., these activities are an antidote to 'boredom'. Boredom is the indefinite emptiness, dullness that young people feel due to unemployment or precarious employment. Sometimes young people are pushed to the above leisure activities to bond with peers and because there are no alternatives.

Boredom points to feelings of disempowerment. As a result, leisure activities of the young can be threatening to those in power who see masses of the disempowered together. In this respect, leisure activities can also be political.[19] Riley et al. (2010) say that as far as citizenship is increasingly expressed through consumption, choice, personal responsibility, collective action and rights, leisure is an expression of citizenship. Leisure activities bring together people bound by the pursuit of enjoyment of an activity or substance. Often, leisure pursuits imply income-generating activities for some entrepreneurs, thus leisure is about consumption too. When the latter are in the grey economy it means society has to make choices about what it chooses to acknowledge, legalise or criminalise. Kenya chose not to legislate against the consumption of locally produced plant stimulants *qhat* (Carrier, 2005) and *qhat* has become an emblem of communities that farm it. South Africa had to ban alcohol sales in a bid to fight COVID-19 because partying was subverting government policies. Here too, Zimbabwe

19 In South Africa, parties have been the bane of public health responses. These issues are not discussed here due to limited space.

has yet to discuss how leisure marginalises and empowers some.[20] Other commentators say leisure activities keep young people away from the streets and from confrontational politics that produce their disempowerment. In case of the latter, in gerontocratic settings, the powerful turn a blind eye to leisure pursuits that do not call them to account for developmental crises.

Political participation and decision making

Marginalised groups share one common trait that of lack of political clout to influence decision making with regard to development in general, but also on matters specific to their strategic interests. In this respect, there are growing calls for more political participation by women and youth as seen in several international agreements and commitments such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for action (BPfA), in the MDGs and SDGs, as well as in regional protocols. Youth participation is mentioned in the UNCRC and also in the African Youth Charter (AYC) as well as Sections 17 and 20 of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Women's participation in decision making

Gender activists realise now that whether they call for quotas or affirmative action, descriptive representation does not translate to substantive representation (Joseffson 2014). This is because elected women are chosen primarily to follow the party line. There are other impediments including the fact that male leaders of parties approve candidates. Often, they choose women they can control through their networks such as wives and children of friends. In Zimbabwe, the exclusive filter used by the ruling party is that of 'struggle credentials' to use Parpart (2015)'s term. This has allowed wives, widows and children of fallen comrades of leaders, women e-combatants or ex-refugees during the war to stand for office. Such candidates are amenable to following the party line thus filtering out issues of interest to the transformation of gender relations. Furthermore, in most cases (save perhaps in countries such as South Africa) feminist organisations and activists do not form parties or align themselves with political parties. This antipathy means that feminist organisations lack bases to suggest candidates leaving leaders of parties to decide (Goetz 1998).

20 A case in point are recent media reports of a truckload of cough syrup, consumed by youths to get high, was impounded on its way to Zimbabwe from South Africa. The amount of that contraband point to some well-heeled individuals benefiting from the sale of the cough syrup.

In addition, to the conundrum of substantive representation, Zimbabwe has yet to comply with the regional protocols such as SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) on head counts of 50:50 in male: female representation. As shown in the table below, since independence female MPs were less than half of all elected representatives and yet women are the majority of registered voters. A quick perusal of records of parliamentary debates shows that female members of parliament (MPs) do not assert their opinions even on issues that affect women such as education and healthcare.

Table 2: The percentage of female MPs since 1980

Election	Number of female MPs	Percentage
1980	9 (out of 100)	9%
1985	8 (out of 100)	8%
1990	17 (out of 150)	11.3%
1995	21 (out of 150)	14%
2000	14 (out of 150)	9.3%
2005	24 (out of 150)	16%
2008	30 (out of 210)	14.29%
2013	86 (out of 210)	40.9%

Note: *In 2013 elections 26 women were elected and 60 became MPs were nominated to fill quotas.*

Sources: https://www.parlzim.gov.zw/about-parliament/publications/history-of-women-parlamentarians *(accessed 5 Sept 2020) EISA African Democracy Encyclopaedia Project* https://www.eisa.org/wep/zim2008women2.htm *(accessed 8 October 2020), UN Women (2013), Butaumocho (2018) and Maphosa et al. (2015).*

In other higher echelons of power, there are relatively more women in cabinet than there were before including the first appointment of a female Minister of Defence with struggle credentials. However, during her term of office, Zimbabwe has seen unprecedented violence unleashed by the military on ordinary, unarmed citizens including women minding their business in the city. Thus, this example shows that the promotion of women who are amenable to men's criteria to preside over androcentric institutions does not lead to change in gender relations or change for women's experiences of power. These appointments are good for public relations (PR). Consequently, Zimbabwe has a long way to go in achieving

gender equality in political participation.

The SADC Protocol seems to have focused attention on parliamentary elections and representation and not so much on the local authority elections. The latter remain male dominated and biased. Male councillors focus more on perks of the job such as residential land for themselves and less on service delivery. As a result, most councils across Zimbabwe are unable to provide potable water. This leaves women to improvise thus intensifying their workloads and leaving them vulnerable to mental health challenges given a series of public health concerns (cholera, typhoid, and now COVID-19). Furthermore, there is political interference, violence and extortion in accessing market stalls, residential flats and plots in low income areas among other services (McGregor 2013). The physical and structural violence that now typifies council elections likely makes it difficult for women to run for office.

In other areas of leadership, gender equality remains a pipe dream. For example, in 2015 only three out of eight (27%) vice chancellors of state universities, ten out of 31 ambassadors were women (ZimStat 2016). In the public service, four out of seven commissioners, twelve out of 41 permanent secretaries, twelve out of 51 principal directors, 80 out of 289 directors and 132 out of 517 deputy directors are women. In judiciary services almost half of magistrates (92 out of 207) are women, but as one goes to higher tier courts they are headed by men. In the labour courts ten out of fifteen judges, and in the High Court eleven out of 29 judges, are women (ZimStat 2016:56). The media is also similarly male dominated with men as editors. The statistics show that in spite of the constitution and international agreements that bar discrimination against women and call for gender equality, these ideals are yet to be realised.

Youth's participation in decision making

Since the worldwide ratification of the UNCRC, it is widely accepted that children and youth are entitled to participate in decisions making in their families, communities and states. The African Youth Charter (AYC), the first World Youth Report (WYR) in 2004, the Constitution of Zimbabwe's Section 20 provide for youth participation as well. The AYC was promulgated in 2006 after the 1995 UNGASS that spawned the first WYR and the Millennium conference that gave birth to MDGs. Its preamble acknowledges multi-dimensional marginalisation visited on African youth such as illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, ill health, structural violence

and so on. The charter is comprehensive and looks at rights of young people (freedom of expression, association, thought and movement), as well participation in all sectors and at all levels, access to information (financial, political, on rights, etc.), the need for youth policies that are passed by parliaments, allocated budgets and mainstreamed in all areas of development, the need for sustainable livelihoods and youth employment and protection from torture by law enforcement agencies.[21]

However, the realisation of these rights, remains a pipedream because of the same structures of power inequalities such as gerontocracy and patriarchy. Child and youth participation are about incremental citizenship rights which recognise young people's differentiated capacities to decide, to express themselves and that they have different platforms on which to speak through representatives (James 2011). Through participation young people make or break society depending on the selected mode of participation. When young people choose violent protests or insurgency the impacts are negative (see Peters and Richards 1998). This awareness sometimes makes adults fear genuine youth participation. Such adults prefer ritualistic and tokenistic forms of participation that seek to control and manipulate youths.

In rural Zimbabwe, donor-funded initiatives of child protection committees have been piloted (Fanelli et al. 2007). In these initiatives, youth participation is dependent on donor funding and more capacity development is needed to allow for multiple methods of participation and to ensure that young people's views are taken seriously.

Young people participate through occupational, neighbourhood, religious and school groups through which they engage with power. In addition, young people use the media especially social media, skits, satire, music lyrics to speak to power. However, in the context of Zimbabwe spaces for youth participation, regardless of the platform are increasingly constricted. For example, in 2020 alone:

- Bloggers including microbloggers have been rounded up for expressing views considered subversive.
- satirists who parodied government crackdowns have been rounded up and abused.
- female political activists affiliated to an opposition party have been publicly humiliated and horrendously tortured

21 Adapted from articles 2 to 20 of the African Youth Charter (AU 2006)

- the spokesperson of an association of medical students was also abused and found alive just for asking for better working conditions.
- student associations that sued education authorities over the hasty and unilateral roll out of online learning in response to COVID-19 are yet to hear the outcome of their case.

In past decades, leaders of student associations in universities had their grants withdrawn when students went on strikes that disrupted classes (Cheater 1991). In the late 1990s students were suspended or expelled from the university on grounds that strikes indicated political activism. In recent years, students rarely go on strike.

In the 2000s, when unemployed graduates took to social media to complain about unemployment and subjectivities based on poverty, such as #ThisFlag and #ThisGown, they were arrested for challenging the ruling party and berated as traitors funded by foreign governments (Gukurume 2017). Thus, young people who question the government are brutally silenced. However, when the ruling party's youth league mobilised the Million Man March to celebrate the ex-President Robert Mugabe, they were allowed to march, print t-shirts and advertise in the print and electronic media and to publicise their own hashtags. Many ran Facebook pages praising national leaders while abusing leaders of the opposition. Later, Youth League of the ruling party organised rallies which became a platform for the former First Lady to canvass for election and to verbally abuse rivals; the Youth Interface rallies. It is therefore clear that young people are allowed space to speak only when praise-singing leaders and their policies. Recently, several members of the Youth League were sacked for calling on leaders to take action on corruption. Many are in hiding, on the run as they are wanted by police or in police detention pending trial.

Youth affirmative active action in higher decision making such as parliament does not exist. There are junior councils (for local government) and child parliaments (run through schools) but modes of operation are not well publicised, nor are modes of operations (who decides/chooses issues they debate) publicised. They seem to talk about safe topics or speakers are not taken seriously because of their age. These institutions feature in state party reports to the UN Committee on Rights of the Child as a sign of compliance with the UNCRC. These institutions point to window dressing as far circumstances of young people have not changed as noted in the foregoing.

In the foregoing, youth participation in decision making and ability to influence politics remains a pipe dream despite international commitments and constitutional provisions. These contradictions clearly demonstrate despotic powers explained in the conceptual framework and justified as culture, prerogatives of elders and struggle credentials. The latter considerations overlook the suffering of the young people who are a large majority demographically. Their exclusion points to deep-seated injustices that need undoing.

Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)

SRHR is perhaps a controversial dimension of human rights; a high standard that demands respect of the bodily integrity of men and women, protection from coercion and violence when it comes to sex and related matters of reproduction, freedom to decide when to have children,, the right to sexuality education and services, and protection from non-discrimination (Tamale 2008, van Eerdewijk 2001). The controversy of SRHR is seen in the fact that since the mid-1990s the Zimbabwe government introduced Lifeskills in secondary schools as part of prevention of HIV. However, the government insisted on 'abstinence only' information on grounds of cultural and religious sensitivities. Researchers elsewhere argue that abstinence-only teachings are unscientific, incomplete and amount to misinformation. They do not allow young people to fully control their bodies and make responsible decisions. Furthermore, reasons behind abstinence-only education are the same reasons behind the coded silences vis-à-vis girls' menstrual hygiene (MH) challenges. In studies done in east Africa, MH leads to girls missing school and ultimately undermining their performance in school. In Zimbabwe there are no empirical studies documenting MH and its impact on school attendance. There is also no reason to think it is not an issue.

The failure to teach a more comprehensive sexuality education is also likely to blame for high teenage pregnancies currently pegged at 25% by eighteen years of age. Debates about how to reduce this these rates have stalled because gerontocratic and patriarchal interests fear allowing young people autonomy on their sexuality. Looked at from the point of view of the impact of lost access to schooling, these fears are way too costly. Furthermore, conservative approaches to SRHR is the reason why women are vulnerable to HIV and other illnesses as well as the relatively high prevalence of gender-based violence in its different forms. They have

been denied the means to vary power inequalities inherent in heterosexual relations.

Activists also say that when it comes to gender specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SRHR remains a hot button issue because of the coalition of religious interests at the highest level of the UN. Thus, the implementation of SDGs has been about cherry picking issues. The easier to do or less controversial aspects, such as maternal health, appeal to cultural, business, political, religious and feminist arguments of saving lives of mothers and children. However, when change is extended to sexual and reproductive health rights of women and youth such as access to information, to contraceptives, bodily integrity, autonomy and decision making in reproductive health matters, cultural and religious interests are exposed, and politicians resist change arguing cultural and religious sensitivities. Although activists argue that reforms in sexual and reproductive health rights are the new frontier of change in gender relations, resistance on the part of local decision makers and religious interests presents obstacles or speed humps to change. It is widely noted that cultural and religious interests will continue to present challenges for change.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

The foregoing has shown the extent of marginalisation and exclusion of women and youth people in four sectors. It is clear that a combination of gerontocracy, patriarchy and the notion of struggle credentials is used to exclude the large majority of women and youth or disqualify them from running for political office. Given SDGs, social exclusion is not considered sustainable; it is no longer be tolerated (Stuart and Woodroffe 2016) .

In education, the exclusion of women and youth is due to poverty (seen in rural-urban differences in academic performance, completion rates and university enrolments). Furthermore, for candidates that drop out, fail school leaving exams there are not viable alternatives to get skills training without basic secondary education. Thus, many are channelled into low-income work, mis- and underemployment as well as precarious work in agriculture and elsewhere. In wage work, few young people are represented perhaps because of relentless deindustrialisation, many have not been to get entry level jobs unlike older persons who entered work several decades back. Although women dominate in agriculture work in rural areas, few own land in their own right. And fewer have access to loans. Despite the talk

of financial inclusiveness, few women and youth have benefited from loan facilities meant for disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, both women and. youth rely on the informal sector which has been subjected to relentless harassment, surveillance and relocations.

Women and youth lack political clout to influence decisions. It is clear that 40 years on women parliamentarians occupy less than half the seats in parliament. There have been seat reservations and quotas and yet it seems difficult to reach the 50% mark. The foregoing has shown that struggle credentials and patronage as marks of loyalty as well as election violence have excluded many women. Furthermore, female politicians answer more to their leaders than they grapple with substantive representation because of the nature of party politics (Josefsson 2014). Consequently, women's gender's strategic gender interests are not dealt with even when head counts improve slightly.

By head count, youth participation is worse than women's participation despite constitutional provisions and international agreements and commitments. The absence of youth in decision-making structures means that youth concerns and worldviews are marginalised in policy making. Instead, patronage and clientelism continue. This is seen in male youths being used in campaigns and especially in violence against dissenters. The politicisation of youth (Oosterom 2019) as a means of political participation has limited benefits that accrue to a few for a short time. Some youth benefit from their patronage but even these benefits are short-lived as many erstwhile clients are fired, abused, arrested when they become critical. Contestations over bodily integrity seen in the high frequency of gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and vulnerability to HIV also point to deep-seated struggles over along generational and gender lines.

Policy recommendations

- In general there is need to create and strengthen broad, non-partisan consultative processes that capture women and young people's lived realities and aspirations while increasing awareness of ideals encapsulated in international agreements.
- Policies should be guided by international commitments and agreements. Ideals of gender equality and youth concerns should be mainstreamed across all policies.

Education

- For the education sector to cater for all citizens, there is need for policies that respond to different circumstances such as school drop-outs, those who fail school exams and who do not make it to tertiary education. Programmes must be created to meet skills training for these diverse needs.
- There is need for robust information such as tracer studies that document circumstances and experiences of school drop-outs, of students who fail and the unemployed. These studies would inform policy innovation.
- There is need to rethink resource allocations with a view to meaningfully undo the intertwined and multiple layers of disadvantage experienced by rural learners to improve learning outcomes.
- It is important to meaningfully cater for learning needs of young people from materially deprived backgrounds in order for them to access schools and to achieve academically.

Political participation and decision making

- Political filters used to select women and youth for higher office in politics are too narrow and limiting. Furthermore, they seem to lead to control and descriptive representation when substantive representation is desirable. This stifles meaningful gender equality and youth representation.
- There is need to critically rethink gerontocracy, patriarchy, culture and history as part of debates in policy change.

Work and employment

- In view of worsening economic challenges, international relations, rapid technological changes and global economic restructuring, there is a need to rethink the meaning of employment, how it will be created and nurtured to avoid the violations that come with arbitrary decision making and militarised interventions against informal sector workers many of whom are women and young people.
- In rural areas, the distribution of land needs to be more sensitive to gender and youth as the largest segments of unemployed persons who get by on self-employment.
- There is need to widely advertise the role of women and youth desks/

units that AFI et al. (2019) refer to. Furthermore, in order to achieve financial inclusion it is important to educate these populations about financial literacy as well as what is funded and how the funds are accessed.

Sexual and reproductive health rights

- There is need for comprehensive access to information on sexuality and reproduction to suit different needs textured by age, marital status etc. Access to information makes it possible to make informed decisions. For young people it is empowering.
- There is need to focus on prevention of teenage pregnancy rather than repeatedly leaving teenagers to discover reproduction through their own pregnancies. At family, community or national level, which is less costly preventing an unintended pregnancy or dealing with one? Prevention would reduce the currently high statistics of teenage pregnancy. It would likely contribute to the improvement of maternal health and infant and child survival. It would improve girls' school completion rates.

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