



**Zimbabwe Election  
Support Network**

Promoting Democratic  
Elections In Zimbabwe

## *Press Statement*

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### **ZESN COMMEMORATES NATIONAL YOUTH DAY**

**21-February-2024-** On this National Youth Day, the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) underscores the crucial importance of youth participation in electoral processes as enshrined in Section 67 of the Zimbabwean Constitution. Despite Constitutional provisions and global mandates advocating for youth involvement, youth are still underrepresented in key electoral, governance, policy and legislative affairs.

The National Youth Day was proclaimed and introduced by the Zimbabwe government in 2017 to recognise youth and revel their contributions in the development of Zimbabwe as well as for the young people to recognise and emulate the leadership values.

The global community, including the United Nations and the African Union, has repeatedly emphasized the indispensable role of young people in driving sustainable development and fostering inclusive governance. Zimbabwe, as a signatory to various international agreements, is duty-bound to uphold these principles. The Constitution of Zimbabwe, in Section 20 (1), explicitly mandates the State and all its institutions to implement affirmative action programmes ensuring youth access to education, training, and meaningful participation across all spheres of life.

In the aftermath of the 2023 Harmonised Elections, ZESN observed with concern that only 35 young individuals secured seats in the National Assembly. Among these, 17 were directly elected, ten (10) went through the Youth Quota allocation and a further eight (8) through the Women's Quota. This representation, constituting 12.5% of the 280-Member National Assembly, contrasts with the demographic reality where the youth comprise over 60% of Zimbabwe's population.

Whilst ZESN welcomed the institutionalisation of the Youth Quota in the National Assembly to enhance their participation in democratic governance processes as this is something that youth had been advocating for since time immemorial, it is of concern that out of the ten (10) youth MPs elected under the Youth Quota, only three (3) are female. This gender disparity not only undermines the principle of gender equality but also hampers the holistic representation of youth voices in the legislative chambers. Special attention must be given to addressing gender disparities within youth representation. ZESN implores political parties to adopt affirmative action measures to promote the inclusion of young women in leadership positions, both within party structures and as electoral candidates.

In light of these sobering realities ZESN calls upon all stakeholders including political parties, Civil Society Organizations, and the youth themselves to take decisive action towards enhancing youth involvement in electoral processes and economic development. Furthermore, there is need for the government to revise electoral laws to allocate more seats specifically for young candidates and enforcing gender parity measures within Quotas. The ZEC and CSOs should come up with voter education programmes targeting youth to raise awareness about the importance of electoral participation, the electoral process, and the rights and responsibilities of voters and candidates.

ZESN contends that robust youth engagement, rooted in governance awareness and continuous involvement in leadership and governance mechanisms, has the potential to expedite the representation and participation of youth in electoral processes. //ENDS.

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### **PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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