

*A GUIDE TO*  
JUNIOR COUNCILS  
IN  
ZIMBABWE



CHILDREN'S ISSUES OUR PRIORITY

BY

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**PREAMBLE**

After numerous requests by school heads, principals and many other interested parties from all over Zimbabwe, it is with great pleasure that I embark on this journey to try and enlighten everyone interested about the organisation that is Junior Council. Many are puzzled by this institution, some not even understanding why it exists and the purpose it serves. Others think it is a waste of time by a bunch of school children who have nothing to do. After going through this very informative publication, I hope such misinformed positions and assertions will be changed. I am humbled by this opportunity to be the one honoured to create such a great piece of work. This publication is the first of its kind in Zimbabwe and so I will try to make it as exhaustive as possible, while also trying to answer the many questions that have been posed at junior council about its so called “secretive” protocol and procedures. If anything is left out, I’m quite sure the next publications will be more detailed. Where anyone feels I have left out, I will be more than willing to accept any suggestions and additions for the future, for I don’t claim to know it all. To those students wishing to be a part of junior council in the future, this will also serve as a guideline on the basic requirements for one to be a member of such an honorable institution. To parents, teachers and other stakeholders and partners, we are your children; we need all the support you can give us. It is only with your blessing and support that we will achieve our number one goal-to make Zimbabwe youth and child friendly at senior and junior local government structures. It should also be noted that the information given in this guide is of no general application but is compiled from what I have observed to be the case in most junior councils in Zimbabwe. It therefore should be treated as a basis for junior council, but a more in depth analysis would be needed in order to understand all junior councils on a system by system basis.

Enjoy reading the guide.

Valentine T. Masaiti

Junior Alderman

Marondera Junior Council

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## FOREWORD

Catch them young to successfully engender and profoundly instill firm confidence in the envisaged future leaders. This Zimbabwe Programme for Junior Councilors (Zim-ProJuc) formed the basis for on the job training of our leaders to be. The old philosophy of looking down upon young people should quickly vanish or find its exit from today's thinking. Such organisations are rich of ideas that, if upheld and developed, should bring in the cherished breakthrough in surmounting the host of problems that we sadly encounter daily as people. Remember, it is the blind that know and understand the problems that pester them. Hence, it remains logical that it is the young who precisely know what they expect to be done by the elders. They understand child abuse, being orphans, heading families and the like. Articulation of their daily worries would be more appropriate.

Such organisations could help to engender, among other virtues:

- Discipline
- Management skills
- Analysis of ideas
- Critical thinking
- Public speaking

Members of Zim ProJuc emanating from various schools formed these august groups. This helped to cultivate unity among students from schools of various sizes and cultures. At this early age, students learnt to cooperate and unite for a common purpose which remained one of the cornerstones of Zimbabwe's success story upon which the nation anchored. Students needed to make sure their needs were catered for in the running of the government

The following areas were critical to the young:

- Freedom of participation/expression
- Right to education
- Right to identity
- Social consciousness and development
- Gender mainstreaming etc

All should thrive to work towards becoming one day a Junior Councilor

TAKE HEED AND PARTICIPATE

A.T. MAKWINDI

MAYOR

MARONDERA

2014

## CHAPTER ONE- HISTORY OF JUNIOR COUNCIL

### BACKGROUND

In order to understand the Junior Council; where we are and where we are going, one has to have an understanding of where we came from. Junior council in Zimbabwe dates back as early as 1950. The idea was mooted to run parallel to the Senior Councils with the first junior council being established in Harare, then Salisbury, soon after. The idea gradually spread to other parts of the country until, eventually, each and every town council had a junior council in its structures. As is the case, we have been in existence for over 60 years and such a long time surely must have produced a lot of students well equipped with leadership skills. It is very unfortunate that no records were kept of these people and their endeavors but, with this publication, contact with them may be possible as we still have a lot to learn about the rich history of Junior Council. Some are coming out now in their numbers to support our endeavors and we hope many more will continue doing so.

Research and basic knowledge all point to the fact that junior council was formed as a non-political and non-profit making organisation whose aims were to provide young adults with experience in government and governance. It sought to

- i. Create an organisation representative of all the high and secondary schools within the area under the jurisdiction of the senior council
- ii. Create a liaison between the young people of a city and the City council
- iii. Provide the young people of a city with a means by which they make known their opinions and feelings
- iv. Provide a means by which senior scholars may obtain knowledge of civic affairs and,
- v. Encourage a desire among the younger citizens of a city to participate actively in the affairs of the city.

These values are the parameters that act as guidelines within which all junior councils conduct their affairs. However, due to the different people in different places and culture, some other values may differ, but the basic idea remains the same. Constitutional provisions also differ from area to area.

As Junior Council, we strive to conduct our affairs in a way that conforms to the above mentioned values and principles. Junior Council is not a place where students entertain themselves, like most people think. At junior council, it is serious business throughout the whole term of office of the sitting junior councilors. We always try to make sure that when the next junior council takes office, it adopts that spirit of hard work, efficiency and competence and carries it further. Our constitution and code of conduct is next to none regarding the issue of discipline. That is one of the most important feature in a person that we consider fit to take office as a junior councilor. Junior Council also promotes student activism. This is not a new subject as activism is one of the most influential weapons which can be used to influence policy makers' decisions. As children, our needs tend to be ignored or, at the very least, taken lightly and for granted. Junior Council teaches and inspires us to say NO to that tendency. We are tired of being ignored and being taken lightly, we say. It is the time everyone notices that, small as we

are, our imagination and potential is great and, instead of being stepped upon, should be nurtured and allowed to grow.

When faced with a task as daunting and as great as a junior councilors', that's when people outside of the system can possibly understand what these children go through. At Junior Council, we deal with all kind of issues from child abuse, helping orphans and vulnerable children and, most importantly, being child rights defenders without forgetting our responsibilities as well.

### **WHAT IS JUNIOR COUNCIL??**

A Junior Council is a form of local government led by minors or children. It is composed of child public officials elected into office. It has the same structures as those of the Senior Council with the only difference being that it is voluntary, apolitical and almost like a social welfare group. It gives the children a unique opportunity to be involved in civic affairs and government. A Junior Council has the same jurisdiction as that of the Senior Council. It is responsible for representing all the children under its jurisdiction, be it primary school going or high school children as well as supervising any other club, in school or local based, that involves children and works with children. As the junior local government, it is also a regulatory body for all activities which deal with children or minors.

### **NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS FOR JUNIOR COUNCIL**

Section 20 (1) (b) of the Zimbabwean constitution states that "The State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take reasonable measures, including affirmative action programmes, to ensure that youths, that is to say people between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five years have opportunities to associate and to be represented and participate in political, social, economic and other spheres of life." Giving us the opportunity to come together for collective action as youths and children is one of the guarantees given by the government. This provision is the basis upon which Junior Council is founded and sustained. This is what also led to the need for the establishment of a national body of junior councilors, formally registered and recognised now as the National Junior Councils Association of Zimbabwe and this will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO- AIMS OF JUNIOR COUNCIL

### WHAT EXACTLY DOES JUNIOR COUNCIL DO??

This is the most commonly asked question wherever we go. Well, junior council does a lot of things and as will be discussed more in this chapter, many other things as well. At junior council, we specialize in three specific areas:

#### **1. Child Rights Defending**

This is a very sensitive area of concern and every junior councilor is highly encouraged to approach such issues with the utmost care and professionalism. We believe that the best listener of a child's problem is a child, so why look any further than the children themselves. As the saying goes, "anything for us without us is against us". It would make little sense not to involve children in issues that affect them. Of course, there are some issues and cases which require trained professionals with the requisite know how and experience to deal with certain matters. We encourage people or children to approach established institutions such as the Victim Friendly Unit. However, increased involvement of children in other matters is also encouraged to all stakeholders. Child Rights Defending is when we, as children, stand up for what is rightfully ours, that is, our rights. A person is born with his or her rights and no one can take them away from him or her. Rights are inalienable. Even the constitution, the supreme law of the land, recognises a person's right to their rights. Unfortunately, not everyone understands that concept. Our rights are still being infringed upon just because, like mentioned before, we are children. It is disheartening and saddening to note that many a people are still ignorant of the fact that children are their equals in terms of humanity and, therefore, should be treated as such. All rights deserve equal treatment but, over the years, I have noticed that the following three rights seem to be the ones we have dealt with the most.

##### **a. The right to participation**

This is the right which brought about the formation and adoption of junior council. One of the provisions of the Junior Councils constitution stipulates that the reason for the existence of junior council is, "to provide the young people of Zimbabwe with a means by which they make known their opinions and feelings."<sup>1</sup> How do we make our opinions known to the policy makers? The most effective way is by being directly involved in the civic affairs of our town. The platform offered by junior council is like an amplifier; it magnifies our ordinary voices a hundred times over. The louder we are, the better our chances of being heard. And what could be a better opportunity than to be a member of junior council itself? By bringing together students from different schools under one banner, we show a unity of purpose, and we are certain nothing beats a group of determined children advocating for the very basis upon which their lives depend. We have had to deal with this right more often than the others because even teachers in different schools sometimes do not understand why we have a junior council in place. A number of times, school heads or teachers have tried to block this noble institution at their schools

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<sup>1</sup> MARONDERA JUNIOR COUNCIL CONSTITUTION(CHAP. 2 s6(b))

citing a number of reasons, chief among them a lack of knowledge about junior council affairs. They were not entirely incorrect as surely, nothing existed from where junior councilors could cite what it is that they do. It had to take the intervention of the Ministry of Education officials in several towns for them to release their students. From then on, most of our communication goes to schools through the Education office because we try to dispel the school administration's fears about our credibility as an organisation as well as the safety of the children.

**b. The right to education**

Secondly, we deal with the right to education. This right enabled all of us to go to school, and to be a part of junior council. Often times we still come across parents, though a few, and only in rural to semi-rural areas, who are skeptical about sending their children to school, citing all sorts of reasons. Honestly, we don't even see this as a debatable issue. It is something that more than ninety percent of the country has fought and done away with. This right is enshrined in the bill of rights which houses the fundamental rights in our constitution. Section 81 (1) (f) of the Zimbabwean constitution states that "Every child, that is to say every boy and girl under the age of eighteen years, has the right- to education..."<sup>2</sup> Simply put, all children must go to school. Instead of finding ourselves in a position where we have to advocate for parents to send their children to school, we have a dream, a vision that in ten years time to come, we should be advocating for them to keep their children in school until tertiary education, for, simply going would be the most basic and obvious thing they can do. The high literacy rate of Zimbabwe which, according to surveys currently tops Africa at ninety-two percent, is a perfect example of how a nation can develop just by the way it educates its children. Zimbabwe exports a lot of professionals who are in demand overseas because of the high quality education they would have received in the country. As such, it is imperative to keep our levels of academic excellence high, and hence, the need to ardently recognise and uphold this certain right.

**c. The right to identity**

This is the other right that we focus on at junior council. Our jurisdiction spawns to some schools in the peripheries of the towns in which a junior council would be based which are as good as they are in the rural areas. During one of our many tours around some of these primary schools, we encountered cases of children without birth certificates. When denied the right to identity, it is as good as losing your humanity. Identity is a badge of belonging, a symbol of participation and inclusion, without which you do not have either. For children, it is in the form of a birth certificate. Section 81 (1) (c) of the Zimbabwean constitution states that, "Every child has the right to the prompt provision of a birth certificate." If the law is this clear, then it is a cause for wonder how parents or guardians can be ignorant of such a fact. It is the birth certificate which confirms our status as citizens of Zimbabwe. Having a name only is not enough. It has to be confirmed by the issuance of a birth certificate. Because of our wide reach in many schools where we spread the gospel of the importance of this right, we hope parents and guardians will heed our call and take all necessary measures to ensure their children have

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<sup>2</sup> CONSTITUTION OF ZIMBABWE (SEC 81 (1) (F))

birth certificates. We also help in every way possible; including lobbying the registrar-general to consider these children and assist them to acquire birth certificates.

## **2. Developing Social Consciousness**

Social consciousness, or social awareness, is another aspect that we try to deal with and develop in children. Loosely defined, it means the active process of seeking out information about what is happening in the communities around us. This includes the norms, cultures and problems. Having a greater awareness of these leads to a better understanding and coming up with better solutions. A socially aware individual values human rights and acknowledges harmonious social interaction for the developmental progress of human beings. One fact we cannot run away from is that we are all connected. If we realize that, then we can start looking at everything we encounter and every person we interact with as part of us. At junior council, all children are taught to embrace each and every person as themselves. As we get to appreciate the people around us, we also get a more intrinsic understanding of how the society is evolving, the different view points from different sections of the society and how best we can help and be part of that evolution. This might all seem like a lot of mumbo jumbo to many people but, put into effective practice, it brings a lot of positives. 'No man is an island', so the saying goes, and as such, the web that we are living in has a lot of strains and pulls. It is only when we put collective effort that we can address the social issues in our communities. Social practices harmful to children are our greatest undoing as a developing society. The sooner we rid ourselves of such practices, the brighter our future will be for; society is judged by the way it treats its children.

## **3. Positive Youth Development**

This is another fundamental aspect that we deal with as junior council. Youth development is a process that all young people go through on the way to adulthood. The Centre for Youth Development and Policy Research defines youth development as " ...the ongoing growth process in which all youth are engaged in an attempt to (1) meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful, and be spiritually grounded, and (2) to build skills and competencies that allow them to function and contribute in their daily lives."<sup>3</sup>It has also been described as the process through which young people acquire the cognitive, social and emotional skills and abilities required to navigate life.<sup>4</sup> It is an important factor in that, during the earlier stages of life, young people experience profound physical changes, rapid growth and development, and sexual maturation in addition to psychological and social changes. It is widely believed that this often leads to issues with personal identity, sense of self and emotional independence. Every development comes with a challenge and, in an attempt to address those challenges, youth may engage in behaviors considered to be experimental and risky. During this time, public health and social problems begin or peak such as substance use and abuse, sexually transmitted infections and teen and unplanned pregnancies.<sup>5</sup>Addressing the positive development of young people can decrease these problems by facilitating their adoption of healthy

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<sup>3</sup>( Pittman, 1993, p.8)

<sup>4</sup> UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION CENTRE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

<sup>5</sup> Healthy People 2020/ Breibauer, C. & Maddaleno, M. (2005). Youth Choices and Change. Washington, DC. PAHO

behaviors and helping to ensure a healthy transition into adulthood. The best way to do this is to help the youth to achieve their full potential. This does not take any one person but the help of the community and the people around us. At junior council, we have come up with activities where youth might develop their full potential in different activities whilst diverting their attention from harmful and risky practices. These include sports tournaments, debate competitions, a culture and arts festival as well as quiz tournaments. This provides the youth with responsibilities and meaningful challenges whilst also providing opportunities for skill building. We also engage the local youth in activities such as clean up campaigns where they are directly involved in bringing about a positive development. By providing opportunities which give the youth a sense of belonging and pride, we also build positive social norms amongst them, and what better way of addressing the positive development of young people than by giving them something which they can all be proud of. Although we do not profess to have all the answers, we do our best to engage everyone concerned and try to have as far reaching an effect as possible.

## CHAPTER THREE- COMPOSITION OF JUNIOR COUNCIL

### WHAT/WHO MAKES UP JUNIOR COUNCIL??

This is another question which is very important and has to be addressed. Many people are aware of the composition of the Senior Council. Substitute the word senior with junior and you get it. Junior Council is the junior local authority, with the same jurisdiction as that of the municipalities or councils where the junior council would be based. We have the council made up of the Junior Mayor as the head, the Deputy, Town Clerk, Projects Coordinator, Treasurer, Public Relations Department, Secretary, Chief of Committees Clerk and Ambassadors. These positions are the skeleton of any junior council but they differ according to the place in which a junior council is based. These make up the executive body of Junior Council. The rest of the Junior Councilors make up the General Assembly. The maximum number of councilors varies with each year and with the number of schools in a particular town or city as well as the performance of the incoming councilors. Due to the high number of schools in a city, it is most often the case that there are two children from each school, whilst in smaller towns with fewer schools, there are usually five representatives from a single school. Councilors are drawn from students who will be doing their lower sixth form in all the high schools and colleges in the town or city. However, we have a case where there are secondary schools in the town that would be interested in the affairs of Junior Council and would want to be a part of the group. In their case, members will be Form Three students. It is an area of concern that not all schools in places where there is an established junior council are members. We hope as the nation develops, more schools will also be incorporated into Junior Council. This is mainly because we want a situation to prevail in Zimbabwe whereby members of junior council are representative of all the different classes, races, tribes and other distinctions that are in Zimbabwe. If this is achieved, our thrust as a body would be greatly improved and we will reach a wider number of youths and children as possible.

### Selection process of Junior Councilors

As has been mentioned before, the processes of junior councils differ according to the place in which a junior council is situated. There is, therefore no general application of such a selection process. However, over the years, a pattern has emerged that is followed by most junior councils nationwide and it is especially helpful when there is a junior council in place already but, even in cases where a junior council is being established, most of the stages are also helpful as indicators.

A letter is sent to each and every member school requesting the outgoing councilors, with the assistance of senior teachers and patrons to select a maximum of ten students (this number varies) who will represent their schools at the interviews. Each and every prospective councilor then brings an application letter and, for administrative purposes, an application fee subject to revision by the sitting council (which again differs), at the interviews which will be conducted by the councilors and the junior Aldermen. However, the interview is just but the first step in a series of tests and challenges that will be

faced by the prospective councilors. Soon after the interviews, a one month intensive training period begins where we look at various factors using different methodologies. Some of the qualities that we look for in our councilors are patience, commitment, passion, integrity, leadership, an understanding of the society, courage, humility, service, sacrifice, innovation and perseverance. These might seem like a lot to ask from students, but, looking at what junior councilors are supposed to do once in office, one can understand the need for a fully molded character. Many have described the intensive and rigorous training as not necessary and a waste of time: others going to the extent of describing it in very offensive terms. It is, however, very unfortunate that some elements in the society do not appreciate the real value of what we do at junior council, and neither do they understand the processes and procedures one must go through until they become a full councilor. Dealing with issues affecting children is a very daunting and sensitive task which needs the utmost care and full training. Thus, we defend the training as very much necessary. At the end of the month, a maximum of five and a minimum of two successful prospective are chosen from each school to become honourable junior councilors, and again, this number differs from area to area.

Once in office, the junior councilors are allocated wards according to a number of criterion, chief among them the place of residence and location of school. The councilors are also divided into committees headed by the Chief of Committees Clerk. There are four committees in any Junior Council namely Sport and Entertainment, Social Services, Finance and Fundraising and Youth Development and Awareness. These committees have a membership of at least two schools and a maximum of three, in accordance with the number of schools in a Junior Council in that particular year. Each committee is headed by a committee clerk. The term of office for junior councilors is one year, starting in July of each year and ending in May subject to any changes and provisions provided for in the junior council constitution. In other areas, the term of office begins in October and ends in September.

## CHAPTER FOUR- ALDERMAN'S COUNCIL

We cannot fail to mention the Alderman's Council since we are a part of it and the founding members. The Junior Alderman's council, besides that of Harare and some other few cities, first came into full national force in 2011. This was after a series of meetings we attended that were graced by Aldermen from other Junior Councils. During these meetings, they enlightened us on the mandate that the Alderman's Council has with regards to Junior Council. The Junior Mayors of the various towns then, bought the idea. As soon as their terms of office ended, these councilors went on to form Junior Aldermen bodies in their various towns and areas.

The Alderman's Council is a body of selected councilors who will carry on the principles of Junior Council they would have learnt during their tenure as councilors in to the junior councils that will follow as custodians and guardians. The Junior Aldermen constitution outlines the roles of the Alderman as follows:

- a. Working as a liaison body between junior council and external partners.
- b. Identifying effective partners and stakeholders to work with and support junior council.
- c. Acting in an advisory capacity for the sitting council.
- d. Constantly ensuring that the values underlying the constitution and the organisation are adhered to.
- e. Reporting to the Chamber Secretary's office or any other office responsible for junior council in a particular area. This duty sometimes falls on the Public Relations Office or Community Service Office of a municipality or council.
- f. Attending any junior council meetings and functions whenever deemed necessary.
- g. Act as the immediate custodians of junior council.
- h. Doing everything necessary to maintain the standards and norms of council.
- i. Acting in any capacity as provided for anywhere else in the constitution.

As former councilors, the Aldermen are very necessary in ensuring continuity of values, norms and principles. The presence of this body does not create another executive body but rather, a body where decisions are reviewed and if, because of their experience in council matters, the Aldermen decide a junior council decision to be manifestly absurd or out of sync with the expected junior council conduct, they will overturn it and advise on a course of action to be taken.

### How to become an Alderman

Not every junior councilor from the previous council can be selected to be a member of the Alderman's Council. At most, only five are chosen. However, they are not picked randomly but they also go through a process almost similar to the one prospective councilors go through. Soon after their term of office, councilors who would be interested in being a part of the Alderman's Council will write application letters to the chair. In this letter, they include information such as what they would have done as

councilors and their contribution to council activities. Only those who are considered to have contributed the most during their term of office will be selected to become prospective Junior Alderman. They undergo a training which lasts for the whole year, during which time they are supposed to continue giving their time and other contributions to junior council affairs whilst they also get training from the other Aldermen. Unlike the term of office of councilors which lasts for a year, Aldermanship is for life and hence, the yearlong training. During that year, they are supposed to show great passion and commitment since a lifetime duty is difficult to sustain without those two characteristics. After that year is over, the successful prospective Junior Aldermen are then made part of the Alderman's Council.

The Alderman' Council is composed of the chair, the deputy chair, secretary general, information officers and a public relations department. The rest of the Alderman make up what can be referred to as a Consultative Body, since junior councilors will consult them on any issues or affairs to do with junior council.

## CHAPTER FIVE- BENEFITS OF JUNIOR COUNCIL

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING A MEMBER OF JUNIOR COUNCIL??

This question is mostly asked by principals and heads of schools. Firstly, junior council is a non-profit making organisation and as such, we do not hand out food hampers or cash to schools. In fact, we always request for monetary assistance from member schools every year to ensure successful implementation of projects we would have set out to do and for administration purposes. We are still in the process of setting up our own income generating projects which will make us self-sustainable and so, until that is established, we will have to do with the limited resources availed to us by Senior Councils, donors, well wishers and member schools. Most of the times, we work with a zero budget and then hope for the best whilst preparing for the worst and this has carried us and sustained us thus far. We have had a number of companies chipping in whenever possible and their contributions have gone a long way in sustaining the activities of junior councils. It is relieving to note that such big companies recognise the importance of children.

A zero budget does not impede our progress in any way for; we are driven by a determination to succeed. Amongst ourselves, we source money to pay school fees for the few we can afford to pay for, we donate our own clothes to the less privileged and we buy fruits and other needs for those in hospitals. It is our belief that, before anyone comes on board to help fund our projects, we should set the pace ourselves and show that we can also give and help, on our own. Even if that is the case, we have to admit that funding has been our biggest let down. We are young people with big dreams, dreams to extend a helping hand to the less privileged, to the orphans and vulnerable children, but, without funding, they will only remain dreams. Funding is the only way to turn these dreams into a reality and we really hope this article will touch a lot of hearts and minds.

The benefit to be gained by being a member of junior council is mostly in terms of developing the mind, developing positive minded youths in the society, and, most importantly, maximizing the potential of the youth. We cannot reach the millions of youths and children in Zimbabwe all at once, but, the five hundred that we train each year have the capacity to do that. In helping us train those five hundred students every year, you will have helped us reach out to the millions at home, at school and at church.

By having their students participate in affairs to do with children, schools also increase their visibility in the areas where they are situated as well as having the pull factor that attract parents with new children. It is not a secret that when choosing new schools for their children, the parents' foremost concerns are issues to do with their children's welfare and safety. Being a part of junior council's Health and Safety Awareness and Promotion Program enhances a school's status as a place with the safety of children a priority.

## CHAPTER 6 - NATIONAL JUNIOR COUNCILS ASSOCIATION OF ZIMBABWE (NJCA)

As has been established in the previous chapters, junior councils in the whole of Zimbabwe have an important role to play in influencing local government policies on children and youth. As such, it was seen prudent that a central body coordinating all their activities be put in place. Such a body is advantageous for the obvious reason that, if we are to make a noise loud enough for the national policy makers to hear, we have to be as united and as wide reaching as possible. Due to this and other practical considerations which include financial stability and sustainability, the National Junior Council Association, the first of its kind in Zimbabwe and Africa, was established. Below is the concept in detail as extracted from their website and compiled by junior Alderman Shingirirai Chikazhe.

### **Executive Summary**

The National Junior Councils Association of Zimbabwe (NJCA) was formed out of the realization that there was need for a well-coordinated effort in advocating for child friendly policies and programs that positively impacts on the lives of young people in Zimbabwe. The Association comprises of Junior Councils all over Zimbabwe. These organizations are found in almost all the ten provinces in Zimbabwe and they have a direct relationship with local communities in their respective areas. The junior councils are better placed in engagement issues with local authorities and they are better placed in dealing with issues that affect children in the communities they live. Participation is open to children and young people and participation is not limited according to race, ethnicity, geographical expression, language etc. Participation is open to both individuals and organizations that seek to improve the lives of children in Zimbabwe. The association draws much of its inspiration from the junior parliament's motto that says, "Anything for us without us is against us".

### **Background**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, six (6) Junior Councils namely Mvurwi, Gweru, Marondera, Mutoko, Chitungwiza and Harare endorsed for the formation of the National Junior Councils Association in Gweru.

The mandate of the National Junior Councils Association (NJCA) is to set solid foundations for a brighter future for junior councilors and improve the lives of the youths and children in Zimbabwe by establishing income generating projects to sustain Junior Councils and establish entrepreneurship projects for the youths in a bid to eradicate unemployment. It is also the champion in advocating for youth empowerment through monitoring resources allocation, child budget participation and advocating for a child friendly budget and also as junior councilors to be good conductors between the youths and outer business world. NJCA also advocates for children in school and their empowerment through monitoring their educational facilities, activities and their code of conduct.

During its formative years, NJCA was also mandated to make sure that junior councils all over Zimbabwe are recognized on a more professional platform as an effective youth and child led organization and to

ensure that they take a leading role in the development of the African child. Another of its duty was to increase youth participation at local, regional and international level in the system of local governance thus improving the effectiveness and impact of junior councils. The association also undertook to eradicate youth unemployment and improve the educational basis of the youth in schools regardless of social status, creed religion and political opinion according to the Educational Act [Chapter 25:04].

Young people have been actively participating in issues such as HIV and AIDS campaigns, reproductive health discussions, talent shows and such other activities but their views are not being adequately solicited and captured in policy and governance issues. As a result young people feel that local and national policies are not being fully responsive to their plight. The child parliament has been and is still doing a great job but is regrettably not representative of young people's aspirations and opinions in policy and governance issues. The National Junior Councils Association of Zimbabwe seeks to address this anomaly by giving voice, creating space and building capacities for young people to meaningfully participate in both policy matters and governance issues that affect children and young people.

### **VISION**

To create a Zimbabwe that is Youth and Child friendly at senior and junior local government structures.

### **MANDATE**

The association is responsible for the coordination and networking of all junior councils in Zimbabwe, networking and collaborating with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and development partners, reviving and starting junior councils in towns and rural councils where they do not exist, lobbying and advocating for the rights of children, reduction of unemployment and poverty through mobilising and monitoring of resources to undertake various youth developmental programme projects and enhancing youth skills from capacity building and training workshops.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

To be the junior council organization that champions for the recognition of Children and Youth in decision making and development through lobbying and advocating for the rights of children and enhancing youth skills through capacity building.

### **CORE VALUES**

- Integrity, Accountability, Diligence, Perseverance, Discipline, Professionalism.

## **Main Objectives**

Creating a Zimbabwe That is Youth and Child Friendly at Senior and Junior Local Government Structures

## A Guide To Junior Councils In Zimbabwe

- I.** To advocate for youth empowerment through monitoring resources allocation, child budget participation and advocate for a child friendly budget and also as junior councillors to be the bridge between the children, youths and the outside business world.
- II.** To establish income generating projects to sustain junior councils and establish entrepreneurship projects for the youths in bid to eradicate unemployment and poverty.
- III.** To ensure empowerment of children in schools and colleges, through monitoring their educational facilities and activities by engaging with the ministry of education and carrying out surveys.
- IV.** Looking for scholarships and job opportunities for ex-junior councillors and other young people and making junior local governments speak with one voice at a national level.
- V.** To raise awareness and promote understanding of child rights issues in the communities by carrying out trainings and awareness campaigns.
- VI.** To equip children and young people with entrepreneurship skills and enhance their capacity to fundraise for their programs.
- VII.** To advocate and lobby for policies and legislation that favours the allocation of adequate resources towards the development of children and young people.
- VIII.** To create a platform for networking and knowledge sharing with other local, national and international organisations involved in budget work and general youth rights issues.
- IX.** To strengthen the capacity of children and young people to actively participate and influence development processes and decision making on issues that concern them both at local and national level
- X.** To revive junior councils that are dying and to establish junior councils in Towns and Cities as well as rural councils where they do not exist.

The association will strive to popularise young people's participation in policy and governance issues and other rights issues that affect the development of young people in Zimbabwe. The National Junior Councils Association of Zimbabwe targets young people between the ages of 0-24 years of age and will seek to reach out to all the 10 provinces in Zimbabwe. The association came up with a system whereby sitting junior councillors would be involved in the running of the national association as well as all other relevant stakeholders. As such, there was formed the assembly and the advisory council.

### **The Assembly**

This board includes all junior councils made up of the current sitting junior councillors in office each year, as branches under the association. The board shall have an executive board that will represent all junior councils at NJCA major meetings and at the Annual General Meeting enabling active child participation at national level. The Assembly will be responsible for bringing up problems being faced by children and youths in their communities and raising suggestions of solving these problems as junior councillors, then supported by NJCA.

The board will have a chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, secretary and coordinator who will form the executive committee of the quorum. Each year a new board is elected from the new junior councillors and this is done at the AGM and the process voting for the board is monitored by the NJCA Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of the Assembly will be occupied by members of affiliated junior councils.

### **Advisory Council**

The board shall incorporate affiliated members from the Junior Aldermen's institutions and senior council departments responsible for the junior councils in various towns and rural councils. This board brings up issues that are positively and negatively affecting the implementation of junior council activities in their various communities and advise on possible solutions.

### **Partners and Stakeholders**

The board will include Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Government, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development partners. The organization will carry out scheduled meetings with partners and stakeholders when deemed necessary by the Executive Committee.

## **FUNDING AND ACCOUNTS**

### **FUNDING**

The organization shall be funded through membership subscriptions and contributions; grants and donations from the public and government and income generating projects

## **MAIN THEMATIC AREAS**

### **1. Education Department**

- a) The department shall be responsible for engaging with the ministry of education and creating good working relations between the ministry and the association.
- b) It will work directly with the public relations and social survey department

- c) The office will have the department manager and two officers who will report their field work to the manager and the manager will report directly to the Executive Committee.

## **2. Health Department**

- a) The department shall be responsible for engaging with the ministry of health and creating working relations between the association and the ministry.
- b) The department will work directly with the public relations and social survey department.
- c) The office will have the department manager and two officers who will report their field work to the manager, and the manager will report directly to the Executive Committee.

## **3. Child Rights Governance Department (CRG)**

- a. The department shall be responsible for engaging with the ministry of Justice and the ministry of Home Affairs and creating good working relations between the ministries and the association.
- b. The department will work directly with the public relations and social survey department.
- c. The office will have the department manager and two officers who will report their field work to the manager, and the manager will report directly to the Executive Committee.

**THE THREE (3) THEMATIC COMMITTEES WILL ALSO ENGAGE WITH ANY PRIVATE SECTOR THAT WILL BE CARRYING OUT SIMILAR OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES. THEY WILL ALSO BE INVOLVED IN AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS THAT SERVES THE BEST INTERESTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTHS.**

## CHAPTER 7-CONCLUSION

This publication has been an attempt to try and answer the most frequently asked questions about junior council. Although it might not tackle all those questions and issues to the full understanding of some, we are very confident that it will shed more light on the procedures, protocol and processes of junior council. It is imperative that parents, teachers, prospective junior councilors, junior councilors, junior Aldermen, stakeholders and everyone else take their precious time to go through and understand what is written in this booklet. As we have already alluded to earlier on, it requires a collective effort by all interested parties for junior council to fully realize its potential and reach out to each and every child in the town.

Special mention goes to organisations such as NANGO, SAVE THE CHILDREN, ZNCWC and CHILDLINE for their continued support every year in providing the basic training that junior councilors need in order to effectively execute their duties. Their workshops are always a revelation, as they teach us something new whilst also consolidating and upgrading the knowledge that we have. We have to admit that without them, we would not have the knowledge that we have acquired over the years about children's affairs. These people are the best and should really keep it up. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth officials also deserve special mention in this booklet. They have always provided the support we need when we approach schools to help us and the youth in general since they specialize in those areas. It is these departments which give us the relevance that we need to become effective in Zimbabwe. We applaud them for their efforts and urge them never to tire or give up. We also give credit to all councils and municipalities who allow us as children to exercise our rights freely whilst they support us in every way possible.

Our greatest credit goes to the parents who allow their children to be part of such an honourable institution like Junior Council. It goes without saying that, were it not for them, all the efforts to establish Junior Councils would have been in vain. It is our parents who are our immediate advisors and therefore, their encouragement is greatly appreciated and welcomed always. With our parents' support, nothing and no one can stop us from achieving our goals. With them, that dream, our dream, is as good as reality.

Most junior councils in Zimbabwe have two annual awards running in schools, primary and secondary. These are the Most Disciplined Students and the Smartest School. These awards seek to engage students directly in competitions which will keep their environments clean whilst also molding them into disciplined students. Discipline is required of students not only within the school walls, but also at home and in the communities. With the coming on board of partners to sponsor the awards, we hope very soon they will be accompanied by a cash prize.

Our vision at the National Junior Councils Association of Zimbabwe is, "to create a Zimbabwe that is youth and child friendly at senior and junior local government structures." This vision embodies our determination to succeed and be the change that we want to see. With time, we will have the knowledge to turn the adversities we face into opportunities, to have faith in our abilities and to never give up on expressing our feelings and opinions. We always tell the incoming junior councilors every

year that” Patience, Persistence and Perseverance Pays”. We will never give up on our cry for recognition and emancipation as children. As more children get educated and join our cause, nothing can stop us from turning those dreams into a reality, an achievement for all of us. As we walk through this arduous and long journey, wisdom is our hammer and prudence will be our nail. True success is never about stepping into a comfort zone by yourself but it is about taking as many people as you can with you, and this, we will do.

## **JUNIOR COUNCIL CALENDAR AND EVENTS (STEPS TO COUNCIL)**

### **1. Application to school junior council and interview**

Junior Councilors will conduct interviews in their respective schools from the interested students who would have applied. A maximum of ten students are chosen at this stage to become prospective councilors.

### **2. Main application**

The prospective councilors will then apply to the Junior Town Clerk, Junior Council. The letters MAY be accompanied by an administrative fee to be decided by the sitting junior council

### **3. Interview and introduction to the rules and regulations**

To be conducted by the Junior Aldermen and the sitting council at their Council Chambers. This is when prospective Junior Councilors start earning points which will earn them a place in Junior Council. Points will be awarded using provisions of the constitution

### **4. Training and skills equipment**

This is a one month long session conducted by Junior Aldermen. Over the month, youth and child affairs officers from organisations such as NANGO, Save The Children and Childline will be visiting to share their experiences and knowledge about child affairs and advocacy.

### **5. Fundraising activity**

Prospective junior councilors are mandated to carry out any one fundraising activity at their respective schools in their communities which will go towards the administration of junior council during their whole term of office as well as the annual braai. (This differs with the various areas)

### **6. Final selection**

Five councilors will be chosen at the end of this month long training. The day will serve as the annual braai day as well as the Election Day for office holders. Voting will be conducted in accordance with the constitution.

## 7. Inauguration and swearing in

Successful prospective councilors will be sworn into office on the day of inauguration. From this day, they become full honorable junior councilors ready to serve their communities.

## Junior Council Events

New junior councilors will either chose from the following or they will come up with their own activities. Not all of them have to be done, but junior councilors should strive to do most of them as this will have a greater impact not only on society, but in their personal lives.

1. Clean up campaign
2. Safety and health awareness campaign
3. Visit and donations to orphanages, old people's homes and hospitals
4. Schools tour
5. Child rights campaign
6. Sport and cultural activities
7. Junior council awards
8. Fundraising activities
9. Any other social activities which might be of help to the community

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Junior Alderman Nigel Goni- Mvurwi

Junior Alderman Mekani Sakala- Kadoma

Junior Alderlady Francisca Buluwati- Kadoma

Junior Alderman Witness Chikuni- Mutoko

Members of the founding committee “the pioneers” of NJCA