

# Youth grounded on governance a sure way to a cohesive society

Kenya Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) placed the country's population by mid-2024 at 52.4 million, out of which, a whopping 40 million, accounting for over 75 per cent are youth below the age of 35.

These statistics point to the fact that youth is the make or break segment for the country's current and future prosperity. They, therefore, deserve the attention and support of all, especially those in leadership. The youth too have a responsibility of making meaningful and informed contributions to the country by using their inherent future-oriented and global-demanded skills. Such contributions should be within the confines of values and principles of good governance and national good.

Going by recent youth civic agitation, one can tell the potential of our youth. Equally, there are clear dangers if the youth do not have clear and well-shaped ethos that are sustainable and in line with Kenya's economic, social and political aspirations outlined in various blueprints.

Progress has been made in the involvement of the youth, largely on awareness creation and igniting their interest in the affairs of their communities and the country.

That notwithstanding, gaps exist on nurturing the youth on governance and leadership that ought to begin tender age. Additionally, in past elections, there has been minimal political participation by the youth. For instance, in the 2022 General Election, only 261 youth were elected for the 1,882 elective positions. This was out of a total of 16,100 candidates.

It follows then that institutions, parents and guardians, and leaders must take a lead in shaping the youth for the country's development and overall wellness. The empowerment of the young people should be through sharing of right and current information about governance and political participation. Youth involvement, including political participation, should be grounded on a concrete understanding of the applicable legal framework, documented procedures and best practices, even as they agitate for their rights, and present their grievances and demands.

By properly packaging their messages, the youth will have a communication power kit that is devoid of disrespect and abuse. This strategy would in turn silence the "noise" in

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nounced and heard by the targeted duty bearers.

Critically, a mind shift must be ingrained in the youth folks. So much so that it is not just about their numbers, but also the interest of the nation. It must be acknowledged that the Kenyan youth lead the way for their continental peers in progressing their agenda. These appreciable efforts that have been illustrated in their multi-media creative manifestations in memes, songs, dance, fine art and many more forms of expressions should inspire us more to have a vibrant and value-based youth. They should therefore, advance the agitation not on the basis of self-aggrandizement but for the good of all.

In its pursuit towards promoting a well-informed and meaningfully engaged youth in governance matters, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) designed a youth engagement programme through the universities and tertiary institutions.

Through this initiative, ORPP engages student leaders through live sessions, public lectures and sharing of information on governance, political processes and democracy. This initiative is also aimed at proactively providing a preparatory mechanism of transitioning these young leaders into work and other society responsibilities, including leadership.

I also acknowledge and commend efforts by other public entities and ORPP partners in promoting pro-youth activities at national level and at the grassroots. Such include sponsorship by public entities of items at the 97th Kenya Music and Cultural Festivals held in December last year. At primary and secondary schools, efforts to promote clubs to nurture leadership, peace, environmental protection and conversation and care for the needy are some other initiatives being undertaken by ministries, departments and agencies.

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My advice to the youth this new year is for them to marshal their energies for the good of not just themselves but all in society. We must inspire the youth to start perceiving themselves as leaders and yearn for a better country.

Going by the youth numbers, the country is more for the youth than it is for the older folks. Let us collaborate to make Kenya a global governance citadel. Won't we?

Dr Nderitu is the Registrar of Political Parties.



Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission officials arrange ballot boxes at Uasin Gishu High School in Eldoret Uasin Gishu County, August 10, 2022. FILE PHOTO