

Appoint the youth to senior State jobs

United States President Donald Trump has appointed Karoline Leavitt as the youngest-ever White House Press Secretary at just 27 years old. Similarly, Botswana President Duma Gideon Boko appointed 26-year old former Miss Botswana 2022 and lawyer Lesego Chombo the new minister of youth and gender.

The appointments are a recognition of the vital role of the youth in national development and express a desire to harness the immense potential of young people.

The youth are not in the waiting room, and are not waiting to be mentored. They are ready. Often, young people are excluded on the pretext of lacking experience. But youth are not inadequate; they have fresh ideas, energy and creativity. Youth are powerful beyond measure. Ignoring participation of the youth in governance is not only bad for the youth but is also a tragedy for any country seeking to develop.

Youth in Kenya have demonstrated huge potential; they have fresh ideas and immense energies, in essence, the country's young population is a crucible of great creativity.

Although the youth drive the country's economy through their participation in the private sector, their creativity, energy and dynamism has always been overlooked when it comes to public service appointments. Kenya has a long tradition of viewing the youth as leaders of tomorrow. It is worth noting that other than Eric Muriithi Muuga, 32, there is no youth in the Cabinet.

There is raging debate on appointments of Cabinet secretaries, principal secretaries, ambassadors and board members of parastatals, with young people expressing outrage at how the government has lost touch with them.

The government has no choice but to include and work with the youth if the country is to move forward, considering that more than 80 per cent of the population is under 35 years. The country's median age is 19 years. This large population of youth means that young people cannot be left behind—the demographic should be seen as an opportunity and not a challenge, an asset and not liability.

As one young person remarked, young people should not just be consulted, young people should be appointed. Youth are already doing

Youth are already doing the work, solving problems ...



Raphael Obonyo | Inclusion

the work, solving problems, and shaping the world they want to live in.

While it is important to tap into the experience and wisdom of the elders, it is important to integrate the vigour of the youth. As Kofi Annan rightly noted, any society that fails to tap into the potential of the youth will be left behind. As a country we will not make headway until we recognise the immense potential of young people.

The government must match its words with action—trust the youth to lead.

Mr Obonyo is a public policy analyst.
raphojuma@hotmail.com