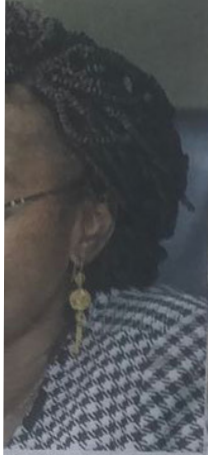


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OPINION

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Gen Zs should lead the way in the charge for good governance by mobilising, registering and turning out to vote



Raphael Obonyo | Politics

Why we must engage youth in our politics

Just in case you doubt the importance of youth in terms of political engagement, think briefly about recent elections in Senegal and Botswana, countries in which young people upended politics.

Last year, Senegal swore in its youngest democratically elected president. The 44-year-old, little known Basirou Diomaye Faye, received overwhelming support from young Senegalese in the country's presidential election that saw him garner a winning 54 per cent of the vote in the first round.

The youth had been misused, underused or abused before in politics, with the old guard routinely winning with their vote. Faye's victory, it turns out, was the fruit borne out of active participation by the youth who had previous only been considered as angry mobs of stone-throwing thugs.

Down south, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) that had been in power since 1966, misread the country's mood and lost massively.

The high turnout of the youth in the election is considered to be the reason behind the significant defeat suffered by BDP in the 2024 general elections.

In Kenya, 2027 is a decisive year and the country will be grappling with politics in the coming months. Being a monumental election, the competition is expected to be intense.

Going by the recent Gen Z protests, more new entrants are expected in the political scene in all elective positions, as has happened in every electoral cycle, with many incumbents not making it back.

And over the past few months, we've seen young people in every corner of the country making a case for their push to bring about real change.

Young people have helped lead great movements, including the fight for multi-party democracy and the quest for constitutional reforms. It is inspiring to see so many smart, fearless young Kenyans standing up and fighting for their rights—organising peaceful protests to rally for their cause. Honestly, we've been waiting for these youth, and they deserve everyone's support.

This young generation should make Kenyans optimistic about our future. By protesting, they're speaking up and shining a light on injustice. One way of supporting them is to vote for people who'll respond to our concerns.

Gen Zs should lead the way in the charge for good governance by mobilising, registering and turning out to vote for the change they want. Most importantly, young people should get involved in governance.

At the same time, Gen Zs should come to the table with youth-friendly proposals. For example, the number of youth to be nominated for political office by parties, memoranda on systemic challenges like youth unemployment, and lower taxation to support entrepreneurship.

Over the years, the political class has often seduced young voters, used them to add to their vote baskets and left them disillusioned.

Ultimately, it should not be lost to Kenyans that the participation of youth in politics is critical to the future of the country. Youth participation matters.

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tion, P. O. Box 49010, Nairobi 00100.

DAILY NATION

Merge or dissolve State firms for efficiency

The setting up of parastatals and other government agencies was meant to streamline the delivery of public services and foster development. These agencies would enable government resources to be used to build vital infrastructure and facilities for the people's benefit.

However, the proliferation of these government corporations and organisations has also had its negative side. They have become conduits for the wastage of public funds and resources. There can be no mention of corruption without listing some of these agencies that have been exploited by some people to enrich themselves.

The reform of the government corporations is nothing new. Plans to merge or dissolve state corporations have been in the works for a long time, as part of the government's efforts to reduce the huge public wage bill. And it makes sense to collapse some of those that duplicate functions into one efficient and viable entity. It is, however, understandable that there is some panic over possible job losses.

The Cabinet has approved plans to merge or dissolve some corporations in a budgetary support programme with the International Monetary Fund. This is reminiscent of the 1990s structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) by the IMF and World Bank that saw thousands of jobs lost when corporations were privatised or dissolved.

Nine state corporations will be dissolved, 42 merged, and another six restructured. The Cabinet has approved the dissolution of nine enterprises, with 16 others to be sold off or liquidated. The merging of 42 enterprises with overlapping functions into 20 is meant to cut waste and reduce government spending.

The Union of Kenya Civil Servants has cautioned against any retrenchments. However, the government insists that no jobs will be lost and that all the affected employees will be absorbed into the public service.

This move is long overdue and should be extended to other levels of government, including, possibly, the reduction of the number of ministries. This, hopefully, will lead to less appetite for taxes from a small section of the population to fund inefficient State firms and a bloated workforce. It must, however, be fairly executed in the public interest.

Let experts lead jobs drive

The government's massive plan to vaccinate 20 million cattle and 50 million smaller livestock, including goats and sheep, is being rolled out despite reservations in some quarters. However, unlike with this idea of a mass vaccination was broached, it has not been made mandatory.

A key issue of concern has been the suspicious initiation of the scheme by the political leaders instead of the government's agricultural and research experts leading the campaign. It also comes at a time when four counties have been placed on quarantine over the deadly foot and mouth disease (FMD), with reports of possible outbreaks elsewhere. Clear vaccination is necessary to safeguard the livestock and sustain the beef and milk enterprises.

Besides FMD, President William Ruto wants the livestock vaccinated against Peste Des Petits, which is an equally highly contagious disease. Unless checked, these epidemics cause the deaths of millions of cattle and goats and are locking the country out of the lucrative export market including oil-rich Gulf countries.

Kenya's performance in the international markets has significantly hampered by the FMD and hence the need for vaccination.

However, the Kenya Veterinary Association says its objections on the vaccination programme, including the provision of the vaccines, hiring of the personnel to administer the vaccines, and the need for public participation have not been answered. It had questioned the need for mass vaccination.

The Director of Veterinary Services, Dr Allan Azege, said that due to the threat of diseases, the mass vaccination should not wait any longer.

Farmers should keenly listen to experts, and not panic as the roll-out of the livestock vaccination starts next year.