

International Day of the Girl Child Statement

11 October 2024

On this International Day of the Girl Child, Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) join forces with the global community in embracing girls' diversity, promoting their rights and fostering their empowerment under the Global Theme: **"Girls' Vision for the future"** and our National theme **"Elevating Girls' Voices for Sustainable Development"**

This day reminds us that investing in girls' empowerment is key to unlocking a future of gender equality, social justice and human prosperity. Join hands with us to cultivate girls' potential, fostering a new wave of female leaders, pioneers and drivers of positive change.

In our quest for gender equality, let's address the unique obstacles girls encounter. Due to climate change and socio-economic shocks and stressors, resulting to poverty, many girls especially in rural areas have limited access to education and have become victims of child marriages. It is our mandate therefore, to implement interventions that curb these harmful practices for the brighter future of our girl child.

As the church, complementing government efforts in improving the overall welfare of the girl child, we are currently conducting initiatives that address their Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and healthcare at large because they are experiencing limited access to reproductive healthcare, menstrual hygiene facilities among others. In addition, in order to improve the nutritional status of the girls, exacerbated by the El-Nino drought phenomenon, we continue providing food assistance to address malnutrition and food insecurity.

Let us therefore stand together in promoting their leadership through inclusive decision-making processes and girls participation in governance as they lack representation and their voices are often marginalized in decision making processes due to societal constraints that stifle girl's aspirations.

We urge the global community to unite in supporting girls' empowerment, creating safe environments where they can thrive free from sexual exploitation and harmful practices like virginity testing or forced labour. Their voices should be heard and their dreams supported.

Today, as Zimbabwe Council of Churches, we remember that every girl is fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image (Psalms 139; 14) and they deserve equal opportunities to be empowered so as to reach their full potential.