

Youth Political and Civic Participation

Developing a culture of youth political and civic participation goes beyond encouraging young persons to exercise their voting right ! please permit me to ask how many persons here today have their youth policy as an act of parliament (Ladies and gentlemen, policy makers, heads of government this is our starting point). We can see the demographic transition, we can see a heavy youth population,

Can we simply start by giving priority to our young persons in the house or parliament, can we start with better budget allocations, can we start by allowing young persons to not only have a voice in forums like these but also during parliamentary debates outside of youth parliament, (In saint lucia we may have youth parliament once a year and the outcome is basically the same as a normal debat) where does the outcome of this sitting go ?

In Saint Lucia We have a few organisations that not politically affiliated but they assist in the grooming of young people to assume leadership positions in our society.

- Department of Youth Development and sports
- Saint Lucia National Youth Council
- District Youth and Sports Councils

On the more political side we very few youth arms of political (In relation to St. Lucia)

Key Factors to address

- Fostering Political Participation Includes helping our young persons understand our governance system and understand that it goes beyond Party and all the messy ideas we have attached to our political systems.
- We need to understand that our current political approach doesn't appeal to our young persons and we need to use more creative and unconventional methods to reach out to this new age audience.
- In going through the national youth policy of jamaica it states that “some political cultures stifle the space for youth participation in the

political process” so it’s not just a matter of young persons are not interested but also have we make adequate adjustments to facilitate young persons within the political sphere

- Further in this same policy It also highlights that the political arena is disproportionately dominated by older persons especially men” and that young persons are underrepresented.

how do we now tackle that ?

Solutions

- Redefine ‘POLITICS” - to not just mean political party or electing a president or prime minister but to support political engagement throughout the and beyond the tenure.
- Strengthen youth leadership and governance- speaking for St. Lucia we’ve done this through the ofcourse the Saint Lucia National Youth Council, The District Youth and Sports Councils and Our Youth Ambassadors Network. In Saint Lucia we’ve made every young persons a resource person rather than a concentrated few to foster development even within the grassroots.

- Youth participation on all government and non governmental organisation board of directors (reiterating the point that ALL issues are youth issues)
- Provide early opportunities for young persons to be part of active youth movement to foster youth development. (Youth organisations, Youth Parliament, Student Councils, School Clubs, Political Youth Arms etc)
- Increased education on governance structures and political frameworks - we speak highly of SHRH, family planning, the need for comprehensive sex education but Where do we facilitate learning about our GOVERNMENT SYSTEM.
- Develop platforms that assist in allowing young persons to speak and give input on national issues, policies, legislation and political debates.

Key Message: In almost every forum you hear young persons are the future leaders we say this in regards to technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, student governance but what about young political leaders, who takes the time to groom and create young political leaders, young men and women who will sit and carry the youth agenda comfortably in the house of parliament and create a generation of well informed voters and political activists. And as i stated in my Key message to ECLAC when young persons are places at the helm of development we can face the future with ease !