

“CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND LARGELY ABUSED”: YOUTHS

YOUTH FORUM

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The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) introduced by the Government of Zimbabwe in December 2009 was largely abused by the Members of Parliament, claims the youths of the country. The **Youth Forum** Research and Advocacy Department carried out a mini-survey in different parts of the country and found out that most youths did not even know of the existence of the facility.

The CDF was introduced by the Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti and is being overseen by the Ministry of Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs which is under Hon. Eric Matinenga. The Fund was given to Members of Parliament and they were tasked with identifying areas that needed immediate attention and to develop them using the funds. Each of the 210 legislators was allocated US\$50,000 in the 2010 National Budget for implementation of projects that would benefit communities such as construction of market stalls and drilling of boreholes.

Although Minister Biti warned legislators that the CDF was not an opportunity for self-enrichment saying strict monitoring of the fund would be implemented, it has emerged that the fund was largely abused as there is little to show for it on the ground in many constituencies. However, it would be wrong to paint all MPs with the same brush as there are some MPs who used the money to develop their constituencies spending the money on school projects, boreholes and irrigation. Most such MPs decried that the money

was too little and therefore could only be used to finish off projects that were started before the embarrassing decline of the Zimbabwean Dollar.

Most youths interviewed by the **Youth Forum** said they did not know of the existence of the Fund and if it indeed exists, what it was or is being used for. From the survey, it appears those legislators who used the money for developing their communities decided to

embark on the projects without consulting the electorate who voted them into power, and if they did, then they left out the critical constituency of youths. A Masvingo youth, who requested anonymity, said she only got to know about the fund when a gravel road in their area was being repaired, “That’s when we were told it was the CDF being used, we didn’t even know of the fund before that, but at least he did something for us”.

Another youth from Glen View in Harare said they were told to apply for funding for small projects but they didn’t get replies after the applications. They also don’t know of anyone who received the funds after applying so they are not enlightened as to what the money was used for. A youth interviewed in Chimanimani in Manicaland said he didn’t know about the fund and that, although there was some development after 2009 in his area, he is not sure if it was as a result of the Constituent Development Fund or it was as a result of other government and private sector initiatives.

“HOW CAN ONE ALLOCATE US\$50,000 TO 50,000 PEOPLE AND MORE THAN US\$100,000 WORTH OF VEHICLES TO ONLY ONE MAN AND STILL HAVE THAT ONE MAN LOOTING FROM WHAT IS ALLOCATED TO THE MASSES?”
ASKED A BULAWAYO YOUTH

Youths in Bulawayo decried that a whole constituency can be allocated a meager US\$50,000 while one man in the form of a minister is allocated a vehicle worth over \$100,000 above other benefits and vehicles, which is more than double the amount for 'developing' a whole constituency. They said it was indecent that the legislators first enrich themselves by looting little funds meant for the whole constituency before they enrich themselves with obscene amounts. "How can one allocate US\$50,000 to 50,000 people and more than US\$100,000 worth of vehicles to only one man and still have that one man looting from what is allocated to the masses?" asked one youth from Bulawayo.

With reports saying only 107 of the more than 200 MPs had managed to file their returns, it remains to be seen what measures will be taken for those who fail to account for the money. It is also important to note that the Ministry of Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs, which is responsible for overseeing and auditing the Fund, is now saying that it does not have the resources to audit the legislators. This has irked the youths of Zimbabwe because when the Fund was introduced, Minister Biti said strict monitoring of the Fund would be observed but that was without allocating enough funds for such an activity.

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