

VOICES



IFC country manager Amena Arif and Bamburi Cement managing director Seddiq Hassani during the signing of the IFC Sourcing 2Equal gender programme agreement, aimed at increasing procurement opportunities for women-owned enterprises, at Bamburi Cement Nairobi Grinding Plant on Monday /HANDOUT

LETTERS

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Allocate more funds to tackle mental health-related issues

May be the Mental health awareness month, it is worth noting that mental health has an impact on many aspects of our daily lives.

Despite pivotal consideration of mental health in the global health indicators and commitments, the global resource envelope for mental health is insignificant.

There lacks enough commitment from governments and donor agencies to support mental health.

Unlike communicable diseases, investments in mental health programmes and services have been completely forgotten, negating the accessibility of quality mental health services.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her potential, can cope with the normal life stresses, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to their community.

Another indicator of low priority for mental health is the lack of budgets and funding for mental health-care services at national and county governments levels.

According to the World Federation for Mental Health, access to mental healthcare remains unequal.

In low and middle-income nations, 75 to 95 per cent of people with mental health conditions have no access to the right care.

This is further compounded by the fact that mental health, especially in the African context, is a subject often discussed in muted tones due to the stigma and discrimination attached to it.

In Kenya, it is estimated that one in every 10 people suffer from a common mental disorder.

The number increases to one in every four (20-25 per cent) people among patients attending routine outpatient services.

Additionally, the World Health Organization's 2017 report on the world mental health situation ranked Kenya fifth among African countries with the highest number of depression cases.

Despite the well-outlined guidelines and priority actions in the mental health policy in Kenya, the country still faces a lot of challenges regarding the provision of optimal and affordable mental health care and treatment.

Globally, mental illness on average attracts just two per cent of government spending on health, according to WHO.

Due to the lack of investment in related services, 85 per cent of people suffering from depression on the continent have no access to an effective treatment.

This is hugely attributed to the fact that Members of Parliament have done little in the past few years to influence and allocate more funds towards mental health.

JACKSON NGARI
Student at Rongo University

Youths have role to play in active politics

Youths have in general continued to underestimate how impactful their active participation in politics could be.

It is not about being political but rather being aware of the issues ailing our society and taking part in solving them.

Currently, we make up to 78 per cent of the country's total population and more than half of the total 19 million registered voters.

On our own, as university students, we form a constituency—a voting block.

We are the numbers. Notice the sudden endearment politicians have been showing us lately during campaign season.

Now more than ever, we have a reason to be actively engaged in politics.

To be vocal about our concerns as we are the most hit by the poor

policies this nation has in play.

Being the majority voters, the election results will depict what the youth believe in; our ideologies and who we deem fit to lead the people of Kenya.

For the same reason, we have the power through democracy to change policies that are not beneficial to us.

The numbers thing is a big blessing if we are willing to realise it.

Because we are the majority, we could execute non-violent socio-political revolutions in our political jurisdiction targeting paradigm shifts in governance.

We could also voice long-term solutions to our perennial problems and do away with short-term solutions such as handouts and have sustainable remedies such as empowerment initiatives.

Civic education should be our first move to increase youth participation

in politics. This will allow us to make better decisions when exercising our rights.

If we are equipped with knowledge of the country's political history and political culture, then we will use better parameters to decide on the right leaders for us other than choosing along tribal lines.

Through civic education, we can learn to have a common front in the ways we handle political issues.

We can create platforms for engagement with political players, this will in turn increase accountability from politicians to Kenyans.

Being the majority, our action or inaction will greatly determine the course of this country.

Youth should actively participate in politics and show a common front in their civic duties, decision-making and execution of the same decisions

AGGREY ONYANCHA
Student at Rongo University

VOX POP

COMPILED BY JESSICA NYABOKE

Should politicians with graft cases be locked out of the ballot?



Yes: Some of these politicians were impeached because of corruption. They are not fit to hold any public office.

JOHN OTIENO
Uasin Gishu



No: The government is not fair. Some people misused money for agencies like Kemsa but no action has been taken against them because of interests.

WILLIAM MUTAHI
Uasin Gishu



Yes: They should not vie for any position because their integrity is questionable. If elected, they will steal to enrich themselves.

HEZRON GOBERO
Uasin Gishu



Yes: They should be held accountable for their actions. Other Kenyans looking for jobs are asked for certificates of good conduct. How about them?

NELVIN BIWOTT
Uasin Gishu

