



STATEMENT: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD 2024

Yesterday, we commemorated the International Day of the Girl Child, and in doing so, we celebrated the resilience and strength of girls in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. The 11th of October and the ensuing weeks offer us the opportunity to amplify girls' voices and to champion their leadership. This year's theme, **Girls' Vision for the Future**, underscores the urgency of our collective responsibility.

Girls' rights are human rights, yet the reality for millions of girls in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa is different. Too many girls face significant challenges that deny them their rights, restrict their choices, and limit their futures.

The statistics paint a stark picture. According to UNICEF, *only 14% of girls in Zimbabwe complete upper secondary school, and this number plummets to a mere 1% for the poorest girls. Additionally, 1/3 of women were married before the age of 18, and 5% of girls before the age of 15.* But, these statistics cannot define our future.

There is hope! *The future is Usawa (Equal)*. The Usawa Institute believes that the future of Africa is equal if the continent invests in girls' and women's education.

At Usawa, we are working tirelessly to address key issues that impact the education and well-being of girls and young women in Zimbabwe. Our work focuses on advocating for gender-sensitive and responsive curricula and teaching methods, eliminating child marriages, creating platforms where girls can gain digital and financial literacy, coding and entrepreneurial skills and equipping them with the knowledge and tools to build resilience in the face of climate change.

We see the potential of the more than 580 million girls and women on the continent. The potential is limitless, and this is particularly true in Zimbabwe. We are working to ensure that all girls in Zimbabwe and throughout Africa have the opportunities they need to reach their full potential.

The Usawa Institute is committed to working with all stakeholders to realize the vision of an Africa where every girl's rights are protected and she is empowered to reach her full potential.

Let us secure our collective future by investing in girls. Together, we can create a better future for all.



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