

RAU casts spotlight on devolution of power for Bulawayo residents

March 2019

Research and Advocacy Unit (RAU) in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) hosted a one day workshop in Bulawayo on how best Matebeleland can achieve economic development in the context of devolution of power.

The workshop held under the theme [Re-building Zimbabwe: Economic Challenges and Opportunities for Matebeleland in the New Dispensation](#), was hosted in the context of devolution of power, which is provided for in the Zimbabwe's constitution.

Discussions focused on how each province ought to be delegated with the power to preside over local resources so that they benefit the people. Section 264 (d) of the 2013 constitution reads that the objectives

of the devolution of governmental powers and responsibilities to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities are, [“To recognise the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development.”](#)



Participants listen to a presentation on an overview of the economy in the new dispensation

This comes at a time when Bulawayo which used to be the [industrial hub](#) of the country is currently a pale shadow of itself. The city, which used to be laden each morning by workers hurrying to catch early buses to their workplaces is now overwhelmed with vendors scrambling to sell their wares to eke a living out of the profession that has become the most popular option in Zimbabwe. Most of the industrial sites either look deserted or have been converted into churches.

Dr Ngobizitha Dube a lecturer at the Institute of Development Studies at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) encouraged the people of Matebeleland to come up with a vision for their area and work towards achieving it to fully benefit from

devolution of power. He explained that during the colonial era, Zimbabwe's colonisers had a vision to develop the country through agriculture, as such the people of Matebeleland were encouraged to have a vision as well. Dr Dube said, "The question we need to be asking before we devolve is are we proud to be people of Bulawayo and do we have the vision to make Bulawayo a better place for the future." Dube underscored that Matebeleland has a beautiful culture which has the potential to be exchanged for monetary value. He said, "We have a powerful, radiant and beautiful culture which gives us an opportunity to put it in monetary terms." He further noted that money is backed up by trust, an idea which lacks among Zimbabweans who express pessimism in their perception of the future. [Zimbabwe has not had a currency of its own since 2009](#), which has led to a lack of confidence in the economy.

Edward Manning the chairperson Street Wise Informal Traders Association (SWITA) who represented vendors bemoaned the recycling of colonial laws which perpetuate the discrimination of the poor by denying them a chance to make a living out of buying and selling. "The informal sector is running the economy, but 39 years after we gained independence we are still living under the by-laws of the Smith regime," Manning said. Manning went on to emphasise that vendors are the number one employer in the country hence they should be respected. He also underlined that the vending business does not only benefit the vendors but also the ordinary people since the vendors sell affordable wares which provide a cheaper alternative to the basic goods sold by the licensed suppliers.

The workshop provided an opportunity for citizens to come up with a solution by the people to take part in their own governance. It brought together people from different walks of life to discuss pertinent economic issues and strategies that can be employed to afford citizens a chance to realise benefits from the devolution of power. A number of participants expressed the desire to engage in more participatory platforms like these to enable the production of the greatest public opinions to govern.